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READING THROUGH DRAMA: THE CONTRIBUTION THAT DRAMA MAKES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ENGLISH

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Thesis submitted to the School of Education, University of Nottingham, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2020

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the contribution that educational drama practices make to teaching and learning in the core curriculum subject of English at secondary school level, focusing particularly on the processes involved in reading literary texts through drama. It considers the theoretical approaches that offer an adequate account of what happens in English lessons when drama plays a significant role in the learning.

The investigation is also concerned with the influence of the learning and cultural community of a school on pedagogy in the English classroom. Within this context of institutional expectation the dispositions of the teacher and learner research participants towards drama as part of the English curriculum are explored. The study situates English within a bigger picture of policy, illuminating the ways in which, historically and ideologically, policy frameworks seek to shape classroom practices.

Employing a two-case, cross-site case study of Key Stage 3 English classrooms in two London secondary schools, the school-based investigation spans two consecutive phases. Phase one in part serves a diagnostic function and phase two provides a complementary rather than a replicating research perspective (Yin, 2014). This framework enables the research to encompass both exploratory and explanatory purposes, posing open questions about how the learners in the study construe their learning in relation to the reading-through-drama practices to which they are exposed, and how their English teachers discursively and pedagogically construct drama as part of their classroom practice.

The data set is comprised of observation in drama-in-English lessons, field notes, documentary resources, teaching artefacts, and semi-structured interviews/focus groups with teachers and learners. A ‘bricolage’ approach blends thematic analyses with interpretive vignettes of significant moments (Yandell, 2014b), those key events (Lewis, 2001) which represent and illuminate the drama practices of the English classroom. The analysis is underpinned by a socio-cultural perspective on learning, but treads new

ground by demonstrating how aspects of literary theory are manifested in reading-through-drama activity with secondary school learners. From this less familiar viewpoint it therefore lends a fresh voice to current debates about what constitutes learning in English.

This thesis argues that drama as part of the English curriculum, despite policy equivocation on the matter, is far more than merely one element in the teacher's pedagogical 'tool-kit'. It demonstrates how, as a direct result of policy imposition and an all-pervasive test-driven schooling culture, the competing models of English that have emerged over the last 20 years are not conducive to the types of engagement with literary texts that drama promotes and enables. This thesis, however, argues that there remains the potential for a differently-inflected version of English to be enacted by teachers and learners in the contested space of the classroom, one that recognises the centrality of drama to the creative practices and social contexts by and in which young people learn. In this way drama, as a vital constituent, ensures that the cultural and aesthetic demands of English are properly met.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This PhD thesis would not have been possible without the encouragement and wisdom of those close professional colleagues who, over many years, have inspired me to become ‘a head taller’ (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102) as a teacher and teacher educator than might otherwise have been the case.

I also owe a debt of gratitude to my supervisors, Anton Franks, Joanna McIntyre and Susan Jones, whose expert input and advice at all points along the way have kept me on track whilst giving me the confidence to move forward.

I cannot thank enough the teachers and learners who so magnanimously invited me into their classrooms in challenging and arduous times for education generally and for the study of English in particular. I hope that I have done justice to their undeniable generosity, commitment and skill.

Last but by no means least I would like to acknowledge the support of my partner, Jim Clarke, who has patiently tolerated our lack of holidays as well as the hours I have spent shut in my study. This endeavour would never have reached fruition without his unwavering belief that I could do it!

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 The focus of the research

This study focuses on the contribution of drama to learning in the core curriculum subject of English at secondary school level[1]. My aim is to investigate the connections between English and drama that have implications for teachers' practices and learners' experiences in the English classroom. I pursue this by means of a two-case, cross-site case study involving at various points six English teachers and a range of their Key Stage 3 classes (11 to 14 year olds) in two London secondary schools. The school-based research spans two consecutive phases between 2009 and 2012, with a return visit to the phase two school in 2016, during which data are gathered from classroom observations, field notes, teaching artefacts and interviews. I analyse these data from the perspectives of the specific context within each school, drawing some comparisons between them, and with regard to particular institutional and policy factors relevant to English teaching. From the phase one data a view emerges of drama as a not-very-well-defined element of the curriculum for English. Thus, this phase of the research serves a highly useful diagnostic function in that it supports a finessing of my overarching research question and guides adaptation of the research design. The phase two case study provides a complementary rather than a replicating perspective (Yin, 2014) by presenting what Thomas (2016) refers to as a 'conspicuously good example' (p. 3), generating rich data which enable me to address positively the question of drama's contribution to teaching and learning in English.

1.2 The politics of English

The relationship between drama and English is enshrined in policy with drama requirements, to a lesser or greater extent, present in every iteration of the statutory National Curriculum for English (1989, 1993, 1995, 1999/2000,

[1] A core subject is compulsory throughout schooling. An indicator of the importance currently placed on English is that results in national examinations at age 16 are 'double-weighted' in the league table rating of secondary schools.

2007, 2013/14) since its inception in 1989. Despite this history, drama came under threat during the latest review of the National Curriculum in 2013 which took place as part of the radical reform agenda of Michael Gove[2], the then Secretary of State for Education.

To understand the position of the Department for Education (DfE) at this time in relation to drama in the curriculum, the DfE's official response to a letter of concern, sent by representatives of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on 17.10.2012, sheds some light. The DfE reply states that 'Ministers do not consider drama itself to be core knowledge as it is more a question of pedagogy' (Brown, November 2012), leaving it to schools to decide whether they will include 'subjects and topics like drama' (ibid, 2012) and thus casting doubt on any claim to a disciplinary base for educational drama. Even at primary school level, if drama does feature 'it is in relation to students studying great works of great dramatists, including Shakespeare' (ibid, 2012), a response that encapsulates a canonical view of the types of literary knowledge that are important for students to 'acquire in order to succeed in education, and in life' (ibid, 2012). At secondary level a twofold threat to drama, with proposals to both remove it from the National Curriculum for English and discontinue it as a General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examination subject, was averted following significant lobbying by an alliance of practitioners and cultural organisations[3].

The struggle to maintain a place for drama in the English curriculum is not a new one, however, and is indicative of a much larger, ongoing debate about the nature of English and what the subject is for, the progress of which has been charted by numerous writers from a range of standpoints (see, for example, Burgess and Martin, 1990; Gibbons, 2013b; Goodson and Medway, 1990; Kress, 2011; Peel, Patterson and Gerlach, 2000). In 1989 the 'politics of English' (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990, p. 47) were brought into stark

[2] Michael Gove was Secretary of State for Education from 2010 to 2014 in the Conservative-led Coalition Government.

[3] The website of the Cultural Learning Alliance provides a summary of the lobbying process which took place between February and September 2013 and which brought about the inclusion of references to drama in the Spoken language section of the National Curriculum for English. See CLA (2013), The New National Curriculum - a quick guide, http://claarchive.org.uk/news.aspx?id=115. Last accessed 30.12.16.

relief when the Conservative Government under Prime Minister (PM) Margaret Thatcher imposed the original National Curriculum regulatory framework. As far as English was concerned the document *English for Ages 5 to 16* (DES, 1989), or The Cox Report after the Chair of the Committee of Enquiry, Professor Brian Cox, identified five different views or models of the subject, although the process by which the authors arrived at their categorisation remained opaque. In giving credence to these differing perspectives the report was positioned by some commentators as a consensus approach to constructing a curriculum for English (see Marshall, 2000), a situation that did not meet with political approval, and which paved the way in subsequent government reviews for ever more ideologically-polarised accounts of the subject. Thus initiatives, ranging from skills-oriented to knowledge transmission, have been progressively instantiated in classroom practice by means of policy imposition such that English teaching seems to be in a near-constant state of flux.

In recent years this national debate about English has been influenced by international comparisons of the performance of educational systems, such as the OECD PISA[4] survey, which are underpinned by the philosophy of the 'global education reform movement' (Sahlberg, 2012; Sahlberg, 2013; Sahlberg, 2015). The GERM agenda promotes competition, standardisation, test-based accountability and managerialism. There is a focus on core subjects such as English, and literacy as a key concern of English, to the extent that policy-makers 'in many different jurisdictions' (Moss, 2012, p. 104) exert direct influence over schools' literacy practices via 'a common set of tools for engineering change' (p. 105). Thus the 2006 PISA findings were used to direct education policy in England, with the Conservative-led Coalition Government's White Paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010) citing England's apparent drop in the PISA rankings as a driver for its sweeping programme of educational reform.

[4] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in its triennial Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing and comparing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in all participating countries.

This, in brief, is the political landscape that English teachers must navigate and it provides the background against which my research takes place.

1.3 The impetus for the research: an autobiography of the question

It is my contention that the role of drama is central to this ongoing discourse[5] about what constitutes disciplinary knowledge in English, how its curriculum should be organised and what pedagogical methods are uniquely associated with its 'delivery'. Therefore it is necessary for me to be clear about my own position in the debate and I will exemplify this by means of a brief 'autobiography of the question' (Miller, 1995, p. 23). This is an approach which allows bridges to be built between past and present experiences, narratives and conversations, thus enabling my researcher-self to begin 'to construct a meeting point in which different voices, ideas and theories can be juxtaposed and reinterpreted, thereby enabling new knowledge to be created' (Nicholson, 2009, p. 323).

From 1974 to 1978 I trained as a teacher, gaining a Certificate in Education and a Bachelor of Education joint honours degree in English and Drama. There was a sustained focus on drama and theatre in education in the drama element of my degree programme, and a strong theory-into-practice strand which drew on the work of key theorists and practitioners in the field from Peter Slade through to Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton and Brian Way. Included as a set text for the course was the somewhat less predictable, very recently published work by Robert Witkin, *The Intelligence of Feeling* (1974). The book's title is indicative of the author's purpose in constructing a type of conceptual framework by which the significance to adolescent learning of the creative, expressive arts might be understood and explained. Witkin's research, undertaken in a wide range of both selective and non-selective secondary schools, offers a response to what he identifies as a 'failure to develop arts curricula in schools systematically' (Witkin, 1974, p. 30).

[5] Throughout this thesis I use the term discourse in relation to the debates that take place within and across educational contexts, acknowledging the power relationships that are inherent in the conduct and manipulation of these debates.

My drama tutors' promotion of this text is interesting for two reasons. First Witkin firmly positions English, alongside drama, art and music, as one of the creative arts subjects in the secondary school curriculum. Second, the findings of his research and suggestions for practical application of his framework challenge the established practices and ways of thinking about English at that time but also critique emergent practices in the newer subject of drama. For example, he highlights an over-promotion of the pseudo-objective language of 'critic talk' (Witkin, 1974, p. 67) when studying works of literature in the English classroom and advocates instead teaching processes that stimulate innovative, passionate and expressive responses. His findings also indicate how little time in English lessons was being devoted to creative writing. In terms of drama teaching Witkin concludes that the newness of the subject and the desire of drama teachers for curriculum acceptance were leading to a justification of educational drama on the grounds of its social usefulness. This was skewing what was happening in drama lessons towards issues-based, '"crisis dramas"' and '"social problem" role plays' (ibid, p. 95) which were then held up for objective analysis. His concern that such an approach was placing limits on the learners' acts of expression does not mean, however, that Witkin's framework is non-interventionist in terms of the teacher's role. Rather he is clear that the teacher should 'exercise his (sic) teaching function' (ibid, p. 96) to assist learners in 'managing the medium' (p. 32) through which their expressive acts take place.

On my drama course the students engaged seriously with Witkin's (1974) critique. We also considered criticisms of the non-selective comprehensive school system[6] that came from the rather different ideological perspective of the *Black Papers*, a series of pamphlets written by a right wing group of academics and educationalists between 1969 and 1975. From these engagements with current debates in English, drama, and education more widely, my sense was that the drama tutors and students nevertheless shared

[6] In 1965 Government Circular 10/65 had requested Local Education Authorities in England and Wales to begin the conversion of their schools into non-selective comprehensives but the process took many years to complete and in a few areas selective grammar schools were, and still are, retained.

optimism about the potential of the non-selective comprehensive schools to revolutionise practices in English and develop and grow the emerging praxis of drama. Personally I took from my course an understanding that teachers of the more established subject must advocate for drama, both as part of English and as a subject in its own right. This was despite a lack of collaboration between the English and drama departments during the entirety of my initial teacher education (ITE) programme, the English part of my degree mirroring almost exactly the diet of English teaching that I had received during my own schooling.

At my secondary school the English teaching I had experienced, with one notable exception, was also very much as Witkin (1974) described, and this contributed to my enthusiasm for a new approach. I had passed the national examination at age 11[7] for entry to a selective grammar school to the delight of my parents, neither of whom had been educated beyond the age of 13. My only encounter with educational drama came at quite a late stage in my compulsory schooling when my then English teacher cast me in the school play. It was this, though, that set me on a path towards my future career, sowing the seeds for my commitment to the subjects of English and drama and to the teacher's role as agent of curriculum change. It also, crucially, opened my eyes to the selective system of which I was in many ways a privileged recipient, and to the insidious effects of its inequities.

The director of the play was the same teacher who had introduced into my English lessons some discussion and group work elements as well as a range of creative writing activities, unusual approaches in comparison with the other English teachers I had encountered. He also decided to break with the tradition of putting on a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta as the school production, instead choosing *Zigger Zagger* by Peter Terson (1967), although he had to withstand opposition from the Headteacher and finally accept the compromise of imposed changes to the dialogue. This play was originally written for the National Youth Theatre and deals with issues relating to the lives of disaffected youth. It tells the story of a football fan or, depending on

[7] This was known as the 11+ examination.

perspective, ‘hooligan’, who leaves school at 15 to take up a series of dead-end jobs. The main character was played by Steve, a boy from a working class background who prior to this had enjoyed very little in the way of educational success when judged by the academic standards of the school. He had been placed in bottom sets throughout his time there and eventually left with few qualifications. It was unsurprising that my contact with him prior to participation in the school play had been minimal as the school operated an academic streaming system as well as perpetuating a gender divide through imposed seating arrangements in lessons and segregated playgrounds.

I had no doubt assimilated the messages about the desirability of social and educational stratification that these practices promoted, but being involved in the play prompted a new understanding of my situation. Involvement in the production did not provide an exactly ‘replicating experience’ (Fleming, 1997/2019, p. 4) as far as my own real life circumstances were concerned, but this is not, as Fleming suggests, the purpose of dramatic art. What it did afford was both an important opportunity ‘to explore and examine experience in ways which would otherwise be denied’ (ibid, p. 4), particularly in the strict regime of the grammar school, and ‘a kind of knowing qualitatively different from the kind we normally associate with the classroom’ (Jackson, 2007, p. 36). As my developing ‘*feeling-idea[s]*’(Witkin, 1974, p. 21) [italics in the original] found expression in the symbolic action of the drama, it became clear that the aesthetic nature of the dramatic experience was integral to its educative effect. I therefore found that my participation in this theatrical event had the power to reconnect me ‘with the real world, in ways that are revelatory, striking, disturbing’ (Jackson, 2007, p. 33). The real world in this context was one of educational inequality enshrined in the structures of schooling, a situation which had led to my best friend from primary school receiving very different educational opportunities to my own as a result of her lack of success in the 11+ examination.

The teacher’s choice of play was therefore significant, and not only because it provided a demonstrable break with the school’s tradition. Its provenance, content, tone, presentational style, which did not privilege message over

entertainment, as well as the ensemble nature of the production and the context in which it was being performed, spoke of a pedagogic objective and had all the hallmarks of 'theatre as an educational medium' (Jackson, 1993, p. 3). Perhaps less obviously its content also presaged some of the dilemmas that the teachers would shortly face when the school opened its doors to the full range of learners as a result of the status change from selective grammar to non-selective comprehensive.

When I went onto train as an English and drama teacher, the first opportunity to follow my own English teacher's lead as a pedagogic advocate for drama in education arose during one of my teaching practices in a comprehensive school in rural Lincolnshire. Drama was not taught in English or as a separate subject, although the shortly-to-retire Head of English was pleased to host a beginning teacher who would assist him with rehearsals for the school play. The Headteacher, however, proved to be interested in learning more about drama, seeking me out for discussions about the value of drama in the curriculum and allowing a special arrangement for me to teach drama in the school hall to an upper school English class (16 year olds) once a week. That this was not seen as a disruption to their preparations for the national examinations strikes me now as remarkable, although at that time the results-focused culture of schools was not as prevalent as it is today.

The learners were completely unfamiliar with the subject and treated both it and me with suspicion, but I was assisted by the presence of the Headteacher who appeared in a number of the lessons and helped me to elicit their engagement. Although it was daunting as a beginning teacher to be observed, however informally, by the Headteacher, I took his interest as a sign that the non-selective comprehensive school environment would be matched by a more inclusive curriculum, one in which educational drama had an important part to play. I also believed that English teachers, by both utilising drama practices in their own teaching and demanding curriculum representation for drama as a discrete subject, would be at the forefront of this movement. And so it proved in the two comprehensive schools where I went onto teach. I was employed in both as an English teacher who would build capacity for all

aspects of drama in the curriculum and this afforded me the opportunity to work with and develop my practice alongside like-minded practitioners. It is also worth noting that our attempts to free up the curriculum were supported by the introduction in 1986 of an inclusive national examination for 16 year olds, the GCSE, which replaced GCEs for the more and CSEs for the less 'academically able'[8].

Despite these hopeful and rewarding experiences, and even though over time more and more secondary schools were offering drama as a discrete subject, I learned not to make assumptions about the widespread nature of drama as part of what went on in English classrooms. Indeed, during my long career as a school teacher, participating in many in-service training courses, conferences and projects such as Language in the National Curriculum (LINC)[9], my encounters with English teachers from a wide range of schools led me to believe that drama was not necessarily a consistent feature of many English classrooms. This was an impression shared by the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) in their 'Position Paper' on drama: 'NATE acknowledges drama as part of the English curriculum but feels that currently its full potential within English is not realised' (Bunyan et al., 1998, p. 1). My move into higher education in 2002, after 24 years in schools, confirmed this perception of English teaching as increasingly 'drama-lite'. As a tutor to beginning teachers studying on the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)[10] secondary English programme, I was regularly required to visit schools across the London and Greater London areas, and sometimes beyond. Here I found less engagement with drama as

[8] Prior to the introduction of The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) the national examination system reflected the selective nature of schooling. The General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary (O) Level, which had mainly been taught in the grammar schools, provided access to study at Advanced (A) Level. The Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) was the examination offered in secondary modern schools which did not provide post-16 education. The vast majority of CSE students left school at 15 or 16.

[9] Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) was a national government-sponsored project enabling English teachers in neighbouring local authorities to meet together via a loose consortium-style arrangement for the purposes of curriculum development and action research. The project was initiated in 1989 but was discontinued in 1991when its position on the study of language as part of English did not meet political expectations. Its materials and findings were never formally published but were widely circulated, unofficially, amongst teachers.

[10] The Postgraduate Certificate in Education is the academic qualification awarded at the end of an initial teacher education programme.

part of English than I might reasonably have expected, given that a statutory National Curriculum requirement for its inclusion remained in place.

Impressions aside, those reports of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)[11] which summarise the findings from inspections of English departments over some fifteen years (Ofsted, 2005; Ofsted, 2009; Ofsted, 2011; Ofsted, 2012) provide corroboration. Tellingly, their case studies of 'outstanding' English departments indicate that a rich diet of drama activity in English is one of the 'outstanding' features. This raises two important questions: what is it about drama that contributes to the 'outstanding' qualities of such English lessons; and if the use of drama in English is so desirable, what might be the factors responsible for the patchy representation highlighted by these reports?

In terms of the second question, I could speculate that drama had found its place on the curriculum as a popular subject in its own right so perhaps there was less of an impetus to include drama as part of English. Or that a narrowing of the secondary English curriculum as a result of an increasingly examinations-obsessed political agenda simply allowed less room for drama input. Or that changes to teacher education meant that there was limited time for and investment in drama as part of the training of English teachers, a point supported by the funded research of Blake and Shortis (2010) into the preparedness and subject knowledge development of initial teacher trainees in English. Their findings identify issues about the support for subject knowledge development that trainees receive and about 'how to prioritise subject disciplinary expertise in the context of limited contact time with university tutors' (Blake and Shortis, 2010, p. 30). Thus, within the one-year timescale of a PGCE programme, it is understandable that tutors will 'exercise relatively high levels of discretionary choice' (ibid, p. 29) in terms of the subject knowledge input they provide, which may or may not lead to a particular focus on the role of drama in teaching English.

[11] Ofsted is responsible for the inspection of a wide range of educational institutions. Despite claims on its website to be completely independent of government, it nevertheless comes within the auspices of the Department for Education and is always headed by a political appointee.

As far as the first question about the positive contribution that drama makes to English is concerned, I have alluded to my own commitment to utilising educational drama practices as a key part of my English teaching repertoire, and as a teacher educator I was often being asked to articulate why. Thus I began to identify the role of drama in learning English as a potential area for more intensive study and I realised that this would mean scrutinising my own beliefs and values as an English teacher. The situation seemed ripe for investigation, and I found encouragement in John Yandell's words which very much prefigured the type of inquiry that I was interested in formulating:

> What would an adequate account of English lessons look like? What theoretical perspectives are required to make sense of what happens within a secondary English classroom in an urban, multicultural school? How can we begin to make sense of what is accomplished in such places? (Yandell, 2008, p. 36)

What, therefore, would an adequate account of drama-in-English lessons look like; which theoretical perspectives could be usefully brought to bear in order to make sense of what is accomplished in the secondary drama-in-English lesson? Guided by these intriguing questions, the latter of which pointed to an area that I had already identified from my reading as under-researched, I set out to answer the following research question:

- What contribution does drama make to teaching and learning in English?

As is clear from the above, my precise area of interest is not the well-trodden path of educational drama as a discrete subject in the school curriculum but rather the drama-English relationship and its significance to learning in English. My own writing up to this point was somewhat related. For example, in one paper I had analysed the model of drama offered to English teachers by the *Drama objectives bank* (DfES, 2003), a publication that came out of the New Labour Government's National Strategy (see Pitfield, 2006). I now wanted to focus intensively on the drama-English relationship from the

perspectives of epistemology, pedagogy and curriculum. My overarching question contains the implicit hypothesis that drama does make a valuable contribution to teaching and learning in English. It is an important aim of my research, therefore, to test whether and how this manifests.

1.4 How is drama in English defined?

An accepted part of the curriculum for English is the study of plays. However, whenever the term 'dramatic literature' is used interchangeably with 'plays' and 'drama/dramatic texts' with 'scripts', it is significant that 'dramatic' is the qualifier, whilst the noun foregrounds a view of the play as a written rather than performance piece. By implication, therefore, a play may be studied without recourse to participatory drama activity. Furthermore, a comparison of all the versions to date of the National Curriculum for English at secondary level shows that the drama requirements reside not in the programme of study for Reading (where literature study sits), but rather in Speaking and Listening (S&L), or Spoken English as it is now known. However, as S&L, Reading and Writing are all interrelated elements of English, some blurring of the lines is inevitable. Thus work with play scripts may be mentioned in the S&L section, for example, in terms of using language 'to convey action, character and tension when they [learners] are scripting and performing in plays' (DfEE, 1999, p. 32), or in non-statutory notes to accompany the Reading programme of study:

> The study of Shakespeare should be based on whole texts and provide an experience of the play in performance (eg through drama techniques, acting out key scenes, watching a performance in the theatre) (QCA, 2007, p. 71).

It is this approach to drama in English, set in train by The Cox Report (DES, 1989), that has endured, with the follow-up guidance to the report claiming a 'special function' (DES, 1990, paragraph 3.5) for drama in S&L whilst also acknowledging the opportunities that drama provides for learning in the other programmes of study.

Beyond the confines of the study of play scripts, references to drama across the various versions of the National Curriculum for English include: dramatic improvisation and role play (DES, 1990, p. 26); different dramatic techniques (DfEE, 1999, p. 32) and approaches (QCA, 2007, p. 64); and group improvisation (QCA, 2007, p. 69). In the very latest version, however, the emphasis is on the rhetorical purposes of performance as a means to generate discussions about effective language use (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2014), and as I explore more fully in my review of the literature, such an inflection is an indicator of political intent as far as the subject of English is concerned.

However, it is necessary to look back to The Cox Report (DES, 1989) in order to find the most detailed account of drama and its role in the English curriculum, even though this was immediately relegated by the politicians to the status of guidance with only a reductive description appearing in the programme of study itself. The non-statutory advice contains much about drama for personal growth and expression, and also in managing relationships. In drama the relationship between teacher and learners is described as a partnership and is encouraging of learner autonomy, although this theme is missing from the follow-up document (DES, 1990). Similarly the authors of The Cox Report envisaged that 'some elements of drama will become an integral part of the English Curriculum' (DES, 1989, paragraph 3.8), but by the time the additional guidance is published, integral has been superseded by 'a significant role' (DES, 1990, paragraph 3.4). Thus, in a small way these adaptations are indicative of the well-documented political wrangling that took place when The Cox Report was first published (Cox, 1995) and show how the 'politics of English' can seek to constrain 'the possibilities of practice' (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990, p. 47). Nevertheless, whether integral or significant, the descriptions of drama in English at secondary level focus attention on its importance in developing learners' linguistic resources, approaching the study of plays through the dramatic medium itself, and using role play to explore both non-fiction and literary texts. The additional non-statutory guidance (DES, 1990) also offers a 'Drama In Action' section. This lists a small number of techniques that

might be employed, such as teacher in role and forum theatre[12], and although unattributed, the former draws from process drama[13] approaches, the latter from the traditions of political theatre. Thus their inclusion points to an expectation of particular types of dialogic interaction in the drama-in-English lesson.

The term drama as I use it within the parameters of my research returns to this guidance as well as drawing from elements of the NATE Position Paper (Bunyan et al., 1998), accounts of the underpinning principles of educational drama as a subject discrete from English (see, for example, ACE, 2003), and the discussion in *Drama from 5 to 16* (DES/HMI, 1989), the final paper in the *Curriculum Matters* series[14]. In brief, drama is an art form, a practical activity and an intellectual discipline. It is important in cultivating the 'use of a disciplined imagination' (DES/HMI, 1989, p. 9), and is characterised by in-role exploration within an imaginative and symbolic fictional environment which in English lessons is often stimulated by the literary or dramatic text under consideration. Drama relies on collaboration as learners share ideas and interpretations about texts and situations, drawing upon their own life experiences in order to create, interrogate and reflect on their dramatic improvisations and presentations. Thus, active participation in drama calls upon the full range of learners' linguistic, bodily, imaginative and aesthetic resources. Franks (2009), looking at learning in drama, proposes that 'students learn through doing drama and… about drama by making drama' (Franks, 2009, pp. 11-12). My purpose, however, is somewhat different as I wish to probe how young people learn in English through doing and making drama.

[12] Forum theatre was born out of the work of practitioner and activist Augusto Boal with poor communities in Latin America in the 1960s and 70s. During live performances he invited his audiences to actively engage as 'spectactors' in tackling the issues of social injustice and political oppression portrayed, and by dramatically exploring the different ways in which scenes might be played out.
[13] The term process drama was coined by Cecily O'Neill building on the work of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton. It is characterised by the teacher's careful structuring of dramatic sequences, utilising improvisation approaches which involve teacher in role. Techniques such as flashback and flash forward are also employed to support the dramatic exploration of events in the here and now.
[14] *Curriculum Matters* was a series of 17 booklets published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) between 1984 and 1989. The preface casts *Drama from 5 to 16* as a contribution to the professional debate that informed the development of a National Curriculum, although there are many disparities between its recommendations and the drama content of the version of the National Curriculum that was finally imposed.

The point at which I chose to embark upon my research was timely. It was just over twenty years on from that seminal moment when the connections between drama and English were officially recognised in statute. In addition, the aforementioned state of flux as regards the English curriculum had been well-illustrated by a snap government decision in 2008, following a lengthy history of teacher and parental discontent, to abandon standardised national testing at Key Stage 3 (age 14). This happened at roughly the same time as the introduction into schools of a revised National Curriculum for English (QCA, 2007) which proclaimed creativity as one of its underpinning concepts. As far as drama in English was concerned, in such a climate the implications for classroom practice therefore warranted further investigation.

1.5 Thesis outline

The importance of exploring and defining drama-in-English praxis provides the impetus for the approach taken throughout my thesis, a brief outline of which follows.

My aim in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) is to explore the pedagogical and curricular web that binds the two disciplines of drama and English, and to consider how the debates represented in the literature have impacted on and shaped drama-in-English practices over time. As discussed previously, the interplay between policy and practice situates my research. Therefore I begin with a selective consideration of key policy documents from the birth of English as a school subject to the present day, always focusing on the ways in which drama in the English curriculum is described and represented. Through the contestations that these policy interventions reflect, and sometimes provoke, I am able to chart the development of the two subjects, exploring the implications for classroom drama activity of being tied to different and often conflicting constructions of English. By exploring the debates surrounding English and drama as discrete subjects, with particular attention to the points at which these converge, I set the context for my analysis of their influence on drama-in-English practices.

Despite drama being located in the S&L/Spoken English programme of study, I acknowledge the aforementioned blurring of the lines in terms of the contribution that drama makes to the other elements of English and that drama is often employed in support of textual study. This has led me to consider models of reading and how they apply to drama activity in the English classroom. As any research into drama as part of English must also take account of statutory requirements regarding the study of plays by Shakespeare, there follows a critique of work about an approach characterised as 'active Shakespeare'. External regulation and how it influences constructions of drama in English is relevant to a section on handbooks for teaching, in which I also consider the strands of theory which underpin practical descriptions of drama-based activity in the English classroom.

Finally Chapter 2 examines my own theoretical positioning and the analytical lens that in later chapters I apply to my data. Underpinning my interest in the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English is a view of the classroom as a socio-cultural space, and thus the key theoretical field on which I rely is Vygotskian psychology. Lev Vygotsky (1896 to 1934) was the Russian psychologist whose work became increasingly influential in European educational thinking during the latter part of the twentieth century, and in my analysis I draw from a broad range of his writings on learning, play, creativity and the arts. Because my research is specific to English teachers, English classrooms, and drama-in-English practices, I intertwine aspects of learning and literary theory as well as referencing theoretical perspectives to do with the performative nature of society and its institutions. This is in order to consider how learners are framed as cultural producers within such a context.

Where my study finds affinity with research into creative learning, it is in the 'set of values and ambitions' (Sefton-Green et al., 2011, p. 2) and 'constructivist understandings' (Thomson and Sefton-Green, 2011, p. 8) of both research and learning that researchers within this field broadly share. In creative learning models the aptly-named 'We-paradigm' offers a socio-

cultural reading of 'creativity as a fundamentally collaborative endeavor' (Glaveanu, 2018, p. 26), a stance that has relevance for the collaborative nature of the drama-in-English lesson. However, in seeking to investigate the claims made on behalf of creative learning, the researcher must be attentive to the '*cultural politics* behind many rhetorics of creativity' (Banaji, 2011, p. 43) [italics in the original]. That is why later, in Chapters 4 and 5, I consider 'the nature of contemporary communities, schools and teachers' (Thomson and Sefton-Green, 2011, p. 8) by examining the particular contexts that have a bearing on the teacher-participants and their pedagogical dispositions towards drama in English.

In setting out my research design in Chapter 3, I also address the complexity of undertaking a two-case, phased case study, giving an account of my methodological journey across the two phases of the research. My approach is to analyse the data from within each school setting and, where appropriate, cross-site. The thematic analysis that I describe in Chapter 3 is applied in Chapter 4 to the presentation of my phase one findings and also supports a nuancing of my overarching research question. The four subsidiary questions that I identify via this process provide the broad headings under which my findings are grouped.

The first of these considers the influences on their practices of the policy, institutional and curriculum structures within which the research participants operate. My second is concerned with the classroom and what happens when drama is an embedded feature of the learning in English. Here I introduce Heathcote's 'security thresholds' (1971/2015, p. 19) as an appropriate way of analysing the teachers' drama-in-English practices. Two further recurring themes, which prompt my remaining subsidiary research questions, focus on the role of dramatic play in learning English and the collaborative processes involved in the practice that I identify as *reading through drama*.

When I turn my attention to the lesson observations in phase two, it is important that my methodology addresses the particular challenges of gathering data from the social and embodied practices of the drama-in-

English classroom. To do justice to the 'always imperfect task' (Gallagher, 2008b, p. 2) of analysing and re-presenting its 'messy corporeality and materiality' (p. 4), I adopt the interpretive perspective of the bricoleur-researcher (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000). Thus I draw from 'narrative modes of inquiry into practice' (Yandell and Brady, 2016) to represent and interpret the specificity of interactions in the English classroom and as a way of mediating those top-down accounts of English teaching that rely on 'so-called evidence-based' methods, 'performance indicators' and '"objective" measurement' (Doecke, 2015, p. 154). My own observations intersect with the reflexive stories of those teachers and learners 'who are actively engaged in the situation that is the focus of the inquiry' (Doecke, 2015, p. 154). Following Jackson's (2007) approach, I weave theory throughout the 'continuous interpretative text' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 271) that I fashion from the data. To avoid this account becoming monologic in nature, as O'Toole warns (1996, p. 149), I blend it with my thematic analysis from across a data set which includes interviews and focus groups, allowing the participants' reflections to shed further light on my analysis of the lessons.

Chapter 5 looks closely at the pedagogical values of the teacher in phase two of my study. Here I find Alexander's (2004) critical account of 'the act and discourse of teaching' (p. 8) to be particularly relevant as it was developed in response to those government impositions that had, and continue to have important ramifications for literacy and English teaching. Thus the teacher's pedagogical approach as regards drama in English is viewed as part of a complex contextual web which includes her contribution to the learning community in which she operates, her professional history, her reflections on practice and the practice itself.

This last is the focus of Chapters 6 and 7, and therefore the subsidiary research question which probes what happens in the English lesson when drama forms an integral part of the learning is of particular relevance. Chapter 6 looks at this in terms of textual study and also addresses the subsidiary question to do with the particular contribution of drama to the

collaborative processes of reading which are a staple of the secondary English classroom. To inform my analysis of the practices observed, I introduce the notion of drama as a form of re-creative activity, a concept explored in my Literature Review in relation to theories of reading. In Chapter 7 I analyse the role of dramatic play in the study of a scene from a Shakespeare play and how a '"playful culture'" (Jackson, 2007, p. 198) is encouraged, shaped and utilised in pursuit of learning in English. As a lens through which to view this drama-in-English lesson I also employ notions of frame, from the sociological perspective of Bateson's (1973) play frame to the teacher's educative and aesthetic framing of the dramatic activities. In other chapters too framing is an important concept in my analysis of the pedagogical, curricular and institutional structures that support and/or constrain the situated practices of teachers and learners.

I shift my focus in Chapter 8 to an analysis of the data from three learner focus group interviews undertaken during phase two of my study. This is entirely led by the need to foreground the voices of the learner-participants in order to lend further perspective to the findings presented in earlier chapters. Taking account of what Bomford (2019) calls the 'complicated relationship between learning and time' (p. 13) in English, one of the focus groups takes place some four years on from the original research period, at a point when the participants are nearing the end of their compulsory period of schooling. This allows me to probe their views on the longer term effects of learning English through drama.

In Chapter 9, my final chapter, I critically review my research process and draw together what has emerged from the analysis in chapters 4 to 8. I particularly address the concept that I have identified as reading through drama, a process integral to learners' engagement with the works of literature studied in the English classroom. I am well aware, however, that my argument is at odds with mainstream policy and practice, as is apparent from the time I have spent during my own teaching career in schools and higher education both justifying and proselytising for the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English. My thesis, therefore, is an attempt

to unpick the complex reasons for a prevailing view of drama in English as an ‘add on’, and through my analysis to argue that a very different discourse is needed.

1.6 In conclusion

Given that English is a subject especially prone to ideological interference, I have found it necessary to approach the question of the role of drama in the curriculum for English from a political perspective. This is in recognition of ‘the ideological work we perform as English educators’ (Doecke et al., 2019, p. 220) when we seek to re-envision and transform English teaching beyond ‘narrow instrumental purposes’ (p. 220). Therefore, in my thesis I explore the conditions which support or militate against a strong culture of meaning-making through drama and analyse how these are played out in particular English classrooms in two schools. For me, though, it is just as important to define in precise terms the contribution that drama does make to teaching and learning in English and to do so by both immersing myself in the activity of those classrooms and seeking the perspectives of the teachers and learners most intimately involved in this endeavour.

CHAPTER 2

Drama in English: a review of the literature

2.1 Setting the parameters

My aim here is to present a coherent narrative of the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English, piecing together those strands of practice, theory and policy which are relevant to my research. Handbooks for teaching English through drama, although relatively limited in scope, have proved useful in demonstrating how epistemological and pedagogical connections are concretised in writings for and about classroom practice. For theoretical perspectives I have mined those bodies of literature which focus on English and drama as discrete subjects, more extensive in the case of English but not insubstantial for drama as the 'younger' of the two secondary school subjects.

My account begins, however, with policy, both its broader sweep and those reforms specific to English as a core subject in the curriculum. Because the continuing struggle for control of the curriculum in this area is indicative of 'a debate in miniature about what education can and should be' (Raleigh and Simons, 1996, p. 3), it is unsurprising that English has been particularly dogged by political interventionism. This is what makes policy an important site of enquiry in terms of my research. In what follows I demonstrate that at key points in the history of school English, and of drama within English, policy edicts, whether advisory, prescriptive and/or proscriptive, have been undeniably influential in shaping key aspects of the subject. I am well aware, though, that policy does not provide a full account of how a subject is constituted, with cause and effect running in both directions from policy to practice and vice versa, an understanding that informs my approach throughout this review of the literature.

2.2 Drama in the English curriculum: a beginning

The publication of *The Teaching of English in England* (BoE, 1921) is one of the defining moments 'in the emergence of English as a cultural praxis' (Doecke, 2017, p. 231). This Board of Education report offers a rationale for

the inclusion of English Studies as part of a 'national plan', although not at this stage as core to a 'universal curriculum' (BoE, 1921, p. 12 paragraph 8) for schools. Known as The Newbolt Report after its Chair, Sir Henry Newbolt, it was 'widely influential. It sold' (Hawkes, 1986, p. 111). The Report emerged from the post-First World War landscape and a concomitant resurgence of national pride, but was also influenced by the period of social and political change of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Its emphasis on the contribution of a national culture to a post-war nation-building agenda could therefore have been entirely regressive. Instead it is suffused with an Arnoldian[15] (1869/1960) sensibility emphasising the unifying and civilizing qualities of culture (see Hawkes, 1986, pp. 111-112), in this case a national culture. Its mission is to place Literature (with a capital 'L') at the beating heart of the study of English. Thus Shakespeare, presumably as Literature's principle representative, is central to one of the Report's three tenets of education, the training of the emotions through Literature as art. It is not wholly surprising, therefore, to find in the chapter devoted to *Some Particular Aspects of the Teaching of English* (BoE, 1921 Chapter IX) a reasonably extensive section on the contribution of participatory dramatic activity, with the authors advancing an argument for play-acting as a method of teaching about dramatic literature.

Play-making too has its place, and is considered to be 'in the fullest sense, practical English composition' (BoE, 1921, p. 312 paragraph 285), and therefore supports essay writing skills. By warning against training in formal essay writing at too early an age, the authors appear to acknowledge something akin to a developmental process in writing that goes beyond the technical considerations of teaching spelling and grammar. Additionally, they hint at a particular type of teacher-pupil interaction in their enthusiasm for the collective composition of a play, for which the teacher acts as scribe, and which builds from the dramatisation of scenes towards a full performance.

[15] Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was an important intellectual figure in the history of English Literature; a poet, cultural critic, author of *Culture and Anarchy*, and a government inspector of schools who campaigned for English Literature to be introduced into the school system as an alternative to Classics. To emphasise the lasting nature of his influence, his words were quoted in a speech by Michael Gove as recently as 2011.

This acknowledges that drama might facilitate a desirable collaborative learning experience in the English classroom, which is not to position The Newbolt Report as deliberately subversive of the more traditionally understood teacher-pupil relationship. Indeed, when the authors turn to the role of drama in speech training, they suggest that an aesthetic and emotional response to the recitation of passages from Literature can best be invoked through demonstration by the one cultural and elocutionary expert in the classroom, the teacher.

Emerging, nevertheless, is an embryonic definition of drama as both content and method in English. In terms of the educational purpose of dramatic activity, the authors of The Newbolt Report highlight its potential to effect social and personal transformation, achieved by inducting young people into accepted and acceptable forms of aesthetic appreciation. As Snow (1991) posits:

> …practices of self-culture through literature and creative self-expression in a morally managed environment combined in English, so that the masses might be taught to feel rightly (p. 21).

This is suggestive of Eagleton's (1983) argument that literature has long been used as a tool to embody and entrench a particular set of social values, although Doecke (2017), in his re-evaluation of The Newbolt Report, persuasively argues for a more nuanced reading, highlighting that within its account of English:

> …nationalist sentiments combine with progressive proposals about the relationships that ought to exist within the classroom and the need for a curriculum that connects with the life and personal relationships of pupils (Doecke, 2017, p. 239).

He therefore urges caution in pronouncing on the authors' intent from the vantage point of a different era and context. Whilst I remain alert to this

warning in my own reading of The Newbolt Report's approach to drama as part of the English curriculum, it is still worth noting how some key developments in drama practice at the time of the report remain largely unacknowledged. These include an understanding of drama as part of the progressive movement in education, which has its roots in the philosophy of Rousseau (Fleming, 2010; Marshall, 2000). This approach can be seen in the pioneering drama work of Harriet Finlay-Johnson (1912) which had an influence on the views of the then Chief Inspector of Schools, Edmund Holmes (Anderson, 2012; Fleming, 2010; Marshall, 2000). Similarly the connection between child play and drama, as exemplified in *The Play Way* (1919) by Caldwell Cook (an English teacher), is unrepresented in The Newbolt Report. Nevertheless, these omissions from the official account do not detract from the fact that, at a key point in the history of English, certain forms of practical dramatic activity are recognised as having a place in the English curriculum and the English classroom.

From these tentative beginnings I now turn to accounts of the heated debates instrumental in forging English and drama as discrete subjects before moving onto consider their development in relation to each other.

2.3 Development through debate: English

To exemplify one such debate I draw on the literature about two schools of thought on English that emerged post-Second World War. The policy landscape at this time had been determined by the 1944 Education Act which aspired to a new educational approach appropriate to an England emerging from the second major conflict of the century. This act extended the state system of education to include primary, secondary and further education levels and raised the school leaving age to 15. However, the schooling structure that was subsequently implemented followed the recommendations of The Norwood Report (1943) and was essentially backward-looking as it entrenched a selective system of schooling determined by a national 'intelligence' test at age 11. Thus at secondary level grammar schooling was for the academically able minority, technical schools had a more scientific

and vocational remit (although in reality few of these were opened due to cost), and secondary modern schools catered for the majority.

Although The Norwood Report was published in the same year as the first drama advisor for schools was appointed (see Hornbrook, 1989/1998), the report has very little to say about drama in English beyond its usefulness in allowing students to experience 'the "feel" of correct English on their tongue' (SSEC, 1943, p. 95) and instilling a tradition of reading aloud. Drama is still described in terms of literature study which is linked to those aesthetic subjects recommended for limited inclusion in the curriculum (Art, Music, Handicrafts), largely on the grounds that they hone 'aesthetic sensibility' (SSEC, 1943, p. 124) and the power of appreciation.

2.3.1 The Cambridge and London schools of English

This focus on refining critical sensibilities in relation to the study of canonical literature and on 'correctness' in language use is central to the Leavisite[16] (1948) tradition of the Cambridge school of English. Located in 'the academy', the elitism of Cambridge English exerted its influence on the teaching of the subject in the selective grammar schools via the subject specialist training in universities. By contrast London English, as Gibbons (2013b) reports, grew out of post-war endeavours by both academics and teachers based in and around the Capital to adopt what is often described - and in more recent times derided[17] - as a progressive and essentially classroom- and child-focused approach to English teaching. This 'for many teachers, especially those in the urban centres' (Ball, Kenny and Gardiner, 1990, p. 59) focused on validating and celebrating 'the lives, culture and language of the working class' (p. 59). Ball et al. (1990) also identify a radical strand to this movement by which teachers encouraged learners 'to develop a critical relationship to their own knowledge' (ibid, p. 61), rather than a straightforwardly celebratory one. However, Gibbons (2013b) takes issue with those who would position the two schools of thought about

[16] F. R. Leavis, the Cambridge English scholar and academic, founding editor of the journal *Scrutiny* and author of *The Great Tradition* (1948).
[17] Yandell (2014a) cites the comments of Tony Blair, Leader of New Labour from 1994 to 2007 and UK Prime Minister from 1997 to 2007, and Sir Michael Wilshaw, Chief Inspector of Schools from 2012 to 2016, on the negative effects of progressivism in education.

English in direct opposition to each other, pointing instead towards the more complex interactions that take place as practical classroom applications of a subject discipline develop over time.

As far as the development of London English is concerned, Gibbons (2013b) is emphatic about the importance of The London Association for the Teaching of English (LATE), established in 1947, and of the part played by both its inspirational figures and its network of teacher-members. His analysis demonstrates how the isolated incidents of progressive English teaching in the years between 1945 and 1965, as described by Medway et al. (2014) and found in English departments providing 'oases of progressive practice' (Yandell, 2014a, p. 406), could be disseminated, debated and transformed via the LATE study groups. These groups, as well as LATE conferences, campaigns and publications, were all indicative of its 'collaborative, participatory and classroom-focused' (ibid, p. 406) ways of working. In terms of its relevance to drama-in-English practices, the LATE archive shows that as early as 1948 there existed a 'drama in the classroom' study group (Gibbons, 2008, p. 126).

Gibbons (2008) sees LATE in its formative years as an essentially '"bottom up"' (p. 124) movement and suggests that this was a major strength in terms of its wider influence on classroom practice. I would, however, argue that the 'grassroots' practices of those English teachers who utilised drama as a tool for exploring texts and language in the classroom were supported and disseminated by emerging centres of educational innovation such as the Inner London Education Authority, established in 1965, even though this could be characterised as a 'top down' organisation, albeit with a participative ethos. Furthermore, such localised innovations in classroom practice had the potential to exert a wider influence once they connected with the national move away from the aforementioned selective system of state secondary education.

2.3.2 What is English?

In 1963 the failures of the selective system and its curriculum were highlighted by The Newsom Report, aptly named *Half Our Future* to focus attention on the inadequacies of the education of those young people in secondary modern schools who would become 'half the citizens of this country, half the workers, half the mothers and fathers and half the consumers' (CACE, 1963, p. xiii). The authors look at the links between curriculum and educational outcomes, and from the perspective of the subject English ask this telling question: 'Have aim and method in English teaching kept pace with what we know about young people and how they learn?' (CACE, 1963, p. 152, paragraph 461). They also allude to the possibility of the 'creative art' (ibid, 1963, p. 157, paragraph 478) of drama as a subject beyond English, but continue to associate drama with English, the connection being 'creative expression'. This is promoted as a key tenet of English, and has as its aims both the personal development and social competence of the learner.

Up to a point this echoes aspects of The Newbolt Report, but an important difference is to be found in Newsom's championing of improvisation as the central element of drama in English on the grounds that it supports learners in identity formation, problem-solving and negotiation of the interface between the personal and social worlds. This constitutes a broadening of the understanding of drama practices that are relevant in English. It also relates to the authors' belief in a curriculum based upon knowledge about how children learn in English, their rejection of a too narrow definition of literacy, and a reasonably non-traditionalist view of the underlying social purposes of student talk in the English classroom. Less positively, however, Newsom associates drama with a non-academic mode of learning, a view which was later to have repercussions for its status both as a discrete subject and as part of English once a statutory National Curriculum was imposed.

Just two years after the publication of The Newsom Report, Government Circular 10/65 heralded the move away from a selective to a comprehensive system of state secondary education. According to Dixon (1991) this period

between 1960 and 1969 was an exciting one for the networks of socialist and liberal thinkers operating within the sphere of education and seeking to bring about an inclusive education based on a curriculum and assessment model that did not hark back to either grammar or secondary modern principles. Such curriculum innovation was presaged in a LATE document of 1956, *The Aims of English Teaching*, which at this point offered a clear vision in the London English mode, although one 'based predominantly on practical knowledge – it is waiting to be supported by a theoretical framework' (Gibbons, 2013a, p. 139). However, Goodson (1995), strikes a more cautionary note, warning that even in the comprehensive school system there is always the danger of old patterns being replicated when, 'academic subjects for able pupils are accorded the highest status and resources' (ibid, p. 140). His words find resonance in very recent ideologically-driven curriculum shifts, as I return to later when looking at criticisms of drama as a 'soft' subject lacking in rigour.

2.3.3 What is drama in English?

Almost from the outset there was a right wing backlash against comprehensivisation, with the publication in the period between 1969 and 1975 of the *Black Papers*. These achieved a reach beyond the educational world and according to Benn and Chitty (1997) provoked media and public concern about an apparent fall in standards and the social engineering attributed to the 'non-competitive ethos of progressive education' (Cox and Boyson, 1975, p. 1). Against this background the report of the Bullock Committee of Enquiry, *A Language for Life*, emerged, its remit being 'all aspects of teaching the use of English, including reading, writing, and speech' (DES, 1975, p. xxxi). McGuinn (2014), who is critical of The Bullock Report for its approach to drama, feels that more might have been expected of policy produced at a time when Vygotskian socio-cultural thought was beginning to gain some traction in the curriculum, and by a committee which included James Britton, a key figure in LATE and writer of an influential body of work about English teaching. McGuinn (2014) accuses the authors of equivocation in their account of educational drama and its

underpinning principles. It may be, as McGuinn (2014) suggests, that The Bullock Report does not particularly advance the cause of drama in English, but it does find little evidence to support those concerns about the widespread and detrimental effects of a progressive agenda in English stoked by the authors of the *Black Papers* (see Ball, 1985). Nevertheless, McGuinn's critique points to a theme that runs through the literature about English teaching: that is, whether the English curriculum **hosts** drama (and should be expected to), whether drama **serves** English or whether drama is **integral** to English [my designations and emphases].

2.3.4 A continuing process of contestation

The contested history of English as presented above is of importance to continuing debates about its nature and purpose as a school subject as well as to what actually happens in contemporary English classrooms, as Gibbons (2013b) persuasively argues. This can be demonstrated as far as drama in English is concerned by reference to a more recent perspective in English teaching which derives from the multimodal turn (Kress et al., 2005). Multimodal meaning-making in English recognises that gaze, gesture, intonation, posture and image are more than mere reinforcers or modifiers of speech and writing but modes in their own right, and 'takes all communicational acts to be constituted of and through the social' (Jewitt, 2009, p. 15). Contained within this is the potential for a wide-ranging view of drama's contribution to the English curriculum, as 'signs are always produced in social settings', such that 'the full range of embodied communicative resources are engaged in making meaning' (Franks, 2010, p. 246). Yet recent accounts in the literature about drama in English (Kempe, 2003; Kempe and Holroyd, 2004; McGuinn, 2014) have instead tended to rely on the New Labour Government's National Literacy Strategy and its *Key Stage 3 National Strategy Framework for teaching English* (DfEE, 2001)[18], which offers a more restrictive model. The *Framework* assigns drama to the

[18] The National Strategy was central to the educational policy of the New Labour Government elected to office in 1997. Embedded in the National Literacy Strategy were explicit instructions to do with teaching style and delivery and in this way the Government sought to dictate pedagogy in order to realise its particular curriculum vision for English.

S&L programme of study following the pattern set in train by The Cox Report (DES, 1989). However, the *Framework*, in its skills-based, objectives-led, teacher-controlled approach to talk in the classroom, assumes a tightly instructional model of language development that is inflected somewhat differently to the one envisaged by Cox (DES, 1989).

The lists of atomised objectives dictated by the National Strategy *Framework* document are some distance away from the teaching objectives considered important in drama. Winston (2004) sums these up as:

> …'expressive' rather than 'instructional', focusing on those open-ended aspects of learning, where we enrich our knowledge by exploring concepts through talk and action to complement our learning of skills (p. 27).

