



PHD

Responses to Shakespeare at Key Stage 3: a study in three schools

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RESPONSES TO SHAKESPEARE AT KEY STAGE 3:

A STUDY IN THREE SCHOOLS

Submitted by Kim Rowena Diment

for the degree of PhD

of the University of Bath

2002.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Diment', with a horizontal line underneath.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis shows how responses to Shakespeare have been presented in the wider, cultural context as well as in the specific educational context. Through a small-scale qualitative study conducted in three different schools, an examination of responses to Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 (of the National Curriculum in England) is presented. The study focuses on the end of Year 9 when 13 and 14 year-old pupils sit National Curriculum Assessments in English. For many pupils, this is the first time that they will have encountered Shakespeare formally through public examination. Responses from pupils in both the exploratory study and the main research study not only offer an illuminating picture of how Shakespeare was taught and experienced but also suggest ways in which the pupils viewed themselves as learners and participants – or not – in an educational system predicated on passing examinations. The data, which include responses from teachers as well pupils, are analysed inductively using an adapted model of grounded theory, to which Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, cultural capital and field are applied. The findings from the study show the different ways that pupils and their teachers position Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, illustrating in particular the tensions that continue to be effected through the testing regime. The thesis suggest that a timely re-consideration of the latter is due, one that can account for the heterogeneity of pupils, teachers and schools whilst enabling the construction of a positive and enduring response to Shakespeare.

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CHAPTER ONE

“Hic et ubique?”

*Hamlet, Act 1, v **

1.1: Introduction

When the dawn summons the ghost of Old Hamlet back down to hell, his voice remains above as an insistent echo, “here and everywhere” and one which his son Hamlet never quite manages to silence thereafter. Shakespeare himself is believed to have acted the part of the Ghost and so it is doubly apt that, like the Ghost, Shakespeare’s posthumous presence remains palpable in our culture, here and everywhere. This pronounced corporeality is what seems to exasperate many contemporary critics. In a radio programme which assessed Shakespeare’s status on the cusp of a new millennium, the eminent Renaissance scholar, Professor Lisa Jardine, was perhaps only half joking when she described his “annoying, consistent prominence” (Jardine, 1999).

Shakespeare’s prominence is such that he is embedded and embodied in everyday life, and as a simple exercise I can bring to mind a random selection of images, products and place names that denote Shakespeare in one form or another. My regular bus journeys can take me past Shakespeare Avenue; the abandoned building with the fading lines from *Hamlet* inscribed on its façade; the fishermen on the river bank with their *Shakespeare* tackle and bait boxes; the hardware shop where I could buy Shakespeare Blue paint (blue is of course connotative with royalty and high status in general); at least three different pubs named after Shakespeare and; slightly

further afield, the William Shakespeare Hairdressers where I could get my hair cut by William Shakespeare himself. I could pay for these services and goods with my credit-card. Printed on it, the word GUARANTEE encircles a hologram of Shakespeare's head which, icon-like, sanctifies my transaction. Thus, the commodification and sacralisation of Shakespeare go hand in hand.

The power of the Shakespeare brand is one that is utilised in selling, not just Shakespeare, but almost anything else. Shakespeare "carries with him classic associations of an idealised England" (Tranter, 1999: 22). The Shakespeare brand endorses what the Marketing Officer of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in London describes as "three significant concepts: Englishness, 'reliable tradition', and authenticity" (ibid, 22). 'Brand Shakespeare' has more recently also been yoked to 'Corporate Shakespeare' in the burgeoning form of management training courses and books, (Beckett, 1999, 2002; Moss, 2001; Nurden, 1999; Coulsting, 2001) which seek to enlighten business people about the potential of using Shakespearean approaches - for example, Henry V's leadership, Hamlet's chaos management (*sic*) - in business practice.

The alliance between Shakespeare and commerce is just one part of the behemoth that comprises the 'Shakespeare Industry' which also covers the teaching and learning about Shakespeare in schools, colleges and universities - as well as the myriad theses and dissertations about Shakespeare that belch out of the belly of the beast year by year. Why, then, add yet another thesis to the hefty catalogue of debate, disputation

and conjecture that has been built up over centuries and is set to endure for some while yet? In short, the emphasis in this research study is not to understand more about Shakespeare *per se* but to contribute to a greater understanding of pupil and teacher responses to Shakespeare in the light of questions about why he is so consistently prominent in our culture and in so many other cultures around the world. In contextualising and analysing these educational responses as well as some of the wider socio-cultural responses, the study also aims to consider what it is that we want of Shakespeare. Is it to teach our children to become better people; to be thought of as cultured; to pass examinations; to enhance language and literary skills; to help develop creativity and imagination; to aid personal growth; to be aware of a literary heritage; to function in the workplace; to question ourselves and our society?

From my own experiences of encountering Shakespeare as a student at school and at university; as a theatre-goer; in my first career at the BBC and in my second as a teacher, I was strongly aware of the sense of confusion that surround these sometimes conflicting aims. It was this awareness that provided the initial impetus for my research. Before presenting further details of the study I wish to consider the conflicting, even paradoxical, nature of Shakespeare's prominence in our culture.

The title of this introductory section is interrogative, doubly so. On the one hand we can note that "hic et ubique?" is a question that Hamlet asks of the Ghost but on the other hand it is also a question that we ask of Shakespeare today. Shakespeare is here and everywhere but he is also nowhere. Coming across three visual instances of

Shakespeare's 'being and not being' exemplified this paradox further for me. Firstly, when I began this study, my journey to the university would take me past the aforementioned building with the quotation from *Hamlet* on it. The building had once been occupied by squatters who had decorated the façade with paintings and the line "Oh that this too too solid flesh would MELT, Thaw and resolve itself into a dew." (Act 1,ii). Since then the words have almost all faded except for one and that is the capitalised "MELT", ironically its very survival denying its own signification.

Secondly, on successive visits to Shakespeare's Globe theatre on the banks of the River Thames in London, I have witnessed the gradual fading of a poster of Shakespeare which had been pasted on to a wall in the nearby Rose Alley (coincidentally nearer to the actual site of Shakespeare's Globe than the current replica Globe theatre). At the time of my most recent visit, only the bare outline of the familiar Droueshout engraving (used in the 1623 First Folio) remained, yet even this visual synecdoche could still be recognised as none other than Shakespeare.

Thirdly, I was recently photocopying an article about Shakespeare only to discover that the journal's front-page picture of Shakespeare with the legend *Who was Shakespeare?* printed next to it stubbornly refused to emerge, even after I made two successively lighter copies. By looking carefully at the third and last copy, it was just possible to make out the gleam of an eye staring out of the surrounding darkness. Even in the very act of oblivion something, scarcely tangible, remained.

What I understood by these three instances is that Shakespeare is like a palimpsest, as one image, or idea, fades so it is replaced by another. It is this fluctuating visibility of Shakespeare that helps to ensure his survival, not as something immutable, singular and fixed but as something that is transformable and plural. He means and has meant different things to different people. For example, despite palpable evidence of racial discrimination (Portia's in *The Merchant of Venice*) the African-American writer Maya Angelou can say:

Of course, he was a black woman. I understand that. Nobody else understands it, but I *know* that William Shakespeare was a black woman. That is the role of art in life.

(cited in Garber, 1990: 249).

Presenting a different take on this idea that we make and re-make Shakespeare according to the role that we assign him in our lives, the novelist Jorge Luis Borges focussed on Shakespeare's own transformability in his parable, *Everything and Nothing* (Borges, 2000). This brief meditation on the persona of Shakespeare presents a man who became both everything and nothing because of his own bleak realisation that "There was no one in him" (ibid, 284). Shakespeare became everyone in order to fill the void he discovered in himself. Far from delighting in this Keatsian sense of negative capability, ultimately Borges's Shakespeare despairs and throws off the guise of his many fictional selves. He remains clothed in only one, that of his final "character ... a retired impresario" (ibid, 285).

A less poetic, but very funny and pertinent perception about Shakespeare, surfaced in an episode of the bleakly comic television series *The League of Gentlemen* (Transmitted on BBC 2, January 4th, 2000). A sketch portrayed two young men thumbing through the racks at their local video store. One of them picks up the filmed version of *Richard III*, starring Ian MacKellen.

Ally: Oh, Richard ay, ay ay (reads out title phonetically) Is it an horror?

Henry: No, it's Shakespeare.

Ally: You devoid! Shakespeare is a language!

Henry: Yeah, that's what I thought but it turns out that Shakespeare is a director from them days, it's cool though.

Ally: So, is it any good?

Henry: Yeah (pause) There is some talking -

Ally: Aw! (goes to put video back on shelf)

Henry - but mainly loads and loads of killings

Ally: How many?

Henry: Loads.

Ally: Do you see 'em all?

Henry: Yeah!

Ally: Would Richard ay ay ay win *The Predator*?

Henry: In terms of killing, yes.

Ally: Right, we'll get it then.

In fact, it has been suggested (Bright, 1998) that emphasising the violence (and there is plenty of it) in the plays may be one way of switching 'turned-off' boys on to Shakespeare and other classical literature. The claim that "Shakespeare is a language", and an inaccessible one at that, is a sentiment that would accord with many pupils in schools, as they grapple with a strange and unfamiliar form of English that stares up at them from their Shakespeare set texts. Even professionals can be fazed by the language, as the renowned Shakesperean actor Sir Antony Sher describes: "I harboured a profound sense of inadequacy. It was to do with the taste of Shakespeare in my mouth, I couldn't quite get it" (Sher, 2002: 10). Despite having

access to the best Shakespearean voice teachers and directors available, Sher says he only got to grips with Shakespeare's language after leaving it for a while and returning to it as an older actor, when its previously confusing "clamour" (ibid, 10) thrilled him: "Shakespeare makes the actor's job easier, not harder. You have only to follow the clues in the text – it's like a huge and beautiful map" (ibid, 10). If it has taken Sher most of his professional acting life to come to terms with Shakespeare, what can be expected of 13 and 14 year olds who have his language "thrust upon them" and maybe never quite manage to get "the taste of Shakespeare"? Is their relationship with Shakespeare going to be soured by the experience to the extent that their subsequent appetite for more helpings of Shakespeare will diminish rather than increase?

The debate about Shakespeare's prominence and just what he stands for is one that is shot through with paradox. Earlier I mentioned the commercial pull of the 'Brand Shakespeare' and its associated qualities that were identified by the Globe Theatre's Marketing Officer. Exactly what constitutes "Englishness, 'reliable tradition' and authenticity" and why these are considered "significant concepts" could be vigorously debated, but the paradox that I wish to point to here is that Brand Shakespeare's contribution to the portrayal of the "UK as a heritage park" (Bowers, 2001) is also what some export businesses are currently at pains to avoid. The strap-line to Bower's newspaper article pithily summed up their concerns, "Image makers' preference for Shakespeare and the Spice Girls embarrasses some exporters in an era of globalisation" (ibid).

Another paradox is to do with Shakespeare's invisibility as well as his "prominence" A Mori Omnibus poll, commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2001, found that "40 per cent of respondents not only knew Shakespeare's name and works, but also thought his plays were relevant to politics today" (Thorpe, 2001). Yet, according to the theatre director (and long-standing Shakespeare-phile) Michael Bogdanov, most of the British population knows little and cares less about Shakespeare (Bogdanov, 2000). In his 1996 BBC television documentary *Shakespeare on the Estate*, one of the residents of the Birmingham Ladywood Estate commented:

Who is Shakespeare? Nobody knows, nobody cares.

This is Ladywood, all we want to do is to get drunk and be merry.

Notwithstanding the unconscious Falstaffian allusion, the quote exemplifies a Britain, or rather an England, that remains impervious to the brandishments of 'Heritage Shakespeare' and what might be seen as its epicentre, Stratford-upon-Avon, which is scarcely any distance away from Ladywood if measured geographically but vastly distant if measured socio-culturally. In a recorded lecture, Bogdanov said that if we want to use Shakespeare to help to bridge this divide it can only be done if he can be experienced in a politicised way, "not as literature but as a contemporary voice used to articulate protest, hit the soft underbelly of our ideologies where it hurts" (Bogdanov, 2000). The crux of the matter, he felt, is to get people of all classes, backgrounds and ethnic origin to listen to Shakespeare's "contemporary voice" but, to quote the Mori poll findings again, if 40 per cent of the

respondents were familiar with Shakespeare then that meant that the majority, 60 per cent, were not. Furthermore, whilst the poll also claimed that “half the British public have (*sic*) seen a stage production of Shakespeare” (Thorpe, 2001) those who attend most frequently have “household incomes over £30,000” (ibid).

We have a Shakespeare who was voted as British Personality of the Millennium in a listeners’ poll for BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme in January 1999. However, many people it seems have only the remotest connection, if any, to the Man of the Millennium (as Shakespeare was soon re-dubbed in the flurry of media comments following the poll announcement). Shakespeare’s plays are a compulsory part of the National Curriculum in England yet they are also being eroded from university English Literature courses in both Britain and America (Wallace, 2000. Cornwell, 1997). Recently, it was deemed newsworthy that a popular broadcasting personality failed to give the correct answer to a Shakespearean question in a quiz programme and that the works of the novelist Toni Morrison have replaced Shakespeare on American college curricula. Professor John Sutherland, commenting on the furore (Sutherland, 2000), considered that Shakespeare’s survival is still something to be remarked upon because in 400 years hence:

no one is going to be watching re-runs of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*

Will they still be reading Toni Morrison? Perhaps. Will they still be performing Shakespeare, and studying him? Nothing is more certain.

(Sutherland, 2000: 3).

However, Sutherland's conviction about Shakespeare's staying power is not necessarily a universally-held one, as Gary Taylor demonstrates:

People don't internalise him the way they used to ... As a result even when Shakespeare is taught, he doesn't stick... if Shakespeare were not so massively supported by corporate capital and government subsidy, if he were not forced upon schoolchildren, would he still loom so large in our culture? Or would he collapse to the status of Chaucer? A great writer, admired by specialists, but paid little attention by the larger world?

(Taylor, 1999: 4).

If the evidence presented in the MORI poll shown above suggests that theatre is not a wholly accessible art form, it could also be said that Shakespeare in the theatre is not accessible to the majority of the population. Where might we find a truly democratic Shakespeare? Could we find it in our schools? As Shakespeare is situated very firmly within the National Curriculum in England, ostensibly, schools might well be the ideal place from which a democratic Shakespeare might emerge. However, it seems obvious to have to point out that schools are very different, and that they have different pupils, different teachers, different cultures. How, then, can Shakespeare be taught and learnt in the same way? This study looks at Shakespeare at the end of the Key Stage 3 curriculum in England in three schools in a single city, two of them state schools and the third an independent school. It will be clear from the study's data that there are many differences, as well as similarities, between the responses to Shakespeare in all three schools. Yet the implicit assumption behind a national

public examination of Shakespeare is to see examinees as having had a common experience of and understanding about Shakespeare.

I should also point out here that independent schools are not under the statutory obligation that state schools are to enter their pupils for the end of Key Stage 2 (at 10-11 years) and Key Stage 3 (at 13-14 years) examinations. For my study I was keen to look at both the private and public sectors and I was fortunate enough to find a school that did enter their pupils for the Key Stage 3 English SATs. The SATs (Standard Assessment Tasks) are more properly called the National Curriculum Assessments. However, as they used to be known as SATs (not be confused with the US SATs – Scholastic Aptitude Tests), and as they are still universally referred to as such I have continued to use the term throughout the thesis.

Whilst Shakespeare had been “an integral part of English literature examinations at 16 and post 16 years and, as such, is part of the education experience of many, though not all pupils in secondary school” (Gilmour, 1994: 6), with the introduction of the National Curriculum the study of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 and 4 became compulsory. In September 1992, the Conservative Education Secretary, John Patten said:

It is essential that pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding and appreciation of our country’s literary heritage. Studying the works of Shakespeare is central to that development. That is why the study of Shakespeare is an explicit requirement of the National Curriculum.

(quoted in Gilmour, 1994: 7).

Within education and for educational practitioners and legislators the polarity between consensus and conflict about Shakespeare's status has been exemplified in the literary debates of the past twenty or thirty years. The tradition of classical humanism placed the guardianship of knowledge and values with an educated elite (Lawton, 1989), and the claims of 'liberal humanism', successively derived from the legacy of Coleridge; Arnold; T.S. Eliot; I.A. Richards and Leavis, state that there is an inherent value in great art and, as such, our responses to works of great art operate from a fixed point, that we accept their greatness as a given. The opposite view, deriving from the cultural studies tradition, sees works of art as cultural artefacts and culture itself operating as a site of contested power. In essence we can see this polarity shown in the following two quotations:

Shakespeare lives. To a greater extent than any other writer, he has posthumously forged the creative consciousness of Western man.
(Schoenbaum, 1979:10).

The point of Shakespeare and his plays lies in their capacity to serve as instruments by which we make cultural meaning for ourselves.
(Hawkes, 1990: 147).

Schoenbaum's claim was made around the time that Shakespeare's iconic status was being challenged by the emergence of new critical and literary theories, including cultural materialism and new historicism. Yet it was also the time that Shakespeare's

canonical position was firmly secured with the National Curriculum for England and Wales (although the position of Shakespeare in the Welsh curriculum has recently changed, see Chapter Three) and remains so. Attempts to reform the syllabus and dislodge Shakespeare are usually met with expressions of outrage from the media, who decry such assaults as sure and certain evidence of the ‘dumbing down’ of British culture.

A recent example was in February 2001 when it was widely reported that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Government’s examination advisory board in England, was planning to remove the study of Shakespeare from GCSE English, to be replaced by “media studies”. The then Chairman of the QCA, Sir William Stubbs was immediately obliged to issue a press statement categorically denying the rumours:

All students aged 11-16 are required by law to study the works of Shakespeare and other great works of literature. The QCA has no intention of recommending any changes to these legal requirements. Consequently, the study of Shakespeare and other great writers remains, and will remain, a key part of the school curriculum and assessment in English for every pupil, regardless of the GCSE examinations they take.

(QCA, 2001a).

I quote the speedy response of the QCA in full, not just because ‘Shakespeare’ is shown as both a part of and singularly apart from other “great works of literature” and other “great writers”, but also because it shows how powerful the perception of

Shakespeare as a representation of the pinnacle of “great” literature is still. It shows, too, the anxieties that surround attempts to topple him from those Olympian heights.

However quickly the QCA acted to refute the rumour, it continued to rumble in the pages of the press and will almost certainly do so in the future since it also raises questions about why Shakespeare is tested. One suggestion was supplied by Professor John Sutherland who wrote that “one of the few ways we have left of “making” pupils and students do what they do not want to do is exams. That is why Shakespeare must stay” (Sutherland, 2001). He argued that the whole point of Shakespeare, was that it was difficult to understand. In this he echoed T.S. Eliot’s assertions about contemporary poetry which “must be difficult... The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning” (Eliot, 1932: 289). In an intriguing synthesis, Eliot’s idea about the necessary difficulty of poetry encompasses both the feminine and the masculine in his own use of language, with the more accommodating “comprehensive”, “allusive” and “indirect” used in conjunction with the violence of “force” and “dislocate”. However, the end to which these tactics are employed is that the poet retains control of his language and meaning, a principle that is fathoms away from Hawkes’ position (op cit.) where meaning is made by readers.

As I had become aware of these arguments for and against Shakespeare in my own encounters with Shakespeare over the years as a student and as a teacher, I also became aware of the discontinuities that seemed to characterise the teaching and learning of Shakespeare between primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. It was this awareness that provided the initial impetus for my research

To begin with, I had planned to find out everything about the teaching and learning of Shakespeare from primary school to undergraduate level but as I re-focussed the research to a more manageable level, to that of Key Stage 3, I also became more interested in allowing voice to those who heard less often in the “official discourse” (Wallace *et al.* 1998: 93) - the pupils themselves. They are, after all, the consumers and as such have a right to be heard. In the thesis, I analysed pupils’ responses to Shakespeare at a significant point in their own academic careers, towards the end of Key Stage 3 when they take the English SATs, one paper of which is devoted to Shakespeare. I looked specifically at Year 9 pupils because for many of them this is the first time in their school career that they have encountered Shakespeare formally in the form of a public examination. Furthermore, there is a discontinuity between the teaching and learning of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 and at Key Stage 4, as Peter Thomas, who is Principal Examiner and Assistant Principal Moderator for the NEAB English Literature GCSE, notes: “There is a conflict in the mode of assessment between terminal examination at KS3 and coursework at KS4 ” (Thomas, 1999: 29). This difference tends to allow for Shakespeare at Key Stage 4 “to be presented as enjoyable rather than as a national hurdle. Unfortunately, the KS3 paper is not a

natural preparation for this” (ibid., 29). Yet, in the *1999 Official National Test Papers, (English)* aimed at parents helping to prepare their children for the SATs, it is stated “In the end, the tests are just another step on the way to GCSE” (The Stationery Office, 1999: viii). In the light of the continuing debates and controversies about testing, at all levels, within the education system, I wanted to look more carefully at how such a ‘testing’ regime at Key Stage 3 might affect pupils’ responses to Shakespeare in the present as well as in the future.

In the final section of this introduction I shall briefly summarise the structure of the research study, which is discussed in further detail later in Chapter Three.

The study was conducted in three different schools, from both the private and state sectors in the same city. The pupils came from a wide range of academic and social backgrounds, providing a concomitant range of responses to Shakespeare. The schools in the research study comprised:

School A: an ‘inner-city’ state secondary school

School B: an independent school

School C: a suburban state secondary school.

All the pupils and teachers referred have been presented anonymously. The pupils have been given pseudonyms and the teachers referred to as *School A, Class teacher, School A, Senior teacher* and so on. After a period of class observations in each school and following discussions with the class teachers, potential groups of pupils

were identified. They were then asked if they would be willing to take part in two tape-recorded focus group interviews both before and after the Shakespeare SATs.

Results from the initial exploratory studies (in a suburban state secondary school and a City Technology College) had shown that pupils' responses to Shakespeare were more wide ranging than those that I had expected of most teenagers, *i.e.*, "It's boring" and "We don't understand the language". Pupils from the exploratory study as well as the main research study did make comments of just such a nature, however, there were also many other remarks that hinted at feelings, concerns, exasperations and hopes about how they viewed themselves as learners and participants in the educational system as a whole.

The main research study fieldwork comprised whole-class observations, interviews with focus groups of six to seven pupils of mixed gender both before and after the SATs; short individual interviews where possible with members of each of the focus groups; interviews with each class teacher and a senior departmental teacher in each school.

As the complexity and subtlety of the range of responses became clear, I realised that in analysing the data I would need an equally responsive method of data analysis to support that range. In choosing to research a relatively small sample of pupils, using semi-structured interviews, I had decided early on in the research study to work qualitatively rather than quantitatively. I began to base the process of analysis around

the concept of ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1997) which seeks to allow the theory to emerge from the data rather than imposing a hypothesis upon the data. For example, I did not want to state at the onset that “13 and 14 year old pupils dislike Shakespeare” and that somehow the data that I subsequently collected would ‘prove’ the truth of such a statement. Rather, I wanted to be able to see what emerged from what pupils were actually saying about Shakespeare at a specific time and place in their own school careers. I then wanted to consider how Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, *cultural capital* and *field* could apply to the findings of the research study. The emergence of the research design and its subsequent application are discussed more fully in Chapters Three and Four.

In Chapter Two, which follows, an examination of responses to Shakespeare in the wider social and cultural context will be considered, so as to situate the specific Year 9 classroom responses to Shakespeare more fully.

*All quotations from Shakespeare plays in this thesis have been taken from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (1985), New York: Avenal Books.

CHAPTER TWO

“Thousands and thousands of books have been written about Shakespeare, and most of them are mad”

(Logan Pearsall Smith, 1933: 28).

2.1: Introduction

It could be said that embarking upon any form of Shakespearean investigation automatically confers madness upon those who attempt it, especially when one surveys the centuries-worth of accumulated critical material which has laboured, in one way or another, to get to the heart of Shakespeare’s meaning. Hugh Grady recalls that long before the present-day’s “voluminous proportions” (1991:1) of critical and scholarly works:

Hazlitt had sardonically observed that if we wished to perceive the splendours of human achievement, we should read Shakespeare; but if we wish to view the follies of human ingenuity, we may look to his commentators.

(Grady, 1991: 1).

It would be an impossible task to review all of the “thousands of books” (Smith, 1933) about Shakespeare that Logan Pearsall Smith mentions, the many thousands more that have been added since, as well as the myriad papers, articles and journals that appear year on year in both print and electronic form. Nor is it within the scope of this thesis to capture the “infinite variety” of all responses to Shakespeare, both historical and contemporary.

As Henry Crawford famously remarked in *Mansfield Park*, “Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how. It is a part of an Englishman’s constitution” (Austen, 1966: 335). The theatre director Jonathan Kent, added a contemporary twist to this notion, when he said of *Hamlet*, “Everything we are is in it. It is the DNA of us” (Neill, 2000:29). What I wanted to look at in this chapter was not only how that embedded state came about historically but also how it has been both sustained and challenged. Following this introduction, the first section of this chapter looks at examples of the dominant rhetoric that has helped to support and maintain Shakespeare’s high cultural status - for example, that Shakespeare’s plays are imbued with values that are universal and “for all time” - as well as the strong counter tradition which claims that Shakespeare’s plays are socially and culturally located in a specific time and place, and should be studied with that specificity in mind. By presenting a range of these wider responses to Shakespeare, the aim is to situate more fully the context of the classroom responses to Shakespeare that are the subject of the empirical research.

As far as what we might refer to as “pupil responses” in general, there is a substantial and growing body of research interest in the area of pupils’ attitudes to and experiences of school and schooling (for example, Adey and Biddulph, 2001; Beishuizen,*et al*, 2001; Cooper and McIntyre. 1993; Crozier, 1999; Demetriou *et al*, 2000; Ellis, 1996; Fielding, 2001; Francis, 2000; Hendley *et al*, 1996; Lang, 1993 Mac an Ghail, 1992; MacBeath *et al*, 2001; Miller *et al*, 1999; Myhill, 1999 Osborn, 2001; Ruddock *et al*, 1996; Shkedi, 2001; Smith *et al*, 2000; Stables *et al*, 1995; Stables and Wikeley, 1997; Wallace *et al*, 1998; Worrall, 2001; Wright, 1999; Younger and Warrington, 1999). Incidentally, Jean Ruddock’s

contribution to this field over many years surely entitles her to be labelled the doyenne of research on “student participation and student voice” (Gaston *et al*, 1999). All of the studies cited above vary widely in size, scale, methodological and theoretical approach ranging, for example, from the ongoing projects in the ESRC *Consulting Pupils About Teaching & Learning Programme* (Fielding, 2001) to an examination of a specific group of Year 12 students (Worrall, 2001). Whilst my own small-scale qualitative study differed from these in terms of size and focus, what it had in common with them was the desire to give attention to pupils’ concerns about particular aspects of their education. As Wallace *et al.*, declared of their research study (see also Ruddock *et al.*, 1996):

In seeking to represent students’ views, we took the view that their interests were often very different from those of the teachers but that they had very little power to bring them into the official discourse.

(Wallace *et al.*, 1998: 83)

Demetriou *et al.*, state that:

if we are concerned about helping young people sustain ... an enthusiasm for learning, confidence in themselves as learners [and a] sense of achievement and purpose [then] we also need to take more account of their experiences of learning in school.

(Demetriou *et al.*, 2000: 426).

As well as making pupils more confident and enthusiastic about their learning, through listening to pupils and gaining a deeper understanding of their experiences in school, Younger and Warrington aim “to generate teaching-learning strategies which will take account of student reaction and experience” (Younger and

Warrington, 1999: 232). Whilst some of the research mentioned above did examine pupils' attitudes to subjects, including English, none of it – as far as I could discover – looked specifically at pupils' attitudes to Shakespeare in the Key Stage 3 curriculum, which was the focus of my study. This is not to say that Shakespeare does not make an appearance, for example in *Attitudes to English at Key Stage 3* (Stables *et al.*, 1995), it was found that the prescribed study of Shakespeare had an effect on pupils' attitude to English:

The prevalence of comments concerning Shakespeare forms the clearest evidence of any effect on pupil perceptions of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 3. There were more positive than negative comments about Shakespeare, but he was cited relatively frequently as the 'least liked' aspect of the subject, as well as being cited frequently as a reason for enjoying English.

(Stables *et al.*, 1995: 35).

How Shakespeare is taught and with what effect bears relation on pupils' attitudes to Shakespeare, and there is a wide range of studies that look at different aspects of the teaching and learning of Shakespeare (for example Aers & Wheale, 1991; Bottoms, 1994, 1995; Clarke, 1995; Gibson, 1993, 1998a, 1998b; Hardman & Williamson, 1996; Joughin, 1997; Leach, 1992; McEvoy 1991; Protherough, 1986; Reynolds, 1991; Sedgewick, 1999; Sinfield, 1994; Wade & Shepherd, 1993; Yandell, 1997). Since the data in my study was concerned with Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, I also looked at official evaluations and reports, these and many of the above are discussed further in the section which ends this chapter **Shakespeare and English**.

In the study, which concerned itself primarily with classroom responses to Shakespeare but also sought to situate those within the context of wider social and cultural responses to Shakespeare, it would have been possible to map both sets of responses onto an extraordinarily diverse set of loci including, for example, ideology, nationalism, race, gender, and class. Whilst such concepts are intertwined with the various and varied responses to Shakespeare that are visited during the course of this chapter, it was not the purpose of this study to examine such issues specifically. For example, it was not my intention at the outset to look at responses to Shakespeare in relation to, say, gender, although it will be seen from the empirical data that such issues did arise at times, but I did not set out to examine how boys and girls responded differently to Shakespeare.

Having said that, before continuing with this chapter, the first section of which draws attention to the construction of, and challenges to, “Unser” Shakespeare, I wish to consider briefly some gender aspects. It was only as I came close to finishing this section that I realised the responses that were used to show how Shakespeare was both constructed and challenged were reflected almost entirely through the male voice. If this chapter favoured the male response over the female, it is a fault I readily acknowledge but one that which also served to indicate the extent to which individuals and institutions are steeped in the prevailing masculinist discourse. For example, Thompson and Roberts’ (1997) excellent survey of *Women Reading Shakespeare* from the Restoration to the beginning of the 20th century shows that when women did respond to Shakespeare – and they did – their readings were very often distinctly different to those of their male counterparts:

Women used their reading of Shakespeare to raise a wide range of contemporary concerns – marital relations, repression in the family, the improvement of women’s education, the ideal of Womanhood, ethnic difference, the experience of civil war (to name but a few).

(Thompson and Roberts, 1997: 1).

Although women’s readings of Shakespeare comprise an extensive body of work, it remains little known (with notable exceptions, such as the quotation from Jane Austen previously referred to). The fact that much of this earlier female response did not circulate in the public domain as freely as the male response is of some interest when we consider how Shakespeare and the study of Shakespeare has often been presented historically. Thus Shakespeare’s connection with what we might perceive as a masculine-orientated discourse of imperialism, nationalism and patriotism was consolidated during the centuries after his death, and such connections continue to be made in the present day (as will be seen further on in this chapter). Also, we shall see that whilst Shakespeare was studied by women, children and the working classes in schools and institutes (Mathieson, 1975) in the 19th century, such engagements did nothing to aid Shakespeare’s rise to academic respectability. That came about largely through male scholarship (with its early emphasis on philology) in the universities.

Secondly, I wish briefly to address the issue of gender and education (gender also plays a role in many of the studies cited above). Salisbury notes that early gender work in education, that of the 1970’s and 1980’s, “was seen mainly in terms of empowering girls” (Jackson and Salisbury, 1996: 105) but that this began to

change around the mid 1990's. Concern from the government and the media was increasingly directed towards what was perceived as the underachievement of boys in relation to girls at school (Gove and Watt, 2000; Weiner *et al.*, 1997). The subsequent "moral panic" that this induced (Francis and Skelton, 2001) led to education policy aimed at increasing the "motivation of boys in school" (Raphael Reed, 1999: 98).

Although research has shown that English is "popular with both genders" (Stables and Wikeley, 1997: 394), it is also one of the subject-disciplines where girls are seen to be out-performing boys (Lucey, 2001). However, it has since been reported that boys out-performed girls in the 2002 extension paper A levels. Results showed that "boys perform better at the very highest level, even in traditionally "feminine" subjects such as English" (Henry, 2002: 1). The Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) issued a report in 1998, *Can do Better*, which aimed to show how the classics might "help bridge the literacy gap between boys and girls" (Chaudhary, 1998: 4). It was also reported that Shakespeare:

should be at the forefront of the fight to bridge the gender gap ... The secret of turning boys on to literature may lie in feeding them extreme violence, gore, lust and Gothic horror – or Shakespeare, as the experts call it.

(Bright, 1998: 7).

The Birmingham-based project, *Black Boys Can*, tackled Shakespeare through drama workshops in its bid to help under-achieving black boys in inner cities.

The mother of one boy commented:

He came back this week saying he did Shakespeare and it was ‘heavy’ which means brilliant. They were acting out Othello and he found it very dramatic and exciting.

(Leaner, 2001: 5).

Switching all pupils - not just boys, black or white, - onto Shakespeare using a variety of pedagogic approaches is “a consummation devoutly to be wish’d” , and further on in this chapter in the section on **Shakespeare and English**, approaches using drama and ICT are looked at in relation to enthusing pupils about Shakespeare. However, what Gove and Watt term “gendered subject preferences” (Gove and Watt, 2000: 69) could get in the way of this objective. The reason, it is claimed, that girls do better at English than boys is because it is still:

an English that focuses upon what has been described as nineteenth century literary and literacy habits, rather than the literacy in computer and communications media required in a rapidly changing world.

(Gove and Watt, 2000: 69).

Raphael Reed also notes that:

the promotion of information technology in the classroom is also proposed as a strategy to ‘turn boys on’ to working ... despite evidence that information technology educational and employment contexts continue to disadvantage women and girls.

(Raphael Reed, 1999: 102).

The divide between education and employment contexts is something that should not be ignored otherwise, Kress warns, there is the growing possibility that “Girls’

achievement would be rewarded by the education system; but not by the world of work” (Kress, 1998: 5). Bearing these concerns in mind, I would nevertheless continue to argue for the inclusion of as wide a range as possible of pedagogic approaches to Shakespeare, that also offers opportunities to all pupils, not just some.

What is made clear through the above and other research studies (for example, Arnot *et al.*, 1998; Baxter, 2002; Martino, 1995; Murphy and Elwood, 1998; Phillips, 1998; Skeggs, 1997), is that the issue of gender and education is immensely complex. It also encompasses notions of race and class, which are both areas of great complexity in themselves. As far as this study was concerned, the pupil focus groups were made up of both boys and girls, with differing ethnic backgrounds, of mixed abilities and from different classes. To begin with, the data from the interviews were inductively analysed using a grounded theory approach so as to avoid, as far as possible, confirming researcher-preconceptions or biases, such as, “it is likely that girls would prefer *Romeo and Juliet* because it’s a love story” or that working-class children would dislike Shakespeare more than middle-class children. In fact, the range of responses that arose out of the interviews resisted such over-simplification, as is discussed further in Chapter Three, which concerns methodology, and Chapter Four, which concerns the data analysis. The points I have briefly raised here are important in emphasising that this thesis is not primarily about gender and education, or indeed race and class, but that I was aware of these issues and sought to address them through an inductively-led analysis of the data and a theoretical framework derived from Bourdieu’s concepts of *cultural capital*, *habitus* and *field* (discussed further in Chapters Four and Five).

Another leitmotif of this thesis that I wish to acknowledge here, and which has already been encountered in Chapter One, is that of transformation. However, I want to make it clear that the sense in which I use it is primarily in relation to the texts of Shakespeare themselves. I suggest that one of the reasons for Shakespeare's continued survival is because the texts are infinitely transformable and malleable. They can be reinterpreted from one age to another and from one context to another. Paradoxically, Shakespeare's survival is also ensured by what are perceived as those selfsame texts' universal values and timelessness, but these too can be re-presented in different formats and for different audiences. So, as I have said, my use of transformation in this thesis is largely concerned with these perceptions about Shakespeare's texts. However, we can also connect the notion of transformation with the transformative potential of:

Socio-constructivist and experiential theories of learning [which] emphasise that all learning is brought about through the involvement of personal and social activity in a process of personal growth (Stables *et al*, 1999: 449).

Stables *et al.*,(ibid) consider the potential of applying Harré's (1983) conceptual model across the lower age range of the secondary-school curriculum. Harré stresses the role of personal development which "consists of a series of 'identity projects', each of which follows the same sequence, from 'conventionalization' to 'appropriation' to 'transformation' to 'publication' (ibid, 451). Transformation, learning and identity are closely connected, as Wenger points out:

Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and

information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person.

(Wenger, 1998: 215).

If we think about transformation in this sense, then we can also see how the teaching and learning of Shakespeare also has the potential to be a transformative experience for pupils. However, this sense did not come through very readily in the empirical data, focussed as they were on Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, with its emphasis on the assessment process at the end of the Key Stage.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into the following section titles:

Section 2.2 “Unser” Shakespeare presents a broadly chronological survey of critical responses to Shakespeare, with reference to Shakespeare’s appropriation and shows how Shakespeare’s high cultural status has been challenged as well as maintained.

Section 2.3: Shakespeare and English looks briefly at the rise of English as a subject discipline, and concludes with a consideration of different pedagogic approaches to Shakespeare in the classroom and the testing of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3.

2.2. “Unser” Shakespeare

During the course of the First World War, the Cambridge don Arthur Quiller Couch gave a series of lectures on English Literature and, in one of them, discussed German enthusiasm for it. Whilst he admitted that German scholarship over the past hundred years had made a “methodical and most helpful”

contribution to the study of “our” literature (Quiller Couch, 1923: 295), he was particularly indignant at what he saw as German appropriation of Shakespeare. He drew his audience’s attention to a recent performance of *Twelfth Night* in Leipzig that had commenced with a specially-written Prologue which told how Shakespeare had fled England to dwell in his “second home” because his “pure majesty was not sufficiently appreciated in his native land:

This Germany, that loves him most of all
To whom before all others he gives thanks,
And says: Thou wonderful and noble land,
Remain thou Shakespeare’s one and only home.

(Quiller-Couch, 1923: 298).

That a play of Shakespeare’s was performed in Germany at this time was in itself remarkable, it would be hard to imagine an equal enthusiasm for a performance of a German play in Britain when the rhetoric of propaganda directed against the barbaric and bloodthirsty ‘Hun’ was all pervasive. Yet the fact that it was performed - with the addition of the Prologue quoted above - tells us something even more remarkable. Three hundred years after the death of an English dramatist whose plays were specifically written for, and spoke to, a Renaissance audience, those same plays were claimed by the peoples of an entirely different nation in an entirely different era. During the intervening centuries, “our” Shakespeare had also become “unser” Shakespeare. How this came about is the subject of this section where I will consider how Shakespeare’s posthumous reputation arose and was maintained both nationally and internationally.

Shakespeare's contemporary reputation

Shakespeare's contemporary reputation was different from the one that evolved after his death. His status as a poet and playwright was not seen as *sui generis*, one that soared unreachably far above that of his fellow dramatists of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. Indeed, one of those contemporaries, Christopher Marlowe, was possibly his greatest rival and Marlowe's early death at the age of 29 removed the very real threat of dramatic usurpation (Bate, 1997). The facts of Shakespeare's life are tantalisingly few and what is not known for sure has been the subject of much enduring speculation, ranging from sheer madness to mere pedantry. In particular, the so-called Lost Years between 1585, when Shakespeare is thought to have left Stratford and 1592 when he re-appears in London, have aroused much discussion about just how and where his theatrical and writing talents developed. One claim, dating from 1937, that he spent those years in a recusant Northern household (thus leading to attendant speculation about the plays' hidden religious heterodoxies) has been the subject of recent renewed interest (Wilson, R. 1997, Holden, 1999), as well as refutation (Bearman, 2002).

In 1592, Shakespeare makes his first appearance as a professional actor and dramatist and it is then that the first printed references to him are made. On the 8th September of that year, Thomas Nashe, one of the band of men of letters known as the University Wits, published his pamphlet *Pierce Penniless*, in which he praises a play he had recently seen, Shakespeare's *Henry VI* (Nicholl, 1984). More well-known, however, are the posthumously published remarks that appeared at the end of that month from the pen of Robert Greene, a fellow University Wit, who, whilst dying in poverty, wrote *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*,

Bought with a Million of Repentance in which he described the appearance in the city of:

an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute Johannes Factotum is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in the country.

(Schoenbaum, 1979: 60).

Greene's, perhaps understandably, sour adumbration of Shakespeare's qualities was unusual in its negativity. Other contemporary descriptions of Shakespeare were much more positive. Greene's own publisher, Henry Chettle, was at some pains to distance himself from Greene's splenetic outburst, writing that:

myself have seen his demeanor [*sic*] no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes: besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art.

(Schoenbaum, 1979: 60)

This rebuttal, says Bate, "marks Shakespeare's first step on the literary and social road of upward mobility" (1997:18). By the end of the 1590's both his poetry and plays were well known and widely praised, and Greene's gripes were all but forgotten. Perhaps one of the most significant lines in Shakespeare's progress towards literary high-standing came from Ben Jonson, when he wrote in the First Folio of 1623 that "He was not of an age but for all time" (cited in Brownlee, 1960: 3), a comment which helped set the tenor of Shakespeare's later posthumous reputation. Ironically, in terms of performance longevity, Jonson's own plays, which adhered more closely to classical form than Shakespeare's, have

proved less enduring. For all his praise of Shakespeare, Jonson was not above criticising his fellow playwright's style, revoking Hemmings and Condell's claim that Shakespeare never had the need to revise a single line, with the half-joking "Would he had blotted a thousand!" (Bate, 1997: 27). However, as Bate goes on to point out, the construct of Shakespeare as a divine conduit through whom inspiration flowed is one that prevailed despite Jonson's early attempt to present a working playwright who had to persevere in the sweat and toil of revision.

Furthermore, until relatively recently, what had also been left out of this perception of the playwright as sole progenitor was a better understanding of what was very often a collaborative process, involving writers, theatre-managers and actors in the production of a play for stage performance. Although scholars argue about how much and in which plays, it is now largely accepted that Shakespeare also worked collaboratively (Kermode, 2000: 18). In an amusing conceit, the 1999 romantic comedy film, *Shakespeare in Love*, portrays an inky-fingered William Shakespeare, surrounded by mounds of discarded drafts suffering from writer's block and making little headway with his new play *Ethel, the Pirates's Daughter*. Fortunately, his fellow-playwright Christopher Marlowe steps in with some timely suggestions which ensure that the re-named *Romeo and Juliet* becomes a theatrical hit.

However, in the same way that Mozart's music-making has been perceived as divinely-inspired, so claims have also been made for Shakespeare's "godlike apprehension" of the human condition and in doing so, Shakespeare, like Mozart, is seen to personify genius. Bate (1997) is careful to point out in his book *The*

Genius of Shakespeare that the word genius had different connotations in Early Modern England to those it has today. Then, its original meaning as a person's tutelary god or spirit of a place, or institution was prevalent. However, the idea of artistic singularity allied with the more modern idea of genius (almost inevitably suffering) is most strongly evoked through the sensibilities of the Romantic era of the later 18th century and early 19th century, which I shall refer to in more detail later. As in every era, the Romantics re-presented Shakespeare in their own image, nevertheless it is one that has resonated powerfully through to the present day.

Another long-lasting perception is that of Shakespeare as a personification of a prelapsarian, English genius derived from Milton's well-known lines in *L'Allegro* which hymn the pleasures of the stage, contrasting "Jonson's learned Sock" with "sweetest Shakespeare fancies child,/ Warble his native wood-notes wilde". (Quiller-Couch, 1981:333). Nowadays, critics are more likely to agree with Ben Jonson's earlier view that "Shakespeare was more the perspiring reviser than the warbler of wild woodnotes" (Taylor 2001:11).

Shakespeare restored

In 1642, the theatres were closed down under an edict passed by the Long Parliament and remained so during the entire period of the republican interregnum, although unofficially dramatic performances did take place (Styan, 1996). In 1660, the theatres re-opened under the enthusiastic patronage of the restored monarch, Charles II. The king's exposure to a very different type of dramatic performance when in exile on the Continent, led to theatrical changes on the English stage, not least of which was the introduction of female actresses.

Although the plays of Shakespeare and those of some of his contemporaries such as Jonson, Fletcher and Massinger, (Beecher Hogan, 1964, Sanders, 1994) were still performed (partly for pragmatic reasons because there were no new ones) the Shakespearean mixture of low comedy and high tragedy was considered inappropriate. Shakespeare was “tolerate[d]” but needed to be “altered” (Jusserand, 1899: 161) to suit the tastes of the Restoration audiences and so began a process of theatrical change and adaptation that has continued ever since.

Shakespeare was castigated in some quarters for not conforming more properly to classical strictures, in particular the dramatic unities of time, place and action, as well as a lack of decorum. In 1692, the champion of French neo-classicism, Thomas Rymer published his *Short View of Tragedy*. In it he excoriated Shakespeare, condemning *Othello* as “a bloody farce”, the moral of which was merely to offer “a warning to all good wives that they look well to their linen” (Drabble, 1984: 724, 858). The poet and playwright John Dryden (1631-1700), later described by an admiring Samuel Johnson as “the father of Shakespearean criticism” (cited in Smallwood, 2001: 79), strongly refuted Rymer’s attacks. However, Dryden’s own deeply-felt reverence for Shakespeare did not prevent him from criticising Shakespeare’s style and in 1672 he wrote that “he wears almost everywhere two faces, and you have scarce begun to admire the one ere you despise the other” (Wiggins, 1999: 35). Dryden presented his own versions of Shakespeare. Of his 1679 re-working of *Troilus and Cressida* he wrote, “I undertook to remove that heap of rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly buried” (Knights, 1946: 8). Earlier he had transposed *Antony and Cleopatra* into “an exemplary neo classical tragedy” entitled *All For Love: or The*

World Well Lost in 1677 (Drabble, 1984: 294), which Byron rather unflatteringly likened to a “salad” when he saw a production of it in 1815 (Marchand, 1982:85). *All For Love* just about survived into the late twentieth century (which is more than can be said for most of the other adaptations) albeit as a theatrical curiosity when, for example, the Royal Shakespeare Company performed *All For Love* alongside *Antony and Cleopatra* in repertoire so that contemporary audiences could judge the plays’ respective merits for themselves. Dryden also collaborated with Sir William Davenant, (1606-68) the theatrical impresario - Shakespeare’s godson and also reputed to be his illegitimate son - on *The Tempest*, whilst Davenant had already combined *Measure for Measure* and *Much Ado About Nothing* as *The Law Against Lovers* in 1661-2 (Sanders, 1994). Davenant’s musical version of *Macbeth* was also performed in 1673. The poet Thomas Shadwell’s (1642?-1692) version of *Timon of Athens* appeared in 1679, followed by the playwright Thomas Otway’s (1652-1685) version of *Romeo and Juliet* which became *Caius Marius* in 1680 (Beecher Hogan, 1964, Sanders, 1994).

Probably the most notorious re-working of Shakespeare during this era came with Nahum Tate’s (1652-1715) *History of King Lear* in 1681, which not only did away with the character of the Fool entirely but also gave the play a happy ending. In fact, Tate’s version survived in performance until well into the nineteenth century when Shakespeare’s original play was finally restored to the stage.

From stage to page and quarrelling critics

Whilst Shakespeare thrived in one form or another on the stage, the 18th century saw the beginnings of a major shift in perception (Hawkes, 1990) due to the increasing literary attention the plays received. They were not only thoroughly discussed in literary circles but more editions were published during the course of the century. In this significant transposition from performance to print, Hawkes states that Shakespeare becomes “irrevocably woven into the strands of a national literary culture” (ibid, 147). It is the onset of Shakespeare’s connection with a holy trinity (I use this term deliberately in view of the discourse of sanctification which has been used in connection with Shakespeare from Ben Jonson onwards) of the separate yet inter-linked concepts, “national”, “culture” and “literary “ that marks a turning point in the perception of what Shakespeare was. The separation from his contemporaries was strengthened in the 18th century and Shakespeare became embedded in these powerfully-resonating discourses in ways that his fellow-playwrights never did.

Whilst Shakespeare becomes intertwined with the national consciousness, 18th century critics and dramatists continued in their heroic attempts to tidy Shakespeare up, both in performance and in print. The prevailing tenor of Shakespearean criticism was evaluative and, to modern ears at least, fastidious in its pedantry. The poet laureate and dramatist Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), whose six volume edition of the plays was published in 1709, set the tone for subsequent editions through its editorial emendations and act-division. Rowe excused Shakespeare on the grounds that:

we are to consider him as a man that liv'd in a state of almost universal licence and ignorance. There was no establish'd judge, but every one took the liberty to write according to the dictates of his own fancy.

(Smith, 1903:15-16).

The critic John Dennis (1657-1734) concurred, “if he had had the Advantage of Art and Learning, he wou'd have surpass'd the very best and strongest of the Ancients” (ibid, 25). In addition to the discussions about Shakespeare's “want of Poetical art”, arguments also raged about how familiar Shakespeare was with Latin and Greek texts. In an intriguing conflation, and one that implies a contradiction to his earlier stance, Dennis himself claims that unschooled, natural genius and national excellence should be proudly accepted:

Therefore he who allows that Shakespeare had learning and a familiar Acquaintance with the Ancients, ought to be look'd upon as a Detractor from his extra-ordinary Merit and from the Glory of Great Britain.

(Smith, 1903: 41)

In 1707, the Act of Union between England and Scotland was passed, thus consolidating a new national identity which was enhanced by the merits and glories of a Great Briton and embodiment of national eminence – Shakespeare.

In defending Shakespeare against the criticism lobbied at him by the neo-classicists, Alexander Pope wrote in the preface to his edition of 1725 that to “judge therefore of Shakespeare by Aristotle's rules is like trying a man by the laws of one country, who acted under another” (Smith, 1903:50). Pope's edition was censured, not least by Samuel Johnson in the Preface to his own edition and also by Lewis Theobald (1688-1744) who published *Shakespeare Restored* in

1726. In it, Theobald poured scorn on Pope's edition for attacking Shakespeare "like an unhandy slaughterman: and not lopp'd off the Errors, but the Poet" (Smith, 1903: 78). Pope took his revenge by immortalising Lewis as the Laureate of Dullness, 'Theobald', in his satirical four-volume poem *The Dunciad* (published between 1728-42) in which he also aimed a swipe at the literary-manqués "Who study Shakespeare at the Inns of Court" (Mutter & Kinkead-Weekes, 1962: 167).

Shakespearean scholarship then, as now, engendered not a little invective directed at previous efforts as edition succeeded edition during the course of the century. Samuel Johnson acknowledged "The chief desire of him that comments an author is to show how much other commentators have corrupted and obscured him" (Desai, 1979: 115). Theobald's own edition came out in 1733-4, which "surpassed that of his rival. Over 300 emendations are still accepted by most modern editors" (Drabble, 1984: 974). Sir Thomas Hanmer's (1677-1746) followed in 1744, which he described as a "true and correct Edition" (Smith, 1903:90). Although Pope died in the year that Hanmer's elegantly-bound six volumes, squarely aimed at "the wealthy book lover" (Maw, 1998:24), were published, he knew of it and Hanmer's "pretensions" were duly satirised in *The Dunciad* (ibid, 25). The irony is that by the 1760's when both men were long dead, copies of Hanmer's edition "could fetch ten pounds - a fabulous sum [whilst] Pope's could be had for 16 shillings" (ibid, 25). Bishop William Warburton (1698-1779), who was of the Pope faction had brought out his edition in 1747, over whose deficiencies Johnson casts a discreet veil because Warburton had once given him kind notices. Johnson's (1709-1784) own, long-gestated,

edition and Preface appeared in 1765 and, despite criticism, it has proved to be one of the most enduring. Desai (1979:4) suggests that this may be due to Johnson's "multi-dimensional" sense of Shakespeare, that he is timeless but that he is also specifically located as an English dramatist living in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras. Whilst this specificity resonates with present-day criticism, it must not be forgotten that Johnson also believed that Shakespeare's ultimate value was transcendental: "The mind can only repose on the stability of truth" (ibid, 5). It is the certainties behind the notions of truth and stability that have been most subject to critical challenge in recent times (which are also the subject of further discussion in the following chapter).

In addition to editing Shakespeare's works, Edmond Malone (1741-1812) could be considered Shakespeare's first real biographer. His assiduous archival searches reached new heights of scholarly endeavour, which contemporaries found both awe-inspiring and egomaniacal in their obsessiveness (Martin, 1995). Malone found and carried away from Stratford "several thousand documents" covering the period 1563-1650, which he kept "on loan" for twelve years before their return was indignantly demanded by the Stratford town clerks (Martin, 1995: 182).

Malone's researches into Shakespeare's life set in motion a field of Shakespearean scholarship that continues to the present day.

Another significant contribution to Shakespearean criticism in the eighteenth century came not from a professional critic but from a civil servant, Maurice Morgann. In his 1777 *Essay on the Dramatick character of Sir John Falstaff*, the tenor of criticism changes, leaving aside editorial concerns relating to the text to

concentrate on treating Shakespeare's characters "rather as Historic than Dramatic beings" (Smith, 1903: 247). Morgann also describes the sensations Shakespeare produces on him and, indeed in him: "Him we may profess rather to feel than to understand ... we are possessed by him, than that we possess him" (ibid, 249). Morgann criticises the "learned Editors and Commentators" (ibid, 250) who are entirely ignorant of what "every woman and every child" (ibid,) is able to feel but which they seem unable to do. It is comments such as these that Smith claims show Morgann to be the "forerunner of the Romantic criticism of Shakespeare" (Smith, 1903: xxxviii), even though as Foakes points out "there is no evidence that Coleridge, or for that matter later romantics such as Hazlitt or Keats knew" of Morgann's essay (Foakes, 1989: 5).

Shakespeare's national and international reputation

In a prescient passage Morgann also condemns those who had criticised Shakespeare's alleged barbarity, foretelling a future:

When the hand of time shall have brushed off his present Editors and Commentators, and when the very name of *Voltaire* and even the memory of the language in which he has written, shall be no more, the *Apalachian* [*sic*] mountains, the banks of the *Ohio*, and the plains of *Sciota* shall resound with the accents of this Barbarian.

(Smith, 1903: 249).

Of course neither the French language nor Voltaire has been forgotten, and it is a little unjust to excoriate Voltaire as an unredeemed Shakespeare hater. During Voltaire's two and a half year stay in England from 1726-1728 he undertook to learn about the English, their language, (even astonishing Boswell with his fluency

in swearing, Cronk, 1994: viii) their literature and their politics. In London, he attended the theatre frequently, seeing both contemporary plays and those of Shakespeare commenting that “the shining Monsters of *Shakespeare* give infinite more Delight than the judicious Images of the Moderns” (ibid, 92). We know that *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* were performed at the time Voltaire was in London and that later Oliver Goldsmith translated the preface to Voltaire’s own (now lost) tragedy *Brutus* where he mentions *Julius Caesar*:

With what pleasure have I seen at London your tragedy of Julius Caesar, which, though an hundred and fifty years old, still continues the delight of the people. I do not here attempt to defend the barbarous irregularity with which it abounds. What surprizes me is, that there are not more in a work written in an age of ignorance, by a man who understood not Latin, and who had no other master but a happy genius.

(cited in Cronk, 1994: 166).

It was only much later in Voltaire’s life that this early admiration turned to active dislike. He had always baulked at Shakespeare’s “barbarous irregularity” and disliked “the theatre becom[ing] a place of carnage as we so often find in Shakespeare” (ibid, 167). It was Shakespeare’s lack of neo-classical decorum that offended Voltaire’s sense of dramatic propriety. As we have seen, Shakespeare had been criticised on these grounds before but the crux of the matter, as Wiggins points out, is that Voltaire said it “with an uncommonly aggressive tone” and to add insult to injury, “in French” (2000a: 39). Responding to this slur, Mrs Montague, one of the original Blue Stocking circle of intellectual society

hostesses, published her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare compared with the Greek and French dramatic poets, with some remarks upon the misrepresentations of M. de Voltaire* in 1769. She became something of a celebrity in Paris because of it and the essay went through six editions by 1810 (Jusserand, 1899: 369).

