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# **Subversion in the Classroom:**

Anarchist Thought and Practice in Higher Education

**Andrew J. Brogan**

Thesis submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Political and Social Thought from the School of Politics and  
International Relations, University of Kent, September 2018

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## Abstract

This thesis is a critique of critical pedagogy which questions several of the key political assumptions behind critical pedagogy's calls for social change. Over the past decades critical pedagogy has become established as the progressive response to dominant approaches to education, first addressing issues of economic oppression and then expanding its analysis to include race, gender, sexuality and more. The wide range of authors contributing to critical pedagogy reflect this growing field of analysis and despite the variation in background and focus, all authors are united by a central tenet: education is political, and education can help to change the world for the better through greater justice, equality, democracy, and freedom. In recent years critical pedagogy has turned its attention to neo-liberal approaches to education which emphasise individual competition, personal gain, and free market economics, positioning itself as the progressive and critical response to neo-liberal education. The aim of this thesis is to question the assumptions behind this call for greater justice, equality, democracy, and freedom, and to argue that rather than offering a progressive response to neo-liberal practices of education, critical pedagogy leaves key structures of neo-liberalism unquestioned.

Building on anarchist theory and practice, and specifically on areas concerning the subject, governance and subversion developed following poststructuralist insights, I argue that rather than critical pedagogy offering a response to neo-liberalism, the unquestioned assumptions of critical pedagogy reveal a vision of social change and individual transformation which is constraining. Developing my critique through an anarchist reading of critical pedagogy's reliance on the state, and Foucauldian reading of the attempt to govern the individual subject, I propose and explore a subversive approach to educational theory and practice which operates in the gaps and tensions created by the education systems. My exploration occurs in the context of a UK higher education institution in which I was teaching as a Graduate Teaching Assistant for three years, and I examine the tensions and difficulties of working in a neo-liberal Higher Education (HE) institution while simultaneously pursuing an approach to education entirely alien to it. To this end I utilise autoethnography to capture, re-tell, and analyse specific experiences from my teaching practice, using a

combination of Gray's work on exilic space and de Certeau's work on *la perruque* ('wiggery') as a lens to establish the possibility of subversion in constrained and constraining systems like neo-liberal HE.

I contend that the anarchist thought and practice developed in this thesis offers a possibility for subversion which avoids the pitfalls of critical pedagogy by creating and developing moments in which we take responsibility for our actions, our (trans)formation as a subject, and our relationships to others in ways which are unaccountable for by neo-liberalism and critical pedagogy alike. I conclude the thesis piece by arguing that no matter the practices of governance we are subject too, be they neo-liberal in nature or emanating from critical pedagogy, there always exist moments and means of subversion.

## Prologue: A Dusty Hill

*A nine-year-old community spread over a dusty hill. A volcano standing guard in the background. Ceaseless sun that turns the ground to dust and sand. Water brought in on lorries, stored in tanks. A handful of rogue electricity pylons. No sewage system. Single brick, two room homes. Incomplete rooftops waiting for the next floor. Thin windows in metal frames. Concrete floors. Small shops in front rooms. Gas canisters for cooking. Heavy supplies brought up the hill on foot. Warm days and cold nights. Freezing temperatures. The rainy season. Dirt pathways collapse in a muddy slide.*

\* \* \*

I sit on the water tank as the bucket fills below me. I enjoy this quiet moment up here in the community, looking back down the foothills to the city below. I've been working in the community for a charity for around six months now and whilst I feel like I've found my feet on the day-to-day running of the project, I've also begun to feel a tension between my interpretation and understanding of what we're doing, and the charity's. "To break the cycle of poverty": as a tagline, a mission statement, that's a hard one to argue against. Who wouldn't want to break the cycle of poverty? Whatever that may actually mean. It's the wrong question to ask myself, really. There's something more complex here, something connected to the role I'm playing in the actions of a charity which has this as its mission statement. At the beginning of my time with the charity, six or seven months ago when I first met the founders, I was swept along with the idea of being involved in "making a difference", in "doing something good", without really thinking any further or deeper about what such a role entailed. I didn't get past the clichéd phrases. Increasingly, in the last few weeks I've become aware of this tension, and looking back I've noticed this in the contents of my journal.

The charity runs a project based in a primary school on the outskirts of Arequipa, Peru's second city. The city proper is a beautiful place of white stone buildings, cobbled streets, churches, and squares, and is a popular stop-over for tourists travelling to and from Bolivia or Chile, or on their way to Lake Titicaca and Cuzco. It has also become an increasingly popular place for internal migration, with people moving closer to the city in search of work. With the space available and the seeming lack of any regulations about building or planning, communities establish themselves

on the outer fringes of the city, occupying land, building homes, and slowly establishing a presence. Where I am working now is one such community.

It was established nine years ago and perches on the foothills of the volcanoes which border the north and eastern sides of the city. Communities like this are set up before the provision of any utilities and then electricity, water, and sewage systems are built in later, although when seems to be a constantly moving time frame. The community I'm working in has power, but not to all houses, and has the channels dug for sewage systems, but in the six months I've been here nothing more has happened yet, and speaking to members of the community, the channels have been here for at least a year now. At the foot of the hill there is a local swimming pool and the informal transport systems only come as far as that. The steep dirt and dust roads leading into the community itself aren't navigable by the small combi buses. This means the community is only really accessible on foot, which involves a slog up a steep hill. At over 2000m altitude the walk robs the air from your lungs. A combination of the buildings, the location, the lack of utilities, the transport links all give this particular community a strange feeling. It has a sense of permanence through the houses and small shops, and at the same time a sense of the temporary and the unfinished through the lack of utility provision. With the informal transport network of combis reaching the community there is a connection to the rest of the city, and yet it's at arms-length. The community seems to balance on the edge of separation.

Most of the male members of the community hold some sort of manual job, building seems to be the most common among them, and it's a fairly stable line of work given the amount the city below is expanding. Among the women of the community, many are cleaners or cooks in small restaurants nearby. Others collect plastics and cans for recycling. I doubt this is what they had in mind when they migrated to the city. There are lots of children in the community and most families can scrape together the money to buy the uniforms and materials needed for them to attend a school a little closer to the city, a school with a good reputation. For those who can't, their children attend the state-run school based in the community itself, the one which the charity assists.

The charity's primary role is providing a flow of volunteers to act as teaching assistants in the school and to lead English classes once a week. We also provide the school with extra materials like pens and paper when we can afford them, and fund the school lunches, aiming to ensure that the pupils get at least one good, healthy

meal a day. I'm the project manager and I'm here to make sure that the volunteers are looked after and cared for, that the cooking gets done, and to act as a bridge between the charity founders and the staff at the school and the community. On the surface this all sounds very good; assisting teachers, teaching English, providing meals. But the tension rises when I start thinking about the underlying premise behind the charity and the way I'm involved in the assistance we're giving.

Behind the charity's mission statement lies the belief that by helping to educate some of the children of the community, and particularly by teaching them some English, they will be able to secure a better job in the future. This, in turn, will be better for the community as once the children reach working age they will bring more money and financial stability to the area. Social change through education. Not a new idea, nor a unique project in the area, the country, or the world.

What I have begun to question in the last few weeks is, what is this social change that the charity, and I as a member of it, are promoting? I can't shake the feeling that all we're doing is getting a handful of pupils into a slightly better economic position. That all we're doing is teaching them the rules to a game which is still crooked. And it is here that I'm beginning to feel the tension between my personal position and actions and that of the charity. I struggle to articulate what I mean by 'my personal position', but I seem to have a gut reaction to the claims of the power of economy to fix issues, to the claims that if people could just work harder, earn more, and spend more sensibly, then everything would be OK, everyone would find their place in the social system. It's based on ideas of meritocracy and a belief in social mobility, but doesn't seem to take into account the array of disadvantages many of these students face, and the problem that social mobility can only ever work for a limited number. The idea just doesn't work for me. It doesn't seem to tell the whole story. I know that my reaction stems from a combination of family and social background, my formative years, and my own reading, it starts from a time long before I arrived in Peru. It's a feeling that something is deeply wrong with a world which not only enables oppression to exist, whether that's political, social, or economic, but which is based on the ongoing exploitation of others and maintenance of that oppression. And this is the root of my feelings towards the charity – I am working, directly or indirectly as part of the systems that support such a world.

Of course, through assisting the teachers and helping to provide a healthy cooked meal once a day I'm no doubt having a positive effect on the lives of these pupils who

I've come to know and care about. But the more I think about it, the more I feel that my actions as a project manager supporting a charity with this understanding of social change and the world are incompatible with my personal views, with my understanding of myself and my role in the world.

\* \* \*

*The volunteers. Mainly young. Four week to six months stay. Travelling through South America. Come here deliberately to work with the charity. Western European and North American. White. Predominantly women. Well-meaning. Shocked at the condition of the school. Shocked at the teaching. Enjoy their interactions with the pupils. Each has a favourite. Don't necessarily know how to teach.*

\* \* \*

The headteacher steps out of his classroom. Glancing at my watch I'm surprised by the time and know what's coming next. I flick off the tap and lock the access panel. As I'm heaving the bucket full of water to the bathrooms the head lets out a short blast on his whistle. 10:30. Play time. I refill the two big drums in the bathrooms, with no running water the toilets are flushed by dunking a small bucket in the drum and then emptying it into the toilet basin. I've only just finished by the time the first of the pupils is running up. I'm unsure if she's heading for me or the bathroom so I swiftly step aside to clear a path just in case. Bathroom. The next one slams straight into my leg and sits down on my foot. I didn't even see him coming. Scooping him up with one arm and the bucket in the other I head over to the concrete play area at the front of the school.

For the volunteers and me this is our favourite time of the day. It's a chance for us to relax and have some fun with the pupils, whether it's playing marbles, which I'm really no good at, hopscotch, which sees a slight improvement, or pushing the swings, which is my forte. The volunteers are scattered around the playground and I wander about having a quick chat about how they're getting on. The charity is kept going by a steady stream of volunteers who come to help us and I'm always staggered by the number who do so. In my more cynical moments I can't help thinking that the younger volunteers are here to pad out their CV: work experience, check; travelling, check; volunteering, check. I know from conversations with them that they are, more often than not, motivated by the same initial desires as I was, "making a difference"

and “doing something good”. When I stop to take a breath, I know this is unfair of me. It’s only been in the past few weeks that I’ve began to ask questions of my own motivations and role, it would be hypocritical to criticise the volunteers for not doing the same.

I get on very well with this group of volunteers and they clearly get on. It’s a huge help to us all when there aren’t any problems between the volunteers. The work they’re part of with the charity presents them with some difficult situations as they are thrust into a community which is very different to what they’re used to. When I’m interviewing potential volunteers, I do what I can to prepare them for the community, the school, and pupils, but there’s only so much you can say, sometimes people just have to see for themselves. It can be quite a culture shock, particularly for those younger volunteers for whom this is the first time away from home and their first time facing such conditions. When the volunteers get on well they form a support network for each other and they also seem to be more willing to speak to me about any problems or concerns they have.

\* \* \*

*Two brick rooms. Three wooden rooms. And a bathroom with a water tank out back. Yellow over blue. A stretch of concrete and dirt. A suspended shade. A swing frame with the swings locked in the building. Holes in the wooden walls from break-ins. Broken glass from beer bottles. Filling the kitchen water bucket each day. Moving the cooking range from brick classrooms to the kitchen. Everything locked away to stop it being stolen. Bright tiles and windows in the brick rooms. Dusty floors and gloom in the wooden rooms. White boards with jealously guarded markers. A stockpile of workbooks hidden in cupboards. A head teacher who likes to fish – on school days.*

\* \* \*

The head catches my eye halfway through play time and gestures for me to come over. One of the teachers is standing with him. The head and I don’t see eye-to-eye but I get on particularly well with the teacher standing with him and I have immense respect for the amount of work she does. Deciding that two of the pupils, a brother and sister with severe learning difficulties and special needs, need special attention, the head has given up his class and combined it with the year group below, taking on the sibling pair for himself. In practice, this means the head has more quiet time to

sit and read the paper while this other teacher now has a class of fifteen pupils with an age range of 8 – 12. In a school of 30 pupils on a good day this teacher often has more than half the school in her class and one of the dark and dusty wooden rooms to work in.

We make our way into the head's classroom to try and avoid any disturbances while we chat. 'There's a problem with one of the pupils,' the head starts, 'his parents aren't happy with him having one-on-one lessons outside of the classroom, and no one asked them if it would be OK.' I nod. One of the pupils has some learning difficulties and we, the charity and the school, thought it might be beneficial to have one of our more experienced volunteers who was going to be with us for another three months work with him on a one-on-one basis. To help him concentrate the pupil and the volunteer sat at a table set up just outside the classroom. The head continues, 'They want him back in the classroom, taking part with the others.' I nod again. 'Did you explain the progress that he's been making, even in these few weeks?' I ask. '*Claro.* (of course).'

I let out a sigh. I'm frustrated and already thinking about the conversation that I'll have to have with the volunteer who's working with the pupil. It'll be a hard one. She'll be disappointed and won't understand the parents' decision. 'Is there nothing we can do to change their minds?' I ask, already knowing the answer. 'No.' The reply I expected. 'They think he should be in the normal classes just like his brother and sister are.' I sigh again. 'He isn't like his brother and sister,' I exclaim, 'he really struggles to sit and read and copy from a book.' I know I don't need to say it out loud, the head is well aware that the pupil struggles with the teaching style here, and there is only one: copying and rote learning. There's an implicit criticism of the school in what I've said, but that passes without comment. It's the head's turn to nod. I turn to the teacher hoping to find an ally. She shrugs sympathetically, although I don't know if it's sympathy for me, the pupil, the parents, or all of us. 'We should have spoken to them about it before now', she says. And she's right.

It's a feature of the way the charity operates and interacts with the community which aggravates the tension I'm feeling. There is a sense in which we are here to help the helpless community. Here we are with our notions of what progress looks like, what makes a happy and healthy child, what education should include, and the importance of a well-paying job, and we carry out these ideas without so much as a word to the community themselves. We have arrived wielding money and food, and knew what

we were going to do before we got here. We have assumed that the community would agree with us, that we are “doing something good”. This issue with the pupil is a microcosm of this. We have taken our fledgling knowledge of education and applied it to the situation without any consideration of the wider context. What if the pupil is singled out by his peers for receiving preferential treatment? What if the parents are singled out by the community as receiving preferential treatment? What if the parents simply don’t want us to work one-on-one with their son for personal, cultural, or other reasons? What if the pupil doesn’t want to be isolated from his peers? None of these are questions we have asked ourselves, the pupil, the parents, or the community.

\* \* \*

*The head leaves. Another blast on the whistle. 11:30. Break runs 30 minutes over. This is fairly normal. The youngest pupils line up. Soap and a bowl of water for their hands. Toothbrushes and a cup of water for their teeth. 4-5year olds in one class. 6-7 in another. 8-12 in the third. Volunteers herd the remaining pupils. Calls to finish marbles. Huffing teachers. Scraping chairs. Shouted instructions.*

\* \* \*

Everyone is settled back in their classrooms and the doors are shut behind them to try and stop any distractions. In all but the brick built rooms this also shuts out a lot of the natural light, making it hard to see properly. After making sure all the volunteers are in place and OK I poke my head around the kitchen door to see if there’s anything I can do to help. Each day the lunch is prepared and cooked by a mother of one of the school pupils. The charity provides a budget, the cooks collaborate, decide what to cook each day, and buy anything they need. If there is any food left over at the end of the day the cooks take it home for themselves. I get on particularly well with the mother who’s cooking today. Three of her children are already at the school, and a fourth, no more than 3 months old, always comes with her when she’s working. The kitchen-come-cafeteria is as gloomy as the other wooden rooms, but in here the constant dry, dusty smell is over-ridden by whatever is being cooked that day, lending the space a less hostile feeling.

This is the normal rhythm of my day once the volunteers have been here long enough to know the ropes. The title of Project Manager may sound grand, but in reality,

once things are up and running, and barring any unforeseen occurrences, there's little to manage. Rather than buzz in and out of the rooms making a nuisance of myself, or go to help out in a classroom when there's a chance I'll be called out and disrupt things, I go and spend some time with whoever is cooking that day. By doing this I gain two things. On the one hand it gives me something useful to do. On the other, it gives me a chance to interact with the mothers, and through our conversations gain a better understanding of what is going on in the wider community. I'm hoping that by spending time speaking with people in the community about what we, the charity, is doing here, how it's received, and how we might do things differently I can relieve some of the imperial feelings about the charity's approach and my own actions.

The cook beams a smile as I peer into the folds of the blanket at her baby sleeping soundly among the constant sounds and smells. 'We don't have enough onions, could you pick some up from the shop?' I nod, jog out of the kitchen and turn up the hill behind the school. The community is dotted with shops people have set up in their front rooms, but there's only one which usually has fresh fruit and vegetables. Wading through a small sand drift and jumping over a trench that's been redug once more in the promise of a sewage system which never arrives, I walk over to the shop and rap on the grate over the door with a coin. Someone comes through from the rest of the house and opens up. I scoop up some onions and have a quick chat before heading back to the kitchen. Time moves surprisingly quickly here and I know it's not long until the first of the classes will come through for lunch.

'The potatoes', the cook says gesturing to a bowl as I hand over the onions. I've done this enough times to know what she wants me to do and I pick up a serrated knife to make a start on peeling off the skins. The potatoes are freshly boiled and even the ones on top are still hot enough to hurt my fingertips but I know we don't have long to get them ready. I set about burning my fingers, and being laughed at for doing so, and we chat about how she's doing, how the family is, how the children are getting on at school. I'm peeling off the last of the skins when one of the volunteers leans through the window to ask if lunch is ready for the youngest students. The cook gives a quick nod and the volunteer disappears from the window to reappear moments later in the doorway leading a train of four and five-year olds.

\* \* \*

*Potatoes, lettuce, tomato, and spicy peanut sauce. Liver, peas, rice. Vegetable rostis and rice. Not enough plastic plates. Wash up as soon as one pupil is finished so another can eat. Pass out plastic cups of chichi, the sweet corn drink. Make sure each pupil has eaten properly. Collect plates and cutlery. Wash up again. Sweep the floor of dust and dropped food. Don't want to attract the stray dogs. Carry the cooking range to the brick classrooms overnight. Teachers slip away as soon as they can. Check under tables and chairs for pupils. Padlocks swing and snap into place. Locked for the day. 14:00. Students drift away across the community. Some wait to take our hands.*

\* \* \*

I'm tired and coated in dust. Making my way down the hillside with the volunteers we talk about how the day has gone and any questions they have. I arrange to talk with the volunteer who works one-on-one with the pupil who needs to go back into the classroom, but that's a conversation for another day. We're both shattered at the moment. We're in luck today and as we make our way past the rubbish dump where the community joins the tarmac roads a combi pulls up which can take us back to the centre of the city. Combis are what keeps most of the city moving, and at the same time stuck in traffic. The community is at the end of the line so we're the first people on. I collapse into my seat, folding my legs up and I can already feel weight pushing down on my eyes. It will take around 45 minutes to get to the centre and it's a chance for me to get some sleep before I go to my second job.

The combi rolls its way down through the foothills of the volcanoes. Outside the windows the buildings take on a greater sense of permanence, these are areas of the city which are more established and benefit from a full range of utilities. I'm drifting in and out of sleep as the volunteers and locals shout to each other to make themselves heard over the straining engine. As we approach my stop I unfold myself from my seat and start squeezing through the human mass jammed into the combi. They're cheap transport for everyone and make their money by packing in as many people as possible. Moving around in them always reminds me of the children's puzzles with a jumbled picture and a single missing tile space: A particular set of moves is needed to get the right image. A particular set of moves is needed to get off the combi as people shuffle into the space I vacate on my way to the front.

I climb the shaking iron staircase to my flat. The last thing I want to do right now is get changed and go teach at the university for a few hours. I peel off my dusty

clothes, shake them out on the balcony and fold them on a chair ready for tomorrow. Shower on, and one of the advantages of showering mid-afternoon, the sun has had plenty of time to heat the water tank on the roof. The shower works like it always does, breathing life back into me. Smart trousers, a shirt, and shoes, and my transformation is complete. I head back down the stairs and make the short walk to university. From the outside the difference between my work in the community and my teaching at the university could not be greater, but similarities exist, and there are tensions here in the same way as at my work for the charity.

\* \* \*

*A private university. Fee-paying students. A foreign language requisite. Students paying extra for English classes. Guards at the gate. White walls and bright lights. Large foyers. A timetable of classes on the office window. Find my name and room number. Collect the necessary text book. Find the classroom. Familiar student faces. Whiteboards. Markers. Seats with tables attached. Re-arrange the seating.*

\* \* \*

The university couldn't look more different to the school in the community. It's one of several private universities in Arequipa and much like the others the gated entrance is guarded by security guards standing like sentinels and checking I.Ds on the way in. The inner courtyard has a few plants dotted around defying the relentless sun and maintaining their green, and the building towers around me at three stories high. I make my way into the main building and up two flights of wide stairs kept meticulously clean. High ceilings, white walls and big windows make the university feel as airy and open as the wooden classrooms in the community feel closed and gloomy.

I find my classroom and unpack my things. The students start to drift in at 16:00. It's a slow-drip that will quite possibly last until 16:15. Time is a fluid concept in Peru. Before I teach a new course, no matter how many times I've done so, I get very nervous: what if we don't get on? What if I can't remember part of the course? What if I make an idiot of myself? It's the first day of a new month of courses and I'm teaching the module which leads on from the previous month. This means that I know most of the students as I taught them until just a few days ago in the old class. Although the university often tries to ensure that you don't teach the same class for

two months in a row, it can happen, and comes with positives and negatives. We smile and greet each other easily, many of the guys offering me a handshake as they enter the room. I got on well with this group last time and it's nice to see them again. I can feel my heart rate steadying as more and more familiar faces come in.

It's 16:10 and the stream of students has all but stopped. Someone leans over to pull the door to, but a hand shoots into the gap. Then an arm, a leg, a body, a face. Ah. He's here. I failed this student last time round. He didn't really work or participate in the classes, so I couldn't get a sense of his comprehension or speaking skills. The exam did nothing but show that he doesn't really understand the grammar we had been working on either. There was no way that I could let him pass. It would have been pointless. It's not about his failing the exam; exams are far from the best way to establish a student's understanding of a subject. It's that throughout the previous month he rarely showed anything but the most basic understanding of English. For him to carry on to the next module, the one we're starting today, is a waste of time. Most of it will go straight over his head, and I don't have the time in the class to help him catch up, even if he wanted to.

And this is the downside of teaching the same group. I'm stuck and conflicted. And more than anything, I'm annoyed that no matter how many times I speak to the management in the department, it keeps on happening. The students pay to have English classes, and they have to have a certificate in a foreign language to get their degree. In many cases, as long as they continue paying, the department is happy to keep advancing them up the levels, regardless of their ability. This isn't education, it's a barely concealed commercial exchange dressed up in a cloak of acceptability by taking place in a university. Not that the university is alone in the practice. I've also worked in two private language institutes where it was exactly the same. It feels like something similar is happening at the university as it is at the community; the pupils at the school and the students at the community are being taught how to survive or thrive in a world based on economics, divisions and hierarchies.

We greet each other and I hope the smile that I'm working to hold doesn't slide into the annoyance that I'm feeling; it's not his fault he's in this class. All he'll want to do is get to the end of the set of courses and receive the certificate which says he can speak English. I push my annoyance aside and focus on the class in front of me.

\* \* \*

*A textbook and workbook for each course. Three courses per level. Five levels in total. A series of pre-planned exercises. From first page to last. Reading. Writing. Listening. Speaking. Grammar. Group work. Individual work. Planned progression. Content divided by day. A 'Teachers Guide' for how to conduct each exercise. A time-frame for each task.*

\* \* \*

I hold up my copy of the textbook for this module, 'Does everybody have a copy? Or, if you're waiting for one, can everyone see a copy?' Nods ripple around the room. 'Great', I continue, 'can you open up to pages 4 and 5, and we'll make a start.' I feel like I know the book and the tasks like the back of my hand: I've taught this module twice before. The first task is a reading piece about the Great Ocean Road in Australia, it's meant to introduce the students to the past participle; have eaten, have seen, have driven, etc. Seeing the text again reminds me of how annoyed I got with it last time. All of the examples and tasks in textbooks are so far removed from the reference points and lives of these students. I know we have to do past participles as it's in the exam at the end of the month, but I've thought of a slightly different way of doing them this time round. My knowledge of pedagogy is limited to the short TEFL course that I took and my experiences of teaching over the last one-and-a-half years, so I don't really have the language to explain what I want to do differently, or why, I just know that I want to experiment.

Sighing, I close the book and place it on the small lectern at the front of the room. Pulling one of the chairs round so that I sit at the end of the semi-circle and I can see everyone, I sit down: 'So', time to jump in, 'today I have worked at the project. I have eaten lunch. I have had a shower. I have walked to work.' I pause and write the past participles on the board. I'm hoping that I can inject a bit more life and interest into the work by eliciting the grammar rule from the students and asking them to tell the rest of the class about their day using past participles. The pre-packaged work included in the textbooks can be so dull and detached, and until now I've never really had the confidence to try something different. At the same time, I'm painfully aware of the time constraints that we have. Just four weeks, five days a week, minus a few for exam preparation, means we end up with 17 sessions together. If this doesn't work we've lost a session.

I look at the board and back at the students. 'Can you spot any patterns here?' I ask. 'Are there any familiar elements in these sentences?' A pause. It stretches. And

stretches. I can almost see it reaching out in front of me. Just as I'm about to speak again after what must have been only a handful of seconds, someone catches my eye and starts to speak, "'Have" is a verb. And the others look like past-tense verbs.' I breathe what I hope is an inaudible sigh of relief. We talk through how a past participle is formed, and using a timeline drawn on the board, how it is used. I hand over to the students and ask them to write a series of sentences about their days. It seems to be working, a different way to talk about past participles which uses the students' own lives and experiences as the starting point. I'm excited about what's happening, but I have no idea how to do it with other topics.

\* \* \*

*Climb the shaking staircase. A pair of bare bulbs cast the room in a yellow glow. A double bed. A small wardrobe. A small fridge. Two gas rings. A patio table and chairs. Two wicker comfy chairs. A thin film of dust on the floor. Dump my bag on a chair. Laptop on, shirt and trousers off. Into more comfortable clothing. Yesterday's dinner out of the fridge. Balcony door open to let air in. A cacophony of noise from the last combis of the day. Exhaustion.*

\* \* \*

The tension I feel between me and my actions at the charity and the university is building. The approach to the community, the underlying belief of social change through higher income, the payment for progression at the university, the prearranged and irrelevant course content. I'm entangled in all of these practices and I'm struggling to see my way through. How do I continue working for the charity and the university while I have such strong negative feelings about their actions? Is there a way to work for the charity, work with the community, and work towards my own vision of the world? Is there a way to teach in these institutions and resist the underlying premises of them? A way to cover the content, meet the requirements of the university, the needs of the students, while unpicking some of the elements of the university I don't agree with. It's the end of the long day and I'm drained. My mind jumps from one thing to the next, unable to find any rest.

*The work at the charity is good, it's helping.*

*But it's not something I'm comfortable with.*

*The university is driving me mad.*

*I love working with the children, and I must be having a positive impact in the community.*

*The teaching is fine, I think. I enjoy being in the classroom. And teaching English.*

*What can we do to work with the community differently?*

*I need the work at the university, it's my only income.*

*Maybe I could talk to the department again about moving students up a level.*

*It worked today, talking about past participles differently. I should try it with other topics.*

I flick the TV on to distract myself. It's almost time for the local news and the Spanish will force me to concentrate. Despite the difficulties that I have with both jobs, I love what I do. The contradictions and conflicts that I'm feeling don't detract from the overwhelming sense that I'm happy here. But equally, that doesn't detract from me looking forward to getting back to the UK.

I pull a letter down from the shelves. It's from the University of Kent offering me a place on an MA programme. I've already been through the modules that are on offer numerous times and I've got an idea of what I'd like to look at. I can't wait to get back to my own formal education. Being in Peru, in fact, the four years since I finished my undergrad, have all been a learning curve; working in a secondary school, working in a call centre, learning to teach English, moving to Peru, learning Spanish, meeting people, learning the city, learning about running a project, learning about myself. But the pull to go back to university and pick up on some of my questions in a more formal setting is really exciting.

The news starts. I put the letter aside and take the pan of yesterday's left-overs off the stove. I grab a fork and a chopping board and set the pan down on the table. I listen to the news of protests against the proposal to increase combi prices, disturbances near a potential mine-site not far from the city, and the ever-present-but-never-arriving promise of a city funded bus system. I turn off the TV and pick up a book. Only six months more.

\* \* \*

*A sunny September. A green campus. More buildings than I remember. Student accommodation. A conference on Latin America on my first weekend. A chance encounter*

*with a PhD student. A shared interest in Latin America. A talk about experiences. My frustrations and questions. His research with social movements. He suggests Pedagogy of the Oppressed. I pick up a copy from the library that day. A language to talk about some of my experiences of education.*

# 1. Introduction

Critical pedagogy is an approach to education which argues that all education is political, and therefore education is always working either to maintain the status quo or to change it (Freire 1996). Which politics education follows comes down to those who direct the education, be that ministers at the national level or teachers in the classroom. In its most recent formulations critical pedagogy has positioned itself as a response to neo-liberalism and neo-liberal approaches to education, arguing that the neo-liberal state prioritises private wealth over public need, and that neo-liberal education is specifically geared towards the inculcation of students into economic practices and logic based on privatised and individualised competitive gain (McLaren and Kincheloe 2007; Macrine 2009; Giroux 2011; Porfilio 2011; Nikolakaki 2012). It was this critique of neo-liberalism which made critical pedagogy so attractive following my return from Peru. For critical pedagogy, education is part of changing the oppressive status quo of neo-liberalism and working towards a society which has greater democracy, social justice, equality, and freedom (Biesta 1998). Critical pedagogy aspires to a state which is a reformed entity for the use of progressive parties in the inclusion of more participatory forms of democracy (Freire 1998; Carr 2011a; Wheeler-Bell 2014; Liou and Rojas 2016); of the critical citizen as one who is self-reflective, aware of the role she plays in society, and is critical of structures of power which maintain oppressive practices (Giroux 1992, Macedo 2009; Saltman 2009; Sandlin and McLaren 2010; McDonald and Underhill 2014); and of the teacher as a transformative intellectual who works tirelessly for the education and creation of critical citizens in the classroom and beyond (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987; Freire 2000, 2001; Darder 2009; Giroux 2011). However, I argue here that for all its laudable critique, theory and practice, critical pedagogy's vision of the reformed state, critical citizens, and transformative intellectuals imposes limits on social change. In establishing its vision, critical pedagogy predetermines the social change possible by binding it to state structures as the form of social organisation and by establishing a very specific form of subjectivity for the student and teacher alike. Therefore, rather than enhancing freedom through education, critical pedagogy limits possibilities.

My critique of critical pedagogy is informed by postanarchism, a particular development of anarchist thought which argues for the ever-present possibility of freedom for the subject to (trans)form her own subjectivity and relationships apart from external pressures and expectations. Establishing a critique of neo-liberalism through the formation of subjectivity, the actions of the subject, and the relationships of the subject, anarchism, via postanarchism, puts forward a radical response to the pressures of neo-liberalism which attempt to give form to subjects through various predetermined identities, roles, and behaviours (Newman 2016). I draw on an anarchist framework in my critique of critical pedagogy to argue that critical pedagogy exerts similar pressures on the subject to operate in a particular predetermined form of social organisation, the reformed state, and to conform to particular predetermined forms of subjectivity, the critical citizen and the transformative intellectual. This critique has been shaped by several questions which form the backbone of this thesis and are borne out of my experiences in Peru and following my return to higher education in the UK: How radical is the social change called for in critical pedagogy, and how does it operate as a response to neo-liberalism? How can we approach our own (trans)formation without tying ourselves to predetermined understandings of the subject and action? How can we envisage and enact an approach to education which does not predetermine forms of subjectivity, action, and relationships? And finally, how can I enact an approach to education which builds from postanarchist understandings of subjectivity, action, and relationships?

Ultimately, this thesis is a critique of critical pedagogy in the context of a neo-liberal higher education institution, the aim of which is to explore my attempts to create a classroom space which distances external pressures and invites me and the students to take control of our own actions and behaviours, i.e. the formation of our own subjectivity. In answering the first question, how radical is the social change called for in critical pedagogy, and how does it operate as a response to neo-liberalism?, I explore critical pedagogy's understanding of the reformed state, the critical citizen and the transformative intellectual. It is here that I argue that through the lens of anarchism and the subject, her relationships, and (trans)formation, that critical pedagogy cannot operate as a response to neo-liberalism. This sets up the

subsequent three questions, if critical pedagogy cannot offer a response to the neo-liberal context I work in, what can? The second question regarding our own (trans)formation without predetermination is answered as I expand on anarchism and the postanarchist focus on the subject through an engagement with Michel Foucault's work on care of the self. To answer the third question about an approach to education informed by postanarchist concerns with subjectivity, action, and relationships I explore the possibilities of subversive practice in everyday life and the possible creation of spaces in which externally defined roles and behaviours are distanced. Finally, I use autoethnographic narratives to explore my attempts at the creation of such a space as a response to both critical pedagogy and neo-liberalism. Before getting into these questions in more detail it is first necessary to establish the background to critical pedagogy which lays the foundations for my critique.

### What is Critical Pedagogy?

The first step in outlining the aims and scope of this thesis is to provide the reader with an introduction to critical pedagogy. Beginning with the early work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, I take the reader through the development of critical pedagogy as an educational, social and political theory and practice. In the course of this introduction we track the development of the theoretical underpinnings of critical pedagogy through the 1980s to the 2000s, consider the rise of various critiques of critical pedagogy through the late 1980s and early 1990s, and explore the broadening of the field of critical pedagogy to include a wide array of theoretical perspectives of education, society and politics. This acts as both an introduction to the field and a literature review, enabling me to place my work in the context of existing critiques of critical pedagogy and point the way for the coming chapters.

#### *Paulo Freire and the Roots of Critical Pedagogy*

To understand the foundations of critical pedagogy means to understand more about Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator whose seminal book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993; 2005) lies at the heart of what is now an expansive movement of critical educational, social, and political theory and practice. Born in Pernambuco in north-east Brazil in 1921, Freire describes his family as straddling the social divide between

middle and working class, referring to himself and his three siblings as 'connective kids' (1996, 21-22) – children who occupied areas of both the middle and working class life, with the outward markings of the middle classes such as the clothing they wore, and with the inner troubles associated with the hunger of the working classes (ibid.). After initially struggling with schooling Freire discovered a love of teaching which was to stay with him throughout his life (ibid., 50). Although Freire originally trained to be a lawyer and went as far as successfully defending his first client, he soon changed direction and put his energies into education.

Freire found work teaching Portuguese to adult learners and later ran the education programme of the Social Service of Industry, overseeing the educational activities of the service designed to support industrial workers and their families in north-east Brazil (Schugurensky 2011, 16). It was during these years of the late 1950s and early 1960s that Freire became more involved in politics in Brazil, particularly around the issue of social change through literacy and voting. At the time being literate was a condition of suffrage in Brazil, and without being able to vote poor Brazilians had no say in the running of the state. For Freire, education was political because the decisions made about the education of the rural poor, or lack of it, was a deliberate move to prevent the poor's participation in Brazilian politics. Freire was actively involved with three key groups in the early 1960s, the Movement for Popular Culture, the Cultural Extension Service at the University of Pernambuco, and an adult literacy programme in the Rio Grande do Norte region. All the groups shared the common theme of a critical understanding of society and the state and engaged in various means to increase the role of civil society in the areas surrounding Paulo's native Recife. Consisting of a range of intellectuals, artists, politicians, workers and teachers, the groups strove for the progression of Brazilian society (Freire 1996, 109). For Freire, the greater involvement of a greater number of people had the potential to fundamentally unbalance the power of the established political elites and their parties. Consequently, Freire began working to improve the literacy levels of the urban and rural poor alike in order to empower them as citizens to play a role in the development of Brazilian society through participation in state institutions via voting (Freire 1996, 109; Schugurensky 2011, 20-21).

The success of the literacy projects was to be Freire's undoing following the coup d'état of April 1964. In his attempts to increase the suffrage of the rural poor Freire was seen as a threat to the newly established Brazilian military elite government and was arrested as a dissident and charged with being a traitor to the Brazilian people. After several months in prison Freire was released and sought refuge in Bolivia before being uprooted again three weeks later and moving to Chile. This was the start of fifteen years of exile in which Freire and his family would live in Chile ('64-'69), the USA ('69-'70), and Switzerland ('70-'79) (Schugurensky 2011, 23-24).

During the first years of his exile in Chile Freire once again established educational programmes working with the rural poor and drew on his experiences in Brazil and Chile to write *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* represents a first sustained attempt by Freire to explore his criticism of traditional approaches to education and his suggestions for an alternative. In the course of the work Freire articulates a blend of Marxism, Hegelian dialectics, and liberation theology to argue that traditional educational systems act to ensure the ongoing oppression of large sections of society resulting in the dehumanisation of both the oppressed and the oppressors (ibid., 44).

Freire's critique of traditional methods of education set out in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the basis of critical pedagogy. Freire characterises traditional approaches to education as "banking", in which the teacher takes the role of an active subject who through narration fills the passive students with knowledge (2005, 71-72). In so doing, education is reduced to an act of depositing 'in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the despositor' (ibid., 72). The result of this student-teacher relationship is that there is no communication between the students and the teacher, there are only communiqués issued by the teacher which are to be memorised and repeated by the students. In this educational approach students are not taught to think, create, and question knowledge, but are taught to unquestionably accept the knowledge gifted to them in their ignorance by the knowledgeable teacher (ibid., 72). Placing this critique of traditional approaches to education in the larger societal context, Freire argues that in this educational system the students are actively prevented from considering their own position in the world and the role they can play in shaping the world around them. This prevention is

described by Freire as a process of dehumanisation in which students are prevented from fulfilling their uniquely human role of being active agents in the world (ibid., 25). Instead of engaging students in a process of knowledge creation and self-affirmation (ibid, 18), the banking model of education holds students in a position of oppression (ibid., 55). Freire argues that while those practicing the banking model are oppressors of the students, they are themselves dehumanised by their actions as it is not part of the ontological vocation of humans to oppress others (ibid., 25). The banking model of education as an institution of the state ensures the continued oppression of students and the continued dehumanisation of teachers and students alike in favour of the ruling elites who are served by a compliant and uncritical population (ibid., 73).

In response to the traditional approach to education Freire proposes an alternative, 'libertarian', or 'problem-posing' education (Freire 2005, 72; 79). At the heart of libertarian education is the emancipation of students through their involvement in the process of knowledge creation and the creation of the space and conditions for them to pursue their self-affirmation and freedom, which is the ontological vocation of humans (ibid., 55-56). Libertarian education aims to humanise or re-humanise those who have been dehumanised through the oppressive practices of traditional education. To do this, libertarian education brings critical thinking to the fore and Freire argues that it is through critical thinking that students can come to see themselves as actors in the world, rather than passive objects of systems beyond their control. In order to highlight the students' role as social actors Freire's problem-posing education places the context of the students at the centre of any educational programme. In contrast to depositing knowledge deemed suitable and necessary by others, liberatory education starts from the immediate world of the students and draws its material from their knowledge and experiences. Freire argues that by posing questions about the community in which the students live, students are able to gain a critical distance to their everyday life and are better able to consider the active roles they play as citizens in their community and society at large.

An example of Freire's theory in practice is the culture circle and the use of image as a generative theme. In preparation to establish an education programme in an

area, Freire and his team would spend a considerable amount of time in the community, getting to know the members of the community, their daily routines and the language they use. Based on this information Freire would work with an artist to produce an image of a particular part or moment from the community to be used as a starting point in class. One of the most famous of these images is a farmer standing to the side of a well with farm tools around him and a house in the background. Arranging the members of the class around the image Freire would begin to ask them about what they could see and if the image reflected their own experiences of community life (Freire 2005, 96-104). Freire highlighted the human impact captured in the image in front of the class: someone had dug the well, someone had built the house, and someone had cultivated the land, asking whether it could be that that someone is the person in the image. Freire argued that in the critical distance created by viewing an image of their own environment the students were able to understand that they too have had an impact on the world around them. Were it not for the students, there would be no well, no house, no farm. It was crucial for Freire to point out that the students' actions have changed the world in the past, continued to change the world in the present, and consequently could change the world in the future (ibid., 61). This interplay between action and reflection on action has since become a central notion of critical pedagogy: praxis. Praxis is the ongoing relationship between taking action and critically reflecting on the action taken to inform future action (ibid., 62-65). By entering the process of praxis students come to see the world as an arena they are able to shape and transform through their thought and action, and as a consequence the libertarian education proposed by Freire becomes a vehicle for social change. In exploring the notion of praxis Freire is careful to note that it is precisely the *interaction* between thought and action which is crucial in liberatory education, as without thought and reflection, action becomes *activism* – 'action for action's sake' (ibid., 69) – which negates the possibility of communication, dialogue and consideration of the action taken.

Freire's approach to education brings with it a different student-teacher relationship to that found in banking education and focuses on communication and dialogue between teachers and students rather than communiqués issued by the teacher for memorisation by the students. In order to strive for the humanisation of

all involved, liberatory education requires the teacher to engage in an ongoing effort to communicate *with* the students about the world around them, fundamentally shifting the understanding of knowledge to a collaborative and co-creative basis (Freire 1993, 61). By engaging in dialogue with students to enhance their critical thinking and self-affirmation as actors in the world the 'teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist' (ibid., 61) and in their place arise new terms and forms of relationship, 'teacher-student' and 'student-teacher' (ibid., 61). The importance of this terminological shift is profound as teachers find themselves realigned on the side of freedom rather than oppression. In working with the students as co-creators of knowledge teachers are no longer replicating the oppressive structures of the classroom and society at large found in the banking model of education. Rather, teachers are working with students to assist them in recognising their ability to be actors in the world, to become active citizens in their country, and to challenge oppressive practices.

For Freire, this realignment of teachers and the pursuit of students' critical thinking and self-affirmation enables dramatic social change through the empowerment of the oppressed to change the world in ways which benefit all, rather than unquestioningly continuing to conform to educational, social, and political circumstances which only serve the interests of the ruling elites. For Freire, and many of those who went on to work on critical pedagogy, this social change occurs through greater engagement with all aspects of social and political life, ranging from community groups, to unions, to organised political parties (Aronowitz 2008, 78). It is this notion at the heart of all the strands of critical pedagogy to come in the decades which followed the release of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: education is political, and education can help to change the world for the better through greater justice, equality, democracy, and freedom (Biesta 1998, 499).

Embedded within this central claim of Freire's were several other important elements of what came to be known as critical pedagogy: the context of the students as the starting point of education, the need for praxis, and the importance of dialogue. Since Freire's work critical pedagogy has expanded along many different strands, which share a common understanding of the political nature of education and the possibility of social change through education and engagement with political

life and which have led to critical pedagogy being described as a big tent of ideas (Lather 2001; Choules 2007; Amsler 2011).

### *The Development of Critical Pedagogy*

From these beginnings Freire's work was picked up by North American academics such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Ira Shor, Stanley Aronowitz, Shirley Steinberg, Joe Kincheloe, bell hooks, and Donaldo Macedo. Indeed, it was in a conversation between Freire and Giroux that the term critical pedagogy was coined as a name for the critical educational work these scholars were undertaking. The term 'radical pedagogy' was initially proposed as a name of this branch of theory and practice, but it was deemed as potentially too divisive and off-putting to some, and the softer sounding term 'critical pedagogy' was adopted instead (FreireProject 2007). This collection of thinkers began to work closely with Freire's original ideas expressed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and started adding greater theoretical depth to Freire's work. All of these scholars have maintained their engagement with critical pedagogy over the subsequent decades as they sought to elucidate critical pedagogy's grounding in critical theory (Giroux 1983) and Marxism (McLaren 1989), as well as expand Freire's initial critique of traditional education to include other dominant educational approaches (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987; Shor and Freire 1987), and to add complexity to Freire's binary of oppressor/oppressed through the introduction of race, gender, class, and culture, and poststructural considerations of power and authority (McLaren 1989; hooks 1994; Usher and Edwards, 1994; Giroux 1996; Kincheloe and Steinberg 1997; Aronowitz, 2008).

In order to better understand the big tent of critical pedagogy as it stands now, it is important to explore the development of critical pedagogy from the 1980s through to the 2000s. This development of critical pedagogy occurred in two main areas: first, the development of critiques of different approaches to schooling to include orthodox Marxist, liberal, and conservative approaches; and second, the development of a critique of more complex and interlinked forms of oppression. Both of these areas have played an important role in the spread of critical pedagogy as an

educational, social, and political theory and practice.<sup>1</sup> The development of critical pedagogy through the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s was accompanied by an increasing number of critiques of critical pedagogy which sought to further develop and expand critical pedagogy as a theory and practice of education. While some of these critiques aimed at pushing and developing critical pedagogy through addressing perceived blind-spots in its growing body of theoretical work (Ellsworth 1989; Lather 1998; 2001) others focused on the problems teachers had with translating the abstract work of critical pedagogy into the complex and tension-ridden contexts of their classrooms (Berlak 1989; Britzman 1991; Weiler 1994; Boyd 1999; Johnston 1999; Tinning 2002; McKinney 2005; Power 2008).

Lifting Freire's original critique of the banking model of education, and putting it into the context of the global north, Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux turned their attention to three dominant understandings of education; orthodox Marxist, conservative, and liberal, pointing out the limitations of each and the role they play in ongoing forms of oppression (1987). In their critique of orthodox Marxism, Aronowitz and Giroux describe an approach to education which takes account of the relationship between education and society, and sets out to analyse said relationship, but does so only through the lens of reproduction. While Aronowitz and Giroux highlight the important role such analyses played in breaking open the school as a site of analysis, they argue that the human component in education is often lost along the way (*ibid.*, 70). Orthodox Marxism models education in three particular ways; economic-reproductive, cultural-reproductive, and hegemonic-reproductive, each illuminating a particular facet of the relationship between individual and society, but none pointing a way out of the system of reproduction (*ibid.*, 73-75). Economic-reproductive understandings of education highlight the role education plays in the creation of conforming workers who neatly slot in to their predetermined economic roles in society. Cultural-reproductive analysis draws out the ways in which dominant forms of knowledge and values are reinforced and reproduced through education, and hegemonic-reproductive analysis examines the processes which

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<sup>1</sup> All the thinkers discussed here have been somewhat artificially separated in the pursuit of structural clarity. Suffice to say that while some may have a particular focus their work stretches across multiple areas and often comes as selections within larger edited volumes.

legitimate the ideological imperatives of the ruling elites (ibid., 70). Aronowitz and Giroux's critique follows that if education is approached in purely reproductive terms and this reproduction is seen as a form of domination, education loses its emancipatory potential and becomes nothing more than a tool in the maintenance of established forms of oppression. Aronowitz and Giroux claim that in orthodox Marxism there is no allowance for moments of creativity, self-formation, or resistance, leading such an approach into a theoretical and practical cul-de-sac (ibid., 70). Paul Willis' (1977) study of working class boys in England was central in the development of Aronowitz and Giroux's critique. Willis broke with the assumption of unquestioned reproduction in schools by demonstrating that the boys enacted multiple moments of resistance throughout the day. Without allowing space for resistance and no chance for radical social change orthodox Marxism's approach to education may illuminate the world around the students through encouraging critical thought, but it misses out on a crucial element of critical pedagogy: praxis. By only considering the reproductive roles of education any chance for students to actively engage with social and political life is removed, and as a result education loses the vital element of reflection on *action* (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987, 70).

Another approach critiqued by Aronowitz and Giroux was the conservative approach to education, characterised by a concentration on standardisation, technical mastery of subject matter, and the pursuit of qualifications. The conservative approach to education is focussed exclusively on the creation of effective workers, 'turning schools into "company stores" and defining school life primarily in terms that measure their utility against their contribution to economic growth and cultural conformity' (Giroux 1989, 18). Relying on the same positivist epistemology identified by Freire in his critique of the banking model of education, conservative approaches to schooling reduce education to an exercise in the technical mastery of a subject by way of knowledge transfer and the ranking of students according to externally defined standards (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987, 65). Aronowitz and Giroux argue that in this approach education is reduced to a technical exercise which is unconcerned with students as anything other than parts in the continuation of the status quo. They claim that the conservative approach to schooling leaves students as *functionally* literate, in that they are able to read and

write, but *conceptually* illiterate in that students are unable to think on a conceptual, and therefore critical, level (ibid., 202). This critique of conservative approaches to schooling is perhaps the closest to Freire's original banking model critique. By removing the possibility to think critically students in conservative approaches to education are unable to view themselves as actors in the world, are unable to view the change they have already brought upon the world, and are therefore unable to consider the future change they could bring through greater involvement in social and political life.

Finally, in the early days of the development of critical pedagogy, Aronowitz and Giroux took aim at liberal approaches to education premised upon notions of meritocracy and social mobility. Aronowitz and Giroux argue that the open admission systems of liberal educational approaches which are designed to broaden access to education on the basis of ability do nothing more than entrench hierarchies of educational institutions (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987, 69). The claim to meritocracy ignores the social and economic factors which impact the educational prospects of students, cloaking them in language of opportunity and ability. As a result, those institutions which traditionally attracted the more traditionally academically successful students will continue to do so, while other students will be directed to other institutions under the banner of open access (ibid., 3). This meritocratic approach goes hand-in-hand with claims of education for social mobility, in which education enables the working classes to be lifted into the middle classes by virtue of educational attainment and the subsequent employment opportunities. Aronowitz and Giroux point out that notions of social mobility are 'based on the assumption of an expanding economy' (ibid., 28), anticipating the newly educated and mobile working classes take on the white collar managerial positions of the middle class. However, at the time of writing with the recessions and economic volatility of the 1980s, this assumption was shown to be unrealistic, and is equally problematic today following the financial and economic shocks of 2008 onwards. Without an expanding economy, argue Aronowitz and Giroux, there cannot be the creation of jobs necessary to fulfil the liberal promise of social mobility (ibid., 28).

With these three critiques of prominent educational approaches Aronowitz and Giroux sought to build on the foundational ideas found in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

to more closely and critically examine approaches to schooling in the global north. Along with these developed critiques, critical pedagogy from the 1980s through to the late 2000s also developed a more complex and nuanced understanding of forms of oppression at work in, and reinforced by, education. From Freire's work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which established an all-too-straight-forward oppressor/oppressed dichotomy, critical pedagogy began to account for the various forms of oppression through critical reflection on class, race, gender and culture. I concentrate here on two major strands in this development of oppression and critical pedagogy: class through a development of Marxism, and issues of race and gender.