Also difficult to resolve in terms of a role for drama is the National Strategy demand for explicit teaching of objectives within a highly regulated lesson structure, and the effect of this on learning within English:

> We must therefore be wary of initiatives that seek to prescribe and make routine the nature of the text (the lesson) that students participate in … The aesthetic space for learners decreases as the degree of explicitness increases. The fewer the gaps the lesson supplies, or the more routine they become, the less personally involved the learner is likely to be (Pike, 2003, p. 93).

The implication is clear: if there is little space in the curriculum for the expressive and aesthetic elements of English, then there is little space for drama.

2.3.5 Space for drama in English

This returns to a wider theme in the literature about English teaching to which I have referred above; that is, whether drama is integral to English, a position supported by Medway (2005). It is no surprise, therefore, to find him critiquing the certainties of the National Literacy Strategy model on the

grounds that it allows pedagogical possibility 'no gap through which it might enter and find a niche' (Medway, 2002/3, p. 4). His somewhat different vision of the English curriculum:

> …involves years of engaging in the exploration of issues, writing in a range of genres, debate, conversation, literary reading, drama and so on. It is necessarily diffuse and ill-defined (Medway, 2005, p. 23).

Neelands (2004), like Medway, emphasises the positive nature of the drama-English relationship, arguing that English is an appropriate host for drama in the sense that: 'there would be no drama in our secondary schools if English hadn't given time for it in the first place' (Neelands, 1991/2010, p. 70). In this way he displays less concern than some of his fellow drama specialists that the subject loses integrity if statutorily tied to English. Whilst Neelands sees a place for drama as a methodological tool, 'a process for learning' (ibid, pp. 68-69) that serves English (and other subjects), more crucially he identifies drama as integral to English in terms of its 'content relationship' (p. 70) with literature and what he calls the 'verbal arts' (p. 71) of English studies. Therefore, like Pike and Medway, the need to find spaces and gaps for drama is apparent in Neelands' call for '"pedagogical space"' (Neelands, 2004, p. 17) as part of his 'pro-human' (ibid, p. 11) and later 'pro-social' (Neelands, 2009, p. 173) agenda, which has a social justice orientation and 'integrative pedagogic aspirations' (ibid 2009, p. 177). However, Neelands' claim that his pro-social approach to drama is 'both artistically and socially progressive'(p. 180) seems at odds with his advocacy of one of the Literacy Strategy's key publications, the *Drama objectives bank* (DfES, 2003), in which drama in English is subjected to an objectives-led 'makeover'. Thus Neelands is far less critical than Medway of the foundational premise of the Literacy Strategy, suggesting instead that it is part of an emancipatory and democratic tradition, and being careful to take issue with it only for the draconian manner of its implementation in schools.

Medway (2005) highlights why, politically and economically, a messy, less regulated English curriculum might be thought too undesirable, inefficient and in some respects subversive. This point is illuminated by the struggle, outlined in Chapter 1, to ensure inclusion of references to drama in the latest iteration of the National Curriculum for English (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2014) and to retain drama as a GCSE subject. These threats were eventually overcome when a mention of drama was included in the final draft of the curriculum for English and drama GCSE was retained but with significant changes to its content and approach. Michael Gove's stance towards drama during this process was, however, unsurprising given his characterisation of progressive education as a betrayal of young people, his dislike of so-called soft subjects, which he positions as non-academic and less intellectually rigorous, and his attacks on the teaching of English Literature (see Gove, 2013a; Gove, 2013b), again for its lack of rigour in the diet of literary texts selected for study.

2.4 Development through debate: drama

The metanarrative of progressivism in education has also framed debates in drama as a subject discrete from English. Studies which consider the development of drama education have focused attention on the legacy of its earliest pioneering practitioners, Finlay-Johnson, Caldwell Cook, and Hourd, and their use of play to engage learners with dramatic literature and poetry (see Bolton, 1998; Fleming, 2010; McGuinn, 2014). As an early example of the drama-English relationship, it is perhaps no accident that in the case of Caldwell Cook and Hourd their practices arose from their teaching of English.

Following in the footsteps of these pioneers of educational drama, Peter Slade's (1954) insistence on child-centred free play, self-expression and the pre-eminence of the phenomenon he identifies as child drama later drew criticism from the very different perspectives of Hornbrook (1989/1998) and Bolton (see McGuinn, 2014). Slade's practice is criticised by the former for its failure to link with a wider aesthetic of drama as part of a rich theatrical heritage and its lack of emphasis on 'the learning of the formal and stylistic

aspects of drama as a cultural form' (Franks, 1995, p. 2). Bolton on the other hand does not deny the adult-as-fellow-traveller aspect of the teacher's role that is implicit in Slade's approach to child drama but expresses concerns about a lack of teacher guidance in terms of mediating content, form and structure.

For Bolton and his close collaborator, Dorothy Heathcote, whose practice has been lauded for its 'vital influence on the international development of drama in education' (preface to O'Neill, 2015a), this mediation would very often be managed from within the drama. Thus both teacher and learners, in role together, make choices about the progress of the drama, the teacher's choices being, in both a planned and spontaneous sense, pedagogic in nature. This approach is at the heart of what has come to be known as process drama (O'Neill and Lambert, 1982). Fleming (1997/2019) warns of the dangers implicit in process drama when the teacher over-orchestrates 'significant content and artistic form' to the extent that 'it is the teacher rather than the pupils who is acting as "playwright"' (p. 4) of their drama work. However, Bowell's (2006) commitment to process drama leads her to argue that it is key to the dramatic art form itself, acknowledging it as 'a genre of drama applied within an educational context' (p. 28), one 'for which the audience is the people who are creating it' (p. 27) and 'the makers of the meaning are the recipients of the meaning' (p. 28). For Johnson and O'Neill (1991), vital to this genre are critical spectatorship (including self-spectatorship) and critical reflection.

Such disagreements about the nature and practices of educational drama were prevalent in the UK between the 1950s and 1990s, but less so in other countries (Fleming, 1994/2011; Fleming, 1997/2019). These led to theorists and practitioners taking up polarised positions between drama as process and drama as product, the latter tending towards a skills-based view of the subject. The reasons for the divisions have been exhaustively documented (see, for example, Davis, 2010; Fleming, 1994/2011; Hornbrook, 1989/1998), and the debates have proved every bit as acrimonious as those taking place in the field of English.

Latterly the literature about educational drama has looked to ways of marrying, if not different schools, then different strands of thought. These encompass: aspects of learning theory which emphasise the social and cultural nature of the creative process in drama; performance theory; and the political dialectic of theatre practitioners and activists such as Brecht[19] and Boal, as well as the playwright Edward Bond who has had a long association with Theatre in Education (Davis, 2014; Wooster, 2016). From this new-ish landscape a discourse around 'Applied Theatre' (AT) has emerged, yet even here a lack of cohesion and agreement about approach is apparent.

AT is described by Neelands and Nelson (2013) 'as a vehicle for building community' (p. 16) among those engaged in it. Nicholson (2005) has used AT as a portmanteau term to describe socially- and culturally-engaged art-making, participatory drama, theatre and performance activities in community settings which may, or crucially may not include schools. McIntyre's (2016) research into two site-specific community performances involving young people rightly highlights the importance of such projects given the diminishing curriculum opportunities for creative and cultural activity and arts subjects in schools. Her call for 'new ways of describing and evaluating the value of arts and cultural activities' as part of a 'debate about reframing cultural value' (McIntyre, 2016, p. 150) is, however, of relevance to school and community settings alike. Ackroyd (2007) identifies a tendency in AT towards the marginalisation of drama in education, and emphasises the danger of designating an AT 'perimeter of practice' (p. 8) which disallows 'a significant stake' (p. 10) for school drama. Anderson (2012) too urges exponents to bear in mind that AT practices are grounded in educational drama and therefore rifts should be avoided. Munday et al. (2016) assert the importance of school drama as part of a strong social justice strand within AT. They do not claim that drama automatically acts as 'an agent of socially just pedagogy' (Munday et al., 2016, p. 77), but cite research to demonstrate its agentive potential. This is in response to Hickey-Moody's (2013)

[19] Bertolt Brecht, the Marxist-inspired director and dramaturg, 1898 to1957.

criticisms that in some circumstances the arts might be used as a tool to promote particular types of conforming behaviours amongst young people.

Alongside the AT movement a much more classroom-focused direction has emerged from Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert work which has clear links with the aims and methods of process drama. Mantle of the Expert as an educational approach has been developed further by Luke Abbott amongst others following Heathcote's death in 2011. In what is now a patented version of Mantle of the Expert (MoE), a community of learners encounter cross-curricular study through dramatic engagement in collaboratively-generated fictional settings during which the learners are cast as a team of 'experts' working to a 'commission'. The information found on the website at https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/ suggests that the Mantle of the Expert approach has gained some educational traction particularly in primary schools and through training partnerships with organisations such as the National Education Union.

Thus, from the legacy of conflicts about 'drama as process versus drama as product', which dogged the subject during its growth period in secondary schools, to a situation whereby a lack of opportunity leads to a divide rather than a continuum between community and school drama, it would seem that important disagreements persist.

2.5 The debates converge

To return to the context of the school curriculum, the histories of English and drama as discrete subjects, outlined above, converge in debates about the teaching of skills. I will now focus on how such debates are played out both in the literature and in policy.

2.5.1 A skills approach to drama activity

In drama teaching, the skills approach has arisen from Hornbrook's (1989/1998) interventions, in which he negatively ascribes experiential drama in education practices to a post-Second World War enthusiasm for educational progressivism. His argument for a pedagogy which 'closes the gap between classroom drama and the theatre' (Hornbrook, 1998, p. 5) is

framed by a view of drama as a theatrical art form that should be taught in the historical and cultural context of (a mainly Euro-American) theatrical tradition.

In his more encompassing 'conventions' model, Neelands draws on but attempts to ameliorate the excesses of Hornbrook's craft skills approach. Significantly the text which promotes Neelands' model, *Structuring drama work* (Neelands and Goode, 2000), has been reprinted 27 times, which 'must make it the widest-selling book on drama education internationally' (Davis, 2014, p. 36). According to NATE, the conventions, which 'are drawn from the theatre, literature, the cinema and the broadcast media' (Bunyan et al., 1998, p. 2), are structuring devices for drama activity. However, over time these have infiltrated lessons as a set of stand-alone drama and theatre techniques which O'Connor (2010b, p. xxv), hinting at a 'hijack' of the model by the Hornbrook camp, claims was never Neelands' intention. Whilst this is a convenient argument, it does not quite stand up to scrutiny as far as the role of drama in English is concerned, given that Neelands is one of the architects of the *Drama objectives bank* (DfES, 2003)[20] that I have cited previously as a key Literacy Strategy publication. Aimed primarily at English teachers, it closely aligns Neelands' drama conventions with the Strategy's lists of skills-oriented English objectives.

The account of teacher in role in the *Drama objectives bank* (DfES, 2003, p. 13) gives a flavour of the problem with this approach. Here it is represented as a way for the teacher to model skills and behaviours, whilst the pedagogical complexity of a process drama understanding of teacher in role, as described earlier, remains unacknowledged. It is hard to know whether this is due to deliberate over-simplification for the benefit of non-drama specialist English teachers or acquiescence with the highly-regulated pedagogic approach of the Literacy Strategy. These are ideas on which I have expanded

[20] In 2003 Jonothan Neelands and Andy Kempe launched the *Drama objectives bank* to tutors working in initial teacher education and led the training, an event which I attended. However, in the January 2004 issue of ***English***Drama**Media**, the magazine of the National Association for the Teaching of English, Paul Bunyan and Ruth Moore also lay claim to authorship.

in an article (Pitfield, 2006) written in response to the publication of the *Drama objectives bank.*

It would be entirely misleading not to recognise that Neelands has moved on from this position, developing and theorising his 'pro-social' (O'Connor, 2010a, p. 115) and 'ensemble' (Neelands, 2009) pedagogies through his practice and writing. Nevertheless, as Bryer (2017) emphasises, it is the conventions approach that over time has had a defining influence on GCSE drama specifications, chiming with government pressure to shift the very latest version further towards 'the vocational realm' (p. 437) of theatre practices and skills than ever before. From this perspective it is possible to argue that Neelands has been instrumental in delivering Hornbrook's vision of a drama curriculum.

2.5.2 The power of pedagogy

In terms of the English curriculum, by tying his drama conventions to the pedagogic model of the Literacy Strategy, Neelands undermines his own argument that pedagogy is the means to ensure their more nuanced use. Throughout his writing his belief in the power of pedagogy is marked, for example, when he calls for a '"pedagogic contract" for English and Drama classrooms' (2004, p. 15), to allow teachers 'to reclaim the pedagogical perspective of their work in the face of the state-owned curriculum' (p. 17). This stance is at the same time positive and problematic, because on the one hand he is relying on the agency of teachers, on the other calling into question their ability to exercise it, as what they are actually being given is 'responsibility without authority' (Neelands, 1991/2010, p. 72). Thus they have the responsibility for results and meeting targets but little authority in deciding the best ways to achieve these. Relating this to English teachers' use of drama, the focus on results coupled with a sense of ambiguity in the approach of policy-makers towards drama in English, which McGuinn (2014) suggests can be traced back to The Bullock Report (DES, 1975), exonerates those who do not want or feel able to engage with drama as part of the English curriculum. Whilst the (non-compulsory) *Drama objectives bank* (DfES, 2003) seems to offer a way of ameliorating this situation, it is

nevertheless an ‘off-the-peg’ model and as such is no real substitute for giving English teachers’ space to develop their subject knowledge, pedagogy and confidence through reflexive engagement with new or different ways of working. The findings of Daly’s (2004) research with beginning teachers in London English classrooms supports the call for a very different approach:

> The practice of teaching is about a constant process of meaning-making, within a social theory of learning which requires teachers to be active participants in the learning in their classrooms. If we believe that learning in fact comes from the interfaces between what children bring and what teachers offer, how can they work with any prescribed set of tools and methods? A knowledge base for English teaching comes rather from the shared experiences of teachers as and with learners, critically interpreted through instruments for reflection. It is not about managerialist applications of methods which remove the critical thinking bit - the intellectual creativity of teaching (Daly, 2004, p. 196).

Yet in English a far-reaching skills agenda has over time led to the types of practices that rely on the prescribed set of methods to which Daly (2004) refers and which I see replicated in English lessons when visiting schools in my capacity as a PGCE tutor. To characterise these, either literary texts are used reductively as a vehicle to identify language features (for example, the ubiquitous metaphor hunt) or to drill learners, for assessment purposes, in the PEE, or some such acronym, of ‘point, evidence, explanation’ paragraphs when writing about literature. Learners are asked to comment on the effect of the language on the reader, suggesting one ‘correct’ response of one collective reader. In this model it is as if literature teaching has been untouched by reader response theory or any notions of intertextuality, theoretical perspectives that I discuss below. It also positions the English teacher, as Xerri’s (2013) research into poetry study in English demonstrates, as the one sophisticated reader in the class who acts as the gatekeeper of

meaning, which in turn begs wider questions about 'discursive rights in the classroom' (Giovanelli and Mason, 2018, p. 2) and whose meanings have value.

Drama activity is not by default an antidote to such an approach to literature teaching, however. For example, at the 2012 National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) annual conference I attended a workshop on Simon Stephens' adaptation of Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, part of the *Critical Scripts* series by Bunyon and Moore (2013). The workshop was led by the authors, prolific writers of drama in English handbooks. Some participants were asked to respond as the 'Playwright' (afforded a capital P) to questions from an 'actors' group about his dramatic interpretation of a scene from the novel. To do so they were encouraged to draw on comments from interviews with Stephens in which he explains his rationale for making specific adaptations. I argued during the workshop that the activity is not a genuinely interpretive one as it promotes the idea of the playwright as the authoritative voice. In Bakhtin's (ca. 1920-1923/1990) terms, this takes the viewpoint expressed by the author as 'a validation and demonstration of the truth of an idea' (p. 10), rather than as just one 'incarnation of meaning in existence' (p. 10).

In the light of these criticisms I will now consider some theoretical perspectives that are pertinent to a discussion of the contribution that drama makes to the reading practices of the English classroom.

2.6 Reader response, re-creative text and intertextuality

A recent important intervention into debates about classroom reading practices is offered by Yandell's (2014b) research, demonstrating how, in the context of the English lesson, meanings are shared and negotiated by drawing on a broad set of schooled and home/community literacy practices. His is both a 'reader-oriented' (Giovanelli and Mason, 2018) and a socially-oriented approach. As such it is at odds with examination requirements that adhere to more elitist notions of reading as an act of individual judgement and good taste, expecting candidates to write about 'a text in ways that demonstrate

their worth by showing their knowledge of the text's worth' (Yandell, 2014b, p. 37). His social model of reading also critiques reader response theorists such as Rosenblatt, Iser and Fish for not addressing the significance of both the 'contexts which shape, inform and inflect the reading' and 'reading as a collaborative or collective act' (ibid, p. 40). Evans, writing in 1987, does, however, point to the effects of the communality of the classroom on reading and interpretation as well as noting the beginnings of a shift in reader response accounts towards recognition of the text, not just as an interrelationship between the author and the reader, but also between readers (Evans, 1987). These ideas are considerably expanded by Yandell (2014b).

In the reading activity of the classroom Scholes' (1985) seminal work on literary theory also suggests the importance of intertextual relationships and the teacher's preparedness to find ways of drawing out the connections between the literary text and the 'larger cultural text' (p. 33) in which it resides and to which it contributes. In terms of drama in English, Eccles (1989) describes this as a process whereby the learners bring their knowledge to the classroom and this interacts with and expands upon the literature studied, with drama providing not just the opportunity to 'look at life through the eyes of another' (p. 4), but to experience it. As such this is a culturally-situated view of reading as it acknowledges the readers' own cultural knowledge and experiences as of relevance in interpretive activity, and highlights the dialogic and inclusive flavour of reading through drama in the English classroom. Also significant in forming composite and constantly shifting readings is 'the creative imagination of the reader' (Iser, 1978, p. 142), although the solitary, highly competent and culturally homogeneous reader that Iser (1978) assumes in his 'reception' theory is problematic in terms of the larger cultural text of the socially diverse English classrooms in which my research takes place.

Iser's (1989) notion of the author and reader playing a game of the imagination with 'the text as a playground' (p. 250) is, however, relevant to teachers who approach reading through drama, with meaning-making and the richness of the experience as the rewards of the game (Evans, 1987, p. 31).

Another of Iser's (1978) ideas well-suited to the ways in which drama activity is employed as part of the reading process in the classroom is that of 'the wandering viewpoint' (p. 108), by which the readers, as they travel through the text during a sequence of lessons, are layering and connecting perspectives from different moments in their reading. In this way 'literary readers…build up the object for themselves' (Evans, 1987, p. 36), and are re-creating it. These are simultaneously imaginative and interpretive processes, although Iser still envisages them as individualised rather than collective acts of meaning-making. Nevertheless his ideas underpin what is known as the re-creative mode in engagements with literary texts. This is when learners, in response to a literary text read in the English classroom, re-imagine and re-produce the existing text in different ways, for example, by changing genre or shifting the narrative perspective. Such activities, according to Knights and Thurgar-Dawson (2008), highlight the connection between the critical and the creative aspects of the reading process, as well as casting learners as both active, engaged readers and cultural producers. The re-creative response to reading therefore, draws on those elements of reader response theory which are to do with collaborations between writer and reader in the act of production, with the source text being re-made every time it is read (Knights and Thurgar-Dawson, 2008).

The relationship between the source and re-creative text is also an intertextual one, recognising that all texts are written and read in the light of the other texts to which they implicitly and explicitly refer within the historical and cultural contexts of both their production and their reading. Thus the study of literary texts in drama-in-English lessons draws on a 'network of textual relations' (Allen, 2011, p. 1) from both within and beyond the classroom context as other texts are 'folded into' (Burnett and Merchant, 2016, p. 273) the storying-through-drama which takes place. In this model meaning-generation is a dynamic process, with texts offering neither stability nor determinacy of interpretation in the way that is suggested by the teacher acting as the gatekeeper of meaning. Smagorinsky (2011) identifies an 'anticipation of the construct of intertextuality'(p. 322) in

Vygotsky's early work *The Psychology of Art* (1925/1971). Vygotsky's description of the way in which transactions with art draw upon 'intelligent emotions' (Vygotsky, 1925/1971, n. pag.) is also useful when considering the role of affect in re-creative dramatic engagements with literature.

2.6.1 Reading as an embodied activity

Dramatic acts of re-creation do not treat the source texts as inert, or in new materialist terms 'as preexisting entities, but as intra-action, as forces from which other texts come into existence' (Dolphijn and vanderTuin, 2012, p. 57). In this process, according to Misson's (2013) description, both texts and readers are 'in a state of becoming, and each is shaped by how they react with each other' (p. 352). As Hickey-Moody (2009) demonstrates by means of a reading of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, 'Literary affect' can become 'corporeal affect' (p. 275). This has relevance for the concept of embodied reading (Yandell, 2008; 2014b) whereby the body is a key interpretive resource in 'the richness of the cultural work' (Yandell, 2014b, p. 108) produced through specific role play activities around a dramatic text. The very term 'role play' encapsulates the purposeful entanglement of drama and play in reading, a phenomenon I consider in subsequent chapters in relation to the classroom practices observed.

Other perspectives on embodiment include that of Eagleton (2003) who suggests that culture and human bodied existence are inextricable:

> Because our bodies are materially geared to culture - because meaning, symbolism, interpretation and the like are essential to what we are - we can get on terms with those from other cultures (ibid, p. 159).

Thus for Eagleton (2003) 'Having a body' is 'like having a language' and 'is a way of being in the midst of a world' and 'a way of going to work on the world' (p. 166). This is relevant given the increasingly diverse nature of urban English classrooms where learners' engagements with each other and with literary texts are felt and made material in the bodied work of drama activity.

Embodiment and the importance to learning of the intra-action or intertwining of the physical and the ideational is pursued in the concept of classrooms as bodied spaces (Franks, 1997; Franks et al., 2014). Franks refutes a mind-body dichotomy and proposes that 'in relation to, or in response to, sets of social interactions, representations, texts, or even her own desires, she [the learner] might "act" to create her own texts' (1997, p. 131). Here he is using the term desire in a Vygotskian (1978) sense to describe the learners' 'motive force for learning' (Franks, 1997, p. 135). In later chapters I explore the centrality of the learners' 'bodiliness' (Franks et al., 2014, p. 172) to the artistic and expressive practices that take place in the context of the English classroom where I also find echoes of Bakhtinian 'carnivalesque' (1984) in learners' dramatic behaviours. This highlights another intertextual relationship, as the re-creative dramatic texts the learners are encouraged to produce contain those elements of imitation which 'seek to parody, pastiche, paraphrase, "translate" or supplant the original' (Wilkie-Stibbs, 1999/2005, p. 170), thus liberating 'readers from an over-invested admiration in great writers of the past' (p. 170).

2.6.2 Drama and reader response

From the above it is clear that the position of the literary text in the English classroom is not as polarised as Barthes (1977) would suggest, in that recognition of the reader's role does not signify 'the death of the author' (p. 148). The text retains its significance, a reader response position closer to that of Rosenblatt (1978/1994) and Iser (1980) than Fish (1980), who famously posed the question, 'Is there a text in this class?' (p. 305). In Rosenblatt's (1978/1994) 'transactional' model of reading 'the reader's attention vibrates between the pole of the text and the pole of his (sic) own responses to it' and this 'permits a dynamic view of the text as an opportunity for ever new individual readings' (pp. 129-130). This process allows readers to draw on their own contexts and 'readinesses to think and feel' (ibid, p. 88) about the text. In English lessons, because readings are situated within the social reading practices of the classroom, a range of relevant literary and lived experiences in relation to the text are opened up by the interchange of

learners' views (Evans, 1987, p. 40). Through drama, learners work collaboratively with and within the textual indeterminacies, blanks and gaps, which are structured so as to 'prompt acts of ideation on the reader's part' (Iser, 1980, p. 112), although responses are still circumscribed and shaped by the fictional world that the text creates (O'Neill and Rogers, 1994, p. 48). Thus learners are spurred to interpret and re-make the text in different ways, or as Neelands has it, to tell their own stories in relation to the stories of others (O'Connor, 2010a).

It is Barrs (1987) who goes further, demonstrating most comprehensively how reader response approaches and drama are inextricably connected: 'Whether we read aloud *or* silently, in some way we enact, or perform, the text' (p. 208). In assuming 'the voice of the text, tuning our own voice to its demands' (ibid, p. 209), the text 'lives *through us*' (p. 208) [italics in the original]. By the same token learners live through the texts they go onto create and thus writing is characterised by Barrs as '"Drama on paper"' (ibid, p. 211). In viewing all aspects of English as 'involving the creation of fictional worlds and the assumption of roles' (Coles and Bryer, 2018, p. 56), Barrs places drama at the epistemological heart of the subject.

2.7 The 'active Shakespeare' debate

This section acknowledges that much of the drama activity in English classrooms is likely to be encountered in the study of play texts and is particularly harnessed in support of teaching plays by Shakespeare. The compulsory status of Shakespeare's works in the curriculum for English has given rise to teaching handbooks and projects that promote active, drama-based approaches as a panacea for desk-bound study. Although the value of a drama-based pedagogy for teaching Shakespeare might appear self-evident, Coles (2013) suggests that such a notion is in need of considerable nuancing.

James Stredder (2009), for example, does not seek to position the drama activity as 'an end in itself' (p. xix), instead locating it within a set of critical reading practices which recognise the 'shifting cultural contexts' (p. xix) in which the reading takes place. His text presupposes in its very title, *The*

North Face of Shakespeare: Activities for teaching the plays, that teachers and learners will face difficulties when engaging with the works of the Bard, although Stredder is careful to point out that 'what our culture has made of Shakespeare' (2009, p. 3) is rather more problematic than the plays themselves. In mitigation of this cultural baggage he cites a mixed set of influences on the practices described in his book, including the outreach activities of major theatre companies, the increasingly progressive nature of English teaching since the 1950s, and the work of the pioneers of drama in education. However, it is the *Shakespeare and Schools Project* at the Cambridge Institute of Education, led by Rex Gibson, 'the most specific initiative in Britain in the last twenty years' (Stredder, 2009, p. 5), for which Stredder reserves the highest praise, his own text being published as part of the *Cambridge School Shakespeare* series[21] which is the legacy of that project.

2.7.1 'Active Shakespeare' in policy

It is worth noting that a similar endorsement of an 'exploratory and performance-based approach' (DES, 1989, paragraph 8.16) to teaching the plays of Shakespeare and other dramatic texts can be traced back to The Cox Report (DES, 1989). Indeed the chapter on 'Literature' singles out the *Cambridge Shakespeare and Schools Project* for particular praise, again drawing on an 'active' versus 'desk-bound' binary and negatively equating the latter approach with the 'once-traditional method' (DES, 1989, paragraph 7.16) of studying Shakespeare. This stance was never likely to find favour with Cox's political masters, the right-wing Conservative Government of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (see Cox, 1995), particularly as The Cox Report emerged against a background hum of criticism from right-wing commentators such as John Marenbon[22]. He saw no need to allow space for learners' interpretive responses to the literature read in class, such as might be elicited through drama-based activity, because 'The competent reader reads a work of literature much as other competent readers read it'

[21] Rex Gibson was the original editor of this series which was published from the mid-1980s onwards and was substantially updated in the mid-2000s.
[22] John Marenbon's views were published by an influential right wing think tank: Marenbon, J. (1987), *English our English: the new orthodoxy examined*. London: Centre for Policy Studies.

(Marenbon, 1987, p. 37). Furthermore, his assertion that 'English is combined and confused with other subjects to its, and their, detriment' (ibid 1987, p. 38) does not appear to support a relationship between English and educational drama.

The National Curriculum was responsible for ushering in an era of attainment targets measured by statutory national tests (Standard Attainment Tasks or SATs) at age 14, the Shakespeare paper being a key element of the English test. It is this reality which, according to Coles' research, has led to a situation whereby:

> Affording "access" to a reified text becomes drama's prime objective. Consequently, the notion of "active Shakespeare" draws attention away from the socio-cultural role of students as readers... The playtext, rather than the student, remains central to the enterprise throughout (Coles, 2009, p. 34).

Such practices are certainly not reflected in Stredder's (2009) account of pedagogy. He is at pains to place both learner and text at the centre of the learning experience, with learners able to manipulate the text as a resource rather than a canonical artefact, though for Franks et al. (2014) a Shakespeare play cannot but retain its 'canonical authority…in a heavily tested, prescribed curriculum' (p. 180). Where there is agreement between these two positions, it can be found in the idea of the play as 'permeable' (Franks et al., 2014, p. 176) and open to interpretive shifts if treated as what it is, a theatrical text, 'a script, a score for performance…a field for play and experiment' (Stredder, 2009, p. 15). This is a perspective I explore later in my analysis of classroom practice.

The criticisms proffered by Coles, who was herself part of the *Cambridge Shakespeare and Schools Project*, are well-made. Stredder too deplores the 'Monumentalism in Shakespeare' that 'mystifies the object of study' (Stredder, 2009, p. 8) and promotes cultural intimidation, a position inherent in the high stakes assessment regime that teachers and learners are subject to

and which has far-reaching effects. For example, when the Key Stage 3 SATs were still in place my own small-scale research indicated that joint projects between English and drama specialist teachers were almost exclusively based on the teaching of a Shakespeare play for test preparation purposes. Such collaborations were therefore, in essence, results-driven (Pitfield, 2006), a situation that did not significantly change following the Government's abandonment of the tests in 2008 (Pitfield, 2013).

2.7.2 'Active Shakespeare' programmes

Post-SATs, in initiatives such as the Royal Shakespeare Company/University of Warwick's Learning and Performance Network (LPN)[23], Coles (2013) still finds faint echoes of the 'active Shakespeare' approach that was predicated on test preparation. The LPN offered a combination of outreach in schools, workshops and summer schools for learners and continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers led by actors and directors utilising rehearsal room techniques. Coles (2013) suggests that the LPN lacked engagement with 'what pupils themselves bring to the classroom or with models of reading, and for me leaves questions of cultural practice largely unanswered' (p. 55). This criticism finds some corroboration in a key research evaluation of the LPN model (Thomson et al., 2010). One of its findings in relation to the LPN's model of CPD highlights that, although the teachers involved were prepared to use drama techniques as part of their teaching of a play's narrative, they did not routinely transfer the collaborative building of interpretations into their own classroom practice:

> But work that focused on making more patterned connections to particular themes, motifs, issues or points of view – connections that might highlight for viewers and participants ways in which the play could be interpreted in relation to the concerns of their own lives – was less in evidence. (Thomson et al., 2010, p. 22)

[23] 2006 to 2017.

This suggests that rehearsal room, or as it is sometimes known, ensemble pedagogy, rather than engaging with wider pedagogic purposes, is more to do with methods to 'access' Shakespeare:

> These teachers were moved by the sense that something difficult was being conquered, something boring was being made interesting. These feelings did not necessarily encourage them to emphasise meaning-making and interpretation in their lessons with young people. (Thomson et al., 2010, p. 25)

Yet, as Coles' extended research in English classrooms across two London schools demonstrates, when rooted in a socio-cultural perspective on learning and a view of reading that foregrounds critical literacy, 'active' approaches used in the teaching of Shakespeare have the 'potential for enabling students to collaborate in the production of meanings around an aspect of a playtext' (Coles, 2013, p. 292). However, her findings also indicate that, if the prevailing curriculum and assessment regime explicitly works against this position, there are profound implications for what actually takes place in the classroom.

2.8 Practical approaches to reading through drama

I now turn my attention to the ways in which accounts of the English-drama relationship are portrayed in teaching handbooks. Bryer (2017) points out the inadequacies of such texts in representing the moment-by-moment interactions that shape what happens in the classroom context and for inevitably falling back on a description of the teacher's input rather than providing a perspective on what learners might bring or create (Bryer, 2017, p. 436). Nevertheless I have chosen three which illuminate particular versions of the connection between the knowledge and pedagogical bases of English and drama and which in different ways reach out towards the wider debates and theoretical positions which I have discussed previously.

Ken Byron's book *Drama in the English curriculum* (1986) pre-dates the introduction of a statutory National Curriculum for English by three years,

and so is able to promote experimentation within a less tightly-regulated curriculum context. To overcome the problems of depicting evolving classroom situations and in an attempt to represent the dialogic way in which English teachers can best develop their knowledge base for teaching, Byron imagines conversations between two teachers. Mike is unconfident in employing drama but as a confident English teacher understands the need to do so. Maggie is his more experienced colleague who acts as the sounding-board for the descriptions of classroom practice presented in his journal. Byron's voice is also present and foregrounded in the questions he poses about the nature of English, such as 'How does drama relate/contribute to my purposes as an English teacher' (Byron, 1986, p. 4)? To answer this he draws links between the development of the affective and intellectual understandings central to both subjects, and in this way claims that his work has 'a clear theoretical base' (ibid, p. 1).

The influence of the previously discussed reader-oriented approach to teaching narrative fiction is apparent in his description of drama in the English curriculum, although he does not directly reference reader response theory. Thus, by constructing meanings together in role from within the fictional experience (Byron, 1986, p. 75), learners are operating within the textual gaps or blanks in a very physical sense. It is this whole person engagement which makes reading through drama qualitatively different to engaging in classroom discussion about a text. Neither is drama simply about the animation of narrative texts. Rather it provides opportunities for exploring multiple perspectives and utilising different timeframes, which has some parallels with a re-creative approach to literature study. His account of drama as a multiple sign system and text a single sign system (Byron, 1986, p. 77) also heralds later ideas about the English classroom as a multimodal site. Such prescient perspectives on English teaching through drama were soon, however, overshadowed by the introduction of the National Curriculum for English (DES, 1989) and the political fallout that ensued.

In a much later handbook, Maggie Hulson's *Schemes for Classroom Drama* (2006), the author, an expert practitioner and leading member of The

National Association for the Teaching of Drama (NATD), shares her praxis, presenting an account of some tried and tested schemes of work for which she also provides a theorising commentary. As a drama specialist her practice is less constrained by English curriculum regulation and the classroom perspective offered is a largely socio-cultural one filtered through the work of some key drama theorists and practitioners, most notably Dorothy Heathcote.

It is in Hulson's commitment to story - her schemes are often based around myths and legends - that I find links with the practices of the English classroom. Myths are often the '"pre-texts"' (O'Neill and Rogers, 1994, p. 49) which playwrights draw upon and they are 'bound by material considerations' (Hulson, 2006, p. 10) but are also 'flexible enough for reference to the differing experiences and knowledges of the participants' (p. 10). What Hulson (2006) calls the 'key framing questions' (p. 8) for each scheme allow learners to interrogate the givens of both the story and their own experiences. The importance Hulson places on making these types of connections provides a link with Jones' (2003) description of a 'cultural-relativist'(p. 149) approach to teaching and learning in English, which he argues has been marginalised as a result of successive top-down curriculum, pedagogical and assessment impositions.

Hulson (2006) also suggests that myths 'lend themselves…to the conjecture lent by distance' (p. 8), and O'Neill (2015b) too highlights this potential in drama to combine 'engagement and distancing within the same context' (p. 4). This has resonances with the work of Bruner[24], another major influence cited by Hulson (2006), who considers myth within his wider discussion of modes of thought in learning, specifically the metaphoric or narrative mode (Bruner, 1986). Narrative invites the type of 'subjunctivised' reading that Bruner describes as 'trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties' (Bruner, 1988, p. 110), and which therefore has the potential to transform readers' experience of the world. He uses a psychoanalytic term, externalization, to describe how the 'real' world is rendered 'newly strange'

[24] The research and writings of Jerome Bruner, the American developmental and educational psychologist, were published from the 1940s to the 1990s. His work engages with that of Vygotsky.

(Bruner, 1988, p. 109) through story, and how this acts as ‘a filter for experience’ (Bruner, 1989, p. 171). Thus, in the process of making strange, rather than being objectified our experience is subjectified. This is not about placing learners in the classroom at one remove from a dramatic situation or from themselves within it. Rather it suggests that what happens during process drama is ‘metaxis - the being in two states at once: that of the role and also yourself so that you and the role situation are interacting live’ (Davis, 2016, p. 22), the two being interdependent in terms of the learning that takes place. Hulson (2006) sums it up in this way: ‘As we tell the story [through and in drama] we are “telling” reality - it makes *us* and we make *it*’ (p. 8) [italics in the original]. This is pertinent to my later analysis of learners’ responses, captured both in-the-moment and retrospectively, to the drama activity of their English lessons.

In *The English Teacher’s Drama Handbook*, McGuinn (2014) offers a theoretical underpinning for his description of practice as well as an account of the development of educational drama as a subject taught in schools, tying this into different perspectives on English teaching. His analysis of the debate between drama as process and drama as product appears even-handed in terms of assessing the relevance and usefulness of each approach to English but his examples of practice lean more towards the latter. This is clear in his adherence to the model for teaching and assessing drama activity of ‘“making, performing and responding”, which is advocated by Abbs and Hornbrook’ (McGuinn, 2014, p. 73) and notably replicated in the *Drama objectives bank* (DfES, 2003) and elsewhere (Kempe and Ashwell, 2000). Also, the emphasis in his lesson sequences is on the development of language skills through drama, even when the sequence has a work of literature at its heart. Thus McGuinn (2014) explicitly situates his practice in ‘the levels of the writing code’ (p. 93), from grapho-phonemic to contextual. This is a system adapted from Andrews’ (2001) review of research into teaching and learning practices in English from the late 1970s to the early 2000s. The review’s findings characterise the English classroom as having ‘less dependence on literature as the foundation of the subject’s practices’

(Andrews, 2001, p. 1) and guided more by regulatory frameworks than was previously the case.

McGuinn also relies on an approach taken by Kempe and Ashwell (2000) who closely align their description of progression in drama to the way in which progression in English is measured in the National Curriculum and the National Literacy Strategy. Coming from an English teaching background it is perhaps unsurprising that McGuinn's (2014) account of curriculum and pedagogy has been influenced by an expectation that the use of drama, like all other aspects of English, must be weighed, measured and accounted for in the strict terms set out by the statutory curricular, assessment and inspection frameworks. Anything less would have been unlikely to find its audience given that the publication of *The English Teacher's Drama Handbook* (McGuinn, 2014) coincided with the latest revision of the National Curriculum programmes of study for English (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2014) from which drama had very nearly been removed.

2.9 Towards an analytical framework

Because my review of the literature has been undertaken in tandem with my research in schools, there is reciprocity between the two which has been helpful in determining the theoretical basis for my analysis of the data. My purpose, therefore, in this section is to give an account of the key theoretical concepts underpinning the interpretive framework that I employ to describe, analyse and give substance to my data.

The strands of theory which have emerged during this process, also informed by my experiences as a teacher of English and drama and latterly a teacher educator, are socio-cultural, recognising that 'Knowledge is constructed in processes of social interchange' (Flick, 2014, p. 78). This is why Vygotskian theory lies at the heart of my analysis. However, the aspects of his work that are particularly relevant to my research are drawn from across his body of writing; on development and learning, art (specifically theatre and acting), play and creativity.

2.9.1 Vygotskian theory: a revised reading

I have alluded above to the breadth of Vygotsky's body of work, but as Davis et al. (2015) note, other theorists such as Bruner seem to enjoy greater prominence in the field of educational drama research. This leads me from the outset to identify what is a problematic area of Vygotskian theory in terms of my own research. He asserts that in adolescence the imagination becomes a subjective form of thinking borne out of inner desires which remain intimate and hidden. Thus 'imagination in adolescents and school children is play without action' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 93) and 'the creative images which the adolescent fantasy engenders' are 'strictly for oneself' (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 284). Yet in those classrooms where drama activity takes place, we 'expect adolescents to engage in a very public form of play, exposing their "expressions of desire" to the evaluative gaze of teachers and peers' (Franks, 1997, p. 138).

This difference in the perspectives offered by Vygotsky and Franks is hardly surprising given the very particular educational, cultural and political contexts in which each are embedded, although it does pose a challenge for the contemporary researcher. Britton's (1987) observation that 'social behaviour implies interaction within a group whose activities have been shaped to cultural patterns' (p. 24) is helpful, as the classrooms about which I am writing have rather different 'cultural patterns' to those envisaged by Vygotsky. Therefore, as Franks (1997) suggests, an adjusted conception is needed of how fantasy and imagination are realised, one encompassing 'social acts of "creative expression" - acts which, by their nature, demand audience and interpretation' (Franks, 1997, p. 139), and that are accepted as a form of cultural action. The common ground that Vygotsky and Franks share is to be found in their understanding of affect and desire as productive in driving the realisation of creative imagination. Thus for Daniels and Downes (2015) classroom drama offers appropriate '"cultural and technical" factors or tools' (p. 100) by which to direct the products of adolescent imagination into satisfying creative activity. In addition, desire-driven fantasy 'emerges more powerfully during adolescence' (John-Steiner, Connery and

Marjanovic-Shane, 2010, p. 13), and this can be channelled into dramatic exploration of literature and the arts.

Also pertinent is Grainger Clemson's (2015) work on Vygotsky and perezhivanie. This is a term adapted by Vygotsky from the domain of theatre to mean the integration in learning of emotion and thought as shaped by the particular environmental context (Zoss, 2010). For Grainger Clemson (2015) Vygotsky's interpretation of perezhivanie finds resonance in contemporary Western educational thinking about the types of active learning methods, teacher-learner dialogism, and drama-based activity which promote imaginative engagement and empathy. In this way his work in problematizing 'the processes involved in imaginative activity' (Grainger-Clemson, 2015, p. 54) has continuing relevance and points the way to:

> …a revised reading of Vygotsky's work in terms of emotions and bodily action, and research into the process of externally communicating internal psychological states in classroom settings (ibid, p. 54).

My research has just such an impetus.

2.9.2 Socio-cultural theory and learning through drama in English

Further insight into Vygotsky's theories as relevant to drama in the English classroom is to be found in his essay on *Imagination and creativity of the adolescent* (1994, p. 284). Here he discusses the ways in which imagination in adolescence becomes 'intellectualized' (p. 270) in the sense that it does not reside solely within the affective realm and is closely linked to thinking in concepts, but is still inventive and creative. As such it does not relinquish its close connection with play. Indeed Vygotsky characterises imagination in adolescence as 'the successor to child play' but with a 'tendency towards figurativeness' (p. 275), and regards the creation of imaginary situations 'as a means of developing abstract thought' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 103). It is his concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978) that sheds light on what happens when learners involved in drama activity in English lessons are asked to put their imagination to work actively and

collaboratively in the classroom environment. Thus the social context in which the meaning-making occurs and the process by which learners 'grow into the intellectual life of those around them' (ibid, p. 88) is fundamental to the ZPD.

2.9.3 The zone of proximal development

The ZPD and its implications for learning is discussed in two different chapters of *Mind in Society* (1978). Vygotsky presents the ZPD first in the context of assessment and later in a section about play as 'a leading activity that determines child development' (p. 103). One of the most famous quotations from this work describes the ZPD thus:

> *It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers* (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) [italics in original] .

Therefore, if assessment is to be a dynamic process the ZPD must not only provide 'a summary of completed development' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87) necessary to determine the learner's actual developmental level, it also has to delineate 'those processes that are currently in a state of formation, that are just beginning to mature and develop' (p. 87). Two key arguments are embedded here, both of which are relevant to the particular focus of my research: one is about the need for instruction and assessment to always be oriented towards next steps in the developmental process, and the other is concerned with the social, participatory nature of learning.

In terms of the role of instruction in the ZPD, a whole literature has emerged around methods for 'scaffolding' learning, with Yandell (2014b) referring to the range of pre-produced tools such as writing frames and word banks that are used as scaffolds in English. Daniels and Downes (2015) suggest that such an approach is indicative of an inappropriately '"one-way" process within which the "scaffolder" constructs the scaffold alone and presents it for

use to the novice' (p. 101). These writers show that any such understanding of the scaffolding process is an oversimplification and runs the risk of closing down the gaps or spaces necessary for creative exploration. Therefore, to assist with learning in the ZPD, scaffolding that is responsive to the learner's activity rather than a pre-planned intervention (Yandell, 2014b, quoting Bruner) can only be achieved 'through negotiation between the more advanced partner and the learner' (Daniels and Downes, 2015, p. 101).

2.9.4 From play to pedagogy

Scaffolding in drama is altogether more complex as it embraces creative exploration, and this has implications for pedagogical approach. Hulson (2006) makes this point, suggesting that the fictional worlds created by educational drama activity act as a zone of proximal development. What happens in the ZPD during classroom drama activity has parallels with Vygotsky's description of the role of play in development, and here, according to Barrs (2017), he is emphasising dramatic play:

> In play a child always behaves beyond his (sic) average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102).

In addition dramatic play is not a solitary act, because 'Being a head taller is an ensemble performance' (Holzman, 2010, p. 37). This is particularly relevant with regard to classroom drama activity, as the facility to imagine and imagine collaboratively is essential to learners' development.

In her notion of '*learning playfully*' (ibid, p. 37) [italics in the original] Holzman draws a direct connection between play, creativity and learning, but for Bolton (1979) there has to be a step up or gear-change when shifting from dramatic play to drama as a more formalised way of making meaning. Thus, for the teacher to facilitate learners moving between their actual and developmental levels via a continuous and socially interactive process of doing, observing and reflecting, 'a highly developed pedagogy' (Hulson, 2006, p. 5) is required. This involves the teacher holding each individual

child in view whilst carefully shaping 'the whole collective experience' (ibid, p. 5). In this way the role of play and a pedagogy 'rooted in observation and enacted through communication and relationship' (Barrs, 2017, p. 356) come together in the ZPD of drama activity.

2.9.5 Vygotsky and dramatic engagements with literature

A focus on the social in acts of expression links to another strand in Vygotsky's writing, that is, his interest in the psychology of art and the creative work of the actor (1932). Here Vygotsky asserts that 'the experiences of the actor are not so much a feeling, of "I" as a feeling of "we"' (1932, n.pag.). The emotions of a performance are shared between participants and observers, based upon 'shared social understandings' within 'situated sets of conventions' (Smagorinsky, 2011, p. 334), and firmly rooted in the specific context in which the performance takes place. In later chapters I adapt and apply these perspectives to the participatory and collective experience of learners as they engage with different types of literature in the English classroom, when 'learning within the official script of the lesson' (Yandell, 2014b, p. 122) is able to draw intertextually on experiences from beyond the classroom to support learners' understanding of their reading.

Thus Vygotsky's (1932) ideas about the social context in which drama and theatre is created and the process he identifies whereby emotions, which first emerge 'borne in the air, in social consciousness', are refracted through the 'literary formulation' of the word, and then through 'the actor's embodiment' (Vygotsky, 1932, n.pag.), underpin the study of plays in the classroom. New materialist scholars have criticised socio-cultural approaches for subsuming 'arts' very materiality' within 'the textual, the linguistic and the discursive' (Bolt, 2013, p. 4), such that 'meaning is often thought to be a property of words' (Barad, 2003, p. 821). However, I would argue that Vygotsky's process of refraction as described above offers a response to this criticism as it highlights the entanglement (Barad, 2003) of the material and the literary, 'of matter and meaning' (Dolphijn and vanderTuin, 2012, p. 50). In the bodied space of the drama-in-English classroom the body is a key

interpretive resource and is integral to the social reading practices that occur there.

2.9.6 Theorising drama practices

To enter and participate in the imagined worlds of drama activity requires a contract for collaboration (Daniels and Downes, 2015) which facilitates learners' exploration of different identities in a way that is not restrained by the reality of 'self' but nevertheless has an impact on it. 'Self', though, is ever-present in the self-spectator function of Heathcote's (1980) classroom drama, which encompasses the ideas of Vygotsky, but also Bakhtin as I explore below. In a paper that considers the connections between Vygotsky and Heathcote, Susan Davis (2015) draws from Bolton's biographical work on Heathcote to suggest that she was aware of Vygotsky but did not reference his work, wishing to avoid the potential for association with Marxist politics. Yet in her practices there are connections to be found with Vygotskian theory, not least in her interactions 'as a knowledgeable other, involved and intervening, expanding children's horizons as they co-construct solutions within problematic situations' (Davis, 2015, n. pag.) as part of the drama.

However, where Heathcote herself reaches out to the work of others beyond the field of drama, it is to Goffman's (1975) concept of frame. She uses this to describe the point of view from which the participants are invited by the teacher to enter the drama, different frames demanding different kinds of thought (O'Neill, 2015a). Thus framing can encompass immediate, in-the-moment engagement in the fictional event, but also more removed in-role perspectives, such as that of the media representative reporting on the event. The latter example also contains echoes of Brecht's ideas around distancing in drama to provoke thought and give rise to social action. Given that Goffman (1959) in his earlier writing employs a performance paradigm and theatrical terminology to 'read' social life in organised settings dramaturgically (Denzin, 2003), his work does have relevance for a classroom in which role play is an embedded part of the structures of learning.

2.9.7 Socio-cultural influences beyond Vygotsky

Whilst Vygotskian socio-cultural theory is foundational to my analysis, I also draw on a range of theoretical strands that, with different inflections, come within the purview of the social. Thus, insights from Bakhtin's work (Bakhtin, 1984; Holquist and Liapunov, 1990; Morson and Emerson, 1990), as well as cultural anthropology (Schechner, 1985; Turner, 1982), frame analysis (Bateson, 1973; Goffman, 1975), performance theory (Schechner, 1977/2003), and cultural theory (Williams, 1977; Williams, 1983) are all relevant.

For example, a focus on framing reveals how identities and experiences are organised within the classroom and more widely in the school. This also provides the springboard for my consideration of framing in drama-in-English activities where learners adopt and explore different subject positions within fictional situations. For Daniels and Downes (2015) drama provides 'the opportunity of standing outside familiar trajectories in order to contemplate new realities' (p. 111). In the classroom this happens as part of a collaborative, creative act requiring negotiation both internally, with oneself, and externally with peers. Thus I have found it useful, when analysing learners' responses to the drama activities observed in English lessons, to draw on Morson and Emerson's (1990) exploration of the links between the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, and in particular Bakhtin's three categories in the 'process of self-formation in both art and life' (ibid, p. 180). He describes these as 'I-for-myself (how my self looks and feels to my own consciousness)', 'I-for-others (how my self appears to those outside it)', and 'the-other-for-me (how outsiders appear to myself)' (ibid, p. 180). Such ideas chime with those of Schechner (1985), who likens being in role to being 'beside myself' (p. 37), and Heathcote (1980), who uses the term self-spectatorship to describe the sometimes mental, sometimes physical oscillations that take place between the dramatic and evaluative modes during classroom drama.

Bakhtin's (1981) work is also useful when considering the heteroglossic and, dialogic nature of a drama-in-English classroom which has the study of

literature at its heart. In this context I take Bakhtin's description of the novel as 'a diversity of individual voices artistically organised' (ibid, p. 262) to apply more broadly. Thus author, characters, teacher, learners and learners-as-characters share space and dialogue, this multi-languagedness (ibid, p. 327) apparent in both the bodily and verbal communication that is a feature of drama activity.

The theoretical approaches of Schechner and Turner (Schechner, 1977/2003; Schechner, 1985; Turner, 1982) offer useful insights when later in this thesis I explore drama activity based on learners' reading of a scene from the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here the teacher attempts, through learners' role-adoption, role-play and the discussion that ensues, to set up what Turner (1982) describes as a productive 'dialectic between performing and learning. One learns through performing, then performs the understandings so gained' (p. 94). It is of relevance that the learners are in the phase of adolescence, with Turner describing this as a 'liminal period' (Turner, 1982, p. 113) during which the adolescent 'is neither what he (sic) has been nor what he will be' (p. 113). At such a time of ambiguity, maturation and change is made possible by experiencing the 'social dramas' (ibid, p. 92), both large- and small-scale, of everyday life, with their proximity to both dramatic play in one direction and the 'aesthetic dramas' (Schechner, 1977/2003, p. 192) of theatre in the other. Turner (1982) suggests that these social dramas 'induce and contain reflexive processes' (p. 92) crucial to growth and development. This reflects an ontogenetic view of dramatic play, at first individuated but moving towards enactments in social settings such as the classroom.

