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A Surrealist Play of Associations: Neoliberalism, Critical Pedagogy and Surrealism in Secondary English Language Arts

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***Abstract*—**This project utilizes principles derived from the Surrealist movement to prioritize creative and critical thinking in secondary English Language Arts (ELA). The implementation of Surrealist-style pedagogies within an ELA classroom will be rooted in critical, radical pedagogy, which addresses the injustices caused by economic-oriented educational systems. The use of critical pedagogy will enable the subversive artistic and political aims of Surrealism to be transmitted to a classroom context. Through aesthetic reading strategies, appreciative questioning and dialogue, students will actively critique the power dynamics which structure (and often restrict) their lives. Within the ELA domain, cost-effective approaches often replace the actual "arts" of ELA. This research will therefore explore how Surrealist-oriented pedagogies could restore imaginative freedom and deconstruct conceptual barriers (normative standards, curricular constraints, and status quo power relations) in secondary ELA. This research will also examine how Surrealism can be used as a political and pedagogical model to treat societal problems mirrored in ELA classrooms. The stakeholders are teachers, as they experience constant pressure within their practices. Similarly, students encounter rigorous, results-based pressures. These dynamics contribute to feelings of powerlessness, thus reinforcing a formulaic model of ELA. The ELA curriculum has potential to create laboratories for critical discussion and active movement towards social change. This proposed research strategy of Surrealist-oriented pedagogies could enable students to experiment with social issues and develop senses of agency and voice that reflect awareness of contemporary society while simultaneously building their ELA skills.

***Keywords*—**Arts-informed pedagogies, language arts, literature, Surrealism.

I. Introduction

THIS research investigates the current state of secondary ELA education in Quebec, while offering the solution of a proposed Surrealist pedagogy. Surrealism is an artistic and political movement. Based upon anti-society, anti-capitalist and anti-convention beliefs, Surrealism initially involved an aggressive philosophical attack on reality [2]. Led by Andre Breton in the 1920s, Surrealism as a philosophical practice was born in Paris and branched from existing societal critique intrinsic to the Dada movement [18]. Within ELA teaching, the language arts lack creativity and critique, societal or otherwise. Rather, the ELA curriculum has been reduced to a measurable science, with standardized evaluation tasks favouring efferent reading [17]. It should be considered how this discipline deviated so far from curricular goals of fostering artistic freedom and building autonomous, critical citizens [13]. This research also extends an exploration to the societal context housing the schooling system, which is inherently economic in nature [6], [20]. If classrooms are considered to be units mirroring the Neoliberal values of society at large, one may begin to determine why language arts education has morphed into a language science. What is needed by ELA teachers is a revolt of sorts that can help reclaim the artistic power that is missing. The formulaic models that limit and dictate the possibilities of ELA need to be deconstructed, much as the historic Surrealists fought for the power of artistic thought and expression under the guidance of Breton [2]. However, the impetus of a historic artistic movement, though it is political in nature, does not form a linear connection with the artistic needs of modern classrooms. This gap prompted a consideration of critical, radical pedagogy. Within this domain, figures such as Henry Giroux [6] have attacked hegemonic Neoliberal contexts in order to liberate educational freedom, just as Breton [2] fought in the name of artistic emancipation.

The map of consciousness presents a web of seemingly disjunctive, yet influential bodies of thought. David Swanger [19] has noted that the power of artistic processes lies in fusing opposite entities and reconciling their discordant qualities [19]. Therefore, this involves an act of theoretical, Surrealist play [18], where meaningful associations between the conceptually distant bodies of Surrealism, contemporary ELA classrooms, and critical pedagogy will be formed. This paper will first begin with an exploration of Neoliberalism as a political construct, whose ideologies can be used to analyze the construction of classroom communities in contemporary Quebec. Next, critical pedagogy will be explored as an ideological framework that critiques the operations of Neoliberal societies and the presumed negative effects they have on education.

Within this exploration of critical pedagogy, important perspectives surrounding the theory such as Freire and Gramsci will be acknowledged, but the paper will ultimately focus on Giroux, as his voice greatly mirrors the revolutionary impetus of Andre Breton. While critical pedagogy originates from theories of class-based struggles, an implementation of these theories onto a private school context may seem mismatched and erroneous. This paper aims to once again resolve this conflict, illuminating the need for critical pedagogies within the private sector as much as the public

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one. Critical pedagogy could also help illuminate the politically charged nature of ELA contexts, and possibly lead to solutions to reintroduce the missing "arts". Finally, Surrealism will be explored as an artistic movement that targets the reality of the status quo and conformist behaviour in the name of artistic liberty. This theory could speak to the lack of artistic criticality in ELA classrooms, while also targeting accepted ideas of "reality" when it comes to Neoliberal-infused education. This act of Surrealist play aims to show how Surrealism is not confined to its original historic school, but instead is ongoing, and worthy of revisiting in light of dilemmas in contemporary classroom practices. This research also aims to illuminate how theories such as critical pedagogy, initially designated for specific audiences and purposes, can be broadened in terms of its relevancy. This Surrealist play and the formation of spontaneous connections will forge a new theoretical framework, or way of seeing [1] and experiencing contemporary ELA education. This research aims to uproot three conceptual bodies of knowledge from their "fixed" sociopolitical, cultural contexts, and create a dialogue of common interests. Finally, the need for Surrealist-centered pedagogies will be justified, while illuminating theoretical gaps in need of further research.

II. Neoliberalism and Education

A. The Societal Machine of Neoliberalism

Foucault has noted that contemporary society conceptualizes the state as a "*monstre froid* we can see confronting us" [4], what with its presumed all-encompassing power. However, Foucault has followed by presuming this fear of the government constitutes a reductionist overvaluing of state power. He has also described the state as "no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction" [4], with its conceptual power originating largely from the people. This concept of governmentality [4] would therefore suggest that the operations of certain power structures are supported by the interplay of societal institutions and procedures, and most importantly, the people within them. However, if Foucault is correct in his assertion that the power of the state is derived from an elusive fear of it, this could mean that supporting power narratives is an inadvertent endeavour. It appears that the current governmentality perspective originated in the eighteenth century, with society's transition out of sovereignty. Sixteenth century sovereignty involved societies ruled by single rulers, whose aims consisted of maintaining their absolute governance (constituted by territory and subjects) at all costs [4]. Therefore, the contemporary movement towards governmentalized alternatives such as Neoliberalism becomes contextualized when considering its predecessors. Essentially, Neoliberalism moves entirely away from centralized forms of state power and disperses opportunities for economic prosperity amongst a wider range of people [12]. Harvey has noted that Neoliberal structures center on beliefs that the potential to achieve financial prosperity and exercise economic ingenuity should not be restricted by state intervention and apparatuses. This promise of liberty could indeed form an attractive model if it weren't contingent upon having financial means at the base. Harvey has further deconstructed how Neoliberal systems, despite delivering faulty claims of freedom, manage to establish strongholds on society. In a sense, the unrestricted (and unregulated) model that calls itself "free" allows for the calculated construction of consent to Neoliberal theory [12]. Here, wealth is indeed decentralized from a single sovereign body; but rather than being distributed equally amongst the public, it remains concentrated amongst a population of elites. Within this model of market exchange, corporate elites have the power to influence the formation of policies thanks to their financial power and an unregulated system. The result is a top down system where societal institutions such as education operate in the interests of privileged investors. This Foucaultian matrix creates a cycle where the subjects of Neoliberalism actively feed its existence, and thus, their own subordination. Giroux [7] has further emphasized how the rhetoric of market exchange appropriates and distorts the language of human behaviour to systematically silence and disempower "common" citizens, while also supporting their dominant illusion of freedom. This form of "newspeak" [14] can consequently be used to justify or negate a myriad of different social injustices all enacted in the name of liberty [7].

B. Consent to Neoliberalism, and the School place

Giroux [6], along with Hall and Eggington [11], has brought to light the fractured assumption that classrooms exist in vacuums, ideologically and politically removed from the contexts that surround them. The authors have also further challenged the belief that classroom societies are places of neutrality that contribute in building democracy and equality within society. Therefore, rethinking idealistic visions that classrooms are ideological safe zones could help teachers and researchers understand how contemporary ELA education systematically begun to lack criticality. To do this, the overarching societal norms that have become common-sense ways of structuring people's lives must be examined. In other words, these imbedded societal narratives reach so deep that people unconsciously enact them in their everyday lives, including their actions in the school place. Neoliberalism is a set of economically-oriented discourses that have produced a new social order within capitalist contexts, such as the Canadian reality [12]. Those in positions of economic power offer citizens conditional freedom, controlling them to maintain the economic potential of these exploited masses. For example, when visiting Starbucks, the Neoliberal citizen may feel empowered by the amount of beverage choices. With milk alone, one may choose from skim to whole, while also being able to pick alternative, non-dairy options. However, what this consumer may neglect to recognize is that Starbucks has established the choices people are offered, thereby determining the rules within which their freedom exists. Even options such as almond and coconut milk were only recently accepted into the Starbucks repertoire, thus being accepted as "normal" options to be chosen. Societal institutions such as the school replicate this individualistic model, thus

perpetuating its strength. Freire has referred to education catering to Neoliberal-style contexts as a "banking model" [5]. This model assumes teachers to be holders of knowledge, who systematically dole it out to void recipients, the students. Freire has also noted that this model "produces a fragmentation of knowledge that invariably diminishes the students' critical awareness in favour of accepting reality as a given" [5]. Essentially, formulaic, standardized ELA instruction is a mechanism that has been installed to support and legitimize the status quo doctrine [20]. Through calculated, measurable assignments, ELA teachers feed students information, preparing for them to enter, and presumably flourish within a society of privatized interests. However, this "society-building" lens of education becomes increasingly problematic without a critical contemplation of who or what has been removed from education in the name of "liberty". It is also through passively accepting the guise of freedom that people perpetuate Giroux's aforementioned idea of "neutral" school places. Davies and Bansel [3] have attributed Neoliberalism's success in shaping education to a moralistic, fear-driven move from social welfare to economic output. This shift in "social" priorities has been sold to citizens through the ethos of becoming upstanding, successful individuals who can adequately provide for their families. As a result, the school place has become a center of conformity lacking in individual thought, as knowledge is legitimized or rejected, according to its relationship with the dominant market-exchange model [3], [20]. This being said, it may seem ironic that Neoliberal theory was based on principles of "human dignity [in addition to] individual freedom" [12]. A careful analysis of the current social construction should consequently involve questioning where this element of dignity has been either displaced from its origins, or reconfigured and redefined to garner the interest of the masses.

C. ELA within a Neoliberal Context:

It should be noted that while the institution of education functions in maintaining the dominant Neoliberal status quo, the discipline of English is particularly complicit within this model [3], [11]. Hall and Eggington [11] have noted that English, including second language and language arts instruction, is based upon connections to both established forms of history and to popular culture. This means that English as a tool is responsible for supporting legitimized ideas of normality, of which are especially controversial within hegemonic Neoliberal contexts. Essentially, in addition to operating within contexts of top-down, market-oriented power relations, the Neoliberal ELA teacher is also responsible for spreading the status symbol of the English language [11]. While Neoliberal theory involves establishing dominant ideas of normality, English has established itself as a symbol of that imperial dominance. English as the language of instruction also infers that ELA teachers are selling English as the language of ideology building. Therefore, "real-world" connections are often built from positions that place Eurocentric ideals as the benchmark of unquestioned "reality". Evidently, the idea that any one culture can be prioritized as the dominant norm within a supposedly multicultural, inclusive context is problematic, especially when society at large functions upon notions of freedom. Furthermore, this model of high-status English complicates the idea that the ELA classroom should be a site of shared voices and the communal construction of meaning [13]. Presumably, English operates as currency within the Neoliberal model of market exchange, and the degree to which students and citizens master this "skill" directly dictates their ability to adhere to the dominant societal norm and gain economic potential [11]. It is not an accident that the universal language of commerce is English, but that does not mean that culture, which Trend [20] has referred to as the everyday lived experiences that shape teachers as much as teachers shape them, cannot or does not exist outside of this language [20]. Especially within the Canadian culture of supposed multicultural diversity, a prioritization of singular forms of lived experiences and ways of being is decidedly problematic. This hegemonic identity of English has fused well with Neoliberal ideologies, forming a powerhouse vessel to transmit the theory. Inevitably, however, there are issues of access, and this understanding of the English language would suggest that those who stand outside of it are not privy to the economic, social and cultural benefits that accompany it as a commodity. English brings alongside it a history of cultural hegemony and colonial dominance, thereby taxing ELA teachers with the complicated sociopolitical weight of it. An attempt to teach English from a position of supposed neutrality should be revisited with a critical, interrogatory stance.

Within this Neoliberal model, the ELA curriculum has also become a system of targeted skills-building and efferent reading. Efferent reading involves reading solely for the attainment of information, rather than development of interpretive skills [17]. This method limits ELA to a series of procedural tasks, rather than the more educationally interactional experience of reading with the intent of entering into a story and reflecting on its personal significance. Hall and Eggington [11] have suggested that this strategies-based approach to English instruction further contributes to the classroom's "closed box" identity, with education demarcated from the outside world [11]. An example of an assignment that calls upon efferent reading strategies is the Secondary ELA Reading Response. While the QEP has claimed the analysis of texts to be a holistic endeavour that "represent[s] sociocultural values and beliefs, promot[ing] viewpoints and influenc[ing] our actions in society" [13], the formation of step-by-step categories result in fragmented, checklist-style reading methods. Rather than reflecting on the personal significance of aspects such as writer's techniques and themes, this categorization of different textual elements has caused students to read in a tunnel-vision style. Consequently, students become passive scavengers rather than active agents engaging with a body of textual work. The text thus becomes divorced from the real world by virtue of an unwillingness to bring it to life.

D.Moving from Efferent to Aesthetic

Rosenblatt [17] has illustrated the difference between the efferent reading practices evidenced in current ELA education, as opposed to aesthetic reading practices. Rosenblatt has also argued that literature is closely related to human experience. Therefore (Neoliberal) didactic, moralistic methods of teaching literature stifle the possibilities of aesthetic, transactional reading. The efferent approaches to ELA, involving "the learning of facts and the acquisition of skills deemed to be important" [19] by dominant (Neoliberal) discourses release students from their responsibility to critically play within their world. This system of education systematically eliminates the power of the reader. The reader, who in this case is the ELA student, with his or her past and ongoing life experiences, brings to a text a specific angle from which to read and interpret. The engagement between a text and the unique reader (with his or her body of knowledge) forms a new experience and thus, the creation of meaning. Greene has contrasted the process of aesthetic experiences and Dewey's notion of the anesthetic. When experiencing the aesthetic, people become empowered by new possibilities and ways of seeing and feeling, all of which originated within the self [10]. Swanger [19] has referenced this relationship of exchange that takes place within aesthetic experiences, noting that "the aim of aesthetic education … [involves] nurtur[ing] emphathetic knowledge." [19]. Rather than simply connecting to the subject matter of an artistic work, this notion purports that by projecting themselves into it, readers and viewers can empathetically connect to the perceptions of the artist. These perceptions, or ways of seeing [1] and knowing, help fuse the sensibilities of the reader to the stories of the artist. Essentially, writers and artists can elicit emotions through stories, presenting a particular perspective in reaction to their shared world. The reader thus participates in the vision of the writer, using it to make sense of her or his lived experience outside of the text. This empathetic relationship takes place when the reader and writer form a shared, imaginative experience and the reader becomes focused and absorbed by feelings in response to the stimulus of the text. Swanger [19] has also suggested that empathy extends far beyond the official domain of art; likewise, art is evident throughout the world, despite being systematically disregarded. Art involves people's perceptions and reactions to a subject or stimuli. It also involves conversation and contemplation regarding the reactions these subjects elicit within people. The ability to connect students to their world by inviting them to see through the eyes of an artist, can consequently promote similar connections within lived, interpersonal relationships [19]. By extracting meaning from the perspectives of an artist and exercising their power to question their political, social and cultural realities, students in ELA could expand their ways of interpreting their world. This thought process could operate as an awakening of sorts, with students becoming empowered agents, intimately connected to their societies through artistic understandings. A questioning of the commonplace narrative paired with a conscientious effort to form fusions within the world rather than distinctions and categories will allow students to rethink their learning.

Ultimately, through engaged criticality in ELA and the embrace of aesthetic learning, students could begin deconstructing the unilateral presentation of "reality" that has been presented through their narrow Neoliberal lens. This process of imaginative emancipation is the central aim of Surrealist theory [2] and is notably lacking from contemporary ELA education. Therefore, the objectives of the historic artistic movement, itself entrenched in emancipatory struggle, speak directly to ongoing challenges observable in the arts and artistic educational disciplines. This Surrealist play intends to draw together conceptually distant bodies of thought, and it appears that this practice of connection-building could provide the theory and methods behind reintroducing criticality in ELA education. Within tasks such as the connection paragraph of the Secondary Reading Response [13], students are already being asked to recognize similarities between textual themes and the outside world. However, without interventions that critical pedagogy could offer, these connection paragraphs tend to once again result in limited, one-to-one comparisons. While the intention behind the QEP goal of connection-building is important, a surface-level interpretation of this task can result in students recognizing either superficial or plot-related connections between textual works. In the event students succeed in identifying common themes related to human experience in multiple works, or between a literary work and a political, social, or cultural event in their lifeworld, a limited manner of teaching connection building closes the task once a connection has been forged. Without critical questioning and a systematic refocussing of the way people view societally formed categories, the connection task is reduced to a matter of grouping rather than fusing. For example, if students were to compare *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* to *The Great Gatsby*, both novels often studied within secondary ELA curriculums, a number of issues could come into discussion. Were a student to isolate issues of masculinity and power, Williams' Brick could be explored in terms of his supposed closeted homosexuality and his pressure to maintain an image of brute, unemotional masculine strength. Fitzgerald's Gatsby provides a different image of masculinity, with his power coming through money, ingenuity, and the fulfillment of an American dream. If the student drawing this connection were to connect these two men but neglect to acknowledge the larger sociocultural forces at play behind their respective representations of masculinity and power, the connection becomes isolated between the two texts. By not extending the global significance of the common themes, the student has once again categorized the texts but closed off possibilities that what links Brick to Jay could also link Brick to contemporary CEOs or modern men. In short, the problems become imprisoned within the texts and the connection forged locks its social relevance from being accessed. Once again, however progressive the task may have been, the student who formed this one-to-one connection would likely walk away with an understanding that Brick is similar to Jay, rather than the fact that both men's similarities could speak to general problems of societal masculinity.

In order to broaden the process of connection building and prevent it from creating the reductionist tendencies often witnessed in classrooms, the imagination factor cannot be ignored. Swanger [19] has illustrated Coleridge's notions of the imagination as opposed to fancy. Coleridge has purported that the "fancy has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites [and]…is no other than a mode of [m]emory emancipated from the order of time and space" [19]. On the other hand, the imagination involves the recreation of meaning and a heavy reliance on metaphor. It appears, therefore, that the approach towards secondary ELA connection paragraphs involves a lack of imagination and at the very best, an application of the fancy. Swanger [19] has channeled Coleridge's perspective, presuming that aesthetic educators ought to elicit the imagination in order to create active learners. The process of enacting the fancy involves forming one-to-one representations of fixed realities. There is no divergence involved, and presumably, a lack of critical engagement with the connection-building task. On the other hand, the imagination involves seeing something new from the fixed representations of entities, thus creating engaged readers. In a sense, the Neoliberal influence upon ELA education forms a two-fold problem: it promotes a context for efferent reading, which as a practice, systematically disables students from becoming critical. Returning to Breton's call to action in liberating the power of the imagination, if this force were to be freed, students could engage in aesthetic, transactional experiences and become agents of their learning. This creation of new meaning would also invite the criticality currently lacking from the ELA system. However, in order for any of this to be possible, educators need to become critical of the calculated agendas that so greatly affect the way they shape their practices.

III. Critical Pedagogy vs. Neoliberalism

A. The Pink Elephant Named Neoliberalism

Surrounding education exist the systemic structures that dictate teaching practices operate almost invisibly, with, it could be argued, teachers' full consent. What is missing from current practices is an acknowledgement of the pink elephant in the room that is Neoliberalism. This imbedded system of norms has been allowed to dictate practices and it is often unclear where its influence ends and teachers' thoughts begin. As well, the fact that teachers operate within a system of highly targeted ideals, promoting a unilateral image of success often becomes an accepted reality. Many teachers may object to the market exchange model of education, but would likely not establish positions to question this all-encompassing "reality". Gramsci has noted that political structures such as that of the pink elephant in question, promote an image of order and harmonious stability [9]. As a result, Gramsci's proletariats, or in this case, powerless teachers, stay silent in response to these hegemonic structures, fearing what radical change could bring. It appears, therefore, that the lack of imaginative criticality within current ELA practices could signify not only an economic model, but a systematic disempowerment of teachers and students [6]. However, when examining this situation of oppression, a truly critical approach, which aims for sustainable change, will involve examining how Neoliberalism functions in creating roots within society. This exploration will necessarily involve calling into question not only the hegemonic system and elite policy makers, but the entire oppressed population who also plays a role in maintaining their own disenfranchisement. This means that teachers adopting critical pedagogies with a solution-based mindset must recognize how they continually contribute to the messy model.

B. Teachers as Oppressed Oppressors

As previously noted, this research takes place in a private institution, where funding restraints do not resemble those of the public sector, and class sizes do not regularly exceed twenty students at a time. It may seem, therefore, that appropriating theories of critical pedagogy would be hypocritical, reflecting a lack of reflection and contextual consideration. While Freire [5] indeed based his theories upon first-hand experiences of Third World poverty, realities that greatly differ from the generally privileged existences of the research pool, the narrative of oppression remains relevant. In his own theories of critical pedagogy, Giroux has targeted private institutions, noting their corporate interests to mark the destruction of democratically shared culture. This research operates from an insider position, and the message is appealing to many future policy makers within Neoliberal societies. This means that Freire's theories of oppression could be reconceptualized to address future oppressors who are, in their own way, the current oppressed. This is an audience that may seem initially misguided, but upon further inspection is in dire need of this pedagogy.

Freire [5] has illustrated his pedagogy of the oppressed to involve "the humanistic and historical task of the oppressed …liberat[ing] themselves and their oppressors" [5]. This large responsibility implies that while oppressors actively inflict violence, the oppressed are also part of a systemic problem. Also, due to the oppressor's positioning within this problem, they are unable to instigate change, as their conditioning has instilled within them a reflex to protect their power. Freire's theories of oppressor-oppressed dynamics have inspired the work of contemporaries such as Giroux [6], with whom this research draws parallels to Breton's desire for emancipation and revolutionary impetus. However, while Giroux's passionate, justice-oriented tone functions well in highlighting the ills of Neoliberal models of education, his message appears to be an exclusively political one. That is, teachers are products of a faulty political model. Giroux has indeed recognized the untapped potential of teachers to transform their disempowered realities, but in order to appropriate this call to action and link it to Breton's Surrealist mandate, Giroux's revolutionary message needs to be contextualized within Freire's model of oppression.

As previously noted, Neoliberalism involves a market exchange method of society-building, which essentially positions people as commodities within the model [6], [20].

Trend [20] has echoed Giroux's cautionary perspective on the diversity and freedom offered through hegemonically constructed culture. Essentially, artistic expression has been appropriated and institutionalized by those in power who stand to gain from an economic model of culture. Rose & Kincheloe [16] have illustrated this concept through politicians such as Giuliani dictating specific forms of art to be decent and "real" or alternatively, profane, depending on the subject matter depicted in the works [16]. The result of having a society built on privatized, profit-oriented interests, according to Trend, is the development of hierarchies, competition, which thus results in a lack of solidarity; or, one could argue, actual freedom. This lack of authentic freedom forms the base of the oppressive state such as teachers and citizens within the Neoliberal norm [5]. The human imagination also becomes vulnerable, what with its loaded power and potential for deviance from established "universal values" [20]. Greene has noted that the imagination allows one to consider "additional possibilities of meaning" [10], which can pose serious threats to (Neoliberal) societal agendas that argue (or advocate) for single stories. Culture, within societal and academic marketplaces, stands at the mercy of a privileged elite, privy to economic cuts and highly controlled manipulation [16]. Giroux [8] has presented a grim picture of cultural domains that have fallen prey to the dominant order of marketplace societies [8]. By illustrating how the school is a dead zone for the imagination, mirroring the lack of personality and life of an American shopping mall dead space, Giroux, like Trend, has illuminated the inherent power structures involved in shaping the education domain. Therefore, it appears that the first tier of oppression within the ELA problem exists at the societal level of policy makers and creators of "normality". Under this oppressive umbrella, there lie the teachers, the dehumanized by-products of their societal norm. However, according to Giroux [6], Trend [20] and Freire [5], teachers and students are implicit within this model, as they perpetuate the hegemony set in place by those in power. By quietly abiding to a dehumanizing, standardized system, teachers and students are cogs in the machine of corporate-oriented education. This understanding constitutes teachers as oppressed individuals, with their oppressor being their Neoliberal context. Giroux, much like Breton [2], has formed a call to action, prompting people (in Giroux's case, teachers) to question their cultural positions, while actively working towards reclaiming their imaginative and critical agency. By recognizing their power as transformative intellectuals [6] and acknowledging the structures that have systematically silenced this potential, teachers can become agents of social change. Here, Giroux's awakening of the teacher echoes Freire's self-actualisation of the oppressed. In a sense, teachers need to reflect upon their oppressed positions in order to move towards changing the system.

While Giroux [6] refers to changemaker teachers as "transformative intellectuals", Trend [20] addresses his audience of "cultural workers", and Rose and Kincheloe [16] speak to "artful teachers". In all cases, however, these authors identify stratified societies that carry a façade of inclusion and freedom, along with the hopeful individuals who can potentially upset these models. Swanger [19] notes that "[t]he role of the art and the artist is not to provide the grease, but the squeak" [19]. This means that a fundamental duty of artistic experiences lies in not facilitating the smooth negotiation of social problems, but to bring them to the forefront of awareness and elicit the drive for change. The Neoliberal system has encouraged the passive acceptance and preservation of oppressive social practices and structures, thus imbedding the ideology increasingly deeper within the commonplace [16], [20]. Rose and Kincheloe [16] have noted that artful teachers (or similarly radical changemakers) are viewed as opponents to a system that severs the meaningful ties between politics and art. Art, within this system, is stripped of its controversy and in doing so, the messages of artists are rendered inaccessible. This practice is justified by policy makers, whom Swanger [19] has named "guardians of the ideology", in the name of making art "safe"; otherwise understood as conformist and nonthreatening towards dominant discourses of society [19]. This practice of disassociated artistic messages (which some may argue constitutes censorship) mirrors the fragmented reading practices of secondary ELA [13]. By removing the significance of art and its power to critique social injustices, those in power succeed in silencing artists' voices, while prioritizing the aims of a privileged minority (white, conservative, male). On the other hand, by questioning taken-for-granted ideas of culture, art, and society, proponents of critical pedagogies can empower students to become energized agents rather than apathetic reinforcers of the status quo. It appears, therefore, that the key to rectifying the negative effects of Neoliberal influence upon education and culture, lies in radical changemakers harnessing their intellectual power to overcome their oppression. However, such an understanding would purport that teachers stand at the end of the chain in terms of Neoliberally oppressed victims. While this research supports Giroux's [6] recognition of teachers' lack of authentic freedom, a revisiting of Freire's [5] model of oppressor-oppressed matrixes would require a consideration the dual identities of teachers. In fact, the chain of educational oppression does not end with teachers, as it continues with students; also, this situation forms more of a loop than a chain. Within this loop, oppressed teachers are seemingly at the mercy of their Neoliberal model. However, this model obliges them to enact oppression on students, thus perpetuating the strength of the system. In turn, teachers' oppressive practices built upon Neoliberal virtues operate in forming future oppressors in their students. Students spend their entire educational careers in dependent positions, oppressed by the all-knowing power of teachers [5]. Freire [5] would note that within this relationship, students would develop not only animosity towards their oppressors, but also an inbred ideal that overcoming this oppressed state could be achieved through individualism and the oppression of others [5]. Hence, the daunting Neoliberal model, despite meeting disagreement within the education sector, has managed to create two generations of roots via systemic complacency and a fear of

freedom [5]. Interestingly as well, teachers within this model often rationalize their self-proclaimed faulty teaching, blaming these (oppressive) practices on their own oppressed state. This would mean that teachers' silence against the oppressive structures of Neoliberalism is not the only reason teachers are to blame for said structure's continued stronghold. Teachers are far more active in their oppressive roles than they may wish to believe. While the overarching societal context of Neoliberalism indeed creates structures for oppressive practices (class sizes, funding, etc.), the actual degree of trickle down and visible impact on everyday teaching practices is perhaps less generalizable. It could be argued that within these dual identity oppressor/oppressed roles, teachers' practices are largely fear based and this sometimes causes them to create oppressors where they may not actually exist. A common occurrence within schools is a great deal of distaste against the administration. Many teachers may attribute disengaged students to the lack of community promoted by the head of school. However, it could be argued that the teaching profession is a largely isolated one. That means that while there may not be constant collaboration in teachers' practice, any negative ethos permeating from the "top" could rightfully be checked at classroom doors. The administration of a school often has very little influence on classroom teaching. This understanding illuminates the degree to which oppression has defined teaching practices. Out of guilt from recognizing their positions as oppressors [5], teachers feel the need to blame (possibly imaginary) oppressors rather than face the actual problem of deflated classrooms—themselves.

C. Critical Pedagogy and Secondary ELA

Secondary ELA teachers have the responsibility to present students with a window into their world. The frame in which they set that window could confirm the method of market-oriented societal preparation, or conversely, critically-engaged social activism. In a sense, ELA is about storytelling, as teachers simultaneously deconstruct works of literature and the stories of society. The power of ELA lies, as illustrated in the Quebec Education Program's (QEP) mandate, in representing societal values within the school and recognizing their role in shaping people's actions as individuals [13]. However, there stands an apparent disparity between the theory and practice of the QEP's intended goals. Identifying why this critical engagement with societal values is not happening to its fullest potential lies in first recognizing restrictive practices such as standardized, procedural assignments and teaching methods. Second, however, approaching ELA from a standpoint of Critical Pedagogy can help teachers engage with the storytelling they have been doing, thus illuminating its restricted nature. Trend's [20] perspective on knowledge as static currency speaks to this closed nature of storytelling. Essentially, through this hegemonic narrative, there lies one story and one way of telling it. Culture, and the messages transmitted through stories, are stripped of their transactional value, and presented in a singular way that supports a dominant discourse. What is missing alongside creativity and criticality in classrooms is not a recognition of this hegemonic system, but rather, a frank interrogation and subversion of it. Disempowered ELA teachers could therefore reignite imaginative fire in their classes by forging an honest dialogue about the oppression that comprises their societal institutions and everyday practices [5], [16], [20]. By forming a critical discourse around which to frame their existence, teachers are not only subverting their artistic disenfranchisement in a highly Surrealist manner [2], but they are also bringing their ELA storytelling to life. Asking questions and interrogating common-sense narratives can not only encourage students to fulfill the aims of the QEP, by examining societal values in relation to identity and the self, but also illuminate the stories that have been disregarded by the canonical framework of "proper" education [16], [20].

D. Critically Reading the Canon

It should be noted that in terms of canonical forms of knowledge, Surrealist theory does not promote the violent destruction of forms of knowledge that it opposes. Rubin [18] has noted that the anarchy synonymous with the Dada movement's opposition to the bourgeois world was replaced by the Surrealists' "constructive, collective action" [18]. This distinction is important to note when considering an application of Surrealist theory to contemporary ELA classrooms. When discussing hegemonic structures and policies of education, along with the problematic nature of single-sided storytelling, the ELA canonical book room is often a location of (anarchic) attack. The lacklustre state of a conventional North American English book room could once again be classified as evidence of Neoliberal systems at work. On the one hand, the lack of evolution in representation of books is often an issue of funding. Swanger [19] has noted that the minimal financial resources allotted towards arts programs "tell us something about the status of arts in schools" [19]. With certain political agendas prioritizing privatized, commercial interests, the traditional public school book room may not often find itself able to constantly renew its resources. As a result, the book room offers a visual representation of the position education, particularly arts education, holds within society, what with its collection of often incomplete, highly weathered class sets of outdated novels. However, within Neoliberal contexts, the high school book room can face another challenge. As previously noted, due to the institution housing this research being private, funding and resources are internalized within the institution. However, surprisingly, the book room resembled the common cliché of an underfunded public school within an inner-city catchment zone. The book room of the institution profiled in this research housed many of the same authors such as Fitzgerald, Orwell and Williams, however within this new context, these commonly deemed "outdated" titles were now considered "canonized". This observation illuminated another face of the Neoliberal issue facing ELA teaching and learning: the fact that irrespective of economic context, the dominant discourse seems inescapable. Returning to Surrealism's constructive aims, the means in which teachers ought to

address the issue of the canon ought not to stem from violence. In other words, it could be argued that abolishing the secondary ELA book list in an underfunded public institution, or a conservative private one, is either realistic or beneficial for learners. It can be argued that canonized literature could oppressively promote hegemonic ideas of normality [16] in a manner that neglects possible ideological evolution within contemporary social practices. Many may argue, therefore, that contemporary ELA readers cannot possibly be critical when negotiating a literary milieu in which they are not represented. Evidently, the predominantly white, heteronormative, patriarchal structures depicted within novels such as the aforementioned selections, *The Great Gatsby* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* do not account for alternative representations of gender roles, sexuality, race, or general world views. All this being said, it could be argued that the Surrealist pedagogue would support this research's position, that throwing these novels in the garbage would form the opposite of a progressive, critical move. Freire has cautioned that the oppressed, in this case the ELA teacher facing canonical literature, must not become oppressors themselves, in the search for freedom [5]. The previously stated anarchic position towards *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* that argues for its lack of relevant contemporary representation and deems it an illegitimate choice for the ELA curriculum means moving against Swanger's [19] notion of empathetic knowledge. Such a perspective would essentially state that any individual not adhering to cisgender[1] positioning, heterosexual orientation, or Caucasian race, could not empathize with the characters of the novel. This belief that because Williams' characters have been canonized means they are somehow not able to inform readers on universal human complexities is reductionist and arguably oppressive. Many people may share past experiences that greatly mirror the romantic struggles and desire for love that Maggie displays within the novel. The complicity forged with a canonized, 1950s housewife, despite being contemporary citizens, confirms the power of ELA. If, as previously noted, teachers aim to promote connection-building mindsets in students, abolishing the canon and the stories represented within it would counter this objective. The fact that students will be entering Neoliberal societies is a reality teachers cannot fight. A practice of book (room) burning would anarchically communicate that the answer to hegemony and inequality within society is to destroy, or be fearful and hide from problems. Vilifying Neoliberal contexts (and the ideologies they represent) does not serve students in a progressive manner. Instead, criticality is the perspective students ought to take when entering society. Returning to the concept of teachers' novel studies, if no attention were paid to the "outdated" structures represented within the novel, they would be confirming their Neoliberal dominant (and restrictive) discourse of reality and normality. Also, if they choose to not study the novel all together, instead choosing only popular fiction, they would not be representing an accurate mirror of the outside world. Therefore, through critically addressing themes such as the whiteness of Williams' characters and the patriarchy of his depicted marriages, teachers will no longer be hiding from reality. A frank, critical engagement with the "outdated" content could hopefully help students interrogate real, possibly lasting human tendencies. Berger has suggested teachers ought to question who benefits from restricting their access to certain forms of history [1]. In this case, acknowledging the Eurocentric agenda of limited representation is the first step. A censorship of these voices would essentially form rulers of the contemporary oppressed. A final consideration regarding the elusive book room debate, involves the possibility of joint voices. It is true that the number of canonized titles within secondary book rooms have been housed on the status of legitimacy. Titles have even been removed from book room shelves in the name of maintaining a specific set of accepted ideologies. The Surrealist method of construction and collective activism would therefore suggest that educators make space on the shelves for new voices to coexist with the canon. Rose and Kincheloe [16] have illuminated the need to pair popular forms of art with canonical counterparts, in order to interrogate high and low stratifications of culture. Ideally, the critical, Surrealist educator would view these book rooms as places of possibility as opposed to restriction. If the titles are not representing teachers' lived realities, they ought to create learning opportunities for students to create critical change.

Essentially, becoming critical educators can save students from complacency and social stagnancy. Critical pedagogy operates on the educational scale, within classrooms, just as Surrealism operates on the artistic domain. Breton and his Surrealists created their manifestoes and revolutionary movement to reclaim artistic autonomy and most importantly, the freedom of thought [2]. Breton based his movement upon a belief that people's thoughts have been hinged via the barriers of conformist, politically-charged societies. As Rose and Kincheloe [16] have highlighted the delegitimization of certain art forms, Breton has called into question the same dismissal of artistic practices of expression. Expression, according to Breton, is an artistic gift linked to humanity and people's understandings of the world. If their expression becomes blocked, it is likely their thought processes have also been blocked, and this is the epitome of artistic imprisonment. This research aims to attach the same respect to the imagination as Breton has done. His aims for democratic emancipation of the mind mirror the views of Trend, Giroux and Rose and Kincheloe in terms of liberating the education domain. As such, the subversive strategies of Critical Pedagogy aimed at the classroom could serve in bridging the similarly subversive aims of Surrealism aimed at the art domain, forming a joint conversation that could speak to the needs of artless ELA classrooms.

[1] cisgender positioning refers to individuals whose personal identities and genders correspond with their birth sex.

IV. Surrealism and Critical Pedagogy

A. Creating a Culture of Counter-Consent

Upon first glance, the historic Surrealists who belonged to an artistically motivated movement share little in common with contemporary ELA educators. The latter are a group of "real life" pavement pushers, working to transfer an established set of societal understandings to new generations of young people. The former were a group of artists working together to reshape their artistic domain. However, it could be argued that these two groups of people, although separated by historical context, bear solid similarities in their recognition of their own oppression. Both groups have respectively struggled in their practices, with their art suffering at the expense of dominant, overarching power structures. The largest difference between the Surrealists and ELA teachers actually lies in the collective nature of the former and the isolated practices of the latter.

The history of the Surrealist movement may, however, seem inseparable from its theory; thus, the question remains whether or not it could be effectively appropriated into contemporary contexts. The historic Surrealist movement arose through a highly specific context of sociopolitical factors. With its rise occurring in the early 1920s, the historic Surrealist movement took place in between the two world wars [18]. Following the First World War, many poets and artists congregated in Paris, as it was the site of charged, critical anti-rationalized thinking. The final period of the Surrealist movement was therefore marked by the emigration of Surrealist artists during the wake of the Second World War [18]. Evidently the tension due to the historic political circumstances greatly fueled the climate for the creation of the Surrealist movement. However, this understanding raises the concern of whether Surrealism can truly exist outside of its historical vacuum. The inter-war period played an integral role in amassing the collective voices surrounding Surrealist principles, while also fueling a shared momentum of revolution in response to world-scale political injustice. Parker [15] has described the French concept of terroir to involve "the spectrum of appreciable flavors or fragrances created by the unique physiographic constitution of the plot of land where a given product was grown and produced." [15] The term "terroir" is used most commonly to describe the production of food and wine, but the same philosophy ought to be attributed to ideas. If terroir were to be used to understand the creation of the Surrealist movement, it would mean their ideas could not truly be reproduced within the conceptually distant space of ELA learning. However, while people have tried to reproduce terroir in the creation of fine wines but struggled to duplicate the complexity that comes from the history of particular geographic soil, an attempt to create the soil for critical change within ELA learning is entirely possible through careful consideration. Gramsci, when calling for collective action within the socialist movement, has noted the importance of creating "cultural institutes", which form environments for political inquiry, debate, and liberated thinking. This dialogue is necessary to allow the political ideology (in Gramsci's case, socialism) to take root [9]. In a sense, Gramsci's arguments for creating cultures of ideology to assist political action could reflect an effort to forge a political terroir. Far closer to contemporary ELA's geographical context, the 1948 Refus Global movement offered an example of Surrealist-inspired revolution in Montreal. Wilkin [21] has noted that this movement centered on the liberation of art, expression and thought from the societal restrictions of "Church-dominated Quebec" [21]. Inspired by the automatism advocated in Breton's Surrealist manifestoes, Borduas led his own mini Surrealism movement in the name of liberty and social change. The Refus Global, despite having taken place over half a century ago, offers hope in its successful appropriation of Surrealist philosophy from all the way across the ocean. Even when facing different sociopolitical challenges, the relevancy of the Surrealist movement still appealed to the Refus Global cause, which fueled this research and a belief that creating a Surrealism-inspired movement within contemporary ELA could be successful.

In order to understand the politically charged impetus of Surrealism's creation, which involved more than simply a defence of art production, it is important to examine Dadaism. Dada arose in the early nineteenth century in response to the rationalization of the bourgeoisie, which Dadaists attributed to causing the First World War. This rationalism was interpreted to justify inhuman political atrocities, and the Dadaists, through a collective sharing of new philosophies, aimed to combat this reality via nonsensical expression [18]. Essentially, the positivist method of explaining the world suddenly seemed hollow when these "truths" could support chaos and suffering. Surrealism was born from Dadaism and utilized the collective rhetoric of the movement to pursue a new exploration of reality, based upon Freudian theories of the subconscious [18]. Breton's exploration of previously uncharted, seemingly illegitimate artistic forms [16] was enacted to discover the possibilities of the mind, in response to perceived threats against its power [2]. Breton, in his manifestoes, continued the Dadaists' critical opposition of rationalism, while proposing the solution of a collective artistic and philosophical movement. He illustrated how deconstructing barriers of the mind can lead to authentic expression, and thus a democratization of thought and being. Breton connects strongly to Giroux [6], as both revolutionaries have aimed to free the common man through intellectual emancipation. This emancipation comes through addressing one's oppressed state of thought, and critically reclaiming one's ability to create knowledge and meaning. Breton's embrace of dreams and automatism could reintroduce the "arts" needed in ELA. He has argued against scientific logic in the arts, which can be observed through standardization and formulaic, efferent reading practices within the ELA context. In a sense, Breton's manifestoes have explored the root of artistic concerns, much as Giroux [6], Trend [20] and Rose and Kincheloe [16] have investigated the sociopolitical intricacies that have resulted in a deflated educational landscape. Breton [2] noted that "every great idea is perhaps subject to being seriously altered the instant that it enters into

contact with the mess of humanity", suggesting that art is in constant danger of misinterpretation and ought, therefore, to be protected. While Breton argued for the liberation of thought and expression on the path to artistic production, and Giroux [6], Trend [20] and Rose and Kincheloe [16] have fought to free educators and cultural workers from the shackles of Neoliberal restriction, the same objective unites these voices. It appears that man is not free in his current state, and while he may feel himself to be so, especially when being fed an empty diet of illusionary liberty [3], he must come to terms with these "chains that bind him" [2] and devote himself fully to unhinging them.

B. Surrealism in ELA

In current ELA classrooms, an initial concern may be a practice-oriented one, as teachers feel that logistical barriers restrict the way they act. However, if they were to more critically dissect their positions as educators, they would acknowledge their own defense of said barriers. Breton's [2] radical devotion to Surrealism, and his constant efforts to define and redefine the constituents of the movement and its philosophy, were all aimed at helping man reclaim his most powerful possession, his mind. It may be tempting to examine the Surrealist movement solely based upon the art produced under its name; however, these revolutionary works do not independently speak to the political nature of the cause. To examine them as such would be to view the problems of contemporary ELA in complete isolation from the sociopolitical issues surrounding it. Likewise, to view the artistic works of Surrealists as the end goal of the movement would be problematic, as such would involve an interpretation of the movement as one of art for art's sake [16]. The work of Surrealist artists, rather, should communicate the charged freedom that Breton advocated, as these pieces form a subversive statement about the power of automatism [2]. These works are not the end product, as the ultimate goal of Breton's fight was to achieve purely unaffected thought and expression. One could argue that a sole focus on Surrealist works rather than a joint examination of them in conjunction with Breton's manifestoes would produce a "chicken and egg" problem, resulting in a misaligned understanding of the movement. If teachers therefore shift their gaze and recognize pure automatism to be a tenet of the movement, they could consequently begin reconceptualizing their own ELA problem. In fact, focusing on logistical restraints such as the need for standardized testing, in addition to seemingly dehumanizing realities such as class sizes and funding would be to examine Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* [18] as a purely artistic (rather than political and emancipatory) work. The point is not the restraints surrounding teaching practices; the point is the impact these restraints have on teachers' abilities to promote authentic thought in a Bretonian manner. Therefore a solution must take into account this conceptual web, as a solution does not lie in simply dismantling unsavoury boundaries. Hypothetically speaking, if teachers were to abolish standardized testing in ELA education, the non-critical educator would find himself saying, "Now what?" In fact, a sustainable solution to achieve creativity and criticality in ELA education, and to free students' minds, making them sensitive and tuned in to their societal surroundings, is to use their own minds. Subversive thinking and Critical Pedagogy [6] could therefore operate in thinking the way out of their conceptual bounds. As previously noted, teachers are maintaining their own imprisonment by not analyzing its structure [3]. By coming together in a collective manner as demonstrated by Breton's Surrealists [2], ELA teachers can form participatory language communities of dialogue and critique [11]. Through this shared revolution, ELA teachers have the potential to create a political movement of their own, one aimed at liberating their domain and restoring its artistic power. ELA educators cannot continue to silently struggle in isolation, resolved to an idea that change is impossible. They must harness the fire of critical pedagogy, question their subjugation, and intellectually rise above the structures that have formed technicians [20] of them, as artists.

V. Conclusion

After having engaged in the extensive act of Surrealist play, which has forged connections between seemingly disjunctive bodies of ELA classrooms within Neoliberal contexts, theories of critical pedagogy and the Surrealist art movement, one central question may still remain: Why Surrealism? Some may wonder why, if this research aims is to excite more criticality and creativity in ELA classrooms, another art movement could be explored, any art movement for that matter, which utilizes the imagination as a force. This research's response to this query would involve revisiting the dichotomous nature of the ELA classroom, which involves, in addition to artistic concerns, political ones. This research focuses on the political nature of the ELA problem in this final conversation about a need to explore Surrealist pedagogies. While Breton's movement and the theories it represents indeed address the contemporary move towards a more formulaic, scientific-oriented ELA approach, Surrealism is distinct in its motivating drive. What moves Surrealist theory is an active interrogation of the real [2]. The idea of real, it appears, has been confounded with ideas of truth, which speaks to the legacy of Breton's considerations, as the current society reflects this exact ideology. Essentially, through the power of the mind, and in this case, the mind of the student, Surrealist theory could challenge the fabricated nature of reality and approved answers that attempt to explain the world. By challenging assumed, established and otherwise unmoving realities, Breton's rebellion, much like theories of critical pedagogy, presents the possibility of alternative realities. Critical pedagogy isolates the inherently hegemonic nature of accepted truths by politicizing the controversial education domain. Essentially, critical pedagogy can be envisioned to call into question the problematic Neoliberal reality that has shaped the ELA domain and stifled teachers' ability to play. The shared dreams of freedom that Surrealism shares with critical pedagogy, within its own cultural space of the art domain, allow ELA teachers to envision a solution for change to critical pedagogy's call for action. In a sense, this act of

Surrealist play has illuminated the stagnancy of many teachers' ELA realities, while illuminating their own power as educators to question the grounds upon which that "reality" stands. Through a further exploration and eventual implementation of Surrealist pedagogies, this research aims to continue problematizing the discipline, and finally fulfill the insightful promises of the QEP [13].

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