1769 was also the same year in which Shakespeare's national and international reputation was strengthened through the Shakespeare Jubilee. Organised by the leading Shakespearean actor of the time, David Garrick, this was the first ever Shakespeare celebration. It took place over three days in Stratford-upon-Avon in September, a month not associated with Shakespeare in any way but coinciding with Stratford's Race Week, which showed a shrewd sense of commercial pragmatism that has been associated with the town ever since. Garrick's dedicatory "Ode Upon Dedicating a Building, and Erecting a Statue, to Shakespeare, at Stratford upon Avon, 1769", was later described by James Boswell as giving "us the idea of a mortal transformed into a demi-god" (cited in *The Shakespeare Exhibition Catalogue*, 1964: 4).

"... 'Tis he! 'tis he!- that demi-god!
Who Avon's flow'ry margin trod,
While sportive *Fancy* round him flew,
Where *Nature* led him by the hand,
Instructed him in all she knew,
And gave him absolute command!
'Tis he! 'Tis! "The god of our idolatry!"
(Schoenbaum, 1979: 181).

In a curious way, Garrick's own immortality was gained through Shakespeare.

After Garrick's death, Charles Lamb wrote of coming across a "harlequin" statue of the actor in Westminster Abbey, whose inscription firmly conjoined him with Shakespeare, like "twin-stars" in the heavens. Lamb thought both the statue and the inscription highly impertinent (Talfourd, 1859: 517).

Shakespeare's divine status was beginning to be an established part of the rhetoric about him. In a passage written by Thomas Sheridan (father of R. B. Sheridan, the playwright) Sheridan claims that Shakespeare was heaven sent (along with Milton) to British shores. Shakespeare's transcendentalism is allied with his humble origins to produce "another glaring instance of the superiority of English genius over that of all other countries" (Sheridan, 1971: 512). Sheridan's comment encapsulates the range of responses to Shakespeare that present him both as a working man of the theatre and as a divinity who has come down to earth.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Britain's growing Empire and the onset of the Industrial Revolution had put the country well to the fore amongst the Western nations. As the embodiment of national artistic greatness, Shakespeare became an exportable commodity. The success of Shakespeare and the British Empire seemed to go hand in hand so that Goethe, at the apex of the Napoleonic Wars, could describe how Shakespeare was at once part of a wider world and also rooted in a country whose "enterprise reached all the parts of the earth" (Bate, 1992: 70).

In 1776, a translation of the works of Shakespeare was published in France and subscribed to, in an impressively eclectic list, by no less than King Louis XVI and

Queen Marie-Antoinette as well as “Russians, Germans, Spaniards, Dutchmen, princes and commoners, secretaries of embassy, consuls, comedians; the most famous names in France and abroad: the new Shakespeare was a European event” (Jusserand, 1899: 359). In the dedication to Louis XVI, the translators stated that:

Shakespeare can appear with confidence in the country of Corneille, Racine and Moliere, and demand of the French that tribute of glory which every nation owes to genius and which he would have received from those great men had he been known to them.

(Jusserand, 1899: 360-1).

Predictably, Voltaire’s reaction was explosive, not only had the “noise” of Shakespeare’s 1769 Jubilee in “remote Stratford ... spread throughout Europe” (ibid, 362) but:

the worst of it is that the monster has a party in France and, worse than the worst, I was myself the first to speak of this Shakespeare; I was the first to show the French a few pearls that I had found in his enormous dunghill... I shall die leaving France barbarous.

(Jusserand, 1899: 375, 376).

Although he would have hated it, it is hard to resist summing up Voltaire’s outrage through an apt (and appropriately amended) quotation from Shakespeare, “This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this *France* / Is now leas’d out, - I die pronouncing it, - Like to a tenement or a pelting farm” (*Richard II*, Act II, 1)

Shakespeare and the Romantics

Whilst Voltaire’s fellow countrymen and women were becoming more familiar with Shakespeare, the Germans had already embraced Shakespeare with what was

to prove an enduring passion, (although Peter Daviddhazi [1998] points out that there was also some patriotic resistance to Shakespeare in Germany). They did so partly because the inchoate structure of Shakespeare's plays was everything that French neo-classical drama was not. It was Shakespearean drama that most strongly sympathised with the ethos of the *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress) sensibility of early German Romanticism which firmly rejected the classical unities in drama.

It was not until 1823 that Stendhal's *Racine et Shakespeare* was published which finally buried French neo-classicism with its definition of romanticism:

Romanticism is the art of presenting to people the literary works which, in the present state of their customs and beliefs, are liable to give them the greatest possible pleasure. Classicism, on the contrary, presents them with the literature which gave the greatest possible pleasure to their great-grand-fathers.

(Claudon: 1986: 183).

The pleasures and sensations that Stendhal and the later Romantics felt when encountering Shakespeare were also expressed as early as 1773 by Johann Gottfried Herder, who despaired of expressing such a heightened state of emotion through the inadequate medium of words alone. Despite being utterly subsumed, he sounded a note of warning when he feared that with the passage of time the world of Shakespeare's plays would inevitably "become incapable of living performance, and will become the fragment of a Colossus, an Egyptian pyramid which everyone gazes at and no one understands" (Bate, 1992: 48). This is an interesting perception, not only because of its prescience but also because of where

Herder situates Shakespeare - alongside the monumental remains of what was considered the pinnacle of human achievement - the sites and works of classical antiquity. The inference is, however, that the lived life of Shakespeare's plays will become as remote and as inscrutable as them. Some four hundred years later, there are many productions of Shakespeare's plays that succeed in presenting a "living performance" but there are also those that leave audiences benumbed with boredom and incomprehension. In fact, how school-age audiences respond to Shakespeare's plays in performance is something that is considered in further detail in the analysis of the empirical data in Chapter Four.

Despite the long-lasting influence of the Romantics on our own perceptions of Shakespeare (most especially psychological character-traits, so that Hamlet, for example, is the epitome of a Romantically-suffering soul), there is a disjuncture between our time and theirs. When confronted with the works of Shakespeare, the feelings of many in the present day are less than awe-struck because the 'wonderful' has become over-familiarised – through, one might say, package tours rather than Grand Tours. For Herder and the later Romantics, awe and wonder were associated with the idea of the sublime, which became an aesthetic *leitmotif* of Romanticism with regard to the potency of Art, Literature and Nature to awaken powerful responses. In our own time, such feelings are difficult, if not impossible, to replicate.

Amongst the ferment of writers, artists, poets, philosophers and critics contributing to the development of Romanticism in Europe, were the German brothers Friedrich von Schlegel and August Wilhelm von Schlegel. A.W.

Schlegel was instrumental in translating Shakespeare's plays into German but also became well known in England for his series of *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature* which he gave in 1808. These were published between 1809-11 and translated into English in 1815. The dates are significant because Coleridge (who was fluent in German) presented his own series of Shakespeare lectures in 1811-12 (see below for details of the plagiarism controversy). Whilst Schlegel acknowledged Shakespeare as "the pride of his nation" (Bate, 1992: 88), he also claimed that Shakespeare's long-lasting fame would be due in no small measure to German precocity in recognising his genius. He berated the critics of the eighteenth century, in particular the French but also Shakespeare's own countrymen, for their hypocrisy in labelling Shakespeare's plays barbaric and indecorous. What needed to be appreciated more fully, he believed, was the wholeness of the plays, "penetrating to the centre and viewing all the parts as so many irradiations from it." (ibid., 96). By submitting oneself wholly to the plays, it was possible both to possess them and to be possessed by them.

As has been shown so far, critical responses to Shakespeare have always arisen out of previous work and as such are incorporated by succeeding generations of critics, Cronus-like in their appetites. Whilst this illustrates a particular point, it has a wider significance in relation to the study as a whole. This chapter's presentation of the changing responses to Shakespeare shows how, for example, claims for Shakespeare's fixed and unchanging values, which have helped to secure his prominence in the educational system in the present day, can be seen to rest on somewhat shaky foundations. The diversity of critical opinion, both past and present, can serve to undermine such claims. In Chapter Four it can be seen that

some of the responses of the pupils, who were not *au fait* with the entire range of historical and current critical response, also challenged assumptions about Shakespeare's taken-for-granted greatness.

Shakespeare has been reified in many different ways, and one of the most consistent has been through the use of architectural metaphors. Pope compared him to "an ancient majestick piece of Gothick Architecture" (ibid, 62) and Lewis Theobald continued the theme:

The attempt to write upon Shakespeare is like going into a large, spacious and splendid Dome thro' the conveyance of a narrow and obscure Entry ... And as in great Piles of Building, some Parts are often finish'd up to hit the Taste of the Connoisseur; others more negligently put together, to strike the fancy of a common and unlearned Beholder.

(Smith, 1903: 63).

Whilst the tone and use of language might strike us very differently today, the metaphor itself remains in contemporary usage with Shakespeare seen as an edifice which towers above all else. The contemporary British novelist Fay Weldon talks about 'Castle Shakespeare' (cited in Eaglestone, 2000: 69), which dominates the entire literary landscape.

However, it is generally accepted that the Romantics did build a Shakespearean edifice that was structurally distinct from previous constructs and one of the most significant critics of that era in England was Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Much of Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism comes down to us in the form of lectures delivered (and not always perfectly recorded) between 1808-19). Foakes

maintains that “he changed fundamentally the ways in which we perceive and understand Shakespeare’s works and his influence has been pervasive” (1989: 1).

During the course of his 1811-12 series of lectures, (the first *Lectures on Poetry and Drama* having taken place in 1808), Coleridge was presented with a copy of A.W. Schlegel’s Shakespeare lectures. Unfortunately, after this second series, Coleridge was to be dogged by accusations that he had plagiarised Schlegel which have not entirely been refuted even today. Foakes does not directly accuse Coleridge of plagiarism, only saying that he “found [in Schlegel] everywhere echoes of his own thinking” (1989: 11) which Jonathan Bate confirms as an indication that Coleridge “has to a considerable extent been vindicated” (Bate, 1992: 15). However, Richard Holmes, in his two volume biography of Coleridge, sums up the dispute thus: “Where he stole - and one repeats, he did steal - he also transformed, clarified and made resonant ... one can say that Coleridge plagiarised but that no one plagiarised like Coleridge” (1998: 281).

Scholarly debates aside, what cannot be denied was that Coleridge’s Shakespearean criticism was influential in the way he dismissed the critical tropes of previous centuries “like so much antiquarian flotsam” (Holmes, 1998: 220), whilst championing new approaches to understanding Shakespeare. His style of close textual analysis and invention of the term ‘practical criticism’ was influential in the twentieth century (Foakes, 1989). He was also keen “to emphasize Shakespeare’s judgement in the design of his poems and plays” (ibid: 9) as well as the protean nature of Shakespeare’s poetic imagination and a consideration of “the psychological [rather] than the chronological” (Holmes, 1998: 271). For a prime

example of the longevity of this latter approach, we need only think of how much Hamlet's character has been subject to endless psychological speculation ever since. Indeed Coleridge famously identified himself with Hamlet "I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so" (ibid, 286). What is interesting is that *Hamlet* was not at that time seen as one of the great tragedies but, "as an 'irregular' melodrama with many objectionable and inexplicable scenes" (ibid, 282).

Coleridge's writings and lectures on the play throughout his career changed that perception and helped cement it within the very foundation of the canon.

Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism was developed further in his *Biographia Literaria* of 1817, in which he also broke with the pastoral perception, defined by Milton's "warbl[ing] wood notes wild" by firmly declaring that Shakespeare was neither a "mere child of nature; no automaton of genius; no passive vehicle of inspiration" (Bate; 1992:151), but a man who had to work at his craft in order to unleash "that stupendous power, by which he stands alone, with no equal or second in that class" (ibid, 151).

Another aspect of Coleridge's criticism which has prevailed is the ideological appropriation of Shakespeare. He should, declared Coleridge in 1818, "be styled a philosophical aristocrat, delighting in those hereditary institutions which have a tendency to bind one age to another" (Bate, 1992: 20). It was Coleridge's son, Hartley, who produced an essay for Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine in 1828, entitled *Shakespeare, a Tory and a Gentleman* (ibid, 232), a claim that has been re-asserted by Conservative Party politicians in the twentieth century when, for example, selective quotes from Ulysses's famous "degree" speech (Act I, iii) in

Troilus and Cressida were used to show that Shakespeare was “one of us”

(Dollimore & Sinfield, 1994).

In contrast to Coleridge’s brand of reactionary conservatism which increased as he grew older, William Hazlitt - the other great interpreter of Shakespeare within the English Romantic movement - maintained his radical stance in literature and politics throughout his life (Grayling, 2001). Terence Hawkes agrees with Jonathan Bate in situating Hazlitt and Coleridge at opposite ends of “a struggle for possession of Shakespeare that was a feature of British ideology between Waterloo and Peterloo. The creature familiar to us as ‘Shakespeare’ was to some degree produced by it” (Hawkes, 1990: 143).

Hazlitt’s Shakespeare, however, was no Tory. The “new and revolutionary spirit” (Motion, 1997: 214) with which the actor Edmund Kean imbued his interpretation of the great Shakespearean roles was approved of by Hazlitt (Keats, another great lover of Shakespeare, was also deeply impressed by Kean’s acting). Hazlitt championed the cultural and artistic importance of the theatre (Grayling, 2001) although he was ambivalent about Shakespeare on stage (Sanders, 1994).

However, it is through Hazlitt’s vivid theatrical notices that we can get a sense of how performed Shakespeare manifested itself to early nineteenth century audiences. In taking the title role of *Othello*, Hazlitt describes Kean’s performance as a:

master-piece of profound pathos and exquisite conception, and its effect on the house was electrical. The tone of voice in which he delivered the

beautiful apostrophe, “Then, oh farewell!” struck on heart and the imagination like the swelling notes of some divine music.

(Bate, 1992: 487).

Coleridge, in another series of lectures delivered in 1813 at Bristol and reported in the Bristol Gazette, declared that he:

never saw any of Shakespear’s [*sic*] plays performed but with a degree of pain, disgust and indignation. He had seen Mrs Siddons as Lady Macbeth, and Kemble as Macbeth - these might be the Macbeths of the Kembles, but they were not the Macbeths of Shakespear.

(Bate, 1992: 140).

Coleridge told his auditors that Shakespeare had no place on the stage but should instead be found “in his *proper* place, in the heart and in the closet” (ibid, 140, my emphasis). Nowadays, definitive statements regarding what is and what it not ‘authentically’ Shakespearean would be quibbled at, but here Coleridge is firmly expressing his preference for a solitary and private engagement with the plays of Shakespeare which is patently at odds with their theatrical genesis. Although he complained about Shakespeare on stage he did go to the theatre and apparently rather often, which rather deflates his point. One of Coleridge’s most well-known comments is about Kean’s acting is most often only partially quoted, “To see him act ,is like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning”. The full quotation clarifies the rather more pejorative intention:

Kean is original; but he copies from himself. His rapid descents from the hyper-tragic to the infra-colloquial, though sometimes productive of great effort, are often unreasonable. To see him act, is like reading Shakespeare

by flashes of lightning. I do not think him thorough-bred enough to play Othello.

(Foakes, 1989: 184-5).

Coleridge discussed the nature of dramatic illusion and the audience's complicity in sustaining that illusion which, later on in relation to poetry, he posited as "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith" (Foakes, 1989: 10). As Foakes goes on to say, the audience's dramatic faith provides "access to the imaginative coherence of the play, so that Coleridge's theory of dramatic illusion relates closely to his new insistence on plays as works of imagination, with their own organic unity" (ibid, 10).

However, Coleridge's own "willing suspension of disbelief" was often tested by contemporary productions since, as Byron also noted, the Shakespeare that was performed at the time was "five times out of ten, not Shakespeare's, but Cibber's" (Marchand, 1982: 100). Slightly older than his fellow-Shakespeare reviser, Nahum Tate, Colley Cibber became the Poet Laureate in 1730, and was also 'honoured' in Pope's satirical poem *The Dunciad*.

Charles Lamb was part of the Romantic circle, a friend of both Coleridge and Wordsworth and his own comments on Shakespeare are certainly worth looking at, especially in relation to Shakespeare on and offstage. With his sister Mary, he published the well-known prose *Tales from Shakespeare* for children in 1807. The Shakespeare canon was to be 'cleaned-up' for public consumption. In that same year, *The Family Shakespeare* also appeared, which expurgated, or

'bowdlerised', Shakespeare's obscenities and blasphemies. It was edited by Henrietta Bowdler, sister of Dr. Thomas Bowdler, whose own, hugely successful, edition was published ten years later in 1818, although it was heavily based on his sister's earlier edition (Thompson and Roberts, 1997).

In 1808, Charles Lamb focussed on a largely neglected area of study with his anthology, *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets: Contemporary with Shakespeare*. This was unusual in paying more than scant attention to Shakespeare's contemporaries. An inveterate theatre-goer, he declared that both Colley and Tate's versions of Shakespeare's plays were nothing but "ribald trash" (Talfourd, 1859: 522) and was especially scathing of Tate's happy ending in *King Lear*. The main point of his essay *On the tragedies of Shakespeare* was that Shakespeare's plays were impossible to stage because the *reader's* (my emphasis) "slow appreciation" of the intricacies of the text and innermost thoughts of the characters could not be acquired by watching a "gesticulating actor" (ibid, 519). Shakespeare's characters, he claimed, should be "objects of meditation" (ibid, 522) and furthermore, even if they were well acted then the:

too close pressing semblance of reality give a pain and an uneasiness which totally destroy all the delight which the words in the book convey ... The *Lear* of Shakespeare cannot be acted ... [*Lear's*] greatness ... is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual ... while we read it, we see not *Lear*, but we are *Lear*.

(Talfourd, 1859: 523).

Lamb is not alone in thus privileging the reader's intellectual response and meaning-making over that of an audience - a distinction which has had

repercussions to the present-day. As for the audience itself, a “great portion” (ibid, 519) of it, or what he may just as well have termed the “mutable, rank-scented many” (*Coriolanus*, Act III, i) simply would not have understood Shakespeare unless it was literally presented to them on stage. This literalness made him uneasy, as we have seen in the quotation above but that he was made especially so in relation to productions of *Othello* presents an intriguing insight into his own racial prejudices. Othello’s blackness, he says, does not “offend” the reader but “upon the stage, when the imagination is no longer the ruling faculty ... I appeal to everyone that has seen Othello played, whether he did not ... sink Othello’s mind in his colour; whether he did not find something extremely revolting in the courtship and wedded caresses of Othello and Desdemona” (Talfourd, 1859: 524).

Unlike an audience, says Lamb, a reader can wholly dispense with the representation of a “coal-black Moor” (ibid, 524) and replace him with one of a lighter hue, for “the Moors are now well enough known to be by many shades less unworthy of a white woman’s fancy” (ibid, 524). Lamb’s prejudices, and to what extent they were widely shared and accepted should be regarded within the context of the time. The Abolition of Slavery Act was not passed until 1833, meanwhile the Atlantic slave trade was in full swing, justified by deliberately undermining earlier Rousseauian notions of the noble savage to create those of an inhuman savagery. Lamb shows us, however, that in the battle for conquest, Shakespeare himself is taken prisoner, his world is taken possession of and his inhabitants re-fashioned as and how their conqueror-reader desires it.

With regard to performances of *Othello*, up until fairly recently it has been acceptable for a white actor to “black up” when playing the lead role. Exceptions to this norm include famous performances by the black American actor Ira Aldridge in the nineteenth century, and the American singer Paul Robeson in 1930 and 1959 (Jays, 2001:20), whilst British “television’s first black Othello” was Gordon Heat in 1955 (Rosenthal, 2000: 95). Willard White (the Jamaican-born opera singer in his first straight acting role) reprised his 1989 Royal Shakespeare Company performance for television in 1990. (Ironically, Verdi’s *Otello* is a tenor role and therefore unsuitable for White’s bass voice). Rosenthal claims that “in the age of political correctness it is unlikely that an actor will ever again black up for the part on screen” (ibid, 95). In roles that are not specifically racially orientated, there has been an increase in ‘colour-blind casting’ in both filmed and staged performances. There was much media interest following the announcement that a British monarch, Henry VI, was to be played by a young black actor, David Oyelowo, in the course of the marathon 12-hour run of the History Plays during the RSC’s 2000-2001 season. Oyelowo, described as a “Nigerian prince” (thus subtly implying that his qualification to play a King was *bone fide*), said that colour should not be an issue because the ownership of Shakespeare should be all-inclusive: “England is no longer Anglo-Saxon, it is becoming the opposite.” (Kellaway, 2001: 5). In performance, Jays noted that “Oyelowo’s colour wasn’t an issue; he was simply a fine actor doing a magnificent job” (Jays, 2001: 19).

Multicultural casting is something that theatre-goers today are more accustomed to, yet this state of affairs is of relatively recent duration. The distinguished black actor, Hugh Quarshie, broke the mould of colour-blind casting when he played

Hotspur in 1983 in the RSC production of *Henry IV*. He wrote more recently that he was especially heartened by the casting of another black actor, Adrian Lester, as Hamlet in Peter Brook's production in 2001, purely because it was Hamlet "and not Othello, a role written for a white actor in black make-up" (Quarshie, 2000). Quarshie himself has refused to play Othello, defying the idea that Othello should be the ultimate role for black Shakespearean actors to play (Jays, 2001). It has been recently announced that Adrian Lester is to play the lead role in *Henry V* at the National Theatre in London in 2003.

Although they are separated by almost two centuries, Lamb's, Quarshie's and Oyelowo's comments show that debates about theatrical performance conventions are also indicative of contemporary cultural concerns, at the heart of which lies the question of possession. Who owns Shakespeare? In a radio programme about the significance of Shakespeare's status on the cusp of the new millennium, Lisa Jardine made a comment about Shakespeare that is pertinent to this question. She argued that Shakespeare can be still be accepted as a national poet in today's Britain as a pluralist, "indeed multicultural [because] a national poet by definition cannot protect himself from the encounter with the nation, the nation is plural" (Jardine, 1999).

If Shakespeare is to survive and be debated thus in another two hundred years, the battle for possession will have to continue. Shakespeare's world and its inhabitants will have to be re-fashioned to suit the prejudices of the time and those who engage with it, be they readers, critics, actors, audiences or most pertinent to

this research study, pupils and their teachers. However, Shakespeare's continued existence can be ensured not through conquest alone but conquest that brings in its train liberation so that, Ariel-like, Shakespeare can live on in a form which is something quite other and transformed from what it has been.

Romantic critics were much taken with Shakespearean transformations. Hazlitt saw Shakespeare's ability to be in and yet out of his myriad characters as something remarkable; to be both a Prince and a gravedigger, a Queen and a gardener. He felt that this attribute was not simply an ill-assorted co-mingling of the high-born and the low-born as earlier critics had positioned it, but was something much more. It was central to Shakespeare's imaginative power which was so developed that, as Hazlitt wrote in 1814, "He scarcely seems to have had any individual existence at all" (Bate, 1992: 166). Coleridge too, described Shakespeare's imaginative power as a "displacement of the self into the other" (Holmes: 1998: 124) and Keats developed the idea in a letter, which was to prove justly famous: "At once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement especially in Literature & which Shakespeare pos[s]essed so enormously - I mean *Negative Capability*, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason" (Motion, 1997: 217). What Keats had been mulling over privately was the very subject of one of Hazlitt's poetry lectures the following year, which Keats attended. In it, Hazlitt declared that Shakespeare's ability to embody all manner of men and women was so perfected that "He was nothing in himself; but he was all that others were or that they could become" (ibid, 227).

Coleridge had described Shakespeare's language as snake like in its ever-evolving and twisting circularity (Bate, 1992: 163), and it had also been Shakespeare's unboundedness and lack of propriety that had so exasperated critics of previous centuries. But what was criticised was now applauded. Even the French came round to Shakespeare as "unser" Shakespeare became "notre" Shakespeare. Shortly before Stendhal's *Racine et Shakespeare* appeared, to which I have already referred, Francois Guizot, a fellow-countryman of the arch Shakespeare-villifier Voltaire, wrote in 1821: "At the present day, all controversy regarding Shakespeare's genius and glory has come to an end. No one ventures any longer to dispute them" (Bate, 1992: 203). In what must be seen as an ironic coda to French neo-classical criticism of Shakespeare, Victor Hugo praised Shakespeare's jangling juxtapositions of the high and the humble, which had so irked the rational minds of the Age of Reason, "We insist then that the grotesque is one of the supreme beauties of the drama" (ibid, 226). Nearly forty years later, Hugo was still writing about Shakespeare, and these extracts from his *William Shakespeare*, published in 1864, illustrate most vividly much of what the Romantics had thought and felt about Shakespeare:

Shakespeare is above all, an imagination ... At one pole, Lady Macbeth, at the other Titania. A colossal thought, and an immense caprice ...

Shakespeare, like all great poets, like all great things, is absorbed by a dream. His own vegetation astounds him; his own tempest appals him. It seems at times as if Shakespeare terrified Shakespeare. He shudders at his own depth.

(Bate, 1992: 229)

Hugo's vividly organic and personifying metaphors exemplify a typically Romantic exuberance. In other words, Shakespeare can not be contained within boundaries but is like an artistic "arabesque" which "grows, increases, knots, exfoliates, multiplies, becomes green, blooms, branches, and creeps around every dream" (ibid, 228).

In claiming Shakespeare as "notre" Shakespeare, rather like the German critics of the First World War, Hugo is unable to resist a sly dig at the British, showing how Shakespeare rises above the country of his birth:

Shakespeare, [...] is a sympathetic genius. Insularism is his ligature, not his strength. He would break it willingly. A little more and Shakespeare would be European. He loves and praises France; he calls her 'the soldier of God'. Besides, in that prudish nation, he is the free poet.

(Bate, 1992: 230).

So as we have seen, Shakespeare can be claimed and remade to suit different characteristics and mores. In this respect, Shakespeare is infinitely malleable and transformable.

Beyond Romanticism

In the nineteenth century there was a consensus that Shakespeare was important, both nationally and in the international arena. In 1840, the Scots-born scholar and historian Thomas Carlyle gave a series of lectures (published in 1841) in which he presented Shakespeare as one of history's heroes. In amongst his fulsome panegyric is the claim, "He is the grandest thing we have yet done" (Bate, 1992: 255). This single sentence is interesting because it illustrates a double vision of Shakespeare, on the one hand Shakespeare's greatness is created through and by

himself but on the other hand, as we have already seen, it is also the nation, his readers, his audience who create that greatness, that grandeur. The latter perception looks familiar when viewed through the optics of some present-day critical responses which emphasise a cultural means of production. Carlyle ends with a passionate re-appropriation of “unser” Shakespeare which serves to conflate both viewpoints, “English men and women ... will say ... ‘Yes, this Shakespeare is ours; we produced him, we speak and think by him; we are of one blood and kind with him.’ ” (ibid, 256).

It would hardly be possible to continue this discussion of 19th century responses to Shakespeare without mentioning the one writer whose adjectival epithet - Dickensian - presents an immediately-recognisable portrait of a distinctive world in the same way that Shakespearean does, (along with their respective heritage industry connotations). Dickens felt an affinity to Shakespeare, in that they both came from relatively humble backgrounds and became wealthy during the course of their careers, and neither was university-educated. The mystery surrounding so much of Shakespeare’s background was also something that Dickens tried to appropriate in connection with his own life and he went to some lengths to present himself as the “man from nowhere” (Sanders, 1999). Alas for Dickens, whereas biographers can only speculate about Shakespeare’s private life, a great many of Dicken’s secrets have long been uncovered. Above all though, it was in Dickens’ literary ambitions that he most wanted to emulate Shakespeare. As Shakespeare has come to embody one of the high points of the Renaissance in England, so Dickens and the Victorian era walk hand in hand. In what might be construed as his most Shakespearean novel, *Nicholas Nickelby*, Dickens’ tributes to

Shakespeare are affectionately comedic as in the Crummles' theatre company's production of *Romeo and Juliet* and Mrs Nickleby's rambling monologue about her Shakespeare-stuffed dreams in Stratford. More seriously, Dickens defends Shakespeare against the "literary gentleman's" criticism that "Bill" was merely an adapter of stories with Nicholas Nickleby's rebuttal that Shakespeare was an artist "who turned familiar things into constellations which should enlighten the world for ages" (Dickens, 1994: 624). Whilst Shakespeare is also alluded to in specific novels, notably the 'Hamlet scene' in *Great Expectations* and the description in *Sketches by Boz* of *Richard III*, he is also less overtly, but still palpably present, in many more of Dickens' works (Leach, 1992). In the present day, the literary critic John Bayley affirms that Shakespeare's words "have become primal" (Bayley, 1998: 18) and that they are:

invisibly present in all great novels, because Shakespeare was a great novelist: the inspiration, directly or indirectly, of all novelists. And his words have left his plays behind.

(Bayley, 1998: 18).

The last sentence in particular attests to the very real sense of the primacy of the word, moreover the word made flesh as it is subsumed within not just the communicant-reader but as it courses through the veins of the national body too.

The 19th century was also the era which saw the increasing professionalisation of Shakespearean scholarship. For the first time, people began to earn their living by, through and with Shakespeare (Hawkes, 1990). It was also a painstakingly pedantic era for, like their entomological counterparts armed with huge butterfly nets and chloroform collecting jars, Shakespearean scholars seized hold of, pinned

down and dissected every “last syllable of recorded” text. Such scholarship was Causabon-like in its monumental ambition to classify and edit Shakespeare and projects were initiated that would see out their progenitors’ whole life-spans. A case in point is the American New Variorum edition, begun in 1871 and reported to be “still in progress” well over a hundred years later. (Drabble, 1985).

Whilst such endeavours were redolent of High Victorian self-confidence, for one eminent Victorian, however, the age was characterised by doubt as well as certainty. Matthew Arnold (whose famous poem *Dover Beach* mourned the loss of religious faith) held a unique position as poet, critic and for 35 years as HM Inspector of Schools. His oft-repeated definition of culture as “the best that has been thought and known in the world” has become a maxim used to define a liberal humanist approach to “great” literature. This ‘Arnoldian’ cultural perspective influenced many subsequent critics, including F.R. Leavis (whose influential views on the teaching and learning of English literature will be considered further in the second section of this chapter). However, we also need to consider Arnold’s exegesis in relation to both its specificity and temporal location. *Culture and Anarchy* was published in 1869 and the first and second series of the *Essays in Criticism*, which included *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1864) appeared between 1863 and 1888. In its adamant opposition to the anarchy that manifested itself in contemporary mob riots, it might be considered that Arnold’s concept of culture is one that is at heart absolute. Culture, he explains, entails a study of perfection. Such perfection, as exemplified by Shakespeare, came about through a confluence of the “power of the man and the power of the moment” (Arnold, 1964: 12), and so Arnold’s Shakespearean

criticism is careful to situate the man “within a framework of cultural history” (Carroll: 1982: 154). Furthermore, the critic’s task is to disseminate, not to polemicise, and thereby exemplify a “disinterested endeavour to propagate the best that is known and thought in the world” (ibid, 33). As a poet himself, it is the enigma of Shakespeare that Arnold responds to most powerfully, as this extract from his sonnet *Shakespeare* show:

Others abide our question. Thou art free,
We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge ...
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school’d, self-scann’d, self-honour’d, self-secure,
Didst walk on earth unguess’d at. Better so! ...
(quoted in Quiller-Couch, 1980: 923).

A.C. Bradley, however, was a later hugely influential critic who was not content to leave Shakespeare “ungessed at”. His Shakespearean criticism, which included *Shakespearean Tragedy* published in 1904, focussed on trying to understand Shakespeare’s plays through his characters and their “inferable identities” (Taylor, 2001: 40). “The age of Bradley” (Dubrow 1997: 30 cited in Taylor, 2001: 39) was “manifested most triumphantly in the first two or three decades of the twentieth century”(Taylor, 2001: 38). Bradley lived on until 1935, by which time a very different sort of critical response had also developed. This eschewed a Bradleyan emphasis on plot and character in favour of a greater attention to the text itself and was perhaps most famously expressed in L.C. Knights’ essay *How many Children had Lady Macbeth?* (first published in 1933, Knights, 1946). As

the title suggests, Knights' attack was directed at what he felt was an over-emphasis on the "detective interest" (ibid, 3) in Shakespeare's characters, a fault which he traced back to the latter half of the 18th century. Bradley's fulsome praise for Maurice Morgann (who was discussed earlier) was proof enough of the pervasive link between that time and this, when Knights argued that a different response was involved the development of a "full complex response" (ibid, 16), which:

makes our experience of a Shakespeare play so very much more than an appreciation of 'character' – that is, usually, of somebody else's 'character'. That more complete, more intimate possession can only be obtained by treating Shakespeare primarily as a poet.

(Knights, 1946: 16).

Following on from the work of I.A. Richards, whose 1929 *Practical Criticism: a study of literary judgement*, "revolutionised the teaching and study of English" (Drabble, 1984: 827), Knights advocated a close reading of the text, analysing each word "to the last line of the last act" whilst emphasising that a Shakespeare play is "a precise particular experience, a poem" (ibid, 17).

We have seen examples of the development of a range of responses to Shakespeare which incorporates the literary as well as the theatrical, that is, Shakespeare as wordsmith and Shakespeare as playwright. In the following part of this section we shall look at some instances of critical (in the pejorative sense) responses to Shakespeare.

“For I am nothing if not critical” (Othello, Act II, i

The rise of Shakespeare’s reputation was not one that went entirely unchallenged, Voltaire was the most prominent dissenter in the 18th century as we have seen. Despite Shakespeare’s eventual triumph in Voltaire’s homeland, other dissenting voices continued to be heard during the course of the following centuries. In 1814, Byron, ever the iconoclast, wrote in a private letter that Shakespeare’s survival in whatever form, was by no means certain: “Shakespeare’s name, you may depend on it, stands absurdly too high and will go down” (Marchand, 1982:100). In the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st, Shakespeare’s iconic reputation has been assailed but despite Byron’s prophecy, Shakespeare’s name has not gone quite “down”. The sheer amount and range of discussion, debate and criticism that exists attests to the continued power of his name. Byron insists that the “few flashes of genius” (ibid, 100) found in the plays do not warrant the high status accorded to Shakespeare. Along with other great would-be bardicides, Byron was in fact widely read in Shakespeare’s works, his own letters and journals are liberally scattered with quotes and references to Shakespeare’s plays. In order to condemn one has to know the object of vilification and Byron was certainly familiar with Shakespeare, as indeed was another great writer of the 19th century – Tolstoy.

Tolstoy’s familiarity with the works of Shakespeare, achieved during the course of a long life, gave rise to nothing but “an irresistible repulsion and tedium” (Wiggins, 2000a: 38). He read the plays over and over again (in Russian, German and English) in order to ascertain just what it was other people so admired in them.

After a final re-reading of the whole canon when he was 75 years old in 1903, (Wiggins, 2000 b:38) he gave up, declaring that:

The plays were 'trivial and positively bad', to the extent that their readers risked losing not only their powers of aesthetic discrimination but even 'the capacity of distinguishing good from evil'.

(Wiggins, 2000b: 3)

Martin Wiggins agrees in part with George Orwell's suggestion that Tolstoy was judging Shakespeare by his own yardstick of what and how a writer should write, and that Shakespeare fails in this respect because, quite simply, he did not write great 19th century Russian novels.

The prevailing currents of Shakespearean criticism during the course of the later nineteenth century were largely positive, so much so that George Bernard Shaw disparagingly coined the term bardolatry to describe the most fervent worship. In contrast there were also those, to paraphrase Hamlet, whose idolising "currents turn[ed] awry". Members of the 'Anti-Stratfordian' movement firmly believed that William Shakespeare from Stratford-upon-Avon was not the author of Shakespeare's plays. Over the years numerous contenders for the throne have been put forward, including Francis Bacon; Christopher Marlowe; Edward Vere, the Earl of Oxford; Robert Burton and even Queen Elizabeth 1. The Anti-Stratfordians continue to pursue their claims, with much energy and fervour that "shows no sign of abating" (Garber, 1987: 4), refusing to believe "that the poorly-educated man from the obscure market town was the author of the greatest works of English literature" (Rubenstein, 2001:35). Although the subject of later discussion in the

thesis, it is interesting to point out here that pupils from one of the schools in the study were partly familiar with the Authorship Controversy.

What the Anti-Stratfordians have in common with other critics is that they are all well-read in Shakespeare's works, even if they do not accept or like him. George Bernard Shaw was no exception in this respect, in fact he was saturated with Shakespeare. From an early age he had read Shakespeare's plays, once describing them as "mother's milk to me" (Simon, 1958: 38). With the development of his conviction that art could be used to uncover social injustices within society, he believed that the main sin of bardolatry was that it prevented an Ibsenite progress of modern drama (Simon, 1958). For Shaw, Ibsen was the new and revolutionary spirit of the theatre, "Shakespeare was to Ibsen as Salieri was to Mozart." (Wiggins, 2000c: 41). However, Shaw was not exactly modest about his own genius as a playwright and once declared that "If I had been born in 1556 instead of 1856 I should have taken to blank verse and given Shakespeare a harder run for his money than all the other Elizabethans put together" (ibid, 41). In 1949 he wrote *Shakes Versus Shav*, intriguingly for a puppet theatre, in which there is a stand-off between the two playwrights:

Shakes: Where is thy Hamlet? / Couldst thou write King Lear?

Shaw: Aye, with his daughters all/complete. Couldst thou/have written Heartbreak House?/ Behold my Lear....

(Lawson, 1999: 5)

As Lawson points out, the quotation serves to illustrate "two rules for writing about Shakespeare: don't measure yourself against him directly and don't make him speak blank verse" (ibid, 5).

Succeeding Voltaire, Tolstoy, and Shaw, Wittgenstein's opposition to Shakespeare stemmed from his "suspicion that praising him has been the conventional thing to do" (Wiggins, 1999: 35) and that accustomed admiration was not sufficiently tempered with reason. Wiggins also considers it "significant" that Wittgenstein's

manuscript jottings about his own inability to appreciate Shakespeare were made at a time late in his life (he died in 1951) when he was also proposing a sceptical philosophy in which the experience of doubt and uncertainty was central.

(Wiggins, 1999: 35)

Unwittingly perhaps, Wittgenstein anticipated the tenor of much later twentieth century criticism of Shakespeare, in that it is also characterised by doubt and uncertainty.

"Reputation, reputation, reputation!" (Othello Act II, iii)

So far, in looking at a range of responses to Shakespeare in the centuries following his death we have also seen how the growth of his national and international reputation was both consolidated and challenged. It is a pattern that has been followed through the twentieth century up to the present day, as exemplified in the contrasting quotations from Schoenbaum and Hawkes that were presented in Chapter One. The former claimed that Shakespeare's role in the forging of the West's "creative consciousness" (Schoenbaum, 1979: 10) was very nearly paramount (in fact, Harold Bloom [1999] insists that it is), whilst the latter defends the notion that Shakespeare's plays "serve as instruments by which we make cultural meanings for ourselves" (Hawkes, 1990: 147).

Jonathan Bate, for one, does not believe that Shakespeare “is simply something that we make meaning out of” (Bate, 1999). Instead he locates “a kind of golden thread running through the culture as Shakespeare looks back to earlier culture and looks forward. He, in that sense, holds tradition together” (Bate, 1999). For Bate, the notion of tradition in Shakespeare is one that is strengthened by its diversity. He rebuffs the “enormous condescension of current academic criticism” (Bate, 1997:191), which he describes as the New Iconoclasm. His argument with New Iconoclasm (loosely incorporating cultural materialism and new historicism) is that it tends to ignore the:

contribution which Shakespeare has made to the lives and works of people whom ‘radical’ critics ought to care about – people like the Chartist Thomas Cooper and the poet of *negritude* Aimé Césaire [whose re-working of *The Tempest* was a powerful indictment of colonialism], people whose radicalism brought about real historical change.

(Bate, 1997: 191).

According to one reviewer, in his book *The Genius of Shakespeare*, Bate steers a course between the conservatives and radicals by presenting a “just, liberal, unhostaged book” (Wood, 1997:11) and shows that Shakespeare was :

an intending author who, being a great poet, was not always at the mercy of Elizabethan ideologies. But he also stresses what was unoriginal in Shakespeare – how often he embroidered an inherited pattern, how collaborative was the Elizabethan theatre.

(Wood, 1997: 11).

Although Frank Kermode's book *Shakespeare's Language* (Kermode, 2000) took what some would consider an old-fashioned approach – primarily concerned with the subject of its title, language - like Bate, Kermode claims to adhere neither to Bardolatry nor to New Iconoclasm. He points out that not all Shakespeare's language is sublime but he also refutes "modern attitudes" (ibid, viii) which claim that Shakespeare's reputation is "fraudulent" (ibid, viii) or that his plays should only be studied in the context of their production.

On the other hand, the American scholar and critic, Harold Bloom, is proud to proclaim his unstinting bardolatry. For him, Shakespeare represents the fulcrum of Western canonical tradition, and as such Bloom defends that position against what he describes as the gender and power freaks in his 750 page book, provocatively entitled *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (Bloom, 1999). As the title of his book indicates, Bloom claims that we derive our fullest sense of what it is to be human from Shakespeare's own works. Whilst Bloom's audacity in making this claim has been subject to admiration as well as derision from critics, Bloom remains unabashed, claiming that:

the only proper attitude towards Shakespeare is stunned awe ... He really could think more largely, and comprehensively, and accurately, and creatively, and perceptively than, somehow, all the rest of mankind and womankind has ever been able to do. It is, in fact, total knowledge. What is one to say about him finally?

(cited in Mead, 1999: 23).

Terence Hawkes, Professor of English at the University of Wales, Cardiff, is not stunned into awed silence, “ I don’t believe he had any innate quality. If he had it would have been reflected at the time and, although they knew he was good, they didn’t think he was a genius” (Swain, 1997: 19).

As the editor of a volume called *Shakespeare Left and Right*, Ivo Kamps included contributions from both sides of the ideological camp, not just as a platform for the differing arguments but also to show that both the Left and the Right approaches to Shakespeare are “ideological and both are, for different reasons and to different degrees, prone to disguising their ideological content” (Kamps, 1991: 1). He concurs that the Left “shows a greater willingness to scrutinise its critical and political premises” (ibid, 11) than the Right but, as an example of hidden ideologies, points to John Drakakis’s editorial in *Alternative Shakespeares* (Drakakis, 1990), which “ suggests with misplaced confidence that the contributors to his volume are in a position to examine the record ‘disinterestedly’.” (ibid, 11).

Cultural materialism and New historicism

Kamps’ emphasis that we are all ideologically situated is a salutary reminder that there can also be ideological distinctions between Left and Left, let alone Left and Right. On the surface, there are many similarities between what in Britain came to be known as ‘cultural materialism’ and in the United States ‘new historicism’ but unpicking the ideological differences underpinning each approach reveals fundamental differences. Put simply, a cultural materialist reading of a Shakespeare text can reveal “*dissident* stories that undermine and call into

question (or subvert) that story which supports the powerful and is most widely believed” (McEvoy, 2000: 205, italics in original). A new historicist reading of the plays can show that “authority [is]challenged and overthrown ” (ibid., 204) but “the drama always ends with monarchical power re-established, and indeed, all the more strongly established because it allowed subversion to flourish, but has contained it successfully” (ibid, 204).

Such readings of the plays can also have an effect on modern-day productions of the plays where either approach could be used by producing endings that uphold or subvert the status quo. For example, in *Measure for Measure*, depending on how the actor plays the role, does Isabella accept the Duke’s proposal with an appalled silence or an acquiescent one? In *The Taming of the Shrew* is Katharina complicit with Petruchio’s shrew-taming tactics or is she beaten by them? In effect, whether Shakespeare is being scrutinised by a critic or performed by an actor, these analyses comprise a different approach to thinking about Shakespeare. The literary critic Raymond Williams, who was closely associated with the origination of the term cultural materialism, described how he first began to think differently about Shakespeare. As an undergraduate at Cambridge in 1939 he was confronted by row upon row of book titles in the library stacks depicting Shakespeare as “royalist, democrat catholic, puritan, feudalism, progressive, humanist, racist, Englishman, homosexual, Marlowe, Bacon and so on” (Dollimore and Sinfield, 1985: 281). What he found to be “a central methodological error” (ibid, 281) in these portrayals was that they saw in Shakespeare’s texts evidence of “authorial confession or assertion” (ibid, 281). Thinking about a Shakespeare text differently meant paying much more attention to the form itself. It is dramatic fiction, and it

is patently not a linear narrative, so that the analytical search for the singularity of an authorial confession or statement of belief, has to change direction in order to encompass a text that is “inherently multivocal” (ibid, 288). Williams ends by stating that:

I have my own reasons for believing that the most practical and effective new direction will be in analysis of the historically based conventions of language and representation: the plays themselves as socially and materially produced, within discoverable conditions, indeed the texts themselves as history.

(Dollimore and Sinfield, 1994: 289).

As editors of what has come to be regarded as something of a landmark in critical studies of Shakespeare, *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* [first published in 1985], Dollimore and Sinfield explicate further on the cultural materialist approach, which uses “ a combination of historical context, theoretical method, political commitment and textual analysis” (ibid, vii) in order to challenge traditional literary analysis. Cultural materialism challenges the claims that are made about great literature, that is, its capacity to recreate the “quality of human experience”; its ability to “ provide direct *commentary* on the life of societies”; the revealing of “what is universal in human life”; and finally “the aesthetic appreciation of literature is seen as an end in itself” (Hoggart, 1987: 33-34, italics in original).

Cultural materialism also concerns itself with marginalisation and subordination, and looks at low culture as well as high culture, with the latter re-assigned “as one

set of signifying practices among others” (Dollimore and Sinfield, 1994, viii).

Close attention is also paid to the forces of production, which help to shape culture:

A play by Shakespeare is related to the contexts of cultural production (the court, patronage, theatre, education, the church). Moreover, the relevant history is not just that of four hundred years ago, for culture is made continuously and Shakespeare’s text is reconstructed, re-appraised, re-assigned all the time through diverse institutions in specific contexts. What the plays signify, how they signify, depends on the cultural field in which they are situated.

(Dollimore and Sinfield, 1994: viii).

Grady, whilst noting the “cross-fertilisation” between cultural materialism and new historicism (evinced by the fact that two of the contributors to Dollimore and Sinfield’s *Political Shakespeare*, quoted above, are the Americans Leonard Tennenhouse and Stephen Greenblatt), also points to differences:

British cultural materialism has roots in an activist British Left that give it different qualities, different strengths and weaknesses, from the much more academically oriented American new historicism.

(Grady, 1991: 231).

New historicism:

In America, Stephen Greenblatt is the figure credited with the use of the term “new historicism” in connection with Renaissance studies, although he preferred to ascribe a “poetics of culture” to this genre of literary analysis, (Veesper, 1989: 1).

Greenblatt's influential book, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* appeared in 1980 and the new historicism began to consolidate around Greenblatt (who admits to the shaping influence of Foucault, an important figure for the cultural materialists as well) and other scholars. They did not propose new historicism as "a doctrine but as a set of themes, preoccupations and attitudes" (Veese, 1989: xiii). Some of these preoccupations focus on a type of literary analysis that was contextualised historically, culturally, economically and socially. New historicism effected a paradigm shift in which: "The Elizabethan world is no longer the idealised golden-age, the long-sought-after organic society of both Tillyard and Leavis" (Grady, 1991: 229) with attention focussed instead on "the marginalization and dehumanizing of suppressed Others, both in literary texts ... and in history" (ibid, 229).

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz's concept of *thick description* was used by new historicists so as to "reveal ... the behavioural codes, logics and motive forces controlling a whole society" (Veese, 1989: xi). A new historicist reading of Shakespeare's texts would claim that the characters in them are ultimately controlled, by the inevitable re-assertion of the state's authority at the end of the play. New historicists also make characteristic use of the language of the market place and it is "the moment of exchange" (ibid, xiv) that especially "fascinates the New Historicists":

Circulation involves not just money and knowledge but also, for New Historicists, prestige – the "possession" of social assets as evanescent as taste in home furnishings or as enduring as masculinity.

Their point is that such social advantages circulate as a form of material

currency that tends to go unnoticed because it cannot be crudely translated into liquid assets.

(Veenser, 1989: xiv).

However, such symbolic currency does, “even if unconsciously, ... aim... at material advantages” (ibid., xiv). This is also a point that Bourdieu makes when he says that economic capital can, in some cases, be acquired through the accumulation of symbolic capital. The relationship between a form of symbolic capital, what Bourdieu describes as cultural capital, and pupils in the study will be the subject of further discussion in the thesis. Randall Johnson, who edited and introduced Bourdieu’s *Essays on Art and Literature* (Bourdieu, 1993), also comments on some of the similarities between new historicist readings of the literary field and Bourdieu’s in that both emphasise the connections between the historical, the social and the political *with* the literary.

Shakespeare “translated”

In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, the Mechanicals’s play rehearsal is abruptly ended by the transformation of their friend Bottom into a nightmarish half-ass, half-human creature: “Bless thee, Bottom! Bless thee! Thou art/translated.” (Act III.i). By the end of the play Bottom has recovered his human identity but is left with a tantalisingly elusive memory of his transformed self, “Methought I was - there is no man can tell what. Methought I was, and methought I had, - ” (Act IV.i)

Translation in the sense of transformation is equally applicable to Shakespeare’s texts as they have changed and been changed in form and substance during their diaspora from The Globe throughout the globe. Shakespeare’s plays have endured

so long (and in ways that those of his contemporaries have not) because they have been able to resist definitive explication. After centuries of scholarly activity “by indirections [to] find directions out” (*Hamlet, Act II, i*), Shakespeare’s texts and the man himself retain their ambiguities, as the certainties of one era are toppled by the uncertainties of another. So far in this chapter, this notion of transformation strongly allied with appropriation has emerged as a “golden thread” in the successive responses to Shakespeare that we have seen, from the first editorial emendations to the latest cultural materialist and new historicist readings. All in their turn have made and re-made Shakespeare and, as I have already suggested, this can be seen as positive in relation to a strategy of survival. Before turning to the consideration of Shakespeare’s survival in the classroom, which is the subject of the second section **Shakespeare and English**, I should like to conclude “Unser” Shakespeare with a look at some examples of Shakespeare’s translation overseas.

The political implications of the plays often have an especial resonance abroad, as exemplified by the enduring power of *Hamlet* in Eastern Europe (especially in Russia, where ‘Hamlet is more than just a play’ [Meek 1998: 18]). For example, the Taganka theatre in Russia under the direction of Yuri Lyubimov “became the visible centre of resistance for the intelligentsia” (Goldfarb, 1989) and *Hamlet* a *leitmotif* of that resistance. For his production of the play, performed in Britain in 1989, Lyubimov “was looking for a key to unlock the play” (ibid.). He found it – both literally and metaphorically – in the huge, loosely woven curtain that twisted and turned across the stage, revealing and concealing the actors who alternately clung to it and punched it. This remarkable prop emphasised the fear and

suspicion that lurked in every corner of the all seeing, all hearing State of Denmark, not unlike the Soviet Union that Lyubimov had been exiled from five years before. When the National Theatre's production of *Hamlet* played in Belgrade in 2001, it made newspaper headlines: "As a gesture of welcome for democracy in Serbia, the British have sent a gift; the greatest work of their greatest playwright" (Crawshaw, 2001: 1). As the journalist covering the tour, Crawshaw found that art and politics "were so intertwined that it was difficult to tell where one began and the other ended" (ibid, 1).

It would take too long to continue listing how, where and in what form Shakespeare has resurfaced in different places throughout the world and with what reception. The point is to acknowledge what might be called Shakespeare's polymorphous perversity, which leads to Shakespeare's appearance in opera, ballet, film, television, radio, the internet and digital technologies, advertising, literature/s, art, architecture, sculpture and so on. To illustrate this, I would like to focus on one aspect of Shakespeare's translation in more detail, and one which took place within a South African context.

The South African novelist Lewis Nkosi has described life in the black townships during apartheid: "It was the cacophonous, swaggering world of Elizabethan England which gave us the closest parallel to our own mode of existence" (cited in Sampson, 2001). However, it was in the classrooms of the colonies that Shakespeare was most strongly legitimated, used implicitly and explicitly to support both the unifying and subjugating hegemonies of the British Empire. In reminding ourselves of how Shakespeare was used in certain contexts in the past

we can also see how, in the process of colonisation, Shakespeare can encompass subversion as well as subjugation. Anthony Sampson, a former editor of the black magazine *Drum* writes that:

Shakespeare for the last 50 years has been one of the main influences behind the liberation movement in South Africa. Shakespeare became more politically relevant than the Bible or Marx. Successive generations of African leaders saw his plays as an inspiration for their struggle and their humanity.

(Sampson, 2001: 27).

Julius Caesar was especially significant, becoming “a textbook for revolution”

(ibid, 27). Whilst Tanzania’s first President, Julius Nyerere translated *Julius*

Caesar into Swahili, the first manifesto of the Youth League of the African

National Congress in 1944 concluded with lines from the play, “The fault, dear

Brutus, is not in our stars/But in ourselves that we are underlings” (Act 1.ii).

Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others in the cohort of political prisoners

serving their sentences in South Africa’s notorious Robben Island shared *samizdat*

copies of Shakespeare’s plays, especially *Julius Caesar*, as a “source of

inspiration” (Walder, 2001).

Post-apartheid, in 2001, Shakespeare’s influence on a whole generation of

political activists was seemingly disregarded when a committee, made up of

teachers appointed by South Africa’s Education Department, proposed banning

certain Shakespeare texts (as well as books by many other authors, black and

white) from the senior school syllabus. The reasons behind the ban were to do

with what the Committee perceived of as Shakespeare's inherent racism and sexism, deemed inappropriate in a twenty-first century educational curriculum that aimed to promote tolerance and sexual equality. Indeed, in campuses elsewhere in the world Shakespeare's texts have been dropped from the curriculum for these same reasons. However, one of the banned authors, the contemporary South African novelist Nadine Gordimer, pointed out inconsistencies. For example, *The Merchant of Venice* - which has been banned in other countries because of its perceived anti-semitism - was deemed acceptable (Cartwright, 2001). In an unintentional echo of the sort of critiques that were also made in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Committee also made direct references to some of Shakespeare's plot-lines, which were "ridiculous and unlikely... [and] full of violence and despair" (Walsh, 2001).

The proposal to ban Shakespeare's plays - which the South African government later said would be rescinded (MacGregor, 2001) - came about because the plays failed to conform to the prevailing ideology. Discussing English literary studies within a colonial context, Ania Loomba notes "Althusser's point that educational systems are important means for the dissemination of dominant ideologies" (1988: 88). However, she goes on to query whether "such a process of control" (ibid, 88) works or not. She suggests that in reality it is more complex because the:

process of replication is never complete or perfect, and what it produces is not simply a perfect image of the original but something changed because of the context in which it is being reproduced.

(Loomba, 1998: 89).

So the Shakespeare that was presented in colonial classrooms could not be received in quite the same way as the Shakespeare that was taught in the “motherland” nor was it, presumably, the intention of colonial educators that Shakespeare’s texts could serve as political rallying cries to undermine state authority.

The Shakespeare that is taught today, whether it is in the Republic of South Africa or anywhere else in the world, cannot, and indeed should not, be a simulacrum but should be re-made according to context. In the following section, we shall look at the emergence of English as a subject discipline and how Shakespeare has been incorporated within it.

2.3: Shakespeare and English

‘Shakespeare and English’ is a heading that connects Shakespeare to a double sense of the word ‘English’. Shakespeare has become embedded within English, as it has evolved as a subject discipline and has also become synonymous with an emergent nationalism. This dual identification has continued in some form or another to the present day. For example, a Guardian editorial in 2001 discussed how Shakespeare’s ‘Englishness’ could be seen as something that had the potential to diffuse nationalist tensions rather than inflate them. Reflecting on the proposed plans by the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, to block St. George’s day celebrations on April 23rd but to allow a St. Patrick’s day parade to take place in the city on March 17, the editorial suggested that English ambivalence about national symbols and the imperial past could be resolved by celebrating, instead of St. George, (“a demoted Turkish saint of doubtful existence” Toynbee, 2000:20):

a genius and Englishman who was born on April 23rd? Step forward Shakespeare and help the rest of us, including Mr Livingstone, to solve England's identity crisis.

(The Guardian, 2001).