At the phylogenetic level of cultural analysis, for Raymond Williams, the influential neo-Marxist critic and commentator, the value of cultural production is in its very ordinariness, the everyday-ness of culture being made and re-made daily in contemporary society. Drama in Williams' dramatized society is part of 'the rhythms of everyday life' (1983, p. 12) and 'a daily habit and need' (p. 15), and thus has 'direct cultural continuity' (p. 14) with our own lives, in very much the same way that drama in the English classroom strives for cultural continuity with the lives and experiences of the

learners. Indeed, it is in the classroom that Rosen (1980/2017) proposes 'spontaneous expressive dramatic language can become a form of art' (p. 306) but one distinct from the culturally- and historically-evolved conventions of 'institutionalized' (p. 306) theatre. However, within the English curriculum these two may fruitfully be brought together in the study of dramatic literature, in this case with equal emphasis on both 'dramatic' and 'literature'.

2.10 In conclusion

In the following chapters I use the interpretive framework developed here as a lens through which to view teachers and learners working actively and dramatically in the social, semiotic space of the English classroom. My analysis also sheds light on the ways in which pedagogy is framed by teachers' experiences, school contexts and national policy discourses. I aim, therefore, to demonstrate how teachers' perspectives on the nature of learning in English through drama inform their mediation of both curriculum and pedagogical practices. First, though, I consider the methodological issues involved in researching the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the research design: two phases

In this chapter I describe my methodological approach during the two-phase research study that I undertook across the academic years 2009/2010 and 2011/12 in two secondary schools, with a return visit to the second school in 2016. The research involved, with varying degrees of time commitment, six English teachers and their Key Stage 3 classes in phase one and one teacher and class in phase two.

The starting point for this account of methodology is my research question 'what contribution does drama make to teaching and learning in English?' This clearly anticipates a role for educational drama as part of the English curriculum, although as I have highlighted in the previous chapter, on this matter policy inhabits a more ambiguous space. In what follows I aim to address Thomson and Sefton-Green's (2011, p. 9) concern about the potential for 'silence between the question and the method' by demonstrating how the two are inextricably linked across the two phases of my research.

Phase one at Downham Fields School focused on five teachers, with a sixth quite quickly but amicably withdrawing from the research. The challenges these teachers faced in adopting a more sustained approach to the use of drama as part of their English lessons led to a modification of the research design for phase two, during which I focused on one teacher at Woodside Boys School. This was Shona, a confident practitioner already committed to drama as key to her teaching of English. Before I go onto describe in greater detail my conceptualisation of the research, it is worth exploring the commonalities in methodological approach across both phases.

3.1.1 Ethnography

In attempting to find ways to understand and analyse the perspectives of those studied, I would describe my 'methodological orientation' (Hammersley, 2006, p. 4) as 'ethnographically motivated' (McIntyre, 2016).

Educational research such as mine does not adhere to an anthropological notion of remoteness from the setting common to descriptions of ethnography (see Hammersley, 2006), because ‘Many of those who are interested in creative learning are also engaged in its production’ (Thomson and Sefton-Green, 2011, p. 10) and have formerly lived or are still living the life of an educator. Such a description is applicable to my own position as a practitioner and a researcher.

Thus I have found Kathleen Gallagher’s (2011) account of her ethnographic-like approach to research in drama education useful in foregrounding the following: observation in classrooms ‘paying attention to the interesting and the mundane’ (p. 72); the demands and sensibilities of researching within an art form; and the value of ‘ethnographic things like chats in hallways and side comments and informal kinds of engagements’ (p. 73) alongside the more formal discursive methods of interview and focus group. An example of one such informal exchange occurred following an observed lesson in phase two of my research. Shona, the teacher-participant, referred approvingly to a particular group of learners “playing with the space” during a mime activity whereas in my contemporaneous written notes I had described the learners’ actions as off-task behaviour. Shona’s comment sent me back to the video recording to review ‘the situated activity of the participants’ (Lomax and Casey, 1998, paragraph 1.4), and reminded me that all qualitative research is interpretive rather than representational in nature. Thus, the video record afforded me the opportunity to adopt an appropriate ‘reflexive methodological stance’ (ibid, paragraph 1.4), a discussion I return to later in this chapter.

3.1.2 Holism

Another issue which has resonance for my research is referred to by Hammersley (2006) as ‘the pull of holism’ (p. 6). Holism proposes ‘that we cannot understand what goes on within particular situations unless we can locate these within a larger picture’ (ibid, p. 6). In the research process how that wider context is determined, or even how wide is wide, are matters of interpretive perspective. A researcher such as Berry (2016), a former English

teacher, is explicit in locating his account of school and teacher activity in England in the macro political context of global neoliberal education policies. Coles (2013) suggests that it is incumbent on the researcher to highlight her interpretive decisions and motivations as integral to any account of the larger picture within which her research sits. Thus Coles' research (2013) into constructions of Shakespeare in the secondary school English curriculum simultaneously points in one direction towards the classroom and in the other to the broader context of schooling as an ideological institution but also as a site for contestation in which Coles has been implicated over some fifteen years. This not only holds resonance for my position as a researcher, but also raises interesting questions about insider research and the relationship between ethical stance and method.

3.1.3 The insider research position

These points are taken up by Sikes and Potts (2008) in their discussion of insider and member research. They are resistant to drawing a precise distinction between these two terms, leaving the researcher to define for herself the extent of her '"insiderness"' (p. 3), although define it she must:

> This is because it is generally accepted that biographical experiences arising from individual and social characteristics have (more or less) influence on, and import for, the research interests people have, the methodologies they adopt, the methods they use, how they interpret and analyse their data, and the ways in which they re-present and disseminate their 'findings' (ibid, p. 5).

In addressing the extent of my 'insiderness' (ibid, p. 3), I have found it helpful to adopt a similar stance to Swain (2006, p. 199), an ex-teacher researching in the primary school setting:

> ...I actually took part in many different forms of participation, such as watching, sharing, listening, learning, discussing, playing, collaborating and

> helping…I also did not sit passively at the back of the class or always stand and observe from the edges of the playground. I am describing this as a form of *semi-participant observation* (ibid, p. 201) [italics in the original].

I too, whilst observing, note-taking and filming in classrooms, collaborated with individuals and groups of learners and engaged with them in discussion about the drama activities. However, my personal experience of the familiar settings of school and classroom, as well as my insight into and insider knowledge of the context of English teaching, enabled me to fit in with confidence, not to be an unnecessarily obtrusive presence and to sensitively make decisions about my interactions with the teachers and learners (Denscombe, 2014).

3.2 Methodological approach

My methodological approach is commensurate with the aims and conduct of case study. Thus, in seeking 'understanding, extension of experience, and increase in conviction in that which is known' (Stake, 1978, p. 64) I examine complex phenomena 'in detail from a number of different angles using a range of data sources and often a mixture of analytic methods' (Cameron and Shaw, 2016, p. 21). As my research takes place within an educational context 'the cases of interest' are 'people and programs' (Stake, 1995, p. 1), and I actively seek the perspectives of the research participants in relation to both the scope of the inquiry and aspects of the data generated. Researching the drama in English practices of teachers and learners has afforded me the opportunity of constructing a case study from activity 'naturally occurring' (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000, p. 3) in the educationally 'natural context' (Bassey, 1999, p. 47) of the classroom. In addition, as case study acknowledges that the boundaries between the case and its context of occurrence are far from distinct, my analysis of contextual conditions is important in understanding the phenomenon under investigation.

This has led me to adopt a 'collective case study' design (Stake, 1995, p. 5), also known as 'multiple-case' (Yin, 2014, p. 50), spanning English classrooms in two schools. My preference is for Stake's (1995) term to best describe an approach by which I subject the topic of interest to cross-site analysis. One of the advantages of this type of '"two-case" case study' (Yin, 2014, p. 64) is that the cases, whilst sharing relevant characteristics, offer a fruitful degree of comparison as opposed to 'direct replication' (p. 64).

In selecting two (rather than more) schools as the research site, I have also been mindful of the need to work within my means as a lone, independent researcher facing the particular challenge of accessing lessons at exactly the right moment to observe drama in English activity. This research design and the contextual conditions of schools required researcher-responsiveness, but I was always aware that too much flexibility might lead to a dilution of my research focus (ibid, p. 55). However, as Yin (2014) notes, adaptation or modification of the initial case study design may sometimes be appropriate (p. 65) providing that rigour of procedures is maintained.

Thus, as I moved from phase one of my research at Downham Fields School to phase two at Woodside Boys School, the need for modification in the light of discoveries made during the phase one data collection period was apparent. I discuss this in more detail below and later in Chapters 4 and 5. Modification did not lead to dilution, however. Rather my case study became '"progressively focused"' (Stake, 1995, p. 133) on what Street (2011) refers to as the 'telling case' (p. 584) provided by Shona and her Year 7 class of 12 year olds. This was an appropriate adaptation of the design given that the previously discussed policy and teacher equivocation around the role of drama in English meant my case study was unlikely to be representative or typical (Yin, 2003, p. 41) of all English teachers and of English teaching per se.

Case study is well-suited to the interpretive paradigm in which I locate my research. It allows for penetration and interpretation (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p. 181) of a situation in terms of its participants, and thus my

research is conducted with teachers and learners rather than on them whilst acknowledging how I, the researcher, and the case interact. The exploratory nature of my case study (Yin, 2003, p. 6) is indicated by the 'what' formulation of my overarching research question, although the idea of unpacking the phenomenon in which I am interested additionally suggests an explanatory impetus (Thomas, 2016, p. 132).

3.2.1 An evolving research design

In this section I want to give a brief account of the evolution of my research. In line with the way in which I describe my aims above, I began phase one determined that my research design would value the perspectives of teachers. This was an important principle for me as a former English and drama teacher and now a teacher educator and researcher in the field. Bound up with this idea was the aspiration of 'Helping to develop practice' (Thomas, 2016, p. 37) and an acknowledgement of the role of the teacher as agent of change. At this point, therefore, I considered participatory action research, a methodological approach which has its roots in the critical pedagogy of the Latin American scholar and activist Paulo Freire (1996) and foregrounds both the agency of the participants and knowledge creation through a fusion of theory and practice.

I was also drawn to participatory action research because of its notion of participants as 'a community of equals' (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p. 232), making it distinct from a professional development model in which the researcher from 'the academy' generates the theory and the practitioners apply it to and evaluate the practice. Rather it is concerned with the collective responsibility (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010) of teachers and researchers working together 'in a sustained relationship' (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p. 226), the researcher acting 'as facilitator, guide, formulator and summarizer of knowledge and raiser of issues' (ibid, p. 230). My aim was to facilitate the teachers' engagement in generating 'living educational theories of practice' (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010, p. 2) as a way of arriving at 'cogent explanations' (p. 1) which would also address my overarching research question in an exploratory and proactive way. In

adopting such an approach I judged that the particular relationships I had already established with five of the six teachers at Downham Fields, having been their PGCE tutor during the period of their initial teacher education, would be particularly significant, a point on which I elaborate below.

I presented this conception of the research design to the participating teachers in phase one, introducing my research proposal at an English Department meeting on 06.07.2009 and providing a written explanation of the process. I positioned it as an opportunity to explore and theorise what for them was an innovation in practice (Atkins and Wallace, 2012), that is, the systematic introduction and evaluation of drama practices in their English lessons at Key Stage 3. Although it is not a rule of this type of action research that the research question is jointly-generated, in asking for the teachers' commitment to interrogating their practices as regards the use of drama in English, I was nevertheless aware that they might not have alighted upon this as an issue of priority without my intervention. Therefore to situate the research within the participants' existing contextual boundaries (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p. 232), I began by asking them to articulate their reasons for committing to the study. Paul, for example, wished to consider the contribution drama might make to assessing reading within the particular assessment model that the English Department had recently introduced (field notes of meeting with Paul on 04.09.2009). Thus he was attempting to connect the research to departmental priorities at that time, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4. Thereafter, between September 2009 and July 2010, I maintained an on-going conversation with the teachers about the research question, strategy and emerging data, characterising this approach as dialogic in that I was asking them to reflect on and to an extent theorise their own situations and practices (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000).

From September to December 2009 I worked with Paul at Downham Fields in this way. During this period he became concerned that the pressures of his role in the English Department were making it impossible for him to commit the necessary effort, and that what was being asked of him by the research design was more than he could comfortably offer. Claire, Chloe, Jamie and

Emmanuel, who were due to begin their involvement during the spring term of 2010, despite having expressed initial enthusiasm, decided that in the longer term the intensity of the action research planning, action, evaluation, re-planning cycle would simply be too demanding. They were, however, happy to agree to my continuing presence as a researcher in order to gather further data through the range of ethnographic-like methods detailed later in Table 3b. I was therefore prompted to re-evaluate my methodological approach in support of what was clearly an emerging case study, and this blurring of the lines between the two designs echoes Stenhouse's call to synthesise teachers' action research within the broader practices of educational case study (Stenhouse, 1975; Stenhouse, 1983). Thus, by remaining responsive to the teachers' circumstances and maintaining an open, dialogic approach (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000) at all times, I was able to proceed in this manner.

3.2.2 Case study

The phase one data highlighted particular barriers to the teacher-participants' systematic use of drama practices in their English lessons and this drove my modification of the research design in phase two. Thus the focus of my case study now became the 'conspicuously good example of something in which you are interested' (Thomas, 2016, p. 3). This necessitated a move from the breadth of data-gathering across a range of teachers and classes in phase one, to the depth of a more sustained period of classroom-based observation of a single teacher's practice with one class in phase two. Such a refocusing of the design allowed her practice, in the context of her professional life history, to speak directly to the question of what is important about drama to English teaching. I adopted what Thomas (2016) calls 'the snapshot' (p. 165) process, given that my cross-site case study was bounded by the particular time constraints of schools, and in phase two by my need to observe one class of learners more intensively over several months straddling two academic terms. Phase two also involved an element of the 'diachronic study' (ibid, p. 169) which takes development over time as its focus, when I negotiated a return to the school some four years later to re-acquaint myself with the whole class

and hold a final group interview that included some learners I had interviewed previously.

Whilst I do not claim that the phase two case study of the practices and perspectives of a particular English teacher and her class of learners is representative of all English teachers and their classes, as I demonstrate in later chapters it does offer significant insight into the following:

- pedagogic approach to drama in the English classroom and what constitutes effective practice in this area;
- how the purpose of drama in learning English might be elucidated and understood.

I am also aware of the concerns expressed about case study as a research design. For example, in the following description (Hammersley and Gomm, 2000) there is a ubiquitousness which points to a certain woolliness: 'In one sense all research is case study: there is always some unit, or set of units, in relation to which data are collected and/or analysed' (p. 2). This impression is exacerbated in the literature by a tendency to dwell on what case study is not in relation to the other forms of social research or by efforts to justify its 'ambiguous' nature and to 'reconstruct' it as a concept (see Bassey, 1999), all of which lends credibility to the somewhat extreme claim of Dowling and Brown (2010) that there is 'no such thing' (p. 171) as case study.

A more measured criticism, whilst accepting the validity of case study research, finds fault with its lack of potential to generalise beyond the specific case. Although, 'their primary goal is not to produce large-scale generalizations' (Cameron and Shaw, 2016, p. 21), as Simons (1996) and Gaskell (2008) demonstrate, a kind of bogus generalisability is sometimes employed in state-sponsored case studies to legitimise policy impositions, with Gaskell (2008) identifying this as 'the politics of methodology' (p. 132). Due to the small-scale and independent nature of my case study, I was unlikely to encounter similar problems, but these examples have been instructive in prompting me to look beyond process to consider the purpose of undertaking a case study in the context of my own research.

On the matter of purpose Thomas (2016) sees generalisability as beside the point, choosing instead to emphasise the opportunities that case study affords for specificity, particularity, 'getting a rich picture and gaining analytical insights from it' (p. 23). Bassey (1981), however, highlights that in educational case study research relatability in situations of similarity, rather than generalisability, is important in extending the boundaries of pedagogic knowledge, while Denscombe (2014) suggests that, even though every case has unique features, it may be possible to consider it as one of a type, 'a single example of a broader class of things' (p. 84). My aim, therefore, is for my own research to sit somewhere between these two contrasting positions. By conceiving of the case holistically, that is, by analysing the data both within each school setting and, where appropriate, across the two, and by placing the practice observed within the wider context of policy formulations of the subject English, my case study sheds light on and contributes to debates around the nature of subject knowledge and pedagogy in the realm of English teaching.

3.3 The research contexts

In my role as PGCE course tutor in the education department of an higher education institution which is part of the University of London and situated in proximity to both Downham Fields and Woodside Boys schools, I was able to draw on my existing connections to facilitate my access to their English Departments. Beyond such practical considerations I had several reasons to assume that the two schools would provide me with a suitable setting in each phase of my research.

At Downham Fields the ethos of inclusion was publicly-stated and much-evidenced throughout its statutory school self-evaluation document (2010, unreferenced to preserve the anonymity of the school). As part of this agenda, and facilitated by the Assistant Headteacher who was my point of contact, teachers were encouraged to take part in small-scale research projects investigating their own practices. I had previously been involved with two such initiatives in a 'critical friend' capacity. Another factor was the status of

Downham Fields as a Specialist School[25] for the humanities, a requirement being that excellence in the lead specialisms, which included English and drama, should permeate, enrich and be embedded in the whole curriculum. Such a school-wide stance on drama seemed to offer a favourable backdrop to my research within English. So did the Specialist School Status of the second school, Woodside Boys, which was granted in 2004, its specialism being the performing arts. In addition, staff at Woodside Boys had recently been involved in the large-scale national project known as *Creative Partnerships*[26] and I was interested in how this might have impacted, or not, on classroom practice. The *Creative Partnerships* project was an intra-action (Barad, 2003) between artists, teachers and learners. The term intra-action here implies a creative ebb and flow between these agents in learning and highlights the potential for a dynamic re-articulation and re-working of creative learning practices. I discuss this further in Chapter 5 as Shona was part of the school's *Creative Partnerships* project from its inception, taking over leadership as School Co-ordinator in the second year.

Other contextual factors were indicative of changes taking place at the schools during the time of my research. Both Downham Fields and Woodside Boys had recently undergone a disrupted period during their Building Schools for the Future (BSF)[27] projects, a programme providing new, purpose-built schools on the existing sites. At Downham Fields the phased demolition and rebuilding work was still in progress whereas at Woodside Boys staff and learners were newly-installed in the rebuilt school by the time I began my research. In the case of the former, the disruption caused to the day-to-day life of the staff and learners was significant and this in turn had an

[25] Schools in England could apply for the Specialist Schools Programme until 2011 when the funding was withdrawn by Government. The chosen specialism had to be based on a school's particular characteristics and identity and was a reflection of its aims.

[26] The *Creative Partnerships* programme, a flagship project of the New Labour Government, was funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport with additional funding from the Department for Education. It was managed by Arts Council England. The project was designed to bring creative workers such as artists, architects and scientists into schools to work with teachers. From 2002 to 2011 over 2,700 schools across England were involved.

[27] *Building Schools for the Future* (2003 to 2010), a New Labour Government initiative later abandoned by the Conservative-led Coalition Government, was an investment programme allowing schools in England and Wales to bid for capital funding to renew their buildings. The funds for the programme came from Private Finance Initiative agreements that schools made with private companies rather than being funded by government.

impact on my research as I discuss later in this chapter. Another similarity between the two schools was that extremely longstanding and well-respected and -liked headteachers had recently retired and so the teachers were experiencing changes brought about by the new management regimes, which in the case of Downham Fields was having a direct impact on the practices of the English Department.

3.3.1 Introducing the schools

Downham Fields is an inner city, co-educational comprehensive school for the 11 to 16 age range with an ethnically diverse intake and serving a community with significant social and economic deprivation. Half the students are entitled to free school meals, an accepted if somewhat crude indicator of economic disadvantage. Nearly three quarters are from minority ethnic groups, Black African and Caribbean being the largest. The number of students with learning needs or disabilities is well above average. The school's most recent Ofsted inspection at the time of my research had taken place in 2007, and it recorded achievement statistics endorsing the success of the school's inclusivity agenda.

Woodside Boys is a larger than average, London urban comprehensive school for the 11 to 18 age range, located within an ethnically and socially diverse catchment area. The fact that it is oversubscribed indicates its popularity with local parents/carers, the Ofsted report of 2011 noting that students live within a geographically small area. It is all-boys from 11-16 with a mixed sixth form shared with a neighbouring girls school. The relevance of the single-gender composition of the observed class is explored later in my thesis. Over 60% of the school's intake come from ethnically diverse origins with the largest group (a fifth of the school population) being of Black Caribbean heritage. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Over a third of students, and

significantly higher than the national average, has special educational needs and/or disabilities.[28]

3.3.2 Introducing the English Departments

I approached Downham Fields School with the intention of beginning my research with one teacher but expanding over time to include others in the English Department. The aforementioned Assistant Headteacher, as well as being the senior member of staff responsible for promoting research engagement in the school, was the most experienced member of the English Department, its line manager, and an ex-Head of English at the school. She acted as the 'Gatekeeper' (Dowling and Brown, 2010, p. 37) in providing access to the research site and canvassing the English teachers on my behalf. Although my research proposal received her enthusiastic support, Dowling and Brown (2010) point out that ethically I needed more than just permission to proceed, I also required the commitment of those who would be participating. Thus, following my presentation of the research proposal at a department meeting in July 2009, I was encouraged when six teachers volunteered to take part, their profiles (see Table 3a) reflecting the relative youth of the department at that time.

My approach to Woodside Boys School was via the Head of English, who had served in this role for eight years during his nineteen-year career at the school. He showed an interest in my research, mentioning his contribution to the *Creative Partnerships* project and pointing out the particular enthusiasm for using drama in English lessons of one teacher in the department. He invited me to a department meeting for which I prepared a paper outlining my research, and I was allocated a slot on the agenda to present it. I have included this paper as Appendix 1. I was also invited to stay for the whole meeting to contribute to a discussion about the pros and cons of the various GCSE English and Literature specifications at a time when new specifications were being introduced nationally by the examination boards. I include this anecdote to demonstrate the collegial nature of the decision-

[28] The inspection reports for both schools are available on the Ofsted website but are unreferenced here to preserve anonymity.

making in the department, the welcoming atmosphere, and to suggest that my attendance was not deemed an undue imposition by this team of largely experienced and confident teachers, which I felt augured well for my research presence in the department.

At both Downham Fields and Woodside Boys there had been a longstanding commitment to mixed attainment teaching groups in English, which spoke to my own philosophy as a practitioner in the field of English teaching and to the social, interactive nature of drama in English. To contextualise this further, mixed attainment teaching was a reasonably unusual practice in the educational climate at this time as the prevailing political pressure was, and still is, for setted classes[29]. However, a degree of setting on the basis of ability as identified by internal test results was being imposed in English at Downham Fields by the new senior management regime and driven by the imminence of an expected high-stakes Ofsted inspection. If the relatively young English Department at Downham Fields was unable or unwilling to resist such a change, there was a contrasting story at Woodside Boys where the profile of the English Department tended towards experience and length of service at the school. A firm stance and a shared ethos as regards the pedagogical value of mixed attainment teaching in English had supported the Head of English in withstanding attempts by the new Headteacher to dismantle the mixed attainment arrangement, a situation I heard being vigorously discussed in the English office during several of my visits.

Whilst I did not set out explicitly to explore issues of mixed attainment versus ability grouping in relation to my research question, a 'bigger picture' relevance emerged from my analysis of the data gathered at Downham Fields which I consider in Chapter 4. As regards my research at Woodside Boys, I mention this context to give a flavour of the English Department and to presage my discussion in Chapter 5 of the ways in which it has been instrumental in the development of Shona's pedagogical approach.

[29] In a key speech on educational reform Prime Minister Tony Blair cited ability grouping as one tenet of the New Labour Government's wide-ranging school improvement agenda: 'And there should be renewed encouragement for setting by subject ability, which has already been extended since 1997', (Downing Street, 24 October 2005).

I now introduce the teachers who, following the initial presentation of my research at the department meetings mentioned above, came forward to participate.

3.3.3 Introducing the teachers

In terms of commitment to the research I believed it would be advantageous that I had acted as PGCE tutor to five of the six Downham Fields participants. I had been their teacher, mentor but also assessor when, as student-teachers, they were working towards becoming qualified teachers. Whilst drawing positively on our previously developed relationships, I acknowledge that the role of PGCE tutor is different to that of co-researcher and so at all times I remained alive to the potential of an imbalance in power affecting the research relationship. This also meant that I could not claim the teacher sample, which was weighted towards a quite narrow range of teaching experience as documented in Table 3a, as entirely self-selecting. However, almost certainly our prior connection secured the participation of my ex-tutees, with the sixth teacher, Chloe, prompted to volunteer as a result of her closely collegial relationship with Claire and Jamie and her strong drama and theatre background.

Table 3a: The teacher-participants at Downham Fields School

Name (Pseudonym chosen by the participant)	**Teaching experience**	**Undergraduate/ further degree subject(s)**	**Prior experience of drama**
Paul	5 years	BA (Hons) English MA Renaissance Studies	As part of his initial teacher education programme
Daryll	4 years	BA (Joint Hons) English and Drama	Practical and theoretical study at university
Claire	Newly Qualified Teacher: first year of teaching	BA (Hons) English	Expressive Arts GCSE and acting in plays at school and university
Emmanuel	2 years	BA (Hons) English	Drama as a school subject and performances in church and community plays

Chloe	Newly Qualified Teacher: first year of teaching	BA (Joint Hons) English and Drama	Member of a theatre in education company that toured schools performing Shakespeare plays and running workshops
Jamie	Newly Qualified Teacher: first year of teaching	BA (Hons) English Literature and Language	Involvement in play production at school and university

Since qualifying none of these teachers had taught anywhere other than Downham Fields School, with Daryll, Claire, Jamie and Emmanuel having completed part and Paul and Chloe the vast majority of their school-based training there. The professional profile of Shona in phase two at Woodside Boys School, with fourteen years of classroom experience and a key whole-school teaching and learning development role, therefore introduced a different perspective to my research.

For phase two, as an ex-English teacher I understood the challenge involved in finding an English practitioner, no matter how keen, who would include sustained drama activity in most of their English lessons. However, I judged that Shona would perceive as realistic and manageable my request to observe and video-record one lesson a week with the same class over a number of weeks, gathering data on the drama-in-English practices that I observed. Furthermore, as I was seeking to develop a more professionally-balanced research relationship in phase two, in order to minimise the effect of my presence on the data, I felt it necessary to ensure that the teacher I observed was not one of my ex-PGCE trainees. Shona agreed to be interviewed, and at her request we met in my office at the university. I audio recorded the interview, after which I took her on a tour of the campus to build our research relationship.

When I began my observations in her English classroom Shona had been an English teacher for fourteen years. She had also taken two short career breaks (for maternity leave). Prior to embarking on her programme of teacher education (a one-year PGCE) she had majored in English in her

undergraduate degree and then pursued a Masters degree in Education. She began her teaching career at Woodside Boys School, teaching there for three years before moving to a girls' school for five years. She then returned to Woodside Boys where she successfully applied for an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) post (DfES, 2001), and has remained there ever since[30]. According to a Department for Education and Skills publication (2001), 'An Advanced Skills Teacher is an excellent teacher who achieves the very highest standards of classroom practice and who is paid to share his or her skills and experience with other teachers' (p. 3), in their own and other schools. The role was introduced in 1998 to recognise and reward excellent teachers in local authority maintained schools in England and Wales who chose to stay working in classrooms rather than following management routes to promotion. Coincidentally I had first met Shona at Downham Fields School, the setting for phase one of my research, when she was engaged in AST outreach work supporting the practice of two newly qualified English teachers and I was visiting in my capacity as a PGCE tutor.

How far her focus on teaching and learning in English, and more widely on promoting creative learning through her leadership of the *Creative Partnerships* project at Woodside Boys, speaks to her philosophy as an English teacher is something I explore in relation to the findings from the data analysed in later chapters. However, Woodside Boys School has served as an important context for the development of Shona's practice, as her return to teach at the school, her promotion to AST, and her warm manner of speaking about the learners, the school and the school-based *Creative Partnerships* project all suggest.

To sum up, the insights gained from phase one prompted a reconceptualisation of my research design and led me to Shona as a key participant in my research. As Silverman (2014) advises, I sought out the settings and the individuals and I thought carefully and 'critically about the parameters of the population' (p. 61) for my study to ensure exposure to the

[30] As an aside, after I completed my period of classroom-based research at Woodside Boys, Shona was promoted to Head of English, following the previous Head of Department's voluntary decision to step down from the role. She remained in this post for several years before moving to another school.

processes I was interested in studying. Therefore in both phases I would describe my sampling in terms of the teacher-participants as largely purposive although Chloe's involvement in phase one introduced a snowballing element (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000).

3.3.4 Introducing the learners

My lesson observations were spread across a number of Key Stage 3 classes in phase one (see Table 3b) which were all broadly representative of the ethnic, social and gender mix of the school. I was not given access to attainment data on the classes I observed but gathered information about learners in conversation with the individual teachers. For example, Paul's Year 9 class (14 year olds), the subject of my most sustained period of observation, did not represent a full ability range due to the senior management decision to remove learners considered to be high achieving in order to create a top set.

The Year 7 class of 12 year old boys that was my sole focus at Woodside Boys School in phase two reflected the non-selective composition of the school and the social and ethnic diversity of the student population:

- Ethnicities - Black Caribbean (4); Black African (2); Mixed Heritage - White British/Black Caribbean (1); Mixed Heritage - other (4); Sri Lankan Tamil (1); Turkish (1); White European (6); White British (7);
- Learners with statements of Special Educational Need (8).

This group of learners had earlier in the year transferred from primary to secondary schooling. Their Key Stage 2 results in national tests taken towards the end of Year 6 when still in primary education indicated an attainment range between Levels 2A and 5A. To give an idea of government expectations at this time, schools were to ensure that the majority of learners reach at least Level 5 by the end of Key Stage 3 (that is, by the end of Year 9 at age 14), with an aspiration for all learners to achieve a progression rate of at least two levels between Key Stages 2 and 3.

The adolescent age of the learners and the single-gender context of the class are of relevance as I demonstrate in my later analysis of the intra-action between Shona's pedagogical approach and the learners' responses to drama-in-English lessons, an example of what Aitken et al. (2007) refer to as the 'finely-tuned' nature of 'relational pedagogy' (p. 6).

3.4 Collection of the data

In terms of both the focus and conduct of my research, I have found the approach of the research team of Kress et al. (2005) in describing their ESRC-funded research project *The Production of School English* (2001-2003) to provide a useful model. For this project data were gathered from lesson observations and video recordings in the classrooms of English teachers in three schools, but also from interviews with learners and teachers, and in informal discussions. In addition, the way in which the data analysis was set in the context of policy, to understand 'the impact of fifteen years of "structural" educational reform at the micro-level of the classroom' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 1), chimed with aspects of my own study. The research team's focus on depth not breadth was of particular relevance to my approach in phase two. I was relying on data gathered from several evidence sources and via various collection techniques, with the data 'needing to converge in a triangulating fashion' (Yin, 2003, p. 14), and this convergence allowed for a tight focus, precisely because a case study should not sacrifice depth of understanding for breadth of coverage (Thomas, 2016, p. 123).

As my research is looking at the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English, like Kress et al. (2005) I encounter the English classroom as a multimodal space, in which acts of meaning-making are 'multimodal combinations of communicatively oriented utterances and actions' (ibid, p. 19). However, mine is not the type of semiotic analysis adopted by Kress et al. (2005), yet neither do I adhere to that which they characterise as the dominating linguistic approach to research in English classrooms. Thus, when describing drama activity and quoting the related talk, whether teacher to learner(s), learner to learner, or learner(s) to teacher, I do not focus my analysis on small, discrete linguistic units. Instead I take a

socio-cultural perspective on drama as part of a social practice occurring within particular structures that frame classroom activity (Wodak and Meyer, 2016), and which are shaped by what Kress et al. (2005) refer to as the 'social agency' (p. 14) of the teacher and learners.

Although in terms of scope I, as a lone researcher, could not call on the resources to which a research team such as Kress et al. had access, across both phases of my study I gathered data by:

- observing in the classrooms of a range of teachers in two different schools, where possible utilising a video record;
- conducting and transcribing interviews and discussions with both teacher and learner participants;
- studying teaching documents and other resources such as learners' written work.

This enabled me to gather data sufficient to address my research question. The endpoints of the research periods in phases one and two were governed by both the decisions I took about data saturation and more pragmatic considerations (Atkins and Wallace, 2012). Saturation is a complex notion which is not simply reliant on the quantity of the data but more importantly the quality. Rich data are 'many-layered, intricate, detailed, nuanced' (Fusch and Ness, 2015 p. 1409). Effective methodological triangulation of the data gathered from a range of sources not only offers 'different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon' (ibid, p. 1411), but also a means to determine saturation (see Denzin, 2012; Fusch and Ness, 2015). Also of importance is 'Hearing and understanding the perspective of others' (ibid, p. 1411), as this may be an indicator of the saturation-point, something I recognised in the concerns expressed by the teachers at Downham Fields about the effects of the BSF project on the quality of the data being produced. In phase two the class I was observing was to be assigned to the timetable of a student-teacher (ironically one of my own PGCE tutees), and as a consequence Shona moved into an overseeing role and my observations came to an end. However, this was a time-limiting factor of which I was aware from the outset, the lessons spent in observation of the class

nevertheless affording me the opportunity to experience drama work across the range of their English studies. In Tables 3b and 3c I summarise the data sets from both research sites.

Table 3b: Downham Fields School (phase one) - summary of full data set

Teacher	**Field notes**	**Audio record of pre- and post-lesson discuss-ions**	**No. of 1 hr. lesson obs. & topic**	**Video record of lesson obs.**	**Teacher interview/ focus group**	**No. of post-lesson teacher qu'naires**	**Learner focus group - the class of… (teacher)**
Paul	✓	5	5xYr 9 *Stone Cold* & *Coram Boy*		✓(Int)	2	
Daryll		1	1xYr 9 *Coram Boy*		✓(Int)		
Claire	✓	1	1xYr 7 *Nation* 1xYr 8 *Nation* 1xYr 9 *Half-Caste*	✓ ✓ ✓	✓(FG)		✓
Jamie	✓	2	1x Yr 9 *Shrek* 1xYr 8 *Nation*	✓ ✓	✓(FG)	1	✓
Chloe	✓	2	1xYr 9 *Shrek* 1xYr 8 *Nation*	✓ ✓	✓(FG)	1	✓
Emman-uel	✓	2	2xYr 7 (double lesson) *Nation*	✓ ✓	✓(FG)	1	✓

Texts studied: *Stone Cold* (Swindells, 1993/1995); *Coram Boy* (Gavin, 2005), a play adaptation; the animated film *Shrek* (Adamson and Jenson, 2001); the play *Nation* (Pratchett and Ravenhill, 2009); the poem *Half-Caste* (Agard, 2004/2013).

I also analysed the departmental scheme of work for *Stone Cold* (Swindells, 1993/1995).

Table 3c: Woodside Boys School (phase two) - summary of full data set

Year/Term	Data	Video/ audio/notes/ artefacts
Yr 1: term 1	Interview with class teacher, 1 hour and 30 mins.	audio/ notes
Yr 1: term 1	Year 7 (11-12 year olds) lesson observation: *Warhorse*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 1	Small sample of learners' written work: *Warhorse* newspaper report.	written artefact
Yr 1: term 1	Yr 7 lesson observation: *Warhorse*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 1	Post-lesson discussion with class teacher, 15 mins.	field notes
Yr 1: term 1	Yr 7 lesson observation: *Warhorse*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 1	Teacher's planning for Yr 7 English project 'Think like a… (animal)'.	document artefact
Yr 1: term 1	Yr 7 lesson observation: *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 1	Yr 7 lesson observation: Inhabiting an animal, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 1	Post-lesson discussion with class teacher, 20 mins.	field notes
Yr 1: term 1	Sample of learners' written work: 'Think like an animal'.	written artefact
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 lesson observation: *A Midsummer Night's Dream (AMND)*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 lesson observation: *AMND*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 lesson observation: *AMND*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Sample of learners' written work about Titania's speech (the argument between Titania and Oberon).	written artefact
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 lesson observation: *AMND*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 lesson observation: *AMND*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Post-lesson discussion with class teacher (student-teacher also in attendance), 20 mins.	field notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 lesson observation: *AMND*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Post-lesson discussion with class teacher (student-teacher also in attendance), 20 mins.	field notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 drama workshop observation: led by an actor from The Globe Theatre and held in the school theatre space: *AMND*, 55 mins.	field notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 lesson observation: improvised scenes (based on aspects of the text), 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 lesson observation: *AMND*, 55 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 learner focus group interview, 30 mins.	video/ notes
Yr 1: term 2	Yr 7 learner focus group interview, 48 mins.	video/ notes

Yr 4: term 2	Meeting with whole class now in Year 11 (15-16 year olds), 20 mins.	audio/ notes
Yr 4: term 3	Yr 11 learner focus group interview, 44 mins.	video/ notes

Texts studied: *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007); the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Frost, 1923); Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Buckle, 2005).

3.4.1 Observation

In the lessons of Paul and Shona, due to the greater length of my observation period with these classes, my role was clearly that of the semi-participant (Swain, 2006) as previously described. Although I did not have the same degree of interaction with learners during the 'one-off' observed lessons in other classes, I did not remain aloof. As Yandell (2014b) points out, it can actually be more unnerving for the teacher and learners, and therefore disruptive of the classroom activity, if the researcher effects a kind of silent invisibility akin to the presence of the Ofsted inspector (p. 55). Both teachers acknowledged the insider nature of my presence, with Paul introducing me as "Ms Pitfield who will be helping us improve our lessons with a focus on drama" (lesson observation notes, 15.09.2009). Shona, however, was more explicit in signalling her expectations of my role, inviting me to talk to the class about my background and research. To embed this further, very early in the observation period she assigned me a role in a mime activity which she was demonstrating. On several occasions when learners were engaged in small group drama activities, she allowed a group to move out of the room into the corridor. She then left me and a Teaching Assistant nominally 'in charge' of the rest of the class while she worked with the group outside, suggesting her tacit acceptance of both my teaching experience and 'responsible adult' status[31].

[31] All those in direct contact with children and young people as a result of employment or voluntary work are required in law to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, now known as a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. At this time I had undergone a CRB check in my role as PGCE tutor.

As I have acknowledged above, the extent of my insiderness as a researcher in this situation made non-participatory detachment an unviable stance, and in any case the distinction between the participant and non-participant observer is hardly clear-cut:

> ...by virtue of being in the classroom (or meeting, etc.) and watching what is going on you are, to some extent, a participant - and you are likely to have an effect on the interaction that takes place (Swann, 1994, p. 27).

During the observations I made notes using a 'time against activity' format, and later added an additional column to record my evaluative comments and questions as and when they occurred. This is in common with much of the written recording of classroom interaction for research purposes (see, for example, Edwards and Mercer, 1987/1995). In line with the nature of my research question, my 'activity' column included notes of both talk and action. In phase two, to provide further focus for my observations and as an aide-memoire, at the top of the recording sheet I printed the broad features I had identified in an early coding of the teacher interviews from phase one. I carried my notebook with me when talking to individuals and groups of learners during the drama activities but tried not to distract them with my note-taking, most often walking away before writing down some key points about their activity and our discussions.

3.4.2 Use and interpretation of video footage

There were consent issues which affected the videoing of some, but by no means all of the lessons in phase one, although these did not negate the value of using video as a method of collecting data. In phase two it was helpful that Shona was positive about the potential of video as she had used it herself when exploring her own classroom practices as part of the *Creative Partnerships* project. During whole-class interludes, when Shona was addressing all the learners, I sat on a spare desk near the video camera. As space was limited in the classrooms of both schools, I usually set the camera in a fixed position at the front of the classroom. I left it on 'record', angled to

take in as wide a view of the room as possible, although when groups were presenting their drama scenes to the rest of the class I would act as the camera operator, using the zoom facility to focus in on their activity. As only one learner at Woodside Boys had opted out of being videoed, compliance with his and/or his parents/carers' wishes was easily achieved by carefully positioning him in the group at the side of the class that was not captured by the wide angle lens and by pausing the recording whenever he or his group presented their drama to the other learners.

In the light of Bragg's (2011) warning that visual images can 'actively produce the realities and power relations they claim simply to reflect' and that the assembling of such records 'is not an "innocent" process' (p. 92), I remained aware of the video camera's potential for obtrusiveness and its power to interact with the events of a lesson. This was demonstrated by the reactions of learners at the beginning of Chloe's first observed lesson when she drew their attention to the video, dwelling on the fact that learners had already had their opportunity to submit opt out forms of which none had been received. At this point a number of them volubly objected to being videoed and the ensuing argument to a large extent set the tone for the rest of the lesson.

In Shona's class, whilst the vast majority of the footage shows learners engaged in the activity of their lessons seemingly unconcerned by or perhaps fleetingly unaware of the camera, early in the series of lessons there are a number of shots of learners approaching the camera, often at the beginning or end of a lesson, to make their presence felt by staring into the lens and/or speaking to camera at close range. Two learners seated at the desk closest to it seemed to find it a particular distraction during periods of whole class discussion, with one sometimes deliberately 'pulling faces' and the other casting surreptitious glances. Even Shona, who appeared to model an attitude of taking no obvious notice of the camera, was once prompted by some unusually disruptive behaviour to publicly ask the learner concerned if he would be happy for his parents to view the video evidence, thus blurring the lines between its research and surveillance potentials. However, the fact that

the learner had engaged in such behaviour in full view of, but not directed to the camera might indicate that he had become temporarily unaware of it, although there is no satisfactory way to verify this (Lomax and Casey, 1998).

The research of Lomax and Casey (1998), whilst not specifically focusing on an educational setting and a large group of participants, nevertheless goes a long way towards questioning whether such awareness of filming should always be considered problematic in the research process. Thus, in the context of Shona's Year 7 classroom, participants exhibiting self-awareness in relation to videoed activity is just as likely to suggest an 'orientation to themselves as both the objects of research and to the preservability of the encounter' (Lomax and Casey, 1998, paragraph 4.3), as it is to indicate the type of self-consciousness that affects behaviours. For me, as an active, semi-participant researcher (Swain, 2006), a video record afforded a degree of reflexivity about the situated activity of the classroom (Lomax and Casey, 1998) that would otherwise have been entirely dependent on field notes and memory. The danger of reductionism in my transcription of the video recordings, when paralinguistic features and complex talk activity are re-presented as words on a page (Cook, 1995), was balanced by the advantages to the research of the iterative loop between video record, field notes and transcription.

Therefore, the potential of utilising the video camera, even in a technologically basic manner, outweighed the negative considerations. As indicated above, my use of video was not analogous with a multimodal semiotic approach to English in the manner of Kress et al. (2005). Rather, in employing video as a research tool, I was able to return to and review lessons after the event, enriching, not replacing, 'my own sense of the lesson that I had observed' (Yandell, 2014b, p. 65), as well as affording me the aforementioned opportunities for reflexivity and 'to notice things that I had not noticed in the real time of the lesson' (ibid, p. 63). This is despite the tendency of video, when used solely as a recording device, 'to render human activity flat' (Gallagher and Kim, 2008, p. 112), and at times of group activity to make specific conversations unintelligible, the latter an issue for

the accuracy of my transcription. Thus I do not claim its use as a means of capturing reality (Yandell, 2014b, p. 63), but as Gallagher and Kim (2008) suggest, a video record does have the capacity to give at least a flavour of the more permissive space that is opened up by drama activity when learners are encouraged to act as artists 'improvising performances and identities out of thin air' (p. 107).

3.4.3 The interview

In seeking answers to a question that is rooted in practice, and in acknowledgement of the interpretive nature of the research, the classroom was a key site of 'naturally occurring data' (Silverman, 2014, p. 169). My observations were an opportunity 'to examine what people do in real life rather than asking them to comment on it' (ibid, p. 169), the latter pointing to critiques of interview and focus group data as 'researcher-provoked' (ibid, p. 5). I would argue, however, that my research, as delineated by my overarching research question, was not well-served by an 'oversimplistic distinction between methods that are contrived and those that are "natural"' (ibid, p. 170). Rather it was necessary to take both an emic and etic approach (Silverman, 2014), probing by means of interview and focus group methods how the teachers and learners 'name and frame their everyday worlds' (Thomson and Sefton-Green, 2011, p. 9), whilst simultaneously recognising my 'own naming and framing practices' (p. 9) as someone immersed in the field. I do not therefore remove myself as the interviewer from quoted conversations to ensure that the interviewees' perspectives are represented in the context of an 'interactional flow' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 330).

Indeed, the active nature of interviewing was highlighted by Claire at the end of a teacher focus group interview (08.03.2010) that I held with four of the teachers at Downham Fields (see Table 3b) as a starting point for their involvement in my research. The focus group interview schedule is presented in Appendix 2. Claire made unbidden positive comments about this method of interviewing, suggesting that it had provided an opportunity for her to share and interrogate with colleagues their philosophical and pedagogical standpoints, something for which the busy day-to-day life of a teacher does

not leave enough space. Shona made similar points when, at the conclusion of our interview, I asked her to complete a 'diamond 12' discussion activity (see below), previously tested in the teacher focus group at Downham Fields. My intention was to provide her with a means to draw out and summarise some of her key ideas and views in order to bring to a satisfying close (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015) our in-depth, one-to-one, qualitative interview. Her spontaneous comments on the diamond 12 and the fact that she asked my permission to use the activity with her English Department colleagues suggested that she felt it had enabled knowledge construction around practice as well as reflection on the value and currency of such knowledge, something I explore further in Chapter 5. Thus, as Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) point out, the interview can be an 'enriching experience for the subject, who may obtain new insights into his or her life situation' (p. 35).

However, striking a note of caution, Sefton-Green (2008) suggests that there may well be 'a disjuncture between many teachers' theoretical explanations of their practices and how they are evaluated day-to-day' (p. 24). In which case, I reasoned, a fruitful outcome of interviewing as part of a triangulation process would be to explore the manifestations of any such tension in the teachers' practices. My aim in synthesising data gathered from a range of methods was to develop a comprehensive view rather than elicit identical results (Meijer, Verloop and Beijaard, 2002). This is akin to Bragg's (2011) account of the type of mixed methods approach which accepts 'that the knowledges and insights generated by different approaches may not cohere smoothly while still enriching the outcome of the research' (p. 91). Thus she uses the term 'crystalization' rather than 'triangulation', identifying the latter as less helpful due to its positivist connotations.

Interviews, focus groups and informal conversations were an on-going feature of the phase one research at Downham Fields. In phase two the in-depth interview with Shona lasted for one hour and thirty minutes and took place prior to the beginning of the observation period, although following this there were further conversational interactions captured in my field notes. The semi-structured nature of Shona's interview allowed me 'to obtain

descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 150). This approach was characterised by my adoption of a responsive style (Flick, 2014) to create a rapport with her. I had set about developing this in an earlier telephone conversation during which we had shared some commonalities in our professional histories, a conversation designed to address the asymmetry of the research relationship whilst not denying the researcher-led agenda of the interview. I developed an interview guide honed from the questions used in the teacher focus group in phase one. The guide focused the conversation but left space for further probing (Silverman, 2014), digressions, expansions and the exploring of new avenues (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p. 146), and sought to balance the interviewer's need to ask certain questions with the interviewee's individual, perhaps idiosyncratic way of responding (Flick, 2014). To further elucidate the process, and as I draw upon the interview with Shona in several of my later chapters, a lengthy extract is presented as Appendix 5.

3.4.4 The learner focus groups

As an ex-school teacher I was well aware of the need to adapt both the format of and my role in the interviews with young people in the school setting. Thus I decided to seek permission to hold focus groups interviews with small groups of learners at both schools, four groups from different classes in phase one and three groups from Shona's English class in phase two, the details of which are summarised in Table 3d.

Table 3d: Learner focus group interviews

Phase	Phase 1 Down-ham Fields (DF)	Phase 1 (DF)	Phase 1 (DF)	Phase 1 (DF)	Phase 2 Wood-side Boys (WB)	Phase 2 (WB)	Phase 2 (WB)
Number	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3
Date	21.05 2010	29.06 2010	29.06 2010	07.07 2010	06.02 2012	05.03 2012	26.04 2016
Approx. duration	27 mins.	18 mins.	12 mins.	8 mins.	30 mins.	48 mins.	44 mins.
Class and teacher (pseudo-nyms)	Year 7 Emman-uel	Year 8 Claire	Year 8 Jamie	Year 8 Chloe	Year 7 Shona	Year 7 Shona	Year 11 Various
Learn-ers (pseudo-nyms)	Mark Shannon Simeon Lien Sean	Yesim Rai Mark	Njebe Shakira Miriam	Bradley Precious Carol	Ahmad Sammy Peadar Jermaine Ricky	Duane Zemar Adam Tom Joel	Ricky Joel Zemar Gideon Elias

I have settled on the term focus group because this best describes its strength in maintaining a tight focus on the single issue (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000). However, in the context of research, to avoid associations with the political and marketing uses of the term and bearing in mind that the research focus group should not be used as a way of striving for consensus (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015), it is sometimes referred to as a group interview. Cohen et al. (2000) weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of the focus group as an interviewing method, suggesting that it is positive in its economical use of time. Because the data emerge from the interactions between the participants, this gives them some control over the agenda even if the setting is contrived (p. 288). Furthermore, such group discussions 'correspond to the way in which opinions are produced, expressed and exchanged in everyday life' (Flick, 2014, p. 244), but this in turn can lead to unwieldy transcription which may cause difficulties in the analysis.

There were both operational and ethical reasons underpinning my decision to conduct focus group discussions with learners. These are relatively self-contained events, an important consideration as I judged that the teachers would have viewed an extended interviewing period as an encroachment on valuable learning time. In considering the perspective of the learners I did not assume that they were comfortable with my presence, although I was a familiar face to Shona's class but less so to the learners at Downham Fields. My choice of focus group format was therefore to alleviate any undue pressure that they might have experienced as a result of the adult-to-learner power relationship in a one-to-one interviewing situation. In recognition of the importance of group dynamics in ensuring that views can be properly heard and discussed, I did not select the participants by random sampling, relying instead in each case on the teachers' knowledge of their classes. Because I was more familiar with the learners in Shona's class as a result of my regular classroom observations, in discussion with her I did offer one or two suggestions, as I wanted a broader sample than just those who had appeared openly enthusiastic when taking part in drama activities, and in this sense the sample had purposive features. Each focus group discussion took place in an office or classroom during the school day. The teacher was not present but stayed close in a neighbouring room, except in the case of phase one, group 4 (see Table 3c), as this took place with Chloe in the room and at the end of the day. I video- and audio-recorded the discussions and transcribed them.

In common with Swain (2006), during the discussions I sometimes felt under pressure ethically as an ex-teacher to intervene in a less researcher-like way. This was usually to maintain order between participants, for example, when the contribution of one learner was subjected to a degree of personal mockery by another, behaviour I judged to contravene school policy and my own boundaries. Gallagher (2008a) discusses the ethical and personal dilemma for ethnographic (and ethnographic-like) researchers in deciding how far to 'make ourselves present and absent in the work that we do' (p. 72), and how such considerations are infused with both a sense of personal culpability and

positivist notions of researcher objectivity. I therefore remained alert to the effect that my occasional teacher-like interventions were having in compromising the required 'permissive atmosphere for the expression of personal and conflicting viewpoints on the topics in focus' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 175), whilst still judging them necessary. Similarly, some of the participants were less voluble or adept at managing the group dynamic than others, so rather than attempting to 'interpret their silence' (Flick, 2014, p. 260), I felt it appropriate at times to directly ask a quieter participant to offer a view, even though this had the potential to single out the learner and subject their response to undue scrutiny by the others.