Together Peter McLaren and Stanley Aronowitz represent the development and maintenance of Marxism and the role of class in critical pedagogy. McLaren is perhaps the most vociferous proponent of the Marxist strand in Paulo Freire's original work. In a succession of pieces starting from his early *Life in Schools* (1989) and continuing through to his more recent pieces (2007, 2016), McLaren has championed the role of Marxist thought in the development and progression of critical pedagogy. Explicitly promoting the role of class in social change and the desire for the development of a socialist democracy McLaren rallies against the development of a singular mode of production and the integration of ever-more numerous countries into modern systems of capital (1999, 2016). McLaren argues that with the spread of this singular system of capital the traditional proletariat has been transformed into a precariat; 'a proletariat existing in permanently precarious conditions of instability and uncertainty' (2016, 2), and that this form of capitalist social relation is the biggest challenge facing critical pedagogy (ibid., 6). McLaren identifies his task as making 'socialist class consciousness possible' through 'building historical consciousness through popular organisations and class practice' (ibid., 8-9), keeping issues of class at the centre of his work on critical pedagogy (1999). This element of popular organisation and class practice is also highlighted in the work of Stanley Aronowitz. In his 2008 book *Against Schooling* Aronowitz focusses on the role of trade union education, arguing for the reintroduction of adult education programmes run by trade unions as a way of introducing critical social and political thought and practice to the public. Aronowitz argues that dominant educational approaches, like those critiqued in his earlier work with Giroux, reduce schooling to

test-taking and represent the antithesis of the critical thought sought in critical pedagogy (ibid., 17). Aronowitz advocates for movements of 'parents, students, teachers, and the labour movement armed with a political programme' (ibid., 50) which can challenge the prevalence of high-stakes testing and establish workers' centres to tackle education around housing, schooling, and the workplace (ibid., 147).

bell hooks' work is central to the development of race and gender in critical pedagogy, particularly her three texts explicitly dealing with education: *Teaching to Transgress. Education as the Practice of Freedom* (1994), *Teaching Community. A Pedagogy of Hope* (2003), and *Teaching Critical Thinking. Practical Wisdom* (2010). These works and her wider oeuvre examine gender and race through the lens of her experiences as an African American woman from the southern United States. hooks sought to expand the understandings of oppression in Freire's work through an elaboration of the sexist and racist modes of oppression at work in education, and the difficulties of navigating those oppressive practices while educating for social change. It was no longer sufficient to view oppression as a dichotomy between oppressor and oppressed, or only through the lens of social class. Education broadly, and the classroom in particular, is the site of multiple oppressions often operating in a state of tension with one another and the institution itself. hooks sets out to elaborate a discussion of race and the ways in which issues of race manifest in classrooms inspired by critical pedagogy and how they can be tackled. hooks' earliest piece, *Ain't I A Woman* (1987) began this process of adding complexity to critical social thought by arguing for a more nuanced approach to feminist thought through the acknowledgment of a multiplicity of experiences of being a woman. hooks opposed the tendency of feminist thinkers during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s to universalise the experience of women and argued that the experiences of white middle class women are as divorced from the experiences of black working class women as they are from the experiences of white middle class men. hooks argued that to effectively address issues of feminism they cannot be removed from issues of race. It was this nuance and complexity of multiple understandings of gender and race which hooks sought to introduce to critical pedagogy. hooks criticised *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for the continual use of 'man' and 'mankind' as universal terms for

all people. As a result, Freire changed subsequent editions to include the terms 'him/her' and 'his/hers'.

Through her captivating series of short essays dealing with everything from "Critical Thinking" (1994), to "Talking Race and Racism" (2003), to "Humour in the Classroom" (2010), hooks elaborates a form of critical pedagogy in both theory and practice which helps to account for gender and race in the classroom. hooks' essays are personal reflections on her experiences of teaching with a range of students, and how she tackles the complex and overlapping issues of gender and race, often difficult and challenging topics for the student and teacher alike. In many of the essays hooks deals with the confrontation of difficult topics which are intimately connected to the lives of the students, highlighting the need for the teacher to be aware of the dynamics between the students themselves and the students and the subject matter. One of the issues hooks explores is students who cry when confronted with questions of gender and race which they had not previously considered (hooks 2010, 77-83). Calling on her own experiences hooks recounts the times she would cry during history class as a secondary school student, connecting this to the all-too-real context of recent desegregation and her experiences of having to attend a school which was officially desegregated but still required black students to arrive on separate buses, wait in the gym until the white pupils had entered the classroom, and be spread throughout the classes so as to be a small minority presence (ibid., 78). hooks draws a connection to her experience as a female professor, stating that she is ever-attentive to not crying in front of her class no matter how emotive the topic may be, due to the constant struggle of female academics to be seen as intellectually equal to their male colleagues: 'One measure of our inferior status in the sexist mind-set is the assumption that at times all females will be emotionally overwhelmed, that we will "come undone"' (ibid., 79).

The aim of this brief introduction and review of the thinkers who have been central to the development of critical pedagogy is to give the reader a grounding in the background of this thesis and an overview of the key currents in critical pedagogy. This development through the work of Giroux, Aronowitz, McLaren, hooks, and others gave critical pedagogy a much greater theoretical depth, but at the same time lost the contextual specificity of Freire's original work. This was a response to a

caution from Freire himself about attempts to apply his work as a blueprint in vastly different contexts: he asked that his work was not lifted from South America and imported without being recreated and rewritten. Freire emphasised the importance of treating his work as critically as any other by asking questions of it, challenging it, and reinventing it (Macedo 2007, 394). In the rewriting of Freire's ideas scholars like Giroux and McLaren have drawn on their own intellectual backgrounds in deepening the theory of critical pedagogy. However, scholars such as Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) and Kathleen Weiler (1994) highlight that the deeper theorisation has come at the cost of greater abstraction of the aims of critical pedagogy, and the development of a universal and Eurocentric male influence at the heart of critical pedagogy. These two elements have combined to cast the student-teacher relationship in specific ways around the paternalistic notion of empowerment. The aim of feminist scholars like Ellsworth and Weiler was to maintain the underlying vision of democracy, equality, social justice and freedom in critical pedagogy, while expanding it to include a greater diversity of progressive critical approaches to education (Weiler 1994, 12).

Starting with the abstract nature of critical pedagogy Ellsworth argues that writers on critical pedagogy stripped their work of historical, social and political context and instead reverted to the abstract nature of the central concepts of critical pedagogy: critical democracy, individual freedom, social justice, and social change through critically engaged citizens (Ellsworth 1989, 300). Ellsworth argued that all too often the theoretical discussions of critical pedagogy, such as those outlined in the previous section, failed to place the theory in the context of practice which could be useful in teachers 'thinking through and planning classroom practices to support the political agenda' of political and social change for greater democracy (ibid., 300). Furthermore, Ellsworth argues that the term 'critical' is itself highly abstract and acts to mask the specific political orientation of the work critical pedagogy does (ibid., 301). Ellsworth's critique is supported by Weiler who argues that the abstract nature of the goals of critical pedagogy do not deal with the specific experiences of people's lives, and when teachers attempt to enact forms of education inspired by critical pedagogy it often ends in 'anger, frustration, and a retreat to safer or more traditional approaches' (1994, 13). As examples of these attempts Weiler highlights pieces by Ellsworth (see above), as well as Deborah Britzman's work (1991)

recounting the difficulties of staff and students alike during discussions of race in a class with a single black student, and Ann Berlack's discussion of treading the fine line between discussing critical views of the world and imposing them (1989). Other scholars have similarly written with scepticism towards the theoretical basis of critical pedagogy (Gore, 1992; Lather, 1992; Walkerdine, 1992) and the difficulties faced by those implementing strategies suggested by critical pedagogy (Lewis 1992; Luke and Gore 1992a, 1992b; Fernández-Balboa 1998; Lather 1998, 2001; Boyd 1999; Johnston 1999; Tinning 2002; McKinney 2005; Power 2008).

The critique of the abstract nature of critical pedagogy and the resulting difficulty of putting critical pedagogy into practice is linked to the concern that the development of critical pedagogy has seen it include universalised claims based on the Eurocentric male positions of many of the key authors. Throughout her critique Ellsworth highlights that the uses of the terms "empowerment", "student voice" and "dialogue" in critical pedagogy comes with an attempt to universalise certain practices rooted in Eurocentric white male understandings involving the primacy of rationality and rational discussion. Ellsworth points out that this privileges certain modes of interaction and action in the classroom which denies other forms of engagement (1989, 303-305). Other feminist scholars echo the point, and in their introduction to an edited volume on feminism and critical pedagogy Luke and Gore argue that all of the contributors have gone through an 'apprenticeship' of the canon defined by the Eurocentric male and are looking to articulate their positions as 'women within a patriarchal system of knowledge, scholarship, and pedagogical relations' (1992b, 3). The risk in attempting to introduce feminist theory and practice into the academy is that many male academics, even those who purport to be influenced by critical pedagogy, see their position under threat (Britzman 1991, 62). Ultimately, a range of feminist academics came together in an 'effort to break with the kinds of discourse and theory-building that have remained under the control of men' (Greene 1992, ix). These feminist scholars sought to decentre the heavy male influence in critical pedagogy's development and linked this attempt to the specific student-teacher relationship encouraged in critical pedagogy.

Weiler argues that the claims to universal truths and collective experience contained in critical pedagogy do not address the tensions the teacher faces working

in the classroom (1994, 13). While critical pedagogy acknowledges the ‘socially constructed and legitimated authority that teachers/professors hold over students’ (Ellsworth 1989, 306), there is a lack of attempts to reformulate the institutional power imbalances between teacher and student, leaving education framed as a largely paternalistic endeavour. Through the language of empowerment and emancipatory authority teachers are imbued with a status which sets them apart from students at the same time as making the students reliant on the teacher for the students’ own transformation (ibid., 307). This relationship reifies the role of the teacher and places her in a permanently powerful paternalistic position vis-à-vis the student, therefore acting to predetermine the way teachers and students interact in the classroom by fixing a very specific vision of teacher role and student transformation.

Ellsworth takes these three points of critique – abstract nature, universalised claims, and lack of teacher context – and examines them in relation to her own specific teaching practice as an attempt to develop critical pedagogy further. In early 1988 the University of Wisconsin-Madison where Ellsworth worked was embroiled in a crisis provoked by an increase in the amount and visibility of racist acts both on campus and in the wider community. The university’s response was to initiate a number of strategies to recruit a greater number of non-white students and staff, to ensure a compulsory ethnic studies course, and to implement a number of procedures around racial and sexual harassment (Ellsworth 1989, 297-298). Ellsworth’s own response was to establish an elective module called “Media and Anti-Racist Pedagogies”, a course designed to investigate how racist structures and practices operated at the university (ibid., 299). Conscious of her own critiques of critical pedagogy, Ellsworth sought to address the abstract nature of critical pedagogy, the Eurocentric male focus, and the student-teacher relationship through her own practice. Rather than attempting to build pedagogical practice on the basis of the assumed universal elements of empowerment, student voice and dialogue, Ellsworth states that in her situation,

[a] preferable goal seemed to be to become capable of a sustained encounter with currently oppressive formations and power relations that refuse to be theorised away or fully transcended in a utopian resolution –

and to enter into the encounter in a way that owned up to my own implications in those formations and was capable of changing my own relation to and investments in those formations. (Ellsworth 1989, 308)

Ellsworth sought to address the abstract nature of critical pedagogy by rooting her response in the specific context of her university and programme and in her context as a female academic. This began with the specific naming of the political stance of the course as being anti-racist, rather than using the more ambiguous term “critical”. In doing so, Ellsworth wanted to ground the course in the lived experiences of the students dealing with racism on campus and in the community. In this sense she returned to Freire’s original calls for the specific context of the students providing the starting point for any critical intervention through education. Furthermore, in starting from this specific context Ellsworth was better able to explicitly name the modes and practices of oppression the course sought to address, providing a concrete focus in place of critical pedagogy’s abstract concepts. Finally, Ellsworth worked with the students not only to help them identify the oppressive racist practices they were subject to and involved with, but also examined her own role in these oppressive practices. Rather than automatically assume her ability to detach herself from the privileges of being a white middle class professor engaging a diverse student group around the topic of racism and the university, Ellsworth aimed to explicitly address her own race, class, gender, and her position as a teacher (1989, 309). Ellsworth challenged the paternalistic language of teachers transforming students by empowering them by including herself and her own transformation as part of the critical process. Not only does this challenge the Eurocentric male dominance in critical pedagogy, it establishes a different student-teacher relationship in which both teacher and student are transformed.

The critiques of Ellsworth, Weiler and others continued to develop critical pedagogy and further expand the big tent to include feminist concerns with universality, male dominance, and specific teacher context. What has followed in recent decades is critical pedagogy’s engagement with neo-liberalism through a critique of neo-liberalism writ large and neo-liberal education more specifically.

## Critical Pedagogy and Neo-Liberalism

In the last decade those who were central to the development of critical pedagogy have taken stock of the work to date and attempted to regroup. A series of edited books were published with the same key figures contributing chapters, all concerned with the future of critical pedagogy in the neo-liberal age, best encapsulated in one of the earliest titles *Critical Pedagogy: Where Are We Now?* (McLaren and Kincheloe 2007). Shirley Steinberg points out that critical pedagogy needs to 'continually attempt to redefine themselves through the context' (2007, ix). Critiques of neo-liberalism were introduced as critical pedagogy sought to update its position as an educational, social, and political theory and practice in what was being heralded as new dark ages (Giroux 2011; Nikolakaki 2012) and uncertain times (Macrine 2009a). Key elements in neo-liberal approaches to education which are criticised by critical pedagogy are: education as an economic function to serve the market, the role of institutions as providers of a service, and the student-teacher relationship. Ultimately neo-liberal education is critiqued as a form of oppression which seeks to not only maintain but actively reproduce the current form of society which is built on systemic inequality and which limits personal freedom and societal transformation to economic gain (Porfilio 2011, ix).

One of the central pillars of neo-liberalism addressed by critical pedagogy is the undermining of public institutions in favour of private interests (Giroux 2009; Macrine 2009b; Hill, et al. 2015). This sees a reorientation of education from being understood as a public good to being approached as an individual and competitive endeavour operating under the auspices of the free market. Recent considerations of neo-liberalism include the criticism of the increasing marketisation of education as a consumer product. Joe Kincheloe discusses this as the 'corporate private view' (2007, 25) of education, in which schools are a supplier of labour to the economy and commodities themselves which are open to free-market dictates. In this understanding, schools are not concerned with the development of an individual's sense of responsibility to herself, others, and society, but are absorbed by the creation of citizens which are economically productive for the benefit of the individual and society writ large (ibid., 25). This critique of neo-liberalism is

reminiscent of a blend of Giroux and Aronowitz's (1989) earlier critiques of liberal and conservative approaches to education, bringing together the private endeavour and focus on qualifications from conservative approaches and the claimed meritocracy and social mobility of liberal approaches. Critical pedagogy scholars continue: as neo-liberalism and its accolites pursue the privatisation of public goods, education is no longer only about the private choice of the individual, the institutions of education must begin to market themselves as offering a superior product to the consumer (Hill 2003, 2). Increasing the attractiveness of the educational product can be done in a number of ways. One of these is the institutions embracing the various metrics applied to education, ranging from those which score and rank research, to those which offer a comparison of teaching, and those which claim to measure student satisfaction (Rolfe 2013). Henry Giroux highlights two further ways universities in particular attempt to market themselves and increase their attractiveness to potential student-customers: the increased presence of corporate franchises on university campuses, and the advertisement of academic subjects on the basis of their exchange value to the student upon completion (Giroux 2009, 15-16).

This reorientation of education as a market for consumer students and the institution as a provider of a product results in the third area of critique: a different student-teacher relationship. This is a student-teacher relationship in which the student is a consumer seeking economic gain and the teacher is a member of the institution providing a product. Under neo-liberalism teachers are constantly measured and counted and Stephen Ball uses the notion of performativity to argue that neo-liberalism is not only operating 'out there' (Ball 2012, 18) in institutions and wider society, but is also 'in here' (ibid., 18) in the way in which teachers and academics orientate themselves and their relationships in education. Ball argues that teachers and academics 'spend increasing amounts of [their] time in making [them]selves accountable, reporting on what [they] do rather than doing it' (ibid., 19), and as a result the work of the teacher and academic becomes a performance to be judged by others. The substance behind the performance is no longer important, it is the performance itself which is used to hold the teacher and academic to account. One element of this changing role of the academic is captured in the dynamics of research output. As suggested by Rolfe (2013) and elaborated on by

those working on critical pedagogy, research is now measured by funding in and research papers out, or to call on the more colloquial phrase: publish or perish (MacKinnon 2009, 516). In such an environment part of the performativity of academics is measured by the amount of funds raised from external partners as a means of maintaining a vital funding stream for the institution (Giroux 2009, 15). A further impact resulting from a neo-liberal approach to the role of academics is the introduction of casual worker teaching-only contracts, so the students are being taught by cheaper seasonal labour while full-time staff focus on the production of externally funded research (Giroux 2009, 16).

Critical pedagogy offers itself as a solution to this neo-liberal approach to education and society, arguing that now more than ever critical pedagogy is needed to combat the inequalities of society which are made ever greater through neo-liberalism. Maintaining the core message of greater democracy, social justice, equality and freedom critical pedagogy urges teachers to challenge the neo-liberal practices they are embedded in and work towards a form of democracy and citizenship which is 'more humane, less Eurocentric, less paternalistic, less homophobic, less exploitative, and less violent' (Malott 2011, xxiii). While critical pedagogy has extended its critique to include neo-liberalism, its response remains the same. Students need to be empowered to become active citizens and challenge inequality and oppressive practices and become more involved in participatory forms of democracy (Freire 1998; Kincheloe 2007; Macedo 2007; Aronowitz 2008; hooks 2010; Giroux 2011; McLaren 2016). The nuanced theory of critical pedagogy has developed and expanded over time to include an ever greater range of oppression and critique, but the response throughout this time, critical pedagogy's suggestions for an alternative approach to education and society, have remained strikingly static.

### Higher Education in the UK

My initial response to critical pedagogy was that I had found an approach to education which could help me better understand and respond to both my time teaching in Peru, and my new situation as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at an English higher education institution. Here was an approach to education which troubled the notion that the reduction of education to considerations of economic gain was

problematic and devoid of potential for social change. Here was an approach to education which took aim at the uncritical processes of, and actors within education which served, willingly or not, to preserve the social status quo. Here was an approach to education that seemed to give me a language to talk about the tensions I felt in Peru as I worked for a charity which orientated itself around raising the economic potential of the pupils, or a university which sought to do the same for its students.

Higher education in the UK has changed substantially in the last decade: there has been a shift to a younger student body with a greater proportion of full-time undergraduates (Universities UK 2015, 2) and university financing has changed with the introduction of higher tuition fees for students and the drop in funding grants (ibid., 2). In the winter of 2015 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) began a legislative process to introduce yet more changes to English higher education institutions. The first stage in this process was a consultation document titled *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (BIS 2015). The document laid out plans to link university funding to teaching quality, ease the process for institutions to gain degree-awarding powers, and introduce greater competition through deregulation. Included in these proposals was the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which is a tool designed to assess and rank teaching quality in universities (ibid.). In May 2016, the government continued the legislative process with a second document accounting for the feedback it received on the first. The second paper aped the title of the first, *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (BIS 2016) and included a greater level of detail in preparation for another round of consultation before being presented to Parliament. The proposals contained in *Success as a Knowledge Economy* have since become law, and the first TEF awards were granted in 2017. After the first round of awards there was a consultation process with higher education institutions and TEF has undergone some changes, primarily around the way the awards are calculated, but the underlying premise and rationale remain. In the belief that it will raise standards in higher education the Government seeks to create an open market place through the simplification of regulation, the easing of entry for other providers, the removal of student number caps, and the assurance of

an exit process, all designed to enhance competition in the sector and align higher education with neo-liberal free market principles. By examining *Success as a Knowledge Economy* in more detail, we are able to draw out the same three concerns highlighted in critical pedagogy's critiques of neo-liberalism: the marketisation of higher education, the role of institutions as a service provider, and a student-teacher relationship based on provider-consumer economic logic. Concentrating on *Success as a Knowledge Economy* and the TEF is not because they represent a sea-change in the neo-liberal approach to higher education, on the contrary, they are steps along a well worn path. However, what they do represent is the explicit intervention of state organised forms of accounting, bureaucracy, and ranking into the space of the university classroom, the space which is the focus of this thesis.

Two particularly important elements of the proposals contained in *Success as a Knowledge Economy* are competition and choice. The first, competition, concerns higher education as a market and the changes to increase competition. The second, choice, aims to increase student choice within the higher education market through the use of accounting and ranking procedures, which has a subsequent impact on the student-teacher relationship.

Starting with competition, *Success as a Knowledge Economy* begins from the statement that '[c]ompetition between providers in any market incentivises them to raise their game, [...] Higher education is no exception' (BIS 2016, 8). From here, the paper goes on to explain that introducing greater competition into higher education will act to create a greater diversity of providers, more high quality providers, and consequently, an increased choice for students (ibid., 10). To introduce the competition which the government deems crucial, changes are made to the higher education sector to enforce its operation along free market lines. This includes simplifying the regulation of higher education institutions and creating a single route of market entry for new providers (ibid., 9). The new single route of entry is accompanied by a simplification of regulations around granting degree awarding powers and achieving university status, smoothing the way for private providers to establish themselves as higher education institutions (ibid., 10). *Success as a Knowledge Economy* argues that the ease of entry and degree awarding powers will result in increased competition in higher education, and further aims to bolster this

competition by lifting the cap on student numbers at higher education institutions, allowing each institution to take on as many students as they wish, or have the capacity to manage (ibid., 18). The drive to create a free market for higher education and to increase the competition between providers raises the prospect of institutions having to end some modules, entire courses, or even totally exit the market place if they are found to be unprofitable (ibid., 10). When considering this possibility *Success as a Knowledge Economy* states that '[t]he possibility of exit is a natural part of a healthy, competitive, well-functioning market and the Government will not, as a matter of policy, seek to prevent this from happening' (ibid., 10).

*Success as a Knowledge Economy* states that a central element of enhancing competition is increasing the choice for students by providing greater information about all higher education institutions through a register of providers, paying particular attention to the price and quality of each institution (BIS 2016, 10-11). In order to gather and provide this information the Government has introduced the Teaching Excellence Framework, starting in the academic year 2016/17. The TEF attempts to capture what the Government considers to be good teaching, broadly defined, and includes information about learning environments, student support, course design, career preparation and various soft skills (ibid., 11). The aim of the TEF is to provide a robust framework, similar in nature to the Research Excellence Framework (ibid., 12) which can be used to provide comparable information about institutions in order to assist students in their choices (ibid., 43). Judgements about teaching excellence at higher education institutions are to be made by expert panels including academic peers, employers, and students (ibid., 19). The TEF functions by using metrics as proxy-measures for teaching excellence, which include student satisfaction, retention rates, the amount of contact hours, employer sponsorship and employment rates following graduation (ibid., 46). Existing tools such as the National Student Survey provide measurements for these metrics, and a university's submission to TEF is assessed by a panel consisting of employers, students, widening participation representatives, and academics (ibid., 19; 47).

Higher education institutions that take part in the TEF and are judged to perform well and deliver quality teaching, receive both reputational and financial rewards. In the first instance, institutions are ranked by TEF level and are able to use this ranking

to advertise to prospective students. In the second, institutions are allowed to raise tuition fees in line with inflation and above the current £9000 limit (BIS 2016, 49). Combined with the market changes for higher education, these reputational and financial incentives are designed to further increase competition between institutions and provide students with clearer information and more choice. The centrality of competition and choice in *Success as a Knowledge Economy* are indicative of the role the British Government sees higher education playing in the society. To this end, tacitly contained within *Success as a Knowledge Economy* is a very specific understanding of the types of relationships to be encouraged within higher education institutions. What is unmistakable when considering these forms of relationships is the primacy of economics as their underlying model. Students are cast in the role of consumers making a rational choice about their course and institution on the basis of potential economic gain, and teachers are placed as the providers of a product and service to be designed to help ensure this economic advancement.

Where students are concerned, there are numerous subtle and obvious ways throughout *Success as a Knowledge Economy* by which students are cast as consumers of a product. In many cases this takes the form of the language used to talk about students and their choices, with references to the increased competition bringing about 'better outcomes and value for students' (BIS 2016, 8), or the move to link higher education outcomes and tax data in order to provide prospective students with information about the 'rewards that could be available at the end of their learning, alongside the costs' (ibid., 14). While the language used here tacitly places students as consumers, there are elements of the paper which are more explicit. One of these is the data sources used by the Government, most notably the inclusion of research conducted by the consumer group Which?, which in itself reinforces the notion of students as consumers in reporting that 3 in 10 students think that the 'academic experience of higher education is poor value' (ibid., 11). A second example can be found in one of the regulatory changes: part of simplifying regulation to help ensure competition is the introduction of the Office for Students (Office for Students 2018), which is described as being a 'consumer focussed market regulator' (BIS 2016, 16) which is explicitly pro-competition and pro-choice. A final

example can be seen in the partnership between the Office for Students and the Competition Markets Authority (CMA), which now governs the legal rights of students as consumers of higher education. Since 2015 the CMA has provided advice for both institutions as providers and students as consumers regarding the rights and obligations involved in higher education (Competition Markets Authority 2015).

The use of regulation to force higher education institutions to act in a free market environment and the casting of students as consumers of that higher education product also acts to place teachers in higher education institutions in the role of service providers. Talking of the introduction of the TEF, the Government states that it will address issues of teaching quality 'so that students can be served better in the future' (BIS 2016, 13), suggesting not only that the institution is a service provider, but teachers too. Furthermore, due to the criteria used in making the TEF judgements, teachers are tacitly called upon to supply a product which will be accepted by and acceptable to both students and employers who hold career development and economic gain paramount (ibid., 46). The classroom is a space in which a form of economic exchange takes place. It is a space flooded with the economic imperatives of wider society and the institution itself, reinforced by the orientation of higher education as a free market and students as consumers. The relationships between student and teacher are premised upon the social relationships found in the free market and mediated by the state. Teachers are placed in the role of providing courses which satisfy the economic imperatives of student and employer alike. The external referents to which the classroom is held says that students enter the classroom as an individual looking to go through a process that increases their economic potential. Teachers as providers are there to guide the student through that process in ways that align with Government and employer expectations of economic potential and need. It is not that the classroom relationship between student and teacher is stripped of all elements of learning, teaching and education, but the aim of these is predetermined as economic potential and gains.

While this classroom relationship is not explicitly addressed in *Success as a Knowledge Economy* there are hints at the regulation which ensures such a relationship. The quality reviews which form part of the TEF include several elements

that look to reinforce a market-based relationship in the classroom. One of these is the assessment of curriculum and standards expected of UK qualifications made across subjects (BIS 2016, 34). There is a suggestion here of a standardised and comparable curriculum for subjects, and wedded to the rationale of the TEF to provide comparable information across universities, suggests the standardisation of course content. Another element included in the quality reviews concerns the contact hours which students have. It states that it is imperative that students are not only receiving the 'right amount' (ibid., 34) of contact hours, but that they are receiving the correct 'sort of contact time with teaching staff' (ibid., 34). Even more than the assessment of curriculum across courses, the inclusion of the notion of the correct sort of contact hours acts to constrain the interactions of students and teachers into those forms deemed acceptable by the Government and expert judgement panels.

Casting students in the role of consumers, and teachers as providers, *Success as a Knowledge Economy* sets up a form of classroom relationship based upon economic imperatives, and seeks to hold that form of relationship constant through the judgement criteria of the TEF. This frames a certain set of expectations about the role of the teacher, the role of the student, and the relationship between the two. For the university as an institution the teacher is a measurable and therefore (ac)countable economic actor whose role is to transfer knowledge to students in such a way as to satisfy national and student expectations. For students, the teacher is cast as a worker providing a service which will result in a preferential economic outcome for the individual student.

### A Critique of Critical Pedagogy: Predetermination

To understand my critique of critical pedagogy we first need to understand anarchism, or more specifically, the development of anarchist thought around the notions of subjectivity, action, and relationships. Unlike other strands of political theory, Marxism for example, there is no single foundational document or thinker one can point to as either the starting point or the central text for understanding anarchism. As a result, anarchism has been described as an ideology, a discourse, a culture, a philosophy (Heckert 2010, 186); it has been described as fluid, changing

with the needs of those who use it and produce it (Armaline 2009, 136); and it has been argued that it is best thought of as anarchisms, a collection of theories and practices which share some common ground (Mueller 2012, 15). Despite this fluid understanding of anarchism there is a key theme in nearly all anarchist work, which is an anti-authoritarian streak motivated by a desire to 'critically interrogate, refuse, transform and overthrow all relations of authority, particularly those centralised within the sovereign state' (Newman 2016, 1-2). This anti-authoritarian stance is inspired by three central values: liberty, equality, and solidarity (Mueller 2012, 16). By examining each of these values in turn it is possible to cast off popular misconceptions of anarchism as a force of chaos and destruction (DeLeon and Love 2009, 160) and instead present anarchism as a positive theory and practice of freedom (Graeber 2013, 187).

Liberty, or freedom – the two are often used interchangeably in anarchist literature (Mueller 2012, 17) – in anarchism is conceived of as freedom from coercion and the freedom to live how best suits you (Berkman 1980, 9). This freedom is not to be mistaken for the freedom of the individual over and above the freedom of others. As Bakunin writes: 'I am free only when all human beings surrounding me – men and women alike – are equally free' (Bakunin 1964c, 267). Freedom in anarchism does not mean limiting or negating the freedom of others because the others' freedom is a necessary condition of the freedom of an individual (ibid.). This understanding of freedom introduces the second value, equality. Equality is not restricted to economic or social status (Mueller 2012, 17), nor is it rooted in a belief that all people are identical (Bakunin 1869). Instead, anarchist equality centres on equality of opportunity for activity and development. It is an understanding of equality which allows for variation and personal tastes and the freedom to pursue one's interests (Berkman 1980, 25). Anarchist equality does not seek uniformity, and is best approached as seeing all people as equivalent rather than equal (Bakunin 1869). The final value, solidarity, is based on ideas of mutual aid. In an alternative reading of Darwin's work, early anarchist thinker Petr Kropotkin argued that it was cooperative mutual aid, not individualistic competition, which led to the survival of a species (Kropotkin 1972). This understanding of solidarity as mutual aid is closely associated with free association and the belief that people cannot live in isolation and are able

to choose their communities without external compulsion or coercion (Berkman 1980, 13). Solidarity and free association are rooted in the belief that humans are capable of managing themselves and their affairs without the need of a top-down social structure (DeLeon 2006, 76).

In anarchism, these three values have been the basis for a critique of the state as a form of social organisation imposed on individuals which prevents them from freedom, equality, and solidarity (DeLeon and Love 2009, 160). From these three values different areas of anarchist thought and practice take subtly different focuses, not breaking with anarchism, but illuminating particular elements. One such area of anarchist thought is postanarchism. While maintaining the importance of the three values of freedom, equality and solidarity, postanarchism highlights anarchism as autonomous practice in the present (Newman 2016, 11-12). Although Gustav Landauer (2010) and Jamie Heckert (2010; 2012; 2013; Heckert and Cleminson 2011) have approached anarchism in a similar way, I focus here on the work of Saul Newman as his work establishes the starting point for my critique of critical pedagogy and the state, critical pedagogy and the teacher, and my own teaching practices.

Postanarchism emphasises an anarchism of the here and now, an anarchism which starts and ends with freedom as autonomous practice. Postanarchism highlights a politics of autonomy understood as a certain relationship to the self based on the ever-present possibility of freedom and the invention of alternative relationships and self-governance which are not determined externally to the individual, be that by the market or the state (Newman 2016, 129). In this understanding of freedom as the practice of the subject, there is a shift away from a universal understanding of freedom to which everyone strives, and an emphasis instead on the freedom of the subject to determine her actions and relationships for herself and in the moment. There are a number of thinkers who are frequently identified with this focus on the subject, action, and relationships, including Jason Adams (2003), Todd May (1994), and Lewis Call (2010). I focus on the work of Saul Newman as he provides the most sustained engagement with these ideas developed through a number of articles and books, culminating in his most recent piece *Postanarchism* (2016). Those working focussing on the subject, action, and

relationships captured by the term postanarchism claim a distinction from anarchism which needs to be addressed and questioned here.

At its core, postanarchist writers claim the difference between anarchism and postanarchism lies in the issue of predetermination. Newman's critique of anarchism is that in postulating a universal human subject as free and rational and arguing for social revolution to destroy the state and liberate humanity, anarchism provides a revolutionary metanarrative which predetermines an end point of a stateless society (Newman 2016, 6; 12). With this predetermined end point of a stateless society the actions of individuals are aimed at an externally defined end-goal (ibid., 12). This establishes an understanding of anarchism and anarchists which can be used as a measuring point by which to define identity, progress, success or failure. There are as many different anarchist identities as there are understandings of anarchism, which leads to claims of anarchist identities competing for a form of 'anarcho-perfectionism' (Heckert 2012, 66) in which individuals are judged by their efforts to appear anarchist enough (ibid.). Newman argues that if anarchism aims at the destruction of the state and the implementation of a non-hierarchical, non-coercive, free society, in short, a predetermined end point, then anarchism can be held to externally derived measures of success, or more likely, failure (Newman 2016, 12). This has the potential for those identifying as anarchists to constantly fail, introducing pathological shame as anarchists constantly fall short of the mark they set themselves, leading in turn to a greater sense of needing to be anarchist enough (Heckert 2012, 70).

In place of this predetermined end of a social revolution and a stateless society, postanarchism argues for anarchism as an ontology, where thought and action are freed from predetermined ends (Newman 2016, 11-12). For Newman postanarchism is a form of thinking and acting anarchistically and 'seeking to transform the immediate situation and relationships that one finds oneself in [...]' (ibid., 12). Here, postanarchism is freedom as autonomous practice in which specific relations of domination are examined, challenged and, if possible, overturned (ibid., 12), and therefore postanarchist freedom is always contingent and changing with the context of the subject who acts autonomously. The focus on the immediate action of the individual brings to the fore questions about the individual as a subject, forms of

action, and relationships which are linked to the issue of freedom, its curtailment, and its realisation.

The subject in postanarchism is approached through the lens of poststructuralism and the decentring of a universal human subject: anarchism can no longer rely on a singular notion of humanity as free and rational but constrained by the state (Newman 2016, 6). Postanarchism draws on poststructuralism to argue that there can no longer be a recourse to an individual as fundamentally free and rational as the human subject is now understood to be formed by external power and discourse rather than an underlying universal status (*ibid.*, 8-9). Postanarchism's view of the subject builds from Foucault's work on governmentality, rejecting the notion of a universal human nature and arguing that the subject is formed through various governmental practices which constitute her identity (Newman 2016, 19). These governmental practices can be understood as the 'conduct of conduct' (Gordon 1991, 48), or the attempt to regulate aspects of behaviour in individuals whose subjectivity is formed in specific ways according to their context (Foucault 2009, 267). The practices forming the subject overlap and form multiple and at times contradictory identities including the healthy subject, the consumer, the law-abider, the educated subject, and so on, each enforced by practices of various agencies of which the state is part (Odysseos, Death, and Malmvig 2016, 153; Newman 2016, 20-21). What lies behind the notion of forming the subject through practices of governance is a drive to make the subject visible and representable by the governing agencies, defining a range of action for the subject according to her various and overlapping identities. In neo-liberal practices of government freedom is presented as the freedom to choose from the range of identities, the forms of subjectivity on offer, each of which has been captured and commodified under neo-liberal capitalism (Newman 2016, 23). In choosing from the predetermined range of available identities, the subject willingly reinforces her own formation as a subject, becoming dependent on the externally constituted identities for her existence (*ibid.*, 23). As a result of this stance, Newman's postanarchism is critical of identity politics which attempt to supply and have recognised ever-increasing divisions and categorisations of identity which ultimately hold the subject ever-tighter in the dependency on external references in the formation of her subjectivity (*ibid.*, 31).

It is this understanding of the formation of the subject and the version of freedom involved with it which is the focus of postanarchism's critique and action. Far from being freedom in the postanarchist sense of autonomous practice in the present, freedom in neo-liberalism is fixed by predetermined identities and realms of action. If postanarchism is to argue for freedom as autonomous practice, it is necessary to present an alternative subjectivity which starts from thought and action without *arché*, without the predetermined end of a complex of neo-liberal identities. In this formulation postanarchist subjectivities take on different form, one which is constructed by the subject herself in the present and defies the predetermination of fixed identities and ends (ibid., 32).

The focus for postanarchism shifts from the destruction of the state, to autonomous practice which defies attempts at the external formation of the subject or recognition within existing representative structures such as the state (Newman 2016, 47). Postanarchism points to insurrection as the form such autonomous practice takes, arguing that insurrection aims only at the subject's self-transformation by asserting her autonomy from those external conditions and constraints. This freedom as autonomous practice is an ongoing practice of individual autonomy which is prefigurative in its form. Prefiguration carries two elements: first, it occurs in the immediate present without a predetermined end and second, it is a practice of freedom which constantly works to invent and form our own subjectivities and relationships to others without external referents (Newman 2016, 64-65). The spontaneous and creative element of autonomous practice means that action is always contingent and changing according to the context of the subject, and as a result autonomous practice is constantly experimented with and reinvented (ibid., 65). Importantly, this is not a call for action directly *against* agencies of governance and power which forms subjectivity, but an affirmation of the self *despite* these forces (ibid., 54-55). Postanarchism is cautious of direct opposition to attempts to form subjectivities because direct opposition requires an engagement with those forces of power, which ultimately sustains them (ibid., 55). Instead, there is a turn to action without opposition. In refusing action which is established via a reference to forces of power postanarchism removes itself from binaries of position/opposition and opens a space apart from such forces, a space in which new forms of subjectivity

can be realised (Heckert 2012, 71). Examples of this freedom as autonomous practice are found in the Occupy movements, in which people came together in a refusal of the attempts of neo-liberal capitalism to form their subjectivity as consumers, workers, the unemployed, and the like. Spaces were established where people formed their own subjectivities as members of a spontaneous community operating in ways and means entirely apart from the subjectifying attempts of neo-liberalism (Newman 2016, 28). The Occupy movement, loosely defined, defied external attempts to define it and there was an external frustration with Occupy for having no concrete demands to put forward (Schrager Lang and Lang/Levitsky 2012, 21-22). Ultimately, Occupy and those involved could not neatly be identified, captured, and placed into practices of governance, and so attempts to define it and subsequently categorise Occupy as a success or failure were, and continue to be, misdirected.

In the anarchist focus on the subject highlighted in postanarchism the self-(trans)formation of the subject through autonomous practice is closely linked to the relationships the subject has with others. Although written long before the term “postanarchism” and the insights of poststructuralism, Gustav Landauer establishes the importance of relationships not dependent on the state. Landauer’s approach to anarchism and the state is to cast the state not as a physical entity which can be destroyed as with smashing a window, but as a set of imposed relationships which condition how people interact with each other (Landauer 2010, 214). This was not a new critique of the state in anarchism, with many others having made similar points (see Bakunin 1964a, 128; Rocker 1972, 2), what stands out is the response which was a call for people to ‘*constitute themselves as a people apart from the state*’ (Landauer 2010, 214, original emphasis). Landauer establishes the importance and potential of relationships as a response to oppression. These early links to relationships are highlighted in postanarchism as it becomes clear that freedom as autonomous practice can already be observed in many relationships which occur every day (Newman 2016, 130). Examples abound, but a consideration of friendship highlights the ways in which relationships between friends are premised upon identities which are not included as part of the neo-liberal practices of governance (May 2014). Entering into a friendship as a relationship which defies neo-liberal practices of governance, the subject is undertaking autonomous practice through which she

simultaneously engages in the formation of her own subjectivity. In this example of friendship two prominent neo-liberal identities are highlighted, the consumer and the entrepreneur, both of which shape the subject in different, and at times contradictory, ways. The consumer and the entrepreneur interact with others on the basis of personal gain and self-interest. However, through friendships it is possible to avoid these attempts to form the subject by relating to others on the basis of shared passion (ibid.).

The majority of critiques of postanarchism from other scholars writing from other perspectives encompassed in anarchism. The basis of many of these criticisms is that postanarchism has been too quick to establish itself as a new tradition of anarchist thought (Rousselle 2011, vii), both through the use of the prefix 'post' (Cohn and Wilbur 2010), and the reduction of anarchism, sometimes referred to as classical anarchism, to a canon of white, male, European thinkers (Evren 2011, 11). Critics argue that the use of the prefix 'post' is intended to position postanarchism as something progressive and that anarchism is something from the past and better left there (Cohn and Wilbur 2010). Connected to this is the criticism from several scholars that postanarchist's treatment of anarchism, and therefore its characterisation as a theory and practice of the past, is based on a selective and reductive reading of a small sample of anarchists (Villon 2003; Cohn and Wilbur 2010; Evren 2011; Jeppesen 2011). These scholars argue that postanarchist readings of anarchism are based primarily on Proudhon, Godwin, Bakunin, and Kropotkin, and that alongside restricting anarchist thought to these few thinkers, postanarchism also reduces the work of these thinkers to a small range of works and quotes (Villon 2003). It is the postanarchist reading of the subject in anarchism which has been particularly criticised as being selective and reductive. Cohn and Wilbur (2010) and Evren (2011) point to numerous moments in anarchist literature in which the human subject is not naively assumed as fundamentally good, but is better understood as malleable and shaped by social context. It's not that there is an *a priori* anarchist subject who is good or bad. To continue the language of postanarchism, the formation of the subject is largely contingent on the society and context she finds herself in. Therefore, Newman's move to put clear water between anarchism and postanarchism regarding the subject appears unnecessary.

As a result of these reductive readings Sasha Villon accuses postanarchism, and Newman in particular, of setting up anarchism as a 'straw man' (Villon 2003). Later criticisms are kinder to postanarchism and suggest instead that the postanarchist reading of anarchism is not deliberately reductionist, but takes a history of anarchism for granted (Evren 2011, 11). Ruth Kinna argues that postanarchism, and once again Newman in particular, uses this understanding of anarchism as a theoretical foil to help develop postanarchism further (Kinna 2017). One response to these criticisms of postanarchism is to position it not as a distinct and separate area of anarchist thought and practice, but to consider it as a particular response which is part of the wider understanding of anarchism, in the same way that environmental anarchism is also an approach to anarchism which happens to emphasise certain areas at the expense of others (Franks 2011, 169). In this approach the earlier criticisms of postanarchism still stand and need to be addressed, but postanarchism can be approached not as a breakaway, but as the 'particular response of particular subjected groups in a limited historical context' (ibid.).

Franks' approach to postanarchism carries echoes of earlier discussions regarding anarchism and the multiple facets and approaches which have developed over time. In his work 'Anarchy without Hyphens' Karl Hess (1980) establishes an argument for understanding anarchism not as a series of fractured elements of theory and practice, but as straight forward anarchism which does not need further refinement or definition: '[...] anarchists [...] are people and, as such, contain the billion-faceted varieties of human reference. Some are anarchists who march, voluntarily, to the Cross of Christ. Some are anarchists who flock, voluntarily, to the communities of beloved, inspirational father figures' (Hess, 1980). Hess's examples continue covering a vast array of different facets and characteristics of anarchists before concluding that no matter what these characteristics are, they all start from a single point: liberty. Hess argues that anarchy – without hyphens – is about being free without predetermining what that freedom is, and how different anarchists develop that notion of freedom is the result of 'choice and chance' (ibid.). This is reminiscent of our starting point in the exploration of anarchism and the three central values of liberty, equality, and solidarity.

Returning to postanarchist attempts to put clear blue water between anarchism and postanarchism, and the subsequent critiques of that attempt, we are right to be cautious and critical of postanarchist claims but that does not mean that the theoretical work developed under the banner of postanarchism cannot be a valuable tool in understanding the world around us and the possibilities for subversion. Two areas in particular stand out for further consideration: the postanarchist critiques of identity politics and the question of direct opposition. These two areas are closely linked and will be addressed in parallel. Postanarchism, and Newman specifically, is critical of identity politics which provides a set of identities which ultimately constrain the subject in ever-increasing and complex practices of government (Newman 2016, 31). This critique sits alongside the claim that direct opposition, by its very nature, maintains the thing it opposes. Newman uses the example of the LGBTQ movements as building on identity politics and issues of representation to a point of exhaustion (ibid.). Newman argues that in direct opposition to the denial of LGBTQ identity the LGBTQ community have succeeded in having their particular identities recognised and protected, but in doing so, have also created a means by which they can now be counted and accounted for through practices of government (ibid.).

We are right to be cautious of the consequences of direct opposition but we cannot deny some of the tangible benefits which can arise from it. To keep with Newman's LGBTQ example in the UK context in which this thesis is written, the coordinated lobbying actions of the LGBTQ community in the UK are reflected in a raft of legislation and policy seeking to grant legal protection to individuals and communities who identify as LGBTQ. We can point to the nine protected characteristics of the 2010 Equality Act as an example of this, which include gender reassignment, sex, and sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010), and moves to integrate LGBTQ rights into school curriculum. These examples have tangible day-to-day benefits for those who identify as LGBTQ as the discrimination faced by many from the LGBTQ community is now established as an offense which can be prosecuted, signalling that such discrimination is no longer a socially acceptable norm, nor a legally defensible act. My intention here is not to detour into a discussion of social norms and legality, nor is it a claim that legal protection automatically leads to the end of discriminatory practices, but it is a signal through legal mechanisms of desired

behaviour in the public at large which no longer tolerates the singling out and discrimination of a particular group of people. The legal protection afforded the LGBTQ community is an example of the use of identity politics and direct opposition to secure benefits for that community. As with our caution about Newman's claims against identity politics and direct opposition, we also need to be aware of the tensions apparent in achieving gains through identity politics and direct opposition. The point here is that Newman presents too simplistic an understanding of these things, a criticism similar to those made about Newman's claims regarding postanarchism's distinction from anarchism.

Given the critiques of postanarchism and Newman, it is Hess' and Frank's understandings of anarchism I carry forward in this thesis. What is important for me here is the role postanarchism can play as a framework for my critique of critical pedagogy, which itself is my particular response to my particular position. While the discussions around postanarchism's reductive treatment of other anarchist thinkers are important, I am not arguing for postanarchism as a saviour of anarchism but am drawing on the insights gleaned from the interaction of anarchism and poststructuralism to help guide a critique of critical pedagogy and to act as a reference point for my own practice in the context of a neo-liberal higher education institution. To this end I continue to use the term "postanarchism" as shorthand throughout the thesis to refer to anarchism with a particular focus on the subject, action and relationships as developed following anarchism's interaction with poststructuralism. Postanarchism's understandings of the subject, forms of action, and relationships is the framework through which I approach my critique of critical pedagogy. It is my contention that critical pedagogy does not offer a response to neo-liberalism, nor is it itself a theory and practice for radical social change.

Establishing the methodology and method underpinning this argument is the focus of chapter two. I begin by drawing on hermeneutics, and particularly the work of Paul Ricoeur who established the possibility of reading action as text. Ricoeur introduced the hermeneutic principles of reading and re-reading action as a simultaneous process in which we read and re-read ourselves, our assumptions, and our traditions (Ricoeur 1971). This hermeneutic process is then given form as a method through autoethnography: the study of self in the context of social

phenomena (Ellis 2004). Throughout chapter two I establish the self-reflective process by which I gather and analyse empirical data regarding my own teaching practices in light of my critique of critical pedagogy and in the context of working in a neo-liberal higher education institution. The chapter concludes with a consideration of Foucault's work on care of the self and the practice of accounting for our actions to others. The form this thesis takes means it is not only an academic pursuit, all-be-it one heavily entwined with personal interest and experience, it is simultaneously a process of self-care. These considerations of method lead me to establishing my critique of critical pedagogy in the following two chapters.

In Chapter Three I introduce the reader to critical pedagogy's suggestions for the redefined state which involves the practice of thick democracy by critical citizens. Through the lens of postanarchism I demonstrate that critical pedagogy's reliance on the state, the identity of the critical citizen, and practices of thick democracy enforce practices of government aimed at the formation of the subject, the type of actions the subject takes, and the relationships the subject has. Through the state, the critical citizen and thick democracy we see critical pedagogy limiting the possibilities of social change by predetermining the end-goal, the form of social organisation, the subject, and action. As a result, I argue that critical pedagogy is not and cannot be a response to neo-liberalism, as it operates practices of government which limit the freedom of the subject.

Chapter Four focuses on the teacher in critical pedagogy. I argue that critical pedagogy's ideal of the teacher as a transformative intellectual forms the subject through practices of government which define the actions of the teacher, and as a result fixes the relationships the teacher has with students. Following postanarchism's calls for autonomous practice, I turn to Michel Foucault's work on care of the self (2005, 2006, 2012) to deepen our understanding of how the teacher can work to distance the identity given to them by critical pedagogy and take responsibility for her own formation as a subject. Through this process of care of the self the teacher opens the space for different relationships to students which are not defined by critical pedagogy's identities of transformative teacher and critical citizen. Through postanarchism and care of the self student-teacher relationships are formed by the subjects in the moment of interaction itself, rather than following a

predetermined form. I argue that the formation of such spontaneous relationships requires a certain quality of communication between the subjects involved which is found in Foucault's concept of *parrhesia*. The practice of self care and the relationships which accompany it are an elaboration on the postanarchist call for the subject to refuse predetermined identities and take control of her own (trans)formation.

Having established the unsuitability of critical pedagogy as a response to neo-liberalism and the care of the self as a postanarchist autonomous practice for teachers, Chapter Five addresses the possibilities of such autonomous practice in our everyday life and the spaces which are created by such action. To do this I draw from two areas: first I use Michel de Certeau's work on the practice of everyday life and the possibility of subversion without opposition (1988), and argue that subversion is possible even in highly constrained environments such as higher education institutions. Second, I call on the work of Obika Gray (2004) to elaborate a conceptualisation of the classroom as an exilic space in which dominant forms of social organisation can be distanced and space opened to all participants to enter into relationships of self care. Exilic space suggests an arena of the spontaneous creation of social organisation realised without necessary connection to the dominant social forms (Gray, 2004). I draw on these notions of exilic space and couple them with de Certeau's work to argue for an understanding of the classroom as a space which both enables and results from postanarchist autonomous practice.

These three chapters prepare the ground for an exploration of my own teaching practice. Chapter Six of the thesis consists of a series of autoethnographic narratives drawn from my time teaching in a higher education institution in the UK. These narratives are an examination of my attempts at autonomous practice while working in a highly constrained environment in which I am subject to multiple practices of governance attempting to form my subject and conduct my behaviour. The narratives are a collection of eight moments in which the tensions between autonomous practice and practices of governance are explored.

Closing the thesis is a discussion of where this theoretical framework and autonomous practice might lead, highlighting the possibilities which exist in using the neo-liberal university's own processes and procedures against it. I argue that the neo-

liberal concentration on performance and ranking creates a gap in which postanarchist practice can flourish, and that through an always changing series of teaching practices it is possible to subvert the classroom as a space, environment, and collection of subjects for means entirely alien to the neo-liberal university.

## 2. Talking Methods

This thesis is a combination of theory, practice, and writing in which I engage with the texts of critical pedagogy and anarchism and explore and analyse my teaching practice, with each element informing my understanding of the others in a continual process. The combination of these elements requires a methodological approach which enables me to capture and explore my own development as a teacher without privileging theory, practice, or writing above one another and hermeneutics provides this methodological framework. I start this chapter with consideration of hermeneutics as the broader methodology underpinning this thesis, drawing on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, and Paul Ricoeur. I then turn my attention to a discussion of autoethnography as a specific method by which I gather and present my empirical data.