Replacing St. George with Shakespeare is not a new idea. Particularly since devolution in the United Kingdom, around April each year newspaper feature writers ponder the significance of national symbols. In 1999, The Observer's query as to why St. George should be abandoned in favour of Shakespeare was answered thus:

The world's most famous author epitomises everything that the English are good at – creativity, openness, humour, wit, internationalism, story-telling. That's what being English is all about.

(Arlidge, 1999: 10).

It is hard, though, to see how Shakespeare's "internationalism" can also be squared with a specifically English nationalism and in a newspaper article, the journalist Polly Toynbee asked, "to what extent can we be more proud of Shakespeare than a German might be? What is our present day ownership of him?" (Toynbee, 2000: 20). Even though such a question would no doubt have given Arthur Quiller-Couch apoplexy, surely the point of it is that "present-day" ownership of Shakespeare should not to be confined to any one nation, or even any one section of that nation. As has been discussed earlier, it should be seen as plural, multi-cultural, and transposable.

Before continuing with this section, it should be reiterated that Shakespeare in the English curriculum refers to England because there is no statutory requirement to

be tested on a play of Shakespeare's at Key Stage 3 elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The series editor of a recent guide to *The Education Systems of the United Kingdom* hopes to remind readers that the volume "will serve to convince those who are still inclined to use the term that the *British* education system does not exist!" (Phillips, 2000: 7, emphasis in original). Devolution has meant that there are now significant differences, as well as similarities, between the educational systems of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Both this present discussion and the empirical research are situated within the context in England. However, as a point of interest, I contacted the Welsh and Northern Ireland curriculum and assessment authorities to ask about their Shakespeare provision. (Scotland was excepted on the grounds that there is no National Curriculum: "the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID), now the Scottish Executive Education Department, has only ever issued guidelines on the curriculum, never prescriptions" Matheson, 2000: 68).

In Northern Ireland, the Subject Officer for NICCEA (Northern Ireland Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) confirmed that the Key Stage 3 English tests cover Reading and Writing only, with no Shakespeare Paper. She went on to say:

Shakespeare is not formally tested, but many schools choose to incorporate the plays into their schemes of work. Pupil response can be assessed as part of teacher assessment, whether for Talking and Listening or more formal Reading and Writing tasks. It's probably true to say that this allows for a more flexible and creative approach.

(Personal Correspondence, e-mail, 7 August 2001).

She also said that in her own school a different play was taught in Years 8, 9 and 10 where “the emphasis is on exploration and performance as much as analysis, especially in Year 9 when we hold a Shakespeare Festival which involves drama workshops and performance” (ibid.).

At the Qualifications Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (ACCAC), I was told that in 1997 they had had a review, following concern about pupils’ writing, and in 1998 had taken Shakespeare out of the end of Key Stage 3 tasks, leaving Reading and Writing papers only. The feeling was that Shakespeare was not best suited to test pupils’ ability to write, as it is content-limited. Since then they have found that pupils’ writing has improved. Teachers can choose which Shakespeare text they teach in the classroom, and how they teach it. (Personal Correspondence, telephone, 18 July 2001).

However, Terence Hawkes has recently criticised the continued existence of Shakespeare in the Welsh curriculum, where it is no longer mandatory but has:

turned out to be strongly ‘recommended’ by the Authority [ACCAC] – this of an author, many of whose works either explicitly or implicitly recommend and buttress exactly the structure, the United Kingdom, which the Welsh Assembly systematically brings into question.

(Hawkes: 2000: 233).

He adds that in Scotland a “similar issue has surfaced, but with different emphases”, for example, when *Macbeth* was excluded from “the compulsory Scottish section of the new Higher in English and communication, on the grounds that it is not Scottish enough” (ibid, 234).

In England, Shakespeare's survival in the classroom has been shaped through and by the subject development of English itself. Whilst this section does not deal with a complete survey of the rise of English in academic institutions, the aim is to consider some significant landmarks along the way so that the context in which the Shakespeare that is currently taught and tested in Key Stage 3 classrooms can be situated more fully.

English as a subject can trace its inception as a philological off-shoot of 19th century classical studies to a position of curriculum dominance in the 20th and 21st centuries. Although Cambridge and Oxford did not appoint university chairs in English until 1878 and 1883 respectively (Ball *et al*, 1990), the first Professor of English Language and Literature was appointed as early as 1827 at the new institution of the University of London. The programme of English literature studies that the Reverend Thomas Dale inaugurated sought to include a "field survey of English authors and English titles from the early Middle Ages to the end of the eighteenth century" (Court, 1992: 59), touching on what Dale considered to be generic characteristics. For example, Sidney and Spenser illustrated "the language of poetry... [whilst] Shakespeare's plays [exemplified] the language of common life" (ibid, 57). In a bid to improve the standing of English, philology (which in the 1830's was new and exciting terrain in the field of language study) was embraced and thus set the tone for the subsequent direction of academic English studies in the 19th century:

Elevating English to the status of a specialised, empirical study gave it the aura of a discipline designed to encourage a scientific "habit of mind".

It gave it a claim to be taken seriously.

(Court, 1992: 74).

While such an elevation may have helped English to become “serious”, it also helped to establish the legacy of the division between English language and English literature. English literature, meanwhile, thrived elsewhere. It was being taught “in elementary schools, girls’ schools and Mechanics’ Institutes” (Mathieson, 1975: 124). Of the latter, “about five hundred had been founded by 1850” (ibid, 123) and one of the objectives was that that the study of literature would help to turn the minds of workers away from “seditious political material” (ibid, 123). English literature had in fact existed as “a low status subject” (mainly for girls) since the late sixteenth century (Fleming & Stevens, 1998: vii), but it:

did not figure on the curricula of the major public and endowed schools for boys; at best it was thought they might amuse themselves with works of English literature as recreation.

(Poulson, 1998: 19).

This earlier gendered, hierarchical and class-based approach to the teaching and studying of English literature did little to assuage the path to academic respectability in the institutions of higher education, particularly Oxford and Cambridge, where the Classics held sway. No doubt the 19th century Oxbridge classicist dons who sneered at the new subject of English as an “upstart crow”, would be spinning in their graves after the recent announcement that the “last Oxbridge course to insist on Latin fluency [will begin] admitting students who have not learned the language” (Farrar, 2002: 1), thus ending “more than 800 years of scholarly tradition” (ibid, 1).

The emphasis on the philological study of English, which helped to give the subject hard-won academic respectability, was not without its critics. For example, in 1891 John Churton Collins decried it as a barren and reductive approach which entirely ignored “all that constitutes [English literature’s] value as a liberal study ... [it] has been regarded not as the expression of art and genius, but as mere material for the study of words, as mere pabulum for philology” (Goodson & Marsh, 1996: 108). However, this emphasis did no disservice to Shakespeare at university level where “the study of him [was] made intellectually respectable by an early emphasis on philology and historical criticism” rather than emphasis on his merits as a proponent of “liberal study” (Taylor, 2001: 22).

By the “first decade of the new century” (Doyle, 1989: 26) the character of English studies had become “multi-faceted” (ibid, 26). The foundation of the English Association in 1907 was another important step forward in the development of the subject, one which “ would lead a mission of cultural renewal.” (ibid, 31). The urgency of the “mission” was emphasised by the Professor of English Literature at Oxford, George Gordon, who said:

England is sick and ... English literature must save it. The churches (as I understand it) having failed, and social remedies slow, English literature now has a triple function; still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but above all, to save our souls and heal the state.

(cited in Ball *et al*, 1990: 49)

As English literature was invariably drawn towards the lodestone of Shakespearean literature, it is no surprise to see how Foster Watson firmly

identified Shakespeare with English patriotism in his treatise about the origins of *The Teaching of Modern Subjects in England*, written in the heyday of the Edwardian era:

Particularly was this [Renaissance] spirit active in promoting the sense of glory in our native country. Our dramatists, true sons of the Renaissance [*sic*], even if they knew ‘little Latin and less Greek’, registered with full glow, the state of the consciousness of nationality. The defeat of the Spanish Armada had proved that no flights of imaginative exaggeration were necessary to sustain the credit of English patriotism. Shakespeare voiced the swelling joy...

(Watson, 1971: 527)

Watson quotes the famous lines from John of Gaunt’s speech in *Richard II* (Act II, i) that describe England as a paradise, “This precious stone set in the silver sea” (ibid,) but entirely omits the bitter, denunciatory last lines which negate all that went before.

It was during the First World War that the connection between Shakespeare and nationalism was strengthened further, with a series of public lectures to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare’s death in 1916. ‘These commemorations were often stridently patriotic in tone, invoking the Bard as evidence of British cultural supremacy’ (Robb, 2002: 131). Theatre managers put on suitably bellicose productions, including *Henry V*, whilst “appropriate lines would typically be played so as to bring down the house” (ibid, 134) such as the stirring words from *King John*: “This England never did and never shall/lie at the proud feet of a conqueror” (ibid, 134). The Times Newspaper produced patriotic

extracts from Shakespeare (and other writers including Wordsworth and Kipling) to send to the troops in the trenches. However, as Bate points out (1997), the soldier-poet Edward Thomas's 1915 anthology of English literature, also intended for soldiers on the Western Front, deliberately avoided war-like sentiments.

Instead, Thomas's anthology focussed on the pastoral and the sayings and doings of ordinary men and women, such as the soldier Michael Williams' reproof in

Henry V:

But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make when all those legs and arms and heads, chopped off in battle, shall join together at the latter day ... Now, if these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the king. (Act IV, i).

However, Shakespeare as the Chief Patriot of Great Britain, or more usually of England, was a persona that had been strongly built up during the First World War and its aftermath, and as such could be used in furtherance of the 1921 Newbolt Report's aims in fostering a sense of civic and cultural unity. The Report's full title was *The Teaching of English in England*, and Committee members included such prominent Shakespeareans as Caroline Spurgeon, Dover Wilson, Arthur Quiller Couch and George Sampson, whose 1925 edition of his book *English for the English* was also a significant landmark in the teaching of English (Mathieson, 1975). In the Newbolt Report, it was claimed that the study of Shakespeare would bring in its wake an understanding of the two elements present in all great literature, which were:

the contemporary and the eternal. On the one hand, Shakespeare and Pope can tell us what Englishmen were like at the beginning of the 17th and 18th

centuries. On the other hand they tell us what all men are like in all countries and at all times. To concentrate the study of literature mainly on the first aspect, to study it mainly as history, is to ignore its nobler more eternal and universal element.

(The Newbolt Report cited in Ball *et al*, 1990: 52).

The Report aimed to lay to ground the criticism that English was a “soft option” (The Newbolt Report, cited in Doyle, 1989: 58), but had as much intellectual respectability as the classics. It also advocated English as a cultural and unifying force in the life of the nation, one that was desperately needed following the upheavals of the First World War. The Newbolt Report’s “anxieties about the social divisiveness in England” (Mathieson, 1975: 35) partly derived from an unexpected source – Matthew Arnold. That great literature, and thus by implication Shakespeare, should comprise part of a liberal education, was something that Matthew Arnold was “passionate” about (Mathieson, 1975: 37). Mathieson also points out that Arnold’s belief in the supremacy of the classics, which was shared by others of his time, “unwittingly ...intensified the bitterness of debate about its [English] worth during the first half of this [20th] century (ibid., 35) and made it more difficult, Mathieson argues, for F.R. Leavis in his struggle to dislodge the classics from Oxford and Cambridge.

In replacing the classics with English, Leavis and his Cambridge School aimed to present the latter as “the central humanising study” (ibid, 35) in the university curriculum and one which could in turn be diffused throughout education at all levels by English teachers who “planted themselves in educational institutions with missionary zeal ... equipped with a moral vision,[and] a canon of texts

which embodied it” (Ball *et al*, 1990: 55, 54). Thus armed, the more combative warriors of culture, rather than preachers, (Mathieson, 1975) could fight “the evils of cultural impoverishment brought about by mass industrial society” (Ball *et al*, 1990,55). So influential was the movement “that, with some truth, it could be said still to be the established voice in secondary schools today” (ibid, 55). In fact, in the study, one of the teachers made the point that due to the age profile of much of the teaching profession, many of them still inclined to a ‘Leavisite’ view of literature because that is how they had been taught. Young or old though, Allen points out that “very few teachers in schools have time to consider recent criticism or literary theory” (Allen, 1991: 42).

The foundation of LATE (London Association for the Teaching of English) in 1947 by James Britton, with others such as Douglas Barnes, Harold Rosen, and John Dixon offered a critique to the Cambridge School of English. Ball *et al*, distinguish between the two:

In the Cambridge vision the English teacher and the great literary heritage, with which they are entrusted, are to stand against the depredations of the machine age. In contrast, the London vision celebrates the immediate life, culture and language of the school student. Whilst one position might be said to embody the subordination of the pupils to a romanticised view of the past, the other was always in danger of subordinating pupils to a romanticised view of the present.

(Ball *et al*, 1990: 59).

Peter Abbs' 1982 assessment of the legacy of Leavis and the Cambridge School praised its strengths, including the attention to the subtleties of language and meaning, an appreciation of the vitality of tradition and a refusal to compromise, but also drew attention to its weaknesses which derived in the main from its narrow focus, thus ensuring that "English became a well-fortressed island rather than part of a unified archipelago" (Abbs, 1982: 16). The dis-connection with other parts of the curriculum, in particular the expressive arts, and the elevation of "act of criticism above the act of creation" (ibid, 16) were for him "fatal inadequacies" (ibid, 16). Abbs identified two further strands in English teaching, the first he termed the "Progressive School", which encouraged creativity in the education of children. Pioneers included Caldwell Cook at the Perse School, and Edmund Holmes who was writing as early as 1911 about self-expression and the child. Abbs identifies two seminal works of the movement as Herbert Read's *Education Through Art* (1943) and Marjorie Hourd's *Education of the Poetic Spirit* (1949). In seeking to emphasise "unity and organic form" (Abbs, 1982: 11) so that, for example, English, drama and art "are not only run often side by side but interpenetrate" (ibid, 11), he considers that that the Progressives were correct. They tried to avoid curriculum fragmentation and specialisation but Abbs also points to weaknesses relating to vagueness and indulgence.

Secondly, he identified a contemporary Socio-Linguistic School deriving from linguistics and sociology, exemplified by Basil Bernstein's work concerned with the relationship between social class and language, as well as the work of Douglas Barnes, James Britton, Harold Rosen in London and M.K. Halliday's Nuffield work in Linguistics and English Teaching. The latter's *Language in Use* had more

of a “ direct influence on English teaching than Bernstein’s research” (ibid, 18).

Yet, in its emphasis on linguistics and social studies at the expense of literature, Abbs believed that the movement left out what was truly distinctive about English, its creativity, and produced a technicist and ideological form of English.

In 1966 the Dartmouth Conference, out of which arose John Dixon’s *Growth Through English* (1975), posed the question “What is English?” and responded with the answer: “English is whatever English teachers do” (ibid, xviii). By the time of the third edition of Dixon’s book in 1975, that response was deemed inadequate and was extended to the students themselves, and their empowerment. Such a focus was seen by the Right as anathema and in that same year the fourth *Black Paper* appeared (the first of which been published in 1969, heralding a sustained critique of comprehensive education). The editors, Cox and Boyson, reflected on their perception of the educational scene in the late 1960s when:

it seemed that the educational revolution in the United Kingdom would wreak its havoc with little or no opposition. The retreat from teaching and structure, the flight from high culture to pop culture, the move to non-selective education, still advanced on all sides ... at last the tens of thousands of teachers who secretly opposed its advance realised that their opposition was firmly based; whatever faults there were in the preceding traditional system were as nothing compared with the strange excesses of destructive zeal by the progressives.

(Cox and Boyson, 1975: 1).

Also in the same year, the Bullock Report, *A Language for Life*, was published (at the instigation of the then Secretary of State for Education, Margaret Thatcher).

In it, “both the major contesting paradigms, ‘English as language’ and ‘English as literature’ receive[d] positive reinforcements” but it was also “the first in a steady stream of increasingly direct interventions into the school curriculum.”

(Ball *et al*, 1990: 66, 67). By the time of the 1988 Education Reform Act, the “taming” of English was well underway, “part of a general process of increasing centralisation of control over education” (ibid, 74). In 1989, Doyle observed:

What were once marginal Black Paper perspectives have become the basis for a new consensus ... that capitalist market forces should be allowed to mould the content of educational provision.

(Doyle, 1989: 138).

As regards English specifically, Doyle stated that it was not possible to establish English as a “national mobilising centre” (ibid, 132), which is what the Newbolt Report had tried to do in the inter-war years. Whilst the vision of Leavis and the Cambridge School had not altogether disappeared either, English studies had been affected by the breakdown of consensus and the upsurge of conflict and contestation since the 1960s and 1970s. Writing in the early 1980’s, Peter Abbs presented his reconceived version of English, which would emphasise the core place of the arts and also take the best of the three movements in English teaching.

Thus, from:

the Progressives, an emphasis on impulse and the innate tendency towards individuation. From the Cambridge School, the emphasis on tradition, discrimination and critical audience. From the Sociolinguistics the emphasis on process and the clarifying principle of ‘Language across the Curriculum’.

(Abbs, 1982: 30).

A few years later Doyle, whilst noting that “English studies remained (and remains still) radically inconceivable without those texts which authorise it as an area of *English and literary study*” (Doyle, 1989: 122-3, emphasis in original), called for the subject to be re-conceived as “a cultural or social semiotic study” and to leave behind the “celebration of a falsely harmonious ‘heritage’.” (ibid, 142).

A current indication of differing emphases within English can perhaps be summed up by a recent debate at the 2001 annual conference of the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), on *Creativity and Learning in English*. The motion that ‘Literature should be at the Heart of the English curriculum?’ was argued against, on the basis that the importance of literatures rather than Literature was becoming more significant in today’s classroom. (An incidental irony was raised from the floor by a delegate who pointed out that if a National Curriculum had been instigated in the time of Elizabeth 1, the plays of Shakespeare almost certainly would not have been on it). The fact that the motion was narrowly won, by just two votes, with ten abstentions, can be viewed positively as an example of a discipline which is mature enough to incorporate difference, or negatively as one which is still beset by dissension. I would incline to the former view, with the rider that English teachers should be allowed more autonomy in continuing to teach their subject in ways that they believe are best suited to their pupils (a theme that was brought out in the study by some of the teachers) and not to be constrained by the centralising control of policy which may dictate otherwise. However, in an era of National Literacy Strategies and National

Curriculum examinations for both the primary and secondary sectors, this may be less possible.

In this preceding section I have paused briefly at certain interstices in English studies to indicate the wider discourse in which the teaching and learning of Shakespeare is embedded. Before continuing with a closer look at Shakespeare in the classroom, I wish to add a summary note to the above.

As early as the 1880's "the liberal politician John Morely urged that literature be taught in schools as an 'instrument for a systematic training of the imagination and sympathies and of a genial and varied moral sensibility'." (Ball *et al*, 1990: 49).

The pedagogic tension that is encapsulated within Morely's quotation is worth more than a surface glance as it illustrates very well the divergent roles that English has performed. Firstly, it is described mechanistically, as an "instrument" that will provide "systematic training". The subsequent development of the pupil's "imagination and sympathies" are to be equally balanced with the development of "a genial and varied moral sensibility". We have then a model that is attempting to be holistic but which carries within it the seeds of divergent and potentially divisive approaches to the teaching of and learning about English.

A century later, the models of English teaching as set out in the Cox Report (more formally known as *English for ages 5-16*, DES, 1989) were cultural analysis, personal growth, cultural heritage, cross-curricular and adult needs, which some believed to be incompatible. However, Andrew Goodwyn's 1991 research survey

among English teachers indicated a growing sense of a composite “relationship between personal growth and cultural analysis” (Goodwyn, 1992: 9) in which:

literature becomes part of culture in a broad and not a canonical way.

However, literature remains a civilising and moral influence, not in the cultural heritage sense but because it allows the individual to develop self and social awareness through refining responses to texts.

(Goodwyn, 1992: 9).

Six years later Goodwyn and Findlay reported the findings of a further research survey amongst English teachers. One of the main contrasts between 1991 and 1997 was that “the current National Curriculum is now perceived by teachers as diametrically opposed to their preferred models of English” (Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999: 21), with the prioritising of Cox’s model of cultural heritage over the other Cox models of personal growth and cultural analysis. As one teacher commented:

What I have resented in recent years, more than anything, is the erosion of my professional judgement. We have always taught Shakespeare and pre-20th century literature but I strongly object to not being able to decide for myself when to introduce my students to them (and which texts to use). We are also inexorably being forced to teach to the paltry tests.

(quoted in Goodwyn and Findlay, 1999: 24).

What the above observations indicate is a continuing concern with the purpose of English. Are pupils to be taught to be functionally literate? Are they to be taught in a way that awakens their creative faculties? Are they to be taught how to think about and see the world and one’s place within it in a particular way, according to prevailing mores? Can they be taught all of these things together, or do they

cancel each other out? The fact that questions such as these are still asked by academics, teachers, parents, employers, educational policy-makers (although pupils themselves are all too often left out of such debates) more than a century after Morely's observations attests to the continuing potency of the central question, "What is English for?" Whilst it is not within the scope of this thesis to consider that question more fully, it is pertinent to re-focus it to ask, "What is Shakespeare for?" In this final section of **Shakespeare and English** we will look at Shakespeare in the classroom in more detail.

No other English writer is afforded the same sort of significance as Shakespeare in the way that he is wholly embedded in canonical discourse. Even so, the educational establishment in the shape of the 1989 Cox Report felt the necessity to signal the arrival of new uncertainties about the importance and significance of teaching Shakespeare:

"Many teachers believe that Shakespeare's work conveys universal values, and that his language expresses rich and subtle meanings beyond that of any other English writer. Other teachers point out that evaluations of Shakespeare have varied from one historical period to the next, and argue that pupils should be encouraged to think critically about his status in the canon. But almost everyone agrees that his work should be represented in a National Curriculum. Shakespeare's plays are so rich that in every age that can produce fresh meanings and even those who deny his universality agree on his cultural importance.

(DES, 1989: 7.16).

Here, Cox's attempt to reconcile oppositional views with some sort of parity nonetheless results in dogmatic statements that have in turn been subject to challenge. For example, Leach dissects the ideological underpinnings of the Report's assumptions about Shakespeare's place in the curriculum. Whilst acknowledging "that Shakespeare is of cultural importance" (Leach, 1992: 33) she goes on to ask:

"how this weight of significance is brought to bear on work in the classroom, and which particular aspect of it the writers [of the Cox Report] would like us to be examining. In other words, what do we *do* with Shakespeare in the classroom to make the experience for pupils at all commensurate with this cultural load?"

(Leach, 1992: 33, emphasis in original).

Echoing this need to overcome Shakespeare's "egregious and infinitely problematical greatness, the sheer nuisance of his cultural status as the Bard of Avon" (Sedgwick, 1999: 139-140). Sedgwick argues that this can only be done by having "faith in Shakespeare's extraordinary ability to challenge and motivate the imaginations of all who come into lively contact with him" (ibid, 139).

The continuing arguments which educationalists have about how and why Shakespeare should be taught embody ideological divergences that can leave the consumers - the pupils themselves - stranded between different sets of value systems and beliefs. On the one hand, the study of Shakespeare in the National Curriculum is deemed important because of its intrinsic moral worth and the universal values it espouses but on the other, teenagers are forced to study the

works of a Dead White English Male, who, moreover, is forcibly and creakingly resurrected from an age so remote from theirs that they can have little connection with it, or him. It is no wonder that pupils can find it hard to reconcile the two points of view, as the analysis of the responses to Shakespeare in the Year 9 Classroom shows in Chapter Four.

It would be a truism to say that the teaching of Shakespeare in the different educational sectors has changed over the past one hundred years, but in looking behind the truism and enquiring as to *why* and *how* changes came about reaches to the heart of the debates about *how* and *why* Shakespeare should be taught. As far as the latter is concerned, the time has come to move the debate forward from the somewhat stale calls for the removal of Shakespeare from the curriculum because the plays are irrelevant, out of date and elitist to a more challenging engagement with Shakespeare. Janet Bottoms cites Jane Coles' (1992) as an example of some teachers who "encourage their students to be irreverent with it [the text], directly undermining the sacred authority of the Word" (Bottoms, 1994: 25), whilst Sean McEvoy, also a teacher, maintains that he does not wish:

to see Shakespeare removed from the curriculum. On the contrary, as long as Shakespeare holds the high cultural status which he does in our society, it is crucial that he is studied. Indeed, it is **because** the texts are used in the way that they are that we must not ignore them. They should become a site of conflict, a place where dominant readings are challenged and the ideological use of these texts is revealed.

(McEvoy, 1991: 75, emphasis in original).

In America, meanwhile, Ivo Kamps notes that his:

primary goal in teaching my Shakespeare course ... is to try to make sure that students do not accept unthinkingly any reading of Shakespeare – Left or Right. The test of a shrewd analysis is not whether it produced the truth, but whether it can recognise what is at stake in adopting one system of representation over another.

(Kamps, 1991: 10).

At Key Stage 3, it has to be admitted that such challenges to the dominant readings of Shakespeare texts are unlikely to be made.

There is, though, the potential for pupils to engage in a far livelier approach to Shakespeare than previously. For many older adults today, memories of school Shakespeare are more likely to be negative than positive when they recall grinding through a set text line by line round the class and rarely, if ever, getting the chance to enact any of it. Today's pupils, in contrast, can experience "more things than [were] dreamt of" by previous generations with the different approaches to teaching Shakespeare that have developed within the last twenty years or so and we will now turn to an examination of some of these.

Using drama to understand Shakespeare seems an entirely obvious ploy but if the idea of presenting Shakespeare in the classroom as a dramatist has been added to the pedagogic armoury, it has taken a long time to do so. As long ago as 1908, Dr. Sydney Lee of the English Association told teachers that he had a:

a notion - it might be quite unworkable - that the essential dramatic virtue of Shakespeare's play might be brought home to pupils by encouraging

them to act in class one or two scenes ... The acting should be the last element in the play, and the casting of parts would excite a desirable emulation among the pupils.

(Lee, 1908: 9).

From those tentative suggestions, drama-active and participatory approaches to teaching Shakespeare in classroom today have become more and more popular, particularly since the 1980's with the inception of the *Shakespeare in Schools Project*, developed by Rex Gibson between 1986-1989 (the work of which was specifically encouraged in *The Cox Report*). Whilst Gibson argued (successfully) to keep Shakespeare in the National Curriculum, he was later just as passionately opposed to the proposals to test Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, believing them to be:

utterly misconceived. I am not against assessment. Indeed, I see it as integral to teaching. But there are more educational ways of assessing pupils' Shakespeare experience at Key Stage 3 than a brief written test.

(Gibson, 1993: 79).

Part of the problem for Gibson was that the proposed 'tiered' structure of the test would disenfranchise children. He believed, and continues to believe, that all children should have an entitlement to Shakespeare. Putting theory into practice he worked with teachers in an effort to find out what approaches to Shakespeare really worked in the classroom. By and large these were drama-orientated and subsequently disseminated throughout the secondary community by those teachers.

As one such teacher later commented:

It has been my experiences that students find the active, physical approaches... exciting and enjoyable, because they allow all of them to

participate and collaborate as they explore a Shakespeare text.

(Fitzgerald, 1998: 16, emphasis in original).

The results of the Project were published by Gibson (1990). Gibson then edited the Cambridge School Shakespeare series of play texts, relatively inexpensive, which included examples from the *Shakespeare in Schools* Project of classroom based activities for teachers to use.

Gibson continues to urge that teaching Shakespeare in schools should be learner-centred in a way which “enables students to imaginatively inhabit the world of the play” (Gibson, 1998a). One of the first things that Gibson wants teachers to forget is that a Shakespeare play is a text and remember that it is a script, to be played with. Gibson emphasises the practical over the theoretical and for secondary level up to and including Key Stage 3 (although it could be asked why it has to stop there, and not continue throughout Key Stage 4, in conjunction with greater depth of textual and contextual analysis).

His arguments that students will become “owners” of Shakespearean texts through (actively) engaging with the universalities of theme, character and story are not, he acknowledges, those that have found favour with academics in the echelons of higher education. Indeed, he and his followers have been derided as “charismatically anti-intellectual” (Wilson, 1997 b : 63) and Gibson’s mission to reclaim Shakespeare seen as one that merely displays his reactionary colours. Yet, as one teacher told me at the Globe Theatre’s 1998 conference, *Shakespeare in the Contemporary Classroom*, Gibson’s techniques helped her to engage the

enthusiasm of reluctant pupil and with such success that she commented, “I can’t imagine teaching any other way” (see Gibson 1998b). The accusations that Gibson is reactionary or anti-intellectual miss the point, Gibson’s approaches are aimed at School Shakespeare, not Shakespeare at university level. For one thing, he argues, working with Shakespeare texts in school should be approached as a collective and collaborative enterprise, and what might appear to be hopelessly old-fashioned elements such as Story; Character; Theme; Dramatic Effect and Language need to be addressed, if pupils are going to become successful owners of Shakespeare.

Whilst Susan Leach notes Gibson’s “passionate exposition of practical ways in which pupils can be given experience of Shakespeare” (ibid, 1992: 22), she adds a warning proviso:

The paradox is this; Dr Gibson is so convinced of the rightness of including Shakespeare in the School Curriculum, and so keen that pupils should experience Shakespeare, that he is prepared to contemplate the risk that most pupils’ experience of Shakespeare will remain minimal, boring, text- and desk-bound, simply because most teachers have not had access to the kind of approach which he is supporting.

(Leach, 1992: 24).

Following the statutory inclusion of Shakespeare in the National Curriculum, the RSA, (Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturing & Commerce) launched a project in 1992 aimed at evaluating a “programme of teaching to introduce Shakespeare to pupils of all abilities and all age ranges from

5 to 18 years” (Gilmour, 1994: 6). The *RSA Shakespeare in Schools Project* worked with a “family of schools” (ibid, 6) from primary to secondary level in the Leicestershire area. The results of collaboration between secondary and primary teachers found that “methods applied by primary school teachers were just as applicable in the secondary schools, and vice versa” (ibid, 21). Amongst the Project’s conclusions was the strong perception that:

the arts were the means by which many pupils became engaged in the Shakespeare text. If this seems to be an obvious statement because, after all, his plays were written for the theatre, it has to be said that Shakespeare is not often taught by these methods; his plays are usually approached within the classroom in the same way as novels or poetry, through reading, discussion and responding through writing.

(Gilmour, 1994: 31).

Using a wide range of teaching methods, appropriate to the age and ability of pupils, the Project found that Shakespeare became “genuinely accessible to all ages and abilities” (ibid, 26). In contrast, it is Shakespeare’s in-accessibility for the less able pupils that Professor Sig Prais has recently criticised in his research, which was reported in the media under such headlines as *Bad report for the Bard* (Wainwright, 2001:11); *Studying Shakespeare ‘fails the majority of pupils’* (Lightfoot, 2001:12); *Bard’s plays are not the thing* (Hackett, 2001: 3). Professor Prais was also reported as suggesting that 14-year-old English pupils were disadvantaged in comparison with their continental peers whose language skills were more developed. The suggestion that less time should be spent on Shakespeare (and other classic literature) and more time on acquiring the language

skills more relevant “to the requirements of life – for example, how to write letters of application to employers or landlords” (Wainwright, 2001:11) seemed to hit a nerve. Responses from readers (including the playwright Howard Brenton as well as the teacher Alex Fellowes, mentioned below) decried what they saw as Prais’s overly instrumentalist view of education.

This division between the development of pupils’ “linguistic growth and imaginative growth” was articulated by Dennis Carter who, in 1992, began the three-year Clwyd Poetry Project “in reaction against what he saw as the national curriculum’s excessive stress on the “functional” aspects of English” (Knight, 1997: II). Working in primary schools, infants and older children tackled “texts of undeniable sophistication and difficulty” (ibid.), which included Shakespeare, and not only produced imaginative work but also made leaps and bounds as readers and writers. For example:

The year 6 pupil who wrote (in the character of Hamlet) of the trumpet announcing the entrance of Claudius and Gertrude:

I feel lonely and sad,

there’s a trumpet playing a hard

and dark song in my mind

was responding to Hamlet’s anguish at an intuitive level. But it is within the rich context of the teaching inspired by the project that this pupil’s own “inner activity” was mobilised and his confidence in his own use of English strengthened.

(Knight, 1997: II).

Another example, this time from a secondary English teacher and poet, comes from the work of Mike Jenkins. He uses his poetic insight to help instill a “passionate love of writing” in his pupils (Whittaker, 1999:10) who, in turn, “provide the inspiration for his gritty poems and short stories” (ibid, 10). His poem *Ol Shakey* perfectly encapsulates a demotic view of *A Midsummer Night’s*

Dream:

Ol Shakey does my ead in!/ Why didn ee write tidy?

I mean, sall about bloody fairies/ They do belong on a Christmas tree.

Tha Puck ... os’ee or is it she?/ A misprint or wha?

An as fer Oberon,/ I reckon ee’s arfta Bottom!

Ernia? She’d give yew one./ Titania? Did she ave a toy boy?

See, I never knew it wuz all about/ bonkin till ee tol us.

Mind, I’d rather-a English version/ In them Brodies notes.

Ol Shakey musta bin on-a magies!/ Love potion? More like Ecstasy.

“Kinky sex with an ass-head man/ in a wood outside Athens.”

When I wrote tha in-a exam/ I got absolutely nothin.

(Mike Jenkins, quoted in Whittaker, 1999: 11).

The belief that because Shakespeare occupies a position of high cultural status he is also sexually decorous is, of course, a mistaken one and teenagers of 13 and 14 years of age can certainly appreciate the “adult quality” of Shakespeare’s plays, as one of the teachers in the study pointed out (See Chapter 4, Section 4.5.3.2. example 1). How the bawdier aspects of Shakespeare are dealt with in class is up to the teacher, with some choosing to be more euphemistic and others tackling them head on. Both the school ethos and the relationship between pupils and teacher play an important role so that, for example, some teachers might be happy

to use Jenkins' poem as a starting-off point for discussion in class but others might be less so.

Alex Fellowes is another teacher who believes that children should be given the opportunity to take ownership of the text and become confident users of it. For 30 years, he has been teaching children in a middle school in Bradford, where the majority speak English as a second language. His pupils re-enact Shakespeare in English, Punjabi and Urdu. He says:

In some ways, they're better prepared than white kids to get to grips with the language because they're great code-switchers. They can switch from English to Punjabi to Urdu. Elizabethan English is just another language register.

(quoted in Arnot, 1999: 4).

From the examples that we have looked at, it will be clear that performance can help pupils form a sense of ownership towards the plays. Chris Grace is also someone who has harnessed the power of performance in this way. Grace was one of the people behind the *Animated Shakespeare* series made ten years ago in Russia, which were short versions of Shakespeare's plays that were adapted by Leon Garfield. Extremely successful, they have been used in classrooms as introductions to Shakespeare, mostly at primary level (although I have used them at both secondary and further education level). Grace has recently turned his attention to young people's performances of Shakespeare in the shape of *The Shakespeare School Drama Festival*, which was presented in the West End in the autumn of 2001. Students who were in one way or another educationally

disadvantaged put on performances that were remarkable, to the extent that even professional theatre critics were moved. Grace said that he planned to extend the programme of performance and workshops to hundreds more schools, so that Shakespeare becomes “a bridge between drama and education just as, 10 years ago, in Moscow, it was a bridge between East and West.” (Johnson, 2001: 11).

Even if they do not perform themselves (and not all pupils, it should be added, want to take part in public performances of Shakespeare, or even classroom performances for that matter), pupils can see live performances at theatres.

Despite budgetary restraints such visits still happen, although the experience can vary between visiting a full-scale professional production to a local amateur dramatic production. Theatre-in-education (TIE) companies also survive (just) and present performances and workshops in schools, although the quality of these can differ widely. The outstanding quality of one such touring venture, sponsored by Lloyds/TSB in conjunction with the National Theatre, provides schools with a day-long workshop and performance as well as the use of a specially-adapted bus which allows pupils to engage interactively on computers with the processes of a Shakespeare production. Such quality comes at a price though and one that makes it inaccessible to many schools.

At the other end of the scale are the TIE companies that go to heroic lengths, with miniscule budgets, to take Shakespeare into schools. After all, the theatre director Peter Brook’s famous dictum that theatre can be created simply by one person walking across an empty space in front of other people still holds true (Brook, 1968). Elaborate sets, costumes and effects do not necessarily add up to a better

production but, however humbly or magnificently executed, I do believe that a production has to have integrity and be wholly committed to the play and their audience, most especially if that audience is a school one. For many pupils (as in *School A* in the study) such performances in their schools will be their only experience of seeing Shakespeare on stage, so it should be as enriching an experience as possible.

Back in the classroom though, teachers are also faced with an almost overwhelming choice of multi-media resources with which to tackle Shakespeare. These include CDROMs and Internet websites supplying historical and theatrical background; comparative guides to video, audio and filmed performance versions; interactive discussions with actors, scholars and even ‘William Shakespeare’ himself. As Andrews (2000b) notes, Shakespeare is well provided for in terms of “imaginative UK-based software” (ibid, 25).

These opportunities for looking at and learning about Shakespeare in different ways that could enhance pupils’ active engagement whilst also complementing traditional approaches have already have been in existence for a while. Poulson (1998) notes how “school literary practices, and, to a certain extent, ... ways of teaching English” have been affected by the exponential development of information technology (ibid, 137). Wheale (1991) considered how the potential of ‘video-scratching’, that is, copying, editing and transposing, would allow pupils to discover another way of engaging with Shakespeare other than through the reading the text. The subversive potential of the new technologies was exciting because it enabled teachers:

to take the existing kinds of study and by extending them create realisations of the plays and multiple-comparable views of the plays which in effect subvert the kind of Shakespeare still powerful in the minds of the heritage lobby.

(Clarke, 1995:15).

Looking at textual analysis specifically, another fairly long-established example, is that of Dev Tray software, which works in the same way as the photographer's developing tray, allowing the text to appear gradually (Yandell, 1994, Andrews, 2000b). Today, computers can also enable pupils to compare and contrast differing editions, once the sole domain of elite scholarship. (Clarke, 2000). As far as comparison of different performances of plays goes, this democratising principle now extends beyond that notion to include pupils' own adaptations *and* voicing of "the performed text" (ibid, 109). By engaging in these sorts of tasks, pupils can come to a richer understanding of both the literal and metaphorical *construction* of the plays and their meanings.

However, if the new technologies are to become more powerful tools in subject pedagogies, not just English, how can Shakespeare work effectively in tandem with them? Even some of the older technologies, such as the use of video recordings in classrooms, need to be thought about quite carefully, according to Leach (1992). At the very least, it should be made clear that the video pupils see of, say, *Twelfth Night* is not going to be the definitive version of the play, in the same way that a single performance of it will not be either. At this point, I have a

confession to make. Although I am a qualified teacher (of English and Drama), I have only rarely used any sort of technology in my own Shakespeare teaching, and when I have used the video (for that is my technical limit) it has invariably been accompanied by a call for help from my students. In short, I feel the same way about technology that many English teachers say they do about Drama – frightened. Just after I had completed my teacher-training, and long before I realised the referencing-imperative of keeping a meticulous record of anything that I heard or read, I attended a workshop at The Institute of Education in London about the teaching of Shakespeare. During the course of one session, I was particularly struck by a printed quote (unidentified) that was handed out to us. A teacher had responded to the question ‘Why teach Shakespeare?’ with a poignant “To further my sense of hopelessness”. This is how I feel in relation to using ICT to teach Shakespeare but I also realise that this “fear and loathing” can and should be overcome, if pupils are to be offered the opportunity to engage with Shakespeare through a much wider range of practices.

In his contribution to a series of articles (in *The Secondary English Magazine* which consistently offers accessible information for teachers on a range of topics, including Shakespeare and ICT) about the Internet’s pedagogic potential, Franks (2001) suggests that “many English teachers are, like me, still coming to terms with the shift from traditional print media to newer forms of electronic text” (ibid,: 14). For Franks, using an Internet text of a Shakespeare play meant that he could choose between different editions, as well as shape the presentation of the text to suit differing levels of teaching. Furthermore, as Hunt (2000) points out, children

are confident and sophisticated users of media texts, often more so than adults.

As teachers we should enable them to apply this expertise creatively across the curriculum in ways that can enhance their self-confidence.

Andrews (2000a) puts forward a further benefit of cross-curricular collaboration in that it could help to establish a sense of connectedness between the different subjects in the secondary curriculum. Furthermore, he says that such a collaboration is ideal at Key Stage 3:

Joint projects between subjects, especially at Key Stage 3 before GCSE syllabuses take over, can be highly motivating because they give teachers and students alike the chance to make connections and to learn from each other... I would suggest that Year 9 is an ideal time at which to make such connections.

(Andrews, 2000a: 12).

Peter Reynolds, commenting on one school's work in Gibson's *Shakespeare in Schools* Project, noted how collaboration had enabled "fourth year pupils to devote a whole term to work derived from *The Tempest*. All their English, Humanities, Art, Music and even some Science was derived in some way from the text" (Reynolds, 1991:9). At the time Reynolds was writing, ICT was not yet as developed as it is today.

While such work is potentially very exciting, my only provisos are to do with resources and the structure of the curriculum. To take the latter point first, if we are really serious about cross-curricular collaboration, we should also have to re-

think the discrete structure of the curriculum, which assumes that different “subjects are categorically different in all respects” (NACCCE, 1999: 67). Rather we should acknowledge “the considerable overlap between different field of knowledge” and redefine our curriculum, as other countries do, “in terms of areas of learning or subject groupings” (ibid, 67).

Then, for those teachers like myself who are unsure about how to use ICT, training would need to be provided (Andrews notes that training ‘teachers in the application of ICT In their subject teaching’ was a requirement of the DfEE Circular 4/98 [ibid, 2000b: 33] – too late, alas, for me).

With particular regard to the resources available on the World Wide Web, discrimination has to be exercised if pupils are to avoid downloading “whole screeds of impersonal, outdated and (to them) largely meaningless prose, thinking they were researching Shakespeare’s life and work” (Butler, 2000a: 18).

Furthermore, pupils and teachers should have access to equipment that works well and, ideally, there should be technical support and advice on hand if it does not. Some schools are obviously going to be better equipped than others (for example, in *School B* there was lavish computer provision) and some pupils might have access to computers at home whereas others might not. All these things have to be taken into consideration if the creative potential that the use of ICT could bring to the study of Shakespeare is to be fully realised.

Rex Gibson considers that “there is no ‘one right way’ to understand, perform or respond to Shakespeare” but that the task of teachers to help pupils, of whatever culture, “to feel that it is ‘our Shakespeare’, something that belongs to them.” (Gibson, 2000: 27). Certainly, this is no small order and if it is to be accomplished successfully then teachers and schools need to be given the time in which to think properly about how this might be achieved in order to develop a synthesis of pedagogic approaches that will encourage a positive response to Shakespeare. However, time in general is not only a commodity that is in markedly short supply in most schools but in particular is also likely to be even shorter in the English classroom due to the impact of the National Literacy Strategy at Key Stage 3.

Testing Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 is not something that that teacher Alex Fellowes is particularly “enamoured of” (Neill, 1999:19). In the following section we turn to the issue of testing Shakespeare, by way of the following quotation:

Today was the day of Pinpin’s first test. She was only two years old, too little to mind how well or badly she did, but from now till the day she died she would have a rating.

(Nicholson, 2000: 5).

Nicholson’s fictional world in his novel *The Wind Singer*, is one in which people’s life-status is dependent on whether they have passed or failed a series of examinations, which begin when they are barely out of nappies. Despite being a work of imagination, it accords uneasily with the real world in which the rhetoric of examinations is increasingly embraced as the *sine qua non* of educational endeavour. Whilst the assessment system has some way to go before toddlers are

tested – *pace* Nicholson - Baseline Assessments are used to test four and five year olds. (Russell, 1999).

In a recent survey of more than 8,000 secondary schools in England and Wales , it was reported that with state school pupils taking up to 75 external tests or exams by the time they leave sixth form (more than 60 if they leave at 16), they “are being tested to destruction” (Smithers, 2000:1). Charity organisations that offer telephone counselling report getting more calls from children and young people suffering from exam stress. (Slater, 2000) whilst a new organisation, ExamAid, has been launched to help alleviate exam stress (Harris, 2000). Professor Smithers, of Liverpool University argues that having gone from a position of “under-testing... we have now got into a testing frenzy at the moment” (Woodward, 2000:5), whilst John Dunford, the General Secretary of the Secondary Heads Association agreed that such a situation could lead to the “danger that you lose the richness of education that comes from the breadth of the curriculum” (ibid, 5).

The tension between those who believed that the testing regime was successful (for example, The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority who were – and are – responsible for the administration of the tests) and those who thought otherwise was illustrated by Dunford’s call a year earlier for the Key Stage 3 tests to be scrapped. The response in The Times Educational Supplement editorial “*Say yes to tests at 14*”(TES, 1999: 20) was to emphasise how experiencing the stresses and strains of tests can help prepare pupils for “adult life” (ibid, 20) but more importantly that the Key Stage 3 tests “are becoming established as a rite of

passage, a common experience shared by every 14-year old across the country... they give important feedback to young people... and their parents” (ibid, 20). The third reason that “national testing is a national event” is not especially different from the first, neither of which can be claimed to be wholly true. There are significant numbers of 14 year olds who do not take the tests, pupils from many independent schools and those who are not entered at all because their levels are not high enough (as was the case of two pupils in *School A*, see Chapter Four). The editorial also stated that the testing was a “national event” because “the whole country is becoming more involved in education” (ibid, 20) and that the plethora of study aids now available attested to that. This assertion can be questioned on two grounds. Firstly, the exponential increase in revision and study guides can be seen more as an indicator of anxiety on the part of parents and pupils, desperate to supplement their schooling in order to pass their examinations. Secondly, it would be hard to look back to a time when there has not been a concern and involvement with education. Readers who responded to the editorial also criticised this view of the Key Stage 3 tests. Graham Foster, a Head of English wrote that 14-year olds “wonder what the tests are for, and why they have to do them” (sentiments which accorded with those of the pupils in the study) and went on to say:

In any case, the Key Stage 3 English test bears little relation to GCSE, where Shakespeare is assessed through coursework, it is highly inappropriate to “test” Shakespeare via an exam and it is likely to damage the enthusiasm of potential students of literature.

(Foster, 1999: 26).

At the time of the report about exam stress, referred to above, another editorial in *The Independent*, *Children should be put under pressure at school* (2000:3) also indicated a further set of tensions about the disadvantages and advantages of testing. On the one hand, it suggested that it was perfectly right and proper that children should have to do things “which they find difficult, or which require hard work” (ibid, 3), on the other hand, that this should not lead to increased pressure on children at home: “If schools cannot teach children all they need to know between 9am and 3.30pm, they are not doing their job properly” (ibid, 3).

The examination culture is not new, of course, but it is worth noting one set of justifications in the 1975 Black Paper, which specifically emphasised that accountable, that is, external examinations were essential in education, for without: “such checks, standards decline. Working-class children suffer when applying for jobs if they cannot bring forward proof of their worth achieved in authoritative examinations” (Cox & Boyson, 1975: 1).

Proving one’s “worth” by submitting to the authority of the examination is well-established. In England, the era of public examinations came into being alongside the creation of professional bodies and army and civil service reforms in the nineteenth century and as Lawton notes: “The English are not generally thought of as great curriculum planners, but in many respects they have led the world in the field of examinations” (Lawton, 1989: 67).

Shakespeare’s authoritative position within the English curriculum was assured by what Terence Hawkes describes as “the shepherding of Shakespeare into the

examination room” (Hawkes, 1990:149). Shakespeare and examinations thus became inextricably linked. The examination that this thesis is concerned with is the Key Stage 3 English assessment, specifically the Shakespeare Paper, which is one of two English Papers. In 1992, following the 1988 Education Reform Act which heralded the arrival of the National Curriculum:

it was decreed that every fourteen-year old should be tested on a set Shakespeare play. According to a press release from the Department of Education, dated 30 June 1992, headlined ‘SHAKESPEARE AND GRAMMAR TESTS FOR ALL 14 YEAR OLDS’, that was what John Pattern, the then minister, saw as ‘real education’.

(Bate, 1997: 199).

The twin edifices of Shakespeare and grammar were to stand resolute in the face of the five models of English teaching in the Cox Report, which suggested making room for cultural analysis *as well as* cultural heritage. It was ironic that the Cox Report’s proposals for English in the National Curriculum, which had had been met with “cautious acceptance” (Poulson, 1998: 41) by teachers, had been met with even more cautious acceptance by the government that had set it in motion. However, the plans to impose SATs were greeted by resistance from many schools and teachers. The result was that “by June 1993 the consensus established by the Cox Report had been undermined and English teachers were boycotting Key Stage 3 tests” (ibid, 41). Sir Ron Dearing’s subsequent curriculum review went some way to alleviate to alleviate tensions, however, over a decade later, and after two revised English Orders in 1995 and 2000, the tests at Key Stage 3 are still firmly in place.

With particular regard to Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 though, the attitude of teachers has, if not hardened exactly, then been re-focussed to a greater degree. For example, one teacher has described how he and his English department took active steps to ensure that their Key Stage 3 pupils got higher marks than they were getting. By closely examining past Shakespeare Papers they “set about identifying precisely what was required and developing appropriate teaching strategies” (Butler, 2000a: 17). As Butler says in his second article:

KS3 English teachers have to be ruthless, *Twelfth Night* is one of English Literature’s great delights, but, once it is a KS3 set text, the QCA expectations apply, and they are precise and demanding. If, as is currently being reported, the Government introduces KS3 league tables, pressure will increase to the best levels possible – a compelling reason for working on good teaching techniques.

(Butler, 2000b: 10).

Whilst teachers like Butler are developing the range of “teaching techniques” to help prepare their pupils for the Key Stage 3 Shakespeare Paper, the range of questions that are being asked has also been extended so that, for example, “as a whole [the paper] embraces the likely classroom exploration of character, theme, empathy and performance” (Thomas, 1999: 29). The key words here are “as a whole”, the complete range of questions does not apply to each of the three plays. Pupils could be at a disadvantage, Thomas points out, if they have worked on just one or two aspects of the play, say empathy and performance, and the questions on their particular play happen to be concerned with theme and character. In the

study, it will be seen how one teacher worked on themes and, in fact, much to his pupils' relief, there was a theme-based question. To avoid having to work on such a 'lucky dip' approach, the different types of questions should be applied consistently to each of the three different plays that are being examined.

Even though the Key Stage 3 tests have been 'bedded down' for some years now, there is still a great deal of concern about them ranging from fears about the accuracy and reliability of the marking criteria to the damage in pupils' self-esteem if they 'fail' (for example, Cassidy, 1999, 2000; Clerk, 1999; Foster, 1999; Gaskin, 1999; Judd, 1998; Passmore, 2000; Purcell, 1999; Raphael Reed, 1999; Thornton and Cassidy, 1998; Trustram, 2000; Woodhead, 1999).

Concerns about the Key Stage 3 tests have also been raised in official evaluation reports. SCAA/ACCAC (the then curriculum and assessment authorities for England and Wales, with the former becoming the QCA in 1998). The 1995 and 1996 Key Stage 3 Assessment report was written by a team from the University of Exeter, and commissioned by SCAA/ACCAC. One of the conclusions of the *Exeter Evaluation of Key Stage 3 Assessment in 1995 and 1996* was that it distorted the Year 9 English teaching curriculum. Teachers reported spending "an inordinate amount of time on teaching Shakespeare" (Radnor *et al.*, 1996: 173). Teachers were also having to teach more narrowly, "the test requires a mechanical 'academic' response which kills genuine enthusiasm and enjoyment with the test" (*ibid*, 106), so that they were 'teaching to the test'. The Exeter Report

recommended that “serious consideration be given to the transfer of assessment of Shakespeare to teacher assessment” (ibid, 62).

The QCA Report for the 1997 Key Stage 3 Assessments (QCA, 1998a) was an analysis of pupils’ performance and, in relation to the Shakespeare Paper, noted that pupils had been thoroughly prepared and organised their answers “more effectively than in previous years, with close reference to the text and less storytelling without comment “ (ibid, 2). However, it also reported that “a number of schools have expressed doubts about the accuracy of their pupils’ Key Stage 3 test results on the basis of comparisons with Teacher Assessment” (ibid, 25). In the 1998 QCA report (QCA, 1998b) there was an additional section on teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions of the tests. Resonating with the findings of the Exeter Report, many schools felt that Shakespeare took up a lot of time “with resulting lack of breadth and balance to the English experience as a whole” (ibid, 27). Some schools “deplored the test’s focus on selected scenes as this was perceived as detrimental to pupils’ understanding of the whole set play” (ibid, 27). School and pupil questionnaire responses indicated that most pupils “took the tests in their stride, accepting them as a normal part of school life [but] “lower attaining pupils ... both in mainstream and special schools... found Shakespeare difficult and irrelevant” (ibid, 26).

Included in the 1999 QCA Report (QCA, 2000) were suggestions from teachers, one of which was to remove “Shakespeare from the written tests.” (ibid, 29).

Teachers also felt more comfortable with “the empathetic, character/plot and thematic questions than they did with the directing and audience/performance

tasks.” (ibid.). However, a more critical tone towards the tests was expressed in the 1998 Association of Teachers and Lecturers/National Association for the Teaching of English Report (ATL/NATE, 1998). Included in it was a comparison between the ATL report on the 1997 Key Stage 3 tests and the 1998 tests. In 1997 it had emphasised the inappropriateness of testing Shakespeare, which was reiterated in the 1998 findings. Additional comments about the English test, of which there were more about the Shakespeare Paper than anything else, also mentioned that the Year 9 curriculum was “narrowed” and that the paper was considered “to promote poor practice in the teaching of Shakespeare” (ibid, 12). Again, there was concern about less able pupils

whose positive experiences of learning Shakespeare were undermined by a demoralising test. One respondent wrote: *I am filled with a sense of pointlessness. We see pupils who can hardly read loving the Shakespeare text, simply to be demoralised by the awful exam paper.*”

(ATL/NATE, 1998: 12)

The Report also noted that the “major ... problems” about the 1997 Key Stage 3 English test that had arisen in research findings from SCAA, the STL and NATE were still unresolved in 1998. These included the “perceived inappropriateness of the Shakespeare Paper” (ibid, 19). The Report’s recommendations to the QCA included the introduction of Teacher Assessment (TA) of Shakespeare because they claimed that “teachers are convinced by their own evidence of pupils’ attainment at GCSE that TA at Key Stage 3 is more valid than the tests.” (ibid, 20). The 1999 ATL/NATE Report (ATL/NATE, 1999) reiterated this recommendation. It also found that the vast majority of respondents said that preparation for the test was taking up too much time whilst many also felt that “the

pressure they feel to teach to the tests undermines good practice” (ibid, 1).

However, a minority view of the Shakespeare Paper was expressed by one teacher-respondent (out of 224), which is worth quoting:

“Please do not ‘dumb down’ these examinations. They set a standard at which teachers and pupils can aim and allow students contact with what may well be their first experience of Shakespeare after years of ‘relevant pap’.

(ATL/NATE, 1999: 13).

The then-Chief Executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, Nicholas Tate, defended the tests, saying that “our own survey of teacher opinion ... shows overwhelming test satisfaction” (Tate, 1999). In *The Independent* newspaper, Dr Tate had this to say:

Schools don’t take these tests very seriously. A disturbing proportion of children are getting the same level at 14 as they are at 11. A national literacy strategy for secondary schools must be on the agenda.

(*The Independent*, 1999:8).

Yet the QCA Report (1998b) found that “increasingly, pupils were approaching the tests seriously and wanted to do well” (ibid, 26). Peter King, who had been involved with the Shakespeare test development team also defended the tests, saying that:

KS3 tests can provide valuable pointers, [to GCSE grades], especially if they are linked to the wider continuous assessment by the teacher. Both

KS3 and KS4 help schools to measure their performance against national standards, surely no bad thing.

(King, 1999: 26)

John Yandell, in a report commissioned by the Teacher Training Agency into attitudes to Shakespeare, found that his plays are seen as a:

kind of initiation, a move away from the pieties of teenage fiction towards reading matter which is adult – in its difficulty, in the seriousness with which it is treated in the wider society, as well as through its associations with the dominant school pursuits of exams and qualifications.

(quoted in Bright, 1998: 7).