I was aware that these types of slippage between the researcher and teacher roles had knock-on effects, such as on those occasions when I caught one of my interventions veering towards leading rather than probing a participant's response. This is something I acknowledge in one of the exchanges quoted in Chapter 8. However, on the whole I was careful to allow conversations to take their course. When I was granted more time for interviewing I took the opportunity to employ video-stimulated recall (VSR). For one focus group at each school I selected a short extract from a videoed lesson, using the clip of their recent drama work as a visual 'elicitation tool' (Bragg, 2011, p. 91) to stimulate discussion. VSR is recommended in some accounts of the focus group method (see Silverman, 2014), the caveat here being that the choice of clip, and therefore the agenda for that part of the discussion, was controlled by me. Nevertheless, this approach is ethically sound in laying bare to participants the research process and facilitating researcher and participant engagement in what Gallagher and Kim (2008) call a 'multi-perspectival' (p. 112) analysis, allowing me to test my analysis against that of the participants.

I held the final focus group, the diachronic element of my phase two case study, as the learners were reaching the end of their period of compulsory education and preparing for the national GCSE examinations. As a preliminary to this I met with the whole class again for 20 minutes during their pastoral time to re-introduce my research. Using a short PowerPoint presentation, I encouraged the learners' to briefly discuss with each other

their views about the contribution that drama had made over time to their learning in English lessons and then to feed back their ideas to Shona and me. A month later I returned for the focus group interview. As time was of the essence for these learners during an intense period of examination revision, the potential of the focus group interview 'to elicit a great deal of information in a short period of time from those most directly involved' (Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub, 1996, p. 32) was an important consideration.

The focus group consisted of five learners, selected on the basis of them having taken part in the original focus groups. However, on the day one student was absent and another was required by his teacher to remain in class, and given the difficulties of last-minute organisation, Shona randomly selected two substitutes. I had been concerned that a researcher-created focus group at this time risked the learners' non-engagement as the topic was unlikely to feel directly connected with the examination priorities of their current English lessons. I was therefore pleasantly surprised by their willingness to engage and by the positive atmosphere in which the discussions took place, suggesting that they considered a break from intensive revision to be no bad thing. As a prompt to discussion I prepared a diamond 9 activity adapted from the diamond 12, both discussed below.

3.4.5 The diamond 12 and the diamond 9

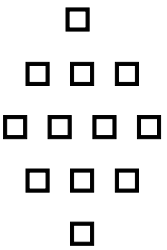
Although primarily an interview, the focus group is unlike other interview forms as the data are generated by means of discussion (Flick, 2014). In my research it was a very appropriate data-gathering method, as discussion is a tool for learning and exploring ideas particularly associated with the English lesson. Thus, before I began my observations in the classrooms of Chloe, Claire, Jamie and Emmanuel at Downham Fields School, I arranged with them to hold a focus group at the end of a school day in one of the English classrooms. To stimulate ideas and topics for the ensuing discussion I gave each of them the same set of statements about drama-based learning in English. The statement to which each ascribed the most importance was placed at the pinnacle of the diamond shape, and so on. A statement in a line containing several was considered to be roughly on a par with the others in

the same line (see Figure 3a). I have used this type of diamond 12 activity in other research (Pitfield, 2011) and in my own teaching, the statements being developed from both my reading and my experience as a drama-in-English practitioner. The full set of diamond 12 statements is reproduced in Appendix 4.

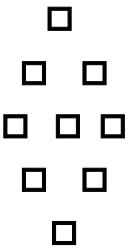
I anticipated that the English teachers at Downham Fields, if not familiar with the precise format, would have used some variation on a discussion statements activity in their own teaching. By employing this technique I was quite deliberately making a connection between the method and the participants' experience, productive in terms of building a rapport and an appropriate atmosphere for the focus group. Having completed the task individually, they then explored as a group their various decisions regarding the positioning of the statements in the diamond.

Figure 3a: The diamond 12 and the diamond 9

Diamond 12



Diamond 9



Such a method of gathering qualitative data might draw criticism for imposing boundaries on participants' discussions. In recognition of this, I had been careful when developing the statements to investigate and synthesise a range of views about drama in English. This also demonstrates how my Literature Review acted as a springboard for data collection methods (Flick,

2014) and remained in dialogue with the findings throughout the empirical process. In a further attempt to ameliorate the danger of limiting the focus group discussion, I included a blank statement sheet labelled 'other', enabling the participants to reject a pre-given statement and generate their own replacement. This also offered me a further insight into their current pedagogical perspectives on the contribution of drama to learning in English.

In the one-to-one interview with Shona I introduced the diamond 12 for reasons already discussed. In addition I again made use of this type of stimulus activity on my return to Woodside Boys School four years after the original period of data collection, when I judged it expedient to use a diamond 9 in the final learner focus group to remind, prompt and stimulate this new discussion. In this instance my decision to adapt the original diamond 12 format, in terms of both the number of statements and their phrasing, was made in acknowledgement of the differences between the teacher and learner focus group constituencies. However, the cramped nature of the space we were assigned - the only room available was a tiny office - meant that it was not feasible to ask the learners to spread out and undertake the activity individually first. I therefore made an on-the-spot adaptation, instead moving immediately to facilitate a group discussion around the statements.

3.5 Ethical considerations

I have touched on a number of ethical issues throughout this chapter to do with the extent and impact of my insiderness, ways of gaining access to the research site and the information I provided for participants. At all times I have drawn upon the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2011)[32], which begin by focusing on the aspirations and aims of educational research. In keeping with this approach, I identify the key aims of my research as:

- extending knowledge of effective practices for approaching drama in the English classroom;

[32] These guidelines have subsequently been revised, although not in ways that would have impacted on the conduct of my research.

- promoting practitioner reflection on and understanding of the purpose of drama in learning in English;
- raising critical questions about the policy framing of the subject English with regard to drama.

Underpinning the research is an aspiration to benefit the young people who learn in these English classrooms. It was important, therefore, to demonstrate an openness and transparency that would elicit participants' co-operation and willingness to volunteer for extended periods of classroom observation and interviewing.

3.5.1 Informed consent

At all stages I sought to obtain informed consent - in my approach to the schools, the English department members, the teacher-participants and the young people. In each school an informal approach was followed by a more formal written proposal and a face-to-face presentation at a department meeting. In both departments volunteers came forward, and at Downham Fields I convened meetings, singly and in groups, also engaging in email exchanges. From all the teachers I gained verbal consent for both the research process and their part in it. I held further meetings as the research progressed to answer questions and discuss their continuing participation. I was careful to assure the teachers that they had the right to withdraw from the project at any time. Also my video recording of lessons was subject to consent and both teachers and learners could choose to opt out. In Appendix 5 I have included the learner consent letters which the teachers were encouraged to customise before issuing to their classes. No teacher-participants raised issues about the storage of the data (recordings, transcriptions) when I explained that these would be kept on my password-protected university computer in a secure office. At the end of the data collection period I was required to present to the senior management at Downham Fields, via the Assistant Headteacher, a short summary report of my research activity.

With Shona, the teacher at Woodside Boys School, prior to interviewing her and embarking upon the period of observation I had an initial telephone conversation to discuss the extent of her commitment to the research and to

gain her verbal consent. Again there were further discussions and email exchanges, and her satisfaction with the process was indicated by her willingness, four years after the original data collection, to allow me to return to the school for the purposes of attending a class and re-interviewing a small group of learners.

I explicitly drew on the BERA document to guide my contact and dealings with the learners. I created a template for the consent request letter to be distributed to learners and their parents/carers by the two schools in line with their protocols for both consent and safeguarding. In both schools it was agreed that 'implied consent' should be used. Thus the letter included an 'opt out' rather than an 'opt in' form which was only returned if the learner and/or their parents/carers refused permission for the videoing and interviews. When any issues arose, as was the case with Chloe's class described previously, I sought to maintain an open dialogue with the teacher whilst adhering to her/his own consent boundaries.

3.5.2 Anonymity

I have anonymised all names of schools, teachers and learners by employing, as far as it is possible for me to tell, appropriate pseudonyms, and have omitted certain details of the schools to minimise the risk of identification. However, I am acutely aware that in some aspects of my reporting it is very difficult to completely conceal identities, for example, when a school's or English department's particular characteristics are considered to be relevant to the findings. When commenting analytically on the data and in recognition of the privileged position I hold in relation to it, I have made every effort to remain alive to the fact that some teachers might retrospectively feel embarrassed by my scrutiny of their practices. I have balanced the need for anonymity, however, with the impetus to remain true to the specificity of situation and context, for as Walford (2008) points out, anonymisation has its own drawbacks. It can lead to a spurious sense of generalisability in both the conduct and reporting of the research as it 'implicitly gives the writer and reader the chance to broaden the findings of the study beyond the situation investigated' (p. 36), whether intentionally or not. Whilst bearing these

considerations in mind I did not want to lose the sense of real people in real situations, and so to avoid having to employ the more generalised sobriquet 'Teacher 1' or 'Learner A', I suggested that the teachers might provide their own pseudonyms and also assign culturally appropriate pseudonyms to their learners. This was a request with which the teachers at Downham Fields complied. However, at Woodside Boys Shona expressed a preference for me to do this, a task I attempted based on some limited background information she provided. Aware of the inadequacies of this approach, I subsequently asked her to read a book chapter (Pitfield, 2016) I had written which drew on some of the early data from phase two. This was to ensure that she was happy with my naming choices, could see how I was using the transcribed data from the interview and the lesson observations, and to be open with her about the way my analysis was tending.

3.5.3 Managing the research relationships

Although Yandell (2014b) refers in a somewhat tongue-in cheek manner to the PGCE tutor 'lurking' (p. 53) in and the researcher 'haunting' (p. 180) classrooms, he found his PGCE mentor/mentee connection to be largely supportive of his presence as a researcher in the classroom. This too was my experience, particularly in the early stages at Downham Fields, although later there were instances of the balance tipping too far in the direction of the PGCE relationship. For example, at points of pressure for the Downham Fields teachers, there was an expectation that I should be steering the drama content and conduct of their lessons. Whilst this harked back to the type of positive relationship that we had developed within the safe space of the university-based part of their PGCE programme, when they were able to challenge and seek advice to negotiate some of the more prescriptive models of English experienced during their schools placements (see McIntyre and Jones, 2014), it was not always helpful in this new relationship of researcher and research participant.

Paradoxically, there were instances when my asked-for guidance was not wholly welcomed, a phenomenon that I refer to in Chapter 4 in relation to my analysis of Paul's lessons. Therefore I had to be acutely aware, as Heath

(1984) points out in her seminal study of schooled and home language practices, that the participating teachers should not come to view my research as 'pressuring change' (p. 129). This was highlighted by Daryll's withdrawal from the research at an early stage when he expressed concerns about the detrimental effects on learners' progress and behaviour of changing his practice to incorporate drama activities.

Although I was actively encouraging 'a culture of inquiry' (Gallagher and Blaney, 2001, p. 53) during our discussions, the teachers' expressions of concern about the behaviour issues I might encounter whilst observing in their lessons suggested some residual effect from that part of the PGCE tutor's role which is to do with assessment. The BSF project added an additional layer of complexity as the school in many ways looked and felt like a construction site. On a number of occasions during the observation period the teachers were timetabled in classrooms they felt were unsuitable for drama activity and they voiced their disquiet that such a context for learning was not giving a fair picture of the learners' responses in drama-based English lessons. As problematic as this was for a research study with selective classroom observation (Flick, 2014) at its heart, as an ex-school teacher myself I fully appreciated that such environmental considerations were presenting a genuine stumbling block in terms of the school's continuing suitability as a research setting.

These experiences at Downham Fields were relevant when making the adjustments to my research design for phase two. My more professionally-removed relationship with Shona, a practitioner already confident in using drama as part of her English teaching, was productive in that she was clear about her boundaries, did not waver in her commitment during the research period, and found no necessity to cancel any of the planned lesson observations. Just one learner from her class returned an opt out slip, an overall positive response I attribute at least in part to the careful way in which Shona explained the consent letter and talked to the learners about their involvement in research, her invitation for me to speak to the class at the

beginning of the first observed lesson and her encouragement of questions and comments.

3.5.4 Managing the researcher role

It is incumbent on the ethical educational researcher not to abuse the trust of the participants and this 'involves the moral integrity of the researcher' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 97). It also presupposes the adoption of an open, enquiring stance (Edwards and Mercer, 1987/1995), as opposed to one of superiority. As both a researcher and a former teacher I recognise my responsibilities in maintaining this trust and certainly do not consider myself uniquely placed to be judgemental, ever-cognisant of the fact that my own practice in English lessons over many years would not always have borne such close scrutiny. When I looked back over my observation records during the data analysis process, like Grumet et al. (2008) I was at times able to detect my own biases, for example, about the teacher's pedagogical decisions, and it was important for me not to discount these but rather 'to own them and work them out' (p. 151). Therefore, I have not set out in subsequent chapters with the intention of criticising individual teachers. Rather I am striving to reach a better understanding of how drama contributes to teaching and learning in English within the particular classroom contexts to which I had access, the institutional practices of schooling, and the parameters of educational policy.

3.6 Refining the research question

I have referred previously in this chapter to the reciprocity between literature review, data-gathering methods and data analysis which is part of the circularity of the qualitative research process (Flick, 2014, p. 139). It was this that during phase one of my study enabled me to explore the complexities of my prima facie research question and refine it by identifying the following subsidiary but integral questions which I then carried forward into phase two:

- In what ways might policy, institutional and curriculum structures situate the English teacher's drama in English pedagogy?

- What happens in the English classroom when drama forms an integral part of the learning?
- What is the role of dramatic play in learning in English?
- How does drama activate the collaborative processes of reading in the English classroom?

In Chapter 4 I expand upon the process by which these subsidiary research questions were generated.

3.7 The data analysis process

The English classroom is 'a bricolage of methods, a plurality of purposes and objectives' continually reconstructed by teachers and learners 'in contexts over which they never have full control' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 18). This presents a challenge for the qualitative researcher who, in exploring the possibilities of pedagogy in school classrooms, sees the value of adopting creative methodological and analytical approaches when 'asking questions about the intersection of the aesthetic and the social' (Gallagher, 2011, p. 72). In what follows I aim to demonstrate the ways in which I have addressed this challenge.

Mine was an inductive analysis taking as its starting point a pivotal data item (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in each phase, the teacher interviews, to identify the recurring themes or patterns. I listened to the interviews and highlighted in the transcripts key ideas (Boler, 2008), referred to by Lewis (2001) as 'general themes' (p. 183). These were tested and developed over time by application to the entire data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As a counterweight to the notion that themes simply reside in and emerge from the data, and because the researcher does not exist in an epistemological and theoretical vacuum, Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledge her active role in selecting and deploying evidence. Thus of relevance is Kemmis' (2005) description of expert practitioners who '"search for saliences", that is, search for knowledge in and through practice to correct and amend practice in the light of changing circumstances and new perspectives' (p. 421). In a similar way, as a researcher my 'thematized coding' (Hall, Jones and Thomson,

2011, p. 131) was no doubt influenced by saliences from my own teaching experiences, but this was a reciprocal process in that analysis of the data further developed my understanding of the saliences (Yandell, 2014b).

An early coding of the teacher interview data from phase one highlighted these emerging, very broad themes:

A. Effects on drama-in-English practices of curriculum, assessment and institutional constraints.
B. Beliefs about drama as part of English lesson content.
C. Expertise in drama-related practices.
D. How young people learn in English through drama.

In recognition of the active nature of the process and to make a clear connection with my overarching research question I expanded the coding under two headings, 'Teaching' and 'Learning'. This enabled me to synthesise a list that acted as an aide-memoire/guide during lesson observations and other data-gathering activities (see Table 3e). This way of working with the data, continually 'sifting, sorting, reviewing and reflecting on them' (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p. 148), enabled the previously reviewed data to inform and shape further data collection (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982/2007, p. 163). Thus, as I moved towards categorisation, I was able to strike some codes from the list or subsume some within others, a process 'akin to funnelling from the wide to the narrow' (Cohen, Mannion and Morrison, 2000, p. 148).

Table 3e: The aide-memoire/guide for lesson observations

Teaching: drama in English as…	**Learning: drama in English as…**
Means of studying literature (B; D)	Learner at the centre of the text (B; D)
Active learning opportunities (B; D)	Physical embodiment (C; D)
Drama as pre-reading and reading skills (B; C)	Cultural production (B; D)
Teacher in role as pedagogy (B; C)	Collaborative learning (B; D)
Environment for drama in the English classroom (A; D)	Playfulness in learning in English (B; D)
	Quality of learning (B; D)
Constraints…… (A)	Constraints…… (A)

On completion of the data collection I trawled the entire data set for common features (Troman and Jeffrey, 2011) using the 'broad brushstrokes' recommended by Saldana (2009, p. 1). I employed a colour identification system to highlight instances of each in transcripts from the data set. This process of multi-method triangulation (Meijer, Verloop and Beijaard, 2002) or crystalization (Bragg, 2011) required me to move across the data, coding and recoding, seeking links and categorising into families of codes that shared characteristics - although these were 'fuzzy' categories (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This led me to finally establish the themes, those patterns or trends that were to serve as the bones of my analysis (Saldana, 2009). I found, though, that even in their condensed form of categories and subcategories, the data were unwieldy to manage (Hall, Jones and Thomson, 2011), and my thematized coding method risked atomising the data into small 'isolated segments' when I actually needed to approach them 'as contextualised events' (Lewis, 2001, p. 183). To ameliorate this danger I drew on the examples of Yandell (2014b) and Lewis (2001) by selecting for analysis both the 'significant moments' (Yandell, 2014b, p. 64) that were themselves representative of other moments, and 'key events' (Lewis, 2001, p. 183) characterised as such by teachers and learners when interviewed. In Chapters 6 and 7 I present these as interpretive vignettes.

In the end the necessity of separating out the central themes for analytic and presentation purposes determined the most useful way of structuring my discussion chapters, with the four themes identified informing chapter headings and subheadings:

- drama in English as pedagogical approach;
- drama in English as re-creative text;
- drama in English as play-based activity;
- drama as learning in English.

In conclusion, the vignettes I offer under these broad headings represent my readings of the data and my interpretations of the particular moments on which I have focused, but they are always infused with the voices, actions

and interactions of the teachers and learners. Additionally, from a flexible use of strategies such as the diamond 12 or 9 to the interpretive practice of casting from the data a narrative or 'continuous interpretative text' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 271), my approach owes much to the 'Qualitative Researcher-as-Bricoleur' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p. 7). This brings me full circle to the description with which I began this section, and I therefore propose the analytic and interpretive method described above as very appropriate for investigating drama's contribution to the bricolage of learning that constitutes English.

CHAPTER 4

Phase one: refining the research question

4.1 The circularity of the research process

In this chapter I focus on my research at Downham Fields School, drawing from across the phase one data set and cross-referencing classroom observations to field notes and interviews with teachers and learners. My purpose here is to demonstrate how my overarching research question, which emerged over time from my own practitioner experiences, has been nuanced during my phase one exploration of the ways in which the English teacher-participants discursively and pedagogically construct drama as part of their lessons. However, as I highlight in Chapters 1 and 2, the particularity of their situation must always be located within broader discourses about English teaching, and education more generally. My analysis of the phase one data therefore looks closely at the 'intra-action' (Barad, 2007, p. 139) between institutional expectation, curriculum policy and the dispositions of individual teachers towards drama as part of the English curriculum, Barad's (2007) neologism most accurately capturing the relational nature of these elements as actualised in the practices of the classroom. I balance this account with learners' views on the contribution that drama makes to their learning in English.

4.2 Institutional expectations and demands

The first of my subsidiary research questions acknowledges a recurring theme identified from the phase one data. It is to do with the ways in which institutional and curriculum expectations bear down on pedagogical approach: **In what ways might policy, institutional and curriculum structures situate the English teacher's drama in English pedagogy?** In what follows I analyse how "institutional weight", a term coined by the teacher Paul in an audio-recorded conversation on 15.10.2009, is apparent in school and curriculum structures. I explore the impact of this on the participating teachers in terms of their dispositions towards drama as part of their English teaching.

4.2.1 The imposition of ability groupings in English

An example of institutional weight is to be found in the school senior management team's imposition of 'top set' English groups in Years 9 and 11. When he comments that "they sort of set behind our backs basically" (15.10.2009), Paul suggests such actions are against the wishes and ethos of the English teachers, a claim supported by my own experience of the commitment to mixed attainment teaching demonstrated by the Downham Fields English Department over a number of years. Also, his choice of words implies that senior management pursued their policy in an underhand way which signals a de-professionalising disregard for the teachers' status as subject specialists.

> MP: You wouldn't want to go to a setted system?
> Paul: I would rather not teach, if I'm honest with you, than go to a setted system. So it angered me greatly at the time but then if you're only one voice on it, and I think it's quite a young department (recorded conversation, 15.10.2009).

Paul, who is the longest-serving of the teachers involved in the phase one research, highlights the youth of the English Department as of significance in the leadership team's methods for implementing the change in policy. The action of senior leaders in this instance fits with a model of 'managerialism' (Jones, 2003, p. 148) in which discourses of ability, such as those introduced to sift the learners in English at Downham Fields School, are an important feature. It is in line with Jones' (2003) research into the way managerialism at whole-school level has over time impacted on the following: the relationship English teachers have with their subject; learners' experiences of English in the classroom; and the very fabric of the subject itself. Thus there are tensions inherent in taking an oppositional stance whilst managing performative discourses of 'professionalism' which are all about the teacher's ability to adapt 'to the necessities and vicissitudes of policy' (Ball, 2004, p. 17). This can lead, as Paul indicates above, to the teacher experiencing a kind of 'values schizophrenia' (ibid, p. 9).

In the following section I examine how these forces are at work in Paul's curriculum plans, with particular reference to his planning for the drama-in-English content. I then move onto consider how an over-reliance on 'pedagogic strategies which can maximise success in terms that are pre-given' (Jones, 2003, p. 149) is indicative of the more insidious effects of managerialist discourses on the English teachers' construction of their subject.

4.2.2 Curriculum and assessment impositions

Jones (2003) refers to the 'particular technologies of English teaching' (p. 149) that have come to replace 'curriculum experiment and "dialogue" around the validity of different forms of knowledge' (p. 149), vestiges of which are apparent in the scheme of work that Paul constructs for the reading and study of the novel *Stone Cold* (Swindells, 1993/1995). For this he utilises a framework common to the department and the scheme is to be taught by others in the team, as per departmental policy. In developing it Paul was aware that my observations of his drama-in-English practices would take place in some of these lessons. Thus the scheme sheds light on the relationship between the departmental approach to addressing curriculum requirements and Paul's perspective at this point in his career on the purposes of drama in English.

The learning objectives for lessons in the scheme almost exclusively focus on information retrieval and the development of inference skills in reading. Indeed, the learning objectives are couched as Assessment Focuses (AFs), the terminology of an assessment tool known as Assessing Pupil Progress (APP)[33]. This was a national policy initiative, reinforced by widely-distributed training materials, which schools were required to put in place following the abandonment of end of Key Stage 3 tests in 2008. Paul believes the explicit focus on the AFs to be a good thing as he harbours concerns that the department's teaching of reading at Key Stage 3 is not systematic enough,

[33] Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) employs a highly atomised set of criteria represented in grid form, with separate grids for Reading, Writing and Speaking and Listening. These are used by teachers to finely mark learners' work and, by means of a calculation, to arrive at an overall assessment of National Curriculum levels of attainment in each of the three elements.

and he favours an interventionist approach (field notes, 06.09.2009), which his planning for teaching *Stone Cold* (Swindells, 1993/1995) allows him to take. Paul, though, has an investment in APP, as he had been responsible for leading on this initiative in the school and at local authority level throughout the previous year. Despite this he later claims that the drama activities he has been trying out with his Year 9 classes have led him to a change of heart about APP:

> MP: Right, so what are we going to do on Friday?
> Paul: That's it, final thing that I did want to say was, again I had a bit of a kind of an epiphany, again based on this kind of thinking around, just the way that drama's making me think, which was, this whole sort of thing was, you know I've been continually saying to you, "oh yeah, but what about..?" Actually I kind of had a bit of a realisation the other day which was, yeah but this [APP] is just an artificial assessment tool anyway, you don't necessarily need to come back to that assessment tool. What they're doing [the Year 9 class through drama], and I do really believe this, what they're doing is much more in keeping with, if you like, a real engagement with the text. That's much more 'real reader' (15.10. 2009).

This is the second time that he has set what he calls "real" reading and "organic reading" in opposition to a skills approach: "Do the AFs develop reading skills? Yes. Is that how children read? Probably not" (field notes 06.09.2009). However, when giving his reasons for prescriptively focusing his scheme on the development of reading competencies assessable using APP, he highlights the "official", and therefore officially visible nature of this document, referencing its wider audience and hinting at the accountability mechanisms by which English teachers are bound. Paul absolves himself of responsibility for the scheme's lack of drama content by suggesting that other teachers more confident in this way of working will fill

in the gaps, and positions this as a way of promoting teacher autonomy (field notes, 06.09.2009). As is clear in my review of policy in Chapter 2, Paul is not alone in adopting an equivocal stance towards drama in English, nor in implying its voluntary nature.

The institutional weight of assessment regimes is particularly acute for Chloe as an NQT. It affects her classroom practice as far as drama in English is concerned, even though in her previous career she ran school-based Shakespeare workshops, as this sequence from a conversation audio recorded on 27.04.2010 demonstrates:

> MP: That's interesting, what have you found has been the big difference between doing that [the workshops] and then being a teacher of English and trying to introduce drama?
> Chloe: Pressures on you as an English teacher of what is needed, the outcomes. Often I think with Year, I mean Year 10...
> Jamie: ...behaviour...
> Chloe: Yeah, first of all Year 10, it feels like there's a lot to get through and at the end of that you have to have a piece of coursework. So when I taught *Romeo and Juliet* last year for the first time I did a drama lesson, I did two drama lessons. I went on a really good course with the RSC for a day, um, and I really enjoyed it but I couldn't see actually what they'd [the learners] got out of it that they directly needed. I could see generally what they got out of it, but this time round I didn't even end up doing those lessons because I was worried about time and how that ...even though I could see why...
> Jamie: ...the pressure's been really on us, hasn't it, with the Year 10s, I feel, and the coursework...
> Chloe: Year 10 it feels quite difficult in terms of what they've got to get done, and also, you know, when

> you're an NQT you feel those pressures more because you want them to deliver. So Year 9, I do think there is more time, um, but yeah behaviour isn't very good... (audio-recorded discussion, 27.04.2010).

It would seem that, in developing her pedagogical understanding and approach, Chloe's prior experience of utilising drama in the study of a Shakespeare play is superseded by the pressures on her as a novice teacher to ensure that learners "deliver" their achievements. In this way learning is commodified, and the learning "directly needed" for examination assessment, of which coursework produced in controlled conditions is a part, becomes the only valid indicator of learners' understanding of the play and of the teacher's effectiveness in teaching it. Thus embedded in her comments is a view of classroom drama activity in the reading of a play as diversionary or extraneous, rather than essential for a text written to be performed.

In talking about the pressures which constrain the use of drama in literature teaching, Chloe and Emmanuel reveal that there are also consequences for learner attitudes towards drama:

> Chloe: Yeah, the pressure is like, pressures I'm already feeling it. Like you have Year 11 (to Claire), but with Year 10 I can't waste a lesson, they need to know these poems well and they need to be able to write about them. So if you come in and spend a whole lesson doing drama and then at the end of it you're having to squeeze in two poems because it's [the drama activity] not integrated, you kind of feel the pressures of 'what are they going to be tested on?' which I know every teacher knows that you shouldn't just base it on…
> Emmanuel: …teach to the test…
> Chloe: …but especially when you're an NQT, you don't want your whole class to not fulfil their potential (Claire nods in agreement). You need to be doing your job well.

> Emmanuel: Sometimes the kids themselves, because of how… their preconception of the subject and obviously what's expected of them, they…
> Chloe: "What's the point of this?"
> Emmanuel: Yeah, sometimes you have to convince them. Like "You sure we've got time? Why aren't we writing?"
> Chloe: Or just opting out.
> Emmanuel: "If I'm not going to be assessed on it, if I'm not going to get a grade, I'm not going to get a level, then why should I do it?"
> (Teacher focus group interview, 08.03.2010)

Explicit here is that in a test-driven system the concerns felt by the teachers regarding the legitimacy of drama activity in learning English are directly or indirectly communicated to learners. This has the potential to influence learners' dispositions towards drama as a way of reading texts in English, and therefore their perceptions of what is important in the subject, in such a way as to set up the very attitudes that Chloe and Emmanuel cite as a reason for not employing more drama in their English lessons. To shed further light on these claims, later in this chapter, and again in Chapter 8, I give voice to the perspectives of learners.

4.2.3 Pedagogical and physical boundaries

The only lesson in Paul's *Stone Cold* (Swindells, 1993/1995) scheme of work which plans for a fuller engagement with drama activity has as its objective 'to understand how we can use drama to imaginatively engage with texts'. This apparent separation of imaginative engagement from the more prevalent skills development aspects of the scheme is physically reinforced in Paul's use of a different teaching space whenever he teaches a drama-in-English lesson.

The move from classroom to Drama room seems to hold more significance than a simple matter of lack of space might suggest, with Paul signalling to

the learners that drama in English happens somewhere other than the English classroom. He reflects on his reasons for making this distinction:

> Paul: The change was with the Drama room - that is seen as being a very imaginative space. I do like the whole ritual, the rite of passage of moving down there… (recorded conversation, 15.10.20 09).

This brings to mind Fleming's (1997/2019) idea of ritual as important in and common to both child play and drama activity, particularly as Paul's later critique of his own drama-in-English practices focuses on his need to allow learners the opportunities to play. As far as the learners' experience of English is concerned, Paul is positive about the potential of the Drama room to provide an "imaginative space", which I note he explicitly invites the class to inhabit during a drama-in-English lesson observed on 09.10.2009. Although this hints at the corollary, the English classroom as an unimaginative space, "I do like…" suggests that for him too this space for drama (both physical and imaginative) might offer a welcome degree of pedagogical freedom, and echoes the research of Franks et al. (2014) into teachers' use of rehearsal room pedagogy[34]. These researchers highlight the potential for shifts in 'how teachers see themselves and their role in the classroom' (Franks et al., 2014, p. 171) when they operate in and move between the different and differently organised spaces of the rehearsal room and the classroom.

The pedagogical and physical shifts experienced by Paul when teaching reading through drama present him with some genuine challenges as indicated by two instances from my planned lesson observation schedule. When I go into Downham Fields on 15.09.2009 to observe a previously discussed drama-based English lesson, and having received an email on 11.09.2009 from Paul about his "really interesting drama week", I find the class engaged for the whole lesson in a quotation-retrieval activity that takes

[34] This was research conducted into the Learning Performance Network (LPN), the project involving teachers, learners, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and the University of Warwick to which I refer in Chapter 2.

place in their usual English classroom. In our discussion afterwards Paul suggests that the change of plan is due to his previous drama lesson having gone "completely wrong" (field notes, 18.09.2009) because he had not read enough of the novel with the class for them to engage properly with the activities and that the change of venue to the Drama room had been too abrupt. Yet in this lesson the further reading of the novel that he suggests would make the planned drama activity more meaningful does not take place, and instead the learners re-read a very short passage which is used solely as a vehicle for finding quotations in preparation for an assessment. He maintains a tight grip on the lesson, with learners working individually and mainly in silence, which also points to his desire to regain control of the space and their responses within it. He reflects on his tendency to be "too controlling" (field notes, 18.09.2009) and this is a theme to which he returns in later conversations when he ponders what it might mean to allow learners through drama to be more playful in their exploration of the text. Then on 22.09.2009 Paul emails me to cancel an observation: "as I am now straying from the SOW [scheme of work] and Learning Objectives I am concious (sic) of the 'drama learning' losing meaning".

These two instances point to Paul's doubts about the role of drama to prepare learners for the pre-planned assessments that exert pressure on curriculum time, as well as to concerns about managing the behaviour issues that may arise as a result of the drama activities. For Paul these factors work together to situate drama in English as at best an optional extra and at worst an uncomfortable distraction that pushes at his boundaries as an English teacher, as I explore in my later analysis of one of his lessons.

4.3 The potential of drama as an integral part of the English curriculum

Teachers' positions, however, are not fixed, but 'sustaining a positive sense of effectiveness' (Day et al., 2006, p. 614) and agency in relation to their subject when faced with the types of institutional weight described previously, is fraught with difficulties. This is a theme identifiable from the teacher focus group interview on 08.03.2010 which involves Chloe, Emmanuel, Claire and Jamie. Here a lively discussion ensues about what the

subject English is and what it is for, and in this there are indications, the particular and acute pressures in English as a core subject notwithstanding, that the teachers' positions with regard to drama in English are unstable and therefore open to change. For example, Chloe can see the potential relevance of drama if it is a properly integrated aspect of English, an issue raised by Jamie previously in the interview when he suggests that none of the departmental schemes of work he has taught that term reflect such an approach but he has nevertheless been trying to include some lessons of drama. Jamie is an NQT and holding him back is his uncertainty about "where it [drama] fits in" and "finding ways you can integrate it as a bit of a lesson". In contrast to the concerns about drama activity exacerbating behaviour issues that he expresses in the exchange with Chloe quoted earlier in this chapter, here he highlights an unexpected benefit of persevering:

> Jamie: It's having the time to think about it sometimes, and also worrying about, I mean it is a double-edged sword because I worry, I worry about behaviour but actually I find behaviour often improves because of drama but it's taking that first risk. With my Year 9 classes it [behaviour] definitely improved in some respects (teacher focus group interview, 08.03.2010).

The teachers' discussion begs the second of my subsidiary research questions: **What happens in the English classroom when drama forms an integral part of the learning?** Their exchanges are indicative of the way in which they negotiate the needs of the formal curriculum, their own needs as teachers and their learners' needs, as they move towards determining a 'personal deliverable model' (Green, 2006, p. 121) for teaching their subject. Thus the relationship between institutional demands and pedagogy is not a simple one, and in developing more nuanced narratives around their own practices there is the potential for change.

4.3.1 Pedagogical 'security thresholds'

To pursue this question further I now consider how the process of change is reflected in both Paul's classroom practice and his commentary on the lessons, as he endeavours to integrate drama into his scheme of work for the novel *Stone Cold* (Swindells, 1993/1995). To understand the nuances of his pedagogical disposition towards the use of drama in English, I refer in my analysis to what Heathcote (1971/2015) identifies as the 'security thresholds' (p. 19) of the teacher seeking to introduce drama into lessons. She describes how new teachers or, as in Paul's case, those novice in facilitating learning through drama, confront their own security needs when promoting the 'two-way flow of communication' between teacher and learners which is 'the living, vibrating matter of teaching' (Heathcote, 1971/2015, p. 19). The thresholds she describes are at once practical, philosophical and pedagogical.

Heathcote is primarily interested in teachers opening themselves up to scrutiny via self-reflection. She suggests that, if teachers are to assay using drama as part of their teaching, they must be prepared to address their individual strengths, weaknesses and needs. This is very much in the intellectually curious and pedagogically creative mode of professional development posited by Daly (2004), as explored in Chapter 2. For O'Neill (2015a) in her introduction to Heathcote's paper, teachers who are prepared to consider their pedagogy and practice in the light of Heathcote's thresholds have the 'ability and willingness to be our authentic selves in the classroom' (O'Neill, 2015a, p. 18), and will as a result experience 'rewarding interactions, engagement and learning' (p. 18). O'Neill does not offer a precise definition of authenticity but for Ball (2004) the concept is about teachers holding fast to their knowledge and expertise even when these diverge from the orthodoxy of dominant discourses. However, if authenticity and performativity 'clash and grate at every turn'(Ball, 2004, p. 16), this can lead to the aforementioned 'values schizophrenia'(ibid, p. 9), when 'commitment and experience within practice have to be sacrificed and compromised for impression and performance' (p. 9). Heathcote in 1971 was writing about security thresholds at a time when the balance could more

easily be tipped in favour of the teacher's search for authenticity, because curriculum imposition was not as pronounced and the accountability measures and inspection regime as experienced by schools and teachers today were far less onerous. Nevertheless, in exploring what happens in the English classroom when drama forms an integral part of the learning, I propose that the thresholds offer a suitable lens through which to view Paul's attempts to push at the boundaries of his practice by introducing more drama-based learning into his English lessons.

4.3.2 Exploring the teacher's thresholds of security

In a conversation with Paul (field notes, 02.10.2009) he highlights his tendency to over-control the direction of the learning in his English lessons and he again reflects on this after a lesson that I observe on 09.10.2009. The way in which the lesson is structured accentuates the divide between what happens in the different spaces of the English classroom and the Drama room. Paul begins in the classroom with a PowerPoint presentation of 'top tips for effective improvisation' with graphics illustrating 'correct' behaviours for both participants and spectators. Even though the learners are about to move to the Drama room, a place they associate with their discrete drama lessons, Paul does not acknowledge or draw on their prior knowledge of improvisation protocols. On arrival he does, however, urge them to inhabit this "imaginative space" (lesson observation notes, 09.10.2009) in their improvisation of a scene between the characters Gail and Link from *Stone Cold* (Swindells, 1993/1995), during which they will use freeze frame[35] and mime in pairs and Paul will narrate. However, the scene is punctuated by a series of false starts as he halts the action to bring the learners back into a circle, talking to them about their "learning journey" which he suggests is being hampered by some examples of poor behaviour. He reinforces routines, at different times sending learners out of the room or to the 'time out' chairs. On each occasion the drama activity is interrupted and then re-started. When

[35] A freeze frame is a drama technique whereby learners, individually or with others, use their own bodies to create a still image to represent a scene, an idea, an emotion, a piece of figurative language, etc.

he sums up at the end, he tells the learners that they have "managed to salvage" (lesson observation notes, 09.10.2009) good things from the lesson.

In our discussion immediately following the lesson Paul worries that his approach is not working for the drama sessions as it is stifling the learners' enthusiasm and not harnessing their energies in the right direction. He recognises a need to give learners the space and time within the activities to play creatively in the way that younger children might (he mentions by way of example play in Early Years teaching), although he freely admits that such an approach feels alien to him (field notes, 09.10.09). Heathcote (1971/2015) writes about the play-based nature of drama, proposing that dramatic play must be allowed elaboration time if it is to have intention, and that the former may be denied by the teacher as a result of 'their own worry or impatience' (Heathcote, 1971/2015, p. 24). Paul's reluctance in allowing the elaboration time necessary for learners to find intention in their drama may also be exacerbated by the enduring legacy of National Literacy Strategy prescriptions for 'successful' English lessons. The Strategy's explicitly stated learning objectives, fast-pacing of lessons, frequent plenaries and mini-plenaries, and so on, leave little time for Heathcote's elaboration, and are amongst the types of 'technologies of English teaching' (Jones, 2003, p. 149) implicated in the 'cultural shift' (p. 143) that has affected the actualisation of English in the classroom.

Because Paul expresses a desire to find ways to surprise and engage pupils in the drama from the very beginning of the lesson (field notes, 09.10.2009), we talk about the possibility of including in his next drama-based lesson a whole-group spontaneous improvisation set in the market described in the novel. During this the learners are to be given time to develop their in-role activity, that is, to play with intent and with time for elaboration, and Paul might enter the scene in role as a character from the novel to interact with individuals and groups and move the drama on. A market situation is one of the examples given by Heathcote (1971/2015) to demonstrate how different teachers might confront the 'size of group threshold' (p. 20), and relates to

the degree of security the teacher experiences when working in drama with varying group arrangements.

When I begin my observation of the lesson it is apparent that Paul has gone part but not all of the way towards the experimentation we discussed. Although he retains the teacher in role aspect, he decides to adopt the very high status role of the Chief Inspector in charge of the team investigating the case against the serial killer, Shelter, from the novel. He sets up the chairs in the drama studio in rows facing him, and by means of this seating arrangement and the language of a police briefing, he informs the learners of their collective role in relation to his. When Paul issues them with a case file this is another method of keying them into his and their roles (Bolton and Heathcote, 1999). However, because he maintains his command status throughout the lengthy briefing, with shouted instructions and 'bawling out' of individuals, he is leaning further towards the 'performer' than 'facilitator' mode of teacher in role. Thus 'the students become **"audience"** to the performance' [emphasis in the original] (Bolton and Heathcote, 1999, p. 119), rather than full participants.

Heathcote (1971/2015) suggests that risk has to be part of the process for teachers determining their security thresholds, but Paul has been careful to minimise his risk by making himself the focus of the action. This puts him in danger of generating ' a kind of inertia of expectancy' (Heathcote, 1971/2015, p. 24), such that learners 'look to the one isolated person (the teacher)' (ibid, p. 24) to solve the problems posed by the drama. A different type of inertia, which seems to have a gendered quality, is on display amongst a small group of girls sitting in the back row during the police briefing, who in bodily turning aside and exchanging sceptical looks (observation notes, 16.10.2009) signal disengagement from Paul's in-role overly-aggressive delivery and the tightly controlled nature of the drama. Yet later, when given time to role play together, these same learners make efforts to commit to the drama and are not averse to engaging with my character, all of us in role.

A shift in balance from learners as audience to learners as participants is evident when Paul sets them the task of searching for clues, and here he moves towards allowing them to 'adopt the cultural role of "fellow-makers"' (Bolton and Heathcote, 1999, p. 119) of the drama. In this section of the lesson, where Paul facilitates small group work opportunities for learners to develop their roles and circulates the room holding conversations with them, he is clearly taking a risk by operating in role without controlling from the front. This is an indication that he is beginning to confront his 'Decision-making and leadership threshold' (Heathcote, 1971/2015, p. 21), which requires the teacher to hand over some responsibility for the progress of the drama to the learners as 'an important educational experience and one means of ensuring involvement' (ibid, p. 21).

I am prevented from observing if there are any further developments in this direction by Paul's decision to focus in all subsequent lessons on preparing learners for their forthcoming assessment task. This precludes any drama activity, suggesting that the institutional weight of assessment procedures has again had the final word. However, the inclusion of drama as part of his English teaching repertoire has presented personal, sometimes uncomfortable challenges, as described above, and this may also have contributed to Paul's decision.

4.4 What is the role of dramatic play in learning English?

From these observations of Paul's lessons and his reflections on the role of play in learning through drama, and bearing in mind my reading of Heathcote's (1971/2015) ideas for working productively with the play-based nature of drama, another of my subsidiary research questions has emerged: **What is the role of dramatic play in learning in English?** I therefore included a statement on this as part of the diamond 12 activity described in Chapter 3 and employed during the teacher focus group interview (08.03.2010).

Emmanuel and Jamie both place this statement near the bottom of their diamonds and Claire and Chloe each selects it as their least important statement:

> Chloe: (To Claire) We've got the same one, haven't we?
> MP: What was that?
> Chloe: (Reading statement aloud) 'Draws on elements of child play to enhance learning in English'.
> Claire: Yeah, I find the wording of this one difficult again, like the child's play.
> Chloe: I guess it's the one I least kind of understood really so I guess it ended up being last (laughs) because I wasn't sure what that would look like really, and I think child play, what children experimenting, playing around that kind of thing was covered in other ones [statements] but I didn't know specifically…
> Claire: But kind of (reading the statement) 'to enhance the learning in English'. What we do in English is quite structured although there's avenues for creativity, things like that, but everything comes down to having a purpose. 'We do this because', or 'why have you done this?' but I just thought child play, it was (pause).
> Emmanuel: Is it that (unclear), the kind of innocence that sometimes…
> Chloe: Where you're just playing…
> Emmanuel: …when children approach something not necessarily knowing why or expecting to do it a certain way, when they just come… it's very organic and they just do it.
> Claire: Very accepting.
> Emmanuel: Very accepting, yeah, not worrying how it looks.

> Jamie: I had that [the statement] as my second to last one. It's because the fact that it says 'play' almost suggests something derogatory, almost as if drama is just a big game, just time to have a laugh and to get out of lessons, whereas I think actually drama is often very structured, it has to be or it would just be complete chaos so it's not play.
> Chloe: It won't just be play to see what happens, although obviously it's organic in some way, but there will be a purpose to it because you have a lot to cover and a lot of skills they [the learners] need to acquire.
> Jamie: Not dossing about.
> Claire: No, we're not trying to say it's not going to be fun, play means fun, but...
> Jamie: Exactly. It's not going to be **play** [his emphasis].

In the characterisation of play as an activity without purpose, or simply fun for fun's sake, there are echoes of what Banaji (2011) identifies as 'a constructed binary opposition between "pointless playing around" (creativity) and "real learning" (academic progression within a sanctioned tradition)' (p. 37). This is some distance away from a Vygotskian stance which credits play with a significant role in development, although at different ages and depending on learners' 'needs, inclinations, incentives and motives to act' (Vygotsky, 1966/2016, p. 6), its function changes. He draws a direct correlation between play and imagination, with imagination in adolescence driving those creative acts which transform reality, are inventive and involve 'the creation of anything new' (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 270). The connections between play and learning are therefore of direct relevance to the ways in which creative, imaginative activity around text incentivise affective engagement with literature in the secondary English classroom (see Vygotsky, 1994, p. 284).

Thus, in Chloe's dismissal of "play to see what happens" in English lessons, there is the suggestion that discovery is the opposite of purposeful learning.

Similarly in her focus on the need for structure, it is not obvious to Claire how play might serve a pedagogical function. Emmanuel, though, is more positive in acknowledging the desirability of the open-minded approach to learning that play might encourage in his learners. This is evident in practice when I observe his Year 7 lesson (10.05.2010) on two scenes from *Nation* (Pratchett and Ravenhill, 2009), in which he allows learners to play with the physicality of characters diving to the sea bed as a preliminary to dramatization of a scene.

Jamie's concern that drama might be equated with play in a derogatory sense - a view of play as 'messing about', neither educationally valuable nor justifiable for secondary school learners - indicates that he does place some value on drama in learning English. When he talks about the need for structure, though, this is mainly to avoid the "chaos" in the classroom that might occur if learners see drama as play, which indicates that he is struggling with his own security thresholds. For example, from my observation of his Year 9 lesson on *Shrek* (Adamson and Jenson, 2001) that took place on 12.05.2010, the threshold to do with noise levels is relevant. I note his repeated remonstrations in an attempt to curb the learners' talk which continually frustrates the flow of the drama work and stretches a freeze frame activity to its very limit, with learners indicating their increasing disengagement via uninterested body language and off-task chatter. A chaotic classroom is understandably an uncomfortable space for the inexperienced teacher to occupy. How this "chaos" might be interpreted by others can also make drama seem a high-risk strategy for teaching English, which is illustrated throughout Jamie's lesson when he and the class are subjected to the intermittent attentions of a deputy headteacher.

Jamie's concern about learners trying to avoid work and "dossing about", Claire's thoughts that play is in opposition to structure and purpose, and Chloe's reference to the pressures of the curriculum ground that has to be covered all hint at the fears associated with threshold experimentation in the surveillance culture of schools. Even Heathcote, writing in 1971,

acknowledges that the pressures of timetabling and curriculum might hinder teachers in finding 'their true teaching thresholds' (p. 19).

4.5 Learners' perspectives on learning in English through drama

I now wish to draw from the data gathered during the learner focus group interviews in phase one of my research to add a further perspective on how drama might develop understandings with regard to 'the important objects of English' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 1), texts, talk and writing. As quoted previously in this chapter, Chloe and Emmanuel appropriate the words of learners to support their concerns about spending time on drama in English. Therefore in this section my aim is to begin to probe such attitudes by giving direct voice to the learner perspective.

In all four focus groups I ask the learners to explore how drama relates specifically to the subject of English, which is an issue touched upon by the teacher Claire in the context of assessment:

> Claire: English essentially has always been about reading and writing, that's what you get your GCSEs for, you don't get it for drama (teacher focus group, 08.03.2010).

The focus group learners do not raise assessment as a particular issue, perhaps because they are still young enough to feel at a distance from the pressure of GCSEs, and this is one of my reasons for later seeking the perspectives of a group of learners who are just about to sit their GCSE examinations. Rather than dwelling on assessment the phase one learners express some affinity with Barrs' (1987) view of drama as integral to learning in English. Thus Yesim highlights a key factor for her in experiencing a text through drama:

> Yesim: I think it really helps when you're like watching a film or you're reading a book, you're kind of watching it, hearing it, but you don't actually, because you haven't experienced it you won't know what's actually

> going on, but if we act it out then you, 'cos then you can know what we're feeling now, you'll express it more and get, like, more involved.
> MP: So it enables you to express your feelings and understand them?
> Yesim: Understand what you're watching or reading even more, like puts you in the actual spot for it (learner focus group 2).

In her references to "feeling now" and "in the actual spot", the immediacy of experiencing the text in this way is clearly of significance and brings to mind Jackson's (2007) research into the responses of young audiences to a theatre in education programme. He highlights how immediacy is bound up in the theatricality of experiencing dilemmas unfold in real time (ibid, p. 230). Furthermore, Yesim's dramatic involvement with character is not just about developing an empathetic response, although that is important. Criticality is implied by her need to know what is "actually going on" and to "Understand even more", pointing to the interplay between the affective and the evaluative when responding dramatically to the literature that is read in the English classroom. Miriam echoes this when talking about how drama helps her to grapple with characterisation in the texts studied:

> Miriam: Sometimes we read stories and stuff and we need to like, if we want to get to know the character better we can act out as the character (learner focus group 3).

Thus the need to "get to know" suggests that there is both a connection with and separateness from the character necessary to develop a fully-rounded understanding of characterisation.

Like Barrs (1987) Miriam recognises the contribution of drama in different aspects of the subject. Here she draws another connection:

> Miriam: It helps you with your writing as well.

> MP: How does it help you with your writing?
> Miriam: Because when you're acting things out you know that, mmm, like when you're speaking, like when you're acting it out and you're saying the things, like, that the people in the story say, you'll know, like, how to write your own stories, stuff like that, 'cos you understand it better (learner focus group 3).

Whilst Miriam highlights the creative act which links drama with storying in the sense that writing is '"Drama on paper"' (Barrs, 1987, p. 211), Rai in focus group 2 also points out how drama might support the technical aspects of writing:

> Rai: I think it [drama] helps us, like, learn and to, like, say it, for example, if there was an exclamation mark you have to shout it or you have to look really shocked (learner focus group 2).

Rai's idea is also in keeping with Barrs (1987) who suggests that 'Punctuation, viewed in this light, has something of the function of stage directions' (p. 209).

Nevertheless it is the role of drama in the reading of literature texts and plays that features most prominently in the focus group discussions and is a key factor, therefore, in establishing the fourth of my subsidiary research questions: **How does drama activate the collaborative processes of reading in the English classroom?** My choice of the word 'activate' is guided by Anderson and Dunn (2013) who highlight its 'chameleon-like quality that allows it to take on a variety of meanings dependent on context' from 'stimulate' to 'motivate' to 'cause a transformation' (p. xvii). All of these possibilities are embedded in the way the learners describe drama as a means of engaging with texts. For example:

> MP: What do you like about doing drama? What sorts of things do you like doing?

> Precious: Acting as a different person, as a character.
> MP: OK, so being a different person.
> Carol: I like stepping into people's shoes to see how they feel. That's more easier than reading out 'cos like you see yourself and see other people perform.
> MP: You like watching other people perform as well? What, in the class? (Carol nods assent.) Why do you do drama in English do you think?
> Precious: To express how we…to express it more and to, so you can see what people in the play are feeling and stuff (learner focus group 4).