Hermeneutics has a long history reaching back to antiquity, and was originally concerned with the interpretation of text, particularly the exegesis of religious texts (Byrne 2001, 968; Prasad 2002, 14). One of the central figures in the development of philosophical hermeneutics in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century is Martin Heidegger and his work *Being and Time* (1973). *Being and Time* aimed to revive the question of Being while also establishing some of the fundamental framework for hermeneutics as the process of understanding (ibid., 24). Heidegger claims that our exploration of understanding starts from our initial presuppositions about the entity we want to study: what we already know or think we already know about this entity conditions how we initially interpret it. These presuppositions provide the basic concepts of the entity being studied and come to us through tradition (ibid., 30). Tradition in Heidegger's work is not an object passed through time but a process in which what has come to us from history is delivered as self-evident. The process of tradition which constitutes our presuppositions and the presentation of tradition as self-evident blocks our attempts to examine the roots of our presuppositions (ibid., 43). The initial presupposition of the entity is what enables our initial understandings, but this must not be confused with a statement which is taken as a self-evident starting point from which other propositions are derived (ibid., 28). The presuppositions are used as a temporary and necessary guide for our understanding to enable us to

approach the entity, but these initial presuppositions change as we come to a deeper understanding of the entity through study. The change in our presuppositions introduces the concept of a circular movement between Being, presuppositions and understanding. There is, in Heidegger's words, 'a rather remarkable relatedness backward and forward' (ibid., 28) in which the process of inquiry itself is an element in the mode of Being of the entity. For Heidegger, the interpreter in this process of hermeneutic inquiry is the subject and the text is the object. Both are kept at distance with the subject interpreting the object in order to gain a deeper understanding of it whilst maintaining an objectivity to the understanding gained.

While Heidegger saw the subject and object in the hermeneutic process as two separate entities maintaining an objectivity in understanding, Hans-Georg Gadamer explored the role of the subject as an active and subjective element in the process of understanding. Gadamer starts his engagement with Heidegger by highlighting the difference in their two projects: while Heidegger sought to explain the 'fore-structure of understanding for the purposes of ontology' (Gadamer 2006, 268), Gadamer was concerned with the process of understanding if hermeneutics was no longer bound by ideas of objectivity (ibid.). Gadamer rejected Heidegger's subject-object divide and saw the subject as an active part of the process and proposed hermeneutics as a dialogue in which 'the interpreter puts questions to the text, and the text, in turn, puts questions to the interpreter' (Prasad 2002, 19; see also Gadamer 2006, 271). For Gadamer the subject and object are not detached from each other but are in a mutually interactive relationship because through the understanding of the text the interpreter also gains a greater understanding of herself.

Gadamer explains that in the process of understanding we need to pay attention not only to the text but to the interpreter's presuppositions. He writes that,

[...] it is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself. A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of

what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there. (Gadamer 2006, 269)

Gadamer argues that our presuppositions influence our understanding of the object and therefore we cannot approach a text directly holding blindly to our presuppositions, but must explicitly examine our presuppositions in the process of examining the text (2006, 270).

Gadamer argues that it is not enough for the interpreter to be aware of her presuppositions but that she must also be aware of the tradition in which her presuppositions are embedded (Gadamer 2006, 272). Furthermore, the interpreted text is also embedded within a broader tradition, whether that is history, genre or discipline and the interpreter must be continually aware of the tradition of the text as well as her own tradition. Gadamer's understanding of a hermeneutic methodology highlights the interaction between interpreter and text: 'The [hermeneutic] circle, then, is not formal in nature. It is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter' (ibid., 293). In the interpreter's constant attention to tradition and presupposition as part of the process of understanding a text, the interpreter also comes to a deeper understanding of herself. This, in turn, leads her to interpret the text and herself differently, which once again changes her understanding of both. For Gadamer, this process is not necessarily about achieving a superior understanding of either text or interpreter, but to 'understand in a *different way*' (ibid., 296. Original emphasis).

Another important issue that Gadamer introduces into the circular process of hermeneutics is the relationship between the universal and the singular. The universal refers to the text and tradition under study, while the singular concerns the individual's interpretation of the text: 'If the heart of the hermeneutical problem is that one and the same tradition must time and again be understood in a different way, the problem, logically speaking, concerns the relationship between the universal and the particular' (Gadamer 2006, 310). For Gadamer, the relationship between the universal of tradition and the particular of the text as understood by the interpreter is best approached as a special case of applying something universal to a particular situation (Gadamer 2006, 310): giving the example of legal hermeneutics

Gadamer explains that the work of the interpreter is to '*concretize* the law in each specific case' (ibid., 325).

Hermeneutics through Heidegger and Gadamer has been established as a method for the interpretation of texts which is a circular process of understanding between the interpreter and the text as she accounts for the presuppositions and traditions of both. The interpreter must be aware of her own presuppositions and tradition as she first approaches a text, and be ready and willing to reformulate these in the process of understanding. Jürgen Habermas' addition to hermeneutics is the introduction of elements of critical theory into the relationship between the interpreter, the text, presupposition and tradition.

Habermas introduced critical theory to hermeneutics through a particular emphasis on language as the necessary element which makes hermeneutics as the interpretation of text possible. Habermas argues that Gadamer's approach to hermeneutic understanding can be presented as a continuing process of socialisation in which new texts are only understood in relation to texts the interpreter already understands. In this way the interpreter continues the process of tradition by understanding each new text through the tradition established in the interpretation of previous texts (Habermas 1990a, 222). This takes us to the crux of Habermas' critique of Gadamer: Gadamer requires an acknowledgement of tradition in the process of understanding but does not treat tradition to critical analysis.

For Habermas, communication is possible because there are linguistic rules shared by the conversation partners, whether they are an author and reader or people engaging in face-to-face communication. The role of the interpreter in a conversation is to act like a translator who listens to the language of an other and makes it intelligible for her own understanding (Habermas 1990a, 215). This notion of interpreter as translator does not only function between different speakers sharing a particular time period, but also between generations as shared understandings are transmitted through time as traditions. Habermas establishes the connection between language, interpretation, and tradition which is key in his critical intervention in hermeneutics (ibid., 217). Tradition, for Habermas, is the 'medium in which languages propagate themselves' (ibid., 217) and acts as a bridge between generations. The inculcation of language in the individual occurs through a process

of socialisation which sees the individual '[grow] into his language' (ibid., 217) and the individual is therefore an element in the continuing process of tradition. Pointing to Gadamer's work, Habermas states that tradition comes to mirror the 'life-long socialisation of individuals in their language' on the social scale (ibid., 218). Tradition is a language in which we live (ibid., 238), and like tradition, language needs to be questioned. If we conceive of language as a kind of 'metainstitution on which all social institutions are dependent' (ibid., 239), it opens the way for the consideration of language and tradition as mediums of domination and social power which serve to legitimise specific forms of social organisation (ibid., 239). It is not enough for the interpreter to recognise her presuppositions and traditions and the presuppositions and traditions of the text as she approaches her interpretation, she must also be critically aware of the ideological underpinning and implications of such presuppositions and tradition, and be willing to question them (ibid., 239). Reflecting on the ideological implications of her presuppositions and tradition the interpreter is able to gain a different understanding of herself and the text. Building from the critical awareness of ideology in language, presupposition and tradition, this way of interpretation can set in motion a weakening and overturning of the tradition (Habermas 1990a, 240). Habermas did not reject Gadamer's development of hermeneutics, but criticised Gadamer's assumption that language and the tradition it conveys are elements the interpreter cannot remove herself from and critique (Habermas 1990b, 254).

For Habermas, hermeneutics includes a self-reflection of a subject recognising her 'specific freedom from, and dependence on, language' (Habermas 1990b, 249). This dual aspect of hermeneutics as freedom from and dependence upon language influences the interpreter's processes of understanding of the text and herself as she goes beyond the recognition of the presuppositions and traditions, into a critical stance towards such presuppositions and traditions. In so doing the interpreter comes to a different understanding of both the text and herself and the process of understanding continues anew. Habermas opens the possibility for new interpretations and understandings, and new practices which can challenge tradition and the presuppositions within it.

While the work of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Habermas would be sufficient as a methodology for my engagement with the written work of critical pedagogy, my analysis of my teaching practice requires an addition to hermeneutics which covers action and which is found in Ricoeur's work. Ricoeur opened the possibility of hermeneutic methodology to be applied to areas beyond textual analysis and argued that action is not text in any literal sense, but that it is *like* text in ways which allow us to read action using the same methodology as we read a text (1971, 529). Ricoeur describes four traits of the sentence in linguistics which enable us to apply hermeneutics to discourses and events (ibid., 530): first, discourse is always temporal; two, discourse refers to a speaker through personal pronouns; three, discourse goes beyond itself and 'refers to a world which it claims to describe, to express, or to represent' (ibid., 531); four, discourse not only has a world it represents, but also an other to whom it is addressed (ibid., 531). Each of these traits fixes the speech act as something greater than the linguistic unit of the sentence. Sentences must be understood as a discourse containing the intention of the speaker and the possibility of interpretation by the listener. The possible gap between the speaker's intention and the meaning of her words open the space in which hermeneutics operates in the listener's understanding of meaning and the understanding of herself in relation to that meaning (ibid., 531-534). Furthermore, the discourse of the speech act can be moved from its temporality as spoken word to an inscription of discourse through writing (ibid., 538).

Ricoeur argues that these four traits of linguistics and discourse are equally applicable to action, and in the same movement by which we fix discourse in writing, we can treat action as fixed text (1971, 538). Temporality as the first trait of discourse is the same as the temporal action. It carries similar issues of fixation as speech and discourse: whereas speech and discourse are fixed through writing, actions are fixed through their constitution as social phenomena. Similar to speech, action also contains a gap between intention and meaning: 'deeds escape us and have effects which we did not intend' (ibid., 541). Thus, action leaves an inscription on the world beyond the action itself, and becomes fixed in a way which enables the interpreter to read it. The second trait of text carried over to action is that of self-reference: action is always self-referential in that it requires something to complete the action.

Action is linked to something through the use of action verbs; something *did* something. The verb *to do* can be replaced by any other and the tense can change to provide distinctions in time, but when it comes to action, the action verb is always tied to a noun and provides a point of reference for the action (ibid., 539). The third trait of the relevance of discourse beyond itself is likewise applicable to action. Ricoeur suggests that the importance of those actions which can be read like text lies in the relevance of the action to situations beyond the moment in which the action occurred. Such actions exceed and transcend the social context of their production and can be re-enacted in other situations (ibid., 543-544). Finally, like discourse, human action is addressed to an other. In the case of human action, the range of possible interpreters is endless, meaning that human action is always open to new interpretation (ibid., 544).

To bring Ricoeur's work back to the discussion of hermeneutics, the interpreter is able to approach action as an entity of study, remaining critically aware of the presuppositions and traditions bound in the action, as well as her own presuppositions and traditions. In this approach the interpreter engages in the process of understanding by critically reflecting on presuppositions and traditions and bringing to light new interpretations and different understandings of herself and the action. The work of Heidegger, Gadamer, and Habermas provide a sufficient methodological framework for my engagement with the texts of critical pedagogy, enabling me to critically explore my own presuppositions and traditions as well as those of the established texts of critical pedagogy. However, without Ricoeur I would be unable to take the next step in considering my actions in the classroom through the same movement of the critical recognition of the presuppositions and traditions I bring to that space, and the presuppositions and traditions of the space itself. Ultimately, Ricoeur's addition to hermeneutic methodology enables this thesis to go beyond a purely theoretical engagement with critical pedagogy, and allows for a more complex interplay of different elements in the process of understanding.

While hermeneutics establishes a methodological framework for my thesis, I require a method to gather and analyse data related to my teaching practice. For this

I turn to autoethnography, a method which embraces narrative and action as data for analysis.

### From Methodology to Method

Autoethnography is a qualitative method which links the individual to her surroundings and has its roots in anthropology and sociology. The 'auto' refers to the self, the person conducting the research, while the 'ethno' refers to culture and the society in which the research is taking place (Ellis 2004, 31). In autoethnographic research the individual knowingly takes the double role of researcher and subject which differentiates autoethnography from other research derived from personal experience. Focussing on the interactions between the researcher's social and personal situation, autoethnography allows the researcher to reflect on her position as a social actor as she moves from 'the inward to the outward, from the personal to the other, and vice versa' (Meerwald 2013, 44).

#### *Autoethnography*

Although the use of personal narrative in social research can be traced back to the Chicago School in the 1920s (Deegan 2007), it was Charles Wright Mills' work on sociological imagination which set the ground for a qualitative research method which includes the researcher as an integral part of the exploration of social phenomena. In *The Sociological Imagination* (1973) Wright Mills makes an explicit connection between each individual's life and the history and development of society. Wright Mills states that many people do not connect their personal experiences to the wider context in which their life takes place and are not aware of the role the context plays for their character:

Seldom aware of the intricate connexion between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connexion means for the kinds of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part. (Wright Mills 1973, 10)

Unaware that they are able to transform and be transformed by the society in which they live individuals lack what Wright Mills called 'sociological imagination' (1973, 12). The sociological imagination is what enables an individual to understand that 'by

the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history' (ibid., 12) and the way the wider social context impacts upon his life. Given that both the individual and the world are transformed by one another Wright Mills argues that any study of social phenomena must come back to the problems encountered in an individual's biography and the intersection between the individual and the society (ibid., 12).

*The Sociological Imagination* opened the way for the inclusion of the genre of biography in explanations of social phenomena. Building on Wright Mills' effort to define a qualitative method for the social sciences, Norman Denzin (1989) introduced the idea of "interpretative interactionism" – a method for the study of the interplay between personal experience and social phenomena. Denzin summarises his method as follows: 'Interpretive interactionism speaks to [the] interrelationship between private lives and public responses to personal troubles' (ibid., 9). Denzin seeks to make the lived experiences of individuals directly and easily accessible to readers by capturing the voices, emotions and actions of those experiences which 'radically alter and shape the meanings persons have given to themselves' (ibid., 9). Denzin's note on those experiences which alter and shape the researcher's life is important, as it is not all parts of the researcher's life which are to be included. These interactional moments can be positive or negative, but in autoethnography the researcher is focussed on those which lead, or led, to transformations in the researcher herself in relation to the researcher's social question.

The connection between the researcher's own life and the exploration of wider society in autoethnography serves a critical function because it can enable a critique of the conditions of the society in which the self is located. In this way, autoethnography is not merely a simple narrative of an experience but a 'critical looking outward at power relations in a cultural space' (Banks and Banks 2000, 234). Furthermore, the links between the researcher, the social phenomenon in question, the researcher's own role as an actor in that social phenomenon, and the element of criticality are vital for preventing an autobiography from becoming a narcissistic endeavour in which the researcher ignores the larger social questions.

Having provided a basic understanding of the principles underpinning autoethnography as a method and the role the researcher plays in the critical study

of the society in which she is embedded, we now move on to consider the key characteristics of the method itself. First and foremost, autoethnography is a form of narrative told about the self, in which the researcher and parts of her story form the backbone of the study. Duhnpath argues that our lives are narrative in quality and that 'we experience the world and re-present our experience narratively' (2000, 544-545). We make meaning of our lives through the narratives we tell to ourselves and to others and these narratives allow us to explore our experiences and include others in that exploration. We frequently bring a coherence and rationality to experiences as we re-tell them, and it is often experiences which do not fit rationally and coherently within our existing narrative structures that shake and challenge us to transform (Meerwald 2013, 48). The focus on the individual as both researcher and subject enables us therefore to reconstruct and interpret those moments and critical episodes in our lives which hold subjective significance for us (Duhnpath 2000, 544-545).

The element of re-presentation captured in Duhnpath's work brings us to another feature of autoethnographic narratives: not all parts of an individual's biography are important for the investigation of social phenomena. Rather than including the entirety of an individual's biography which would mean including a great number of moments that are neither relevant to the study nor particularly pertinent in the individual's life, Denzin suggests focussing on 'interactional moments' (1989, 15) in the individual's life. Interactional moments are 'epiphanies' – moments which 'leave marks on people's lives' (ibid., 15) and 'radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their life projects' (Denzin 1998, 335). Denzin argues that by focusing on particular moments that are both related to the wider social phenomenon being studied and which have a profound transformational effect on the individual, forms of biography such as autoethnography become a more exact method for exploring social questions. Each autoethnography is premised on a careful selection process which enables us to connect disparate events over time and consider their consequences (Riessmann 1993, 19; Elliot 2006, 24). The researcher chooses which experiences, or interactional moments, to re-tell, what details to include or omit about those experiences, which words to use and where to place the

emphasis. In each of these steps, she is creating a particular representation and interpretation of the experience (Sikes 2010, 17-18).

One issue that needs to be addressed is the constructed nature of autoethnographies, their interpretations, and the truth claims they contain. In writing autoethnographic narratives we enter into an ordering process and in doing so we are not making claims to a “historical truth” but a “narrative truth” (Spence, 1982). An autoethnography provides us with an accessible account of the meaning of an interactional moment for the author. Hence, the value of narratives such as autobiography lies in their ability to convey personal meaning rather than being enmeshed in a dichotomy of truth or falsity (Gusdorf 1980, 43). Whatever selections and omissions an author makes in telling her narrative reveals a truth about how she experienced the event and how she perceives herself and her actions in that event. The autoethnographic narratives in this thesis play this role of meaning-making and reflection on my attempts to practice a critical response to critical pedagogy and act as a singular example and exploration of a critical pedagogy, itself a response to neo-liberalism as a social phenomenon.

Another feature of autoethnography is that it is predominantly written in the first person singular (Ellis 2004, 30). Given that autoethnographies are narratives about ourselves as both researcher and subject of research this is perhaps not surprising although while the most common, it is not the only way to write an autoethnographic narrative. There are collaborative autoethnographic narratives which use the third person ‘we’ or individuals’ names. The advantage of the collaborative approach is that it allows researchers to explore the same experiences from multiple viewpoints and combine, compare, and negotiate the interpretation of these experiences as a collaborative process (DeMeulenaere and Cann 2013). As well as encouraging each individual researcher to critically consider her own interpretation of an experience through being presented with another’s interpretation, collaborative work can also bring previously unforeseen or unnoticed features of an experience to the attention of each researcher, and therefore provide a more detailed account of an event. Although less common, autoethnographies can also be written in the second person. In his piece *The Critical Life* (2000) Ronald J. Pelias writes exclusively in the second person as he takes the reader through a condensed version of his day and the

challenges and questions which arise from constantly looking through a critical lens on oneself and others.

You wonder: What does it mean to live with a critical eye, an eye that's always assessing, always deciding questions of worth, always saying what's good or bad? What does it mean to judge others? What does it mean to say someone else does not measure up? By what right do you set certain standards? How can you not? What does it mean to judge yourself? By what right do you evaluate? What is at stake? To discover the heart of such questions, you track your day. (Pelias 2000, 220)

In this opening paragraph of Pelias' article the unusual use of the second person 'you' invites the reader to place themselves directly in the protagonist's position. While we are aware that Pelias is writing about the experience of one of his days, the boundaries between the writer and the reader are blurred, encouraging the reader to take on the narrative as one of their own and displaying the accessibility integral to autoethnography.

The notion of the reader as the protagonist introduces another important element of autoethnographies: autoethnography is a story, not a report. As the autoethnographic method allows us to tell narratives about our lives and experiences it takes us a step away from strictly academic forms of writing. Autoethnographies introduce the possibility of using writing elements and styles drawn from fiction and utilising narration, characterisation and plot line (Ellis 2004, 30). Time, place, plot and scene combine to add to the experiential quality of autoethnographies by providing the reader with a location where 'action occurs, where characters are formed and live out their stories and where cultural and social context play constraining and enabling roles' (Clandinin and Connelly 1998, 155). These elements of fictional writing enable autoethnography to bridge the gap between the personal experiences of the researcher and experiences of the reader because it provides the context of the experiences in a way that is both accessible and recognisable. This is not to say that the autoethnographic method is restricted to writing alone. Story telling can come in many forms, and the same is true for autoethnography which can include as varied media as 'short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, scripts, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose'

(Ellis 2004, 38). The media in which the researcher chooses to tell her story is open, but regardless of the form there are common elements which autoethnographies bring to the fore. Autoethnographies will include the majority, if not all, of the following, 'concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness' (ibid., 38), and each of these aspects highlight the highly personal nature of autoethnographic work. For the researcher, there is the constant 'vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written or having control over how readers interpret your story (ibid., xviii). And yet this vulnerability is central to autoethnography as the researcher not only opens herself to her own criticism, but also the criticism of others which is an integral part of the critical social function autoethnography plays.

The element of interpretation involved in autoethnography, and indeed any qualitative research method, is addressed by Denzin who states that interpretations are 'unfinished, provisional, and incomplete' (Denzin 1989, 64) and that each time a researcher returns to look at a social phenomenon the process of interpretation starts once again (ibid., 64). Importantly, Denzin argues, this does not mean that interpretations are inconclusive. He distinguishes between inconclusive and incomplete and argues that autoethnographic narratives can draw conclusions about the social phenomenon in question whilst still recognising that the process of interpretation itself is never finished. Denzin states that: 'To think otherwise is to foreclose one's interpretations before one begins' (ibid., 64), removing the need for the work to explore the social phenomenon. The unfinished nature of autoethnographic social study could be thought of as a weakness, but to do so would mean denying the continual possibility of turning a critical lens upon ourselves and our stories, as well as other people and their stories. To suggest that interpretations should not be revisited, or perhaps should not be revisited in the name of a definitive end to the research, is to suggest that there is a single correct answer, the one true interpretation of events. The unfinished nature of the interpretation of autoethnographies can also be seen through the lens of hermeneutics: it invites the author and reader to enter a critical hermeneutic process of understanding, opening up the interpretation of human action to myriad interpreters.

Alongside these personal elements, the maintenance of a clear link to the wider social context in which the experiences of the researcher occurred is a further key feature of autoethnography. The term “context” includes the physical and institutional environments of the researcher along with her wider social, cultural, and interpersonal environment. The interpersonal environment in this instance refers to the significant others of the researcher, such as partners, parents, mentors, colleagues and peers (Duhnpath 2000, 546). Broadly speaking, the researcher’s context consists of all the elements of her daily life which impact on the researcher in ways pertinent to the social phenomenon being studied. Without the inclusion of context, a text is not an autoethnography but a memoir. The inclusion of social context allows the autoethnographic researcher to function as ‘a universal singular, a single instance of more universal social experiences’ (Denzin 2007, 136).

While the above can be identified as key features of autoethnography, this introduction is in danger of presenting a harmonious and unified view of autoethnography as a method. To do so would be to overlook the attempt to distinguish between two categories of autoethnography, first introduced by Leon Anderson in 2006. Anderson’s opening gambit is that it is possible to draw a distinction between “evocative autoethnography” and “analytic autoethnography” (Anderson 2006, 373), arguing that the former aims to achieve ‘emotional resonance’ (ibid., 377) with the reader whereas the latter fits more with other traditional forms of social research. In Anderson’s categorisation, evocative autoethnography is of the type promoted and used by many of the scholars included above such as Carolyn Ellis and Ronald Pelias. Walford’s criticism of this evocative autoethnography, drawn on by Anderson, is that it is often ‘self-indulgent, and is sometimes more akin to therapy than social science research’ (Walford 2004, 412). In establishing his distinction Anderson argues analytic autoethnography has five key features: complete member research status, analytic reflexivity, narrative visibility of the researcher’s self, dialogue with informants beyond the self, and commitment to theoretical analysis (2006, 378). Complete member research status and analytic reflexivity refer to the position of the autoethnographic researcher as a full and active participant in the group being researched, and the need for that researcher to reflect on and analyse their experiences of being part of said group (ibid., 380). When discussing the

narrative visibility of the researcher Anderson requires the researcher to be a 'highly visible social actor' (ibid., 384) in the text and to incorporate her own emotions and experiences as vital data in the story of the social phenomena. The dialogue with others is central in analytic autoethnography and involves the researcher going beyond her own experiences to include the experiences of others in informing the work, with Anderson calling for an autoethnography which 'is grounded in self-experience but reaches beyond it as well' (ibid., 386). Finally, analytic autoethnography enters a process in which 'generalised theoretical understandings of social processes' (ibid., 385) can be developed and refined.

Anderson's division of analytic autoethnography and evocative autoethnography has been heavily criticised and only finds limited use in the social sciences (Willis 2011; Thompson 2015). I argue that Anderson's division is an artificial one. While acknowledging that it is entirely possible that some authors writing autoethnographies are 'self-indulgent' and using it as a form of 'therapy' (Walford 2004, 412), using this criticism as a basis for a separation between analytic and evocative autoethnographies is not convincing. In the exploration of autoethnography above both Denzin (2007) and Duhnpath (2000) argue for the inclusion of social context in order to tie the experiences of the researcher to the social phenomenon she is experiencing and studying: without this connection the work loses the social link which transforms a work from memoir to autoethnography. Let us approach this systematically through Anderson's five key features of analytic autoethnography. Anderson's first claim that the researcher must be an active member of the group being researched (2006, 378) is not convincing because this is a universal feature of autoethnographies. The term "autoethnography" contains two main elements, 'auto' which refers to the self of the researcher and the 'ethno' which refers to the culture in which the self is located (Ellis 2004, 31). Any research which includes the study of culture without the researcher as an active participant is not autoethnography, it is ethnography, a related but distinct form of social research. This point goes some way to addressing Anderson's second and third features; analytic reflexivity and narrative visibility of the researcher (2006, 378). By connecting the self to the social phenomenon the researcher cannot but address and reflect on her experiences in the research and use this as part of the data informing

the larger project. Connected to the question of the data used in autoethnographies is Anderson's fourth feature; the requirement for the inclusion of dialogue with other participants (2006, 378). Here I follow Kevin Vryan's argument that it is entirely possible to complete a piece of research without engaging in dialogue with others as part of data gathering. Vryan maintains that if he was to complete a project on the basis of self-produced data, he would still be able 'to carry out effective analyses and develop concepts and models of significant social processes in new ways' (Vryan 2006, 406). The absence of data from other participants in the social phenomenon does not preclude the possibility of a thorough analysis. Instead, the determining factor for the inclusion of a dialogue with participants is a question of its necessity, value, and feasibility in light of the research taking place (*ibid.*, 406). The final of the five key features of analytic autoethnography, is the 'commitment to the development of theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena' (Anderson 2006, 378). Once again, this has already been addressed above in the introduction to autoethnography as a method. Denzin's notion of the 'universal singular' (2007, 136) illuminates that in the autoethnographic account the researcher acts as a singular instance of a regular experience. In writing an autoethnography the researcher may not be attempting to provide explanation of a social phenomenon at the macro level but this does not deny her theoretical engagement through the autoethnography. The extent of the link between theoretical engagement and practice may vary, but just as the analytic autoethnography promoted by Anderson does not rule out evocative accounts, the autoethnography put forward by Ellis, Bochner, Denzin, Vryan and others does not preclude the inclusion of theory.

I therefore do not recognise the division between analytic and evocative autoethnography, and I find the attempt to delineate the two unnecessary. However, I agree with Kathy Charmaz (2006) that Anderson's five features are a useful set of guidelines for carrying out and evaluating autoethnographic work, with the caveat that we must be cautious not to apply these criteria as a set of normative statements about what autoethnography *should* be (*ibid.*, 398). To do so not only attempts to create a divide where there is none, but also runs the risk of limiting the creative and flexible potential of autoethnography as a method.

One further issue is to be considered when working with autoethnographic narratives that is closely connected to the danger of an autoethnography becoming a self-indulgent and narcissistic endeavour. Gustav Fischman warns of a similar danger around the notion of a 'narrative of redemption' (2009 207). Narratives of redemption erase any background of the subject and any process which may have taken place during the series of events. Instead, they portray moments of personal heroics in which 'pure acts of will [...] are implemented instantly, and [...] achieve virtually instantaneous results' (ibid., 208). At their core, narratives of redemption are over-simplified accounts of personal glory in the face of oppression, which, while emotionally resonant, do away with the complexities of our lives and interactions. Just as the autoethnographic researcher must avoid writing something devoid of social connection, she must also be wary of producing a narrative of redemption.

### Autoethnography, Education and Politics

Now that we have an understanding of the background and features of autoethnography, we can highlight some of the ways in which it has been used as a method in the study of education and politics. Broadly speaking autoethnographic pieces in either education or politics can be placed in one of two categories: the first is those works exploring autoethnography as a method, and the second is those works using the autoethnographic method when researching education and politics.

An example of the autoethnographic method for educational research is Ronald J. Pelias' work *The Critical Life*. Pelias invites the reader to explore the critical social function of an academic through the lens of his personal experience as a lecturer by taking the reader through his typical day as an academic, exploring the highly evaluative role that comes with such a position (Pelias 2000, 220). Pelias offers insights into his interactions with family, students, staff, and administration, weaving together emotional responses and considerations with contextual information and critical commentary on his own behaviour throughout the day (ibid., 220). This educational autoethnography brings to the fore the tensions and contradictions an academic faces in her dealings with the different elements of her life. In one particular instance Pelias describes the complications of marking student essays when he begins to consider the weight of authority which comes with his position as

a lecturer (ibid., 221). In another, Pelias highlights the difficulty of dealing with specific colleagues and internal departmental divisions, the politics at play over a possible appointment to the department and the vested interests in everyone's stance (ibid., 225). Although the details of Pelias's experiences are specific to his context, the nature of the experiences he describes - deliberating over student grades while wrestling with the considerations of institutional power that one holds, or dealing with departmental tensions and politics - are shared by others in academic positions. To echo Denzin, Pelias presents a 'universal singular' (2007, 136), the telling of a singular event which carries universal features, and the strength of educational autoethnographies is to bring these experiences to light and to encourage the reader to reflect on similar situations in her own life.

One example of exploring autoethnography as a method in educational research is Stephan P. Banks and Anna Banks' piece *Reading "The Critical Life": Autoethnography as Pedagogy* (Banks and Banks 2000) in which they explore several ways in which autoethnographies such as Pelias' enrich educational research. Banks and Banks argue that educational autoethnographies play an important role in teaching the reader to challenge everyday assumptions about her role and position as a social actor. By bringing everyday action into focus educational autoethnographies highlight those actions which the reader may take for granted. An example comes through Pelias's *The Critical life* (2000) in which he deliberates over his role as an academic grading papers and the power dynamics at play in departmental appointments. These might be taken for granted by other academics, and yet through the Pelias' autoethnography they are confronted with a consideration of their own practice in relation to these two areas. This, Banks and Banks argue, is an educational moment for the reader (ibid., 235). Closely tied to the challenging of the reader's assumptions, Banks and Banks argue that autoethnographies dealing with educational experiences teach the reader to model 'a critical attitude' (Banks and Banks 2000, 236) in her relationships with family, colleagues, students, or institutional administrators. By highlighting issues of power in everyday life autoethnographies invite the reader to reflect on her own role in power relationships and consider how her actions reinforce or challenge oppressive uses of power (ibid., 236). A further consideration of autoethnography as a method

in educational research is that it teaches the reader that there are different possibilities for writing and presenting educational studies. The autoethnographic method both demonstrates and brings to the fore the personal engagement with our own research which occurs when writing (ibid., 235). Often research in the social sciences, education and politics included, is encouraged as a distanced and dispassionate process, artificially separating the researcher from the writing; autoethnography bridges that gap and models different possibilities of writing for others.

While Banks and Banks concentrate on the educational possibilities within the autoethnographic method, Ruby Duhnpath makes the case for the greater inclusion of autoethnographies in educational studies. Duhnpath states that there is no dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative research arguing that each can be supportive of the other and provide a different and complementary look at the same subject (2000 543-544). From this starting point Duhnpath argues that far from being a threat to more quantitative educational research, autoethnography provides a valuable insight into the experiences and approaches of teachers, teacher educators and pupils alike in response to educational challenges. Duhnpath is careful to point out that the subjective narratives of teachers, teacher educators and pupils should not trump the quantitative work undertaken by academics and administrators but do play a vital role in providing the rich descriptive elements missing from quantitative educational research (ibid., 550). According to Duhnpath, a blend of autoethnographic and quantitative educational research offers insight into both the experiential and interactional moments of individuals, and the wider social and institutional contexts in which those interactions take place. Importantly, Duhnpath argues that by encouraging more autoethnographic work in educational research we can give space to currently marginalised and excluded voices in academic research (ibid., 550).

Straddling the gap between work which explores autoethnography as a method and work which utilises autoethnography in educational research, DeMeulenaere and Cann have written a collaborative autoethnography about activist research in education, sociology and anthropology (DeMeulenaere and Cann 2013). DeMeulenaere and Cann argue that activist research should be focussed on enabling

social change and should specifically address issues of oppression, be that race, gender, class, sexuality, age, etc., and challenges to those oppressive practices in the lives of the research participants (ibid., 557). To this end, they argue that by encouraging a collective reflection collaborative autoethnography is an excellent way to bring activist research and social change together. DeMeulenaere and Cann suggest that the reflection of activist scholars as part of their research helps to highlight the power relationships and dynamics involved in research for social change, and can therefore help to break the 'hierarchical divisions' (ibid., 561) and make activist research more socially just by addressing issues of oppression in the population involved in the research. Researchers working collaboratively with educators bring the normally distant realms of academic research and practical experience together in a process of reflection which is beneficial for all involved.

While there exists a range of literature on autoethnographies in educational research, there is far less inclusion of autoethnography in the study of politics, be that pieces exploring autoethnography as a method or pieces which use autoethnography. The lack of autoethnographic methods in political research is discussed by DeLysa Burnier (2006) who stresses that the 'overarching commitment to become a science has excluded the personal, and specifically the self, from scholarly research and writing' (ibid., 411) in political science. The only space in which personal writing appears in the social sciences are prefaces of books, personal addresses, or essays in honour of a particularly important individuals, along with biographies and autobiographies (ibid., 411). Burnier argues that this is an oversight as the personal is central to the development of the social scientific, and personal writing allows us to capture the subjective elements of research:

Personal writing is hybrid in character, in that it blends and combines an individual's personal story with his or her scholarly story. It is writing that is not strictly scholarly because it contains the personal, and yet it is not strictly personal because it contains the scholarly. Indeed, personal writing in this way seeks to erase the false dichotomy between the scholarly and the personal. (Burnier 2006, 412)

By way of response to this lack of autoethnography in political science Burnier includes elements of personal writing as part of her courses, encouraging students

to write reflective pieces about their own lives in light of what has been covered in the course (ibid., 413).

One of the few examples of autoethnography in political research is the work of Abraham DeLeon. DeLeon explores autoethnography as a methodology, arguing that 'testimony opens new ways of looking at knowledge construction by allowing participation in a subversive form of scholarship' (2010, 399), connecting this to his experiences of systemic racism (ibid., 398). Adding more detail, DeLeon argues that autoethnographies have the potential to be anti-hierarchical and subversive by challenging traditional notions of scholarship based on objectivity (ibid., 407-409). Autoethnographies can act as a form of counter-narrative which explore the everyday actions of activists and scholars alike and can therefore be a form of direct action as encouraged by forms of anarchist theory (ibid., 409).

These examples of the autoethnographic method in educational and political research share three important commonalities: the personal, other voices, and accessibility. In the first instance, in both education and politics, autoethnography introduces the personal while maintaining the link to the wider social context. Autoethnography allows us to consider social phenomena not from a falsely claimed objectivity, but from the acknowledgement and embracing of the effects society has on an individual and vice versa. Finally, autoethnography offers an accessibility for reader through forms of writing which are recognisable and understandable for wider audiences. Therefore, autoethnography in education and politics helps fulfil an important social function as a record of direct action and as a form of writing and research which can be explored and discussed by those outside the academy.

### Hermeneutics, Autoethnography, and Me

This thesis is an interaction of my reading and critique of critical pedagogy, alongside my practices of teaching, informed by and reflective of both the presuppositions I bring to the process of understanding and the traditions in which I am embedded. Importantly, hermeneutics as developed by Ricoeur via Gadamer and Habermas, provides a methodological framework which embraces the interplay of all these elements at once, removing the prioritisation of one over another. The understanding and critique of critical pedagogy in this thesis has been a process of

constant development as a result of my reading, writing, and practice occurring simultaneously. As I have deepened my engagement with the literature around critical pedagogy and sought to develop my teaching practices, I have been confronted with my own presuppositions and the assumptions of critical pedagogy. Through these confrontations of presupposition and tradition I have been challenged to expand my reading further as I seek to better understand my own presuppositions and treat those of critical pedagogy critically.

In combination, Charles Wright Mills' work on sociological imagination and Norman Denzin's interactional moments set the ground for a qualitative research method which includes people and the details of their lives as an integral part of the exploration and explanation of social phenomena. The discussions around analytic and/or evocative autoethnography and the warning regarding redemptive narratives are important considerations in this thesis. As stated at the beginning of the chapter, my thesis is located at the intersection of politics, education and personal experience and entwines theory and practice while addressing the short-comings of critical pedagogy. Autoethnography provides me with a method by which I can combine these theoretical explorations with personal accounts of practice. Building from my initial research questions regarding the social change called for in critical pedagogy and how I enact an approach to education which creates space for me and the students which distances external pressures and in which we can decide how to act for ourselves, my thesis includes the features of autoethnography outlined above. Recalling Anderson's five criteria as a guide, I explicitly connect my experiences of teaching to the wider context of neo-liberal higher education and I am an active member in that context. Furthermore, I am visible in the research itself and my analysis is a reflection on my practice, and my autoethnography is connected to a wider attempt to theorise the shortcomings of critical pedagogy in my context of neo-liberal higher education.

Operating in parallel with autoethnography in this thesis is Foucault's work on care of the self (2005, 2006, 2012). Autoethnography is the study of self in the context of society and is a method through which the experiences of the individual can be used to illuminate and analyse wider social phenomena. In this process of

presenting one's experiences and actions as objects of research the researcher opens herself to criticism. Ellis captures this process of opening and critique as follows: '[...] there's the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written or having control over how readers interpret your story. It's hard to feel that critics are judging your life as well as your work' (2004, xviii). In revealing herself through autoethnography the researcher is inviting others to critique her and her actions and it is in the movement of revealing and critique that there is a parallel to Foucault's care of the self (2005, 2006, 2012). Care of the self is an on-going process of subject (trans)formation in which an individual attends to her own actions and the actions of those around her in order to take responsibility for those actions rather than deferring that responsibility to the expectations of others (Foucault 2005). Practices of self-care have transformed over time from antiquity to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries A.D. and beyond into early Christianity but throughout this transformation they maintained a central tenet: the re-telling of thought and action to an other. In antiquity this other took the form of a singular master to whom the individual would divulge all thoughts, words, and actions from the day, offering these up as objects of self-reflection and critique. While this could take the form of oral conversation Foucault's specific example draws upon the letters of Seneca to Seneca, in which Seneca accounts for his day in great detail and waits to receive the input of his master (2006). By the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries the master figure had changed from a singular individual to a potential network of others, including teachers, family and friends, to whom the individual could re-tell her day.

In both time periods accounting for oneself to oneself and others as part of taking responsibility for one's actions and (trans)formation as a subject meant opening oneself to critique and criticism, much like the autoethnography. In light of this, this thesis is not only an autoethnographic exploration of my critique of critical pedagogy in the context of neo-liberal higher education, it is also a process of self-care. Through my autoethnographic account I am taking responsibility for myself and my actions and invite others into a consideration and critique of those actions. I am inviting the reader to play the role of a master. This thesis and the methodology which underpins it is not only an academic endeavour, it forms part of an active and on-going attempt

at my practices of self care which run parallel to the critique of critical pedagogy and the practice of subversive teaching.

To anchor the discussion of autoethnography and self care in this thesis let us consider the material that constitutes the foundation of my autoethnography. I kept class notes after each seminar over the period of two years, covering twelve different groups on a first-year undergraduate module in British politics. This allowed me to immediately record my impressions of the class and highlight any specific occurrences and interactions which were particularly interesting. Alongside specific instances the class notes provided me with a format in which to capture more general information about the sessions, including details about the rooms, the ambiance, the group dynamics and personal thoughts and emotions. In addition to these written notes I used a voice recorder to capture the entirety of each of the sessions. These recordings were supplementary to the class notes and allowed me to return to specific sessions to confirm events and conversations as they happened.

Autoethnography comes with its own ethical challenges and considerations. In connecting the personal and the other, and critically examining the interplay between me as a researcher and my context, autoethnography deals directly with issues of ethics. In telling my own story I necessarily include the students, and as with the selection of the narrative to be told, I select how to represent those students. Both, Carolyn Ellis and Norman Denzin come to the same conclusion when considering the ethical component of autoethnography, proposing that the researcher writes from an 'ethic of care and concern' (Ellis 2004, 46). Denzin elaborates this initial position stating that ethnographers, autoethnographers included, should always write from an ethic of care, solidarity, community, mutuality, and civic transformation (Denzin 1997, 274-275). Such a stance places my on-going relationships and interactions as a central consideration in the writing and presentation of my autoethnographic work. I must be continually aware of the possible impacts of my work on both me through opening my life to criticism, and on those around me who play an integral role in my interactional experiences. The ethical approval for this thesis started from this position of care and concern and drew on the British Education Research Association (BERA) ethics guidelines (British

Education Research Association 2011<sup>2</sup>) as a practical guide. Although this thesis is a study of my own teaching practice, it necessarily involves the students I work with, and therefore they are participants in the study, if not specific entities of study. To this end, it was important that I went through the ethical considerations and procedures as would usually guide primary research, including voluntary informed consent, full disclosure about the project, right to withdraw, and issues of privacy. Along with the position of care and concern argued for by Denzin and Ellis, these four elements of the BERA guidelines inform my responsibility to the students as participants (ibid., 5).

In the first class with each new group of students I would begin with a brief introduction to the research, explaining that while I was conducting research into my own actions, this could not be isolated from my interactions with the students. Distributing participant information forms and participant consent forms gave the students time to read through an outline of the project and what was being asked of them, and I encouraged them to ask any questions they may have. Being already aware of the relationships of power and authority in play in the classroom, with me in the position of seminar leader and them as students, I recognise that the students may not have had the confidence to ask for clarity and may well have agreed to the research on the basis that someone with a position within the institution was asking them to. However, this was an important step both in terms of compliance with ethical guidelines and for establishing an environment of questioning and challenge. In the majority of the classes at least one student asked a question about the research and their role and my responses clarified points and issues. I made it clear, verbally and in writing, that any consent given at that moment could be withdrawn at any point until the end of the data gathering phase of the research. This process of information sharing, question and answer, and consent forms satisfy the BERA criteria of informed consent to participate in research (ibid., 5), openness in the securing of that consent (ibid., 6), and the right of participants to withdraw (ibid., 6).

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<sup>2</sup> These have recently been updated: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>

One question which was asked in several groups was whether I was going to be using the students to experiment on with my different teaching practices. The issue of detrimental impact arising from participation in research is covered in BERA's guidelines (BERA 2011, 7), and it was important for me to reassure the students that I was not going to be doing anything untoward. I explained that the project started from the premise that all teaching is a political act, and that how we teach and how we engage with each other in the classroom is political. From my position, whether voiced or not, all staff they interacted with in the course of their degree would have a notable teaching practice and would approach them on the basis of this particular understanding of what education is and should be, and how the classroom should function. I explained that what I was aiming to do in this research project was to make my position and approach explicit and to explore the politics involved with this position. I assured them that regardless of the research I was conducting, I had a responsibility as a staff member of the institution to guide them through the module and help them achieve their personal goals. Sometimes there may be a personal tension for me between these different elements of student aspirations and expectations, institutional responsibilities, and personal convictions regarding education and my role, but these tensions are in part what I am exploring in the research.

To deal with issues of privacy and confidentiality (BERA 2011, 7) the class recordings and class notes were both kept in password-protected files with back-ups stored on a password-protected USB drive used only for this project. In the write-up of the gathered data names of participants have been changed to ensure anonymity. Upon completion of this thesis the gathered data will be destroyed.

### 3. Critical Pedagogy and the State

The social change critical pedagogy is working towards is a more democratic state in which citizens play a greater role in the decision making processes which impact them (Giroux 1989; Freire 1998; Darder 2002; Gandin and Apple 2002; 2005; McLaren 2007; Carr 2011; Wheeler-Bell 2014; Liou and Rojas 2016). In predetermining from the start the outcome of social change and the form of social organisation this change is to take, critical pedagogy removes the freedom of people to determine their own forms of organisation through spontaneous autonomous practice. Critical pedagogy's calls for social change may strive for greater equality, democracy and freedom, but this is bound by a framework of the state which ultimately maintains hierarchical relationships and practices of government which give form to subjectivities. There is a parallel to be drawn with neo-liberalism, not in the objectives of the social change pursued, but in the role of certain practices of governmentality which predetermine the subjects' actions. In both critical pedagogy and neo-liberalism education is an arena ridden with external pressures and expectations for all participants. In neo-liberalism the expectation of students is to become productive economic units and consumers, and for teachers to provide an easily replicable and sanctioned set of knowledge. In critical pedagogy the expectation for students is to become critical citizens who take active roles in democracy, and for teachers to be transformative intellectuals who guide students to this end. Whatever the form of these pressures, critical pedagogical or neo-liberal, the student and the teacher are constrained in their actions. Bringing this back to the state, critical pedagogy establishes these constraints through a call for social change which explicitly maintains state structures and practices of government. Therefore, critical pedagogy cannot be a response to neo-liberalism, as although the end-goal might be different, the processes which limit the freedom of the subject, student or teacher, are the same. To better understand this claim, this chapter first establishes critical pedagogy's understanding of democracy and the state through two concepts of democracy. The first is thin democracy, which reduces democracy to voting, and citizenship to consumerism. According to critical pedagogy it is this form of democracy found in the neo-liberal state. The second is thick democracy, the type

sought by critical pedagogy and which promotes citizen participation in all walks of public life. With thick democracy comes a redefinition of the state as a form of social organisation. Connected to critical pedagogy's thick democracy and the state is a specific form of citizenship which establishes the identity and actions of citizens who participate in thick democracy. Critical pedagogy positions itself as a response to neo-liberalism through its calls for thick democracy, a redefined state, and critical citizens, and I close the chapter by drawing on postanarchism to argue that critical pedagogy cannot be a response to neo-liberalism because through thick democracy, the state, and the critical citizen it predetermines the subject, action, and relationships through practices which mirror neo-liberalism.

Democracy and citizenship are two core themes in critical pedagogy's response to neo-liberalism. Although these terms are used repeatedly throughout critical pedagogy there is little attempt to provide a precise definition of either. Indeed, Henry Giroux cautions directly against trying to provide cut-in-stone definitions of either, stating:

Once we acknowledge the concept of citizenship as a socially constructed practice, it becomes all the more imperative to recognise that categories like citizenship and democracy need to be problematized and reconstructed for each generation. (Giroux 1989, 5-6)

Giroux argues that the concepts of democracy and citizenship should not be reified as this would remove the possibility for each generation to critique them from their own context. In order to maintain its critical impetus and belief in the social construction of knowledge, critical pedagogy needs to maintain the possibility of questioning terms which are so central to its calls for social change. However, despite the reluctance to provide a definition of democracy or citizenship critical pedagogy has a clear vision of what each of these concepts entail.

### Democracy in Critical Pedagogy

Paul Carr (2011a; 2011b) and Quentin Wheeler-Bell (2014), demonstrate that the notion of thick democracy in critical pedagogy provides a foundation and approach that can 'create the conditions for a more nuanced, resilient and hopeful form of democracy' (Carr 2011b, 187) which counters neo-liberalism. Building on previous

work which addresses democracy in critical pedagogy (Darder 2002; Gandin and Apple 2002, 2005; McLaren 2007) Carr and Wheeler-Bell develop democratic practice which challenges oppression and aims to create a 'more humane political, cultural and socioeconomic space for all' (Carr 2011b, 188).

Thin democracy is the form of democracy operating in the neo-liberal state which reduces democratic participation to the act of voting, and restricts the teaching of democracy to this understanding (Carr 2011b, 198). The organisation of the neo-liberal state is an important part of maintaining a thin democracy. Critical pedagogy argues that the neo-liberal state is one which is economically flexible and efficient, meaning a small a state as possible allowing maximum freedom for capital flow and accumulation (Carnoy 1998, 10). This means a reduction in the number of state-run public services such as healthcare and education, and an increase in private-run organisations supplying those services on a for-profit basis. The space for capital created through the non-intervention of the state is not to be confused with a lack of state support of capital. In the fallout of the 2008 financial crisis neo-liberal states around the world stepped in to provide bailouts to protect large banks and corporations from failure and collapse (Aronowitz 2009, xi). By reducing the size and interventions of the state neo-liberalism provides a space for capital to flourish at the expense of greater equality between people. The organisation of the neo-liberal small state is accompanied by an array of practices which seek to determine the political role of citizens and the form of education pursued.

Regarding the political role of the citizen in thin forms of democracy, issues are centred on party-political positions with the agenda established through public statements and media coverage, taking no account of citizens' interest or needs. Simultaneously, these discussions focus on reassuring citizens of decisions which have already been made, and reinforce the division between decision-making elites and the public as passive recipients of policy. Rather than playing an active role in the state, the citizen in the neo-liberal state is reduced to a consumer, limiting choice to a choice of which products to buy, which services to pay for, and how to spend personal accumulations of wealth (Giroux 2011, 8). This shifts the understanding of a citizen to such an extent that being a citizen is conflated with loyalty to and participation in the existing social and economic system (Aronowitz 2009, x). Those

who cannot participate in the process of consuming are already economically marginalised, and as a result of the conflation of citizenship with consumer are marginalised even further (Macrine 2009, 1) and defined as both undesirable and disposable (Giroux 2011, 8). With these capital focussed practices of the neo-liberal state come large inequalities between citizens, not only on the basis of economics but also social status. Any attempts to address these inequalities are limited to mild reforms characterised as 'reformism' (Freire 1998, 74). Reformism seeks to introduce gradual changes in the practices and conditions of society in favour of preventing deeper transformations. There may be adjustments to limited welfare and support programmes on an *ad hoc* and piecemeal basis, but the underlying systems which are the root of many inequalities are left untouched. Here reforms are used as a tool to satisfy those who argue for greater equality while avoiding the risk of larger changes which would threaten the privilege of capital and those who hold it (ibid., 74).

When regarding education, critical pedagogy argues that the thin democracy of neo-liberalism operates in myriad ways to restrict the time and space for democratic practice and critical discussion. It does this through limiting the study of democracy to specific subjects (Politics, Social Studies, Citizenship, etc.), limiting curriculum opportunities for the exploration of democracy beyond voting, and uncritical approaches to the study of power, change and social relationships. Alongside this, the curriculum is highly prescriptive and assessment is based on the reproduction of the answer already given during the delivery of the education, further curtailing opportunities for critical thinking and questioning. Addressing the school as an institution, the thin democracy of neo-liberalism tends to isolate schools from their immediate community context through the use of standardised curricula and teaching practices, divorcing institutional education from local issues (Carr 2011b, 198). The aim of thin democracy is to educate uncritical and compliant citizenry who cannot and do not participate in the world around them beyond the act of voting every few years (Aronowitz 2009); thin democracy is small and centralised, and dependent on formal institutional and state structures (Carr 2011b, 198-199). Ultimately, critical pedagogy understands the neo-liberal state as acting to preserve inequality and oppression through the prioritization of capital over people. Critical pedagogy characterises this as the neo-liberal state being against the solidarity of the

people (Freire 1998, 88). In light of this, critical pedagogy explicitly positions itself as a response to neo-liberalism, arguing that the goals and practices of critical pedagogy are desperately needed to push back against the neo-liberal state and the form of citizenship it has established (Aronowitz 2009, xi; Steinberg 2007, x).

Critical pedagogy's response starts from thick democracy, a form of democracy which aims at the increased participation of citizens in the decisions which affect them. Wheeler-Bell writes that thick democracy,

[...] expands the arenas in which individuals are able to collectively organise and deliberate over the processes that affect lives. Thus, systems that expand social power for the most part, are better than systems that limit social power, because they allow individuals greater access to arenas in which they can collectively control social processes. (Wheeler-Bell 2014, 465)

Thick democracy is a form of democracy which encourages and embraces the active participation of citizens. As with thin democracy, thick democracy is associated with a particular form of state organisation. Critical pedagogy too posits a state which is flexible and efficient, but has a completely different understanding of flexibility and efficiency. Critical pedagogy argues for a redefinition of the state as neither an almighty entity overseeing and commanding the population, nor as a tool of the rich for the continuing exploitation of others, as is the case in neo-liberalism (Freire 1998, 35, 89). Rather, the state can be used as a tool for the redistribution of capital, the ending of oppressive practices, and the promotion and protection of oppressed groups. In place of a small state which works to protect and promote capital flow and accumulation, the state in critical pedagogy is used to alter the economy to suit the needs of the people. Economic development is an important element here, but it is turned into a means to support people rather than an end in itself. To this end, the state in critical pedagogy must be redefined by progressive political parties, who, once elected, can begin to use the state differently. These parties must make use of the state to fight in favour of economic development and to limit the size and power of the centralised state through a process of decentralisation (ibid., 35, 78). The decentralisation of the state enables it to be flexible and efficient through greater citizen involvement in more participatory forms of democracy. Thick democracy

sees voting and elections as a component of democracy, but not synonymous with democracy. The thick democracy of critical pedagogy still makes use of forms of representative democracy and party and state structures, but it does not limit itself to these (Aronowitz 1993; Carr 2011a; 2011b; Wheeler-Bell 2014; Liou and Rojas 2016). Thick democracy also includes politics which reaches beyond party-political lines and into all aspects of life, addressing a wide range of issues and settings including concerns of power, diversity, inclusion, oppression and social change (Carr 2011b, 198-199). The aim of thick democracy is to continually include citizens in decisions which impact them ranging from the economy to schooling, to health care and beyond. In contrast to neo-liberal understanding of the citizen as a sporadic voter in elections, in a thick democracy the citizen plays an active role as a check and balance on the decisions of the leading group (Torres 1994, 190).

When addressing education in a thick democracy, critical pedagogy approaches democracy as something not only to be taught in schools but which must be learned through the practice of democracy itself (Freire 1998, 91). In this understanding thick democracy introduces principles of critique, participation and discussion into all areas of education, with staff and students alike taking part in the decision making processes of the school. Here, democracy is not confined to the study of specific subjects as in neo-liberal understandings of education, but is integrated into the very operation of the school. Furthermore, rather than isolating the school from the community and learning through centralised curricula and textbooks, the school is embedded within its community, drawing from this context to question and challenge non-democratic and oppressive practices. In this approach, assessment is no longer the focus of education, instead the concentration is placed on the social and collaborative construction of knowledge and the role this plays in the empowerment of students (Carr 2011b, 199). It is important to note that while Carr (2011a, 2011b), McLaren (2007), Wheeler-Bell (2014) and others emphasise the possibilities of thick democracy in schooling, opportunities for greater participation are not limited to schools: democratic involvement includes participation in a range of civic organisations, trade unions and established political parties (Aronowitz 2008, 78; Gandin and Apple 2005). Critical pedagogy's thick democracy and redefined state is one in which there is the integration of citizens in democratic processes and the

support of an economy and market which represents the interests of oppressed groups not just the needs of capital (Carnoy 1998, 13; Freire 1998, 60). The state protects human rights, provides welfare and health support to its citizens, and provides institutions for the design of, and support for, rationally-based and universally applied laws (Torres 1994, 190-191), and is therefore a solidarity state (Freire 1998, 60).

The thick form of democracy sought by critical pedagogy is based on the values of social justice, equality, and individual freedom, all grounded in tolerance and the rights of others (Freire 1998, 52). Tolerance is not a value which is mechanically transferred through rote-learning and text books but it is developed through practicing being open to others and living with difference rather than isolating oneself. This understanding of tolerance corresponds to critical pedagogy's understanding of democracy as something which needs to be lived rather than taught. Tolerance is rooted in the ability to listen to and interact with those who have a different opinion and to engage in a process of dialogue and understanding with them (ibid., 51). The rights of others operate in tandem with tolerance and require a recognition of the rights of all people regardless of statuses and characteristics which are currently discriminated against. Here, we see the influence of earlier developments in critical pedagogy to extend understandings of oppression beyond class and economic status to include race, gender, and the like. It is these values which are translated into a practice of democracy in which citizens listen and are listened to by one another as they participate in decision making processes which impact them. Furthermore, in encouraging greater participation it is necessary to cultivate values of tolerance towards others and their positions and to maintain respectful and rational dialogue in order to reach agreement. In order to increase democracy, equality, justice and freedom all citizens are encouraged to participate in decision making procedures, involving themselves in a wide range of established organisations, particularly at the local community level. This understanding of democracy found in critical pedagogy as both a set of values and a practice relies upon a closely related concept, citizenship (Macedo 2009, 814).

## The Critical Citizen as Agent of Change

Critical pedagogy's thick democracy is based on challenging and changing oppressive conditions faced by citizens through projects which aim at increasing citizen capability and involvement in decision making processes, most often occurring through or connected to state institutions. The citizen is therefore vital in the practices of democracy sought in critical pedagogy. Like democracy, 'citizen', 'citizenship', and other associated terms are not defined in critical pedagogy, but there are several reoccurring terms like "critical citizen" and "engaged citizen" (Giroux 1992; 2009; Macedo 2009; Macrine 2009; Saltman 2009; Sandlin and McLaren 2010; McDonald and Underhill 2014; Liou and Rojas, 2016). Elaborating on what a critical citizen is, Giroux writes that:

[d]emocracy cannot work if citizens are not autonomous, self-judging, and independent – qualities that are indispensable for students if they are going to make vital judgments and choices about participating in and shaping decisions that affect everyday life, institutional reform and governmental policy. (Giroux 2009, 20-21)

The inclusion of the notion of autonomy here is interesting as it implies something akin to the anarchist understanding of the term, Giroux even calls on the connection between knowledge and the power of self-definition for students and teacher alike as part of the expansion of democratic freedoms (2009, 20). The call is for students to develop a critical agency which enhances their responsibility to others, public life, and democracy (ibid., 21). However, this potential similarity between the critical citizen in critical pedagogy and the subject in anarchism comes to an abrupt end only a sentence later, as the importance of the critical citizen is re-stated as students learning how to govern, and how to be governed (ibid.). The autonomy claimed by Giroux is ultimately limiting, as it restricts the action of critical citizens to *being* critical citizens, whatever particular actions they choose to take in fulfilling that role.

Fernández-Balboa picks up some of the characteristics of the citizen in critical pedagogy in his exploration of self-reflection and praxis: writing of critical pedagogy as a way of life, he writes that '[critical pedagogy] has personal, ethico-moral, and political implications that require knowing oneself; reclaiming one's own voice, identity, and rights; and acknowledging one's social and political responsibilities'

(1998, 47). Both Giroux and Fernández-Balboa bring several important points to the fore regarding the citizen in critical pedagogy. One we are already familiar with, and focuses on the need for the citizen to be aware and reflective of her position in society and her ability to make change. We are reminded of Freire's earliest work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* where the attention is placed on the context of the students and the process of bringing those students to a realisation of their abilities to act on and shape the world around them (Freire 2005, 25). The second highlights the active role the citizen plays; it is not enough to recognise her position in the world, the critical citizen in critical pedagogy must also act from that position.

The citizen is vital in the practices of democracy sought in critical pedagogy, and several scholars warn that increasingly students as citizens do not take responsibility for the maintenance of democracy (Giroux 1989; De Lissovoy 2011; Ross 2017). hooks writes of her concern that in contrast to her upbringing in which there was an awareness that all citizens 'assume responsibility for protecting and maintaining democracy' (2010, 13), there is little discourse about democracy now. As a result, citizens assume that 'living in a democracy is their birthright; they do not believe they must work to maintain a democracy' (ibid., 14). hooks argues that this understanding of democracy is the result of an education system which limits exposure to ideas of democracy and oversimplifies the threats to democracy as coming from an external enemy, not from the internal dismantling of democratic processes or the apathy of citizens. hooks' critique closely mirrors the critique of thin democracy which leaves no place in education or public discourse for larger questions and discussion on the nature of democracy. In place of citizens assuming the continuation of a democracy, hooks argues that democracy must be addressed as something to be struggled for, fought for, and actively sought in the ongoing education of citizens (ibid., 14). To this end it is not enough to teach about democracy in the abstract, but education itself must become a forum in which citizens can become involved in the active process of citizenship and democracy. The education of critical citizens must therefore involve the development of critical capacity through which citizens will 'learn how to hold power and authority accountable' (Giroux 2011, 7). It is education which offers the first opportunities for citizen involvement in thicker versions of democracy which build schools as democratic public spheres (Giroux 2005, 66).

In addition to scholars who focussed on the importance of the critical citizen in critical pedagogy, Johnson and Morris (2010) and Ross (2017) have provided a more systematic appraisal of the skills and aptitudes critical citizens have. These categories are not offered as a final answer to what the critical citizen in critical pedagogy looks like, but are an attempt to bring certain characteristics and roles of the critical citizen into focus. Following an examination of the overlaps between critical thinking, critical pedagogy, and citizenship education Johnson and Morris (2010) distill some of the key elements of an ideal critical citizen, including 'politics', 'social', 'self', 'praxis', 'knowledge', 'skills', 'values', and 'dispositions' (ibid., 90). A critical citizen's knowledge is understood as the knowledge of society and systems of government, knowledge of the connections between culture and power and citizens' positions within these, and knowledge of how to enact change. Major skills of the critical citizen include critical analysis, dialogue, cooperation, reflection, and collective action, while values of the citizen address a commitment against injustice, the valuing of identities, a consideration of self-worth and ethical actions and reflection. Dispositions refer to active questioning of social and public affairs, a social awareness towards self and others, a critical perspective and a motivation to change society (ibid.).

Another example of an exploration of an ideal critical citizen is Ross' discussion of the need for 'dangerous citizenship' (2017). Ross builds from the work of Paulo Freire to argue that citizenship 'embodies three fundamental, conjoined and crucial generalities: *political participation, critical awareness, and intentional action*' (2017, 50, original emphasis). Together these three characteristics and roles of the critical citizen in critical pedagogy connect to the thick democracy of greater participation in decision making processes, as outlined above. The first of these, political participation, does not only mean the act of voting but an engagement with organisations of democracy which prioritise principles of justice, freedom, and equality. Critical awareness refers to Freire's work on *conscientizacao* and involves citizens reaching an understanding of how things are and how they might be different, enabling them to be guided by a vision of the world and an understanding of the possibilities of their actions (ibid., 50). Finally, intentional action concerns

behaviours 'designed to instigate human connection, true engagement with everyday life, meaningful experience, communication, and change' (ibid., 50).

While the critical citizen is the aim in critical pedagogy, there is a recognition that the specific circumstances of many may prevent them from becoming more involved in thick democratic practices. Stanley Aronowitz points to those groups which are formally disenfranchised, such as immigrant populations, and those who are effectively disenfranchised through various obstacles and are unable to fulfil the role of critical citizen which critical pedagogy requires of them (Aronowitz 2008, 77-78). When discussing participation in trade unions for example, Aronowitz argues that critical citizens are vital both to the life of the union and its efficacy. He argues, however, that while it is desirable for citizens to participate in forms of democratic decision making, the reality of many citizens is that long working hours, multiple jobs, and double shifts all 'conspire to exclude them from even the most informal institutions of democratic life' (ibid., 78-79).

### Democracy, the Citizen, and the State

We now consider two practical examples which illustrate critical pedagogy's attempts at thick democracy and the critical citizen, starting with Paulo Freire's involvement in the administration of the Workers' Party in São Paulo, Brazil. When the Workers' Party won municipal elections in the late 1980s, Freire was appointed as the Secretary of Education and viewed the victory as 'a fantastic possibility for at least changing a little bit of our reality' (Williams 1990, cited in Aronowitz 1993, 19). The election of the coalition which formed the Workers' Party brought with it an attempt to redefine the state along democratic socialist lines. In a rejection of the structural adjustment policies used elsewhere in Latin America, the administration in São Paulo sought to forge its own path through reforms to educational policy in partnership with other elements of Brazilian civil society (Torres 1994, 182-183). Freire described the process of transition from a party of elites to a democratic party of the left as a pedagogical endeavour which required a commitment to the rights of others and tolerance (Freire 1998, 52). The Workers' Party represented a radical left administration which sought state reforms in health, transport, and education for the people of São Paulo, and Freire saw his role as starting a process of change

(Aronowitz 1993, 19). Despite the new possibilities Freire saw, he was aware of the economic and political challenges facing the new administration and their impact on schooling: 60-70 percent of students dropped out, most had only four years of schooling, and many teachers lacked training (ibid., 19). Freire began to reform the municipal schools of São Paulo and characterised them as 'popular democratic schools' (ibid., 19) which measured quality through the establishment of class solidarity, and aimed at democratising schools to ensure that the local community elected the school director in order to ensure direct accountability. Furthermore, the democratisation of schools in São Paulo included opening decisions about the school and the curriculum to community involvement: school councils were established which played key decision-making roles regarding education in São Paulo (Freire 1998, 62). Writing about this period in São Paulo, Aronowitz states that Freire's popular-democratic philosophy took on a distinctly practical edge as Freire tried to 'transfer power to the oppressed through education, now framed in the context of state-financed and controlled schooling' (Aronowitz 1993, 20). Reflecting on the period, Freire writes that the process of democratisation of the administration was vital to shift the Worker's Party from its position as a centrally organised avant-garde to one which was a more decentralised party of the masses (Freire 1998, 78).

A more recent example of critical pedagogy's engagement with the state and democracy in action is found in Porto Alegre, Brazil (Gandin and Apple 2002; 2003). Brazilian education is highly centralised, with decisions about curriculum and funding being made by appointed secretaries of state. The Popular Administration sought to change this through the introduction of greater autonomy and citizen participation and control in form of participatory budgeting and the Citizen School. Participatory budgeting involves the active participation of the communities of Porto Alegre in directing the financial resources of the city on the basis of need, pushing back against the prevalence of elite decision making and financing of traditional and authoritarian public policies (ibid., 262). In introducing participatory budgeting the Popular Administration committed themselves to 'enabling even the poorest of its citizens to participate in deliberations over where and how money should be spent' (Gandin and Apple 2002, 260). Gandin and Apple praise the inclusion of participatory budgeting as a demonstration of the thick democracy and the importance of local context and

empowerment of marginalised and oppressed groups called for in critical pedagogy. In the process of participatory budgeting the people of Porto Alegre were involved in an education process based on their empowerment, and the governmental administration has been re-educated around the possibilities for democratic participation:

Popular participation “teaches” the state to better serve the population.

This is a crucial point that is often forgotten in our discussion of the role of democracy in state policy formation and in bureaucratic institutions.

(Gandin and Apple 2002, 262)

While citizen participation in budgeting carries an educational function for all involved, the Popular Administration in Porto Alegre also established a more specifically educational project through the Citizen School. The Citizen School was designed to change the relationship between the state and communities through education (Gandin and Apple 2002, 260-261). The aim of the Citizen School, which worked through the municipal school system, was to develop the possibility for citizens of Porto Alegre to see themselves as active agents in their community. These municipal schools were often set up in the poorest communities and played a vital role in introducing the thick democratic practices called for in critical pedagogy: the secretariate for municipal education sought the ‘active participation of teachers, school administrators and staff, students, and parents in institutionalised forums of democratic decision making’ (ibid., 263). This participation was seen as central in the creation of citizens who are autonomous, critical, tolerant and respectful of the rights of others (ibid., 263-264).

The examples of Freire’s role in São Paulo, and participatory budgeting and the Citizen School in Porto Alegre are held up as models for critical pedagogy’s thick democracy and citizen participation. They demonstrate how democracy and citizenship are linked explicitly to state institutions and structures, and in the case of Citizen School, it is promoted as an active attempt to adjust the relationship between communities and the state through education. In the redefinition of the state through the actions of progressive political parties, critical pedagogy highlights the importance of such reform acts for their potential to transform the state as an operator for equality and freedom (Freire 1998). Both São Paulo and Porto Alegre are

examples of critical pedagogy's reliance on the state as part of the social change it seeks, a reliance reinforced through thick democracy and the critical citizen. The state, although in a more democratic form, is constantly assumed in the discussion of critical pedagogy's suggestions for action and vision for the world. This places strict limits on the social change possible in critical pedagogy as it denies the possibility of other forms of social organisation and fails to address the state as a form of oppression itself. Critical pedagogy seeks social change within the structure of the state which makes society more equal and more democratic, but in not challenging the state itself critical pedagogy fails to address the hierarchical forms of organisation which are a constituent part of the oppression it claims to challenge. With the continuation of the state critical pedagogy also enables the continuation of social relationships based on hierarchy and coercion which limit personal freedom. To understand this argument we need to address anarchism's critique of the state and anarchist conceptions of freedom.

### Never Mind the State: Anarchy in Thought and Practice

One of the scholars to address critical pedagogy's limitations regarding the state is Judith Suissa (2010). Suissa argues that educational philosophers such as Henry Giroux acknowledge the political dimensions of their work and take a critical stance towards their understanding of and approach to education but still 'take the present basic social framework and institutional setup as given' (ibid., 3). While such academics frame their critiques and calls for social change using terms such as "more democratic" and "more participatory", the structural relations of the society we live in and the education we should have are left unexamined. Suissa argues that it is precisely this tendency not to challenge larger social structures which makes critical pedagogy so appealing: there is the comfortable offer of social change for those who pursue principles of democracy without going as far as 'demanding an entire revolution in the way our society is organised' (ibid., 3). Furthermore, academics tackling issues of democracy in education tend to do so by equating education to schooling, and thus placing any debates about education as part of social change within the existing framework of a state (ibid., 4). Suissa does not analyse these arguments any further, but uses them to provide a distinction between progressive

approaches to education like critical pedagogy and anarchist philosophies of education.

Following Suissa's argument my contention in the remainder of this chapter is to show how critical pedagogy cannot be considered as a response to neo-liberalism – a role it casts itself in – precisely because of its reliance on the state through the twin concepts of democracy and citizenship. I draw on the framework of postanarchism following Franks' argument that postanarchism is not a distinct form of anarchism or an attempt to surpass anarchism as a theory and practice of freedom, but is an anarchism with a particular emphasis (2011, 169). In this understanding, postanarchism as part of anarchism argues for freedom as autonomous practice in which the subject attempts to form her identity and subjectivity without reference to those identities established by external agencies of government. In establishing freedom as autonomous practice, postanarchism lays out three interrelated elements, the subject, action, and relationships and I use these three elements to provide a framework for my critique of critical pedagogy and its reliance on the state.

The lessons of poststructuralism introduced by postanarchism argue that the subject is no longer understood as a single, unified and universal being, but is continually formed by overlapping practices of government which seek to direct behaviour (Newman 2016, 19). In the neo-liberal state these various identities can include the employed, the healthy, the criminal, the educated, etc. Freedom in neo-liberalism is the freedom to choose from predetermined identities which form subjectivity, it is this understanding of freedom critiqued by Newman in relation to identity politics, as explored above (2016, 31). While the various practices of governance which form subjectivities are not all found in the institutions of the neo-liberal state, the state is part of this ensemble of power (*ibid.*, 20-23). Rather than providing a response to the neo-liberal state (Aronowitz 2009, xi; Steinberg 2007, x) critical pedagogy proposes a form of state which reinforces practices of governance along the same lines as the state it critiques. Critical pedagogy rejects attempts to cast citizens as consumers, defined by participation in capitalism (Giroux 2011, 8) but instead attempts to cast citizens as critical, defined by their participation in practices of thick democracy and the state. This acts to predetermine the form of the subject in critical pedagogy. Although there is a claim to autonomy, this autonomy is still

bound by the prescription of a form of subjectivity based on the notion of the critical citizen: the subject is free to involve herself in an areas of life and thick democracy she chooses, but she must involve herself. This is similar to the conception of neo-liberal freedom as critiqued in postanarchism: the subject is free to choose which identity(ies) she wishes to conform to, but choose she must. In both cases the prescription of the form of subjectivity limit the possibilities for the subject to form herself apart from these externally defined roles. The critical citizen in critical pedagogy is a form of subjectivity, an identity like any other, which comes with specific modes of behaviour. The critical citizen is a subject who involves themselves in the running of her local school for example, or who participates in a trade union, or in the case of Porto Alegre, is active in local budgetary decisions. As with the subject in neo-liberalism, there is a freedom of choice, but that freedom is reduced to a decision about which facet of the identity of a critical citizen the subject decides to follow in participating in democracy and the state.

Anarchism, and the role of the subject, action and relationships highlighted by authors like Newman, brings to light a second issue regarding the subject in critical pedagogy, critical pedagogy's calls for tolerance and the rights of others as key values in its vision of democracy and the state (Freire 1998, 51-52). These values build from, and find their expression in, the areas of critical pedagogy which sought to develop more nuanced understandings of oppression and move past Freire's original oppressor/oppressed dichotomy to include a wider range of peoples on the basis of race, gender, sexuality and other marginalised identities. In critical pedagogy's vision of democracy these oppressed people are recognised, protected and celebrated. Viewed through postanarchism, the inclusion of ever-greater identities is not connected to the freedom of subjects, but quite the opposite because it gives the state and governing agencies yet more predetermined identity options for the subject to choose from. Furthermore, the acceptance and protection of these identities brings an even greater dependency of the subject on the state as the power which recognises this specific identity (Newman 2016, 31). The same move occurs in critical pedagogy in its calls for tolerance and the rights of others. Oppressed identities are given protection under the democratic state of critical pedagogy introducing a dependency for the subject who choses one of those identities as part

of her formation. We have explored the limits of this postanarchist critique of identities in more detail previously but it is expedient to remind ourselves that while this critique enables us to identify an area of concern in critical pedagogy, it is not without issues.

Action is the second area of postanarchism which frames a critique of critical pedagogy through its reliance on the state. Newman critiques revolutionary politics of the likes of critical pedagogy which rely on the state, dismissing any attempts to organise a disciplined revolution which seizes control of power to implement change from above, 'as though [the state] were a benign instrument to be commanded by a revolutionary will' (Newman 2016, xi). It is precisely this form of metanarrative and use of the state we see in critical pedagogy. The metanarrative of critical pedagogy can be summarised as social change through education for greater democracy, equality, justice, and freedom. Through the concepts of state, thick democracy and critical citizenship we see the actions of subjects, the critical citizens discussed above, predetermined by an externally defined end-goal. There is no space in critical pedagogy for the critical citizen to decide her own action. Social change as greater democracy, equality, justice and freedom form the already decided on end-point and the role of the critical citizen is to help society get there. Furthermore, in critical pedagogy's concept of thick democracy and a redesigned state a crucial role is to be played by the reinvented political party. Critical pedagogy may not seek a highly centralised and strong state, but it is the role of the political party to decentralise both itself and state apparatus as part of the process of bringing about social change. Critical citizens are given responsibility as part of this process, but it cannot happen without the support of the party and changing state apparatus.

There is also a temporal element to this critique of action. Anarchism argues for an immediate concern with the present, the here-and-now (Newman 2016, 12), following the same line of argument as found in Gustav Landauer's work from a century earlier: if people constitute themselves as a people apart from the state, the state will, at the same time, cease to exist (Landauer 2010). Newman in particular is highly critical of revolutionary politics which place the end goal in some indeterminate distance from the present (Newman 2016, 11-12), a temporal dimension found in critical pedagogy's action of education for social change. Critical

pedagogy argues for the education of critical citizens and the redefinition of the state at the hands of a progressive political party as the *start* of a process of social change. Only once a progressive political party is elected can the process of changing the state apparatus and opening citizen participation in thick democracy begin. Simultaneously, only once people have been educated as critical citizens can they begin to take part in thick democratic practices which are necessary to bring about social change. There are two anarchist objections to this. One, critical pedagogy's understanding of critical citizenship as something to be learnt fixes an end point for the action. We have already seen anarchism's distancing of such fixed end-goals in the discussion above. Two, the critical citizen and the changing of state institutions and practices is the social change to come, they are the promise of social change at a future point in time once other conditions have been met. By placing social change as something to be obtained in the future, critical pedagogy cannot account for the possibilities of change in the everyday present. As with the formation of the subject, critical pedagogy's aim for action to bring about a democratic state in which there is greater democracy, equality, justice and freedom predetermines the social change sought. In so doing critical pedagogy removes the freedom of the subject to act beyond the boundaries of participation and critical citizenship towards its set vision of the state and social change.

Given anarchism's rejection of end-goals, there is no suggestion for what should replace the state. The concentration is instead on freedom as autonomous practice in the present through which the subject refuses attempts to categorise her and define her actions and relationships, and acts for herself in the creation of her subjectivity and social organisation. This is a rejection of critical pedagogy's state, democracy and critical citizen as a response to neo-liberalism. To take this anarchist critique of critical pedagogy further and bring it into contact with education, the focus of this thesis, in the next chapter I turn my attention to the teacher in critical pedagogy.

## 4. Critical Pedagogy and The Teacher

The previous chapter ended with the argument that critical pedagogy's predetermined thick democratic state as the aim of social change limits its ability to respond to the challenges of neo-liberalism and neo-liberal education. This chapter examines the teacher in critical pedagogy and argues that, as with the state, critical pedagogy predetermines the role and relationships of the teacher in a way which limits possibilities for social change. By painting a very specific picture of who a teacher should be and what at a teacher should be doing, critical pedagogy denies teachers the opportunity to decide autonomously what kind of teacher they would like to be and how they would like to enact their vision of social change in the classroom. In critical pedagogy, the teacher should be a transformative intellectual who constantly works towards critical engagement with the world and strives to become a critical citizen working for a thick democracy. Consequently, the teacher in critical pedagogy is meant to have a specific relationship with students in which she actively encourages students to develop into critical citizens. To explore how this predetermined role and relationships of the teacher limit both personal and social change I turn to Foucault's notion of care of the self. In contrast to the predetermined relation between the student and the teacher found in critical pedagogy, care of the self promotes an open-ended and flexible understanding of the individual and her relationships. I argue that care of the self is a vital part of enacting anarchist (trans)formations of the self and relationships which can subvert the personal and inter-personal relationships of the state.

### The Teacher as an Intellectual

From critical pedagogy's point of view, the neo-liberal approach to teachers is characterised by deskilling (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987; Kincheloe, Steinberg and Villaverde 1999; Giroux 2006; Steinberg and Kincheloe 2006; Apple 2007; Kincheloe 2007; 2008; 2011; Hill et al. 2015; Saltman 2015). Deskilling is a process in which a teacher is transformed into a technocrat who delivers an educational product and is created as part of a workforce which is easily replicable and replaceable. The deskilling process occurs at different points through the teacher's development and

practice. In the first instance deskilling occurs at the level of preservice teacher education in which future teachers are introduced to a particular discourse surrounding their subject (Gallagher 1999; Kincheloe 2008). By developing teacher education which broaches no discussion of the subject area writ large, preservice teachers are expected to immerse themselves uncritically in the dominant tradition of the subject (Gallagher 1999, 73). In doing this preservice teachers are inculcated into the accepted and acceptable understandings of a subject, understandings which are further reinforced through standardised content and delivery practices, constraining the teacher's autonomy and creativity in exploring the subject. In addition to the discourse of their subject areas, preservice teachers are also taught specific pedagogies of content delivery, a practice that reduces the process of education to a series of rules and a common format which can be followed regardless of the individual teacher, the students, and their context (Kincheloe 2011, 58). The standardisation of subject content and curriculum materials which not only set the outcomes for particular sessions but are 'teacher-proof materials' (Kincheloe 2008, 126) which provide instructions to be followed by the teachers, further removes teachers' professional autonomy (Apple 1985; Aronowitz 2008; Saltman 2015). With highly predetermined curricula and the heavy emphasis on final examinations, the space in which the teacher can use her creativity and judgement becomes ever smaller (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987, 28). In this approach teacher autonomy and the practice of professional skills and creativity are discouraged by educational institutions for fear of the potential negative impact on the measurable outcomes associated with the ranking of individual students and institutions alike (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987, 28-29; Aronowitz 2008, xiii). The process of deskilling removes the teacher as an individual from the process of education. The individual teacher is no longer relevant as she can be swapped out at whim with another deskilled individual capable of delivering the same content in the same way. Teaching as a profession is reduced to a technical process of content delivery rather than an active engagement with content and students. The deskilling of teachers goes hand in hand with neo-liberal educational approaches which reduce education to an economic exchange, with the student being the consumer and the teacher being the provider. There is an attempt to remove any variation, creativity, or autonomy from the educational

process to ensure a uniform product which is replicable within institutions and comparable between them. However, these are attempts and there are no guarantees that they will succeed but as I argue later, there always exists the possibility of autonomous practice.

Teachers within critical pedagogy are seen as part of a broader category termed 'cultural workers' (Giroux 1992). Giroux writes that traditionally the concept of the cultural worker has been taken to refer to 'artists, writers, and media producers' (ibid., 5), those professionals that are directly connected to what is ordinarily considered culture in the narrow sense of the term. He expands the concept to include those working in as diverse areas as 'law, social work, architecture, medicine, theology, education and literature' (ibid.). Each of these professions play a role in the creation, analysis, and comprehension of culture, and in the political intent to create and mobilise knowledge in the pursuit of social change (ibid). In critical pedagogy, teachers play a key role in this broader collection of cultural workers as it is through education that cultures can be created, reproduced, examined and critiqued and it is through this process that oppressed groups are empowered to become critical citizens.

The broad concept of cultural workers is closely connected to the concept of the intellectual. The notion of an intellectual is constructed of two parts; the first concerns the way in which an individual approaches knowledge and the second considers how that individual uses their knowledge. Exploring the notion of an intellectual's approach to knowledge, Aronowitz and Giroux contrast an intellectual individual with an intelligent individual. They define an intelligent individual as someone who has a depth of knowledge within a specific field and can make use of that knowledge in a strict, technical application, but who lacks the ability to connect that knowledge to other areas or their own wider social context (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987, 33). Freire is highly critical of these individuals:

Intellectuals who memorise everything, read for hours on end, slaves to the text, fearful of taking a risk, speaking as if they were reciting from memory, fail to make any concrete connections between what they have read and what is happening in the world, the country, or the local community. (Freire 2001, 34)

Freire criticises the technical approach to knowledge which reduces it to nothing more than memorisation and repetition and argues that when knowledge is approached in this way it is impossible to connect the memorised facts with the social world as the facts without context are empty words (Freire 2001, 34). The critique is an extension of Freire's earlier work regarding banking education and the emptiness of student rote learning, where students learning to repeat the facts is more important than the significance of the information (Freire 2000, 71). In contrast, an intellectual is someone who 'has a breadth of knowledge about the world, who views ideas in more than instrumental terms, and who harbours a spirit of inquiry that is critical and oppositional, one that is true to its own impulses and judgements' (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987, 33-34). In order to be an intellectual, it is not enough to simply have a breadth of knowledge, the individual must also fulfil a social function by connecting that knowledge to social concerns that 'deeply affect how people live, work, and survive' (Giroux 1992, 82). To truly be considered as intellectuals, cultural workers such as teachers must act with moral compassion and practical politics in an attempt to bridge the gap between theory and practice, and in doing so take on an inherently public position and role in shaping society (Giroux 2011, 65). In critical pedagogy the ideal teacher is an intellectual who is able to connect her knowledge to the world, be that her students' immediate contexts, issues of the local community, or issues which reach further afield.

With the concept of teachers as cultural workers and intellectuals, Aronowitz and Giroux further split teachers into four categories: the teacher as a hegemonic intellectual, as an accommodating intellectual, as a critical intellectual, and as a transformative intellectual (Aronowitz and Giroux 1987, 36-40). It is important to note that these four categories are considered ideal-types and that Giroux and Aronowitz state that educators can, and indeed do, move across and between these groups (ibid., 36). 'Hegemonic Intellectuals' are identified as those who define themselves by 'the forms of moral and intellectual leadership they provide for the dominant groups and classes (ibid., 39). They see their role as actively providing a homogeneity of culture, politics, and ethics in line with expectations and wishes of the dominant class. 'Accommodating Intellectuals' are those who tacitly support the dominant classes and prevailing social reality, but are not aware of their position in

this process. In contrast to 'Hegemonic Intellectuals' they 'do not define themselves as self-conscious agents of the status quo' (ibid., 39), but unquestionably conform to the expectations they are subject to from the dominant classes. Those characterised as 'Critical Intellectuals' are 'ideologically alternative to existing institutions and modes of thought' (ibid., 37), but do not connect this stance to their wider social position and function. The result of their approach is that critical intellectuals distance themselves from the political nature of their work, leading them to a point at which their critique can become rhetoric.

The final and most important category of the teacher in critical pedagogy is the 'Transformative Intellectual'. Transformative intellectuals not only adopt a position of criticism, as critical intellectuals do, but take active steps to ensure that this criticism is translated into action for change:

Educators need to encourage students by example to find ways to get involved, to make a difference, to think in global terms, and to act from specific contexts. The notion of teachers as transformative intellectuals is marked by a moral courage and criticism that does not require them to step back from society but only to distance themselves from being implicated in those power relations that subjugate, corrupt, exploit, or infantilise. (Giroux 1992, 106)

Through public engagement and action, transformative intellectuals aid in the creation and maintenance of a 'democratic public culture' (Giroux 1992, 105), in which neo-liberalism can be questioned and challenged, and change can be fostered. Through this engagement a teacher as a transformative intellectual can challenge oppressive practices in her immediate context and in doing so model this challenge for her students. This public role of the teacher is not restricted to the classroom. Teachers in critical pedagogy 'must reach beyond the boundaries of the classroom, into communities, workplaces, and public arenas where people congregate, reflect, and negotiate' (Darder 2009, 158). Teaching in critical pedagogy is understood as a form of social criticism that provides the basis for social change (Giroux, 1992, 105). In reaching beyond the classroom and engaging in their relations to the wider world, teachers as intellectuals perform a public service. Integrating herself into her community the transformative intellectual simultaneously lives and enhances the

democratic values of greater participation. Giroux summarises critical pedagogy's challenge to teachers as transformative intellectuals:

This is a call to transform the hegemonic cultural forms of the wider society and the academy into a social movement of intellectuals intent on reclaiming and reconstructing democratic values and public life rather than contributing to their demise. (Giroux 1992, 106)

The transformative intellectual outlined here is radically different to the deskilled teachers in neo-liberal institutions criticised by critical pedagogy. In neo-liberal education intelligent deskilled teachers have their creativity stripped from them and are left with an approach to education which is bound by strict rules and specific methodological processes, which are accepted without challenge. This is akin to Freire's critique of the banking method and Aronowitz and Giroux's portrait of the accommodating intellectual. By contrast, the transformative intellectual actively engages with and challenges the context in which they teach, both within and beyond the classroom. Fischman argues that most teachers have the potential to be transformative intellectuals, they only need a starting point to realise this possibility:

Potentially, a great number of teachers could be committed intellectuals, based on the functions that they could perform and not on any essential value or characteristic. For these teachers the starting point will very likely be an attempt to understand how the multiple forms of exploitation are affecting his/her students, their families and communities, and him or herself, and the institution within which s/he works. (Fischman 2009, 213)

Here Fischman emphasises the importance of the action for the teacher and suggests students and their community as the starting point for teacher engagement. Simultaneously, the role of the transformative intellectual is presented as something attainable and easily within the grasp and ability of many teachers, removing the sense that teachers need to undergo a great change to fulfil the ideal.

## Relations in Education

A fog of forgetfulness is looming over education. Forgotten in the fog is that education is about human beings. And as schools are places where human beings get together, we have also forgotten that education is

primarily about human beings who are in relation to one another.

(Noddings et al. 2010)

This quote captures the expansion of interest in the role of relations in education and critical pedagogy (Sidorkin 2002; 2003; Stengel 2003; Thayer-Bacon 2003; Bingham and Sidorkin 2010; Margonis, 2011; Biesta 2012; Chinnery 2012; Noddings, 2013; Mayo 2015) which not only expands critical pedagogy's big tent but also adds a greater depth to the understanding of the role of the teacher as a transformative intellectual. The teacher in critical pedagogy acts as a model and guide in challenging oppressive social practices and assisting students to become critical citizens. The ability of the teacher to fulfil this role is closely connected to the relationships the teacher has to others and knowledge.

To understand the recent turn to relations in critical pedagogy, it is first necessary to outline what is meant by the rather ambiguous term "relation". Barbara Thayer-Bacon offers a good starting point by highlighting that "relation", its plural "relations", and its variants "relationship/s" and "relational" are used in a wide variety of ways (2010, 165). The common theme that binds the different uses of the term relation is connection; we use them to refer to a functional interaction, a logical relationship between terms, a personal relationship between individuals, the social relationships of citizens to their country. Likewise, we use the term to signify and to demonstrate empathy with others and as a way to compare experiences (ibid.).

Writing about student-teacher relations Nel Noddings draws a distinction between teachers and instructors: whereas a good teacher always recognises the importance of her relationship with the students, the instructor does not consider fostering a relationship to her students as part of her role and instead focuses on correct answers and 'obtains an impressive number of correct responses from students on test' (Noddings 2010, vii). Indeed, the student-teacher relationship in critical pedagogy is of paramount importance for the enhancement of the learning experience for both teacher and student because 'the reactions of students invited into a caring relation often include increased interest in the subject matter (if she is interested, it must be worth exploring); enhanced self-esteem (if she sees something in me, I must be worth something); and concern for others (if she cares about them, perhaps I should too)' (ibid.). In order to achieve a good relationship between teacher

and student, the teacher must show respect to students and allow them the space to bring their personal and cultural identities into the classroom (Margonis 2011, 434). Margonis argues that the teacher must work to bring formal education in line with the array of other educational events happening in students' lives (Margonis 1999, 2011). In doing so, it is possible to create spaces in which students relate to one another and work collectively to address social issues which are borne of their own contexts and relationships both in and outside the classroom. This requires the teacher to prioritise relations over the competing institutional and national pressures of assessment, and to prioritise relations over a dogmatic adherence to a political position (Margonis 2011, 438).

While some scholars highlight the importance of relations in the classroom, be that between teacher and student or student and student, others make the case for the importance of relationships to strangers we do not know personally. Hutchinson argues that an important part of education examines the relations we have with people in the wider world. Through technology and global commerce we now have immediate access to people all over the world. Connected via webs of production and consumption, it is no longer enough to only consider our relations with those who we have face-to-face contact with (Hutchinson 2010, 76) but we now also need to consider strangers and education plays a vital role in helping to conceptualise these relations. As a starting point for exploration of our relation to strangers Hutchinson suggests the three Cs: care, concern, and connection (ibid., 84-84). Hutchinson explains:

*“Why should we care? How can we demonstrate our concern? What is our connection? Take these questions and apply them to issues of sweatshop labour and instead of ignoring the topic, one asks: Why should I care that a child ten years of age works twelve-hour shifts in intolerable factory conditions? How can I, as a student, demonstrate that I am concerned about these labour practices (perhaps boycott, demonstrate, write letters to the corporation)? And what is the connection between my going to see a multimillionaire ballplayer and the company whose product he endorses paying unliveable wages to its overseas workers? (Hutchinson 2010, 84-85)*

Hutchinson's questions regarding our relationship to strangers are an important addition to other scholars' work as they can help teachers to address social concerns which go beyond the students' immediate context. One example of the attempt to include the consideration of strangers is found in a critical exploration of the fast-food industry illustrated by Love (2011). Students may like fast-food, attracted by a combination of taste, price, and advertising, but be ignorant of the production of the final product which involves a vast array of strangers ranging from those who work in fast-food restaurants for a minimum wage to those who grow the vegetables and produce the meat (Love 2011, 440-441). Starting from the immediate context of the students who like fast-food, the teacher in critical pedagogy can follow the three Cs to help students to critically examine how their choices of food impact strangers: should the students care that restaurant and farm workers alike are paid so poorly for their labour? How can students demonstrate their concern about the exploitative practices that result in the low end price of the product? And what connections are there between the students enjoying fast-food and the lives of others? The critical examination of the issue cannot stop here. The care, concern and connection to strangers must also extend to other fast-food customers who do not eat fast-food for the taste or convenience but because it is the only cheap source of food available to them (ibid.). These far-reaching discussions which go beyond a reductive position of outright opposition to fast-food open the way to consider more complex and nuanced understandings of how students and teachers alike can practice opposition. We are reminded of Giroux's discussions of resistance and rebellion in which he explores students who act out against school rules: his argument follows that by rebelling against school dress codes students are simultaneously reproducing wider societal practices of fast fashion and the sexualisation of young women (Giroux, 1983). Opposition to oppressive practices as encouraged by the teacher as a transformative intellectual must be aware of and engage with these nuanced considerations of care, concern and connection in collaboration with students. In this instance, it is the role of the teacher in critical pedagogy to encourage students to think about all of these relationships and in fulfilling her role as a transformative intellectual, to work with the students to address and change the issues raised while

being cautious not to reinforce another set of oppressive practices operating in a different environment beyond the classroom.

Giroux argues that both ethics and politics are present in the relationship between the student and teacher, and that ethics is the sense of our own personal and social responsibilities for the other in the struggle against inequality. The role of the teacher in this relationship is to actively enter the struggle through education and other means and to challenge inequality, social injustice and lack of freedom and to expand democratic and human rights in her own classroom practice and in her wider community (Giroux 1992, 74). Drawing on her own experiences of education bell hooks recalls that it was the teachers with this ethical commitment who had the most impact on her. She writes that '[t]hey were the teachers who were concerned with the integration of thinking and learning information. They were the committed teachers who wanted to see students grow and self-actualise' (hooks 2010, 34).

Alongside this relation to others and its ethical component, scholars on relations in education also highlight the importance of a particular relation to knowledge. Writing as part of the big-tent of critical pedagogy, these scholars understand knowledge as socially constructed and reject a notion of knowledge that is conditioned by strict relationships of hierarchy, discipline, and authoritarianism (Stengel 2010, 141). Barbara Thayer-Bacon describes this understanding as 'relational (e)pistemology' (2003), emphasizing that knowledge is 'something that is socially constructed by embedded and embodied people who are in relations with each other and their greater environment' (Thayer-Bacon 2010, 165). By viewing knowledge as something that arises from and within our relations, we are invited to consider a different role of the teacher. Rather than being a transferor of pre-arranged and unquestionable information, the teacher, along with her students, is an active participant in the creation of knowledge. As mentioned previously, critical pedagogy rejects the notion of knowledge as something that is transferred and accumulated (Giroux 1992, 98) and claims that educators in traditional approaches to education are 'transformed from an intellectual to a technician' (Aronowitz 2008, xiii). In contrast, critical pedagogy calls for a relation to knowledge that views it as constructed as part of our relations with others and sees the teacher as having a particular relationship to knowledge that creates space for others to enter into the

production of knowledge as part of an ongoing process. As Freire states in a chapter entitled 'Teaching Is Not Just Transferring Knowledge': 'to know how to teach is to create possibilities for the construction and production of knowledge [...]. In speaking of the construction of knowledge, I ought to be involved practically, incarnationally, in such constructions and be involving the students also' (Freire 2001, 49-50).

Although critical pedagogy's approach to the relations of the teacher have been presented here in three parts, they are not stand-alone relationships, but interwoven with one another. A teacher's relationship to knowledge cannot exist without her relationship to the other. Without acknowledging the other and her position within the classroom and the wider community, the teacher cannot carry a notion of knowledge that is based on the belief in its production as the result of interactions with others. Likewise, the recognition of the teacher's own position in regard to broader society and social change cannot occur without the relation to others that allows for their voices and experiences to be heard.

### Postanarchism and Subjectivity

Having outlined the understanding of the teacher in critical pedagogy, I can now establish my critique through the lens of anarchism and the emphasis on the subject, action, and relationships. Once again, I use the shorthand of 'postanarchism' here not in distinction from anarchism, but as a way to quickly refer to the illumination of the subject, action and relationships. As with the anarchist critique of critical pedagogy and the state, I proceed by addressing these three key elements.

Postanarchist understandings of the formation of subjectivity are embedded in Foucault's work on governance and the formation of the subject according to multiple and overlapping identities, each of which come with expected modes of behaviour (Newman 2016, 19). These practices of government are sometimes forms of power of the state and its agencies, for example schools and security services, and are sometimes non-state agencies such as corporations. No matter who or what the governing agencies are, their aim is to conduct the behaviour of subjects in identifiable ways which can be categorised, understood and controlled for (Foucault 2009, 267). I have previously critiqued critical pedagogy on the basis of the prescriptive formation of subjectivity, arguing that rather than offering a response to

neo-liberalism, critical pedagogy utilises similar practices by offering the subject choice within a defined realm of action. In this section of the chapter I apply this critique to education and demonstrate that in its treatment of teachers, critical pedagogy establishes a defined identity which is an element in the formation of the subject. The identity of the teacher in critical pedagogy is established as a transformative intellectual, and subjects are expected to conform to this formation of their subjectivity in the pursuit of critical pedagogy's vision of social change. The identity of the transformative intellectual is comprehensively established through contrasts with other teaching identities like the hegemonic intellectual and the critical intellectual. The formation of subjectivity is not only confined to the teacher when she is in the education institution, but is to form an important part of her identity through her entire life. Here, critical pedagogy abandons the choice contained in neo-liberal identities in which the subject is presented with a range of identities to pick from. Critical pedagogy presents no such range, firmly pinning its colours to the mast: if you want to be considered a teacher in critical pedagogy, you must act as a transformative intellectual, no other identity is permitted. This attempt to form the subject of the teacher through the identity of the transformative intellectual leaves the subject in critical pedagogy with no space in which to form her own subjectivity. Like the critical citizen, the subject as a transformative intellectual has a wide range of actions available to her to as ways to critically engage with the world around her, but this engagement is still bound by the broader notion of subjectivity established for her. Her subjectivity is already predetermined by critical pedagogy as a transformative intellectual.

The realm of action defined for the teacher in critical pedagogy is connected to this very specific and limiting form of subjectivity. Action in critical pedagogy can be approached through action in the classroom, and action in the community. In the classroom the teacher is to deliberately introduce the context of the students and use this as the starting point of education. In starting from the students' context, the teacher helps to create a critical distance between the students and their immediate community, helping them to realise the role they can play as critical citizens. Ultimately, this approach aims to achieve critical pedagogy's goal of a society with greater democracy, equality, justice and freedom. We know from the previous

chapter that this end-goal predetermines the action of the critical citizen as subject, an outcome equally applicable to the role of the teacher. The teacher in critical pedagogy takes on a dual aspect. Not only is the teacher an identity on which practices of government operate giving form to the subject, the teacher is also part of a governing agency which enacts practices of government for the formation of others. Working in education the teacher is part of educational practices which explicitly seek to create students as critical citizens through the introduction and reinforcement of specific behaviours. The classroom is not the only domain of action for the teacher in critical pedagogy because she is also expected to strive for social change in her wider community. In this element of her role the teacher takes on some of the identity of a critical citizen, actively participating in democratic processes and teaching the students what critical citizenship is by example. In and outside of the classroom, the action of the teacher is decided not by the teacher herself but by critical pedagogy. To be a teacher is to be a transformative intellectual and to act for social change is to bring about greater democracy, equality, justice and freedom.

Through the formation of the subject as a transformative intellectual and the realm of action defined for her, the teacher in critical pedagogy has clearly established relationships with others. The teacher as a transformative intellectual carries the responsibility to help shape the student as a critical citizen. As a result, the teacher will always be in a position of power regarding the student and this power will always determine their relationship. In contrast, anarchism argues for the spontaneous relationships which are not dependent on externally imposed formations of subjectivity, but are born out of the free autonomous practice of the subject in the present moment (Newman 2016, 129).

The anarchist critique of critical pedagogy and the state through the subject, action and relationships only critiques but offers no response or solution. This critique is important as it establishes the limit of critical pedagogy as a response to neo-liberalism, a role critical pedagogy has cast itself. The anarchist critique of the teacher in critical pedagogy however, offers a response through autonomous practice. Anarchism offers a space for freedom as autonomous practice in which the subject refuses the formation of her subject by external expectation and creates space to form her own subjectivity. Taken to its extreme this position may conclude

that any form of institutionalised education will cast the teacher in a particular role with particular expected behaviours, therefore to pursue anarchist autonomous practice institutionalised education should be removed. This would culminate in a position akin to Ivan Illich's position in *Deschooling Society* (1995) in which institutionalised schooling is removed in favour of informal networks of learning. However, it is important to remember that anarchism is a practice for *now*, and following Franks (2011) is approached here as a particular response of a particular subject in a specific context. While a conclusion of anarchism may suggest deschooling, such a position does not assist me in my critique of critical pedagogy, nor in understanding and following my own practices in the context of neo-liberal higher education. The question of deschooling brings us back to the earlier discussion of the role of direct opposition in anarchism more broadly, and in Newman's work specifically. If we were to follow Newman's construction of postanarchism without question, action entirely alien to the dominant system, in this case removing ourselves from educational institutions to practice education elsewhere and differently, would be entirely appropriate. However, following this path would contravene one of the central tenets of anarchism, freedom as the freedom of all. As Bakunin wrote, 'I am free only when all human beings surrounding me – men and women alike – are equally free' (Bakunin 1964c, 267). In this instance opposition from within existing educational institutions has an important role to play in autonomous practice which operates as part of the freedom of self and others. Such an approach to opposition within existing educational institutions does not require the direct opposition Newman is critical of, but neither does it preclude opposition and subversive action from within.

The postanarchist position is that freedom is the starting point for the subject and an ever-present possibility in the subject's present context, not something to be learnt or achieved as part of social change. Anarchism is a politics of autonomy in which freedom is understood as a relationship one cultivates in the present (Newman 2016, 129). This anarchist freedom is not only a refusal of practices of government which form the subject, it is an active pursuit of self-government and relationships which are no longer solely determined by external factors (Landauer 2010, 214). In

the context of this thesis, it is the pursuit of self-government and relationships which are not determined by critical pedagogy through the identity of the transformative intellectual. To give greater depth to the postanarchist notion of self-governance and relationships to others, I turn to Foucault's work on care of the self.

### Care of the Self

Michel Foucault's lectures from the early 1980s lay the ground for an understanding of the teacher's relationship to herself and the connection to others. To take our understanding of this relationship to others further, I draw on Foucault's work on *parrhesia*, the practice of speaking truth to others, and connect it to teaching practice in the classroom as the practical expression of care of the self and others.

In his late lectures at the Collège de France Foucault turned his attention to exploring the notion of care of the self, an idea often dismissed as being simply egotistic in more recent times (Foucault 2005, 12-13). Foucault argues that in antiquity and through to the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D the notion of care of the self was closely linked to the now more famous delphic precept of 'know thyself' (ibid., 4) but while know thyself went on to form the backbone of much of Western political thought, care for the self fell into obscurity (ibid., 4-5). Given the importance of care of self, Foucault explores care of the self and its development over time to better understand its impact today.

First, care of the self 'is an attitude towards the self, others, and the world' (Foucault 2005, 10) and concerns our relations with others and our behaviour in the world. Care of the self is a principle which is profoundly connected to how we live our lives, and not a method to be deployed in specific situations. Second, care of the self also 'implies a certain way of attending to what we think and what takes place in our thought' (ibid., 10). Third, care of the self is not an aimless process in which we pay attention to our thoughts and actions, but is aimed at our transformation:

[...] the notion of epimeleia [care] does not merely designate this general attitude or this form of attention turned on the self. The epimeleia also always designates a number of actions exercised on the self by the self, actions by which one takes responsibility for oneself and by which one

changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself. (Foucault 2005, 10-11)

Care of the self can be approached as a prefigurative spiral in which by considering ourselves and our actions, and others and their actions, we are able to reflect and act again in the constant pursuit of relationships which enable care of the self and the transformation of subjectivity. Care of the self presents us with an understanding of the relationship to self and transformation which is established without end, a process of transformation which has the open-ended formation of the self as its aim rather than the particular and predetermined self of the transformative intellectual. The distinction between the two may appear subtle, but it is an important one. The transformative intellectual is a form of subjectivity decided in advance and externally of the subject herself. Critical pedagogy provides a clear understanding of how the transformative intellectual is to act and the relationships she is to have. The teacher's role is reduced to the choice of the specific actions she takes whilst being formed as a transformative intellectual. In contrast, care of the self promotes the formation of the subject not along predetermined lines and to external expectations, but as a process of (trans)formation undertaken *by* the subject and *for* the subject. Care of the self opens the space for the subject not to pick from a range of practices and behaviours already established by critical pedagogy under the banner of the transformative intellectual, but to take responsibility for her own formation apart from this externally defined identity.

Care of the self in antiquity was presented as a principle which applied to and was pursued by the young. The aim of care of the self was to prepare the young for their advancement into maturity and was particularly targeted at correcting failings in Athenian education (Foucault 2005, 75). Care of the self concerned both the education and transformation of the subject and consisted of pedagogical and psychological elements. The pedagogical element concerned 'the transmission of a truth whose function is to endow any subject whatever with aptitudes, capabilities, knowledge, and so on, that he did not possess before' (ibid., 408). The use of the pronoun 'he' is telling here, as care of the self was a gendered pursuit, reserved for specific boys in Athenian society. This pedagogical element was complemented by a psychological one which aimed not at the endowing of abilities, but at the

transformation of the young men as subjects (ibid., 408). Those who practiced care of the self in antiquity were young men and members of the Athenian aristocracy who would go on to govern the city state. In spite of the importance of their future occupation, the education they received did not prepare them to fulfil their future role. It was considered to be the duty of young Athenian aristocrats to care for themselves in order to care effectively for others through good governance but the Athenian education did not teach the young men how to govern themselves and consequently could not help them to govern the city as adults (ibid., 37, 72, 175).

Care of the self in antiquity was concerned with a particular form of reflexivity of the subject, a particular form of the subject's reflection on thought itself. In antiquity this reflexivity came in the form of memory exercises which strove to access the truth of actions and thought through a process of recognition (Foucault 2005, 460). Such reflection was crucial in being able to consider one's thoughts and actions throughout the past day, review the choices made, and consider what could be done differently in future scenarios. This was an endeavour in which the individual gave an account of his day through the use of an active period of reflection at the end of the day before going to sleep, or through the use of a diary to record the day's events.

The final element of care of the self in antiquity ties several of these characteristics together. In order for the young man to go through the corrective function in preparation for governance, and in order for him to be able to truly account for his day, he needed a master. The master was a philosopher who would play the pedagogical and psychological role needed to teach the young Athenian care of the self (Foucault 2005, 58). The mastership took on three different models. First, there was the mastership by example: a master was required to model the appropriate behaviours for the individual. Second, mastership by competence, 'that is to say, quite simply, of the person who passes on knowledge, principles, abilities, know-how, and so on, to the younger person' (ibid., 128). And third, was the mastership of dilemma and discovery, which was Socratic in character and operated through on-going dialogues in which the student would be questioned about problems they face or might face and led to realise and consider his response (ibid., 128). The relationship between individual and master maintained a strict hierarchy, with the master being responsible for the development of self care in the individual, without

being transformed in this process himself. Despite the non-prescriptive concepts underpinning care of the self as a process of self-formation, the practice throughout antiquity was aimed at the formation of suitable city-state governors as an end point.

The notion of care of the self underwent important changes by the time of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. The first of these changes was that, at least in theory, the notion of care of the self was no longer exclusively reserved for young aristocrats, but became a more general maxim for all people: 'it appears as a rule applicable to everyone, which can be practiced by everyone, without prior condition of status and without any technical, professional, or social aim' (Foucault 2005, 126). However, while the principle of care of the self was generalised, in practice, it was still only accessible to a select group of individuals as it was practiced and taught only within specific institutions which could only be attended by those who had the time to do so (*ibid.*, 113). The generalisation of the principle of care of the self also saw an important shift in the age of people who practiced care of the self. The focus was no longer on the young Athenians and their preparation for governing, but on a process of formation of subjectivity which aimed for the individual's status as subject in old age (Foucault 2005, 109). The shift in age brought with it a change in the time scale for the individual. Rather than care of the self being constrained to the moment between adolescence and adulthood, it became an obligation to last a lifetime (*ibid.*, 87). By opening the age range of those who practiced care of the self, it changes from a practice with a time-limit and end point into an endless pursuit, driven by a constant attention to the way individuals lived their lives. The end-goal of a subject capable of governing the city state is removed in favour of a process of constant attention the aim of which is the subject's formation of herself *for herself* rather than for an externally defined goal.

Opening the principle of care of the self to encompass the entirety of an individual's life was also accompanied by a change in the character of the master figure. As care of the self was no longer confined to a corrective motion which aimed at tackling a young man's ignorance, it was no longer necessary for the master in the relationship to be a "professional" and a philosopher. Instead, the role of the master by the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D was to act as 'an effective agency (*opérateur*) for producing efforts within the individual's reform and in his formation as a subject. He

is the mediator in the individual's relationship to his constitution as a subject' (Foucault 2005, 129-130). By the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries A.D the term master became misleading, as the master could now be a friend, a family member, a teacher, or other acquaintance. The shift in the character of the master broadened the practice of care of the self and lifted it out of particular and exclusive settings, tying it to individual relationships (ibid., 206). Together, the generalisation of the notion of care of the self and the change in the character of the master reflected a change in reasons for practicing care of the self. Care of the self was no longer meant to enable oneself to govern well, but was instead 'for oneself and with oneself as its end' (ibid., 83). The result of this change was a different relationship to the other: rather than being premised upon the need to govern well, the relation to the other was based on the individual's own process of personal transformation. Unlike the stricter separation of the individual and master in antiquity, by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries A.D this relationship was no longer constituted by a hierarchy between those involved. This reconfigured relationship with a master established a reciprocity between the two individuals involved. In accounting for herself and her actions to an other, both parties enter into a relationship of care in which they can account for themselves.

Alongside the change in the characteristics of the master, the care of the self in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D necessitated a particular relationship to others which was beneficial to both the individual striving for transformation, and those around them. An example of one such relationship is friendship:

Friendship is just one of the forms given to care of the self. Everyman who really cares for himself must provide himself with friends. From time to time these friends will enter the network of social exchanges and utility. This usefulness, which is an occasion for friendship must not be removed. It must be maintained to the end. But what gives this utility its function within happiness is the trust we place in our friends who are, for us, capable of reciprocity. And it is reciprocity of behaviour that makes friendship figure as one of the elements of wisdom and happiness. (Foucault 2005, 195)

This introduces two important elements into care of the self which were not present in antiquity. First, the duty of individuals to provide themselves with friends as a

necessary part of care of the self and second, there is a reciprocity in friendship which acts as a social bond. Caring for myself by having friends is simultaneously caring for others by being a friend myself. Whilst this example is focussing on friendship, the reciprocal quality of the relationship can also be found between lovers, or family members. In the context of this thesis I am interested in the possibilities of the relationship of self care between people in a classroom. Overall, the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D saw care of the self become a critical social function that concerned not only the individual's life, but her wider world, and the lives led by others (Foucault 2005, 93).

We can draw direct conceptual links here back to the work of Colin Ward (1973) and Todd May (2014), and their arguments that anarchic relationships are possible in everyday life. The new relationship between the individual and the other is characterised by reciprocal care, a relationship which does not establish a hierarchy in which one of individual is accounting to a more senior formal master. There are similar relationships at work in anarchist calls for free association and reciprocity. While Ward proposed that anarchist relationships of non-domination, free association and reciprocity were waiting like 'a seed beneath the snow' (Ward, 1973, 14), operating at a level beneath the state and bureaucracy, May argued that anarchic relationships are already in existence, not operating under the state, but in spite of it. May points to the presence of friendships, which are not based on hierarchical relations determined by what one individual can gain from another, but are based on shared interest, mutual reciprocity of feeling and the role of the friendship in the past (May, 2014).

As with antiquity, care of the self in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D is accompanied by a particular form of reflection, a particular form of the subject's thought about thought. In antiquity this was characterised by practices of memory and remembrance in which the individual accounts for herself to herself and a single master operating in a hierarchical relationship. In the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D this reflexivity found its form in an ongoing and active consideration and meditation on the individual's life and her actions towards herself and others in relationships which are not strictly hierarchical (Foucault, 2005, 460). This form of reflexivity introduces a particular way of living and particular practices of self-government into the

principle of care of the self and becomes an aesthetic form which concerns the individual's constant attention and action regarding the ways in which she, and her friends, live their lives. Reflexivity is no longer confined to specific moments of reflection at the end of a day but is practiced through giving an ongoing account of one's days and actions not only to oneself, but to one's friends. This ties into the newly introduced notion of care of the self as an ongoing practice and process of personal (trans)formation through an individual's life which requires a certain attention and way of living (ibid., 460). Embedded within the notion of care of the self and the reciprocal relationships it entails is a particular form of interaction between speaker and listener which enables such relationships.

### *Parrhesia*

As noted above, the relationships between ourselves and others necessary for the practice of care of the self require a certain quality to the interactions. This form of interaction is *parrhesia*, the act of speech which occurs between the individual and an other.

*Parrhesia* in the first instance means simply 'the need for the two partners to conceal nothing of what they think from each other and to speak to each other frankly' (Foucault, 2005, 187). *Parrhesia* forms an ethical verbal relationship between speaker and listener, one in which there is both a moral attitude (ethos) and a technical procedure (tekhne), that are both indispensable for 'conveying true discourse to the person who needs it to constitute himself as a subject' (ibid, 372). This notion of *parrhesia* is at the centre of the relationship between individuals, formal masters or otherwise, and is fundamental to the principle of care of the self. In order to understand *parrhesia* in more depth, we need a deeper explanation of the term itself, as well as its use as an element in relationships formed through the practice of care of the self.

*Parrhesia* has both positive and negative forms. In the negative, *parrhesia* is taken to mean saying everything, saying anything which comes to mind, anything which serves the cause one is defending, anything which serves the passion or interest driving the person who is speaking (Foucault 2012, 10). However, it is the positive sense of the term which we are interested in here, and that carries more qualifying

characteristics than simply to say everything: ‘the word *parrhesia* [...] refers to a type of relationship between the speaker [*parrhesiastes*] and what he says’ (Foucault 2006, 2). *Parrhesia*, contains five key characteristics, frankness, truth, criticism, risk, and duty (Peters 2003), and by examining each in turn we are able to gain a greater understanding of the term.

Turning first to frankness, Foucault states that the positive sense of *parrhesia* has a certain measure of straight-talking, in which the speaker conveys her own message in a clear and concise way: ‘the speaker makes it manifestly clear and obvious that what [she] says is [her] own opinion. And [she] does this by avoiding any kind of rhetorical form which would veil what [she] thinks’ (Foucault 2006, 2). Foucault makes an important distinction between *parrhesia* and rhetoric, drawing a direct and clear connection between what is thought by the speaker and what is said. Not allowing room for miscommunication or confusion the speaker ‘personally sign[s]’ (Foucault 2012, 11) her discourse. The speaker of *parrhesia* is not necessarily a great orator or public speaker, nor does she speak with flourish or fancy. Instead she conveys her own message with clarity and thought, communicating directly with her interlocutors.

This personal connection between thoughts, words, and actions leads to the second characteristic of *parrhesia*, truth. The *parrhesiastes* speaks her opinion, but the connection goes deeper than this. In speaking her opinion and personally signing herself to it, she creates a bond between herself and the truth she has spoken (Foucault 2012, 11). The consequence of this bond is that the *parrhesiastes* never speaks in the name of another, or with the words and thoughts of another, but always with her own ideas, notions, and truth. In this positive sense of *parrhesia* we are given a picture in which it is not simply the role of the speaker to say anything and everything, but to consider what she says, how she says it, and her relationship to it.

The third and fourth characteristics of *parrhesia* are closely linked, and best considered together: risk and criticism. In speaking the truth, the *parrhesiastes* invariably plays a function of criticism of either herself or her interlocutor, and this criticism carries with it risk. ‘For there to be *parrhesia*, in speaking the truth one must open up, establish, and confront the risk of offending the other person, of irritating

him, of making him angry and provoking him to conduct which may even be extremely violent' (Foucault 2012, 11). When the term *parrhesia* was used in ancient Greek and Greco-Roman cultures, it always brought with it an element of risk for the speaker, often in form of violence and death. This possibility of extreme violence is linked to the references of *parrhesia* in which the speaker addresses a tyrant or king, who, upon hearing something he does not approve, could react with great anger (Foucault 2006, 4). However, this risk need not always be so extreme. There can also be a risk to friendship, or a political risk involved in *parrhesia*. For example, if a friend does something which you think is wrong, and you play the role of *parrhesiastes* and challenge them about their actions, you risk angering and hurting them, and as such, risk your relationship with your friend. These relationships, particularly the political, do not only exist between the speaker and a single interlocutor, but can also be found between the speaker and the agora (Foucault 2006, 7). When considering interactions with the wider world, the speaker of *parrhesia* is at risk if her opinion or approach is contrary to the dominant opinion, or if in speaking the *parrhesiastes* risks bringing about scandal (Foucault 2006, 4).

The final of the five characteristics of *parrhesia* is duty. As it suggests, *parrhesia* is tied to the duty of the speaker to speak in that she is compelled or obliged to speak the truth and unable to stay silent (Foucault 2006, 6). This duty gives *parrhesia* a sense in which speaking out is not wholly the speaker's choice but that they cannot do differently but to speak the truth despite the risk that doing so brings. To help bring these five characteristics together Foucault offers a concise summary:

*parrhesia* is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relationship to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. (Foucault 2006, 6)

While these five characteristics help us to better understand what is included when we use the term *parrhesia*, there is another element to the term which is connected to the process of truth-telling. Foucault highlights that *parrhesia* is not simply a skill or a set of techniques, but it is 'a stance, a way of being which is akin to a virtue, a mode of action' (Foucault 2012, 14). This means that *parrhesia* cannot be reduced to

a tactic to be deployed at whim as it carries an ethical function in addressing relationships between people. *Parrhesia* is an ethical undertaking at its core and engages in telling ‘the truth of what is in the singular form of individuals and situations’ (Foucault 2012, 25). This focus on singular forms of truth regarding the subject and her behaviour in a particular situation is a rejection of any attempt to rely on truth with a capital “T”, as this would imply a universal truth about universal subjects, and, as has already been discussed, postanarchism rejects such a notion. Instead, truth here concerns the specific actions of a specific subject in a specific situation, and is concerned not with universal statements or claims, but with the extent to which the subject, in that moment and that action, took responsibility for her actions as hers, rather than automatically as the actions expected of her by external forces. In engaging in *parrhesia* the subject and her interlocutor are able to consider the actions of the subject from this position of the subject herself and her attempts at the formation of her own subjectivity.

#### Care of the Self, *Parrhesia*, and the Teacher

This exploration of care of the self and *parrhesia* has enabled me to bring a greater depth to anarchist calls for autonomous practice in which the subject refuses the formation of her subjectivity by external sources and attempts to decide for herself how she is to be. Care of the self is the continual process of attention paid by the subject to her subjectivity through the critical accounting of her actions and the actions of those around her. This continual process is one through which the subject is able to incrementally take responsibility for the formation of her subject in the different contexts in which she operates, and with each attempt at autonomous practice is able to show the subjectivities of neo-liberalism and critical pedagogy as contingent, malleable and subject to change. Moreover, in the process of self care the subject engages with others in reciprocal relationships which are not defined externally but are prefigurative and arise in the relationship itself. Care of the self requires us to form and maintain reciprocal forms of social relationships in order to continually attend to our own formation as subjects. Such relationships are not, and cannot be, conducted on the basis of predetermined social roles, as to do so is to place limits on the relationship and the transformation possible (Anderson and Wong

2013, 424). The student-teacher relationship in critical pedagogy is one where the teacher's role is to enable the student to examine ideas and connect these to context in the pursuit of social change. This establishes a rigid structure to the relationship which is directed toward a particular fixed end determined by critical pedagogy with the teacher acting as its agent. This relationship has a fixed form which does not develop on the basis of the interactions of those involved, but remains centred on the creation of critical citizens working toward social change.

In contrast, anarchist student-teacher relationships are formed in the moment of the interaction between the subjects. This relationship cannot be formed in advance, it cannot be planned or directed. It is a spontaneous result of autonomous practices of the teacher and student as they take control of their own formations as subjects. This of course occurs within an institutional context in which there are external expectations already shaping the relationship between teacher and student from the moment the teacher enters the class. All the teacher can do in this scenario is to attempt to disrupt these roles and expectations and invite students in to relationships to self care and care for others. In taking account for themselves the teacher and student practice care of the self, or self-governance. I argue here that a teacher who commits to anarchism, commits to forms of self care as outlined above. Through practices of care of the self and the continual attention to how she lives her life the teacher can consider her subjectivity and her relations to others in an ongoing and transformative way. Care of the self does not posit an externally defined and particular self to be reached, as in critical pedagogy's transformative intellectual, but instead invites the teacher to live in a way which enables her continual (trans)formation along with the (trans)formation of others and society. There is no end point to this process, as there is no end point in anarchism, the focus is on the practice itself and the changes such practice brings in the world. Here, teaching becomes part of the teacher's practices of self care. Education offers the teacher an arena in which to invite others, the students, into relationships of care of the self and care for others. Education presents the teacher the chance to account for herself with regards to the topics she teaches and *how* she teaches, while simultaneously presenting the opportunity to engage with the students through critical questioning of themselves and their actions. In inviting the students into this self care and care

for others the teacher requires a form of communication which is frank, truthful, critical, and at times, risky: it requires *parrhesia*. By approaching education as part of her self care the teacher attempts to establish a space in which the externally defined subjectivities and relationships of critical pedagogy are distanced and anarchic spontaneous relationships arise.

Before concluding this chapter on care of the self, it is important to address the potential of care of the self becoming a practice of government under neo-liberalism. It could be argued that care of the self finds a contemporary manifestation in the notion of well-being which now pervades educational institutions: this is yet another identity added to the neo-liberal ensemble, the mentally healthy individual. The discourse of health and well-being creates an expected mode of conduct for staff and students in higher education, one in which individuals are expected to attend to their own mental health and well-being via institutionally sanctioned means. Staff should take part in lunch-time sports clubs, yoga sessions, and alike in the pursuit of this mental health and well-being. The well-being discourse could be approached as a neo-liberal manifestation of care of the self, however, Foucault's work on care of the self already provides us with a cautionary note. Foucault wrote of the change of care of the self into a form of egotistical pursuit in contemporary society, one which targets the singular and individual pursuit of self over and above (or perhaps apart from) the relational element (Foucault 2005, 12-13) which makes care of the self such a powerful concept when wedded to anarchist thought and practice. There is a danger of the co-opting of care of the self into the neo-liberal practices of government, but I argue here that such a move would take a fundamental move away from self care as established in this thesis.

Throughout this exploration of care of the self I have made the connections to my critique of critical pedagogy and the predetermined role and transformation of the teacher. In parallel with my earlier critique of critical pedagogy relying on the continuation of the state as the form of social organisation, my critiques find their practical expression in the following chapter where I build on previous critiques of critical pedagogy and the lack of consideration of the context in which teachers work. In the following chapter I put forward a theorisation of the classroom as a space in which results from postanarchist autonomous practice.

## 5. Anarchy in the Classroom

In the previous two chapters I have made the case that critical pedagogy limits the possibilities for social change by predetermining the subject, action, and relationships. These critiques have been made through the framework of anarchism, and a particular focus on the subject, action, and relationships, and the theory and practice of freedom as autonomous practice in the present. In this chapter, I propose a theorisation of the classroom as a space for everyday action which arises through anarchist autonomous practice. I begin with Michel de Certeau's work on the practice of everyday life and the possibilities of subversion without opposition (1988). Drawing on de Certeau's ideas, I argue that subversion is possible even in highly constrained environments such as English higher education institutions. From here, I call on the work of Obika Gray and others to elaborate a conceptualisation of the classroom as an exilic space in which dominant forms of social organisation can be distanced and subjects self-govern through care of the self and the formation of spontaneous relations with others (Gray, 2004; Grubačić and O'Hearn 2016). The aim here is to provide a theory of action which can account for the context of the teacher, while not trapping myself in my own critiques of predetermination: this is a fine line to tread between offering one possibility, and denying others.

### The Practice of Everyday Life

To elaborate on a theory of autonomous practice found in anarchism, I begin here with Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988). De Certeau offers an approach to everyday life which highlights the gaps between something's intended purpose and its use, arguing that in these gaps exists the chance to subvert the dominant forms of social organisation and the formation of the subject via practices of governance.

De Certeau's starting point is the claim that within dominant forms of social organisation there are always particular ways in which institutions are designed to be used, and yet there are always ways to subvert these institutions. The term "subvert" is key as de Certeau does not argue for a direct rejection of the institutions or attempts to alter those institutions for other means, but argues that subversion

entails using the institutions for 'ends and references foreign to the system' (de Certeau 1988, xiii). In using institutions for means and ends entirely alien to the dominant form of social organisation people are able to escape them without leaving them (ibid., xiii). This is similar to the discussion of direct opposition in anarchism and Newman's work and the possibility of subversion from within. This notion of using the institutions of dominant forms of social organisation in ways and for ends entirely alien to those forms are at the heart of de Certeau's work. de Certeau maintains that there is a difference between the initial production of something and the way it is consumed by its users, but, importantly, he does not use the terms production and consumption in their economic contexts. As an example, there is the production of television images and what the consumer makes of the images or what else she does with her time while watching television: a television show may be made to provide light entertainment, and yet the viewer might use it as background noise while completing another task (ibid., xii). To elucidate the ways in which the gap between production and consumption can be used de Certeau introduces the notion of *la perruque*, or 'the wig'. *La perruque* is a French term for 'the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer' (de Certeau 1988, 25). Crucially, this is different from both stealing, as nothing of material value is taken, and absenteeism, as the worker is still present at her job. Two examples offered of *la perruque* are the furniture maker and the secretary. A furniture maker uses the lathe at work, scraps of wood, and parts of her work time to build a sideboard for her home. This is a creative act on the part of the furniture maker which is driven not by economic considerations of selling the sideboard and making a profit, but by a desire to make the item for her own pleasure. A secretary uses a pen, paper, and work time to write a love letter. Again, the love letter is written for the pleasure of the secretary, it is not directed towards economic gains and carries no financial motive. In both cases people make use of the dominant frameworks in which they find themselves to produce something entirely unaccountable for by those frameworks and neither action is motivated by an economic concern or directed toward profit (ibid., 25). De Certeau points out that this subversive behaviour is not always tolerated, and that turning a blind eye to its occurrence has become less common as the attempts to control the gap between production and consumption have increased. But, there are

still 'sleights of hand' (ibid., 28) available to us as we divert time which is owed to institutions in order to produce other objects, play games of free exchange, and exchange gifts, all actions that subvert by bypassing the predetermined aim of the dominant political and social frameworks of society (ibid., 28).

de Certeau argues that *la perruque* is one among many practices that 'introduce artistic tricks and competitions of *accomplices* into a system. [...] Sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways of "making do"' (de Certeau 1988, 29, original emphasis). In outlining his understanding of other practices that can play in the gap between production and consumption de Certeau outlines two pairs of concepts: the first strategies and places, and the second tactics and spaces. Strategies and tactics are often cited as de Certeau's most well-known concepts, but as noted by Ian Buchanan, there is a thinness to their formulation that has left them open to interpretation and use in many different ways (Buchanan 2000, 86). De Certeau himself noted that his work on strategies and tactics formed an 'initial schema' (de Certeau 1988, 35) rather than a fully formed set of concepts. Starting with de Certeau's own words, the distinction between strategies and tactics:

I call a *strategy* the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be determined as its *own* and serve as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives, objects of research, etc.) can be managed. (de Certeau 1988, 35-36, original emphasis)

Strategy establishes a specific set of relationships both within the place in question and in relation to other exterior places. Strategies seek to create places of conformity through the calculation and manipulation of these power relationships in areas that have both physical locations and abstract forms. Further to this, strategy also seeks to establish a certain autonomy and independence with regard to possible variations in situations by being able to 'capitalise acquired advantages' and 'prepare for future expansions' (de Certeau 1988, 36). Another way strategy seeks to operate is to control places through the division of space. By parcelling out space strategy creates

a 'panoptic practice' (ibid., 36) by which elements exterior to the place are transformed into objects that can be 'observed and measured' (ibid., 36) and thus planned for and controlled for to a certain extent. When talking of strategies de Certeau explicitly links them to places, defining them as a configuration of proper positions in which each element is to be found in its correct and distinct location and in the correct and distinct relation to all other elements in the place. This configuration excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location at the same time, and therefore implies a certain stability (de Certeau 1988, 117). This spatial element corresponds to the controlled and planned for elements of strategies, and builds on de Certeau's use of the term 'panoptic practice' (ibid., 36) in which elements are parcelled and categorised.

In order to explain the difference between strategies and tactics, we turn to the example of the furniture maker. The furniture maker works for a company which posits itself as a subject, uses strategies to control for relations internally and externally, and operates within a defined place of its own. The strategy of the furniture company refers to how it manages internal relations through the establishment of hierarchy between workers and managerial staff, and external relations as it deals with suppliers of material and buyers of furniture. Through strategy things are maintained in their correct places, a worker is a worker and operates on the workshop floor, a manager is a manager and operates in an office: the worker cannot work in the office nor can the manager work on the workshop floor. The furniture company maintains an isolated place, the shop, which is itself carefully ordered to manage the company's relationships to those exterior to it. Buyers enter a showroom at the front of the building in which they purchase their furniture, they are not allowed to enter the workshop floor, nor are they allowed to enter the rear of the building where materials are unloaded. Similarly, delivery drivers bringing materials to the company must use the rear entrance and are not allowed to unload their deliveries in the showroom. The company maintains a controlled place in which each element – worker, manager, buyers, supplier – are given their correct position and orientation in relation to one another.

de Certeau's notion of tactics sit in contrast to strategy (Buchanan 2000, 86). A tactic is 'a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. No

delimitation of an exteriority provides it with the conditions necessary for autonomy. The space of a tactic is the space of the other' (de Certeau 1988, 36-37). de Certeau goes on to say that tactics always play on and with the 'terrain imposed on it' (ibid., 37) and as such operate in continuously isolated instances. This transient nature of tactics means that it can never consolidate a position and can never plan particular practices, but instead must seize moments as they arise and be forever on the lookout for any possible gaps between production and expected consumption (ibid., 37). Furthermore, de Certeau claims that tactics are 'the art of the weak' and are determined by the '*absence of power*, just as strategy is organised by the postulation of power' (ibid., 37, original emphasis). So, if strategy seeks to create protected places in which all possibilities are controlled and accounted for in favour of the predominant forms of social relationships, tactics seek to create spaces that subvert these dominant forms of relationships. Buchanan summarises tactics as 'being constantly in the swim of things and are as much in danger of being swept away or submerged by the flow of events as they are capable of bursting through the dykes' (2000, 89). Spaces exist when 'one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables' (de Certeau 1988, 117). This rather vague initial introduction to space is later given more substance by de Certeau as he explains that spaces occur because of certain practices that 'orient it, situate it, [and] temporalize it' (ibid., 117) lending space a greater fluidity than place. These practices, or tactics, that orient, situate, and temporalize mean that spaces are constantly in formation and dissolution creating a state of instability and unpredictability in contrast to controlled places. This also means that space is a '*practiced place*' (ibid., 117, original emphasis), a location which is brought into being by the very actions that both require and constitute it.

Once again, we can return to the example of the furniture maker. While she works at the furniture company and is subject to its strategies and works in its place, she is not wholly constituted by the company. There are gaps she can exploit through tactics and spaces. For the furniture maker tactics and spaces come in moments throughout the working week when she is able to collect the offcuts of wood and begin building her sideboard. During breaks and lunches she plans what she wants to build. During lulls in production she starts to collect materials. By completing pieces

early, she creates time to work on her own project. However, none of these occasions are regular or planned for, each is the result of a spontaneous action and each occurs in a moment which cannot necessarily be replicated. In these tactical moments of subversion her workstation in the workshop becomes a different space: it is still embedded in the place of the company, but it is like a bubble in a liquid, separate while within. Through her tactics the furniture maker fleetingly creates a space of escape from the company's strategy and place, escaping it without actually leaving.

To help further illustrate the gap between the production of a place and its use as a space de Certeau offers the example of a city and uses the contrasting narratives of maps and tours to draw out both physical and relational differences of place and space. A map of a city is based on a predetermined, fixed, and predictable layout of the city which allows us to make assumptions about locations of certain elements, suggests how we travel from one element to another, and gives us a set of language to use (de Certeau 1988, 119). We are able to navigate a city using a map which is drawn, oral, or otherwise, through telling the story of the relationship of elements within the city to one another. Tours on the other hand use a different type of narrative, a narrative of space. This is distinct from a narrative of place in that it is formed by the practices which constitute and are constituted by the space itself. A tour of a city does not merely describe one element in spatial relation to another, although it may do this too, but it predominantly tells the story of how these elements within this place have been used in different ways (de Certeau 1988, 119). In telling the story of the different ways that the space has been used, we are simultaneously using that space differently: previously it was the space in which the story we are telling occurred, now it is being used as the space in which that story is being told. It is the idea of elements of places being used differently, or differently to how they were intended to be used, which is particularly important. Returning to some of de Certeau's other notions, in the gap between production and consumption, in this example of the city, there is possibility for tactics and the creation and dissolution of space. The city is designed in a particular way with an original intention behind its use. However, in navigating the city it is possible to find, use, and make short cuts, perhaps a pedestrian using an underground car park to get from one street to another, rather than using the connecting pavements. Pedestrians

in a city can use/consume the city in a very different way than intended, and in so doing spaces continuously form and dissolve: an alley way becomes a short cut, a park bench becomes a bed, a street becomes a race track. Such is the unpredictability and instability of space.

de Certeau's ideas on strategy and places, and tactic and spaces have given us a way to approach the practice of everyday life and the possibilities which exist using the gaps between the production of something and its consumption. *La perruque* is explored in direct connection to education by Ruth Heilbronn as she examines the role of teacher educators in preparing pre-service teachers for their new job. Heilbronn has taken de Certeau's ideas and used them to explore the tensions which arise between many teachers' vocational aims of student learning and growth, and the institutional aims of target-driven ends and assessment (Heilbronn 2013, 31-32). Setting out the tension as she sees it, Heilbronn argues that the aims of education are 'predominantly subsumed to economic ends, related to gaining skills, qualifications and employment in a global economy' (ibid., 31). In the English state school context which Heilbronn is addressing these economic ends come in the form of a highly assessed and prescriptive learning process which is at odds with the national curriculum stance that teachers should aim to personalise their teaching for each student. Alongside this tension between two parts of the English national curriculum, there is also a tension between many teachers' vocational aims which are often couched in the language of caring and social justice and the establishment of relationships with the student and the wider institutional aims of training, skills, and qualifications that serve the economy (ibid., 32-33).

Heilbronn argues that teachers rarely seem to question the institutional paradigm which they are working in, and adds that this is entirely reasonable: 'to ask fundamental questions of one's daily work could lead to a loss of faith in that work, in the sense of removing the ladder one is standing on' (Heilbronn 2013, 35). A key responsibility for teacher educators is to assist teachers in being able to question their positions and situations without jeopardising their ability to act. The ethical imperative for teacher educators is to help teachers to cope with living with contradictions (ibid., 36-37). The primary means for dealing with these tensions comes through teachers developing a 'strategic competence' (ibid., 35) about the

institution they work in, and then the ability to engage in *la perruque*, translated by Heilbronn as 'wiggery' (ibid., 36). Highlighting, as de Certeau does, that wiggery is not unethical behaviour, Heilbronn suggests that it is instead playful, creative, and witty, and that it is this playfulness that is vital for teachers to navigate the tensions in their daily lives and resist the overwhelming pressures of the institution: 'Playfulness enables and announces that alternative viewpoints exist, even if these alternative viewpoints are not fully rationalised' (ibid., 36). *La perruque* enables teachers to hold, and at times pursue, different aims to the institution without confronting the authority of the institution head-on (ibid., 36). *La perruque* for teachers can be a subversive and tension-releasing act without necessarily drawing the attention of the institution and negatively impacting on their own position.

The practice of everyday life and *la perruque* offers us the gap between production and consumption in which possibilities of subversion exist. Coupled with de Certeau's sketches of strategies and places, and tactics and spaces we can approach anarchist relationships of care of the self and others which bring with it a transformation of forms of social organisation. The notion of wiggery as put forward by Heilbronn offers teachers a way to deal with the tensions of their position and goes some way toward addressing the criticisms others have made of critical pedagogy. Importantly, through de Certeau and Heilbronn, the practice of everyday life and wiggery in the classroom gives us a grounding for a theory of action which takes into account teachers' context and does not attempt to fix the action or the outcome in advance. Wiggery gives teachers a way to find the spaces in their day-to-day institutional context in which they can enact anarchist relationships in the present, including care of the self and others. What is lacking in de Certeau's work, as discussed above, is a greater understanding of the notion of space. By de Certeau's own admission his work on spaces and places was limited, and with an understanding of the possibilities found in everyday life, it is therefore now necessary to elaborate on a theory of space which builds on de Certeau's work and aligns with anarchist understandings of the formation of the self and relationships.

## Exilic Space

To give us a starting point in theorising space I turn to the work of Obika Gray and his study of the Jamaican urban poor in the 1960s and his work on the notion of exilic space in particular. Gray's study into the use of state power in Jamaica and the forms of opposition to it introduces the notion of exilic space to capture and analyse the urban poor's marginalisation and unequal position in Jamaica, and the creation of spaces that resisted formal state power. Introducing the notion Gray writes:

The black poor lived much of their existence under conditions of social dishonour and economic marginality in post-war Jamaica. This was the condition to which Jamaica's historically unequal social relations had assigned the black majority. However, the black poor did not surrender to this deprivation but developed a repertoire of defensive responses. (Gray 2004, 92-93)

These responses included working with power as well as defying it, and importantly for this thesis, the 'pursuit of a relatively autonomous existence within the social space they occupied' (Gray 2004, 92-93). Gray named this social space exilic space.

Gray argues that faced with the dominance of the Jamaican middle and upper classes and the imposition of their standards and norms of living and their relationship structures through the state, the urban poor sought to create their own spaces of social dissidence where they developed 'their own structures of defiance and modes of existence' (2004, 93-94). The urban poor in Jamaica were denied full membership of Jamaican society through their use of language and customs and a strong commitment to an identity based on African descent and civilisation. Denied a place in the dominant organisation of Jamaican society, the urban poor created exilic spaces in which they practiced a form of cultural labour in making and recovering themselves and what they saw as their right to an equal identity. While these other modes of existences may have been the semi-autonomous products of the urban poor, be they political gangs, street and community religious leaders, or criminal subcultures, they were far from unproblematic (ibid., 93-94).

While the exilic space of the urban poor was an area of cultural production, it was also a physically located space which maintained certain features. First, although the exilic space was subject to 'surveillance and penetration' (Gray 2004, 95) by the state

and its actors, as well as other areas of Jamaican society drawn to the possibilities of new cultural forms that were taking shape there, it remained a relatively isolated area. While political parties and state security forces both periodically entered poor urban environments, these interventions were normally restricted to sporadic instances and very specific locations (ibid., 95). Second, exilic space was ridden with contradictions arising from the various new identities being formed and the cultural residues left behind from the dominant political and social frameworks (ibid., 103). These features of the exilic space combined to create an area with a 'dual identity' (ibid., 102) where the urban poor faced economic and social oppression within wider Jamaican society, but in that they created areas of relative autonomy in which they could subvert the repressive practices of dominant Jamaican political and social frameworks and pursue their own cultural forms and identities. These other identities of the urban poor were not dependent on the expectations of wider society, but neither were they fully free from any 'cultural residues' (ibid., 97). There still existed a preference for traditional church weddings over other forms of intimate relationships, for example, and a preference for lighter over dark skin tones (ibid., 97). However, what is of importance in these exilic spaces is the underdetermined nature of the spaces, the gap between societal expectation and action which opened the space for possibilities, possibilities that in this case were manifested as other identities and relationships created by the urban poor themselves. Gray is quick to warn that this autonomy should not be overstated, as various political groups and parties worked to find ways to use the new political and social forms for their own partisan agendas (ibid., 112). Similarly, Gray argues, it should be remembered that this determined creation of exilic space was largely informed by a 'covert desire for inclusion in the cultural mainstream' (ibid., 113) and that while the creation and use of exilic space played an important role in the cultural recovery of the urban poor, the space was also shot through with conventional understandings of morality and shared values found in Jamaican society at large.

Gray's notion of exilic space is complex and full of tensions which the occupiers of the space had to negotiate and cope with, either individually or in groups. With this, exilic space is both a physical location and a space of cultural renewal and growth in which people explore possibilities for relationships which are not bound to wider

societal expectations and yet still recognised their location, both physically and culturally, within wider society.

The concept of exilic space has been used to address a range of groups who sought to escape dominant forms of social organisation. With examples that range from the Cossacks, to Zapatistas, to prisoners exilic space has been used to highlight the spatial and structural exit from 'acceptable society' (Grubačić and O'Hearn 2016, 16) even though these groups remain embedded within wider society and often take part in its institutions and economy (ibid., 16). In this understanding, exilic space is both an escape from the state and an attempt to leave the hierarchical relationships of wider society of which the state is only one part (ibid., 17). The example of the Zapatistas highlights the attempts in Chiapas to create forms of social organisation and institutions which evolve from the needs and actions of the community, rather than ones imposed or imported from elsewhere (ibid., 111). The Zapatistas did not seek to battle capitalism, nor did they seek to act as a guide for others' action, or to leave Mexico. They stood as a 'lesson in dignity' and '[...] [did] not want to monopolise the vanguard or say that we are the light, the only alternative, or stingily claim the qualification of revolutionary for one or another current. We say, look at what happened. That is what we had to do' (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, quoted in Khasnabish 2012, 221). This approach was not framed as a direct opposition or attack on the state, but as a creative process through which other spaces could be created while still operating within the state. The Zapatistas sought to escape without leaving.

Other uses of exilic space have been found in analyses of Occupy and the attempts, conscious or not, of people to create spaces for living and dialogue when in wider society spaces to live, and spaces to talk are so often divided off and require money to access (Mann 2012, 108-111). Occupy offered spaces in which groups were able to escape from state institutions and capitalism while still being embedded within them (Vodovnik and Grubačić 2015). In her study of Occupy encampments Mann argues that 'caregetting/giving, learning, reading, talking, getting/giving food, communicating' (ibid., 108) are all subject to increasing levels of privatisation which acts to increase our dependence on infrastructure which we have very little control over and struggle to afford. In contrast, Occupy camps became different spaces of

social and economic life which were premised upon practices of mutual aid and collaborative community building (Vodovnik and Grubačić 2015, 539-541). In Occupy camps people created exilic spaces by bypassing the financial logic of wider society and working collaboratively to supply food and drink through the encampment kitchens or healthcare provision through medical professionals donating their time and resources (Mann 2012, 109). In these analyses of Occupy the camps are not only understood as exilic spaces which stand apart but within the state, they are also explicitly understood as spaces in which anarchist forms of social relationships come to the fore. They are examples of anarchist principles of liberty, equality and solidarity, and can be understood through postanarchism's emphasis on subject, action and relationships as attempts to not only relate to others differently, but to relate to ourselves as subjects in ways which are not predetermined by the state and its institutions. Furthermore, these exilic spaces can be understood as expressions of de Certeau's tactics and spaces: moments seized and spaces created on an *ad hoc* and temporary basis which make use of the gap between production and consumption. Many Occupy movements used public parks and open spaces which were not originally intended to house temporary populations.

A further important point to note about exilic space as an expression of de Certeau's tactics and spaces is that it can be subversive without being oppositional. de Certeau reminds us that in playing in the gap between production and consumption we are able to subvert dominant forms of social organisation not through direct confrontation but through using these gaps for means entirely alien to the state and its institutions. Occupy is an example of this in the creation of a space which was based on free association and mutual aid underpinned by anarchist values of liberty, equality and solidarity, and the desire to constitute ourselves as subjects without the interference of the state. The link between exilic space, de Certeau and anarchism is made even stronger through a consideration of this notion of subversion without opposition. This can be approached in two complementary ways.

In a chapter entitled 'Anarchism Without Opposition' Jamie Heckert (2012) captures this notion of subversion with a quote from the novelist Ursula K. Le Guin: 'To oppose something is to maintain it' (Le Guin 2012, Ch.11, Para.19). In the first instance, to define exilic space as anti-capitalist, anti-hierarchy, anti-consumerist, or

any other “anti” we might think of, is to bind exilic space to existing forms of social organisation, the state. This is not to say that being ‘anti’ or saying ‘no’ is not a desirable or powerful position to take, but it cannot be all. Paul Kingsnorth’s work *One No, Many Yeses* (2003) highlights the complexities of many social movements and groups which may share a similar ‘no’, anti-capitalism for example, but contain a plethora of ‘yeses’, each of which comes from the specificities and contexts of the group. To define and group these various movements as anti-capitalist is to curtail the diversity of positive positions, approaches, and responses to capitalism contained within them. Exilic space offers us the possibility to include ‘no’ whilst not being defined by it and enables the possibility of many ‘yeses’ without straightjacketing what those possible ‘yeses’ might be. What is paramount here is not to detach the ‘no’ from the ‘yeses’, for ‘[j]ust as a no without a yes denies the possibility of life, a yes without a no denies the possibility of choice’ (Heckert 2010, 188). And so while the ‘anti’ contained in a lot of the ideas of exilic space are important and should not be forgotten, exilic space should not and cannot be reduced to them and defined by them. Once again we can see an example of this in practice in the various Occupy movements. Occupy had no overarching claims, each Occupy encampment and movement grew out of a myriad of local, national and international concerns, and while most did criticise capitalism and the state, to stop our understanding of Occupy there would be to lose the diverse range of positively framed responses from groups around the world, none of which necessarily shared a vision of what Occupy was or what it was specifically fighting for. We are reminded of Subcomandante Marcos’ statement ‘This is what we had to do’ (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, quoted in Khasnabish 2012, 221), and in Occupy’s case “this” was different for each encampment.

Once again we return to the complex interplay and tension between direct opposition and indirect subversion first addressed in this thesis through Newman’s critiques of identity politics. I argued above that while we are right to be cautious of direct opposition because of the possibility of contributing to ever greater practices of government, we would be remiss to deny the gains from direct opposition. The example of Occupy and the Zapatistas, and Kingsnorth’s work in *One No, Many Yeses* add to this complexity. While groups often posit a position directly against neo-liberal

capitalism, one “no”, doing so does not necessarily guarantee the continuation of neo-liberal capitalism. Indeed, the varied and creative responses of different groups, the many “yeses”, highlight the possibility of maintaining a direct opposition to neo-liberal capitalism whilst simultaneously practicing forms of indirect subversion in ways and means entirely alien to it. Groups and individuals navigate the tension between the dangers of direct opposition as warned by Newman, Heckert, and Le Guin, and the need for creative subversive responses captured in the work of de Certeau and Gray. Direct opposition and indirect and alien subversion are not mutually exclusive, nor are they strategies in de Certeau’s use of the term. They are instead better approached as tactics, the use of which is influenced by the fleeting and *ad hoc* nature of the situation one finds oneself in. This links back to Franks’ understanding of anarchism and the different emphasis placed on different elements, whether that is the environment, subjectivity, or myriad other concerns. Anarchist theory and practice can be understood as the ‘particular response of particular subjected groups in a limited historical context’ (Franks 2011, 169). Those particular responses might engender direct opposition or indirect subversive action, but to predetermine the action in advance through the denial of either would be to deny the complexity of theory and practice established throughout this thesis. This necessary complexity and nuance of subversion without opposition is captured in the second exploration of position/opposition explored below.

In the second instance, attempts to define exilic space in dichotomous terms of position/opposition acts to solidify thoughts and possibilities within mental boundaries and borders. Calling on Heckert once more we can follow his question, ‘[w]hat new possibilities arise when we learn to cross, to blur, to undermine, or overflow the hierarchical and binary oppositions we have been taught to believe in?’ (Heckert 2012, 64). If exilic space is to be an area of creative possibilities in our relationships it is imperative that we think beyond the existing political and social frameworks to which we are normally beholden. This is connected to the term “exile” itself. Exile is always “exile from” and not “exile to” and this small linguistic change brings something vital to the concept of exilic space. To utter the term “exile to” requires the speaker to name a destination, an end point of their motion of exile, and yet to do so would be to curtail the very possibility that we are looking for in the

notion of exilic space. “Exile to” would establish the dichotomy we are keen to avoid. In contrast, “exile from” only asks the speaker to name their starting point, what they are trying to distance themselves from, leaving the process of exile free not only from a singular destination, but from any requirement of predictions about what is to come. As such, the notion of exilic space allows us to name a multitude of elements of existing forms of social organisation which we want to distance ourselves from while leaving our destination open. Once again we can turn to Occupy as an example. Occupy both as the loosely defined movement and the collection of individuals which comprised it, famously had no singular unifying end point. Each Occupy group consisted of a wide variety of people with a wide variety of motivations, and while many pointed to capitalism, strict hierarchies, or unequal economics as elements of the current forms of social organisation they wished to escape from, there was never a predetermined answer as to what the Occupy encampments should be. The forms of the encampments and the social relationships within them were formed in the moments of the interactions, not already decided upon. They were not constrained by claims to reach a certain end point and so avoided the from/to dichotomy.

An exilic space is a space characterised by its creative possibilities, whether that lies in spaces to repair and recover from cultural slights, spaces to live, talk and listen, or spaces to escape from strict hierarchies and capitalist consumption. Central to these exilic spaces is their underdetermined nature which sees the expectations of dominant society distanced in subversive but not necessarily oppositional ways, opening possibilities for social relationships that are not bound to existing forms of social organisation. Importantly, each of these characterisations of exilic space are not areas outside our everyday lives but arise and operate within wider society; they are the spaces illustrated by de Certeau, the gaps between production and consumption. All of this work acts to open the idea of exilic space and the possibility of theorising the classroom as a space of subversion and transformation whilst still being embedded in the university.

Exilic space offers us a way to theorise a classroom space in which social relations and the social change which can follow from them are not tied to pre-existing and dominant forms of social organisation. The notion of exilic space offers us a response to the limits of critical pedagogy as laid out in the previous chapters. My critique of

critical pedagogy began with its reliance on the state as the form of social organisation. Through critical pedagogy's vision for the state as an entity of economic development and reform for equality I examined two important reoccurring concepts in critical pedagogy, democracy and critical citizen. Through these two concepts critical pedagogy weds its calls for social change to a continuation of the state. Through anarchism I argue that despite its claims critical pedagogy's reliance on the state prevents it from offering a theory and practice of social change which can end oppressive practices. Far from offering us a response to neo-liberalism and its institutions of education, critical pedagogy plays at reform which ultimately leaves us ever more reliant on a form of social organisation which is premised on separation, categorisation, hierarchy, and the external definition of subjectivities. The state and its institutions act as a permanent and hierarchical imposition in the relations of people, operating to categorise, determine and shape individuals and society. In pursuit of an approach to education which does not contain the limits of the state I turn to anarchism as both a theory and practice for the freedom of individuals and society alike.

The turn to anarchist education and the emphasis on the subject, action, and relationships leads to another critique of critical pedagogy: the context and relationships of the teacher. In critical pedagogy the teacher is presented in a fixed form as a transformative intellectual. Critical pedagogy lays out a clear understanding of what a transformative intellectual should do and how they relate to others, wider society, and knowledge. This form of relations is closely tied to critical pedagogy's continued reliance on the state and revolves around teachers inculcating the values and practices of thick democracy in their students, aiming at the creation of critical citizens who are then able to hold power and authority to account and involve themselves in forms of participatory democracy. I argue that this fixed understanding of the teacher contributes to the tensions and difficulties many teachers face when attempting to translate the abstract work of critical pedagogy into their specific classroom contexts. Critical pedagogy's unwavering understanding of the role of the teacher is not sufficient to help teachers deal with the multiple tensions and contradictions of their role, resulting in a sense of frustration. To address this I turn to Foucault's work on care of the self, and suggest care of the self as an

understanding of the teacher and their role which does not define the teacher by their adherence to the abstract concepts and aims of critical pedagogy, but which locates them as an individual in relation with other individuals striving for the realisation of their subjectivity. Once again, this is wedded to anarchist views of transformation of the self and society in ways which are not connected to the state and dominant forms of social organisation.

Building from the anarchist framework established so far this chapter has taken a more detailed look at *how* to enact anarchist relationships. Starting with the practice of everyday life and the possibilities which exist between production and consumption I explored *la perruque* as a tactic through which dominant forms of social organisation and the relationships they enforce can be subverted. In such an action spaces are created which are fleeting yet ripe with creative possibilities for other ways of being. The practice of everyday life was then coupled with the concept of exilic space to provide a deeper theorisation for the spaces created by *la perruque*. Exilic space is the creation of space within already established institutions, locales, and societies in which individuals and communities can enact forms of social organisation and relationships which arise from their own needs and desires rather than having such forms and relationships imposed from elsewhere. Once again these concepts were connected to anarchism as I showed the use of tactics and exilic space through the example of Occupy and highlighted the importance of subversion without opposition as a necessary part in the realisation of other social forms and relationships not tied to existing forms.

These three chapters have come together to lead me to a consideration of my own teaching practice. While this thesis is a critique of critical pedagogy as I found it unable to help me address the issues of neo-liberal education I faced in Peru and in the UK, it is also a positive response. Realising that critical pedagogy could not help me to disentangle myself from neo-liberalism because it too seeks to give form to me as a subject through the identity of the transformative intellectual, I was looking for an approach which could, and found it in anarchism. In the previous chapters I have taken the reader through a anarchist critique of critical pedagogy through an examination of the state, democracy, the critical citizen, and the transformative intellectual. At each point I have argued that critical pedagogy predetermines social

change by fixing a form of subjectivity, a form of action, and forms of relationships. Along the way I have deepened anarchist calls for freedom as the subject's autonomous practice through an examination of care of the self as self-governance, and the creation of spontaneous relationships through *parrhesia*. I have also developed anarchist understandings of the possibilities of autonomous practice in everyday life and the subsequent creation of exilic space in which external practices of governance are rejected and new forms of organisation and relationships arise.

My aim in this project was to answer a series of questions, some concerning critical pedagogy, and some concerning my own practice: How radical is the social change called for in critical pedagogy, and how does it operate as a response to neo-liberalism? How can we approach our own transformation without tying ourselves to predetermined understandings of thought and action? How can we envisage and enact an approach to education which does not predetermine forms of subjectivity, action, and relationships? And finally, how can I enact an approach to education which builds from anarchist understandings of subjectivity, action, and relationships? Chapters Three and Four have answered the first question, critical pedagogy is not a response to neo-liberalism. Chapter Four has also answered the second question. It is through processes of self-government and care of the self that we can approach our own transformation as subjects without predetermining our thoughts and actions. Chapter Five has given us an answer to the third question. We can enact an approach to education which does not predetermine subjectivity, action, and relationships by playing in the gaps between production and consumption and creating exilic spaces in which practices of government which give form to our subjectivity are distanced. What is left is the final question: how do I enact such an approach to education? It is my answer to this question which is the focus of the next chapter. As I wrote this PhD I was working in the highly constrained environment as described above, my project was about capturing my attempts at autonomous practice, care of the self, and the creation of exilic spaces through autoethnographic narratives. These narratives allow me to explore my attempts and the constant tensions arising from the institutional and student expectations of me as a teacher. There are eight narratives in total, each one dealing with a specific session taken from my second and third year teaching as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. They do not

capture moments of success or failure – to use such language would open me to accusations of predetermination which I am trying to avoid – they capture interactional moments as those moments which were particularly important in my development and (trans)formation as a subject.

## 6. Interactional Moments

The task of this chapter is two-fold: first, introduce the context in which I was working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, and second, the autoethnographic accounts of my attempts to enact anarchist autonomous practice as part of my teaching.

When I returned to the UK from Peru, I first completed a Masters in Politics. It was during the MA that I began my engagement with critical pedagogy and my dissertation focused on the life and work of Paulo Freire. This interest soon turned into a PhD proposal, application, and finally, a position as a PhD candidate in Political and Social Thought. When I got my position as a PhD student, I was awarded a teaching scholarship which covered my tuition fees and paid me a monthly stipend for a period of three years in exchange for teaching four seminar groups per term, per year. I was now a student-cum-teacher which brought with it varying and overlapping identities and practices of governance, all competing to give form to me as a teacher and creating a highly constrained environment. There were two sources of teacher identity I had to navigate, one coming from the institution and the other from the students.

Institutionally, my identity as a teacher was defined in part by the module I was assigned to teach and the module convenor I was working with. As a Graduate Teaching Assistant I was assigned to teaching on the basis of departmental needs, and in the first year of teaching had no say in what I could or preferred to teach. In the second and third years there was an allowance for personal preference. Alongside this, I had no input into the module structure or aims, the weekly content, or the reading the students had to complete. I was very much there to help in the delivery of someone else's module, casting me in a strange position as a teacher. My role and the realm of action I had was defined by the module convenor, and had he decided to provide complete lesson plans to be followed each week, that would have been the action expected of me. I was lucky in this regard that the module convenor I worked for did not provide lesson plans for each of the seminars and so I had some flexibility around *how* I approached each topic. Beyond the module content and seminars, I was also subject to a number of practices of governance at an institutional level. Every term I was required to hold mid-term and end-of-term evaluations with

the students. The mid-term evaluations could be designed at my discretion or I could use a template provided by the module convenor. The end-of-term evaluations were conducted using a centrally supplied form on which students could score aspects of the module selected according to institutional targets, including my performance as a teacher. These end-of-term evaluations were then collated to draw comparisons across all modules within the school. The scores were reported in numerical form and also used a traffic-light system to highlight areas of concern or excellence. The institutional accounting for my practice did not stop with these evaluations as, in addition, my teaching practice was observed by the module convenor in one of my seminars each term. The observation process began with completing a form about what the observed session was going to be about, how it was going to be run, and how it fit with the module as a whole. The observation forms included spaces in which the module convenor and I would record our impressions of the observed session. These evaluations and observations aimed at ensuring that my actions as a teacher were in line with institutional expectations, and if not, could serve a corrective function. This is not to say that the evaluations and observations were punitive in their design, but that they both added to institutional attempts to control for my practice. These practices demonstrate that although I began teaching as a PhD student before the establishment of the TEF, the groundwork for the TEF was well-laid. A further institutional practice to establish my identity as a teacher was having an ID card which was distinct from my student ID card. Not only was the design of the card itself different, it would allow me into different rooms on campus than those I could access with my student card. Rooms I required access to as a teacher had to be added via a centralised system and only upon receipt of confirmation from the administrative team in the school of politics that I did indeed need access to the rooms I was requesting. Through my teacher ID the institution was able to physically influence my movements and access.

While these various institutional practices overlapped to give form to me as a teaching subject, I was also subject to the expectations and practices of the students I worked with. Neo-liberal practices of education, particularly in higher education, cast the student as a consumer of a product provided by the teacher. Various neo-liberal practices reinforce this economic understanding of the student and the

teacher ranging from the focus on the employability of the student following their degree, to the importance of the National Student Survey in ranking the university in the higher education market place. These practices established my role as one in which I took on a responsibility to the students I worked with to provide them with an enjoyable and economically valuable experience. This impacted my identity as a teacher as there was an expectation in the classroom that everything we did built towards the end-goal of a high degree classification which could be exchanged for a high-paying job. It is a combination of these expectations of curriculum, teaching practice, and economic gain which condition my relationships with students from the outset when we enter the classroom.

Together, the institutional expectations and student expectations of me as a teacher presented a highly constrained environment. I was given flexibility to teach only at the discretion of the module convenor, I was subject to accounting and observational procedures to ensure I act in ways which are congruent with institutional expectations, which are themselves influenced by student expectations of me as a teacher. To draw on anarchism, my subjectivity was given form through my identity as a teacher which was constructed through various practices of government. Simply denying the existence of these expectations would not be a sustainable response, and so all I could do was attempt to distance these expectations, roles and relationships incrementally throughout the eleven weeks I spent with each group. Critical pedagogy could not offer me a way to resist this neo-liberal approach to education because it too sets out practices of government and identities which give form to and constrain my subjectivity. And so, I turned to anarchism and freedom as autonomous practice.

Anarchist understandings of freedom as autonomous practice has repeatedly highlighted three areas: the subject, action, and relationships and these three areas form the framework for my autoethnographic narratives.

The importance of the subject in anarchism lies in the subject's, my, formation of myself through attempts to show the predetermined identities of the teacher and the student created by the institution as contingent and changeable. However, it is not as clear-cut as refusing one identity and forging another. I cannot escape my context as a teacher in a university, nor can I simply deny that others' expectations

of me exist. Rather than establishing my identity along dichotomous lines of *this* and not *that*, the challenge I faced was how to fulfil the role of the teacher which came with institutional and student expectations, and at the same time remaining truthful to myself and my values in that role. At its core, it is the same tension I faced when working in the charity and university in Peru. What was particularly odd about my situation as a Graduate Teaching Assistant was that until then I had always been a student in this institution. I did my BA there, and then four years later my MA which led into my PhD. From the end of my MA in August to the start of my PhD in September I became a teacher in the institution alongside continuing to be a student. This added another overlapping identity and cast me in a strange hinterland between a postgraduate student and full staff member.

Given these various overlapping identities the following narratives cannot be reduced to instances when I was *me* and instances when I was *not me*, but are instead instances which illuminate the constant tensions of the range of identities placed upon me at any given time in the classroom. There were numerous times when in attempts to form myself I relied on the identity constructed for me by others. A glance at such situations would write me off as a hypocrite and my actions as incoherent with my words, but doing so would be to deny the complexity of the challenges I, and many others, faced in an educational institution in which the formation of my subjectivity is a constantly shifting and overlapping of different identities in the context of my autonomous practice. Instead, these moments need to be unpicked and reflected upon to consider if there is another way I could have acted, another approach I could have taken. Only in doing this is it possible to engage in the process of self-(trans)formation through care of the self.

In giving form to myself, I enter into a relationship to myself which is based in self-care. Self-care relates to my attempts to continually account for, reflect on, and critically analyse my actions. This practice has no end-goal and is not about whether I fail or succeed to reach a certain formation of my own subjectivity. To do so would trap me in the determination of the subject, which is at the root of my critique of critical pedagogy. Instead, care for myself is about attending to my actions in a consideration of the extent to which they are *my* actions, rather than the actions expected of me by others. Importantly, care of the self is not a tool I enact or call

upon in my teaching, but teaching is part of my self-care. Teaching is an arena in which I am able to practice self-care through being open with others. This means being open to questions and challenges not only about the topics and my position regarding them, but about what I do and how I do it. In the context of my teaching it means being truthful about my faults and failures, and explaining the rationale behind the things I do and decisions I make. This relationship with the students is not entirely boundless as it finds limits in the topics we discuss in the classroom, but within these topics I am open to talk about myself and my position, if invited, rather than claiming a false objectivity and detachment. This invites students to engage with me in this process, questioning me and holding me to account for what I say and do. However, this is an invitation, not an imposition. My self care is not a demand on the students, but an offer. The students are also an element of my self care as I have a responsibility to care for them. This means offering critique of students, others and the world as part of my reciprocal responsibility. It means encouraging critical thought and establishing connections between themselves, their actions and the wider world. In this way, I maintain critical pedagogy's desire for critical thinking, but rather than focussing it on a future-yet-to-come of a more democratic state, it follows the anarchist attention on the present. The critical thinking, which is a necessary component of care of the self and care for others, is not preparation for social change, nor is it a prerequisite for social change, it *is* social change. It is a prefigurative action which does away with means and ends and is concerned with now.

To enact these relationships of self-care and care for others it is necessary to use *parrhesia* in my communications with students. I must be truthful and frank with what I say and how I say it. I cannot hide behind other people's words nor can I speak with students in ways which mask what I am trying to say. Alongside this, I must be critical of myself and the students, pushing us all to a closer consideration of our actions and to reflect on how these actions are connected to wider issues. This criticism inevitably carries risks because no matter how well the students and I get along I could easily upset or annoy them with my probing and challenging. This risk extends beyond the immediate classroom interaction and introduces a risk at the institutional level. If the students are particularly put-out by my questioning and

challenging, this could be recorded in the mid- and end-of-term evaluations which are gathered centrally and would bring my practice to the attention of the institution. Finally, it is my duty to invite a relationship of self-care and the frank and critical communication of *parrhesia*. In practice *parrhesia* with students in a British politics classroom means questioning their assumptions and actions in relation to the topic of the week and challenging them to consider how their assumptions and actions regarding the topic impact on their understanding and the possibility for them to take different action.

This process of questioning and challenging the students is closely connected to the importance of context, another element of critical pedagogy which maintains its influence in my teaching. The anarchist understanding of freedom as autonomous practice is practice now, and hence always concerns practice in context. In contrast to the context providing the basis for paternalistic empowerment and future social change in critical pedagogy, context in anarchism provides the starting point of autonomous practice (Heckert 2012, 71). Context in teaching about British politics means trying to connect the topic of each week to the lives of the students, which might be approached through starting sessions from students' knowledge of a topic, or establishing this connection later in the session. Connecting the sessions to students' knowledge and experience is easier with some of the topics than others. Most students have experience of general elections and even if they were too young to vote in the most recent election, they will almost certainly have been aware of the campaigns, the election itself and the result. It is also straight forward to make connections to the media, for example, through a discussion of the forms of media the students use and how they interact with media outlets. With other topics it is much harder to make these connections. Students rarely have any experience or starting knowledge of how the two Houses of Parliament work, or how the judiciary functions. In these cases, I need to find other ways to anchor the topic in something more relatable to the students. Sometimes this is easier said than done, and in three years of teaching I never managed to do so with the topic on parliament.

There is a further carry-over from critical pedagogy which links to the methodology underpinning this thesis. Praxis, the interplay between action and reflection, was one of the central elements in Freire's earliest work on critical

pedagogy. This interaction is also at the root of hermeneutics as developed by Ricoeur. It is through reading my practice as text that I was and am better able to understand the various identities which form my subjectivity and my responses to them. In order to select the moments used in these narratives, I first consulted the class notes I kept after each class. Over the two-year data gathering period I amassed nearly 40,000 words of class notes which gave me a starting point to pick out particular moments in the classes. When selecting these moments, I looked for instances which illuminated the tensions of working in a higher education institution and pursuing anarchist practices. With these moments selected, I listened to the recordings of those sessions to ensure my notes were an accurate reflection of what happened. Listening through the recordings also allowed me to re-visit the dialogue in those sessions and draw out the specific moments of practice which are important in the context of my thesis. This means that the narratives written here are not taken from a single group in a single year, but might represent the first class with one group from my second year teaching, and the fourth class with a different group in my third year teaching. These narratives are however arranged in a chronological order running from the beginning of term to the end. It is imperative that through these autoethnographic narratives I not only account for my actions in the moment but connect them to a reflection on being a teacher in higher education, and the theoretical work on anarchism, care of the self, and exilic space. Without the interplay of action, reading, and reflection the narratives run the risk of becoming a narcissistic endeavour in which I retell stories about my teaching rather than offering an analysis of a more general social problem in the specificity of my singular experience.

Bearing the above in mind, there are several aims for these narratives. In no particular order, they are: a critical account of my own autonomous practice, part of an ongoing process of care of the self, an invitation to the reader to enter into a relationship of self-care, an example of the possibilities of self-formation, a cautionary account of the difficulties of competing identities, and a hopeful call to action. These narratives are all these things and more, or at least, that is the intention. Ultimately, as with any hermeneutic process and any autoethnographic account, readers will have their own interpretations of these moments.

## Introductions

I'm in my second year of teaching seminars on British politics, and this year I would like to audio record the seminars and keep class notes as part of my thesis. It's the first class, although due to the way the seminars are structured it's already the second week of term. With reading week in week five and a revision session in week twelve, a twelve week term quickly becomes only ten sessions, each being only fifty minutes long. We're not going to be spending all that much time together, really. My heart is pounding as I make my way over to the classroom. I'm always nervous before meeting a new group, no matter how many times I've done it. Questions rattle through my mind: what if we don't get on? What if I forget all their names? What if I forget what I'm meant to be doing? After a year teaching here and two years teaching in Peru you'd think the nerves would be gone by now, but they keep creeping up each time. I've been sitting in one of the campus cafes for the last few hours and it's chilled me to the bone. The weak winter sunlight gives the illusion of warmth but not much else, and my left hand still looks a slightly unnatural colour as I clutch my coffee. Under my right arm I've got a box full of various materials that gets heavier with each step. Thud. Module outlines. Thud. Participant information sheets. Thud. Participant consent forms. Thud. Registers. Thud. Old text books. Thud.

The purpose of today's class is straight forward: introduce ourselves to each other and take a look at the module to come. Well, that's what it's meant to be. It's also my first chance to set the scene for all of our classes to come. I've been practising how to introduce myself and my project to the students and I've run through the script in my head countless times in the last few hours. In spite of everything I've been reading and thinking about, I feel like I'm going into this blind. Maybe not blind, overloaded? There are so many moving parts to a class and I'm trying to think about them all from room layout, to where I sit, and from how I introduce the topic, to how I talk to the students, and all the while I have no idea what might actually happen. There's a disconcerting uncertainty to how the students will react to me, to the project, to my request to record our sessions.

Actually, that's not strictly true; I'm well aware of how they will probably respond to my request for them to be included in my research. I need to audio record our sessions so that I can re-visit important moments later to enable me to write about

my practices as part of my thesis. There's no other way for me to gather this level of data but to record it, as I can't spend every session keeping notes. I can't escape that in asking them to take part in this research I'm asking them from a position of power, and it's unlikely they'll say "no". Granted, it may not only be because I'm a teacher, some may want to do it to help me out, some may be entirely ambivalent to being included in research, but there's a good chance they'll agree because of the power relationship which is established before any of us set foot in the classroom. Even then, agreeing to being included in the research is a different proposition to how they will react to me and my approach to teaching. It makes me a little uncomfortable that although I'm technically giving them a choice, it appears there's little voluntary decision involved. All I can do is try and ensure that they are aware of what I'm doing and make it as clear as I can that they can decide to decline their participation. Adding another complication to this process is that I need to start the recording as soon as I can so that I capture as much of the session as possible, but this means asking them if I can record the session from the very start, and then going through the project information and consent forms.

Walking into the atrium of the building I pause and try to remember where I need to go. The old colleges were built as original parts of the uni in the sixties, and if campus myth is to be believed, designed by a prison architect. The closed-in bare brick walls and the confusing layout make it hard for me to find my way round even after doing my BA and MA here. Turning to the right out of the courtyard at the entrance I wind my way down the stairs reasoning that if I can at least find the central internal courtyard, I can walk around it until I get to the right room. I did come here a few days ago to check the room out, but it doesn't seem to have helped me remember a route to get there. Maybe by the end of term.

Bottom of the stairs, turn left. I think this is right. An opening on my right and a few people standing by the double doors leading out into the courtyard. 'British politics?' I ask tentatively, hopefully. My right arm is killing me and I'm hoping someone can take either the box or my coffee so I can shift the weight. A few nods and one person who looks confused, looks at his watch, and hurries away. 'Great', I beam, 'could you grab this for me please?' gesturing to the coffee. 'Cheers.' I

gratefully haul the box into both arms while someone else holds open the doors for the few of us to pass into the room.

Room layouts can have a huge impact on the class and it's something I've become increasingly aware of. Some classrooms have banks of windows and high ceilings allowing natural light to enter and giving a sense of space. Others are not so well equipped and are bathed in the orange/yellow glow of fluorescent strip lights hanging within touching distance above your head. In my attempts to create an inviting space in each room, I open blinds or curtains to let in as much natural light as possible and, weather permitting, open windows to allow fresh air in. The layout of tables and chairs is an important physical aspect I can adapt and I want to take advantage of that whenever I can. Most rooms at the university are squares or rectangles of tables with an opening at the 'head' of the room, in front of the board and projector. Those that do not have an opening normally have a single table, set apart from the others and often used, and intended to be used, by the seminar leader in a clear indication of the traditional power that accompanies the title. Rather than rigidly adhering to the standard layout that places me as the focal point at the front of the room, I would like to rearrange the space in order to adapt it to whatever we are doing in class and to help to disrupt the expected roles we are to play as teacher and students.

For most of our sessions a square or rectangle is the most useful layout. There are two advantages to organising the seating in this way. First, it opens the entire room to be used by everyone involved, challenging the notion that certain locations are somehow under the 'ownership' of the seminar leader. Second, it places each student within the eye-line of the others, facilitating face-to-face conversation and debate directly between the students, rather than them addressing their contributions to me, and then me, like a living echo, having to open them out to the class. Of course, that's how I envisage it, but it could just as readily be read as a panoptic layout in which I can observe everyone at once, reasserting a hierarchy through a subtle policing of the space. Another advantage of starting from a square or rectangle is that it is an easy shape to adapt for different uses. At other times, for other tasks, other layouts might be more suitable: clusters of tables for small group discussion or face-to-face rows for debates. Each of these is quick and easy to set up

from a starting point of a square or rectangle, an important consideration when class time is short. How each of these layouts is understood and used by the students and I is influenced by how I act in it and this ties into another consideration of the room: where do I put myself? I always think of bell hooks and Ron Scapp when they wrote about how moving out from the front of the room to be amongst the students made a huge difference to how they interacted with each other. Rather than talking to the students from a position of control, moving around among the students makes me more accessible. Being among students means they are able to pick up on the way I move, the way I smell and myriad other details about me. I also always remember how unnerving hooks and Scapp found it, and how out of control they felt when they first did it (hooks 1994, 138). But I take inspiration from this, the classroom is the space in which I work, and that work cannot be reduced to intellectual labour. Institutionally, the expectation is that I'm at the front of the room, probably isolated by either a lectern or a table, and that's probably the expectation of the students too given that they're first year students and most will not have been long out of schooling. I know that sitting in a different place in the room isn't going to be a panacea, but it is part of an attempt to disrupt some of the behaviours expected of me and gives me a bit of space to act differently.

Thoughts of tables, chairs and seating are on my mind as we first walk into the classroom. These are strange rooms down here at the bottom of the college. Arranged around an inner courtyard they tuck under the floor above like galleries on a mountain road. The outer wall is full of large glass panes while the inner is the same bare brick as the rest of the building. Long and narrow they have the appearance of afterthoughts rather than purposely designed rooms, with the front dominated by a large TV doubling as a projector screen with a small white board tucked alongside. Two larger white boards fill the spaces in between the brick pillars that jut out into the room from the inner wall, making pinch points down that side of the table and rendering the white boards there unreachable. Although I remember having classes in one of these rooms during my undergraduate years in the mid-2000s, I've never taught in one before and I see it with different eyes. With the tables arranged in a long line filling the space there's little room to move and wherever I'll sit, I'll be trapped, unable to move around. Moving has become an increasingly important part

of my teaching practice, not only for getting among the students as hooks and Scapp talk about, but so that I can be actively engaged with the students rather than setting them a task and sitting back to do nothing. It's often in these moments of moving around the room to speak with individuals and groups that I get to know the students better and I think it helps to make me more approachable too. To be stuck in one position makes it much harder to build these relationships with the students.

Mindful of wanting to remove some of the physical barriers which separate the students and me, I make the decision to take a seat along the long edge of the table by the inner wall. I'm reluctant to automatically sit at the 'front' of the room as it will put me so far away from people at the far end of the table: it must be five meters long. We're not using the projector or white board today so there's no need for me to sit isolated at the front. I'm unsure how the students are going to react to me not sitting at the front, and the first signs aren't positive as the one student who had sat on the same side as me shuffles a few chairs to his left to move him round the corner to another side of the table.

'You don't have to move', I prompt as he's half way through his shuffle.

'Oh. No, it's OK, I'm fine here,' he says gesturing to his new seat.

It was said without malice and accompanied by a smile, so I don't think it's personal. I don't blame him. I imagine I would have responded in exactly the same way if a seminar leader had sat only a seat or two along from me. As more people find their way into the room the seats to my left and right fill first, the short ends of the table, and then gradually the long edge opposite me. Those who are last to arrive are squeezing themselves past the other students and into empty chairs in some sort of contortionist act, all avoiding sitting on the same side as me. It feels like the room has simply re-orientated to make the front wherever I happen to be. We'll see if things ease up over the next few weeks. It could of course be an entirely practical response, the students may all want to see my face throughout the session, and there are no doubt times when this is helpful for me too. But this comes from an approach to education in which the teacher is the focal point for the class, and this is one of the elements I'm trying to disrupt.

Sitting in a different place is as unnerving for me as it seems to be for the students. I definitely feel exposed and disarmed without the normal props which accompany a

seat at the front of the room: the table, the whiteboard, the space to get up and stride about – something I have developed a habit of. I unpack all the materials, making separate stacks in front of me. Looking back, I wonder if this almost ritualistic placing of different documents in front of me acted as a way for me to rebuild a barrier which had been removed because of my choice of seating. Either way, my nerves are still sitting just under my skin. Coats are shrugged off and laptops taken out. I do a quick head count: fifteen people. Not everyone that should be here according to the register, but it's almost five past the hour and I can't wait for late-comers. Time to start.

'Morning,' I start, hoping to strike the delicate balance between awake and ready to go, and overly enthusiastic, 'how's everyone doing?' I never really expect a reply, especially in the first week, so I just look out to hoping to catch a few nods of the head or even barely perceptible inclines. 'First up, is everyone here for British politics?' After asking at the door, it's always worth double checking. Again, a pause, a nod or two. 'OK, great. I'm Andy, I recognise some of your faces from the first lecture last week, and in a minute we'll go round so we can all start putting names to faces. First up though there are a few admin bits that we need to run through.' First few words done and it feels like the nerves are gone.

'Before we start I'd like to talk to you about my work quickly, as some of it involves you guys.' I need to introduce the project right at the start of the session so I can capture as much of it as possible in the recording. By doing a brief introduction I'm hoping I can start the recorder now, as long as there aren't any objections. This brings me back to the question of power and one of the most immediate tensions I face in the project. I want to disrupt the identities and actions of a teacher as established for me by the institution and the students, but in order to record my attempts to do that, I need the students' permission. Securing their permission at the beginning of the term when we do not know each other and have no other relationship but teacher-student relies very much on my institutionally derived power as a teacher so I am able to control the space, unilaterally decide that we are going to discuss my project, and go through the necessary ethics requirements. The irony isn't lost on me as I launch into the speech I've been mulling over all morning, '...anarchism..., ...teaching in particular ways..., ...my position and role as a seminar leader.... As my work involves

researching my teaching I'd like to record our classes using this voice recorder,' I scoop it from the desk and hold it aloft, 'I'll be keeping class notes that I'll write straight after each class, but there'll be stuff that I miss or forget about, so this is to help me. Before I turn it on, does anyone have any major objections?' Nothing. I hit the record button and place the recorder on the desk in front of me. 'Thank you, this is a huge help.'

I continue, 'Over all of my teaching I'll work with 100+ students this year alone. To include each and every one of you would be too much, so instead I'll draw on a few interesting and specific moments to analyse in the project', I explain to a sea of nodding heads. They seem to be following me so far. I scan the room for knitted eye brows or confused confidential glances to one another. The lack of either gives me confidence to carry on. 'So rather than concentrate on a specific class, I'll use a mix of bits from this year and next. No matter which parts I end up using, your names will be changed to keep you anonymous.' I pause a moment and scan the room, 'Does that make sense?' Most of the students nod.

No one objected. Could they have? Not only are they facing my institutional identity as a teacher, they are also at the start of forming new connections as a group and there are issues of peer pressure at play too. It would have taken a very confident and strong-willed student to say "no" not only to me, but in contrast to their peers. To stand out and say "no" would risk being labelled as a difficult student, it would single them out. And if someone had said "no"? Well, I wouldn't record the session, but I wouldn't change how I teach. I'm not approaching myself and my teaching this way for the sake of the project. The project is an exploration of how I teach but it is not the reason I teach. Had this group, and all the others over the two-year period objected to my recordings of the sessions and not given their permission to be included in the write-up, I would have had to re-think the project, but I wouldn't have stopped the thesis altogether.

As part of the ethical requirements of primary research involving others I need to give out information sheets about the project and consent forms for the students to sign. This gives them the chance to indicate that they do not wish to be included in the research without singling themselves out in front of peers. Placing my hand on two stacks of paper in front of me, I carry on. 'What I've got here is a short information

sheet giving a bit more detail about the project, that's for you guys to keep, and a consent form with some tick boxes and a space for you to sign. I'll leave the recorder running in each class, and if you are happy to be included in the write-up of the research, could you please tick the boxes next to the statements and sign at the bottom. If you'd rather not be included, that's no problem, don't tick the boxes but could you still sign the form please so that I have a record of it.' I split the two piles of paper in two and start passing them to either side of the room. As people hand them out, I add, 'If you agree now but change your mind later, that's not a problem either, you just have to let me know and I'll update my lists.' A central part of informed consent is an element of *ongoing* consent. Up until a certain point in the research, normally the end of the data gathering, the participants retain the ability to withdraw from the research. All that's required is a message to the researcher saying they no longer want to be involved. I hope a combination of the information sheet, the consent form, and me telling them, I can reassure the students that it's not a problem if they don't want to be part of the research, or if they change their minds later. As I said above, it would mean I would have to re-think parts of my thesis, but it wouldn't change how I teach.

The information sheet and consent forms are passed around. Some barely glance at either before ticking and signing, others are more obviously reading both carefully. 'Can I ask you something?' Someone to my left. I look across and meet the eye of a student. I'm aware other people have stopped and are looking at us both.

'Of course,' I respond with a bob of the head, 'What's up?'

'You said you want to try and teach and interact with us using ideas from anarchism? Are you just experimenting on us?'

'No, I'm not.' I pause and quickly gather my thoughts. It's a good question and more than anything I'm glad someone has reacted to what I'm asking them to take part in. I'm aware that my response, both vocal and physical, could set the tone for the rest of the term.

'There are two things I guess. First, whenever research involves other people it has to be reviewed by an ethics committee to make sure it's up to the university's standards. I've used well established ethical guidelines when thinking about the project, and it's been cleared by the module convenor, my supervisor, and the

department's ethics person.' I'm not sure I can divert into an explanation of ethical details of autoethnography, anarchism and care for the self, it's not really the time for it and I don't think it would help right now either.

'Second, and perhaps more importantly, I have a responsibility as a seminar leader to help guide you through this course and do so in a way that means you get as much as you can from these eleven weeks. Not just in terms of British politics, but in a wider sense of learning and being challenged.' I'm looking round the room as I say this, trying to address all fifteen faces in front of me, to explain my position and show the type of response they'll get if they want to question me. 'Each of your seminar leaders will teach in a particular way, and whether they consider it or not, there will be assumptions about learning, teaching, their role as a seminar leader, your role as a student, and what-have-you, and these assumptions will form a large part of how they teach. What I'm trying to do is make my own assumptions clear to you and me, and consciously account for them, and challenge them.'

'So, no, I'm not using you as some helpless guinea pigs!' I add with a small laugh which is thankfully echoed by some of the others in the room, including the student who asked the question. 'Does anyone else have any questions?' I ask, keen to keep this question and answer process going.

'Does anyone else listen to the recordings?' someone else asks.

'No,' with a shake of my head, 'these are for my use only, and once the project is over, they'll be deleted.' I look around the room with what I hope is an inviting look, 'Anything else?' With no one forthcoming it looks like it's time to move on to some of the other things that we have to cover in this first class. I thank everyone for their time regardless of whether they've given consent to be included in the write-up or not. While introducing the project and the recording I have relied on my authority as a teacher but, I am hoping that the process of explanation, and more importantly, the questions the students have asked me, will have softened that slightly and point the way for our interactions to come. What's becoming apparent is that this really isn't either/or. While anarchism starts from the assertion that we are free as subjects to form ourselves through autonomous practice which rejects the identities created for us externally, it's not that straight-forward. When I walk into that classroom, I bring a lot of identity "baggage" with me no matter what I do. I can choose to take

control of my own formation, but in doing so I add to the medley of competing and overlapping identities. The question then becomes how I can try and carve the space for autonomous practice, while still having to satisfy the requirements of the institution. No matter what else I do, I still have a responsibility to the students to help them through the module, which means covering the content laid out for us by the module convenor and in the order he has decided. It comes down to how I do this, and the almost continual transitions between different identities.

We spend the rest of the time going round the room getting to know each other a little more. Most of the people in the class haven't had classes together before, so it's a good chance for us to learn names. I ask students their names, why they're doing the course, and then a question about them, whether that's connected to the course, to uni more generally, where they're from, or what they do when they're not studying. As they answer I take mental notes about who says what, who's happy to respond and who is more reluctant, who is listening to others and who is not-so-subtly using their phone or laptop for something else. Every now and then I re-cap their names out loud for my sake as much as others; I've found that it helps me remember them and picture their faces. I ask them to look at the module outlines and see what weeks catch their eye? I ask them if there are particular exercises from other seminars that they found interesting or useful? Or that they would rather avoid? This is part of my attempt to decentre the expectations of me as a teacher deciding in advance what tasks we'll do with which weeks. By opening the *how* of the classes to input from the students I hope to create a collaborative space in which we all contribute to the learning process. I began doing a bit of this in my first year of teaching, but I was never quite sure how to integrate the students' suggestions. It felt a little like I was back in the university in Peru where I wanted to try something different but wasn't sure what or how. In my first year teaching I wanted to involve the students but I couldn't quite work out how to do that, or how to make use of their input. As I got further through that first year, I got better at it, and now at the start of my second year I'm more confident that I can actually make use of their input and show them that I've listened.

It's coming to the end of the class and I thank everyone again. Bags are packed in a rush and people file out of the door. I put all the materials away and make my way

upstairs ready to have one of my office hours. It's unlikely that anyone will come to see me so early in the term so the hour of quiet gives me a chance to write up my first impressions of the class while they're still fresh in my head. I know that no one action is suddenly going to do away with the tensions of being a teacher in higher education and approaching my teaching practice through anarchist relationships of care of the self and others, but I think today may have set the tone for the term.

Looking back on the session as I write this narrative I'm struck by the different competing elements, including those coming from within me. I'm reminded of Heckert (2013) who argues that the state is a state of mind, and the anarchist argument that we internalise and subscribe to the practices of government which give shape to our subjectivity. When we do this we become ever more reliant on the identities presented for us and it becomes ever more difficult to refuse them. To a certain extent, having spent many years of my life in educational institutions on both sides of the lectern, I have internalised what it is to be a teacher in the institution, even if I'm now trying to shake that dependency off. When I teach this inevitably involves some of the institutionally expected behaviours just as it involves behaviours of my own which are unaccountable within existing practices. And so I find myself returning to Heckert's ideas regarding anarchism without opposition (2012, 71), and adding my own twist: what if I start from accepting everything as it is, and then ask myself what can I do? How can anarchy be nurtured? How can I learn to be gentle with myself when I realise I'm drawn to external practices of government which shape my subjectivity and hold me in their grasp? These are questions I kept returning to over the course of the following years. With the beauty of hindsight, I realise that I kept falling into a dichotomy of 'I can't be *that* teacher, I've got to be *this* teacher,' which is only ever going to end in failure and disappointment. I think I realised this as I went through my teaching practice over the two years following this session and I got better at accepting the idea of doing what I could in the moment, regardless of what I *should* be doing according to institutional or student expectations. In light of this, I have thought of something I could change when asking for the students' consent to include them in the write-up. Consent is something which is ongoing, and participants have the right to withdraw from the research until the data gathering finishes, but the onus is placed on the participants to speak up

and say they no longer wish to be included. Given the issues of authority and hierarchy at play in the classroom this is just as unlikely as someone initially saying “no” when I ask to turn on the recorder. To try and remind the students of the option to withdraw, I could have checked at the beginning of each session if anyone wanted to withdraw, or perhaps give, their consent, and I could have reminded them that they need to let me know in the moment, but could e-mail me if they prefer. A rolling reminder that I was doing the project, happy to talk about the project, and that it was OK to change their consent may have helped to reinforce the students’ active participation and their ability to say no if they wished.

## Drawing

'Morning all.' I choose a seat at random and pull a few notes and the register from my bag. It's a clear bright day with light flooding into the room. This class is in one of the newer rooms on campus which has a lot more space and tables on wheels, it makes the whole thing easier to move around and adapt for different activities. At the moment everything is set up in a large rectangle with a gap in the middle. It's nearly time to start so I pass the register round and have a quick chat with those nearest me, but still avoiding the side of the table I'm sat on. It gives me a chance to try out my memory of their names: 'How has your week gone, Kieran?' Picking someone I'm confident won't mind responding. He tells me a little about the week and that he has an interview for a job at one of the campus cafes later. By the time we finish it's time to start and it looks like all that are going to arrive have.

Today is our first lesson of content in the course where we look at British politics in a very broad sense to help establish the political framework of institutions and groups we'll be looking at over the rest of the module. The reading the students have been asked to do sets out key features of the British political system like the electoral system, the division between the Commons and the Lords, the role of the judiciary, etc. and compares them to other European countries. In my first year teaching this course I got the students to list the key features and explain them in more detail as a way to make sure they had done the reading and everyone was starting from the same knowledge base. After doing this last year I realised that there was such variation in the class regarding prior knowledge of British politics and that the task was either rehashing old knowledge for some or making quite a leap for others.

The variation of students in the classroom is something I've had to learn how to deal with in the module. Some of the British students come straight into their first year of undergraduate studies having just completed an A-Level in British politics, which can often be as much of a hindrance as a help. Some of these students come to the module assuming they already know what they need to know to get through the module, which can mean they don't necessarily engage with the reading or the module as a whole. Others attempt to dominate the class through their previous knowledge. Other British students come to the module not having studied British politics before, but having picked up on bits and pieces through the news. Aside from

the British students, the university and programme attracts a large number of EU and international students. Many of these students have never studied British politics, and their pre-existing knowledge is mainly the product of international perceptions of Britain through media outlets. This creates a diverse range of students and backgrounds which makes assuming a base-level of knowledge about British politics very difficult to do.

During the first year of teaching I read about the work of Paul Donnelly and John Hogan (2013), two lecturers in Irish politics who used freehand drawing as a way to introduce the subject to a diversity of students. Their aim was to use freehand drawing to introduce a more complex and critical approach to the study of politics by illuminating the multiple ways a topic could be understood even from within a fairly small group of people such as a course year group. Inspired by this, I took on their ideas and transformed them to work better in my context of much shorter sessions. Rather than simply putting together a list of similarities and differences between British and European political set-ups, we're going to begin by trying to get a better understanding of how each of us sees British politics and what we already might know about it by drawing pictures. There are many advantages to using drawing in this class near the beginning the course. In the first instance, it's a very effective way to decentre the classroom, removing the focus from me as the teacher and placing it on the students' knowledge of the topic. This engages the students as active figures in the collaborative construction and direction of the session, as their drawings will form the basis for the following discussions. This challenges the notion that it is only me as the teacher who should determine the content of the session. Another advantage to using drawing with such a mixed group of students is that, as it is non-vocal, it is something all students can engage with at the same time, regardless of the level of their previous knowledge and their level or confidence with spoken English. This can help to level the room by putting all the students at the same starting point of a blank piece of paper and an open-ended request to draw British politics however they think of it. Granted, there can be a difference in the confidence of the students in drawing, but the task is set out in such a way that the focus is on the content of the drawing and not about making any aesthetic judgement. A bonus of using imagery, and pulled over from Freire's earliest education programmes, is that it

enables a distance between the students and their ideas. If they were to respond vocally, there would be a series of responses which are much harder to capture and then reflect upon. By starting with a drawing, students are able to adapt and elaborate their response as they go, and are then able to take a step back at the end and see if what they have drawn matches what they were initially thinking of. This element of capturing the response also enables students to compare and contrast their responses with one another with greater consideration and complexity, as they are not required to respond immediately and to a single specific point.

All of these elements come together to help disrupt the identities expected in the classroom. It's no longer on me as a teacher to provide content, and beyond that, it gives the students an active role in shaping what and how they learn. With this, the students cannot only be passive consumers of information, they must step into the space created and take part in the collaborative responsibility for the class. Yes, I'm still using my position as a teacher to establish some of the boundaries for the class, and I'm still directing the overall course of the session, but the student-led generation of content encourages an environment of joint responsibility in which we all come together around a common topic in order to increase our individual and joint understandings. The drawing task encourages the creation of an exilic space in which I don't have to be controlling and the students don't have to be passive. We can each be something other than those identities.

'OK, does everyone have a piece of paper and a pen or pencil? If not, I have some spares here.' People scramble around in their bags and share spare sheets of paper and pens. Everyone looks at me sitting with my own paper and pen in front of me. 'I'd like you to draw British politics.' There's a wave of confused and disbelieving faces. 'I know it might sound strange, but trust me, there's a point to this. What do you think of when you think of British politics, and can you draw it?'

I ask the students to trust me, but on what grounds? We've only known each other for a few weeks. Actually, what the words 'trust me' really mean in this context is, "trust that I'm a teacher with a professional responsibility to guide you through this module, and no matter how odd this task might seem, it forms part of a wider attempt to engage in discussions around political engagement," but 'trust me' is a

simpler short hand which relies on the unspoken identification of me as a teacher and all the institutional power and responsibility which comes with it.

‘Seriously?’ Pete asks.

‘Yeah. Give it a go. I’ll do one too. They don’t have to be masterpieces, just draw what you can. Stick men are about the limit of my artistic abilities.’

A few rolls of the eyes. A few sidelong looks to each other. A few shrugs. And a few who just get started. ‘Let’s have about three minutes,’ I add. Pens meet paper, mine included, and a quiet descends on the room. I draw out my own piece, although it does feel a little like cheating, as I’ve done it several times this week already and it feels rehearsed compared to the more spontaneous responses from the students. As much as anything I don’t participate in the task to generate more content but to show the students that I am actively participating in all parts of the seminar including the seminar tasks. I hope that this approach contributes to the disruption of the generally expected teacher-student relationship in which the teacher sets a task and students complete it. To put it more positively, I hope that my active participation in the tasks I’m asking them to do helps to level some of the hierarchy of the class and introduce a more reciprocal relationship.

It only takes a minute for the first peals of laughter to erupt as they catch sight of each other’s drawings. I look up smiling and see that others are too. More laughter. Another minute more and it looks like everyone has finished, so I ask some of the students to move their chairs to the empty space in the middle of the tables so that groups of about four students can see each other’s drawings and talk easily together. I ask them to explain their drawing to the others in their group and to look at what others have included and what their perspectives of British politics are. I give them some time to get started before I get out of my seat and manoeuvre into the empty space in the middle of the tables. Another advantage of doing the drawing exercise is that it gives me a chance to interact with the students in smaller groups, talking to them in more detail and getting a much better sense of who they are, what makes them comfortable, what makes them uneasy, or even at a more basic level, if they have a shortened form of their name they would prefer me to use. It all helps me understand them better as people in the classroom space, as well as bridging some of the assumed distance between seminar leader and student. I make my way to a

group with one of the foreign students in, Yadong from China, and squat down next to the table. Yadong was very quiet last week and I'd like to see if he's more comfortable talking in a small group.

Beth has just finished talking about her drawing and answering a question from Nathan about a strangely proportioned Houses of Parliament. Yadong is the next in line. Shyly, and fixing his eyes on me, he pushes his drawing forward: it's more abstract than others, with a circle in the centre labelled 'Britain' and a series of other circles at different distances around it with the names of other countries on. 'What is it?' Asks Nathan. He's softly spoken and has a way of asking questions without being intimidating, so he's a good person to ask the question of the reticent Yadong.

Yadong explains, to the page at first, and then gradually to others in the group and me, that when he thinks of British politics, he thinks of it primarily in terms of Britain's international position. The other circles represent countries which he thinks Britain has influence over, and the closer they are on the page, the more influence Britain has. Everyone has something appreciative to say, none of us having thought of it from that perspective before. It certainly seems like Yadong is more comfortable talking to a small group than he is to the entire class and I'll have to remember this over the rest of term and make sure I don't put him on the spot. Knowing a bit more about how best to approach Yadong in future, I move on to another group. It's only later that I realise this was a really important moment for Yadong, that collection of students, and me. They organised themselves, prompted and asked questions of each other, and supported Yadong through his reticence. I was there, briefly, and I joined the conversation but only as an aside not as a focal point. Although Yadong looked to me at first, my presence didn't suddenly mean everyone deferred to me, instead they looked to each other for support and answers, taking on the responsibility of their own learning. Another demonstration of why the drawing task can be so helpful in attempting to create an exilic classroom.

I shuffle further round the table and chat to another group who are part way through looking at Sabi's drawing, another circular design. Sabi is in the middle of her explanation so I just wait at the side and listen for moment: '...and then round the outside, at a distance, is everyone. Like us.' Barbara, another member of the groups looks up and fills me in, 'The centre of the wheel is London and the Prime Minister

and ministers, and spokes are the things that connect us to them, like voting, and parties and stuff'. Sabi nods in confirmation of Barbara's summary.

'That's really cool. I've done this exercise with lots of different people over the years, and no one has ever drawn it like that.' Looking at Sabi, she smiles. A little like Yadong, she was quite quiet last week, but seems to be more comfortable opening up in a smaller group. I make another mental note.

While Yadong and Sabi's are certainly more abstract, others include more physical elements in their drawings. It's fairly common for students to draw the Houses of Parliament, the Queen, non-descript politicians (often wearing top-hats), and money. Rather than the objects themselves, it's often the placing on the page and the suggestion of the relationship between these elements and everyone else, 'like us' as Sabi said, which is most interesting. Sabi's drawing is particularly unusual in its circular design. Most drawings place politicians and the Houses of Parliament at the top of the page, with the Queen off to the side almost as an afterthought. Everyone else is then drawn a lot smaller and as a crowd at the bottom of the page. These drawings are always accompanied by comments from the students which are highly critical of politicians and supportive of notions of popular organisation. It always makes me wonder if the students realise the critical stance they represent in their drawings, that their approach is a critique of a form of social organisation based on the hierarchical position of those who represent and direct the state apparatus. I'd love to have the chance to explore some of these ideas with them but we don't have the time. While I think it's important for me to spend time talking with the groups and engaging with what they've drawn it's a long process and I'm conscious of the limited time we have in class and the need to connect these drawings to the module as a whole.

While most people take to the drawing task, even after some initial confusion, and end up relaxing and sharing their work with thought and consideration, some don't. It turns out Az is one of those. He was vocal last week, but not in a chatty open way, more of a speaking-for-speaking's-sake way. He's in the next group round from Sabi and Barbara, and is busy holding forth about his drawing. As I move over, he stops and launches into an explanation of an image in which he crudely names politicians from certain political parties as a joke. 'Right.' I say as impassively as I can muster.

Determined to try and get something deeper than “All politicians are idiots” from him I ask if it’s just UKIP and Tories that he’s represented? Or does he think all politicians are the same? And why is that? He’s silent for a moment and I can’t tell if it’s because he’s thinking about an answer or because he has no idea what to say.

‘I don’t know,’ he replies.

‘OK. I was hoping for a little more really. I know I said that the drawing could be anything, but there doesn’t seem to have been much thought in this. Try and think about what it is that makes you think this about politicians? I’m not saying you should like them, but if you want to make a statement about something try and back it up with an argument.’ It feels like there’s an edge to my voice which might betray my annoyance. I’m not sure I’ve handled this particularly well, but I was caught totally on the hop and it seems like the only way to respond from within the tangle of not wanting to disregard his position entirely, and wanting to challenge him to think through his position in a bit more detail. I want to push him to think more about his drawing but that doesn’t seem to be getting us anywhere as he just stalls and doesn’t know what to say.

My desire to challenge him stems from care of the self and care for others: he should be able to account for his drawing and his thought process behind it. Not challenging him to reflect on his position doesn’t get him, the class, or me any further. Challenging Az isn’t just about Az, it’s showing the class that they need to be ready to explain their positions. It’s the first time I can remember when I’ve felt this thrown during the drawing task and it’s disarming. There’s always a sense of giving up control with a task like this and I have to accept what the students produce and try and work from there, which inevitably involves needing to respond on the spot to whatever they come up with, but I was unprepared for Az’s drawing and response. I’m trying to think back to other times there has been this approach to the drawing, one which reduces the task explicitly to a joke, rather than using humour as part of a considered response. Maybe it’s that which bothers me about Az, it looks like he took the chance to make the task about making a joke first, and connecting this to British politics second. I know that I invite uncertainty with the drawing but I trust that the students are mature enough to take it seriously, and he hasn’t. This sort of response is always a possibility: I opened the space for Az to respond to the prompt, and he did exactly

that. More than that, he behaved in a way which was unexpected for a student, which is part of what I'm hoping for in our classes. What triggers such a negative response from me is that he then can't expand on his answer. Ed offers to talk through his drawing and, consciously or not, lifts me out of needing to go further with Az.

As the class continues we go on to link elements of people's drawing to key features of the British political system that they've read about as part of their preparation, helping to lay some of the groundwork for the weeks to come. Overall, apart from the moment with Az, the class seems to have gone well. The drawings have helped us all to talk to each other on a more conversational and equal footing while still covering the necessary content. Hopefully with that the class has been a demonstration to the students for the ways in which they can shape their own role, and by extension, themselves, in the classroom. They don't *have* to be passive recipients, nor do I *have* to be controlling.

Revisiting this session as I write my thesis I can't help but wonder if the drawing was an exercise through which we created an exilic classroom. Exilic space is space in which practices and identities, and with that, relationships, are created which are not imposed from outside the space itself. By this definition we did create an exilic space on that day, however fleetingly. Yes, it clearly took my institutional position as a teacher to get things started, but what developed from there was the result of eighteen people in a room interacting with one another on a topic they had come together to learn about. The moment with Yadong is a great example of this. Everyone in the group was listening to each other and Nathan recognised that Yadong needed a little encouragement to open up. In response, Yadong stepped into the space created for him and began to talk. Despite my presence the group continued talking with them and their drawings as the focus. We were fulfilling the institutional requirement to learn about British politics but did so in a way which the institution could not account for. This was an act of *la perruque*, an act of playing in the gap between what and how the university expects us to be in the classroom, and what we actually make of that space through our own actions.

## Engagement

This week is all about political engagement. The lecture and the reading focussed on how engagement has changed over time and what the links between trust and engagement might be. The aim of the seminar is to look at the changing nature of engagement and talk about why citizens' engagement with politics might have changed. Both the lecture and reading gave lots of suggestions of ways to engage, ranging from the more traditional ways like voting and party membership to the more recent developments in engagement like signing online petitions. At the end of last week I asked the students to think about how they engage, leaving the options deliberately open to see what they would come up with. I'm not sure how many of the students will have been old enough to vote yet, and I imagine that most of the British students would have been sixteen or seventeen at the time of the last general election in 2015, so I'm hoping that we might get to hear about some of the more recent forms of engagement and aspects which haven't been included in module so far.

We all file into the room and take seats. There's not a huge amount of space in here and the tables are standing quite close to the walls in the attempt to maximise the capacity of the room, but they are arranged in a square which leaves an open space in the middle where we can move around. I take a seat at the side of the room opposite the door so people don't have to try and squeeze past me. No one takes the seats either side of me, but no one is actively avoiding me or the side of the table I'm on like they did in the first few weeks. The room size and shape help here as the room is so small that there is little choice but to sit closer to me.

Once the clock hits five-past, we get started. I ask about different ways to engage and toss a pen to Mark who's sitting next to the small whiteboard in the corner of the room so he can write up the responses. For this first part I'd like to get as many ideas up as possible, then we can revisit them and ask about the ways the students themselves engage. Compiling the list first gives the students a reference point for the discussion about their own engagement and perhaps brings up options they hadn't considered before. As the suggestions come forward, I can see Pete scowling at some of the less conventional ones like online petitions, and even protests. We're in our fifth class together and I have a bit of an idea about each of the students now

and can gauge who responds to a prompt, who works well in a group or who will speak up no matter what. Pete definitely falls into that final category. Not one to hold back, I know when he's ready to comment on whatever is causing him to scowl, he will. I haven't commented on any of the suggestions yet and I haven't really needed to as everyone is directing their inputs to Mark.

As the flow of suggestions winds down, for which Mark looks very grateful, I pause for a moment just to look over what's there on the board. Everyone else is either looking over the options too or is busy copying them down in their notes. These first five minutes have given us a huge amount to work with.

As the next step, I'd like to make a connection between what they've read and heard about political engagement in the lecture and their own actions and experiences. 'OK, so given this huge range of ways to engage with politics, what do you lot do? How do you engage?' By taking the question of engagement and focussing in on them we can make a bridge between the wider social world and their personal lives and prompt all of us to reflect on our actions, a vital element in relationships of self-care and care for others. By connecting the topic to our actions and discussing those actions with one another, we create a space as an invitation to others to enter into relationships of self-care through accounting for and being held to account for our actions. I would like to give the students the chance to listen to each other, reflect on their positions and question each other's and their own positions. I hope that this will help to create a relationship between the students which goes beyond merely using the other to increase one's knowledge. When we stop, listen, and discuss, the other becomes someone with whom we enter a reciprocal relationship in which we learn from each other and about ourselves. What I would like to avoid at this point is the discussion turning into a pursuit in which we simply list the different ways in which we engage, and demonstrate that we all engage in politics in some form or another. Instead, I am more interested in talking about the changing nature of engagement and questions of trust in politics.

'I voted.' Malikah says to me, and then to the rest of the class, 'I live in a safe seat, so I know it doesn't really make any difference, but I voted because I'm a woman.'

I know Malikah from last year, she's back to repeat the year after things didn't go according to plan last time. I didn't see her too much in the classes last year, but

when she did come she always came across as someone open to conversation and debate. I weigh this up as I try and make a quick decision about whether I can push her on this point. I have trouble with the argument that being a woman automatically means you should vote and I don't think the answer the women died to get the vote is necessarily a convincing one.

I decide I can at least try, 'Why does being a woman mean you should vote?'

'Women died to get me the vote, I shouldn't waste it.' There's a definite defensiveness here and other women in the class are nodding along in agreement. I know I have to tread carefully to be able to challenge the idea without being overbearing or patronising. It would be too easy for me to shut down a discussion from my position as a teacher and a man, and I need to watch my language, tone, and response. A miss-spoken word, an emphasis in the wrong place, anything which could be construed as a dismissal of Malikah's point. This is part of the risk which comes with criticising and challenging others and there's no way to avoid it.

'OK, but women have died for different political causes all over the world, is it just voting that you identify with?' I'm worried for a moment that my use of the word 'just' will be seen as belittling. There's a definite chance that I'll alienate and annoy Malikah and others in the class. It's only in listening back to the session I realise that I got distracted from her point about voting. Rather asking her to think through in more detail about why she connects being a woman and voting, I'm drawing her off into questions about why she doesn't engage with a host of other actions, but this isn't what she, or I, was really getting at.

'What do you mean?'

'Well, women fought for the vote and died for it, but at the time that was them taking radical action to put themselves on a more equal footing with men. That was several generations ago now, are there actions you could take now to continue that movement for radical action? Or was getting the vote enough? Sorry,' I apologise, 'I'm not deliberately being an arse, I'm just interested.' I hope it's clear that I'm not trying to attack Malikah, I just want her, and others, to think about their position.

'No, it's OK.' I let out a silent sigh of relief. 'I guess I never thought about it,' continues Malikah, 'I think I just always thought that I should.'

A couple of people shift slightly in their seats, balancing on the edge of speaking. I don't say anything in an attempt to leave the space for someone else to voice their opinion. I'm conscious that this has been an exchange between Malikah and me so far. The pause is a split-second.

'Voting is the only thing that counts anyway,' interjects Pete before anyone else. 'Voting is the only way to make a difference, and because people don't trust government, they don't vote. That doesn't make sense. They should vote if they want to change things.' It appears that this is what Pete has been holding onto so far in the class, and why he seemed so negative towards many of the suggestions of engagement.

'Look,' he continues, brandishing two graphs that he's printed out from the lecture, 'trust has gone down, voting has gone down, so we have to say that engagement has gone down.'

Those who looked like they might speak a moment ago have settled back into their chairs. Pete has just introduced a lot of points at once and I'm not sure which way to go with it. Do we follow on with the statement that we should vote because it's the only way to make a difference, or do we explore the connection that Pete has made between trust and voting? I decide for the connection between trust and voting, as there's an essay question on it, and I'm wary of people making the same correlation between trust and engagement without being careful about what they are actually referring to. Students in other classes have already made the same spurious connection so I've had versions of the conversation before now. I try and explain that what the graph about trust might be able to help us explain is any changes in *why* people engage, but it can't tell us *if* they engage or not.

'No,' Pete responds belligerently, 'it can tell us about engagement because if people don't trust government, they won't vote.'

'No,' I try keeping my voice level but I think there's an edge creeping in, 'what if I really distrusted government and so I wanted to get them out of power? Or, going the other way, I really trusted government and was happy just to sit back and let them continue?'

Addressing the rest of the room as well as Pete, 'You may want to argue that voting is the only engagement that counts, OK, that's an argument you can make,

whether I agree or not doesn't matter. But trust alone can't be a measure of voting as engagement.'

'OK, so how would you argue that engagement has gone down then?' Delivered dripping with challenge.

'First up, make it clear what *you* mean by engagement, and why that is. In your case, Pete, it would only be voting. Then try and find some specific turnout figures from somewhere, as we're talking about British politics, you could look at local, national, and even MEP elections as examples of voting. Then you can say, "Voting is engagement, here's data that shows voting is decreasing across different types of elections, and so engagement is going down." You just have to leave aside the trust part.' I finish with a shrug.

Pete looks at me. A pause. He nods, 'OK, yeah. That makes sense, I guess.'

We carry on talking as a class about various types of engagement, voting included, and how things have changed over time, how we might account for that change, and how we might engage more, should we choose to. Our conversation takes us from party politics, to single-issue pressure groups, to online campaigns. Nearing the end of the class, Victoria, who until now has been very quiet, casually throws a sentence into the conversation, 'I'm going to run for the SU election. I think I'd make a good President.' I glance at the clock and it's five to the hour, time to finish. I can't believe that she only told us now, or maybe it was deliberate as there's no time left to talk about it. 'I can't believe we've run out of time, but I'd like to hear more about it next week?' Victoria nods and packs her bag along with everyone else.

Sitting down to write up my class notes later I'm not sure what to make of this session. We drew out some of the links between ourselves and society, particularly with Malikah and her approach to voting. Although Pete's interjection cut this conversation slightly short, we did begin to link personal action to larger social questions which is an important part of reflecting on how we act. It would have been good for others to add to the conversation, and it looked as if some were about to. Although we weren't able to continue the discussion in depth I hope that it got people thinking about voting and their reasons for doing so. I'm trying to think if I would do anything different when I'm next in the position of challenging a student, but it's hard to second guess. What does come through on a second reading of the

class notes and listening to the recordings is that I didn't articulate my position regarding voting, and so it was hard for me to challenge Malikah constructively. It comes across as a personal response to the link between voting and being a woman, a link that many people make and a conversation I've had with others before, but such a quick and unconstructive response masks my difficulty with the argument. It's not that there is a conflation between being a woman and needing to vote because of this, nor is it about the gendered element although I'm very conscious of being a white male challenging a woman about voting. It's that in the recourse to voting because of the history of suffrage people often do not then consider the act of voting itself. I've had conversations similar conversations with male students in the past who vote because the UK is a democracy and people died in the World Wars to keep it that way. Male or female my problem with the argument is the non-critical acceptance of the act of voting. There are parallels here to my time in Peru, particularly in my work with the charity where we were teaching the children the rules to play in a crooked game. Without considering voting beyond the historical narrative, either through the suffragettes or the World Wars, students stop at the acceptance of voting and representative democracy as an unquestionably desirable act. I think this is why I had such a reaction to Malikah and really felt like I have to push her, so that all of us in the class could take a closer look at our actions and our interactions with society. But this didn't come across in the moment.

Looking back, there were elements of *parrhesia* in my interactions with Malikah. I was having a frank and honest conversation about her reasons for voting and that I find her argument ill-thought-out. In pushing her, and being critical of her explanations, there was a real risk that I would end up offending her and others who shared her position in the class and shutting down the chance to talk, and risking future conversations. Frankness, truth, criticism, risk, four of the five characteristics of *parrhesia*. Duty? Well, I certainly felt like I had to challenge her, but I was aware of the danger of doing so. *Parrhesia* would mean a duty no matter what, and indeed risk is an unavoidable element, but when in the context of the classroom it is not as clear-cut. In bringing *parrhesia* into the classroom I have to be careful as there is the necessity for an ongoing relationship between the students and me until the end of term. Both parties walking away from the relationship is not an option when we still

have six or seven weeks to go. We're institutionally bound no matter what for the duration of the term. Where some modules may have more than one seminar leader, for British politics I am the only one, it isn't possible for a student to join another group. This places an unavoidable constraint on *parrhesia* in the classroom as I need to constantly balance challenging students and maintaining a relationship which enables us to work together. This does not mean refraining from speaking the truth to students, nor necessarily limiting what I say, but it does mean being aware that when I am frank and challenging, there is more at risk than our one-to-one relationship and that there are other intervening factors. It's not that this is an either/or situation, but there is a point at which challenge could irreparably damage a relationship which has to be maintained.

The conversation with Pete was an interesting one. He tends to be quite combative and I find it hard to judge how to respond. There have been a number of times in the last few weeks when I've had to intervene in group discussions as it sounded like he was brow-beating another student. I don't know if other students have any difficulties with his approach. I know it gets my back up and I can't help but see it as the assertion of dominance on his part, so I need to find a way to address the points he's making without putting up my own combative front. I think what I struggle with is that he is over confident without seeming to have thought through his point, and then when he's challenged he tends to double-down rather than listen to what others say. I wouldn't be doing my job, nor would I be inviting relationships of self-care if I didn't respond to the errors in Pete's challenges and assertions, but I need to find the most constructive way to do that. By pushing back in an equally assertive way I think all I would achieve is to set us at loggerheads, and that won't help either of us understand the other's position or learn from it.

## Miserable Sessions

It's 1pm on a Friday and my third class in a row: I'm exhausted and hungry. I know the timing is nothing more than a consequence of timetabling, which is no doubt done by algorithms based on class size, etc., but the impact it has on our class is very real. Running from room to room and session to session is incredibly draining and I can feel myself slowing down already. The next group always gets a bit of a bad deal as I can never say I'm truly at my best by the time I get to their class. I'm tired, and I can't think as quickly as I would like, which means I find it hard to string their ideas and points together and present the students with challenges and invitations to develop ideas and points they're making. When I feel that tired, I'm much more likely to repeat what I've just done in one of the previous two classes rather than focusing on the group in front of me and think about what will work best for them. Another knock on is that I sometimes forget what I've said in which class and to who and I get worried that I'm going to repeat myself over and again in this third group. This group is quite talkative and in a way this enables me to set off a task and then sit back. Usually and thankfully, these students organise themselves and discuss the topics with very little prompting. Their engagement makes the classes easier despite my tiredness. How we get there might not be great, but the result is that I'm rarely fulfilling the institutional role of a teacher providing content and knowledge, and the students take on a lot of the responsibility for the sessions themselves.

It's mid-way through the term and miserable weather hangs over campus. It's not that cold really, but it's the kind of weather that feels like it reaches deep inside you. The kind of weather that no amount of layers keeps out. I'm early to the class and for the first time this term we need the lights on in the room. There's been a class in here before us and the room has that close, musty smell of wet bodies and warm radiators, condensation fogging up the glass. Despite the cold, I crack open a few of the windows to try and get some air in the room and take a seat away from the radiators which have a furnace-like intensity.

People start to head in. I try and rouse myself with a few cheery 'ellos' and start to chat with one of the students about how his new job is going, but his usual buoyancy is not there today. He replies with a few short answers and it's clear he's not really in the mood to chat. Casting a look at the others coming through the door

cold and wet none of the faces look like they want to chat, and I doubt mine does either today. Coats are shrugged off and the blue glow of laptop screens adds to the fluorescent white-yellow of the strip lights giving everything and everyone in the room a sort of washed-out pallor. It's five past the hour and we should be starting, but the room is surprisingly empty, only eight of us in all. It's hard to not take the turnout a little personally. Despite knowing that we get on well as a group to see only half the class in a session mid-way through term is disappointing. This isn't the only class to have such a low turnout, some of the other classes this week had a low turnout too. I ask if anyone knows about other students who are on their way or are held up and I'm met with a few deflated 'no's and shakes of the head. Sometimes when the numbers are this small it's worth holding on a few minutes to see if anymore head in, but it doesn't look like this is going to happen today.

Today, we're talking about different electoral systems, particularly contrasting the Single Member Plurality system of the UK with more proportional forms. As a topic it follows nicely on from the week before when we talked about political engagement, with the voting system of national UK elections being touted by many in the class as a key reason for people disengaging. The lecture gave more detail on how the two different systems work, and some of the material on the reading list gave great examples of different countries' electoral systems and issues around the topic. What I would like to do today is to ask the students to debate the relative merits and drawbacks of different electoral systems with one part of the class arguing for reform and the other part arguing for keeping the system we have. Considering the assignments at the end of the term, I'm hoping that alongside consolidating their knowledge about electoral systems, this will also provide some practice in constructing arguments and supporting them with academic data. The essay for this module is due on the very last day of term but as all the submission deadlines are staggered, this means their first essays will be due in in a few weeks. If we don't start addressing some of the skills they need to demonstrate in the essay now, they'll be swept along with their other assignments and it will be harder to do so later. They will either stop coming to class because they are working on their other assignments, or their attention and engagement in class will drop off. At the beginning of the week I e-mailed the students and asked them to prepare for a debate on the merits and

drawbacks of the two different voting systems, allocating people to a position on the basis of their surname, which was the only way to ensure that we don't end up with a room full of people arguing for the benefits of a more proportional voting system. Given the low turnout today there's no guarantee that we won't have ended up with that divide anyway. Although the debate task has worked well in the past with other groups, it really needs a good number of people to work and hopefully eight students will provide us with enough different ideas and arguments for a lively discussion.

The room is one of the bigger ones in an extension to one of the original college buildings. There's plenty of space in here to move around and with only eight people it feels cavernous. People shuffle around and organise themselves into their respective groups on each side of the tables and I reach over to put a chair in the gap in the middle so I can speak easily with both groups. It comes out at five for reform and three against, a reasonable balance of the sides.

They start with a few minutes to gather their thoughts as a group, think about the key points they want to make, and how they might argue against points coming from the other side. Where normally conversation would have picked up quite naturally by now, today it's faltering. The group against reform are quietly talking about a few ideas, the other group is as good as silent. I wait a moment to see if they start of their own accord but there's a lot of staring at notes and screens and not a lot of talking. I catch someone's eye and move over. The stilted response to my suggestions of points they might want to consider feels like pulling teeth as I resort to trying to take them step by step through constructing an argument. This is tough today. For all of us. I'm reluctant to give them all the answers, but what do I do if they're not prepared to do the debate? At the moment I'm not sure if they're not prepared as in they haven't done the reading, or not prepared as in they're not willing to discuss. Without much conversation it's hard for me to get a sense of whether it is the one or the other or indeed both.

I try and think of other ways to approach the topic but I'm drawing blanks. Could I run through some of the key points first? No, particularly not now I've given them the task and got them started. Perhaps I could make the two groups switch sides and have them defend the other position? It might force them to think a bit more about the stances? No, given the mood in the room I'm not convinced that will work any

better. Could I scrap the debate altogether? But what are we going to do then? Part of me thinks I should just end the seminar now and save us all the remaining forty minutes of slogging through this, but I don't think that would go down well with the students, or anyone else at the university if they found out. Unsure of what best to do I resign myself to the debate.

After a few minutes I check in with the other group arguing against reform, and when both sides reluctantly say that they're ready I take a seat and invite those arguing for reform to open the debate. The apathy in the room hasn't lifted and it's a lifeless back-and-forth of different points with little engagement or connection from one point to the next. I'm dulled as well today, and it really isn't helping. Whereas normally I might be able to string the different points made together, nudging the opposite side to think about their responses and trying to keep some sort of momentum going, today I just can't. My thinking is slow and rather than helping to move the debate on it's like I'm a side-line spectator watching it lurch from one side of the room to the other and back again.

It doesn't take too long for the groups to look like they're winding down and rapidly running out of points to make. I decide to change tack. 'Ok,' I interject, 'it feels like this has run aground a bit, so how about if you step out of your assigned positions. Do you think the voting system should be changed?' I'm hoping that by bringing it back to them we might be able to inject some life into it. Surely, they have an opinion on this? Nearly everyone does. If we can get started with their opinions maybe we can then tie these back to the evidence they've got from the reading.

Silence.

I'm waiting. Once again unsure what to do. I don't mind silence when I can see that people are forming an answer, but this is an awkward silence which lingers. Silence certainly has a role to play and as part of embracing uncertainty in the classroom. I'm normally perfectly comfortable to let a silence sit undisturbed in the middle of a room. Silence can give people time to think and if I clamour to fill that space with a reformulated question or my own answer or explanation it shifts the responsibility for the space and session entirely back onto my shoulders. The students have a role to play too, and silence can give them the space to play it (Forrest 2013). But this isn't that kind of silence.

Eventually, one student offers his opinions, and then another adds hers and the class seems to find a little more rhythm with ten minutes to go. The class ends and we all exchange sympathetic looks as we pack up our things. We all seem to know that this has been a far from ideal class, and quite unlike any other class we had in the term so far. Coats on, umbrellas ready, and people file out back into the mist. I'm drained. This was an archetypal "bad class", no conversation, no engagement, no life. In my reluctance to fall into simply repeating elements of the lecture, re-transmitting what I thought the people should know, the class stumbled from one point to the next. I take solace in hooks' reminder that creating an engaging space can't be done by force of will on my part alone. hooks (1994) reminds me that the classroom is a communal space which necessitates a collaborative effort from all involved. If students are resistant during a class, I can't force them to participate as to do so would be to force my own understandings and concepts onto them. I have to give up notions of controlling the space and open myself to the uncertainty of what will arise from the group itself. Today, my force of will wasn't there anyway. I was in no position to try and shape the task differently.

I wonder what I could have done differently. Revisiting the session in my notes and recordings gives me a distance to the event, and actually, I think there's plenty I could have changed. In the first instance, it would have helped to have gone through some of the key points of each of the electoral systems as a whole class first. I've done something similar before with other topics and I'm not sure why I dismissed it during this class. It might have broken up the flow of their conversations while they were preparing their debate positions but there weren't any conversations to break up in the first place; that was precisely the problem. Adding some of the key features to the board would have given the students a reference point to start from, and would have helped me to see if they had done any of the reading. Not having done the reading wouldn't have been the end of the world, but knowing that would have at least allowed me to address it and help the students get started. The debate itself could also have been set up differently. Doing a structured debate isn't necessarily something the students know how to do. I know I've never done one with them and I don't know if they've done one in another class. Because of this, I really think I should have provided more of a framework: how structured debates function, the

point-response process, the need for opening statements, etc. Without this introduction I threw them in the deep-end and expected them to swim. Providing this structure would have helped us take a better look at constructing arguments as part of the debate preparation which, hopefully, would have carried over into their assignments. I'm cautious of planning a class too tightly and not allowing sufficient space for the students but leaving it entirely unbounded like it was in this session can be disarming and counter-productive.

There's nothing to say that had I done these things in this particular session it would have been any different. There was something about this day and we all seemed to be absolutely drained. Ultimately, I think this bad session helped me. In going back over my class notes this session really stood out as a difficult one, and it has forced me to go back through it and try to unpick why it didn't work. In giving up some of the control in the classroom I introduce a large degree of uncertainty, which comes with the risk that days like this might occur. I don't think the response is to try and strive for or create certainty about the classroom space, the relationships, the direction of the session as doing that would be imposing myself and my ideas on the students, running roughshod over their contributions to the class. But that doesn't mean I can't work to try and create a space in which this uncertainty can be used creatively by all of us. Sometimes that won't work, and today was a good example.

## Role Play

I'm quite nervous walking up the hill to campus today. Each term that I teach, the module convenor has to come and observe one of the classes, and today is the day we've arranged for this term. Each observation session is accompanied by paperwork for both me and the module convenor. The observation form focuses on how the session is delivered rather than broader concerns with the development of my teaching practice or innovation in the techniques used. It is separated into sections which capture the immediate and short-term gains for the students and asks what the aim of the session is, how it fits with the rest of the module, and how I plan to deliver the content. The observation form, in fact the entire observation process, strikes me as a largely bureaucratic exercise which perfectly demonstrates the institutional understanding of my role as a teacher and reminds me of Readings' (1996) and Rolfe's (2013) work on excellence in the university. Readings, and Rolfe following him, argued that universities have been increasingly corporatized and are now operating as businesses which sell products. In order to promote and sell themselves to their consumers, the students, universities use a range of accounting procedures to capture what they, and their staff, do and hold these actions to a standard of excellence. The difficulty with the notion of 'excellence' as a standard is that it's an ambiguous term which has no fixed meaning and one person's idea of excellent teaching could be entirely different to another's. Part of the process in establishing and accounting for excellence is the assessment of staff performance through observations like mine today, and student feedback mechanisms like mid- and end-of-term reviews and the much maligned National Student Survey. This sense of the observation as a bureaucratic and governance process is further reinforced by the module convenor's approach. He seems to view the process as a technicality, although I'm unsure whether this is because he has seen me teach in the previous two years, or because he sees this as an arbitrary institutional requirement. It could be both, of course.

Today's class is about the role of the judges in British politics and focuses on the judges' status as unelected position holders. In the lecture, the module convenor introduced some of the basic information about the roles of the judges and the main arguments for and against an elected judiciary. In tandem with a bit of reading

everyone should have a good grounding for the class. If not, it's not the end of the world as I'm planning to do a role play with the students which everyone should be able to take part in with a bit of preparation time in class and some of the supporting materials I've prepared. I tried the role play for the first time last year and it worked well as a way of addressing the topic in a dynamic and interactive way. Assuming we don't all clam up in the module convenor's presence, I hope that it will result in a lively discussion today. Last week I let the students know that the module convenor would be there today and reassured them that he was there to observe me, not them, hoping that being forewarned they won't be too nervous, if they're nervous at all.

I've learnt from other sessions over the years that when handing over the control of the seminar to the students I cannot simply let them get on with it but have to provide some sort of framework to guide them. This does not mean putting limits on what they can do with the seminar, but creating an entirely blank space in the past has sometimes been a disarming and overwhelming experience for the students. I'm also aware that, observed or not, this seminar needs to discuss the role of judges in British politics and I do have a responsibility to both the institution and the students to make sure we do this. The question then becomes, how best to create a space in which we can satisfy institutional requirements and student requirements but *still* offer space in which the students and I can behave in ways which we determine for ourselves, rather than falling into patterns of behaviour and relationships which only satisfy institutional expectations of consumer-provider, or critical pedagogy's critical citizen and transformative intellectual. The answer for me, today at least, is to establish a classroom space which deliberately replaces these roles with different ones. In this instance, the roles put into that space are only loosely formed and leave plenty of scope for the students to make of them what they will. It's an interesting class as it carries a great deal of uncertainty for all of us. I'm not sure what the students will do with the roles, what arguments they'll make, or even how long the role play will last. Sometimes, if a group hasn't taken to it, it's been over within minutes, at other times groups have really stepped in to the different positions and I've had to draw it to a close so we could make some connections between what they've just experienced and the reading they've done. The students know nothing

about today. I haven't told them about the role play or asked them to prepare for specific positions as it's always a bit hit-and-miss who will turn up. It's no good having a well-prepared judge if she's not in class.

Based on the real-life trial and eventual deportation of a foreign national wanted in his home country on terrorism charges, the role play allows us to explore the roles of various sectors of British society, and in particular the tension between the decisions of an unelected judiciary and the will of an elected government. In the real case the accused successfully appealed the first deportation attempt with judges ruling that it would be against his human rights for him to be deported. This caused an outcry with some members of the public arguing for his immediate deportation, and the Home Secretary at the time agreed, appealing the decision. Other members of the public and human rights groups argued for the original decision against deportation to be upheld. The conflict between the judges and the Home Secretary brought the question of an unelected judiciary to the fore, which makes this example an excellent case study for the purpose of this session. Exploring the topic through a role play can ground the issues surrounding the judiciary in the concrete actions and decisions of the participating students and enables the students to assess the arguments from various positions. For our purposes today, I've set up five roles for the students to take on, the judge, the accused, the government, a human rights group, and the public. The judge is a 'free' position which means that whoever takes on this role will need to direct proceedings and make a judgement at the end. The accused and the human rights group will be arguing for the accused not to be deported, while the government will be arguing in favour of deportation. The public is a group which can decide their stance as they go along, and in fact, the individual members of this group do not need to agree with one another. Apart from these initial positions I have not prepared any more input and do not intend to take part in the role play unless things go off course.

I spot the module convenor on the way to the classroom and we have a quick chat about the lesson. He's looking forward to seeing how it plays out. So am I, although I don't say this out loud. There are a few people in the room already and the module convenor pulls up a seat inconspicuously in one corner. I sit down and have a quick chat with some of the students. Alongside the brief role descriptions the students

can take, I've also prepared two short handouts. One is a shortened copy of the European Convention on Human Rights, and the other is a timeline of the real case the role play is based on. The timeline stops on one side of the page at the point at which we're running the role play and the remainder is on the reverse side for the students to follow up in their own time later. I hand out a copy of each to everyone and a spare set to the module convenor.

'So, we're going to be doing a role play today, which means you guys need to choose your roles! Who wants what? We need a judge, an accused, a government, a human rights group, and a public.'

Adam snaps up the role of judge before I can finish my sentence. Sally surprises me by offering to be the accused, and Mark and Barbara firmly stake their claim to the human rights group. Malukah, Pete, and Jack join forces as the government. Sabi, George, and Nathan settle as the public. Everyone shifts tables and chairs to make some space for themselves and the groups huddle together to discuss the positions they want to argue. Each group can use the European Convention on Human Rights to help them prepare their arguments, and some have laptops and phones they start using to get other ideas. As they start to discuss their positions, I move around the room chatting to each group to make sure they're OK with what they're meant to be doing. I've forgotten the module convenor sat in the corner. After a quick chat with Adam to make sure he's happy with his role and understands that, for a large part how the class unfolds will be up to him, I retake my seat out of the way but from where I can see everyone. I make sure a pen and paper are within easy reach to note down the flow of the session should we need to return to anything or connect points with a bit more detail later, and then, with a natural lull in the conversations in the groups Adam theatrically clears his throat.

'I'd like to bring the court to order and get this hearing underway,' he starts. 'You'll each have the chance to lay out your positions in opening statements of no more than three minutes, and then I'll ask questions of you as I see fit, and allow you to cross-examine each other.'

Whether this is how a court room functions or not, Adam has taken on the role of a judge without a moment of hesitation, and everyone else responds in kind. I watch as the room transforms and people take on characters quite at odds with what I've

come to know of them throughout this term. Sally becomes loud and eloquent, stringing together an impressive opening statement and getting very creative with her use of the European Convention, demonstrating quite a change from her normal quiet demeanour. Barbara is assertive and confident in challenging the government position of deportation, taking the lead in the group when I would have assumed it would be Mark who is quietly and confidently feeding advice and arguments to her. Malukah, Pete and Jack certainly are a formidable government presence and are presenting strong arguments based on the European Convention. The public is in slight disarray, arguing amongst themselves as much as with the other positions about the right things to do, with Sabi strongly standing ground against deportation and George arguing fiercely that Sally should go without a delay, a position I have no doubt he does not personally believe in. And Adam sits at the front keeping track of it all, calling on people to elaborate points, or questioning them in more detail. Laptops and phones are out on the desks, but rather than the sometimes obvious use to check social media, each time today is to add research or an example to a point they want to make.

Throughout the weeks we have spent together so far, I've tried to let go of the idea that I am a teacher there only to provide information, to confirm student knowledge, and to prepare them for the essay, all parts of an identity which establishes and reinforces a strict separation between teacher and student. This separation creates an instrumental relationship between teacher and student in which the teacher is knowledgeable and is there to take the students through the module, contributing towards the end-goal of a degree for the student and a higher chance of employment success. The same criticism is applicable to critical pedagogy, which envisages the teacher as a transformative intellectual who teaches students how to become critical citizens in order to reach the end-goal of a more democratic society. In line with postanarchism, I have attempted throughout the terms so far to act not as the teacher envisaged by the institution nor as a transformative intellectual conceptualised in critical pedagogy but as me-who-teaches. This has meant trying to create space in the classroom in which I can put the authority and hierarchy which comes with the role of the teacher and the transformative intellectual at a distance and in which I take control of my own actions. This is about trying to open a space for

us to meet as people coming together to explore a topic of interest without solely relying on the authority and hierarchy of being a teacher. There are times when this occurred, for example in the opening sessions with each group in which we drew British politics or the frank exchanges with students about their and my actions regarding a particular topic. The tension of my position as a teacher is never lost on me because in order to create the foundation for such spaces I use my position as a teacher to prepare and design a task which is specifically aimed at creating such a space. What is important for me in this design and the hope that I have for it, is that I don't cling doggedly to it. If my ideas aren't working in the classroom, I need to be ready to change them, to listen to the students and create space for them to have an input into the sessions and demonstrate that they have an active role to play in the way our sessions unfold.

The role play allows me to step back from controlling a large part of the session and hand it over to the students to develop their arguments and dictate the pace of the session. I might be providing ready-made roles for the student to take on, but beyond the direction of their stance towards deportation, how they fulfil this role, which arguments they make or how they interact with opposing positions is down to them. I'm reminded of something I once read about the use of anecdote in the classroom, and how by drawing on anecdote students are able to try out their ideas and approach discussion without directly exposing themselves (Elliot 1992, 22). The use of anecdote, and in this case, role play, creates a kind of "safety net" for students, allowing them a fall-back position of pointing to the anecdote or the role play character as the source responsible for the positions put forward. For me, the role play means I can remove myself from the process and observe the session whilst remaining ready to step in to help bring a different perspective to the process once students have decided that the role play has run its course. The role play becomes an example of wiggery in practice. We're in the institution, and we're still satisfying the institutional aims of dealing with the role of the judiciary in Britain, but we're doing so in ways which are not accounted for by the institution. On top of this, while we're fulfilling institutional aims, we are, in parallel, doing something else, something entirely different. We, or more accurately, the students, are creating a space and relationships which have nothing to do with the economic logic pervading higher

education. In this moment they are not here to individually add to their stocks of information from me or each other, they are working collaboratively to explore an issue which they find interesting. At the same time, my expected role as a teacher is reduced to nothing. I have no input here what-so-ever. To make a direct link back to de Certeau, the classroom was produced with a particular use in mind, but it is being consumed in an entirely different way today.

Adam delivers a verdict, no deportation for Sally. Some cheers, others groan, I can't tell if they're still in character or not. Almost seamlessly a conversation picks up about how it's not right for Adam to make that decision as he wasn't elected. Although I have some questions I'd like to ask, I try not to move, not to draw any attention to myself. I'm interested to see how long the conversation will continue and develop of its own accord without my intervention. When there's a slight lull I ask a question to the room rather than anyone in particular. Nathan answers. Then Sally asks him a question. And Sabi takes on the answer. And I offer an answer too. The conversation rolls on. Although I had set out the framework and identities used in the role play this following conversation emerged spontaneously. I didn't need to step in to direct their attention to a particular point as they picked up on their own ideas and issues around the unelected judiciary grounding what they were saying in their reading and the role play. This is a moment of autonomous practice on all of our parts: we are collectively giving form to our own subjectivities in the process of interacting and learning from each other, and in doing so, are creating a relationship in the classroom based on mutual exchange of ideas, respect for one another's positions, and a joint desire to discuss something which has intrigued us.

Regrettably, it's almost time to finish. I hold on as long as I can before having to break the spell and bring the class to a close, and unfortunately I have to do it by stopping someone from responding to a challenge: 'I'm really sorry, but we're out of time. And the next class is massing just outside,' I add with a gesture of my head. 'Today has been really interesting, thank you all.' A round of 'Thank you' and 'See you next time' as we all gather our stuff, put the room back to how it is mapped out on the diagram on the door, and head out. The module convenor waits for me outside the room and we fall in to talking about the session as we walk towards our offices. He says how much he enjoyed the class, and asks if this was a particularly

exceptional session. I'm not sure why I answer the way I do at first, false modesty maybe: 'Yeah, I guess it was. They're a nice bunch.' And then I pause. 'Actually, no. This wasn't exceptional in terms of engagement and levels of interest. A lot of our classes together are animated and interesting, I'm very lucky to work with such a group.'

My notes later reveal just how lucky I was with this session. I ran the role play a total of fourteen times over the two years of keeping class notes, and while each one was interesting and enjoyable, none took off in the way this session did. Creating a framework for such a session can help to create a space for autonomous practice, but it is by no means a guarantee. Using my position as a teacher to set up the seminar is an important part in enabling me and the students to then take other actions. What I'm coming to realise is that the tension between the desire to act autonomously and the need to cover certain topics needn't necessarily be a disabling tension but can also be a hugely creative impetus. It forces me to think and re-think sessions constantly, reviewing what I've done before, reading more about others' experiences of teaching, and thinking of new ways to tackle the topic. *That* is my freedom in my context of a Graduate Teaching Assistant. This session *was* exceptional, but not because of engagement and interest. It was exceptional because it was one of the longest periods of an exilic classroom I have experienced. For forty-five minutes the classroom was a space of our own collaborative construction in which we gave shape to ourselves, the room, and our relationships without dependence on the expected identities of teacher and student and the relationship which accompanies them.

## Conversations

I'm running a little later than normal this morning, not late for the class, just later than I would normally arrive. I've been enjoying the walk up to campus too much, basking in the sun that, for what feels like the first time in months, has some warmth to it. I stroll through the corridors of the college and down to our small courtyard room, today, bathed in light from the long bank of windows. It's almost five past the hour and coming into the room I'm met with five faces. 'Is this all of us for today?' I ask to no one in particular.

'There's an essay deadline later, I guess most people are working,' offers Graham with a shrug.

'Well, cheers to you guys for coming along. It would have been a boring fifty minutes without you!' Picking a spare seat on one side of the tables I unpack a few things and pass round the register. We're all seated at one end of the long table, no need to spread out when they are so few of us.

'Have you voted in the Student Union elections?' asks Melissa.

I shake my head slightly, 'No, I haven't. The Union elections don't really interest me. Although I did look through the candidates' manifestos for President.' I pause, wondering how blunt I can be, 'I wasn't impressed.'

'You know all the adverts everywhere saying that if you vote you get free food at Nando's, you don't!' Exclaims Kieran, I'm not sure if the exasperation is genuine or not. 'You still have to buy stuff, and spend, like, a tenner or something, *then* they'll give you something for free. That's rubbish.'

'I think a bigger problem is incentivising voting by offering free Nando's, to be honest. Isn't there a danger that people will just go along and tick a few boxes in order to get the food?' I ask to the room.

'Yeah,' replies Kieran, 'but if they're going to offer free stuff, they should be upfront about what it really involves.'

'Yeah, *if* they're going to do it, you're right, they should be clearer.' I glance at my watch, 'Well, I guess between SU voting and a deadline no one else will be here today, so we might as well get started. How did you all get on?'

Today we're taking a look at the relationship between Britain and the EU, and as it's such a hot topic, I thought we could start with checking out some of the main

campaigns in the build up to the referendum for Britain to leave or remain a member of the EU. By using the lecture and some of the suggested readings we're going to try and assess the claims made by the leave and remain campaigns with regard to the Britain/EU relationship. At the end of the last class we came up with a list of the campaign groups and then people chose which one they wanted to do some research on. I e-mailed the list to the group too so that anyone who wasn't in the class knew what we would be up to today. I thought we could start from their research and their impressions of the campaigns and see how things developed from there. This week gives us a chance to make an explicit link between the academic study of Britain's relationship with the EU and the experiences of the students here and now. The build-up to the referendum is pervasive and inescapable for the students, and it has also become clear in the recent weeks and months that there is a lot of wrong information being published and argued by the main campaigns. Taking a closer look at these campaigns enables us to turn our critical attention to the immediate political landscape and reflect on how we as members of the public interact with and respond to the possibility of being involved in a decision as pertinent as membership of the EU. As politics students in a British politics module the timing presents us with a rare opportunity to examine these questions in 'real-time' rather than after the event.

'They're ridiculous,' starts Beth, as she opens up her laptop and spins it round to show the rest of us. 'I was looking at Vote Leave, but there isn't really anything there to read or research.' Peering over the top of her laptop screen Beth clicks on one of the photos and headers, 'You think this is going to open up a piece giving you more detail, but all it does is send you to a new page with the same photo and sentence.'

'Yeah, I found it really hard to find information about Stronger In,' adds Nathan, 'they just don't really have anything up.'

'Same with Grassroots Out', joins Alex. 'I tried finding interviews with people that might give more information, but that didn't really help either.'

Given the lack of substantive content from any of the campaigns people had looked into, a problem I also had when I was preparing for the class, we talk instead about whether some of the grand claims that have been made match up to what we've read for the course. After some time, Beth stops and simply says, 'I don't even know any more if I'll vote.'

‘At least you can vote’, quips Alex. As a German citizen in the first of three years studying here, he has no option to.

‘You know what, you should vote, Beth.’ suggests Nathan. ‘Even if you don’t like the campaigns, and they’re not really helpful, are they, you still think we’re better off staying as part of the EU, and you should vote for that. It’ll make a difference.’

‘I guess, but if we’ve found it hard to get good information about it, and we’re Politics students, what’s it going to be like for other people? I’m worried they’ll see stuff like “Blah blah millions more for the NHS” and just think, “yeah, that sounds like a great idea” without thinking about whether that’s believable.’

‘It does seem mad that there isn’t more good information for all you guys.’ Barbara is from the US, and only here for the term. She’ll be gone before the vote takes place, watching from a distance back home. ‘Are you going to vote?’

It takes me a second to realise she’s talking to me. I’ve been listening to the conversation unfold and thinking about a similar one I had with my mum about her trouble finding useful information. ‘It’s tricky’. I start, and stop, trying to gather my thoughts before I reply. ‘As an idea, as another form of overarching government and set of institutions, no, I have no love for the EU. But, as you say, I don’t for Britain and structures of government here either. But, I am concerned about some of the noises being made by people that are campaigning to leave about the repeal of the EU Convention of Human Rights, about free movement, things like that, which feel more immediately worrying to me. That, and in a more personal sense, I met my wife here because she came to Kent as an Erasmus student and then stayed on to do a PhD. Without the EU, it’s unlikely that would have happened. Sorry, a slightly long-winded answer and I haven’t actually answered yet. Yes, I will vote, and yes, I’ll vote to remain.’

‘We asked the module convenor in the lecture which way he would vote, but he wouldn’t answer. He said he didn’t think it was appropriate and didn’t want to influence people. You obviously don’t agree?’ asks Barbara.

‘No, I don’t. Teaching is a political act, and if he tells you or not, the choice of course content, the way he approaches topics, it can all reveal a political position, even if you’re trying to be as objective as possible.’ I shrug, ‘I have a political position, you guys already know that, and I would feel disingenuous if I tried to hide it.’

‘I was thinking about this last time, don’t you have a duty to vote in elections and things too, because you’re a British citizen, you live here, you work in a university, you have to obey the laws, shouldn’t you vote too?’ challenges Beth.

This is interesting for me. We’ve touched on my position before in other classes as and when it’s come up, but it’s always been brief and handled with a slight trepidation by whoever has asked the question. Whether it’s the amount of time we’ve now spent together, the lack of people in the class, or perhaps both of those things and more, but this is the first time a group has been this direct in asking me questions. We are clustered around one end of the table, relaxed and at ease with each other.

‘No, I don’t think I should automatically vote because I happened to be born in the UK. You’re right though that there is obviously a tension between my personal politics and the position I hold at the university, but that’s what my thesis is about, that’s why I record all our classes.’ I say, waving the voice recorder. ‘I’m trying to find out how I can work with, or around, or through, I’m not really sure what the right word is, those tensions.’

‘And what do you think so far?’ Asks Kieran.

‘I think I’m still trying to find out!’ I say with laugh and a smile. ‘I feel, I hope, that these classes, for example, haven’t been “normal” for want of a better word, when it comes to how we relate to one another. Sure, there are times when I have had to be a “seminar leader,” but there are also times, like now, I guess, when we’ve all been able to sit and talk and learn together as ourselves, not only as a teacher who provides information and students who learn it. And hopefully, in us doing that we haven’t jeopardised your progress through the course. We’ve been able to do things differently while somehow still doing what’s expected. Or needed. Maybe that’s a better word.’ I pause, proud of what we’ve managed to do in the last nine weeks, this is the first time I’ve said it out loud. ‘I guess I try and do the same in all other areas of my life too, Beth, to answer your question. Yeah, there are things I have to do that I might not agree with, but simply denying them won’t get me anywhere or make them go away. I have to think about how to deal with each one as it comes up. Voting is a good example. Normally I wouldn’t vote full stop, but the referendum is an opportunity in which my vote will count towards the outcome, I’ll be an active and

more direct participant in a decision which impacts me. That's quite different to voting in the general election from a limited choice of representatives, assuming you can ever really be represented by someone else anyway.'

'The classes have been interesting,' starts Barbara, 'you can be a little confrontational at times!' She adds with a laugh. 'In a good way, I mean. You push us, and although it's obvious you don't agree with some of what we say you still take it, and us, I guess, seriously. These classes have been really different, different from those at home and my others here. I've enjoyed them a lot.'

'Thanks Barbara.'

The others all nod and agree and I'm elated. 'Thank you so much, it means a huge amount to know that.' I sigh a contented sigh and look at my watch. 'Well, we may have veered off topic slightly, but at least we know that both the Leave and Remain campaigns should be treated with caution, and whatever we personally may feel about Britain's relationship with the EU, it's more complicated than most people allow for. Cheers guys, and I'll see you next week.' We all pack up and leave, and I head to the office to write down some notes. As I write it strikes me how much it means to have Barbara say those things. I know I can be confrontational and it seems to be clear to the students that I approach the seminars from a particular political position, even if we haven't talked about it at length. What this seminar seems to have affirmed for me is that it is possible to hold these positions and not get trapped by them. So many critiques of critical pedagogy revolve around the difficulties of teachers trying to balance their own stance with the positions of the students and they seem to get caught in the tension between the need to be a transformative intellectual with a specific end-goal of social change, and the need to have democratic teaching practices which allow the space for students to act in ways contrary to the social change sought. While there are certainly still tensions at work in my own teaching, I don't share that same sense of being stuck. I do what I can and I hope that in my attempts to form more open relationships with students I can show that other ways of approaching education are possible, we don't have to follow the provider/consumer model, but there is no attempt to impose an alternative relationship. It stands more as an invitation to the students to enter into a relationship of care of the self and others through the critical questioning and

accounting for our positions and actions, but ultimately it is on the students to decide to engage with that. Elsewhere I've written of how teaching forms part of my self-care through my being open and honest with students about my actions and decisions, and today was an excellent example of that in practice. Beth's questions encouraged me to stop and think, and to account to her, and the others in the room, for my position not only about the EU, but about what I do as a teacher in a university and about what I do as a citizen in Britain. This process of accounting for myself to others and considering what I do is self care, as it not only opens my actions to the criticism of others, it also encourages me to consider if there is anything I could or would do differently.

## Critical Thought and the Media

I'm hot, uncomfortable, and thirsty. Trudging up the hill with eight daily papers in my backpack along with my usual things for the class is no easy task, especially on a day as bright as this. It's the kind of day it would be great to take the class outside, if only we could. There's always the danger that someone arrives late and can't find us, or that we lose a portion of what little time we have in relocating to somewhere different. Instead, I make do with the room, one of the seminar rooms in a newer building on campus which has, thankfully on days like today, a large bank of windows down one side and looks out into woodland. It's a deadline day for another essay so I'm not expecting a huge turnout, but the six people in the room is even lower than I expected. In fact, three of those, Barbara, Ed and Victoria are from a different group, but they had e-mailed me to ask if they could join the seminar today so they had some time to submit their essay this morning. I don't know if these six have had other classes together, but from the way they're chatting when I come in I assume they have. These are a great six to have a class with. They are all thoughtful and prepared, and it should make for a good class. They are clustered around two tables in the corner, so I pull a chair over to join them.

'OK, so this week is about the media, and so,' I heave the stack of papers from my bag and they land on the table with a satisfyingly solid thud, 'here's a selection of the main daily newspapers in the UK!'

George laughs, 'Did you carry those up from town?'

'Yeah.' Rolling my eyes. 'I wasn't sure the campus shop would have all I wanted, so it was safer to get them in town before I walked up. Before we start with these though, do any of you read the newspaper? As in, a physical copy like this?'

'I do,' replies George while the others shake their heads, 'I normally get The Times. I know I won't agree with it, but I think that means I read it a bit more carefully.'

'That's interesting. None of the rest of you do though? No. OK, where do you get your news from?'

We spend a bit of time talking about various news sources, their perceived reliability, and the reasons we use them, we also talk about why we still tend to use newspapers in discussions of media influencing people and politics, as well as outlining four theories of media impact. Then it's time to turn the papers over to

them. As only George reads a physical copy, and because Claire, Barbara, and Quentin aren't British, I take a moment to lay out the copies and divide them roughly into Red Tops and Broadsheets. I brought with me copies of The Sun, The Mirror, The Express, The Mail, The Independent, The Telegraph, The Guardian, and The Times, and offer them the choice of whichever they would like to take a look at.

Everyone has made their choices and I'm about to explain what I'd like us to do when...

'What on earth...' Claire is holding up The Sun open on Page 3.

'That, I'm afraid, is the biggest selling daily newspaper in the UK.' I reply. 'I'm sorry, I entirely forgot about it, I should have warned you.'

'I can't believe it. That's ridiculous. This is 2016 in the UK and people still think it's OK to have women like that in a newspaper?!' Barbara is just as incredulous.

Victoria joins in, 'I've always known about Page 3, but I've never looked at it, obviously. It is a bit unbelievable that people think this is OK though.'

'They don't though, do they? Not everyone anyway. There's a campaign against it isn't there?'

'There is, or there certainly was,' I reply to George's question. Quentin has just sat there and shaken his head so far in disbelief.

'Sorry,' starts Claire to me, looking quite apologetic, 'I didn't mean to shout. It just caught me off guard.'

'No apology necessary, I'm sorry I didn't give you a heads up.'

'What were you about to say before I shouted?'

'Oh, right. Yeah. There are stories in each of these papers about immigrants and crime, some more obviously placed than others', I say, gesturing at Victoria's copy of The Mail, with its front-page coverage. 'Take a read. See what's said, the tone of the piece, the words used, it's location in the paper, other stories that surround it. We all know that different places report with different biases, but as we rarely read things we're likely to strongly disagree with, we may not appreciate just how differently the same thing can be presented. This gives us a chance to look at that for one story across quite a wide range of sources.' Newspapers in this way can act as a great tool for self-reflection. How do we respond to others' versions of truth, particularly those which challenge our own?

Everyone turns their attention to the papers and starts reading, me included. After a few minutes we begin to talk through the various presentations of the same stories, as people highlight certain wording or pictures' placements that are particularly evocative, or the inclusion of information which isn't really relevant to the story, but has found its way in there none-the-less.

'I had no idea that some papers were quite so biased,' Victoria, shaking her head, 'and it's made even worse by these three,' gesturing to her own, The Sun, and the Mirror, 'are such big sellers.'

'It's not that the information isn't correct, or at least not in this story, but it's so inflammatory.' Adds Quentin. 'When I go home to the States I'll take a look at the papers, I'm sure the same thing happens.'

'Do any of you think the papers are playing an important role here, in providing us, or perhaps challenging us, with the truth?' I ask, hoping to be contentious.

'No, of course not.' Replies Claire, somewhat angrily, 'If this has shown nothing else, it's that there's not really as simple a thing as "the truth". Even we strip it down to the bare facts that some men, who happen to be immigrants, have committed some crimes, that is barely the truth, and some of it is irrelevant. It doesn't matter to the story that they are immigrants, does it? I'm sure other people who are British have committed similar crimes at a similar time too, but there aren't stories about them in the paper.'

'They're clearly just trying to sell papers,' states Barbara, 'and I thought the news back home in the States was sensationalist!'

'It's not just about selling papers though, is it?' George counters, 'This isn't just what people want to read about, this is what newspapers *want* us to read about. I think they operate much more along the 'Framing' lines: giving us issues to think about, and the language we use when we talk about them.'

'Ok,' I interject quickly, 'Try and remember that these are theories we apply to newspapers to try and help us understand the relationship between newspapers and the public, they're not necessarily deliberate paths taken by the newspapers themselves.'

‘OK, fair enough,’ continues George, ‘but I think it’s important to be aware of the tricks that papers use, like we’ve looked at today, and be able to say that they aren’t being plain. They dress up a story with loads of other stuff.’

‘Yeah, but everyone does that I guess. When you tell a story, you try and make it more interesting.’

‘Maybe, but there’s a difference between you telling a story, Barbara, and a newspaper selling millions of copies.’

The conversation rolls on as we cover everything from truth telling, to media regulation, to free speech. A general consensus emerges that newspapers, and media outlets more widely, should be more honest, more truthful, but there are precious few ideas on how we might make that happen. We divert and talk about the problems of telling the truth in our lives, how difficult it can be sometimes. We talk about the difficulties of telling the truth to people who don’t want to hear it, or won’t listen to it, and I’m immediately reminded of *parrhesia*. It seems everyone has a story of being torn between telling someone what you think of their actions and wanting to spare their feelings. We talk about the ways we try to dress up our criticism, to soften it and take the edge off, to not offend those we’re speaking to. We talk about the distance which sometimes exists between what we see in a situation and what others see in it, and again how difficult that can make it to talk about. This brings us full circle back to the news stories we started with and the problems of telling the truth and uncritically accepting what we read.

‘I feel like people don’t shop around enough for their viewpoints. They just stick to one viewpoint and find news which confirms that.’ Barbara continues, ‘Instead it would be better if people reached to the other side of the aisle and said, “well if this is so bias, and if that is so bias, can I find the truth in the middle somewhere?” But people don’t really do that.’

Claire chips in, ‘If people could be more critical about what they read, it would be good. If they could read between the lines of what’s being said, and where this opinion is coming from.’

‘So do you guys do this?’

There’s a slight pause, and then Ed speaks up. ‘I’ve got to be honest with you Andy, I don’t read the news.’

‘You don’t read newspapers?’ I ask, unsure quite what he means.

‘No, I don’t read the news at all.’ There’s a sharp inhale from the other five in the room. ‘I mean, what’s the point? I know who I’m going to vote for, and the rest of it is all stabbings, shootings, war, politicians that have done something wrong. What’s that got to do with me? It’s all rubbish.’

The shock in the room is palpable. Victoria takes up the argument, ‘How do you know who you’ll vote for if you don’t read the news?’

‘Well, I did politics at A-Level, and I’m doing a politics degree now, so I think I’ll be alright,’ replies Ed defensively.

‘But we haven’t talked about party politics or party positions at all in this course.’ I add.

‘How do you know which candidate stands for what?’ asks Barbara, ‘How do you know their stance on policies? Do you research it?’

‘I don’t, no. I don’t want the Conservatives to win.’ Adds Ed.

‘Why not, though?’ Claire asks. ‘You have to read in order to know why you don’t support them.’

‘Why? Why do I have to?’ Ed says this quite sharply, but I think I know him well enough to know he doesn’t mind being questioned like this.

Barbara takes up the reply, ‘Because then you’re an ignorant voter.’

‘OK, so I’m an ignorant voter.’

‘But then you’re exasperating the problem of people not being critical about who or what they vote for.’

‘Well the problem is people not voting.’

‘Uninformed voters probably present more of a risk than people who don’t vote,’ argues Barbara, continuing to challenge Ed.

‘I’m interested that you know you absolutely won’t vote Conservative, but can you articulate why?’ I ask. I’m keen to see if Ed can work this through and we can all get a better understanding of what’s going on, him included.

‘I just don’t agree with them.’

And then almost in unison George, Claire and Victoria ask, ‘But why?’

'I'm not trying to say I don't know anything about anyone. I know things, like from the past that they've stood for. When I say I don't read the news, I mean I don't look for it. But if someone sends me an article I'll read it.'

'So, it's quite passive then?' I ask.

'Absolutely.'

'You see,' Barbara intervenes, 'I find power in being informed. I'm better able to take decisions about things. Don't you feel vulnerable? Like it's totally out of your control?'

'I don't think being any more or less informed is going to make me any less vulnerable, or make me feel like I have more of say in anything.' Replies Ed. 'We have the right to vote, but that's where it ends. We do that once every five years, and so once every five years I get to put a piece of paper in a box saying I'd rather have this person than that person, but that's it. I get no control over anything else.'

It's interesting to hear someone making this point, and I agree with him, but I'm keen to ask about other areas of control. 'OK, about control of the country, I agree. But you have control over other things. You have control about how you live your life.'

'Do I?' interjects Ed.

'About how you interact with people. The things you believe in, the things you stand or stand up for.' I continue.

'I don't know,' replies Ed. 'I guess I don't really feel like I have control over a lot of those things either.'

'I think you do,' offers Victoria. 'I think we do.'

Everyone is quiet for a moment, digesting the last ten minutes. I look at my watch and it's gone over the hour. We're lucky that there's not another class in here and none of us have to run off to another class. We all thank each other for the session and agree that it's been really interesting. I think back to previous attempts to make the bridge between the social and personal levels of analysis and how it's been tough to do. It seems to have occurred today almost naturally with no particular direction or prompting from me. Maybe it's because we're most of the way through the term and the students have come on in their thinking, or maybe it's simply that the link has come from them rather than through a direct intervention from me. It was

fascinating to watch them all respond to Ed and pick up the questioning, holding him to account for what he does, or more accurately, doesn't do. Although the questions were mostly directed at Ed, there's definitely the sense that the session has made everyone think about what they do. We covered such a wide range of ground today and everyone came together to make a space of free-flowing conversation and ideas. The odd mix of students from different classes really worked as a combination in a way that none of the other classes on the media either before or since have.

## Personal Choice

It's the final week of term in my final year of teaching. So far this week there have been very few people in the classes. It's also deadline day for their British Politics essay and I've been fielding frantic e-mails for the last week. This year the essay for this module has fallen on the last day of term, after all the others, which understandably pushes it to the bottom of the to-do list for most people until they're cleared their other three end of term essays. The result of it being left till last though is that it then becomes a frantic rush to get something written in a week. Throughout the term I've been offering to talk about their essays, reminding the students of my office hours and e-mail address, and letting them know the days I'll be on campus and where I'll probably be if they need to find me. We've also put a bit of time aside in one of the classes to talk about the essays. All in, very few people have spoken to me about them though, with some deciding to leave it until last night to ask me what I thought of their essay plan. I know colleagues may say I shouldn't, but I've replied to each and every one over the course of the week, regardless of when I've seen it, be that first thing in the morning over tea or last thing at night before I went to bed.

I'm greeted with an empty room. Sunny, bright, in fact, the nicest I've seen it looking. But empty. I glance at the clock on the wall already knowing that it's getting quite close to five past the hour, only a few minutes to go. I pull my laptop out of my bag and log on to my staff e-mail account. I might as well use the time to reply to anymore last-minute essay e-mails. There are a few that I respond to straight away, and some from people in the class to let me know that they won't be attending today either due to the essay or having already gone home. Essay deadline, last day of term, no other classes. It's looking like the class will be a write-off. I decide to use the time to start writing up some reflections of the class and term as a whole and settle in for a quiet fifty minutes.

I hear the door open and look up. Half past the hour and I see Umar coming into the room. I can scarcely believe it.

'I'm sorry I'm late. I wanted to submit the essay before class but I got a bit held up.' He apologises. 'I guess there's not really a class?'

'Nope. You're the only person who's come. Thank you, though.' I add with a smile and a laugh. 'Do you want to stay for a class for the last twenty five minutes?' I offer.

I should hold a class really, even if it's only him, and with less than half the time to go, but this really is his decision.

He pauses looking at me and then steals a glance at the door, as if weighing up his options to escape.

'It's entirely up to you Umar, it's your class and you can decide if you stay or not. I won't be offended if you decide to go. Heck, you turned up, so feel free to sign the register if you like.' I say, passing it to him across the table from where I'm sitting.

'If you really don't mind, I'll go. I'd like some sleep.' He says with a sheepish grin. 'Thank you though. I don't think I really like British politics, but I've enjoyed these classes a lot. I think Politics was the right degree for me to do. Are you teaching anything next year?'

'It's unlikely, my scholarship ends in September, and I want to concentrate on finishing the thesis then. I'm glad you've enjoyed the classes, so have I.' Umar comes around the table and offers his hand, as I stand up and take it, he thanks me again, and I him, and he leaves the classroom with a wave.

I'm a little disappointed that three years of teaching on this module ends with a hand-shake from a single student on the final day of term. It's only when I write this down that I realise that actually, this was an interesting moment and perhaps a fitting end to all I've been trying to do in the last few years. I don't know why Umar came to class, maybe it was because he enjoyed the classes and just wanted to come and say goodbye, but I find it unlikely that he would have come in part way through just to say that. Instead, his demeanour and approach make me think he came to class because he felt like he had to, that's his role as a student. He was then presented with a choice and a personal responsibility about what to do. There was no compulsion to stay or go, there was no pressure from me for either, the decision was his to make, he couldn't defer to the authority of another. He could have easily stayed out of deference to the institutional expectation that that is what a student should do, but he chose not to. He chose to be open and frank with me and to take his leave. There were no mumbled excuses, just an explanation as to why he wanted to leave. Could or would this have occurred with other seminar leaders? I don't know. The point is that it did occur with me. I think this moment is the culmination of eleven weeks of getting to know one another, eleven weeks of establishing a classroom and

a relationship which was not entirely dependent on institutional and student expectations of me as a teacher and them as students. And it's for this reason, as anticlimactic as it seems, I think this was actually a fitting end to my three years of teaching here, and my two years of the project.

## Student Perceptions

These narratives have so far focused on me and my actions, reactions, and interpretations of what happened during the course of the project. This has given me the opportunity to explore these moments in detail, offer an analysis of them, and connect my practices to the theoretical work which informed my actions along the way. To bring this collection of narratives to a close I finish with others' interpretations of my practice by examining the end-of-term module evaluations completed by the students. As part of the formal processes of the university students are asked to complete end-of-term evaluations of each module. These evaluations have both quantitative and qualitative sections, asking students to rank the module according to four areas: General observations; Module organisation and management; Teaching, assessment, and feedback; and Learning resources. While some of these sections do not relate to my practice, any questions concerning teaching, assessment and feedback do, and so the student responses in this section can be revealing of their perceptions of my teaching. For each question in these sections students rank the module on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest, and are also given the opportunity to provide longer written feedback. The results of these anonymised evaluations are then passed to the seminar leaders, me in this case, and the Director of Education, who looks through the results in order to highlight and address any problems which may have arisen. The evaluation process is an excellent example of the formal procedures of the institution at work, reflecting the high value placed on student satisfaction. Alongside this, the end-of-term evaluations provide an element of external recognition that my teaching was satisfying institutional requirements. While the quantitative responses are interesting and offer a snap-shot of student satisfaction with my teaching, it is the space available for qualitative responses which provides me with a way to understand if the students saw any differences between my teaching practice and that of other seminar leaders, and what it was that they liked or did not like. While satisfaction generally is a poor proxy measure of teaching quality given the wide range of possible motivations and desires of students attending university, the written comments can offer an insight none-the-less, as without the constraints of a fixed numerical scale students are able to express their opinions more freely.

I recently sat down to revisit the end-of-term evaluations of my teaching practice hoping to find some evidence from the students themselves that being in my seminars had, in some way, been different to their experiences with other seminar leaders. The module on British politics ran in the second term of the first year undergraduate programme, so the students I worked with had already experienced four different seminar leaders. Alongside their classes with me in the second term, they would also have another three seminar leaders, making a total of eight in their first year. This variety of different Graduate Teaching Assistants meant that by the time the students were asked to complete the end-of-term evaluations for my classes they had experienced a range of teaching practices and style and so were able to draw some comparative conclusions, even if they were not specifically asked or trying to do so. I remember getting my first set of student feedback following my first year of teaching and recognising myself in the remarks of the students. More accurately, the comments of one student which I recognised as being entirely applicable to a lot of my teaching in that first year. In my first year I seemed to ignore the more positive comments and fixate on the negative, something I've since tried hard not to do. Among the normal array of those comments saying that I was a good teacher there was one which stuck out. One student had commented that I often look at the clock, realise there is time left in the class, and repeat myself to fill that time. It may have been one comment among many, but it struck me as true, and even more, I could vividly recall the times I had done it: the panic that I was out of things to say and tasks to do, the realisation that there was five, or even ten minutes of class time left, the blundering re-hashing of a summary of the class while the students looked on, all seemingly aware of my panic like it was written all over my face. The memory was razor sharp. The experience of receiving the negative comment stuck with me, and as I went into my second year of teaching having read more on pedagogy I wanted to make sure I would not repeat the mistakes of the previous year, even if it was only the comments of one student. In the two years since then the end-of-term evaluations provided a useful barometer of how I've got on during the term and how my practice has been received and perceived by the students.

There are three statements in the evaluations which directly addressing me as a seminar leader: 'Overall, the seminars were interesting and informative'; 'My

seminar leader encouraged participation’; and ‘Discussions with my teacher, during office hours and via email, about my work were helpful’. For each of these statements I received average scores of 4.61, 4.78, and 4.48 respectively. In each case these scores were higher than the departmental average. While not suggesting that these scores themselves validate my teaching practice, they do demonstrate that for all intents and purposes of the formal procedures of the university, I was not only fulfilling institutional requirements, I was exceeding them. These scores, along with the positive observation reports by the module convenor meant that as far as the institution was concerned I was doing my job well, and so warranted no further attention or concern. This approval through the universities own formal processes meant I was effectively ignored. I complied with the necessary steps to evaluate my performance throughout the year, and at each stage was shown to be performing well, therefore the university paid me no mind when it came to the *how* of my teaching, as all the measures pointed to successful outputs.

Along with the favourable scores, the students’ written comments revealed that something different was indeed occurring in my seminars. What I was looking for in revisiting these evaluations is something from the students which indicates that, from their perspective, their seminars with me were different in some way. Ideally I was looking for evidence that my attempts at anarchist practice, at disrupting the expected roles and behaviours, and in opening the possibility of other student-teacher relationships had been noticeable and positively received by the students. Having seen the extent of student comments previously I wasn’t expecting detailed explanations: many student comments on end-of-term evaluations are barely a sentence long. Instead, I was looking for evidence, however small, that the classes had not simply been enjoyable or interesting, as you would hope these would be responses to all classes regardless of the seminar leader, but that students felt there was a difference enough to leave a comment to that effect. More specifically, I was looking for evidence of the impact of my approach to addressing the content of the classes, and the impact of my approach to the students and the classroom relationships I attempted to develop. If students were reporting that there was something particular in how I approached the topic and them, it serves as support for my own interpretations of what happened throughout the two years of the

project. Completion rates of end-of-term evaluations are quite low, and the numbers who then decide to leave a written comment are even lower, so I make no claims that what I found in the comments included here are universally representative of the 200+ students I worked with during the two years of the project. However, these comments can be used as indications from beyond my own narratives that my teaching practice was distinguishable and beneficial to the students while still meeting institutional requirements.

In a later conversation with the Director of Education, he recalled looking through the evaluations at the end of the year and reading through all of the comments, as he was required to do. He mentioned that while the scores I received for my teaching were indeed good, it was the student comments which stood out to him. Among these comments were a range of generally positive statements that I'm a good teacher and that my seminars were enjoyable and interesting. While these comments and feedback are lovely to receive and certainly made me very happy to read, they didn't offer any insight into whether these student's perceived our classes any differently to those they had with other seminar leaders, or if they noticed anything particular about the ways I interacted with them or approached the content.

It is the comments which dealt more specifically with me and my teaching practice which are the most revealing and helpful. Most of these comments addressed my demeanour and manner in the classroom and my interactions with the students, with one student commenting that I was 'relaxed, friendly [and] positive' and another pointing out that because of this relaxed environment it was easy to participate in the sessions 'without pressure of fear of embarrassment.' These comments demonstrate the students' response to my attempts to create an environment which was open and sessions which built from their knowledge and experiences of the topic, enabling them to participate without the fear of providing the "wrong" answer. Others pointed to my ability to create engaging and interactive sessions, noting that my seminars are 'always inventive.' These comments are evidence of my attempts to engage students through the creation of exilic spaces in which their active participation and role in the creation of knowledge and the direction and tenor of the classes are placed at the forefront of what I do. Alongside this, these comments

reflect my ongoing commitment to interacting with students in ways which seek to support and take seriously their contributions, and to develop new ways of addressing the topics of the module. The comment regarding the inventiveness of the seminars is particularly interesting as it suggests that I was doing something unusual or unexpected in my teaching practice, but more than that, that this inventiveness was well received.

That there is something specific to my way of interacting with the students was captured in the following two comments, both of which highlight my attempts to engage students in a consideration of their position through *parrhesia*, prompting them to reflect on their actions.

Andy is a great seminar leader. He pushes the students to develop succinct points, yet encourages a relaxed and inclusive environment. He is supportive of a diversity of opinions, with comments of a left and right leaning persuasion taken seriously.

Made the seminars engaging made us look at things from a different perspective, can tell he has strong conflicting views to his students especially his right winged ones but remains political neutral a compelling skill.

These comments are particularly important in light of my attempts to engage students in practices and relationships of self care and care for others. Challenging the students to consider and develop their position and arguments is a key element in encouraging the students' self care as we are encouraged to account for our position, the actions we have taken and the decisions we have made. By pushing the students to develop succinct points I engaged them in a process of a closer consideration of their position. In addition, in making them look at issues from different perspectives they were able to sharpen their own understandings of a topic. As they are challenged to consider others' positions the students are encouraged to revisit their own position through an others' eyes, creating a critical distance which enables a more detailed examination of their initial ideas. I found the comment regarding my political neutrality especially interesting, as throughout both terms of teaching I made no attempt to hide my own position. Reading the comment over, I'm left thinking that perhaps I missing something in the student's meaning, as they first

suggest I have strong conflicting views, and then that I am politically neutral. In light of the earlier comment regarding my ability to take all positions seriously, regardless of political leaning, I think this student may mean something similar.

While all of the above comments hint at students recognising that their experiences of seminars is different in my classes, there is one student who makes this point explicitly: 'Was taught differently to my other modules but really enjoyed learning about the ins and outs of British Politics.' Unfortunately the student does not expand on exactly what was different about my teaching practice, but it is the most direct statement that I was indeed doing something differently. When I began the data gathering I was hoping to capture those moments in my teaching practice in which I addressed the tension of subverting the dominant understandings of education while working within a neo-liberal university. What these student responses demonstrate is that my attempts to disrupt expected identities and behaviours of teachers and students by engaging with the students as active participants in the creation of knowledge, and inviting them in to relationships of self care and care for others, did not go unnoticed. More than this, these attempts have been highlighted in student comments as positive attributes of both me and my teaching practice. Although these examples are limited in number because of the comparatively small number of students who complete the qualitative portion of the end-of-term evaluations, they do stand as evidence to support my interpretations of my practice as explored in the narratives above.

## 7. Subversion in the Classroom

The beginning of this thesis can be traced back to my time working for a charity and a university in Peru and the question, how I could work in institutions which have different values and understandings of the world to my own? This question became my focus when I was awarded the position as a PhD candidate and a Graduate Teaching Assistant at a university in the UK and had to learn to navigate my way through a neo-liberal educational institution which perceived education as a means to an economic end.

My position as a Graduate Teaching Assistant was organised via the Graduate Teaching Assistant Coordinator who is a permanent member of academic staff tasked with organising the teaching allocation and supporting the Graduate Teaching Assistants within the department. It came with a raft of contractual obligations, including completing various training sessions, an initial probation period, and regular reviews. The teaching was allocated on the basis of departmental need and suitability, and once my teaching had been allocated, I was assigned to a number of seminar groups, and the Timetabling Office organised the room allocations and timings. My duties as a Graduate Teaching Assistant included teaching up to 288 contact hours over the three years of my contract, preparing seminars, marking students' coursework, exams, and submitting end of year reports. An intrinsic part of this position was complying with various bureaucratic procedures which included keeping students' attendance and performance records, preparing students' mid- and end-of-term evaluations and having my seminars observed by the module convenor on a regular basis. For the first year of my contract I was on probation, subject to review and assessment, and if deemed necessary, targeted training. If I was seen not to be performing to a suitable standard, the allocated teaching hours would be redirected to other duties (University of Kent 2016).

Working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant brought with it all manner of bureaucratic requirements of a neo-liberal university as initially addressed by Bill Readings (1996). Readings explored the need for universities to constantly measure and record practice in quantifiable ways so that they, as institutions, could be understood by others. The increasing need to design and maintain data related to

universities' performance resulted in an increasing bureaucratic structure and the focus of universities on formal procedures for capturing and measuring their performance and ranking their performance against the ambiguous term "excellence" – a standard Reading considered as unsuitable because it is not anchored in a specific set of criteria. The change in universities' focus towards bureaucratic procedures to capture and account for action and in an attempt to determine "excellence" has resulted in universities being less concerned with the specifics of *how* courses are taught, as long as these courses are judged to be taught excellently. As Ball argues, the neo-liberal bureaucratic university is complex, incoherent, unstable and sometimes contradictory. It establishes itself through a prioritisation of universal market-based social relations which have a crucial impact on an academic's relations with students and colleagues, her knowledge production, and her flexibility, innovation, and productivity (2012, 17-18). In the neo-liberal university, the role and expected behaviours of the teacher is 'performativity' – a practice of governance which links teachers'

'effort, values, purposes and self-understanding to measures and comparisons of output. Within the rigours and disciplines of performativity we are required to spend increasing amounts of our time in making ourselves accountable, reporting on what we do rather than doing it' (Ball 2012, 19).

This effort of constantly having to account for our and others' performance drives teachers in universities towards a focus on capturing and promoting performance in the name of transparency while paying less attention to the detail of our performance. The focus on bureaucratic procedures to capture performance makes no account for the substance of teaching and learning. On the contrary, as long as the outcomes are favourable for the students and the institution the substance is almost irrelevant. Each module has an outline and form which has been agreed to by the institution which contains learning outcomes, assessment criteria and assessment methods. As long as the results from the term match the expectations established in the module outline, the details of how the students achieved this outcome and why a teacher's performance is judged to be excellent are of no interest to the institution.

This meant that the realm of my action as a Graduate Teaching Assistant was left largely open, with no specific direction about my teaching practice other than that it had to be judged as excellent. The means by which my performance was assessed was a combination of my compliance with the formal procedures, student evaluations taken at two points throughout the term, and the module convenor's observations of my seminars. While a range of different procedures operated in the background to establish my realm of action and ensure my compliance with procedural norms, the mid- and end-of-term evaluations and the observations by the module convenor were procedures through which the university could check if I was acting in a way that would lead to the preferred outcome. The mid- and end-of-term evaluations included questions about what the students enjoyed in the seminars, what they would like to see changed, how interesting and informative the seminars were, and how engaging I made them. The fact that my performance as a teacher was judged through the lens of students' satisfaction with their seminars vividly demonstrates the economic model which underpins neo-liberal education and the crucial importance the institution places on student-consumer satisfaction with the service and product they have received throughout the term.

This creates a situation in which the desired outcome acts to determine the means by which it is reached. Rather than "excellence" being based on the substance of classes, the university focuses on the end-point of student perception and outcome, and in doing so creates an environment in which the excellence of my teaching practice is determined by student satisfaction. While the formal procedures themselves do not directly establish behaviour, they act as part of a larger ensemble in which the desired outcome is predetermined. Working in a higher education sector saturated with the logic of the free-market and increasingly governed through institutional-level performance indicators such as the Research Excellence Framework and the Teaching Excellence Framework, these outcomes are determined as students' successful degree completions and their employment destinations following their degree. These formal procedures can be understood as practices of government which attempt to give shape to my subjectivity through establishing realms and patterns of behaviour which are deemed to be institutionally desirable and which will achieve the desired outcomes. The core of my problem with

both my work in Peru and my work at the university in the UK came down to neo-liberal attempts to form my and others' subjectivity. As a teacher, my subjectivity was cast by the institution as a provider of an education product and experience which aimed at increasing the economic potential of the students I worked with. Disagreeing with the economic logic of education, I was looking for a way to escape these institutional attempts to form my subjectivity and to assert my freedom to determine for myself what teacher I wanted to be. I was looking for a way to work in the university in which I could expand the ways and means by which I took control of my own subjectivity and actions in the present and in my context.

Initially I thought that critical pedagogy and its critiques of dominant approaches to education, its nuanced understandings of oppression, and its calls for education as part of social change provided me with an approach by which to understand my situation and practice resistance to it. When I first read Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993), it offered a language and critique of dominant educational approaches which addressed many of the challenges with education I had experienced in Peru and the UK. As I began to explore critical pedagogy and the work of Henry Giroux, I was struck by his description of his first time reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

I was a high school teacher and I found myself in a class trying to do all kinds of innovative things, and the vice principal came up and he said, 'I don't want students sitting in a circle, I want them in a straight line, and blah blah blah.' And I didn't have an answer for him. I didn't have the theoretical language. And ironically, the week earlier, someone had given me a copy of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and I was so frustrated that I went home, read the book, I stayed up all night, got dressed in the morning, went to school; I found my life had literally changed. I mean, I felt it had changed as I had a language that all of a sudden seemed to say, to speak very directly, to the kinds of issues I was involved in. But more importantly, they gave me a way of theorising that experience and practice, rather than just saying, 'I think it works', or 'I think it's good', or 'students seem to like it'. Something was going on that was quite profound for me, it was the beginning of a movement from a position of being voiceless to having a voice. (FreireProject 2007)

My first response to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* echoed Giroux's. Paulo Freire's critique of the banking model spoke to my experiences and offered a theoretical framework through which I could better understand my discomfort working in the education sector and presented a language which enabled me to better articulate my desire to try different teaching approaches. Critical pedagogy offered an approach to education which prioritised the empowerment of citizens through greater democratic involvement in society. It offered an approach to education and social change which went beyond attempts to make students better economic performers and claimed to address the conditions which caused social oppression and exploitation. However, the deeper I engaged with critical pedagogy, the more I came to realise that it could not offer me the freedom I was looking for. At a first reading critical pedagogy offered a response to an education system which focused on procedure, performance, and end-goals by emphasising the importance of context, the ways in which education can be used as a tool to empower, and the possibilities for me as a teacher to act differently. However, through predetermining social change, the form of social organisation, and the behaviour of individuals, either as a critical citizen or a transformative intellectual, critical pedagogy fixed an end-point to which all my actions must aim. In short, rather than offering freedom, critical pedagogy offered the appearance of freedom by defining a wide realm of action, and yet maintaining that action *must* occur and must be directed toward a particular end. If I was to follow critical pedagogy, my response to working in a university and the ultimate aim of that response had already been decided for me, and this meant a constraint on my freedom.

Looking for an approach to education which does not predetermine forms of subjectivity, action, and relationships, I turned to anarchism, and particularly the lessons anarchism has learnt from poststructuralism. Drawing on the term postanarchism to denote a particular focus in anarchism rather than suggest something distinct from anarchism, I explored a theory and practice which focuses on the present and makes no attempt to predetermine my subjectivity or future social change. Anarchism and the focus on the subject, action and relationships, highlights freedom as autonomous practice and calls for the subject to take control of her own (trans)formation not by directly resisting the practices of governance of

external agencies, but by starting from the transformation of the immediate situation she finds herself in. This transformation is rooted in the ever-present possibility of freedom through action in which the subject gives form to her own subjectivity and her relationships, and freedom is therefore contextualised by the subject's position and surroundings. The autonomous practices called for by anarchism place the emphasis on the actions of the subject without *arché*, that is, without predetermined ends or an overarching ideal of subjectivity and relationships to which the actions of the subject are directed. For anarchism informed by poststructuralism, the formation of my subjectivity comes about through various practices of government enacted by different external governing agencies, with education being one of them. In response, anarchism suggests autonomous practice as a form of prefigurative action which carries no predetermined end and which works to invent and form my own subjectivity without reliance on external expectations. In forming my own subjectivity through prefigurative action, I also create new forms of relationships with others. The poststructural influences in anarchism argues that in (trans)forming my own subjectivity, I change the basis of my relationships with others. I no longer solely relate to others through the behaviours expected by the complexities of governing agencies but take control of my own subjectivity in forming relationships with others in the moment of interaction. As with subjectivity, these anarchist relationships cannot be predetermined but are the response of the subjects entering the relationship. This anarchist approach to the subject, action, and relationships provided me with a framework for my critique of critical pedagogy and a basis for my response to my particular context of working as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. To practice my teaching informed by anarchism, and to subvert the formal bureaucratic procedures of the institution and forms of subjectivity which accompany them, I used *la perruque* and created exilic spaces.

*La perruque*, or wiggery, is a disguise we can use to create space for ourselves in our everyday lives. Taken from the French term "the wig" it applies to the actions we can perform which make use of the tools, spaces, roles and expectations of institutions to create something different and unaccounted for by the institution. This does not mean refusing to work, nor is it attempting to step out of any structures and practices of governance, nor is it the attempt to take political power or to reform

systems of power. Instead, *la perruque*, as understood through anarchism, is about side-stepping the system through actions and the creation of spaces which are unconceivable and unintelligible to the systems in which they are embedded, and which form the realisation of freedom of the subject and her relations and bonds to others. *La perruque* is a tactic used to find and exploit the gaps created by the institution itself.

In my context of higher education, there is a gap between the production and consumption of the classroom space. For all the institution's accounting procedures, there was no attempt to capture the substance of teaching practice, only the outcome, and this created a gap to be exploited through *la perruque*, disguising my work as that desired by the university while my teaching practice operated in ways which were unaccountable for by the formal evaluation procedures. With the university's concentration on formal procedure and the measuring of performance, the classroom is produced as a place in which the performance measures are realised through the administration of attendance records, evaluations and observations, but that is not necessarily the way in which the classroom is consumed. In the classroom, I am able to use this gap left by the focus on procedure and measurement to subvert this focus with a concentration on the substance of my teaching practice. *La perruque* in my case meant taking the timetable, classroom space, and module content provided to me and using them differently whilst still complying with the formal evaluation requirements of the university. As long as I continued to satisfy institutional procedures regarding performance, as shown in the student evaluations discussed above, the university had no cause to look more closely at the substance of my teaching. To an outside observer I held my seminars at the times I was allocated and in the rooms I was allocated to. Each session ran to time, no session was missed, student attendance records were taken and submitted to the university each week. Alongside this, the topics for each week matched those of the lecture, the readings the students did were those readings set by the module convenor and were used by us for the discussion in the sessions. In short, I was doing everything I was meant to be doing. By complying with and meeting university procedural requirements regarding performance, I created space for myself and my teaching practice. In my teaching practice I concentrated on subverting the performance oriented

understandings of teaching and learning which establishes a one-way relationship of knowledge exchange on provider-consumer lines. In my attempts to subvert this approach I attempted to establish a different student-teacher relationship which started from the collaborative creation of knowledge. While the topic, and often specific questions, were set by the module convenor, I could decide the angle from which we approach the content and addressed the topic through approaches which subvert the expectation of the teacher as the arbiter of knowledge. One example of my attempt is found in the autoethnographic narrative *Drawing*, where the set task was to establish the basic framework and institutions of British politics and compare these to other European countries and the reading for this session specifically addressed this comparison. However, in the class itself we approached the content from a different starting point, that of the students' existing knowledge and understanding of British politics. I was therefore able to focus on the elements of specific knowledge the students already had of British politics, and how to bring that knowledge to the fore using the drawing exercise. From there, we could use this student-generated content as the basis for the rest of the session, bringing out connections between what the students already know and the module topics decided on by the module convenor. This was a small act of subversion in which the knowledge of the students was approached as the corner-stone of the session rather than an add-on to the information gleaned from the set reading. This subversive act focused on the substance of the class, using the gap afforded me by the institutional concentration on procedure and performance measurement.

There is a tension here between this subversive practice and the issue of student achievement which is highlighted at several points throughout the autoethnographic narratives. This tension is revealed in the first narrative when one student asks if I am using the class as an experiment, and my assurances that no matter how I approach the class, I have a responsibility as a staff member to help them through the module and learn along the way. At the time I did not make direct reference to student achievement as I did not want to shift the focus of the discussion about the project to an emphasis on grading. Indeed, this was exactly something I was trying to create some distance to. However, due to the various practices of government established by the institution and society at large regarding my conduct as a teacher

there was an expectation regarding student attainment, as well as an understanding of the student-teacher relationship and aims of higher education brought to the classroom by the students. What came to the fore in this interaction was the tension between pursuing my own understandings of self and education in parallel with latent student expectations of achievement. Importantly, what is revealed in this first narrative and throughout the subsequent seven encounters is that through embracing the creative possibilities inherent in *le perruque* it is possible to satisfy both student expectations and my own attempts at subversion: they are not mutually exclusive even if they are not directly complementary. Playing in between this tension is also compatible with the broader anarchist underpinnings of my subversive action. While there may be a temptation to simply reject institutional and student expectations of student achievement in a directly oppositional approach, to do so would mean running rough-shod over the student understandings of higher education and their and my roles within it in favour of my predetermined and reified understanding of what higher education *should* be. To follow this path would be contrary to the anarchist and poststructuralist influences at the heart of my work. Once again we are brought back to the discussions of direct opposition and subversive action, and the nuance and complexity required to deal with and partake in both. When dealing specifically with institutional and student expectations of student achievement to strike a directly oppositional stance would be to curtail possibilities of subversion before starting. It would also require a lack of recognition on my part that for many, high student achievement in the form of high grades and degree classification is a central motivation for going to higher education. Instead, in these narratives I proposed, and practiced, the more elusive forms of subversion as captured in the notion of *la perruque*, enabling the students and I to accommodate a wide range of actions and motivations within the classroom, including, but crucially not limited to, autonomous practice of subject, action and relationships alongside the achievement of high student grades.

Part of the university's accounting procedures of my teaching practice were the observations of my seminars by the module convenor. In these observations the details of my teaching practice were laid bare to be judged by a member of the institution, one more embed in the procedures and system of the university,

although with a different range of priorities. For the module convenor, in much the same way as for the institution at large, as long as my teaching practice is meeting the requirements of the module the module convenor is content. This goes some way to making the module convenor complicit in my teaching practice. De Certeau wrote of those who turn a blind-eye to *la perruque*, and the module convenor did just that. Rather than addressing my teaching practice as a subversion of the institution, the module convenor focussed on the outcomes of my teaching practice, their compliance with university expectations and requirements and students' engagement in class. Because of his position in the university, the module convenor had a vested interest in turning a blind eye to my practice, as to raise any challenge to it would be to draw attention to me and my practice and him and his module, increasing his own workload. In using *la perruque* I was able to play in the gaps left by the institutional concentration on formal procedure, exploiting the blind-spot in which the university paid no mind to the details of my teaching practice, as long as I was outwardly compliant with expected behaviours and outcomes. In this gap and in using *la perruque* I was able to create, however fleetingly, exilic spaces in the classroom.

Exilic space is space in which people come together and create their own subjectivities and relationships while remaining within the dominant frameworks of society. We have seen such spaces arise most recently in the various Occupy encampments in which collections of people gathered of their own accord and for their own reasons, and created spaces which were typified by behaviours and forms of relationships which cannot be accounted for by the practices of wider society. In the case of Occupy people came together and created spaces through practices of mutual aid and collaboration, leading to the establishment of temporary medical centres, libraries, education centres, and kitchens. Although these encampments were present and highly visible in the centres of cities, being in the encampments offered a form of escape while within. These exilic spaces are always temporary and fragile constructions. They form, collapse and renew as different people establish them in different contexts, and so as with *la perruque*, exilic space is unpredictable, unplanned for, and undetermined. Also like *la perruque*, exilic spaces are subversive. Exilic space is space where the expectations and pressures of society can be

distanced, subverting dominant expectations of behaviours and relationships through establishment of a creative space for the formation of subjectivities and the development of relationships.

Through *la perruque* I was able to create exilic spaces in the classroom, escaping the pressures of the institution while remaining within it. I used the gap afforded me by the institutional concentration on formal procedure to attempt to create a spaces in which the students and I could create our own subjectivities and form different student-teacher relationships to the ones envisaged by the institution. These exilic classrooms were not entirely free from the university, as they relied on the university structures for their creation. The exilic classroom needs the classroom, the timetable, and the module to bring the students and I together, and so it is not possible to create the space entirely apart from the university as an institution. Instead, the exilic classroom incrementally creates space apart from the university focus on formal bureaucratic procedure through an emphasis on the substance and detail of the content and approach in the classroom. This shift in emphasis acts to incrementally undermine the university and its focus. Exilic space is always temporary and fleeting, and the exilic classroom is no different. The creation of the exilic classroom always finds a limit in the fifty minutes allocated to the session, so that even if we were able to create exilic space in the first few minutes of a class, it would come to an end only fifty minutes later. In using *la perruque* and exilic space as part of my teaching practice I was able to create the conditions in which the students and I would take responsibility for our subjectivity and work collaboratively to form new student-teacher relationships.

Following anarchism and the lessons of poststructuralism I approached subjectivity not as singular, unified, and universal, but as an ensemble of overlapping identities shaped by various practices of governance, often from sources external to the subject. The anarchist call is for subjects to approach freedom as an ever-present possibility, and therefore to practice freedom through the assertion of subjectivity as taking responsibility for actions and relationships in the here and now. This anarchist freedom is a subversion of those identities and pressures placed upon the subject from external sources which seek to give form to subjectivity through practices of governance. In using *la perruque* and creating exilic spaces we use the rules and

expectations of the institution to create environments in which those rules and expectations are made to look contingent, malleable, problematic, subject to change and deliberation, agency and choice. In the classroom when we distance the traditional understandings and relationships of students and teachers we are asked to take responsibility for our own practice rather than fall back on the external expectations. Taking responsibility involves care of the self and the ability to reflect on and account for our practices. Care of the self is a process by which the subject is able to consider her actions in the context in which they occur and to tell the truth of those actions to herself and others. In giving an account of the substance of her actions the subject engages in a process of self-criticism through which she is able to reflect on the extent to which the actions were her own, and consider how she might act differently in future. Care of the self extends beyond the single subject to include those around her, both in a consideration of her and their actions. This involves others telling the subject the truth of her actions in that moment, and it involves the subject reciprocating. This establishes a relationship between people engaging in care of the self, and establishes care of the self as a form of truth-telling. The process of truth-telling is established through various practices of governance of the self, by the self, helping to give form to subjectivity. Care of the self therefore acts as a subversion of the practices of governance of governing agencies, which attempt to establish different forms of subjectivity through which the subject acts. This is not a grand casting-off of all external expectations and behaviours, but a subtle and gradual process through which the subject is able to overcome her attachment to external referents in her particular context. In my context as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, care of the self was a process of self (trans)formation in which I continually attended to my actions and the actions of those around me as they related to the specific context in which the action occurred. This context was decided in a large part by the topic of discussion for that week. The aim of care of the self was for me to gradually and increasingly take control of and responsibility for my actions rather than relying on the expectations of others to guide me. In this process I had to account for and reflect upon my actions and the actions of others in order to understand the actions taken and learn how I might act differently. In the classroom this meant a consideration of my actions to subvert the bureaucratic procedural and

measurable performance focus of the institution through an approach to teaching which emphasised the collaborative construction of knowledge and the responsibility we all took for our learning. This involved considerations of my position in the room, my body language, my tone of voice, how I challenged and questioned students, and how I opened myself to being challenged and questioned in turn. Instances of this questioning and challenging of actions can be found throughout the autoethnographic narratives. For example, in the session *Engagement* as we discussed Malukah's decision to vote, or in *Conversations* as the students questioned me about my decision not to vote and my work in the university. My self-care also involved an approach to knowledge which understands knowledge as a collaborative creative process, and one which builds from the students' contexts and existing knowledge of a topic, disrupting the more traditional understanding of the teacher not only as the provider of knowledge, but as the extension of practices of governance designed to inform and regulate students behaviour: sit still, no mobile phones, talk calmly, do the reading, ask questions, engage with your peers, respond to teacher prompts etc.. These are not necessarily insidious behaviours but they are behaviours expected of the students none-the-less. In the pursuit of self care and care for others I attempted to create a distance to these expected behaviours and invited students to take responsibility to fill that space. This resulted in a variety of responses ranging from Az's decision to make a joke of the drawing exercise, to the collapse of the debate and to the free-running conversation about Ed not reading the news.

While the specific theory around care of the self was explored in the fourth chapter, as discussed in the second chapter, this thesis as a whole presents my account of my actions and ongoing process of self care. Not only does it plot the path of the development of this thesis in both the theoretical and practical dimensions, through the narratives it presents a re-telling of particular moments of my practice which stand out as moments which highlighted my ongoing attempts to practice self care. In recording, analysing and presenting these moments, I opened myself and my actions to the considerations of others, inviting them into an anarchic relationship of self care and care for others. My aim here was to establish spaces in which the students could also consider their actions from a critical distance and to explore the

ways in which external expectations shaped their actions. There is not a claim here that the external referents of the students disappeared because of this critical distance, but that like my own practice, this distance allowed the students to think about and take responsibility for their practice in the classroom. If students were able to do this in the space of the exilic classroom, learning to account for and take responsibility for their actions to themselves and others, then this too was a gradual subversion of both the university focus on performance and a similar focus found in wider society.

To be able to follow such practices of self care required the students to be not only involved, but complicit, and this meant the development of a new relationship between each student and me as their teacher. In creating exilic space and taking responsibility for my practice and subjectivity, and encouraging students to take responsibility for theirs, a new student-teacher relationship was formed. Rather than being a student-teacher relationship based on the exchange of knowledge and the measuring of performance, care of the self invites a student-teacher relationship which is rooted in collaboration and mutual development; a subversive relationship in the face of social relations forged through the lens of performance, procedure and market economics. Importantly, such a reconfigured relationship relies on the free cooperation and input of the students and cannot work otherwise. While I can create certain conditions and invite students into relationships of self care and care for others, I cannot impose these relationships on them. To do so would be to undermine the calls at the heart of anarchism and care of the self for subjects to take control of and responsibility for their own subjectivities. Were I to impose a particular form of relationship on the students I would simply be adding to the external pressures and practices of governance I claim to be trying to distance. There are several key features in the collaborative creation of new student-teacher relationships which can be found throughout the autoethnographic narratives, including the co-creation of knowledge and the role of questioning and challenge. The collaborative approach to knowledge is an important element in the reoriented student-teacher relationships as it helps to disrupt some of the traditional authority which comes with being a teacher, and encourages the active participation of the students not only in knowledge creation, but in the design and direction of the sessions. However,

attempting to establish a new student-teacher relationship involves risk, which brings us back to care of the self, and more specifically, *parrhesia*.

*Parrhesia* is a particular form of truth-telling connected to care of the self. It is a quality in the interaction between subjects which contains five key elements, frankness, truth, criticism, risk, and duty. Frankness addresses the mode of interaction between subjects, in that the speaker must be clear and concise in what she says, so as not to confuse and misdirect the listener. What the speaker says must be the truth regarding her own or the listener's actions in the context of the practice. This truth is critical, not simply as the criticism of action, but as part of an invitation to the listener to reflect on the action from a critical distance, and therefore assess the action in relation to themselves. To this end, it is the duty of the speaker to speak the truth to the listener and help create that critical distance. These elements were present in my interactions with students and in their interactions with each other and necessitated the formation of new student-teacher relationships in which such *parrhesiastic* interactions could take place. However, there is a final element of *parrhesia* which warrants careful consideration, and that is the element of risk. In following practices of care of the self and care for others and inviting students to form new student-teacher relationships there was always the risk that the students would not respond to my attempts at all, or that they would find my practice irritating, confusing, and a potential barrier to them achieving the grade they want from university. Were this to occur not only would it alter my teaching practice, there would be the risk of students reporting their concerns to the university, and bringing me and my practice to the attention of the institution. I know from the end-of-term evaluations that this was not the case, but it is easy to imagine a situation in which students are unhappy being called on to take responsibility for their learning and practice in the classroom, carrying the expectations of a teacher who transfers knowledge and achieving their own high performance measures through assignments, and ultimately their final degree classification. In such a scenario, the formal procedures of the university and the performance measures involved in my role as a Graduate Teaching Assistant would act to shut down any attempts at subversion through the intervention of the university or, at the extreme, the removal of any and all teaching responsibilities. An example of this tension coming to the fore

in my teaching practice is found in *Engagement* as I challenged Malikah over the reasoning behind her decision to vote. In this session I wanted to challenge Malikah, and others in the room who may hold a similar position, to think beyond their initial decision regarding voting because of the historic events which led to the vote. My concern was that an uncritical consideration of the decision to vote would avoid any discussion of the act of voting itself. I wanted to prompt Malikah to think through her position and if there was anything about the act of voting which made voting important, rather than the historical events which led to the suffrage. In pushing Malikah on this point there was a risk that I would annoy and alienate her and others, a risk enhanced by my position as a white male teacher questioning the decision of a woman to vote because of the actions of the suffragettes. From a position of *parrhesia* this risk is part of the *parrhesiastic* interaction which is rooted in telling the truth of the actions of that subject in that context. Through *parrhesia* it was entirely appropriate to question and challenge Malikah in an attempt to bring critical distance and consideration of her actions. Simultaneously this interaction acts as an example of the new student-teacher relationship and the necessity of student complicity and active participation in a *parrhesiastic* interaction, as without Malikah engaging with the challenge the reoriented student-teacher relationship would have collapsed. A key part in establishing and building the *parrhesiastic* interaction is the formation of trust in the classroom. In the first of my autoethnographic narratives I reflected on asking the students to trust me, and that there was no basis for them to do so other than me being a teacher and staff member of the institution. However, I asked the students to trust me not only on my status as a teacher, but on the basis of my words and actions in the classroom with them. Throughout my teaching practice I worked hard to ensure a coherence between my words and my actions, from the opening session when I asked about student preferences for particular tasks, to acting on student feedback from mid-term evaluations. When I invited and encouraged contributions to discussions and the session I did not then shut down student responses in preference for a different answer. At each turn in my interactions with the students I aimed to develop a trust between us which was based on more than my institutional status alone, as achieving this level of trust is crucial in pursuing *parrhesiastic* interactions.

And so this element of risk connected to my attempts to form my own subjectivity through care of the self, and my invitation to students to do the same leads to a series of interesting tensions and questions regarding *parrhesia*. Much like the tensions when considering my subjectivity, the tensions involved in *parrhesia* in my practice cannot be reduced to a dichotomy of “*this was parrhesia*” and “*this was not parrhesia*”, and we are encouraged to think through the complex interactions which occur in the neo-liberal bureaucratic university and my position within it. There was a constant element of balance at work in my use of *parrhesia* throughout my teaching practice as I needed to ensure an ongoing relationship with the students whilst pursuing anarchist practice of care of the self. There was always the risk that in pushing the students to account for themselves and their actions they would feel attacked and complain to the university, or they would simply stop attending the classes. In either case this would have been a problem for both the institution and me. Institutionally, it would bring me and my practice to the attention of the university, and under the pursuit of performance metrics my teaching practice would have been subject to greater scrutiny, decreasing the possibilities for teaching differently. Personally, it would have severed the chance to continue fostering chances for the students and I to take responsibility for ourselves in the classroom: the self-formation of subjectivity and a new student-teacher relationships cannot occur without the student in the room.

This element of risk and balance which comes with *parrhesia* begs an important question about compromise of my anarchist practice to satisfy university formal procedures of accounting and performance management, but such an approach is in danger of falling into a dichotomy of “*parrhesia*” or “*not parrhesia*”. Instead, I argue that *parrhesia* in combination with *la perruque* and the creation of exilic spaces is not about compromise, but about exploiting the existing gaps and weakness of the institution. With an institutional focus on procedure and performance measurement blind-spots are created in which the university has no interest. As long as the various procedures are being followed and nothing untoward is raised through performance assessments, the university shows no concern for the substance of a teacher’s practice. In effect, this allows the university’s own practices of governance to be used as part of the very means of subversion of those practices.

In Vaclav Havel's essay 'Power of the Powerless' he addressed precisely this interaction and question of compliance with procedure, subversion, and truth through the allegory of the greengrocer who displays a slogan which reads 'Workers of the world, unite!' (Havel 1990, 41). Havel argues that the slogan was hung in the window by the greengrocer not because the greengrocer feels particularly strongly about the workers of the world uniting, but because it is the expected action for him to perform. He displays the slogan because it has always been done this way, because everyone else does it, and because it is the way it has to be. The message of the slogan is not the words 'Workers of the world, unite!' but the greengrocer's action in placing the slogan in the window. The message is a message to the system at large that the greengrocer knows what is expected of him and therefore deserves to be left in peace (ibid., 42). The slogan in the window of the greengrocer is unlikely to be noticed by people passing or shopping, and so it is not, in isolation, a message to others with any particular impact. It is however part of the larger ensemble of slogans found everywhere which create a panorama of everyday life as displays of peoples' obedience. The greengrocer, and everyone else who displays the slogan, has adapted to the conditions they live in, and in so doing help to reinforce and recreate those conditions (ibid., 51). The greengrocer's slogan, along with all others, is proof that the procedure of the system is being followed (ibid., 45). Havel argues that in adhering to procedure, the greengrocer is taking no responsibility for himself and his actions and is living a lie established by the system he lives in which aims at the perpetuation of itself (ibid., 62): the greengrocer is at the same time a victim and an instrument of the system (ibid., 52).

However, the greengrocer has another option available to him, a way to stop living a lie. He can stop putting up the slogan in his window. By refusing to display the slogan in his shop window, the greengrocer breaks the rules of the game and takes responsibility for his actions. He acts from a position of freedom and asserts this freedom through the action itself, his revolt, Havel argues, 'is an attempt to *live within the truth*' (Havel 1990, 55. Original emphasis). Living in truth is a broad realm of action which can encompass those direct and open moments of defiance against the system, but also includes any attempts by people, individually or collectively, to 'revolt against manipulation' (ibid., 59). In pushing against an enforced position

people attempt to take control and responsibility for their behaviours in a system in which adherence to procedure is the only behaviour sought. This attempt to live in truth carries an ethical dimension, as it not only concerns the actions of the individual, but also acts as a demonstration to others of the possibilities of taking responsibility for their own action and the fragility of the focus on procedure (ibid., 62). The greengrocer's attempts to live in truth are not only confined to *not* doing the things expected of him, but can also include more concrete actions which go beyond the immediate response against manipulation into actively working to subvert the system through organising others to act, or speaking out publicly (ibid., 84). In these concrete actions a coherent attempt at 'conscious, structured and purposeful work' (ibid., 85) may emerge, at which point living in truth for the greengrocer is no longer simply a negation of living a lie, but is a particular way of living and taking responsibility for his actions.

We can use Havel's greengrocer as a way to address my position as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. Havel was writing in the context of Soviet controlled Czechoslovakia, and so was addressing a system he termed 'post-totalitarian' (Havel 1990, 40) but there are features of his critique of living a lie which are present in my context. First, there is the concentration of the system on the adherence to procedure. For Havel's greengrocer this was through displaying the slogan, saying the right things at political meetings, and voting in elections, for me it was completing mid- and end-of-term evaluations, having peer observations, and orientating my practice around the notion of excellence. Second, the greengrocer placing a single slogan in the window is not, by itself, an action which denies freedom to the greengrocer, but it is part of a larger ensemble of practices of governance which seek to give form to the subjectivity of the greengrocer as someone who does what is expected. The mid- and end-of-term evaluations that I must go through with the students are not by themselves procedures which give form to my subjectivity, but as with the greengrocer's display of the slogan prompting the question, 'what's wrong with the workers of the world uniting?' (Havel 1990, 42), the performance procedures of the university prompt the question, what's wrong with wanting to know where I can improve? However, these evaluations form part of a larger network of practices at work in the complex neo-liberal university and beyond which all

implicitly prioritise behaviour through the lens of the free-market and individual competition and gain. Third, the greengrocer's compliance with procedure, the hanging of the slogan in his shop window, meant he was left in peace, while my compliance with procedure through mid- and end-of-term evaluation ensured the same. In each of these ways we can say that through my work at the university I was living a lie, just as the greengrocer was through displaying the slogan. Through my compliance with the formal performance oriented procedures of the university I was allowing the expectations of the system to be the reference point for my actions. However, continuing to draw on Havel's allegory, both the greengrocer and I have the possibility of living in truth through taking responsibility for our actions, subverting the procedures we are expected to follow. In the greengrocer's case this was removing the slogan from his window, speaking out at political meetings, and encouraging others to act by showing them that another way to live was possible. In my case this was by placing the emphasis in the classroom on the collaborative creation of knowledge, the disrupting of expected behaviours, and the attempt to create space for others to take responsibility for their actions. As with the greengrocer, my attempts to live in truth became a structured and purposeful work which formed a central part of my practice as a teacher.

Returning to the greengrocer, there is however a risk involved in his attempts to live in truth, one which is already familiar to us through *parrhesia*. If the greengrocer is to remove the slogan from his window, and even more, begin actively and publicly living in ways which defy the procedures of the system, he will pay a price. He will be relieved of his job, his pay will be reduced, his family will be effected, his neighbours will mistrust him. This will not occur because anyone else necessarily believes in the system the greengrocer is threatening, but because it is the behaviour and response the system requires towards those who do not follow procedure. This will occur because of the very same procedures and conditions which compelled the greengrocer to display the slogan in the first place. The greengrocer will be isolated and ejected from the system as an anomaly (Havel 1990, 55). Equally, if my performance is found lacking or I do not comply with the procedures of the university I too will be isolated and ejected from my role as a Graduate Teaching Assistant. Returning briefly to Readings' warning about the notion of excellence as a measure

of performance, one of the impacts of using “excellence” as a standard in the bureaucratic procedure focussed university is that its ambiguous nature leaves the university with sufficient flexibility to identify, isolate and remove anyone under the banner of pursuing excellence (Readings 1996, 32-33). So what is the greengrocer to do? And what am I to do? Havel’s proposal to live in truth and take responsibility for my actions finds its parallel in anarchism and *parrhesia*, and yet in doing so I would risk being identified and removed ending any possibilities to pursue my teaching practice. And so a more nuanced reading is needed, one in which the interaction of compliance, subversion and truth looks instead to the use of procedure against the system itself. What if the greengrocer kept the slogan in the window, for all intents and purposes adhering to the procedure of the system, and then used the peace this afforded him for subversive action elsewhere? What if I meet all the formal procedural and performance requirements of the university, enabling me to use the space left behind the procedure to practice subversive, anarchist forms of teaching? And so my proposal is this, continue to meet the formal procedural requirements of the system in which you live and work and in so doing, be left in peace. Then use this peace and the space created by the focus on procedure to pursue subversive action in which you live in truth, subversive action in which you use *parrhesia* to question and challenge, subversive action in which you use *la perruque* to create exilic spaces, subversive action in which you take responsibility for your own actions, subversive action in which you create new relationships with others. Find your own ways to use the rules of the system to exploit the gaps these very rules create, and in these gaps take responsibility for yourself and your actions.

It might be suggested that such an approach means you are still living in a lie, and that the only way to create distance and space for you to take responsibility for your own subjectivity and relationships would be to leave those systems which attempt to condition them. I argue that fleeing would not be taking responsibility or addressing your conditions or the conditions of those around you. Fleeing would be an insular act and would do nothing to address your freedom: I am reminded of Bakunin’s argument that he cannot be free if those around him are not free (Bakunin 1964c, 267). It is this belief in a social bond through freedom which underpins anarchism, care of the self, *parrhesia*, and living in truth, and it manifests in each of

these in taking responsibility for your actions in the present, in the context: 'responsibility is ours, [...] we must accept it and grasp it *here, now*, in this place in time and space [...], we cannot lie our way out of it by moving somewhere else' (Havel 1990, 104).

While this thesis has dealt with my experiences working in a higher education institution, the possible implications of my work stretch far beyond this context. This thesis deals with the possibility and practice of subversion in any institution in which formal processes, procedures and practices of government aim to constrain the subject. With this, the thesis also invites larger questions regarding ourselves and our ability to live with the truth of ourselves in institutions and systems which increasingly seek to determine that truth for us. A anarchist understanding of freedom as practice as put forward here and captured and explored through my autoethnographic narratives offers one possible set of notions which can assist in understanding and challenging constraints on freedom without predetermining practice, subjectivity, relationships, or social change.

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