

University of Ottawa

**Cultural Mediation and the Case of *I, Claudia* Study Cases**

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## Cultural Mediation and the Case of the *I, Claudia* Study Guides

Five study guides prepared for two productions of *I, Claudia* by Kristen Thomson will serve as a case study to determine the nature and orientations of the tools provided by theatre companies to pedagogues, who in turn teach students how to understand and read theatrical performance. More specifically, this case study will seek to explain how processes typical of “cultural mediation” help students accumulate what Pierre Bourdieu names “cultural” or “social capitals”, both necessary when training future citizens. This thesis will thus serve as a first critique of the workings, strengths and failings of a sociological mechanism typical of English Canadian theatre designed to help teachers mediate theatre and create more informed audience members.

## INTRODUCTION

Developed by theatre companies throughout Canada, study guides are meant to be used by educators when accompanying students attending professional productions. Today, most companies make use of them, to the point that they are considered a staple in Canadian theatrical practice. One has only to consult any established theatre company's Web Site in sub-sections devoted to "Student Matinees" or "Educational Activities" to discover a wealth of information readily available to students and teachers. It is also clear that study guides have evolved over time: for example, in Ottawa, the National Art Centre's (NAC) English Theatre Section originally supplied educators with director's and designers' notes which could exceed one hundred pages. Teachers would extrapolate lesson plans based on these documents. In 2002, Jim McNabb, a science and dramatic arts teacher, decided to create study guides as an alternative to these lengthy documents. He was the first teacher in Ottawa to translate artistic information into a standardized "learning objective" format<sup>1</sup>.

Surprisingly, study guides have not yet captured the attention of academics: bibliographical research revealed that no researcher to date has sought to analyze the complexities, content, history and/or purpose of these widely distributed and for the most part easily accessible documents. This is indeed surprising since these same guides are the principal mechanism used by cultural workers – be they administrators, artistic directors, communications officers, community development officers, cultural mediation officers, etc. – to help make theatre more accessible to student groups. As such, this thesis seeks to be a starting point in the analysis of the phenomenon of study guides in English Canada by helping identify content, objectives and challenges as seen in a single case study. As a secondary goal, this thesis will investigate the

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<sup>1</sup> Information obtained during a visit by Jim McNabb to a *Theatre in English Canada* class taught by Dr. Joël Beddows in 2005.

effectiveness of study guides as a tool in the field of cultural mediation through the analysis of the driving forces that orient content.

As a first axiom, it is important to note that regardless of the company, the production, the author, or the creative team, most study guides include similar types of information. In fact, study guides that do not include descriptive information about the play (plot, playwright, characters, process), the theatre company (history, mandate) as well as different activities and exercises for the students to be completed before or after attending a production are indeed rare. Whether the guide is five or twenty five pages long, whether it is photocopied or professionally bound or simply made available on a company's Web Site, whether it is written by an artist or a pedagogue, certain information is today expected under known subject headings. This being said, the orientations given in these documents and the actual content provided under each heading differ largely from company to company and in the present case, even between study guides developed for the same play.

Five study guides commissioned by five different companies based in four Canadian provinces that either presented or produced productions of *I, Claudia* by Kristen Thomson were selected as a case study. This corpus is meant to be considered a "snap-shot" and hopefully a touchstone that will serve as a point of comparison for studies to follow. More specifically, the corpus of this thesis is composed of study guides written by Jessica Abdallah for Geordie Theatre in Montreal, Québec; Amelia Faught, Kristen Van Alphen, and Mary Wood for Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, Ontario; Jim McNabb for the Great Canadian Theatre (GCTC) in Ottawa, Ontario; Mark Claxton for the Globe Theatre in Regina, Saskatchewan; as well a "authorless" study guide prepared by Gateway Theatre based in Richmond, British Columbia (BC).

The second axiom of this project is concerned with the work of known sociologists Pierre

Bourdieu and Hannah Arendt who will provide the theoretical lens and working definitions of key concepts through which this corpus will be analyzed. This will be followed by a description of the productions themselves and their particularities in order to provide a common understanding of the artistic material that inspired the study guides' authors. The curricula designed by the four provinces in which companies are based will be used as a second referencing point throughout this thesis to determine how provinces' Ministries of Education are – or are not – trying to encourage socially or aesthetically based readings of plays and how this in turn also orients the content of study guides. In other words, this thesis will try to demonstrate how and why curricula often serves as a justification or alternatively, as a grounding point, for the guide's content. Finally, study guides will be analyzed in order to determine their effectiveness as tools of cultural mediation.

As such, this thesis was not designed to prove an overarching theoretical, dramaturgical or historical hypothesis. It was conceived as a first step in a longer process that reaches beyond the possible objectives of an MA-level study that will provide insight into the strengths and shortfalls of a significant phenomenon in English Canadian theatrical practice. It is perhaps foremost a first attempt to articulate a methodology through which other similar bodies of work may be analyzed by future researchers.

### **CULTURAL MEDIATION: WORKING DEFINITIONS AND KEY CONCEPTS**

The supposition that bridging mechanisms such as study guides can help build both cultural awareness and knowledge through a better understanding of artistic form and social significance can be traced to the very concept of culture itself as defined by Hannah Arendt:

Culture, word and concept, is Roman in origins. The word "culture" derives from *colere* – to cultivate, to dwell, to take care, to tend and preserve – and it relates primarily to the intercourse of man with nature in the sense of cultivating and tending nature until it becomes fit for human habitation. [...] It seems it was

Cicero who first used the word for matters of spirit and mind. He speaks of *excolere animum*, of cultivating the mind and of *cultura animi* in the same sense in which we speak even today of a cultured mind [...] (211-212)

Culture is here considered the root of civilization and civilized thought, as well as a necessity for democracy and government. This, in turn, explains why governments make use of concepts and tools developed by advocates and proponents of cultural mediation in order to introduce students to methods that allow for a better understanding of art and creative thought.

Art, and theatre in particular, are here considered agents of democracy, thus underscoring the importance of cultural mediation within society as a whole. Mediators, be they teachers or employees of theatre companies who write study guides, seek to teach students how to read or interpret selected and often already canonized pieces of art deemed representative of civilization and civilized thought by state sanctioned representatives; Ministries of Education in the present case. Within the parameters of cultural studies as defined by Arendt, “canonized works” are those that “will last through the centuries [and] can ultimately claim to be a cultural object” (202). For example, in the realm of Visual Arts, staples that have made their way into English language curricula include impressionist painting or sculptures by Auguste Rodin. In theatre, Shakespeare’s omnipresent body of work is taught both in English and Theatre Arts curricula. In short, art is “instrumentalized” through cultural mediation in the same overt pedagogical objectives that include citizenship, but that do not always include aesthetic appreciation or understanding.

The multiple and layered interpretations of art are not always easily accessible to students, or teachers for that matter, who do not always frequent cultural institutions out of personal interest. Pedagogues and mediators teach students how to decode complex works in order to encourage appreciation – not to be confused with consumption – and pleasure. Over

time, students are meant to develop opinions that surpass instinctive appreciation, ie. “I like it”, “I did not like it”. In other words, learners should “acquire, for example, a predisposition to the 'rules of the game' for viewing paintings in a gallery and, furthermore, doing so in a way that appears entirely natural and effortless” (Moore 106). Multiple outings are also intended to multiply aesthetic experiences through increased exposure to a variety of forms. Unto themselves, these strategies have pedagogical value: the more productions learner attends, the better they will be equipped to understand the complexity of works seen or experienced through comparison. More specifically, cultural mediation seeks to expand learners’ horizons:

1. by explaining or helping to understand codes implicit to the works of art;
2. by linking the art to the context in which they were produced or;
3. by linking art to the context in which it is seen.

Also, this process is conceived to counter certain attitudes towards art and culture that would have it considered elitist, mysterious and inaccessible to citizens.

### **USES OF THE CONCEPT**

Cultural mediation in professional theatrical practice gained notoriety in Belgium and France in the 1990’s and took root in Québec around 2005 (Little 5). Often still considered a “Francophone concept” in English Canadian theatre circles, cultural mediation finds resonance in Anglophone practice when defined as a key component of “participatory and community engaged arts” (Little 5). When embraced, institutions mandated in the production and distributions of art also act as mediators that facilitate both access and understanding of works otherwise deemed “inaccessible” or “difficult” to targeted audiences.

Varying establishments organize events thematically and offer programs that create a sense of proximity. For example, Bourdieu in *The Love of Art* studies how art galleries in five



countries themselves acted as mediators by targeting all classes of society:

As the works comprising the artistic capital of a given society at a given moment in time demand codes of varying complexity and sophistication which are therefore learnt with varying degrees of ease and speed of institutionalized or self-directing learning, they are characterized by different levels of emission, such that the legibility of a work of art for a particular individual is a function of the distance between the level of emission, defined as the degree of complexity and intrinsic sophistication of the code demanded by the work, and the level of reception, defined as the degree to which this individual has mastered the social code, which can be more or less appropriate for the code demanded by the work (Bourdieu “Art” 43).

This eminent French sociologist then goes on to explain that the strategies put in place by museums – guided tours, explanatory notes, etc. – are in fact mechanisms to instigate “self-directed learning” that in turn link “understanding” with “pleasure”. Although rarely based on the principle of “self-directed learning”, in English Canadian theatre, study guides are the principal mechanism used by theatre companies and presenters to bridge the arts and educational objectives in order to equip future citizens with cultural capital as a component of citizenship. The link made by Bourdieu between cultural mediation and citizenship is an axiom of this thesis and in no way its subject.

Québec’s Drama Curriculum states that one of the goals of education is “to enable the pupil to develop as an individual and as a member of society” (Québec Ministry of Education 3) and reminds educators that “[w]hile the program is concerned with the specific objectives of the subject of drama, it is important to remember the primary goal is one that is basic to all education: developing self-knowledge of the cultural environment” (Québec Ministry of Ed. 5). Ontario’s Arts Curriculum affirms the importance of creating a sense of citizenship through the accumulation of cultural capital on its third page. More specifically, this document explains how the arts have a “civilizing influence” and help students engage in a cultural life as well as learn to appreciate diverse cultures:

Since artistic activities involve intense engagement, students experience a sense of wonder and joy when learning through the arts, which can motivate them to participate more fully in cultural life and in other educational opportunities [...] They identify common values, both aesthetic and human, in various works of art and, in doing so, increase their understanding of others and learn that the arts can have a civilizing influence on society[...] The openness that is fostered by study of the arts helps students to explore and appreciate the culture of diverse peoples in Canada, including First Nations and Francophones. Students learn that people use the arts to record, celebrate, and pass on to future generations their personal and collective stories and the values and traditions that make us unique as Canadians (Ontario Ministry of Education 3-4).

Saskatchewan's Arts Education Curriculum has a section devoted to the idea of treating students as "engaged citizens". Students are encouraged to learn "how to design, compose, problem solve, inspire change, and contribute innovative ideas that can improve the quality of their own lives and the lives of others" (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment 3). This "gives students multiple ways to express their views and to reflect on the perspectives and experiences of others" (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment 3) which can provide a "voice and means to make a difference in their personal lives and in peer, family, and community interactions" (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment 3). Finally, British Columbia's Curriculum presents drama as a pragmatic method for teaching students a sense of citizenship through hands on experience: "Drama education helps learners make sense of their world by integrating experience with knowledge" (British Columbia Ministry of Education 1). It also teaches the students cultural awareness by "provid[ing] a unique opportunity to foster respect for and appreciation of a variety of values and cultures" (BC Ministry of Education 1).

The learning process as defined in these four provinces' curricula is different but all four share the common goal of engaging and encouraging students to become involved citizens through the arts. The accumulation of cultural capital, thanks to strategies associated with

cultural mediation, is important to each province and, one might suppose, equally important to the writers of study guides.

## **CULTURAL CAPITAL**

According to Bourdieu, the accumulation of “capital” is the “principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world” (“Capital” 241). He defines all capital as “the result of labour”: one has to put in time and effort to gain cultural, social or economic capital. Once acquired, capital “enables them [consumers] to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour” (Bourdieu “Capital” 241). Furthermore, it always has the potential to benefit the individual: economical capital can be exchanged for food and shelter; social capital provides access to like-minded people or business connections that could lead to economic opportunities; and cultural capital provides a better understanding of neighbouring cultures. As with economic capital, cultural capital helps citizens acquire power and/or status and determines their place in society. Because it can be measured like economic capital, it can also be transferred: “In this disintegration, culture, more even than other realities, had become what only then people began to call 'value', i.e., a social commodity which could be circulated and cashed in exchange for all kinds of other values, social and individual” (Arendt 204).

Cultural mediation is grounded in the belief that the receptor of art is, in fact, a consumer – devoid here of its mercantile meaning –, and that it is a civic obligation to have some cultural knowledge in order to minimally participate in society. This also allows consumers to help perpetuate a society’s common values. Through the logic of self-perpetuation and according to Bourdieu’s theory, what is taught to the students of today is important because these same individuals will be tomorrow’s teachers. As such, cultural mediation seeks to help “level the

playing field” in regards to access and understanding in order to ensure a minimal accumulation of cultural capital for all citizens. In order to obtain this capital and own its content, participants must be taught to decode, appreciate, and analyze in order to retain content, recognize its worth and develop critical regard that moves beyond personal taste. In other words, it is not enough to simply state that you have attended a play, you must demonstrate an understanding of its content grounded in observable fact.

### **LEARNING TO “READ” PERFORMANCE**

Acquisition of cultural capital through “reading” and “understanding” artistic objects is dependent on the mastery of codes that provide meaning and build pertinence to the receptor. It is the job of the mediator to explain or help decode the art “for and with” students as a means of instilling the skills necessary to understanding subsequent pieces:

Codes are highly complex patterns of associations that all members of a given society and culture learn. These codes, or “secret structures” in people’s minds, affect the ways that individuals interpret the signs and symbols they find in the media and the ways they live. From this perspective, cultures are codification systems that play an important (although often unperceived) role in people’s lives. To be socialized and to be a member of a culture means, in essence, to be taught a number of codes [...] (Berger 30).

In regards to theatre specifically,

[m]any theatrical conventions can undoubtedly be reduced to a set of codes, particularly in the case of highly stylized or ritualized forms of theatre (Peking Opera, classical dance, No, etc). It is then easy to define the convention and limit it to a set of unchangeable rules (Pavis 58).

A typology of codes developed in relationship to the specificities of theatre has emerged over the past fifty years thanks to the work of several notable semioticians: “visual codes, musical codes, proxemics, etc. Any theatrical message within performance requires a multitude of codes if it is to be decoded” (Ubersfeld 14). Codes are important in order to understand both production considerations as well as cultural and social references. When one does not master these codes

or confuses them with other considerations, it leads to the possible misinterpretation of the piece:

Sometimes there is confusion, and the code applied by the creator of a program isn't the code used by the members of the audience. In such cases there is bad communication. What makes things complicated is the fact that, generally speaking, people are not consciously aware of the rules and codes and cannot articulate them, although they respond to them (Berger 15).

Study guides seek to help students to understand codes and limit confusion over time, thus facilitating the accumulation of cultural capital.

With few exceptions in this thesis, my analysis has indicated that theatre study guides follow three general orientations – or three “families” of codes – when attempting to mediate productions through overtly or understood learning objectives: they are either curriculum-based; socially oriented; artistically prejudiced; or some combination of the three.

Curriculum-based guides seek to interpret plays as a way to meet educational objectives set out in provincial curricula. Every province has its own curriculum with different priorities, objectives and standards which are defined specifically for each subject. This is the main argument used to justify the need to write a new study guide each time a production is presented in a new province. The curriculum used as the basis for study guides can follow learning objectives set out in Drama as a subject, but also tends to include exercises and questions related to other subjects in order to broaden the appeal of productions. Exercises and questions that help respond to objectives developed for subjects such as English, English as a second language, History, or Social Studies are common place since productions and plays may touch on issues directly related to these subjects.

Socially oriented guides invite students to detect and interpret social messages implicit to productions by focusing on the social themes explored within the productions. In socially oriented guides, students are invited to read the story told through the lens of characters and their

problems. These types of guides also tend to focus on topics already considered important by the educational system itself or society as a whole: for example, bullying, divorce, and self-image. Very often, descriptive information, exercises and questions seek to help student identify with characters and situations, thus creating a sense of proximity with the work. For example, guides may include questions asking students to reflect on how bullying effected the character(s) and how this relates to students today.

An artistically prejudiced grid invites students to focus on the structural and aesthetic aspects of a production. Form is here emphasized, rather than content. Grids, questions and activities focus on the theatrical devices used in telling the story and furthering the plot. This helps students learn how to read a theatrical production's devices by helping students understand artistic choices and their intended message. These guides tend to focus on the creative team and the creative process while synopsis and characters are seen here as constructs. Artistically prejudiced guides also provide terminology to label aspects of the theatrical event in a systemic fashion: terms such as monodrama, monologues and mask, for example, would be defined by using proven definitions – usually borrowed or cited from specialized dictionaries – that are then explained.

Writers' prejudices and preferences in terms of approach are usually easily identified. Their approach determines which types of codes are explained and what tools are provided to educators and subsequently, to students, to help understand a given piece of theatre. Determining implicit and explicit priorities in study guides will help determine how the production of *I, Claudia* was or could be mediated: does the guide treat theatre as scholarly subject to be studied like English, History or the Social Sciences, or is it considered an appendix or a case study for these same subjects? Does the guide define theatre as a mimetic reflection of

a given reality and characters as people that serve as a starting point to theme based and social-problem based discussions? Does the guide provide the necessary tools to decode theatrical devises thus placing emphasis on form and aesthetics? Does the guide explicitly encourage the transfer of tools provided to subsequent productions attended, thus indicating that spectatorship is a normal life long journey?

### **CURRICULA ANALYSIS**

Through an examination of Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia's ministry approved curricula and prior to analyzing actual study guide content, it is important to:

- investigate the degree to which provincial curricula favours attending live theatre and why;
- to define the importance given to theatre as a socially oriented or "society-based" activity within these same curricula;
- and to identify priorities established by provincial school systems in regards to production analysis.

All provinces included in this study state that exposing students to professional theatre productions is important although each argues different reasons when affirming this priority. Also, each ministry proposes its own process of analysis to use when examining a live production: some are quite extensive while others give very little information which could be beneficial for teachers when guiding students to respond to a piece of theatre. It is also significant to note that most of the targeted provinces also put some emphasis on creating material that is geared towards young females and/or created by females and/or created by traditionally marginalized populations or groups.

## QUÉBEC<sup>2</sup>

Québec's curriculum strongly advocates the importance of attending and analyzing live performances starting at a very early age. The Ministry's document states: "[Students] must also have opportunities to attend professional theatre performances, visit theatrical venues and meet artists and craftspeople who work in the theatre" (Québec Ministry of Education, "Cycle One" 344). The reasoning behind attending a live show is culturally motivated, perhaps more so in Québec than in other provinces:

Such contact allows students to experience the intensity of an artistic experience firsthand and make a sensitive interpretation of it, undistorted by another's vision or the limitations of a media format. It helps students become committed and culturally active creators, performers and spectators. These experiences can also lead them to a career in the arts (Québec Ministry of Education, "Cycle One" 344).

Starting in elementary school, Québec's curriculum encourages students to analyze works of art and teaches them how to appreciate the arts and culture in and outside of the classroom (Québec Ministry of Education, "Cycle One" 331). According to this same document, a better understanding of culture through mediation leads to the accumulation of cultural capital:

The secondary Drama program has a special relationship to the aims of the Québec Education Program. Essentially, theatre arts help students to construct their identity since they themselves are, in a sense, the raw material of their art [...] They learn to know themselves and others better, and to understand the environment in which they evolve and interact, all of which contributes to their empowerment (Québec Ministry of Education, "Cycle One" 342).

The importance of arts education is also reflected in the very definition of educators in Québec where they are referred to specifically as cultural mediators:

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of Québec, two curricula will be examined: Cycle One Drama and Cycle Two Drama. Cycle One corresponds to elementary school grades and Cycle Two, to grades 7 to 11 in other Canadian provinces. Cycle One is labeled as the "common basic curriculum" and Cycle Two is the "diversified basic curriculum" meaning students are becoming more selective in their subject choices and these same subjects are becoming more concentrated.



Finally, teachers play the role of 'cultural mediator', able to communicate their passion for the dramatic art and establish links between past and present or between different forms of the art. They keep abreast of developments in the world of drama and share this knowledge with their students (Québec Ministry of Education, "Cycle Two" 5).

This thesis is examining study guides to see how they help teachers function as cultural mediators, but in the Québec educational system, teachers are mandated by the province to assume this role. It is believed that a:

renewed, enriched perception of the world of art helps them [the students] structure their personal and cultural identity and prepares them to play a role as creative citizens, aware spectators and cultural participants who base their choices on their own values (Québec Ministry of Education, "Cycle Two" 2).

*Appreciating Dramatic Works* is the title of Québec's theatre curriculum, a document that defines the process through which teachers guide students when analyzing a production. There are four hierarchical and systemic steps in this state approved approach:

1. Analyze a dramatic work: Immerses himself/herself in the work and identifies its components. Identifies significant elements, based on a variety of appreciation criteria. Identifies historical aspects, if applicable, including socio-cultural aspects, using available information. Makes connections between these elements.
2. Interprets the meaning of the work: Identifies expressive and symbolic elements. Establishes the impact of the elements on the work and on the reactions it elicits. Identifies comparable elements in other works. Enriches his/her performance by searching for complementary information
3. Reviews his/her previous appreciation of the work based on its historical context, including the socio-cultural aspects. Builds his/her arguments taking appreciation criteria into account and communicates his/her point of view
4. Shares his/her appreciation experience: Identifies the important elements of his/her experience and its characteristics. Makes connections with previous experiences. Identifies what he/she has learned and the methods used" (Québec Ministry of Education, "Cycle Two" 24).

This process has the merit of being clear while leaving some room for educators to create personalized lesson plans.

Québec's curriculum does not explicitly state the importance of using or attending "women centred" work. This is curious since feminism as a public discourse took root in

Québec rather radically during the Quiet Revolution<sup>3</sup>, particularly in fields related to artistic creation and education. Québec curriculum does however focus on the ‘artistic heritage of Québec’. Because of the importance of feminism in post-Quiet Revolution Québec, it would seem that observing and analyzing a play written, performed and centred on a female protagonist or female artist is included in the “artistic heritage” already in place.

## **ONTARIO<sup>4</sup>**

Ontario’s Arts Curriculum, like Québec’s, emphasizes the importance of direct contact with artists of “diverse backgrounds” as well as attending professional productions as part of teachers’ lesson plans:

In all arts courses, consideration should be given to including regular visits to and from guest artists with diverse backgrounds and experiences, as well as field studies that help students to connect with the arts world. Students develop a better understanding of various aspects of the study of the arts when they can see and experience actual examples of the arts they are studying (Ontario Ministry of Education 29).

The Ontario curriculum also emphasizes the need to be able to analyze artistic choices specific to productions and relate these same choices to interpretation or “reading” of the plays attended.

The analysis of productions is referred to as the “Critical Analysis Process”. Ontario’s students are encouraged to critique productions in a tiered process. Through this process, this province’s Ministry of Education recognizes that theatre criticism or appreciation must take into considering the necessary reconstruction of the play seen through one’s memory:

1. Initial Reaction; their first reaction.
2. Analysis and Interpretation; “students try to figure out what the artist has done to achieve certain effects[...] artist’s use of the elements, principles, materials, and/or concepts specific to the art form[...] (Ontario Ministry of Education 20)”.
3. Consideration of Cultural Context; “students develop an understanding of works

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<sup>3</sup> Desrochers, Nadine. 2001. Le théâtre des femmes. In *Le théâtre québécois 1975-1995*, édité par Dominique Lafon, 111-132. Montréal : Fides.

<sup>4</sup> In order to create symmetry in the present study among the provinces’ curricula consulted, for Ontario, the Grade 9-10 Arts Curriculum was used since it falls in the same age-group as Québec’s.

in the arts in their cultural context[...] students also need to understand how aspects of an artist's life can have a bearing on his or her works and on the interpretation of those works. (Ontario Ministry of Education 21)".

4. Expression of Aesthetic judgement; "Students compare their perception of the art work after reflection and analysis to their initial reaction and make connections to other works of art they have seen or heard. They consider the effectiveness of aspects of the work (Ontario Ministry of Education 21)".
5. Ongoing Reflection; "Reflection occurs throughout the critical analysis process, whether students are examining their own works or the works of others. (Ontario Ministry of Education 22)

This process is used for live productions attended outside of the classroom and for work created within the classroom setting as well.

Significantly, Ontario's curriculum stresses the importance of presenting original works created by all genders and visible minorities to students; especially in the arts where works written by "dead white males" to this day dominate the canon (Shakespeare in theatre, Beethoven in music, Monet in Visual Arts):

Outside the classroom, the work of women and many minority groups is underrepresented in public galleries, theatres, dance and music concert halls, and the world of popular culture. As a result, women's and minority perspectives and viewpoints in drama, film, dance, music, and the visual arts are limited [...] Teachers should make students aware of these equity issues and ensure that the work of a socio-culturally and historically diverse range of both women and men is valued and explored. As well, teachers should provide positive role models for both male and female students in the areas they are exploring, both to engage the students and to help them consider the possibility of careers in those areas. (Ontario Ministry of Education 38)

In a way, Ontario's curriculum amply justifies any teacher's choice to attend and study plays such as *I, Claudia* written by a female concerning a young female with all the characters being performed by a single (female) actor.

## **SASKATCHEWAN<sup>5</sup>**

Saskatchewan's curriculum explicitly states the importance of training lifelong participants in the arts. The curriculum encourages teachers to guide students to "become

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<sup>5</sup> Saskatchewan Curriculum 10, 20, 30 and Grade 9 curriculum will be used for this analysis.

willing participants in the interactive process between artist and audience rather than passive consumers of the arts (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 10, 20, 30 4)”. The province goes so far as to encourage the accumulation of cultural capital as an end unto itself. In this province’s curriculum, teachers are asked to incorporate ‘common essential learning’ in their arts education agenda to help “students better understand the arts and to prepare them for future learning, both within and outside of the classroom (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 10, 20, 30 5)”. More specifically, Saskatchewan’s Ministry of Education seeks to teach students cultural and artistic codes that might be used in the future, whether it be as an audience member or a creator. Like Québec, this curriculum places emphasis on citizen engagement and local cultural awareness:

It is important that students become familiar with their own artistic heritage and surroundings. If they study Saskatchewan arts, they will recognize themselves, their environment, their concerns and their feelings expressed in a diverse range of materials, styles and art forms (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 10, 20, 30 4).

This is accomplished through field trips to local theatres and attending live theatre performances.

Finally, like Ontario, Saskatchewan also focuses on the importance of gender equality both in the classroom and in content used or presented by teachers:

An educational environment free of gender bias can be facilitated through increased understanding and use of gender-balanced material and teaching strategies, and continued efforts to analyse current practice. Both male and female students need encouragement to explore non-traditional as well as traditional options [...] The Arts Education curriculum endeavours to integrate the experiences and accomplishments of both female and male artists in an effort to overcome the discrepancies between male and female participation, achievement and reward. The work of female artists has not traditionally been recognized or valued to the same extent as that of male artists. This curriculum strives to make it clear that the work of both men and women is of equal value and importance in today’s world (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 10, 20, 30 14-15).

It would seem that in this Prairie province, the inculcation of certain social values is just as

important as considerations linked to artistic enterprise. This is not surprising when one considers the socialist and political interventionist traditions well rooted in Saskatchewan's political and ideological makeup. In light of this fact and also not surprisingly, Saskatchewan's curriculum is "student centred" with the teacher acting more as a guide than a traditional "impartor of knowledge". More specifically, the Saskatchewan curriculum promotes holistic approaches to teaching:

Responding critically to arts expressions is an important component of the Arts Education curriculum and should be an active experience for the audience members. Students should be encouraged to become thoughtfully involved in this interactive process with a wide range of works of art from each of the four strands (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 10, 20, 30 386).

Both students and educators are "encouraged to extend their learning beyond the classroom:

"They may wish to share their learning through community performances or exhibits"

(Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment 9, 15).

Saskatchewan proposes the most exhaustive grid of analysis or method of the four provinces' curricula included in the present study. The province's curriculum includes fifteen pages devoted to explaining how to "respond to arts expression". There is also a handout designed for direct distribution to students. Since the province places equal emphasis on all art forms, this grid was conceived to analyze dance, drama, music and visual arts:

#### Summary of the Steps

1. Preparation
  - i. The teacher establishes a climate for viewing or listening and provides a context for the experience.
2. First Impressions
  - i. Students share their spontaneous reactions to a work.
  - ii. Responses are influenced by the students' past experiences.
  - iii. There are no wrong answers.
3. Description
  - i. Students objectively describe what they saw and heard.
  - ii. Students take inventory of what is in the arts expression.
  - iii. Responses should be objective, not interpretive.

4. Analysis
  - i. Students attempt to discover what the various artists have done to achieve certain effects.
  - ii. Students examine how various materials, instruments, elements, principles and other arts concepts have been used.
  - iii. The teacher encourages the use of language of the discipline.
5. Interpretation
  - i. Students try to figure out what the work is about.
  - ii. Students express what the work means to them, incorporating information from the two preceding steps.
  - iii. Students' perspectives, associations and experiences affect interpretation.
  - iv. Associations may be made through imagery, metaphor and analogy.
6. Background Information
  - i. Students learn as much as they can about the work and the various artists involved with its creation.
  - ii. The teacher provides information or has the students research biographical, historical or cultural information.
7. Informed Judgement
  - i. The students participate in a culminating and reflecting activity.
  - ii. The students are asked to refer back to their first impression and support their initial opinion of the work, or develop and support a new opinion.  
The students are asked to consider the context of the work as part of the response. (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment 399)<sup>6</sup>.

This non disciplinary specific and comparative approach is complemented with questions conceived to help students recognized the specificity of each art form.

According to the curriculum, students should have already been introduced to a similar process at the primary level, stating that “Most students at the Secondary Level will be familiar with this process and should be able to engage in a critical thinking dialogue as a whole group, in small groups or individually” (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 10,20,30 386). The authors of this curriculum believe that students, regardless of their age, can innately respond to artistic expressions in three levels: emotion, association and formal intellectual. They are encouraged to move beyond this initial response as they age and mature.

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<sup>6</sup> This is one of the handouts which can be used in the classroom.

**BRITISH COLUMBIA (BC)**<sup>7</sup>

This curriculum encourages students to not only attend productions, but to produce a play in a classroom setting. It also states that teachers should reach out to the community: they are encouraged to attend professional, community, and university level productions, both in rehearsal and after opening. Whereas Québec's and Ontario's respective curricula emphasize the importance of attending live productions, BC's experiential approach puts emphasis on the understanding of the creative process "from the inside" and aims to expose students to how "theatre is made":

Students learn about the nature of a theatre company and the interconnected roles and responsibilities of people who work within it. They examine the requirements for teamwork, leadership, commitment, and onstage, backstage, and front-of-house etiquette. They learn the synthesis of content and context in the theatre environment. Through participation in the rehearsal and performance process, students learn the skills and attitudes necessary to perform within a theatre company, including valuable personal and interpersonal skills that students can apply in broader social and career contexts (BC Ministry of Education 11-12, 11).

The curriculum does not directly link the importance of being a part of a company with the possibility of becoming a more knowledgeable audience member.

In a second separate section, BC's curriculum encourages teachers to develop "students' skills as members of an audience and as discriminating observers" because it is "an important part of any drama program" (BC Ministry of Education 14). Like Saskatchewan, the BC's curriculum states that a student should respond to a play three different ways: emotional, contextual, and intellectual (BC Ministry of Education 15). The curriculum provides a description of how to encourage students to respond on these three levels: a student's first emotional response (first impression) should be followed by contextual reactions (description of what they saw and heard) and finally, learners should critique and provide intellectual analysis

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<sup>7</sup> British Columbia grade 11-12 curriculum is used since theatre arts are not taught at the grade 9-10 level in this province.

(students do a background analysis of actors, playwrights, directors, cultures and links all three together to create an opinion). This step by step process was inspired by Saskatchewan's curriculum. The handout available in British Columbia's curriculum states: "This summary is adapted from Drama 10, 20, 30 Curriculum Requirements (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 1993)" (BC Ministry of Education, 15).

Unlike all other provinces included in this study, BC puts more focus on Aboriginal issues and First Nation produced material than on issues linked to gender equality. It does however ask teachers to discuss how social, political, and historical ideas have changed the theatre. Among examples quoted, gender equality is mentioned:

Look for evidence that they are able to identify and describe the commonalities and differences of among the various styles [of theatre] in relation to purpose (e.g., audience), gender roles, political influences, connection to the norms of the larger society (as reflection of or challenging), use of production elements, and common themes (BC Ministry of Education 37).

"Girl culture" is not specifically or obliquely mentioned in the Arts Education curriculum but the document does mention the importance of looking at individuals and groups who have been suppressed in the past and encourages teachers to showcase their work in an attempt to present a positive image of such groups or populations.

### ***I, CLAUDIA: TEXT AND PRODUCTIONS***

When designing study guides, writers normally take into account provincial curricula and artistic projects' specificities when attempting to bridge the two. Much of the possible interest in *I, Claudia* lies in its particular dramaturgical structure: the monodrama. According to Patrice Pavis' canonical definition, the monodrama "is a play with a single character, or at least a single actor (who may take on several roles)" (Pavis 217). Furthermore, it tends to centre on a single 'stage figure': a term used to designate all conceptions of human presence on stage. *I, Claudia*



focuses on the title character and all other characters exist to provide information in regards to her journey. The fact that all these characters are performed by a single stage figure makes this play unequivocally a monodrama.

Nikolay Evreinov complements Pavis' definition when he argues in his article "Introduction to Monodrama" that the human mind can only relate to one perspective at a time. If this is true, monodrama can be seen as the dramaturgical structure best suited to the analysis of the evolution of a single 'active participant', or protagonist. Having only one character with which to identify is important according to Evreinov since the "world of the play" must be considered synonymous with the play's protagonist:

Monodrama requires each of the spectators to stand in the participant's shoes, to live his life, ie., to feel as he feels and have an illusion of thinking as he thinks, and therefore to be the first to see and hear the same thing the participant does. The cornerstone of monodrama is the participant's on-stage emotional experience producing an identical co-experience, becoming one with the participant. To induce the illusion in the spectator that he is turning into the participant is the chief task of monodrama. To accomplish this on stage, there first must be but one object of action, not only for the reasons given earlier, but also because monodrama's aim is the representation of an external performance that corresponds to the internal performance of the object of the action, and it is not within our feeble powers to be present at two performances at once (Evreinov 191).

Evreinov's definition sheds light on why this dramaturgical form is so often utilized in plays designed to target teenage audiences: other examples might include *The Shape of a Girl* by Joan MacLeod, and *Dying to be Thin* by Linda A. Carson. This form, exemplified by these plays, requires overt identification by audience members to work.

The four characters in *I, Claudia* are all related to, concerned with, or exist in relationship to a protagonist, Claudia. Douglas, Claudia's grandfather, worries about her while

discussing his own failings as a comparison point when criticizing Claudia's parents' decision to divorce: "All those years ago Eileen [his wife] just showed up at the office. She just came walking into the office with the baby – and I was, I was, I was –mixed up with that girl. But she never said anything about it" (Thomson 12). Drachman, the colourful school janitor, is also concerned about Claudia and keeps a watchful, guardian-like, eye on her: "She is too young to think on it but hiding this sock in the electric box could cause a very danger. So I am watch always to keep a safety<sup>8</sup>" (Thomson 7). The only character not overtly concerned with Claudia, although directly related to her narrative, is Leslie: Claudia's soon to be stepmother. She is meant to be the play's antagonist and counterbalance the sweet yet awkward Claudia: as such, the audience is not meant to invest in her journey as it does with Claudia's.

Although not originally or intentionally created as a theatre for young audience (TYA) production, *I, Claudia* has been presented to younger audiences during innumerable student matinees throughout Canada with good reason: the protagonist is 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  years old and turns 13 at the end of the play (Thompson 10). Furthermore, the play deals with issues such as divorce, puberty, and popularity: topics of interest to many pre-teens and teenagers today. The three other characters are older and adults. This in itself helps create distance for younger audience members from these characters allowing them to perceive these characters as windows into Claudia's worldview by providing significant information in regards to Claudia's journey. The title of the play itself and its Latinized double subject reference – not unlike the French "*moi, je*" – reminds the audience that the play is "all about Claudia".

The fact that both definitions of monodrama place emphasis on the role of the audience is

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<sup>8</sup> Drachman's character is written to indicate his particular accent. What may seem at times like mistakes are in fact intentional, hence the absence of [sic] after quotes by this character.

not banal. Pavis specifies that the audience is the monodrama's protagonist's partner. Evreinov considers spectators as beings that share the protagonist's perceptions and understandings of situation. They "share" the hero's dramatic experience. According to Evreinov the audience is meant to function as the protagonist's alter ego and bear witness to testimonials or confessions. The monodrama, according to Per Brask, as quoted by Jenn Stephenson, can be traced back to the middle of the eighteenth century but grew to popularity in Canada in the mid to late 1970s (Stephenson vii), in part as a consequence of the rise of feminism as a public discourse. Patricia Badir, again as quoted by Jenn Stephenson, compares the monodramatic form to writing found in young women's private journals: "[T]he private and intimate nature of monodrama becomes comparable to the solitary yet political acts of journal writing and diary keeping which are forms of personal expression seeking to explore female experiences left out of history, literature, art" (Stephenson viii). The monodrama is a "safe place" for characters to discuss emotions, feelings and thoughts without judgment from outsiders. This turns the audience into an extension of the hero on stage: the character's conversational mirror.

The title of *I, Claudia* is an obvious referent to Robert Graves' novel *I, Claudius*, written in 1934. Graves wrote this "fictional autobiography" of Tiberius Claudius using the first person singular. Claudius was born in 10 B.C as a member of the Roman Empire monarchs. Suffering from certain deficiencies – he limped, stuttered and drooled –, his family assumed he was a harmless idiot and hid him from public life. As he grew, he lost his physical defects and became a known scholar and historian. He survived intrigues and attempted poisonings during the reigns of Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula and at the age of 49, he became the fourth Emperor of Rome. Thomas is not entirely original in her choice of reference: the adaptation *I, Clownius* was used in the American sitcom *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*; "*Me, Claudius*" was used in *Sesame*

*Street*; and even “*I, Borg*” in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*<sup>9</sup>. The referenced novel serves to foreground the play and indicate how and why familial perceptions define the individual. Family members in both *I, Claudius* and *I, Claudia* assume that the heroes are somewhat invalid and incapable of making decisions. They are marginalized and ignored. In Tarragon’s study guide, it is appropriately explained that the title sets the stage for a show that clearly emphasized the importance of allowing “the typically voiceless to have a voice. Claudia is both a child and a woman, a powerful representative for children and adolescents, and she requires that we listen to and respect her” (Faught, Van Alpen, and Wood 3).

Born in Toronto in 1966, Thomson first developed Claudia’s character at the National Theatre School of Canada where she trained. Under the tutelage of Pierre Lefèvre, it is there that Thomson first became interested in using masks on stage. She performed a prototype of what was to become *I, Claudia* during the Theatre Columbus’ Mayhem festival in 1999. Later, a longer and more developed version was performed at the Tarragon 1999 Spring Arts Fair. The artistic director of Tarragon at the time, Andy McKam, liked the production still in development and decided to workshop the project since the company’s mandate remains to this day “to create, develop and produce new plays and provide the conditions for new work to thrive<sup>10</sup>”. The play was developed into a full-length production for Tarragon’s Extra Space and created during the 2000-2001 season. Thomson worked with dramaturg Chris Abraham who also directed both the first stage production as well as the eventual film version. The choice of monodrama was partially the result of the project’s autobiographical nature: Thomson’s parents divorced when she was seven (Faught, Van Alpen, and Wood 3).

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<sup>9</sup> References for these shows can be found here: *Sesame Street*: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0582988/>; *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSOu5C55kUA> and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0708732/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://tarragontheatre.com/about-us/mandate/>

In the play, Claudia lives in downtown Toronto with her mother, Cynthia. Every Monday night, she stays at her father's condo. The majority of the play takes place in the boiler room located in the basement of Greenfield Senior Elementary where she hides the socks she steals from her father. Both Claudia and Drachman exist in this location, a space presented as "belonging" to Claudia. The boiler room represents the only place where she can comfortably tell her story. This is a place "where nobody goes, except me [Claudia]...Oh and except the janitor" (Thomson 7). No other intruder enters this safe space, except the audience. Drachman opens the show: "So now I must say on behalf of that placard such a welcome to each person really from my heart, such a welcome" (Thomson 5). Creating a fluid sense of space and time – and the overall dream-like quality of the piece –, once the boiler room is identified as belonging to Claudia, it morphs into Douglas' new apartment where he just moved "three months ago to be near my son – ...my granddaughter Claudia and his beautiful wife Cynthia" (Thomson 11).

The boiler room setting thus becomes a metaphor unto itself and helps create the monodramatic tone of the piece. The audience finds itself literally "in" or "facing" – depending on the production as explained later – the inner workings of Claudia's mind. This is confirmed when the audience is introduced to Leslie in her office at Regional Supply Network. There, she flashes back to the time she met David on the dance floor at a conference. Her second and last scene takes place at a bridal shop where she is being measured for her wedding dress. These scenes help confirm the impression that Claudia may in fact be "performing" the other characters, thus explaining why everything serves to construct her narrative and help her meet a need to make sense out of events that shaped her but over which she had no control. Regardless of the reading that one makes of the play, the overarching narrative remains one of personal discovery and self-empowerment.

The audience discovers that her father had an affair with Leslie and that Leslie may in fact be the reason for Claudia's parents' divorce. Claudia reveals that she discovered that her father and Leslie met prior to her parents' separation (Thompson 20). Furthermore, Leslie is "making" Claudia's best friend, her father, move to Brantford. The audience and other characters are meant to feel sympathy for Claudia because of her frustrating situation, admiration for her skills at analyzing adult behaviour and empathy because she cannot openly communicate her real feelings to her family. When discussing the wedding, Claudia yells: "STOP THE PROCEEDINGS! I DEFY YOU STARS! NOBODY ASKED MY PERMISSION" (Thomson 20).

Leslie on the other hand, is presented as power-hungry and yet describes herself as a victim. For example, prior to her wedding dress fitting, she exclaims: "Hello? Hello? How much longer is this going to be? What am I, some second class citizen?" (Thomson 16). By marrying David, Claudia's father, she states that she feels like she is proving everyone wrong, including her parents:

I have a bit of a reputation and its probably sounds stupid but I want, I want, I just want everyone I know to see me walk down the aisle with the man I love. That's what I want. And I really want my parents to see that. I want it to be a perfect day and I want to walk down the aisle right past them and give them a little, you know "fuck you." Like, you didn't think I could do it, well, I did it (Thomson 17).

Confirming Claudia's right to dislike Leslie, her grandfather Douglas expresses his disapproval of his son's new relationship: "[...] and his beautiful wife Cynthia. She's a custom-made lady! When those two met, they were so young, it was just like Romeo and Juliet – and now it's all gone to hell. That's right, and now he's mixed up with this new girl, this so-and-so" (Thomson

11). Douglas' dislike is emphasized by his refusal to use Leslie's name.

Drachman frames Claudia's story. Originally from the fictional country of Bulgonia, his past jobs included actor, artistic director of the National Theatre of Bulgonia, dramaturg, and translator. It is no accident that he "cleans up" the mess that is Claudia's life or at least, provides order and meaning to events that have marked her existence. In order to protect her, Drachmen created a safe section in the box so she does not get hurt: "So I watch always to keep her safety...So you see, I was make this barrier here. And so the sock is separated from the electrical wire, and so. But still, I am watching for her" (Thomson 7).

David and Cynthia, Claudia's parents are described by Claudia, Leslie and Douglas yet they never appear. Thomson chose to not include David and Cynthia for two reasons: "[S]he didn't find the appropriate masks from which to develop these characters on stage" (Faught, Van Alpen, and Wood 10) and Thomson also felt "that it is sometimes more effective for us to imagine these people. As well, it is important for the story to have outside perspectives and not to be told singularly from the viewpoint of Claudia's nuclear family (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 10) . According to Claudia:

My dad is my best friend and I get to see him every week! It starts Monday after school at 3:45. I wait for him in the park across the street from the school and he is never late like other kids' parents and we do something totally bohemian together like go bowling or for pizza. And I have to say it is the best moment of my entire life because there's so much to talk about and we're both hi-larious (Thomson 9).

Claudia idolizes her father and never speaks ill of him. She thinks bowling and pizza are "bohemian" – here used quite positively – whereas adults might see such a choice as lacking creativity or the consequence of not really knowing their children very well. Leslie's description

of David on the other hand serves to justify the divorce from his former wife:

I just can't be that miserable. And when I met him David was. He was. That's just a sad fact. He just was a totally different guy. He was stiff, arrogant, he had a terrible haircut... I met him [David] at a time he was feeling pretty depressed about his life and I know that feeling (Thomson 17-18).

This is the only information provided to the audience about David; Claudia's ally, albeit a weak one.

Cynthia, Claudia's mother, is described by both Claudia and Douglas. She is mentioned first by her father-in-law who describes her beauty and how much his son and she were in love (Thomson 11). Claudia on the other hand speaks of Cynthia after the divorce:

I always pretend that my mom's just fine, but, I heard her crying... All the curtains are closed even if it's sunny outside. So, my mom is very sensitive. And my mom is way nicer than anybody else in the world. My mom is smart. My mom is brilliant. My mom is way better than anybody else, you know (Thomson 15-16).

Claudia describes her parents after their divorce whereas Leslie and Douglas give the audience insight as to the parents before the divorce. This would imply that Claudia knows elements of her parents' existence that might justify their separation, but chooses to not acknowledge, or is not mature enough to acknowledge, the complexity of the complete picture of their relationship.

Claudia's exclusion from her father's decision making process and the consequences his choices have on her life serve as the basis for the play's principal conflict. As Claudia approaches adolescence, she resents being treated like a child. Since she is not told anything about her parents' relationship, she investigates: "I find all my information from sneaking around – all the important information about my own life. I find it from sneaking around" (Thomson 10). This is how she found out her parents were getting a divorce: "Like I already knew my parents were getting separated from hearing my neighbours though the fence even though they



didn't do it until my grandma died" (Thomson 10). She also found out about Leslie through investigation: "Look at what I found for example six months ago! These! (*high heels*)<sup>11</sup> I went to my dad next time like, 'look what I found by accident. What's? Like whose are these?' And he goes like, fake normal, 'Oh those belong to Leslie'" (Thomson 9). We see further evidence of her acuity when she reveals the real reason justifying her parent's divorce:

Don't tell my mom. That this conference coffee mug that I stole from my dad's apartment actually belongs to Leslie. I thought it was my dad's because it's from a conference he goes to every year. But Leslie told me that it was hers. She said she went to the same conference as my dad. The date on this coffee mug is 1997. But my mom and dad didn't separate until Grandma died in 1999. "So you didn't split up because you were unhappy but because you were a little too happy with other people at a conference in 1997 when we were still a family" (Thomson 20).

Her disapproval of her father becomes clear in the climax.

After David and Leslie's wedding, Claudia re-imagines what she wishes she could have said or done at the wedding, in direct contrast to her role as submissive flower girl during the ceremony. In her boiler room, she yells:

WHO'S GONNA BE THE WISE GUY WHO ASKS MY PERMISSION OR I'M GONNA SHOOT SPEED INTO MY ARM AND THEN I'M GOING SNORT, like what do you do with crack cocaine? DO SOMETHING WITH CRACK COCAINE TO MAKE ME ADDICTED FOR LIFE AAAAND IF I'M SO ADDICTED I MIGHT END UP, I might end up killing myself (Thomson 20).

The play's resolution takes the form of a dream during which Claudia tells her father the truth about everything she knows, her true feelings and her desire not to be a flower girl described to her goldfish in the following manner:

I bet you never saw a flower girl before. Flower girls never get to say anything. They just have to stand there. They are usually five which is probably old in fish

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<sup>11</sup> Stage directions in the text.

life but it is young in human life. They don't get a statue on the cake. They dress you up like they don't want you to look cool. They want you to look like a loser (Thomson 11).

In her dream, after she breaks her silence, she imagines her father agreeing with her and subsequently asking her to be his best man:

I said "Yeah, you did fail. So I need some time to figure things out so I need to wear my own outfits for a while and not be the flower girl." And he said, he said "You're right. You are not going to be the flower girl, you are going to be the best man. I have a tuxedo rented for you in the back. Go put it on and we'll walk down the aisle together, pal. My darling, my love." ... That really happened, you know. In my mind, I didn't wear that dress. In my mind... (Thomson 21).

In her imagination, she and her father are considered equals since they walk down the aisle together. In a final attempt at familial reconciliation, she goes on to imagine her mother there as well "laughing and totally amazed[...]" (Thomson 21).

The play ends with Drachman telling the audience a 'famous Bulgonian fable' about a 'spragnome', this country's version of a trickster. This creature tells a newborn's family to "weave their child a basket to contain all that her heart's desires and when it is full, I will return to make her wise" (Thomson 22). The little girl does so and when she is older, and her basket is full, the 'spragnome' returns to steal the contents of her basket. The girl cries:

'Now I have nothing left but my sadness.' And so she cry and she keep to cry until practical flood of tears was filling her basket. And when her basket is complete full of tears that spragnome point. He say: "Now, you see, your basket is no longer empty. Now it have very much inside. Lugaldya. Look." And when she look she saw that her basket was become a deep pool...brimming with her experience and dancing on the surface of her tears...yes, very clearly she perceived it. Reflected on the surface of her grief she saw herself. *Drachman closes the red curtain. The End* (Thomson 22).

This allegory serves to summarize Claudia's situation. Her basket was filled with memories of her family but once the 'spragnome,' Leslie, entered her life and upset that basket, she lost her

sense of family. She will soon realize her basket is filling with new memories. This fable gives the audience hope for Claudia.

Three universal truths, or themes<sup>12</sup> as described in the study guides, stand out throughout the text: transformation, safety and love. Transformation is the most important. From visible character transitions through the use of mask to a young girl's transition into womanhood, *I, Claudia* is a series of metamorphoses. The play significantly begins with Drachman: "*There is a flash of fire and DRACHMAN magically produces a butterfly from the top hat. The performer then transforms to become CLAUDIA*" (Thomson 5). Puberty is also a key marker of Claudia's discourse in regards to her perception of selfhood:

Oh my God I don't even want to talk about it, it's disgusting. Yeah, like oh, oh "you're going through puberty" and everyone thinks they can say things like about if you need a bra or something. It's so embarrassing! It's so disgustingly embarrassing! And you can't even say anything, you can't even say, you can't even say, "STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP TEASING ME!" Right? 'Cause everybody thinks it's so funny and everybody all the grown ups think because they went through it they can just torment you! But they can't. It's totally disgusting and unfair (Thomson 6).

According to her, adults already went through this transition and she feels that this gives them a sense of entitlement to tease her about her own transition. This is yet another situation that strikes her as unfair.

Claudia often associates situations and outcomes with her appearance. She also states that she believes her father ended his marriage with her mother because of her appearance: 'Like, sometimes the only thing I could think of is that my dad thought I was just too ugly' (Thomson

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<sup>12</sup> In dramaturgical and literary studies, themes are more elaborate than one word universal truths. For this reason, they are usually described in sentence format. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I will follow the format used in the study guides that make use of single word descriptions.

21). This reflects the belief that one's success in life is a direct outcome of one's physical attractiveness, a perspective not uncommon among pre-pubescent regardless of gender. Like the butterfly, Claudia wants to transform from a "maggot and then go into a cocoon and then become a miracle" (Thomson 15). She believes once she comes out of her cocoon, "I will get better so that they, so that my mom and dad think that if I was good enough they better stick together to be my parents" (Thomson 21). All four characters go through transitions or are defined by important transformations: Claudia through puberty; Drachman from a European theatre director to school janitor; Leslie from someone who could not maintain a healthy relationship to a married woman; and Douglas to a widower.

The need to feel safe is another leitmotif throughout the play. In Claudia's first monologue, the character discusses safety concerns when living in downtown Toronto and having to take the subway to and from school:

What I think is if you are someplace where there's nobody there then that's not safe right because there's nobody else to kind of protect you or to see if you might be in trouble. So that's what I say is not safe. If nobody is there to watch you. Right? So, safety is a very big concern for me. Yeah. Yes, it's a very big concern for me for very sickening reasons because you know, there are vulnerable people in this society, and I am one of them (Thomson 6).

Within the context of her new family situation, it becomes clear that she feels abandoned by her parents. Claudia's mother shuts herself in and draws the curtains: "Sometimes I go in and I say 'Oh are you okay? Do you want, um, some juice or like a foot massage or anything?'" (Thomson 15). Claudia only gets to see her father on Mondays which will come to an end after his honeymoon when he moves to Brandfort with Leslie. Claudia does not know where she belongs anymore. Even within her peer hierarchy, she is unable to find stability: "I invited some girls over to my house to work on our science fair topic. Ya, well most of them didn't want to come

over” (Thomson 5). She only finds real comfort in the safety of the boiler room in the basement.

Finally, Claudia was born into a loving relationship and now has to come to terms with her parents’ failed marriage and her father’s new relationship. Claudia is angry with her father because she thinks he only wants to see her on Monday nights and that he will be moving soon. Love is highlighted through the use of multiple references to the iconic figures of Romeo and Juliet. As mentioned earlier, the character of Douglas compares Claudia’s parents to the famous couple: “When those two met, they were so young, it was like Romeo and Juliet” (Thomson 11). Claudia has two goldfish named Romeo and Juliet: “Romeo and Juliet and Romeo is pregnant! I thought I would have an experiment of observing the new family since I heard that goldfish eat their babies” (Thomson 10). Wanting to observe this “new family” for her science fair project is telling: she needs to observe a family, even one where traditional roles seem inverted, in order to rebuild a clear and probably more complex and realistic understanding of relationships.

## **PRODUCTION ANALYSIS**

It is important to explain certain production and visual choices in the two productions of *I, Claudia* included in this study to provide context when affirming how and why some study guides put emphasis on certain production values. It is important for study guides to discuss or instigate discussion about these choices since these same choices define codes being exploited, directorial vision, the productions’ aesthetic and, ultimately, key elements of the story being told. Understanding or extrapolating the motivations behind such choices and their effect on the audience builds both knowledge and cultural capital. The importance given such information in the guides will help determine the degree to which each guide is centered on educational goals or objectives, socially oriented elements debates or themes, or the artistic enterprise. If students are

encouraged to look at artistic choices to some degree, over time, they will be able to create a rapport between such choices and other artists' work while also gaining the ability to identify the significance of these choices within the same artist's body of work.

Tarragon Theatre in Toronto, Geordie Theatre in Montréal, the GCTC in Ottawa and the Gateway Theatre Company in Richmond all presented the same production of *I, Claudia* which was originally produced at the Tarragon Theatre and directed by Chris Abraham. Globe Theatre in Regina produced its own original production of the show, indirectly affirming the importance of this script and its potential to attain the canon. It is important to note that although Abraham's *mise en scène* was always respected, certain artists were replaced over time in the original production, including the actress:

	Gateway Theatre	GCTC	Tarragon Theatre	Geordie Theatre	Globe Theatre
Date	2008	2008	2002	2012	2013
Production	A Crow's Theatre Production	A Crow's Theatre Production	A Crow's Theatre Production, in collaboration with Tarragon Theatre	A Crow's Theatre Production	Globe Theatre
Actor	Liisa Repo Martell	Liisa Repo Martell	Kristen Thomson	Michelle Polak	Lucy Hill
Director	Chris Abraham	Chris Abraham	Chris Abraham	Chris Abraham	Ann-Marie Kerr

Set Designer	Julie Fox	Julie Fox	Julie Fox	Julie Fox	Andrew Cull
Costume Designer	Julie Fox	Julie Fox	Julie Fox	Julie Fox	Andrew Cull
Lighting Designer	N/A	Jeff Logue	Rebecca Picherack	Beth Kates	Leigh Ann Vardy
Stage Manager	N/A	Marinda da Beer	Shauna Janssen	Sarah O'Brien	Crystal Skinner
Sound Designer	N/A	N/A	John Gzowski	Chris Abraham	N/A
Study Guide Writer	N/A	Jim McNabb	Amelia Faught, Kristen Van Alphen, Mary Wood.	Adapted by Jessica Abdallah. Originally created by Matt Sedmen, Keri Sedmen, Amy-Lynn Strilchuck and Anna Lake.	Mark Claxton

The original production and three remounts directed by Chris Abraham will be analyzed as a single production since Abraham never changed the original set and sound design, masks and costumes: only lighting was rethought according to venues. This enterprise proved particularly challenging since an archival copy of this production does not exist. However, Abraham and Thomson created a film of the play in 2004. Although adapted, photographs and media reviews of the production and the movie indicated that production values are very similar:

only costume changes in direct view of the audience were omitted in the film version. The following descriptions will also be based on pictures of the original play version, some of which were included in the Tarragon's study guide, as well as descriptive information provided in Tarragon's study guide itself. Pictures of the Saskatchewan production directed by Ann-Marie Kerr were also provided by the director: again, the company and the director could not provide a taped archival version of this production<sup>13</sup>.

### **CHRIS ABRHAM'S VERSION OF *I, CLAUDIA***

The set design of this first version of *I, Claudia* was first created according to the specificities of a traditional proscenium arch stage. The set was designed to evoke a boiler room and is transformed into the other spaces through the use of a disco ball – party/dance floor for Leslie – or sound effects – birds chirping and car noises to indicate the neighborhood in which Grandpa Douglas lives –. Tarragon's audience entered from the side door usually reserved for actors in order to create the impression of “going to a secret hiding place” (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 10). The audience is initiated into Claudia's world, having been invited to enter through a secret or clandestine entrance. The setting is realistic, grounding this play in an identifiable reality:

[The set is] carefully designed to look like a realistic basement. Chris Abraham explains that the choice to create an objective reality for the play was important. If the audience had been asked to imagine the basement in a bare theatre setting, the play would have been Kristen's. The sense of colour, detail, and texture make it Drachman's story. (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 10)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Tarragon's achieves at the University of Guelph did not include any recorded version of the play. None of the venues where the play was performed, including Tarragon, had kept a copy.



The physical environment exists in contrast to the overall aesthetic of the performance marked by the play's principal theatrical device: masks. Lighting is used to indicate changes in space: "To reinforce the theatricality of the play, there is a spotlight effect projected onto the red curtain at the beginning of *I, Claudia*" (Faight, Van Alphen, and Wood 11). However; for the most part, the lightening is dimmed and conducive to evoking what one would expect in a school's basement boiler room. This choice creates a secretive atmosphere: one in which the protagonist does not feel exposed.



**Claudia in Boiler Room. Geordie Production, photographer Unknown.**



**Grandpa Douglas. Geordie Production, photographer unknown.**

Sound is also used to help the audience identify the four characters' spaces and "ease the transitions between the characters or scenes" (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 11). Sound cues used in Tarragon's production include:

The sound of boiler pipes throughout the piece helps frame us in a boiler room.

The disco music introduces Leslie's character.

The radio excerpts, noise of passing cars, and birds chirping lets us step into the slow paced world of Grandpa Douglas.

Claudia's radio tape deck plays one of her favourite *Backstreet Boys* songs that she dances to. (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 11)

The music also serves to set the period of the play: The Backstreet Boys were a late 1990's boy band and this music was never changed or updated. It is the light and sound that help the audience suspend their disbelief so that a boiler room can also be read as an apartment, a dance floor and a bridal shop.

The four principal properties of this production include a goldfish bowl, a red curtain, red shoes and a child's lunchbox. As specified earlier, the goldfish represent her parents and their dying love. The bowl eventually becomes cloudy because of an infection. The red curtain is used as a prop by Drachman as an indication at the top of the show that "we are at the theatre", a closed and intimate space, where anything is possible.



**Claudia observing her infected goldfish. Picture by ©2002 Tarragon Theatre, photographer unknown.**



**Claudia observing her fish. Geordie Productions, photographer unknown.**

Red is an important colour in *I, Claudia*: beside the red curtain, Claudia wears a red hat and eventually, red high heels. The heels are the third important prop and the objects through which Claudia discovered her father had a new girlfriend. Indicating a change in their symbolic function, after a discussion on how “disgusting” heels are, Claudia uses her graduation money to buy herself red heels, similar to Leslie’s. She begins to mimic Leslie’s style because she wants her father to give her the same attention that he gives his new wife but also to indicate her desire

to explore adult behaviour. Inversely, Claudia's lunch box symbolizes her youth. In it, she keeps juice boxes and the objects which she steals from her father's condo.

The characters' costumes are simple and designed in order to facilitate quick and changes visible to the audience. As visible in the picture included, Claudia wears a red hat, a green cardigan sweater, a white blouse, a plaid skirt, black tights, and black shoes. Drachman wears a grey paperboy hat, a brown vest, a white blouse (same as Claudia's) and black pants. The actor ties her hair back for this character. Grandpa Douglas wears the same blouse and cardigan as Claudia but his sweater is buttoned at the bottom indicative of an older person. He also wears black pants and has a pair of binoculars around his neck when bird watching. Leslie wears the costume most dissimilar to the rest of this cast of characters: a black halter top and black skirt to evoke the time she met David on a dance floor; she wears the white blouse tucked into a black skirt with black tights when discussing her business and her other relationships; and finally she wears a white wedding veil in the bridal shop.



**Claudia with the red heels. Tarragon Theatre, photo by Colin O'Connor.**

The masks are the most important scenic element of the play. Thomson went through an extensive process when identifying the right masks for each character:

For a period of time, Thomson went to NTS everyday to select masks for *I*,

*Claudia*. After she had selected masks, she had them reproduced from fiberglass to latex (latex is less expensive and more flesh like). The masks used in *I, Claudia* are copies of four of the masks from a complete set of 26, used at various theatre schools internationally, to instruct students in character development and improvisation[...]Pierre Lefèvre (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 7).

For the other masks, Thompson went to a mask studio in Montréal where she was able to try on different masks (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 3). Drachman was a more confusing character for Thomson to create: *“I loved the mask so much, I decided to make him fit* she explained.

Drachman comes to represent Kristen Thomson on stage. He is the theatre director who is shaping the play for us” (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 9). Thomson wanted to use masks to showcase her story about teenagers due to the fact that masks can operate on a literal and figurative level:

Claudia herself acknowledges the masks that teenagers wear when interacting with adults. She explains *“If an old-fashion type of adult is trying to make friends, they go, “Oh, what do you want to be when you grow up?” Right? And you should go, you go like this. “I don’t know” just shrugging your shoulders, and like all over your face is like, duh. Right? But really the whole time underneath I wanna be a DJ or a VJ, cause that would rock!* “Claudia wears a mask in her interactions with her parents. She does not want them to know that she is unhappy, and she feels that she needs to protect her mother (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 6-7).

The masks also allow a much deeper understanding of what teenage girls are going through by having to hide who they are to protect the feelings of adults.



**Claudia. GCTC, photographer unknown.**



**Drachman. GCTC, photographer unknown.**



**Grandpa Douglas. GCTC, photographer unknown.**



**Leslie at the Conference. GCTC, photographer unknown.**

**ANN-MARIE KERR'S *I, CLAUDIA***

Regina's Globe Theatre created its own production of *I, Claudia* in 2013. It was directed by Ann-Marie Kerr, a graduate of the Jacques Lecoq School in Paris where emphasis is placed on mask work. Although billed as an "original production", images indicate that Kerr's approach was very similar to Abraham's, with two major differences: the first and most obvious difference was that the production was performed in the round. To open the show, a red curtain created a square area on the stage which dropped to reveal Drachman inside a boiler room: he was standing next to a boiler. Emphasizing a sense of wonder, Kerr used smoke and chains to create a theatrical effect. The second major change was Douglas's mask. All the original masks were used but had to be reshaped in order to fit the new actress' face. The mask for the character of Grandpa Douglas had to be modified due to the fact that it looked like an older woman's face on the actress, Lucy Hill. The creative team did consult Thomson before doing so, according to Anne-Marie Kerr.



The red curtain in the theatre-in-the-round. Globe Theatre, photographer unknown.

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<sup>15</sup> Pictures were provided by Anne-Marie Kerr.



Costumes in this production were slightly different. Claudia wears a green hat and her green sweater is fully buttoned. She still wears her plaid skirt and black tights. The red shoes in this show are wedges rather than heels. Drachman wears a black toque, black zip up windbreaker and black pants. Grandpa Douglas still wears a paperboy hat that is grey, mustard yellow sweater with a checkered yellow scarf and black pants. Leslie wears a white blouse under a black business coat and black pencil skirt with black tights. She also changes into a white wedding dress and veil. Overall, these minor changes reduce the omnipresence of red in Kerr's production as contrasted in Abraham's original production. No specific significance was detected for this change.



**Claudia with her red wedges. Globe Theatre, photographer unknown.**



**Grandpa Douglas. Globe Theatre, photographer unknown.**



**Claudia in Boiler Room. Globe Theatre, photographer unknown.**



**Drachman. Globe Theatre, photographer unknown.**



**Leslie. Globe Theatre, photographer unknown.**



Leslie in her wedding dress with Drachman's hat. Globe Theatre, photographer unknown.



Grandpa Douglas. Globe Theatre, photographer unknown.

## STUDY GUIDE ANALYSIS

The five selected guides will be analyzed in order to assess content and eventually, what

forms of cultural capital could be accumulated when used by educators before or after attending *I, Claudia*. Again, the use of three broad categories serves to determine where emphasis has been placed by theatre companies through choices made by the guides' authors: more specifically, guides developed to accompany productions of *I, Claudia* tend to be curriculum-based, socially oriented or artistically biased to varying degrees. In other words, the tools proposed to analyze and appreciate the production will either "privilege" provincial learning objectives in a variety of subjects; link productions to themes typical of social studies; and/or emphasize the students' understanding of artistic form and their aesthetic experience. In a process of cultural mediation, this in turn will help determine what kind of capital – social or artistic – is privileged by authors and companies. Of course all provinces teach social studies in one form or another, as well as drama or theatre arts. Learning outcomes specific to both are found within curricula. This being said, curricula includes a plethora of other objectives linked to language acquisition, history, and visual arts, to name but a few, that may have found resonance in these same guide guides. This approach multiplies the number of possible entry points to understanding theatre, particularly for neophytes.

It is also important to determine which analytical grids and approaches are being used by the guides' respective authors since these same tools will determine how students might analyze future productions. These grids may encourage students to perceive theatre as an extension of English, question artistic choices and the use of theatrical devices and/or compare themes to contemporary social issues. The degree to which provincially approved curriculum encourages students to do one or the other, or all three, determines how students interpret productions and how they perceive theatre as an art form: its complexities, its functions, and its rapport with education and society.

It is important to note that all four provinces have adopted a progressive methodology when analyzing live productions: each curriculum provides its own step by step process. Many of these steps include clear instructions on what the educator or student should research and how the steps connect. This too determines how educators “teach” productions and the techniques used to engage students. Finally, it is important to examine why theatre companies are putting emphasis on certain goals by situating content in the context of the company’s mandates.

When preparing the following analysis, pie charts were prepared to determine the amount of quantifiable space allotted by each study guide to the three identified approaches: curriculum based, socially-orientated or artistically driven information, exercises, questions or resources. Categorization works as followed:

- 1 When pages or parts of pages include objectives and expectations as defined by curricula (often through the form of quotes) with suggested exercise underneath, these sections were considered “curriculum based”. They tend to speak directly to educators;
- 2 When space was allotted to articles, descriptions, exercises and questions that sought to deepen a student’s ability to link the production to a social phenomenon or to their own understanding of their place in society, these sections were categorized as “socially-oriented”. For example, exercises which deals with students’ feelings or past experiences and try to connect these feelings or experiences to the production;
- 3 Exercises, quotes or testimonials (interviews) that sought to deepen an understanding of the experience of attending the performance or the codes and devises that built the production were considered artistically driven. They also tend to introduce the creative team, their functions and possible intentions as creators;

- 4 A fourth category entitled “Other” appears in the chart. This category includes pages that do not fall into the other three categories. For example, in Geordie Theatre’s study guide, the title page, table of contents, introduction, “Meet *I, Claudia*” page, ‘Pre-Show Activities page and “Post-show Activities” page – these pages only contain pictures – all fall under ‘other’ in their pie chart.

## GEORDIE PRODUCTIONS – QUÉBEC

This study guide was adapted by Jessica Abdallah for Geordie Productions. It credits Matt and Keri Sedmen for the educational portions and thanks Amy-Lynn and Anna Lake from Alberta Theatre Project (ATP) who presented *I, Claudia* from October 20-Nov 8 in 2009<sup>16</sup>. ATP’s study guide is not available. Abdallah is a director, actress and theatre coordinator who teaches for the Geordie Theatre School<sup>17</sup>. This company is located in Montréal, Québec, and according to its Web site, exclusively presents “live English theatre for young audiences since 1980<sup>18</sup>”. Students are the company’s target audience.

Abdallah’s guide begins with a page devoted to educators explaining its three unit structure:

- Unit 1: Meet *I, Claudia*,
- Unit 2: Pre-Show Activities and
- Unit 3: Post Show Activities (Abdallah 3)

She goes on to explain how: “Each unit has various lesson plans and activities. Each lesson and activity can be used as a standalone and therefore you do not need to follow them in sequential

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.atplive.com/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://geordie.ca/geordie-staff/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://geordie.ca/about-geordie-and-mission-statement/>

order. Please choose the activities that would be of interest to your students” (Abdallah 3). The study guide creates bridges with Québec’s curriculum as it seeks to help teachers respect goals defined by the province. Significantly, for the exercise within the units, Abdallah includes “Québec Education Plan Competencies” which includes a list of the different related subjects and explanations of how to make necessary links. For example, the first “Theme Activities” lesson plan “[u]ses languages to communicate and learn” and “[c]reate dramatic works” (Abdallah 12). Even though the curriculum frames each exercise, the same activities can lead to either artistically-oriented exercises or social studies-based projects. These exercises are not specifically based on provincial curriculum but rather encourage students to perceive themselves as creators or artists themselves: they are “justified” by citing objectives found in the curriculum. The exercises prioritize an understanding of the production *I, Claudia*.

Again, Abdallah refers to a variety of subject areas rather than choosing a single subject specific objective to justify each exercise. Not only is this approach non-theatre specific, it provides teachers the freedom to teach however they feel fit within the context of a specific class or make the links they feel appropriate between the production and the subjects they are teaching. For example, “Theatre related activities” are made up of a series of five exercises based on the play and the cited curriculum objectives include:

Languages:

Represents his/her literacy in different media.

Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes.

Arts Education

Creates, performs, and analyzes dramatic works.

Creates personal images. (Abdallah 21)



A second example of an exercise that covers several objectives is: “Masks in the Theatre: create a mask-making assignment where students make a mask to represent themselves and then write a short monologue about their feelings or thoughts on one of the themes related in *I, Claudia*” (Abdallah 21). Exceptionally, this exercise is more concerned with the production through the use of masks and with the children through the writing of a monologue about their feelings than actual provincially approved curriculum. This exercise does conform to the ‘arts education’ objective of creating dramatic works, but it does not instruct the students to perform, share or analyze each other’s monologues as specified by the province (Aballah 21).

This guide does encourage text analysis and offers insightful knowledge building activities on character study (pages 19-20 in the guide). It also helps teachers help students write a play review. The following chart synthesizes content found in Québec’s curriculum that defines play analysis as a layered process. It also indicates to which extent and how this guide provides information and resources that helps educators meet pedagogical obligations as defined by the province.

The Steps (as quoted by Québec’s curriculum)	Information in Guide that relates to steps	Questions/Exercises in Guide that relate to step	Comments
“Analyze a dramatic work: Immerses himself/herself in the work and identifies its components. Identifies significant elements, based on a variety of appreciation criteria. Identifies historical aspects, if applicable, including sociocultural aspects,	Information given in the guide that relates to identifying the production components include: ‘About I, Claudia’, ‘About the Playwright’, and ‘Play Synopsis’. These sections go into detail about the process that led to the play’s	Exercises in which relate to this step include:  1) ‘Topics and Themes found in <i>I, Claudia</i> ; where educators are given a list of themes specific to the play to be discussed with students. Themes	The first exercise entitled ‘Topics and Themes’ engages students socially. This allows students to relate to the work through connecting the themes with student personal experiences.  The second exercise

<p>using available information. Makes connections between these elements” (Québec Ministry of Ed. “Cycle Two” 24).</p>	<p>creation. However, these sections do not provide information in regards to historical references specific to the production.</p>	<p>included are: transformation, reflection, image, identity, decision making, voice and literary devises. This section includes 11 exercises.</p> <p>2) ‘Play Discussion’; students analyze their understanding of and reactions to the show:</p> <p>“Answer the following questions in full and complete sentences. Encourage them to not give general statements but to support their opinions with specific examples from what they saw.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Name of the play, the playwright, publisher, date it was published.</li> <li>-Provide a complete list of characters with a brief description of each.</li> <li>-Describe the setting of the play (including time period).</li> <li>-Describe the “mood”, genre and 1-2 main themes of the play.</li> <li>-Summarize the plot of the play (beginning, exposition, main conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, conclusion).</li> <li>-Explain why you</li> </ul>	<p>helps students identify the different components of the production. These are all insightful questions which allow the students to move beyond opinion based affirmations: “I liked it, I did not like it”. This exercise provides the questions which students may use in the long term as a grid of appreciation. It is in fact a set of tools which allows them to decode future productions, not just <i>I, Claudia</i>. This is an artistic-driven exercise.</p>
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		liked or disliked the play. Support your reason with five examples” (Abdallah 19)	
<p>“Interprets the meaning of the work: Identifies expressive and symbolic elements. Establishes the impact of the elements on the work and on the reactions it elicits. Identifies comparable elements in other works. Enriches his/her performance by searching for complementary information” (Québec Ministry of Ed. “Cycle Two” 24).</p>	<p>The guide offers little information which could help educators or students in attaining this learning objective. Unlike other guides analyzed in the present study, there is no information on the history of masks in theatre which might have been beneficial for this. However, the guide does include exercises which relate to this step.</p>	<p>Exercises which relate to this step are:</p> <p>1)“Play Review’; “Have students answer the following questions in full and complete sentences[...].” (Abdallah 20). The questions asked cover the play’s plot, playwright, theatre company, character description and technical aspects.</p> <p>2)‘Masks in Theatre’ Exercise could also be used for this step. The masks are an important element of the play. The exercises ask students to create a mask that represents themselves and to than write a monologue to accompany the mask.</p> <p>3) “Movement” Students are asked to re-create a section of the play using only movement. This allows them to understand the importance of gesture in theatre as their</p>	<p>To interpret the possible meanings of the work, one must understand the choices made by the creative team. The review activity asks the students to describe technical aspects of the production and discuss “the play and the choices the director made” (Abdallah 20). This encourages students to focus on artistic choices and their justification. This also helps to create the perception of theatre as a code by encouraging observation and questioning artistic choices. The guide however does not provide teachers with resources to explain choices. The second step also asks students to define the impact of major scenic elements. This guide touches briefly on the topic of masks through a minor activity that involves “student’s mak[ing] a mask to represent themselves and then</p>

		<p>main tool in communication since facial expressions are hidden.</p> <p>4) “Playwriting”: This exercise asks students to write a credo which will be used as a “jumping-off point or a spontaneous improv, a planned improv, or for writing a short play” (Abdallah 21). This connects students with the process of writing.</p> <p>5) “Warm-up” is an exercise which gets students to “journal about the character attributes of three people in their own lives” (Abduallah 22). The students then act out the three people while the others look for the differences. This exercise connects to this step by allowing students to understand the process the actress had to go through in order to distinguish the four different characters she plays.</p> <p>6) “Speech” works with the folk tale component at the end of the play by getting students to discuss “some other folk tales that students know</p>	<p>write a short monologue about their feelings or thoughts on one of the themes related to <i>I, Claudia</i>” (Abdallah 21). This hardly does justice to the complexity of the use of masks within the production.</p> <p>Mask making, movement, playwriting, Warm up and speech are artistically orientated.</p>
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		[...] and re-enact it” (Abdullah 22). This allows them to understand the importance the tale meant in the production and how they can be used to tell other peoples stories.	
“Reviews his/her previous appreciation of the work based on its historical context, including the sociocultural aspects. Builds his/her arguments taking appreciation criteria into account and communicates his/her point of view” (Québec Ministry of Ed. “Cycle Two” 24).	N/A	The ‘play review’ exercise could also fall into this category.	This step encourages taking into account historical or cultural contexts when understanding and appreciating the play. The study guide provides no resources to help complete this step. This play is set in the same time period contemporary to the students studying the play so it would appear that this was deemed unnecessary. If teachers interpret this to mean production history, then the review activity asks the students to gather information on the play, playwright, director, theatre company, etc. <i>I, Claudia</i> has a more complex history than some productions as it started itself as a learning exercise and grew slowly into a production.
“Shares his/her appreciation	N/A	There exercise which best fits this step is	The review exercise tells teachers to

<p>experience: Identifies the important elements of his/her experience and its characteristics. Makes connections with previous experiences. Identifies what he/she has learned and the methods used” (Québec Ministry of Ed. “Cycle Two” 24).</p>		<p>the ‘play review’ again. Sharing their experience orally fits this step.</p>	<p>“Encourage them [students] to not give general statements such as, “I liked it”, or “It was good”. These comments are not significant in a review unless specific examples are provided of what you saw to support your opinions” (Abdallah 20). Again, this helps students move beyond simple opinion and understand that they are not simple consumers of theatre. It encourages them to make statements that indicate their appreciation of the art.</p>
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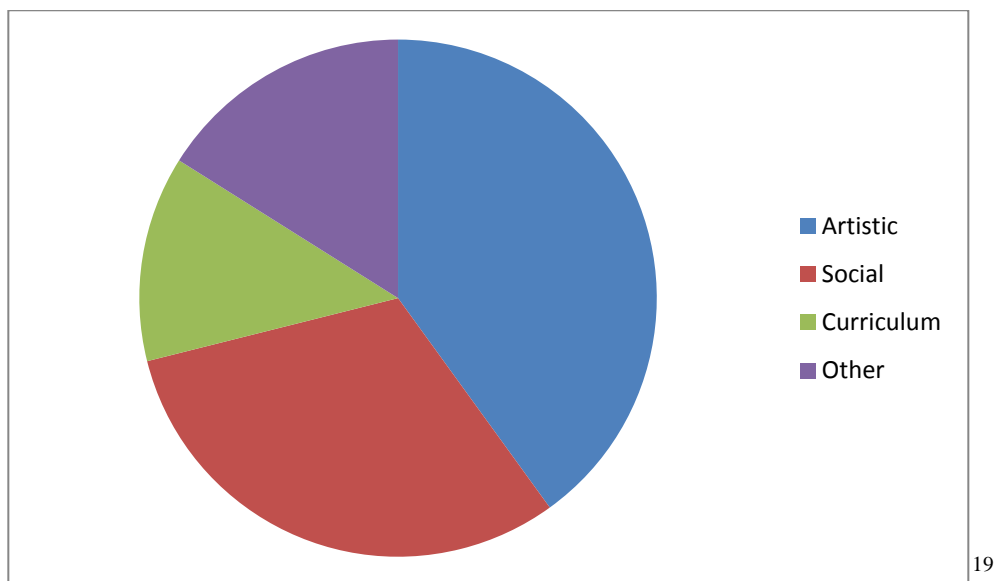
The Geordie Theatre study guide does a fair job in following the steps of analysis defined in Québec’s curriculum even if it does not follow them in the prescribed order. Although the study guide puts emphasis on curriculum, Québec’s approach also allows for Abdallah to put emphasis on both artistic and social readings of theatre. Socially-oriented exercises are also included and are intended to be completed before attending the production. These exercises ask students to imagine their own experiences that help them “connect” with the character of Claudia. For example, the Outer & Self Reflection Activity:

encourages students to create a shoebox and decorate the inside with “aspects of their inner self (elements they might keep hidden or to themselves). Have students decorate the outside of their box with aspects of their outside self (elements they share with others, as well as how others perceive them) (Abdallah 13).

The character of Claudia reveals a lot about her inner self throughout this piece – ie. wanting to

be a VJ, her true feelings about the divorce and re-marriage, etc. – and this aspect of the play serves as a linking point with this exercise. In all, this guide offers seventeen exercises that can be defined as “socially oriented” that also encourage students to perceive the piece as a reflection of their own existence rather than exclusively as an autonomous artistic enterprise. “Social capital” is accumulated by asking students to reflect on their own feelings, decisions they have made during their own lives ,and their beliefs.

The attribution of space within the study guide is itself revealing when determining the priorities communicated through choice of content. This pie chart displays how the thirty pages of the study guide are divided.



Overall this guide seeks balance and is training students to examine theatre through both an artistic and social lense, all the while creating links with curriculum for teachers. This is not surprising since Geordie Productions’ mandate states that their “work inspires dialogue between

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<sup>19</sup> “Other” includes title page, pictures, and pages which divide the units.

children and parents as well as teachers and students<sup>20</sup>. Their guide offers enough questions and exercises to spark dialogue between all parties on topics ranging from artistic devices to social issues. Although not explicitly stated or encouraged, the tools provided to educators and students through these exercises can be recycled when analyzing or appreciating future productions.

This being said, the socially driven exercises are the most original. For example, in “Becoming a Relative”, “students chose a relative they have not met – preferably 3 generations away such as a great-grandmother or great-great uncle” (Abdallah 12). The student then research the person of their choosing and “creatively present[s] their ancestor to the class” (Abdallah 12). This exercise connects students to their familial past and helps sensitize them to the importance of the link between Claudia and her grandfather Douglas, although this is not a theme explored in the play itself.

This study guide is helping train students to be more aware of themselves and their surroundings by asking them to understand who they are, who they try to be, and who they want to be. Again, Québec’s Arts Education curriculum states that “[e]ssentially, theatre arts help students to construct their identity since they themselves are, in a sense, the raw material of their art” (Québec Ministry of Ed. “Cycle One” 342). These exercises provided help to attain this goal. As such, is it possible to state that this guide is a useful and balanced tool when mediating the production of *I, Claudia*. It provides many thoughtful socially driven exercises which allow students to remember the production by relating to it. It also provides questions and exercises concerning the artistic process.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://geordie.ca/about-geordie-and-mission-statement/>



## TARRAGON THEATRE – ONTARIO

The creators of Tarragon Theatre`s study guide work for the Educational Outreach Program within the company. The writers of the guide, Amelia Faught, Kristen Van Alphen and Mary Wood, are employees. Kristen Van Alphen was a professional stage manager until 1999 when she made a career change to educational administrator and technical outreach. She has a B.A in English and Drama<sup>21</sup>. Mary Wood has a B.A (French and Drama) and a B.Ed which she puts into use when she “helps administrate and develop Tarragon`s curriculum knowledge<sup>22</sup>”. She is also a dramatic arts teacher. There is no available information on Amelia Faught`s credentials. The very existence of an “Education Outreach Program” indicates the importance Tarragon places on cultural mediation. Education and outreach activities “to artists, to young people, to educators, and to our general audience — are designed to foster an understanding and appreciation of the process of creating new plays<sup>23</sup>” are a key component of the company`s mandate. As such, in the present case, it seems fair to assume that an appreciation of the creative process would orient the choice of activities included in this study guide.

The introduction to the guide “About the *I, Claudia* Study Guide” speaks first to educators and states its goals: “This study guide has been created in order to make your theatre experiences at Tarragon a more fulfilling and engaging one. We hope that it will create discussions, generate ideas and prompt many questions” (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 2). The guide goes on to justify exercises and choices of content: “With regards to this play, we feel especially strongly that students benefit most if they are aware of the events that are described within the script” (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 2). In other words, an understanding of

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<sup>21</sup> <http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~cmce/graduate%20studies.htm>

<sup>22</sup> <http://fcis.oise.utoronto.ca/~cmce/graduate%20studies.htm>

<sup>23</sup> <http://tarragontheatre.com/about-us/mandate/>

dramaturgy and the artistic impetus that led to the play's creation is explicitly deemed beneficial for the students' understanding of the production. As a result, the guide provides information on the process of writing, creating and developing the play, the characters' development, the use of mask, what the director wanted to accomplish, the themes explored and how they possibly relate to Thomson's own life, and the design process. This guide leaves the distinct impression of privileging an artistic understanding of theatre and the students' aesthetic experience. This guide is exhaustive in this regard and sets the bar quite high for teachers and students who might expect a similar wealth of information for future productions.

The guide begins by providing readers with insight into the creation process of *I, Claudia*, which in turn helps to reveal how certain themes and ideas emerged and evolved. For example, butterflies are a major motif in the play and the guide reveals how they connect Claudia and Drachmen: "It is through the symbol of the butterfly that Drachman demonstrates his understanding and concern for Claudia" (Faught, Van Alphen, and Woods 6). Drachman understands Claudia's need for transformation and uses the butterfly as a symbol of his comprehension of her situation. Another theme which was examined was safety and a sense of personal security. The guide clearly and succinctly explains how this idea emerged for Thomson:

Through events in her own life, Thomson became interested in the moment of children's life when they lose their "safety, predictability, security" and finally have to confront a new image of the world. Although not every child experiences divorce in their family, in more general terms EVERYONE has their own experience where they've been shaken out of this "security". This realization is an important part of growing up, and a first encounter with reality (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 3).

The Tarragon Theatre guide also provides insight as to how and why Thomson explored the themes of divorce and love:

Thomson wanted to explore what these events, divorce more specifically, do to ideas about love and longing for love. Is there any way of re-establishing that “*normalcy*” in a child’s life after having experienced such a trauma? Although the event of divorce in *I, Claudia* is similar to Thomson’s life, the stories are not autobiographical. Thomson tried to remember the feelings and processes she experienced as a child, in order to create the truest response for the character of Claudia. Without using autobiographical detail, Kristen called on very personal feelings to become the essence of the characters she created (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 3).

Clearly this guide encourages educators and students to “explore” Claudia’s world and worldview so they can understand her choices better. Although akin to “social capital”, this also in turn encourages students to share their own interpretations of the play.

Just like in Geordie Theatre’s study guide, provincial curriculum is used to organize the exercises provided for pre and post show appreciations. Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood go so far as to set up exercises respecting a lesson plan format taught in teachers’ colleges throughout Ontario: objective at the top, materials needed follow, then activity steps, and a followed up post production activity. This format creates a sense of familiarity with the educators. Unlike Geordie’s study guide, the objectives are not drawn from numerous subjects but exclusively and directly from the Dramatic Arts Curriculum. In a sense, this guide’s objectives are more specific. For example, students are invited through exercises to “demonstrate an understanding of how role is communicated through language, gesture, costume props and symbols” (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 17) and “Identify and explain methods of creating and developing roles within a drama that accurately reflect the intentions of the performer and the circumstances of

the drama” (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 16). Again, even if the objectives of the study guide’s exercises are inspired by official curriculum, the proposed exercises are exclusively inspired by the play.

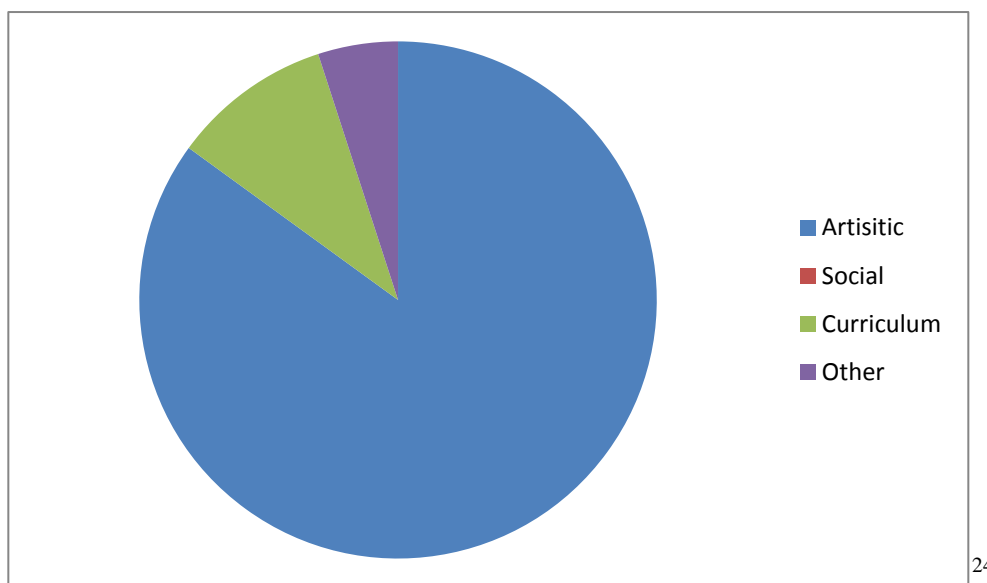
The Steps (as quoted by Ontario’s curriculum)	Information in Guide that relates to step	Questions/Exercises that relate to step	Comments
Initial Reaction; “Students are encouraged to express their first reaction to a work. This first impression is the starting point for further investigation and discovery. (Ontario Ministry of Ed 20)”.	N/A	N/A	It might have been assumed that the educators would ask for the student’s reaction regardless of the content of the guide. The fact that the guide does not ask educators to discuss the student’s first reaction is revealing. This missed opportunity would allow educators to gage the student’s reaction to the play and compare their first reaction to their last opinion after the process. This allows students to compare the two and gain an understanding of how important it is to think deeply about the art they see rather than merely accept it. This is creating participants of art rather than merely consumers.
Analysis and Interpretation: “[S]tudents try to figure out what the artist has done to achieve certain	This guide covers this step with its insightful and detailed information sections at the beginning of the guide. These sections	This step is meant to be both practical and practice-based and gets the students to think deeper about the production. It is	

<p>effects. Students can discuss the artist’s use of the elements, principles, materials, and/or concepts specific to the art form. (Ontario Ministry of Ed 20)”.</p>	<p>include: ‘Process of writing and creating <i>I, Claudia</i>’; ‘Process and Development of <i>I, Claudia</i>’; ‘As a director, what was Chris Abraham trying to accomplish?’; ‘Play within a play’; ‘Themes’; ‘Masks’; ‘Character Development through Masks’; ‘Characters in <i>I, Claudia</i>’; ‘Use of language in <i>I, Claudia</i>’; ‘Design elements’; and ‘Costumes’. All of this information gives the educator enough resources and information to guide their students.</p>	<p>artistically driven.</p>	
<p>Consideration of Cultural Context: “students develop an understanding of works in the arts in their cultural context. In addition to analysing and interpreting the art works themselves, students also need to understand how aspects of an artist’s life can have a bearing on his or her works and on the interpretation of those works. (Ontario Ministry of Ed 21)”.</p>	<p>Some elements of Thomson’s biography are revealed in the different sections of this study guide, a choice meant to help students understand certain decisions. For example, the guide informs readers: “When creating <i>I, Claudia</i>, Kristen Thomson wanted to develop “<i>this moment of realization, trauma, transformation in a child’s life</i>” (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 16) similar to the one she experienced when her own parents divorced.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Even though the majority of Ontarian students will most likely originate from the same culture as Thomson or will be familiar with it by virtue of attending school in Ontario, it is still important to encourage students to become more sensitive to the cultural contexts in which art is created. This helps students to think about the very idea of cultural impact when seeing shows from other cultural, political and national contexts.</p>

<p>Expression of Aesthetic judgement: “Students compare their perception of the art work after reflection and analysis to their initial reaction and make connections to other works of art they have seen or heard. They consider the effectiveness of aspects of the work (Ontario Ministry of Ed. 21)”.</p>	<p>The guide offers three different critiques from three different theatre reviewers. This gives an example of how the students might structure their own reviews by providing examples penned by professionals.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The guide offers reviews but no instructions or lesson plan on how students might write one. It is odd to include the reviews but no exercise to accompany them. The reviews offered reveal some background information on how the show was created. All of the reviews are positive and offer more information about the show than how the viewer actually felt about the show.</p>
<p>Ongoing Reflection: “Reflection occurs throughout the critical analysis process, whether students are examining their own works or the works of others. (Ontario Ministry of Ed. 22)”.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The guide provides many dramatic exercises that could be recycled after attending plays in the future. For example, the character analysis exercise which uses masks could be completed without mask element. It includes compelling questions about character not specific to <i>I, Claudia</i>.</p>	<p>This last step allows students to recycle what they have learnt in previous theatre analysis and apply it to their own creative work.</p>

Overall, the Tarragon Theatre study guide does not focus on the analytical process proposed by Ontario’s curriculum. Rather, it provides information and exercises for educators to get a good grasp of the artistic process that are linked to the curriculum. At best, it refers to the curriculum as a method for ordering exercises.

Artistic analysis and understanding is at the core of this guide. While the first analyzed study guide produced for Geordie Theatre also put emphasis on social context and social impact, the following pie chart reveals Tarragon’s priorities and the type of appreciation they try to instill in young audience members and teachers:



The exercises throughout this guide are conceived as a method or a system through which students may emulate or reproduce and thus attain an experiential understanding of this creative process. For example, the first exercise starts with students creating their own mask as a step in character development. This allows students to understand the challenges imposed by mask work as this medium limits facial expression. This first exercise is followed by an analysis of the characters created. Students are then divided up into groups, given a specific character from the play, and asked the following questions based on what they have just learnt:

- What sort of voice does your character have? High, low?
- Does your character speak slowly, quickly, why?

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<sup>24</sup> “Other” includes title page.

- Students try and come up with a “voice for their character”
- How does the character move? Walk? What is their posture like? Body movement? Why?
- What clothes would they wear? Why? (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 14)

Ideally, when completing this exercise, students have not yet witnessed choices made by the creative team. The guide follows this with “Each group presents their analysis to the class. A discussion occurs as to how these decisions were made” (Faught, Van Alphen, and Wood 14). This allows students to imagine the characters and compare their choices with those made for the production. This strategy seeks to engage students with the show by encouraging them to think of alternatives and options to choices made by artists, rather than merely accepting them. Furthermore, this “step by step” approach encourages learners to do so in a systematic fashion, which encourages “argument building”. Overall, this is an example of how the Tarragon theatre study guide puts emphasis on understanding artistic codes when teaching students how to “read” and interpret a production. This in turn allows students to accumulate “artistic capital”.

### **THE GREAT CANADIAN THEATRE COMPANY (GCTC) – ONTARIO**

As mentioned in the introduction, Jim McNabb, well-known Ottawa-based teacher as well as an amateur director and actor, felt frustrated when the NAC’s English theatre provided over one hundred pages of research material instead of an actual study guide according to present day standards. McNabb took matters into his own hands and created his own guide that the NAC then distributed to other educators. He developed the format thanks to a survey he sent out to colleagues in other schools which he uses to this day. It includes historical background information, excerpts from scripts and exercises which engage students in the production. In



more recent years, he started writing guides for the GCTC.

Over time, McNabb has distinguished between guides distributed to teachers and those designed and provided to students. Today, he writes principally with a student reading audience in mind since they are more likely to access guides through the Web. Respecting this principle, the GCTC produced two study guides for *I, Claudia*: one for educators and one for students. Surprisingly similar to the guide for students, the educator's edition has only five additional pages which include sections entitled "Curriculum References", "The Rocky Road of Puberty", "Some Traumatic Effects of Divorce on Pre-Adolescents" and "Treating Emotional Problems". Since the other four study guides were not conceived to be directly accessible to students, in order to maintain a sense of coherence within the present study, this chapter will focus exclusively on McNabb's teachers' edition.

Like all study guides, the GCTC's includes a title page displaying a picture and title, followed by a list of members of the creative team, a brief synopsis of the play and the times for possible matinees. The choice of promotional image on the cover page, unlike the other study guides, is not taken from the production. The following picture of an excited girl jumping in the air wearing a school uniform with butterflies circling her and a boiler room in the background is in fact somewhat misleading due to the absence of a mask:



**Title Page Picture for GCTC's Study Guide. Photographer unknown.**

Putting mask work at the forefront helps emphasize the importance and the particularities of this production's creative process, a key element in all study guides when proposing exercises to help mediate the show. According to *Vue Weekly*, an alternative weekly newspaper published in Alberta, when *I, Claudia* was being adapted into a film in 1994, "there was push to lose the masks" (Nikodym). Actor Liisa Repo-Martel, who performed in *I, Claudia* for a number of runs, including those at GCTC and Gateway Theatre Company, when asked if she could perform without the masks, affirmed: "The masks were such an important part of putting the show together. [...] It feels like it wouldn't have been written the way it was written if it hadn't been developed through masks" (Nikodym). In a similar vein, Abraham added: "The masks elevated the characters to another level" (Nikodym). At the very least, the use of this image does not

correspond with the show's aesthetic and raises the question of the importance the GCTC places on creating corollaries between productions' specificities and promotional or educational materials.

Unlike the first two study guides analyzed, provincial curricula are not used to frame exercises:

The Steps (as quoted defined by Ontario's curriculum)	Information in Guide that relates to step	Questions/Exercises that relate to step	Comments
Initial Reaction; "Students are encouraged to express their first reaction to a work. This first impression is the starting point for further investigation and discovery. (Ontario Ministry of Ed. 20)".	N/A	N/A.	The guide does not encourage educators to ask students about their first reaction to the play. This is revealing: first emotional response is not considered important.
Analysis and Interpretation: "[S]tudents try to figure out what the artist has done to achieve certain effects. Students can discuss the artist's use of the elements, principles, materials, and/or concepts specific to the art form. (Ontario Ministry of Ed. 20)".	Information provided by this guide which could be used for this step are found in section entitled: "About the Play," "Structure," "Themes", and "Characters".	The exercises which could be used for this step include:  1) "Develop a short performance". This exercise uses the script excerpts found in the guide and ask students to act it out. This exercises focuses on the decisions made by actors when it comes to characterization. For example, "Experiment with a variety of these gestures and activities until certain ones feel right and comfortable. Experiment with different voices (pitch, loudness and quality such as nasal, gravelly, ect.)	These questions are designed to help students develop a better understanding of artistic choices. All of these exercises are artistically orientated.

		<p>rhythms of speech and inflection” (McNabb 14). This familiarizes students with elements used in the actor’s characterization.</p> <p>2) “Monologue writing activity”. This is the same exercise as proposed by Tarragon which gets students to eavesdrop on a conversation and write a monologue using the people’s colloquialisms, speech patterns, or accents. This is similar to the first exercise “Develop a short performance” where students have to observe movement and speech to develop characters.</p> <p>3)”Mask Making and Character Work”. This exercise is similar to the other mask work exercises where students create their own mask and then build characters around it. This is getting the students familiar with the materials used in the production and how the masks were used to achieve certain effects.</p> <p>4) “Movie Review” is an exercise where the students watch a movie on Pierre Lefèvre, who Thomson’s mask work was influenced by. This connects to the step by allowing the students to understand the principals behind her technique.</p> <p>5) “Class discussion” This is</p>	
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		<p>where the students get a chance to discuss the artistic choices of the production. The exercise asks students to discuss:</p> <p>“Style of acting chosen for this show; style of writing; effectiveness of the language to suggest characters.</p> <p>Themes explored in the play – what was the play about? What do we learn from it?</p> <p>Structure of the script – What was the purpose of the character Drachman? Were Drachman, Douglas and Leslie the three most effective characters to tell Claudia’s story? Should there have been other characters, such as Claudia’s parents or her Grandmother? Did we learn details of the story at the most effective times? For instance, should there have been an epilogue to tell what happened to Claudia next? What were the clues that this was a play within a play?</p> <p>Production aspects: Costumes – How well did the costumes define each character? What was the purpose of using masks to portray the different characters? Did each mask represent the character properly?</p>	
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		<p>Set – Did the set change in any way to suggest different places? What mood did the set convey; what effect does it style have on the viewer?</p> <p>Lighting – did the realistic/non-realistic nature of lighting express anything; what special effects were used?</p> <p>Sound – did the recorded sound effects and music help or hinder setting the location or mood?” (McNabb15).</p> <p>6) ”Writing a Review” has students read other reviews and use them as examples to write their own critique.</p> <p>7) “Creative writing exercise” has students explore character relationships between some of the characters in the play and some who are not. For example, “Eileen (Claudia’s grandmother) telling Claudia about Douglas’ affair” (McNabb 15). This encourages students to think about possible scenes and scenarios to be added to the play. This is encourages students to analyze the characters’ relationships.</p>	
<p>Consideration of Cultural Context: “students develop an understanding of works in the arts in their cultural context. In addition to</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The GCTC mandate stresses the importance of making links between art and society since this company seeks:</p>

<p>analysing and interpreting the art works themselves, students also need to understand how aspects of an artist's life can have a bearing on his or her works and on the interpretation of those works. (Ontario Ministry of Ed. 21)".</p>			<p>"[t]o foster, produce and promote excellent theatre that provokes examination of Canadian life and our place in the world (GCTC Website)". This guide however does not propose questions related to cultural context, whether it be in relation to presenting the production in Ottawa or references made in the production itself to specific social phenomena.</p>
<p>Expression of Aesthetic judgment: "Students compare their perception of the art work after reflection and analysis to their initial reaction and make connections to other works of art they have seen or heard. They consider the effectiveness of aspects of the work (Ontario Ministry of Ed 21)".</p>	N/A	<p>The review exercise encourages students to reflect on and analyze the production. This exercise is not designed to help students compare initial reactions to those developed after time, nor does it encourage them to compare this production with others seen.</p>	<p>The guide provides resources to educators on review writing.</p>
<p>Ongoing Reflection: "Reflection occurs throughout the critical analysis process, whether students are examining their own works or the works of others. (Ontario</p>	N/A	<p>Most of these exercises could be recycled for future productions, although the guide does not encourage teachers or students to do so. The educator would have to adapt certain elements to meet the</p>	<p>This last step is important in the accumulation of capital, whether it is artistic or social.</p>

Ministry of Ed. 22)".		specificities of a new play. For example, "Develop a short performance" takes short script excerpts and asks students act them out while trying to create mannerism and characteristics specific to the different characters. This exercise could easily be used for another play as long as the educator substituted excerpts.	
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Content clearly indicates that this study guide seeks primarily to help students develop their artistic lens when attending theatre. This being said, tools and exercises provided are not as detailed as those found in Tarragon Theatre's study guide. The guide's information is gathered using various outlets – articles from newspapers, resources found on-line, etc. – rather than directly from the creative team.

McNabb's approach is somewhat prescriptive. He proposes a sympathetic reading of the character of Claudia, leaving less room than Tarragon's study guide for argument or interpretation. For example, she is labeled as a 'misfit adolescent'. This is not how some students may see or interpret this character: she could have been presented as being a "normal" adolescent since it is common for teenagers to be withdrawn and have an unstable relationship with family and friends. In relationship to Claudia, the author states: "We admire her sensitivity, her good humour and her resilience" (McNabb 6). Does the audience have to admire her? Will students who may or may not be going through similar situations admire her? Of course the educator does not have to share these opinions with their class but if the educator is not familiar with theatre, they might be tempted to impose readings provided by an "official guide" with



which students may not agree since the play does allow for multiple readings. Students do not seem invited to develop their own opinions based on information or analysis. Furthermore, instructions to exercises are scant. For example, in Tarragon's guide, a single lesson can take one or two pages to explain and includes support material, objectives and post lesson discussions whereas the GCTC's guide describes all activities in two pages.

This guide does however make use of other media by including two "Movie Viewing" exercises. One directs educators to a film called 'Pierre Lefèvre On Acting' which they could show their students. Again, Lefèvre was Thomson's mask professor at the National Theatre School of Canada and had a direct influence on her conception of mask work. The guide does not offer any follow up or analytical exercise directly related to this film but suggests "Mask making and character work" might be linked to this video. The other recommended movie viewing is the film adaptation of *I, Claudia*. McNabb recommends that the educator either rents a copy or purchases one from Amazon. It explains "Viewing of the movie would allow a more detailed study of how Thomson creates the voices and movements for each of the characters" (McNabb14). At the very least, this would have benefitted from accompanying supplementary information on actor training or craft since Thomson herself did not perform the show in Ottawa.

At first glance, these exercises seemed disconnected from the production but further study reveals certain links. For example, mask making and character work could be enhanced with viewing the video on Pierre Lefèvre's approach to actor training, as the guide suggests. "The Movie Review" exercise could be used to show students how Thomson created characters through mannerisms and speech patterns, just as students are invited to do in an exercise entitled "Monologue writing activity". Learners are invited to:

individually eavesdrop on a conversation overheard on a bus, in the cafeteria, at home or in a mall. Write it down verbatim as it is being spoken, or if possible, record it on a tape and then transcribe it on paper. Attention should be paid to the actual language used especially any colloquialisms, speech patterns, accents, etc, rather than trying to write it formally. Pass the dialogue to another pair of students and have them speak it, then act it out. Now the person who eavesdropped writes a monologue for each of the characters [...] (McNabb 14)

If the educator did not have the time to master these exercises or is not familiar with theatre, he or she could have easily missed the connections and students would have lost an opportunity in furthering their understanding and appreciation of character development.

Linked to the GCTC's mandate, there is a single exercise provided that connects the play's themes to students' perceptions of their place within society or considers theatre as a forum for social intervention:

Distribute copies of the pages on "Traumatic Effects of Divorce on Pre-Adolescents". Have the class discuss how many of these various behaviours or attitudes are exhibited by Claudia throughout the course of the play. Have students choose one or two points and write a letter to "Dear Abby". Trade letters and write a reply (McNabb 15).

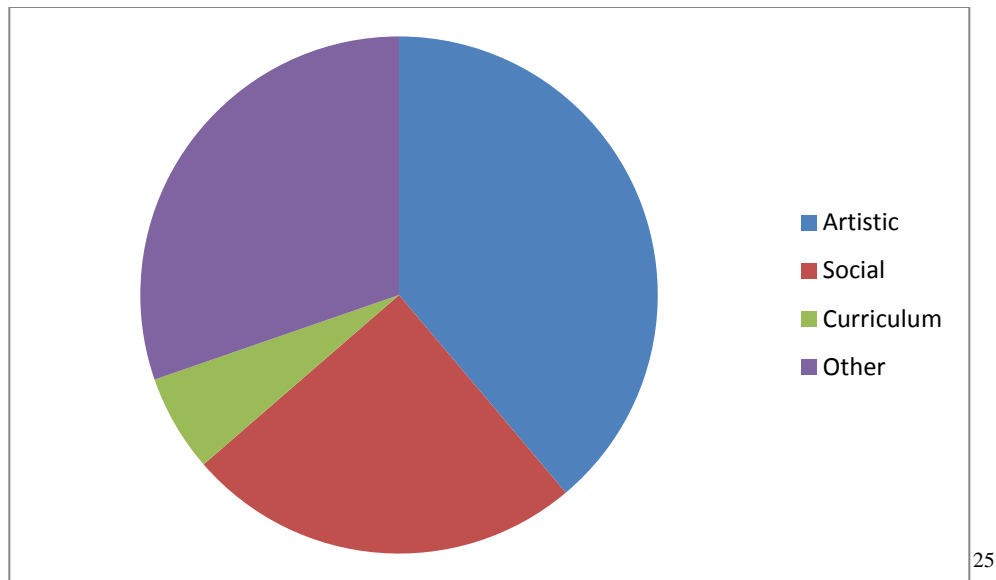
The sheets provided for this exercise are a great resource for engaging a discussion with students:

Children often blame themselves for the failure of their parents' marriage and take on an unrealistic sense of guilt and responsibility. Children may believe that since their parents no longer love each other they may no longer love them. They may feel unlovable. [...] Children seldom do well in school during and immediately following a divorce. Filled with unfamiliar emotions and uncertainty, the child's concentration will be minimal at best. How teachers and parents deal with this reaction to school may have long-lasting consequences on the child's attitude to school and learning. As a defense mechanism, the child may revert to a more

youthful behaviour and appear “babyish” or clinging. Adults must deal with this behaviour with understanding and compassion rather than chastisement if trust is to be rebuilt (McNabb 10-11).

Many of these points reflect Claudia and her experiences which would help students understand this character better and perhaps shed light on their own experience. Claudia tells the audience that she believes the divorce is “like sometimes, I don’t even know why I think it is my fault. I don’t even know why. Like sometimes the only thing I could think of is that my dad thought I was just too ugly” (Thomson 21). She does not understand why, but she feels that “unrealistic sense of guilt and responsibility” even though she is aware that her father had an affair. Her father’s remarriage and imminent move makes her feel that he does not love her anymore: “Oh, you precious you are in love and now you get to do whatever only you want and I am the garbage kid that you can throw in the garbage can of life!” (Thomson 20). Claudia loses interest in school, an idea communicated to the audience when learning that she did not complete her science fair project and skips school: “Science fair is going in the gym right now and I’m skipping ‘cause I already know I’m going to fail...*she tears the diagram*. So. Screw the science fair” (Thomson 19).

Quantitatively speaking, the exercises used or taught in the GCTC’s guide are principally artistically motivated, even if their most engaging exercise is socially driven:



This guide was designed to be used by educator who has experience and a back ground in theatre so that they can connect certain exercises: unfortunately, such teachers are among the minority among those who take students to the theatre. Although more artistically then socially oriented, it is difficult to determine the overall orientation of this guide. Since McNabb admittedly has stayed true to this day to a format first developed after consulting other teachers, it might be said that he privileges teachers’ perceived needs over all other considerations, including the specificity of the production for which he is creating the guide.

### **GLOBE THEATRE – SASKATCHEWAN**

In terms of context, the Globe defines itself as a “national centre of excellence in the production of theatre-in-the-round <sup>26</sup>”. Unlike some of the companies included in this study, the Globe does not offer an official educational development program, nor does it mention cultural mediation in any of the promotional documents consulted. This guide was written by Mark Claxton who is a Regina-based actor and professor at the University of Regina in the Continuing

<sup>25</sup> The “Other” includes the title page, page of pictures, page of resources, ‘What’s on in the Lorraine Fritzi Yale Gallery’ page, and theatre etiquette page.

<sup>26</sup> <http://globetheatreive.com/about-us>

Education program. Claxton graduated from the Globe Theatre's inaugural Actor Conservatory Training program in 2008. In 2009, he was the assistant director for *A Doll's House* at the Globe Theatre. Finally, Claxton writes a great deal about theatre in Regina on his blog<sup>27</sup>. This study guide was not specifically conceived for educators. In the introduction, Claxton states: "This guide is intended for anyone who would like to enhance their appreciation and understanding of the Globe Theatre's production of *I, Claudia*" (Claxton 3). Even if the author implicitly acknowledges that provincial curriculum did not influence his work, he does mention teachers and indicates that in the very least, the guide was meant to be useful when exploring the play before and after attending the production with learners:

Teachers who are preparing their students to experience the play can provide them with this guide's discussion questions ahead of time --- or allow them to see the production and then use the questions or other sections of the guide to facilitate further thought and discussion (Claxton 3).

When considering this guide as grid, it is apparent that it was designed to give educators and cultural mediators as much freedom as possible. For example, questions were designed to be asked before or after attending the production. Selections may be made in accordance with an audience member's degree of previous contact with theatre. This can be helpful when dealing with students who have difficulty focusing or concentrating. It also provides cues in regards to elements that Claxton thinks significant.

Providing these same questions after the performance makes sense if students have a good memory and already possess the necessary skills to retain and understand theatrical conventions in order to then analyze their significance. For example: "Think back to the old

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<sup>27</sup> [globetheatrelive.com](http://globetheatrelive.com)

'Bulgonian' folk tale that Drachman relates to end the play. What is the meaning and moral of this tale, and how does it relate to Claudia's story?" (Claxton 9). Giving students this question before the play would indicate that this tale is important when understanding Claudia's journey. If students are not familiar with the convention of the "synthesis statement" or the "moral" in a piece of fiction – a convention not always specific to theatre –, they could easily become confused by the metaphorical nature of this last segment and either ignore it or take it literally. In short, whether Claxton did so intentionally or not, this guide helps teachers adapt to students' level of knowledge and degree of theatrical experience.

Unlike Saskatchewan's curriculum, this guide is not step-oriented nor does it follow the in-depth analysis process provided by Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education. This being said, educators can still use this study guide to create their own lesson plans since the guide does provide analysis of the show's background and a clear summary of the plot:

The Steps (as quoted from Saskatchewan's curriculum)	Information provided in relation to the step.	Questions or exercises provided in relation to step	Comments
<p>"Preparation: -The teacher establishes a climate for viewing or listening and provides a context for the experience" (Saskatchewan Ministry of Ed. 399).</p>	<p>This guide states "Teachers who are preparing their students to experience the play can provide them with this guide's discussion questions ahead of time – or first allow them to see the production and then use the questions or other sections to facilitate further thought and discussion" (Claxton 3). If the educator chooses to do so, then</p>	<p>The questions provided are only concerned with answers made possible after attending the play. They are not concerned with "context".</p>	<p>This step is an effective way to 'hook students' interest and is a recommended strategy for any observation exercise in any subject area.</p>

	it would be preparing them and completing this first step.		
<p>“First Impressions: -Students share their spontaneous reactions to a work. -Responses are influenced by the students’ past experiences. -There are no wrong answers” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Ed. 399).</p>	N/A	N/A	<p>This is a great step to gauge how well the production was understood. If the questions were given before attending the play, the students would already know what is expected of them. If the questions were withheld until after this step, the educator could get a sense of how well the class understood the social and artistic themes of the play. The second step shows what the students have accumulated information from their past experiences and these skills could be utilized for <i>I, Claudia</i>.</p>
<p>“Description: -Students objectively describe what they saw and heard. -Students take inventory of what is in the arts expression. -Responses should be objective, not interpretive” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Ed. 399).</p>	N/A	<p>The guide does provide a question which could be related to this step: “<i>I, Claudia</i> challenges its actor to portray four very different characters. How successfully was this managed? Aside from the lines in the script, what other means did the actor use to create distinctive characters we could recognize immediately?” (Claxton 9). This</p>	<p>This is a useful exercise to help students remember what they had seen and heard and to share this information with others. <i>I, Claudia</i> includes costume changes. In theatre in-the-round, there is nowhere for the actress to exit. The guide is here seeking objective, not interpretive, answers. It is not demanding students to connect everything right away</p>

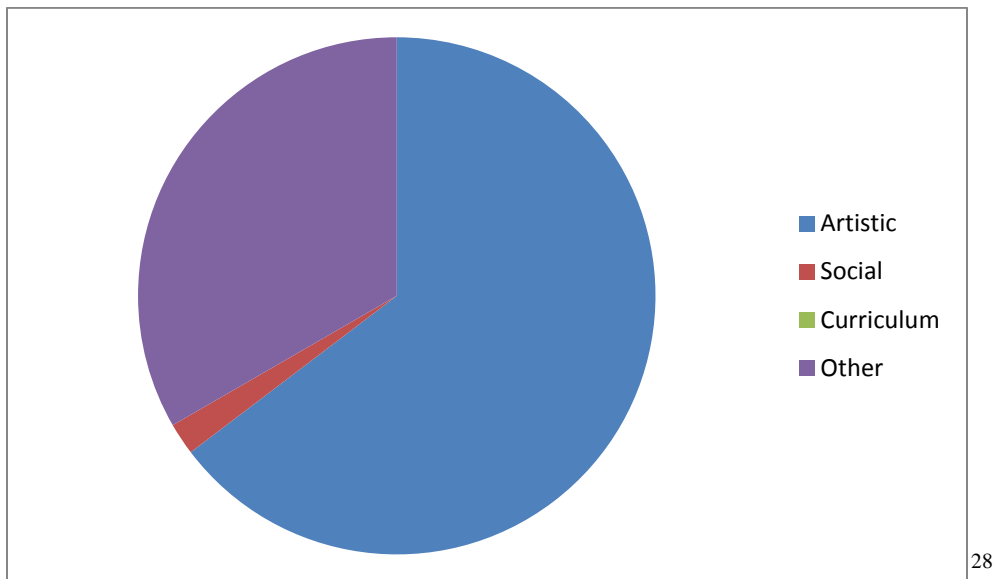
		question encourages students' to objectively examine the actor and determine for themselves what mannerisms were used to create characters.	but to simply think about what they saw. This is building students' artistic capital since observation is an important skill as an audience member.
<p>“Analysis: -Students attempt to discover what the various artists have done to achieve certain effects. -Students examine how various materials, instruments, elements, principles and other arts concepts have been used. -The teacher encourages the use of language of the discipline” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Ed. 399).</p>	<p>The guide provides some information useful for this step. It includes information concerning “The Playwright and Play,” “Theatre and Masks: a Brief Overview,” “Meet the Artistic Team,” and “Synopsis”.</p>	<p>Some of the questions provided engage the students. For example: “Which significant people in Claudia’s story do NOT appear on stage? Why do you think the playwright chose not to give them a direct voice?” (Claxton 9).</p> <p>“All of the characters in <i>I, Claudia</i> are performed in half-mask. What effect did the masks have on you as an audience member? How did they contribute to or take away from the effectiveness of the play?” (Claxton 9).</p> <p>“Think back to the old “Bulgonian” folk tale that Drachman relates to end the play. What is the meaning and moral of this tale, and how does it relate to Claudia’s story?” (Claxton 9).</p>	<p>These questions are all useful for analysis, but they are not enough of them. The guide also lacks follow up activities to enhance the questions.</p>
<p>“Interpretation: -Students try to figure out what the work is</p>	<p>This guide provides some information for this step. For</p>	N/A	<p>This is an important step because it allows students to understand</p>



<p>about.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students express what the work means to them, incorporating information from the two preceding steps.</li> <li>-Students' perspectives, associations and experiences affect interpretation.</li> <li>-Associations may be made through imagery, metaphor and analogy” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Ed. 399).</li> </ul>	<p>example, the information describing the playwright is useful. It also provides a detailed description of how the original play was developed (Claxton 4). This description is succinct and easy to follow. The questions do not encourage discussion regarding students' interpretations.</p>		<p>the ‘moral’ of the story and how that moral connects to them. This allows them to develop a better connection with the play.</p>
<p>“Background Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students learn as much as they can about the work and the various artists involved with its creation.</li> <li>-The teacher provides information or has the student’s research biographical, historical or cultural information” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Ed. 399)</li> </ul>	<p>Very little is mentioned about the artistic team.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>The guide does state that students themselves could research the play so this step does not depend on information provided in the guide itself.</p>
<p>“Informed Judgment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The students participate in a culminating and reflecting activity.</li> <li>-The students are asked to refer back to their first impression and support their initial opinion of the work, or develop and support a new opinion.</li> </ul>	<p>N/A.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>This step is beneficial for the students since it allows them to observe how their own opinions change over time, from when they first attend the play to later opinions and understandings of the piece.</p>

-The students are asked to consider the context of the work as part of the response (Saskatchewan Ministry of Ed. 399).			
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Quantitatively speaking, this study guide puts emphasis on artistic considerations and form-related considerations. Examining how the nine pages are divided up reveals the strength of this orientation:



Artistic resources provided include “The Playwright and the Play”, “Theatre and the Masks: a Brief Overview”, “Meet the Artistic Team” and a “Synopsis of the Play”, are helpful when attempting to instill “artistic capital” in young audience members. Perhaps because of its brevity, the resource pages are easy to follow and well written. This guide also places emphasis on creative process and asking questions related to the artistic choices.

Only one question provided out of the five could be considered social in its orientation:

<sup>28</sup> “Other” for this guide includes title page, table of contents and “How To Use” page.

“If you were writing a one-person play about your own life and could portray up to three people besides yourself, who would they be? Why would you include them?” (Claxton 9). This question uses a creative impulse to frame the question but it does encourage students to understand that art exists in a social context and that audience members do make links between the two. This exercise is one of the rare examples that combine both forms of capitals in an engaging manner among the five study guides included in this study.

Claxton’s nine page study guide was created to accompany the only production of *I, Claudia* not directed by Chris Abraham included in this study. Regrettably, the guide makes no mention of the original production. This reads as a missed opportunity as it would have been beneficial for learners to have compared choices made by both directors. Most significantly and in respect of the Globe’s mandate, the Saskatchewan production was staged in the round changing the audience’s relationship with Thomson’s characters and yet none of the questions deal with the particularities of this rapport between an audience and a production. Furthermore, after seeing the live production, the educator could have shown excerpts or the film version strongly inspired by the original production. A discussion on how different choices changed the meaning or message of the play or how different types of theatrical space change the audience’s rapport with plays would have been an engaging activity for students and contributed to the students’ understanding of theatre. Typically, students – and in particular, those in Ontario and Québec –, attend a production of a play by Shakespeare at least once during secondary school and this type of exercise where two versions of the same play – one of which is often a known film– are compared is common practice when teaching such productions: this would have been an example of a similar phenomenon with a Canadian play.

Claxton’s guide is not the most thoughtful of the five nor could questions included be

easily applied to understanding of others plays. The author even states under the list of provided questions: “Geordie Productions’ study guide for *I, Claudia* features many thought-provoking exercises to inspire creative writing about your own life and the important people in it” (Claxton 9), without quoting these exercises in the document provided. This is the only example of such a phenomenon encountered. In short, this guide may be aiming a helping create “artistic capital” among learners but it does not provide as many resources as other guides with the same objective.

### **GATEWAY THEATRE COMPANY – BRITISH COLUMBIA (BC)**

The author of this study guide is not named. Despite numerous e-mails and telephone messages, no one in the present Gateway Theatre staff can identify this person. This company does not mention audience education or development specifically in its mandate but does in fact focus on theatre as a “powerful means of creative expression that has the ability to transform individuals and communities. We believe free expression is necessary to healthy societies<sup>29</sup>”. Audience development here is a community-oriented activity. This guide targets educators and first time theatre goers: “This study guide is intended to assist you and your students’ understanding of the play you are about to see, and provide an introduction to those who have not had an opportunity to view a live theatre production” (“Gateway” 3).

As mentioned earlier, according to BC’s curriculum, students should be well versed in theatre and regularly attend live productions. Attending theatre is a provincial educational priority which means students should regularly attend plays and thus, by grade twelve, have acquired a basic theatrical culture and understanding of theatre. The BC Ministry of Education

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.gatewaytheatre.com/about-us/our-manifesto>

goes so far as to allow secondary schools to offer an entire class based on both attending and producing live theatre:

Students learn about the nature of a theatre company and the interconnected roles and responsibilities of people who work within it. They examine the requirements for teamwork, leadership, commitment, and onstage, backstage, and front-of-house etiquette. They learn the synthesis of content and context in the theatre environment. Through participation in the rehearsal and performance process, students learn the skills and attitudes necessary to perform within a theatre company, including valuable personal and interpersonal skills that students can apply in broader social and career contexts (British Columbia Ministry of Education 11-12, 11).

It is also important to see how well this guide corresponds with the “analytical process” as defined in BC curriculum. Again, please note that this process was borrowed from Saskatchewan’s Ministry of Education.

The Steps (as quoted from British Columbia’s curriculum)	Information In Guide which relates to step	Questions/Exercises which relates to step	Comments
1. “Preparation— provide students with a focus for viewing a particular work (BC Ministry of Ed.7)”	In the “Plot Synopsis” section, the guide mentions the ‘difficult situations’ Claudia is facing. These could be used to start a conversation or provide focus for educators when discussing the piece with students. Difficult situations mentioned include “her parent’s divorce, her dad’s	N/A	Educators would have to be aware of the play’s content in order to fully understand and create a focus for the students. Situations listed can be vague. This would require teachers to see the production prior to attending with their students, which rarely happens.

	remarriage, a frustrating science fair project about her goldfish, puberty, and ‘friends’ at school” (“Gateway” 4).		
2. “First impression—encourage students to share their initial responses in a constructive manner (BC Ministry of Ed.7)”.	N/A.	This guide does not offer educators questions or encourage them to ask students about their first impression of the show.	Again, no time is allocated for first impressions.
3. “Description—ask students to objectively describe what they saw and heard (BC Ministry of Ed.7)”.	The plot synopsis in the guide can act as a reminder for the educator. It is not very detailed.	N/A	This is an engaging step to refresh the student’s memory and sharing what the students remember could help other students who might have missed certain elements.
4. “Analysis—encourage students to: • organize their thinking about how productions are made • consider how the various roles function together during the production process (BC Ministry of Ed.7)”	The guide offer very little information on how this production was created (rehearsals, creative process, etc). However the guide does offer lists of different jobs and roles within a theatre company with explanations of what the jobs require people to do.	This guide proposes one question that relates to this step: “Jobs in Theatre: Off the tops of their heads, have students name as many jobs in theatre as possible. Then look for the answers near the end of this study guide and see how many they missed! (“Gateway” 6)”.	Three of the twelve pages of this guide contained definitions of functions in theatre. The writer seemed more concerned with theatre knowledge than knowledge related specifically to the production.

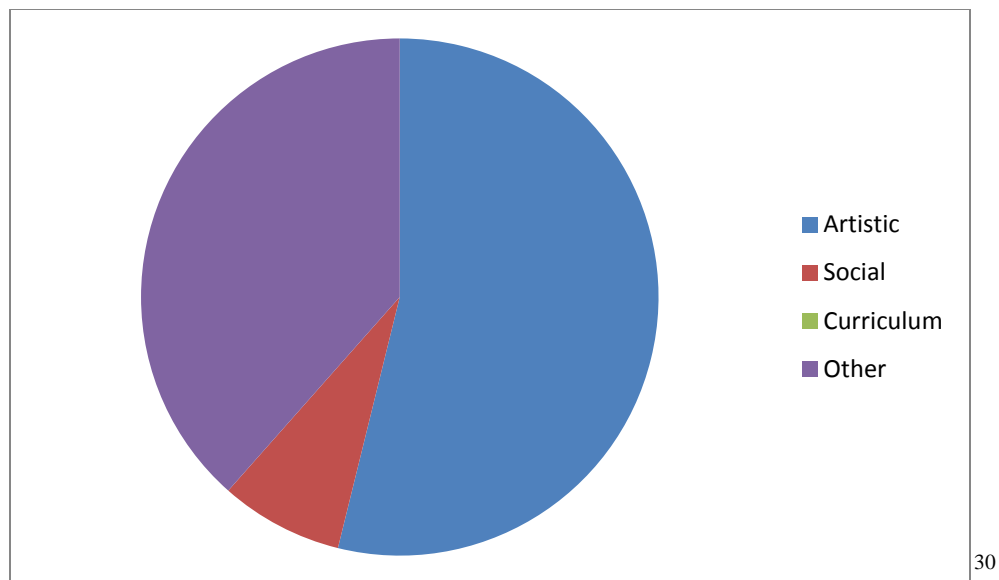
<p>5. “Interpretation—encourage students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflect on and discuss what the production means to them</li> <li>• analyse how their responses are influenced by their own experiences and perceptions of the world (BC Ministry of Ed.7)”.</li> </ul>	N/A	<p>The guide offers one question which relates to this step:</p> <p>“Catharsis: Having seen the play, one will understand the difficulties preteens and teens go through. Have students write about their current life. Give them sufficient time to do this, and do not have them read out their writings” (“Gateway” 6).</p>	<p>This is a very socially oriented question. Students would have to choose how much they would like to reveal about their lives knowing the educator would be reading it. This raises the question of whether or not this exercise has any pedagogical value.</p>
<p>6. “Background information—ask students to analyse, interpret, and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• actors, directors, and scriptwriters of various cultures the context in which the production was created</li> <li>• the purpose of the production (e.g., social, ceremonial, occupational, functional, commercial, political) (BC Ministry of Ed. 7)”.</li> </ul>	<p>The guide offers minimal information concerning Kristen Thomson. The purpose of this production is not mentioned in this guide.</p>	N/A	<p>This is an engaging question to ask students since it required them to think about the purpose of this production, a skill to be applied to others attended in the future. The guide’s failure to address this question is disappointing.</p>
<p>7.” Informed judgment—ask students to refer back to their first impressions and support their initial opinions of the work. They may also develop and support a new opinion of the work, based on</p>	N/A	<p>There are two exercises which relate to this step:</p> <p>“Medium Comparisons: Watch the movie and watch the play. Compare and contrast; see which one the students preferred and which one communicated the play better” (“Gateway” 6).</p> <p>“Write a Review: Have your students write a review of the</p>	<p>Encouraging students to e-mail their review to the theatre company is an engaging exercise. It allows students to understand that their opinion does matter not only to the educator, but to the theatre</p>

their discussions, research, and reflection (BC Ministry of Ed. 7)".		play they have just seen, including a summary and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the production. Have them discuss their thoughts about the play. The Gateway Theatre welcomes students to submit their reviews via e-mail to: <a href="mailto:marketing@gatewaytheatre.com">marketing@gatewaytheatre.com</a> " ("Gateway" 6).	company as well.
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It is difficult to qualify this guide as being either artistic or social in its overall orientation.

Unlike the other guides, it gives the overall impression that Gateway Theatre is more concerned with discussing theatre as an art form and defining services offered by their institution than the actual production of *I, Claudia*. It goes into great detail when describing jobs in the field of theatre divided here into three categories: "Who Does What?", "Standard Technicians on most Gateways Shows," and "Gateway Administration Staff". In all, the guide describes thirty three different professions specific to theatrical practice. Three pages are devoted to the actual production whereas five pages are devoted to information about Gateway's different workshops, their Performing Arts Classes, how to rent their theatres and the different jobs in their theatre:





Clearly, this guide places emphasis on artistic components of the theatrical event. Curriculum is not mentioned or used, nor does this guide provide many socially driven questions, exercises or resources. Of the five questions included, only one is socially oriented: a question that asks students to write about their own life just as Claudia does in the play.

Other questions prove problematic for different pedagogical reasons. For example, students are asked to compare the production with the film version. Learners must identify “which one [they] preferred and which one communicated the play better” (“Gateway” 6). This type of exercise was used in other guides but Gateway’s does not indicate where to find the film, nor does it indicate how to compare the two by providing questions or a grid. This lack of information could prove difficult if the educator is not familiar with theatre or cinema or how to effectively distinguish them from one another in an academic setting. A second exercise instructs teachers to “Ask students to make masks. They can be made from a variety of classroom materials! You can also redecorate old Halloween masks (“Gateway” 6). No learning

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<sup>30</sup> “Others” include the title page, the table of contents, About the study guide, About the gateway theatre and websites.

objective is indicated, nor does it help educators who are not necessarily art teachers in the detailed execution of this exercise. The most engaging exercise provided in this guide is “Write a review!” But yet again, the guide does not provide an outline or models: it only asks students to include a “summary and an evaluation of the effectiveness of the production” (“Gateway” 6). In short, this guide gives broad instructions with very little detail on how to successfully go about completing them.

Furthermore, this guide provides only scant information in regards to process based decisions:

*I, Claudia* is the first play written by actor Kristen Thomson. She developed it by using masks to create characters in improvised skits. She then transcribed her work. The result is one actor, switching between four masks to play four different characters in *I, Claudia*. (“Gateway” 4)

This kind of scant affirmation is counterproductive as it leaves students with the impression that the development of a new play is easier than it actually is. This is yet another missed opportunity. As other guides have indicated, giving students access to the creative process and explaining what motivates certain decisions helps learners retain information in regards to the production itself.

In conclusion, this guide is more informative than pedagogical. The job descriptions are followed by a section devoted to “Theatre Vocabulary” which provides definitions for eight words: act, box office, curtain call, lyrics, book, performance, props and scene: once again giving the impression of recycled material, these words in no way coincide with the specificities of *I, Claudia*. The guide does offer a definition for “monologue”, albeit brief and included in its information section. The history of masks in the theatre section skims the complex and

important history of this medium. It focuses on the masks in Greece and during the Middle Ages, and mentions their role in conveying mood and character. Thomson's masks are inspired by the commedia dell'arte tradition.

## CONCLUSION

The analyzed study guides as mechanisms in the field of cultural mediation do seek, to varying degrees, to help teachers help students acquire cultural or social capital. As anticipated, they proved to be asymmetrical marriages of the three possible orientations identified in the introduction: curriculum based, socially orientated or artistically driven. Geordie Theatre's guide was the most successful at combining the three equally. Its author, Jessica Abdullah, used curriculum to guide lay-out, artistic information and resources to explain the production and socially driven exercises to engage students through identification. Tarragon's guide was foremost a marriage of curriculum based and artistically driven orientations. The three others fell principally into one category without ever completely excluding the other two. These permutations and space allotted to examples, exercises and explanations specific to each orientation were driven by the theatre companies' mandates and to a lesser degree, by the interests and backgrounds of different writers.

Consequently, this comparative study of these five guides begs the question of the actual need to write original guides for each venue unless new guides make overt reference to curricula, the only significant factor that changes from province to province. Since some study guides recycled certain information provided by others – for example, Geordie Production's uses the same information and exercises as Alberta Theatre Project and Gateway Theatre's went so far as to recommend consulting the guide developed by Geordie Productions –, could the producing company not have designed a guide that respected the step-by-step approach to analysis and

appreciation common to all curricula? Of course, such a “master guide” would have to allow for pedagogues to take into account the levels of maturity and theatre attending experience that vary from group to group.

Secondly, contrary to my expectations, the analyzed guides made no mention of “girl culture” or feminism. This reads as perhaps the most significant “missed opportunity” by guide authors since curricula in all provinces makes mention and encourages the study of both. In other words, they could have easily been used to provide context to the productions and helped create links between the play and students. The guides instead privileged issues related to family, adolescence, bullying and unpopularity.

The third conclusion is perhaps the most important: contrary to one of the founding principles of cultural mediation, none of the study guides linked theatre to citizenship. Again sociologists claim that cultural mediation builds citizens, which is the axiom of my project, not the subject of it. Students were indeed better tooled to decode productions attended and thus accumulate social or cultural capital as defined by Bourdieu. However, this phenomenon was in no way defined by the theatres or their authors as a civic duty or an activity to be repeated later on in life as an adult. Personal experience has taught me that sometimes, educators can get lost in lesson planning, correcting and the organization of their daily classroom activities and as such, need a gentle reminder as to the lasting benefits of attending theatre with their students. More precisely, it is the job of the cultural mediators, the educators in this case, through the use of the study guides to help link citizenship with the cultural enterprise by helping students understand the importance of theatre within society. As we all know, education is more than the transfer of knowledge: it is the process of creating and molding citizens. The complete absence of this discourse within the five guides themselves was both revealing and disturbing.

The accumulation of social and artistic capital in an educational context and through the mediation of the theatrical event is not enough. A process that allows for a richer and better understanding of theatre is clearly at work throughout English Canada: both the various Ministries of Education through curricula and theatre companies contribute to this objective through guides and other resources. In other words, there is a system in place that does not attain the desired end result: after several decades of student matinees and the distribution of study guides, overall audience development has never been so difficult and ensuring adequate audience numbers for evening performances is more challenging than ever<sup>31</sup>.

This being said, the absence of a link between theatre and citizenship is only one hypothesis. A study of the actual uses and misuses of study guides by teachers would certainly allow the development of other hypotheses that might help explain this disconnect. Regardless of the approach or the questions to be examined, study guides certainly merit further study in order to ensure that future generations of students are not merely consumers of art within an educational context, but become involved, engaged and appreciating theatre audience members throughout their lives.

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<sup>31</sup> For access to various studies of the topic, please consult : <http://www.artsmarketing.org/>

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