Just as Carol cites her engagement with her classmates' performances, Shakira in focus group 3 emphasises the joint endeavour of the reading that takes place in the drama-in-English classroom, because "Everyone will get involved". As Precious suggests, involvement includes expressing and watching others express characters' emotions and actions, and this can allow a 'more abstract notion of character' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 106) to emerge, albeit one that is realised in 'bodied' form. This is character 'as a web of references, including references to the students' experiences of life' (ibid, p. 106) rather than something that is simply and 'concretely there to be "read off" the text' (p. 106). To add to this, Heathcote (1980), in an early version of her Mantle of the Expert approach, maintains that stepping into a character's shoes, the analogy that Carol uses, is not about being totally submerged into their life, although it does require suspension of disbelief to 'be' the character temporarily (Ewing, 2015). Rather, there is 'a double consciousness of immersion in the experience and self-spectatorship' (O'Neill, 2015b, p. 4), which is underpinned by the physical and metaphorical act of stepping in and out. Self-spectatorship has an evaluative function but it is more than this. It is a prompt to further learning, because in acting as an audience for oneself, one is putting one's own responses under the spotlight so that they serve as fresh stimuli (Vygotsky, 1979).

Learners from focus group 1 who have been reading the play *Nation* (Pratchett and Ravenhill, 2009) and who I have recently observed dramatizing a scene through mime, freeze frame and choral speaking, discuss this potential in drama for being both inside and outside of the character and the play:

> Mark: I think it's like the character and you have to connect, you have to act him 'cos he can't be actually out there 'cos he's in the book. So it's like if he was alive and he were to be like you, he'd have to read what you have to say. That's what we had to do basically (learner focus group 1).

Mark's idea about the reciprocity between character and reader suggests another form of stepping in and out, the reader into and the character out of the text. This is achieved by the reader making a connection with the character so that he (sic) is "like you" and you are like him, which demonstrates how the text lives through the reader and the reader, as Barrs (1987) puts it, tunes their own voice to the voice of the character and the text. Sean describes it in this way:

> Sean: It's like bringing the characters out of the book, bringing it to life as if you were really there so you've got to imagine it as if you were there (learner focus group 1).

Thus the imaginative and creative 'as if' mode of drama enables a temporary 'living-through' (O'Neill, 2015c, p. 112) and 'Thinking from *within* a situation' (p. 112) [italics in the original], but also by "bringing the characters out of the book", they can be held up to critical scrutiny.

Finally, whilst imaginative engagement is important, so is a learning context that encourages and stimulates it:

> MP: Anything else you want to add?
> Yesim: That I just think we should do a bit more drama.

MP: In English?
Yesim: I think in both ways [in English, and more discrete drama lessons].
MP: In both ways. Why, why do you think you should do more?
Yesim: Because when I do drama it feels a bit more free, it's more you've got a bit more space, you're more relaxed, it's not all about your work and it's more about what **you're [**her emphasis] doing and like it gives you the comfort and I find it a lot more comfortable and freedom…(learner focus group 2).

Yesim hints at an English classroom in which drama places her at the centre of the learning and is about development rather than "work" produced. This idea of time and space for learning is in contrast to the more driven, teacher-controlled model which has resulted from the types of policy imposition discussed earlier in this chapter. Similarly Shannon in focus group 1 describes classroom drama as allowing her to be "more relaxed and calm" and crucially "you're kind of more with everyone else".

Like Shannon, Njebe's contribution highlights the significance of the social nature of learning through drama but it is also the physicality of this way of working that impacts on his disposition as a learner in English:

MP: Is there anything you want to add, because you've been really helpful?
Njebe: Yeah, I want more drama in English.
MP: More drama?
Njebe: Yeah more drama.
MP: Why?
Njebe: Because like I work better in groups, Like, I have freedom but when I'm just sitting down writing it down, yeah, it's boring and I feel the need to talk and that's 'cos it's boring staying in the same seat for an hour, but

> if we're, like, doing drama, yeah, you get to move about and that (learner focus group 3).

Whilst his words signal a straightforward chafing against the constraints of desk-bound learning, there is also a sense that, for Njebe and others, the talking, working in groups and active, physical engagement are key to learners owning the interpretive and creative acts of the English classroom. These focus group participants are drawing a clear connection between the learning environment and learner disposition, a point expanded by Yesim when she describes drama as enabling her and her fellow learners to "learn in a different way".

4.6 From phase one to phase two

The picture that emerges from my analysis of the data in phase one has therefore been instrumental in:

- crystallising some of the important issues for English teachers seeking to introduce more drama activity into their English lessons;
- highlighting the complexities of the prima facie research question;
- prompting further refinement of the research question through identification of four subsidiary research questions;
- refocusing the research design, to encompass a more systematic and extended observation of one English teacher, a proponent of drama, as she engages her learners with texts and with each other in the social space of the English classroom.

In subsequent chapters the four subsidiary research questions identified above underpin my analysis of the phase two data. In Chapter 5, I examine how Shona situates her drama-in-English practice in relation to policy, institutional and curriculum structures. The focus is on her own account of pedagogy, contextualised by her career trajectory prior to and during her time at Woodside Boys School. In Chapters 6 and 7 I explore classroom practice in order to address the question of what happens in the English classroom when drama forms an integral part of the learning. In Chapter 6 I pay particular attention to textual encounters and in Chapter 7 to the role of

dramatic play in the study of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Chapter 8 drills down into the phase two learners' characterisation of the purpose of drama in English. I seek their perspectives at two different points in their secondary school career, drawing links with the issues highlighted in the previous chapters.

CHAPTER 5

Phase two: the teacher and her pedagogy

5.1 Introduction

My focus in what follows is on Shona, the English teacher at Woodside Boys School who, as the self-selecting participant in phase two of my study, was prepared to subject her commitment to drama-based learning in the English classroom to research scrutiny. This chapter is therefore concerned with her pedagogy as contextualised by key aspects of her career trajectory prior to and during her time at Woodside Boys School. It is framed by the subsidiary research question: in what ways might policy, institutional and curriculum structures situate the English teacher's drama in English pedagogy? Thus, I draw from across the phase two data set but in detail from my interview with Shona (03.11.2011), with the intention of locating her biography in those broader cultural and professional domains that link with the issues I am seeking to analyse (Forsey, 2008).

5.2 The pedagogical context web

Notions of pedagogy are complex (Alexander, 2004), the use of the term variously determined by the different educational traditions from which it derives. Thus pedagogy as 'the act of teaching and the body of knowledge, argument and evidence in which it is embedded' (ibid, p. 10) may look very different across time and from country to country, continent to continent. In his discussion Alexander (2004) identifies a number of 'related domains of ideas and values' in three main areas, all of which are relevant to my analysis in this chapter. These are: 'what is to be taught, to whom and how'; the 'requirements and expectations' (ibid, p. 11) that formalise teaching; and context as a web of selfhood, culture, and history which locates teaching in a particular social purpose. He also suggests that pedagogy is inflected differently depending on views of it as a science, an art or a craft. His description of pedagogy-as-art, a set of improvisatory (but not laissez-faire or unstructured) processes, has relevance for my later analysis of Shona's

classroom practices, the progress and outcomes of which are in large part determined by classroom interactions.

It is worth noting that Alexander's (2004) work is partly a scathing critique of New Labour's National Strategy and its prescriptive pedagogy. This he reveals as entirely shaped by political purpose in its advocacy of pragmatism, compliance and an ahistorical (or anti-historical) educational perspective, reducing 'effective teaching to "what works", or "best practice" lessons downloaded from government websites' (p. 13). Although Alexander foregrounds the National Primary Strategy for particular criticism, Peel et al. (2000), in their comparative study of English in England, Australia and the USA, also note that 'fierce ideological debates' (p. 14) about pedagogy, 'have been the preoccupations of secondary school English teachers over the past twenty-five years' (p. 14). Alexander's (2004) concerns that the National Strategy approach to pedagogy is dangerously devoid of 'wider evidence and debate about children, teaching, curriculum and culture' (p. 28) resonate with my Literature Review account of the skills agenda in both English and drama.

Thus, informed by Alexander's (2004) analysis of the domains that enable, legitimise and locate teaching, my aim is to explore Shona's pedagogic stance. As this does not exist in a vacuum, I will consider how it influences and is influenced by wider English Department and school contexts, those '"frames within frames"' (Bateson, 1973, p. 161) which organise and represent the whole range of experiences (Goffman, 1975) in a school. In offering this account, I give weight to Shona's own articulation of her drama-in-English practices recorded during the interview on 03.11.2011, and at times I position her comments in relation to views expressed by those teachers interviewed during phase one of my research. Finally, by including brief vignettes from observed lessons, an example of the significant moments (Yandell, 2014b) approach discussed in my Methodology chapter, I examine how Shona's perspective on the nature of learning in English through drama informs her classroom interactions and her mediation of the curriculum.

5.3 Transforming pedagogy

Shona's career trajectory is not insignificant in terms of her pedagogy, as is apparent in the 'snapshot' I give in Chapter 3 to describe how her teaching is framed by beliefs and practices held collectively within the English Department and the whole school. However, this is not a one-way set of influences and I now go onto discuss how Shona herself has been agentive in shaping the school ethos, that is, 'the overall feel, style, or climate of a school' (Hallam, 2002, p. 63). As research studies have indicated (Hallam, 2002; Kress et al., 2005), factors to do with school ethos influence dispositions towards: the learning context, an example being the different types of ability grouping employed at both subject department and individual teacher levels; specific subject practices in English; and attitudes in the school to relationships and matters of equality and social justice.

Here I look at aspects of ethos as they relate to Shona's pedagogy. When interviewed she makes a case for viewing the Specialist School for Performing Arts status of Woodside Boys as indicative of a particular approach to learning:

> …there's a feeling that the performing arts do pervade the whole curriculum. I think Ofsted said almost that exactly, you know, something very positive about the way they [the performing arts] go through the whole curriculum.

Another indicator is that Woodside Boys, as a Specialist School, secured participation in the *Creative Partnerships* inquiry-based project. This initially involved a small group of teachers, of which Shona was one, but which grew over the course of three years into a whole school development initiative that she has led in her role as AST. Hall (2010), who charts the development of the *Creative Partnerships* programme during the New Labour Government's three terms in office, notes how its initial exploratory and dialogic approach opened up a discursive space around creativity. In time, though, this was modified in response to political concerns 'about the inclusion of

marginalised, disaffected or deprived communities into the mainstream of cultural activity' (Hall, 2010, p. 489), and there were ongoing tensions with the Government's all-pervasive standards agenda. In the interview with Shona, however, her focus is on the engagement of the school staff, and she cites her own involvement in and leadership of the project as a source of immense professional pride. Echoing Hall's (2010) account of the early incarnation of *Creative Partnerships*, Shona highlights the cooperative nature of the venture along with its positive effects on classroom practice:

> …pretty much every teacher in the school did something, not all of it drama of course, but certainly there were significant dramatic elements in it.

It is not possible to determine from this one account the full extent of Shona's impact on the direction of the project, and therefore on the learning context in the school, or the extent of the whole-staff commitment to the project. However, what does stand as firm evidence is the publication of a book[36] in 2011, for which Shona as the *Creative Partnerships* School Co-ordinator provided the introduction and acted as co-editor. This publication features a series of full-page contributions from over seventy members of staff, plus learner input, celebrating and sharing their experiences of experimenting with creative learning methods whilst pushing at the boundaries of practice in their own classrooms.

The book's content and manner of production also suggest that Shona's proactivity in her leadership role has avoided 'a perceived separation of artist from teacher' (Bowell, 2006, p. 26). This is a potential pitfall if responsibility for creativity is seen to reside entirely with the external partners or when the '"Creative Agent"' takes 'a deficit view of teachers' creative capacities' (Hall, 2010, p. 487). The sustainability and replicability of the creative processes therefore rely 'on teachers and artists being willing to work together as partners, to respect one another's expertise and to give time to

[36] The title of this publication has been withheld to maintain the anonymity of the school.

exploring theoretical standpoints and analysing pupils' work' (Hall, Thomson and Russell, 2007, p. 617), an approach which the book represents.

From her own perspective, in commenting that "The book is lovely, I'm so proud of it", Shona highlights her emotional investment which is an integral part of teaching identity (Day et al., 2006), or selfhood to use Alexander's (2004) term. This is significant to the extent 'that the emotional climate of the school and classroom will affect attitudes to and practices of teaching and learning' (Day et al., 2006, p. 612), and thus influence the teacher's ability to adopt a transformative approach towards their pedagogy.

5.3.1 A learning community

This idea of pedagogical transformation is intrinsic to the school's 'Learning Community' staff groupings, of which there are six. These have developed out of the *Creative Partnerships* programme rather than being imposed institutionally, even though the work of these groups can no longer be supported by the funding provision of the external creative partners[37]. Whilst adapting, in Shona's words, to "the more meat and drink of educational business", the creative impetus of the school's learning community model has to an extent been retained in the "project-based learning" and "creative use of new technologies" groups. The survival of the learning community in this format therefore indicates the ongoing influence of the *Creative Partnerships* programme as well as highlighting the ability of the staff to adapt to the changing situation following its demise. It also suggests a determination to embed a set of core educational values faithful to those of the original project and in this respect I would argue that the school displays a number of the features of a cultural community (Rogoff, 2003). This is demonstrated by the participants 'trying to accomplish some things together, with some stability of involvement and attention to the ways they relate to each other' (Rogoff, 2003, p. 80), and by their engagement in the collective

[37] Following the 2010 election and the formation of the Conservative-led Coalition Government, funding for the *Creative Partnerships* programme was cut by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and Arts Council England in 2011, with any remaining activity in schools ending in summer 2011.

exploration of current practices and new approaches with a view to longer-term understanding of the consequences of change (Kemmis, 2005).

With the publication and distribution of the book, the community 'opens itself to examination and self-examination in different ways' (Kemmis, 2005, p. 414). Although the book might be deemed self-promotional, it is some distance away from the type of 'impression management' (Ball, 1998/2001, p. 196) marketing exercise with which schools have been forced to engage as part of an increasingly competitive and performative educational landscape. Thus the school is prepared to promote to a wider audience its support for pedagogical experimentation and creativity, effectively 'nailing its colours to the mast' in a political climate that is no longer supportive of the *Creative Partnerships* agenda.

The name Learning Community clearly signals what is to be accomplished by this 'communicative network' (Kemmis, 2005, p. 417) of staff groups, and suggests that the practices espoused will be reflected in the classroom, the latter providing the focus for my later analysis of Shona's practices as observed in her drama-in-English lessons. It is true to say, however, that Shona's teaching is contextualised by her involvement in, and indeed leadership of these whole school development initiatives as well as by her commitment to the educational philosophy of the English Department as regards mixed attainment teaching. Shona's reflections foreground the connections between these wider influences and her classroom practice, as well as pointing to the way in which, contextually, the single-sex nature of the school might have significance:

> Also we have done a lot of work, like the work I was involved in last year with *Creative Partnerships* which became the whole school INSET[38] in our learning communities about more active learning strategies across the curriculum, and creating opportunities for the students to be creative across the curriculum. And I

[38] In-service training.

> don't know if that's particularly because it's a boys school or whether it's because there's a driving force among the staff. And maybe, you know, it may have been born out of interests and concerns about how boys manage that type of thing.

She compares this to her early years of teaching at the school, before moving on and then returning:

> Thinking back to when I first taught at Woodside Boys which was I think 13 years ago, it was my first job, I think there was much less of this kind of work going on, that would be my perception anyway. The classroom would have been a much less active place. So I think it is something that we have been developing in the last decade or so.

By using "we" she clearly places herself alongside her colleagues in this professional and pedagogic endeavour. Although hers is the perspective of a teacher who in her leadership role is heavily invested in the project, at the level of her own practice this does point to Shona's genuine interest in developing creative ways for young people to learn in English and across the curriculum. I now go onto examine how her experiences as a learner in the context of her Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme have a bearing on her classroom practice.

5.4 Shona's pedagogic journey

Extrapolating from her own experiences and development as a learner, she identifies the "need to cultivate a spirit of risk-taking" and suggests why this is important: "I really like that when students take a task and then do it their way, that they have the kind of confidence to do that". This comment is imbued with a vision of learners as agents in their own learning and of the teacher as one 'whose energies and skills are at the service, during the professional situation, of the students' (Heathcote, 1971/2015, p. 19). Earlier in the interview, in answer to my question, "So what do you think are the

benefits, as far as the learning of the pupils is concerned, when you use drama-based activity?", she compares this approach to teaching and learning in English with the "didactic" way in which punctuation and paragraphing is taught:

> I think there are holes in our practice. Why are we teaching this [punctuation and paragraphing] so much and why are we not getting anywhere with it? I think it's a very valid question to ask. But yes, I think if you...it's something about...I think drama works well as a strategy because it's something about the collaboration but it's also something about the students needing to find answers, find solutions for themselves, and doing it themselves (interview with Shona, 03.11.2011).

Shona here echoes concerns about teaching methods that position literacy as a set of 'standardised and circumscribed techniques' (Syverson, 2008, p. 109), rather than as situated practice (Burnett and Merchant, 2016, p. 260), and which raise 'real questions about the effectiveness of methods that require children filled with energy and imagination to sit still at a desk' (Syverson, 2008, p. 111) completing functional literacy tasks. By contrast Shona's depiction of the drama-in-English lesson is collaborative, problem-solving and, as Daniels and Downes (2015) claim, potentially subversive of the teacher's dominance. For Shona such experimentation should take place in the context of a whole-school collaborative enterprise, if it is to aid the development of pedagogical practices at classroom level:

> And it [the lesson experimentation described in the book published as part of the *Creative Partnership* project] was about taking a risk, about doing something differently, perhaps on quite a small scale. We didn't want it to be something that was unmanageable or another burden, if you like, and it was about talking to

> people from other departments and kind of sharing expertise and sharing experience, again kind of enquiry-based. And I think it was really successful.

Shona's approach to pedagogic and curriculum development, like Daly (2004), emphasises 'the intellectual creativity of teaching' (p. 196) within a social theory of learning, here with a cross-curricular flavour. It also highlights the importance of the culture of the school to teachers' and learners' understanding of the processes of learning.

Shona's use of the drama strategy teacher in role, which in one observed lesson I witnessed her using, speaks to her own preparedness to teach from a position of '*calculated risk*' (Heathcote, 1971/2015, p. 19) [italics in the original]:

> Um think of other sort of examples of how drama might be used – me in role, that's another quite interesting...I mean I find that can be very productive, that sort of idea that you can question a character and I really enjoy that if it's a role that I think I can do quite well.

She has variously played Curley's wife from *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, the character of the boss in *Holes* by Louis Sachar and 'Lady Sugar' in *Teachers' Apprentice* [39]. When she describes her structuring of the role play for the last of these, the sense of the teacher's 'own relationship to the role - their own role function - and their power in relationship to the role' (O'Neill, 1985, p. 161) is entirely bound up with her pedagogical intent. To engage the learners she uses the popular cultural reference point of the reality television show *The Apprentice*, which puts would-be entrepreneurs through a series of tasks and relies on highly manufactured moments of drama between contestants and experts. However, by eliciting learners' ideas for effective learning strategies in English as the 'product' to be 'sold', she uses the imaginative situation to draw them into a discussion about their own

[39] *The Apprentice* is a reality TV show in which a group of aspiring entrepreneurs compete in a variety of tasks for employment by British businessman and Conservative Party 'Enterprise Tsar', Alan Sugar.

learning. The dramatic action, in which groups 'pitch' to Lady Sugar their favoured learning strategies to market to other schools, allows Shona to simultaneously draw on and subvert the profit-making and competitive focus of the programme by means of a non-adversarial, socially-oriented message that good learning deserves to be shared.

Shona suggests that this kind of role play also facilitates another form of subversion, which she refers to as "playing around with the relationship between pupils and teachers in some ways". This acknowledges that drama can afford opportunities for learners 'to participate in a genuinely dialogic process' (Daniels and Downes, 2015, p. 106), and allows for some negotiation of more traditional pedagogic relationships. Such 'a shift in the normative power relationships within the class' (Neelands, 2011, p. 172) is not without risk, though, and demands both 'protection and mutual respect' (p. 172) for those making themselves vulnerable through participation in drama. Nevertheless Daniels and Downes (2015) highlight the potential for drama activity to create '"negotiated" identities and mediated relations of power and control' (p. 98), and in Shona's example this operates at different levels, within both the 'real' patterns of teacher-learner pedagogic interaction and the in-role relationships.

Shona by her own admission is no drama specialist but describes having moved from a position of scepticism about the drama-in-English content of her ITE programme to an understanding of its continuing effect on her praxis:

> So although we [she and her fellow student-teachers] were very resistant to it...I mean we really...I don't know, and again I don't know whether younger teachers would be like this, but it was almost as though we were affronted that we were being asked to do something active, that we wanted the passive delivery, we were in a university. We wanted the passive delivery of having to sit there and make notes or stare into space and leave, you know, and we were really resistant to being asked

> to do this what we thought was a little bit beneath us, we were going to have to get up and show things. But it was, as it turns out, you don't know, do you, at that moment, it was some of the most useful stuff, some of the most relevant. All the other, where we sat there passively making notes, I can't remember any of it, or very little of it.

Thus, contrary to a view of teachers as 'technicians who implement the educational ideas and procedures of others' (Alexander, 2004, p. 11), Shona now rejects any notion of 'delivering' a curriculum, although she recognises that this was her expectation of learning at that time. Instead she cites the longer lasting effects of the active engagement required by the drama-in-English content of her training programme. That her experience as a learner is transferred, as an ongoing and active process, into her practice as a teacher is apparent in the way she construes learners' engagements with texts. In the following account of her playful and parodic response to the drama activities of her ITE course there are parallels to be drawn with her encouragement of learners' carnivalesque behaviours as described in a later chapter:

> Yes, and I remember we were taken on a trip to the British Museum and we had to do a piece of drama in response to our visit to the British Museum and present it in one of the galleries, and you know, we did, the group actually did this incredibly cheeky and subversive, well we thought it was anyway I guess. I think that the academic staff involved were probably long enough in the tooth by then not to have felt too offended. But you know we tried to be very sarcastic and clever about it because we didn't actually, we weren't really prepared to put ourselves on the line and take the risk and do it in a kind of more genuine, straightforward sort of way.

From her early position of scepticism, Shona's understanding of the contribution of drama to her English teaching repertoire and therefore the need for her to take risks in that direction have developed gradually over time and through the vehicle of classroom experience:

> I've never taught drama as a discrete subject but I have used it sort of over the last 14 years in English, very frequently I think, obviously not to teach dramatic techniques but as a way of exploring ideas in literature or ideas in how to use language, ideas about communication, across all year groups.

From this description it is clear that, for Shona, drama in English is rooted in the social, communicative and literary practices that are the bedrock of the discipline.

5.5 The relevance of play-based activity

Given the pedagogic journey suggested by her account, it is unsurprising that Shona positions learning as a shared endeavour, with both staff colleagues and the learners as co-collaborators and co-experimenters. This is evident from the leading role that she continues to take in 'Play', one of the Learning Community staff groups through which the book came to fruition, and also in her own investigation published therein. Her project emphasises her commitment to exploring how young people might learn in English through play and involves both the creative partners and the learners at all stages of the investigation. Thus her entry in the book begins with the question, 'How can we make use of the ways our students like to play to support their learning?' and draws on a range of drama activities. Again, by using 'we' she highlights the social nature and shared endeavour of learning in the school and in her classroom, such that her group of Year 9 learners were invited to employ their own collaboratively-developed criteria on playfulness in learning in order to evaluate a lesson that Shona taught on the Shakespeare play they were studying. This speaks to the ways in which Shona's practice connects pedagogy and learning, encompassing both a sense of learner

autonomy and the experiential nature of drama activity. Thus her account sets up the particular lines of enquiry that I go onto pursue through classroom observation and interviews with learners.

Shona aligns herself with the views of her Year 9 learners, sought following the classroom-based investigation described in the book:

> …they talked a lot about how much better they understood it [*Richard III*] because they played with it. I suppose I like the idea of drama as being playful, as being a form of play, not playing as in a play on the stage but playing that extension of...you know how children...because my own children are quite small. They're aged 4 and 6 and they do so much of their learning through playing, acting out, make believe, imagine this. So I suppose my view of drama in English, it's that sort of learning. It's the playing, the enjoying, the what if-ing. That's powerful. And you know, students genuinely coming and saying things like, that's the best lesson I've had all term, that was really fun, like that sort of response, that enjoyment. I don't see why… I know it can't all be fun, I don't want to sound ridiculous, but I just don't really see why schools shouldn't be more fun.

In the above account Shona acknowledges the importance to learning of both the ludic and entertainment qualities of drama activity. Her linking of play, enjoyment and learning is also reminiscent of Vygotsky's (1978) thoughts on the role of play in development. Whilst Vygotsky does not regard pleasure as 'the defining characteristic of play' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 92), he nevertheless recognises its effectiveness in motivating and incentivising the type of '"good learning"' that is always 'in advance of development' (p. 89). Shona, like Paul in Chapter 4, references child play when situating her practice, but offers a more nuanced view, suggesting that the very essence of drama is to

be found in play. She comments on the positive reactions of learners when drama-in-English lessons emphasise what Jackson (2007) calls a '"playful culture"' (p. 198), and for Shona their voices seem to be more persuasive than official edicts that would stifle pedagogical innovation in this area. This is underlined by her firm response to the statement 'Drama-based learning in English draws on developmental features of child play to enhance learning in English'. When I ask her to complete the diamond 12 activity at the end of the interview, she places this statement at the pinnacle:

> Yes, that's exactly what I think the major value of this is or certainly I've come over time to see that. If you'd asked me five years ago I might not have put that at the top.

Through her use of drama she has arrived at a rather different understanding of the role of play in learning English to that of the teachers at Downham Fields (see their discussions of this same statement in Chapter 4), but also of significance is how she charts the development of her views. Thus the particular mix of 'life and work, external policy, school leadership and culture' (Day et al., 2006, p. 611) that she has experienced has been influential in sustaining her 'positive sense of effectiveness in relation to subject, pupils, relationships and roles' (p. 614), enhancing rather than destabilising her professional identity as a subject specialist.

5.6 Teacher agency

There is a spirit of inquiry inherent in Shona's attempts to justify the time she spends on drama activity in English lessons, although she is not immune to the pervasive regulatory discourses that permeate schools. During the interview she mentions the ephemeral nature of drama work and ponders whether it can stand as evidence of learning in English or add any discernible value to the writing that learners produce. Such doubts are indicated by her decision to end one of the two lessons I consider in detail in Chapter 6 with a cloze procedure writing task, even though at a later point she intends for learners to engage with an extended piece of re-creative writing arising from

the drama activity. The cloze activity requires learners to fill in the gaps in pre-given sentences with words that they consider to be appropriate to the meaning. It is a perfunctory task in comparison with the re-creative drama 'texts' they have already produced and the discussions arising from them. As an example of the type of scaffolding activity that I critique in my Literature Review it might at best serve in future lessons to remind learners of their dramatic explorations. At worst it is an accountability measure, offering to external audiences 'something to show' for the learners' activity in the lesson. Thus it would appear that Shona too experiences the tension between spending a considerable amount of lesson time on the drama work and the perceived need for her learners to produce a tangible written record, no matter how minimal.

However, as Yandell (2014b) suggests, it would be wrong to position the teacher as wholly without agency in such matters. In Shona's case her concern to justify the time spent on drama in English has not led to the abandonment of drama activities in her English lessons, but rather has been positively directed into her own professional inquiry about the efficacy of drama as a way of reading a text and as a precursor to writing about it:

> And I think overall the writing on it is better too, they write better about the things they've played with. And that was one of the things that I tried to do a little bit last year myself, was trying to make connections between writing and things that we'd done drama work, play-based work with, I suppose satisfying myself that the outcomes on paper justified the time. And I think time is a conflict. Even at Key Stage 3, I think time is an issue.

Although she too experiences curriculum time constraints, which are as real for her as they are for the teachers at Downham Fields, also apparent in this comment is an understanding that dramatic activity as part of textual study in the English classroom can be instrumental to progress in writing. This is a connection that has been explored in research at primary school level, where

in-role drama work has proved to be a powerful stimulus, allowing children to adopt different voices in their writing (Barrs and Cork, 2001; Cremin et al., 2006; Safford and Barrs, 2005). Learning in the creative arts, including the study of literature, has led to 'improved attitudes to school literacy' such that children 'write with more interest and commitment, because their creative arts experiences give them something to think, talk and write about' (Safford and Barrs, 2005, p. 192). In addition, the findings of Cremin et al. (2006) demonstrate that the opportunity for '"seizing the moment" to write' (p. 288) in role as part of dramatic engagement with fiction texts has a positive impact on children's writing development. These researchers emphasise that 'imaginative engagement in the tense scenarios of drama appears to help them [the learners] form and transform experience and create, cultivate and effectively communicate their own and others' ideas in written text' (Cremin et al., 2006, p. 289).

Shona's pedagogy aligns with these approaches, and she is also animated in her endorsement of the diamond 12 exercise as a way of articulating how drama contributes to her own practice and why it is important to think and talk in this way about what she does:

> The next time I want to use drama in a lesson that's going to be observed, I've got in terms of just the language to put on my lesson plan that will allow someone who's not an English specialist, who's not a drama specialist to understand the value of working in this way and what the students are getting from it. It's there, but you know for many of us, you're having to work very hard back in your brain to find that, it's not fresh enough, this kind of thing, and I think that's part of the problem. We lose confidence then in the value of this work, even though instinctively we know it has great value for our students, we lose confidence in our ability to explain its value in a culture which is...which can often feel, you know, this sort of notion that you've

> got to be able to show progress for everybody by the end of the lesson. We lose confidence in our ability to explain how that is visible in this kind of lesson [a drama-based English lesson].

The "notion" she refers to is derived from the framework for school inspections (Ofsted, 2015, updated 2018) by which inspectors make high-stakes judgements about the extent of learners' progress even though they do not have to observe whole lessons or sequences of lessons. Thus Shona's repetition of "we lose confidence" highlights the negative effects of the persistent '"targets and outcomes culture"' that militates against the type of '"playful culture"' (Jackson, 2007, p. 198) that might be in evidence in a drama-in-English lesson. However, agency lies in being able to articulate her knowledge and expertise as an English teacher and to take a pedagogical stand. This can be seen when earlier in the interview she asserts that drama has the potential to develop deep learning over time, a stance in keeping with Bomford's (2019) research into English teaching which unpicks the 'fallacy' that 'all the learning that a particular lesson entails necessarily takes place within that lesson' (p. 12). It is unsurprising, therefore, that the Ofsted framework has led to some very formulaic ways of learners being asked to demonstrate their progress, such as parroting back the teacher's lesson objectives during the plenary. By contrast Shona proposes the advantages of leaving learning to embed:

> I don't think in drama-based lessons I always get them to the point at the end of the lesson where we've really teased out that 'what did we learn?', but I think sometimes that comes...it's what they bring back to the next lesson from having done all of that is sometimes most powerful.

Her willingness to champion a different view of learning and to be formally observed teaching English through drama (as has recently been the case) suggest that she is not experiencing the lack of teacherly confidence to which

she refers above. This is despite the pressures of performance management procedures which are ever-present, a situation to which she alludes in a discussion following one of the lessons I observe (field notes 22.11.2011). I would argue that, in comparison with the teachers at Downham Fields, it is not simply Shona's more extensive experience of English teaching that enables her proactive approach to teacher accountability processes, but also that her practice is framed by the support of the department and whole-school learning community as described above.

Nevertheless the policy context as regards English teaching is clearly influential:

> How much time can we spend on the fun stuff and how full should the book be of long pieces of writing?

Her apparently dismissive characterisation of drama as "the fun stuff", when elsewhere in the interview Shona subjects the part that drama plays in her English teaching to a much more in-depth analysis, highlights that the relationship between classroom practices and the constraints imposed on schools, teachers and learners is not always a comfortable one. Detectable here are echoes of the debate about what constitutes rigour in the core subject of English (Yandell, 2013), which is stoked at policy level by concerns about standards of literacy and England's ranking in international comparisons such as the PISA 'league tables'. Thus teachers and learners cannot remain unaffected by policy, with such discourses often being instantiated in classroom practice.

I now turn to the connections between the above account of Shona's pedagogical approach and her practice in lessons, whilst fully acknowledging that it is no simple matter for the researcher to 'read off' from the data the extent to which external pressures impact on pedagogical beliefs and classroom practices (Jewitt and Jones, 2008). Therefore, I offer the following brief vignettes from two observed lessons as an illustration of how she negotiates the formalising and legitimising processes (Alexander, 2004) that frame the practice of teachers. Then in Chapter 6 I go onto consider the

drama activities in those same lessons from the perspective of learners' engagements with the texts studied.

5.7 A snapshot of the classroom

In the lessons on 22.11.2011 and 05.12.2011 Shona articulates and personalises for learners the conditions for a successful drama-in-English lesson. Her explanations point to a socio-cultural view of learning and demonstrate the ways in which the previously discussed practices of the wider school learning community are to be reflected in her classroom. She communicates clear messages about what she believes is important in the activities planned and how the learners might approach these. About a group drama activity based on the novel *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007) she tells the learners:

> Remember, my biggest rule with this type of work, if I don't speak to your group, you know you're doing a brilliant job. If I come past and I'm just making notes on you and I don't actually have to speak to you, you know you're already doing a great job (lesson 22.11.2011).

This is reiterated and expanded in the drama activity of the lesson on *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Frost, 1923):

> I might ask you to, I might say stop and show me something, but what I'm not having to do is say, what's your job, what are you doing, I'm not having to ask you lots of questions about the work because you're actually getting on. So when you see me come round your tables you need to pretty much ignore me, you just get on with the work and let me listen in, assess and judge what you're doing" (lesson 05.12.2011).

While she reinforces a view of the English classroom and the work that takes place within it as rule-governed, the rules are largely to do with cooperation, sharing, exchange and interaction. Her instruction to "pretty much ignore

me", implicitly communicates both the high value she is placing on the learner-to-learner collaborative process in exploring the text and her belief that the learners must be allowed a degree of autonomy if they are to have agency in their learning. Thus they are to share in the responsibility for the progress of the lesson and she communicates that knowledge is to be co-constructed in this classroom through a dialogic intra-action of text, self, group and teacher. There is also a sense that in the longer term the learners will be able to recognise for themselves the processes of learning in English through drama, a thread that I explore further in Chapter 8 when I ask a group of learners to do just that.

The time allocated to the development of their drama - fifty percent of each lesson is taken up with improvising, presenting and discussing it - is also indicative of its importance to their learning. There is no doubt, however, that Shona remains an influential presence, identifying herself as the listener, the assessor and the judge, but this is not the kind of 'authoritarianism in the classroom' which 'dehumanises and thus shuts down the "magic" that is always present when individuals are active learners' (hooks, 2003, p. 43). For example, her reference to assessment and judgement does not overly emphasise the powerful external discourse around National Curriculum tests and examinations, at least not at this stage in the learners' schooling, and where this discourse does overtly intrude on the activity of the classroom, it is mediated by Shona. Thus, when she introduces the learners to the grading system for their learning skills profiles that will be reported to parents/carers on the forthcoming academic review day, her mention of National Curriculum levels is brief:

> That [the profile] includes a National Curriculum level, which you'll be familiar with, you know about those because you'll probably be able to tell me "when I was at primary school I got a level 4a or a level 5c" or whatever (lesson 22.11.11).

She then spends more time explaining the other aspects for which they will receive credit:

> You get a number for things like, did you use the advice and guidance that I gave you? Lots of people in here, when I've given you an action in your book or a target in your book, have used it, so you'll be getting a five or six for that. You get a number for your relationships with other students and other adults in the room. Six is the highest on the learning skills profile, it's not the same as NC levels which go up to eight. (One learner asks her to go over the aspects for which they receive scores.) So I said homework, making use of advice, relationships with others, your group work, your cooperation. (She explains how the numbers are totalled.) It's not just about being quiet and good, although that's important too, but it's also about, did you participate, did you come up with ideas, did you get involved (lesson 22.11.11)?

She links assessment here to the cooperative and interactive nature of learning and the ability to use others' input in the cause of collaborative problem-solving. This is in keeping with Vygotsky's exploration of the ZPD in relation to both assessment and instruction as 'Within both frames of reference he discussed the relationship between an individual learner and the supportive other or others' (Daniels, 2001, p. 59).

Thus, Shona's is not a 'banking concept of education' whereby 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing' (Freire, 1996, p. 53). Rather she accepts that there must be a partnership between teacher and learners to promote critical and creative thinking, and in her use of drama in English she explicitly puts trust in the learners' 'creative power' (ibid, p. 56) as part of this process. It is also clear that her messages about learning in English are

geared to learners who have reached 'the transitional age of adolescence', a powerful and volatile stage when the child's 'relationships to those around him (sic) and to his environment become vastly more complex' (Vygotsky, 1967/2004, p. 53). In adolescence the child's equilibrium is disrupted, but if the emotional and behavioural reactions resulting from this are directed in a positive way and experienced as challenge and an overcoming of difficulties, this can also be a very creative phase, as Shona's explanations and instructions to learners acknowledge. As McNamee (1990) suggests, 'in order to grow and develop people need to be able to think of themselves in a way that is different from the way they are now' (p. 288). Such changes, which are also the conditions 'necessary for change in a ZPD' (ibid, p. 288), are fostered in Shona's classroom through drama. Even when behaviour is challenging, as in the lesson on 22.11.2011, she argues against closing down drama activity as learners have "to learn in this way" because how else "would they learn the communication, the exchange of ideas, the social skills, the listening, the playing with ideas?" (post-lesson discussion, 22.11.2011). This suggests that underpinning her practice is an understanding of the need to harness and develop learners' capacity for imaginative play and give-and-take communication with others, and that the ZPD has 'creative exploration rather than pedagogic domination' (Daniels and Downes, 2015, p. 101) at its heart.

5.8 Pedagogue as professional or technician

In this chapter I have discussed how Shona's drama-in-English pedagogy is framed by wider school factors but also the part she plays in influencing these. In turn her promotion in lessons of interactive group work and collaborative teacher-learner and learner-learner relationships enables learners' enculturation into the values and practices of the community through 'the social organization of instruction' (Moll, 1990, p. 12).

By her own account she sees herself as a professional who engages not just in the act of teaching but in its discourse, as opposed to a technician who views teaching from the perspective of implementation (Alexander, 2004). I now move onto consider how this manifests in key aspects of Shona's drama-in-

English practice and classroom organisation. In Chapter 6 I focus on the ways in which learners' relationships with texts are developed through dramatic activity, and in Chapter 7 I examine the role of dramatic play in activating the collaborative processes of reading.

CHAPTER 6

Drama in English as re-creative text

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, and again in the next, I focus on classroom-based observations, offering an evocative account of the lessons in order to bring the physicality of the drama-in-English content to life. I acknowledge that there are limitations in portraying this type of learning entirely through the written word. Nevertheless, the rich descriptions that I thread throughout both chapters are foundational to my interpretation and analysis of classroom interactions, and like Miller (1995) I recognise the importance of inserting into academic discourse 'the impossibilities and incongruities' of these kinds of classroom narratives as a counter to 'positivist and reductive accounts of what goes on in education' (p. 24).

Below I give an account of two of Shona's English lessons (observed on 22.11.2011 and 05.12.2011) in which learners engage re-creatively with literary texts. The term 'literary text' is value-laden in that it is bound up with contested debates about taste, choice, selection, and particularly with regard to the curriculum for English, statutory requirements. I am, however, employing the term at a much more straightforward level to describe 'the texts most widely read within secondary English classrooms' (Yandell, 2014b, p. 1), recognising that even within the constraints of regulatory frameworks there is a place for departmental and teacher choice.

6.2 Textual practices: drama and the re-creative mode

I want to address the question of what happens when drama is an integral and embedded part of the textual practices in the English classroom, with a particular focus on the ways in which drama activates the collaborative processes of reading. I propose that Shona's use of drama realises the aims of re-creative activity 'in promoting an exchange between critical and creative practice' (Knights and Thurgar-Dawson, 2008, p. 8) that is reciprocal and mutually enhancing. Although the formal English curriculum has increasingly foregrounded the former type of response, the re-creative

approach to literary study views the critical and creative as neither distinct nor hierarchically connected. Such ideas are rooted in research into the processes by which younger readers engage with written stories. For example, Benton's (1979) early research in this area suggests that there is a fruitful interaction between readers' direct involvement in expanding the story world from within the parameters of the fiction, and detachment from its '"otherness"' (ibid, p. 73). Together these processes facilitate meaning-making, interpretation and evaluation. Thus to engage learners in re-creative activity in response to reading a literary text as a means of supporting them to become active, self-aware readers has long been a staple of the English lesson in secondary schools. It is almost always achieved through a written task that re-imagines the text in different ways, the original and re-creative versions illuminating each others' meanings and narrative choices. What is different in my analysis, therefore, is the proposal that drama is the medium of re-creation and the learners' dramatic representations are the re-creative texts produced.

In the following I present vignettes of significant moments as Shona and her Year 7 class focus in one lesson on a poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Frost, 1923), and in the other an episode from *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007), a novel they have been studying over a number of weeks. The lessons selected show the learners using the resources of mind with body to make meaning through collaborative acts of re-creation. They also demonstrate the ways in which Shona translates her beliefs about the nature of English, as exemplified in the previous chapter, into practice and show her to be reaching out 'after a more democratic, participative cultural practice' (Knights and Thurgar-Dawson, 2008, p. 33, drawing on Barthes) in her teaching of texts. This chimes with her encouragement of learners' risk-taking as a means to a pedagogical end, which is on display in other observed lessons and which I explore more fully in Chapter 7.

6.3 An overview of the classroom as a 'site of social semiotic activity'[40]

In the two lessons under consideration it appears that drama is not perceived by the learners to be unusual but rather an accepted part of what they do in English. For example, when Shona sets up a freeze frame activity in the lesson on 05.12.2011, during which learners explore the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Frost, 1923), there is no ripple of surprise or discernible change in their reactions or body language to suggest that this way of working is atypical of their English lessons. However, one learner does ask Shona, "is it drama work?" to which she replies "yes, it's your drama work". Her use of "your" communicates the potential in this classroom for a degree of learner agency and 'response-ability…the possibilities of mutual response' (Dolphijn and vanderTuin, 2012, p. 55).

Shona draws positively on the classroom culture that she has been establishing with these Year 7 learners who have quite recently embarked upon the secondary school phase of their education, and this can also be seen in the lesson on *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007) on 22.11.2011:

> A few weeks ago you had to create some frozen pictures, some freeze frames that showed ideas from a passage that you read from *WarHorse*. I remember this table (moving towards a group seated at a desk in the centre of the room) particularly had these strong, sculptural, statue-like freeze frames that they showed, but many other groups had really great stuff for that too. Today's task might seem easier but actually I think when you get started, you're gonna find this a little bit harder than the last time.

In her description of the learners' freeze frames Shona not only reaffirms the positive nature of their prior learning through drama and hints at further challenge, she also references the aesthetic quality of their work, signalling that this has an important role to play in their learning.

[40] A quotation from Yandell (2008) describing the classroom transformations which occur as a result of learners' engagement in drama activity as part of English lessons.

As they move into their drama activity, another indicator of the learners' familiarity with this mode as part of their exploration of texts in English lessons is how quickly the classroom setting is transformed in a physical sense. In both lessons, with just a few exceptions, learners stand, move between desks, approach each other, gesture to each other, make eye contact, make physical contact, and so on. These adjustments to the ways in which the classroom space is used are further indications of adjustments to the teacher-learner 'relations of power and control' (Daniels and Downes, 2015, p. 105) and signal that 'there is at least the potential for pupils to negotiate their role within this classroom' (ibid, p. 105).

The pattern in both lessons is that Shona slowly circulates the crowded classroom, sometimes standing to watch groups work without intervening, at other times engaging in conversations, smiling and nodding or adopting a quizzical facial expression to encourage learners' to explain their ideas. The physical nature of the activities and the collaborative atmosphere in the room lends itself to safe physical contact, learner-to-learner and teacher-to-learner, for example, when Shona works with particular learners to realise an aspect of a scene in development. During the collaborative drama work she is accepting of the higher than usual noise level in the room. In both lessons a group is allowed to work in the corridor and at several points Shona leaves the classroom to observe and communicate with them but the atmosphere inside does not significantly change as a result of her absence. In the lesson on 05.12.2011 she carries a clipboard, occasionally making notes as she observes the learners' developing their scenes.

Whilst she is, therefore, not an unobtrusive presence and is still recognisably the teacher, in her interactions with different groups of learners Shona does not dominate the space and her body language is relaxed. She simultaneously acts as a collaborator and the experienced other who provides 'adult guidance' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) in the dynamic relationship between development and learning which is characterised by Vygotsky's ZPD. This is evident when the drama activity gets underway, as her 'collaborative instructional practice' (Daniels, 2001, p. 55) requires learners 'to enter into a

fictional social setting in order to explore and learn from what they encounter there' (Hulson, 2006, p. 6). The physical adaptations to the classroom context, the movement of the learners and their freedom to engage without constant teacher mediation of their interactions with each other and with the text, also signal that an improvisational approach, entirely in keeping with the heuristic nature of the re-creative mode of textual study in English, is integral to the process of making meaning. This is exemplified in greater detail below.

6.4 The pedagogical discourse

Before moving onto an analysis of learners' re-creative responses I wish to return for a moment to the matter of the teacher's pedagogical approach, in order to highlight the inter-connectedness of these processes. On her planning sheet Shona outlines a class project entitled '*Think like a ...*' (an animal). She cites as a pedagogical influence a presentation on '*Eco-critical English – English Which Cares*' given by Sasha Matthewman at a NATE research symposium and based on her book *Teaching Secondary English as if the planet matters* (2011). It is significant that Shona identifies her planning for forthcoming lessons as an '*English project*', the word 'project' having fallen out of fashion in statutory frameworks as a way of describing cumulative and sometimes cross-curricular learning, most likely because of its child-centred, collaborative and exploratory inflections. Rather than beginning with learning objectives Shona poses the questions: '*What intellectual purpose?*' and '*What important concepts?*' then frames her planning with a quotation from the environmentalist educator, David Orr:

> The plain fact is that the planet does not need more "successful" people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every shape and form. It needs people who live well in their places. It needs people of moral courage willing to join the fight to make the world habitable and humane. And these needs have little to do with success as our culture has defined it (Orr, 1991).

What she chooses to include on the planning sheet and the language of the above quotation situate Shona's teaching as part of a specific pedagogical discourse, as discussed in the previous chapter, highlighting its value-laden nature and prevailing sense of social purpose (Alexander, 2004). The omission of learning objectives in the form that appear prominently on the English scheme of work at Downham Fields is also indicative of her view of teaching and learning. Instead she writes in terms of 'driving questions' such as 'what would it be like to be a... [animal]?' and 'how can I use language to show the experience of being a… [animal]?' This speculative approach, as well as acknowledging a place for those aspects of learning in English that are unpredictable (Bomford, 2019), brings to mind Heathcote's (1971/2015) emphasis on structuring learning rather than planning it, the former term suggesting that there is space for classroom interactions to determine the ways in which the learning might progress.

Where Shona locates the project's learning within the subject discipline, her planning sheet focuses not on objectives but on the 'anthropomorphic' and 'theriomorphic' tropes of the literature that learners are studying and the types of creative work that will be produced as a result. She explains this anthropomorphic exploration to learners in the lesson on 05.12.2011:

> The next two weeks our project is going to be thinking about animals and how to think like an animal. We're going to be trying to get inside the head of an animal and what it's like to be one, and in order to do that we're going to think about horses first because we've been reading *WarHorse* and you've done a brilliant job of that, and then we will move onto thinking about other animals.

This process of thinking about and like animals is to be achieved through 'the experience of the whole person, of thinking, feeling "bodies in space"' (Franks et al., 2014, p. 177), as I now go onto explore.

6.5 Re-creative interpretation

Shona links the recent study of *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007) with the poem she now introduces, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Frost, 1923). She begins by reading the poem aloud to the class, asking one pupil to briefly explain what is happening in the poem, but her expectation is that learners will go on to demonstrate their understanding of what they have read through a re-creative drama activity. She delineates the form of their dramatic representations of the poem by specifying that learners will use a combination of freeze frame, mime, and choral speaking or narration, and she trusts in their existing knowledge of these tools for making drama to probe further. Learners' contributions indicate their understanding of the techniques but also that the 'language' they will use to explore the poem reaches beyond speech:

> Ricky (on freeze frame): When the actors stop moving in a strong powerful moment.
>
> Nathaniel (on mime): Do the action in an emotional way. When you do an action you do it in a way of using your whole body.
>
> Jermaine (on chorus): It's like a group activity.
>
> Nathaniel (on chorus): It's like someone and someone else (indicating this by placing his hands on one side of the desk then the other), it's like everyone combining each other in action, speak, emotion and um emotion together to make one kind of piece of language.
>
> Tom (on chorus): It's not just humans speaking, sometimes it can be like birds and drums.

The learners' comments also indicate that 'In thinking about domains of theatre and drama, the concept of physicality or "bodiliness"' (Franks et al., 2014, p. 172) is familiar to them, and this exchange sets up possibilities for a

playful, physical, affective and collective experience of the poem as they work towards understanding, interpretation and shared cultural production.

Shona draws on a preliminary activity during which learners have considered the differences between a real horse and visual representations of horses in cartoon and CGI depictions. She asks for an 'expert' opinion on the leg movements of a horse when running:

> Elias: the front ones go in and the back ones... the front ones go forward and it sort of puts them in rhythm... (He demonstrates with his arms, and uses his fists as hooves beating out the rhythm on the desk).

This focus on the movement of the horse is developed as the learners in small groups work towards realising their interpretations. A group of learners that includes Elias quickly comes together, standing to one side of their desks, deep in conversation over the photocopies of the poem for two minutes before they push the desks out of their way. There are a further three minutes during which they discuss the presentation and their roles then Elias begins to experiment with some hip hop style dance moves incorporated into his galloping horse action. The group also tries out but rejects a less evocative way of representing horse and rider movement that involves Erik on his hands and knees and Elias sitting on his back bouncing up and down. Shona has been watching them and at this point approaches to encourage all four group members to try galloping on the spot, and they quickly and effectively represent galloping horses in the uninhibited manner of their movements. Elias then demonstrates a shimmying movement of his head, arms and upper body to coincide with the line, 'He gives his harness bells a shake'. Shona joins in with this shimmy as if she is 'a student among students' explicitly seeking to 'serve the cause of [their] liberation' (Freire, 1996, p. 56), in this case from the physical constraints of desk-bound textual study. There is clearly pleasure for the learners in these imaginative explorations of the movements of a horse, as signalled by their laughter and enthusiasm.

However, the learners continuing efforts to choreograph their movement, as they work together to hone their presentation, signals a '"change of gear"' towards the 'dramatic art form' (Bolton, 1979, p. 32). I use the word choreograph here as in the world of dance, not just as a nod towards Elias' hip hop moves but rather as a way of reflecting the increasing intention and complexity in the patterning of the group's movement. It is not easy for them to achieve, as it requires collaboration, negotiation, attention to the poem and a collective desire to create an imaginatively expressed horse and rider which will elicit recognition from others. However, for Elias and Rudy, playing horse and rider respectively, there is clearly satisfaction in creating it '*from* their collective imaginations and *with* the collective of their bodies' (Franks, 1997, p. 142) [italics in the original].

When the learners present their interpretation to the rest of the class, it is apparent from their choreography and careful synchronisation of words with movement that their re-creative text has, over time and without further intervention from Shona, acquired a discipline. They position themselves facing towards the majority of the class and Rudy and Elias begin to move very energetically on the spot, one behind the other, both high-stepping in a fast trot, whilst Erik and Chris take it in turns to narrate. An adaptation of Elias' hip hop horse movements has made it into the final presentation as he leans forward, loose-limbed and beating a rhythm with his arms. Rudy accommodates this change by affecting a rhythmic skip behind him before they both come to a halt on: 'He will not see me stopping here' (Frost, 1923). The shimmy on 'He gives his harness bells a shake/To ask if there is some mistake'(ibid 1923) is also included. The rhythmic intensity of their choreography brings the rhythms of the poem to the forefront. In additon, whilst executing the hip hop movements as rehearsed, Elias is grinning at the other learners in the class who are his audience. They in turn respond with laughter as if in recognition of this shared cultural reference which has imposed itself on a very different type of cultural artefact, the poem chosen by the teacher, in the formal setting of the classroom.