Another teacher, Non Worrall, conducted research amongst her Year 12 ‘guinea-pig’ cohort of students, who had been “continuously tested for 11 years” (Worrall, 2001: 13). Their responses to the Key Stage 3 tests were overwhelmingly negative.

Before taking them, many had put in a great deal of preparation and felt “really scared” (ibid, 16) but afterwards there was a sense of anti-climax:

I think parents should be educated about how unimportant they are because my parents thought it was life or death about what I got, but now, with my brother, they’ve realised because, with mine, nothing happened after I got them. So now my mum’s realised they’re less and less important.

(Worrall, 2001: 16).

Another student also felt that the SA’s were unimportant, saying that “when the time comes, when it’s really important, when it’s GCSE’s, then I will put everything into it and I will do well” (ibid, 16). Interestingly, all the students in her study also remembered very well *how* they were told of their results, recalling

that some teachers were needlessly thoughtless about calling out their levels in front of classmates:

The prominence given to the results of the externally marked SATs dominates the explanation of this moment in their lives. They cannot even recall the levels awarded by Teacher Assessment.

(Worrall, 2001: 16).

From the responses of these students, Worrall's assessment of the Year 9 SATs are that they appear to be "a key determinant in students' expectations of themselves and others" (ibid, 16) particularly in relation to the SATs scores results being used as GCSE grade predictors. "These students would seem to have absorbed, by a process of osmosis, with no conscious intention on anybody's part, that this is the case. If so, is there now a danger of the SATs becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy of future GCSE grades" (ibid, 16-17).

Whilst the poignancy of the responses to Key Stage 3 SATs is powerful enough, overall, we have seen far fewer examples of responses from pupils, who have to sit the tests, than the representatives of the "official discourse" (Wallace *et al*, 1998: 83). It is the hope, therefore, that the responses of the pupils in this study will add to the debate about Shakespeare in the curriculum.

Conclusion

The quotation at the beginning of the chapter made a humorous point about Shakespearean scholarship which, nevertheless, raised a more serious issue about the near impossibility of reviewing everything to do with Shakespeare. However,

what I have tried to do in this chapter, is to point to what I feel are significant areas concerning differing perceptions of and responses to Shakespeare in the wider context as well as in the educational context. In “**Unser**” **Shakespeare**, an overview was presented of Shakespeare’s rise to a position of canonical and cultural importance, as well as the challenges that have been mounted against his iconic status. It was suggested that Shakespeare’s continued survival is dependent upon the idea of transformation. What also might be termed Shakespeare’s hybridity, then, is the product of ever-changing environments. Shakespeare can be perceived as espousing one ideology in one context but received and “*translated*” into something quite different in another context. It is such genetic mutation that helps to ensure the survival of the *genus Shakespeare*.

Reviewing the earlier part of the section on **Shakespeare and English**, we can say that the tensions that were detected in Morely’s 19th century statement still exist in the 21st century. Most significantly, control over English, and therefore Shakespeare within English, has been subject to increasing centralisation. Alongside the objective-directed aims of government (which now include citizenship teaching as well as testing and assessment targets), teachers can sometimes struggle to teach Shakespeare in ways that are as imaginative and sympathetic to their pupils’ interests and enthusiasms as they would like.

The discussion in this section concluded with an overview and evaluation of testing Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, and I should like to add a couple of further brief quotations about the issue of testing in relation to Shakespeare. The theatre

and television director Michael Bogdanov believes the testing system is discriminatory, one that is:

increasingly designed merely to sort out the literary lions from the sheep and the goats and to create an underclass of inadequacy where the only lesson learned is that of failure to gain access to the green, green grass of privilege.

(Bogdanov, 2000).

Further more, he says that “examination questions of all persuasions invariably assume a shared view of the way the world wags” (ibid,), and that they apply abstract concepts, timeless themes, universal values rather than confront the social and political issues that Shakespeare was engaging with.

Finally, on a rather more light-hearted note, Terry Deary, author of the *Horrible History* series, is not alone in claiming that Shakespeare himself would have done badly in National Curriculum tests (Passmore, 2000). Terence Hawkes records the verse written by Guy Boas who was vice president of the English Association. It appeared in *Punch* in 1926:

I dreamt last night that Shakespeare's Ghost
Sat for a civil service post,
The English paper for that year
Had several questions on King Lear,
Which Shakespeare answered badly
Because he hadn't read his Bradley.
(cited in Hawkes, 1990: 149).

Having begun this chapter with one quotation, I should like to end with another, appropriately enough from Shakespeare:

Polonius: "Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't"

Hamlet, Act II, ii

Moving from madness to method then, in the following chapter the process of arriving at an appropriate methodology with which to analyse the data is presented. I discuss how I managed to overcome the difficulties of dealing with what seemed to be not just insurmountable amounts of data but also how to analyse them, using an adapted model of grounded theory. In doing so, I look at issues of truth and representation as well as a consideration of the nature of educational research. Finally, through an examination of Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus', 'cultural capital' and 'field' I consider how these might subsequently be used to inform the data findings.

CHAPTER THREE

“...*tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-comical-historical...*”

Hamlet, Act II, ii.

3.1 Introduction

The Pollonian array of different research methodologies can overwhelm the novice researcher. Choosing between one of them can feel like embarking upon an *Alice in Wonderland* journey, chasing an increasingly elusive White Rabbit through endless corridors where all the doors are locked: “and when Alice has been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again” (Carroll, 1947: 15). Finding and then managing to keep hold of the “golden key” that leads out of locked rooms is a challenge, and one which does not necessarily lessen during the process of the research enquiry.

Once out of the locked room (that is, once the methodological focus has been fixed) the researcher then has to resolve the problem of making sense of the data. What became clear to me during the development of my own research study was how data analysis might be described as kaleidoscopic. We are all familiar with the way that the image in a kaleidoscope dissolves and changes in shape and form when the instrument is fractionally revolved. In a research study, the difficulty is to hold the

shape (the assembled data) steady enough for a composite picture (the ensuing analysis) to emerge.

The somewhat startling mix of literary and visual metaphors that I have just used to introduce this section on methodology does not reflect an ill-assorted rag-bag of methodological assumptions that I have grabbed hold of in my descent down the rabbit hole, but rather it tries to reflect the complex and multi-faceted nature of the methodological journey that I embarked upon at the beginning of the research process. In using the words “journey” and “process” I wanted to make explicit the link with the fictional and literal tropes of Polonius, Alice, the White Rabbit and the kaleidoscope. Stitched together in this way, they illustrate what I have come to think of as the transformative and propulsive nature of methodological enquiry. By this I mean that methodological process is one that is often beset by stops and starts, when the enquiry either comes up against what appear to be insurmountable obstacles or it takes off in unexpected directions.

Nevertheless, a momentum does develop which propels the enquiry towards resolution and in the following sections of this chapter I will discuss the process of methodological journey as follows:

Section 3.2.1. The educational research context in particular : examines how my own identity as an educational researcher has evolved.

Section 3.2.2. The educational research context in general : presents a personal overview of the wider educational context.

Section 3.2.3. Working towards a resolution of the particular and the general: considers how I have worked within these macro and micro educational contexts, through a focus on the notion of *truthfulness* and allied concepts, in order to analyse the data.

Section 3.3. Choosing a method of data analysis and Section 3.3.1: Grounded Theory : developing an understanding: show how I came to use grounded theory as a model for analysing the data.

Section 3.4: Engaging in exploratory research and Section 3.4.1: After the Key Stage 3 examinations detail the initial research that I conducted in two schools, a suburban secondary school and a City Technology College, which helped to inform the design of my main research study. The latter is fully discussed in the Data Analysis chapter.

Section 3.5: Understanding Bourdieu in practice: considers definitions of Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital and how a relational structure could be arrived at in terms of my own research.

3.2.1. The educational research context in particular.

In coming to write this chapter I felt that it was important, firstly, to illustrate some of my own reflections about what it meant to undertake educational research of this nature, and in the process how I could feel both *enabled* and *disabled* as a researcher.

One of the first questions a would-be researcher asks of him or herself must surely be “Is this worth doing, and who is it for?” In my case, the research question was one that had bubbled under the surface of my life in many guises, forcing me to ask questions about the different contexts and representations of learning and teaching: how they were inhabited by and presented by students, teachers and policy-makers; how they were also seen by those outside the educational ‘pale’ but whose perceptions were, and are, significant. For me, this research project was very well worth doing since it had arisen out of my developing interest in what I saw as the discontinuities and negotiations around the teaching of and learning about Shakespeare that I had experienced both as a teacher and as a student.

If one is honest, then the second part of the question - “who is it for?” - must be re-directed to the researcher, at least in doctoral research. If the researcher cannot say ‘This is primarily for me’ then one’s belief in the work - and the stamina it takes to see it through - is seriously compromised. Bogdan and Biklen note that:

However a topic comes to you, whatever it is, it should be important to you ...

Without a touch of passion you may not have enough to sustain the effort to follow the work to the end, or go beyond the ordinary.

(cited in Salmon, 1992: 63).

However, this does not imply that all doctoral theses are imbued with mere selfishness. Above and beyond the need to recognise one's own possessive relationship to the research is the recognition that it will also have to pay heed to other directive masters such as funding bodies, research committees, supervisors, and examiners. There is a conflict to be resolved between the necessary autonomy of the doctoral student and the context in which their research is undertaken: "the final goal is that other people, whose opinions matter, find your work acceptable" (Salmon, 1992: 85). The resolution of this conflict is one that each and every doctoral student has to work out for him or herself, sometimes having to make compromises along the way.

Encountering methodology:

Like many PhD students, I had initially felt confused about where and how to begin, especially in relation to the role that methodology was to play in the construction of my thesis. My first degree was in English Literature and my MA was in Renaissance Studies, and subsequently I had felt at a huge disadvantage when entering the very different disciplines of the social sciences where explicit attention to methodology is so central to the design of the research. Nor was it simply one methodology that I had to consider in order to understand what I was researching. The heterogeneity of

educational research was, and is, mirrored in the range of methodological approaches that are used to support it. If I was successfully to consider methodology as a hermeneutic aid, it was not until I learned to trust my own interpretative voice that I began to see how I could use methodology, instead of methodology using me.

This breakthrough came about only after long discussions about the nature of methodology, planning workshops with fellow research students, much reading and continual thinking. Indeed, I would say in looking back at my attempts to leap over the methodological Beecher's Brook, my perspective has been a continually evolving one and which is now, at the point of writing up the thesis, different from the one I started out with. I do not consider this to be a bad thing, for if the research process is to be properly reflexive, then the researcher is necessarily going to be evaluating methodology and its application not just to the current study but also to future research studies:

Methodological decisions entail coming to terms not only with one's own personal situation, values and beliefs, but also with the whole intellectual ethos which pervades research ... one aspect of this involves standing up inwardly to conventional research assumptions and ceasing to be intimidated by 'big name' researchers.

(Salmon, 1992: 84)

Coming to terms with methodology involves, then, the growth of confidence. For me, this only occurred when I accepted that I had to use the methodological approach in the way that best fitted the research questions I was asking, whilst being aware that

other researchers could not only have used different methodological approaches but also have drawn different conclusions. Gallagher, for example, reflects eloquently on her experience as a doctoral research student, having to grapple with qualitative research procedures and the problem of how to make meaning that could truly resonate with both the researcher and his or her readers (Gallagher, 1995). Ball (1993:43) points out that “cynical researchers or rather cynical nonresearchers” argue that qualitative data is “soft” data (and implicitly invalid) because different researchers will approach data capture in different ways and come up with different analyses. However, Ball goes on to claim that such differences in approach and conclusion “would be matters of emphasis and orientation, rather than in the story to be told” (ibid.) It was important for me to realise that whilst the emphasis of my story would be different from someone else’s story, this would not invalidate the research findings. Of course, in using the word invalidate I am highlighting another potentially problematic issue for qualitative researchers, which is how to show that’s one own research findings can be considered successful in terms of quantitatively-derived concepts such as generalisability, validity, applicability, replicability (Schofield, 1993). I will be discussing how I attempted to resolve this issue in **Section 3.2.3.**

Following this section, which has offered an account of how I saw myself as an educational researcher working on a specific study in a specific field, that is, a university-based doctoral research study, I now wish to look briefly at the wider educational research context of which I was a part.

3.2.2. The educational research context in general.

Whilst engaged in my research study, I also felt it was important to have a sense of how professional educational research was perceived of in the world outside the university. My reasons for doing so, and for writing about it here, were to do with a mixture of curiosity and the need to belong. As a doctoral student in a university education department, I wanted to add to the knowledge that I was beginning to accumulate about educational research in general and to discover under what terms it operated. Furthermore, as isolation is part and parcel of being a doctoral student, I implicitly wanted to feel part of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) within educational research. So, I asked myself, what is educational research and what is it for?

What it appears that educational practitioners and educational policy-makers want from educational research are findings that will be of practicable use to schools and teachers and that they will help to resolve all manner of educational problems. Furthermore there is the strong expectation that these objectives will be accomplished on a sound value for money basis. This latter criterion was forcefully signalled by David Hargreaves in his 1996 lecture to the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in which he stated that:

Something has gone badly wrong, research is having little impact on the improvement of practice, and teachers I talk to do not think they get value for money from the £50-60 millions we spend annually on educational research. (cited in Hammersely, 1997: 143).

Subsequent reports such as the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE)-commissioned report on educational research (*Excellence in Research in Schools*, Hillage *et al*, 1998) and the Tooley and Darby (1998) report published by Ofsted, contributed further to the debate about the value and purpose of educational research.

It was David Hargreaves who suggested establishing a National Education Research Forum because:

Practitioners and policy makers must take an active role in shaping educational research as a whole ... and researchers need to know that users are powerful partners with whom many aspects of research need to be negotiated.

(cited in McIntyre, 1997: 139).

Ideally, of course, educational research should be symbiotic but the tenor of this extract could be seen to propose a rather different relationship between educational researchers and “users”. Despite the emollient use of the word “negotiated”, the sense that the former are to be directed in their research by the latter is implied. In 1999 the National Educational Research Forum (NERF) was set up (not to be confused with the already well-established research body, NFER, the National Foundation for Educational Research). Whilst the latter’s remit includes the

development of tests and assessments for the National Curriculum, one of the National Educational Research Forum's aims is to develop the recommendations that Hillage *et al*, made in 1998:

The Hillage report identified the need to develop a framework and a coherent strategy within which research in education could thrive. The remit of the Forum is develop such a framework (a set of structures and procedures) and strategy (co-ordinated actions aimed at creating best possible conditions for high quality research for England.

(NERF, 2001:1).

Both NERF and NFER are keen to emphasise their independent status but concerns have also been expressed by some within the educational research community about the nature of the proposed national strategy for educational research and the increase in centralised control that this implied:

In a democracy, it is important that a significant part of education research is free to investigate issues that lie outside, or even directly counter to, those political priorities.

(Hodkinson quoted in Utley, 2001:8).

Tim Oates, the Principal Research Manager of the QCA also noted the increased levels of government-backed research which are directed "towards utility... [and] tied to a commitment to evidence-driven policy and a Treasury-inspired drive to evaluate all major initiatives and programmes" (2000:20). He also pointed out that such an agenda could well lead to:

fears in the research community that immediate government policy concerns

will dominate the research agenda, suppressing unorthodox but valid approaches and any uncomfortable findings.

(Oates, 2000: 20)

However, the research community has continued to query such an agenda, as discussions in recent editions of the *British Journal of Educational Studies* have shown. For example, Rawling (2001) wondered “how much freedom will be exercised by NERF and whether it will have the genuine ability to influence rather than to react to policy agenda” (2001: 143).

Pirrie (2001) is more specifically concerned about the issue of evidence-based practice, which is a medically-derived model and has been held up as one to which educational research should aspire. She states that evidence-based practice is not “a panacea” (2001: 132), and that it:

would ultimately be to the detriment of educational research if the spirit of critical enquiry were to be crushed in a ragged stampede towards ‘evidence-based’ practice. This could have the deleterious effect of narrowing the entire research enterprise.

(Pirrie, 2001: 133).

In a recent book, Andrews (2001:ix) counters such arguments by claiming that “Research uninformed by practical considerations tends to be ignored by practitioners however good it is academically” and that bodies such as NERF and the newly-established research review body, The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-centre), are helping to shape a “virtuous triangle”

(ibid. xi) between research, policy, and practice. Scott offers a pragmatic solution for consideration:

we are involved in the power relations which characterise policy-making ... since our knowledge is both prescriptive and relevant to policy-making about education, we cannot escape responsibility for the political implications for what we do. Suffice it here to suggest here that educational researchers should both to seek to influence policy-making and that the business of policy-making is a legitimate subject for educational researchers to study. (Scott, 2000: 143).

Perhaps in a bid to lay to rest concerns from some sections of the research community, the preface to the NERF strategy document reiterated its role in the following terms:

The Forum does not seek to control research; its role is to serve as a catalyst and enabler ... it is essential for the Forum to continue to conduct its activities independently of government while retaining strong links with policy formation and practice in education” (NERF, 2001:2).

Such debates are concerned, in the main, with issues of power and control. Some researchers perceive that a more centralised form of control is being exerted and bringing in its wake a loss of autonomy whilst others see this trend as signs that a more professional and disciplined approach is being adopted. As far as the latter perspective is concerned, the establishment of research reviews (such as the

aforementioned EPPI-centre), research databases and dissemination programmes can only strengthen and enhance the educational research profile.

It is almost a truism to state that educational researchers of all hues have never shirked from engaging in discussions, debates and arguments about just what their discipline is and why it exists, they would hardly be justified in titling themselves as educational researchers if this was not so. In 1999, Peter Mortimer, in his presidential address to the British Educational Research Association, said “The fact remains, however, that some of our work as educational researchers is probably not good enough” (Mortimer, 2000: 15). Whilst the British Educational Research Association (BERA) may not be as large as its American counterpart (AERA), which saw 13,000 researchers presenting 3000 papers at its April 2001 conference, researchers there are confronted by the same sorts of problems, namely , how to make an impact and what is it that we are doing anyway? The criteria demanded of ‘good’ research can be as varied as the institutions that instigate it, and arriving at a generally-agreed definition of what it constitutes is no simple task. Contributors to *Educational Researcher*, the research journal of the American Educational Research Association, have also had lengthy discussions about the nature and effectiveness of educational research. In a similar move to what is happening in Britain, a suggestion was made to improve the “awful reputation” of educational research by setting up review bodies which would try to achieve a research “synthesis” between researchers, policy-makers and educators. (Scroufe, 1997:26-28).

In addition to the endless debates about just what educational research is and how it is to be conducted, there are also the instances where important research is commissioned, often at the highest level, only for its findings not to be fully used to inform policy or practice. In his book *Doing Qualitative Educational Research*, Geoffrey Walford notes the downplaying of controversial findings from his own 1991 report on the first City Technology College in the country, Solihull CTC (Walford, 2001). An example that I found pertinent to my own research was a report that arose out of the newly-elected Labour Government's White Paper, *Excellence in Schools*:

If we are to prepare successfully for the twenty-first century we will have to do more than just improve literacy and numeracy skills. We need a broad, flexible and motivating education that recognises the different talents of all children and delivers excellence for everyone.

(cited in NACCCE Report, *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education*, 1999:6)

The then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett and the then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, established the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, (NACCCE) chaired by Ken Robinson, Professor of Education at Warwick University in February 1998 to:

make recommendations to the Secretaries of State on the creative and cultural development of young people [up to age 16] through formal and informal education: to take stock of current provision and to make proposals, policies and practice.

(NACCCE, 1996: 4)

In essence, the report argued for a “national strategy for creative and cultural education” which would have “significant implications for methods of teaching and assessment” (ibid, 6). The report was so well-received in the public domain that when it was published in May 1999, a reprint had to be ordered after the first 10,000 copies ran out after two months (Barnard, 2000) and it continues to be receive a healthy number of citations. However, little was heard from the government which had commissioned it. This muted reaction was criticised, not least of all by Ken Robinson himself who accused the government of attempting to bury the report (Barnard, 2000). A year later, the Guardian reported that although the government had “welcomed” the report’s advice, they had chosen “largely to ignore it” (Mullan, Mills, Brookes, 2001), despite the report having been described as “possibly the best document to come out of the education department since Labour took office” (Marshall, 2000:10) and one which could, if implemented, have had an impact on creativity in the classroom. Subsequent concentration on policy implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, especially at Key Stage 3, perhaps left less room for the further development of the report’s recommendations – which numbered almost 60 (Robinson, 1999). In the White Paper, what appeared to be an explicit concern for “parity of esteem” between the literacy and numeracy strategies and the cultural and creative development of young people in schools does not seem to have been fully realised in practice.

Of course, not all professional educational research is policy-related and there is also official encouragement of “blue skies” research (Hargeaves, 2001; RAE, 2002).

Nevertheless, I am left feeling that educational research is a site that is not only “contested” (Hodkinson, 2001) by those who practise and fund it but it is also one which operates within a climate where words such as accountability, assessment, audit culture and transparency comprise an increasingly forceful *alpha et omega*. It is not entirely clear how such an objectives-driven lexicon can fully accommodate the blue skies research that researchers are also encouraged to pursue.

In this brief presentation of some of the vigorous debates that surround the nature of professional educational research, I wanted to acknowledge that in such a climate epistemological closure is not something that can be wholly achieved. Instead, educational researchers - and qualitative educational researchers in particular - are constantly confronted by what Denzin and Lincoln aptly describe as the “triple crisis of representation, legitimation and praxis” (2000:17), a point with which Coffey (2002) concurs in her succinct overview of qualitative research in education.

In conclusion then, if I were to try to embody educational research in a representational way to illustrate what I think it is, it would be as a creature that does not quite resemble anything else, rather like something out of a medieval bestiary. Such a creature, in all its wondrous hybridity, resists the kind of categorisation which not only says exactly what it is and where it came from but also how it is to be managed and what it will produce. What I mean by this conceit is that I do not

believe that educational research can be easily coralled into policy pens, that the diverse nature of the beast should be accepted, and even celebrated.

As the above discussions about educational research both in particular and in general have shown, I have been trying to understand where I was able to fit into both contexts. In order to resolve this, I felt that I needed to look at another concept in relation to educational research - its truthfulness. In the following section, I wish to show how the discussion of a taxonomy of truthfulness helped me to bring both the particular research context and the general research context together.

3.2.3: Working towards resolution of the particular and the general .

Whilst quantitative researchers work within a paradigm that emphasises validity and generalisability, such issues are more problematic in qualitative research, and, as I have discussed, even more so in today's educational climate. Qualitative research is placed in the paradoxical position of having to prove its validity in scientific terms whilst denying any inherent determinisim in the analytical process. How, I asked myself, could a lone doctoral study, which would inevitably look at areas of educational policy and practice given the nature of its enquiry, stand up to an assessment of the generalisability of its findings? Even by thinking about the term generalisability as well as validation and replication I was, I felt, becoming complicit with the notion that 'good' research is almost inevitably equated with research that is positivistic in basis and tone. It seemed to me that qualitative

research, in its anxiety to prove itself, embraced the objective descriptors of quantitative research wholeheartedly, whilst appearing to neglect the more subjective term 'truth'. Whilst I accepted the need for (seemingly) objective guarantors in my research study, I needed to think about how I was going to be representing 'truthfulness' in the research study, both objectively and subjectively.

Truthfulness:

Engaging with the concept of truth is to open a Pandora's Box of philosophical debate, conjecture and disputation that has extended over centuries. To take just one example from a discussion about Foucault's investigation of *parrhesia* or 'truth-telling', Peters explains that such a notion of truth-telling from its classical Greek roots to the present-day:

provides a genealogical analysis which demonstrates the cultural significance of truth-telling as a set of educational practices, strongly wedded to the Socratic beginning of the Western philosophical tradition, and, therefore, also to own (*sic*) cultural self-image or self-understanding.

(Peters, 2001:23).

Truth-telling, in this respect is as much constructed, as constructing and in this section, I show how I came to understand and reflect upon my own practice of truth-telling in the thesis.

If I was going to engage with notions of truth in relation to data analysis, I had to accept first of all that it was indeed my data and that it would be my analysis. This sounds simple enough but in claiming such ownership I also had to accept the responsibility that went alongside such a claim. In particular this meant the responsibility that I had as an outsider to tell the truth about the people and the situations that I had been able to research. “To thine own self be true” exhorts the arch dissembler Polonius, but what did it really entail to be true not just to oneself but also to others? The underlying question to be asked was “How can truthfulness exist in educational research which takes place in a post-modern context where certainties of any sort no longer exist, and one person’s truth can so easily be another person’s untruth?” In the worst case this can lead to a paralysis of the research investigation, where it becomes almost impossible to present one’s own research-truth because, in a relativistic context, that truth is inherently unstable, liable to be pushed aside and toppled by other truths. It becomes, in a sense, frightening to tell the truth and there is even a term, “veriphobia” that has been coined by the American epistemologist, Alan Goodman (Bailey, 2001) to describe the phenomenon. In his article, *Overcoming Veriphobia* (ibid), Bailey is quite simply trying to reclaim truth in educational research whilst acknowledging that uncertainties regarding one’s own position, beliefs and theories can still exist:

Educational research, in this light, depends upon a conception of objectivity that is defined in terms of honest inquiry, openness to criticism and an unapologetic pursuit of the truth ... Without a strong and ever-present sense of truth-seeking, along with a recognition that truth is very hard to find,

inquiry becomes impossible, and academia becomes little more than a forum for political whim and fancy.

(Bailey, 2001: 169,170).

One of the fundamental questions that I ask myself as a doctoral student in educational research is “Am I going to be telling the truth?” with an additional query as to how “my” truth can also be “your” truth? In order to answer that I have to examine my own position closely, an actor situated in a social world looking at other actors situated in their social worlds and in so doing I also have to acknowledge the biases and prejudices that all performers (including my own) bring to their roles. As a researcher I need to be aware of whose truth is being told, and how it is being told. Truth, in a sense, becomes truth-as-process rather than truth-as-product for in presenting what truth is being told, there is a proviso to be considered:

Is it possible to claim significant truth about the world of teaching and classrooms? I doubt it. The significant aspect of classrooms are the conceptual and social features, the very aspects that interpretative and narrative research methods capture so well... As in all social situations, classrooms are in a constant flux, even from one hour to the next.

(Gudmundsdottir, 1997: 1).

Locating a truth-telling axis amidst the whirling vortex of teaching and classrooms is not straightforward. Perhaps, then, this very volatility is something to be embraced, not rejected. Jackson (1990) declared that:

the dream of finding out once and for all how teaching works or how schools ought to be administered no longer animates nearly as many of us as it once did. In its place we have substituted the much more modest goal of trying to figure out what's happening *here and now* or what went on *there and then*. That does not mean that we have given up trying to say things that are true from situation to situation or that we are no longer interested in making generalizations. But the kind of truth in which more and more of us seem interested these days takes a very different form than it once was.

(Jackson, 1990:7, emphasis in original).

Jackson suggests that this different form focusses on the Geertzian notion of *local knowledge* (a concept, incidentally, critiqued by Vincent Pecora (1989) as *The Limits of Local Knowledge*). However, Geertz, in a recent book, has reflected further on the concept of *local* versus *universal* knowledge. Local knowledge presents itself as a “shifting focus of particularity” (2000:133) rather than the wide-scope vision of the universal, the former shows what “this observer, in this time, at that place” (ibid, 137) saw. He surmises (somewhat mischievously in tone) that the use of one approach or the other depends on what it is the researcher wants to achieve:

If advances in the technical, fine-tuning control of social life (Benthams's dream, Foucault's nightmare) is what you are after, then universality talk is, I guess, the talk to talk. If you are after refinements in our ability to live lives that make some sense to us, and of which we can on balance improve

(Montaigne's skeptical [*sic*] hope, Weber's desperate one), - moral skills, not manipulative ones – then something less vaulting would seem to be called for.

(Geertz, 2000:139)

Such a re-focussing of concern implies a concomitant reframing of the researcher's own ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin his or her research endeavours. From whatever perspective one thinks about one's own beliefs about being and knowledge, it is, nevertheless, the responsibility of the researcher to present research accounts, as truthfully as possible, so that his or her readers can form their own interpretations of what they believe to be true. As Gallagher notes:

Believability does not mean that one applied method accurately; it means that one accounts for his or herself honestly and with integrity, so that the reader can judge the believability of the work.

(Gallagher, 1995: 32-3).

Ely *et al*, concur that “ a responsible research report is a report that can be believed” (1997: 36) and go on to pose a pertinent proposition, with which I end this section:

“Truth” is always in flux. Too bad we had to mention such loaded terms as “truth” “validity” anyway. But their specters [*sic*] must often be addressed by qualitative researchers – over and over again it seems.

(Ely *et al*, 1997: 36).

In the following section I consider in more detail my concept of presentation or, more accurately, representation in relation to the truthfulness that I was trying to show.

Representation:

Whilst I was thinking about locating truthfulness in my research accounts, I was thinking about how this could be represented, and at the same time from a list of readings that is by no means exhaustive I was also aware that in postmodern terms, 'representation' was problematic. (Beverley 1999; Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Coffey, 1999; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, 2000; Docherty, 1993; Gane 1989; McGuigan, 1997; Parker *et al.*, 1999; Stronach and MacLure, 1997). Theorists from literary, cultural, critical and educational perspectives have all, in their different ways, confronted the seemingly on-going "crisis" of representation. This crisis not only means thinking more carefully about how we represent ourselves in research accounts (Coffey 1999) but also how we represent others (Skeggs, 1997). In different contexts it has also meant a re-conceptualisation of how to represent the Other; to give alterity a voice that is not constrained by the hegemonies of ideology and power; to consider subalternity (Beverley, 1999, 2000) and the "rights of representation" (Gergen and Gergen, 2000).

Representation, then, goes hand in hand with responsibility. In the older social science sense of the descriptive writing-up of the analysis, representation is not as straightforward as it once was. One of Bourdieu's concerns is how to resolve this very dilemma, in what might be described as a warning to "Mind the Gap"

The problem resided, for Bourdieu, in the gap between the practical logic and necessity of everyday activities carried out by actors, which the social

scientist is interested in observing, understanding, and explaining, and the formalized accounts that the social scientist constructs.

(Swartz, 1997: 50).

Coffey and Atkinson comment that it is only in the “recent past that social scientists have begun to reflect critically and self-consciously on how they produce those texts, and how various audiences read [them]” (1996:109) and go on to say that:

From a postmodern stance, the apparent authority of the traditional scholarly text is rendered problematic, as are many of the traditional claims to truth that they implicitly or explicitly enter. The authorial perspective of the analyst is also rendered suspect ... all forms of textual representation involve some degree of “fictional” work. Even those that conform to more familiar patterns are often based on the selection and juxtaposition of data extracts.

(Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 122, 124).

As Charmaz notes, postmodernism has brought with it a “renewed awareness of our relationships with and representation of subjects that will long influence qualitative research, possibly longer than the term *postmodernism* itself holds sway” (2000: 528). Bourdieu draws attention to the *constructed* nature of the representation of subjects’ knowledge and experience of the social world, and the subsequent imperative to develop a reflexive practice of sociology. (Bourdieu, 1977; Jenkins, 1992; Swartz, 1997).

As I was considering the idea of representation and truthfulness in research accounts it was also pertinent to extend the comparison a little further and bring the subject of my research study, Shakespeare, into the frame. The following two examples focus on two different instances of representation in Shakespeare. The quotation below encapsulates a moment in the past that sought to define the nature of Shakespeare's "truthful" depiction of his fictitious personae:

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied.

(quoted in Desai, 1979: 94).

This quotation from Samuel Johnson's 1765 *Preface* to his edition of Shakespeare's plays, describes Johnson's conviction that Shakespeare's truthfulness in representing "common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find." (ibid, 94) was what characterised the poet's particular genius.

However, if we are to re-view Johnson's credo wearing post-modern spectacles, the privileging of the general over the particular is because "particular manners" can be known and judged "only" by a few. Stories that tell of the particular and the general should not be bifurcated thus. So, I would want reframe the idea of representation as one which shows us recognisable truths, taken from different stories and seen from different angles. The Johnsonian view of Shakespeare's "just" and thereby implicitly true representations of human nature is one which has been undermined by postmodern excavations which have dug into the very bedrock of

concepts such as universal truths and values, stable and immutable meanings.

Representation now is fragmentary - even contradictory. An awareness of artifice as well as mimesis is foregrounded. Falsity and accuracy are both encompassed since it is no longer possible to believe, without question, the truth of what we view with our own eyes.

This point connects with the second one that I wish to make, which is to consider how “representative” the images of Shakespeare are. Even without being able to validate their authenticity fully, the high-domed forehead, flowing hair, wide-lidded eyes, moustache, beard, are all features which are instantly recognisable as belonging to none other than ‘Shakespeare’. I have asked groups of pupils in classroom settings as well as random selections of friends and family how they would portray Shakespeare, and the resulting representations invariably draw upon one or more of the above characteristics. Interestingly, one of the pupils in the study made the suggestion that Shakespeare’s own authenticity can be guaranteed because there are “so many pictures of him” in existence (Appendix B, p.10).

However, to discover if these pictures are derived from a real representation of Shakespeare involves embarking upon an endless paper chase of claim and counter-claim that stretches back for centuries. Such an undertaking would serve as the subject of another entire thesis, and I have only scratched the surface in order to illustrate the wider point I am making about the authenticity of representation in research.

For example, to paraphrase Gloucester in *King Lear* it is not quite enough to “see Shakespeare feelingly” (Act IV, vi) through the medium of the printed (and let us not forget, edited) words alone. There is also the longing to possess something more tangibly authentic, an artefact such as a manuscript written in Shakespeare’s own hand or, failing that, even the chippings from “his” Stratford mulberry tree, which became the 18th century equivalent of the medieval relics supposedly taken from the True Cross (Holderness, 1988). Almost as good, if not better, are verifiable likenesses in the form of pictures that purport to show what the person was really like. Spielman ends his monograph comparing the First Folio engraving with the funerary bust at Stratford with the confident assertion that:

we may rest assured that we have had pictured to us, quite truly in the main, the presentment of Shakespeare, Man and Poet, as he lived and worked.

(Spielman, 1924: 52).

In fact, all the “presentments” of Shakespeare that are current derive from very few sources. These include the Chandos portrait, an oil painting on canvas dating from the early years of the 17th century, now in the National Portrait Gallery, London but formerly in the possession of the Duke of Chandos. The painting has been claimed to have been done by either by Shakespeare’s contemporaries Richard Burbage or John (or Joseph) Taylor). It also once belonged to Sir William Davenant, Shakespeare’s godson (also reputedly his natural son). In an intriguing development, as Halpern

(1997) notes, some 19th scholars were perturbed at what they thought the portrait represented:

One cannot readily imagine our essentially English Shakespeare to have been a dark, heavy man, with a foreign expression, of a decidedly Jewish physiognomy, thin curly hair, a somewhat lubricious mouth, red-edged eyes, wanton lips, with a coarse expression, and his ears tricked out with ear-rings.

(Friswell, J. 1864 cited in Halpern, R, 1997: 165).

A Shakespeare who represents the very idea of Englishness but who looks, to 19th century eyes, “decidedly Jewish” has to be accounted for and, rather remarkably and inconsistently as Halpern notes, Friswell settles the matter by claiming that Shakespeare is painted in character as Shylock. Spielman, in 1924, also dismissed the Chandos portrait with a rejoinder to “note well this apparently swarthy alien” (Spielman, 1924: 5). For Spielmann, only two representations could be considered authentic, the Stratford monument and the Droeshout engraving in the First Folio, which are discussed below.

The funerary bust of Shakespeare in the Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, by Garat Johnson the Younger (anglicised from the Dutch Jennsen/Jannsen), was made at some date shortly after Shakespeare’s death in 1616, since it is referred to by Leonard Digges in his prefatory verses in the First Folio of 1623 as the “Stratford Monument”. The bust was initially coloured in common with the style of the time but was painted white in 1793 at the behest of the Shakespearean scholar Edward Malone. In 1861, the white lead paint was removed and the bust repainted “in its

proper colours, though in too high a key” (Spielmann, 1924: 24. It has been the subject of no little argument regarding its authenticity partly because it made Shakespeare look more like a pedestrian burgher rather than a poetic genius.

Finally, there is the engraved picture of Shakespeare which adorns the frontispiece of the First Folio, that “image, which seems implacable and authoritative” (Stredder, 1999: 171). It is by Martin Droeshout, who was of Flemish Protestant origin, (and not to be confused with his young nephew Martin Droeshout, who some claim as the real engraver of the portrait – as Spielmann does, attributing what he thought to be the engraving’s wretched execution to youthful inexperience). In all three representations, the main features are similar although hairstyles and facial hair differ in some respects, however this was not unusual in portraits of the time. Spielmann shows a sketch of 1849 in which all three heads are aligned in order to ascertain physiognomic similarities, and he himself describes how he clambered over the Stratford monument taking exact facial measurements (Spielman, 1924: 8-12). The significance of these sorts of activities is that they denote an almost overwhelming desire *to have the measure of the man* – in both senses of the phrase.

James Boaden summed up the strength of such desires in 1824: “Of such a man, therefore, who would not wish to possess an exact resemblance...[in order to] enjoy him in private life ... catch... the smile with which he brightened his familiar circle” (Boaden, 1824: 4). Boaden’s life-long pursuit of Shakespeare’s “true” likeness, in which he also makes a strong claim for the authenticity of the 17th century Somerset

or Janssen portrait (by Cornelius Janssen , sometimes called Jonson and not to be confused with Garat Johnson/Jenssen of the Stratford bust), is only one example of the myriad attempts to recover the “real” Shakespeare up to an including the present day.

This desire to possess the true Shakespeare can overcome all reason, as the claim that Leslie Hotson put forward (Hotson, 1977) seems to indicate. Hotson was convinced that one of the two miniature portraits by Nicholas Hilliard, painted in 1588, of *A Man clasping a Hand from a Cloud* was in fact the then 24 year old Shakespeare (rather than the more likely candidate, Lord Thomas Howard ,1561-1626, as Strong (1977) suggests). Of the two miniatures in existence, one is at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the other was purchased by Hotson himself with no little difficulty, so sure was he that it portrayed Shakespeare as he looked in life. Despite robust refutation of this claim (Strong,1977), the idea that Shakespeare is represented if not in the portrait then at least by the *hand* that is being held has not altogether disappeared. My 1995 audio tape recording of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, has the same Hilliard miniature on the cover, and is entitled *Man Clasping Hand from a Cloud, Possibly William Shakespeare's*.

Claims made for any kind of link to Shakespeare, in the hope that more biographical details can be added to the scant store of proven facts about his life, are always going to be the subject of much interest, and not just amongst scholars as a recent newspaper article indicated. A hitherto unremarkable 16th century portrait of a

woman has been claimed to be that of Shakespeare's patron, the third Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley, *dressed* as a woman. The question posed is whether the now-ambiguously gendered sitter is indeed the real representation of the "fair youth" addressed in Shakespeare's sonnets who is described as the "master-mistress of my passion" (Sonnet XX), thus shedding light on the vexed question of Shakespeare's own sexuality (Holden, 2002).

In conclusion then, by touching on some examples of representation connected to Shakespeare my aim has been to point to the sheer complexity of the notion of representation in research, whether it is educational or Shakespearean. As has been shown, on the one hand we use representation as a means to ensure veracity and authenticity, on the other hand we can not know for sure how accurate it really is. Representation, then, is dichotomous, both mutable and unstable, as well as a repository of a represented truthfulness and authority. Accounting for truthfulness in interpretative research involves, at the very least an acknowledgement of these tensions.

Representing truthfulness in qualitative research

However, when research findings are re/presented in myriad forms such as theses, reports and academic papers to examiners, research participants, funding bodies and so on, they are done so with an implicit awareness of the concepts of generalisability, reliability and validity - terms which are also imported from a quantitative paradigm (Janesick, 2000). The qualitative research that is submitted will rely on the

responses of readers who will judge its perceived authenticity. Authenticity itself is valorised through appeals to authority and credibility, both of which can be described as legitimacy-enforcers. The crux of the matter is: “How do we know what you are saying is true and that it is recognised as such?” To put it bluntly the question can not be answered with complete certainty because of the nature of interpretative research. As I noted earlier, what can be presented is an account of the research in as truthful and honest a manner as possible whose findings are recognised as illustrative of either communal or individual realities. In Ellis and Bochner’s dialogic discussion of autoethnography, they consider what they understand by truthfulness:

I [Ellis] start from the position that language is not transparent and there’s no single version of the truth. To me validity means that our work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable and possible.

(Ellis and Bochner, 2000: 751)

In representing others, qualitative research has attempted to present accounts of “lived experience” but Denzin and Lincoln claim that this is no longer possible: “Lived experience cannot be studied directly. We study representations of experience” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 1022). In qualitative research today, such representations are being reconstructed in myriad textualities, the “truth of these new texts is determined pragmatically” (ibid, 1055) and “will be evaluated in terms of an increasingly sophisticated set of local, antifoundational, moral and ethical criteria.” (ibid, 1022).

Finally, in relation to the truth that is told to researchers, rather than the truth that researchers tell, Bourdieu considers how the researcher is able to, as it were, get at the truth. He does so by positing the researcher as a midwife, and in order to practise midwifery, one has to be trained extensively. For the researcher him or herself, “the desire to discover the truth” (Bourdieu, 1999: 621), “is totally devoid of any practical power unless it is rendered as a “craft” (ibid, 621). Bourdieu is deliberate in his use of the word craft, which brings in its wake assumptions of apprenticeship and mastery. The researcher’s craft is therefore concretised and not “an abstract, purely intellectual way of knowing” (ibid, 621):

This craft is a real “disposition to pursue truth” [quotation translated from Aristotle] ... which disposes one to improvise on the spot, in the urgency of the interview, strategies of self-presentation and adaptive responses, encouragement and opportune questions etc., so as to help respondents *deliver up their truth, or, rather, to be delivered of it.*

(Bourdieu, 1999: 621, my italics.)

Triangulation and validity.

Cohen and Manion see “the chief problem confronting researchers using triangulation”, as that of validity (1994: 241). The reaction of the research respondents is deemed a necessary part of guaranteeing validity in qualitative studies. In my research study, it was not possible to track all of the pupils involved in the focus groups to do this, and I had to present my findings in the form of a short report to the teachers in each of the schools. Another approach towards validation is the use

of “multiple methods, or triangulation, [which] reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Flick, 1998: 230).

Triangulation is described in the dictionary as the “tracing and measurement of a series or network of triangles in order to survey and map out a territory or region” (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1970: 2243). The dictionary definition of triangulation refers, of course, to its use as a term of measurement and in the social sciences this measuring attribute is supplemented with a concern to validate the research. I have already discussed the notion of truth in more general terms but there is also a specific expectation to validate data findings through some sort of triangulation technique. In my research study I have sought to triangulate the primary data source of the pre-SATs focus group interviews with post-SATs focus group interviews, individual pupil interviews (where possible) and interviews with class teachers and heads of department. Documentary sources have included field-notes from my classroom observations and school documentation including prospectuses and inspection reports. I have also gathered policy documentation relating to the National Curriculum as well as a portfolio of related press articles.

Whilst this compilation of triangulating sources has deepened my understanding and interpretation of the context surrounding pupil-responses to Shakespeare, it has also made me aware of the wider tensions within qualitative research regarding validation in general. Indeed, one of the most stimulating, and ultimately frustrating, workshop sessions that was organised by myself and fellow- research students was to do with the notion of validity. We were initially concerned with technicalities, trying to

untangle what it was and how it could be guaranteed in our respective research studies but, to our surprise, we found ourselves debating its fundamental premise. In the end we could not come to any firm conclusions about the validity of validity.

Validity is tied up with triangulation and both Flick (1998) and Richardson (2000) offer critiques regarding the concept. If we accept that “Objective reality can never be captured. We can know a thing only through its representations” (Flick, 1998:230 cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:5), then we should also be willing to accept that ‘Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy, but an alternative to validation’ (ibid, 5). Richardson takes the argument one step further by dispensing with the metaphor of triangulation altogether since it implies a measurable outcome that is scientific and objective. In recognising that there are “more than ‘three sides’ from which to approach the world” (Richardson, 2000: 934) she suggests that the growing, changing, altering, refracting prisms of the crystal should serve as:

the central imaginary for “validity” ... Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity” (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves), and crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial, understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (Richardson, 2000: 934).

Eisner describes his use of pluralism in research, which:

relates to the belief that there is no single legitimate way to make sense of the world. Different ways of seeing give us different worlds. Different ways of saying allow us to represent different worlds.

(Eisner 1993: 53).

Pursuing educational research means embracing a methodological diversity that allows for the educational stories that are being represented to unfold as freely as possible, as well as being illuminating and truthful. But, and it is of course a big but, terms relating to veracity and clarity can be refracted through diverse sets of optics. Such concepts can still appear to be guaranteed only by an approach to research that is rigorous, with the strong implication that by rigorous, what is actually meant is scientific. With these subtle and not so subtle connotations in mind, the novice researcher can find questions about the validity of his or her research, and how it will be secured within the thesis, daunting, especially if he or she is intending to use qualitative research methods. Qualitative research has had to defend itself against accusations that both its methods and resultant findings are not as valid as “proper”, that is, scientific research. However, as Hitchcock and Hughes point out:

If being scientific means being systematic, rigorous, and analytical then qualitative research can meet the criteria of being scientific. But qualitative and ethnographic researchers do tend to approach research design, data collection, and analysis in a fundamentally different way from many other social scientists.

(Hitchcock and Hughes, 1989: 36).

In the latest edition of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), the editors say that qualitative research as practised in different ways by different people should be welcomed:

The staggering array of new materials, new resources, new stories, new critiques, new methods, new epistemological proposals, new forms of validity, new textual improvisations, new performed interpretations - all demonstrate an undeniably new, if shifting center [sic] ...The whole concept of center and margins is being transfigured by methods, methodologies, research practices, and epistemologies scarcely dreamed of a generation ago - or even when the first edition of this *Handbook* was published [in 1994].

(Lincoln and Denzin, 2000: 1063).

As fascinating as this seemingly endless variety of new concepts were, and continue to be, as far as my own research study was concerned, I had to settle upon one way of doing things, and upon a methodology whose “precepts” I could follow and develop in relation to it. What I was attempting in my qualitative research study was to produce an interpretative truthfulness derived from a systematic and rigorous analysis of the data. In trying to resolve this conundrum of past and present paradigms the analogy of early modern Humanism resisting the ‘auctoritee’ of mediaeval Scholasticism did come to mind but, as I have come to realise, it should be possible to take the best from both traditions, “ so as to understand how the masters in a given “passe” perspective in fact did their work” (Lincoln and Denzin, 2000: 1050).

So, in representing my research and its findings I have aimed to do so within the parameters of accepted research-validation, whilst acknowledging that there are multiple versions of the truth. I have attempted to maintain a steady position that accepts these tensions whilst seeking to authenticate my representations. In the following section I present an account of my examination of the different qualitative approaches to data analysis which I hoped would enable me fulfil these apparently dichotomous demands.

3.3: Choosing a method of data analysis.

As has already been noted, the existence of what can seem to be an overwhelming range of qualitative methodologies makes the eventual choice of one them difficult, to say the least, (Price, 2000). Having begun a reading of the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss and Corbin, 1990), I also read other accounts of qualitative methodologies and methods (Bryman and Burgess, 1994; Cortazzi, 1993; Cohen and Manion, 1994; Crabtree and Miller, 1999; Cresswell, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Dey, 1993; Feldman, 1995; Hammersley, 1993; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Lareau & Shultz, 1996; Mason, 1996; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Schratz, 1993; Seale, 1999; Silverman, 1993.) I found Bryman and Burgess's identification of four main analytical strands a helpful summary of what was on offer:

- * language-based approaches including discourse analysis, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, all looking at how language is employed;

- * descriptive or interpretative approach;
- * classic ethnography;
- * life history.

Furthermore, there are the experiential (including action research) methodologies which seek to engage in much more collaborative ways of doing research and empowering both the researcher and researched (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1988). The development of narrative is manifested most vividly in the methods of narrative inquiry to relate stories “of the field” using mixed genres including drama, poetry, fiction, autoethnography and testimonio (Van Maanen, 1998; Richardson, 1997, 2000; Josselson and Lieblich, 1999; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Brearley, 2000; Beverley, 2000). Whilst Charmaz agrees that “writing matters” (Charmaz, 2000: 527), in her own writing she attempts to take “the reader into a story ... without transforming the final product into fiction, drama or poetry” .

In what Richardson describes as CAP (creative analytic practice) ethnography, writing itself becomes a “method of inquiry” (Richardson, 2000: 923) and “writers view their own work as process, rather than as definitive representation” (ibid, 936). Richardson’s own work in this area is a part of what she heralds as the paradigmatic changes in academic practice, which include Elliot Eisner’s eponymous query, *Should a novel count as a dissertation in education?* (1996). Whilst Rhedding-Jones asserts that PhD’s should not be presented as novels, her own doctoral dissertation and subsequent writing about that process is deliberately discursive so as to avoid a “totalising narrative” (Rhedding-Jones, 1997: 197). Such examples of the “creative

representation of research” stretch “issues of power and control” and challenge academic conventions (Brearley: 2000:16). However, for such challenges to be presented successfully, experience, expertise and confidence are necessary but these are the very factors that the novice researcher can lack.

Considerations about how I would eventually present my own “writing up” were, at this juncture, far from my mind and in any case like many research students I suspect, I made the somewhat naïve assumption that the writing up process would be unproblematical (Coffey, 1999: 135), since my present over-riding concern was to work out how I was to collect and then analyse data. In fact, some of the earliest decisions that I had made in relation to data collection (such as using qualitative rather than quantitative methods) were instrumental in the eventual use of one type of methodology and the elimination of others, however intriguing they may have appeared at the time.

Following the exploratory research (see section 3.4 and 3.4.1), I decided to collect the data from three different types of secondary school in the city where I would observe a series of classroom lessons and then interview selected groups of pupils before and after the Shakespeare Paper, which is taken as part of the English SATs at the end of Key Stage 3. I also wanted to interview each class’s English teacher and/or Heads of Department for purposes of triangulation. The fieldwork was not going to be longitudinal since it was related to pupils’ responses to Shakespeare in the spring and summer terms of Year 9. Therefore, fully ethnographic approaches were

not appropriate since I was not going to be embedded within the classroom for a consistently long period of time. Although I hoped to interview pupils individually, my main interview data would be captured through the focus groups which would comprise around 18 pupils (ideally, three groups of six). Therefore I did not set out with the intention of presenting detailed life histories of each of the pupils. Nor was the research study, as it stood in the initial stages of development, focussed towards the language-based approaches such as discourse analysis and ethnomethodology (although I was sufficiently intrigued by the former to attend a research-training workshop to find out more about its potential as an analytical tool). This left the interpretative or descriptive approach which attracted me the most in that it seemed to be the most appropriate to my research study.

I also considered using computer software packages (Tesch, 1990, Fielding & Lee, 1991) and attended another university-based, research-training workshop about NUD*IST to see if I could make use of it when analysing the data, since it was designed with qualitative researchers in mind. The conjunction of computer analysis with qualitative research presented itself to me as something that was widely accepted and although I could see the merits of using the computer to help sort out the mountains of accumulated data, ultimately I resisted doing so because I felt that it was simply not right for me and how I was going to have to make sense of the data. I did not feel comfortable enough with it, since my instinctive concern was that computer-aided coding might prematurely close-down potentially fruitful avenues of enquiry. Much later on in the research process, I heard from a research team whose

successful application of CAQDAS (computer assisted qualitative data analysis software) in their research project was, nevertheless, embarked upon with some initial concerns, as one of researchers reflected:

I have mixed feelings about this software ... I feel [it] is like a social worker that is taking control of my baby. I know that CAQDAS has its advantages. It can speed up the process of coding and it can provide a formal structure for writing and storing comments and memos to develop analysis ... but I also feel lost ... for a first time learner, it is taking too much time to figure out what is what.

Marashi, 2001:6).

As I too, was a first-time learner in qualitative research, and one who was also beginning the research with a very limited range of computer skills at my disposal, in the end my preference was to “feel” my way into the data, quite literally, with coloured pens and post-it notes adorning the reams of transcriptions, observations and notes. At the time I felt somewhat heretical - and still do to a certain extent - by not using CAQDAS, especially as grounded theory, which I was thinking of using, seemed to be very much connected with it (Coffey *et al*, 1996; Dey, 1999; Lee and Fielding, 1996; Lonkila 1995, Charmaz, 2000). Clarke *et al*, (2001) in the research project referred to above, noted that:

In our coding procedures we tried to allow the ‘data to speak to us’ (‘grounded theory’), but we cannot forget that the data is also speaking through us. Thus we remain convinced that the validity, or “facticity” of our

findings will be achieved as much through the ways in which we represent them as through the process of coding and analysis.

(Clarke *et al*, 2001: 10).

The idea of validity and representation will be discussed further in Section 3.2.3 but, before leaving this brief account of why I did not pursue CAQDAS, I should like to touch on what Coffey *et al*, see as another way forward. Namely, the non-linear potential of hypertext software in qualitative research in contrast to what they see as the current:

centripetal tendency ... towards a single ideal-type of data collection, storage and analysis. That model combines computing techniques with methodological perspectives claimed to be associated with 'grounded theory'. One can detect a trend towards homogenization, and the emergence of a new form of orthodoxy, especially at the level of data management.

(Coffey *et al*, 1996: 2).

In their response to Coffey *et al*, Lee and Fielding (1996) are robust in their defence of existing computer based approaches to qualitative data analysis, whilst sharing the same excitement about the possibilities of hypertext and suggest that:

Qualitative researchers have gone beyond seeing the computer either as a panacea for analytic woes or as a devil-tool of positivism and scientism. Let a hundred flowers bloom! (1996: 5-6).

The last-quoted exhortation is undeniably positive in tone and encourages me as far as future research is concerned and I would be keen to understand more from

examples of practical applications, for example, Trudel & Wade (1999); Willis & Jost (1999); Linda (2000), Margerum-Leys *et al*, (1999); Frost & Teodorescu (1999).

At the time though, after embarking upon many voyages of discovery, I felt very strongly that I was in danger of “drowning not waving” in a multitudinous sea of methodologies and methods. Richard Frankel’s comments enabled me to cling on to a spar of hope:

the best way to judge the quality of qualitative research is to let go of specious distinctions between research traditions that encourage conflict and disagreement and to look instead at how any method relates to the problem at hand.

(cited in Crabtree and Miller, 1999: 346).

In common with what faces many researchers, the problem at hand was not just how to analyse the data following accepted paradigms but also how to account for one’s own interpretation of them (Colley and Diment, 2001). Woods acknowledges that this is a painful process, furthermore “if we do not feel pain at this point, there is almost certainly something wrong” (1985: 87).

Finally, having come to a position where I felt I was able to clarify my own role as interpreter in relation to the data, I could embark upon the “process of interpretation” (Feldman, 1995: 68) with more focus. Strauss and Corbin note that all qualitative researchers, whether they are grounded theorists or not, share “a distinct position. They accept responsibility for their interpretative role” (Strauss and Corbin, 1994:

274). They add that grounded theory is not static since “one of the methodology’s central features is that its practices can respond to and change with the times” (ibid, 274).

3.3.1: Grounded theory: developing an understanding

Since its “discovery” in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory has become increasingly widespread as a qualitative research methodology. Even critics of grounded theory have described it as “currently the most comprehensive qualitative research methodology available” (Haig, 1995: 281).

It arose out of a reaction to the dominant positivism of the 1950’s and 1960’s:

Grounded theory, a reaction against this positivist trend, was part of the humanist attempt to tie social science data more closely to the beliefs and concerns of participants so that social-science practitioners would find in theory a more congenial guide to the problems of practice.

(Kinach, 1995: 291).

However, in the intervening years grounded theory has been subject to a number of critiques. For example, Bryman and Burgess (1994) and Lee and Fielding (1996) are amongst those who question how stringently it is applied. Bryman and Burgess, in their chapter reflecting on qualitative data analysis in general, note that despite grounded theory’s “frequent citation ... it is questionable whether it is employed by researchers in its entirety” (Bryman and Burgess, 1994: 220), a point with which Lee and Fielding concur:

When qualitative researchers are challenged to describe their approach, reference to 'grounded theory' has the highest recognition value. But the very looseness and variety of researchers' schooling in the approach means that the tag may well mean something different to each researcher.

(Lee and Fielding, 1996:3).

Whilst Glaser and Strauss stressed that grounded theory relied "on the data to develop theory, a bottom-up, inductive approach" (Price, 1999: 4), Silverman's criticism perceives that grounded theory's failure is that it does not then test theory fully enough (1993). Denzin considers that it betrays an outdated adherence to modernist principles (1988a). Reason and Rowan (1981) note that whilst grounded theory is "one of the most sophisticated and developed approaches to rigorous qualitative research", it is not new and remains "an excellent example of a qualitative research approach which stays firmly within the old paradigm" (ibid, xx). Other criticisms include its limitations and constraints (Layder, 1993) and its ambiguities (Dey, 1999).

Haig, however, defends Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory against criticisms of "naïve 'Baconian' inductivism" (1995: 285). Whilst remaining "mindful of grounded theory's pragmatist origins" (ibid, 288), he considers that it should be more properly "grounded" in phenomena and not in data and furthermore that it should be reconstructed in accordance with philosophical and scientific realist methodology, namely "abductive explanatory inferentialism, AEI" (ibid, 282).

Charmaz describes herself as a grounded theorist but one who is not immune to the increasing attacks on grounded theory methods “from both within and without” (Charmaz, 2000:509). She posits a re-visioning of grounded theory that “takes epistemological questions into accounts” (ibid, 523), suggesting a constructivist grounded theory approach should take the place of an objectivist approach because the former “explicitly treats authors” works *as* constructions instead of objectified products” (ibid, 528, emphasis in original).

There have also been the divergent approaches to the development of grounded theory by the founders themselves. Glaser responded to Strauss and Corbin’s further explication of grounded theory (Glaser, 1992) by criticising what he described as “over-technical, rule-following behaviour that is expected of researchers” (cited in Seale, 1999: 100) But as Seale goes on to point out:

The method of grounded theorizing should be understood within the predominantly scientific context in which it was created; yet researchers working within more contemporary paradigms can benefit from attention to the methods it emphasises.

(Seale, 1999: 100).

Any methodology can be subject to criticism and grounded theory is no exception, as we have seen. Certainly, it is tempting to try to latch on to grounded theory as a sure and certain methodological cook-book which, if the researcher carefully follows all the step-by-step instructions, will produce a perfectly turned-out theoretical dish.

However, as I found out, data can be unwieldy, unyielding and stubbornly resistant to overtly prescriptive instructions and, as with any recipe, the best dishes are often those that have had a dash of pragmatism and inventiveness added to the list of ingredients.

However, grounded theory's popularity with many qualitative researchers does not mean that it is necessarily easier to work with than any other methodology. Naresh Pandit proffers this warning in conclusion to his study of grounded theory in practice:

Grounded theory research requires certain qualities of the researcher. In particular, confidence, creativity and experience (both of doing research and of the context(s) being researched) are of great benefit. Accordingly, the research does not favour the novice researcher who may just be beginning to develop these qualities.

(Pandit, 1996: 12).

Pandit goes on to say that this should not be off-putting but that new researchers "are likely" to find grounded theory more difficult than "conventional methodologies [and that] the more experienced (probably postdoctoral) researcher is likely to produce better theory" (ibid, 12). Valerie Janesick, on the other hand, declares that the grounded theory approach to analysis is "a solid one and is especially useful for beginners" (2000: 397).

Summary:

Having digested the arguments for and against grounded theory, I felt that I could use a model of it in relation to my own study. It seemed to be the most appropriate approach to use in the small-scale study that I was going to conduct because of its emphasis on allowing concepts and theories to emerge from the data rather than subjecting the data to *a priori* analysis. This, I felt, would provide me with a framework within which to analyse the data as effectively and honestly as I could, whilst allowing me the freedom to work within my own hermeneutic paradigm. I was then able to use a ventriloquial voice that could allow the educational stories that I was attempting to re-tell to unfold as freely and as truthfully as possible whilst the notion of ventriloquism also serves as a reminder of the researcher's own manipulative voice in shaping the emergent stories.

I did not use grounded theory in a pure or classical sense but I am not alone in this respect, as I have already indicated. In using an adapted model of grounded theory, which avoided what I felt to be the supra-refining of emergent categories, I wanted to allow the eventual core category arising from the data analysis as much dynamism and fluidity as possible so as to reflect and engage with the many and varied pupil responses to Shakespeare at Key Stage 3.

In the following section, I present the results of my preliminary research which helped to formulate potential areas of research enquiry and the eventual design of the data collection.

3.4: Engaging in exploratory research

The research design was evolutionary and one which was formulated through a series of exploratory visits to two schools, a City Technology College and a suburban comprehensive. I was able to observe a Year 9 class in each class before and after the Key Stage 3 English tests (universally referred to as SATs by pupils and teachers, although now officially described as National Curriculum Assessments) and later on to talk informally with small groups about their responses to Shakespeare. In this section I summarise what happened during those visits and my reflections on them.

The Year 9 classes in both schools were classified by their teachers as lower to middle ability tackling Shakespeare formally for the first time. The texts to be examined were *Julius Caesar* and *Romeo and Juliet*, respectively. In the City Technology College, the activity that most of the pupils appeared to dislike the most was having to read a section of the text out aloud in class (this certainly brought back memories of my own classroom experience of Shakespeare). Once this ordeal was over, the class continued working with more enthusiasm on a project they had begun in an earlier session. This was to write letters on tea-stained 'parchment' from Calpurnia warning Caesar of the imminent danger that he was in. As the structure of the academic year was different from other schools, they had been studying the play since August and it was now March. Some of them would have rather been studying *Romeo and Juliet* which they saw as having more relevance to them. (In fact it was the higher ability Year 9 class who were studying *Romeo and Juliet* rather than *Julius Caesar*.)

One group, admitting that they did not enjoy Shakespeare, was adamant nonetheless that their own children should study him. In their acceptance of the idea that Shakespeare was going to be difficult and yet should be studied by everyone was the sense of equality of opportunity, that no one should be excluded from studying Shakespeare because they were not clever enough. By the time the SATs arrived, though, groups in both schools were fed up with working on the play, and many expressed relief that they would not have to sit another exam on Shakespeare for two years, until their GCSE examinations.

In the comprehensive school, following a drama workshop on *Romeo and Juliet* in the school's drama studio, I was asked a question by the first group that took me by surprise, namely, "why did I find Shakespeare interesting?" Their curiosity about why an adult should come all this way to their school to see what happened in their Shakespeare lessons and then talk to some of them made me stop and think not just about my own interest and motivation but also about how these would appear to the pupils and therefore how I was to present myself in future to other groups.

Most of the groups in both schools expressed negative views about Shakespeare. In the school where they had taken part in the drama workshop, they all agreed that they had enjoyed it, preferring that approach over the classroom-based work which inevitably focussed more on the language, which they all found difficult. The paradox was that they said that if they understood the language better, their experience of the

play would be enhanced, but they did not want to have to spend “boring” lessons going over and over the meaning of the text. As far as the language issue went, I wondered how they picked up on notions that a Shakespeare text was entirely incomprehensible. Perhaps it was being faced with the text for the first time; or perhaps hearing of the experiences of older siblings or parents who had studied Shakespeare and told them of their own struggles with it (although one boy was markedly more enthusiastic about Shakespeare because, he told me, in his home environment Shakespeare was enjoyed and appreciated). Some pupils suggested that the answer would be to modernise the text but as another member of the group pointed out “then it wouldn’t be Shakespeare”. The comments about studying modernised Shakespeare indicated an awareness of the cultural value that unmodernised, and therefore supposedly authentic, Shakespeare holds.

Other pupils likened the study of a Shakespeare text to “learning a foreign language” which needed specialist skills for deciphering. Shakespeare’s language will always be a major obstacle for pupils to surmount and the equation of Shakespeare with a foreign language is interesting because, as research has shown (Stables & Wikeley, 1997), the study of modern languages at the ages of 13/14 years has remained a relatively unpopular choice for some time. More recently however, it was reported that a French rap and hip-hop group had achieved the almost impossible in a south London school - making French funky to a class of 13 and 14 years olds, (Williamson, 2001). Doing the same to a Shakespeare text by turning it into a rap is a potentially useful resource in a teacher’s pedagogic armoury.

What makes comprehension even more problematic is that Shakespearean language is embedded in the past, in a specific socio-cultural context that existed long ago and remains forever foreign. To what extent pupils see this “foreignness” as a challenge to be overcome rather than as an insurmountable obstacle was of potential interest.

When asked what phrases they could recall from any Shakespearean text many pupils wrote down variations of “Romeo, Romeo wherefore art thou Romeo?” At least one pupil did not know the exact meaning of that phrase, thinking that Juliet is querying Romeo’s whereabouts rather than his family provenance. This group had been studying *Romeo and Juliet* since Christmas and, as the teacher told me later, they all knew the text fairly well.

Many of the groups equated the study of Shakespeare with history and that they were learning about “what Shakespeare thought in those days” as well as the manner in which people actually spoke. They felt that Shakespeare and the times in which he lived were so historically distant (they were quite vague about his exact dates, suggesting either the 18th or the 19th centuries), that making any sort of connection was almost impossible. The timeless situations and universal values that Shakespeare is supposed to embody were not readily apparent to them. For example, they told me that “Parents don’t really treat their children like that any more” and “You don’t have to die if you love someone.”

The idea that Shakespearean text replicates authentic Elizabethan and Jacobean speech indicates that pupils consider Shakespeare's language to be documentary rather than dramatic. Shakespeare, whilst incorporating the use of simple everyday phrases and repetition (often to very great effect as, for example, in King Lear's dying speech), wrote for a performance space in which heightened language is presented and accepted as a constructed artifice. In addition, his language was a made-up language in more senses than the purely theatrical simply because the English language itself in this period was extraordinarily fluid. Shakespeare contributed to its evolution, "He was, to use his own phrase, 'a man of fire-new words'." (McCrum, *et al*, 1992: 102), many of which a contemporary audience would also have been surprised and challenged by.

As to why they were studying a play of Shakespeare's, one boy answered rather facetiously that it was "to increase your knowledge of important things." In giving me what he thought would be the correct answer he made his fellow pupils in the group smirk. In this group the boys were far more articulate than the girls. Overall, I was very much left with the feeling that they were saying what they thought I wanted to hear. I was interested to read, much later on in my research, that Bourdieu recalls that he too had encountered this sort of complicity when interviewing and warns researchers about such data (Bourdieu *et al*, 1999).

Later on, though, the whole class, boys and girls, enjoyed a special screening at a local cinema of the Baz Luhrmann film, *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*,

which I saw with them. Some of the girls told me that they had already seen the film more than once simply because the lead was played by the Hollywood actor, Leonardo di Caprio, and for the boys the depiction of gangland violence was especially relished. This led me to consider how disjunctive the visual and written texts might be for them, partly because many pupils have a sophisticated understanding of visual texts in today's culture, derived from skilled readings, that is, deconstructing a wide range of visual texts from a very early age. Yet examinations are not, on the whole, geared to the former medium (although directorial tasks appear more frequently in Key Stage 3 Shakespeare Papers).

Having heard repeated comments from pupils that they thought Shakespeare was boring, irrelevant and that the language was too difficult, other comments were unexpected and seemed to me potentially very exciting, until I realised that I was in danger of over-interpreting them and forgetting about theoretical sensitivity. For example, I was intrigued by an offhand remark made by one boy, that Shakespeare himself was implicated in the murder of his nearest rival, Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe's career was cut short at the age of 29 years in mysterious and never wholly-resolved circumstances. Not only had this pupil come up with what I immediately labelled as specialist knowledge, but he later wrote down (on sugar paper in a small group) what was to me the most powerfully-resonating comment I'd yet come across: "Is Shakespeare true?" However, when I tried to elicit further comments from the whole group (all boys as it happened) in relation to his question, it ended in failure for none of the group ventured to add anything. Why? Was it that

the concept was too abstract, was there a gender issue or did I simply push it too far?

I also discovered many months later that the conspiracy theories relating to Marlowe's death are extensively and gruesomely presented in a paperback, *The Terrible Tudors*, which is part of the *Horrible History* series by Terry Deary and is immensely popular amongst schoolchildren from primary-age upwards. From this experience I learned to remain aware of the fine line between interpretation and researcher-bias.

3.1: After the Key Stage 3 examinations

After the Key Stage 3 examinations had taken place, I returned to the classrooms for a further session in which, with permission from each class teacher, I asked the class to work in small groups (with the aforementioned sheet of sugar paper and different coloured pens) and represent their thoughts and ideas about Shakespeare Before and After they had taken the Key Stage 3 examinations.

The Before sections included comments such as:

“we thought we would have to do all writing”

“good writer everyone knows him”

“before Shakespeare sounded like a different language”

“old fashioned, two [sic] long”

“didn't understand old English”

“didn't realise it could be acted in different ways”

“never heard of the plays”

“we didn't think there would be a bit 4 [sic] for all eg love, murder, sex,

“betrayal, violence, comedy”

“old-fashioned, not what we are used to”

And the After sections included such comments as:

“new way of approaching it, eg films, cartoons”

“we lurnt 2 [*sic*] to read old language”

“good experience, all should try it”

“some ideas in his plays are hidden”

“we did alot [*sic*] of fun things to understand the play more, eg drama workshop”

“It was better than we thought it would be”

“The language was easier to understand at the end”

“Heritage, History”

“because of Leo Dicaprio , more people listen and take in the new modern version”

“the new video helped us understand the play”

“Let children of the future study Shakespeare”

Again, I was left wondering to what extent this set of generally positive After responses would arise in the main research study, or whether pupils here were writing down what they thought they should be thinking and feeling about Shakespeare at the end of their Key Stage 3 study.

One group modified the methodological approach of Before and After in a way that both startled and excited me. They drew a circle between the two stages which they labelled “in-between” where they acknowledged the level of frustration that they had felt at not being able to achieve a breakthrough into understanding any more of the language, the story or the characters than they had at the beginning, the Before stage. In the After stage they noted the: “language still hard [but]not so boring; not enough relevance; know in depth; clearer prepared for exam; good story line.” The ambivalence that they had felt towards Shakespeare in the Before and “in-between” stages was still a part of their responses now, and they were the only group to make the link between the examination and their study of the play explicit. I was excited by the implications of this particular representation of responses to Shakespeare. partly because none of the other groups had come up with this concept and partly because of Homi Bhabha’s (1994) discussion of the location of culture and how its meaning can be located within what he also describes as an in-between space. The pupils in this group represented the struggle to make their own meanings out of the cultural artefact that is ‘Shakespeare’ within a spatial vacuum, a transitional space between knowing and not knowing. Does, though, this space serve as a transitional one or can it become continuous in a positive and propulsive sense, can the boundaries between knowing and not knowing be unfixed and prone to what type-setters refer to as breakthrough? Even though this particular group articulated an “in-between” space (with all the potential as well as the frustration that exists in such a space) they nevertheless ended up with a set of After knowledges that were distinctly utilitarian in tone.

What I hoped to find out more about in the main study was the extent to which pupils viewed their developing understanding of Shakespeare. How would they perceive the set of knowledges (to do with set scenes, language, character traits, themes, plot and so on) that they had acquired? For example, after the tests, pupils might say something like “we know enough now to pass these exams, we don’t need to know any more, we can even forget most of what we’ve just learnt because the next set of exams (GCSE) will focus on a different play entirely and they are in the future anyway.” The series of disjunctures that problematises the teaching and understanding of Shakespeare can perhaps be compounded by pupils’ beliefs that their own knowledge about Shakespeare is acquired discretely rather than accumulatively and that the boundaries between not knowing and knowing, or Before and After, are in fact impermeable.

Summary:

After this period of exploratory research, potential areas of research enquiry emerged such as why children think Shakespeare is difficult and what they think Shakespeare is for. The sense that the pupils I had observed and talked to felt that they had now “learnt” Shakespeare in the same way as they would a foreign language was pervasive and ultimately, perhaps, as disconnecting. For unless newly-acquired language skills are put into practice with some regularity, and preferably with visits abroad to consolidate them, they will be forgotten. These pupils’ study of Shakespeare seemed to be at this very juncture. They had been taught just enough to

take their first public examination, but they were not very much inclined to take this body of knowledge with them to “another country” in order to increase their fluency and expertise. As far as they were concerned, their immediate exams were now over and the GCSE’s still seemed far off in the future. They were, at least for now, finished with Shakespeare.

From this exploratory research I decided to conduct my further research in different schools in terms of socio-economic range, to find out how different groups of pupils in contrasting school settings, would respond to Shakespeare at a time when they were all working towards the Shakespeare Paper in the Key Stage 3 English tests. As an informing theoretical framework I wanted to look at how Bourdieu’s concepts of *habitus*, *cultural capital* and *field* might be used in conjunction with my later data. In the following section I will show how I came to an understanding of Bourdieu’s concepts in general before returning to them in relation to the data at the end of Chapter 4, which is concerned with the data analysis.

3.5: Bourdieu: understanding in practice

As the preceding sentence indicates, I had begun thinking about the data in relation to some of Bourdieu’s key concepts, notably cultural capital, *habitus* and *field*.

Without wishing to anticipate the discussion of my completed findings, my primary intention in this section is to present an account of what I understood by these concepts .

It has to be said at the outset that understanding Bourdieu is not an easy task. Very often he writes in what can seem to be a deliberately obtuse way. In his own recognition of this he has attempted to explain why a sociological discourse needs to be different from “ordinary language” (Bourdieu, 1993b:20) but without, I think, being as specific as he could be about the prolixity of his own language, (although his statement that “complexity lies in the social reality and not in the somewhat decadent desire to say complicated things” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 139) offers some sort of explanation). He has also acknowledged that the “hazards of translation” (ibid, 1992: 123-4) can add yet another layer of *misrecognition* for non-French speakers on to an already confused grasp of his immensely subtle and complex concepts. These in turn derive from his own interdisciplinary interests which range from philosophy and anthropology to sociology. Even his close collaborator Lois Wacquant admits that “For the novice, finding an entry into Bourdieu’s sprawling work poses the thorny problem of where to start” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 261).

Bourdieu has claimed that there is a potential connectiveness between literature and sociology (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) and has presented analyses of art and literature in which he has advanced his ideas about how the *field of cultural production* (Bourdieu, 1993a) operates. Furthermore, he has claimed to lay down the “foundations of a science of works of art” (Bourdieu, 1996: 175). Whilst my initial reaction would be to balk at quite such a scientific underpinning of the origins of art (which I accept derives, as Bourdieu would have it, from my own habitus), I can also

step back and admire Bourdieu's audacity and forensic investigation of specific literary and artistic fields (e.g. Bourdieu, 1993a, 1996). Robbins, though, reminds us that Bourdieu's cultural analyses are also part of the game that he plays, and which plays him, "as 'structures' and as elements in his own 'structuring' or position-taking activity" (Robbins, 2000: xxi). Entering into the game in this way also serves to secure a hefty deposit in terms of on his own accumulation of cultural capital.

Swartz (1997:13) warns that "Bourdieu can never be read casually" and, despite such an admonition, one should not be put off from trying to read Bourdieu at all. For me, the key to a more coherent understanding of Bourdieu's "distinctive professionalized sociological discourse" (ibid, 13) came about through a reading of his reflections about his own theory and practice set out in the more accessible works, (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, Bourdieu, 1990, 1993a, 1993b, 1999), as well as a reading of the accounts of how others have thought about and used Bourdieu themselves (Calhoun *et al*, 1993; Fowler, 1997; Grenfell & James, 1998; Hodkinson, 1998; Jenkins, 1992; Reay, 1995; Robbins, 1998, 2000; Swartz, 1997). There was also a process of clarification in my own mind that I was *adapting* a set of procedures rather than adopting an exact replication of Bourdieu's own methodological procedures. Reay (1995) reminds us that we should use Bourdieu's concepts as a model rather than a theoretical straitjacket whilst Swartz describes Bourdieu as "a conceptual strategist" (1997: 5), whose concepts should not be understood as "indicators of specific empirical phenomena, or building blocks of systematic theory... [but] as heuristic devices for communicating a general approach

to the study of the social world.” (ibid, 5). Robbins (2000: xxiii) notes that Bourdieu himself has always thought of his concepts as “tools of investigation” to be used “pragmatically by others in full knowledge of the complexity of conceptual transfer” .

Overall, what I took away from these readings and critiques was a notion of *fluidity* in which the dialectic of structure and agency remains dynamic; in which the metaphor of gamesmanship allows agents the possibility of improvisation and pragmatism, that is, a feel for the game, the “sens pratique”, (Bourdieu, 1993a:5), which is an “intentionality without intention” (Bourdieu, 1992: 108) functioning as conscious and unconscious adherence to the rules of the game.

Even such a critic as Richard Jenkins, who detects the iron hand of determinism in Bourdieu’s work (1992), nevertheless finds that Bourdieu is good to think with. As well as thinking *with* Bourdieu, Wacquant suggests that one should think *beyond* Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: xiv), a suggestion taken up and extended by Brubaker:

So we can and should think with Bourdieu against Bourdieu. But we can do this only by appropriating his sociological disposition, his thinking tools, making them ours and making our own use of them.

(Brubaker, 1993: 219).

Although it felt somewhat presumptuous to think with, beyond and against Bourdieu, in attempting to do so I felt I could utilise what I took to be a sense of indeterminacy to avoid reaching a deterministic analysis of my own research findings.

In applying his concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital to my research it was necessary to begin with an exploration of what he, as well as others, say about them. First Bourdieu revisits all these concepts throughout his works in relation to the specific context that he discusses, so compiling a long list of definitions would not only take up an inordinate amount of space, but it would also muddy understanding rather than clarify it.

Swartz says that “To discover the social at the very heart of the most subjective experience is a central aim of Bourdieu” (Swartz 1997: 46), just as it was, he adds, of Durkheim. It is this attempt to locate the external within the internal (and vice-versa) and the refusal to come down on the side of either objectivism or subjectivism that should be remembered when forming an understanding of Bourdieu’s concepts. The development of these concepts - habitus , cultural capital and field - grows out of his “pincer-like attack” (Fowler, 1997: 22) against subjectivism and objectivism which he describes as “two apparently irreconcilable perspectives” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 124) that social science “oscillates between” (ibid, 124):

On the one hand it can ‘treat social phenomena as things’, in accordance with the old Durkheimian maxim, and thus leave out everything that they owe to the fact that they are objects of cognition – or of miscognition – in social

existence. On the other hand, it can reduce the social world to the representations that agents make of it, the task of social science then consisting in producing an 'account of the accounts' produced by social subjects.

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 124).

This opposition between subjectivism and objectivism can only be reconciled by being transcended and Bourdieu aims to do this "through the introduction into his analysis of practice of notions such as habitus, field and strategy" (Jenkins, 1992: 18).

As individuals, Bourdieu would say, we are also social agents who embody structural and cultural norms, we both enact and reproduce the social structures in which we're constructed. His notion of 'genetic structuralism' "is designed to understand both the genesis of the dispositions of social structures - [for example] the literary field – and the genesis of the dispositions of the habitus of the agents who are involved in these structures" (Bourdieu, 1993a: 162). This, says Jenkins, "is Bourdieu's place in the debate on structure and agency" (Jenkins, 1992:19).

Habitus

Bourdieu's idea of habitus is not:

necessarily a unique or original concept. Commentators and critics have pointed out its near omnipresence over the centuries, and it is a term which has been linked to such writers as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Elias.

(Grenfell and James, 1998: 15).

For example, whilst Bourdieu does not explicitly refer to Antonio Gramsci in his own development of the concept of habitus and its related concept, cultural capital, it is nevertheless interesting to read a brief extract from Gramsci's response to the educational reforms of the 1923 Mussolini government in Italy in this context:

In a whole series of families, especially in the intellectual strata, the children find in their family life a preparation, a prolongation and a completion of school life; they "breathe in", as the expression goes, a whole quantity of notions and attitudes which facilitate the educational process properly speaking.

(Gramsci, 1971: 31).

It is certainly possible to see the parallel between a Bourdieuan idea of habitus and cultural capital and what Gramsci is describing here, but Bourdieu lays claims to the concept because it is one that, he says, "I completely rethought" (Bourdieu, 1990:10). Eagleton also makes a link between Gramscian ideas and Bourdieu when he points out that Bourdieu's notion of *symbolic violence* is "Bourdieu's way of rethinking and elaborating the Gramscian concept of hegemony" (Eagleton, 1991: 158).

Brubaker recounts that his initial attempt to "pin down [the] precise meaning" of what it was that Bourdieu meant by habitus was doomed because:

Bourdieu was not in fact defining, but rather was characterising the concept of habitus in a variety of ways ... to designate – and inculcate – a certain sociological disposition, a certain way of looking at the world. The same

could be said of the other fundamental concepts including capital and field.

(Brubaker, 1993: 217).

The formal description of habitus as the “systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (Bourdieu, 1977: 72) is a compact, complex summary where each word is an iceberg of underlying meanings. In a note to this definition, Bourdieu explicates the word disposition which, he says:

seems particularly suited to express what is covered by the concept of habitus (defined as a system of dispositions). It expresses first the *result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure; it also designates a *way of being, a habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity, or inclination*.

(Bourdieu, 1977: 214. italicised in original).

If we are to understand the habitus of particular groups of Key Stage 3 pupils, for example, it can be helpful to be reminded that Bourdieu further describes habitus as:

the product of all biographical experience (so that, just as no two individual histories are identical, so no two individual *habitus* are identical, although there are classes of experiences and therefore classes of *habitus* - the *habitus* of classes)

(Bourdieu, 1993b: 46, italicised in original).

For Bourdieu, the notion of embodiment is also very important:

one of the crucial features of habitus is that it is embodied, it is not composed solely of mental attitudes and perceptions ... [habitus shows] the ways in which, not only is the body in the social world but also, the ways in which the social world is in the body.

(Reay, 1995: 354).

Bourdieu affirms that this dynamic does not mean that the agent “is an automaton nor a rational calculator, but rather like ‘blind Orion moving towards the sun’, in Poussin’s *Landscape with Orion*” (Bourdieu, 1993b:46). Habitus “is meant to capture the practical mastery that people have of their social situation, while grounding that mastery itself socially” (Calhoun *et al*, 1993: 4).

Habitus , says Bourdieu, is acquired early on in life; in that sense it is *durable* but it is also *transposable* in the sense that it may “ generate practices in multiple and diverse fields of activity” ; it is both a system of *structured structures*, in which the structures “inevitably incorporate the objective social conditions of their inculcation” and a system of *structuring structures*, which enables the structures “to generate practices adjusted to specific conditions” (Bourdieu, 1993a: 5).

In terms of how habitus works in relation to, say, pupils, Bourdieu writes:

Thus, for example the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message), and the habitus transformed by schooling,

itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences (e.g. the reception and assimilation of all subsequent experiences), and so on, from restructuring to restructuring.

(Bourdieu, 1977: 87).

Cultural capital

Bourdieu distinguishes between material and immaterial, or symbolic, capital, the former comprising economic capital and the latter including cultural capital. Like economic capital, one's accumulation of cultural capital can accrue or diminish and the higher one's stock of cultural capital, the greater the control that can be exercised "over one's future and that of others. As such it is a form of power" (Calhoun, 1993: *et al* : 5). Unlike economic capital, however, symbolic capital is based on what Bourdieu describes as its "essential instability which, being based on reputation, opinion and representation... can be destroyed by suspicion and criticism"

(Bourdieu, 1992: 93).

The first time that Bourdieu used the notion of capital was in *Les Héritiers: Les Étudiants et la culture*, (*The Inheritors*) by Bourdieu and Passeron and published in 1964 (coincidentally the same year as Gary Becker's publication of 'Human Capital'), in which they looked at students' cultural position-taking and Bourdieu himself continued to develop this concept throughout his career. In 1979 *La Distinction, Critique sociale du jugement* appeared (published in English in 1984 as

Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste) in which cultural capital was defined as :

a form of knowledge, an internalised code or a cognitive acquisition which equips the social agent with empathy towards, appreciation for or competence in deciphering cultural relations and cultural artefacts.

(Bourdieu, 1993a: 7).

Whilst cultural capital derives from a person's habitus - the set of dispositions which in turn emerge from familial inculcations - Bourdieu also discusses how school institutions (in the French context) themselves contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of cultural capital. This occurs partly "by means of the competitive examination" (Bourdieu, 1998: 21) which is also "an act of *ordination*" (ibid, 21, italicised in original), that is, those who are successful are separated from those who are not and this "separation achieved by school is also an act of ordination in the sense of *consecration*, enthronement in a sacred category, a nobility." (ibid, 21 italicised in original).

The concept of cultural capital can be open to over-simplification by, for example, making the correlation between lack of cultural capital and social and economic deprivation but Bourdieu's further explication (Bourdieu, 1979 cited in Robbins, 2000) has attempted to clarify his perspective on the concept's function. Bourdieu refers to three distinct kinds of cultural capital, the first of which is *incorporated*, that is, embodied and therefore

indistinguishable from the habitus, but Bourdieu is making it clear, for the first time, that there are cultural dispositions which are biologically transmitted ... the key factor about incorporated culture is ... that it is confined to the physical life spans of individuals. Every incorporated culture is the unique product of unique dispositions.

(Robbins, 2000: 34-5).

The second form is *objectivated* cultural capital, that is, cultural artefacts that have “acquired autonomous market value over time” (ibid, 35). However this value is in a constant process of re-negotiation:

Although objects – such as books and pictures – can be said to be the repositories of objectivated cultural capital. All those objects on which cultural value has ever been bestowed lie perpetually dormant waiting to be revived, waiting for their old value to be used to establish new value in a new market situation.

(Robbins, 2000: 35).

The third form is *institutionalised* cultural capital, which has “by contrast... an objective existence which is instrumental in constituting individuals.” (ibid, 35).

Such institutions do not necessarily have to be educational, although Bourdieu does emphasise the significance of educational institutions’ cultural capital:

Institutions are consolidated social groups which have the power to prescribe or pre-empt the ways in which individuals might try to use objectivated cultural capital to modify their own incorporated cultural capital. Bourdieu refers particularly to educational institutions which are embodied value

systems. By bestowing titles and awards on individuals they appear to be giving expression to the differences between those individuals. In reality, however they are constructing differences in terms of their values and denying the validity of differentiations made by individuals themselves.

(Robbins, 2000: 35).

Field

Bourdieu's concept of field (*champ*) was substantially developed later than his other concepts of habitus and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1992). It was "first applied [by Bourdieu to] the French intellectual and artistic worlds as a means to call attention to the specific interests governing those cultural worlds" (Swartz, 1997:118). With the concept of field, Bourdieu wanted to move "beyond structuralist explanation" (Robbins, 2000: xiv) to show that "Agents are involved in the construction of the "fields" within which their actions have meaning and receive recognition." (ibid, xiv). Furthermore, "A field is a dynamic concept in that a change in agents' positions necessarily entails a change in the field's structure" (Bourdieu, 1993a: 6). The field's "dynamism and malleability ... avoids the inflexible determinism of classical structuralism" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 18). However, all fields lay within what is described as "a kind of 'meta-field'." (ibid,18) that is, the *field of power* which encompass the dominant power relations in society.

Bourdieu discusses the "invariant laws of functioning" (Bourdieu, 1993b: 72) of the field (for example, the literary field, artistic field, educational field) in terms of the

field's autonomy, "an independent social universe" (ibid, 163). He likens the field to a prism which refracts external determinants "like demographic, economic or political events [which] are always retranslated according to the specific logic of the field" (Bourdieu, 1993a: 164). Or, in other words, "converting demands from the broader field of power (the state, the dominant economic classes) into a logic and currency befitting its own social topology (Prior, 2000: 143).

The field is also a site of struggle, within which *forces of the field* operate to confirm and deny *position-takings*:

we know that in every field we shall find a struggle, the specific forms of which have to be looked for each time, between the newcomer who tries to break through the entry barrier and the dominant agent who will try to defend the monopoly and keep out the competition.

(Bourdieu, 1993b: 72).

Within a field there are specific stakes and interests (for example, academic prizes) that are not recognised in other, specialised fields or by people who have not "been shaped to enter that field" (ibid,72) so that for a field to be able to function, not only do the stakes have to exist but people who enter it have to be "prepared to play the game, endowed with the *habitus* that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field" (ibid, 72).

Field situates “ individuals, groups and institutions within a broader matrix of structuring relations” (Swartz, 1997: 35) and it is certainly this idea of the relational that Bourdieu is keen to stress. In his refutation of charges of determinism made against the concept of habitus, Bourdieu re-affirms that:

habitus realizes itself, becomes active only *in the relation* to a field, and the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances depending on the state of the field.

(Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 116, italicised in the original).

Thus, Bourdieu sees habitus and field as “mutually constituting” (Grenfell and James, 1998: 16) with field posited as:

A structured system of social relations at a micro and macro level. In other words, individuals, institutions and groupings, both large and small, all exist in structural relation to each other in some way.

(Grenfell and James, 1998: 16).

The concept of field has increasingly been embraced by researchers due in part to its “analytical strength, its ability to take in a broad range of processes” (Prior, 2000: 144), but Prior goes on to state that this apparent strength is “perhaps also its principal weakness:” (ibid,144)

It remains a somewhat vague and elastic idea. The concept has an almost chameleon-like quality in that it can mean all things to all people: determined

and determining, structured and structuring, strong and weak, modern and postmodern, promoting reproduction and change, Marxist and Weberian. (Prior, 2000: 144).

Whilst acknowledging Prior's critique I still felt that I wanted to use the analytic strengths of the concept rather than concede defeat in the face of its perceived relativist weaknesses. I end this chapter with an example of how I planned to do this but in the meantime, wish to present a brief, yet useful, summary of Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital,

Thus, people (agents), collectively or individually, transform or reproduce their social structures, but they do so within specific social conditions, including those that are internalised as part of their habitus at the very moment of revolution. Domination, therefore, occurs through a variety of means, from the economic operations of the market, to symbolic intimidation (in this context Bourdieu is surely right in seeing success in exams as a modern equivalent to the sign of grace). (Fowler, 1997: 23).

Metaphors

Bourdieu's own metaphorical use of games and playing to describe social activity is deeply serious but he allows himself a more ludic episode when he evokes Maxwell's Demon - "the image that physicist James Clerk Maxwell used in explaining how the Second Law of Thermodynamics could be suspended" (Bourdieu,1998: 20) - in order to suggest, firstly, that "the educational system acts like Maxwell's demon ...

it maintains the pre-existing order, that is, the gap between pupils endowed with unequal amounts of cultural capital” (ibid,20). Ultimately, however, he questions whether Maxwell’s metaphorical demon can be applied to the school structure, because :

social agents ... are not particles subject to mechanical forces [but are] active and knowing agents endowed with a *practical sense*... the habitus is this kind of practical sense for what is to be done in a given situation.

(Bourdieu, 1998: 24-25).

As I was trying to think my way into, or beyond, Bourdieu I also wanted to find a metaphor, not to apply to the social world or the educational system as a whole, but one through which I could apply my research findings to his concepts of field, habitus and cultural capital.

At first I was thinking of networks of linked objects within a frame, such as an abacus or a “star curtain” made up of connected electric lights that can be draped across a window frame, but whilst these were certainly relational I felt that they were too static, too in-organic in fact. I wanted to think of these concepts as organic, having life, movement and growth. I remembered once seeing a shoal of herring, displayed in an aquarium, in a see-through funnel that reached from floor to ceiling. The movement of the fish, both separate and together, was mesmerising yet, since they were trapped, this ceaseless activity was doomed to the sterility of repetition with no hope of progress or change. Imagining such a shoal set free in the oceans was not

entirely satisfactory because, even here, they are not able to function independently of determinant patterns of movement and behaviour.

Thinking of a structure that would perhaps be more autonomous, I lit upon the honey fungus (*Armillaria mellea*). This is a remarkable organism whose comparatively small outward manifestation belies its inward tentacle-like growth, which can stretch for huge distances below the surface. Like all fungi, this hidden but permanent network, the *mycelium*, is the “true body” of the plant (Bon, 1987: 6). On the one hand such a metaphor could account for the connectedness of field, habitus and cultural capital, the replicating and replicated patterns of life which are both visible and invisible but on the other hand, the invisible part of the organism, its underground structures, are overly dominant, too powerful and - certainly with regard to the honey fungus which is described by mycologists as a “destructive parasite” (ibid., 142) - too sinister a part of the whole to provide an apt metaphor.

Still looking, I came across the following quotation about the French 18th century philosopher and man of letters Denis Diderot (given in the context of a discussion about cultural phenomenology) which I found intriguing, despite its fragmentary nature:

Diderot in his unfinished *Elements of Physiology* ... imagines that each organ and even each sense of the body has its own life, independent of the life of the whole: ‘Certainly’, he writes, ‘there are two, or even three, quite distinct

forms of life. The life of the complete animal. The life of its organs. The life of the molecule.’

(Connor, 2002).

Whilst the hierarchical presentation of the “distinct forms of life” can be seen as homologous to the relationship between the field of power, field and habitus, the emphasis on the discrete independence of the forms of life does not allow any room for what can be described as the symbiotic, of the *structuring* as well as the *structured*, that is worked through in the dynamic relation between field and habitus. However, the triadic notion that Diderot presents is an attractive one and I recalled these lines from Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s poem *The Woodspurge*:

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.
... One thing then learnt remains to me,-
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

(quoted in Scott, 1971).

As the focus of the narrator’s (grief-blinded) gaze falls upon a hitherto-unregarded “weed” growing amongst the grass, the woodspurge (*Euphorbia amygdaloides*) is transformed into an organism of immense symbolic power of redemption and endurance, encompassing as it does the form of the trinity. Furthermore the idea of sacralisation is not inappropriate, since it offers a link between much of Shakespearean criticism and Bourdieu’s writings. In Bourdieu’s discussions of

education and culture he speaks of “cultural consecration” (Bourdieu, 1984:7) and in Bourdieu and Passeron’s *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1990:141), it is stated that: “The examination is nothing but the bureaucratic baptism of knowledge, the official recognition of the transubstantiation of profane knowledge into sacred knowledge”. As Swartz notes, for Bourdieu:

Symbolic power is a power to “consecrate”, to render sacred. He thus associates the concept of the sacred with legitimation, particularly in high culture and art where boundaries delimiting the legitimate from the illegitimate are particularly strong.” (Swartz, 1997: 47).

The metaphorical form of the woodspurge has a visible (the flowering body) and invisible (the sustaining root system) structure whilst the particularity of its triadic form (“three cups in one/a cup of three”) is at once *part of* and *separate* from the construction of the whole. It seemed an apt way to think about how I could construct a relational network of field/s, habitus and cultural capital. If Shakespeare was to be presented as a field, it is clear that the *Shakespeare field* is connected to both the *educational field* and the *cultural field* (by this I mean the wider context outside the school context, which includes individuals as well as institutions connected with the ‘Shakespeare industry’, as has been discussed earlier in the literature review).

Pupils, teachers and their schools are sited within the *educational field* and as agents in this field occupy relational positions depending on their *habitus* and *cultural capital* and it has already been discussed how the field can also be described as a *field of*

forces. All three fields occupy to a lesser or greater degree dominated or dominating positions within the encompassing *field of power*.

In the following chapter I show how the data from the three schools comprising the main study were analysed using a model of grounded theorising and end by discussing those findings with reference to Bourdieuan concepts, as outlined above.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1. Introduction:

In this chapter I begin by briefly describing where the data came from and what they comprised. The chapter then discusses the following sections:

Section 4.2: Negotiating access and introductory sessions

Section 4.2.1: Setting up the focus groups

Section 4.2.2: Pupil profiles

Section 4.3: Open Coding: Introduction

Section 4.3.1: Open Coding Category 1: Prior Encounters with Shakespeare

Section 4.3.2: Open Coding Category 2: Apprehending Shakespeare

Section 4.3.3: Open Coding Category 3: Experiencing and Understanding Shakespeare in the Year 9 Classroom

Section 4.3.4: Open Coding Category 4: Perceptions of Shakespeare

Section 4.4: Axial Coding: Introduction and Core Category

Section 4.5: Data Synopsis

Section 4.5.1: School A

Section 4.5.1.1: Teaching and testing Shakespeare in School A: the teachers' perspective

Section 4.5.1.2: How School A teachers position their pupils in relation to Shakespeare

Section 4.5.1.3: School A pupils' perspectives of Shakespeare post-SATs

Section 4.5.2: School B

Section 4.5.2.1: Teaching and testing Shakespeare in School B: the teachers' perspective

Section 4.5.2.2: How School B teachers position their pupils in relation to Shakespeare

Section 4.5.2.3: School B pupils' perspectives of Shakespeare post- SATs

Section 4.5.3: School C

Section 4.5.3.1: Teaching and testing Shakespeare in School C: the teachers' perspective

Section 4.5.3.2: How School C teachers position their pupils in relation to Shakespeare

Section 4.5.3.3: School C pupils' perspectives of Shakespeare post-SATs

Section 4.6: Discussion of data analysis

By deciding to conduct the main research in schools that offered a wide socio-economic range, my aim was to find out how different kinds of pupils in contrasting school settings in and around the city, would respond to Shakespeare. They would all, however, be working towards the Shakespeare Paper in the Key Stage 3 English tests.

In full, the data comprised the following:

- field notes from approximately five classroom lesson-observations in each school;
- four audio-recorded pre-SATs focus group interviews, which are presented in the Appendices. The reason that there are four rather than three pre-SATs interviews is that I had to return to *School A* to record a second interview with the full complement of six pupils because only four pupils had been present during the first interview. The pre-SATs focus group *School A* interviews have been denoted *1a* and *1b* respectively;
- three audio-recorded post-SATS focus group interviews, one from each school;

- seven individual interviews with pupils from *School B* (two of whom were interviewed together); seven individual interviews with pupils from *School A*. It was not possible to record individual interviews with pupils from *School C*, so their biographical details were addressed during the course of the post-SATs interview.
- six audio-recorded interviews with teachers comprising one class teacher interview and one senior departmental teacher from each school.

Pseudonyms have been used in place of pupils' real names. Teachers in each school have been denoted by position, for example, Class teacher, Head of Department. I have used a simplified transcription model adapted from Silverman (1993) as shown below.

Transcription notation:

I Interviewer

U Unidentified pupil

M Many pupils

[-] at the end of sentences indicates speech overlaps

[...] indicates inaudible words or phrases on the tape.

(U) interjection into speech by unidentified pupil or pupils

(()) researcher's interjection

4.2: Negotiating access and introductory sessions

Negotiating access to schools to undertake a research project is not simple, it involves tact, diplomacy, confidence, flexibility, an awareness of ethical concerns, a sense of responsibility, gratitude, assertiveness, honesty and, it has to be admitted, a degree of guile.

As I wanted to find at least three schools that encompassed a wide socio-economic range, I began looking at both the private and state sectors. Since independent schools are not obliged to make their pupils sit Key Stage 3 SATs this proved to be the most difficult school to find.

However in the end I negotiated access to:

School A: an 'inner-city' state school situated in an economically-deprived part of the city.

School B: an independent school situated in the city's affluent heartland.

School C: a suburban state school situated on the outskirts of the city but where people are keen to buy property to live within the school's catchment area.

Following telephone conversations with the Head of Department in each school in which I briefly outlined the nature of the project, I wrote formally to the Headteacher of each school, requesting permission to undertake the research.

Once this was granted I was able to return to the Heads of Department and identify which Year 9 classes I would eventually be focussing on. My offer to make a brief presentation about the project to staff was taken up by *School C*, where I was invited to do so at a Departmental staff meeting. I found this very useful in helping me to get to know the school better and, hopefully, for the department to understand more fully what it was I was trying to do. In the other state school, *School A*, the nature and purpose of my research was mediated through more informal contact with the Senior English Teacher, who was also the class teacher of the Year 9 group I was allocated to. However, during the term I was to be with them, the class was going to be predominantly taken by a PGCE

Beginning Teacher (in effect the tenor of the relationship between class and teacher was different to what it would have been with the class's usual teacher).

In addition, I suggested to each school that I would be willing to introduce myself beforehand so as to explain the nature of the project to them. I did this in both the state schools, and after my presentation to each class, there followed a discussion and, (in a similar exercise to the one that I had conducted in each of the schools in the exploratory study) I asked them to break into small groups to write down (on sugar paper) anything and everything they knew, liked or disliked about Shakespeare. In *School A*, the 'inner-city' school, nearly every group had the words "boring" and/or "the language/meaning is difficult". The exception was a group who wrote a series of factual snippets about his life and also, with some finality, "He is dead". As a whole, the class did not engage very willingly in the exercise, despite the (Senior) teacher's exhortations to remember what he had taught them in Year 8, which included learning one of the Sonnets off by heart .

In *School C*, the suburban state school, the responses were altogether more fulsome and afterwards the teacher commented that he was surprised at how much they knew. The sheets of sugar paper were crammed with names of plays, biographical material and phrases although, again, most of them mentioned how difficult his plays were to understand (with one group, all boys, writing "we hate the language"). Some of them added that the language was easier to understand in film and video versions. One interesting speculation was that "He may have been gay" with an added parenthesis that stated "we think this because he wrote

126 of his Sonnets to a man” and another group named him as the author of ‘Venus and Adonis’ and ‘The Rape of Lucrece’, all of which interested me because, like the boy who knew about Christopher Marlowe in the exploratory research, previously discussed, I thought these statements showed evidence of more specialist knowledge. Another group wrote down “transsexuals [sic] eg Romeo and Juliet, [sic] Twelfth Night”. Certainly, Mercutio in Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet* is presented as a transvestite and Viola’s cross-dressing in *Twelfth Night* could be interpreted as transsexual, which is where the mis-recognition could have come from.

In *School B*, the independent school, I was not invited to introduce myself to the pupils and gain the sorts of insights into their responses to Shakespeare through initial class discussions, as I had in my exploratory research and in *Schools A* and *C*. In fact, my overall role in relation to the nature of the research project seemed to be less clear in *School B*. After my initial discussion with the Head of Department and two teachers, during which I explained what I wanted to do, I was invited to observe a series of different Year 9 classes, ranging from what were described to me as “lower ability” to “higher ability” sets. One of these classes that I observed was a “middle ability” set who were about to continue their study of *Romeo and Juliet* by acting out the beginning of the play. An extract from my fieldnotes and my reflections will illustrate the nature of the confusion surrounding my position at the time:

What struck me was how much of the text the teacher was able to get through in comparison to *School A* and *School C*, although the lesson

times are shorter than in either. I have also noticed that my position here in relation to my position in the two state schools is subtly different. I am rarely, if ever introduced to a class and certainly have not been invited to discuss the project with them as I was in the other schools. I had assumed that this was the class that I was going to be allocated to for the term (it is now February 1st and “my” classes have already been established in the other two schools) but when the teacher introduced me some way into the lesson, it was as someone from Bath University who would be coming into a lot of different classes “to see how good you are at Shakespeare”. I was slightly taken aback as I was not able to interject a disclaimer to say this is not what I am meant to be doing at all and I certainly do not want to judge them on how “good or “bad” they are at Shakespeare.

(Classroom observation, 1/02/99).

In order to resolve this I had to reiterate to the department exactly what the research study was about. This had to be done with some delicacy as it was vital that I had the same sort of access in each school - a single class and a focus group within that - otherwise the comparative samples would have been invalid.

Fortunately, within a couple of weeks, I was able to ‘begin again’ with a different class and with whom I was able to stay for the remainder of the term.

In retrospect, the process of negotiating the same sort of access across the sample of schools was not going to be uniform, simply because each school in itself was

different. As a teacher I know how busy schools and teachers are, and indeed this is what I made clear in my original letters to Head teachers. Gaining any sort of access is a privilege in itself and schools are immensely accommodating to researchers (which should always be remembered and reciprocated) but nevertheless researchers have to be fairly assertive to get what they need. Possibly I was not assertive enough in *School B*, and this was probably due to the fact that I felt more intimidated by the school, its surroundings, its culture and above all, its confidence. Although I went to a boarding school myself and was familiar with the ethos of independent schools, I still felt more comfortable in *Schools A* and *C*, because I had been trained in and taught in such schools. What this experience taught me was that the research process is not straightforward, and that researchers need a good deal of pragmatism to deal with the unexpected twists and turns of the research design, access and data collection

4.2.1: Setting up the focus groups

I spent most of the Spring term undertaking classroom observations in each of the three schools in the research study, during which time the classes were studying their respective Shakespeare set texts in preparation for the Key Stage 3 Shakespeare Paper to be held in May. The two state schools, *School A* and *School C* were studying *Twelfth Night*, which had been newly-introduced into the Key Stage 3 Curriculum, and *School B* was doing *Romeo and Juliet*. In the two state schools, my role had been far more of a participant observer than in the independent school - in the former the pupils called me 'miss' and would often ask for help on a word or a phrase that they did not understand in the text. During

group work or pair work the class teacher would be happy for me to walk around the classroom to stop and listen or talk to the pupils. This never happened in *School B*, where I sat at the back of the classroom all the time. Partly this was because in the lessons I observed there was no group or drama work and the whole class was concentrated on reading and discussing the text section by section with the class teacher literally 'leading from the front.'

After several such visits to each of the schools I was more conversant with the school settings, the pupils and their teachers and was then in a position to conduct the initial series of audio interviews with focus groups, which were to form the basis of my data collection.

Following the exploratory research I had decided to interview pupils in focus-groups, ideally comprising six pupils of mixed ability and gender. There are both advantages and disadvantages to using focus groups (Morgan, 1988, 1993; Kreuger, 1988; Wilson, 1997; Janesick, 1998). On the one hand, a wide range of responses can be elicited which can be explored in a safe environment, on the other hand there can be difficulties in getting a representative group together as well as being sensitive to individual members of the group (Gibbs, 1999). Conversely, there is the problem of over-dominance by one member of the group. Since one of the main aims of a focus group is to be as free ranging as possible, there is also a danger that this can lead to a loss of control over the data as Morgan (1988) points out. Wilson (1997) has also raised concerns about the use (and abuse) of focus groups as, for example, in the question "how authentic are the voices that

we hear in the data?" (ibid, 218). She also notes that:

There is literally no place for a researcher to hide within a focus group: language, values, feelings and ability to interact with respondents soon become apparent - a unique challenge both personally and professionally for the researcher.

(Wilson, 1997: 222)

Whilst bearing all the above in mind, I felt that overall, pupils would be more comfortable and confident in discussing their responses to Shakespeare within the setting of a focus -group, rather than as part of whole-class setting or, at such an early stage, in individual interviews.

To help situate the focus-group data, I had also planned to interview pupils later, on an individual basis, in order to find out some basic biographical information. However, in practice these turned out to be much harder to organise than I had hoped, due to school and examination timetable constraints. I was only able to record very brief individual interviews with pupils from *School A* and *School B* focus-groups, whilst I had to gather individual background information during the course of the post-SATs focus -groups pupils from *School C*. I conducted separate post-SATs interviews with the focus groups from *School A* and *School B*. The data from the individual interviews and post-SATs interviews were used in the axial coding process to help validate or refute the core category which emerged from the open coding process.

After the classroom observations, I had a rough idea of which pupils might be

willing to contribute to the focus group interviews. This was based on what I had seen them do and say during lessons, such as how they responded to questions from their teacher, what questions they asked or, indeed, if they spoke at all. I then discussed the potential membership of the focus groups with class teachers and/or Heads of Department but left the final selection up to the teachers and the pupils themselves, who were asked if they wished to take part. The age range of all the pupils was between 13 and 14 years and brief pupil profiles are presented below in Section 4.2.2.

In *School A*, which was in the state sector and was situated in a largely working class area of the city, I had to conduct two interviews on separate occasions, firstly with two boys and two girls, and then with four boys and two girls, as two members of the focus group were absent on the first scheduled interview date. This highlighted another problem, once access to a school has been negotiated, there is no guarantee that the pupils will be there when the interviews are scheduled to take place. In the open-coding analysis, examples from the transcripts of these two interviews are denoted *Ia* and *Ib* respectively.

In *School B*, which was in the independent sector and was situated in the affluent, middle class area of the city, I was presented with what the class teacher described as a “mixed bag” (*Classroom observation, 11/3/99*) of seven pupils, three girls and four boys.

In *School C*, situated in the suburban outskirts of the city with a mixed middle and working class pupil-intake, the focus group was made up of three boys and three girls.

In *School A*, the first interview (*1a*) took place in a corner of the school library during a time when other groups of pupils were also working. This factor together with the slightly intimidating bulky recording equipment contributed, I reflected later, to the group's relative dis-engagement during the interview. For the second interview (*1b*), when the full complement of pupils was present, we were still in the library but were seated in a more private area and I used a less obtrusive tape recorder and microphone, which I subsequently used for interviews in the other schools. In *School B* and *School C* the interviews took place in allocated classrooms.

Having conducted informal interviews (unrecorded) with different sets of pupils in the exploratory research study and bearing in mind the range of concerns that had been raised then, I decided to continue with a semi-structured approach in the focus group interviews. Without trying to be too directive in my use of questioning, my objective was to find out more about the pupils' responses to Shakespeare by interspersing simple questions during the course of each interview such as: "What else have you done in English in Year 9 apart from Shakespeare? What did you like or dislike about Shakespeare? What did you think about studying and being tested on Shakespeare?" I used slightly different approaches with each focus group. In *School A*, for example, I found it was necessary to talk

a lot more about pupils' attitudes and experiences in general (such as the types of films they enjoyed watching) because they resisted attempts to get the discussions back to Shakespeare much more than their counterparts in *School B* or *School C*. It was interesting to note that I was only directly challenged by the focus group from *School C* about why I was asking them questions on Shakespeare, which reminded me of the group in the exploratory research asking me why I was so interested in Shakespeare.

However, it seemed as if the *School A* focus group challenged my persistence in interviewing them about Shakespeare in less explicit, indeed more subtle, ways by not complying readily to interview questions. By being much more monosyllabic and unco-operative they showed that my interest in their interest in Shakespeare was of little importance to them. Interestingly, one of the boys who resisted the discussion the most was far more forthcoming in the individual interview that I was able to conduct some weeks later.

On the other hand, the focus group from *School B* did not challenge me either explicitly or implicitly, they appeared to accept without question that an outsider would be interested in what they had to say. At the risk of over-interpretation at this stage, I surmised that these different positions could indicate differing levels in cultural capital tied up with the differing levels of confidence that each group had, both as individuals and as part of the examination system into which they were collectively embedded.

4.2.2: Pupil profiles

School A focus group:

Suzy, aged 13 years, was the eldest of three children. She was usually quiet in the classroom lessons that I observed and also in the focus group interviews, rarely saying anything unless prompted. She came from a musical family and wanted to take Music at GCSE even though *“this school ain’t running it next year but the music teacher’s teaching me”* (10/6/99 p.4). She said that English was her strongest subject and she wanted to continue her education to A level but was not sure what career she would follow eventually.

Angela, aged 14 years, described herself as *“sort of adopted”* (10/6/99 p.1) and had four foster brothers and sisters. She was an active member of class, often contributing to lessons but was much more subdued in the focus group interviews. Her favourite subjects at school were history and drama and she wanted to be a history teacher because *“it was important and ... I just love to teach”* (10/6/99 p.2)

Jon, aged 14 years, was the eldest of three and was described by his teacher as a bright student who enjoyed English and was highly motivated but isolated because of it. In class he was very quiet but would respond to direct questioning quite readily, in the interviews however he was very much less forthcoming. He wanted to be an RAF engineer, as his grandfather had been.

Tom, aged 14 years, was an only child and a confident speaker in the focus group interviews although in the classroom he was given literacy withdrawal support to help with his problems with reading and spelling. He was one of two pupils in the focus group who were not entered for the SATs Shakespeare Paper

because, as he later suggested, *“we’re not top grade, we’re not as good as everyone else really”* (10/6/99 p.12). Consequently, he thought his only career option would be *“office work it’s what most people do. I don’t know what else there would be”* (10/6/99 p.14).

Jenny, aged 13 years, had an elder sister at the school, who was currently taking GCSE’s. She was an active participant in class and the most responsive of the girls in the focus group interviews. Her favourite subject was English. She was not sure what she wanted to do in the future because at this stage, she said *“you don’t really know what there is”* (11/6/99 p.16)

Rob, aged 13, was the eldest of four children. He was very quiet in class and was restrained in the focus group interviews as well. Like Tom, he had classroom withdrawal literacy support and had not taken the Shakespeare Paper. His favourite subject was Design and Technology and he wanted to be a computer programmer.

Steve, aged 13 years, was the eldest of five children, one of whom was fostered. His favourite subject was Drama. Although his verbal confidence in the classroom was very high, he often got into trouble during lessons. He wanted to be an airline pilot because *“everyone else around my way just wants to survive, be a plumber or an electrician and I’ve always wanted to go higher ... my mum said ... you’ve got to go to university, get a degree so you can choose what you want to do, you haven’t got to be an electrician.”* (26/6/99 p.3).

School B focus group:

Charlie, aged 13 years, was adapting to his first year as a boarder at the school. His parents still lived and worked in the former British colony where he had been born and had attended International School. Although he was good at English and contributed a great deal to the focus group interviews as well as in class, he said that he wanted to be either a scientist or work in a history-related field.

Fred, aged 14 years, was already an experienced boarder, having been a weekly boarder at his previous school. His parents were teachers, and he described his home background as *“all very intellectual and you kind of pick a lot of it up”* ((26/5/99 p.4) He did not want to make a decision about his future career because *“I’m going to keep my options open for as long as possible, there’s lots of things I want to do.”* (ibid., p.4).

Nick, aged 14 years, lived locally and was a day scholar. After leaving the local primary school at seven he had entered the school’s preparatory feeder school, which his younger brother and cousins now attended. His mother was a doctor and his father was an accountant. He wanted his future career to involve either medicine or architecture.

Daniel, aged 13 years, came from an Army family and was used to moving home every two years or so. He had started boarding at the school in the previous year. He expected that after GCSE’s he would probably drop English because he said he was not *“particularly outstanding”* (26/5/99 p.10) at it, preferring science. He wanted to be either a bio-chemist or work in sports science.

Tess, aged 13 years, had been a boarder for two years as her parents lived and worked in Saudia Arabia. English was her favourite subject because *“it’s one I can sort of do well”* (26/5/99 p.12). Tess was the only pupil in all of the three focus groups who admitted that she liked doing Shakespeare: *“Secretly I do but I wouldn’t tell my other classmates because they hate it a lot but I like it a lot.”* (26/5/99 p.12).

Molly, aged 14 years, had been a boarder for two years and loved it. She said that her brother had recently been expelled from the school for reasons that I did not press her about (This may have been due to the fact that because time was running short , another pupil Clare was also being interviewed at the same time). She was reluctant to speak further about her family, seeming unclear about her mother’s occupation , *“she might be unemployed or something”* (26/5//99, p. 1) but said that her father was a truck driver who had left school at 15. She wanted to be either a musician (she had taught herself to play the guitar) or a psychotherapist.

Clare, aged 14 years, was an only child and a day scholar. Her parents were both teachers (French and Art, at a local state school) and she was bilingual in French. She was not yet sure which subjects she would be taking at A level but did not want to study English because *“I’d rather do something I’d be really good at than do something I wouldn’t get such a good mark for.”* (26/5/99 p.16).

School C focus group:

Toby, aged 13 years, was an active participant in class, often engaging the teacher in detailed discussions. His parents were both teachers at the school. (French and Science) In the interviews he was ready to challenge both the

interviewer and fellow pupils about their questions and assumptions. Even though he engaged with the subject so thoroughly, he was adamant that he would not take English at A level, *“it’s probably an important subject but I find it just so very boring, I can’t stand it”* (14/7/99 p.9).

Nina, aged 14 years, had a younger sister at the school, which she admitted made it quite difficult for both of them because in the family *“everyone makes a fuss of me and then when she does it it’s not a big deal”* (14/7/99 p.3). She would be taking English at A level because she wanted to train to be a teacher, at primary rather than at secondary level because she definitely did not want to teach *“people our age”* (ibid, p 6.)

Cameron, aged 13 years, had three older brothers, one of whom was returning to the school’s Sixth Form to do his A levels, the other two brothers were already at University. His mother was a primary school teacher. He also wanted to continue with English at A level at the school and intended to continue his education through to University, (as did all the pupils in the focus group) although he was unsure of what he wanted to do ultimately.

Sandra, aged 13 years, had a pre-school age sister and a nine year old brother. She also planned to continue with English at A level and then on to University. Like all the girls in the focus group, she was confident in the classroom and engaged on equal terms with the boys during the focus group interviews.

Simon, aged 14 years, had a younger sister coming into Year 7 the following September when his older sister would also be returning to do her A levels at the school’s Sixth Form. His mother was a teacher. He was planning to take history

as one of his A level subjects and, like Toby, wanted to drop English after GCSE. He intended to continue his education through to University.

Vicki, aged 14 years, had an older brother who was returning to the school to take his A levels at Sixth Form. Like other pupils in this focus group and *School A's* focus group, who had siblings at the same school, she tended to avoid talking about school or the curriculum with her brother. She intended to stay on to take A levels, "*it's supposed to be a really good Sixth Form*" (14/7/99 p.4) and go on to University but was not sure what career path she would choose at this stage.

4.3: Open Coding: Introduction

Memos, Properties and Dimensions

During the initial process of open-coding the data, four categories emerged which are summarised below. Whilst inductively examining the data, in accordance with grounded theory procedures, I was also writing *memos* and thinking about the *properties* and *dimensions* of each of the categories. The four categories are stated below:

1. PRIOR ENCOUNTERS WITH SHAKESPEARE:

This category looks at the prior encounters with Shakespeare that took place within a school setting, at primary and at secondary level, and considers how these can be dimensionalised along a continuum of *legitimacy*.

2. APPREHENDING SHAKESPEARE

This category discusses pupils' differing degrees of familiarity with textual Shakespeare and considers how these can be dimensionalised along a continuum of *security*.

3. EXPERIENCING & UNDERSTANDING SHAKESPEARE IN THE YEAR 9 CLASSROOM:

This category inspects pupils' understandings of Shakespeare according to their experiences of different teaching and learning methods and considers how these can be dimensionalised along a continuum of *preference*.

4. PERCEPTIONS OF SHAKESPEARE:

This category examines how pupils see Shakespeare in relation to the school context and the wider social and cultural context and considers how their perceptions can be dimensionalised along a continuum of *certainty*.

In the sections 4.3.1 – 4.3.4 each category is first illustrated through data exemplification and discussed, and then briefly summarised in terms of its properties and dimensions.

4.3.1: Open Coding Category 1: Prior Encounters with Shakespeare

The nature of the encounters with Shakespeare prior to the set-text work in Year 9, ranged from active and participatory engagement to preparation of coursework for a Common Entrance examination. This category will be examined firstly in terms of Primary level encounters and then Secondary level encounters.

Primary level:

1. Clare: To come into the Upper School as part of our Common Entrance ... we studied *Macbeth*.
(*School B p.1*).

Here, we can see an example of a pupil whose early encounters with Shakespeare are already formalised to the extent that a play has been studied as part of an examined progress from one schooling level (Preparatory) to another (Upper).

Another pupil from a different school describes his primary state-school experience of the same play in a different way, one that is entirely *active*, whose enjoyment is predicated on its inclusivity and role-playing:

2. Jon: We acted out the witches.
 I: Can you remember any of it?
 Jon: No.
 I: Did you enjoy it?
 Jon: Yeah.
 I: Why did you enjoy it at primary do you think?
 Jon Because the whole year did it, we had to dress up as
 witches.
 (*School A 1a p.4*).

A pupil from *School B*, had become familiar with more than one Shakespeare play at his previous school by being encouraged to work with the texts utilising media literacy skills:

3. Charlie: Well the attitude seems to be a lot different. I mean I did two or three different Shakespeare plays in primary school and it was completely different. We didn't do it what we do now which is trudge through the play. We were actually given a page and that explained what happened in the scene

and then we would ... just talk it over and it would be more fun it would be like writing scripts and stuff, presenting it rather than just trudging through it, trying to find out what it means.

(School B p.1).

4. Tess: It's much easier that way if you learn by playing and having fun rather than just trudging through a play.

(School B p.1).

This image of *playing then and trudging now*, although not so resonantly expressed by pupils in the other focus groups, encapsulates a dichotomy between perceived *legitimate* and *illegitimate* approaches to Shakespeare. From the pupils' perspective, it seems that approaches such as acting out and re-writing Shakespeare's plays are not only more enjoyable but also more empowering in terms of ownership of the text, and subsequent understanding of and engagement with Shakespeare.

However, by the time pupils begin to study Shakespeare in a more formal context in Year 9 and thereafter, they are expected to endure the examined and therefore *legitimated* pain of "trudging through" the text rather than enjoy the *illegitimate* thrills of what can be seen as merely "playing."

Secondary level:

Even those pupils who could not recall any prior experiences of Shakespeare at primary level had all encountered Shakespeare by Year 9 secondary level, either in or outside the school context :

1. Sandra: In Year 8 we did like drama on *The Tempest*
Cameron: Yeah we did a bit of work in drama and on computers on *Twelfth Night* writing letters and stuff. ...
Toby: We made a little table in *The Tempest* with action, what they're doing and who's saying what ... we just made a table with columns ... so you could understand the point of view.
(*School C p.1*).

Whilst in *School A* , the class had tackled Shakespeare in Year 8, using the school's *Shakespeare File* set of resources:

2. Jon: We did *Romeo and Juliet*
(*School A 1a p.12*).

In *School B*, pupil recalled doing Shakespeare in Drama:

3. Nick: We did drama classes last term we used to do *Macbeth*
(*School B p 1*).

Shakespeare at secondary level, as these examples show, can be introduced to pupils through the medium of different subject specialisms; Drama, ICT and English. (Even though Drama is not a separate subject in the National Curriculum, in schools it is very often seen as distinct, as the class teacher in *School C* pointed out: "*I must admit that the co-ordination between the Drama and English departments in this school is not that close*" 14/7/99 p 1).

However, this complementarity is increasingly eroded by the time work begins on the set text in Year 9 and the focus of study is concentrated on work done on Shakespeare in the English classroom, particularly on textual analysis of the three set scenes.

Outside their current school-context, two pupils reported differing encounters with Shakespeare. From *School A* one boy, who enjoyed drama at school and at one time had thought of being an actor, had attended an out of school drama club run by the Bristol Old Vic Theatre where his potential enthusiasm for acting Shakespeare was snuffed out by the actual experience of doing it:

4. Steve: That's why I left because it was boring because it was Shakespeare.
- I: How did they get you to act it?
- Steve: Just acted it read out the words.
- I: Did you do anything else, improvising, exercises?
- Steve: Yeah relaxing and stuff, that was the good part but everything else was boring.
- I: So Shakespeare put you off?
- Steve: Uh huh.

(School A Individual interview, 14/5/99 p 12)

However, from *School B*, another boy's enthusiasm for Shakespeare had been kindled by a teacher from his previous school:

5. Charlie: My English teacher...always wore fluorescent shirts
he painted his English room the windows in fluorescent

colours and then he put quotes from Shakespeare on them and we studied things like *Hamlet* and *The Tempest* and a few other things ... Whole walls would be covered with the stuff

I: So did he make you enthusiastic about the subject?

Charlie: Yes he was very good.

(School B Individual interview, 26/5/99. p 1: p 2).

Whilst the importance of the teacher's role in facilitating understanding and enjoyment of Shakespeare is one that is recognised by both teachers and pupils alike, by Key Stage 3 the exigencies of the forthcoming test leave little time for pupils - and teachers - to engage with Shakespeare in the variety of ways that would have been possible previously:

6. Charlie: Because we haven't got so much time, we've got a very short term and we've got Key Stage 3 at the end of next term and we've got to get through it quickly.

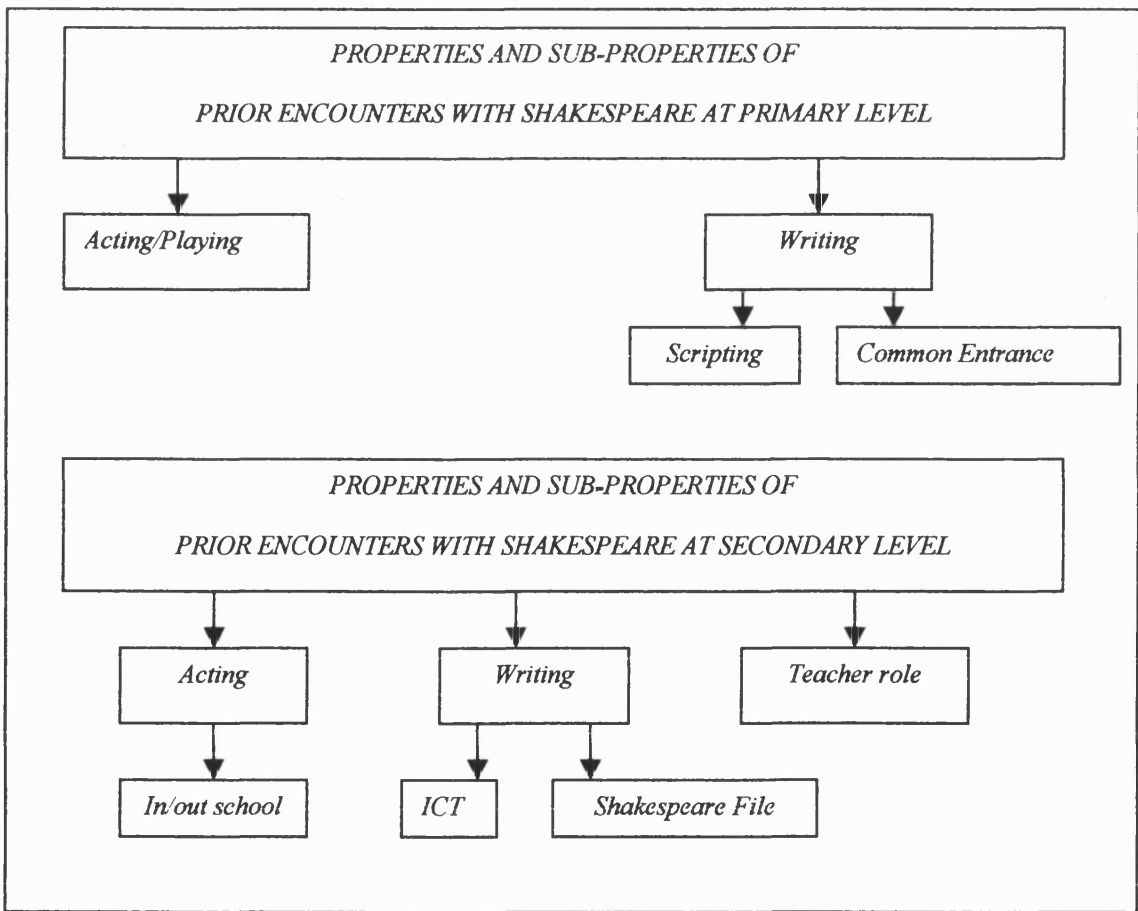
(School B p.2).

What these examples in this category indicate is that for many pupils prior encounters with Shakespeare are often *active*. Teachers don't have to teach 'to the test' and there is the time to introduce Year 7 and Year 8 secondary school pupils to Shakespeare using differing approaches. However, once work begins in earnest on the set text in Year 9 teachers and pupils alike have to focus their exploration of Shakespeare on the three set scenes that pupils will be expected to know in great detail. The result is that they can become bored with it and no

longer see Shakespeare as something that can be *played* with. Rather, it is seen as something that has to be endured as this example, with its unconsciously Beckettian allusions, shows:

7. Jenny: It's just 'cos doing it now, it's just going on and everything.
 Suzy: Yeah!
 I: Going on?
 Jenny: It's like, going on.
 (*School A 1a p 12*).

DIAGRAM AND SUMMARY OF CATEGORY 1:



In terms of prior encounters affecting *current* responses at Key Stage 3 secondary level, the properties can be *dimensionalised* along a continuum of *legitimacy*. What is wholly legitimated at primary level becomes more problematical when secondary level priorities change from playing with texts to working towards tests. So, although “playing” Shakespeare as well as playing *with* Shakespeare are enjoyed at primary level, pupils know that by Year 9 they will be expected to study Shakespeare differently, largely by “trudging” through the text to arrive at an authorised explanation of its meaning.

4.3.2: Open Coding Category 2: Apprehending Shakespeare

In The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (1933) a number of definitions are ascribed to the word *Apprehend*, including the following; *to lay hold of with the intellect; to see; to catch the meaning of; to anticipate with fear*. This range of meanings encompasses the differing responses that pupils presented when discussing their knowledge of Shakespeare’s stories. Although pupils’ prior experiences of Shakespeare varied, as we have seen from the examples shown in Category 1, by Year 9 all the pupils were familiar with the “story” of at least one of Shakespeare’s plays.

The most mentioned play was *Romeo and Juliet*, and as one of Shakespeare’s plays that has become deeply sedimented in the public consciousness, it was not surprising to find that pupils from all the focus groups, whether they were studying the play or not, referred to it in terms of a story that “everybody knows”:

1. Jenny: I thought that everybody knows about *Romeo and Juliet*, you always hear about *Romeo and Juliet* (*School A. 1a. p 13*).

In all likelihood, the play's most recent translation to film, the 1996 Baz Luhrmann *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, has become a significant factor in pupil recognition of this specific play. Nearly all of the pupils had seen or heard of the film, which is a heavily-cut version updated to an urban, gangster setting featuring an explosive soundtrack coupled with visual pyrotechnics and Hollywood star-casting, all elements guaranteed to appeal to a youthful audience.

This reading of the *Romeo and Juliet* story has, I would surmise, largely supplanted the classroom mainstay that Franco Zeffirelli brought to the screen in 1968, an 'authentically' Renaissance version of the play. It is not only through the medium of film, and to a lesser extent television and theatre, that pupils "know" the story of *Romeo and Juliet* but also because Shakespeare's "star-cross'd lovers" are often used as signifiers for contemporary tales about thwarted love, as the following example shows:

2. Charlie: I think in *Romeo and Juliet* it's not the sort of play we'd all enjoy because we've heard it so many times. We know the story off by heart ... because it's just been mediarised [sic] so much and it's more of a metaphor now and you know a tragic love story, compare it instantly to *Romeo and Juliet*, like a 'Romeo and Juliet' story. (*School B p 3*).

What is interesting is the degree to which *familiarity* with the play is perceived as being advantageous or disadvantageous when it came to studying a text more formally. The suggestion from *School B* that an over-familiarity might be disadvantageous because pupils are already bored with the story contrasted with the more instrumental viewpoint of pupils from *School C*, who felt that they would have to do more work on the unknown *Twelfth Night* whereas studying *Romeo and Juliet* “would have saved going over the story.”

3. Sandra: Doing *Romeo and Juliet* would have helped our SATs because we’d already know the story, it would have saved going over the story.
(*School C p 7*).

Pupils from *School B* said that they would have preferred to study *Twelfth Night* because they thought it was:

4. Tess: a good play[-]
Nick: it’s got a lot of action[-]
Molly: it’s a bit more light-hearted[-]
Daniel: it’s great fun.
(*School B p 7*).

It may be that these preferences were expressed simply because of a feeling that “the grass is greener on the other side” but it is also interesting to note that they were able to express a series of opinions about a relatively unfamiliar play. Conversely, the anticipation with which other pupils from *School A* had about starting work on an unheard of text such as *Twelfth Night* was quelled by the struggle to engage with a text that seemed to them to have no easily identifiable anchorages on which to fasten:

5. Jon: One teacher said how funny it was[-]
 Suzy: yeah[-]
 Jon: and then when we read it I couldn't understand
 any of the jokes.
 Suzy: yeah!
 (*School A 1a p13*).

It is not surprising that pupils found the play's humour inaccessible on first reading, since the language in *Twelfth Night* is especially rich in verbal punning and is not as broadly comic as, for example, the Mechanicals' play rehearsals in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or the arresting antics of the "foolish officers" in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

6. Jenny: I thought it was going to be good but nobody had even
 like, nobody even knew anything about *Twelfth Night* ...
 you didn't know anything about it
 (*School A. 1a p 13*).

Not knowing anything about *Twelfth Night* before studying it was something that Jenny from *School A*, found potentially exciting but her reiteration that "nobody even knew anything about" the play in the example above also indicates how the apparent non-impact of *Twelfth Night* anywhere else other than in the classroom in contrast to the well-known *Romeo and Juliet* would make it seem even more puzzling and elusive. Once work on the play in class was underway, however, her initial sense of anticipation all but evaporated:

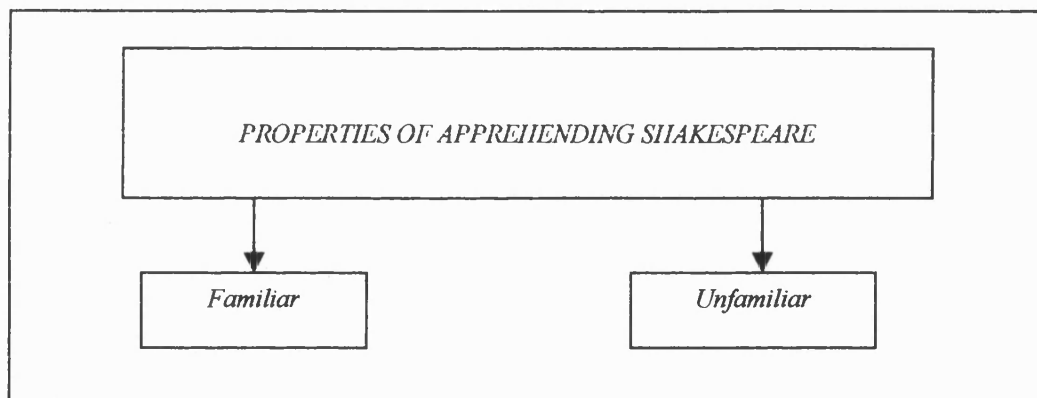
7. Jenny: I would rather have done one that I had heard of like.
 (*School A. 1a p 14*).

None of the pupils in the focus groups expressed a preference for the third play, *Julius Caesar* which was also available at Key Stage 3.

8. Charlie: that's a bit more of a slightly higher up level, yeah, I mean I wouldn't like a political play, I'd prefer something more comic or like *Romeo and Juliet*.
(School B p 7).

Julius Caesar suffers under the double blow of being about politics and history, subjects which can at this age be perceived as being irrelevant as well as difficult.

DIAGRAM AND SUMMARY OF CATEGORY 2:



The differing sets of responses that can be found in this category can be divided into two properties, the *Familiar* and the *Unfamiliar*, which can be dimensionalised along a continuum of *security*. So, prior knowledge of a text, as with *Romeo and Juliet*, which is known “off by heart” is seen by some pupils as potentially helpful for their exams, highlighting a largely instrumental perspective whereas for others this very familiarity brings with it an in-built boredom factor “it’s not the sort of play we’d all enjoy, we’ve heard it so many

times.” (*School B p.14*). Unfamiliar texts are viewed with a mixture of potential enthusiasm and wariness. An overtly political and historical text like *Julius Caesar* is considered to be more difficult and therefore unpopular, whilst a text new to the curriculum such as *Twelfth Night* is potentially viewed with more interest.

4.3.3: Open Coding Category 3: Experiencing and Understanding Shakespeare in the Year 9 Classroom.

Schools and class teachers can choose between three different Shakespeare plays for testing at Key Stage 3. In 1999, these were *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar* and the newly -introduced text to Key Stage 3, *Twelfth Night*. Pupils will be expected to study one of the plays and to have a thorough knowledge of three specified scenes. How teachers teach the set texts is largely a matter for them and their English departments to decide. In the study, then, it was not surprising to find that different teaching approaches were used in preparation for the Key Stage 3 Shakespeare test, and that pupils’ responses to how and what they were taught also varied from school to school. The properties pertaining to this category are discussed in turn below:

ACTING

1. Cameron: I think they should maybe do it a different way.
I: What kind of way?
Cameron: Just act it out.
(*School C p 5*).

It was not just the pupils from *School C* who expressed their preferences for acting the text rather than reading it aloud but also pupils from *Schools A and B*:

2. Tom: Some of them ((the classroom acting scenes)) were funny 'cos everyone mucks up, it's better than sitting down writing or reading.

(*School A 1b p 5*).

3. Daniel: It automatically makes it a bit more fun when you've got to act it out everyone laughs it's a lot funnier. I would prefer it if we acted it out.

Tess: Yes I would too.

(*School B p 15*).

Acting is “more fun” for pupils because it can give the chance to “muck” up, to indulge in what we might term *licensed foolery*, which can be also positioned along the continuum of ‘*legitimacy*’ as discussed in relation to Category 1 Prior Encounters with Shakespeare, where it might sit midway between illegitimate and legitimate perceptions of how to engage with Shakespeare in a school context. Transgressive, in so far as it literally presents the opportunity to play the fool and legitimised because its power can also be harnessed in pursuit of a specific objective, that is, exam success, as this next example shows:

4. Charlie: It would also be quite good if we could act out some plays, at the moment we're on two particular scenes which

we've been told are very important for Key Stage 3, so maybe actually act it out with some of us.

(School B p.14).

Pupils also felt that performing the text helped them to make sense of it:

5. Vicki: Because it's easier to understand if someone's acting even if you don't know the words you can work out the meaning ... not like if you read it
(School C p 5).

6. Jenny: When we're acting it out, you sort of understand it more but when you're just reading it, you don't understand the words anyway.
(School A 1a p 4).

7. Nick: Actually using your language, not using Shakespeare's language ... if we're just acting it out, it's much easier because you know what the play's about and you're saying it in a way that we understand.
(School B p 15).

8. Charlie: When you're acting it out ... you'll find how you would feel if you were in his situation but when you're trudging through it you don't know whether or not to

think how would I feel if I was him, you wouldn't know as
much as if you were actually doing the play.
(*School B pp 15-16*).

The language would be made clear not just through action but also through pupils' use of improvisation and their *own* language to explain obscure meanings. Acting would also allow pupils to empathise with the feelings and motivation of the characters more fully than just by reading a text. This is an important consideration as, very often in the SATs Shakespeare Paper, at least one of the tasks asks pupils to write in an empathetic way as the following examples from the 1999 English Test Papers shows (QCA, 1999):

Romeo and Juliet

Act 2 Scene 4, line 82 to the end of Scene 5

TASK 3

In these scenes, the Nurse is the messenger between Romeo and Juliet.

Imagine you are the Nurse. Write your thoughts and feelings as you think about the day's events.

You could begin:

This afternoon my lady Juliet married her love, Romeo. I am glad I have played my part in helping them ...

Before you begin to write you should think about the Nurse's views on:

- * her part in the day's activities;
- * the behaviour of Mercutio and Romeo;

- * the different ways Mercutio, Romeo and Juliet speak to her in these scenes;
- * her feelings for Juliet and her concerns about Juliet's future.

Remember to write as if you were the Nurse.

And for *Twelfth Night* the empathetic task was as follows:

Twelfth Night

Act 2 Scene 5

TASK 6

In this scene Sir Toby Belch and his friends watch Malvolio find a letter which he thinks is from Olivia.

Imagine you are Sir Toby Belch. Write down your thoughts and feelings as you leave the garden.

You could begin:

What a wonderful trick - and what a fool Malvolio is ...

Before you begin to write you should decide what Sir Toby thinks and feels about:

- * the trick and the way it has worked;
- * Malvolio and his position in Olivia's household;
- * the way Malvolio reacted to the letter and its contents;
- * Sir Andrew, Fabian and Maria and the effects of the trick in the future.

Remember to write as if you are Sir Toby Belch.

The alternative task for *Romeo and Juliet* asked candidates to write about how Juliet reacts in the scene when her parents tell her she is to marry Paris. The

alternative task for *Twelfth Night* asks candidates to write about how Shakespeare introduces different kinds of love to the audience in the opening scenes.

READING

Pupils in *Schools A* and *C* were studying *Twelfth Night*, using the Oxford School Shakespeare Series (Gill, 1990) and the Longman's edition (O' Connor, 1997) respectively. Both were illustrated with notes and/or glossaries on the facing page of the text. Pupils from *School B* were studying *Romeo and Juliet*, using the New Penguin edition (Spencer, 1996) which was not illustrated and had notes at the back. Each pupil in this school had their own copy which they were able to annotate and keep with them during the term. In *School C*, pupils were allowed to take the texts home if they needed to complete homework, but in *School A* texts had to be returned at the end of each lesson, apart from one occasion (that I knew of) when they were allowed to take the texts home in order to complete work. The teacher commented to me later that their work had been the better for it.

Although pupils are presented with Shakespeare's plays in book form they can be confounded by encountering different narrative conventions to the ones they are used to when reading books:

1. Tess: In a novel you get the story read out to you because the author says it in words but for the, like Shakespeare, you have to get it from the dialogue because there's no explanation of what's going on and it's like all scenes and stuff.
(*School B* p 3).

A Shakespeare text can also differ from other books or novels that pupils have encountered in the English classroom because of the addition of notes and/or glossaries, pupils have to learn how to 'read' correctly. The difficulty that pupils had in interpreting the notes was something that surprised the class teacher in *School A*. (15/4/99 p 1) whilst in *School C*, the class teacher found that the notes themselves could be euphemistic, (for example, with regards to Shakespeare's bawdier lines) (14/7/99 p 2). The class teacher in *School B* did not make any specific remarks about the helpfulness or otherwise of the notes but his pupils did:

2. Fred: and some people actually find the notes difficult,
I don't understand any of the notes.
Clare: I don't either.
(*School B p 6*).

Another pupil went on to challenge the idea that a Shakespeare play should be perceived as a book at all:

3. Charlie: Certain scripts are written for certain things .and
Romeo and Juliet it's intended to be a play script
and I really don't think you can use it as a book,
it doesn't quite work.
(*School B p 5*)

By imposing the structure of a book on the form of something quite different - a play - the skills needed to 'read' the text successfully are also different, and can take some getting used to:

4. Daniel: If you're reading through it, you've got to imagine you're Mercutio, Benvolio, Mercutio, Benvolio, Romeo, Nurse.
- Molly: It's a lot through your mind.
- Daniel: Yes, it's OK if you can go this is Mercutio, now I know what's happened, now it's Benvolio but it's forever swapping and it's hard to, and you're thinking I've got to be angry with him, happy with him and it's really difficult to get a grip of[-]
- Molly: what's going on.
(*School B p.5*).

Pupils have to combine a set of techniques in order to negotiate their way through the plays. Whilst the play is being read aloud, they have to concentrate in order to understand the words and phrases that they are hearing whilst simultaneously identifying the narrative and dramatic directions of the plot. A pupil from *School A* also found this difficult:

5. Rob: Sometimes you don't concentrate on it and you just lose what it is and what it is about and you've got to use tons of imagination to get the play right.
(*School A 1a p 3*)

The unfamiliarity of the form and structure of Shakespeare's written language on the page also serves to militate against fluent reading aloud in the classroom, which is something that I observed during a classroom observation. Whilst pupils are concentrating on pronouncing the words correctly, they are unable to decipher the meaning at the same time:

6. Toby: I think when you read it loud what happens is you're so trying to read it right and not muck up, you don't really take in what you're saying ... so you don't understand what you're saying therefore you don't get certain parts of the play.

(School C p 2)

In the classroom, reading Shakespearean text aloud fluently, to be able to “Speak the speech trippingly on the tongue,” as Hamlet says, is seen as more difficult than acting where the physically-embodied text can be modernised or just fooled around with and the meaning can be made clear by “saying it in a way that we understand” (*example 7, p. 245*).

Even when the class teacher reads the text aloud fluently, pupils can still find it difficult to understand the meaning:

7. Nick: .. say Mr --- is reading it out to us, we wouldn't understand it straightaway, we would have to look back in our notes.

(School B p 15)

As we have seen, pupils do not find that reading the text aloud or hearing it read is easy and in order to understand “what it is about” (*example 5 p. 250*) the strategies they use include the ‘scaffolded’ help of peers as well as reading and re-reading the text:

8. Simon: Some parts you have to like read over so that you get it you don't get it all at once.

(School C p 3)

9. Daniel: Well I find it very difficult the text just reading it and I get help from Charlie usually. I find it really difficult and when I'm able to see something as well it gives me, "oh I understand what this means now" instead of "uh oh what does this mean?" when we've gone over it three times.

(School B p 4)

WRITING

The written work that pupils were set during the course of the term included the preparation of character, plot and key scene summaries; explanation of vocabulary and modernising parts of the text; illustrating maps or compiling tables and columns to show plot and character progression ; and in writing at least one formal essay for test practice. Not all the pupils were given this full range of written tasks.

Pupils from *School A* were at a disadvantage when it came to completing any written work that was begun during lessons since they were not able to take the texts away with them. This was because it would have proved too difficult to administer on a regular basis although as the class teacher noted, on the one occasion she was able to let the pupils work with the texts at home, there was an improvement in the written work (*Interview, 15/4/99 p 5*). There was the added difficulty that they had to share text books with another Year 9 class because the school did not have enough copies of *Twelfth Night* texts to accommodate all the year groups. A simple consideration such as not being able to use and refer to the text out of the classroom can make it harder for pupils to practise and perfect the type of writing the examination requires of them. In the Shakespeare Paper they are simply informed that "Your work will be assessed for your knowledge and

understanding of the play and the way you express your ideas.” (Official National Test Papers, 1999). In effect, however, this translates into a more complex set of Assessment objectives with each pupil’s written work marked twice, once for Understanding and Response and once for Written Expression as the following list shows:

The tasks in Paper 2 assess pupils’ ability to understand and respond to:

- * Shakespeare’s presentation of ideas;
- * the motivation of behaviour of characters;
- * the development of plot;
- * the language of the scenes;
- * the overall impact of the scenes;
- * the presentation of the scenes on stage.

Also assessed in this paper will be pupils’ ability to:

- * write in a style appropriate to the task;
- * organise writing clearly, using paragraphs where appropriate;
- * use grammatical structures and vocabulary suitable for the clear and precise expression of meaning;
- * use a variety of sentence structures;
- * use accurate punctuation and spelling;
- * write clearly and legibly.

(The Official National Test Papers, 1999: 94)

Writing to these criteria is something that some pupils are better able to handle than others. Pupils from *School A*, who were given a mock SATs paper to take, still found writing a timed essay more difficult to cope with than pupils from *Schools B* and *C*:

1. Jenny: I didn’t know what to do on it.

(*School A. Ia p 1*).

In the real SATs a few weeks later, many of the pupils from *School A* finished the one and a quarter hour Shakespeare paper with plenty of time to spare but even pupils from *School B*, who were the most accustomed to writing for tests amongst all of the pupils in the research study, balked at having to write about Shakespeare in such a specific way:

2. Fred: you can write what you think happens but I don't think comprehension questions are the best thing for Shakespeare, because it's what you personally think rather than what the examiner thinks what you should think.

Daniel: It's more a play so it's not something you ought to analyse

(*School B p 2*)

WATCHING VIDEOS

Nowadays, it would be unusual for Year 9 pupils to study Shakespeare without having previously encountered the plays in some sort of video format. A popular introduction to the plays is the series of *Animated Tales*, adapted by the children's author Leon Garfield some years ago for television. In addition, there is a steadily-increasing number of cinema and television full-length versions which are also available on video.

Pupils from *Schools A* and *C*, who were studying *Twelfth Night*, were shown the 1996 film version, directed by Trevor Nunn, during their lessons. Most of them were also aware of the 1996 film, *Romeo + Juliet*, directed by Baz Luhrmann. However, the only group to be studying *Romeo and Juliet*, the pupils from *School B*, were deliberately not shown the film by their class teacher until

after the exam, in case it encouraged them to lose focus “through laziness or absorption with Leonardo di Caprio.” (*Interview, 21/6/99 p 4*). However, the pupils were already familiar with the Luhrmann film, and at least one of the pupils knew of the 1968 Franco Zeffirelli version:

1. Clare: [I..] watched the video before and it helped me understand it.
Molly: And there’s the old *Romeo and Juliet* which is good...like they’re not the vamped version.
(*School B p 8*).

In terms of using “the vamped version” to aid their understanding of the written text, there were some criticisms offered:

2. Daniel: It would be good to follow it through with your book, because it’s exactly the same text. ((that is, Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet*))
Molly: It’s not, it’s not because they miss out quite a lot...
I was just looking through it at lunchtime, I go back and watch some of it...
Fred: They also speak very very fast, you can’t really hear.
(*School B p 3*).

The very elements in the Luhrmann film that appeal to a youthful and visually literate audience are achieved at the expense of the dialogue, which is heavily cut, often spoken quickly and hard to hear against the (literally) explosive soundtrack. However, the saving grace of a video is that “you can always rewind it and play

it back” (*School C, p.5*) . For at least one *School C* pupil, watching videos also helped him to empathise better with the characters:

3. Toby: In the modernised version of *Romeo and Juliet* you can actually understand more of the feelings of the characters more than you can if you saw it in a play or just reading it in a book....you can see the conflict...

Nina: You’re more familiar with the actors.
(*School C p 4*).

Certainly, what a theatrical production very often lacks for a younger audience is the kudos that star Hollywood casting can bring to Shakespeare:

4. Jenny: You know what they like did to *Romeo and Juliet*?
That was good ... f they like made modern videos of it, it would be better like people in school would rather learn...watching the video like everyone knows Leonardo di Caprio and everything and girls go and see it ... and then you sort of understand it more and then you relate to it and everything.

(*School A 1a p.2, p 14*)

Referring to the Trevor Nunn version of *Twelfth Night*, pupils from *School C* not only felt they would “pay more attention” to a video but that it also served to make sense of the written text:

5. Cameron: I only got it when we watched the video.
(*School C p 2*)

6. Toby: You pay more attention to a television but if you're reading it out aloud from a book you can always get some pupil to muck around but they're more likely to watch a video.
(*School C p 4: 121-123*)

Once pupils are familiar with the text itself and the mechanics of the plot, they can be disconcerted to find that filmed versions take considerable liberties with the script ("they miss out quite a lot" *example 2, p.255*), but by knowing the text thoroughly they can congratulate themselves on being able to spot where cuts have been made:

7. Sandra: when they changed bits when it wasn't in the book it was quite good.
(*School C p 2*)

WATCHING PLAYS

Both *Schools A* and *C* were able to watch *Twelfth Night* in performance. In *School C*, pupils were offered the opportunity to visit a local theatre during the Easter holidays where a production of the play was being performed. In *School A*, a theatre-in-education company spent a day in the school performing two different plays on the syllabus, with a question and answer session following each performance. In *School B*, the pupils did not see a live performance of *Romeo and Juliet*.

1. Jenny: The video's like, it wasn't, it was quite boring and it was just playing and everything but they

((the T.I.E. company)) made the play different
and funny and everything
(*School A. 1a p 2*).

2. Suzy: It was good, yes it was good.
I: What made it good do you think Rob?
Rob: The way they got all their parts right and Sir Toby
and Sir Andrew messing around all the time ...
Jon: How they chose to modernise it ...
Jenny:... They made it really funny ...
Suzy: It's funnier now that we've actually seen it
so we can actually understand it more.
(*School A. 1a p 1, p.3*).

What made the experience of watching the play in performance enjoyable for the *School A* pupils was largely because of the way in which the actors interpreted and adapted the play to make it more relevant to a school audience. Pupils were able to see that it was funny which they had not been able to so when reading the play; "when we read it, I couldn't understand any of the jokes" (*School A, 1a. p 13*). Although they appreciated the irreverence with which the actors treated the text, "messing around all the time" (*School A. 1a. p 1: 12*) they were also impressed by their ability to learn Shakespeare's language, "they got all their parts right" (*School A. 1a. p 1: 13*) For pupils from *School A*, seeing plays in a school setting is perhaps the only time they will see Shakespeare being performed live, as the senior teacher pointed out.

For some of the *School C* pupils, who visited a local theatre to watch *Twelfth Night* being performed by a professional company, the physicality of the stage

setting and how it was used surprised them:

3. Cameron: They 'ain't got that much space in the theatre.
Vicki: They didn't have many props ...
Simon: They didn't change the scenery once did they?
Nina: It would have made it easier to understand.
Simon: I don't think you would understand the story
if you didn't have any idea of the story before
you went to the theatre, I don't think you'd
understand any of it.

(School C p 3)

Since the theatre uses different conventions to work on an audience's "imaginary forces" from those that pupils are more accustomed to seeing in naturalistic film and television dramas, the fact that actors, props and scenery are all crammed "within this wooden O" means that they have to learn to 'read' the unfolding drama in quite a different way, and for novice theatre-goers this can be something of a revelation.

Despite these difficulties, it was agreed that seeing the characters fleshed out was useful for them:

4. Vicki : Yeah, I think it helped us to see how the
characters were acted.

(School C p 3)

Pupils from *School B* were disappointed not to have seen a performance which

they felt would have consolidated their already-thorough knowledge of the play, especially since the school had its own purpose-built theatre, which was also used by professional and amateur companies throughout the year. It was, in fact, the same theatre where pupils from *School B* saw the aforementioned performance of *Twelfth Night*. Tess made a specific point about the choice of play:

5. Tess: I think it ought to be tied in to a performance, if there's a performance at the Old Vic for like *Romeo and Juliet* then they ought to study *Romeo and Juliet*.
(*School B p 8*).

6. Nick: You really need to see what is happening because if you just imagine it you don't know if you're seeing the same thing as you could in the proper play, if you saw the play.
(*School B p 4*).

From these examples we can see that there is a perception that being able to see the play through a dramatic realisation authenticates the text, for it then becomes "the proper play."

CHOICE

Compulsory Shakespeare is not necessarily met with universal acclaim by pupils:

1. Steve: I would just scrap it do som'at else.
I: Scrap what?

Steve: Shakespeare.

(School A 1b p 10-11)

Most felt that if they had to study Shakespeare at all, they should be able to choose the text rather than have it imposed upon them and that they should be taught through different approaches, for example, watching the plays on video or in performance, reading the text, acting it out, translating it.

2. Daniel: In our last school we looked through *Twelfth Night*, then we went to go and see it being performed which is also a very good idea. Maybe go through the book very briefly then go and watch it as a play or watch it on film, then maybe do what we're doing now, [reading in class] then you've got two ideas, you've got the speech and you can relate it to the play, "oh yes I remember this bit this was when so and so did so and so" and ... you've got more of a picture of what's happened.

(School B p 4)

3. Jenny: watching the plays and [.]

Suzy: yeah watching them.

I: Watching them. Writing about it?

Rob: No.

Jon: No ... I'd get them to act it out a bit ... And keep on sort of reading it, going over it.

Jenny: I wouldn't keep doing it though because that makes it boring and nobody wants to listen to it

anyway, so if you like one day read it and the next day, I suppose the next day you act it, so you do different things with it.

Suzy: Yes [] and make sure it's all translated really.
(*School A. 1a p 5*).

Getting a sense of what the play is about and a clear idea of its structure through a variety of techniques seemed to be an important factor for all the pupils. One of those techniques would be to modernise or translate the text to make it easier to understand but a significant proviso about the authenticity of a modernised text was also made by some pupils in Category 4, which looks at pupils' perceptions of Shakespeare.

As far as textual choice was concerned, these pupils from *School B* drew upon their knowledge of a wider range of plays to discuss their preferences:

4. Molly: If we had to it would probably be *Romeo and Juliet* because there's people doing *Twelfth Night* and *Julius Caesar* and they're just not interesting at all and you can't really write much on the feelings.
(*School B p 6*)

5. Charlie: I think the better plays to study would be the ones ... that not many people have heard of ... like *The Tempest* and stuff. People know they exist but they don't really know what they're like and it would be a bit more exciting for us rather than *Julius Caesar* or whatever.

Molly: I'd prefer to do *Macbeth* because I remember doing it,
yes it was really cool ...

Charlie: But we should have had the choice.

(School B p 8, p. 9)

Overall, pupils indicated that not only would they prefer to choose what text they studied but also that a multiplicity of teaching methods would enhance their understanding of the text. They also identified a further factor in understanding and enjoying Shakespeare, which was the role of the teacher.

TEACHER ROLE

Pupil response to Shakespeare is to a large extent dependent upon the approaches to teaching Shakespeare that their teacher takes as well as the relationship that the pupils have with the teacher. We have already seen how one pupil's curiosity about Shakespeare was awakened by his teacher in a previous school (*example 5, p.236*). In the focus group interviews, pupils from *School A* referred indirectly to the teacher's role when mentioning their preferred approaches to teaching Shakespeare, and only pupils from *Schools B* and *C* volunteered any direct comments on the importance or otherwise of the teacher's role :

1. Nina: I think it also depends on what teacher you have,
some people who are doing Shakespeare they hate
it but I think Mr----- makes it quite interesting.

(School C p 5).

2. Nick: And if they explain it to you properly you think
“wow this play's really good.”

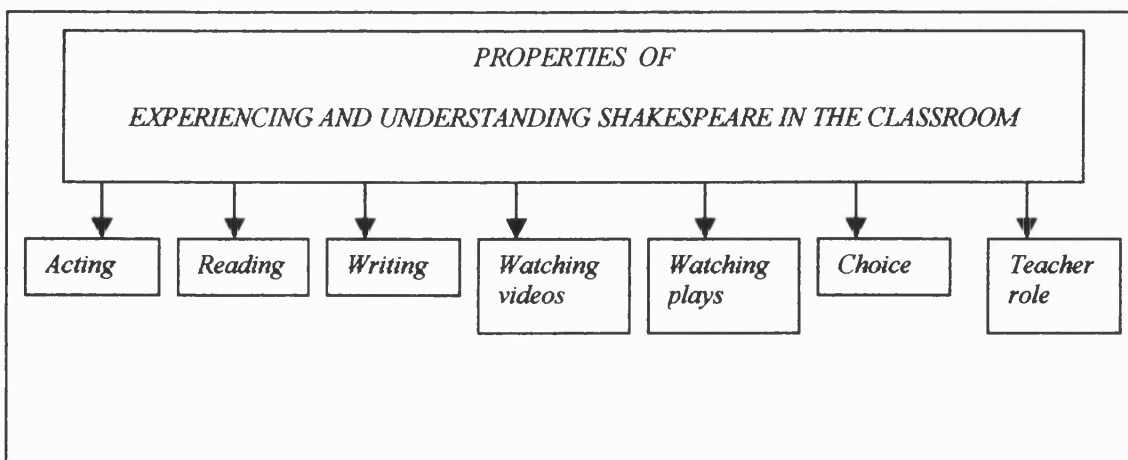
I: What do you think a proper explanation is?

Charlie: It's just with the explanation and stuff Mr ----- explains it so deeply each part that we've forgotten by the time (laughter). We spend the first half of each lesson with just his summarising what he spoke about last lesson because none of us can remember it.

Tess: None of us can remember it.
(School B p 7).

Teaching Shakespeare is not something that the teachers in the research study would wish to relinquish, SATs or no SATs, but they would prefer to have a little more flexibility about *how* they teach, knowing as they do how best their pupils are likely to respond to and engage with Shakespeare. In the previous example, the teacher taught the text so “deeply” because he wanted his pupils to be as thoroughly prepared for the test as possible, although at the same time he was aware that “in some ways in teaching it we - or I- go for overkill” (21/6/99 p.2).

DIAGRAM AND SUMMARY OF CATEGORY 3:



As in Category 1, there is a straightforward list of properties belonging to this category, which comprises the different approaches to the teaching of and learning about Shakespeare. How pupils' understanding of Shakespeare is hindered or facilitated by experiencing these different approaches can be dimensionalised along a continuum of *preference*. But there is a conflict between how pupils would prefer to study Shakespeare (if at all) and what they are required to know about Shakespeare in order to do well at in their Key Stage 3 SATs.

4.3.4: Open Coding Category 4: Perceptions of Shakespeare

In the initial analysis of the interview data, it became clear that pupils' perceptions of Shakespeare were wide-ranging and could best be examined in terms of two main properties: *Subject Status* and *Significance*. *Subject Status* concerns what subject pupils think Shakespeare belongs to, as the data showed that they don't automatically see English as the only locale. *Significance* concerns how they see the relationship between studying Shakespeare and its outcomes, instrumental or otherwise, through the sub-properties *purpose* and *testing*.

Pupils from *School B* were the most articulate about Shakespeare's works and context, implicitly understanding that Shakespeare comes as part of the educational 'bundle' (to borrow a phrase from computer technology) of exams and qualifications that will have a direct impact on their careers and the rest of their lives. Pupils from *School C* were also aware of the significance of Shakespeare but challenged its cultural hegemony whereas pupils from *School A* accorded no extrinsic value to Shakespeare, whilst half-heartedly allowing it might have some intrinsic value.

Subject Status

For teachers, locating Shakespeare in a subject area might not appear to be at all problematical. Shakespeare's works 'belong' to literature and the English Department, from where they can be loaned out on occasion to the Drama Department, ("We did Drama classes last term, we used to do *Macbeth*" *example 3, p.234*). Yet for pupils in the study, Shakespeare's location is not always so securely positioned, even within English:

- 1.. Simon: I think it should be more of a Drama thing.
(*School C, p 5*).

The group followed up Simon's suggestion by considering what Shakespeare *did*:

2. Sandra The stories are quite clever I mean like the one we're doing at the moment it hasn't got a predictable ending so maybe that's what it teaches you to be creative[-]
Toby: but why is it teaching you to be creative in English?
Sandra Creative in everything. Stop twisting my words!
(*School C p 6*)

At this point, all the pupils started talking at once but Toby insisted on bringing the discussion back to the question of whether Shakespeare's creativity belonged specifically to Drama or to English:

3. Toby: If it's teaching you to how to be creative in a dramatic sense so why are you doing it in English?
... Why wouldn't you learn it in Drama instead of English?

- Vicki You do.
- Nina: I think it should be done in Drama
- I: You think it doesn't have a place in English?
- Nina Well, I think it does but in Drama you learn all about plays and everything ...
- Cameron: Maybe I think they should be linked and everything.
- Simon: I think if the Drama classes were the same as English, you won't do, you won't bring English into the Drama of the plays and stuff.
- (School C p 6, p.7).*

What this exchange shows is not just the difficulty pupils have in clarifying Shakespeare's subject position but also the level of uncertainty about what Shakespeare does. If it teaches you to be "creative" these pupils asked, what sort of creativity does it relate to, creative in a literary sense or a dramatic sense, or can it help you to be creative in "everything"? By struggling to fix the concept of creativity in this way, pupils are indicating their awareness of subject specificity (they will soon have to make GCSE subject choices), which seems to undermine the potential that was identified for subject complementarity: "they should be linked."

Even though Shakespeare is for the most part studied within the English department, there was some speculation as to what kind of English it was:

4. Nick: It's different English, it's old English.
- (School B p 2).*

Shakespeare's "old English" was seen as a distinct language with its own rules

of grammar and syntax which have to be worked through in order to arrive at meaning and fluency, but it is one that is not perceived as having any relevance to pupils today since it belongs to:

5. Steve: sort of the past [-]
Tom: if we went round talking in old English, people would think we're a bit weird.
(School A. 1b p 4).

There was a sense that studying Shakespeare meant having to learn and speak differently for no real reason:

6. Cameron: Why do we have to learn old English?
(School C p 6.)
7. Steve: So what's the point? What's the point?[-]
Tom: in learning old language ... we should just learn it but not like have to learn the language ... just learn about it.
(School A. 1b p 12).

Echoing Cameron, Tom could not see why they should have to study Shakespeare's "old language" because it was not "proper" English, which is what he thought they should be studying:

8. Tom: Do proper English...what we're doing now... not old English, modern English, not old English.
(School A. 1b p 11)

There was a strong perception that Shakespeare's language is so distinctive from modern English that it is more akin to a foreign language:

9. Jenny: I reckon it's like French, it's like learning a new language really.

(School A. Ia p 7).

In addition to positioning Shakespeare as a foreign language, with the concomitant struggle to enter a "brave new world" of strangely worded form and structure, its connection to history was also made because the real relevance to English was so unclear.

Whilst most pupils found Shakespeare's "weird" language difficult to understand, only some pupils from *School B* admitted that they eventually accepted it:

10. Tess: The language is difficult but I still find it quite fun to do ...

Clare: In the beginning it's hard but after a while you get used to it, it's fine.

(School B p 4).

Making the language more accessible by modernising was something that all the pupils mentioned but an interesting observation from pupils at *School C* took the discussion one stage further:

11. Cameron: They should modernise the stories more ...

Simon: That's the point of it though, isn't it? For the different language ...

Cameron: What's the point?

Toby: That is the point! (Laughter from whole group)

(*School C p 5, p 7*).

QED, because by studying Shakespeare we - the pupils - will be demonstrating our knowledge and understanding of this difficult and strange language, to modernise it would be to miss the point. Two pupils from *School A*, also acknowledged the “sea change” that would occur if Shakespeare was translated into modern English :

12. Jon: No, because it's different [-]

Steve: it would be Broomespeare!

(*School A. 1b p 11*).

(The rejoinder was a witty pun on the pupil's pseudonymous surname - Broome).

Significance

The second property pertaining to the category examines the vocational and instrumental value accorded to the study of Shakespeare by pupils, in relation to its perceived *purpose and testing*. Whilst they may understand that Shakespeare has high cultural status and is considered important by many, most predominantly by their teachers, their school and those who impose it on them via the National Curriculum, they do not necessarily see the connection between studying Shakespeare and how it could be of use to them later on in life. Since the pupils in the study came from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds it was to be expected that their responses to Shakespeare's significance would also differ, as the following examples show.

Purpose:

1. Vicki I don't really see why you have to do Shakespeare anyway ... I don't see why it is in the National Curriculum ... I don't think it affects our careers and stuff.
(*School C p 5*).

One pupil in *School A* doubtfully suggested that Shakespeare could:

2. Rob: Probably help you get a good job.
(*School A. 1a p 9*).

But one of his fellow pupils remained unconvinced:

3. Jenny: Why do you need Shakespeare to get a job?
(*School A. 1a p 9*).

For these pupils from *School A*, there was a perception that unless you were intending to train as an actor or a teacher, studying Shakespeare was not at all vocationally-orientated:

4. Tom: I don't think you should have to do Shakespeare though because like you can't use it.
Steve: We aren't going to use it for the rest of our life is it?[sic]
(*School A. 1b p 4*).

Pupils from *School A* were markedly more reluctant to expand upon their focus-group discussions of Shakespeare than pupils from *Schools B* and *C*. but in this next example they were considering possible learning outcomes, with a rather

playful conclusion:

5. Steve: It's like the stories of what happened to people
and it might happen to us ...
- Jon: No, it teaches you.
- Steve: Yeah it's got a moral.
- I: What's a moral?
- Jon: It has a meaning.
- Suzy: It teaches you something[-]
- Steve : 'And the moral of the story was never to steal' or
something like that.
- I: What's the moral of *Twelfth Night*? ...
- Tom Don't dress up as girl.
(*School A. 1b p 9*).

More seriously, pupils from *School C* challenged the idea that there were any clear learning outcomes from studying Shakespeare:

6. Toby: You don't get told what you're supposed to learn from
Shakespeare, you ((the interviewer)) keep asking that
question, obviously nobody really knows, nobody's been
told, so how are they supposed to pick up anything if they
don't know what they're supposed to pick up?
... Obviously somebody knows what we're supposed to
be ((learning Shakespeare for)) they're just not [-]
- Sandra: why don't they tell us? (laughter from whole group)
(*School C p 8*).

Here, the partially ironic recognition (the accompanying laughter) shows that whilst they *know* about Shakespeare's significance, their understanding of this perceived importance is punctured by uncertainty. It is the pupils who in are the dark, ("nobody really knows"), and only an enlightened cohort of unspecified others ("somebody knows"), are fully cognizant of the real reasons for Shakespeare's place in the National Curriculum. That superior knowledge is akin to classified information which the pupils do not have access to. Although they challenged the underlying purpose of Shakespeare in an interesting way, as the above *example* shows, pupils from *School C* were also aware of the significance of Shakespeare's cultural status, it was something that they needed "to know about."

7. Sandra: He's a really famous playwright and that he was probably the most famous at that time he's a famous person you've got to know about really.
(*School C p 8*).

Whereas, pupils from *School A* tended to express their awareness of Shakespeare's significance rather more succinctly:

8. Steve: 'cos he's English ... because he wrote plays and stuff
(*School A. 1b. p 7*).

The association of nationalism and Shakespeare was articulated in greater detail by a pupil from *School B*:

9. Daniel: I think it's a slightly patriotic value because he was, since he is a great playwright and he's British.

It's sort of pride they want him to be studied so that everyone has got a slight taste, so they've got, they feel patriotic and stuff, it's pride.

(School B p 14).

The pupils from *School B* were also the most knowledgeable about the context in which Shakespeare lived and worked, and they were able to discuss him and his works in relation to Early Modern Humanism and politics:

10. Clare: I think it was because he was one of the Renaissance writers wasn't he? And he was one of the people who really introduced the word, I think one of the literacy people and that's why everybody says "wow Shakespeare" because he sort of introduced it back after the Romans.

Molly: It sort of disappeared in the Middle Ages and then William Shakespeare and all the other famous writers brought it back.

(School B p 12).

11. Charles: I also heard that he was Catholic and at the time you all had to be Protestant, or the other way round and he ... had to be very careful about what he put in his plays in case it got him beheaded.

(School B p 10).

12. Molly: At the time it was fashionable to be racist and he put it into his plays not because he was racist, I don't know, and people liked it so like in

The Merchant of Venice the merchant was a Jew
and you know everybody was against him. I don't
know, I haven't read it or anything so people liked
that sort of behaviour.

(*School B p 10*).

This last example is interesting not only because it highlights a particular controversy with which *The Merchant of Venice* is often associated today, but also how the pupil immediately qualified her suggestion in order to excuse what could be seen today as Shakespeare's racism by reiterating "I don't know" and saying that she hadn't "read it or anything."

Testing

Pupils also question why it should be Shakespeare who they have to study and be tested on:

13. Nina: How come it's Shakespeare we do and not other writers?

(*School C p 8*).

14. Jenny: If we didn't do Shakespeare we might as well do
another play that we might understand more.

(*School A 1a p 9*).

15. Suzy: You can take a test on anything, why does it have
to be written by Shakespeare, ... 'cos you could just
do modern stories, do good stories.

(*School A. 1a p 8*).

Another pupil from *School A* suggested that Shakespeare functions as a

rite de passage somewhat akin to an unpalatable medicine:

16. Steve: They're putting us through it because they had to do it when they were young so they're putting us through the stress ... the old folk, the teachers, reckon it's good for you but it's not.

(School A 1b p 6, p. 7).

Another pupil in the *School A* focus group found it difficult to find a reason for being tested on Shakespeare, particularly in relation to what she understood English was about:

17. Jenny: 'cos for English you've got to like it's all about reading and writing and everything, so they've just like um 'cos Shakespeare's like like writ all the plays and everything.

(School A 1a p 5).

But a pupil from *School B* thought there was a specific reason for being tested on Shakespeare:

18. Tess: They want to test your ability because Shakespeare's a really difficult play to understand and they can test your ability on that and your understanding of the play.

(School B p 14).

Even though pupils did not like having to take a test on Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, they saw it as preparatory to the more important work that was to follow –

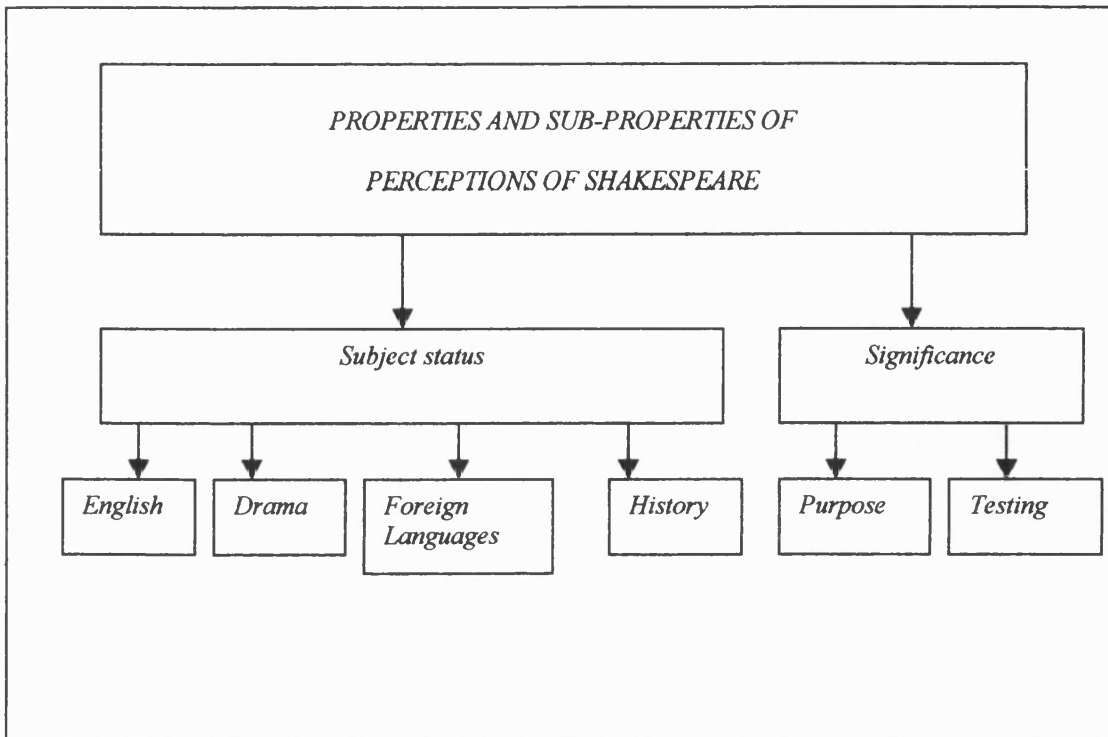
their GCSE's:

19. Toby: Perhaps this is getting you used to Shakespeare when you're doing your GCSE's, because they're a lot more important than your SATs.
(*School C p 8*).
20. Vicki: I think the SATS is really to prepare us for the GCSE's, they're more to see how the teachers are doing, than we're doing.
(*School C p 7*).

There is an interesting contradiction in the last example. Whilst acknowledging that the SATs are a preparation for GCSE's, Vicki also describes them as an indicator of the teacher's performance rather than theirs.

And finally, as we have seen in Category 3, other pupils from *School B* offered some resistance to the idea that writing about the plays of Shakespeare should be tested at all: "I don't think comprehension questions are the best thing for Shakespeare ... it's not something you ought to analyse." (*example 2, p.254*).

DIAGRAM AND SUMMARY OF CATEGORY 4:

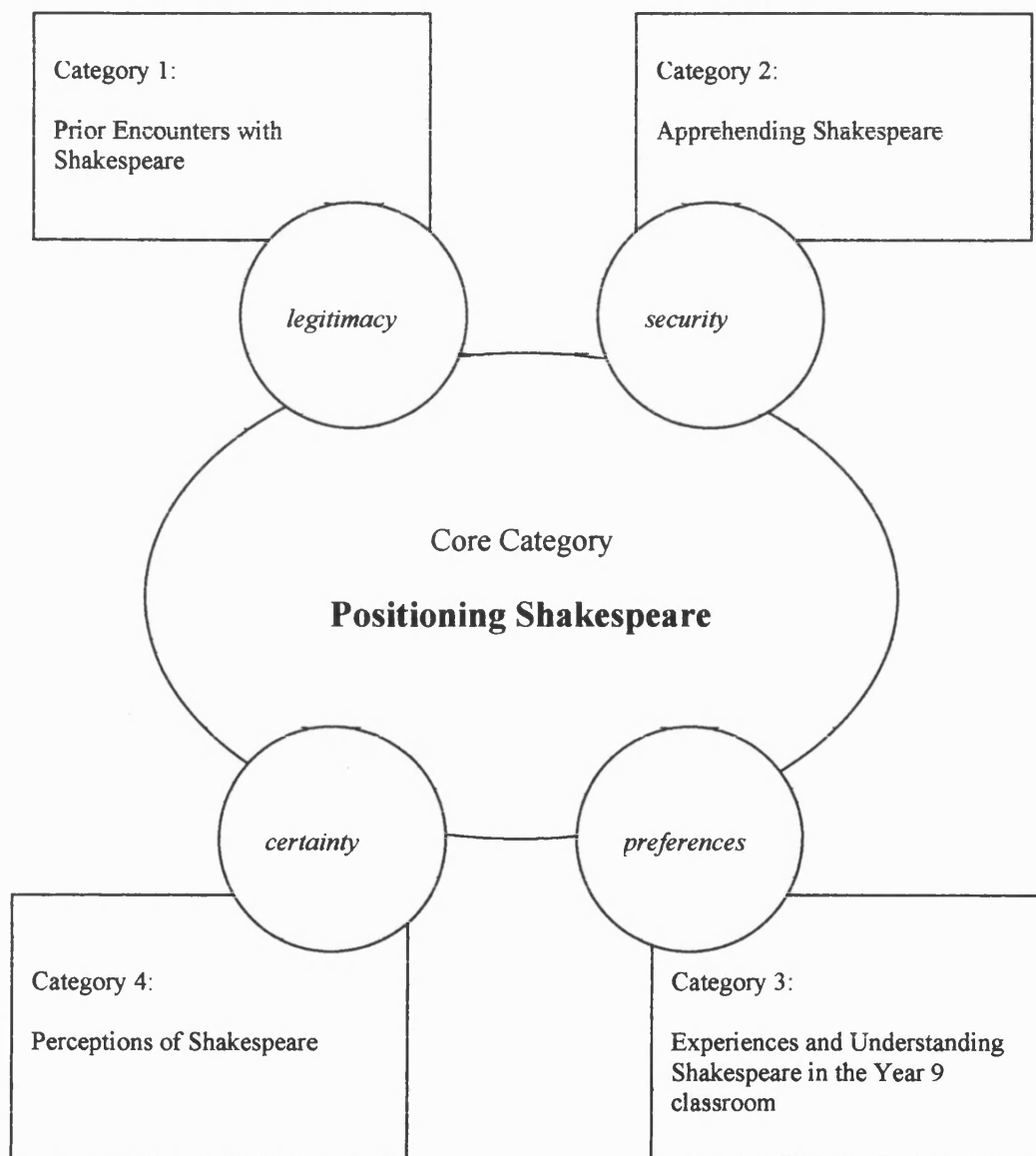


The properties and sub-properties that have been exemplified above can be *dimensionalised* along a continuum of *certainty*. Whilst all the pupils recognised that Shakespeare was considered important, the reasons for studying his works were not necessarily clear to them. There was, in fact, a great deal of *uncertainty* regarding the study of Shakespeare as has been shown.

4.4: Axial Coding: Introduction and Core Category:

Strauss and Corbin define the purpose of *axial coding* as one that begins “the process of reassembling data that were fractured during open coding” (1998: 124). By questioning the properties and dimensions in relation to all of the categories it became increasingly clear that the fractured data were coalescing around an emerging core category, **Positioning Shakespeare**. This category could

encompass the different circumstances in which the relative degrees of legitimacy, security, preferences and certainty had been expressed in the open-coding analysis, as summarised in the model below:



The responses to Shakespeare from different sets of pupils in different schools were inductively analysed in the open coding process to form a core category **Positioning Shakespeare**.

4.5: Data Synopsis

Shortly after the SATs had taken place, I was able to return to each of the schools in order to interview the three focus groups again not only to gauge their reactions to the tests they had just taken but also to try and find out how they felt about Shakespeare at the completion of Key Stage 3 and as they were about to embark upon Key Stage 4 and their GCSE's.

In addition to interviewing the focus groups again I conducted brief individual interviews with each of the pupils from *School A* and *School B*. I was not able to interview pupils separately in *School C* due to time constraints and I obtained brief biographical and background information about them during the course of the focus group post SATs interview.

I had also made field notes during classroom observations of approximately six lessons in each of the schools in the weeks before the SATs. The observations helped me to contextualise the pupils within the larger school setting.

In each school I also interviewed the class teacher and either the Head of Department or the senior teacher with responsibility for Key Stage 3. In these interviews I was asking teachers what they thought about the teaching and testing of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, both generally and in relation to their own pupils in their own schools.

However, it was clear from the analysis so far that pupil positioning of Shakespeare did not exist within a vacuum but within the context of the school itself. It was these interlocking contexts that I now needed to examine in the remainder of the data in order to see how they refuted or validated the core

category. By analysing the data using the *constant comparative* method, I was able to ensure that the core category was *theoretically saturated*.

In the following sections I will be using the data described above to examine the interlocking contexts of school, teachers and pupils in order to see how they can inform pupil positioning of Shakespeare further.

Each of the three schools operated within different demographic and socio-economic environments, and each had a distinct school culture, which is described in turn below.

4.5.1: School A

The school's 1998 Ofsted Report and one of the classroom observations have been used to provide an illustration of the school's culture.

School A was a large, mixed comprehensive situated in the less affluent south west of the city. The single-site school was located in the middle of housing estates and the school buildings' poor state of repair was one of the key issues that the 1998 Ofsted Report was concerned about (1988:6). As of January 2000, the school had 1034 pupils on roll, with an age range from 11 to 18 years. The Report described the school's intake as representative of "a wide range of social circumstance, although there are more disadvantaged people in the area than the national average" (1988:8). Pupils' overall level of attainment on entry was described as "well below average...the proportion of pupils with identified special educational needs is above average" (ibid, 1) and at Key Stage 3 English attainment was "below average" (ibid, 30). Although pupils' attitude towards their work was deemed positive in the English classroom, and that behaviour was good, it required "skillful management" (ibid, 30). The Report also commented

that writing at both Key Stages 3 and 4 was “below expectations” (ibid, 30). However, the quality of the teaching was described as much improved and was now “a major strength of the school” (ibid, 2). In English, teachers had “good subject knowledge ... and supportive and intelligent leadership” (ibid, 30, 31).

Classroom Observation, 2.50-3.30pm, 21/1/99.

The classroom was one half of a double Portacabin, set in a concreted area with other Portacabin classrooms outside the main school building block, and adjoining the perimeter fencing. There were 24 pupils present, 13 girls and 11 boys.

This was the last 50 minute lesson of the school day but the second time that day that the class had had a lesson on *Twelfth Night*. Their teacher was a PGCE student teacher (who had a background in community theatre and drama). The senior teacher, who was also the class’s usual teacher, sat in the small office just off the classroom, within earshot but out of sight. Up until that lesson he had been observing in the classroom, this was the first time he was out of sight, though not out of earshot. There were 24 pupils present, 13 girls and 11 boys, with three pupils absent. Girls and boys did not choose to sit next to each other. The teacher began by telling the class that this was the “moment you’ve all been dreading, when we start the play” (*Class observations 21/1/9 p.1*)

Some pupils groaned but others asked, with some excitement, “are we actually going to act it? Are you going to hand out parts?” (ibid, 1). The teacher, however, wanted them to get into small groups in order to examine the first two scenes of the play, reading through an allocated passage in their groups and then writing down what they thought was the most significant line in their English work-books. The groupings took some minutes to organise and most of the boys sitting near me continued to chat and took no notice of the instructions that the teacher was writing up on the board. She also told them to “think about the

poetry ... even if you don't understand what the words are the meaning will come through because of the poetry" (ibid, 1). She went on to ask if anyone knew what iambic pentameter was. None of the pupils answered correctly at which point the senior teacher came out of the office to remind them that they had done sonnets last year, and should have known what an iambic pentameter was. There were also examples on the wall displays of sonnets and a description of iambic pentameter pinned on to the display close to where I was sitting. Thirty minutes into the lesson, the noise levels were very high and out of six groups only two seemed to be wholly on task.

The teacher then stopped the lesson, telling the class that they were "getting on my wick .. we made a contract ... you're breaking it" (ibid, 2). One of the pupils made farting noises, at which point the senior teacher reappeared and told them off. He stayed in the classroom for the remainder of the lesson, during which someone from each group took it in turn to read aloud a passage from the part of the scene they had been told to work on. The girls managed the task better than the boys and were praised. The lesson ended with two pupils having to stay behind to discuss their behaviour (including, Steve, one of the focus group members).

After the lesson, the class teacher concluded that the class had been testing her because of the apparent absence of the senior teacher and that her lesson plan had been ruined by having to discipline the disruptive pupils. Although I had wanted to support her during the lesson, I felt that my role as observer excluded intervening on her behalf and she agreed, saying, "it's my problem" (ibid, 2), but that it was appropriate to help out when pupils asked me questions directly, as for example when I was asked "what's a eunuch miss?" (ibid, 3). Other factors, apart from that of the teacher's role, that effected the character of the

lesson were that it was the last lesson of the day during which the class had already had one Shakespeare lesson and the pupils had wanted to engage with the play dramatically rather than linguistically. Finally, it was a “no-school uniform” day and the start of an extra-long weekend for them because the school would be closed the following day for INSET.

4.5.1.1: Teaching and testing Shakespeare in School A: the teachers’ perspective

During the course of their separate interviews, both the senior teacher and the class teacher (who was working at the school during her PGCE training) emphasised that schools and teachers should have more autonomy in deciding how Shakespeare is taught and tested. Whilst the senior teacher at the school believed Shakespeare should be taught at Key Stage 3, and indeed always had been, he believed that the Key Stage 3 testing of Shakespeare was inappropriate for their pupils. “Teaching Shakespeare is fine, testing it for examinations is what worries me”. (*Interview 13/4/99, p.2*). Teaching Shakespeare for the purpose of examinations brings about a change in approach:

1. ST: it becomes something far more formalised and teachers go into exam mode. Exam mode is “I’ve got to cover everything that might come up in examination” rather than pick those things that are the most appropriate for our kids in our school.

(Senior teacher School A 13/4/99 p.1).

As it was not just work on Shakespeare that was specially “geared up” (*ibid. p.3*) for their pupils but “all schemes of work” (*ibid, p. 3*). He felt that having to test

Shakespeare in a such specific way not only took away the school's autonomy in deciding how to teach Shakespeare, but also that there was a certain set of assumptions that lay behind the testing of Shakespeare:

2. ST: I mean that autonomy is taken away every time the playing field is levelled, as the government thinks, in terms of everyone doing the same thing. I certainly feel that getting the kids all to do the same thing is not really making us fully aware of the fact that cultures in schools are different and the cultural expectations. ... There's a danger in thinking that because everyone deserves Shakespeare and city kids from a non literary and non-literate background deserve it as well and that we're doing them a favour because somehow they're pulsing with goodness these texts, and if they touch them then they will be blessed by immersion.

(Senior teacher School A 13/4/99. p.3).

However, as he pointed out "the irony is, of course, that we do think it's good for them" (ibid, p. 3) but that he and his colleagues' enthusiasm for "trying to connect kids with Shakespeare" (ibid, p.5) was being constrained by the tests which in turn enforced a different approach to teaching Shakespeare. Before Year 9, pupils in the school could, he felt, still have "fun with the text" (ibid, p.1) and not feel threatened by having to prepare it for an examination. The class teacher also felt that teaching Shakespeare for testing at Key Stage 3:

3. CT: in this particular way for an exam is just too soon and I think teachers within themselves aren't necessarily as enthusiastic perhaps as they would be if it were their choice and the way they wanted to teach.
(Class teacher School A 15/4/99 p.4).

The main hurdle for their pupils to overcome as far as both teachers were concerned was the language of the play:

4. CT: particularly with kids in this particular school who haven't had the cultural background or parents who are educated to the same degree as in other schools ... and in their own use of standard English they have a lot of difficulty with that so then trying to take them on to something like Shakespeare which is already difficult for students who have a good grounding in English and a good vocabulary means to them that it is almost like a foreign language, they cannot cope with it all.
(Class teacher School A 15/4/99 p.2).

The senior teacher was also concerned that the choice of texts did not take into enough consideration that comedies were far more difficult to teach than tragedies, "I don't think the powers that be ever recognise the sophistication of the comedies" *(13/4/99, p.2)*. The class teacher suggested that the choice of curriculum texts was often made "by people who actually don't have much classroom experience and the direct effect of things on the students at all" *(15/4/99 p.4)*. Whilst she agreed that students needed to be academically

“stretched” (ibid, p. 6), that it was “quite condescending to assume that it’s above them” (ibid, p. 6), at the same time she also felt that it was “wrong to introduce them to something that is so alien to their own culture ... it puts them off” (ibid, p. 6).

She also identified a further dichotomy within the tests themselves, just what was it that they were setting out to test, pupils’ analysis of Shakespeare’s language or discussion of performance styles.

5. CT: They’re asking you to focus on key scenes and analyse language and yet at the same time want you to look at it in terms of a performance piece and yet I can imagine that the majority of schools aren’t able to take their kids to see a performance of the show ... so maybe there needs to be a decision made about exactly how it’s going to be tested, are we testing the students’ ability to analyse Shakespearean language or are we testing their ability to appreciate how Shakespeare should be performed and their understanding of plot, character and theme in relation to that.

(Class teacher School A 15/4/99 p.6)

4.5.1.2: How School A teachers position their pupils in relation to Shakespeare

For most of the pupils in *School A*, encountering Shakespeare for the first time is something that comes as:

6. ST: a shock to the system, when you ask them something about Shakespeare they have hardly heard of him or wouldn't know that his name was William. Most of them think that he lived in 1900 or 1800 and haven't any background to understanding Shakespeare.

(Senior teacher School A 13/4/99 p.4)

Both teachers felt that their pupils' further understanding of and engagement with was not best advanced through testing at Key Stage 3, as we have seen. The work that was done on Shakespeare prior to Year 9 enabled pupils to dip their "toe into the water of Shakespeare and it probably comes out still feeling warm" *(Senior teacher, 13/4/99 p 1)*, but this warmth can quickly cool during the course of Year 9. The class teacher felt that she encountered most resistance when the class had to move on and away from the active and exploratory approaches, which as a teacher in "this kind of school you have to think of ... to make work more palatable" *(15/4/99 p.2)*, to the more specific analysis of text and language, which she thought the pupils were "too young to be doing" *(ibid, p. 1)*. An additional difficulty was that pupils felt there was:

7. CT: a sort of stigma about it as well, it's not cool to be seen to be into Shakespeare, so a lot of them don't want to work hard in the classroom ... maybe if they had access to more books or the possibility of having their book and working from home, it might be a lot easier.

(Class teacher School A 15/4/99 p.5)

As has previously been mentioned, there were not enough text books to go round

all of the Year 9 classes, but the one time pupils were able to keep the books to take home to complete an assignment, the class teacher said that the outcome was that “more detailed language work ... and understanding of that key scene” (ibid, p. 5) had been achieved. She also felt that the performance in school of *Twelfth Night* by the visiting Theatre-in- Education company had made a huge contribution to her pupils’ understanding of the play, leaving them “much more positive”) about it (ibid, p.3).

The senior teacher made the point that the factors to do with resistance to Shakespeare were varied, some pupils might be rebelling against a familial background in which an appreciation of Shakespeare was fostered but he added that as far as the pupils in *School A* were concerned, “I can safely say that in this school out of a thousand people there aren’t many who would be in that mind set” (13/4/99 p.4) Perceptions of Shakespeare within the school would also vary from year group to year group:

8. ST: it just depends what they’re being taught, who they’re being taught by and how well that relationship is developing ... and what you’ve seen is a qualifying teacher, not only having the problem of teaching Shakespeare but teaching for the first time and coming to terms with inter-relationships in the classroom, a group that she’d never seen before ... and because *Twelfth Night* is a new play, the resources aren’t there to support her as easily.
- (Senior teacher School A 13/4/99 p.6)

Even if pupils’ overall perception of Shakespeare was that it was difficult and that

it became progressively more difficult, he felt that this in itself was no bad thing:

9. ST: There isn't any problem I don't think for kids to realise that that's a notch up ... it all becomes more problematic but doesn't every subject? Doesn't every subject eventually say well what we told you before was a rather simplified version. So there is recognition that this is a hierarchical skill which comes later. Shakespeare's just dense ... you have to work at it and that's not a bad message for kids, that sometimes you have to work for your learning.
(Senior teacher School A 13/4/99 p 7, p 9)

4.5.1.3: School and Shakespeare in School A: Pupils' post-SATs perspectives

In *School A* there was a difference between how pupils interacted with each other and their teacher and how they responded to interviews both in the focus group sessions and the brief individual interviews. In the focus group interviews both before and after the SATs they had to be prompted to continue their discussions much more than pupils from the other two schools, something that surprised their class teacher as they "were definitely the students who wanted to be chosen" (*School A 15/4/99, p 5*). However, the school's Ofsted report noted that "only a minority of pupils have the confidence to give extended answers or make presentations in formal situations" (1998 p.1) and I found that their verbal confidence in the classroom did not translate as easily to the relatively informal situation of the focus group interviews.

In the group interviews the tone of the discussions was often set by the more dominant member of the group, Steve, whose attitude towards Shakespeare was almost entirely negative, and after the SATs, more aggressively so : “Shakespeare isn’t good for nothing ... Shakespeare should be burned he’s dead” (*Steve 14/5/99 p 8, p 11*), although in the individual interview his responses were much more considered and thoughtful. Whilst Tom and Suzy made milder responses such as “He should be forgot” (*Tom 14/5/99 p 8*) and “He doesn’t come through” (*Suzy 14/5/99 p 11*), the overall tone was even more dismissive of Shakespeare than it had been before the SATs. Not one of the pupils was looking forward to continuing his or her Shakespeare studies at Key Stage 4, partly because they felt they still did not understand the language, which was not only difficult in its own right, but which they could not see as serving any useful purpose in enhancing their English language skills:

1. Tom: It’s old
 - Steve: Old and dodgy words, oh ye,
 - Jon: We don’t use them words anymore.
 - Tom: We don’t write them words.
- (School A 14/5/99 p 11).*

Not only was Tom one of the pupils who was unsure about what skills were learned from the study of Shakespeare, he continued to puzzle over which curriculum subject area it belonged to, as he emphasised in the individual interview:

2. Tom: I don’t really see what you’ve learned, what you get from it, it’s sort of like a history thing because it is learning history, the writing don’t help you or reading that old English. (*School A. 10/6/99, p 13*)

Jenny, whose favourite subject was English, could not see the point of studying Shakespeare wherever it might be situated in the curriculum, largely because “I don’t think it’s got anything to do with what I’ll be doing” (*Jenny 11/6/99 p.16*) None of the pupils thought that by studying Shakespeare their vocational skills would be enhanced in any way, nor were they willing to admit to an aesthetic appreciation of the play itself. Suzy said she would have preferred to do something “more modern” (*10/6/99 p.5*) rather than study Shakespeare and Angela had enjoyed the classroom sessions spent acting out parts of the play, but not the rest of the work. Rob found it difficult to recall anything he had enjoyed about any of his encounters with Shakespeare particularly since “no one’s updated it to our times and he’s like very hard to read” (*Rob 11/6/99 p 22*) Perhaps, as Jon suggested, the only reason for studying Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 was “to bore us out of our minds” (*Jon 14/5/99 p. 3*).

During the course of the post-SATs focus group interview, it became apparent that two of the group’s members, Tom and Rob, (who both had literacy support) had not taken the Shakespeare SATs Paper with the rest of their classmates but had taken another paper instead. Not wishing to cause them any embarrassment, I did not push the discussion of the tests during the interview any further but asked each of them later, in individual interviews, what they thought about not taking the SATs:

4. Tom: Just as I was about to go in they said we’ve got to be somewhere else. And I went off with Rob ... we found out we had to go to be together somewhere else ... we were surprised when we had to go ... I think it’s because we’re not top grade, we’re not as good as everyone else really.
(*Tom School A 10/6/99*)

5. Rob: I thought I was like going to do the harder SATs but they put me and Tom down into the easier SATs.
(*Rob School A 11/6/99*)

When asked if they would have liked to have done the Shakespeare paper, Tom replied that he “would have tried it yes” (*Tom 10/6/99 p. 57*) although Rob was not at all disappointed, merely relieved, despite the fact that he had revised quite heavily for it.

For the rest of the focus group who had taken the SATs Shakespeare Paper, the main feeling was that it was something that was not really significant in any case, “it’s just the SATs isn’t it” (*Jenny 11/6/99 p.16*), whereas they recognised that the forthcoming Year 10 and the start of their GCSE’s would mean they would have to work harder. Steve reiterated the point in the individual interview by his own assessment of scholastic progression:

6. Steve: In Year 7 you’re just getting to know it
Year 8 you’re settling in and Year 9 you’re
messing about. Year 10’s starting to work again and
then Year 11 your GCSE’s and then further education.
(*School A 26/6/99. p. 2*)

At the time, the school did have a small Sixth Form (later closed down), but none of the pupils mentioned it in connection with their further education. Tom said he did not intend to continue his education after Key Stage 4 in any case, “I’ll be happy when it’s all over in Year 11, when we’re all saying goodbye” (*Tom School A 14/5/99 p.14*).

Although the quality of teaching at the school had been highly praised by the Ofsted inspection team and the pupils' attitude towards work described as "satisfactory" (1998: 14), the Report also noted that "some older pupils show a dislike of being singled out for praise and either do not, or profess not to, value academic success. In general, girls' attitudes are better than boys" (ibid, p.15)

Steve admitted that for boys his age peer pressure prevented them from being seen to work too hard: "If I'm like sat in there with all my friends I just don't write I mess about but if I'm on my own and I concentrate I can do really good writing." (26/6/99 p.4) He was aware of the disjunction between the academic success needed to get a good job, "I've always wanted to go higher" (Steve 26/6/99. p.6), and his own "messaging about" might impede that ambition, but concluded that one of the factors contributing to this was how teachers perceived pupils:

7. Steve: Like the first day you're seen as, like, just say you had a bad day or some'at and that's you for the rest of your life, in school anyway. If like you have a bad day and you had a bad word with the teachers or some'at, the teachers say "oh he's rif raff, that kid".

(School A 26/6/99 p.6)

4.5.2: School B

The school's current prospectus, web site and one of the classroom observations have been used to provide an illustration of the school's culture. I was not able to obtain an inspection report.

The school was situated in substantial buildings and large grounds in what was a wealthy residential part of the city. It was founded in the 19th century as a boys school but became co-educational in 1987. Of the 600 pupils on roll, approximately 70% were boys, 30% girls with 55% being boarders and 45% day pupils. Pupils from more than 30 different countries were represented at the school.. The school's prospectus emphasised the academic achievement of pupils, the extensive range of facilities, and the teaching which combined the "the best of tradition with the best of modern practice" (p.1) . Also quoted in the prospectus were comments from the Daily Telegraph columnist, Auberon Waugh, following a visit to the school which he described as "a corner of England which has largely vanished and I could not help wondering what happens to all these pleasant young people when they go out into the world" (ibid, p. 1). The prospectus assured readers that pupils went out into the world "with the academic qualifications, the social skills and the self-confidence they need to tackle the challenges ahead" (ibid, p.1) Over 20 pupils went on to study at Oxford or Cambridge Universities each year.

The school was divided into the Lower School and the Upper School, with pupils entering the latter at 13 years of age. The Third Form (Year 9) was treated as a "foundation year" (*School web site, 6/11/00, p.1*) with a core curriculum of 13 subjects with a further three subjects which could also be taken, a choice of two modern languages and Latin. Pupils took the Key Stage 3 SATs in English and Mathematics, in addition to internal exams. It was specified that "these examinations allow pupils to demonstrate their abilities at whatever level they have reached ... The results, which are reported at the end of the Summer Term, provide valuable information about the level of ability of the children as they move to Year 10. In every subject the emphasis is on the provision of a sound basis for the GCSE course in that subject." (ibid, 1).

In English, which was set by ability and pupils' performance in the Common Entrance Examinations, the "majority of the work is literature based" (ibid p., 8). In connection with Key Stage 3, "technical accuracy in written work" (ibid, p. 8) was encouraged. In GCSE English and English Literature an average of 92% and 95% of pupils obtained grades A* - C respectively over the years 1995-1999. At A level English Literature 100% of pupils obtained grades A-E.

This was the only school in the sample where I observed classes other than the one I was eventually assigned to. Classes were setted and I sat in during a drama lesson on *Julius Caesar* in the drama studio with a lower ability set; a class who spoke English as a second language studying *Romeo and Juliet* and a middle ability set who were also studying *Romeo and Juliet*. This latter observation was interesting because in what was the introductory session on the text, the desks were moved back and the opening scenes were acted out. Apart from the *Julius Caesar* drama class, this was the only time that I observed Shakespeare being acted out.

Classroom Observation. 11.30-1.05am 11/3/99.

The classroom was situated on the second floor of one of the school buildings. The classroom had three rows of desks with the teacher's desk set up on a small podium in one corner. On the back wall there was a row of bookshelves with sets of English literature books in them. There were no wall displays of pupils' work but the walls were hung with three or four framed posters of 19th and 20th century art.

Although the 35 minute lessons were significantly shorter than at either *School C* or *A*, they began and finished promptly with little or no disruption by pupils. During the course of the term, the whole of the play was read through, scene by

scene with special emphasis on the key scenes. Each pupil in the class had their own copy of *Romeo and Juliet*, which they were able to annotate and take away with them. The notes and glossary were at the back of the book, not on facing pages as in the editions used by pupils in *Schools A* and *C*. In this lesson there were 17 pupils present, seven girls and ten boys.

By this time in the term, the class had been studying the play for several weeks and had read it through in its entirety. None of the pupils in the other schools managed to get all the way through their set text. They were now returning to one of the key scenes, Act 3 scene v, in more detail. The teacher read a line and asked for comments on the meaning, reminding them to support their answers fully, “so often I’ve said look at the context”. Daniel, one of the pupils in the focus group, asked if Romeo would be faithful, to which the teacher answered: “very interesting remarks but I don’t think that’s what is meant here - in fact he’s famous for being reliable, staunch. It suggests that he has some kind of diplomatic immunity and will remain constant.” To another pupil’s (a girl) suggestion that Juliet’s mother “seems rather unloving” he replied “I don’t think we should do any psychological speculation that Juliet was an unwanted child” and went on to discuss aristocratic arranged marriages in Italian culture of the time. Both boys and girls asked questions, neither gender dominating, about what age girls could get married during the Renaissance and if Juliet at 14 was considered able “to fend for herself”.

The teacher then brought the class back to the text, asking them “to look very closely to Juliet’s remarks because they have different meanings to her mother ... you can imagine how her mother smiles at this act of assumed animosity”. At this point in the lesson, there was complete silence in the room apart from the

teacher's voice, some pupils were staring into space, tweaking their hair, picking at their nails. They had read this scene before some weeks earlier, when they had covered 130 lines in one lesson (Class observation 11/2/99). The teacher asked for meanings of words and phrases that he picked out, for example, he called for suggestions other than "rascalion or scallywag" for the word "runagate". Pupils offered "punk" and "hubbard", (the latter a word that neither the teacher nor I had ever heard of) and *sotto voce*, the name of another pupil's surname at which there was some laughter from the class. The teacher asked what they thought "vexed" meant, a pupil said she had heard it in the film, *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves* and the teacher replied by saying "my neighbour is the grandmother of an [Old Boy] and she used it when people came into her garden, "I'm so vexed", you or your parents would probably say annoyed, bloody angry." He finished the lesson by reminding them that their prep (homework) was to make notes on what they'd done, and that it was "essential not optional". For English, they were given two hours prep a week, split into half an hour during the week and 90 minutes at the weekend and they would be starting to write essays on the play very shortly.

As has been shown in this example and as I noted in other class observations, the teacher's use of language to explain the text was itself complex and sophisticated and demanded close attention from the pupils. In the earlier observations pupils had not asked many questions, but had mostly been listening to the teacher and taking down notes. By now, they were very much more familiar with the text which was why they were asking more discursive questions during the lesson, such as the cultural customs and practices of Renaissance Italy. They annotated their text books and made notes during the lesson since they expected that they could take their text books with them when they sat the Shakespeare Paper. They were later disconcerted to find that this was not so, "right at the last moment we

were told we couldn't" (*Daniel*, 20/5/99 p.2).

4.5.2.1: Teaching and testing Shakespeare in School B: teachers' perspectives

As an independent, the school was under no obligation to do the SATs, unlike schools in the state sector but, as the deputy head of the English department explained, their pupils did take the SATs, partly for pragmatic reasons because he thought they might be imposed on the independent sector before too long, "so getting in at the start might be an advantage" (*Deputy Head Dept., School B 7/7/99, p.1*) and also because he thought that the Key Stage 3 examination was a better exam than the GCSE because of its focus on a specific literary text rather than "assuming that the different kinds of writing and the different kinds of texts that the Key Stage 4 English exams are looking at are intrinsically equally worthwhile" (*ibid*, p. 1). The class teacher was rather more ambivalent about the benefits of the Key Stage 3 exam, on the one hand concurring that it helped to reinforce a serious attitude towards the forthcoming GCSE's but on the other hand noting that it took up an unreasonable amount of the school year during which third form pupils (Year 9) completed "a fairly heroic plod." (*Class teacher School B 21/6/99 p 11*) through the play. In the exam itself, he was also concerned about the sort of writing that would be produced by answering one of the questions which demanded an empathetic response and by doing so could:

1. CT: tempt them to write in a slightly superficial and gossipy way and it might be quite an amusing piece of creative writing but less likely to be a detailed piece of analysis on the text they've studied ... they've got to cater for a very

broad range of candidates and I think that gives the weaker ones something to grab at even if it doesn't produce what you and I might regard as a good Shakespearean answer.
(Class teacher School B 21/6/99. p. 1).

Leaving aside the issue of what exactly might constitute a "a good Shakespearean answer" the deputy head of the department thought that answering an empathetic question was, in fact, "a remarkably difficult exercise to do well" *(Dep Head Dept., School B 7/7/99 p.5)*. His main area of concern related to pupil age and maturity:

2. DH: And I also think the Key Stage 3 exam now is probably another example of the gap that's developing that the government in many respects quite rightly feels ought to be tested and what pupils are actually capable of at a particular stage ... and with the government's attempt to introduce rigour into assessment that there has been this gradual gulf developing between what pupils actually are ideally capable of writing and reading ... and the emphasis of the exam.

(Deputy Head Dept., School B 7/7/99, p, 2)

In discussing the appropriateness of testing at this age, he also pointed out that the difficulties and demands of certain subjects, like Shakespeare, should not "erect barriers and put people off" *(ibid, p. 8)* because in those very difficulties and demands lay the challenges of overcoming them as long as they were the "right kind of demands and the right level of difficulty for that particular age." *(ibid., 8)* His main criticism of the Shakespeare Paper at Key Stage 3 was that it:

3. DH: very largely assumes that everybody at that particular age is capable of a particular kind of critical or imaginative response and that is simply not the case and it is essentially an academic exam that is suitable for academic pupils and an exam which is less suitable for the less academic.
(Deputy Head Dept., School B 7/7/99 p.8.

Nevertheless, the pupils in the school were “specifically prepared in a particular way” (ibid, 8) for the exam, a process which the class teacher admitted left them with a “very detailed knowledge of the play” (*Class teacher. School B 21/6/99. p. 3*) but one which was not “very cheerful.” (ibid,p. 3) He allowed that “in some ways in teaching it we, or I, go for overkill.” (ibid, p.2) but felt that he had to teach the whole text as “a matter of professional pride ... I end up going to the other extreme and teaching it as if they’re studying it for GCSE” (ibid, p.3). However, he would still want to teach Shakespeare to pupils in this age group, since he felt that he and his colleagues could still “be trusted to take more than a mouthful out of Shakespeare even if they don’t have to” (ibid, p.11) but his approach might differ:

4. CT I’d certainly study a play perhaps in conjunction with a video of some sort. I deliberately backpedalled in this case with the video until after the exam... because the requirements of the questions are quite particular and tightly focussed and I don’t want them being tempted through laziness or absorption with Leonardo di Caprio to write about that. ...you probably think I’m frightfully

crusty and old fashioned, I use videos occasionally but not often and not very willingly really. They always enjoy watching them and it's a way of killing time.

(Class teacher School B, 21/6/99 p.4/5)

The deputy head of the department made the point that there was an essential difference between watching filmed versions of Shakespeare's plays, and indeed other literary works such as the novels of Dickens, and the plays, or books themselves. The former exercise was, he thought, an example of "the parasitic nature of the media [which] reflects an imaginative paucity" (*Dep. Head Dept. School B, 7/7/99 p.8*) The benefits of studying Shakespeare were that through reading [sic] the plays pupils should be able to live through:

5. DH: a sensibility that is finer than your own and therefore you are brought into contact with an imaginative awareness and emotional intelligence that should extend your own imaginative awareness of yourself and other people.
(Dep Head Dept., School B 7/7/99. p.7).

4.5.2.2: How School B teachers position their pupils in relation to Shakespeare

The deputy head of the department thought that pupils' response to Shakespeare was fairly neutral, pupils accepted it as "simply one of the things that is done" (*ibid, 6*) This was reiterated by the class teacher :

6. CT: I would say there's a fairly high degree of willingness if not resignation in the attitudes of most pupils here.
I don't think there's any particular problem about forcing

Shakespeare or other scholastic matters down throats.

(Class Teacher School B 21/6/99 p.7).

Such was the degree of preparation that the pupils had undergone that the majority had, according to their class teacher, found that the exam “easier than expected really and obviously all over in a trice” (ibid, p.1). However, because they take the exam at the age they do, their technical grasp of language lets them down “more than their understanding of the play” (ibid, p.2). Their maturity and intellect is better developed at Key Stage 4, which allows them and him to tackle Shakespeare “a bit more briskly and I think more cheerfully” (ibid, p.4). The deputy head of department also felt that the exam should be taken by pupils a year older because :

7. DH: it does require a not inconsiderable critical awareness of what they have read which is something that is only just beginning to develop. The ablest people in that year have no difficulty whatsoever and are stimulated by it.

(Deputy head dept. School B 7/7/99 p.4/5)

As for the “weaker ones” (ibid, p. 6) they can “do no more” (ibid, 6) than study Shakespeare by having the story narrated to them, through watching and listening to visual and audio performances. Practical involvement through drama is also appropriate for the “less able” (ibid, p. 8) because:

8. DH: that does give them the kind of sense of imaginative involvement that they find very much more difficult just sitting and being required to focus on the text.

(Deputy head dept., School B 7/7/99 p.8)

This assumption that there is a set of hierarchical approaches to teaching Shakespeare was something that the class teacher felt was echoed in their pupils' attitudes to Shakespeare as they progress through the curriculum stages:

9. CT I think that they would expect anyway to have some sort of change and development in all sorts of teaching routines, not especially in English, no I don't think that's a problem, nobody's ever objected particularly to the manner in which they're taught.

(Class teacher, School B 21/6/99. p.6.)

If pupils did continue to study Shakespeare through to A levels at Sixth Form, they would then "appreciate many aspects of the work we do" (*ibid*, p. 7) but he also felt that if a pupil left:

10. CT: after the third form or even the fourth form then they'd probably have a pretty wooden sense of Shakespeare and the work we do on him.

(Class teacher School B 21/6/99 p.7.)

4.5.2.3: School and Shakespeare in School B: pupils' post-SATs perspectives

After the SATs, which all the pupils in the focus group took, there was a general sense of anti-climax. Pupils had found the amount of preparatory work that they had done on *Romeo and Juliet* had "got so tedious" (*Charlie, post SATs focus group 20/5/99 p.2*) that "you lost interest" (*Clare, ibid, p.2*) They had done so much work leading up to the SATs that "when we did the exam we weren't all

that keen on it were we?" (*Clare*, *ibid*, p.2). Charlie thought that the paper "was a bit of an anti-climax for a term and half's work on *Romeo and Juliet*" (*ibid*, p.1). A point that Molly concurred with: "You think, Oh what was the point of doing all that?" (*ibid*, p.1). Having been trained during the preceding weeks to answer questions on the text in a specific way so that they could find and use "the information" in the text to "bring in quotes and things" (*Charlie*, *ibid*, p.1), some felt that the empathetic task was in fact "a lot harder" (*Charlie*, *ibid*, p.1), nor could you "write as much" (*Daniel*, *ibid*, p.1) whereas Molly described it as "a bit sort of childish" (*ibid*, p.1).

They all felt that the knowledge about the play which they had amassed was not properly recognised by the examination:

1 Charlie: I'm not saying I would have wanted more questions but to make the time worthwhile, the amount of time we spent, they could have asked us another question.

Fred: Another question and half the time.

(*School B Post-SATs focus group 20/5/99 p.1*).

One pupil, Tess, thought that a better way to test their knowledge would have been to have "done like courses and stuff" (*ibid*, 2: 40). In general, coursework seemed to be a more favoured option:

2.. Charlie: They should not rely so heavily on exams, they should look more closely on the whole term's work.

Nick: Coursework, coursework. Coursework is much better than exams I think because if you've done well in that then there's no point in exams[-]

- Clare: I blank out in exams
- I: Coursework is a better reflection of what you've learnt?
- Clare: Yes.
- Charlie: And exams are just churning out your notes.
(School B Post-SATs focus group 20/5/99 p.4).

On the whole though, they were aware of the increasing importance of examinations during their progression through the school. As well as external examinations they also took "too many" (*Molly, ibid, p.3*) internal examinations. So they were accustomed to an examination culture but, nevertheless, they were unsure where the SATs fitted into it. They were aware that, unlike pupils at state schools, they did not have to take the SATs but that it was the school's "choice" (*Daniel, ibid, p.4*) to do so. The SATs results could be used to "help to decide your GCSE sets" (*ibid, p.7*), but only if they came through before the end of term which, according to Daniel, had not happened the previous year, "so they couldn't have used it to set people" (*ibid, p.7*)

The SATs' usefulness in helping to "prepare for GCSE" (*Fred, 26/5/99 p.5*) was lessened by the fact that it was a different type of examination, and did not include any element of coursework which the GCSE did. Key Stage 4 and GCSE's were seen as a far more important rung in the ladder of academic success, even though the SATs could be of use in helping pupils to become more familiar with examinations *per se*:

3. Molly: we're getting used to it because when it comes to the GCSE's we'll be like "Oh my god, this is really important".
- Tess: But also the more exams you do the more you get used

to it so like when it comes to A levels you'll be so used to doing exams you'll think it's just another exam.

(School B, Post SATs focus group 20/5/99 p.4).

Whilst they could see the importance of GCSE's and A levels, at least one pupil felt that the relative lack of importance that was attached to the SATs in comparison was due to the fact that a pupil's Key Stage 3 result "doesn't go on to your CV does it?" (*Molly, ibid, p.7*). With the SATs behind them, the pupils were much more concerned with how they planned the next stage of their academic careers:

4. Clare: Most of us know what we want to be really, don't we?
Nick: It's the whole of your life[-]
Clare: you've got to have it planned out.
Nick: After your A levels it's the whole of your life left and you have to do well from now until the A levels ... so you're safe for life.
Molly: You've got to get it right, you've got to get it right.
Daniel: You've got to have some sort of sight, if you think Oh I don't know what to be when I'm older, then you've got nothing to aim for, if you're thinking I want to to be a scientist and you know you're quite good at science you think[-]
Molly: I've got to do well from now on.
(School B Post-SATs focus group 20/5/99 p.10).

With all these concerns about the necessity to achieve and maintain academic success, the pupils were less united in their opinions about how Shakespeare fitted

in. One pupil thought that it enhanced writing and thinking skills, despite the difficulty in understanding it:

5. Daniel: I can never understand Shakespeare and for instance I always get Charlie to help me open the doors, but it really does help your mind, gets you thinking about writing in different ways ... Shakespeare uses maybe a rude comment but he might use it in two different meanings and it's good to show you know, shows you how you think and things.

(School B individual interview 26/5/99 p 10).

Whereas Nick seemed less sure:

6. Nick: I guess it's because well, most of the time, English literature is pretty important, I mean you have to study some kind of work by a famous writer.

I: It may as well be Shakespeare?

Nick: Yes, it may as well be Shakespeare and when you're an adult you'll have to write letters to interviews and stuff.

I: So it's all mixed in there somehow?

Nick: Yes.

(School B Individual interview 26/5/99 p 7).

But Clare was more certain that studying Shakespeare would bring its own benefits:

7. Clare: Well it kind of gives you an advantage over other kids,

like if you want to do a degree and you go to a University they're going to ask you questions because it's all to do with English isn't it? He's like one of the best writers. It's all part of it because without it you'd be lost
(School B individual interview 26/5/99 p 17).

Even though she could see that Shakespeare was part of a pupil's wider academic and cultural capital, because it was "very complicated" (ibid, p. 17) and took a long time to understand, she did not feel that it was at all pleasurable to study, it was just one of those subjects that had to be done, "a bit like maths really" (ibid, p. 17). In fact, only one of the pupils in all the three focus groups said that she enjoyed studying Shakespeare in class, it was an almost illicit pleasure:

8. I: Do you still like Shakespeare?
Tess: Secretly I do but I wouldn't tell my classmates because they hate it a lot but I like it a lot
I: Why do you think that is?
Tess: Most of them like the modern stuff, I like that too but I also like the old English, I think it's just, the way it flows and stuff, it's good to read ... it's fun, it's like a whole different language almost, it's fun to learn.
(School B individual interview 26/5/99 p.12).

The language of Shakespeare that other pupils found the most difficult to get to grips with, the "old English" was in fact what Tess found the most intriguing.

When asked if they were looking forward to studying Shakespeare again at Key Stage 4 for their GCSE's, most pupils were resigned rather than eager. They had

heard that they were going to be doing *Macbeth*; which Clare thought would “be so cool because we’ve already done it in Year 8” (*Post SATs focus group 20/5/99 p.5*) but for others the issue of pre-familiarity with the text generated further discussion about its utility:

9. Clare: It tends to be easier to do a familiar play because you know what’s going on.
- Daniel: Yes but then it becomes tedious ...
- Nick: all of us knew about *Romeo and Juliet* since we were like eight or nine years old. ...
- Charlie: We should have had a bit more choice in it, he just says right we’re doing *Romeo and Juliet* and dumps the books on us instead of what do you want to do, there are others.
- (*School B Post SATs focus group 20/5/99 p.5*).

4.5.3: School C

School C was an 11-18 mixed comprehensive school , situated in a suburban village a few miles from the city centre. It was over-subscribed and in 1999 had 1200 pupils in roll, with nearly 300 pupils in the Sixth Form.

The school’s 1997 Ofsted Report described the school’s intake as encompassing the “full range of ability” (*ibid*, 8). The school was described as “a good school with some very good features. The high quality of the teaching is a strength, and pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning ... Links with the

community , and particularly partnerships with local employers, are outstanding” (ibid, p. 1). Pupils’ cultural development in the form of organised trips to theatres, museums and art galleries, was deemed “satisfactory” (ibid, p. 3). The leadership of the school was described as “strong” (ibid, p. 3) and one which provided a clear “clear direction for the school”. (ibid, p. 3)

At the end of Key Stage 3, levels achieved by pupils for National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science were above the national averages. English GCSE and A level results were also above the national average. In English, pupils were described as “articulate speakers and careful listeners ... They have the confidence to participate in class and group discussion ... By the end of Key Stage 3, some higher attaining pupils are producing writing which is mature, well expressed and coherent. Most pupils enjoy their English lessons.. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in nearly all lessons ... the teachers have good subject knowledge, which enables them to ask appropriate questions to deepen the pupils’ understanding”. (ibid, pp.28-29.) Pupils’ reading skills were “generally well developed. The majority, especially girls, read widely for pleasure.” (ibid, p. 12) Among the key issues for action, the need for a review of special educational needs provision at Key Stage 3 was identified, and for an extension of “the range of teaching and learning methods in order to encourage pupils to take more initiative in the classroom and be less reliant on adults.” (ibid, p. 7).

Classroom Observation. 9.10-10am 5/2/99

The ground floor classroom was situated in one of the teaching blocks, behind the main school building. The classroom was large enough for five sets of double-desk to be stretched across it. At the front was a row of shelves with dictionaries and at the back wall, a display showing pupils’ work . At one corner of the classroom there was an office for the Year 10 head, and at the other end a door

leading to a corridor and another classroom off it. The entrance doors were kept open throughout the lessons as Year 10 pupils sometimes came in to the office which did not cause any undue interruption to the class in progress.. Although I was initially disconcerted, I became accustomed to such movements as the class itself had obviously long done so. The fifty minute lesson, the first of the day, began with teacher calling the register, 28 pupils were present, 14 boys and 14 girls with slightly more mixed seating than at *School A*. After the register, the teacher focussed on the characters' names during the first fifteen minutes of the lesson, asking pupils for word associations. He extended these into a character precis so that, for example, when pupils suggested "casino" for "Orsino" he reinforced the wealth association by saying "yes, he might be rich, he is the Duke" but when they offered "bad, ravioli, macaroni" for Malvolio, he commented jokingly "what's all this food fetish stuff" before prompting "what do you think Malvolio will be like, shall we call him a baddie?"

In the following fifteen minutes he concentrated on the text itself, and asked for a boy and a girl to read it. This was done confidently apart from stumbles on "hence" and "twas" and giggles from the rest of the class at the word "eunuch". During the following discussion about the meaning of the scene, eunuch prompted a range of suggestions from pupils; "some sort of weird animal with a horn ... ain't got no balls ... Is a eunuch a gay man?". The teacher technically clarified what a eunuch was before moving on to ask a series of more directive questions in order to elicit answers about Viola's motives and social position. He ended the discussion by summarising the themes that they had identified; shipwreck, grieving, and a cross-dressing, clever, ambitious heroine.

In the last ten minutes he asked them to write in their books "all the things you've found out about Viola so far, as much as you can, your opinions about her". One

of the pupils, Toby, was intrigued by the idea that Viola planned to disguise herself as a man “she obviously looks like a girl, girls can’t look like men”. The teacher moved over to Toby’s desk and quietly continued the discussion without interrupting the rest of the class who were mostly on task. Toby had managed to get to the heart of the play - about gender and sexuality - but reacted in mock horror when the teacher told him “you’d make quite a good girl actually, if you tried, I’ll show you the video next week and then you’ll see if a girl can become a boy or not.” The teacher ended the lesson by asking them to take their books home with them and to read the Introduction to the play.

The pupils had worked effectively and constructively during the lesson. Their level of engagement showed that they were comfortable with the range of tasks that were employed during the lesson, discussing, reading and writing and their range of responses to the teacher-directed questions showed that they enjoyed making word connections and were confident in their use of language. At least one pupil had also made a connection between what was being described in the scenes and the thematic relationship to gender and sexuality.

4.5.3.1: Teaching and testing Shakespeare in School C: teachers’ perspectives

A general concern of many teachers (ATL/NATE, 1998, Radnor *et al*, 1996) is that the SATs Shakespeare Paper at Key Stage 3 takes up too much teaching time during Year 9. In all the three schools that I visited, no work on the set text was begun until the Spring/Lent term leading up to the SATs in May. Teachers did not want to spend any longer than they already did on preparation for the Shakespeare Paper which is, it should be noted, quite different from saying that

teachers did not want to teach Shakespeare for any length of time. As we have seen in *School A* and *School B*, teachers were also keen to make the distinction between *teaching* Shakespeare and *testing* Shakespeare.

Whilst the class teacher in *School C* acknowledged that work done in preparation for the SATs could provide a “good framework for Shakespeare above and beyond the SATs exams” (*Class teacher, 14/7/99. p.7*), he also pointed to what he perceived as limitations of the SATs:

1. CT: When it was introduced the government was saying you will teach Shakespeare and you will teach it this way and I find it quite constraining ... I would certainly want to be teaching Shakespeare by Year 9 and the idea that if there wasn't a government exam I wouldn't teach Shakespeare is absurd.

(Class teacher School C 14/7/99. p. 3/4)

Echoing the senior teacher's viewpoint from *School A*, the class teacher also felt that since pupils and schools were different, imposing a representative and canonical Shakespeare was not suitable for all schools and all pupils:

2. CT: I think very much it's an old fashioned sort of public school model ... and I don't think it works , it's not appropriate ... you can't impose this model on all children from all different types of schools ... and I think the people who decide the curriculum policy can't see that.

(Class teacher School C 14/7/99. p.10)

As a teacher he felt that he knew how to engage his pupils' enthusiasms and would prefer to be able to choose from a wider range of plays to study at Key Stage 3 rather than limiting the choice to just three plays, which also had further implications for standardisation:

- 3 CT: One of the problems with the SATs using the same texts year after year, they run out of scenes to set and they end up doing extraordinary obscure things by the end of the play's run, which makes a mockery of year by year consistency.

(Class teacher School C 14/7/99. p.7)

However, a limited range of texts does have one practical advantage as the head of department pointed out:

4. HoD: A narrow choice is manageable administratively. I mean they may not have been the plays we'd have ended up choosing... we have to set ourselves limits anyway ... with 11 classes we couldn't take the risk of having 11 teachers choosing different plays and then we're trying to remix the classes for GCSE finding that some students would have already done them.

(Head of department School C 21/7/99 p.7).

In *School C* the SATs results were used, in conjunction with teacher assessment, as a diagnostic tool to help assess and set pupils for the Year 10 GCSE English groups. However, they were "still very wary" (*ibid*, 2) about how much reliance

to place on them “because of all the inconsistencies we know about the marking” (ibid, p.2) and if the SATs results “undermined” or “ran counter” (ibid, p.3) to the teacher assessments then “we’d start to worry.” (ibid, p.3).

The class teacher was also concerned that doing a text-based exam on Shakespeare at this age could be “counter-productive...to a good understanding and enthusiasm” (14/7/99 p.4) for Shakespeare in the future. His own “very pedantic, very boring, very text-based” (ibid, p.9) experience of doing Shakespeare at school was a wholly negative one, “I absolutely despised it” (ibid, p.9) but as a teacher now teaching Shakespeare he felt very differently:

5. CT: oh because he’s so damn good, that’s it in a nutshell ... the way he does things is extraordinarily complex and humane ...and if you can start to encourage children at some point in adolescence to start thinking about generalities, about how people behave rather than just themselves and their friends, that’s got to be a good thing.

(Class teacher School C 14/7/99 p.10)

For the head of department, the teaching and testing of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 was useful in that it gave pupils the chance to familiarise themselves with Shakespeare:

6. HoD: They’re going to meet Shakespeare for GCSE because it is a requirement so as much familiarity with it as possible, with it, him, them. But obviously still there are excellent stories and there’s a lively use of language, variety of characterisation and plot in there that if you wanted to

look for a bank of good, older plays where else do you go?
(*Head of department School C 21/7/99 p.9*).

4.5.3.2: How School C teachers position their pupils in relation to Shakespeare:

Although the class from which the members of the focus group came was a Year 9 top set, the class teacher initially had some qualms about how they and he would cope with *Twelfth Night* because not only was it a new SATs text and the first time he had taught it but also because:

1. CT: the more I read of it the more complicated it seemed as a play to me....But with a good group it turned out to be something they could handle and respond to and I think they actually enjoyed the adult quality of it. It made them feel a bit more grown-up doing it, there are some rude jokes and there's grown-up stuff in it that they seem to enjoy.
(*Class teacher School C 14/7/99 p.2.*)

However, he also felt that the way in which he would like to teach Shakespeare that would appeal to his particular set of pupils was being curtailed:

2. CT I think one of the most important things you do as a teacher is to try and get a sense of enthusiasm going and I think that the way the test is structured is counter-productive to that ... you end up teaching things in a certain rather traditional way and my experience of teaching is that there are other

techniques that you can use that are much better .

(Class teacher School C 14/7/99 p. 4/5).

Not having the time to look at the play using a variety of approaches or picking up on an issue of particular interest to the class was something that he regretted:

3. CT: I would have loved to have the freedom... to say well write an essay about gender in the play at this point ... it seems a shame to me to stultify the enthusiasm and say oh no you can't do that because what we've got to do is to learn about Malvolio in this scene which is entertaining enough but which is perhaps not using the strength of the class..

(Class teacher School C 14/7/99. p. 6).

The strength of this class was that they were “a good, positive bunch” (ibid, p.4) who he felt responded well to the play but he would be “very chary” (ibid,p. 9) about doing *Twelfth Night* with a lower ability group because of the complexity of the text and its “rather grown up set of ideas” (ibid, p.9) The head of department had been teaching *Romeo and Juliet* to his Year 9 group, which had pupils who were at Level 3 or below. He had told them that they would not be sitting the Shakespeare Paper, because he thought it would “be more appropriate” that they knew at the outset (21/7/99 p.1) The class teacher also felt that *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* were less complex but that the reasons for choosing a set text were somewhat arbitrary:

- 4: CT *Romeo and Juliet* is a very straightforward play or something like *Julius Caesar* you can say, he's a baddy and he's a goody, whereas in *Twelfth Night* it's not black

and white. It's all shades of grey.

I: Why do you think it was chosen?

CT: I think all these things are pulled out of somebody's hat to be honest ... they should trust teachers a bit more, let teachers have a bit more say in what they teach.

(Class teacher School C 14/7/99 p.9).

There is the belief, then, that teachers should have more autonomy in teaching Shakespeare in a way that is going to be appropriate for their pupils and at Key Stage 3 this also involves thinking about the issue of age and maturity:

5. CT: I think obviously you end up bowdlerizing things ... there's going to be levels to any bit of Shakespeare which are beyond your average 14 year old ... but I think it's useful that you can so far with it and still leave an implication that there's further to go ... I wouldn't want them to end up having the impression that they know everything about Shakespeare and that's it, because I don't know everything either.

(Class teacher School C 14/7/99 p.3).

Whatever the class teacher's pupils may have felt about Shakespeare by the end of Key Stage 3, he certainly felt that they had embarked upon their study of Shakespeare with at the very least a degree of curiosity. This was partly due to the fact that they were a top set and partly due to what can be termed the "Leonardo di Caprio effect" in which he thought that the film industry's recent interest in Shakespeare had helped to bring about "a sea change" amongst his pupils from "Oh Shakespeare, what's that?" to "Oh we're doing Shakespeare!"

Overall though, the head of department felt that whilst many of the pupils from across the ability range were apprehensive about Shakespeare to begin with because he was seen as “something which is difficult, it’s in a remote sort of language it’s not English as we talk it” (21/7/99, p.4), he also thought that they became more at ease with Shakespeare, partly due to the fact that in the Year 8 English classroom many of the pupils were introduced to Chaucer, “an even stranger English” (ibid, p. 4). He made the point that it was very hard to generalise how individual pupils would react to Shakespeare. Some of them:

6. HoD: particularly the more able ones will really get very interested in the why’s and how’s of the language and others will be stuck at and a bit baffled by the sense that we’ve got to decode almost every word...
(*Head of department School C 21/7/99 p.5*).

Whilst they may not wholly enjoy Shakespeare, he felt that they did understand that Shakespeare represented “more of a challenge” (ibid, p.5) and that as teachers they recognised that “children have an awareness of Shakespeare, whether we like it or not, so we might as well capitalise on it.” (ibid, p.7)

4.5.3.3: School and Shakespeare in School C: pupils’ perspective post – SATs

The pupils unanimously agreed that they felt “relieved” (*Post SATs focus group 14/7/99 p.7*) when the SATs were all over. Even though the text they were studying, *Twelfth Night*, was new to Key Stage 3, their class teacher had guessed

what questions might be asked (“it was obvious to me what the questions were going to be” 14/7/99 p.7) and had concentrated on preparing his pupils for them, as these comments from the pupils after the SATs confirmed:

1. Simon But when we were reading through the book I honestly didn't get a lot of the story and I was so relieved when I saw the Shakespeare Paper, it was just exactly what we had done in class and I was really glad about that because I didn't get the story that well when we were reading it through. The video helped.

Sandra: He ((the teacher)) suspected that these two questions were the ones we'd get the choice from so he taught us loads and loads on those questions.

(School C Post- SATs focus group. 14/7/99 p.10).

Even though this preparatory work on potential questions stood them in good stead in the examination itself, they nevertheless felt that their overall grasp of the play was not secure and that having to write about just one of the three scenes that they had studied was limiting:

2. Nina: You don't know the whole play, just those three scenes but you don't really understand what happens in the rest of the play .

Vicki: ... If we'd done the whole play we'd get like a more we'd know more about the characters.

Sandra: If you'd done the whole play you could just get one question that like covers the whole play.

Nina: I felt that there wasn't very much you could write

about, well there was a lot you could write about with the questions they asked but I think there'd be more if it was a question about the whole play.

(School C. Post-SATs focus group 14/7/99 p.9).

The focus on the three key scenes had also left them feeling bored and unenthusiastic about further encounters with Shakespeare at Key Stage 4:

3. Simon: Yeah I don't feel like studying it now ... because of *Twelfth Night* I just don't like it.
- Vicki: It's like if we don't focus on the same bit over and over again because we done the letter one for like [-]
- Cameron: a month.
- Vicki: Yeah, it really dragged on, and in the end we got really bored with it.

(School C Post-SATs focus group 14/7/99 p.8).

The amount of work that they had done on the three key scenes meant that there was less time to engage with Shakespeare in other, more active ways. What acting in the classroom that they had done, they had especially enjoyed, "but that was a one-off" *(Post-SATs focus group, Toby 14/7/99 p.7).*

Although they knew that they would all be studying Shakespeare again at Key Stage 4, only three of the group, Sandra, Cameron and Nina, intended to take English at A level. The others wanted to drop English immediately after their GCSE's, including Toby who said "It's probably an important subject, but I find it just so very boring, I can't stand it" *(Post-SATs focus group 14/7/99 p.7).*

The pupils were aware that the school used the SATs results to help set them in their GCSE groups and were pleased with their results which would ensure their own academic progression in higher sets (in fact, the whole class results were “split evenly between Level 6’s and Level 7’s , (with) four Level 5’s and one Level 4” *Class teacher, 14/7/99 p.7 269-270*). What they were exercised about, however, was how pupils “in dyslexic groups and that” (*Post-SATs focus group, Vicki 14/7/99 p.5*) were excluded from sitting the Shakespeare Paper:

4. Vicki: Because if they got a lower mark it would make the school look bad ...
- Simon: That’s all the school’s concerned about though, making the school look good ...
- Sandra: I think it’s a bit silly really that they don’t put those pupils in because they’re going to have to, they can’t not do everything all their life because they’ve got dyslexia, I think they should try.
- (School C Post-SATs focus group 14/7/99 p.5-6).*

During the discussion, they discussed their perception of Shakespeare as a mad poet, rather like the 19th century poet, John Clare, who they had been studying before they began Shakespeare and whose real-life incarceration in an insane asylum had fascinated them. They considered that to be a poet “you haven’t to be afraid to act sort of weird” (*Post-SATs focus group Sandra, 14/7/99 p.11*) and Nina tried to articulate how Shakespeare’s particular kind of poetic insanity would not have been remarked upon during his day:

5. Nina: Because his poems weren’t exactly very famous then,

but if people was reading them they would probably think he was a bit weird and lock him up but because it was like ages ago and people like think, hey, that was the way they wrote, they didn't actually realise he was insane.

(School C post-SATs focus group 14/7/99 p.11).

Nina's comments bring to mind the Gravedigger's remarks in *Hamlet* that Hamlet's madness would go unremarked in England because "there the men are as mad as he" (*Act V: iv*) Not only did pupils believe in Shakespeare's insanity but this very weirdness served to distance them still further from making points of connection to him and the themes in his plays. They could empathise with a character's situation if they believed that there was an element of reality, of truthfulness in it, so that films such as *Saving Private Ryan*, *Philadelphia* and *Titanic* were, they felt, ultimately more believable, and therefore more truthful than anything that Shakespeare could come up with. There was no possibility that some of the things that happened to Shakespeare's characters might also be applicable to situations today, such as a young woman's unspoken passion for a man who was unaware of her true identity. They insisted that a connection between logical reality and Shakespeare's fictionality was impossible:

6. Vicki: Take *Twelfth Night* for example, no one's dressed up as a bloke to get close to the person they love.
- I: You don't know!
- Toby: No one has dressed up in that exact place and exact time.
- (School C Post-SATs focus group 14/7/99 p.13).*

They were unconvinced that the ideas and feelings that motivated the characters could have their basis in a reality with which they might identify:

7. Nina: Well you might get ideas but at the end of the day everyone's going to think well it doesn't really matter, does it because it hasn't really happened. I think if it was a true story it would affect people a lot more[-]
- U: yeah[-]
- Nina: and they'd be thinking about it a lot more.
- (*School C, Post-SATs discussion group, 14/7/99 p. 13*).

In the final section of this chapter, which follows, a discussion of the data analysis will be presented.

4.6: Discussion of data analysis

Chapter 3 closed with a discussion of Bourdieu's key concepts of *habitus*, *cultural capital* and *field*. As was shown in that discussion, trying to arrive at a definitive explication of all or any of these concepts is neither simple, not to be desired. Rather it is Bourdieu's intention that they can be applied pragmatically, and used as conceptual tools that help to deepen understandings of the particular social world under investigation (Swartz, 1997; Robbins, 2000). It is, therefore, in this spirit that I hope to use them in this present discussion.

In the previous chapter, it will be recalled that I also talked about using metaphor as a means of understanding Bourdieu's concepts more readily, before arriving at distinct metaphorical conceit of my own. The triadic structure of the woodspurge, as described in Rosetti's poem, presented itself as an image which emphasised how habitus, cultural capital and field are constructed in relation to one another. As has been shown, pupils' responses to Shakespeare were not

arrived at solely within the vacuum of the Year 9 classroom. What they bring to the classroom in the form of the “durable, transposable dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1977: 72), that they have individually accumulated through their family backgrounds and their schooling, in other words their habitus, predisposes them to think about Shakespeare in a certain way. Lest this sounds too deterministic, we should also recall that habitus is further described as the “structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (ibid, 72), which reinserts agency into the equation.

Habitus, then, is a set of dispositions but it also enables the individual to make strategic choices albeit within a sense of limitations. In relation to pupils’ positioning of Shakespeare, this does so within the context of change and development as pupils change and develop. In this sense, we can say that the relationship between pupils and Shakespeare is a dynamic one (although it may not always be, in their terms, a positive relationship). However, it is this idea of dynamism that we need to take forward in the present discussion, in terms of the relationship between habitus and field. It will be recalled that in the previous chapter Shakespeare was presented as the *Shakespeare field*. As was seen in Chapter 2, the Shakespeare field exists within the *educational field* as well as the *cultural field*. All these fields lie within the *field of power*, which encompasses the dominant power relations in society (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The structure of the fields is both dynamic and relational so that, for example, the Shakespeare field could hold a position of greater or lesser power and influence, depending on how it is positioned by “individuals, groups and institutions” (Swartz, 1997:35) in either the educational field, the cultural field or the field of power. Furthermore, the influence and power of the individual agents within the field – which in this case include teachers and pupils – is subject to fluctuation.

Grenfell reminds us of Bourdieu's presentation of the "complicity" that exists between habitus and field. (Grenfell, 1996: 2981) in that the habitus is both structured and structuring:

This complicity is always expressed in the tension between the 'legitimate' ways of acting or thinking defined by the field and the individual's habitus-specific predispositions to conform, or not, to these legitimate ways.

(Grenfell, 1996: 291).

This point has been illustrated in the course of this chapter, as we have seen how the habitus of the pupils has interacted with the Shakespeare field through the range of responses that have been articulated. The process of open and axial coding of these data led to the emergence of the core category, *Positioning Shakespeare*. Whilst pupils' positioning of Shakespeare formed the primary basis of the data, teachers' positioning of Shakespeare in relation to their own pedagogic practices and to their perceptions of their pupils' relationship to Shakespeare was also looked at.

In a Bourdieuan analysis the differing sets of perceptions would be seen as the results of differing sets of dispositions. Furthermore the habitus of the school also plays an important role in that the school is seen as the means of reproduction of the *status quo* and challenges "the optimistic liberal perception of the school as an instrument of social reform and equality" (Nash, 1990: 432). Insofar as each of the schools in this study was upholding one aspect of the *status quo*, preparing their pupils for a National Curriculum public examination, it could be said that they were examples of what Bourdieu would perceive as a conservative force for reproduction. For example, the class teacher in *School C*, who was critical in many ways of the Key Stage 3 Shakespeare examinations also said that as a preparation for GCSE's "I would I think want to give them the [English] exam in

the end ... at Year 9 to get them into the swing of what's going to be expected [at GCSE]" (*Interview, 14/7/99, p. 5*). The deputy head of department in *School B* was critical of what he perceived of as an inappropriately early age at which to test Shakespeare but also recognised what the "government quite rightly, in many respects, feels ought to be tested" (*Interview 7/7/99, p.2*).

However, as we have seen, there were also challenges to this system expressed through teacher-disquiet about the Key Stage 3 examinations, which could also be posited as a challenge to the underlying assumption of conservatism that is equated with the school's reproductive power. It is not, however, within the scope of this thesis to present a theoretical examination of schools' positions within society, but to look more closely at an aspect of practice in some of them. This aspect of practice has been an examination of responses to Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 and in looking more closely at the core category *Positioning Shakespeare* and its related concepts of *legitimacy, preferences, security and certainty* as situated in the *Shakespeare field*, it can be shown how the system both legitimises certain conceptions of Shakespeare and invites reactions to them. So that, for example, whilst pupils may partake in the system by sitting the Shakespeare examination they do so, on the whole, unwillingly but also with an expectation that it will help to prepare them for their GCSE's. These examinations are seen as more important than SATs because they are more valued and hold a higher currency in the educational field and the vocational field. Pupils from all three schools recognised this perception of the greater importance of GCSE's. The SATs being less so, because as one pupil from *School A* suggested, in "Year 9 you're messing about. Year 10's starting to work again" (*example 6, p. 293*). There were also suggestions that Shakespeare was tested at Key Stage 3 because it was "a really difficult play to understand and they can test your ability on that and your understanding of the play" (*School B, example 18, p.276*) or conversely that

“they’re there to see how teachers are doing” (*School C, example 20, p.277*).

In the open coding analysis we saw how the concept of *legitimacy* related to pupils’ prior encounters with Shakespeare in that a more analytical engagement with the text gradually replaced active experiences of Shakespeare’s drama. That is, how pupils were increasingly engaged in a legitimised “trudging” through Shakespeare as they progressed through Key Stage 3 and thus how a higher status is conferred upon the more literary, analytical approaches rather than the active, participatory approaches. How both teachers and pupils position Shakespeare in terms of what teaching approaches are ‘licensed’ becomes, by Key Stage 3, almost wholly bound up with testing. In this respect, we can say that Shakespeare is most certainly legitimised through national tests and, furthermore, that pupils’ (and teachers) are either disposed or not to take on board testing as an unquestioned good.

As we have seen, the pupils in the research study came from different personal backgrounds, different school backgrounds and positioned Shakespeare in different ways. By their very nature, national tests arising out of a National Curriculum have to regard examinees as more alike than they really are and, furthermore, as being able to approach the tests with a homogenous grounding in the study of Shakespeare. That this is not the case has been exemplified in the data which showed just how different the pupils and the schools were in their attitudes and responses to Shakespeare.

We have seen how Bourdieu’s presentation of the examination system is seen as one which upholds a notion of “cultural consecration” (Bourdieu, 1984:7) and, as such, confers legitimacy. With regard to this study, the legitimised academic status of Shakespeare is upheld by a regime of testing and examination.

Academic legitimacy is, in turn, conferred upon pupils who sit examinations about a Shakespeare text and, as Bourdieu and Passeron state, examinations are “nothing but the bureaucratic baptism of knowledge” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 141). It came as no surprise that pupils from *School B*, the independent school, had more cultural capital than the other pupils in the study, and were well acquainted with the importance of examination success, as their discussion showed. What comes across in this extract most strongly, I feel, is the sense of urgency and anxiety expressed by *School B* pupils, “You’ve got to have it planned well ... So you’re safe for life.. You’ve got to get it right, you’ve got to get it right ... I’ve got to do well from now on” (*example 4, p. 307*). Whilst these pupils may have been anxious about examination performance, they were also fighting to stay in “the game” with every strategic weapon they had at their disposal. We might also see this sense of urgency allied with anxiety as predisposed responses to the interaction of habitus and field, and which have drawn upon their own reserves of cultural capital.

For those pupils whose study of Shakespeare is not successfully legitimised through examination, not only is their positioning of Shakespeare affected but also their positioning of themselves as academic non-achievers. The Key Stage 3 SATs at once legitimise Shakespeare and confer academic status upon those who study his works, but the paradox is that this is a status which is only endorsed through a successful undertaking of the test. For those pupils who achieve low levels or who are not even entered for the Shakespeare Paper, the knowledge that Shakespeare is considered beyond their ability influences their perceptions of both Shakespeare and themselves, that some pupils are not, in their own words, “top grade” (*Tom, School A 11/6/99*). When the study of Shakespeare becomes part of the educational rhetoric of performance, raising standards, league tables and the like and its value, in pupils’ eyes, seen as almost wholly embedded within an

examinations culture, then for those who do not do well in examinations, it can also be damagingly excluding.

The concept of *certainty*, which was a dimension of the category about perceptions of Shakespeare, could also be related to this sense of examinations and their legitimising status. Since nearly all of the pupils in the focus groups were studying Shakespeare for the purpose of examination (apart from the two pupils in *School A* already discussed), it was not surprising to find that they saw Shakespeare as being almost wholly bound up with the culture of examinations. We have seen how pupils from *School A* did not really believe that the study of Shakespeare was of any use, even within English, as it did not enhance written or verbal skills, nor would it be of use to them in a vocational capacity once they had left school. Whilst all pupils in the study knew that examinations were important, in that qualifications were necessary to advancing one's career structure, very few of them equated taking tests on Shakespeare with this sense of building a career trajectory. "I don't see how it affects our careers and stuff" as one pupil from *School C* put it (*example 1, p.271*). Another from *School A*, discounting a somewhat doubtful suggestion that it might help to "get a good job" (*example 2, p.271*) asked instead 'Why do you need Shakespeare to get a job?' (*example, 3, p. 271*). Also from *School A*, another pupil commented, "I don't think you should have to do Shakespeare because like you can't use it" (*example 4, p. 271*).

Showing a greater accumulation of cultural capital than pupils from *School A*, pupils from *School B* were more willing to acknowledge the wider benefits in studying Shakespeare. One pupil said that it could help with language skills whilst another was more vague but thought that Shakespeare was somehow mixed up with the adult world of job interviews, writing letters and so on. Only one pupil

made a specific connection between Shakespeare and getting on in life, knowing about Shakespeare she said, “kind of gives you an advantage over other kids” (*example 7, p. 308*). Their range of knowledge about Shakespeare also included an understanding of how the plays were structured, as was shown by a brief but interesting analysis of Shakespeare’s use of comedic interlude to offset the build up of tragic tension in *Macbeth* and *Henry VI, Part 3*.

Whilst pupils in *School C* were altogether more discursive in their discussions about what Shakespeare was for, “obviously somebody knows ... why don’t they tell us!” (*example 6, p.272*), like pupils from *School B*, they also thought the primary purpose of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 was that it was a step on the rung of the GCSE ladder. It had given them some practice in writing about a Shakespeare play for an examination and, as such, it was primarily an end to a means. However, as was shown by the responses showing the confusion surrounding Shakespeare’s subject status we can see that pupils’ certainty about what Shakespeare is, as well as what is not, at Key Stage 3 is not entirely fixed. The suggestion that was raised in Chapter 3 regarding the potential of cross-curricular work was also put forward, albeit tentatively, by one pupil from *School C*, “maybe ... they should be linked and everything (*example 3, p. 267*) in the course of a discussion as to whether Shakespeare belonged to English or to Drama.

Teachers, on the other hand, were more certain about what Shakespeare was, in that they believed in Shakespeare and wanted in to teach Shakespeare. Their habitus predisposed them to find and try to pass on to their pupils values (about literature in general as well as Shakespeare in particular) other than the purely instrumental:

That’s partly the responsibility of teachers to try and make a connection

that all things you study at school aren't vocational, they're not all setting you up to achieve in a job, some of them are about enhancing your quality of understanding the aesthetics, understanding beauty.

(Senior teacher School A, Interview 13/4/99, p 2).

The class teacher from *School C* also made the point that if, "at some point in adolescence" teachers can get their pupils "to start thinking about generalities, about how people behave rather than just themselves and their friends, that's got to be a good thing" (*example 5, p. 316*). He believed that Shakespeare's complexity and humanity were key elements in achieving this. *School B's* deputy head of Department also believed that coming into contact with Shakespeare connected pupils with a "sensibility that is finer" than their own, through which their "own imaginative awareness" of themselves and other people should be extended (*example 5, p. 302*). Teachers here are not just looking at the interiority of experiencing Shakespeare but wanting to extend that experience outwards so that pupils can empathise with other people, and other situations. However, whilst teachers possessed the cultural capital to appreciate these qualities that they believe are inherent in the Shakespeare field, their pupils did not.

These teacher-perceptions connect to the concept of *preference*, which is further discussed below, in that we can see that whilst all the teachers want to continue to teach Shakespeare to the average 14 year old, the requirements of the test prevented them from teaching in a way that could enhance pupils' aesthetic and emotional appreciation of Shakespeare rather than a more mechanistic recall of plot development and character motivation. As the senior teacher from *School A* commented, "we are teaching differently to the way we did previously" (*13/4/99 p.5*).

What teachers balked at was having to teach “to the test” which, as was shown in Chapter 3, has become more common at Key Stage 3. Whether they liked it or not, their gatekeeper role was thereby emphasised. Their school and personal habitus-derived approaches to this role can differ. For example, the class teacher in *School B* considered it detrimental to his “professional pride” if he did not teach the SATs text as thoroughly as possible, even if it left pupils with a less than cheerful experience of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3. The class teacher in *School C* spoke more in terms of getting “a sense of enthusiasm going” (*example, 2, p. 317*), whilst the class teacher from *School A* said that “as a teacher in this kind of school you have to think of many different ways to make [Shakespeare] work more palatable” (*Interview, 15/4/99, p.2*).

They acknowledged that Shakespeare was difficult but, as the senior teacher from *School A* commented, that in itself was no bad thing. By tackling Shakespeare pupils were being taught a valuable lesson, that learning is difficult and can get progressively harder. This accords with the sense that Shakespeare serves as a *rite de passage*, which was referred to in Chapter 3, not just to a more adult literature but also to a more adult way of looking at the world. For one pupil in *School A* though, Shakespeare was not so much an initiation into adulthood, but a way of teachers’ “putting us through the stress ... because they had to do it” (*example, 16, p. 276*).

In terms of Positioning Shakespeare through *preference*, which was a dimension of the category which looked at experiencing and understanding Shakespeare in the Year 9 classroom, the strongest preference of pupils of *School A*, was not to do Shakespeare at all, to “do som’at else instead” (*example 1, p. 260*). However, as we have seen, if they did have to do Shakespeare they would have preferred to do so through a variety of approaches, a sentiment that was shared by all the

pupils in the study.

Unfortunately for the pupils, their knowledge of Shakespeare is assessed at the end of Key Stage 3 through an academic examination, so that other ways of knowing the play, through Drama for example, are necessarily down-graded. It has been shown in Chapter 3 how Shakespeare was developed and taught within the subject discipline of English, which itself has evolved to hold to a position of primary importance in the curriculum. It can be suggested, therefore, that Shakespeare's pole position within the canon demands to be partnered by an equally prominent (and statutorily guaranteed) subject-discipline, English.

Yet, as we have seen from the pupil focus group discussions, performing the plays themselves or watching performances helps to secure pupils' knowledge of the play. For those pupils from *Schools A* and *C*, the experience of acting in class was, quite simply, more fun than engaging with Shakespeare through reading or writing. It also gave them the chance to indulge in licensed foolery. The pupils from *School B* would have liked to act out scenes but were not given the opportunity to do so. Just one pupil mentioned other more public performances, and this was the pupil from *School A*, who was also one of the most confident and articulate members of the class (as well as the one who usually got into the most trouble for misbehaving). This boy had, for a while, attended drama classes at the Old Vic Theatre, which, like most theatres, usually caters for a middle-class audience and is therefore perceived of as inhabiting what might be called a middle class habitus. This pupil eventually left, he says, because acting Shakespeare was boring, but then he also thought that school was boring too. Without knowing more about the details of why and how he left, I can only surmise that some discomfort at presenting himself in unfamiliar surroundings may have been a contributory factor.

The reason that I have focussed in more detail on this example is that it serves as an illustration of how the habitus can respond in one way in one situation and in a different way in another situation. Ostensibly what we might call the *field of performance* was the same in both situations, and the same actor was engaged in that field, but the fact that the performances took place under different circumstances and in different social and cultural environments – one a school and the other a theatre - led to a refusal to continue to “play the game” in one of them. A refusal, one could say, predicated upon the dispositions of that particular habitus. Having entered the field, the agent has to “be prepared to play the game, endowed with the *habitus* that implies knowledge and recognition of the immanent laws of the field.” (Bourdieu, 1993b: 72). Such “knowledge and recognition” can develop though, otherwise systems of social activity would atrophy, and it is to be hoped that this pupil would in some way be able to build strategically upon this experience and achieve his eventual ambition in life “I’ve always wanted to go higher” (*Individual interview, 26/6/99, p.3*)

The teachers in *School A* and *C* also emphasised the need for active approaches to be an additional part of their pedagogic armoury in teaching Shakespeare, however the teaching emphasis at *School B* was much more focussed on the ‘page’ rather than the ‘stage’, with drama seen as being more appropriate for those that were considered less academically able. As a school that prided itself on setting high academic standards, this privileging of “some [approaches] o’er other some” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Act 1, i*), was not in itself surprising for this was part of the ethos and habitus of the school (it is nevertheless gratifying to know that one of this country’s finest classical actors of the current generation is an alumnus of the school). Despite the constraints of the test, the range of pedagogic approaches that the teachers employed showed that their own dispositions led them to a perception of how the habitus of their pupils could

interact with the Shakespeare field.

Within the Key Stage 3 Shakespeare Paper itself though, there seems to be an apparent dichotomy between the analytical and the active approaches, as the class teacher in *School A* pointed out, with questions which require either textual analytic answers or empathetic and directorial answers, “maybe there needs to be a decision on how exactly it’s going to be tested” (*example 5, p. 287*). As we have seen though, the teaching inevitably focusses on preparing pupils for the former, the textual and analytical answers, rather than the latter because this is what the teachers feel the test requires them to do, so that ultimately, the teaching focus has to be on getting their pupils to understand the language. At Key Stage 3, pupils’ experience and understanding of Shakespeare in the Year 9 classroom is predicated upon the demands of the SATs test. Teachers have to teach in ways that fulfil those demands, rather than feel free to adapt their teaching approaches to suit to the interests and abilities of the pupils. The teachers from *School A* and *School C* felt that the tests did not allow them to teach according to the needs of their pupils in their schools, or more specifically as the class teacher from *School C* emphasised, to use “the strength of the class” (*example 3, p. 318*), whereas the class teacher from *School B* commented that “nobody’s ever objected particularly to the manner in which they’ve been taught” (*Interview, 21/6/99 p 6*). However, as has been shown, pupils, even those from *School B*, would prefer to be taught through active and participatory ways, enacting Shakespeare for themselves, watching Shakespeare in performance rather than concentrating on reading and analysing Shakespeare’s language.

Pupils did not feel, either, they should be tested on Shakespeare at their age.

Pupils from *School B* were particularly critical of exams as an indicator of their learning and understanding, preferring coursework and assessment and according

to the class teacher in *School B*, the test itself did not do Shakespeare “any favours” (ibid, p.3) with pupils having completed a “fairly heroic plod” (ibid, p.11) through the play in order to take the test. The class teacher from *School C* was concerned that the test’s specificity meant that he was not able to delve into and develop themes and issues that arose out of the play, such as when a question about gender was raised briefly during a lesson on *Twelfth Night*. As he commented later, he wanted to develop the whole idea of gender in the play, “I would have loved to have the freedom (*example 3, p. 318,*) but was unable to do because he had to concentrate on teaching them the prescribed key scenes. The nature of the tests, then, affected the role of the teacher in helping pupils to experience and understand Shakespeare in the classroom with as much enthusiasm as possible. Although pupils had begun their Shakespeare studies at Year 9 with a degree of anticipation, having had mainly favourable prior encounters with Shakespeare, they ended Key Stage 3 with responses to Shakespeare ranging from resignation to active dislike, none of which was the fault of the teachers, who were all committed to teaching Shakespeare at this age.

What some of the teachers were unsure about, however, was testing Shakespeare at 13 or 14 years of age. For the deputy head of the English Department at *School B*, the problem lay with the issue of pupil maturity, his dispositions as a teacher interacting with the *habitus* of the school led him to believe that pupils were not yet fully capable of producing a written response that was critically and imaginatively sophisticated enough. Yet out of all the pupils in the study, the *School B* pupils were the most capable in terms of writing ability and it was noticeable too, during class observations, that the language of the class teacher was couched in more erudite terms than was apparent in the class observations in the other two schools. In such ways, the linguistic capital of the teacher was being transmitted to pupils, thus giving them access to an enriched cultural

capital.

In *School A*, the class teacher was also concerned that the test was set too early because it led to a textually analytic teaching approach “in this particular way for an exam is just too soon” (*example 3, p. 286*). Such an approach was compounded by the literacy problems that many of the pupils in *School A* had because they had difficulty with Standard English let alone Shakespearean English. She also pointed to the difference between *School A* pupils “who haven’t had the cultural background or parents who are educated to the same degree as in other schools” (*example 4, p. 287*) and pupils from other schools. This difference in habitus and accumulation of cultural capital was reiterated by the senior teacher when he discussed the likelihood of pupils’ awareness and appreciation of Shakespeare being fostered outside school, in the home, “I can safely say that in this school out of a thousand people there aren’t many who would be in that mind set”.(p.289)

In *School C*, the class teacher felt that with a “good group” (*example 1, p. 317*), such as the one he had, pupils would be able to cope with some of the more “grown-up” (*example 1, p. 319*) themes of the play. Even so, he also felt that there was obviously going to be a great deal that was beyond “the level of the average 14 year old” (*example 5, p. 319*).

Pupils from *School B* were the most thoroughly prepared for the test out of all the focus groups. Unlike the other two groups, they had studied the whole play in detail, whereas pupils from *School C* and *School A* had focussed on the key scenes of the play, and had not studied the whole play. These differing experiences led to different responses in connection with the concept of *security*, which was discussed in relation to the category of apprehending Shakespeare and

how secure they felt their apprehension of Shakespeare was, “I didn’t get the story that well when we were reading it through” (*example 1, p.321*). For those who had not studied the whole play their positioning of Shakespeare was less secure as their knowledge about the play was fractured. In *School C*, pupils’ knowledge of the key scenes was thorough and they had been well-prepared for potential questions by their teacher, “I was so relieved when I saw the paper, it was exactly what we done in class and ” (*example 1, p. 321*). However, these *School C* pupils also commented that they would not have felt confident about tackling questions about other aspects of the play, or the play as a whole.

In *School A*, pupils’ overall reluctance to discuss the Paper apart from stating that it was short and that most had been left with time to spare indicated that their apprehension of the play was also less than secure. As has already been noted, this was partly due to their having a less than secure language base from which to approach Shakespeare with whilst the *School B* class teacher also felt that one of the reasons that the test was inappropriate for their age group was that pupils’ language skills were not fully developed at this age, whereas the class teacher from *School C* thought it was to do more with maturity, that some pupils were better able to cope with the more adult themes of the play than others.

Furthermore, Shakespeare, although written in English, was in a form of English that was almost as foreign to pupils from *School A* as French was (*example 9, p.269*). Pupils found the notes and glossaries, written in modern English, sometimes difficult to understand, whilst the class teacher in *School A* felt that the euphemistic nature of the notes in the edition that they were studying was unhelpful, adding to the difficulties of teaching a complex text. Again, it was interesting to discover that pupils from *School B* also found the notes difficult.

In *School B*, although pupils were technically secure in their overall knowledge about the play, they felt that the sheer amount of effort that they put into their study of the play was not rewarded sufficiently by the Shakespeare Paper itself, where the scope of the questions was too limited and left them with a distinctly anti-climactic response to the Key Stage 3 SATs test. Even their class teacher acknowledged afterwards that “the majority of them found it easier than expected and obviously all over in a trice” (21/6/99, *Interview*, p. 1). The pupils themselves felt that the test itself came as something of an anti-climax, “you think what was the point of doing all that” (p. 305). The knowledge that they had so painfully acquired was not going to be of much use to them at Key Stage 4, when they would be studying a different play and, more importantly, studying it in a different way, one that would involve coursework which they favoured over testing, and which they thought was a more effective means of presenting their knowledge about the play.

Although the teachers may not have favoured testing Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 for reasons that ranged from the fact that teaching it for the test took up too much time in the year; that the specificity of the tests was too limiting; that not enough account was taken of pupils’ (and teachers’) own interests and enthusiasms; there was also the perception that the tests served a useful purpose in preparing pupils for their forthcoming GCSE work. This narrowly utilitarian viewpoint was at odds with the belief that there was something else, less quantifiable, that Shakespeare offered such as an aesthetic appreciation of his poetry or enthusiasm for his qualities as an extraordinary story teller. As we have also noted above in connection with the concept of *certainty*, there was a disjunction between the way they, as adults, were able to respond to Shakespeare – both intellectually and emotionally - and how their pupils did. Perhaps this is only to be expected since, as teachers, this is how they have been trained to respond to literature and is

therefore part of their pedagogic habitus. For example, during one of the class observations in *School A*, which was becoming noisier by the minute during the time the teacher was engaged in writing the text on the whiteboard, she paused to ask them to “think about the poetry” because “even if you don’t understand what the words are then the meaning will come through because of the poetry” (p. 283). I was struck by this injunction because it seemed obvious by the response with which it was met (by those who heard it) that they simply did not understand what she meant. They were not attuned to the inner music of the poetic language in the same way as the teacher was.

To conclude, in all of the above we have seen how the core category *Positioning Shakespeare* is mediated through the concepts of *legitimacy, preference, certainty* and *security*. We might also say that pupils’ *confidence* in positioning Shakespeare is dependent on their habitus and varying levels of cultural capital, which can of course include other forms of symbolic capital such as linguistic and academic capital. What remains clear though is the inter-connectedness between field, habitus and cultural capital. In this study it has been shown that pupils’ responses to the Shakespeare field, specifically Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, emerge from their own sets of dispositions, their habitus (which is derived from their personal backgrounds as well as the distinct habitus of the school) which are further mediated through their differing levels of cultural capital.

From the data that have been presented, it can be seen that the sets of dispositions that pupils bring with them to school can be reinforced by the school’s own habitus so that, for example, pupils from *School B*, are more likely to conform to the predominant academic discourse that the school upheld because their cultural capital has enabled them to do so. They were, as was seen, articulate and confident during their interviews and able to draw upon a depth of knowledge (for

example, Early Modern culture and politics as well as an understanding of Shakespeare's structural complexity in plays other than the one they were studying) In contrast, the reluctance of pupils from *School A* to speak at length and to the point often during focus group interviews, could be seen as part of their overall resistance to the academic discourse. Thus, the value that I placed (by doing the research in the first place) and the value that their teachers placed on the teaching of and learning about Shakespeare was not a part of their value system.

With the pupils from *School C*, it could be said that a mid-way point between the other two school groups was presented. On the one hand, they too were articulate enough to challenge my position (interestingly *School B* pupils did not) as well as Shakespeare's but on the other hand, they did not have such deep reserves of cultural capital as pupils from *School B* did.

What all the pupil did recognise, though, was that Shakespeare holds an important position inside the educational system, and that he is a nationally recognised figure outside it too. They may not have all liked Shakespeare or even been able to articulate fully as to why Shakespeare was seen as being so important, but they knew that, somehow, he was. What has been shown in this study is how that recognition is mediated through habitus and differing levels of cultural capital.

Can we say, then, that pupils are only going to respond to Shakespeare in certain ways because of their background and social class, their schools, their teachers? Does the application of Bourdieu's concepts reinforce a deterministic view of or does it also show how such social and cultural patterning can be resisted through strategic intervention by agents who enter the field and "play the game" successfully? The Head of the English department in *School C* said "Children

have an awareness of Shakespeare, whether we like it or not, so we might as well capitalise on it' (*Interview, 21/7/99, p. 7*). My contention is that we can avoid an overly deterministic reading, that "we might as well capitalise" upon the implicit knowledge that pupils have about Shakespeare and make it explicit. This study showed that some pupils used their implicit understanding of the Shakespeare field and its relationship to other fields and the field of power to act strategically, others were less successful. This was not, I would suggest, through an innate lack of inability, if the connection between the potential return on their investment in the Shakespeare field was made more explicit to them then they would at least have the choice as to whether they then wanted to enter the field and play the game. As we have seen during the course of this thesis, an array of differing pedagogic approaches already exists that can engage pupils (and teachers) with Shakespeare and that can fit in with a concomitant range of abilities and interests. For the foreseeable future, Shakespeare is likely to be continued to be tested at Key Stage 3. If this thesis has shown nothing else, then it has shown very clearly that the examination of Shakespeare should offer equality of opportunity to all pupils.

The following chapter draws the thesis to a conclusion with some summary remarks about the study's findings, which include recommendations, as well as a critical retrospective.

CHAPTER FIVE

Is this the promis'd end?

(King Lear, Act V, iii)

5.1 Introduction:

The words that Kent utters as the play closes in on the final scene of *King Lear* are not entirely inappropriate with which to conclude this thesis, although I would hope that they are not taken in quite the same spirit of bleak despair that envelops Kent and the other characters who live on, under “the weight of this sad time” (ibid.).

What, then, is the “promis'd end” for Key Stage 3 pupil studying Shakespeare? As has been shown both through their responses to Shakespeare, which arise out of the wider socio-cultural responses to Shakespeare, there are a number of conflicting aims surrounding the teaching and learning of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3. Did pupils think that their encounters with Shakespeare had made them better people; made them more highly-cultured: enhanced their language and literary skills; helped develop their creativity and imagination, contributed to their personal growth; made them more aware of a literary heritage to which they might lay claim; helped to enhance vocational skills, helped them to think about themselves and their society? Or did Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 only serve to help them up the next rung of the examinations ladder – namely, their GCSE's. It was found that having to teach and learn Shakespeare for the purposes of testing proved a major obstacle in resolving these aims, and that pupils' enjoyment of and enthusiasm for Shakespeare in the long

term was, for the vast majority, severely curtailed by the whole process of Key Stage 3 assessment.

For pupils, the “promis’d end” brought a real sense of sense of anti-climax after the SATs. The amount of time and effort spent on Shakespeare preceding the SATs Shakespeare Paper did not seem to them to be commensurate with the outcome. If the official purpose of SATS was for diagnostic use, to help teachers help their pupils, then that purpose was undermined by pupils’ beliefs that they were really there to measure school against school, teacher against teacher, pupil against pupil. The Shakespeare SATs were certainly not enabling in that sense. In any case, they believed, SATs results were not what mattered, GCSEs were and since they would be doing a different play for GCSE, what they had learned at Key Stage 3 would not be of much help to them. The main benefit was that it had given them some practice in having to write about a Shakespeare text for examination (even though GCSE Shakespeare with its coursework element is distinctly different from Key Stage 3 Shakespeare). For those pupils who had not sat the Shakespeare Paper, the experience had left them feeling that Shakespeare was not for them and as Bourdieu would have it, that they were excluded from “the game”.

Teachers were more mixed in their evaluations. On the one hand, the benefits of an examination on Shakespeare at Key Stage 3 was that it did help to prepare pupils for their forthcoming GCSEs at Key Stage 4, on the other hand, preparation for the SATs led to an overbalance in the Year 9 English curriculum. There were other

consequences too, which confirmed what research reports and evaluations were also saying about the tests, namely that teachers now taught Shakespeare differently, they taught 'to the test'. The primary aim was to prepare their pupils as thoroughly as possible, other ways of engaging their enthusiasms would inevitably have to be left by the wayside. This was something that was regretted by teachers and pupils alike, as was memorably summed up by the pupil who contrasted the 'trudging now' with the "playing then" of his earlier encounters with Shakespeare.

However, even here, we come up against another of those paradoxes that either bedevil or enlighten the study of Shakespeare, depending on one's point of view. Shakespeare, as one teacher pointed out, *is* difficult, and there is no getting away from that but that in itself teaches a valuable lesson. All subjects, not just Shakespeare, not just English, get progressively harder, something that pupils also recognised up to a point. However, success in tackling 'real' Shakespeare is also presented as something of an initiation, a *rite de passage* to the more adult world of literature. As has been shown, this act of initiation is something that pupils either reluctantly comply with or resist. The latter can be accomplished just as effectively, if not more so, through passive resistance rather than active resistance, by a dis-engagement with Shakespeare which dismisses any connection either to their own lives outside the school, or within it.

Even if Shakespeare were to be modernised to make it easier to understand, as some pupils suggested, others pointed out that what you would be left with would not be

authentically Shakespearean. The language of Shakespeare is a major stumbling block that can impede progress towards a fuller understanding of Shakespeare. All the pupils, both in the exploratory research and in the main research study, mentioned the language, as did their teachers. As was shown, even those who live by and through Shakespeare's language most actively, the theatre professionals whose job it is to make a four-hundred year old language live, can baulk at the task. The key to their understanding is in their active engagement with it.

The findings of this study suggest that if pupils and teachers are to succeed in unlocking this forbidding and closed language door, they should be given as many opportunities as possible to be able to decipher it in their own way. Changing, adapting, making comparisons, enacting and embodying it are just some of the strategies that can be used. Transformation has been used as a leitmotif with regards to the plays of Shakespeare, such a notion needs to be embraced wholeheartedly within pedagogic practice if Shakespeare can be transformative for pupils as well. This means, I suggest, that Shakespeare in schools should be done differently. The precedent already exists, it has been shown how pupils and their teachers can engage with Shakespeare actively in the classroom in different ways that are enabling rather than dis-abling. To succeed in this, teachers' autonomy in being able to choose and teach texts in ways that suit their pupils should be returned to them.

If this research study has looked at how Shakespeare has been positioned in particular, and gained valuable insights into the teaching and learning of Shakespeare

in the process, what of Shakespeare in general? As we saw, the plays can never again be received and responded to as they originally were in Elizabethan and Jacobean England but the traces of their genetic inception are passed on whilst adapting to different circumstances and perspectives down the generations. In doing so they can offer up what can be termed a hermeneutics of hybridity, which re-invigorates the bloodlines of critical debate and response.

How will Shakespeare survive in the curriculum and classroom of the future? Having survived the vicissitudes of the long-running argument and counter-argument about 'if' Shakespeare should be taught at all, as well as the rise and fall of his reputation in the wider context - I would surmise that Shakespeare, in one form or another, will remain in the secondary school curriculum. The crucial point is what was noted in parenthesis. The strength of Shakespeare lies in its transformative nature, Shakespeare can be both anything you care to make of it, as well as a repository of timeless and universal values. Of course, the weakness of Shakespeare lies in this apparent strength, precisely because no one can agree on just how much or how little Shakespeare means to society in general or to pupils in particular.

What form Shakespeare takes in the future, then, could well be different to the Shakespeare that we have set before us in today's National Curriculum. As Styles and Beck note:

What knowledges and literacies will be the most powerful by the year 2100?

Will books still exist? What role will young learners play in the curriculum of

the future? Will there be an open, flexible, expansive, creative, enabling curriculum within a vision of life-long learning, or , more pessimistically, only some more technologically developed variant of what is currently on offer, described by Gunther Kress as a ‘backward-looking and backward-moving curriculum?

(Styles & Beck, 2000: 5).

Do we want Shakespeare to exist in the “brave new world” of the first sort of curriculum that Styles and Beck describe, or to move towards the “promis’d end” of the second, where Shakespeare is experienced within a much narrower frame of competences. As has been illustrated in the thesis through a survey of different approaches to the teaching of Shakespeare, it is certainly possible for Shakespeare to be taught in “open, flexible, expansive, creative [and] enabling” ways, that can create the foundations of a life-long enthusiasm.

Teachers also need to regain the full autonomy to teach Shakespeare in ways that suit **their schools and their pupils best** and that, currently, the dictates of Key Stage 3 do not allow for. Not only did one of the teachers in the research study , from *School A*, argue strongly for this but it was also among the concerns of the NACCCE Report *All Our Futures; Creativity, Culture & Education*, previously referred to in the thesis:

We think it essential now to ease the pressure of the prescribed curriculum to allow schools more flexibility in devising their own programmes of work [to do so would]... raise the morale of teachers by affirming confidence in their

professional competence... allow more time and opportunity for schools to develop imaginative forms of teaching and learning... allow schools greater flexibility in developing programmes which meet the needs of their own pupils and which take account of the local and regional circumstances in which they work... allow all schools to develop their own particular strengths and profiles within any given area of the statutory curriculum.

(NACCCE, 1999: 83).

It is not just the range of questions of the Key Stage 3 English Paper that needs to be thought about but also what it is that we hope to achieve by the end of Key Stage 3 itself. One of the criticisms about it is that it is too long, particularly as concerns have continued to be expressed about the Year 8 dip (QCA, 2001b). One of the recommendations of the NACCCE Report was that Key Stage 3 with its “three-year programme, and a *fairly low-key external assessment* (ibid, 80, my emphasis) should be reduced to two years, 11-13 (with a lengthened Key Stage 4, 13-16 years) which “would increase the vitality of Key Stage 3” (ibid, 172) and diminish the chances of pupils becoming “bored, disaffected and disruptive” (ibid. 80).

As we saw earlier on in the thesis, the NACCCE Report findings were not officially taken up by the Government, however, the radical proposals to change the structure of the current curriculum, as outlined in the summary report of the Green Paper 14-19: *extending opportunities, raising standards* (DfES, May 2002), adhere to the spirit if not to the letter of the NACCCE recommendations. With “the focus on outcomes

at 19 rather than 16” (ibid,7), GCSEs will become far less significant, they “should over time evolve to become a progress check around the midpoint of the phase” (ibid,). This also puts more emphasis on the end of Key Stage 3 because the choice of options made then “will assume a greater significance” (ibid,). What happens to the current arrangement of external assessment at the end of Key Stage 3 is not, however, made clear and this could be crucial to how Shakespeare is taught at Key Stage 3. The very recent furore concerning the 2002 A level grades, which involved an independent public inquiry headed by the former Chief Inspector of Schools, Mike Tomlinson, and led to the dismissal of the Chairman of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, Sir William Stubbs, has left confidence in the A level examination system in “tatters” (Henry, 2002: 1). At the time of writing, there has been further media speculation about potential “grading discrepancies” of the “national tests taken at seven, 11 and 14 ... Teachers’ leaders called last night [28/09/02] for a parliamentary inquiry into the future of the exam system” (Bright and McVeigh, 2002: 5), and “The A level mess is not an isolated crisis but a symptom of a system so swamped and befuddled with aims and objectives, with policy papers and clashing dreams, that is hard to make sense of it all” (Riddell, 2002: 28).

Leaving aside the contentious issue of testing for the moment, the arguments about the teaching and learning of Shakespeare can be extremely impassioned, as we have seen, and the debate between conflict and consensus is one that will no doubt exist for some time yet. Some teachers will continue to teach Shakespeare feeling, as Wordsworth says, “What we have loved,/Others will love, and we will teach them

how” (cited in de Sousa, 1998: 451). Others will continue to challenge Shakespeare’s role in the curriculum. Perhaps the ideal synthesis is the one that Bruce Smith proposed:

If Shakespeare is a universal genius, it’s not because of the common values his works affirm but because of the means his works provide *to talk about* common values. What is needed, in my view, is a dialectic between past and present, in which past and present are brought together in a mutual critique. The result should be not a recovery of the past but something altogether new... The paradigm we need is not a matter of *either/or* but a matter of *both/and*. As I see it, my task as a teacher is not so much to “teach the conflicts” as to “teach the resonances.”

(Smith, 1998: 454).

As has been made clear in the research study, none of the teachers wanted to stop teaching Shakespeare, although at Key Stage 3 they were not able to go into as much depth about either the “conflicts” or the “resonances” that they could work on at Key Stage 4 and at A Level. Nevertheless, Key Stage 3 pupils could benefit from studying Shakespeare, they suggested, in ways that ranged from a particular aesthetic appreciation of his work to a general awareness of the social world and one’s own relationship to it. These considerations were noticeably at odds with the pupils’ rather more utilitarian assumptions and perceptions of what Shakespeare was for, as we have seen. The disjunction between the responses of teachers and pupils will always be the case, it could be argued, because professionally-trained teachers have

access to greater resources of cultural capital and can respond both intellectually *and* emotionally to Shakespeare in ways that their younger pupils can not. Furthermore, the requirements of the rest meant that teachers were obliged to instil a more mechanistic knowledge rather than enhance their pupils' aesthetic or moral appreciation of Shakespeare.

However, if we wish to encourage an appreciation of Shakespeare at Key Stage 3, we need to consider not just how disjunctions between pupils' and teachers' responses can be resolved but also how the disjunctions in responses between differing groups of pupils can be resolved as well, or at least ameliorated. What has become apparent in the research study is that pupil-responses to Shakespeare are not all the same but are as wide-ranging and diverse as the pupils are themselves. The 'official' assumption which Key Stage 3 Shakespeare implicitly sanctions is that pupils' experiences and understanding of Shakespeare are homogenous. That this is patently not so has been shown in the findings of the research study.

The issue of testing Shakespeare is one that has loomed large in the research study, from both pupils' and teachers' perspectives. Many pupils in all three of the focus groups had begun their Shakespeare studies at Year 9 with a degree of anticipation, having had mainly favourable prior encounters with Shakespeare. They ended Key Stage 3 with less than impassioned responses to Shakespeare.

In conclusion, I would not wish to suggest that Shakespeare should not be examined at all since, in relation to both intrinsic and extrinsic values, it can be richly rewarding in terms of personal satisfaction to engage so profoundly with Shakespeare whilst academic examination success brings its own reward with the accumulation of cultural capital. As the study has shown, it is more an issue to do with the age at which Shakespeare is tested, and how it is tested. In the light of the current debates surrounding the Government's proposals for the 14-19 curriculum as well as the most recent controversies over testing at all levels, as noted above, perhaps it is timely to suggest that the testing of 13 and 14 year olds on Shakespeare should either be ended or re-configured. As far as the latter is concerned, it could be possible to adapt the current assessment structure in ways that can account for the heterogeneity of pupils, teachers and schools that are holistic rather than atomistic in approach and, most importantly, which will enable Year 9 pupils to sustain a long-lasting enthusiasm for, and delight in, Shakespeare

Before concluding the thesis, I should like to add a brief critical reflection. At almost every stage in a thesis, but especially towards the end, the researcher will agonise over how it has been structured, analysed and presented. Could it have been done differently? "Let me count the ways" as Elizabeth Barrett Browning said in an entirely different context. Limiting myself to just a few, however, I regret that I was not able to obtain more detailed personal biographies of the pupils in the focus groups, this would have enriched the study I believe. Lack of school and pupil time played a large part in being unable to do so. Whilst the focus group interviews did

elicit a great deal of data, as have been shown, I would liked to have supplemented these with more in-depth individual interviews, which may have helped to counter-balance the dominance of particular voices in some interviews. I also feel that these would have provided additional knowledge of individual pupil *habitus*. At the outset of the study, a longitudinal approach was discussed and although this was, in the end, not followed I think that such an approach would be very worthwhile doing, if only to gain further valuable insight into pupils' responses to Shakespeare as they progress through school. Furthermore, although gender did not arise as an issue in the data as such, how gendered preferences change and develop could well be an area to pursue in a longitudinal study.

I sent summary reports on interim findings to each of the Heads of The English Departments in the three schools in the study. Although I understand that schools are busy and teachers move on (as happened in two of the schools), I received only one reply, from the new Head of Department in *School B*, part of which read as follows: "I was very interested to read your work. The issue of the school's involvement in Key Stage Three is a perennial topic, and particularly the validity and effect of the Shakespeare paper, and your research will be useful to that debate" (Personal correspondence, 26/02/02). I should like to pursue further means of dissemination that would contribute practically as well as theoretically to that as it is currently being conducted by teachers, teacher-educators and policy-makers.

This thesis has heard from many different voices, but I consider it fitting that it should end with quotations from two in particular, Shakespeare as well as one of the pupil research participants. We have heard much about Shakespeare in and out of the curriculum, for my part I would not want Shakespeare to disappear from either context. Nor would I want Shakespeare to be expunged from Key Stage 3 but, recalling the earlier discussions about Shakespeare's transformative and transforming power, I would like the present Key Stage 3 Shakespeare-shape to change somewhat so that, like Prospero to Ariel, we can say:

then to the elements

Be free, and fare thou well.

(The Tempest, Act V, v)

The pupils' responses to Shakespeare that have been heard in this thesis have been illuminating, stone-walling, poignant, playful, serious, confused and, as such, they have challenged some of my pre-conceived notions of what Shakespeare means to them, as learners, and to me, as a teacher. What I hope for the future of Shakespeare in schools is that it will in some small way help, not hinder, all pupils in their progress through school and the road to realising their hopes and ambitions.

Following Shakespeare then, it is appropriate that the last word should go to the voice of a pupil:

I always wanted to fly, like a plane, but I don't know because everyone else round my

way just wants to survive, to be a plumber or an electrician

and I've always wanted to go higher.

(Steve, School A)

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