A Feminist Dialogue on Theatre for Young Audiences Through Suzan Zeder's Plays

Jeanne Klein, Gayle Austin, and Suzan Zeder

GA: I come to this dialogue about children's theatre and feminist theory with all the prejudices of an "adult theatre" training, in my case from 1968 to 1988. I never took a creative dramatics [sic] elective and felt simultaneously inadequate about and superior to dealing with children in relation to theatre. The prejudices came down to: children's plays are simplistic, moralizing lessons based on the same old fairy tales over and over, usually performed by gesticulating adults with a mixture of indicating and pandering. Certainly the play scripts themselves were hardly worth adult critical attention.

But as I worked in feminist theory, I began to wonder why certain fields with a majority of female practitioners were slow to embrace feminism: dance, costume design, senior theatre, children's theatre. At a few recent Women and Theatre Program (WTP) conferences I thought, "Why is there never anyone here from children's theatre?" In August 1995 suddenly Jeanne Klein was "here" at WTP, and we knew that the 1996 conference of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) was to be joined with the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE). Suddenly a real face and body was joining me in talking about putting together children's theatre and women's issues. I realized women weren't "here" because they were busy being "there" at AATE. Here was a kindred spirit, another woman willing to venture into liminal space between fields, where "no man dared to go..." My prejudices started unwinding. We continued to speak by phone and e-mail, and submitted a panel for 1996. We discovered a common interest in the not necessarily biological mother-daughter paradigm.

JK: I immediately called Gayle's attention to Suzan Zeder, the most prominent woman playwright in the field, and suggested that we base our project on three of Suzan's plays which mark the last three decades: Step on a Crack (1976) "first brought her recognition as an innovator in scripts for young audiences." Mother Hicks (1986) was deemed the best play of the 1980s by professional and university directors in ASSITEJ/USA. Do Not Go Gentle (1996), commissioned by the

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Kennedy Center in 1991 in association with the American Association of Retired Persons, marks Suzan’s intergenerational concerns across the life span. While each play may not address feminist issues explicitly or directly, these three plays exemplify the increased professionalism of TYA by tracing Suzan’s artistic growth as a risk-taking playwright.

GA: For three days in Lawrence Jeanne and I dialogued, making hours of tapes which she transcribed. We performed the dialogue and Suzan gave her response at the 1996 ATHE/AATE conference in New York. The dialogue which follows is a much edited version of some of our emotional exchange during those days in Lawrence and later in New York, trying to share with you a sense of the passion for theory, and practice, we felt then.

JK: As Gayle writes,

A feminist approach to anything means paying attention to women. It means paying attention when women appear as characters and noticing when they do not. It means making some ‘invisible’ mechanisms visible and pointing out, when necessary, that while the emperor has no clothes, the empress has no body. It means paying attention to women as writers and as readers or audience members. It means taking nothing for granted because the things we take for granted are usually those that were constructed from the most powerful point of view in the culture and that is not the point of view of women.

I believe that the field of Theatre for Young Audiences (or TYA) takes liberal feminism for granted. We tend to assume that all females and males, onstage and off, are treated respectfully as equal participants in the processes and products of theatre, regardless of age, ethnicity, and class. But these feminist assumptions have not been questioned or examined systematically. Despite the past two decades of flourishing feminist theatre scholarship, the “F word” has seldom been discussed, much less published, in children’s theatre circles. Why not? What images, ideas, and expectations does the word “feminism” conjure up in the minds of children’s artists and educators? Why have women’s ways of knowing children been assumed, ignored, denied, or dismissed so lightly, especially when radical, materialist, and culturalist perspectives weave multiple feminist principles beyond basic liberal notions of equity?
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GA: One of our goals is to open up this dialogue to more participants in both TYA and feminist theory. We want to see more serious critical attention paid to TYA plays and performances and more TYA attention paid to feminist issues. This is just one example of applying one part of one feminist theory to criticism of just three plays from Suzan’s large canon. We ended up focusing on the influence of older women characters, surrogate mother figures, and the identity formation of young female characters. But I hope it reflects the fact that we think “theory” can be a useful concept and “criticism” doesn’t have to be prescriptive.

JK: Just as feminist theatre critics entered the so-called “race” for feminist theory late in the 1980s, the field of TYA has been slow to embrace feminist theories in dramatic criticism for many reasons. Little, if any, dramatic criticism exists, feminist or otherwise, largely because plays written for children have been undervalued as a repertoire worth studying. Dramatic adaptations from source materials, such as fairy and folk tales, myths, picture books, novels, and historical persons and events, continue to dominate TYA seasons, because the repertoire remains driven by a capitalist market in which parents and teachers purchase tickets for children based on recognizable titles familiar to adults. Thus, few plays (about 20%) are original dramas created exclusively for the stage. Play or performance “reviews” published in the Youth Theatre Journal and TYA Today are little more than short, descriptive reports or plot summaries, so as not to offend the small circle of TYA family members struggling for national attention and legitimacy. Because theory and criticism are anathema to most TYA practitioners, the field has barely entered any “stages” of feminist literary criticism to expose sexist and racist images in children’s plays, to question its assumed practices (e.g., cross-gender casting), or to make its women playwrights more visible to those outside the TYA family.

GA: Developing work dialogically and then presenting it performatively in the presence of the playwright whose work is being discussed has been an exciting creative experience. Editing this performance script and presenting it to a wider audience in written form will, we hope, suggest other exciting possibilities for future work.

JK: Before Gayle and I could embark on our dialogic journey about Suzan’s plays, we needed to ask each other “baby” questions about our respective territories.

GA: Why is there no feminist criticism of children’s plays?
JK: What does a feminist children’s play look like?

GA: Why do children’s plays so frequently use fantasy characters and theatricalism?

JK: Why do so many plays entertain children by showing them how to play?

GA: Is it because children accept these conventions better than adults, or do children “require” theatricalism, while adults seem to “require” realism?

JK: Why do we keep comparing children’s plays against adult standards which are essentially patriarchal and masculinist?

GA: How does the use of theatricalism reinforce the status quo in TYA?

JK: Why do child protagonists frequently struggle against adult antagonists?

GA: Will the use of realism and social issues help to mainstream children’s theatre?

JK: Why do we assume that children live in fantasy worlds with vast imaginations?

GA: Why are many children’s plays sentimental?

JK: Why do some children’s playwrights romanticize childhood?

GA: Where’s gender in all of this? Why does gender become an invisible issue when women appear to dominate a field?

JK: How does cross-gender casting de-emphasize sexuality?

GA: Why is there a denial of gender and children’s sexuality in the field?

JK: Why is female sexuality limited to fairy tales?

GA: Who controls the development and production of new plays?

JK: Who controls children’s aesthetic desires?
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Who controls the development and production of new plays?

Who controls children's aesthetic desires?

What social and economic pressures ensure that only "safe" plays get produced?

How can more original plays get produced against market conditions?

How does the parental generation, the children's theatre practitioner, censor, control, or marginalize both the younger and older generations?

How does ageism operate within the field?

How do women playwrights ghetto-ize themselves by writing plays about age?

To what extent have women's plays for children been informed by feminist theories? By shifting the focus from child audiences to creating Art—

—and by writing more realistic plays that deal with adults' social issues,

—is this goal really "better" for child audiences?

—or "better" for adult acceptance? How does mainstreaming children's theatre into adult theatre lead to self-censorship?

Will theatre for children lose its distinctive differences when it gets mainstreamed into theatre for adult "family" audiences?

Is that what the field wants?

Why haven't you heard of Suzan Zeder?

(reading from bio) "Suzan Zeder has been recognized nationally and internationally as one of the nation's leading playwrights for family audiences. Her plays have been performed throughout the world and she is a three-time winner of (AATE's) Distinguished Play Award. . . ." 12

According to Susan Pearson-Davis, one of her closest colleagues, Zeder's playwriting principles have grown instinctively out of her artistic relationships with the material rather than with any set of rules. She "writes about children rather than for them, not for any particular social or educational purpose, but because she finds children fascinating and dramatically dynamic." 13
Step on a Crack, Zeder wrote, “As a writer, I have tried to confront the child within myself as honestly as possible in order to bring you a child of this moment.”

GA: In her preface to Mother Hicks, she wrote, “This play came from somewhere and passed through me on its way to somewhere else. . . . The characters and storyline are original and have shaped themselves through me. This play has always moved with its own power. It has told me where it needed to go next, and whenever I came to my desk there were characters waiting to talk to me.”

JK: In Do Not Go Gentle, Lillian’s name reminds me of Beatrice Lillie, a comic actress who was a formative influence on Suzan’s love of theatre and writing.

GA: In regard to these three plays, let’s identify the Mother-Daughter figures, biological and not, and their relationships in each play, and also identify the Mothers of Choice, the Imposed Mothers, and the Father figures of each daughter. And then let’s trace each Daughter’s identity formation and her journey to find her identity.

JK: OK. In Step on a Crack, we have Ellie Murphy, the 10-year-old daughter of Max who imposes a new stepmother—

GA: —Lucille, who is not her biological mother. As in all three plays, the biological mother is not seen. In Step and Hicks she’s dead.

JK: Ellie’s Voice, her superego or the distorted image of her identity, acts as a Wicked Step-Mother. Lana, Ellie’s imaginary friend in a toy box, plays her Fairy Godmother, sort of her Chosen Mother until she chooses Lucille at the end of the play. Ellie wants to live alone with her father, Max—

GA: —an inappropriate Mother because he doesn’t discipline her.

JK: Yes, in fact, he gives her junk to play with from his junkyard, like a grease gun.

GA: Lucille wants Ellie to clean her messy room, but she also allows Ellie to tell her “what mothers are supposed to do” (172-174). Max blurts out that he and Lucille are going to Hawaii—a separation from Ellie.
Dramatic Theory and Criticism

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Spring 1997

JK: But Ellie separates herself from Lucille by running away. After her nightmare on the streets, she returns home and stages the death of Voice in her toy box. She separates herself from this Wicked Stepmother and realizes that she needs a mother.

GA: And Lucille is “a perfectly good one” (195):

Lucille: Yes?
Ellie: I’m . . . sorry I ran away.
Lucille: So am I.
Ellie: Well, I’m back now.
Lucille: I’m glad.
Ellie: So am I. (Pause) Uhh Lucille, I’m cold.
Lucille: Well no wonder, you kicked your covers off. (Lucille billows the covers over her and tucks her in. Ellie smiles.)
Ellie: Uhh Lucille, knock, knock . . .
Lucille: Who’s there?
Ellie: Sticker.
Lucille: Sticker who?
Ellie: Sticker-oud for a while, okay?
Lucille: Okay. Good night, Ellie. Sleep well. (Lucille moves away a few steps and crouches.) Good night, Lana. Good night, Frizbee.
Ellie: Uhh Lucille, they’re not here.
Lucille: Oh. (Lucille crosses to Max and turns back) Good night, Ellie.
Ellie: (Pulling the covers up and turning over) See ya in the morning. (196-197)

GA: So the ending implies that Lucille may help Ellie find her own identity later.

JK: But would you say that Lucille imposes a new identity on Ellie successfully or not? Or would you say that Ellie already knows who she is and does it on her own—especially in the whole confrontation with Voice, when she tells Voice to go in the box and she puts her childhood away?

GA: I would say that, yes indeed, there is less power in terms of the Mother figure influencing the Daughter figure’s identity. The daughter is accepting the fact that she can have a mother who is not her biological mother.
JK: Yeah, she has to acknowledge the fact that she needs a mother.

GA: So Step seems to be about Daughter realizing and admitting that she is a daughter and she needs a mother. Lucille gives the power to name over to Ellie, and Ellie saying, “Stick around,” is, in fact, endowing this identity of Mother on her. And that’s one of the reasons why Step is so complex and emotionally honest.

JK: Because it’s also giving Lucille the suggestion of how to be my kind of mother, how to be the mother I need you to be. And Lucille is giving Ellie the space to do that, giving her the permission: “You tell me the kind of mother you want me to be.”

GA: And then I will be the kind of mother who will then, hopefully, help you find your identity.

JK: But the crucial point here is that Ellie found her identity as a Daughter herself.

GA: Yes, which is also true of Girl in Mother Hicks.

JK: In Mother Hicks, Girl is a 13-year-old foundling or another daughter of a dead, biological mother. Her identity image is an old quilt piece marked with the initials I.S.H. Tuc, a young deaf man, narrates the play’s past events in the present as the Chorus verbalizes his sign language. At the beginning of the play, Girl lives with Jake Hammond—

GA: —an inappropriate Mother who drinks and separates his family during the Depression. Ella, his wife, is this sort of transitional, stand-in Mother for Girl.

JK: But after Ella and Jake leave town, Girl is forced to live with Alma, an Imposed Mother whose husband, Hosiah, is a mortician with a gun. So Girl wants to live with her suspected biological mother—

GA: —Mother Hicks who is Mother Earth because Tuc explains her identity to Girl as “earth, air, fire, water, blood, tears, everything” (408). Mother Hicks is Girl’s Chosen Mother, the town’s witch, a mid-wife who heals rabbits in a box—

JK: —the same mid-wife who was present at Girl’s—
ramatic Theory and Criticism

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Girl: ... I know who I am.
Mother Hicks: You don't know anything! ...
Girl: ... But, Mother Hicks ...
Mother Hicks: (Turns on her) Don’t you EVER call me that!
Girl: Why not?
Mother Hicks: When they call me that in town, they don't mean “Mother.” (She turns away from Girl.)
Girl: (Simply) But I do. I know who I am. I know that I am your child.
Mother Hicks: My child was taken....
Girl: She died? ... (Taking off her quilt piece.) But look at this, you know you've seen this before, it's my name here and the H... the H stands for Hicks! (Girl shoves the piece into her hands. Mother Hicks looks at her squarely.)
Mother Hicks: It stands for Home.
Girl: What?
Mother Hicks: Illinois State Home. (There is a pause.) I seen this piece before. I wrapped you in it just after you was born. Your Mother came here from the State Home, scared and all alone, hardly more than a child herself. I helped her with the birthing ...
Girl: (In disbelief) No.
Mother Hicks: She stayed a spell, but then one day she ran and took you with her. She must have left you in the town on her way to somewhere else.
Girl: And so I am ...
Mother Hicks: The orphan child of an orphan child.
Girl: That's not true!
Mother Hicks: Yes it is, Little Rabbit.
Girl: Witches is powerful, witches can make things happen, witches is never lonely or afraid, because they've got the power. I am your child and you are a witch!
Mother Hicks: I am not a witch!
Girl: Then what are you?
Mother Hicks: I'm just a left-over person, just like you! ...
Girl: That's not true!
Mother Hicks: . . . Now, they are coming for you, and you'll go back to town with them, because that's where you belong!

GA: At the end of the play, Girl returns to the graveyard where Mother Hicks routinely visits her deceased daughter:

Girl: I'm sorry I ran away.
Mother Hicks: They always go when they're healed.
Girl: But I'm not healed, not yet. But I do know one thing, I know one thing for positive sure; someday things are going to belong to me and I'm going to belong to them. But there's something I need first and I won't be healed until I find it.
Mother Hicks: You look all right.
Girl: I'm talkin' about something inside me, like a piece of me left out and wanting.
Mother Hicks: (Looks at her evenly) You'll never find her. No matter how hard you look, you'll never find that poor scared rabbit that gave you birth.
Girl: I know, that part of me isn't hungry anymore, it's just sad.
Mother Hicks: That woman, Alma, she cares. She wants you back.
Girl: I know, but I can't go back there until I find what I need.
Mother Hicks: What?
Girl: A name. I need a name. So, I wonder, could I have her name? Could I be May-ry?
Mother Hicks: That's her name, it ain't yours.
Girl: But I wish it were.
Mother Hicks: (Simply) Well, you can wish in one hand and spit in the other and see which gets full first.
Girl: Could you help me find my own name?
Mother Hicks: (Looks at Girl) I reckon I could.
Girl: Then I can stay with you 'til we find it, just for a while?
Mother Hicks: Creatures come when they need a healing spell, but when it's done, they go.
Girl: I know. (. . . Girl carefully folds the quilt piece and places it on top of the grave.)
Chorus: Mother Hicks is a witch, people say
And she lives all alone at the top of Dug Hill
And she works her magic on the town below.
(She looks to Mother Hicks who nods. Girl puts the quilt piece
and leaves it behind.)
Chorus: When a child falls sick
And there ain’t no cause
And there ain’t no cure
Then everybody knows, that it’s witched for sure
Mother Hicks is a witch, people say.
(Mother Hicks extends her hand to Girl. They rise and begin
to exit upstage just as the Chorus finishes their lines.)

JK: So Mother Hicks heals Girl by helping her to find her own name and
identity.

GA: The influence of Hicks on Girl’s identity formation is that Hicks is allowing
and encouraging her to find her own name, and is saying, “Your name is within
you, go and find it.” And to me, that is the most unusual way of portraying a
Mother of Choice’s influence on the identity formation of a Daughter. It’s rare
in life. It’s almost unheard of in drama or literature. It’s fresh, it’s exciting, and
it is by my value what a “good mother” is.

JK: Right, right.

GA: It seems like there’s a progression from Step to Hicks: from the more
simplistic or less complex idea that the stepmother can help you find your identity
by becoming a “mother,” to the more complex idea that the Mother of Choice can
help you find your identity by saying look within yourself. Do Not Go Gentle
seems like a kind of backward movement to me; but, of course, who’s saying
there should be a chronological progression anyway?

JK: Exactly. But while the identity formations of Ellie and Girl are very
satisfying because their Chosen Mothers allow them to discover these identities
for themselves, this journey becomes very problematic in Do Not Go Gentle.
Who is the protagonist in this play? Whose journey do we follow?

GA: This to me is like a bigger choice. It’s pretty obvious in the other two plays
who the daughter is. The daughter is child and protagonist. But in Gentle, it’s
...and that's how it all begins. Kelli is 13-year-old granddaughter of Joyce. Kelli who has always been a target for the family's attention. The family is in turmoil, and Joyce is struggling to maintain her sanity. Kelli's life is filled with constant battles. She is often made to feel like an outsider, and this only adds to her inner turmoil. Kelli's relationship with her grandfather, Mr. Johnson, is strained, and she longs for someone to understand her. One day, Kelli's life takes an unexpected turn when she meets Matthew, a boy who is different from anyone she has ever known. Matthew's influence on Kelli is profound, and she begins to question the values she has been taught. As Kelli navigates the challenges of her life, she learns to trust her instincts and stand up for herself. In the end, Kelli finds the strength to make the right choices, and her life is forever changed.
The immediate flow of Lillián’s fancy is lost because we see the results of it, not the making of it. Her fancy is just as interesting because its flow, not because we see the results of it.

榜样：

J.K. — because Nobody is materializing the second act.

J.K.: They get tired. The play loses its immediate appeal. The immediate thing for them is the pretense that they own the world. (Ex.)

榜样：

You keep calling him Buddy, an Lillian does, and I call him Nobody. The

J.K.: You keep referring to this Lillium as a second act.

榜样：

J.K.: This act is devoted to two tasks.

榜样：

J.K.: No. I do not do these simple modifications about Windsor Drive that way. But I just do it.

榜样：

60. (78-79)

JIlián: It was mine too. Look at the face. And let it

J.K.: How did Chemcal know to paint the influence?

榜样：

J.K.: Chemcal? It’s in a frame. (78)

榜样：

J.K.: And then she figures out one of Lillium’s phantoms—a picture of Windsor

榜样：

J.K.: Right after we went to Germany. I wrote Chemcal this

榜样：

her: Ott.

J.K.: So Lillium runs away back to camp. After Lillium’s death. Lillium easily tells

榜样：

J.K.: Yes. It is. (65-66)

Lillium: There’s none.

J.K.: You don’t want me.

Lillium: I’m sorry.


榜样：

J.K.: My friends. I am 63 years old and I can be satisfying again

榜样：

LIllium: I want you to be my grandfather. I want you to be

J.K.: You don’t want me.

榜样：

J.K.: You once again?

榜样：

J.K.: You once again?

榜样：

J.K.: You once again?

榜样：

LIllium: Come and sit by me. I’m in a little in my life

Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism
"The Play Ends. Green."

"Her last words, and they weren't even her own."

"Bare, there, against the sky, of the [light]."

"Do not go gentle into that good night.
And you, my children, on her head,"

"Cress, bless me now, but"

"with verse, Dylan Thomas' poem, "The Gift of the Magi.""

"Let us, like Ichabod, this play begins and ends."

"She's losing her inner child, which is the basis of her dignity."

"You, which is the adult, which may be a way of being in your own and
but"

"voice, which is the adult, which may be a way of being in your own and"

"disorder here. Since I'm listening to tell, since I'm listening to this outside

a story, since I'm listening to this outside

there's"

"—and who doesn't have her dignity? Which leads me to say, there's"

"a messy room—"

"—and who doesn't have her dignity? Which leads me to say, there's"

"rooms. I find it interesting that Ichabod likes the style 14 years later who still
has"

"the point. She's losing her mother, who listens to clean up Ichabod's mess
and they work. They keep struggling the external tension so they can reflect on

"—and who doesn't have her dignity? Which leads me to say, there's"

"Explain. She's trying to help people up, to get these characters to move

"time, because she is the most immediate and she doesn't go back and forth in

"subjunctive. This is because she provides comic relief."

"IF: Cool. You know, there's a part of me that looks Middled, the ease with

"Ichabod's diaphanous formations and blurry to some degree.

"initial of Ichabod's "J". He's been influenced, and their influence on Ichabod's

"Yes, I'm not going to lie, but I am relying on that past. Most of the action is the

"Well, that's great."

"through her head [g]. She pauses."

"does "tease" against the "laying of the light." Ichabod then keeps reminding

Journal of Dramatic Theory and Children's Theatre
play is certain help being influenced by what—

CA: And we won’t say the plays are instructed by formal theory, but

GC: From the study of which I am able to do nothing and the use

CA: And it is certainly beyond me off in a broad, too—

CA: Especially that, what meaning is dictated—

CA: Not in any name

meaning. It’s concluded, it’s considered, it feels good

when you’ve said something. When you’ve said it a world, then it has more

meaning. The daughter’s discovery of self as gestures, the whole business of

jointures, the daughter’s discovery of self as gestures, the whole business of

This whole business of meaning of language being so crucial to their

mother in a band of humanlooking

CA: Each daughter goes back forth between the mother and the transparent

appropositive models: Elie is the father. Gil to Amna, and Kely to Joyce

innuing away are the critics of each April; all those eventually return home to

12

13

113

(137)

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122

(June 1997)
First impressions are sometimes what happened to the world—H's. With

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Notes
The subject of feminist theory and its presence (or lack) in the field is one that has been explored by many. This letter is a response to an article in the same issue of the journal. The author expresses their agreement with the views presented in the article and adds their own perspective on the importance of feminist theory in drama and theatre.

Dear Jamae,

University of Kansas
To: Jamae Klein
August 27, 1997

I've just finished reading "A Feminist Reading of a Feminist Reading," by Jamae Klein. I found the essay to be fascinating and thought-provoking. It made me think about the ways in which feminist theory can be applied to the study of drama and theatre.

The author argues that the traditional approach to the study of theatre has been masculinist, and that it is important to consider the perspectives of women and other marginalized groups. She suggests that feminist theory can provide a new framework for understanding the works of theatre.

I appreciate the way that the author connects feminist theory to the specific example of a play. This is an important aspect of feminist theory, as it helps to make the abstract concepts more concrete and relatable.

I hope you find my response helpful, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the matter.

Sincerely,
[Signature]

Jamae Klein
VENICE, California

Selling you my best wishes,

is difficult. It is difficult to play a part, an ultimate mystery, not his failure

it will mean many different things and everyone will believe his/her experience

meant out of voice, emotion, gesture. I think I did not understand the

unrelated to one another. No one can make a play as it may be the only thing that

joy, I want to recall of writing a play that may be one thing and one thing only. If I want to recall

pittance in the way I am in a way, I don’t think it means I understand to think

I find your [Carly’s] amiable course going in the direction

philosophy of it doesn’t have the

ˮWhere does the STORY require?ˮ in either case; it must be done

people’s need. If more than simply Ŵrerequest. The action

opposite of an action, the opposite of an action, the opposite of an action, the opposite of

is not always what we want to be. I want to recall of writing a play that may be one thing and one thing only. If I want to recall

I can do as well, very helpful. Especially in a manner driven by a

Spring 1998

8
Dear Janeen and Gaye,

25 November 1997

Spring 1998
The theory of dramatic theatre is among the primary concepts in drama education. It provides a framework for understanding the relationship between the audience, the performers, and the story being told. According to this theory, the performer is the creator of the drama, while the audience is the receiver of the drama. The performer uses various techniques, such as gesture, voice, and movement, to engage the audience and communicate the message of the drama. The audience, in turn, interprets the drama based on their own experiences and emotions. The interaction between the performer and the audience is crucial in creating a meaningful and engaging theatrical experience.
I believe that all of us in this discussion are "on the same page" in many ways. But, as Jeanne notes, our uses of language shape who and what we understand each other to be and know. By framing the discussion in an accessible way, you have opened a door that I hope will invite others to begin talking and writing about children's theatre in feminist terms. It's essential that we find ways, as the two of you have done here and as Suzan also has in Do Not Go Gentle, to share the focus among multiple characters. Perhaps the feminist teaching model of the person in dialogue, rather than the lecturer who fills empty vessels, is appropriate here too. Please continue this discussion. It's a vital, and often overlooked, element of theatre research.

Iris Smith

Notes

2. 125.
5. 137.