The group's activity, both in process and presentation, also contains elements of Bakhtinian 'carnivalesque' (1984) in that the lesson has encouraged learners' subversion of the text as cultural artefact. In addition, their awareness of the materiality of their bodies in relation to the other bodies that make up the classroom community is heightened and revelled in. This is not to deny that for 'boys in their early adolescence, physical contact between peers can be problematic and is often confined to particular modes' (Franks, 1997, p. 140), such as sports or play-fighting. However, this drama activity has enabled a different, more collaborative physicality to emerge through the relationship of horse and rider and in pursuit of the reading of a poem. The sharing of the experience also evokes a sense of belonging, as is evident from the communal laughter.

Thus, by eschewing more conventional methods of studying a poem in English, Shona's 'Imagination in conference with experience' (Hulson, 2006, p. 12) has provided the opportunity for learners to make their own connections and paved the way for re-creative interpretation. That the learners feel able to engage in this way attests to a pedagogical approach reflective of the Heathcotean (1980) idea that drama experience is at once aesthetic, empathetic, reflective, entertaining (for others) and pleasurable. In terms of literary study Scholes (1985) highlights that the skill of the teacher is in showing learners 'the codes upon which all textual production depends' (p. 25) whilst encouraging their own textual practice, referring to this as 'the pedagogy of textual power' (p. 39). The drama practice of Shona's English classroom as described in this chapter enables learners to both share and assert their textual power (Scholes, 1985, p. 39) in their production of an embodied, interpretive '*text upon text*' (Scholes, 1985, p. 24) [italics in the original], a phenomenon which Scholes identifies as an important part of their reading process.

6.6 Text, drama and social learning

In another group Sammy and Fariq also create a horse and rider combination that sees Sammy engaging in an animated set of horse movements. Unlike in the previous example these two are in a group that appears to find it difficult

to arrive at a way of operating collectively. Their interactions are characterised by a lack of whole group decision-making which is emphasised by the physical distance between them, particularly Joel and Duane who remain apart from the other two and from each other. However, decisions about the horse movements, based on interpretation of aspects of the poem, allow them to briefly come together to agree an anthropomorphic idea of 'horse':

> Joel: (to Sammy, the horse) He's sad. No, not the trees are sad. Bend down, bend down. (Sammy lowers his head). Exactly. Bend down to my hand. (To Fariq, the rider) Yes, just go like that (he demonstrates a hand movement as if holding reins and using them to urge a horse on). That's right, you're riding a horse.

Sammy is prepared to follow these instructions and lowers his head to Joel's hand, pretending to eat from it, until Joel takes this opportunity to mock Sammy's movements with an exaggerated imitation, a moment that speaks to the particular difficulties for this group in negotiating relationships.

This example demonstrates the challenge of determining the working of the ZPD in relation to the progress of individuals in a group that only sporadically functions in a collaborative way. Roberts (2016), however, points out in her discussion of Vygotsky's 'more capable peer' as applied to interactions in the mixed-ability English classroom, that '*reciprocal* learning relationships' (p. 50) [italics in the original] in a collaborative socio-cultural model can only be established by giving time and space 'to developing students' ability to work with each other' (p. 51), much in the way that Shona is doing here. In our conversations (recorded in my field notes following lessons on 22.11.2011 and 30.01.2012) Shona openly acknowledges that an important intention of working in this way is to support learners in establishing their relationships in the class as a means to progress their learning.

To consider this in terms of the implications for the drama work, in any group there are likely to be inequalities of input. Power relationships may adversely affect interactions and the formation of ideas, but alternatively the tensions may lead to creative acts, and it is no simple matter for the observer to discern whether the former or the latter is occurring (Franks, 1997). For example, Joel is undoubtedly a powerful figure in this group but his mockery does not seem to deter Sammy who becomes increasingly goal-directed, repeatedly practising his choreography and urging Fariq to do the same. Sammy adds further recognisable movements to communicate 'horse', with his human facial expressions, such as puzzlement on 'My little horse must think it queer/To stop without a farmhouse near', emphasising the anthropomorphic characterisation in the poem.

As I observe the group practising, Sammy's investment in this creative activity is very apparent and he is keen to inform me that Fariq is both horse and rider, Fariq's legs being the back legs of the horse and his torso, arms and head the rider, whilst Sammy provides the front legs, torso and head of the horse. It is unclear as to whether this is his own or a jointly-agreed representation of their horse/rider combination, which in the practised nature of its embodiment is more complex than horse and rider games played at a younger age in the school playground, although these still provide a reference point. Sammy and Fariq's movement is also suggestive of a pantomime horse, or perhaps they are influenced by the puppetry in the stage adaptation of the novel *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007). All are cultural references for 'horse' that their peers might recognise, and it is Sammy's desire to make something together with Fariq and to share it with others via presentation that is indicated by his commitment to and the pleasure he clearly gains from repeatedly practising his choreography. Such desire, which Franks (1997) identifies as 'the catalyst of fantasy in the gap between the expression of a wish and its fulfilment' (p. 140), drives 'adolescents to represent their fantasy and imagination in forms of cultural action' (p. 145), but only if occurring in the safety of a classroom which is consistent in terms of its routines and expectations. Shona's call for attention spurs Sammy into one final rehearsal

and his overtly excited attitude is in contrast to his approach in other English lessons when I have observed his quiet disengagement.

In both of these vignettes from the lesson on 05.12.2011 drama gives access to the affective, sensory and at times sensual nature of anthropomorphic literary tropes which 'blur the boundary between fantasy and realism' (Reynolds, 2011, p. 81). The drama activity that Shona has instigated around *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Frost, 1923) also enables learners to draw on cultural reference points from their own experience as a point of connection with the world of the poem. Her approach is endorsed by Pullinger and Whitley's (2016) on-going research into modes of engagement with poetry in that she does not leap immediately 'to the analysis stage before personal engagement has taken root' (p. 322). Neither does she distract from their 'authentic and aesthetic reading' by overlaying in advance 'a heavy amount of contextual information' (Cushing, 2018, p. 10) about the text. This is not, however, to deny the importance of 'situated cultural literacy' (Gordon, 2018, p. 20) in the study of literature as a way of ensuring that learners' reading activity has a locating compass bearing (ibid, p. 34). Such an approach is apparent in the next chapter when the learners situate their drama work around a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in relation to the conventions of Shakespeare's theatre. Rather, in the lesson on *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* (Frost, 1923), Shona's direction to think like an animal through physical embodiment and signification echoes Eagleton (2003), as the literary text is felt and made material in bodywork. This, in embryonic form, seems to be what Nathaniel is suggesting in his comments from earlier in this chapter about a type of language being created by combining action, speech and emotion.

6.7 Co-authoring the text

Within the constraints of the dramatic form (freeze frame, mime, choral speaking, narration) the re-creative relationship between the learners and the poem is demonstrated in different ways by different groups. The group comprised of Sammy, Fariq, Joel and Duane choose to adapt the narrative to

satisfy Joel's desire to compose and create character by making the shadowy owner of the woods an embodied presence.

I watch as they rehearse and Joel is keen to tell me that he is in the farmhouse reading. He is apparently referencing the first stanza of the poem, 'Whose woods these are I think I know./His house is in the village though;/He will not see me stopping here' (Frost, 1923), and he is representing this physical distance from the horse and rider by sitting with his back to Sammy and Fariq. Thus, within the fictional setting of the drama the divisions apparent in the group's relationships are reflected by the staging, suggesting that tensions can indeed act as a spur to creativity.

I ask how they are going to make it clear that the owner of the woods is in the farmhouse and Joel replies that they are putting all their emphasis on the movements of the horse and rider. This indicates his awareness of how the audience 'gaze' might be directed by aspects of staging and the other techniques that have been specified by Shona. When they present their scene to the class, his positioning and stillness in comparison to Sammy and Fariq do, however, draw attention to him as part of the action, as Shona's comment suggests:

> 'Cos I thought that worked quite well as a little piece of extra drama, the idea of representing the man who didn't see them in the woods (lesson 05.12.2011).

Here she is acknowledging their act of re-making which has been encouraged by her actualisation of the poetry study as physical enactment. The learners' engagement with their reading and interpretation is demonstrated in both Joel's drive to create context through character and Sammy's blurring of animal and human gestures in a way that is entirely in keeping with the poem, particularly the narrator's anthropomorphic attribution of thoughts to his horse.

6.8 Telling back

In dealing with the different anthropomorphic approach of the novel *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007), in which the horse is the central character providing the voice of the narrator, Shona effects another way in to the drama work. Reynolds (2011) explores the cultural and historical reasons why animals feature prominently in young people's fiction, one being that:

> …giving animals human speech and rationality holds up the mirror to our own behaviour, enabling young readers to comprehend forms such as satire or to recognize political critique (p. 82).

This offers one explanation for Shona's choice of the episode for dramatic representation in which Joey, the horse, is trapped on his own in no man's land during a scene of trench warfare in the First World War. Both sides raise the white flag to allow one soldier from each army to rescue him. A flip of a coin determines that the Welsh soldier will claim him. As her entry point into this scene Shona asks for an affective response and does not mention re-enactment when she sets up the drama activity. Instead she encourages learners to engage with the emotions that Joey would be feeling in this situation, and from a list they have collectively generated she asks them to create a freeze frame to represent some of these emotions.

This more symbolic representation - of emotions rather than events - might reflect Shona's concerns about the value of simply replicating events through drama as a way of animating narrative (Byron, 1986), but the response of one group of learners, as discussed below, offers a different perspective on re-enactment. Vygotsky (1935/2017) highlights 'imitation in a collective sphere, under the guidance of adults' (p. 366), and particularly in the realm of dramatic play, as crucial in developing learners' understanding and laying the ground for independence. Also relevant in terms of the social negotiation of language that occurs in group drama activity is Bakhtin's view of dialogue as intertextual, such that a world of 'already-spoken-about' (Morson and

Emerson, 1990, p. 139) utterances are altered, expanded and '"reaccented"' (p. 139) as they are shared and spoken about anew.

Thus, role play is never merely the replication of 'the already-known' (Brady, 2018, p. 224). When 'we act the actions of another in order to present them recognizably' (Rosen, 1980/2017, p. 305), we are moving 'towards collective wisdom' (p. 308), and it is this double-articulation (p. 305) which transforms both the actions and our understanding of them. Bruner (1986) too is interested in 'telling back' (p. 6) from the perspective of those psychological processes that are 'loosed by the text in the reader's mind' (p. 7) when reading interpretively. He proposes that different readers will 'tell back' (ibid, p. 6) in different ways and with different conceptions of the kind of story being re-created. Thus in the drama-in-English classroom this process goes beyond reading as 'a "two-headed experience"' in which 'The reader creates with the products of two imaginations, his own and the writer's' (Benton, 1979, p. 74). My analysis of Shona's lessons reveals it to be a multi-headed experience as learners interrogate and negotiate their readings to allow a collective interpretation to emerge, although one that is still inflected with their individual texts upon text (Scholes, 1985).

This multi-headed experience of telling back is in evidence in the group comprised of Elias, Erik, Rudy and Chris. They immediately become very engaged with the scene as it is depicted in the novel. Shona, however, remains responsive to what is happening in their drama work, as Heathcote (1971/2015) suggests should be the case, and allows them the space to pursue their ideas. Erik folds a piece of paper with concentration, and holds it in the air as a white flag. He sinks to his knees then all the way to the ground in a very controlled manner, almost in slow motion, whilst holding the flag aloft and staring at it. As he is sinking he allows the paper to flutter downwards in his hand. He immediately jumps upright and holds the flag high in the air again. He is very precise in practising these movements and positions. Rudy has been watching and also wants to raise a flag and so asks me to provide him with a sheet of paper. He and Erik position themselves equidistant from Elias as Joey. The picture created is of the different sides in the war, with

Elias trapped in no man's land between them. Rudy and Erik hold their flags aloft, taking great care over their positioning in terms of the exact distance between them and mirroring the way in which they hold the flags, which communicates to me, the observer/audience, both the similarities and the distance (physically and ideologically) between the two sides in the conflict. Shona calls the class to attention, and they quickly practise the holding of their flags aloft one last time. The stretch of their arms is very exaggerated as if indicating that the flag needs to be high enough to be seen from a long distance away and the tension in their arms and bodies suggests the importance they attach to the action. When they later present this as their freeze frame to the class, Chris is positioned watching the scene and recording the events in a notebook.

This exploration of a scene from the novel through drama activity offers a link between affective, interpretive and analytical responses to literature. The learners strive to convey their understanding of the power of narrative, combining Scholes (1985) '*text upon text*' (p. 24) [italics in the original], or the interpretive element, with '*text against text*' (p. 24) [italics in the original], that is, the critical dimension of reading, and this finds expression in their stylisation of the act of holding the white flag aloft. The physical action within its dramatic context has both symbolic and representational power, and the way in which it is meticulously rehearsed and then performed shifts the perspective from the horse (always present in the first person narrative of the novel) to the context of the two soldiers holding the flags.

During whole-class feedback on the presentation Shona invites the other learners to offer their readings of the freeze frame. Their comments demonstrate the reader's psychological capacity to identify with the characters and relate them to characters we 'carry unconsciously within us' (Bruner, 1986, p. 4), although, as Bruner suggests, this is as much to do with the representational nature of texts as it is with our emotional investment in characters. Both types of identification are apparent as the learners imbue the characters with concerns that might be taken from the novel but are also prompted by their wider knowledge. For example, Santos suggests that Chris

might be ‘sad, scared and trying to get away’ but Zemar speculates that Chris could be an eye witness. In terms of the larger cultural frame (a term I co-opt from Jackson, 2007, p. 165) in which their drama work sits, it is worth noting that at this time ‘witnessing’ is very much in the news, with protests in Tahir Square in the revolt against the Egyptian Government being reported on a daily basis. As Said (2003) argues, readers interpreting ‘literary representations of the historical world’ (p. xxxii), such as that offered here by the novel *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007), can only do so from the perspective of their own time and experience.

Thus, the compelling nature of the narrative that has so engaged Rudy and Erik demonstrates that the text is not inert, it exists in ‘a relationship of co-responsibility’ (Bolt, 2013, p. 6) with the learners as cultural producers. The narrative enables them to interpret ‘the landscape of action’ (Bruner, 1986, p. 14) but also brings them to an understanding of ‘the landscape of consciousness: what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think, or feel’ (p. 14). This is as much to do with their understanding of the context, and the relationships within that context, as it is about identifying with others in an empathic way, and as such highlights the intra-action between the interpretive and the affective in their dramatic re-creative reading of this episode. If texts are only fully realised in the moment of reading and reading is therefore a dynamic act, the learners’ ‘telling back’ (Bruner, 1986, p. 6) of the story melds the act of reading with the act of improvising as they develop their constantly shifting ‘virtual text’ (ibid, p. 7, quoting Iser). What has emerged from this is a group reading rather than any one individual’s intra-action with the text. The ideas of the different members of the group may have jostled for dominance at different times (Franks, 1997), but eventually they have cohered in a form that can be shared with the class through performance and discussion.

6.9 Reading through drama as cultural production

What I have described above is the English classroom as a dialogic space (Jones, 2003) in which art-making is a ‘socially and culturally mediated’ (Barrett and Bolt, 2013, p. 4) experience made possible through practices,

which ‘engage the matter of bodies’ (p. 5). Through drama these learners are drawing on their own cultural reference points in their engagements with character and literary tropes such as anthropomorphism. Thus drama is at the very heart of the literary learning that occurs, and as such has a fundamental place in Shona’s understanding of the epistemological scope of her subject. This speaks to the value system of the teacher who decides ‘to adopt drama into her repertoire of teaching styles’ (Neelands, 1992, p. 9) as an integral part of the shared creative and cultural resources of the classroom and as a way of enhancing the reading of literary texts.

The drama activity in the observed lessons indicates Shona’s understanding of the complexities of literary learning and of ‘the processes of reading and entering a story’ (Bruner, 1986, p. 4). The vignettes described are indicative of Barad’s (Dolphijn and vanderTuin, 2012) notion of diffractive reading, whereby the readings produced by the learners ‘bring inventive provocations; they are good to think with’ (p. 50). Thus the act of re-creation serves to stimulate the interpretive processes of reading, but through their imaginative responses to fiction, here externalised in the dramatic mode, the learners also have a means of expressing their rich emotional lives (Vygotsky, 1994). Dramatic activity lends an immediacy to the imaginative experience of fictional texts and is well-placed to meet those aspects of the re-creative mode to do with ‘restoring and licensing sensuous pleasure in engagement with text’ (Knights and Thurgar-Dawson, 2008, p. 71). Pleasure and the role of desire in learners’ dramatic engagements with text (Franks, 1997) is explicitly linked to the Vygotskian formulation of imagination in adolescence (Vygotsky, 1994). Franks (1997) proposes that drama in schools, by legitimising adolescent play, externalises and gives embodied form to inner desire in a manner that is dynamic, socially orientated and responsive to context. In these circumstances the dramatic activity of the classroom is simultaneously immersive and self-aware: the learners are emotionally engaged in the act of fiction-making but as audience to their own creation are also critically engaged (Bolton, 2010). Immersion and self-awareness are

both necessary components of the re-creative mode and are on display in the vignettes offered above.

As the learners '"pry open'"(O'Neill and Rogers, 1994, p. 48) the literary texts through drama, 'the result is a complex interpenetration of alternate worlds' (p. 50). The first is circumscribed by the source text which is itself a 'symbolic form', a literary interpretation of a 'lifeworld as lived' (Glover, 2018, p. 68). Illuminating this but not identical to it is the drama world. The final world is the learners' own which infiltrates and inflects these other two (O'Neill and Rogers, 1994). In re-creating the source text through intra-actions between self, group and text, the learners in these lessons are encouraged to create a physical palimpsest, positioning themselves alongside the author in an authoritative manner, as well as authorising (Jones, 2003) their own shared knowledge and interpretations. In this way the text ceases to be an abstract object of literary study and is subsumed into the cultural life of the classroom. In addition the learner is positioned as 'an active participant, not a passive consumer' (hooks, 1994, p. 14), and so the reading of literary texts in this English classroom is an act not of cultural transmission but of cultural (and textual) production.

6.10 Reading through drama as inventive provocation for writing

Shona takes this further into the learners' written work. She explains (field notes 12.12.2011) that she has structured the learning sequence so that learners first draw on a lesson in which they playfully embody a range of animals, and then in other lessons experience what it might be like to be the horse in different situations, activities which lead towards writing imaginatively in the voice of an animal of their choice. This last can be seen in the following extracts from learners' writing. As is the case in the drama activity described above, there is a desire to create a compelling narrative, and this is discernable in both the structural and vocabulary choices that the learners make. My transcription preserves the spelling and punctuation of the originals.

Ricky, as a snow wolf, sets the scene in the build up to a hunt:

> Being a Snow Wolf is hardly ever easy. Hunting is all I care about. The feeling when my sharp, white teeth dig into the innocent flesh of another animal is just exhilerating. I was looking forward to this kill particularly. The last hunt had only ended with a small penguin to feed fourteen hungry Snow Wolves.

This extract from Ricky's writing achieves a 'balance of restrospection and anticipation' (Glover, 2018, p. 69), the characteristic of reader response engagement that is indicative of a 'clear narrative construct' (p. 69). It is also revealing of the opportunities for productive interplay between reading and writing that are afforded by reading-through-drama activity.

In a story about the panda cub, Poy, raised in capitivity, Peadar draws on the separation narrative of *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007):

> I stood there in a summer medow the grass licked with rain. My paws wobbled slitly on the uneven ground. I faintly rememberd the separation from me and my mum as I was put in captivity from a extremly yonge age.! The space was rather good and plenty of bamboo shuts and water to disscover. Suddenly! there was a deffning crash,, The noise vibrated raceing and bouncing on the wall.
>
> It was ko-toy my keeper "poy poy poy". I responded with a growl as he had woken me from my nap.

Peadar too seeks to balance retrospection and anticipation, but in comparison with Ricky, his is a less assured shaping of the narrative, as it is not entirely clear whether the first two sentences are supposed to be part of the dream from which Poy is awakened at the end of the extract. Nevertheless, following a lengthy passage in which he describes Ko-toy, Peader arrives at an anticipatory ending, almost a cliff-hanger, reflecting this in the theatrical cadences of the keeper's speech:

> "you know young Poy young o young Poy i wish you good luck good luck as you will find your destainy tomorro?"

Sammy, like Ricky, writes about his chosen animal in the context of a hunt. He is a young lion about to prove himself to the pride. His writing captures the immediacy and visceral nature of the action, effectively retaining something of the physicality of the drama work:

> Lions, Lionesses and Antelopes were darting in different directions, an Antelope ran right in front of me and I shot out at it with my jaws chomping. Snap! I grabed the Antelope by the neck snaping it and puncturing its windpipe. I let go, it ran a few more steps then fell to the ground, it's lifeless eyes looking up at me.

By textualising the voice of the animal, a term adapted from Michael Rosen's discussion of his own writing process (Rosen, 13 November 2019), these extracts demonstrate how Shona enfolds the anthropomorphic experience explored through the learners' dramatic compositions into written composition. Thus the experimental physical language of the former has effectively informed the more crafted written language of the latter.

6.11 Conclusion

The key features of these lessons - the adaptation of space, learners' mobility, the use of unofficial and unsupervised areas such as the corridor, Shona's acceptance and encouragment of playful behaviours, and a receptiveness towards what the learners bring with them - all point beyond the classroom to a school which has had some success in embedding creative practices (Hall and Thomson, 2017). As far as her own practices as an English teacher are concerned, even though she is 'tied to curriculum frameworks and mandated approaches' (ibid, p. 117), her teaching does not fall into those 'apparently unremitting default pedagogic patterns' (p. 117) manifested in tightly-

controlled lesson objectives, close and ongoing monitoring of designated progress markers, and frequent references to targets and levels.

Rather Shona's approach is to draw on those educational drama practices which employ the text more broadly as a stimulus (O'Neill and Rogers, 1994), adapting them to ensure that the focus on the text itself is always maintained. Reading through drama enables a progressively deepening textual engagement as well as contributing to learners' development in the other objects of English, here represented by the '"Drama on paper"' (Barrs, 1987, p. 211) of their written narratives.

I go on in Chapter 7 to analyse a single lesson in which Shona builds from dramatic play to more structured drama activity in order to develop the learners' reading of a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I consider how she shapes playfulness to pedagogic effect such that the learners' encounters with the play script draw on 'zestful imaginative play' (Bruner, 1986, p. 4) as the wellspring of cultural production.

CHAPTER 7

Reading a Play[41] through play: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

7.1 Drama in English as play-based activity

In this chapter I explore Shona's use of dramatic play for learning in English as observed in (but not exclusive to) a lesson on 30.01.2012. It is part of a sequence in the learners' study of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The lesson focuses on the plan by Oberon, King of the Fairies, to gain revenge for an argument in which he and Titania, his Queen, are engaged, and he has instructed his servant, Puck, to place on her eyes while she sleeps the juice from a plant that has love potion properties. Learners are to look closely at the scene in which Titania awakens and falls in love with the first creature she sees, Bottom, the Weaver, who has been physically changed into an ass by Puck.

My approach is to analyse 'key events' (Lewis, 2001, p. 183) from the lesson, and I am using the term 'event' here much as Goffman (1959) does in his study of social life in organised settings, as an interpretable scene of action. However, also pertinent to the reading practices observed in this lesson is my development of an argument around reader response theory in relation to the reading of plays through drama. Thus Rosenblatt's notion of the transaction between reader and text as 'an event, a lived-through process for student and, hopefully, teacher alike' (Glover, 2018, p. 72) is relevant, as is 'The dynamic interaction between text and reader' which for Iser (1978) 'has the character of an event' (p. 67) happening fluidly, aesthetically, and in the case of the lesson that follows, collaboratively.

Another of Iser's (1989) ideas, that of the text as a playground in which the author and reader play a game of the imagination, has particular resonance for my analysis in this chapter, even though reader response theory, of which

[41] Capitalisation of the word Play when referring to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a device I use throughout this chapter and in later chapters to distinguish between the play script as an artefact and the play-based drama activity that takes place in the lesson. Its use is not intended to assert any particular view of the cultural significance of this work by Shakespeare.

he is a key proponent, is more customarily applied to solitary reading acts than to the communal experience of drama and performance. In her concept of the 'permissive gappiness' (Smith, 2019, p. 2) of Shakespeare's plays, the leading Shakespearean academic, Emma Smith, also seems to invoke a reader response perspective, using her term to describe the reading potentialities afforded by the plays' incompletenesses. This is why her interests tend towards 'a reading of literature which is more… takes more seriously reception than the point of origin' (BBC, May 6th, 2019). In a distinct echo of reader response, but also very relevant to Shona's reading-through-drama practices analysed below, Smith describes the gaps 'as the places, actually, where we are' (BBC, May 6th, 2019). It is precisely the ambiguity, uncertainty and instability of Shakespearean drama which prompt imaginative engagement and 'provide space for us to think, interrogate and experience different potential outcomes' (Smith, 2019, p. 322). Smith describes this as a process for 'readers, playgoers and theatre-makers' (ibid, p. 322), but not necessarily as the material of interpretive dramatic activity in the classroom. This is not to suggest that she is averse to such an approach, for whilst noting that the ambiguities of Shakespeare's plays make them 'wonderfully unsuited to the exam system' (ibid, p. 4), she continues to champion their relevance for study[42].

I now go on to meld these perspectives in a consideration of Shona's carefully-structured, play-based drama activities in the lesson on 30.01.2012. Her pedagogical approach to the exploration of this scene is evident in a series of activities she facilitates that invite the learners to play with and through the piece of dramatic literature which is the subject of their study. She also draws explicit connections between play activity, drama activity and the learners' responses to the dramatic literature that is encountered in the English classroom.

[42] Professor Emma Smith's endorsement of the teaching of Shakespeare's plays in schools is indicated by her ongoing involvement with the National Association for the Teaching of English. Most recently she gave the opening keynote lecture at the 2019 NATE Annual Conference.

7.2 Framing the play and the Play

On entering the classroom the learners find that Shona has already established a physical 'play frame' (Bateson, 1973, p. 157) by removing the desks from a space in the central part of the room that is demarcated by a circle of inward-facing chairs. The play frame is simultaneously as material 'as a frame around a painting' and as psychological 'as the borders of a conceptual category' (Franks, 2015, p. 232), and here it is a place that both play and the Play occupy. The material frame of the circle of chairs is the focal point of the classroom and gives substance to the dramatic play that is about to take place as part of the creative work of the English lesson. Even though the usual layout of Shona's classroom is one designed for group work and collaborative learning, serving as a continuing induction into the manner of the learning interactions that will take place in her English lessons, now the desks are pushed back against the walls haphazardly, outside of the frame and unnecessary to it. This different adaptation of the space signifies that there is about to be a further shift in the routines of learning towards extended drama-based activity, with the circle configuration subverting the teacher-at-front power dynamic and creating a space that is shared and more inclusive (Daniels and Downes, 2015) yet also contained.

Shona's use of the play frame to focus on the messages being communicated within it and to engage the learners in interpreting them draws on the metacommunicative properties of both the learners' play and the scripted Play, for as Goffman (1975) suggests, dramas 'provide engrossables - engrossing materials which observers can get carried away with, materials which generate a realm of being'(p. 57). In drama, as in play, the characters' words and actions are replete with metacommunicative signs. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* these are to do with the themes of coupling, love, deceit, betrayal, family responsibility, social stratification and so on, but also encompass questions of power and sexuality. The latter chimes with what would seem to be an emerging issue for this Year 7 class at Woodside Boys' School, which can be seen from their responses to the particular activities described below, and Shona does not shy away from allowing them to

explore these interests in pursuit of developing their reading of the Play. Significant in the metacommunication of the learners' play that takes place in the play frame, and therefore to the learning that takes place in this English lesson, is its 'bodied', nature. Shona alludes to this in her description of the drama-in-English classroom:

> I think it's noisier and less pretty to look at, it's messy, there's an awful lot of laughing and general kind of carry on, which I quite like, to some extent, although when I get tired sometimes I don't. But yes, overall I quite like that aspect of it. And then I think the connections that students make are much better. Yeah, I suppose that's what I think (interview with Shona, 03.11.2011).

This is a perspective on learning that connects a certain spontaneous messiness, playfulness and physicality in the atmosphere and conduct of the lesson with the making of conceptual connections. In the account of the lesson that follows I therefore consider the types of conceptual connections that the learners make and how these constitute learning in English. I also examine the ways in which their playful enactments lead these learners, adolescent boys in a single-sex school context, to see themselves reflected in the fiction that is explored and created (Bolton, 1998), and to grapple with the questions that they are seeking to ask and answer.

7.3 Playing characters and playing with characters

From the moment the learners enter the room there is a relaxed atmosphere as they take their seats at random in the circular play frame and talk to each other. Shona helps to organise some who remain standing or arrive a little late and gives out texts of the speech under consideration. She does not address the whole class for a full two minutes and twenty seconds. When she does there is an immediate settling, and there is no sense, either in her comments or in the learners' reactions, that this classroom arrangement is alien to their understanding of what an English lesson might sometimes be.

Taking her place in the circle she uses a question and answer routine to recap on the main points of the argument between Oberon and Titania and the wider effects this has had. She allows learners to pose their own questions, for example, Elias asks why Oberon should want to take the Indian Prince away from Titania. She sets the context for Oberon's speech and asks the learners to focus their attention on what she refers to as "Oberon's plan to punish Titania for not obeying him". Shona reads his speech aloud as they follow in their copies of the text, then by prompting the learners to speculate as to what might happen, she establishes their understanding that Titania will fall in love with and pursue the first creature on which her gaze alights when she wakens:

> Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
> On meddling monkey or on busy ape
> (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 2, sc. 1)

Shona indicates that she considers this to be an extreme punishment, "and we're going to imagine what this is going to be like today in the work that we're going to do".

This is a predictive approach to the study of text, quite common in the English classroom, but it is not pre-emptive as Shona does not reveal that the animal encountered by Titania is Bottom transformed into a donkey. The lesson also employs pre-framing, a strategy which Jackson (2007) identifies as the way in which learners might be prepared in advance for their engagement with the experience of a theatrical event. Shona not only pre-frames a reading of the Titania-Bottom scene, but also, by means of dramatic play, makes it clear that learners have license to bring their experiences and identities to their interpretations. She moves between narration and direction as she creates the setting and atmosphere:

> So half the class will get a sticker. If you get a sticker
> you are Titania and when…I'll wait for everybody, and
> being Titania you're going to have to try to get inside
> the head of being Queen of the fairies and you are going

> to search around the woods. This room is going to be transformed into a woodland and it's going to be transformed by music. I'm going to play some music to suggest this room is a magic woodland. And as Titania you're going to need to search around the magical woodlands and find somewhere to fall asleep. You can fall asleep sitting up in a chair. Or fairies might even sleep standing up, who knows how they sleep, they may lie down? That's going to be up to you. You're going to find a place to sleep and while you're asleep you're going to imagine that the flower juice goes on your eyes so that when you wake up the first thing that you see you're going to fall in love with.

Imagining and transformation are central to the lesson, as Shona indicates in her use of language when she sets up the activities. The classroom is to be "transformed into a woodland" by music, with learners inhabiting characters bodily and "inside the head". Imagining has an essential physical quality here, with Shona's directions echoing the words of King Theseus in the Play. Thus in this classroom 'imagination bodies forth' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 5, sc. 1), with learners giving form to setting, events and characters in an act of co-creation with 'the poet's pen' (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act 5, sc. 1). Shona makes their imagining material through her musings on the action of fairies sleeping. Here she uses speculative language and leading questions reminiscent of a Heathcotean technique for initiating drama (Fleming, 1997/2019) and indicative of the adult guidance that will stimulate the process of learner maturation in the zone of proximal development, the ZPD being created by the collaborative drama activities that are about to take place.

At a later point in the lesson, and once some early frenetic activity in response to her instruction to move around inside the frame as either Titania or the beast has calmed down, Santos appears to be responding to her words. Absorbed in his role as Titania he moves outside of the play frame, but not

outside of the drama, to sit on a table pushed back against the atrium window. He can be seen swivelling round, to face one way then the other, in time to the music and in a leisurely fashion, until he finds a comfortable position in which to lie down, arms behind his head, head resting on hands. In all these actions his back is straight, head held high and he places his arms carefully, lending a certain regality to his movement. His actions are carried out without reference to or engagement with others in the crowded classroom, and although at one point he and Chris find themselves lying in very close proximity, they seem quite comfortable with this and do not disturb each other. Santos' absorption as he tries out the physicality of Titania is in tune with Shona's direction:

> The music's gonna begin and you're gonna start to move around the room, umm, being careful not to cause a nuisance to other people and whatever drama they're doing. Everyone get inside their own head, doing their own drama to begin with.

Her comment highlights the two-way traffic between the psychological process of imagination, which in terms of the act of reading functions as drama in the head, and the imagination-in-action of the drama in the lesson. In this way Santos' reading of Titania plays out both on his 'mental stage' (Benton, 1979, p. 74) and in his physical actions in the play space of the classroom. This is the kind of intra-action which Barrs (1987, p. 208) suggests will in time enable the fullest of readings and allow the text to live.

7.4 'Play for them' and 'play for teacher'[43]

Shona explains that there will be a pairing up, a falling in love and a pursuit and she will signal each of these actions by use of a bell. She is explicit about the degree of playfulness she expects and that she is not sure where it might lead, heightening a sense of shared discovery:

[43] A concept first identified by Gillham (1974), and thereafter utilised more widely amongst drama in education practitioners and writers such as Bolton (2010), to describe this aspect of drama pedagogy.

> Now this has the potential to be a lot of fun, but also kind of quite crazy (smiling), so I'm going to be quite interested to see how this works out.

In her explanation of the drama activity she employs the phrase "you are going to have to imagine…" several times, to focus the learners' attention on the open-endedness of characterisation. She divides the class into two groups by giving half a plain white sticker to identify them as Titania whilst the others are to move around in the space as the woodland animals. When she distributes the stickers there are protests from a number of the learners who will enact Titania and mockery from some others who will not. The body language of some of those with a white sticker, for example, lounging back in the chair or not displaying their stickers as instructed, suggests resistance to the idea of a boy playing a female character, although this is not the case for all, as the above description of Santos' response has demonstrated. One boy, on not being given a sticker, raises his arms in the air, fists clenched, and says "yes!", but whether this is because he is playing an animal or not playing a woman, or not playing a fairy, is unclear. However, the requirement to play a female character is plainly an issue for some and is explored in the discussion that takes place as part of one of the focus group interviews with learners from the class on 05.03.2012, during which participants return several times to this topic (see Chapter 8).

Shona encourages the adolescent learners to play dramatically and physically with the scene, whilst remaining mindful of both safety considerations and the need to steer their responses towards the sort of challenge that is productive in learning (McNamee, 1990). Immediately some learners start leaping around and whooping like chimpanzees and this is then copied by others so that many adopt the movements of apes or chimps in quite committed and varied ways. For example, my notes on the lesson record the bow-legged walk of a chimp, loping actions, arm swinging, scratching, and so on. Joel makes extreme ape-like faces and beats his breast, Tarzan-style. There are clearly reference points from beyond the classroom for this ape behaviour and its possible meanings, perhaps wildlife documentaries or

‘Planet of the Apes’ films. The learners’ interest in and commitment to the activity and a prevailing sense of fun suggest that for many this is ‘play for them’ (Gillham, 1974). The ‘play for them’ draws the learners in and creates their investment in the drama, but it also provides the ‘children’s angle of connection’ (Davis, 2010, p. xvii) to the ‘play for teacher’. Shona’s pedagogical purpose and choices in ‘play for teacher’, as described here, are ‘congruent: synchronous not diachronic’ (Davis, 2014, p. 78) with ‘play for them’. Her ‘play for teacher’ therefore ‘contains the important dimensions of human experience the teacher wants the class to engage with and the knowledge of how to work in the art form to explore those areas’ (ibid, p. 78).

In a short space of time the physicality of the learners becomes very pronounced and there are some attempts to display to each other, as indeed apes might, but several levels of meaning beyond the mimetic seem to be bound up in this behaviour. As discussed previously, the often problematic nature of physical contact for adolescent boys tends to be confined in schools to activities that allow for degrees of playful aggression. However, drama activity in the classroom can provide an appropriate context for physicality and social contact in pursuit of ‘collaborative imaginative expression’ (Franks, 1997, p. 140). In this case the animal behaviour explored by the learners in Shona’s lesson carries with it metacommunicative messages, a type of ‘denotative action’ (Bateson, 1973, p. 154) that ensures the distinction holds between play and non-play, between playful and real aggression. Such signals simulate what Bateson identifies as ‘mood-signs’ (p. 162), for example, playful threat as Joel uses his size, which he amplifies by means of his ‘king of the jungle’ pose, to clear his path, and histrionic play when two smaller boys are engaged in a fast and apparently hilarious chase, weaving in and out of the other bodies they encounter whilst still retaining their monkey-like movements. The dual participant-spectatorship quality to their actions is evident in their need to simultaneously do, display and share in the pleasure. There are also echoes of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984) in the rowdiness

of their actions, given licence by the dramatic activity, and with the body as the subject of their play and their laughter.

This is not to claim that all of the learners read the signals in the same way, as Ronny, whose facial expression suggests genuine consternation, on two occasions crosses the circle and positions himself close to Shona, attempting to engage her in conversation whilst looking at the others who are involved in the action of the scene. His body language, facial expressions and actions all indicate that either he finds the signals confusing, a matter of 'Is this play?' rather than 'This is play' (Bateson, 1973, p. 155), or that he is uncomfortable to find this kind of playful activity offered as part of the formal English curriculum.

Although some of those who are moving around in the circle as Titania appear to find it a challenge to do so, Shona praises their attempts as "the beginnings of some really good work". Sammy adopts what might be described as a stereotypically effeminate walk, swaying from side to side, hands on hips, sometimes lifting an arm, limp-wristed, and interacting with others in this way until he finally falls, with a swooning movement, to the floor. This dramatic playing inserts itself into the official spaces of the Play text and the school classroom, inverting the normative codes of behaviour and communication associated with schools. Parodic in its representation of the female, such dramatic play again brings to mind the carnivalesque, and is anticipated by Shona in her earlier comment licensing the potential for the "crazy" in this lesson.

The exaggerated nature of the movement is adopted by a number of the boys with stickers and seems to allow them to overcome their initial reluctance so that they gradually become amused by their own strutting and begin to somewhat revel in it. Later, for example, when required to pair up with a beast at the moment of falling in love, Elias responds to his partner's mime of a curious chimpanzee closely examining the sleeping Titania, by jumping up from his sleeping position and adopting the seductive gestures of a femme fatale. For this he draws on the exaggeratedly 'female' movements and facial

expressions he has previously been rehearsing when moving around in the space as Titania. This shared mime causes both Elias and his partner to laugh together and seems as a result to make it acceptable for them to engage in some friendly physical contact and closeness as part of the scene, unconcerned by the proximity of the other learners and the scrutiny it puts them under. Thus their drama activity offers an appropriate space for the type of social, physical expression that is playful, productive and imaginative, although the initial reluctance of some learners, as noted above, indicates that such behaviour carries with it a certain level of risk.

As far as the teacher's risk-taking is concerned, throughout these activities there is acceptance by Shona, even encouragement at times, of high noise levels and an 'appearance of disorganisation' (Heathcote, 1971/2015, p. 19) as a means to learning. To again apply Heathcote's security thresholds, her ideas on proxemics are also evident in Shona's practice. Heathcote discusses the way in which she learned to embrace her tendency to create 'crowded situations' whereby classes were able to 'first throw their behaviour in my face' (p. 20). This, she realised, was her way of determining their needs and what might be suitable starting points for their drama. Similarly at the beginning of the drama activities in Shona's lesson she is not rigid about a set of rules. She chooses instead to gradually shape the learners' play-based drama activity to shed light on their study of a scene from the Play. She sets the parameters within which they will operate through 'an evolving system of interaction' (Bateson, 1973, p. 165), whilst allowing, and in some respects actively promoting the experimental "crazy" atmosphere she has referred to previously.

Thus her next instruction emerges from and is attentive to the learners' responses as described above, and this is highlighted by her careful commentary on their chaotic first scene:

> That was quite a useful practice. It's reminded me of a couple of things that I probably should have told you, but I think I assumed people would know.

Shona then introduces the constraint that when they repeat the scene learners cannot touch or grab at each other but they can still make sounds. The movement begins again and this time there is more focused work on creating the animals and some of the physically smaller boys are able to inhabit the space with greater confidence, whilst more of the pupils playing Titania begin to participate. The activity within the play frame is still somewhat frenetic and becomes more so as the scene is played out, but Shona only intervenes directly on one occasion, stepping into the play frame to place a steadying hand on Martin's arm to calm his very wild and potentially hazardous movements.

For the next repetition Shona asks learners to channel their characterisation of an animal or fairy through movement alone with no sound effects. The deliberately-chosen stately music, largely ignored by the learners during the previously frenetic dramatic play, can now be clearly heard and the effect of this is marked. Movements become dance-like and far less chaotic, with some learners going into slow motion which serves to exaggerate their movements but also allows greater precision in the execution. Martin now stands almost in the centre of the play frame absorbed in a careful mime of peeling and eating a banana, staring intently at the imagined banana whilst seemingly oblivious to the movement of other bodies swirling around him. A minority of pupils remain seated and still do not participate physically but they are all focused on watching the action that is taking place.

Pedagogically Shona is steering each repetition of the scene to build up the elements of the drama. Dramatic play has provided the springboard, but as Fleming (1994/2011) notes, to remain at the dramatic play stage requires little in the way of an underpinning pedagogic rationale (p. 1). Thus she uses the music to facilitate a shift from play frame to performance frame (Schechner, 1977/2003, p. 301), from dramatic play to drama, marking this out as a pivotal moment in the lesson. In terms of her pedagogy, therefore, dramatic play is a continuing part of the cognitive, affective and intellectual development of the adolescents in her class. She makes this explicit in her

comments when reflecting back on the value to their learning of these activities and their responses:

> What you're good at, what you've been really good at, many of you so far, is the playing aspect. So what we've had mmm which I think is very effective…I can't talk over noise so I will just wait. What we've had that I think's been very successful is lots of...particularly the animals, the beasts, the creatures, lots of them very successfully playing those animals. I've seen a lot of really good work of that kind, and I've seen the beginnings of some really good work from the Titanias, though the Titanias' job is about to become much harder (she pauses to remonstrate with a learner who is wearing his sticker on his forehead). So what I'm seeing so far is some good playing. Playing with Shakespeare is really important, so you're playing with the ideas. I think it's very important.

Her emphasis on the "playing aspect", and her repeated use of words and phrases such as "effective", "successful", "good work" and "important" in relation to this, serve to highlight the intellectual properties of play. Her words also make explicit the ways in which 'play for them' has connected positively with 'play for teacher' (and, in her remonstrations, where it has not). However, whilst highlighting that it is "important" for the learners to play with Shakespeare's ideas, Shona also signals that "what we've had" and "what I'm seeing so far" is not the end point of their learning and that she expects further development of learners' ideas about the Play. When she focuses the learners' attention on the need for control, which she says they know about from their drama lessons, she describes this as "the real test" and "tricky to get right". This acknowledges, in Bolton's (1979) terms, the requirement for a gear-change if dramatic playing is to become 'what a child is doing when he (sic) is using the art form of drama' to learn 'at a subjective level of meaning' (Bolton, 1979, p. 32).

She starts the music again and all participants now have to pair up and practise freezing in the moment when Titania wakes to see the beast. Shona then moves around the room narrating these scenes. She picks out a Titania in one freeze frame "who is looking surprisedly but with attention at a beast" and describes "emotions of fear and unhappiness on the part of the beast". In a second freeze frame she notes a Titania who is "reaching out, she's very interested in her pose in terms of actually getting close to this animal"; in a third "shock and horror whilst love and attention are coming"; and more generally, "some of the animals are still quite careless, they're just doing their animal things whilst Titania is showing what she's got". Whilst ostensibly modelling how to comment on the work, this narrative does not downplay the sexual overtones of both the learners' freeze frames and the scene from the Play that they will encounter in a later lesson, and she gives voice to the subtext that is present in the current lesson. This is detectable in the reactions of some boys to playing females and having to show attraction to other boys, or having to receive the attentions of other boys albeit in the guise of females. Varying degrees of discomfort are apparent in the learners' body language and facial expressions during the presentation of the freeze frames, which suggests that this activity represents an affective challenge for them. I now go onto examine how Shona uses this tension to engage learners with the cognitive challenge of the text, connecting the dramatic playing of the earlier part of the lesson with the meanings in the dramatic situations that learners construct as part of their continuing interactions with the Play.

7.5 From play to Play

In the next part of the lesson the aforementioned subtext continues to be played out through the dramatic exploration of the scene. Shona asks one pair at a time to show their freeze frame. When she invites the audience of peers to "tell me what it is you can see, so I want you to attach words to the frozen picture that you're going to see", Shona signals the reflexive nature of what is now a performance frame: 'self-conscious, conscious of its audience, the audience conscious of the performer being conscious of being a performer, etc.' (Schechner, 1977/2003, p. 301). The term freeze frame adds a further

dimension to the concept of framing as it is suggestive of frame in film, a 'still' that captures within a visual narrative a moment in time and space. However, here it is also a way of capturing in stillness the bodiliness of the participants and the physicality of the relationships they are seeking to represent, whilst allowing these aspects to be placed under scrutiny.

The first pair shows Titania on one knee, arms outstretched and flung wide in a very open gesture towards the beast, gazing in what appears to be longing, as if she wishes to embrace the beast who is standing half turned away but looking back at her. Tadeusz, the learner playing Titania, is a recent arrival to the school from Eastern Europe. Although initially very quiet and somewhat isolated in terms of his acceptance by the class, in the time I have been present in lessons he has become a markedly more confident participant when involved in role play and drama activities. The gradual transformation of his rather literal oral contributions as an early stage language learner into something more nuanced was apparent in a hot-seating[44] activity in a previous lesson on 16.01.2012, when his spirited defence, in role, of Egeus' actions towards Hermia showed his ability to interpret character. It also suggested that in 'taking up an attitude' (Barrs, 1987, p. 217) as Egeus he was able to extend his linguistic range, becoming 'a head taller than himself' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102) in communicative terms. This process is recognised by Shona in her account of the ways in which she uses drama in her English lessons:

> I think also, because of the importance of speaking and listening within English, I think drama, I think sometimes it's easier to teach speaking and listening skills when you're allowing a young person to step outside being themselves and to be somebody else in the drama. I don't mean literally be someone else but d'you know what I mean (interview with Shona, 03.11.2011)?

[44] Hot-seating is a drama activity in which a learner adopts the role of a character and is questioned by the other learners about relationships, actions, motives and/or feelings in a particular situation.

Shona's caveat that role play is not about actually becoming someone else echoes Schechner (1985), who draws on the work of the psychologist Winnicott to identify both a 'me', the actor encountering but separate from the role, and a 'not me', the role in the script. However, during the process of rehearsal, as the actor interprets and accommodates the perspectives of the character, 'me' and 'not me' influence each other, creating another level, the double negative of the 'not not me'. Thus 'Elements that are "not me" become "me" without losing their "not me-ness"' (Schechner, 1985, p. 111). This whole process is described in practice by the actor Antony Sher (2015), who variously likens preparing to play Falstaff[45] to a series of 'growth surges' (p. 103) emerging out of an intertextual 'melting pot' (p. 103) of characters, people and experiences in his life until 'I have Falstaff inside me' (p. 189). It is a perspective that suggests the character is subsumed by the actor rather than the actor becoming 'lost' in the character.

For some of the learners in Shona's class, however, something of Schechner's 'not me-ness', as seen in their discomfort about the in-role female-male pairings, persists. Although the learners are used to playing, they are not actors and are inexperienced Players in the actorly sense. Their expressive drama activity is therefore different in nature to that of the 'highly ordered and controlled' (Rosen, 1980/2017, p. 306) institution of theatre. Later in the lesson, though, this does not preclude Shona from facilitating a discussion which connects the concerns emerging from the learners' drama with aspects of Shakespeare's theatre.

Thus there is a distinction between Schechner's and Sher's perspectives and what is happening in this lesson, because the playing and Playing are not principally directed towards entertaining an audience (other than themselves) but towards learning. Nevertheless, in her previously-quoted description of the learning process enabled by drama activity, Shona perceives that some shift from 'not me' to 'not not me' takes place, but not to the extent that learners in role step completely outside of themselves. For Heathcote (1980)

[45] Antony Sher played the character of Sir John Falstaff in the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2014 production of both parts of *Henry IV* by Shakespeare, writing a memoire of the experience.

too the learner is not subsumed into the life of another but is rather trying it out by living through it. By taking on the mantle of the role the learner demonstrates and reflects on what she would do if faced with particular situations, internalising the ideas, processes and emotions of the dramatic action as well as comprehending them intellectually.

Thus Shona combines the playful and embodied aspects of drama to engender deep learning, articulating her practices in this way:

> Erm, I think that learning that is in some way...I suppose it's that notion that...that play is practice...so if we see drama as playing, play is practice, so it's language practice. So your educational theory for your younger children, when they're playing and practising language, they're learning language. There's that but I think it's also...it's that thing of, if you've been it, if you've lived it, so for example, taking a role, then that's much more concrete than just hearing about it. It's the doing, it's the activeness of it that I think contributes to really good quality learning (interview with Shona, 03.11.2011).

Shona's reference to educational theory for younger children is not a digression, as Barrs (1987) suggests when she draws on Vygotskian theory to analyse Heathcote's use of role in exploring voice and viewpoint. Barrs demonstrates that:

> …intelligent use of drama in education can tap into precisely that same capacity to develop through play that children make such constant use of in their own early learning (Barrs, 1987, p. 215).

Where Shona highlights the importance of physical embodiment in the learning - the role-taking, the living and 'doing' in role - Barrs (1987) refers to it as 'the ability to learn through enactment' which is "a fundamental mode of learning" (p. 215):

> Enactment is both *action* and *symbolization*. It is thus a pivotal symbolic category and learning mode, drawing on *both* the individual's powers of social action *and* on the normal capacity for playing and imagining (p. 215) [italics in the original].

To return to Tadeusz in the lesson under consideration, enactment is key to the learning, demonstrated in his portrayal of Titania. While his freeze frame is evaluated by his peers, he maintains the intensity of the facial expression, gesture and positioning that he developed during the rehearsal period. His physical commitment to his portrayal of Titania in that moment, unmoved by some rather pointed giggling and commentary from his peers, suggests that he has crossed 'the limen from *not-me* to *not-not-me*' (Turner, 1982, p. 121) [italics in the original]. Thus the confidence he is displaying when adopting different roles in the lessons on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* points to his growing confidence as a member of the class and contributes to him literally and metaphorically finding his voice in a new educational context. This demonstrates how the fictional situation and characters of the role play can connect with who the learners are and how they see themselves 'at a *real* level' (Bolton and Heathcote, 1999, p. 117) [italics in the original]. The '*real* level' (ibid, p. 117) of developing and managing relationships in the class is not, however, without challenge, as is apparent when the laughter and reactions of those viewing the freeze frame cause Shona to mention the need for maturity. She skilfully steers their comments towards the Play, so when one learner suggests that Tadeusz as Titania is in a trance and looks "weird", Shona draws attention back to the scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by saying that a weird trance-like state "fits very well with this idea of a magical love".

7.6 Dark play

Comments on other freeze frames stay within the realms of what the learners clearly feel will be deemed acceptable by the teacher, until the undercurrents of a subtext about physical attraction and repulsion surface again. Santos describes Joel, frozen in role as the beast, as "all creeped out" and Connor

follows up by saying that Joel looks "disgusted" which causes a ripple of laughter. By using Joel's name rather than referring to his animal character their comments seem personally-directed. Joel's reaction is to break his well-held freeze to give a couple of slight nods indicating his acknowledgement of the idea of disgust. To analyse this by means of Bakhtin's categories in the 'process of self-formation in both art and life' (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 180), in the act of performing his freeze frame for an audience, Joel's 'I-for-myself' is shaped by the 'outside other' (p. 181), which in this case is the 'outsideness' (p. 180) quality of the other learners' spectatorship. The responses of Joel, Santos and Connor each offer different and 'special fields of vision' (ibid, p. 185) which 'supplement each other' (ibid, p. 185) in this 'kernel of a dramatic, aesthetic event' (ibid, p. 189), highlighting the complexity of the intra-actions that take place in the spaces 'between performers, texts, environment, and audience' (Schechner, 1985, p. 113).

A further example is when some of the spectators decide to participate in a form of 'dark play' (Schechner, 1988, p. 12), pushing at the boundaries of the performance frame in a deconstructive but not necessarily destructive manner as a way of grappling with the ambiguities of the Titania and beast relationship. Winston (2005) identifies dark play as 'playing differently and defiantly' (ibid, p. 315), but as dark play does not declare its subversion (Schechner, 1993, p. 36), the spectators' comments are framed in the manner of a serious evaluation. Thus they are concealing their motives by appearing to adhere to the protocols of the lesson, whilst simultaneously playing with identities and what Schechner calls 'alternative selves' (1988, p. 14). However, this is experienced by those learners presenting their freeze frames as a disturbance to the equilibrium between the 'not me' and the 'not not me' states (Schechner, 1985, p. 112). Isaac (playing an ape) is holding a very recognisable ape-like pose with fingers on head scratching. He faces Ricky (as Titania) who stands with arms outstretched towards him, and both show some control in holding this pose but cannot manage any in-role eye contact. Comments from the audience, such as Ronny suggesting that Ricky wants Isaac to go to his (sic) house and that Isaac is thinking about it, instantly

affect the precision of their freeze frame by making them grin at each other in recognition of the awkwardness of this situation, until Ricky, laughing, buries his face in his hands.

Dark play is again in evidence when Zemar and Ronny present their freeze frame. Zemar (as an ape) is standing in a 'king of the jungle' pose looking away from Ronny (as Titania) but with his left arm outstretched behind him towards his partner. During this drama activity Ronny seems to have overcome the discomfiture he experienced earlier in the lesson and is now engaging, sitting on the floor with his right arm stretching up and touching Zemar's hand. With such comments from Ricky as, "Ronny is like 'come, marry me' and Zemar is bemused, like 'mmm maybe'", Ronny begins to wriggle and writhe on the floor suggesting his growing awareness of the physical nature of the scene, his position in it and how this is being represented by others. Yet such comments, when taken at face value, do not stray too far from the Bottom-Titania relationship as depicted in Act 3 scene 1 and Act 4 scene 1 of the Play and in this sense the learners are 'both appropriating culture and creating culture' (Holzman, 2010, p. 37). However, the effects of the dark play are apparent when a suggestion from Jermaine that Ronny is dragging Zemar down into bed prompts a spontaneous round of applause from a number of the learners and sends Ronny fleeing from the scene and from the performance frame.

In terms of the dramatic text being studied, the positioning of characters in relation to each other, the physical and eye contact or lack of it, and the body language on display in the freeze frames suggest the learners' understanding of how the complexities of the power relationships between the two characters might be represented. However, with some of the spectators taking advantage of the materiality of the 'frozen' bodies under scrutiny and the depiction of the relationships between them to engage in this form of dark play, their comments open the possibility to disruption of regulatory heterosexual norms (Butler, 2011). These are ideas which Shona returns to later in the lesson, and not just to draw the obvious contextual link between

the all-male composition of the class and the acting companies in Shakespeare's day.

Thus the relationships that she is building within the class, along with her careful watching and listening as the lesson progresses, enable her to make the kinds of ongoing pedagogical judgements that are a feature of her approach.

7.7 The pedagogy of play, drama and 'reading' literature

In response to learners' dark play Shona's reflexive narrative on the freeze frames offers a degree of distance. At the same time she draws learners in (Fleming, 1997/2019) by investing their learning with the meanings that have emerged from their dramatic play but which they do not necessarily perceive or articulate for themselves. Crucially her narrative of their freeze frames lends coherence and cohesion, deepening the sense of the action as well as moving it on:

> So we're going to see a couple more [freeze frames] in a moment. What I wanted to kind of draw your attention to before we do some more feedback - some of the feedback started to be really good - is we're starting to get, um, we're starting to get some patterns here. So a lot of this idea of talking about openness, wanting to embrace, wanting to hold, the kind of trance-like stare of Titania as she magically, under the influence of magic falls in love. And with the beast we seem to be getting two different kinds of thing, or maybe three different kinds of beast. We're getting a beast that is clearly disgusted in Joel's case, so kind of freaked out by it. We're getting a beast that is just carrying about its normal business although is a little bit surprised, perhaps in the case of Martin, but we're also getting the beast maybe in Isaac's case who actually looks quite happy and comfortable with the situation, isn't

> threatened by the fairy, actually quite likes the fairy's attention.

Her choice of the word 'threatened' brings into the open why some of the learners have been experiencing discomfiture during these activities. It acknowledges that she is understanding of this, but her next comment returns them to the idea of their learning as a process for which they share responsibility, the shift being marked by the change from 'we' to 'you':

> Now we have talked about, from the beginning we've talked about control and we've talked about maturity. It doesn't make you look grown up and clever if you make silly comments and actually it doesn't help the process of the lesson if you do that.

The direct nature of her 'mediation' (Moll, 1990, p. 9), in a Vygotksyan sense, demonstrates what Moll refers to as the 'special socialization' (p. 9) of the learners' thinking and recognises that their 'conscious awareness' of knowledge is 'primarily a product of instruction' (p. 9). As far as learning in the zone of proximal development is concerned, Moll draws a distinction between a reductive 'drill-and-practice' (ibid, p. 8) notion of instruction and the types of interaction which place 'emphasis on social activity and cultural practice as sources of thinking' (ibid, p. 15). The latter approach, characteristic of the observed lesson, is one which will allow learners gradually to internalise the intellectual and problem-solving skills necessary to direct their own learning.

Shona's narrative is also a way of preparing the class for their forthcoming textual study of the scenes between Bottom and Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and of focusing attention once more, as this is an English lesson, on the dramatic text and, crucially, their interpretation of it. There are at least three texts operating here: the text of the Play, which acts as the prompt for the learners' dramatic imaginings; the predictive text of the freeze frame representations; and the text that is apparent in the metacommunicative signals of the learners' denotative actions and comments. This last emerges

from, intersects with and sometimes offers a challenge to the freeze frame images that are developed and presented within the performance frame as a result of playing with the Play. The learners' text is one that they are keen to test out and play with in a 'risky' way within the formal setting of the school and the curriculum. Such explorations are encouraged and endorsed in Shona's structuring of the learning, bearing out her view that:

> …being with younger ones [learners] you need to cultivate a spirit of risk-taking. I think English teachers are generally quite good at that, that it's alright if the thing flops and feels that it's alright to get things wrong… (interview with Shona, 03.11.2011)

By asking for learners' comments on the relationships shown in the freeze frames Shona, in a managed way, brings their alternative text to the surface for articulation and examination. This progressively emboldens them to take more risks in their evaluations during the final part of the lesson.

7.8 The Play in the past and the present

There is a general air of excitement that builds as the giggling and looks passing between learners suggest that they feel they are being daring in this context. Shona draws on this to encourage learners to reflect:

> Now there's something about this that's interesting me, kind of one last thing that we need to talk about by hands up and hopefully you'll be able to get lots of people involved in this discussion. We've had some brilliant freeze frames, so we've got people in here who've really shown they've understood what the situation was, what it would be like. I've got this question for you. Why, and this is not supposed to be a rhetorical question, this is a genuine question, why Year 7 has this drama been so difficult to do and so difficult to talk about in a sensible way, what is it that's made the discussion and the showing quite tricky? I want to hear from you one-by-one (a

number of learners raise their hands to offer answers).
Alexei, talk to us.

Alexei suggests that the difficulties relate to the fact that they are all boys. Shona asks for more detail and Joel adds that their laughter and comments are caused by the fact that the drama is about love, and this links to a topic recently studied in their PHSE sessions (a subject that focuses on personal, health and social issues and debates), which in his words "makes it a bit awkward". Here Joel does not verbalise what that topic is, although all the learners are aware that they have recently been discussing sexual relationships and sexuality during PHSE. Shona reiterates their points, but explicitly adds what Alexei has not said, which is that half of the learners have had to play a female role. She continues to probe:

> We're kind of not getting enough detail, although everything that's been said so far is true. What makes it difficult to do these showings and to talk about them?

Deliberately or not, sometimes the learners avoid or skirt round the sexuality issues, employing distancing techniques or taking refuge in gender norms, such as when Erik suggests that boys are "sillier" than girls, which prompts "Oh I hope that's not true" from Shona, spoken in a tone which communicates her rejection of this depiction of boys. At other times they engage but in an oblique way. Zemar demonstrates this when he picks up on Joel's earlier point and states that because the discussion is about the topic of relationships "people don't actually want to go into that because it's [an English lesson] not PHSE". His use of "people" deflects from the fact that they are all boys, and also indicates that he personally does not wish to discuss his feelings. His compartmentalising of such discussions - suitable in PHSE but not English - might be a product of the clear demarcation lines that exist between the different subjects on secondary school timetables, but equally it could be a tactic to avoid some uncomfortable issues that have taken such a blatantly embodied form in this lesson.

Jermaine seems to be exploring the space between the 'not me' and the 'not not me' (Schechner, 1985) when he proposes that "it's sort of awkward" and he doesn't like talking about relationships because "I'm a boy", though "if it was a girl it would be OK", which causes some laughter in response. Elias returns to this at a later point to suggest that "we [the boys in his class] don't want to seem all squishy and mushy". Not only are they acknowledging the gender binary of how boys (and girls) are supposed to behave, or in Butler's (2011) terms perform their 'sex', but also the constraining nature of the aforementioned 'regulatory apparatus of heterosexuality' (ibid, p. xxi) which in this very public arena they are ostensibly endorsing. However, my notes describe Jermaine's tone of voice as rather ironic, which hints that he might actually be developing a more nuanced relationship with these ideas than his words suggest.

Shona waits for the learners to settle again before she repeats her question and says that she is looking for mature and responsible answers. Ahmed, who voluntarily brings the conversation back to the drama and the text, suggests that in the fictionalised world, as in real life, there will be situations that are interpreted differently according to perspective:

> When we're like acting something out, yeah, someone might be thinking that there's something but the actor might be doing something else.

He also senses that,

> …if you look at the language he's [Shakespeare] using, we don't really translate it that well.

Ahmad here points to the complexities, both in and out of role, of simultaneously negotiating between the views of others and the language of the text. Thus an expansion of the idea of metaxis is useful in explaining this. Davis (2014) describes metaxis in this way: '"I am making it happen. It is happening to me" (p. 29), to which Cecily O'Neill added, "I am watching this happen to me"' (p. 29). However, in order to take account of the social

context of Shona's classroom, the textual negotiation through drama that occurs there is more appropriately represented by my formulation: together we are making it happen, it is happening to us, we are watching this happen to us and we are negotiating what it means to us. This recognises the trial and error quality of learning (Bateson, 1973), as well as highlighting both the importance of it taking place within a social domain (Moll, 1990, p. 5) and its potential for developing more abstract thought through the collective creation of an imaginary, dramatic situation (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 103).

Shona brings the various texts of the lesson together in the final part of the discussion, exploring how the learners' concerns and interests find resonance in their study of the Play. She begins by refocusing attention on performance elements, asking learners to consider the possible responses of the audiences in Shakespeare's day:

> Shona: Having picked over what was quite difficult and tricky about what you had to do, the question I want to ask you is this. When the audience [in Shakespeare's era] see what is really a young man dressed as a fairy, Fairy Queen Titania, wake up and fall in love with another man dressed as a beast, hands up what you think the reaction is likely to be (sound of pips to signify end of lesson)?
>
> Matty: I'm not mmm…I don't know how to say it, yeah, but mmm, if I saw it I would… I would say it was gay.
>
> Shona: OK, so there would be issues around sexuality. How might an audience react to that? Duane?
>
> Duane: In some of the plays, like the people they, like, (unclear) know some of the men act in a feminine kind of way.
>
> Shona: OK, so maybe some of the audience might be quite accepting of it, they'd be used to it, it wouldn't seem anything all that strange to them. I'm wondering how the

> audience might be reacting to Titania waking from her sleep and falling in love with this other man dressed as the beast. Joel?
>
> Joel: People in like Shakespeare's time, yeah, cos women never played anyone on stage because it was all just men, and like nobody at that time would laugh. And say if like we went to a play like that and we was allowed in the old times and we had like the modern minds, we'd laugh.

Once again transformation and imagination, such as Joel engaging in a form of mental time travel in order to try out different audience perspectives and reactions, offer a way of cognitively connecting the learners' experiences with the script. Shona's final comment before she dismisses the class indicates the complexity of what she is trying to achieve, even though there is no time to pursue it further in this lesson. In making meaning around *A Midsummer Night's Dream* she highlights the intra-action between the playfulness of the text, of the learners and of Shakespeare's audiences:

> I think Shakespeare's audience would laugh as well, though, Joel, I think a lot of this is supposed to be funny. Although I'm telling you you've got to stop saying the silly comments, you've got to stop fooling around, I actually think there is a big part of this that is intended to be funny as Joel said.

Shona is well aware of the seriousness in approach required for both the successful performance of comedy and the successful study of the Play, and therefore of the need to steer the learners' play in this direction. Jackson's (2007) research with young audiences of theatre in education is relevant here. He notes how 'The very (serious) playfulness' (p. 227) of the dramatic activity, utilising techniques such as role-switching, humour and irony, communicates to adolescents that situations and their responses to them are 'not fixed' and that there are 'always choices to be made' (p. 227), as has been the case in this lesson. Shona's summing up at the end of the lesson,

however, acknowledges another type of irony, that of her recourse to the formal educational discourses of control and managing behaviour at those very points in the lesson when the learners have attempted to impose their own comedic meanings on the scene.

In the time available in this lesson it is not possible for Shona and the class to fully address the complexities of what a Shakespearean audience reaction to issues of masculinity and femininity might be, but the idea of historical distance that Shona touches upon is, as Yandell (2017b) suggests, important in literary study. However, as he notes, this 'sense of pastness' (ibid, p. 14) is always bound up with the network of associations that learners both bring to and encounter in the classroom. Thus the reactions of the Shakespearean audiences to cross-dressing ambiguities are discussed in this classroom in relation to more everyday 'performances' of sexuality.

Shona's management of and contribution to the class discussion also indicates the way in which in this lesson 'social relations are pedagogic relations' (Yandell, 2017b, p. 14), making the co-creation of knowledge possible. The manner of working that I have described in this chapter is significant in that the lesson - an English lesson - is rooted in the practices of educational drama with dramatic play as its impetus. This serves to demonstrate the 'content relationship' (Neelands, 1991/2010, p. 70) between drama and English, central to which is the study of literature.

7.9 Conclusion

In summary, threaded throughout my account of this Year 7 lesson is Shona's understanding of the relationship between play, imagination and creativity to facilitate the study of dramatic text as part of the subject English. She draws on the Play script to encourage the learners' tentative and playful explorations of relationships and sexuality, and then widens the discussion out again to reflect on performance aspects. Key elements in the reading practices of the lesson are the percipient (Fleming, 1997/2019) nature of the drama activity, its 'immediacy and particularity' (Bolton, 1998, p. 199) and its embodied qualities. Shona's teaching maintains 'the safety net, as in all

make-believe play, of another world (a “real” one?) in which to take refuge’ (ibid, p. 199), whilst challenging learners through the drama to find themselves reflected in the fiction that is both explored and created. This is, in her own words, the “play with a purpose” (field notes, 12.12.2011) that is a feature of her pedagogy.

Both Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with the ways in which the teacher draws on theoretical perspectives to do with reading in order to harness the resources that learners bring with them to the English classroom. My aim in the next chapter is to set my previous analysis of Shona’s lessons in dialogue with the data from three focus group interviews involving learners from her class, one of which takes place four years after the observation period and during preparations for the GCSE examinations. In doing so, I seek to explore and contextualise the learners’ short- and longer-term perspectives on the purposes of drama activity as part of their English lessons.

CHAPTER 8

Learners' reflections on the value of drama in learning English: teasing out "what did we learn?"[46]

8.1 Drama as learning in English: the learner perspective

In what follows I examine the data from the three learner focus group interviews in phase 2 of my research as they pertain to my overarching research question, 'What contribution does drama make to teaching and learning in English?' Each focus group involved five learners from the class at Woodside Boys School (see Table 3d, Chapter 3). Focus groups 1 and 2 took place towards the end of and immediately following the classroom observation period. Focus group 3 was held four years later in 2016, my return to the school to interview learners from the same class coinciding with their GCSE examination preparation as they were moving towards the end of their statutory period of secondary education. Initially I met with the whole class to reacquaint them with my research, and then held the final focus group interview which included some of the same participants who had been interviewed previously at age 12.

8.2 What did we learn?

Although the quotation in the chapter title is taken from the interview with Shona, my primary purpose here is to privilege the voices of learners. From two different vantage points in their secondary schooling I analyse their perspectives on some of the key issues raised in previous chapters about the nature of learning English through drama. To weave these threads together, however, my starting point is with Shona and how she posits learning as something to be divined, developed and advanced by teacher and learners over time rather than instantaneously determinable or clear cut. It is also this that I wish to test against the views of the learners as they discuss the drama-in-English aspects of their lessons.

In Shona's comments that follow on from the above quotation she expands on her view:

[46] A quotation from the interview with Shona on 03.11.2011.

> It's what they [the learners] bring back to the next lesson from having done all of that [drama work] is sometimes most powerful. You know, lovely things like why would Anne agree to marry Richard [in Shakespeare's *Richard III*]. It's so much easier to write about that if you've been Anne and he's bullied you into it than to try and write that from scratch just because Miss says "Anne agrees; Anne is bullied". Well why does she? That can come later, I suppose. It doesn't necessarily have...you don't necessarily always have to have got to that point by the end of that 55 minutes [the length of a lesson at Woodside Boys School]. And I think probably I would be inclined to be the kind of teacher who would argue for… there are times when we need longer than 55 minutes. That would be much nicer to teach English, you know, that we break down the normal timetable for a week and we'd have a whole day of English. I don't thinks it's possible necessarily to do what you want to do in 55 minutes. But if someone comes back to the classroom...you know if you do that on Monday and they've played with it on Monday, and they come back on Tuesday really keen and interested in Richard and Anne, well then that's kind of half the battle won, isn't it, in a way, and if that means you've got to work quite hard to bring them back to what they remember from Monday, well that's alright, because they came wanting to remember it (interview with Shona, 03.11.2011).

Shona's account positions learning in English through drama as a 'long game', and a key part of the teacher's pedagogical role is to develop learner investment. In this model subject knowledge construction involves ongoing learner participation, interpretation and negotiation, recognising that learners'

knowledge about the texts studied is dynamic and shifting. As such she offers an implicit challenge to successive Ofsted inspection frameworks which purport from just a 'snapshot' observation of the lesson to discern the progress that each learner is making, according to a set of predetermined and generic criteria. For Shona the study of literature is a cumulative process, but not as a fixed and objective body of knowledge delivered by the teacher in 'neat, predetermined sequences of accumulation' (Yandell, 2017a, p. 250) which are linearly accrued by the learner. The knowledge-based model that Yandell (2017a) describes here, (also critiqued by Doecke, 2017; Mason and Giovanelli, 2017), differs in key respects from the one that came before it, the skills-oriented National Literacy Strategy, an atomised version of the English curriculum which I have discussed in relation to Paul's planning in Chapter 4. What these approaches have in common, though, is a focus on the utility of knowledge. Thus, neither model relates particularly well to the type of English curriculum that is inherent in Shona's description of the process of literature learning (interview, 03.11.2011) as rather more "messy" than linear, and which is in large part constructed by teachers and learners during classroom interactions in diverse school settings. Yet the way in which I have shown her to encourage what she refers to as "the playing, the enjoying, the what if-ing" in her lessons rings of an attentiveness to the experience of learners as active readers in the 'situated complexity' (Yandell, 2017a, p. 250) of a classroom context where meanings are indeed socially constructed and articulated and, crucially, given time to grow.

It is this account of learning which provided the impetus for me to reconnect with the same group of learners some four years on from the original research period, to once again invite them to tease out their learning for research purposes. My aim in doing so was not to downplay or supersede their earlier focus group reflections at age 12, recorded in the immediacy of a sustained period of drama-in-English activity. Rather it was to place these alongside their retrospective views at age 16 in order to arrive at a more rounded understanding of their perceptions of the purpose of drama in learning English. In this way I was seeking to test out the messy, long game depiction

of learning presented by Shona above, my approach being properly reflective of the crystalization process (Bragg, 2011) that I describe in Chapter 3, whereby insights generated via a range of methods contribute to the bigger picture of the research. Thus my examination of the data from the three learner focus group interviews across phase 2 sheds further light on my analysis in Chapters 4 to 7 of teachers' pedagogy and classroom practices.

There was, however, one final reason for my decision to interview learners in the period immediately preceding their GCSE examinations. As I explore in Chapter 4, some of the teachers at Downham Fields appropriate the voices of their GCSE learners to represent a generally negative view of drama as part of learning in English lessons. I therefore wanted to seek the views of a group of learners at just such a point in their educational journey in order to interrogate this premise from their perspective.

8.3 The role of dramatic play in learning English

In Shona's previously-quoted deliberations on the purposes of drama in English she suggests that incorporating opportunities for learners to play with the text is central to her view of learning. This is borne out in the way she facilitates learners' engagement with and interest in a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Chapter 7). Four years later in focus group 3 on 26.04.2016 Zemar identifies the diamond 9 statement, 'Drama in English is about playing with ideas and texts' as the most important. He equates this with the social nature of reading texts in the classroom which is key to his enjoyment of learning in English. However, enjoyment is not the only outcome:

> Zemar: (reading aloud one of the diamond 9 statements) 'Drama in English is about playing with ideas and texts', because I think when everyone… once we've finished getting ready, like getting your act ready, everyone performs their acts then you get to learn about other people's ideas and how like they think of the text, and how they've interpretated (sic)… interpretated

> (sic)… yeah that word… the text as well, and also you find out different views and that. And also when like you're talking to people in your group you also find different views then as well so that's why I put that up at the top because then you get attitudes to the text.

Zemar attests to the 'amplificatory social power' (Boal, 2006, p. 18) of sharing artistic products in an educational setting by highlighting the type of learning that is involved at all stages of the drama activity; in the collaborative nature of the creative act, the textual interpretations that are inherent in the performances, and the interrogation of those interpretations. That this leads to learners developing "attitudes" to the text is of particular significance and is expanded later in a suggestion from Ricky that drama "provides alternative angles on events", and by Joel who refers to the "multiple positions that one can have when doing drama" and who believes "it's important to say that drama helps you to understand different ways in which you can apply ideas".

It is clear, therefore, that these learners, now at the GCSE stage, not only expect to take up and tussle over their different positions on the texts studied in English but also that they view this as a vital part of the learning process. Here they are in tune with what Tarpey (2017) argues is the radical intent of Dixon's seminal text *Growth Through English* (1969). For Tarpey (2017) in his re-evaluation of Dixon's work, the concept of growth is not about enculturation into a set of '"universal truths" about human existence that are easily and equally applicable to all people' (Tarpey, 2017, p. 157) by means of exposure to Michael Gove's culturally elitist 'Canon of transcendent works' (2013b). Neither is it an entirely personal and individual model of growth through reading literary works, but instead is 'firmly located in children's own social and cultural realities' such that learners '"grow" to have greater agency through dynamic classroom experiences' with the focus on 'student talk, critical discussion and drama in learning' (Tarpey, 2017, p. 159). The contributions of Zemar, Ricky and Joel highlight the important role of drama in an approach to reading in the English classroom that does not

privilege the ‘authority of the text’ (Mason and Giovanelli, 2017, p. 318) over the social reading practices of the learners. The goal is therefore not to settle on one dominant textual interpretation or even a range of personalised interpretations which float free of the wider social context in which the reading is taking place, but rather to acknowledge the textual power (Scholes, 1985) that the learners wield during drama activity as they explore, share and debate their “attitudes” to the texts read. As such, these learners point to the dynamism associated with this way of reading in the English classroom.

8.3.1 The importance of play and imagination in learning English

In the next exchange Ricky identifies progression in the learning process when play and fun become more precisely about imagination in action, and for him imagination is crucial at every development phase.

> MP: Anyone else want to add to a possible ‘most important’ statement?
>
> Zemar: Yeah, drama in English is about playing with your ideas and texts. I think that’s one of the important ones.
>
> MP: OK. I suppose it could really say playing with your ideas about texts maybe?
>
> Ricky: I’d say that for the younger years especially, drama in English is about using your imagination.
>
> MP: But something changes, does it?
>
> Ricky: No, ‘cos I think for the younger years you want people to like, that’s when you want people to develop themselves and I feel that’s all part of their development phase rather than we’re kind of like at the final phase where you’ve just got to be putting it into practice what you’ve learned.

MP: I see, so you're developing in those early stages and you're now being able to put it into practice yourself.

Ricky: Yeah, yeah.

MP: So you're more of an independent learner?

Ricky: Yeah, I would say that.

At the end of this exchange, although Ricky politely agrees with me, my too teacherly re-interpretation of his words temporarily closes down his further elaboration. Nevertheless, his comments about development, which he returns to later in the discussion, resonate with Vygotsky's assertion that the future orientation of the learner is created by everyday acts of imagination in the present (Vygotsky, 1967/2004). Whilst Ricky may feel that he has reached a final stage in his learning, a view most probably influenced by the imminence of the GCSE examinations, his account of a memorable piece of drama-in-English work from his Year 11 English lessons actually demonstrates the continuing significance of imaginative activity. During the discussion with the whole class on 07.03.2016 prior to the final focus group interview he cites his involvement in a dramatisation arising from a class reading of the novel *The Pearl* (Steinbeck, 1947/2012).

Ricky: So we did like a mock trial. There was someone in the hot seat who had to be Kino, then you had a defence attorney, and we had a jury and a prosecutor as well.

Shona: And what role did you have in that?

Ricky: I was Kino.

Shona: You were Kino. Right, so quite tough. You had to take on the role.

Ricky: Yeah.

Shona: How did you find that, what was that like?

Ricky: It was actually a good lesson, it got quite heated that day.

Shona: It got quite heated because?

Ricky: (grinning at some of the other participants from the role play) Because there were some biased people on the jury so they weren't like impartial.

Shona: Ah I see. Maybe that's what would have happened if it were for real as well, so perhaps that's quite good.

The formal nature of the trial setting has afforded Ricky the opportunity for both immersion (participation, empathising, experiencing) and distancing (interested, percipient observation and ongoing critique). In terms of the former, of relevance is the dual affect that Vygotsky (1933/2002) notes as important in play activity, whereby any spontaneous action that Ricky might take, such as challenging his classmates, is subordinated to the rules of the drama in which their power as a jury is undeniable. Thus the rule 'has become an affect' (Vygotsky, 1933/2002, n.pag.), a passion or desire entirely related to his role in the drama. He has emotionally experienced the tension between the personal and the social in the dramatized context and it is in such clashes that the seeds for an active discourse around social change can be sown. This, according to Edmiston (2003), is why 'the doubled reality of drama is so significant' because 'the social and cultural meanings that we make in one space–time affect the meanings in the other' (p. 223). It is of note, therefore, that in his references to the heated nature of the courtroom exchanges and the bias of some characters, presumably towards his, Ricky signals that his dramatic, in-the-moment engagement with such tensions has marked this out as both enjoyable and a "good lesson". In her final comment Shona too draws attention to the productive interplay between the 'what is' and 'what if' worlds (see Edmiston, 2003), bringing to mind Vygotsky's

(1967/2004) description of the emotions engendered during creative engagement with literature and other art forms as 'real' in that they are experienced 'truly, seriously and deeply' (p. 20), even, as in this case, when conflictual and provoking.

We return to the topic of the mock trial during the focus group discussion on 26.04.2016 when Ricky reflects further on his ideas about development:

> MP: You talked about doing a trial.
>
> Ricky: Yeah, it was a mock trial and it was quite a good lesson, it was quite an enjoyable lesson, everyone got quite into it. I feel like as you get older you have to make the thing you're doing drama about a bit more mature. That's why I think it worked because it was about a book called *The Pearl*. It was about someone being I think tried for murder, there were trial lawyers and stuff, it was a bit more interesting than… like I remember in Year 7 we did like, was it *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or something like that?
>
> MP: Yes it was. I came in for some of those lessons.
>
> Ricky: Yeah, I feel like you've got to adjust it for the age, to like keep it [drama in English] relevant, but I still think it can be relevant. You've just got to be careful with what you do it about, I think.

In making a case for drama as a continuing part of the English curriculum, Ricky highlights the important connection between an understanding of adolescent development and broader curriculum and pedagogical considerations. It is not clear whether in hindsight he enjoyed reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but his reference to it does suggest that he considers it an appropriate text for his class of Year 7 learners to have studied through drama. His comments in the focus group discussion four years earlier shed some light on why this might be the case.

8.3.2 Acting out

In an exchange during the focus group on 06.02.2012, 12 year old Ricky and Ahmad focus on the link between the physical enactment and learners' engagement with the world of the Play:

> Ahmad: I think for me, like um, if you're like, if you know the character really good, but they're confusing, for example, like we're learning in class, er there's like loads of love triangles and it's quite weird but you know them well enough and you try to act them out, they're, they're, you'd only be half good because you know them but they're sometimes, like, unpredictable.
>
> Ricky: It's more complicated than it actually... like in real life it would be much more complicated than it actually like is in the play. I guess the play, if you're writing a play you can make anything you want happen, whereas, and you know it's more complicated in real life because anything can happen.

Their acting out has revealed that the unpredictability of characters and situations make them ripe for interpretation. It has also laid bare the artifice and crafted nature of the art form, and shed light on the differences between making "anything you [the writer] want happen" and the "more complicated", less controllable situations of real life. Ahmad does not equate the dramatic activity with the need for expertise in acting, suggesting that a trial and error approach when dramatically engaging with the complex relationships and situations of the Play is more significant than any notion of acting quality.

For Elias this idea still holds true four years later at age 16 when he takes issue with the diamond 9 statement 'Drama is about using the whole body to learn in English', perceiving it to be a reference to acting skill. That this singular interpretation has not previously occurred to me demonstrates both the drawbacks of presenting participants with pre-determined statements and

the potential of such an approach if it spurs them to tease out and debate their thoughts on learning:

> MP: Why would you put that at the bottom [of the diamond 9]?
>
> Elias: Because, like, it's not really focused on the drama, the ideas that come from the drama and how it helps you develop your ideas. It's not really about acting itself but the drama.
>
> MP: So drama's not about acting?
>
> Elias: No.

Although the technicalities of acting are less important than the ideas generated and developed through the drama, these learners nevertheless identify the physicality of the dramatic activity as being of significance to their learning:

> MP: Do any of you think that perhaps 'whole body' is the wrong phrase? Do you think the getting up and doing is important?
>
> Elias: Yeah, I think it is because that can make it more fun. When something's more fun I think you tend to remember it, it sticks in your mind.
>
> MP: So actually getting up and doing it makes it more memorable to you?
>
> Gideon: Yeah because if you sit down, you're just talking, it just gets boring, dragging on and on and on. You don't really retain much, it just gets really boring, but if you're standing up doing other things then your brain starts to work and you remember more stuff.

It is to be expected that, with examinations on the horizon, memorisation looms large as a topic of interest, but Elias and Gideon also identify a link between the physical nature of the activities and the positive mental disposition needed for learning to take place, thus echoing the ideas of the younger learners at Downham Fields in Chapter 4. In addition Joel identifies the phenomenon of a learning "muscle memory" and it is the enactment which imprints the learning. He gives as his example "kind of just putting your ideas onto paper through remembering the actions that you were doing at that point", connecting the physicality with the drama in his head which then becomes the '"Drama on paper"' (Barrs, 1987, p. 211) of his writing.

Later, though, in the section of the discussion focusing on the statement unanimously designated as the one with which they least agree, Joel strikes a note of caution. His comments suggest that there is a conflict between the approach discussed above and the perspective on English inherent in the examinations:

> Joel: I'd probably say with this statement, 'Drama gets in the way of what you should be studying in English', the way it's worded now it would definitely go at the bottom [of the diamond] but I think like the point that it's trying to get at is that for a school in English leading up to that Year 10, Year 11 stage where you have to know what an examiner wants you to do, I can see like what it means because obviously drama, it's something that you look at and something you interpret yourself. So if you interpret that wrong, technically you're not wrong, you're right because that's your interpretation of it, but in the exam it's going to come off differently, like your interpretation may not necessarily be right. So I think maybe if the statement was 'drama just gets in the way of what you should be studying in English in later years', I think it would probably be nearer the top (pause). Most definitely.

Here Joel points to the distinction between textual study as an interpretive activity in English to which drama is central, and the approach reflected in and underpinned by examination requirements. The latter positions disciplinary knowledge as something that is passed on by the specialists and acquired by the learners (see Brady, 2018), and crucially it is the success of the acquisition that is tested. In this sense Joel experiences the examination, or the faceless examiner of his account, as the gatekeeper of right and wrong meanings. These tensions are apparent in the negativity towards drama in English that is attributed to their GCSE learners by some of the teachers at Downham Fields, suggesting that pervasive messages about pedagogy and curriculum knowledge of the type represented in the diamond 9 statement are inbuilt within an intensively results-driven system.

8.4 Learner perspectives on the pedagogy of drama in English

Ricky, however, posits a wider purpose for drama in English:

> Ricky: I would say like what Gideon said earlier, you learn and remember things better when you're like using more of your senses to learn them. So in that sense it does help with things like that. And I think also, especially with the younger years, having that kind of responsibility and like the teacher having that kind of trust in you to do that is quite important just as a general life skill, you have to be able to cope with pressure and expectation, so I'd say that was relevant.

Whilst he reiterates the position that memorisation is supported by the physical nature of drama-in-English learning, he goes further to highlight the importance of its sensual quality. He also articulates how drama activity places responsibility on learners to develop their own ideas and try them out in the social space of the classroom. Thus they are able to take up and internalise 'the knowledge of the collective' (Ewing, 2015, p. 144) and carry it through into their individual responses. It is this which for Ricky builds towards confidence, resilience and independence in his approach to the

subject. His comment that the teacher shows "trust in you" suggests that there is a necessary and 'conscious adjustment of relations of power and control' in those 'pedagogic settings that promote creativity' (Daniels and Downes, 2015, p. 105). As discussed previously, to facilitate this the teacher, in Heathcotean (1971/2015) terms, must be prepared to confront their own security thresholds.

Shona's pedagogy and why she might be adopting a teaching approach that draws on drama activity are also topics for discussion in the earlier focus groups that take place during and immediately following the period of sustained drama-in-English activity that I observed. Thus in focus group 1 on 06.02.2012, discussions circle around ideas to do with fun, pleasure, responsibility and maturity. Jermaine speculates that fun might be an end in itself, but this view is qualified by Ahmad:

> Ahmad: I think it's [drama] a fun way of educating, I don't think it was just fun otherwise we wouldn't have learnt anything, so I think it's a better way of learning because it's more hands on, it's more better because you take in more when you're having fun.
>
> Peadar: It's kind of like you get more out of it.

There is no problem for Ahmad in equating the playfulness of drama activity with learning, and so his formula for learning in English through drama has much in common with Shona's description of fun plus purpose (see Chapter 7). Peadar acknowledges that drama might be a legitimate pedagogical choice on the part of his English teacher:

> Peadar: It's about the teacher trying to make it more enjoyable for the class 'cos if it wasn't then it would just be like what's the point if it's just going to...
>
> Ahmad: ...we would dread English.
>
> Peadar: Yeah.

For these adolescent boys, as it is for their teacher, enjoyment is felt to be important in their learning. However, drama in English isn't solely about fun, or indeed always comfortable, and this is explored by the participants in focus group 2 on 05.03.2012, during which they return several times without prompting to the topic of boys playing girls in their recent English lessons. Yet Joel is still able to identify a pedagogical intent:

> Joel: …it was kind of like a reassuring lesson for Miss [Shona] because like you have to be really mature to do something like that. 'Cos some people would be like really immature and like, 'cos, 'cos Titania's ending up loving the beast and 'cos this is an all boys' school it kind of makes it (grins at Tom)…
>
> Tom: Yeah, dead like…
>
> Duane: Awkward.
>
> Joel: (in a sing-song voice) Awkward.

Joel offers his own interpretation of the teacher's purpose. In his somewhat paternalistic manner of speaking about Shona, and by referring to "some people" (clearly not him), the 'performed self' (Goffman, 1959, p. 244) Joel finds it 'creditable' (p. 244) to present is that of the mature learner, one of those who in the social context of this English classroom can deal with potentially challenging or embarrassing topics. However, at a later point in the interview Joel reveals another side to himself as a learner, when he refers to a self-evaluation of the different aspects of their English work that Shona had asked all the learners to complete:

> Joel: Yeah, she was like concerned about our listening. She gave us this sheet and it's basically saying, what are you capable of doing, and really like most of the people, I'd expect to fill all of them, because everybody's capable of doing it, but for me like I couldn't do like listening for 30 minutes and that. I think that's the only

> thing I didn't do because I'm capable of everything else but I don't really choose to do it for some reason. It's just like I'm not interested in social things like talking to your friends, talking.

What is striking is the confidence that Joel displays both in his own capability and that of his peers; a sense of learner agency which is enhanced by the teacher demonstrating her trust in the learners' judgements. If this sits less comfortably with Joel's reluctance to listen to others' perspectives or negotiate understandings with his peers, something that I have noticed in observed lessons (see Chapter 6), it suggests that the 12-year-old Joel is still finding his way in terms of the relationship between 'I-for-myself' and 'I-for-others' (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 180). However, engagement with the aesthetic activity of the drama-in-English lessons is making a contribution to his 'process of self-formation in both art and life', part of 'the total project of selfhood' (p. 180), the development of which he considers some four years later during the focus group on 26.04.2016. With a nod to the role of his English teacher's pedagogic choices, the 16-year-old Joel reveals that he has learned to be more mindful of others' contributions because of the personal direction in which this self-formation in art and life has taken him:

> Joel: I also think that drama in English helps you to come up with ideas for your writing. That's quite a good one to go nearer the top [referring to the diamond 9 statement] because, like, I know from personal experience, like, with drama you can pick up on certain mannerisms, certain ways that people try to kind of adapt the text into like a physical kind of thing and with that physical interpretation of the writing there's kind of more combinations of words you could use to explain it. So you basically can come out with a completely different sentence with like none of the original words but it still means the same thing. So like I use that a lot, I like to write novels in my spare time, I write a lot

> [emphasised] and I write about, kind of, personal experience, and yeah, a lot of it comes from watching, kind of, people and the way they act.

Considering the proximity of the GCSEs it is noteworthy that Joel has chosen to foreground his personal writing over writing for examination purposes, and his comments here point to the 'physical tuning up' (Barrs, 1987, p. 213) of the drama work as 'a way of getting into the right linguistic gear' (p. 213). However, even as a 12 year old he is able to glimpse beyond the more traditional assessment discourses prevalent in schools, which are accepted as a given elsewhere in the focus group discussions:

> Joel: …say it comes to a situation where you're like reading, Miss wants to know how we understand it so she can use drama to basically do that (focus group 2, 05.03.2012).

In considering the type of assessment opportunities that are afforded by drama in English his use of "how" indicates that there are a range of possible understandings of the literature studied. It also suggests that drama allows learners to express and the teacher to meaningfully assess these. There is a synergy here with how Shona explains what she might be looking for in their drama activity (Chapter 5) and how she uses drama to engage learners in their reading (Chapters 6 and 7).

When it comes to using drama to study the Play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the 12 year old focus group participants see overt pedagogic sense in linking the theatrical conventions of the day with their own context:

> MP: Yes and I seem to remember you had a discussion at the end of that lesson…
>
> Joel: Yeah.
>
> MP: …about that [Shakespearean theatre].

> Zemar: And about what they did in Shakespeare's time, it was like men who got in love with each other.
>
> Joel: Yeah because in Shakespeare's times women aren't allowed to act and it was just men playing women's parts.
>
> MP: So that relates to you doing that play in a boys' school? (General agreement and head nodding)

However, they mine more complex ground when they attempt to pin down the ways in which Shona's use of drama enhances their understanding of the Play:

> Tom: It gives you a better understanding of like the play, because if you like step into the shoes of what's happening, you can, and you have to act out like what's going on, it gives you a better understanding. Because when you're in the person's shoes it makes you feel how they're gonna feel and it would give you a better understanding if you keep acting it out in lots of different parts so you know how they're all feeling and you know more what's going on.

This is not simply about adopting a characterisation, the learners also "step into the shoes of what's happening". Thus Tom's reference to acting out different parts and knowing more about "what's going on" suggests how drama enables empathic and critical engagement to sit side-by-side in providing a more layered understanding of both plot and character. Also, by experiencing the text from inside and out, its constructed nature is further revealed.

Ricky too in focus group 1 (06.02.2012) tackles this point, echoing Tom's ideas as he speculates about the learning involved in the drama work around *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which in his description has placed learners and text jointly at the centre of the learning:

> Ricky: I think we would like, know what the characters are like more. We'd been the characters so like we'd feel it more and we'd maybe know what they're feeling. So like when Helena's told that Demetrius just doesn't like her at all, if whoever's playing Helena would feel it and go, 'Oh so that's how Helena would feel', because you would be forced to feel like that because, you know, you're playing the character. I think it's just like, I think people...I think kids take it in more as well, 'cos they're like, they're more like engaged.

For Ricky it is empathy that underpins the intra-action between affective and critical understandings of the Play and in terms of characterisation allows 'me' and 'not me' to develop into 'not not me' (Schechner, 1985). His use of the word "forced", however, highlights the challenge for learners in this type of engagement with texts. Not only are they making it happen through their participative contribution, at the same time they are 'to some extent conscious of the significance of the experience in a way that takes them into and beyond that present moment' (Davis, 1998, p. XII), pointing to a process of apperception, crucial because these "kids take it in more". The challenge is apparent when Ricky moves from "we" to "you", "whoever" and the conditional tense, signalling a degree of distancing that works on two levels. It allows him to simultaneously perceive the character and the art form, and it enables him to deal with the issues around boys in his class, himself included, having to role-play girls.

8.4.1 Pedagogic constraints

In all the above examples the learners' account of Shona's pedagogic choices has a Vygotskian flavour, highlighting how her approach keeps 'the person in the picture, reminding pedagogy of learners' agency, the complexity of learning and the patterns of longer term development' (Burgess, 2007, p. 30). Learners' understanding that pedagogic decisions are, however, subject to overt external pressures is again highlighted in the focus group 3 discussion held on my return to Woodside Boys in 2016. Whilst the proximity of the

GCSE examinations at this point stimulates some contemplative discussion about the nature of English as a subject and the place of drama within it, there is a general consensus amongst the participants that national examinations place constraints on their English teachers' use of drama in lessons. It is worth noting that by now the learners are taught in different English groups and have experienced a range of English teachers, and they suggest that in Years 10 and 11 drama activities have at best featured irregularly. Nevertheless Ricky, who has already spoken eloquently about his participation in the "good lesson" on *The Pearl* (Steinbeck, 1947/2012), pursues his idea that drama has a role in preparing learners for the Literature examination. Here he is somewhat in disagreement with Joel's more negative idea of examiners' expectations as regards the 'right' interpretation which I have described above, although Ricky does suggest that the English Language examination is a different entity:

> Ricky: I'd say, though, in English Literature drama could probably still be relevant because it is about your interpretation, your ideas, but with Language you have to be very, very specific about the points you make. So I would say that with Literature when you're covering texts it probably could still be useful but it wouldn't be useful with Language at all because Language is one of those where you don't know what topic or anything is going to come up in the exam or what it's going to be about, you have to just read what's there and find the key points and you have to be very, very specific whereas in Literature it's all about the individual, and it's all about what you (emphasised) think and your ideas and your reasons for justifying that.

Because he sees leeway for interpretation, the Literature examination requirements do not seem to Ricky to be entirely predicated on a transmission approach to the teaching of literature. However, below he qualifies his comment that the examination is "all about the individual", highlighting how

the collaborative reading activities of the drama-in-English classroom are instrumental in developing this individual interpretation:

> Ricky: And in a Literature exam they'll talk about explaining…it won't be explain but it'll be like…it would look at how the writer has depicted a character, and it'll want you to talk about how they've done that. And I think it helps, when you've maybe acted as the character or seen them almost live action, to like understand them better.

Thus Ricky sees time spent in English lessons on drama activities which develop interpretations of the literature as important in terms of his ability to articulate his learning in the pressurised context of a high stakes examination, and he holds to the belief that there is room within the examination system for his interpretations to be validated. By contrast his comments about the Language examination highlight an approach in which reading "what's there" in a non-literary text is seemingly a technical activity, the right answers being found from within the text like a puzzle to be solved. It is unclear whether this is a consequence of the language teaching he has experienced, but for Ricky the Language examination reading task does not encourage interpretation, and unlike literature study does not rely on a creative transaction between reader and text, to borrow from Rosenblatt (1978/1994).

My findings in Chapters 4 and 5 point to the different ways in which curriculum and assessment messages are conveyed to learners, even though schools and teachers are not an entirely predictable or controllable conduit. The focus group 3 participants show themselves to be alive to the pedagogic messages communicated through their teachers' curriculum decision-making and classroom tasks, and sometimes even more directly:

> Elias: I think it's [drama in English] like seen as a treat. I remember when we were younger like if you weren't doing something right she would just say stop, like no-one's doing that or something like that, so now it's more

> serious and we don't react…allow ourselves to do drama, it's more text books and stuff.
>
> Joel: That's really important because like with written work, if we're not enthusiastic about written work, they're not going to take away the written work and give us something else to do, but with a drama activity, if we're acting up that day, they're just gonna take that away so they see it as like a…
>
> Ricky: …privilege.
>
> Joel: Yes exactly, they see it as a privilege but in reality it's exactly the same as written work, if anything they're not holding it high enough in terms of esteem because drama activities help you just as much as written activities, I just don't think they understand that.

The message they have received is that drama is not integral, and in the extreme case simply a reward for the accomplishment of the more serious or important work of English. This, as Elias suggests, can over time activate a kind of learner self-censorship where learners do not "allow" themselves to engage, which offers a plausible explanation for the negativity towards drama in English that the teachers Chloe and Emmanuel at Downham Fields attribute to their GCSE learners in Chapter 4. Elias' comment contains echoes of what theatre activist Boal (1990) identifies as 'The Cop in the Head', whereby people imbibe values, particularly aesthetic values, by 'osmosis' (p. 36) in social institutions such as that of the school 'through grades, end of the year marks, files' (p. 37). This process creates an 'image of reality' (ibid, p. 39), in this case of what counts as important, or not, in the subject English. According to Joel, whenever teachers too easily remove drama from lessons as a response to learner misdemeanours, they are signalling its lesser status in relation to other English activities. He offers a telling critique of this approach:

> Joel: So I just think that teachers need to be a lot more kind of understanding that drama's important. I don't think they see it as something they plan for a lesson, I think they see it as something they'll put in because we've been behaving well. It's not something they like schedule or anything, I think it's something they think of spontaneously as like a treat for us. But I think when you get into those later years you start to realise it's not a treat and that it's something that you can use to your benefit, we just try to kind of reap what we sow and just take all of that information from what we've been given by the teachers.

The 16 year old Joel, in weighing the continuing benefits of drama to his learning in English, points to his developing judgement and independence as a learner. This is despite his experience of teachers offering drama as "an escape" or "a break" from intensive examination preparation "and next lesson we kind of get work shovelled down our throats, but I think drama's a part of that knowledge that we're gaining". Such an assertion implies that English teachers too succumb to an 'image of reality' (Boal, 1990, p. 39) that is constructed by curriculum and assessment discourses and which has taken on its own autonomy. According to Joel it is an image of English that positions drama as both lesser and lacking in purpose, although these focus group participants do not find this entirely persuasive as they are still able to espouse the learning potential of exploring texts through drama.

Joel identifies that a lack of planning for drama in English is another reason for its place on the periphery of the subject. This is indicative of the more fundamental ambivalence towards the purposes of drama in English which I highlight in my earlier review of policy, as well as in my analysis of the Downham Fields teachers' views and practices in Chapter 4. As discussed previously, in every version of the National Curriculum for English from The Cox Report (DES, 1989) onwards, drama is positioned as a sub-section of the S&L/Spoken English programme of study, the area of English which has

suffered its own ideological attacks, often being side-lined in favour of Reading and Writing in high-stakes tests and examinations[47]. Yet, as my research demonstrates, drama activity is just as, if not more likely to be pursued as part of the reading rather than the S&L practices of the English classroom. This underlines the fact that 'policy and ideological positions regarding knowledge and the reading of literature rely on degrees of enactment in the context of the classroom' (Mason and Giovanelli, 2017, p. 327). These researchers are referring to enactment in the sense of implementation, and although in the drama-focused context of my research the word has wider resonances, what is important here is that their assertion speaks to the potential of teacher agency in pushing at policy boundaries to determine pedagogical approach.

Therefore, the barriers identified above notwithstanding, and because my study is seeking to understand what happens in the English classroom when drama **does** play a key part in the learning, in the final section of this chapter I turn once more to the learners' perspectives on how texts are encountered and meanings made through drama in English. To do so I will concentrate on one of the two earlier focus group discussions.

8.5 Learning about, through and beyond the Play

In Chapter 7 I have focused on the part played by various types of dramatic engagement in learning about and through the Play. Rooted in these two, however, is a third element, that of learning beyond the Play. This is most starkly captured in a focus group 2 exchange on 05.03.2012, which demonstrates the 12 year old participants tussling with the issues they have recently encountered when required by Shona to adopt an alternative gender role as part of their study of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

> MP: Is there an element sometimes of it [drama] being uncomfortable?

[47] Prior to their demise, the SATs tests at Key Stage 3 did not include the S&L assessment (the only element that was teacher assessed) in the calculation of the level that each learner received. For the current GCSE examinations in English, introduced in 2015, Spoken English is again the only element that is teacher assessed, reported separately and worth a 0% weighting in terms of the overall grade awarded.

Adam: 'Cos sometimes you might…

Duane: Yeah, when you have to, like you're supposed to be in love with another man.

Joel: (finger to lips, to Duane) Ssshhhh.

Adam: Yeah like say, erm… I don't know actually. Well, say you're acting out a girl and you don't wanna be acting out a girl. You're sort of thinking, 'well, what do I do?' and you don't know.

Having acknowledged this tension between the challenge presented by acting out the 'other' and their reluctance in this particular instance to engage with it, they go onto explore how such an activity might relate positively to their learning. In the next exchange about playing female roles in English, the way in which the participants work through both the difficulties they perceive and the reasons for pursuing such activities hints at the strength of the learning frame that has been established by Shona in her lessons:

MP: When you have to do something, we're talking about something uncomfortable though, do you still see there's learning in it or not?

Duane: Yeah.

Tom: When we're girls, we're never going to learn to be girls.

(Joel laughs very loudly)

Duane: It's not like that. You might be acting…

Tom: And it's good to act out something that you wouldn't usually act out, like if you have to be like…

Duane: …you use skills of everything

Tom: Yeah you need to learn how to…

Duane: …do stuff.

Tom: (unclear)

Duane: Emphasise. Empathise?

Duane's idea of "skills" seems to encompass more than technical acting skills as he works his way towards the notion of empathy, and Tom's first interjection in this exchange returns once more to the question that lies at the heart of in-role activity, whether it is ever possible to learn to 'be' someone else and whether that is actually the point. Barrs (1987), Heathcote (1968), Bolton and Heathcote (1999) would suggest not, and for Schechner (1985), in his formulation of 'me', not me' and 'not not me', not fully. Heathcote (1968) proposes that it is not subsumption but both identification and empathy that are important, allowing learners in the drama mode of learning to be 'spectators of ourselves in ways often denied in a life situation, because we can distort time to give opportunity for reflection to be encountered' (ibid, p. 138). Schechner (1985) cites the ability of both the performer and the spectator to 'believe and disbelieve at the same time' (p. 113), thus creating the distance 'between the character and the performer' (p. 9) into which a commentary, of an ideological, aesthetic or personal nature, might be inserted.

It is Joel who goes onto insert his personal commentary in the way suggested by Schechner (1985), when his learning about the Play through the drama activity described in Chapter 7 prompts his contemplation of a relevant real-life context:

> Joel: It's like when you're older like, say if you're acting as a girl… say you're thinking about LGBT[48] and stuff like that, say you're acting as a girl like, it would basically reassure you and like let you basically do what's best for you, 'cos that's how my brother

[48] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

basically like found out about his personality and stuff like that, so yeah.

Duane: Your brother gay?

Joel: Yeah.

Duane: Oh OK.

Joel: Yeah. Well he's not really my brother, he's my half-brother and he's older, and he's twenty-two, so like yeah… I get to see him often.

Duane: Is it weird talking to him, well not weird but…

Joel: It's not weird, I act like he's just normal because he doesn't seem it, he doesn't express it. Like the thing I don't like is people that really express it, I just don't like that, I like just people basically to be….

Tom: Yes, it's a bit weird.

(Both Duane and Joel adopt what they think is a very 'camp' posture and facial expression as a way of relieving the tension, whilst the others remain silent)

Duane: He can just act, you know, he doesn't have to be over the top about it.

In "I get to see him often" Joel does not dismiss the closeness of this brotherly relationship although he still feels the need to distance himself by mentioning that they are half-brothers and separated by age. As Joel, Tom and Duane discuss how sexuality is expressed and 'performed' in real life, they are grappling with Bakhtin's concept of 'I-for-myself (how my self looks and feels to my own consciousness)'; 'I-for-others (how my self appears to those outside it)'; and 'the-other-for-me (how outsiders appear to myself)' (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 180). Their exchange is threaded with references to issues of sexuality that they are still working through.

These include what it means to be 'out' as a gay person, their perceptions of what constitutes "normal" behaviour and of effeminacy in relation to perceived societal norms, and whether homosexuality means being 'like' a girl, one of the very questions that their role play based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has raised. Thus learning about and through the Play has also acted as a way of refracting their own experiences beyond it, such that Joel's disclosure can be made and discussed seriously, unaffected by face-pulling and mockery, distractions that have surfaced at other times during the focus group conversation.

The participants' exchange here is both framed by and inclusive of the wider discourse and practices of the English classroom and is reflective of my exploration of framing in relation to Shona's practices in Chapter 5. It can usefully be represented by Bateson's (1973) idea of 'frames within frames' (p. 161) which delineate 'a class or set of messages (or meaningful actions)' (p. 159) and which are metacommunicative in that they support learners' understanding of and contribution to the message system that is summed up by the term school ethos. Whilst I do not claim that it is necessarily straightforward to discern 'an image of a group's framework of frameworks - its belief system, its "cosmology"' (Goffman, 1975, p. 27), I do argue that the learners' engagement in such a conversation is symptomatic of the practices observed in the English lessons described in previous chapters. These include drama activities which are crafted in such a way as to encourage a playful, full-bodied and ultimately challenging exploration of the texts that learners read together as part of the English curriculum.

Thus, the reciprocity between what learners take from and bring back to the lessons is the stuff of literature learning and chimes with Shona's account at the beginning of this chapter of the shifting and dynamic nature of subject knowledge construction. What is evident from the learners' reflections here is that Shona's carefully structured but responsive drama practices focusing on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as analysed in Chapter 7, have indeed enabled them to wrestle with and contest concepts pertinent to both the Play and their own lived experiences. This sheds further light on my analysis of the

classroom activity in Chapter 7, adding strength to my contention that, far from ‘“ pointless playing around”’ (Banaji, 2011, p. 37), playing with the Play as part of literature study in the English classroom is a very serious and necessary business.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

The motivation for this study was provided by my own experience as a teacher of English who, over many years, has seen both considerable curriculum change and extensive political intervention in the subject, the two often being linked. This has led me, like Kress (2011, p. 211), to approach questions of curriculum and pedagogy from a political perspective, acknowledging that the economic, social and cultural needs and priorities of the state shape education structures and curricula. My starting point may have been a question about the particularity of the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English, but in exploring this my research has thrown a wider spotlight on the ideological significance of English as a core curriculum subject and who 'owns' its content and pedagogical approach.

9.1.1 Reading through drama

It is worth highlighting that in my two research schools, where drama activity features in English lessons, it is most often as part of literature and dramatic literature study, hence the strong focus in my thesis on what I have characterised as *reading through drama*. This emphasis is more than merely accidental. Rather it indicates that drama has a core role to play when learners engage with stories through reading, telling and re-telling. Yet this is hardly an uncontroversial claim, as the external pressures on practice experienced by the teacher participants at Downham Fields in Chapter 4 suggest. Thus my study is rightly concerned with and embedded in wider debates about English; how it is produced and made in the classroom, to borrow the terminology of Kress et al. (2005), and how 'dominant pedagogical practices impact on what students do and feel when they read' (McGraw and Mason, 2019, p. 137). It also suggests that the descriptions of drama in the S&L/Spoken English sections of successive National Curriculum documents do not properly reflect the ways in which drama is employed to develop learners' reading practices.

Thus my findings point to a situation whereby a curriculum rich in drama-based activity is part of a broader challenge to prevalent hegemonic constructions of the subject. The experiences of the teachers in my study, both those who are committed to drama as integral to learning in English and those who can find little space for it in the curriculum, not only have relevance for researchers in the field, teacher educators, English teachers and those entering the profession, but also speak to policy makers. In what follows I demonstrate how my findings reach out to these different but related constituencies. I begin, however, by offering a critical review of my research process.

9.2 Reviewing the research process

I make no claim to the wider generalisability of my findings, as methodologically mine is a small-scale, context-specific case study. However, as I have proposed in Chapter 3, findings such as mine can be relatable in situations of similarity, usefully adding to a broader base of knowledge about the particular phenomenon under consideration. I must also acknowledge that school contexts change over time and if I were to return now to the schools in my study I might expect to find some alterations to their ethos and practices. This has certainly been the case in one of the schools where seismic staffing and curriculum upheavals resulting from a financial crisis can be at least in part attributed to the educational funding policies of successive governments played out at a local level[49]. Such a case is a stark reminder of how policy reverberates at the level of school cultures and classroom practices, also a recurring theme arising from my data analysis.

Since embarking upon my research government policy in relation to the academisation of schools has impacted significantly on the wider landscape of schooling. This programme has sanctioned the take-over of many community comprehensive schools by academy chains and multi-academy trusts, their centralised executive bodies adding yet another layer of

[49] As a member of the educational community locally I have been party to the struggles which pertain to this situation, but to give further details would risk identifying the school.

curriculum and pedagogic control. The National Audit Office (NAO/DfE, 2018, p. 4, accessed 08.04.2019) reports that by January 2018 72% of secondary schools were academies, including free schools, and according to the DfE the figures overall show that 'more than 50% of children in state-funded schools are now in an academy or free school' (Weale, 6 May, 2019). Given the ever-more-widespread nature of this programme, if I were to undertake my research at the present time I would need to consider an academy school as an appropriate research site.

I have also proposed that other aspects of school context are relevant to my research, for example, the single sex setting of the school in phase two which particularly features in my analysis of learners' engagements with a Shakespeare play in Chapter 7. However, gender differences in the way that learners across the two schools view the efficacy of their drama-in-English learning does not emerge from the data set as a strong theme, and so my conclusions do not tend in that direction.

None of these caveats invalidate my findings, as my overarching research question - nuanced by four subsidiary questions - and the methods employed in pursuing it have yielded a rich and complex set of data. The way in which I have conceptualised my methodology both reflects and responds to the systems, climates and cultures of the two schools as well as to the wider contexts in which they were operating at that time. Thus, like Gallagher (2008b) 'in order to get closer to the problems being studied' (p. 4) I have maintained an appropriate degree of methodological responsiveness, apparent in the research relationships I forged and managed throughout. In addition, an example of tracing a thread from wider context to classroom practice is evident when I explore National Curriculum equivocation about the role of drama in English (Chapter 2), and then consider how this influences teacher-participants' curriculum and pedagogic decision-making (Chapters 4 and 5).

As far as my positionality as a researcher is concerned, I have placed 'a frame of significance' (Gallagher, 2008b, p. 2) around the events selected for analysis and interpretation. This is a particularly apposite phrase to describe my methodological decisions given my application of sociological, educative

and aesthetic notions of frame when analysing school and classroom situations. The significant moments chosen reflect my own interests, experiences and beliefs as an English teacher and teacher educator which I have been at pains to lay bare, subjecting them to thorough scrutiny, particularly in Chapters 1 and 3. Within these parameters I therefore propose that the findings of my research do justice to the teachers' and learners' accounts of practice, are genuinely representative of what was happening in the English classrooms to which I had privileged access, and add usefully to knowledge in this field.

9.3 Reconsidering key aspects of the literature

In this section I revisit particular aspects of my Literature Review which have relevance for the formulation of my findings. As stated above, throughout this study I locate the drama-in English practices that I observe and interrogate within the bigger picture of policy. My aim, therefore, is to draw out some of the important threads to do with the influence of policy on institutional and curriculum structures, whilst contrasting these with accounts of drama's contribution to the English curriculum gleaned from both the wider field of literature and the findings of my empirical research.

9.3.1 Some implications of policy

Policy accounts of drama in English are often presented as advisory rather than statutory. Furthermore, a lack of agreement about its purpose is evident across the various iterations of the National Curriculum for English. Even where due weight is given to drama, for example, in the *Key Stage 3 National Strategy Framework for teaching English* (DfEE, 2001)[50], it is to support a particular version of English, in this case the objectives-led, skills-based model that I critique in Chapter 2. The *Framework* view is at odds with a depiction of the subject as being 'about meaning and about ways of knowing' (Kress et al., 2005, p. 3), and which at its core 'provides means for understanding the relation of an inner world of imagination and desire with

[50] The *Framework* was non-statutory in name only. To facilitate schools' compliance with its objectives-led model of English, every local authority was required to employ a literacy consultant, as the post was known, to work with English departments, and a plethora of handbooks were issued to direct its implementation. Imposition was ensured when the pedagogic model of the National Strategy was used to inform the Ofsted inspection criteria.

the outer world of culture and of social demands' (Kress, 2011, p. 212). The classroom practices that I analyse and theorise in Chapters 6 and 7 resonate with this latter perspective and thereby offer a challenge to both a skills-based model and more current policy accounts of literature learning which emphasise the linear accrual of a content-laden body of knowledge.

This different tradition of English teaching, which Doecke (2017) suggests is traceable back to The Newbolt Report (BoE, 1921), is apparent in those practices which allow learners 'to enjoy the sociability that both mediates and is mediated by the reading of literary works' (Doecke, 2017, p. 237). Whilst I am not entirely uncritical of The Newbolt Report in terms of its account of drama as part of English (see Chapter 2), I do note the positive light in which it views aspects of dramatic activity as contributing to a forward-looking English curriculum. This is in keeping with the broader picture of English that Doecke (2017) argues it offers. He finds in the report an affirmation of 'the primacy of human relationships as being both a necessary condition for reading literary works and the source of their meaning for us' (p. 237). In her review of curriculum changes over time, Barrs (2019) proposes that, in just such a version of English, proper account can be taken of the creative practices and social contexts by and in which young people learn and which effectively engage them 'with topics that are often remote from their prior experience' (Barrs, 2019, p. 22). Kress (2011) characterises such descriptions of the subject as 'the older purposes' (p. 213) of English, but far from harking back to a mythical golden age, he is advocating for its continuing centrality to the curriculum in a multimodal world. It is the type of English curriculum that is at issue here, with both Barrs (2019) and Kress (2011) highlighting the political and intellectual challenge for educators in meeting the cultural and aesthetic demands of English rather than focusing in a narrow way on transmission, pragmatism and functionality. The contribution of my research to this debate, therefore, is to demonstrate that, as far as the English curriculum is concerned, drama is uniquely placed to 'interpret its older purposes newly' (Kress, 2011, p. 213).

9.3.2 The status of drama in English

The question that I first raise in Chapter 2 of why policy leaves it to teachers to decide the precise contribution of drama, if any, to their English lessons is an interesting one. Whilst this approach may appear to be an official endorsement of practitioner autonomy, my research indicates a somewhat different reality. Thus, in an English curriculum highly constrained by imposition and accountability, drama is simply not considered important enough to warrant regulation. Joel persuasively makes this point (Chapter 8) when he notes that it is unproblematic for his teachers to choose not to include drama in their repertoire, but that their control over curriculum content would not be allowed to extend to deselecting those elements designated by the thrust of policy as of real significance to learning in English.

There are also implications for the continuing professional development of English teachers. Any lack of confidence in the role and value of drama in learning English, as highlighted by the experiences of the teachers in Chapter 4, could be addressed through the types of teacher development models proposed by Daly (2004) and by Heathcote (1971/2015) in her thresholds of security. However, an obsession with the measurement of learners, teachers and schools has not only narrowed the English curriculum 'to what is to be assessed' (Barrs, 2019, p. 24), but has also dictated the value, or otherwise, of particular types of professional development. Thus, it makes sense to Paul (Chapter 4) at Downham Fields School to pursue, for his department and for neighbouring schools, the implementation of the narrowly-defined APP model. This is despite his acknowledgment that assessing reading by applying the formulaic APP criteria does not address what actually happens when learners engage with literature texts through drama. This is not to be overly-critical of Paul. It is hardly surprising that, in the regulated life of an English teacher, he focuses his efforts on a prominent governmental initiative, no matter how transient it is[51]. Submitting his own practices to

[51] A number of high-profile educational reforms, including those around assessment, that were instituted by the New Labour Government were almost immediately abandoned by the Conservative-led Coalition Government formed after the election in 2010.

scrutiny in terms of the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English, and by association the even more contentious debate about what is English (and assessment in English) for, would require a longer-term commitment. It would also require considerable self-direction in going against the grain of dominant discourses within and beyond the school about what constitutes appropriate teacher professional development, a challenge that in his particular context is simply too onerous.

However, analysis of the data from the teacher interview and lesson observations at Woodside Boys School forcefully demonstrates how a context of creative experimentation can lead to pedagogical transformation at the level of the classroom when legitimised by a strong, evolving community of practice acting as the driving force (see Chapter 5). This is a key finding which is supported by the causal link Neelands (2009) draws between one school's adoption of 'drama as a pro-social ensemble-based process for building community and a common culture' (p. 175) and Ofsted's subsequent conclusions about the positive knock-on effect that this initiative has had on the quality of learners' work in English.

Also like Neelands (2009), who notes the potential for transformation that is offered by the Specialist School Status for the Performing Arts, Shona, in Chapter 5, cites the performing arts specialism of Woodside Boys as significant because it penetrates the whole curriculum and has provided the impetus for the *Creative Partnerships* project. At its heart, though, and much in evidence in the book that the teachers at the school have produced, is a powerful narrative around the importance of a collectively-determined, common endeavour to develop, as the Introduction states, 'an irresistible curriculum', and this is emphasised by the use of words such as 'co-authored', 'sharing', 'collaboration', 'partnership', 'inventiveness' and 'vision'[52].

My study, however, also demonstrates that the Specialist School Status is not in itself a panacea, which is evident at Downham Fields where somewhat

[52] These are quotations from the introduction to the book, but in order to preserve the anonymity of the school and the teachers, I have not included the book details in my list of References.

different discourses hold sway despite drama being part of the school's designated specialism. For Chloe (Chapter 4), an early-career teacher in a youthful English department that is experiencing overt intervention from senior management, the educational narrative that examination results measure the worth of both teaching and learning acts as a curriculum constraint and barrier to experimentation. This is despite her strong background in drama. In this climate her perception that the pressures of teaching to the test leave no time for drama in her English lessons, and that drama cannot contribute meaningfully to the necessary examination learning that must happen are indicative of how far assessment has come to dominate curriculum. Thus, the normalisation of teaching to the test (see Barrs, 2019), accompanied by officially-encouraged systems and rubrics for doing so, leads to an impoverishment of curriculum. It is also an important factor in the de-skilling of English teachers, compromising their role as pedagogic decision-makers, and investing them only with the authority to impart particular textual interpretations that serve examination purposes, a situation first discussed in Chapter 2.

This is more than a simple matter of chafing against a curriculum for English that feels hemmed in by policy diktats and measurement by examination results, a by-product of which is the side-lining of drama. Rather the learners' reflections in Chapter 8 highlight that an English curriculum rich in drama demands a different way of looking at teaching, learning and assessment. Thus they 'conceptualise learning as a fully social, distributed activity' (Yandell, 2014b, p. 174). This is implicit in the 12-year-old Joel's idea that his teacher uses drama to assess how the learners understand the literature they are reading in class. 16-year-old Ricky, who is soon to sit his GCSE examinations, offers a view of the relevance of drama-in-English lessons even within a constrained examinations system when he describes how drama has prepared him for his Literature GCSE. In this account his individual textual interpretations are not separable from the collaborative reading-through-drama activity of English that has made them possible. This is a point elucidated by Zemar's description of the ways in which creative and

collaborative engagement at all stages of the dramatic process gives rise to attitudes and interpretations negotiated in the intellectual crucible of the English classroom. Thus my theorisation of the learners' classroom reading practices in Chapters 6 and 7 holds to account the all-pervasive test-driven pedagogical approach to reading.

9.3.3 Socio cultural theory and the role of play

To look at reading practices in the light of the meaning-making that takes place in Shona's lessons, which is so closely bound up with imagining and interpreting in a social context, gives me cause to revisit an issue that I first raise when discussing my analytical framework in Chapter 2. This concerns Vygotsky's description of imagination in adolescence as the powerful but intimate and hidden driving force of creative thought processes. However, it is precisely because 'Adolescence is a period of stirring emotionalism, of deep shifts of affect, the discovery of passion and the embrace of commitment' (Witkin, 1974, p. 59) that affect and imagination can be channelled in the more public sphere of the English classroom. This can be seen in the depiction of a scene from *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007), when Shona's deliberate focus on the emotional aspects is managed by Rudy, Elias, Erik and Chris (Chapter 6) by means of a carefully crafted and dramatically stylised narrative. Thus my research shows how adolescent literature learning is enhanced through the types of dramatic encounters which serve to externalise learners' imaginative and creative thought processes and which do not privilege analytical over expressive responses, instead drawing on both.

Vygotsky also talks about fantasy or imagination as the adolescent development of children's play but internalised. However, in Chapter 7 I explore how externalised playful actions are entirely relevant to the learning that takes place as a precursor to studying a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. By pre-framing the scene through dramatic play, the learning is embedded in a context that becomes meaningful to and motivates the learners, so that, as Neelands (2009) puts it, 'unfamiliar knowledge' is brought into 'knowing engagement' (p. 175). This type of engagement is

evident in the dark play which so absorbs the learners. Their dark play also demonstrates how the drama activity employs deconstruction not simply as a critical tool for reading, as in deconstructing the text for interpretive purposes; it is also a means for connecting learners' thinking about the Play with their inner worlds and desires. Thus, in a very real sense their reading of and commentary on the freeze frames depicting Titania's relationship with the beast highlights its sexual nature, which is an aspect often glossed over in favour of the fairy and magical elements when the Play is taught to adolescent readers (see Smith, 2019).

9.3.4 Play and reader response

In theorising the classroom interactions recorded in Chapter 7 I take an innovative analytical approach which interweaves perspectives on the role of play and dramatic play in reading with elements of reader response theory. Although the solitary reader construct traditionally associated with reader response appears at odds with drama as an intrinsically communal art form, I argue that its application is very appropriate to the study of play texts in the English classroom because, unlike in the theatre, the scripts remain unmediated by director, designer and actors. In fact, in drama-in-English lessons it is the learners who share these duties as well as acting as their own audiences. My analysis illuminates how the learners' playful, dramatic engagements, and the pedagogical approach which facilitates these, enable them to operate very directly in the textual gaps, a key premise of reader response theory. Through their playful encounters the learners experience at first hand the theatricality of the Play, its '"eventness"', to co-opt Jackson's term (2007, p. 230), and the 'complex, multi-layered, interactive (or dialogic) impact' (p. 230) of their reading-through-drama activity is integral to the learning that takes place. The evidence is there in the way that Shona's lesson successfully encourages learners' concerns and ambiguities to move into alignment with a more thrilling and 'much darker, sexier' (Smith, 2019, p. 85) reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, rescuing it from the kind of pastoral whimsy that often passes as the 'schoolroom version' (p. 85). I propose, therefore, that the meanings made in this way are as much

Shakespeare as the interpretations that are offered by more 'academic' or 'literary' readings. Thus the learners' responses in Chapter 7, and their deliberations in Chapter 8, offer the very best example of how the Play in the classroom has 'the ability to ventriloquize and stimulate our current concerns' (ibid, p. 322).

9.4 What is learning in English through drama?

Previously in this chapter I have argued that fundamental questions about the purposes of learning in English and what shapes pedagogy are at the core of my research. In the following I focus on the key findings which are specifically to do with the contribution that drama makes to learning in English.

9.4.1 Co-authoring

For Neelands' (2009) drama activity has the ability to make 'contextual and authentic connections' between the 'abstractions' of the curriculum and 'the heartbeat of their [learners] own lived experience' (p. 175). This is both demonstrated and expanded in my analysis of the experiential processes whereby the learners in Shona's lessons work playfully and re-creatively with poetry, prose and drama texts. In Chapter 6, for example, Rudy, Elias, Erik and Chris engage imaginatively in re-creating a scene from the novel *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007) as a way of reconstructing the text, 'in their own terms and in terms of their own times' (Evans, 1987, p. 24). Such a manner of working also has implications for the relationships for learning. Shona's attempts to involve learners in decision-making about the content and conduct of lessons, and the implicit and explicit messages she communicates about the nature of co-responsibility in their dramatic engagements with literature are documented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. My analysis identifies this as an ongoing dialogic process, as she is shown gradually 'decentring the power of the teacher' towards 'negotiated learning' (Neelands, 2009, p. 178) in the way that her practice is both attentive to the imaginative worlds of her learners and alive to the potential of co-authoring. Here co-authoring goes beyond the boundaries of reader response theory and the transaction between author and reader, because in this English classroom

the learners share responsibility for the ways in which texts are read and interpreted not only with the author but with the teacher and with each other. This is very different to an understanding of literature knowledge as something that is fixed, passed on and received.

As far as relationships for learning are concerned, another important factor in the reading-through-drama process is the adaptation and use of the physical space; the ways in which the students are encouraged to use and 'be' in the spaces between desks, in the framing circle, and when over-spilling into the corridor, as described in Chapters 6 and 7. This subverts the authoritative power of the traditional classroom layout in which 'the twin objects of Teacher and Board' (Philp, 2019, p. 182) largely hold sway over the presentation of the text (often as a series of extracts) and the meaning-making that happens as a consequence.

9.4.2 The role of drama in addressing the dualities of reading activity

In Chapter 6, through the classroom practices observed and theorised in two of Shona's lessons, I make the case for drama as re-creative text and demonstrate what is of value in this approach to learning in English. I am particularly struck by the dualities of re-creative activity that are recognised and resolved by recourse to learning through drama: creativity and criticality; affective and analytical engagement; cultural transmission and cultural production. The combining of creativity and criticality to the mutual enhancement of both is apparent in the participatory reading-through-drama activities, where to think like an animal activates thinking about the literary text and vice versa. Also, when Elias and his group shape their re-creative text, the drama activity melds their affective and analytical responses to the powerful narrative of *WarHorse* (Morpurgo, 1982/2007). Crucially 'thinking like' also draws on learners' physical resources, referred to by Nathanial as doing actions "in an emotional way", highlighting how sign-making through bodily action is very much part of the language of this English classroom. As regards the text as the object of study, my research demonstrates how the drama provides a way for learners to assert their textual power as they engage

in the processes of reading and collaborate in this form of cultural production.

The importance to literature learning of another duality, immersion in the narrative whilst retaining self-awareness, is represented in my study by the 'stepping into shoes' analogy. As a young reader myself I first came across a very similar analogy in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960/1974). I interpreted the advice of lawyer Atticus Finch to his daughter Scout, 'You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view… until you climb into his skin and walk around in it' (ibid, p. 35), as a straightforward lesson about empathising with the perspectives of others. As an English teacher I co-opted it into my understanding of how drama might help young adult readers to engage with the characters in the literary texts we were reading in class. I was not, therefore, surprised to come across just such an analogy (whether shoes or skin) employed by learners at both Downham Fields (Carol in Chapter 4) and Woodside Boys (Tom in Chapter 8). My observations of classroom reading-through-drama practices in Chapters 6 and 7, however, suggest that empathy is just one element, and though important, does not do full justice to the complexity of the processes involved.

Yesim (Chapter 4) highlights the immediacy and the almost direct access to character that reading through drama affords. Miriam and Mark (Chapter 4) both suggest that there is, if not an exchange, then a reciprocity between reader and character, and Sean (Chapter 4) describes drama as releasing the characters from the book, which means they are endowed with a physical as well as a thinking presence that is embodied by the learners. This brings to mind the gradual merging of Schechner's (1985) 'me' and 'not me' categories into 'not not me-ness' as the learners grow closer to the characters through the drama activity. For Tom (Chapter 8), however, the physicality of stepping in, and as Atticus Finch advises, walking around is also important for understanding the broader landscape of the situation and therefore the text. This is achieved through adopting the perspectives of a variety of characters and where necessary revisiting them. The process of stepping in and out, perhaps several times during the course of improvisation and across

a scheme of work, is apparent in Chapters 6 and 7 as learners interpret aspects of the texts dramatically, with the stepping out having an equally important role to play as the immersion.

These examples also demonstrate that there is no simplistic division between affective response when in and criticality when out of role, because thinking and behaving from within the drama also requires learners to exercise judgement and understanding of characters and situations. It is my contention that reading through drama activates learning through, about and beyond the text, notably demonstrated in Ricky's account of his in-role experience of injustice when dramatically exploring Steinbeck's novella, *The Pearl* (1947/2012). Such an approach is in line with Kress' (2011) strong argument for English as the subject which is founded on the inter-relationship between the cultural world (of the texts studied) and the imaginative, creative worlds of the learners. This is in opposition to a view of English as the acquisition of knowledge 'fixed in canonical forms', with achievement 'judged by competent performance of existing practices' (Kress, 2011, p. 214), and with reproduction rather than production of cultural knowledge at its heart.

It is also at odds with Bakhtin (ca. 1920-1923/1990), whose work is an important reminder of the aesthetic nature of literature as art form, a point acknowledged and well-served by reading-through-drama activities. In terms of the types of dramatic engagement with characters and situations described by the learners above, there is a significant aesthetic dimension to contemplating and connecting with another being. The first stage in this aesthetic activity is for the contemplator to see and experience the other's 'world axiologically from within him (sic) as *he* sees this world; I must put myself in his place' (Bakhtin, ca. 1920-1923/1990, p. 25) [italics in the original]. In the lessons observed, seeing from within is achieved through structured drama activity, and so, as Miriam suggests in Chapter 4, drama satisfies the need to get to know characters. It is equally important, though, in order to 'form and consummate the material we derived from projecting ourselves into the other' (ibid, p. 26), to return to 'my own place outside him' (p. 25) and '"fill in" his horizon' (p. 25) from an encompassing external

perspective. Aptly for my study and its focus on the ways in which learners read literature through drama, Bakhtin describes the first stage of this aesthetic process as coinciding with the other person and the second as enframing him, although both stages are 'intimately intertwined' (ibid, p. 27). The findings from my analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, supported by learners' reflections in Chapter 8, foreground the social nature of these types of aesthetic, dramatic encounters as well as pointing to the symbiotic relationship between reading texts through drama and the ability to 'read' each other in different contexts, including that of the classroom.

9.5 Main recommendations

The following reflections and recommendations draw together some key points from the above discussion of findings and are of relevance to the various audiences identified previously in this chapter:

- The findings of my research into the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English are innovative in demonstrating how important aspects of literary theory, underpinned by a socio-cultural perspective on learning, are manifested specifically in reading-through-drama practices. This is evident from the adolescent learners' re-creative responses as well as their dramatic activity in the textual gaps of the literature studied, with play and dramatic play providing the springboard for their further, more developed textual interpretations.
- Whilst reading through drama is rooted in the broader practices of educational drama, its overriding purpose is to engender an ever-deepening engagement with the text. I argue that, where teachers re-envision their pedagogical reading practices in this way, so will learners as they set about tussling with the literature and each other's interpretive endeavours to become collaborative meaning-makers and producers of dramatic texts on texts and texts against texts (Scholes, 1985).
- A national curriculum for English should better reflect, and indeed champion how drama is employed in the English classroom to engage

learners in the reading of ‘high-quality’ (DfE, 2013, p. 4) literary and dramatic texts. I find that reading through drama makes highly aspirational demands on learners in terms of both their creativity and criticality, much more so than is suggested by the exhortation in the current National Curriculum to ‘appreciate’ (DfE, 2013; DfE, 2014) the English literary heritage. This foregrounding of appreciation is indicative of an approach to literature study which relies on reproduction. Also implicit is a notion of curriculum knowledge as fixed which in turn dictates how it should be transmitted, acquired and tested. My study demonstrates, rather, the rigour of the learning which occurs through the types of dramatic engagement with literature seen in Shona’s lessons, where meanings are contested, made and re-made and are therefore far from static.

- The ever-narrowing testing regime in English has led to ‘teaching to the test’ practices which are antithetical to the rigour that they are supposed to ensure. This is because they eschew experimentation and crucially the elaboration time (to re-purpose Heathcote’s concept) that is the stuff of reading through drama. Therefore, from the perspective of drama in English, my study adds newly to the clamour of voices (see, for example, Barrs, 2019; Doecke et al., 2019; Kress, 2011) seeking to reassert the importance of the ideological work that English teachers do in contributing to and shaping a cultural praxis. The unsatisfactory alternative is that their work is positioned as mechanistic and compliant activity, at the mercy rather than the master of the assessment system. Thus there are clear implications for teachers in re-thinking practices that are now ubiquitous in English classrooms, and for those involved in teacher education if beginning English teachers are to be equipped with both the tools and the arguments to envision practice differently for the longer term.
- When faced with top-down pedagogic prescriptions it can be particularly uncomfortable, and not without risk, for English teachers to set about challenging their own practices, but less so if their purpose is to contribute to a wider endeavour across the whole school

that is underpinned by a strong set of common values. The case at Woodside Boys School, where the staff acts as a learning and cultural community to effect curriculum and pedagogic change, also highlights how teachers such as Shona can, at a local level, become significant change-makers and school improvers. Whilst such an understanding of 'school improvement' is not in harmony with the performance management and competencies model found in inspection and regulatory frameworks, my study demonstrates how it is possible and desirable for school managements to pursue improvement by legitimising and supporting creative, teacher-led experimentation in their schools.

- With regard to taking my research forward, I return again to a consideration of participatory action research, which was my original methodological instinct, and which requires teachers' attentiveness to the complexity, and theorisation 'of what happens, moment by moment, in classrooms' (Yandell, 2019, p. 434). This is because my study has highlighted how crucial it is to acknowledge the role of the English teacher as agent of change. The projects of the learning community that I witnessed in action at Woodside Boys School demonstrate that, despite the difficulties, teacher-participants must be involved as fully as possible in investigating their own practices and that there is strength in a shared purpose to effect change at the level of the classroom.
- The findings of my study as regards the contribution that drama makes to teaching and learning in English beg further research into the learning gains of reading through drama, but could also be extended beyond these boundaries to look at how drama supports learning across all the objects of English. Such an undertaking would benefit from and be usefully informed by this study. I am not, however, underestimating the difficulties of scaling up my research in this way. For example, the approach I am suggesting would be unlikely to find support from a government-backed body such as the

> Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)[53]. The significance of the EEF in the landscape of educational research cannot be denied, as it commissions, funds, packages and disseminates much of the school-based research that currently takes place, and as such has an increasing influence on policy implementation and resource allocation in schools. It wields considerable power in terms of the studies that are undertaken, the methods employed (interventions, quantitative and mixed methods), and in the case of qualitative research, not employed (see Seith, 2017; Torrance, 2018; Yandell, 2019). Additionally, and in contrast to my findings about the pivotal role that teachers themselves play in determining and managing longer term change, the EEF implies in its 'Practical Tools' and 'what works' model of 'best practice' a functional view of pedagogy-as-implementation (quoted terminology is taken from the website of the EEF).

Therefore, it is this direction in educational research that prompts me to offer a final defence of my own study, the outcomes of which are unashamedly to do with 'finding out more about the processes of learning as they are enacted in the [English] classroom' rather than with the 'easily-measurable' (Yandell, 2019, p. 434) and quantifiable as evidenced by test results.

9.6 The case for reading through drama

The findings of my research into if, when and how drama contributes to learning in the English classroom demonstrate that it is insufficient simply to champion drama as one pedagogical approach amongst many in the English teacher's repertoire. Reducing pedagogy to instrumental notions of 'what works' can be fraught with danger, as I explore in Chapter 5, and so the more fundamental debate to which my research contributes is about what constitutes learning in English. My analysis and

[53] The Education Endowment Foundation was established in 2011 and received a £125m founding grant from the Department for Education. It has charitable status, originally being set up by the Sutton Trust, and is in partnership with Impetus Trust (part of a private equity foundation). The EEF and the Sutton Trust are, together, the government-designated What Works Centre for Education.

theorisation of classroom practices have focused specifically on literature learning, and whilst the importance of literature study in the curriculum for English is not in dispute, its purpose and methods are. Williams (1977) identifies literature texts as works of art which are, in one sense 'finished forms' (p. 129), but in more important respects are waiting to be completed, to be made 'present, in specifically active "readings". It is also that the making of art is never itself in the past tense. It is always a formative process, within a specific present' (p. 129). Adhering solely to the finished form view of literature requires little more than a transmission approach to the teaching of it, which, as Kress (2011) describes, is politically a way of maintaining 'stable cultures' (p. 214) through regulation. In my study, I look at this from the somewhat different perspective of what is at stake for teachers and learners involved in the less predictable 'formative process' (Williams, 1977, p. 129) of reading in English. I identify this process as an act of constitution, when the text is brought to life in the here and now by the social interaction between learners' experiences and their interpretations. Thus my findings demonstrate how imaginative, creative and interpretive processes come together in reading through drama, and that teachers and learners engaging with literary and dramatic texts in this highly specific way are collaborating in those genuine acts of co-creation and meaning-making central to a subject that is central to the school curriculum.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Proposal for a small-scale research project within the English Department at Woodside Boys School

This is the paper I presented at an English Department meeting prior to commencing phase two of my research:

Context

Drama has been linked with English since the inception of the original National Curriculum for English, and continues to be so. As English teachers we teach dramatic texts, although the drama objectives in the NC are not all about textual study with the majority to be found in Speaking and Listening.

I am examining the theoretical and pedagogical basis for statutorily including drama within the English curriculum at KS3: what is different or similar about the pedagogy that underpins drama as a discrete discipline; what happens in practice in the English classroom when drama plays a key part in the learning; and how does this compare with the vision of drama within English enshrined in key policy documents? I am interested in exploring the perspectives of both English teachers and their pupils through classroom observation, discussion, interviews and focus groups.

Phase one

Phase one of this study took place in another local secondary school. I observed drama in a small number of English lessons, working alongside various teachers in the English Department. I also held a focus group discussion with the teachers, engaged in a number of pre-and post-lesson conversations, and interviewed a small group of pupils from each class.

Phase two

In phase two I wish to explore how drama fits into the continuity of learning in English over time, which is a key focus of my research.

Process

At Woodside Boys School I would like to follow the learning of one KS3 English class over a period of time, observing/participating in a number of drama-in-English lessons. I will take field notes in the lessons and use a fixed-position video camera to film the activities, affording me the opportunity to review my observations at a later point. I would also like to conduct an interview with the volunteer teacher, hold some pre-and post-lesson discussions with her/him, as convenient, and interview small groups of pupils from the class to explore their views on learning in English through drama.

Ethical considerations

- Names (of the school, teacher, pupils) will be anonymised unless otherwise requested.
- As methods include videoing of lessons and pupil interviews, particular care will be taken to ensure adherence to school procedures for informing and gaining consent of parents/carers and pupils.
- All recorded and transcribed data will be securely stored.
- Pupils' views will be properly considered.
- Participants have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time.
- The broad focus of the research may link with school priorities (eg *Creative Partnerships* work), and is therefore unlikely to be regarded by participants or school management as particularly sensitive.
- It is my responsibility to ensure that the collaborating teacher is not overloaded by the demands of the research.
- I am pursuing this research across the two phases in classrooms with teachers and for teachers and in a spirit of collaborative enquiry and mutual respect.
- I am committed to reflecting on teaching and learning to inform and enhance classroom practice and pupil experience.

Appendix 2

Teacher Focus Group Interview Schedule: Downham Fields School

The focus group began with the diamond 12 activity (see Appendix 4) to stimulate discussion amongst participants. The following questions were then used as a guide for the semi-structured part of the group interview:

1. What do you think are the benefits of drama-based activity in your English lessons?
2. Are there any problems?
3. Do you think it is important for the English teacher to have an understanding of drama pedagogy, i.e. what children learn through drama and how?
4. In what ways does drama in English fit in with department/school/local/national initiatives and priorities?

Appendix 3

Extract from the early part of the interview with Shona, English teacher at Woodside Boys School

(preamble before recording to welcome Shona to the university and to recap on our previous telephone conversation)

MP: This is a very wide question but what experience do you have of teaching drama in English?

S: Well, I think when I first qualified the idea was that we were qualified to teach both English and drama, but I've never taught drama as a discrete subject but I have used it sort of over the last 14 years in English, very frequently I think, obviously not to teach dramatic techniques but as a way of exploring ideas in literature or ideas in how to use language, ideas about communication, across all year groups. I use it in 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

MP: So right up to post-16 as well?

S: Yes.

MP: But you've never taught it as a discrete subject?

S: On my PGCE, my major placement school, English and drama was one subject still, like this was 14 years ago. So then I did, as a PGCE student. That was my only experience of teaching drama for drama's sake, never since. In fact on both my teaching placements I did teach drama as part of the PGCE and it was good, really, really good, and I learnt from some really good teachers, but since then it's been drama for English purposes.

MP: So in what ways do you use drama in your English teaching, specifically at KS3?

S: I suppose quite often drama seems to come about as a means of studying literature, so if we're reading a novel, if we're reading poetry, it's a way of really engaging with, you know, writer's choice of vocabulary, how a writer creates imagery, because I think, I suppose I find it really useful for students

of all ages but perhaps particularly younger students to kind of create physical representations of, particularly imagery, I think, as a way of understanding the power of the language the writer's chosen. But also I've used it to generate ideas, so for example, you know those kind of drama tasks before you begin reading where you do drama around an object or a series of objects. That I find very productive in terms of generating enthusiasm, but also getting students to think about what do they already know about the subject that the text we're going to read is about. Where do they place themselves in relation to that topic? So the kind of, that kind of pre-reading task. I think also, because of the importance of speaking and listening within English, I think drama, I think sometimes it's easier to teach speaking and listening skills when you're allowing a young person to step outside being themselves and to be somebody else in the drama. I don't mean literally be someone else but d'you know what I mean, it might not necessarily be through a role. It could be through a role-play type activities – but in terms of how you listen... so you know the type of drama activities, say a role-play one where you've got a journalist interviewing a character from a book so that is developing the young person's listening skills or kind of paired talk skills, everything from turn-taking to how you take your cue from what someone else said, how you show that you've listened to what they've said. Often I think that's much easier to teach in role, than you yourself as a person having to do it, as the young person having to learn to do those things. You know, how would someone who needs to listen for a particular purpose listen, sort of idea? Um think of other sort of examples of how drama might be used – me in role, that's another quite interesting...I mean I find that can be very productive, that sort of idea that you can question a character and I really enjoy that if it's a role that I think I can do quite well.

MP: Do you use that quite a lot?

S: Not a huge amount. I love being Curley's wife [*Of Mice and Men*] because she's so great and she's so rude, to be able to call the boys bindle-stiffs kind of thing. Or in *Holes*, the boss, she's great to do. I don't know if I've done huge amounts of it with KS3 but yes, from time to time. Being in role...you

know those kind of semi-dramatic activities, so we've done, with my Year 9s last year we did 'Teachers' Apprentice', so they had to call me Lady Sugar and they had to come up with teaching activities. "I'm looking for you guys to come up with really good strategies for teaching this thing and we'll publish it and we'll sell it to other teachers, teachers who haven't got any time to come up with these things themselves", as a kind of role playing, that sort of… I suppose it's playing around with the relationship between pupils and teachers in some ways. I can talk to them in a very different way which of course they find entertaining and I think that whole laughing and relaxing can be very productive in terms of learning. And then giving students...I mean that was really nice because, you know, I had my student advisors, my closest advisors, my...I can't think of the characters...Margaret and...

MP: Isn't it Nick?

S: I had my Margaret and Nick who took it very seriously and were incredibly stern and disapproving of what some of the groups were doing, and in their feedback were really cutting in a way that if they weren't in role I don't think they'd have felt they could have been. Through adopting a role, this is not really me, Alfie, being critical of my friends, this is me as Nick criticising my friends' group work or the leader in this group. And it was much more easy to hear, it's not coming from your friend, it's coming from the role that your friend's playing. I think what I'm not really confident about, I suppose...I don't know, I quite often rely on the students' knowledge of dramatic techniques, so I'll quite often set up a dramatic task with some discussion around how could you show this dramatically, how could you show this in a way that would engage students of your age? How are you going to engage the rest of the class with your ideas, how are you going to show this in a way that helps us to understand this character or this situation? What strategies could you use? And then kind of rely on the knowledge they're bringing from drama often. So they will say, "Oh miss we want to do..." and then they'll tell me the name of this thing, and I'll say, "oh, OK that sounds good, go on then", and then they'll quite often do something nice. Again older students, I guess, get better in terms of what the final outcome

might be, but then on the other hand I suppose I'm not doing it necessarily for, I'm not that interested in the dramatic outcome so much as the process. It's not that you've got to have something really beautiful to show at the end although I think often students think that they do, but in my head that's not how I gauge the success of the activity. I mean quite often what they have to show, you wouldn't want to put on the stage (laughs) but it has engaged them with content that might otherwise have not been so engaging, I suppose.

MP: And at Woodside Boys do they all have a drama lesson a week?

S: They do, yeah.

MP: You said something when I wasn't recording that drama lends itself to group work, relationship-building, that type of thing. Is that something that at Woodside Boys you and the other teachers focus on a lot?

S: I think definitely in Year 7, yes, but I guess probably throughout. I mean, I think English is a subject that, so much of it is learned through talking, you won't be able to learn what you need to learn through talking if you can't listen and if you can't collaborate, if you can't take different roles within a group, and all of those skills. Those skills are valued in English, you know you actually get a level for them, don't you, and later on you get a grade for them, so they're not just part of the process they're part of the end, they're something that we're aiming to develop, and you can't really do drama work without collaboration of some sort. Well, actually I say that (laughs). I did some quite nice work with my last year's Year 9 which we called desk drama, which were very short periods in lessons where you literally just stood up from your chair, where you were standing, no moving the furniture around, no changing of groups, and had to respond dramatically to ideas on the board. I actually got some...that I have my own video footage of and that was really interesting to look at. And again it was around, well, we doing war poetry and it was around kind of euphemistic language for death and getting them to think about the kind of nuance and connotations of different euphemisms for death or different words or phrases to describe death before they were going to...they were reading an extract from *All Quiet on the*

Western Front. I don't know if you know the section where he sits with his friend who's dying and then they were going to write their own piece describing a death, so moving onto something very powerful and very serious, but actually we had quite a lot of fun playing with words first. And so this kind of desk drama notion, and you know, because they're young people, it's quite interesting how they will take hold of something like that and grab it. So by the end some people were no longer standing on the floor, they were standing on chairs and creating height within the room, and it was very quick-fire, but I think it performed its purpose in the sense that by physically representing the idea of passed away as being very different to kicked the bucket, I think there were students who could otherwise have been left behind in terms of that as a concept, and I think with drama they weren't, I think we took everybody along. And I think some people understood it on a deeper level than they would have done. That wasn't particularly collaborative except I suppose if you saw it as whole class collaborative, because you do take your cue, even when you're not being given any time to discuss, you do take your cue by looking at what other people are doing. Oh he's making that shape, I don't think that's right. And it's quite interesting watching some of the more able students, in the beginning it felt like the whole class were working together and then more able students breaking away and doing something different from what others were doing quite quickly, and saying I'm not going to be doing this standing up, standing on chairs thing, I'm actually going to be sitting down and my head is going to be...you know, so, how quickly somebody can adapt to a task that's not actually giving you masses of opportunity to collaborate through talk, but kind of collaborate through observation of each other, I suppose.

MP: Have you taught before in a mixed school?

S: Only on my teaching practices, so I've taught all boys, and I've taught all girls for five years.

MP: Is there a focus because it's a boys' school on trying to get them to collaborate…

S: Erm.

MP: …or would it be just be happening whatever sort of school it was?

S: Our specialism is performing arts, and I think, and certainly, you know, Ofsted said this, and other people who've come in and looked at the whole school, there's a feeling that the performing arts do pervade the whole curriculum. I think Ofsted said almost that exactly, you know, something very positive about the way they go through the whole curriculum. Also we have done a lot of work, like the work I was involved in last year with *Creative Partnerships* which became the whole school INSET in our learning communities about more active learning strategies across the curriculum, and creating opportunities for the students to be creative across the curriculum. And I don't know if that's particularly because it's a boys school or whether it's because there's a driving force among the staff. And maybe, you know, it may have been borne out of interests and concern about how boys manage that type of thing. Thinking back to when I first taught at Woodside Boys which was I think 13 years ago, it was my first job, I think there was much less of this kind of work going on, that would be my perception anyway. The classroom would have been a much less active place. So I think it is something that we have been developing in the last decade or so.

MP: Can you tell me a little bit about the involvement with *Creative Partnershi*ps, how did that come about, what was that all about in the school?

S: Originally (name of teacher) who was Head of Performing Arts but has now retired, she was constantly looking for ways of bringing funding and bringing the creative partners, I suppose, for want of a less now hackneyed term, into school, and she came across and put all the applications in place, so that we actually got a significant, I mean I think it was £15,000 a year-worth of, across three years, input from our creative partners. And she set it up originally to work with a small group of teachers in its first year and I was one of those teachers and you know it was fully cross curricular. There were two teachers from English as it happens, but there were teachers from science and D&T, you know, all involved across in that first year. And it was an

inquiry-based project where each teacher set themselves a question around their use of creativity in the classroom and then went out to explore that, you know, devised activities to explore that question. And (name of teacher) then retired and it kind of fell to me because I was in post as AST at that time and I was the only AST involved in this group, so someone was going to have to pick this up, oh who might pick it up, Shona will pick it up. So I picked it up and we did something very similar in the second year, but we also worked very specifically with one class in the second year as well as again working with a group of teachers, a cross curricular group, a slightly wider group, so we had a representative from every curriculum area in the second year. And then in the third year it became the whole-school INSET, almost all of the whole school's INSET time, and that was last year. And we actually have a book which details all our...I'll give you a copy. It's co-authored by all the teachers in the school. Everybody had to write up their experiment, their enquiry, and pretty much every teacher in the school did something, not all of it drama, of course but certainly there were significant dramatic elements in it. And it was about taking a risk, about doing something differently, perhaps on quite a small scale. We didn't want it to be something that was unmanageable or another burden, if you like, and it was about talking to people from other departments and kind of sharing expertise and sharing experience, again kind of enquiry-based. And I think it was really successful. The book is lovely, I'm so proud of it. And then this year we were continuing with the model of learning communities, but I guess the focus has moved away, because the *Creative Partnerships* money has run out so we no longer have the involvement of the creative partners coming into school. We're continuing the model of learning communities but it has moved away a little from creativity as the kind of core focus, but there are certainly lots of elements of that way of working now that are kind of...the residue is across the school's way of thinking about it, I think.

Appendix 4

The diamond 12 statements used in the focus group interview with teachers at Downham Fields School

Drama-based learning in English....

…helps pupils to develop their knowledge and use of spoken language

…allows pupils through role play to problem-solve and negotiate in groups

…combines emotional engagement and self-expression with the ability to reflect

…animates and enlivens a text or an issue, encouraging an active response

…models the skills required for employment and the world of work

…is an immediate and physical means of getting to grips with texts and textual representation

…provides opportunities for pupils to write genuinely and purposefully

…offers a set of techniques/conventions for exploring English-specific ideas, situations, issues and texts

…is about the freedom to imagine, experiment and take risks

…draws on elements of child play to enhance learning in English

…helps pupils to appreciate great works of literature, particularly plays such as those by Shakespeare

…other... (teacher's own statement)

Appendix 5

Consent request letters to parents/carers at Downham Fields and Woodside Boys schools (drafted by MP for customisation by the school)

Downhan Fields

Dear Parent/Carer

Teachers in the English Department at Downham Fields are currently engaged in a project looking at the ways in which drama activities contribute to pupils' learning in English lessons in years 7, 8 and 9. They are working in collaboration with a researcher, Maggie Pitfield, Lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Maggie will be observing in a number of English lessons and we would like to video record these sessions. The purpose of the recording is to allow us to review the lessons at a later stage. Maggie will be reporting some of the findings from the project as part of her PhD thesis but will ensure confidentiality by anonymising the names of the school, the teachers and the pupils.

Also we would like to hold small group interviews with some pupils from each of the classes to discover their views on the work that they have been doing in their English lessons during the project. If your daughter/son is involved in this part of the project, the interview is likely to take approximately 20 to 30 minutes and will be timetabled within a lesson time. Again these interviews will be recorded, and the identity of the participants will be protected. All recorded material will be stored very securely.

Your help, and that of your daughter/son, will be greatly appreciated. However, if you would rather s/he did not take part in the project in the ways described above, please complete the tear-off slip below and ask your daughter/son to hand it to her/his English teacher by.....at the latest.

Yours sincerely

(English Teacher)

Woodside Boys

Dear Parent/Carer

Ms…(Shona) in the English Department at Woodside Boys School is currently engaged in a project looking at the ways in which drama activities contribute to pupils' learning in English lessons at Key Stage 3. She is working in collaboration with a researcher, Maggie Pitfield, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London.

Maggie will be observing in a number of English lessons and would like to video record these sessions so that she can review them when writing up her research as part of her PhD thesis. The recordings will not be used for anything other than academic research purposes and Maggie will ensure confidentiality by anonymising the names of the school, the teacher and the pupils.

Also Maggie would like to hold small group interviews with some pupils from each of the classes to discover their views on the work that they have been doing in their English lessons during the project. Interviews are likely to last for approximately 20 to 30 minutes and will take place at a convenient time during the school day. The interviews will be recorded, but again the identity of the participants will be fully protected. All recorded material will be stored very securely.

Your assistance, and that of your son, will be greatly appreciated. However, if you would rather he did not take part in the project in the ways described above, please complete the tear-off slip below and ask him to hand it to his English teacher by..... at the latest.

Yours sincerely

(English Teacher)

Opt out reply slip

Please tick in box as appropriate:

I do NOT wish my daughter/son.....(name) to be videoed as part of an English lesson. ☐

I do NOT wish my daughter/son to take part in a small group interview. ☐

Name of Parent/Carer (please sign and print name):

.....

Date: