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Interpreting the gesture, sensing the sign : a comparative case study analysis of the effects of changes in theory and practice on A-level Shakespeare teaching in English literature and theatre studies.

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Interpreting the Gesture, Sensing the Sign:

**A Comparative Case Study Analysis of the Effects of Changes in Theory and Practice on
A-Level Shakespeare Teaching in English Literature and Theatre Studies**

Volume I

Diane Marie Annette Davies

A thesis submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the Requirements of
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts

September 1994

ABSTRACT

Using an illuminative research methodology, this is a primarily qualitative investigation into the effects of changes in theory and practice on A - level Shakespeare teaching in both Theatre Studies and English Literature. Beginning with a review of changes in both educational and literary theory, it attempts to construct a framework for dialogue between secondary school teachers and academics. The research questions evolve from the postal interview responses of a purposefully selected sample of school teachers with a special interest in Shakespeare teaching. The research focus progresses to a comparative case study analysis of both A-level English Literature and A-Level Theatre Studies teaching, with the intent of discerning how changes in contemporary literary theory might be reconciled to classroom practice. The findings of the case studies are corroborated through a student survey questionnaire. The evidence gathered through a review of the theoretical literature, of teacher opinion, observation of practice, and survey of students' opinions point to the conclusion that the proclaimed aims of contemporary theory with regard to Shakespeare teaching might best be served through the inherently dialogic nature of investigation to be found in the Theatre Studies classroom

DEDICATION:

for Mark

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Finally, thank you to my family, especially to my husband and my son, for always being there for me.

I declare that the work contained in this thesis is entirely my own work, and the views expressed therein are my own and not of the University.

Diane M. Davies

Diane M. Davies

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare, Drama and Education

The relationship between drama and education has been evolving since the time of the ancient Greeks. The Aristotelian dictum, "Philosophy begins in wonder" pointed the attention of critics, educators and dramatists toward the tragic catharsis as a prime occasion of wonder, and established unequivocally the relationship between wonder, learning, and the drama of the time. The theatre was acknowledged by Horace as a place for instruction as well as delight. The analogy between the classroom and the audience highlights the passive nature of "instruction" and the pacifying effect of "delight": nevertheless, the potential has always existed for the evolution of the theatre as a site for authentic learning.

The nature of the knowledge that was sanctioned and disseminated through the theatres, and its relationship to the society within which that knowledge was created and those meanings enacted has now become the focus of much critical debate at the university level. With regard to English Renaissance drama in particular, what was once regarded as a stable, almost static and divinely ordered "World Picture"¹ of the Elizabethan age is now seen to be, under the light of current critical scrutiny, a structure held together by an extremely precarious balance of conflicting social energies which threaten at every level to upset the status quo. This is perhaps most clearly evident in the astonishing freedom of thought that was fostered through the mastery of rhetorical skill at the grammar school level. Though the discipline itself was extremely formal (one might even say restricting) the effect of this kind of education was to focus the power of persuasion and to equip young men who had access to an education with what eventually evolved into the dramatist's skill. The young Renaissance scholar's education, like that of the Medieval grammar school boy's before him, "was solidly based on Quintilian, and fortified with the sound pedagogical practice of setting Cicero as a model for schoolboys to imitate in their Latin themes."² The ability to articulate and debate both sides of a question was as important, if not more so, than a basic knowledge of poetic theory.

¹ E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (London: Chatto & Windus, 1943, reprint 1979)

² Donald Lemen Clark, John Milton at St. Paul's School (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948) p. 165, 106.

Modern scholarship has advanced beyond "the claustrophobia of dialectics"³, in the discovery that not every synthesis evolves from a primary oppositional relationship, and in light of that, the rhetorical exercise of arguing through thesis, contradictio, and solutio may seem somewhat limiting to the enquiring mind. However, recognition and identification of the elements of rhetoric and the structure of speech is only one prerequisite to the articulation of an oppositional discourse.

It is not enough simply to alert students to the ways in which the plays seek to construct an argument. Beyond this concern, it is imperative that students perceive as well those social, political and cultural forces that contribute to the conditions within which this particular type of drama can flourish. Joel Altman raises a pertinent question in this regard.

... what happens when academic exercises become public entertainments, as in the case of the dramatised debates that constitute a large part of early English secular drama? Do they retain the ethical neutrality which they enjoyed in the schools -- the ancient home of liberated otium -- or must they become responsible to the doxa of the audiences they have come out to entertain?⁴

Responsibility as a social gesture lies at the heart of true education. This is to understand responsibility as the desire to answer; to respond, and then to act upon one's word;

To be responsible, in respect of the primary motion of semantic trust, is, in the full sense, to accept the obligation of response ... It is to answer to and answer for. Responsible response answering answerability make of the process of understanding a moral act.⁵

Student response, however, is constantly mediated through attainment targets, assessments, and the current alarming trend to quantify knowledge through the constraints of the National Curriculum. Desire and action must be seen to be focused upon an acceptable purpose. While the Shakespeare plays themselves might seem to represent an unassailably acceptable focus for socially responsible education -- for desire and action -- in fact, the teaching of the Shakespeare plays within the schools is a highly politically charged issue. The plays subtly passed out of the popular culture into "high

³ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1988) passim.

⁴ Joel B. Altman, The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical inquiry and the development of Elizabethan drama (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) p. 4.

⁵ George Steiner, Real Presences: Is there anything in what we say? (London: Faber & Faber, 1989) p. 90.

culture"; while modes of reproduction were sanctioned, so were modes of teaching, and the government decreed who is to be taught the plays, and how. The irony at the core of all the pedagogical debate is that the basic instability, if you like, or essential freedom if you prefer, of the mandatory Shakespeare which is now every English student's due is made explicit within the plays themselves. "Nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." (Hamlet, II.ii. 249-250) -- a dangerous statement, and voiced in the volatile climate of a constantly changing school culture, it highlights the fundamental difficulty of the Shakespeare teacher's task.

Investigating The Nature of Change in Shakespeare Teaching

This research project consists of a collection of small but detailed investigations into Shakespeare teaching, all of which have been focused upon the following question: *How do we assess the effects of change -- both political and practical -- upon A-level Shakespeare teaching?* It is concerned primarily with the influence of changes in theory that originate at University level, and changes in practice that evolve at the classroom level. The other side of the research question concerns itself with what *withstands* the effects of change, that is; *What is it that continues to be of value in teaching and learning about the Shakespeare plays?* In essence, then, this dissertation is about the *transformation* of Shakespeare teaching, and looks to the evidence in classroom reality to construct a theoretical scheme for continuing transformation which is grounded both in hope and possibility.

Who's Asking:

(In Which I Self-Deconstruct)

In research of this nature, the questions themselves are to a large extent shaped and determined by the voice in which they are asked. Every step of the observation, inquiry, and analysis that constitutes this research will necessarily be coloured by my own perspective as researcher into an intensely English matter. My interests are culturally

constructed to the extent that I am bringing to the research question my Italian-American heritage, my American education, teacher training, and work experience in education and the theatre, and my English postgraduate education.

In the ten-year gap between completing my first degree in English literature and embarking upon a second, I had worked for two years as a member of the administrative staff of the now defunct Boston Shakespeare Company. It was there that I had the opportunity to experience firsthand the very real material conditions of the plays' reproduction. I also had the chance to watch, in rep., hundreds of performances of Shakespeare plays. It was the desire to share what I believed I had learned about the plays that compelled me eventually to qualify as a teacher of secondary English, and to spend four years in the classroom teaching, among other things, about the beauty of language and its power to move us, about universal values, and the concrete ways in which metaphor enables us to make connections between the spiritual and physical worlds. In that ten-year gap between the time I had completed my first degree in English literature and the time that I returned to higher education to read for my M. Phil., the study of English literature and of the Shakespeare plays in particular had undergone tremendous change. Having been weaned on the avuncular wisdom of Dover Wilson and G. Wilson Knight in the mid '70s, I found myself suddenly at sea with Sinfield, Dollimore, Holderness, Hawkes, Greenblatt and Eagleton. The plays were no longer populated with sublime characters whose dramatically compelling motivations and motions upon the stage resonated sympathetically with the collective consciousness of a rapt audience sharing a cathartic experience. They were now texts among texts, shot through with the traces of sexism, racism and elitism. They were to be read as entirely contingent on the cultural and material circumstances of their creation; expressions of and through a "circulation of social energy".⁶ Critics wrote virtually nothing about poetry, metaphor, lyricism, imagery, or beauty except as components of a decidedly political power in language, and as such, a power that was always suspect. The experience of reading itself had changed: to be moved by the beauty of language was to be naive, to be a victim of its power. Better to have the wherewithal to ask, who is being served and who repressed by

⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespearean Negotiations: The circulation of social energy in Renaissance England (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) passim.

that power? What we once knew as history, the useful background against which we contextualized the plays, became a fractured and multi-vocal notion of histories. The comfortable contextualizations were replaced with the volatile interactions of texts and histories; the "historicity of text and the textuality of history"⁷. To speak of "universal truth" was to commit the mortal sin of being politically incorrect: to continue to equate truth with beauty was beyond forgiveness. On the one hand I felt I had, however innocently, been complicit in a dangerous fraud, abusing my position of power at the head of my classrooms for four years. On the other hand, I felt that I had been cheated and defrauded myself: compelled against my best instincts to read and write about Shakespeare as "an instrument of bourgeois hegemony"⁸ I felt as if I was performing a literary autopsy. I began to question whether or not an ability to connect emotionally with the drama precluded an ability to think clearly about the ways in which the drama moves. I wanted to know what other teachers felt. I wanted to know if the new generation of English and Drama students were capable of being moved by the Shakespeare plays, and if they continued to value the experience of that connection. I wanted to know what was being taught about Shakespeare in the English and drama classrooms in secondary schools in the area where I lived, and how that fitted into the wider political agenda of the educational policies of a right-wing Conservative government, which, during the time that this dissertation was being researched, saw fit to legislate the teaching of "some Shakespeare" to all English children by the age of fourteen.⁹ I wanted to discover through personal investigation what students thought and what teachers thought about the teaching of Shakespeare, and to balance this against what was a matter of public record in the world of politics and higher education. Trying to make sense of a very changed world, I wanted to assess, in a very small corner of that world, the effects of change in Shakespeare teaching upon teachers and students.

⁷ Louis Montrose, 'Renaissance literary studies and the subject of history', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986) 1-12 (p. 8).

⁸ David Margolies, 'Teaching the handsaw to fly: Shakespeare as a hegemonic instrument' in *The Shakespeare Myth* ed. by Graham Holderness (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) pp. 42-53 (p. 44).

⁹ Linda Blackburne, 'Stage set for dispute over play: Government advisors to choose Shakespeare text for test at 14', *Times Educational Supplement*, 3 July 1992, p. 4.

Who's Answering:

The Teachers and Students Involved

The research that went into this assessment makes use of a variety of sources; the picture of Shakespeare teaching that emerges is a conglomerate of a number of perspectives. These include not only what has been voiced by politicians and academics through the media, but also the perspectives of English teachers and students who contributed their ideas and opinions through postal interviews, surveys and conversations, as well as my own observations of classroom teaching. The picture of Shakespeare teaching and learning that emerges from this research is therefore decidedly idiosyncratic. The research cannot make any sweeping generalizations about the state of Shakespeare teaching in the whole of England. What it can do, is raise a number of specific questions about changes in Shakespeare teaching and offer particular answers based upon direct observations of, and input by, a number of teachers and students who are directly affected by those changes. It can put some of the sweeping generalizations from the academic and political spheres of influence upon secondary education to the test at the classroom level.

Justification of Methodology:

Illuminative Evaluation

It is important to clarify from the outset the justification for choosing a primarily qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) methodology in designing the research itself. I will be adapting the evaluative strategies of "illuminative " research, and carrying the project through three stages: observation, inquiry, and analysis.¹⁰

The primary justification for this choice comes from the tone of teacher response to academic criticisms of their teaching practices: while Alan Sinfield, for example, cannot claim to have conducted a specifically "quantitative" analysis of Shakespeare teaching in that he has avoided number-crunching and statistics as evidence for his claims, neither has he engaged in what can legitimately be regarded as qualitative research. The documents that he has had to hand -- surveys of O- and A-level English

¹⁰ Malcolm Parlett and David Hamilton, 'Evaluation as Illumination' in Curriculum Evaluation Today: Trends and implications ed. by D. Tawney (London: Macmillan, 1976)

literature students dating back from 1968, a sampling of Welsh, Southern, and Oxford and Cambridge examining board A-level English literature questions, the Black Papers of 1969-70, and various Examining Board reports¹¹ -- and out of which he has formulated and drawn his conclusions, can be quoted to serve his purpose without any bothersome contradictory evidence from actual classroom practice. Jim Porteous and Steve Bennison have criticized this approach : "It's rather as if Engels had written The Condition of the Working Class relying solely on government blue books, glossy brochures written by Manchester civic dignitaries and the account-books of thriving manufacturers."¹² The distance between university-level study of the Shakespeare plays and secondary-school-level study of the plays is nowhere more apparent than in the absence of academics from the very milieu they seek to reform: the possibility of constructing a dialogue between theorists and practitioners grows increasingly remote for as long as this situation prevails. Any attempt to rectify this situation demands the presence of the researcher in the classroom, and in electing to do any type of case study, the choice for a qualitative analysis has been made.

A second justification for this choice derives from the evaluative nature of the project. One of the central questions posed concerns itself with the possibilities and opportunities for change in the way we teach and learn about (or through) the Shakespeare plays. What is often perceived as resistance to change on the part of the educational establishment may in fact be something else again. Barriers to change exist, some of which take the form of resistance, and some of which defy such simple classification. The complexity and specificity of the situation again demand the presence of the researcher in the classroom. This brand of qualitative research, termed "illuminative" by its originators, Malcolm Parlett and David Hamilton, was developed as an evaluative strategy for educational researchers investigating curriculum change. In some respects it can be considered as a reaction to traditional modes of curriculum evaluation which followed the "agricultural-botany " paradigm:

¹¹ Alan Sinfield, 'Give an account of Shakespeare and Education, showing why you think they are effective and what you have appreciated about them. Support your comments with precise references', in Political Shakespeare: New essays in cultural materialism ed. by Johnathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University press, 1985) pp. 134 -157 (pp. 154 -157).

¹² Stephen Bennison and Jim Porteous, 'An ordeal of degrading personal compulsion', *Literature Teaching Politics*, 6 (1987) 29 -43 (p. 30).

Students -- rather like plants -- are given pre-tests (the seedlings are weighed or measured) and then submitted to different experiences (treatment conditions). Subsequently, after a period of time, their attainment (growth or yield) is measured to indicate the relative efficiency of the methods (fertilizers) used. Studies of this kind are designed to yield data of one particular type, i.e. "objective" numerical data that permit statistical analyses. Isolated variables like IQ, social class, test scores, personality profiles and attitude ratings are codified and processed to indicate the efficiency of new curricula, media, or methods.¹³

Illuminative evaluation differs fundamentally from traditional methods of evaluation in that its focus is on "description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction."¹⁴ The opportunity to evaluate critically (as opposed to prejudicially) the classroom practices under investigation is manifest far more readily within a research strategy that seeks to present rather than to prove. Another advantage of illuminative evaluation is that it takes account of both the wider and the more immediate contexts in which educational innovations function. "Central to an understanding of illuminative evaluation are two concepts: the 'instructional system' and the 'learning milieu'.¹⁵ The instructional system is comprised of formalized plans and statements, pedagogic assumptions, and examination specifications which represent an idealized and coherent scheme of learning. A National Curriculum or an A-level English Syllabus, for example, can be considered as an instructional system, and as such, can provide the focal point for the traditional evaluator's research. What traditional strategies fail to acknowledge is the variety and specificity of interpretation that the instructional system is subject to in different learning milieus:

The instructional system may remain as a shared idea, abstract model, slogan or shorthand, but it assumes a different form in every situation. Its constituent elements are emphasized or de-emphasized, expanded or truncated, as teachers, administrators, technicians and students interpret and re-interpret the instructional system for their particular setting. In practice, objectives are commonly re-ordered, re-defined, abandoned or forgotten. The original "ideal" formulation ceases to be accurate, or, indeed, of much relevance.¹⁶

The difference between the instructional system and the learning milieu provides the focus for illuminative evaluation. Focus itself narrows progressively as hypotheses

¹³ Parlett and Hamilton, pp. 85-86.

¹⁴ Parlett and Hamilton, p. 88.

¹⁵ Parlett and Hamilton, p. 89.

¹⁶ Parlett and Hamilton, p. 90.

emerge. For these reasons it is a research strategy ideally suited to investigations into the relationship between theory and practice.

The research is therefore not constructed along the lines of a scientific experiment; it does not attempt to prove a hypothesis through tests and results. Rather, it allows a hypothesis to emerge over time on the basis of long and careful observations, and offers a series of alternatives to the ways in which we have been conditioned to think about Shakespeare teaching rather than proofs of the superiority of one method over another. It looks specifically at A-level Shakespeare teaching, because that is where the gulf between university-level study and secondary-school-level study is of most consequence. It looks at changes in theory over the past generation in both education and English studies, as well as evidence of changes in practice in Shakespeare teaching as a component of an A-level English Literature syllabus, and as a component of the Theatre Studies syllabus. Most importantly, it attempts to discover what is the pedagogic nature of the relationship between content and method in Shakespeare teaching: in other words, how does the way in which Shakespeare is being taught affect the substance of what is actually being learned by students?

Methodology and Ideology:

The Question of Theory

The question of method demands a further investigation into the more complex question of theory. No classroom practice is without a theoretical underpinning, though often that theory may be almost entirely unconscious on the part of the teacher, despite the practice of calling upon aspiring teachers to articulate their philosophy of education in the increasingly politicized activity of simply applying for a teaching job in the state sector. Nevertheless, theoretical suppositions permeate the whole of school life, from the way in which the desks in the classroom are arranged to the political bias of the A-level examination questions. As schools are in the business of educating, that is, literally "leading out" into knowledge, the single most important theoretical question we can ask with regard to the teaching of any subject is *Whom does knowledge serve?* Once we begin to acknowledge the fact that knowledge can and does serve varied and often conflicting

interests, we step on to the moral high ground upon which the power struggle for knowledge is fought.

This small-scale investigation into A-level Shakespeare teaching begins with the theoretical conflicts which characterize the intersection of two immensely powerful political institutions: the educational system and what has come to be known as "the Shakespeare industry".¹⁷

On the one hand, questions of theory which are focused upon the educational system will concern themselves, among other things, with the ways in which power relationships between the student and the teacher, the teacher and the school administration, the school and the community, and the local community and the state government are established, organized, controlled, and inevitably resisted within the structures of the educational institutions. They will seek to discover the social value of knowledge, and the ways in which the schools confer or deny the individual student's ability to make authentic meaning in their world. These concerns of an essentially 'radical' educational theory will focus upon the ways in which hegemonic control over the circulation of cultural capital is enacted through the school system on every level, and how the replication of inequalities within the social structure is insured. On the other hand, questions of theory which are focused upon Shakespeare and the teaching of the Shakespeare plays will concern themselves with the mediation of powerful texts through even more powerful institutions. The teaching of Shakespeare's plays as a primary token of cultural capital stands at the point of intersection between educational theories of hegemonic control within the educational system and literary and cultural theories of hegemonic control within the material conditions of the plays' production and re-production.

In this regard, this project is about knowledge, power and meaning as they relate to the teaching of Shakespeare in England. That is to say, it is educational in scope and Shakespearean in focus. It is as much concerned with pedagogical issues as it is with the cultural, theatrical and literary influences that help to shape Shakespeare teaching practices. If one begins, as I do, from the conviction that Shakespeare teaching represents

¹⁷ Graham Holderness, 'Bardolatry: or, The cultural materialist's guide to Stratford-upon-Avon', in The Shakespeare Myth p. 4.

unparalleled opportunities for empowering students, the necessity for a conscious investigation of the practices that constitute "Shakespeare Teaching" is paramount.

Defining the Terms:

Knowledge, Power and Meaning

This inquiry is grounded in the belief that ideally, education constitutes a practice that is meaningful, critical, and emancipatory: literally a "leading out" of students' knowledge through a structured process of discovery, inquiry, and mastery. The issues of knowledge, power and meaning are all pertinent. "Knowledge", for the purposes of this inquiry, goes beyond the accumulation of facts: it is more a process than a product -- the ability to discern the structure of inquiry, to formulate a question, and to equally acknowledge the question that remains unasked, to hear the voice that is silenced -- this brand of knowledge is essential to the creative growth of critical thinking. "Power" is the fusion of intelligence with desire: of knowledge with control. "Power" is what enables us to frame an action to a purpose. It is too simple to assert that "Knowledge is power": inauthentic knowledge, in the form of propaganda and indoctrination for example, merely empowers the disseminators. For the purposes of classroom teachers, empowering knowledge is that which discovers and nurtures the students' own authority; which develops the students' own faculties of judgement and enables them to create their own meanings.¹⁸ The student's own authority is one which is negotiated on every level -- from that of the individual relationship between student and teacher, through the constraints on personal response imbedded within the examination system, right up to the structure of the National Curriculum itself.

Upon the Shakespearean stage, theatrical power has always been and continues to be the power of revelation and declaration. It is a volatile power in so far as it is easily subverted from its own proclaimed intentions: what is revealed is not necessarily what has been intended to be shown; likewise what is heard is often not what is declared. This, of course, is equally true of the classroom, in so far as what is taught is not necessarily what is learned; and what is learned is not necessarily what is taught.

¹⁸ Paulo Freire, The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation trans by. Donald Macedo (Massachusetts: Bergin & Garvey, 1985) p. 155.

Power becomes a politically charged issue when we begin to speak in terms of "power over" another, in degrees of strength that progress from influence through impact to out-and-out oppression. In the culture of twentieth-century English schools, as in the culture of Elizabethan English theatres, the power struggle is waged within a framework of institutional constraint that privileges certain types of knowledge and ways of knowing over others. Students' ability to create meaning is therefore predicated upon their perceptions of the cultural parameters within which they find themselves.

It is impossible, today in England, to teach Shakespeare in an ideological vacuum: Shakespeare is too deeply and thoroughly embedded in the cultural heritage, figuring as the focus of either contention or adulation. The implications of this as they are reflected in teacher attitudes and practices, in student response, and in the very structure of the educational system itself as it has been delineated by the National Curriculum are of central importance to this inquiry. What implications does the National Curriculum have for the teaching of Shakespeare, and how does this reflect upon a sense of national heritage and identity in an increasingly multi-cultural society? Can the teaching of Shakespeare in English schools continue to have any real relevance to students from minority and marginalized cultures? Questions such as these highlight the problem of universals: should the Shakespeare plays be taught as representative of enduring and absolute truths? The whole basis of the Leavisite inheritance of practical criticism, so enormously influential to a generation of English teachers, is that "Great Literature" will somehow transcend the contextualization, the historicizing of texts. At the schools level, this belief still enjoys wide currency : at the university level it is becoming increasingly unfashionable. Dover Wilson is "out"; Dollimore is "in", and the tremendous body of theoretical and historical knowledge required now for the production of respectable new historicist and cultural materialist investigations of the plays has substantially widened the gap between schools and university-level study of the plays. Even this, however, is beginning to change: witness Graham Bradshaw and Brian Vickers's attacks upon current

theory's "appropriations" of Shakespeare.¹⁹ All of this has profound implications upon the job a secondary school English teacher has to do.

Theorizing Practice

In order to diminish the gap between schools and university-level study of the Shakespeare plays, it will be necessary for teachers to discern the points of common purpose between radical educational theory and contemporary literary theories. The basis for this discussion, which will be dealt with in detail in the chapters to follow, is outlined briefly below.

Theoretically, there are many points of common purpose between current postmodernist trends in literary theory dealing directly with the plays themselves, (in particular cultural materialist and new historicist readings of the Shakespeare plays) and the brand of radical educational theory which developed out of the work of the Frankfurt School critical theorists, particularly Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno. Paulo Freire's work too, is particularly important : his concept of the aim of education as the nurturing of a "critical consciousness" is the base upon which this project is built. A critical consciousness, or "conscientizacao"²⁰ is one that perceives the social, economic, and cultural forces that constitute our daily lives and human consciousness. Freire's project was one of liberation through education, and fundamental to the working of this project was his very Christian belief that "the oppressor within" the oppressed consciousness must be first acknowledged, and ultimately loved. Central too, to a liberating pedagogy, is the notion that meaning must be negotiated between student and teacher: it is not knowledge, but the ability to create meanings that constitutes power.

Henry Giroux's concept of "border pedagogy" aims to extend the concept of a critical consciousness into a wider field: "border pedagogy" focuses the energy of liberation upon its obstacles -- as there is no expansion without there first being a notion of limitation, the border must be perceived before it can be crossed. His adoption of the

¹⁹ See Graham Bradshaw, Misrepresentations: Shakespeare and the Materialists (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), also Brian Vickers, Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993)

²⁰ Friere, p. 69.

concept of a "discourse of difference" allows a voice to all manner of clamour outside the dominant culture, and acknowledges its validity across a spectrum of social, political, racial, sexual, and gender differences. Border pedagogy, then, is as much about perceiving and crossing borders as it is about "re-territorializing" fields of knowledge -- that is to say, rejecting received notions of the grand narrative, and re-writing, re-reading texts within a re-mapped "territory" of familiarity, validity, and recognition to the alternative understanding.²¹ It is possible, working within such a theoretical framework, to reject the ingrained notions we inherit about the grand narratives (the Shakespearean Canon being prime among them) without rejecting the narratives themselves. If anything, such a strategy enables teachers and students to "reclaim the canon" as Kiernan Ryan entreats.²²

Practical Theory: From Page to Stage

Some of the most profound changes in secondary-school Shakespeare teaching have been effected through the growth in popularity of the active teaching methods promoted by Rex Gibson through the Shakespeare in Schools research project. Working directly with teachers and students, and intimately acquainted with the practical difficulties that they face, he is as much concerned with theory as with practice. His work has taken him throughout the country, working with teachers and students on the development of active methods for teaching the Shakespeare plays. They have accumulated a wealth of information about teaching practice and teacher attitudes about the plays: their research is particularly timely and telling.²³ He has come under some sharp criticism, however, (most publicly from Terence Hawkes in a televised debate with the then Secretary of State for Education Kenneth Baker and actress Fiona Shaw)²⁴ for not limiting their classroom explorations of the Shakespeare plays to the purely political. As he is not in the business of "owning" Shakespeare, but rather keen to acknowledge students' own

²¹ Henry A. Giroux, 'Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism', *Journal of Education*, 170 (1988) 5-30.

²² Kiernan Ryan, 'Towards a Socialist Criticism: Reclaiming the Canon', *Literature Teaching Politics*, 3 (1984) 4-17.

²³ Rex Gibson, 'Gentles, perchance you wonder at this show': Prince Charles's comments about school Shakespeare have themselves become the stuff of drama. But what is really happening?', *Times Educational Supplement*, 24 May 1991, p. 22.

²⁴ "Is Shakespeare Overrated?" chaired by Clive James BBC 2

appropriations, and advocate the teaching of "Shakespeares" rather than "Shakespeare", he views Shakespeare the political playwright as just one of many "Shakespeares". As far as left-thinking academics are concerned, Gibson had an unfortunate and decidedly unfashionable champion in Kenneth Baker.

Gibson's work is important to this research project for two reasons: firstly, and more specifically, because the teachers responding to the postal interview have all been directly influenced by his work, having trained in the active method with him over a week-long residential course at Girton College; secondly, and more generally, because evidence of the use of active methods with varying degrees of success in the actual classroom observations can be found both in the English Literature and in the Theatre Studies classes observed. These observations can then be tested against students' attitudes and responses to the use of these methods as a part of their experience of learning Shakespeare, and help to form the basis upon which an assessment of this particular mode of change in Shakespeare teaching can be made.

The history of Shakespeare teaching in England can be seen as a gradual movement away from text-dominated study towards a growing concern among teachers and examiners for a sense of the performance, a movement from page to stage, from text to script. If we view each stage of this development as part of an expanding dimension of exploration, text-based analysis can be seen to represent a one-dimensional approach; black-and-white pen-and-ink on-the-page interpretation that rarely ventured beyond the realm of inter-linear analysis. The current enthusiasm for active methods adds another dimension: students and teachers on their feet, moving about the classroom with script in hand, and we are now in the realm of three-dimensional Shakespeare teaching. One step beyond this, add the element of time, and see the play as made in time as well as contributing to the times which help to make it (a notion akin to the new historicists' concept of the historicity of texts and the textuality of history) and we are in the fourth dimension. More importantly, if students can be made to perceive for themselves the limits of rhetorical inquiry -- that is to say the ways in which the very mode of investigation itself is culturally constructed, they may then begin to recognize the

origins, structures and power of the rhetoric which suffuses their everyday lives, and regain control and definition of their world.

Back to the Chalkface:

Qualitative Research into Classroom Practices

For many teachers, Shakespeare teaching is fraught with notions of elitism, difficulty, fear, and occasional loathing -- the poisonous inheritance of being badly taught and having 'high culture' thrust upon them themselves. For others, the task of Shakespeare teaching is a joyful challenge -- an intensely rewarding experience for teachers and students that all may profit by, regardless of ability level or cultural background. There are theorists as well as educators who have argued on either side of the debate that Shakespeare teaching can be a golden opportunity to teach "universal truths", or it can equally be a means of hegemonic control, privileged as a cultural form at the expense of alternative modes of expression, effectively stifling the discourse of difference. The extent to which these theories apply in practice can best be determined by witnessing these practices first-hand. It is for this reason that such a large proportion of the time involved in this research has been devoted to communications with teachers and students.

The qualitative aspect of this research is two-fold. The research questions are first focused through an analysis of a detailed postal interview with Shakespeare teachers from a purposefully selected sample, all of whom participated on an INSET course on using active Shakespeare teaching methods in the classroom. I have devised and distributed an open-ended survey questionnaire, requesting detailed responses to questions pertaining to teachers' own attitudes and experiences of Shakespeare in academic as well as theatrical settings. Questions about critical influences have been posed in an attempt to ascertain the extent to which teachers in schools are aware of critical trends at university level. Institutional constraints, such as school budgets, examination requirements, and physical teaching conditions are all investigated, and teachers are also invited to frame their responses in terms of the ideal circumstances under which they would like to teach. Their

testimony is then set against long and careful observations of A-level Shakespeare teaching in both English Literature and Theatre Studies classes.

The classroom observations, or case studies, comprise an important part of the qualitative field research. While I have also included a closed-question survey assessing student attitudes towards their experience of Shakespeare teaching for quantitative analysis, this will serve to supplement the findings of what will be a primarily qualitative investigation into the research questions.

There is much talk on the part of the present government about "parental choice" based on a notion of parents as "consumers" of education. It is very easy to lose sight of the fact that it is in fact the students who are the real "consumers" of education, and in an investigation such as this, it would be a glaring omission to exclude them from a study that purports to discover ways in which student authority can be discovered and self-disciplined. With this in mind I have conducted an analysis of students' responses to a detailed quantitative survey directed toward assessing their attitudes toward, and experiences of Shakespeare teaching in the classroom. If there are any great disparities between what teachers believe is being taught and what students report that they have learned, here is where they will be revealed.

Who is being taught Shakespeare, how, By whom, who is excluded, and why, are all questions that need to be asked. One of the more sobering discoveries of the Shakespeare in Schools research project was that only one in a hundred British students go on to study Shakespeare at the university level -- whether or not this a good thing remains to be seen, but precisely why this is the case should be of some interest to educators at the schools level. It had already been officially recommended that "the less able" be steered away from the Shakespeare plays -- (CSE board recommendation)²⁵, a recommendation which seemed at the very least to be divisive and elitist. When Shakespeare was later assured a place on the National Curriculum, the GCSE board recommendation was modified - the "less able" are now to be steered toward "The Seven Ages of Man" speech, rather than be burdened with the task of attempting an entire play.

²⁵ Sinfield, p. 136.

As there is perhaps nothing that so thoroughly epitomises the "Englishness" of English teaching as the study of Shakespeare plays, it is arguably, in effect, sanctioning the perpetuation of a form of cultural illiteracy to exclude any English students from the study of the plays, whether it be on the grounds of the plays' irrelevance to their everyday lives or on the assumption of their inability to understand the plays. Such policies warrant, at the very least, a reflection upon the debate about the nature of an aesthetic education, as it is defined, contained, appropriated or subverted by the society whose artistic values it reflects.

In an attempt to get beyond theories of social and cultural reproduction within the school system itself, it is necessary to imagine and construct a dialogue between educators and theorists that will be practically useful to classroom teachers who are in a position to make the most of theory. Teachers of Shakespeare in this country are in a position of power within the educational system, and more importantly, within the classroom itself where the teacher-student relationship is forged and meanings are created. To wield that power casually, in however well-intentioned or innocent a way, presents a potential danger. With an eye to enfranchising as many students as possible, with an eye to empowering as broad a spectrum as possible of students (even the "less able") through Shakespeare teaching, the task of the researcher is two-fold: both descriptive (which will involve qualitative field work and assessment of schools practice as it exists) and prescriptive, which will offer a critique and an alternative to present practice.

Educating the Whole Student

"Interpreting the Gesture and Sensing the Sign" is meant to suggest that the nature of an aesthetic education is both rational and intellectually based as well as emotional and intuitive in nature. Until fairly recently, Shakespeare teaching in schools has been characterized by a powerful emphasis on intellectual analysis of the text, often at the expense of understanding the emotional subtext and the physical relationship of bodies on a stage that is essential to theatrical practice. As the criteria for "understanding"

Shakespeare become increasingly intellectual and theoretical, the body is not only neglected but degraded. To ignore the relevance of emotion and its passionate, physical enactment as an essential component of an aesthetic education is to argue for an inauthentic pedagogy. The London School Curriculum Development Committee's 1984 report on responses to literature stresses above all else that student response in examinations should exhibit an intimate acquaintance and authentic response to the poem or play at hand, though even then, the cultural assumptions upon which the evaluation of authentic response was based were being challenged and extended.²⁶ Equally, students must not be deprived of the skills with which to compare their "authentic" experience against an imagined alternative. What remains intriguing and challenging about Shakespeare teaching is the opportunity it presents to open the field of learning out into a complete, even holistic education that engages, stimulates and nurtures a student on an intellectual, physical and emotional level. Essential to this undertaking is a sense of balance and form: empathetic, emotional exploration as well as theoretical and intellectual investigations into Shakespeare studies can equally degenerate into self-indulgence. Drama techniques employed in the English classroom need the discipline of theatrical form -- as theoretical investigations need to be validated against theatrical possibility. As form and structure are themselves components of power, the mastery of these through the teaching of the Shakespeare plays provides a prime occasion for an authentically liberating education.

²⁶ John Dixon and John Brown, Responses to Literature: What is being Assessed? Part I: Literary Response: What counts as Evidence? (London: School Curriculum Development Committee, 1984) p. 14.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND THEORY

" An aesthetic theory is always an attempt to bring to bear on the joyous, libertarian scandal of resurrection the concept of historical and rational form."¹

When Steiner writes of "the joyous, libertarian scandal of resurrection", he reminds us not only of what is arguably the essence of art, but also of education. If education is not joyous, then that "leading out" is scarcely into light. If it is not libertarian, then there remains a serious question as to whom knowledge serves. If it is not scandalous then it has merely served to reassure us of our complacencies. If education itself does not constitute a genuine resurrection, then there is little hope for the life of the mind of the next generation. When educational theories and literary theories as well as aesthetic theories attempt to bring to bear the concepts of historical and rational form upon this enormous energy that fuels our passion to learn, to communicate and to perform, their task is to contain that energy long enough for it to take on the shape of the theoretical vessel, much as the Genii's spirit is shaped in its confinement to the contours of the lamp.

The object of theory, whether its focus is art, literature, or education, is to construct a rational system for the definition and analysis of the products and the processes that constitute our culture. To theorize is to set the energies of imagination about the task of delineating the parameters of the discipline, determining its critical language, methods, values, tasks and relevance by standards which are determined by the vision of the theorists through the particular focus of their times. Nevertheless, the task of theory is itself dynamic and dialectical, in so far as theoretical constructs exist to be rethought, and reconstructed with a motivation that is necessarily oppositional. The freedom of the theorist rests in the choice of these parameters. The limitations of the theoretical construct can be measured by the distance from which it is removed from practical reality.

In its relationship to social change, theory serves equally as an impetus and an obstacle. The realization of perfection in social forms is theoretically possible: this is the impetus to hope among the optimists. But among those theorists whose vision is retrospective and whose memory is revisionist, theory crystallizes the social order into an

¹ George Steiner, Real Presences (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), p. 210.

unassailable paradigm of perfection. Selecting to describe and assign a place to those elements of society which fit the theoretical framework, and discarding those which do not, their task is informed by a curious mix of nostalgia and a yearning after a notion of incorruptibility. Karl Popper's claim that Platonic social theory essentially constituted an obstacle to a free and open society in that it was openly hostile and resistant to change itself is a fundamental example of this:

The speculative or metaphysical setting of Plato's theory of social change ... is the world of unchanging Forms or Ideas, of which the world of changing things in space and time is the offspring. The Forms or Ideas are not only unchanging, indestructible, and incorruptive but also perfect, true, real and good; in fact, "good" is once, in the Republic, explained as "everything that preserves", and "evil" as "everything that destroys or corrupts."²

It is a legacy that has come to inform generations of theorists; the danger inherent in this is that of adoration of the form itself, and the failure to appreciate the fact that form not only facilitates change but necessitates change: the function of theoretical form is to contain and control ideas and desires that are dynamic and in flux by their very nature -- what Steiner terms "the joyous libertarian scandal of resurrection"³ -- and form must change, as theory must change, to accommodate the changes in human desire, and the evolution of human needs. Retrospective vision and revisionist memory limit the possibilities of human agency, and relegate the future to stagnation: that history repeats itself is damning to us all.

The past is read as -- and for -- evidence that change is always only superficial, that human nature, what it is to be a person, a man, a woman, a wife or a husband, is palpably unchanging. This history militates against radical commitment by denying the possibility of change.⁴

It is precisely at that moment when form constrains desire and resists ideas that theory becomes a driving force for social change, though the prescriptive thrust of theory that argues for change is equally committed to form. As the focus is visionary, claims against existing forms and structures of thought are supported by the offering of

2 Karl Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies Vol. 1 The Spell of Plato 5th edn., revised 1966 (London: Routledge, 1986), p. 35.

3 Steiner, p. 210.

4 Catherine Belsey, The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 2.

alternative structures: perfection is equally attainable in the uncharted and infinitely malleable future, as it is in revisionist notions of the past.

To theorize, then, is to choose a vision : of necessity, every focus, every vision is exclusive -- while the poverty of theory resides in this partial blindness, its richness resides in the limitless scope of that choice. The capability to choose is itself predicated upon an ability to see or to perceive, (the root of the word "theory" itself derives from the Greek for "to behold; to contemplate") and in that, the theorist is in a position of authority, as one who exercises completely his or her subjectivity through the conscious control of vision. The point where the uses of theory and the aims of education meet is the point where the question of authority and the formation of subjectivities is thrown into relief against contested ground:

the popularization of theory ... has gained a contested place (a place of contestation), where the ideological content of English and Literature may be overhauled, but ... it has not addressed the routine structure of teaching and learning in which this is practical. In short, though in its own terms the political criticism of a reconstituted literary or cultural studies would be concerned centrally with the production of human subjectivities, this very aspect of a literary education and of its own supposed counter-influence has been ignored. In this respect it has so far failed.⁵

Rather than simply rehearse old arguments for the sake of recounting the history of literary and educational theory to date, it would appear to be more fruitful, given the task at hand, to subject the relevant theories and arguments from both disciplines to a type of structured improvisation -- to construct a dialogue between theorists and practitioners to enact a mutually beneficial critique.

Critical theory and Shakespeare studies:

Negative Capability vs. Negative Dialectics

Before turning specifically to the ways in which critical theory has manifested changes in literary studies, a look at the application of critical theory to education is necessary in order to reveal their points of common interest, the opportunities they present for

⁵ Peter Brooker, 'Refunctioning theory: at most pedagogics', in Dialogue and Difference: English into the Nineties, ed. by Peter Brooker and Peter Humm (London: Routledge, 1989).

resistance and intervention, and their potential for constructing and sustaining the dynamic of an authentically liberating pedagogy .

"Critical theory refers to the legacy of theoretical work developed by certain members of what can loosely be described as 'the Frankfurt School'"⁶ particularly the work of Habermas, Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. The term "Frankfurt School" refers to the original home of the Institute for Social Research, established in 1923 by Felix Weil in Frankfurt, Germany. The majority of the group's most famous members (including Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and Theodor Adorno) joined the Institute after 1930, at which time it was under the directorship of Max Horkheimer. The particular focuses of their work on culture and rationality were to a large extent shaped and determined by their historical moment:

In essence, the questions it pursued, along with the forms of social inquiry it supported, represent both a particular moment in the development of Western Marxism as well as a critique of it. Reacting to the rise of Fascism and Nazism on the one hand, and the failure of orthodox Marxism on the other, the Frankfurt School had to refashion and rethink the meaning of domination and emancipation. The rise of Stalinism, and the failure of the European or Western working class to contest capitalist hegemony in a revolutionary manner, and the power of capitalism to reconstitute and reinforce its economic and ideological control forced the Frankfurt School to reject the orthodox reading of Marx and Engels...orthodox Marxism assumed too much while simultaneously ignoring the benefits of self-criticism. It had failed to develop a theory of consciousness and by doing so expelled the human subject from its own theoretical calculus ... the Frankfurt School's research downplayed the area of political economy and focused instead on the issue of how subjectivity was constituted, as well as how the spheres of culture and everyday life represented a new terrain of domination.⁷

The "rethinking of the meaning of emancipation and domination" lies at the heart of the Frankfurt School's inquiry and critique. They regarded this as an essential task, as society itself, in its quest for social harmony, risks corruption from the forces of instrumental rationality. In essence, this mode of rationality "represents the preoccupation with means in preference to ends. It is concerned with method and efficiency rather than with purposes. It is the divorce of fact from value, and the preference, in that divorce, for fact."⁸ Instrumental rationality was seen by the Frankfurt School to be one of the dominant features of the modern world that presented an obstacle

6 Henry A. Giroux, 'Culture and Rationality in Frankfurt School Thought: Ideological Foundations for a Theory of Social Education', *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 9 (1982) 17-55 (p. 20).

7 Giroux, p. 23.

8 Rex Gibson, Critical Theory and Education (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986), p.7.

to emancipation most requiring criticism and challenge. The result of the pervasive influence of instrumental rationality is a crisis of reason, whereby "reason, as insight and critique turns into its opposite, i.e. irrationality."⁹ Positivism explicitly militates against metaphysics. Quantification and calculation become the important tasks of science, which, as it advances value-free into the world of facts, further undermines the critical impulse. "The obsession with calculation and measurement: the drive to classify, to label, to assess and number all that is human ... is the desire to control and to dominate, to exercise surveillance and power over others and over nature."¹⁰

Art, the media, and cultural institutions (particularly the schools) are likewise tainted by the absence of a higher rationality which provides for an on-going critique of the larger society according to the Frankfurt School's analysis of culture. The culture industry becomes a commodity of the larger society. Art is debased to mere entertainment for the purpose of pacification of the oppressed work force, so that their oppression might be more bearable. Despite their own personal preference for "high culture", they believed that "even high culture had become a commodity, and that the task of critical theory was to study the production and reception of those commodities."¹¹

Finally, as the study of depth psychology afforded an insight into societal oppression in the Freudian language of repression and sublimation, the Frankfurt School began to analyse the formal structure of consciousness. Going beyond Marx, they believed that Freud might hold the key to the dynamics of oppression: that through Freud they might learn "how it was possible that human beings could participate willingly at the level of everyday life in the reproduction of their own dehumanisation and exploitation."¹²

As an ideological foundation for a theory of social education, critical theory serves as a pre-condition for collective action against the oppression of instrumental rationality and the reproduction of the social and cultural inequities of the technocratic age:

9 Giroux, p. 24.

10 Gibson, p. 7.

11 Gibson, p. 68.

12 Giroux, p. 27.

Habermas argues that the knowledge about society generated by critical theory is superior to other forms because it can aid its possessor to free himself or herself from bondage. Knowledge and the interest in emancipation coincide, and thus make for those unities which positivism severs: theory with practice, means with ends, thought with action, fact with value, reason with emotion.¹³

The instinct behind the Frankfurt school's critique of positivism and instrumental rationality was sound in that it recognized that the whole project of those separations was inherently sinister: as an instrument of oppression, fragmentation is as powerful a force as dogma. Their chief weapon against that oppression, which is likewise the most powerful tool for educators, is their concept of negative dialectics.

Negative dialectics is a critical mode of thought evolved chiefly by Theodor Adorno as a critique of Hegel's notion of the social and historical formation of human consciousness, which rejects Hegel's premise of transcendent understanding, free of social bias:

Negative dialectics not only reveal that any aspect of reality has been historically shaped, but that it contains within it "possibilities" or images of what it might become. Thus "dialectic" refers to the constant interplay between subject and object (that is language and reality; or the individual and what he "sees", or between history and present). "Negative" refers to what is "not seen" to "potentiality", "becoming", "possibility" (that is, to what is implied in what is actual, to the contradictions and negotiations embodied in perceived reality.) Thus, negative dialectics imply that the relationships between concept and object (idea and material world) are never still, never fixed, never absolutely certain. This is the dialectic.¹⁴

Negative dialectics can serve on several levels to illuminate the practice of Shakespeare teaching. First, on the level of the wider society, negative dialectics enable educators to discern that Shakespeare as an element of High Culture may have most significance in its absence from the lives of students. The "negative" in negative dialectics indicates a structure of inquiry designed to reveal what is absent; to hear the voice that is silenced. It constitutes a choice of vision whose task it is to throw into light what otherwise might remain in obscurity. Second, on the level of the text itself, the concept of negative dialectics, which acknowledges the historical shaping of thought and consciousness, is radically opposed to the romantic notion of negative capability. Keats's belief that Shakespeare's great poetic talent lay in his ability to negate the self; to transcend and be what he saw; to maintain that "the poet has no identity -- he's

13 Gibson, p. 37.

14 Gibson, p. 26.

continually in for and filling some other body",¹⁵ obscures the issues of agency, subjectivity and authority as they pertain to the historicity of the plays themselves, and to their reproduction of the dominant culture within the school system itself. Third, in the implication that "the relationships between concept and object (idea and material world) are never still, never fixed, never absolutely certain"¹⁶ are found not only the seeds of deconstruction, but also the possibility to discern and change those relationships that remain oppressive and unequal.

Critical Theory and Critical Consciousness:

Paulo Freire and Education for Liberation

Critical theory's great strength and value for educationalists lies in the fact that it "both demonstrates and simultaneously calls for the necessity of on-going critique"¹⁷; if education is indeed to be a liberating and empowering process, then critical theory is imperative. Perhaps most importantly, the later work of the Frankfurt School pointed the way to a more humane society, and the possibility of developing a theory of compassionate imagination:

its members argued that it was in the contradictions of society that one could begin to develop forms of social inquiry that analyzed the distinction between what is from what should be; and finally, they strongly supported the assumption that the basis for thought, and action should be grounded, as Marcuse argued just before his death, "in compassion,[and] our sense of the suffering of others"(Habermas,1980, p. 12)¹⁸

Suffering and affliction are the mode of oppression. They are the measure of the distance between ourselves and our potential, and the depth of our longing for perfection. This is what is so singularly moving about Paulo Freire's book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, the authenticity of his longing and the power of his voice. Paulo Freire developed his critical theory of education for liberation working among peasant study groups of illiterate Brazilians. What is most compelling about Freire's work, and most inspiring for teachers anywhere, whether they teach in Tower Hamlets, Rio de Janeiro, or

15 John Keats, The Complete Works of John Keats. Vol.IV: Letters, ed. by H. Buxton Forman (Glasgow: Gowans & Gray, 1901) p. 50.

16 Gibson, p. 26.

17 Giroux, p. 20.

18 Giroux, p. 21.

Clifton College, is that it is concerned with the relationship between education and humanity, literacy and liberation, and informed by a tremendous love for humankind.

Love is the difference in this book:

Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to other men. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation.¹⁹

In Freire's analysis, the relationship between education and liberation is expressed by the power relationships that characterize our schools. If the system is oppressive, the students are disenfranchised. The school's function as a place of social, economic and cultural reproduction gains importance through perpetuation of the myth of the educational system as a great social equalizer. We need schools to protect our notions of the sceptred isle, we need "ideology production" -- theories about how democracy works (especially when it doesn't). The function of "ideology production" is lodged in the schools, the mass media, and the family. The formation of the individual happens, to a large extent, in the school, and the school's function should be to facilitate the student's optimum development in the physical, emotional, aesthetic, cognitive and spiritual realm. That is the ideal. But when the school system is the product of a society that is unequal, fragmented, alienated and oppressive, the reproduction code for perpetuating this society is built into the school system as well. Learning cannot happen in such an environment, because knowledge is not accessible to the disenfranchised mind. The oppressive mode of what Freire calls "banking education" precludes the possibility of authentic learning. "Banking education" is oppressive in that it pits the silence of students against the teacher's power to create and impose meaning. Whoever is in control of language is in control of power. Whoever is creating meanings is thereby establishing their consciousness. Whoever is robbed of the power to create meanings is robbed of consciousness. In this manner, it becomes possible for the school to function as an organ of dehumanisation.

Critical theory is rooted in difference: in the perception of differences that determine social order. As educators, we begin to create an oppositional discourse that speaks to the possibility of a critical theory when we speak from a critical consciousness.

¹⁹ Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 31st printing, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Corp., 1982), p. 76.

What is required is the development of what Paulo Freire calls "conscientizacao": learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality. The alternative that Freire offers to "banking education" -- that mode of instruction characterised by a one-way transference of knowledge from teacher to student -- is a dialogical investigation into "the thought-language with which men refer to reality, the levels at which they perceive that reality, and their view of the world, in which their generative themes are found."²⁰ The distinction between teachers and students blurs under dialogical investigation. With the freedom to create their own meanings comes their authority, their responsibility to act. Dialogical investigation creates a climate conducive to the evolution of a critical consciousness. In the context of the classroom, dialogical investigation will not happen readily unless the teachers are prepared consciously to mediate the transfer of knowledge so that it does not at the same time become a form of domination.

It is certainly not practical to suggest that teachers abandon altogether the methods of "banking" education; a distinction must be made between the dialogical investigations which constitute authentic learning, and the necessity for the transfer of the enormous amount of sheer information which pervades everyday life in the technocratic age. The mode of "banking" education now characterises the flood tide of computer studies. Teachers who are faced with the challenge of enabling students to negotiate the technological maze of information systems which pervade their world may find that they cannot discard the methods of "banking" education and still continue to teach. Within a literate population, a certain amount of learning will necessarily happen this way without necessarily becoming an occasion for oppression. The factual content of physics and mathematics, principles of logic and empirical data of any kind will be most efficiently transmitted this way. (However, it is the duty of the radical educator to focus on the question "whom does knowledge serve?" rather than "is it efficient?", as there is always danger in the separation of fact from value: the force of instrumental rationality prevails with alarming tenacity.) The inherent danger of banking education is that it precludes the possibility for dialogue. When that possibility is denied, teachers become disseminators

²⁰ Freire, p. 28.

of dogma, as dogma always represents one side of a dichotomy that is repressed or feared:

As we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word ... within the word we find two dimensions; reflection and action in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed -- even in part -- the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world ... liberation is a praxis: action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it.²¹

Simone Weil puts it similarly: "It is language which changes us into people who act. We are, of course, subject to what exists, but we have power over almost everything through words."²²

Border Pedagogy and Textual Power

Within this discourse [of border pedagogy] a student must engage knowledge as a border-crosser, as a person moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power (Hicks, 1988). These are not only physical borders, they are cultural borders historically constructed and socially organized within maps of rules and regulations that limit and enable particular identities, individual capacities, and social forms ... Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps. The terrain of learning becomes inextricably linked to the shifting parameters of place, identity, history, and power.²³

Advancing upon what have become commonplace arguments within critical social theory about the relationship between knowledge and power, Giroux's theory of border pedagogy

offers a crucial theoretical and political corrective ... by shifting the emphasis of the knowledge/power relationship away from the limited emphasis on the mapping of domination to the politically strategic issue of engaging the ways in which knowledge can be remapped, reterritorialized, and decentered in the wider interests of rewriting the borders and coordinates of an oppositional cultural politics.²⁴

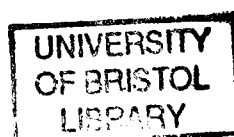
A pedagogical strategy for adapting this theory to classroom practice is put forward by Robert Scholes, who argues for the replacement of teaching texts with what he calls "textuality":

21 Freire, p. 63.

22 Simone Weil, Lectures on Philosophy, trans. by Hugh Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) p. 6.

23 Henry A. Giroux, 'Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism', *Journal of Education*, 170 (1988) 5-30.

24 Giroux (1988) 7.



What this refers to pedagogically is a process of textual study that can be identified by three forms of practice: reading, interpretation and criticism, which roughly correspond to what Scholes calls reading within, upon, and against a text. In brief, reading within a text means identifying the cultural codes that structure an author's work ... Interpretation means reading a text along with a variety of diverse interpretations that represent a second commentary on the text ... Finally, Scholes wants students to explode the cultural codes of the text through the assertion of the reader's own textual power, to analyze the text in terms of its absences, to free "ourselves from [the] text [by] finding a position outside the assumptions upon which the text is based." (p.62)²⁵

In such a proposal the development and application of the concept of negative dialectics is clear: powerful texts demand powerful readers, possessed of a dialectic perception that can as readily perceive absence and silence as they can perceive presence and voice in a text. Powerful texts demand dialogic investigation; if taught in the manner of "banking", they assume the power of dogma.

Linked to a notion of powerful texts is a notion of vulnerable readers. As a consequence of these views, the teacher's role becomes one of regulatory control: without teacherly intervention, the assumption is, pupils may go astray.²⁶

The challenge to teachers is to enable their students to wander through that protean world of the Shakespeare plays and "reterritorialize" that map for themselves, even at the risk of going "astray".

From Theory to Practice:

Across the Great Divide

In an attempt to articulate a theoretically informed pedagogy for Shakespeare teaching -- in essence to address the "routine structures of teaching and learning in which [the overhauling of the ideological content of English and Literature] is practical"²⁷ -- focus will necessarily fall on the apparent gap between the aims and objectives of secondary-school Shakespeare teaching, and the aims and objectives of Shakespeare studies at the University level.

This is a theoretical problem to the extent that while both literary and educational studies may be informed by critical theory, fundamental differences in the natures of these disciplines preclude the wholesale transference of some of the more radical directives in literary theory to the everyday imperatives of secondary-level classroom

²⁵ Giroux (1988), quoting Robert Scholes, *Textual Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1985) 8-9.

²⁶ Gemma Moss, 'Powerful Texts: Feminism and English Teaching', *English Magazine*, 22 (1989) p. 5.

²⁷ Brooker 74.

teaching practices. This is not to say, however, that every imperative of educational theory may easily be applied to classroom reality. One of the fundamental differences between the disciplines lies in their very nature: while literary theories are debated in a public (albeit exclusive) forum, the task itself is a solitary effort, the relationship of the critic to the text being primary. Classroom teaching, on the other hand, is a communal effort, of necessity. A key difference between the theorist/text relationship and the theorist/education relationship is that texts are infinitely more malleable than social institutions: the teachers, students, parents, administrators, researchers, government officials and tax-payers who constitute the institution of education all serve variously to disrupt and resist the prescriptions of theorists in ways which require constant theoretical vigilance and revision. Teaching at its best is not an untheorised practice: but the transference of theory into practice, on the part of working teachers at the classroom level, as well as on the part of educational theorists at the university level, is envisioned as a project grounded in hope and possibility, while it is experienced as a struggle, too often in a climate of desperate frustration.

The relationship of the theorist to the text is empowering in that the theorist is infinitely free to create meaning. The power to create texts has been accorded a subordinate place; it is certainly not within the domain of the academy to harness or foster creative energies to the task of producing new novels, poetry and plays.

Arts departments in this country have for the most part dispensed with creative ability. They have relied upon an emotional interest or intellectual curiosity in the student serving as a magnet to attract him to the subject, and have then directed all their attention (once the student is their captive) upon disciplining his intellect within the confines of the subject with an almost total disregard for the emotional and creative aspects of his personality ... The result is to be seen in a welter of analytical criticism which is predominantly destructive, and in the apathy, the indifference, the complacency, and downright dullness of so much of university life.²⁸

The great bulk of intellectual energy is expended in the task of criticism:

At the level of critical-academic interpretation and evaluation, the volume of secondary discourse defies inventory. Not even the computer and electronic data bank are able to cope. No bibliographies are up to date. The mass of books and critical essays, of scholarly articles, of *acta* and dissertations produced each day in Europe and the United States, has the blind weight of a tidal wave.²⁹

²⁸ Glynne Wickham, 'Drama as a Study: Inaugural Lecture, Bristol University Drama Department, 1960', in The Uses of Drama ed. by John Hodgson (London: Methuen,). p. 173.
²⁹ Steiner, p. 24.

Nevertheless, the production of literature retains a primary focus: this ambivalence is perhaps best reflected in the esteem accorded to the "poet in residence", balanced by the suspicion of the lack of academic rigour with which the "creative writing" course is viewed. The primacy of theory and criticism in Shakespeare studies is defended with an intellectual vigour that borders on elation: the view from the top affords a limitless prospect. Moreover, the transference from theory to practice is not problematic for the literary critic in quite the same way it is for the classroom teacher: for the literary critic, theory is practice; and the practice is itself empowering:

the good critic is something more than a mere purveyor of cliché'd opinions which s/he seeks to make her/his own spurious claims to originality; also, reading is not a passive, submissive (stereotypically feminised) activity, but rather offers opportunities to resist even when what one is resisting is the language attributed to an "authority" such as Shakespeare.³⁰

English studies remains a "manly" pursuit, despite John Drakakis's enlightened use of pronouns: the good critic must be prepared to resist, to take on all comers -- especially this so-called "Shakespeare".

New historicism and cultural materialism:

The Battle for the Bard

"it strikes me that something must be seriously wrong with literary criticism and theory if the people who do it convey a sense that literature means nothing to them or that it means something to them only insofar as it will help them to publish books, get tenure and become famous."³¹

"We believe, with Professor Hawkes, that Shakespeare's plays don't, in any essential or objective sense, mean anything at all; it is we, his readers, producers and audiences who do the meaning ... All that's necessary, really, is that you show how the plays confront the question of power: do they collude with it or do they resist it? Surely that's not too difficult to grasp?"³²

Shakespeare study at University level is not, by any means, an ideologically homogeneous pursuit: now more than ever before the legacy of Practical Criticism, the security of notions of "transcendence" and "universality", in effect the whole liberal-humanist project has been disrupted by the various theoretical movements that have

30 John Drakakis, 'Bardbiz', *London Review of Books*, 11 October 1990, p. 4.

31 M.J.Devaney, 'Bardbiz', *London Review of Books*, 30 August 1990, p. 4.

32 Anthony Pratt, 'Bardbiz', *London Review of Books*, 7 February 1991, p. 4.

culminated in the complex critical climate of post-modernism. Shakespeare studies in particular have been marked by the controversy surrounding two of the most recent "isms" to lend their critical voices to the re-reading and the re-writing of English Literature: new historicism and cultural materialism. Variouslumped together with deconstruction and post-structuralism (most often by their detractors) new historicism and cultural materialism have attracted some exceptionally vehement criticisms. A random sampling of the "Letters" page of virtually any issue of the 1990 - 1991 London Review of Books will testify amply to a critical climate that has been marked by conflict. The tone of what has been dubbed the "Bardbiz" debate varies from intellectual irritation to moral indignation. There was a time when Shakespeare was not a literary text, and texts themselves were not subjected to the scrutiny of theorists; nor was the study of literature concerned with embattled notions of authority, contingency, historicism (new or old), appropriation, subversion, or Greenblatt's "circulation of social energy"³³ Perhaps this is because when the study of English Literature was very much a "gentlemanly" pursuit, "ungentlemanly" intellectual energies were excluded from the academy:

The historical moment of the sixties unseated a kind of genteel liberal humanism from the chairs of Shakespeare, and the fight was on to win authority over the commanding heights of the cultural economy. The New Left spoke the unspeakable jargon of theoreticism, the argot of its site in the social structure. The new old Fogeys called up spirits of the vasty deep in order to quote groanings which cannot be uttered but which audit Shakespeare's timelessness, his storehouse of recorded values, his capital of words.³⁴

The battle lines have been drawn: as Anthony Pratt rather playfully put it, "... if you want to be an intellectual hero, you've got to have an enemy to attack."³⁵

On the level of differentiating themselves from the "old" historicists, as well as on the level of upsetting entrenched notions of Shakespeare as a cultural icon, both new historicists and cultural materialists set about their task by attempting to expose the ways in which our present understanding of the Renaissance in general and Shakespeare in particular has been culturally constructed.

33 Greenblatt, Shakespearean Negotiations, passim.

34 Fred Inglis, 'Recovering Shakespeare: Innocence and Materialism', in Shakespeare in the Changing Curriculum ed. by Lesley Aers and Nigel Wheale (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 59.

35 Anthony Pratt, 'Bardbiz', London Review of Books, 7 February 1991, p. 4.

The new historicists, by de-stabilising cherished notions of history, self-consciously challenge the "literature and society" approach to Renaissance studies. Jean Howard summarizes the assumptions underlying "old" historicist criticism (in the manner of, for example, E.M.W. Tillyard) as follows:

- that history is knowable; that literature mirrors or at least by indirection reflects historical reality; and that historians and critics can see the facts of history. (This last assumption is particularly paradoxical since it rests on the premise that while literature is implicated in history, historians and critics are not.)³⁶

"Old" historicists' notions of history, and the relationship between history, literature and the critic are predicated upon a belief in the autonomy of the author and the objectivity of the critic: Foucault's questioning of the author's identity has resulted in a radical disruption of what was once considered a stable configuration of author, text, and context which allowed for the possibility of objective critical judgement. Nevertheless, the hazard of succumbing to the myth of "objectivity" exists for the new historicists as well. "When a new historicist looks at the past, he or she is as likely as an old historian to see an image of the seeing self, not an image of the other."³⁷

The new historicists are particularly vigilant on this point, because the issues of individuality, subjectivity, agency, and "otherness" are central to their inquiry. Ironically enough, this very vigilance can be seen as self-reflecting: the new historicists' concerns can be read as symptomatic of a post-modern malaise: a focus on individuality can be seen as a response to mechanical reproduction; concern for subjectivity as a response to the inundation of opinion marketed by mass media; concern for agency as a reaction to the breakdown of representational government and the oppressive nature of social control; and concern with "otherness" as a response to the marginalization of minority cultures. The fragmented discontinuity which characterizes post-modern life is reflected in the concerns which guide new historicist inquiry. Rather than seeking the solace of an ordered hierarchy in the "Golden Age" of the Renaissance, modern scholarship instead discovers its own disrupted securities and anxieties in the seventeenth century. Still, there

36 Jean E. Howard, 'The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986), 13-43 (p.18).

37 Howard, p. 16.

is room for some brand of "objectivity", as the existence of self-mirroring in the current critical trends is in fact somewhat mitigated by its own self-consciousness.

In its theoretical genealogy, the new historicist criticism can be seen as a reaction to formalist criticism. In distancing itself from formalist scrutiny of texts, new historicism has incorporated critical theories in the fields of sociology, history, and politics. In its efforts to liberate literary criticism from the "binary opposites"³⁸ of text and context, literature and history, new historicism acknowledges and explores "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history."³⁹ The binary opposites that characterized older forms of historical investigations of literature have been synthesized into a dialectical relationship that allows text and context, history and literature to be dynamically reconsidered, re-read, and re-inscribed, each within the other. The security of causal relations between these has been sundered. History is no longer considered to generate literature; nor context to nourish text. Old assumptions about art as "the product of its time" have been problematized. Context and text, history and literature are now seen as inter-dependent and mutually illuminating, and perhaps most importantly, as mutually generating. Literature contributes as much to the creation of history as history contributes to the creation of literature; each serves to construct the other. This is partly what is meant by "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history". The basic assumptions underlying the new historicist criticism, then, are as follows:

1.) the notion that man is a construct, not an essence 2.) that the historical investigator is likewise a product of his history and never able to recognize otherness in its pure form, but always in part through the framework of the present. This last point leads one to what is, perhaps, the crux of any "new" historical criticism, and that is to the issue of what one conceives history to be: a realm of retrievable fact, or a construct made up of textualized traces assembled in various configurations by the historian/interpreter.⁴⁰

The primary questions informed by these assumptions are concerned with power in the form of ideological, cultural, and economic forces at work to "construct" the individual, society, and history. Investigations of the negotiation, legitimation and representation of power through cultural forms occur within a problematic framework of

38 Howard, p. 24.

39 Louis Montrose, 'Renaissance Literary Studies and the Subject of History', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986), 1-12 (p. 8).

40 Howard, p. 23.

inquiry. That is to say that every question asked contains within it another unasked question -- for the dominant that is voiced, there is the attendant silence of repression. To perceive the dynamics of cultural marginalization, one can proceed from the centre looking out, or by looking in from the margin itself. All questions of "meaning" are thus thrown into relief against the background of alternative discourses.

Alternative discourses propose alternative knowledges, alternative meanings. For these reasons signifying practice is also the location of resistance. Since meaning is plural, to be able to speak is to be able to take part in the contest for meaning which issues in the production of new subject positions, new determinations of what it is possible to be.⁴¹

While holding in common the belief that man is a "construct", the question of what it is possible to be is a matter for some debate among several of the new historicists. Jonas Barish, adopting a Gramscian notion of humanity, contends that there is "an essential core of humanness which history can modify or shape in various ways"⁴², while Jonathan Dollimore denies even the existence of this "core", maintaining rather that "nothing exists before the human subject is created by history."⁴³ In any case, all acknowledge the multiple manifestations of "what it is possible to be", and are more concerned, ultimately, with "histories" than with History. These histories are "characterized by forces of heterogeneity, contradiction, fragmentation, and difference."⁴⁴ These same forces are those that can, within a given text, contest, subvert, recuperate or reproduce a dominant ideology. The new historicists, seeking to avoid the confinement of the binary opposition of text and context, opt instead for an investigation of texts and contexts; both in terms of the variety (and even eccentricity) of discourses, and in terms of the academic disciplines from which the contexts are taken. The prominence given to hitherto marginalized voices from the past is the hallmark of some of the best of the new historicist research: Stephen Greenblatt, for example, draws upon, among other things, French seventeenth-century medical texts dealing with hermaphroditism, pregnancy, and childbirth to illuminate the "cultural poetics" of Twelfth Night.⁴⁵ When Terence Hawkes approaches the text of Hamlet, the oblique light he

41 Belsey, p. 6.

42 Howard, p. 21.

43 Howard, p. 21

44 Montrose, p. 5.

45 Greenblatt, p. 66.

throws upon it is filtered through verses of A.C. Bradley's juvenilia: Bradley's poem, "A Sea Shell", provides Hawkes with the perfect metaphor for subjective interpretation while at the same time placing Hamlet and Bradley's reading of it into a precise historical moment and specific personal context.⁴⁶

While the "core of humanness" remains a matter for debate, there is a consensus on the issue of universals. They have, for the new historicists, ceased to exist. There is neither truth nor fact: there is only contingency. Stephen Greenblatt writes of his own realization of this with a touch of nostalgia:

The textual analyses I was trained to do had as their goal the identification and celebration of a numinous literary authority, whether that authority was ultimately located in the mysterious genius of an artist or in the mysterious perfection of a text whose institutions and concepts can never be expressed in any other terms. The great attraction of this authority is that it appears to bind and fix the energies we prize, to identify a stable and permanent source of literary power, to offer an escape from shared contingency. This project, endlessly repeated, repeatedly fails for one reason: there is no escape from contingency.⁴⁷

"The energies we prize" are revealed through this mode of inquiry continually to transform, and be transformed by the social, political and economic institutions of the State. As the spirit of individuality is a main component of American ideology, the extent to which a notion of individuality has been mythologized in Renaissance texts has been a main focus of American academic attention. In Britain, a related phenomenon is unfolding in the form of the cultural materialist school of criticism. Its theoretical genealogy is somewhat clearer than that of the new historicism, though they share many common concerns:

The term cultural materialism is borrowed from its recent use by Raymond Williams; its practice grows from the eclectic body of work in Britain in the post-war period which can be broadly characterized as a cultural analysis. That work includes the considerable output of Williams himself and more generally, the convergence of history, sociology and English in cultural studies, some of the major developments in feminism, as well as continental Marxist-structuralist and post-structuralist theory, especially that of Althusser, Macherey, Gramsci and Foucault.⁴⁸

46 Terence Hawkes, That Shakesperian Rag: Essays on a Critical Process (London: Methuen, 1986) p. 42.

47 Greenblatt, p. 3.

48 Jonathan Dollimore, 'Introduction: Shakespeare, cultural materialism and the new historicism', in Political Shakespeare: new essays in cultural materialism, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 3.

Cultural materialism shares with the new historicism a central concern for "the interaction ... between State power and cultural forms."⁴⁹ Both have incorporated an interdisciplinary approach, drawing upon theoretical developments in politics, sociology and history to illuminate their investigations. The idea of man as a "cultural construct" serves as the basis for both, though the focus of cultural materialism seems to be trained somewhat more intently on the process of "construction" than on the "construct" itself- (that is, the individual who is the product of the process of cultural construction):

Three aspects of historical and cultural process figure prominently in materialist criticism: consolidation, subversion, and containment. The first refers, typically, to the ideological means whereby a dominant order seeks to perpetuate itself; the second to subversion of that order, the third to the containment of ostensibly subversive pressure.⁵⁰

Cultural materialism further distinguishes itself from new historicism through its primary concern with the forms of cultural reproduction of Renaissance texts, particularly the Shakespeare plays, within the educational system, the theatre, the media, and British culture at large. In many ways a reaction to the Bardolatry that they perceive as pervasive in British society, it articulates the idea of "The Shakespeare Myth" as a hegemonic instrument, and puts forward the challenge to educators and workers in the theatre and media to re-evaluate their roles in light of their participation in cultural reproduction:

In Britain, for obvious reasons, the field of English studies more readily becomes the site of struggle over the definition of national consciousness. Accordingly, English practitioners pay considerable attention to the ways in which particular Renaissance writers and texts have been subsequently incorporated into English culture and into the British educational system: in other words, they are concerned with the history of ideological appropriations of the Renaissance.⁵¹

Briefly, then, what fuels cultural materialism and new historicism is a concern with the power, ideology and control of cultural forms negotiated with that of the State, and how those cultural forms (particularly the theatre) contribute to the production of, and are produced by, history.

The exhortations, particularly from the cultural materialists, to educators to take on board these advances in theory are numerous. Terry Eagleton, reminiscing about his experiences of coming up to Cambridge in the early 1960's as a working-class student,

49 Dollimore, p. 3.

50 Dollimore, p. 10.

51 Montrose, p. 7.

describes his discomfort with Shakespearean "eloquence"; "Shakespeare showed me two things: first, that language was power; secondly, that I had neither."⁵² The movement to adapt educational practice to the imperatives of literary theory is seen to have great potential for student empowerment. "Caliban knew that language was ambivalently emancipation and enslavement. And there is much to be said for a Caliban school of Shakespeare criticism."⁵³ Something very like a "Caliban school of Shakespeare criticism" is imagined by Alan Sinfield, who claims that:

The [Shakespeare] plays may be taught so as to foreground their historical construction in Renaissance England and in the institution of criticism, dismantling the metaphysical concepts in which they seem at present to be entangled, and especially the construction of gender and sexuality. Teaching Shakespeare's plays and writing books about them is unlikely to bring down capitalism, but it is a point for intervention.⁵⁴

On the new historicist front, a somewhat less politicized entreaty can be heard from Louis Montrose:

As teachers of a new historical criticism, our first task must be to disabuse students of the notion that history is what's over and done with; to convince them that, on the contrary, history is always now. If, by the ways in which we construe Renaissance texts, we bring our students -- and ourselves -- to an apprehension of our own historicity, our own ideological inscription, then we are at the same time exemplifying the possibilities for limited and localized agency within the regime of power and knowledge that at once sustains and contains us.⁵⁵

American new historicists, faced with the reality of the university career structure, may not be equal to the task of bringing about the downfall of capitalism; nevertheless, the seemingly innocuous injunction to "disabuse students of the notion that history is what's over and done with" takes on a decidedly radical tenor when considered in light of the proposed British education legislation formally to separate "History" (i.e., "what's over and done with") from "Current Affairs."

In light of this emphasis on our historical construction and the question of agency, the "meaning" of a Shakespearean text has become a matter for negotiation, and the

52 Terry Eagleton, 'Afterword', in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. by Graham Holderness (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 203.

53 Eagleton, p. 204.

54 Alan Sinfield, 'Give an account of Shakespeare and Education, showing why you think they are effective and what you have appreciated about them. Support your comments with precise references', in *Political Shakespeare: New essays in cultural materialism*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 154.

55 Montrose, p. 12.

critical debate in academia has foregrounded the necessity for the educational community to participate in that negotiation on the level of classroom practice:

Knowledge is traditionally kept mysterious by those who possess it. To demystify Shakespeare is to begin to provide an access for all to a form of understanding which has been systematically abandoned to the forces of privilege. Teachers in schools negotiating knowledge at the intersection of private lives and history, have the opportunity to reclaim for new generations the lost ground of our social memory.⁵⁶

This project is also related to Foucault's notion of counter-memory:

Counter-memory represents a critical reading of not only how the past informs the present but how the present reads the past. Counter-memory provides a theoretical tool to restore the connection between the language of public life and the discourse of difference.⁵⁷

In so far as both cultural materialism and new historicism place the reader/critic and their critiques on an equal footing with the examined texts, arguing for the significance of the intertextuality of text and context, rather than for their binary opposition, the thrusts of these arguments hold certain points of intersection with the aims of critical theory in education. These can be discerned through a pair of parallel, yet distinctly different relationships: that of the critic to his text, and the teacher to his students. Taking the wider view to incorporate the institutional, political, economic and social pressures that give rise to the theoretical progress of literary studies, and those same pressures that shape the ideological agenda of Shakespeare teaching at schools level, the aims of state education itself are revealed to be at cross-purposes with the latest academic developments in Shakespeare studies. Cultural materialist interpretations in particular are heavily influenced by developments in critical theory, whereas the structure of the educational institutions within which the "meaning" of the Shakespeare plays must be determined (rather than negotiated) are increasingly bound by the nexus of examinations and assessments that typify the objectives of instrumental rationality.

The focus of both new historicist and cultural materialist critical attention upon Renaissance drama in particular is concerned with the forms of power and the power of forms: the display of ideology in the theatrical mode has been recognized as a powerful organ of state control, given that the English Renaissance theatre was subjected to strict

56 David Hornbrook, 'Go play, boy, play': Shakespeare and educational drama', in *The Shakespeare Myth*, ed. by Graham Holderness (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 156.

57 Giroux, (1988) (p. 15).

laws of censorship, and functioning, to all intents and purposes, within a police state. Under such conditions of restriction, the line between education and propaganda becomes blurred. The dual objective of theatrical production "to delight and instruct" was mediated through a complex interaction of playwrights, state censors, and audience response as it filtered through the network of prohibition, license, approbation, subversion and revolt. This now commands the focus of critical attention which concerns itself, among other things, with the control of knowledge, with the relationship between disseminators and receptors of theatrical "knowledge", and the acknowledgement that the struggle to control knowledge is a struggle to control power. "The project of knowledge is control. Bacon in 1620 stresses that the power in question is not personal and individual but social - 'for the benefit and use of Life' (Bacon,1960:15)." ⁵⁸

To interrogate the aims of the institutionalization of English studies is to acknowledge the depth and extent of potential power that the control of knowledge entails. A National Curriculum reinforces the power of the state school as a site of ideology production, effectively functioning much like the strict controls of government censorship over the functioning of the English theatres during the Renaissance. It is the issue of control of ideology production that both the new historicist and cultural materialists share in common; Stephen Greenblatt, one of the best of America's new historicists, tenders a theory of cultural poetics which focuses upon "the circulation of social energy" ⁵⁹ as it is channelled and negotiated through the institutional nexus of social control. The cultural materialist stance is less concerned with the historicist view, in as much as the on-going process of history-making, historiography, retrospect and revisionist memory is relegated to a place below the phenomenon of the reproduction of unequal power relations within the institutional parameters of everyday life: the schools, the media, the "establishment" productions of the NT, RSC, and BBC. Cultural materialists are more concerned with the exchange of cultural capital or the re-evaluation of cultural currency than with "the circulation of social energy" (though much of this too is manifest as "cultural capital" -- and exchange itself constitutes a good part of what the new historicists understand as circulation). The cultural materialist viewpoint reflects a pluralistic marketplace where

58 Belsey, p. 83.

59 Stephen Greenblatt, Shakespearean Negotiations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Shakespeare, and the value of Shakespeare teaching in particular, has come under question, if not outright attack. One of the fundamental concerns of the cultural materialist critics of Shakespeare teaching in English secondary schools is over what they interpret as "false" relevance of the plays, predicated upon "universal" truths and values which no longer obtain, as they are reflected in the structure of the examination system and the exam questions themselves, and the largely liberal-humanist ideology that continues to inform the great bulk of teacher training and the actual teaching of the Shakespeare plays. The underlying assumption is that in so far as transcendental, universal values can be attributed to the Shakespeare plays and promoted in the teaching of them, then the reality of Britain's pluralistic culture is submerged beneath a Bardolator's mythology of some ineffable quality that is thoroughly Shakespearean and essentially "English". David Hornbrook alludes to this dilemma in acknowledging that

our cultural membership is diverse and the forms with which we are familiar and which tell us who we are, often powerfully contradictory. It is here that the dramatic aesthetic most powerfully engages, for it is able to connect us with history in ways which liberate our understanding, while simultaneously (and necessarily) connecting us to the communities of value and meaning by which we make sense of our lives.⁶⁰

"Use your authority":

The Power of the Answering Voice

The aims of education as a social institution are in a state of constant flux. The movement of educational reform has been a gradual flowing away from the regimented, indoctrinating, "civilizing" influence of one-way teacher-to-student communications, toward a more evenly balanced, negotiated exchange of knowledge between student and teacher. Changes in policy are reflected in changes in pedagogy -- likewise changes in theory argue for changes in practice. The progress from the wish to the deed is gradual, but nonetheless distinctly marked with an evolving ideology.

The most thoroughgoing and self-conscious statement about the ideology of English teaching -- in particular the teaching of literature -- was established in The Newbolt Report of 1921. The post-war nostalgia for an idyllic, pre-lapsarian sceptred isle is the inspiration behind its hidden agenda. The repeated references to "the English mind"

⁶⁰ David Hornbrook, Education and Dramatic Art (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) p. 128.

(and, by association, the English heart and spirit) speak of a collective consciousness of literary culture and values that effectively supersede boundaries of class and gender; race does not even warrant a mention:

English is not merely the medium of our thought, it is the very stuff and process of it. It is itself the English mind, the element in which we live and work. In its full sense it connotes not merely an acquaintance with a certain number of terms, or the power of spelling these terms without gross mistakes. It connotes the discovery of the world by the first and most direct way open to us, and the discovery of ourselves in our native environment.(14/20)⁶¹

The paradox is that the report reveals, as Brian Doyle notes, a contempt for "the public mind" and its vulgar culture, while seeking to impose English culture of a higher order upon the nation's school children with a messianic zeal worthy of the most stalwart Arnoldian:

We find that the nature of art and its relation to human life and welfare is not sufficiently understood or appreciated in this country. The prevalence of a low view of art, and especially the art of literature has been the main cause of our defective conception of a national education. Hitherto literature has ... suffered in the public mind both misunderstanding and degradation.(14/20-1)⁶²

At the same time, the architects of the Newbolt Report proclaim their project to be the cultivation of subjectivities: an education in English is effectively an education for life, grounded in "the experience of being an Englishman", according to their own definition. Nevertheless, they are quite clearly not prepared to validate the experience or legitimate the culture of a rather large sector of the public: learning Shakespeare is, regardless of the authenticity of appreciation or depth of understanding, bound up into the fabric of English life. And the question as to whether or not it should be continues to be laboured. Gary Taylor, by no means beloved of the conservative literary establishment, puts it this way:

I and my professional colleagues are engaged in teaching Shakespeare to school children and impressionable young adults; we must therefore convince ourselves and the society that employs us, that Shakespeare is fit for such people to read. No doubt, read the right way, he is. But do the underlying values of his plays actually mesh, as is often implied, with the values and beliefs of our own age?⁶³

61 Brian Doyle, quoting The Newbolt Report, "The Teaching of English in England", London: HMSO, 1921 in English and Englishness (London: Routledge, 1989) pp. 45-46.

62 Doyle, p. 46.

63 Gary Taylor, Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present (London: Hogarth Press, 1990) p. 384.

The emphasis has come full circle since 1921: it is no longer the students themselves whose "fitness" is questioned, but the "fitness" of Shakespeare himself. The revolutionary fervour of literary theory has had repercussions on the level of secondary classroom teaching, and the resistance to current theory is perhaps even more vehement at that level, owing to the fact that classroom teachers, as practitioners must test the possibilities that theory proposes against the practices that they have worked to establish in the classroom. As one teacher writes in his own defense:

no hunger of the imagination can be satisfied by such a diet as Holderness and Co. offer, and if art and criticism aren't to feed that hunger what on earth are they to do? But I suppose I expose myself to brisk dismissal by asking this question: it makes me out as a believer in the type of liberal humanist criticism which these authors reject because it searches the plays as fables containing universal truths that transcend the conditions of their own production and of our consumption.⁶⁴

The rather thinly veiled resentment behind this statement highlights the real nature of the gap between academic theory and classroom practice: teachers, confronted with the needs of real students, and the hungers of their imaginations, are hard put to translate and direct the energies of a critical consciousness, with its characteristically oppositional stance, in such a way as to satisfy those needs. More to the point, the generalizations of theory must of necessity neglect the specificity of classroom practice. Historical documents such as the Newbolt Report, for example, are statements of ideology and government policy -- they are not evidence of actual classroom practice, but only the document remains available to theoretical scrutiny. Moreover, when theory becomes enamoured of form, the substance of what is being scrutinized can be overlooked entirely. To ask, for example, how examination questions constrain teachers, denies the possibility that examination questions can also liberate: it all depends not so much upon the question asked as the answer given. Steve Bennison and Jim Porteous are particularly astute on this point, when evaluating the relevance of Alan Sinfield's chapter in Political Shakespeare to the possibilities of classroom practice:

[Sinfield's] argument centres around a very limited selection of O and A Level questions, which he claims exemplify the way in which a repressive ideological system works: "the pupil is being persuaded to internalise success or failure with particular and relative cultural codes as an absolute judgement on her or his potential as a human being" ... As teachers, we find accounts like this almost unrecognizable ... Ascribing extraordinary effects to exam questions, without

64 Paul Dean, 'Shakespeare's Histories in Recent Criticism,' *The Use of English* (Summer 1990) p. 25.

taking any account of the process of teaching and learning, without apparently ever looking at actual students, or even their exam answers must surely be inadequate. ... A properly materialist politics of education must require a fuller account of materialist conditions and strategies of resistance and subversion.⁶⁵

In an attempt to get beyond theories of social and cultural reproduction within the school system it is necessary not only to imagine and construct a dialogue between educators and theorists that will be practically useful and mutually beneficial, but also to make an account of the materialist conditions of school life, and the strategies of resistance and subversion which militate against those conditions; to examine with a critical eye the whole process of teaching and learning. Teachers need to be actively included in the formation of theory: this will not be possible until they and their students are regarded not as victims of the system, but as its valued constituents. To deny them this opportunity consigns students and teachers alike to a brand of pessimistic determinism that precludes the possibility of utilizing the discourse of difference to imagine what they might become.

Towards a Theory of Compassionate Imagination

Habermas posited a scheme of modes of social inquiry whereby he set positivism and instrumental rationality against hermeneutics and critical theory, and thereby judged critical theory to be the superior mode of inquiry by virtue of the fact that critical theory contained within it the means of its own regulation, a reflex of self-critique.

There is also contained within Habermas' scheme an implied hierarchy, in that the aims and focus of instrumental rationality (the control and quantification of knowledge through surveillance and measurement) is deemed inferior to the aims and values of hermeneutics (the transference and interpretation of knowledge as it is directed and shaped through language) and hermeneutics in turn is deemed inferior to critical theory, whose aims and focus are the dialectical exchange and growth of knowledge, as it is stimulated through the problematic: the perception of absence and the privileging of

⁶⁵ Stephen Bennison and Jim Porteous, 'An Ordeal of Degrading Personal Compulsion- English 14-18,' *Literature Teaching Politics: Changing the Subject* 6, (1987), p. 31-32.

voices that are silenced or repressed. "Habermas's assertion arises from three interests: technical control, interpretation, and the struggle for freedom."⁶⁶

Critical theory contains within it the seed of change in that it posits the obverse of every question posed. In this manner, it propels the dynamic for change, and is thus a prime component of the historical impulse: among those things which distinguish "man" from animals is "a desire to change his culture; and so change himself. In making history, 'man makes himself' ... Then the historical process is sustained by man's desire to become other than what he is."⁶⁷ As that desire meets with death, the process continues; our linear narrative of history proceeds a generation, a war, a reign at a time -- in Hegel's phrase, "History is what man does with death." And as the desire "to become other than what we are " remains, the theatrical impulse allows us a moment of rehearsal for death, and escape from the linear narrative. We are compelled to change our cultures and ourselves within the bleak constraints of mortality that constitute our history; we voluntarily change ourselves, our subjects, imperatives and agency in the imaginative freedom of our theatres. The same desires that make us historical animals, likewise make us theatrical animals.

The theatrical impulse was perceived by Plato to be a dangerous thing: to his mind, representation of inferior beings corrupted the integrity of the Guardians in ways which he found unacceptable, which disrupted the social order and threatened the evil of change: for this reason, theatre was banned for the elite of the Republic. And for precisely this reason, the theatrical impulse needs to be acknowledged, valued, and developed as a major component of Shakespeare teaching in the schools and as a necessary component of the wider struggle for freedom that informs the aims of critical theory in education as well as the literary theories that enjoy such currency at the moment. This is the essential failing of the new historicist and cultural materialist projects: in focusing on the historicity of texts and textuality of history, they have allowed the ineffable vitality of the theatre to be bound into hard covers: they have allowed Shakespeare to become a text among texts, including their own. Had they chosen rather to focus their inquiry on the

⁶⁶ Gibson, p. 37.

⁶⁷ Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1970), pp.15-16.

historicity of theatre, and the theatricality of history, the essential similarity between the theatrical and historical impulses- that desire to become other than what we are might not yet be lost, and while acknowledging the contingency of our particular cultural circumstances and identities, might still discover some absolute value in imagining what we might become.

Education for liberation must be grounded in criticism: the struggle for freedom, as the prime component of the democratic process, is necessarily predicated on the perception of differences and inequalities. The thrust of the enterprise is freedom from - from hardship, oppression, and want. But we must give voice to the silenced danger inherent in the project and acknowledge that prejudice, aggression, and oppression are also predicated upon the perception of differences. An awareness of difference is not enough to ensure an acceptance of difference. To carry the problematic through, freedom from contains within it the possibility of freedom to; itself the essence of agency and the imperative of responsibility. For critical theory to be fully a force for authentic liberation, it must be practiced within the context of a compassionate imagination: Marcuse's intimation of this before his death ⁶⁸, as well as Paulo Freire's conviction of the necessity of love and commitment to his project of education for liberation, both point to this.

Education for active participation in the democratic process is an advance upon the "civilising" impulse that characterises the ideology of the Newbolt Report. Both ideologies are concerned with the power to control and order social energies, but to impose control was a project that debilitated social responsibility. Through the negotiation of meaning, the broadening of the parameters of knowledge, the reterritorializing of texts, re-interrogation of grand narratives, the inclusion of marginalised discourses as components of Shakespeare studies, one would hope to foster a growth of imagination and compassion; but in fact, the effect of widening the parameters of interpretation has eroded the notion of universal values so far that we stand in danger of eroding as well any basis for compassion, and thereby defeating the whole project of critical theory in education.

68 Herbert Marcuse Eros and Civilization : A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955, reprinted 1974) Preface to the first edition, reprinted p. xxvii.

The historical impulse and the dramatic impulse differ chiefly in the arenas in which they operate -- of the two, the realm of the imagination, in which the theatrical impulse is exercised, is the more constructive, and more free. It can also confine us to the hardness of our own hearts: as George Steiner cautions, our tears for the death of Cordelia can leave us deaf to the cry in the street. To integrate the historical and dramatic impulses is a task both for the critical consciousness and the compassionate imagination. The teaching of Shakespeare in schools presents a prime occasion for that integration. The specific ways in which this agenda is manifest in classroom practice, teachers' attitudes and experiences, and students' responses must command the focus of this project's attention: the evolution of a theory of compassionate imagination as a prime component of drama education in general and the teaching of Shakespeare in particular must address itself to practice as well as possibility.

CHAPTER THREE: FOCAL THEORY

"The worst possible tactic is to refuse to debate questions of value in terms that non-specialists can understand, to abandon Shakespeare's writing without giving good reason; a chatshow discussion in 1988 chaired by Clive James allowed Kenneth Baker, then Secretary of State for Education, to dominate the argument because the representative Radical Academic effectively refused to join debate at all, denying that Hamlet existed (sec. of State fr Edctn: hhhrrump, ghrrrr) and offering instead a discussion of the evening's TV transmissions. The ground for argument was left vacant, and conservatism expanded as it will to occupy the vacuum, enthused and triumphant."¹

The question posed that evening in 1988 under the chairmanship of Clive James was "Is Shakespeare Overrated?" This was debated among the professor, (Terence Hawks) the actress, (Fiona Shaw) and the politician (Kenneth Baker) on behalf of the students, theatre goers, and the citizens who comprised the television audience. The meeting of these interests -- the academic, the political and the theatrical -- all conjoined and inconclusively clashed. Each of the participants tried to claim for their own a definition as to what Shakespeare "means", and a rationale for his continuing prominence in university and school study, in English heritage, and on the world's stage. The "representative Radical Academic", the new historicist critic Professor Terence Hawkes, laid claim to Shakespeare as a "political playwright" as did the politician, then Secretary of Education Kenneth Baker, each to his own ideological leaning. Hawkes contended that the plays, in their exploration of the roles that society imposes upon us, constituted "texts that we use to make meaning" contending that if power does not exist in human agency, it exists in definition, in our individual ability to "make meaning" against the societal imposition of the agreed meaning of the text. Baker, on the other hand, while acknowledging the "construction" of various readings of the Shakespeare plays through various historical moments, refused to acknowledge the cultural construction of Shakespeare himself, or the cultural construction of his enduring stronghold on English heritage and ideology. Confident in his assertion that "Shakespeare argues for national cohesion", Baker's Shakespeare seemed close kin to the Tory Bard beloved of ex-chancellor of the exchequer Nigel Lawson:

'*Coriolanus*', declared Nigel Lawson recently in an interview, 'is written from the Tory point of view. It says that man doesn't change, or man's nature doesn't change. The same problems are there in different forms: the fact of difference and the need for hierarchy. Both these facts are expressed, the [then] Chancellor

¹ Nigel Wheale, "Introduction" in *Shakespeare in the Changing Curriculum* ed. by Lesley Aers and Nigel Wheale (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) p. 7.

claimed, 'more powerfully by Shakespeare than anybody, the fact of difference and the need for hierarchy. Shakespeare was a Tory without any doubt'.²

The rationale for teaching Shakespeare rested, so far as Baker was concerned, with Shakespeare's ability to transcend the cultural re-readings of many ages; for the "universal human values" such as authority, control, and hierarchy that Shakespeare embodies. Whilst ideology and bardolatry locked horns, Fiona Shaw, introduced as a descendant of G.B. Shaw and as a formidable Shakespearean actress in her own right, spoke a different critical language which went, for the most part, unheeded. Baker commandeered what he misconstrued to be her meanings to make an ally of her, while Hawkes, through his academic interrogations, attempted to make a pupil of her. Shaw tried to make a case for distinguishing between imposition of textual meaning and exploration of enacted meaning, but the discussion by this point was so politically weighted as to leave these theatrical insights ignored while the ideological battle was being waged along the lines that had been drawn by her co-panelists. The actor's insight about the relationship between feeling and thought in Shakespeare remained unexplored and unprivileged. It is precisely because confrontations such as these, which attempt to place Shakespeare at the centre of a political, educational, and theatrical debate remain mutually alienating and inconclusive that they generate real frustration for secondary school teachers, to whom the contested task of teaching Shakespeare falls. The "lesson" for educators to be derived from such attempts at debate is this: "the plays cannot simply be abandoned, or the ideology that would be dominant will inhabit them for its own purposes, as heritage, nationalism, pot-pourri (Fr. lit.: 'rotten-pot')."³

The "Crisis" in English Studies and The Resistance to Theory

"The intensity of these debates signals that they are not just about English studies. Any move to tamper with language is an effort to tamper with more than language; if there's a crisis in English, it's because it's symptomatic of a more pervasive crisis in the Humanities. Why is the phrase 'crisis in the Humanities' a cliché? I think it's because it's a tautology- crisis and the humanities go together like Laurel and Hardy."

- Terry Eagleton, NATE '91 Conference, Plymouth

² Nigel Lawson, quoted in 'Session 7: Is Shakespeare a Feudal Propagandist?' in Is Shakespeare Still Our Contemporary?, ed. by John Elsom (London: Routledge, 1989) pp. 140-168 (p. 151).

³ Wheale, p. 7.

"Most of the people who are involved in this 'crisis in English' are university people; they're coming from a different world from the secondary school teacher."

"Most of us are 'Carry On Leavisites,' I would have thought"

-Teachers at Theory and Ideology Seminar, NATE '91

What is most interesting about the statements quoted above is the fear of theory⁴ revealed in their juxtaposition. If there is a real danger that the dominant ideology will "inhabit" the plays if abandoned by teachers who persist in untheorized practice, then the different worlds of university and schools practice have much to learn from one another. The resistance to theory is an amalgam of fear, unfamiliarity and hostility that derives in large measure from the difference in circumstances under which academics and classroom teachers traditionally encounter theory, as well as from the difference in perspective from which they approach the problems of theory. University academics have become increasingly involved with the theoretical (as opposed to the "practical") aspects of English for reasons that are not only inherent in the changing nature of university culture but necessary for professional survival. The creation of new literary works has been relegated to the artist in residence; the editing of classic literary texts, once an acceptable route to the D.Phil. or Ph.D., is now no longer so: textual experts must turn their attention to increasingly rare or obscure texts. Yet the drive of creativity persists, and the requirement for originality at the doctoral level has contributed to a great wave of theorizing which asserts its own claims to authority, creativity, and originality by placing its own interests on an equal footing with the texts it scrutinizes. Post-modernist trends in literary theory blasted away old notions of the very "canon" that secondary school teachers were compelled to teach. The reassuringly comfortable "binary oppositions"⁵ of text and context, history and literature, authorial intent and reader response ceased to prevail, and subjectivity itself became a thing to be deconstructed and disentangled out of a web of contingencies and cultural construction. And no matter how disconcerting the implications of this, no matter how "decentred" the intellect or ego in the midst of such a challenge to accepted notions of our ways of looking at literature (indeed anchoring

⁴ Michael Riffaterre, 'Fear of Theory', *New Literary History*, 21 (1990), 921-938.

⁵ Jean Howard, 'The New Historicism in Renaissance Studies', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986) 13-43 (p. 24).

ourselves in tradition is no longer an academically respectable option) the net effect of this brand of textual investigation and interrogation is to privilege the voice of the critic, to empower. That is the singular complexion of the critical voice: in the end, focus on the subjectivity of the theorist takes precedence over whatever focus is trained upon the text itself. Criticism has always been self-reflexive and self-reflective. Coleridge's Shakespeare criticism reveals as much about Coleridge as Greenblatt's Shakespeare criticism reveals about Greenblatt. (Perhaps the price of the resurrection of the critic is indeed "the death of the author".) In the "crisis" in the humanities, not only were the modes of critical inquiry questioned, but also the justification of criticism itself. Once it became clear that the threatened territory of English Studies could reclaim its integrity by casting aside its image as complicit in a conservative, elitist, liberal-humanist project, the radical academic community set about promoting instead the liberating, democratic project of locating human subjectivity and the contingency of being within the textuality of history and the historicity of texts. In short, the particular circumstances of academic culture helped to formulate a critical perspective in which the relationship of the critic to his text is both liberating and empowering.

The secondary school teacher, on the other hand, will have encountered theory on an entirely different footing, under entirely different circumstances. While it is both dangerous and difficult to generalize at this stage without having first surveyed teachers' own comments on their encounters with theory, I can at least testify to my own experiences of an American undergraduate course in English and American teacher education, which included a thorough grounding in critical educational theory -- as an entirely optional component of the course. There is a substantial range of differences in teachers' theoretical backgrounds: there will be generational differences, which will reflect differences in prevailing educational theories, differences in the manner of teacher training (i.e. B.Ed. as opposed to P.G.C.E. as opposed to the independent school teacher who may have had no formal teacher training at all). In addition to whatever exposure to educational theory teachers may have had, they will also have been witness to and shaped by the prevailing theoretical climate in literary criticism contemporary with their undergraduate training in English. For those teachers of English literature roughly

between the ages of thirty and fifty, the literary theory they will have been exposed to is likely to have been Leavisite; their theoretical background in education, on the other hand, is likely to have reflected a number of conflicting interests. Depending on the educational vogue at the time of their training, they may have been subjected to any number of theories, including theories of "progressive", child-centred education, the "new" sociology education, Dewey's philosophy of education, and the child development theories and psychological theories of Piaget, Skinner, Jung, and Freud. The mixture of sociological, psychological, and philosophical theory that teachers-in-training are exposed to in the course of their own education is as broad and varied as the task that they are being trained to do. The circumstances under which they encounter theory are fundamentally different from those of the academic literary critic; there may even be a marked opposition between the theoretical training they have had in literature, and the theoretical training they have had in education. Even given a best-case scenario, in which "teachers of the left" have had a thorough grounding and training in critical educational theory, in addition to a healthy exposure to post-modern literary theory, the professional climate in which they must survive compels them to maximize their students' chances for academic success within the established system, and success at GCSE and A-level will give their students more real power in the outside world than what examiners might perceive as an oppositional approach to Shakespeare. Subversion may take the form of compromise, of teaching against the grain and the limits of the system can be tried and expanded, but, in the end, the critically conscious secondary school teacher's first obligation is to empowering the students, not to assert the power of their own critical voice. When teachers are called upon to theorize and "politicize" their practice by those working outside the secondary school culture, the vehemence of their reactions directly reflects how deeply both the personal and political are implicated in the process of schooling, and how dimly that may be perceived by those outside of the profession, as well as by those within it.

The Politics of Critical Educational Theory

"Every single thing we do in the classroom is about empowering students!"

-Teacher at Theory and Ideology Seminar, NATE '91

At a recent American conference on the "crisis" in English teaching⁶, teachers were cautioned against the temptation to conflate educational aims with a political agenda, the implication being that education as an institution somehow could, in an ideal world, evolve unaffected by the societal forces that shaped it; that the values our educational institutions conferred upon students might maintain a utopian purity, uncorrupted by the influences that lay beyond the classroom door. Such a vision of education claims innocence from the implications of the problematics of the sociology of the school. Not only is the wider culture a constituent of the interests, values, and dynamics of its educational institutions, but the students, teachers, parents and administrators that drive those institutions are likewise citizens, and as such, live in the wider culture and are agents of its evolution. Before considering the specific problems of Shakespeare teaching, it is necessary to examine the educational, cultural and political climate within which that teaching occurs.

There is a fundamental and problematic difference between the political reasons why societies build educational institutions and the personal reasons why individual teachers teach. The personal and the political are deeply implicated in all aspects of that difference. The task of educating the citizenry is always a part of the political agenda, the question of what constitutes an education always a subject for political debate, most often and most publicly waged between those who have least first-hand experience of classroom teaching. In the background of this crisis in English studies is the public's varying perceptions of "crisis" in education itself. In recent years these perceptions have been exacerbated by simplistically polarized debates in the popular press between proponents of "progressive" and traditionalist teaching methods, or, similarly, between proponents of phonics or whole-words approaches to reading in the primary schools. The proclamations from across the Atlantic that the failure of American education has

⁶ "Special Issue: The Changing Culture of the University" Partisan Review 1991.

produced "A Nation at Risk"⁷, is matched by the reports from the CBI that our schools are failing to produce a sufficiently skilled workforce to enable Britain to compete effectively in the world's market.⁸ Despite the caution with which some teachers advocate the separation of education from politics, education is, now more than ever, the focus of political debate in which both the left and the right seek to wrest, for their own political agenda, control of a definition as to what education is or, more accurately, should be.⁹ It seems that in the U.K., as well as in the U.S.A., public, political debate on education typically descends to a level that is reactionary, accusatory, and prescriptive. Education (or the "failure" of education) becomes the all-purpose scapegoat for societal ills of every variety. The notion that poor reading skills, unemployment, poverty, family breakdown, drug and alcohol addiction, promiscuity and crime can all be blamed, directly or indirectly, on the failure of our educational institutions persists. The reasons for the persistence of such a fallacy are clear enough: the "failure" of the schools is partially implicated in the rise of poor reading and numeracy skills and that alone. But false logic would have it that all that follows thereafter -- unemployment from lack of skills, poverty from unemployment, promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse from the despair of poverty, family breakdown and crime likewise following as the conclusion to the spiral downward into degradation -- all this occurs as if causal relations obtained in a moral regression that begins with low literacy skills. In recent years, when schooling becomes the focus of a political agenda, it is often as an opportunity for politicians to say yet again (usually in reaction to reports in the media of the moral decline of young people) that what the schools must do is to teach "the basics" and "values", the nebulous panacea that will somehow transform the turbulent and corrupted lower classes into literate, numerate, employable and law-abiding citizens.

At the same time, the "crisis" in English studies has accelerated to the point where it is no longer a debate between schools of criticism and conflicting ideologies, but " a

⁷ The National Commission on Excellence in Education. *A Nation at Risk*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Education, 1983.

⁸ See Howard Davies, 'Omissions impossible', *Times Educational Supplement*, 23 October 1992, p. 18., also 'British 'to get menial roles', *Times Educational Supplement*, 30 October 1992, p. 6, for a discussion of this.

⁹ See Mike Harrison, 'Time to debunk the glorious past', *Times Educational Supplement*, 4 June 1994, p. 5, for reaction to this phenomenon.

question, posed from within, as to what English is, where it has got to, whether it has a future, whether it should have a future as a discrete discipline, and, if it does, in what ways it might be constituted."¹⁰ A difficulty arises when, from within the academic world, the attempts to "re-read" English that have been advocated during the past decade fail to take into account the wider concerns of a critical theory of education that has been evolving since the early 1970's. The world of literary studies, (to which, unfortunately, the teaching of Shakespeare has most often been relegated) when placed beside other disciplines such as political science, history, sociology, and education seems to have been the last to pick up on a trend that has already had its day outside of what has been until recently its own relatively closed world. The basic theoretical tenets underlying cultural materialist criticism (as a case in point) enjoyed currency in the new sociology of education as early as the late 60's. To teachers of this generation, it would seem an easy matter to incorporate cultural materialist theories into their English teaching, but this is not as simple as might be supposed for a number of reasons. Teachers of the left, trained in what was at the time regarded as the "new" sociology of education, were fired by both an awareness of cultural reproduction within the school system itself and a desire to intervene for change of the system. They felt a real sense of responsibility towards their students to incorporate their culture, their differences, and experiences into a negotiation of meaning. The foundations of teaching itself, as knowledge transfer from teacher (who "knows") to student (who "learns") were disrupted and re-framed within what aspired to be a more egalitarian paradigm, which allowed for dialogic investigations and dialectical interrogations of the text. Students and teacher were to enter into education as fellow travellers; the distinction between student and teacher was blurred as the mutually beneficial discovery of knowledge unfolded. The teacher, under this radical paradigm, was to return to his roots as a "leader", a coaxer-out of ideas, rather than a gatekeeper to the unknown, with power to impose meaning or withhold knowledge. In order for this scheme of education to work, the students' voices had to be empowered; for meaning to be negotiated, authentic dialogue had to occur between student and teacher.

¹⁰ Peter Widdowson, "The crisis in English studies" in Re-Reading English (London and New York: Methuen, 1982) p. 7.

The relationships that a teacher has with a student, a class, a school system, and the political system which supports that school system are fundamentally different from the relationship which literary critics have with a body of seventeenth century dramatic texts (as well as the relationship they have with others in the academic community). But it would seem that this simple and important fact has gone unrecognized for long enough for a host of difficulties to arise which serve to obscure the issues at stake in the debate about the teaching of Shakespeare in schools. One of the most recent (and self-consciously utopian) attempts to address that difference admits its own ignorance and limitations from the outset:

My Utopian thoughts ... emerge from the following: a desire for alliances with teachers in all sectors, a familiarity with some of the new readings and none of the new practices, an angry awareness of the marginalization of drama work within university, a lack of experience of drama in schools, a responsibility for teaching people who will end up working in the schools of which I have no experience. ¹¹

But the construction of a utopian scenario is itself typical of the academic relationship that privileges critical voice over malleable text. This malleability of the text is evidenced in the endless permutations and appropriations of Shakespeare that have featured in the "Bardbiz" debate, initiated by Terence Hawkes.¹² The much-maligned James Wood stepped back into the arena to ask if Shakespeare is in fact a "black hole" into which we pour our meaning, what are the aesthetic criteria by which we distinguish one author from another, or one style of writing from another (as opposed to one style of reading from another?)¹³

Similarly, in the United States, the vehement debate that ensued in the PMLA's *Forum* following the publication of Richard Levin's "Feminist Thematics and Shakespearean Tragedy" prompted the proposal of a Special Session of the Modern Language Association on the Role of Ideology in Shakespeare studies, held in Washington, D.C., in December 1989.¹⁴ From within the academic community, a wary regard for the "black hole" of Shakespeare studies in particular and literary studies generally is perceived as a threat to professionalism:

¹¹ Simon Shepherd, "Utopian Thoughts on Workshops" in *Shakespeare in the Changing Curriculum*, p. 90.

¹² Terence Hawkes, *Meaning by Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1992)

¹³ James Wood, 'Bardbiz' *London Review of Books*, 7 February 1991, p. 4.

¹⁴ Ivo Kamps, 'Introduction: Ideology and its Discontents', in *Shakespeare Left and Right*, ed. by Ivo Kamps (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

if literary studies are to maintain their centrality as a discipline within an increasingly professionalized academia and culture, they will have to decide what their specific subject matter is and what specialist knowledge of it they can provide.¹⁵

The difficulty of deciding "what the specific subject matter is" has implications for deciding methodology as well as content for Shakespeare teachers on the schools level. It is impossible to disentangle "the subject" of Shakespeare from this nexus without first theorizing classroom practice.

Theories of Reproduction; Theories of Production

Critical educational theory is not a homogeneous body of thought. As the subject of education itself is an amalgam of psychology, philosophy, sociology, and statistics, theoretical advances in any one of the component disciplines of education will have some bearing upon the others. What critical educational theory attempts to do is provide a framework for the continuing analysis, critique, growth and transformation of education as an essential component of a democratic society. Changes in the society will therefore be reflected in changes in educational theory. It is useful at this point to distinguish and clarify those theoretical differences in order to show their evolution and relation to one another, to the hidden political agenda of educational policy, and, finally, as they relate to the debate within English studies between liberal humanists and radical theorists, and the ways in which this highlights the complexity of the differences between (and among) cultural materialist and new historicist approaches to Shakespeare teaching.

To summarize from the previous chapter, the basic tenets of the new sociology of education, as it evolved from the Frankfurt School, are: 1.) An essentially Marxist recognition of economic inequality, and of the existence of dominant and subordinate cultures that arise from that inequality; 2.) An adaptation of Freudian depth psychology as a means of illuminating the relationship between psychological repression and economic and cultural oppression; 3.) A reflex of self-critique (negative dialectics) as a response to instrumental rationality.

¹⁵ Howard Felperin, The Uses of the Canon-Elizabethan Literature and Contemporary Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) p. xi.

What is particularly important about the development of critical educational theory is the progression from theories of reproduction to more recent theories of production. Theories of reproduction in critical educational theory argue from a basic Althusserian notion of the operation of the schools as a component of the "ideological state apparatus" to reproduce the inequalities of the dominant culture. The sinister nature of the schools' hidden agenda is to placate the citizenry and reproduce the labour force, perpetuating the inequalities that sustain the profit margins which uphold a capitalist society. The most famous exponents of this type of reproduction theory in the United States were Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, whose controversial study, Schooling in Capitalist America (1976) argued that the schools functioned to reproduce the stratification (and the behaviours appropriate to that stratification) of the work force. While Bowles and Gintis's work gives a clear picture of the function of the schools as a site for the reproduction of economic inequality, what their work omits is (among other things) an adequate analysis of the ways in which social and cultural "reproduction" is achieved through the schools; this problem was addressed through the cultural reproduction theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Basil Bernstein. The central concern with cultural knowledge is one that Bernstein shares with Bourdieu; Bernstein's particular focus is on the linguistic "codes", the "process of transmission" through which school knowledge is communicated:

Bernstein argues that school knowledge and language is middle-class language, which he characterises as an elaborate code. Working class children, whose language Bernstein characterizes as a restricted code, are at a disadvantage in formal schooling situations, since knowledge is transmitted to them in both a language and organization that is foreign to them.¹⁶

Similarly, Bourdieu, together with his associate Jean-Claude Passeron, developed a concept of "cultural capital" as "the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize different classes and groups, with some forms of cultural capital having a higher 'exchange rate' than others ... Bourdieu and Passeron argue that valued school knowledge is, in fact, the cultural knowledge of the Bourgeois class."¹⁷ The recent American

¹⁶ Kathleen Weiler, Women Teaching for Change: Gender, class and power (New York, Westport Connecticut, London : Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1988) pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ Weiler, pp. 9-10.

movement to educate (and test) students for "cultural literacy"¹⁸ is a prime example of the power and currency of precisely this type of "cultural capital". Likewise when cultural materialists implicate Shakespeare teaching as "an instrument of bourgeois hegemony" they are incorporating the function of Shakespeare teaching into what critical educational theorists would call a reproduction theory. In this analysis, knowledge of Shakespeare represents possession of high-value cultural capital: those students whose social and cultural status predisposes them to have greater access to that cultural capital are the same students who will value that cultural capital and what it represents unquestioningly. Specifically, liberal humanist teaching of the Shakespeare plays is implicated in this analysis, in that the assumption of "universal" values in the plays serves in fact unproblematically to reinforce, and thereby reproduce, inequalities of gender, race, and class. Teachers are, in this view, reduced to state functionaries, grooming bourgeois students for continuing cultural dominance, and there is little if any allowance for the formation of student subjectivities or the power of student agency. Within the growing community of new historicist academics, there is a similar trend among some (but not all) of the new historicist readings to subsume the power of human agency beneath that of the dominant institutions of Elizabethan society, insisting rather on the cultural constructedness and contingency of the subject. The Shakespeare plays in this light become examples of a "reproduction" of the dominant culture of the Elizabethans, their construction an inevitability, and their authorship arbitrary. This last point has proved to be a particularly difficult concept for many educators to grasp, particularly those for whom Shakespeare's value as "cultural capital" is paramount:

The disrespect for the author has patently led to a disrespect for the text; if the author lacks authority, readers or critics can do with the text what ever they like. And if there are no great authors there are no great books. Superman is as worthy of study as Shakespeare. Comic books are as properly part of the curriculum as Hamlet or Macbeth.¹⁹

While this is a somewhat oversimplified and reductive view of the parallel interests of literary and educational theories, it serves to point up some of the major

¹⁸ Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students. (New York: Simon, 1987).

¹⁹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Special Issue: The Changing Culture of the University" Partisan Review 1991 p. 363.

pedagogical difficulties that the incorporation of current literary theory into Shakespeare teaching practice represents for educators who are as concerned with the production of individual students as with the dangers of reproducing the unequal system through which those students must be processed. Within the community of educational theorists, these concerns led to criticism of reproduction theories on a number of grounds: that the high level of abstraction at which these theories are argued betrays an ignorance of actual school practice; that the implication in both Bordieu's and Bernstein's work that in the hierarchy of types of knowledge and codes of transmission, working-class knowledge and codes are in fact inferior; that the mechanistic, functionalist role ascribed to schools is dehumanizing to both teachers and students; and finally, their theories neglect to investigate the ways in which sexuality is produced (and reproduced) through the schools. Critical educational theorists sensed a need to reassess these views within a climate of hope and possibility if their work was to contribute in any real way to the struggle for change. New theories, developing initially as a critique of the reproduction theories of the late seventies, returned to earlier roots in Frankfurt School thought, and exercising the reflex of self-critique inherent in negative dialectics, asked the question that reproduction theorists had neglected: how might schools function as sites where ideology is produced? Production theories are based on a notion of counter-hegemony - that is to say, the forces of resistance, opposition and critique of the dominant culture that typify the schools as sites of struggle through which meanings can be negotiated and subjectivities can be formed. The genealogy of the production theorists is complex and varied.²⁰ Influences include, in addition to the Frankfurt School and the work of Paulo Freire mentioned above, the cultural theory of Raymond Williams (in common with cultural materialist literary criticism) and the work of Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci rejected the notion of the mechanistic function of schools and the passivity of learners that upheld that function, arguing rather that hegemonic control is never complete; that consciousness is complex, containing the possibility of self-critique and the seeds of change. The power of counter-hegemony rests with the development of what he terms the "organic intellectual": one whose philosophy emerges from an understanding of the common-sense

²⁰ See Weiler, 'Chapter one - Critical Educational Theory' in Women Teaching for Change-Gender, Class & Power for a concise, accessible overview of these developments.

world [i.e. the world of "complex consciousness"] and the historical and economic forces which have shaped it.²¹

The Relationship of Methodology to Theory: Know Thyself

The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is and in "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces without leaving any inventory.²²

It is not an easy matter to relate the "how" to the "why", the practice to theory, which is perhaps the reverse of the usual way round, the relating of theory to practice. The rationale for this reversal is to avoid the imposition of meaning in favour of the discovery of the enactment of meaning in practice. Theory is always present in practice; it is not always conscious or articulated. When teachers are admonished to "theorize" their classroom practice, often their resistance can be attributed to a misunderstanding of theory as something external to the teacher; something foreign to be mastered and applied like a coat of paint over what the teacher does quite naturally, often without having the luxury of time and perspective to think about it. What has baffled, and may surprise many practising teachers is that theory, the rationale for teaching, is there already, is personal, is political, and must be deconstructed before it can be articulated, and, more importantly, before it can become a conscious part of methodology:

You can't just knock on a rock and have the stream come out, and I'm afraid that this what many teachers imagine you can do. There is no magical way of finding theory. You've got to construct it yourself and it's a long journey: to deconstruct your own culture, to deconstruct your sexuality, to deconstruct your professional identity -- all those things that are part of who you are -- you actually have to examine them, and it takes a long time to do that I'm afraid. It's a process which never stops, never finishes; that re-reading of yourself, and how you have been made: that's what it is at root.²³

Teachers must be compelled at some point to articulate their personal and political rationale for teaching, and be prepared to locate that rationale within a wider understanding of the sociology of education. The articulation of the reasons why we teach

²¹ Weiler, p. 15.

²² Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks Quinton Hoare and Geoff Nowell-Smith, eds. and trans. (New York: International Publishers, 1971) p. 326.

²³ John Salway, In Interview, NATE '91 Conference, Plymouth, Appendix E.

can be heard in compliance, contradiction or opposition to the reasons the society within which we teach has built its schools. If we teach with the aim of making ourselves "obsolete" as teachers, to promote among our students a self-propelling affection and curiosity about learning, then our rationale for teaching must bear some relationship to the context and methodology of our teaching. In order to make oneself obsolete as a teacher, to foster that curiosity and love of learning, then the teacher must first encounter the obstacles to curiosity, the fear of learning, and even the shame of it. In order to persuade students that learning is to their benefit, students must first be encountered upon a ground where they are convinced of their own worthiness. For students to know the world outside themselves, they must first become acquainted with themselves. This may seem patently obvious, but in fact, with the exception of those rare moments of discovery that are allotted us in nursery school and kindergarten, the bulk of education to follow seems designed to systematically estrange the child from self-knowledge. We have come a long way from the unbridled vigour that characterized the progressive, child-centred movement in education of the 60's (particularly in drama education). The romantic appeal of this approach eventually wore thin and a laudable programme of educational objectives too often manifests itself in practice as classroom mismanagement and undisciplined students.²⁴ It is as if the good intention to "know thyself" had been pursued at the expense of the balance of the dictum: "control thyself". Much of the reactionary tone of educational debate draws its strength from this. But the challenge to enable students to know themselves remains a paramount educational goal. The realization of that goal demands an answer to numerous questions: How do we know ourselves, if not in relation to others? What are the obstacles to authentic self-knowledge? What is possible to control in ourselves? Our thoughts? Our speech? Our actions? Our reactions? Can we learn to control our ability to feel, physically and emotionally; to feel love, fear or pain? How do the objectives of self-knowledge and self-control contribute to the democratic process; to the moral imperative of critical theory? How might changes in the theory and methodology of drama teaching generally and Shakespeare teaching particularly

²⁴ David Hornbrook, Education and Dramatic Art (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) pp. 144-146.

contribute to that project? And perhaps most importantly, might there not also be another side to the educational aim of self-knowledge and self-control?

The obstacles to learning, the fear and shame at the heart of those who, for whatever reason, cannot feel themselves worthy to learn, and the concomitants of these, fear's ignorance, selfishness and blindness -- shame's anger, and the violence it embodies, can be directly addressed if first we venture to forgive ourselves, then to open ourselves to learning. To begin with, the task of knowing ourselves is a fearful thing -- so much that is unspeakable awaits us -- what Freire calls "the oppressor within" ²⁵ must be acknowledged before it can be controlled. To forgive ourselves is to acknowledge the thing of darkness as our own. This is the first, essential step on the way to self-knowledge. Thereafter, the clenched fist, the mind, and the heart all open. Learning begins with self-forgiveness, and with this opening. It is not to be confused with emptying; the presupposition upon which "banking" education is based. The open self is one that is equally conscious of its own experience, vision, opinions, and affections as it is of those of others: this is one of the prerequisites for authentic dialogue. Once the self can be known, the self can be controlled, the self can grow, and the self can change. When teachers are faced with the task of facilitating that change against a body of "timeless" texts, what is needed is not new texts so much as a new conception of timelessness:

We are equipped with a relevant definition of timelessness. Instead of being once and for all the end of a process, the text is continuously the starting point of that process. It is an origin, a generator, always new, always creating, whenever the reader starts reading it. Always creating, because it is founded on a principle of transformation.²⁶

Identifying the Obstacles to Emancipatory Pedagogy:

Finding Theory

"I've never met an English teacher over the last eighteen months who believes that ten attainment levels is anything but a load of rubbish! A purpose for theory is to defend the practice as well as to change the practice ... without some sort of model, or commonly shared idea of what English is that is theorized, we're in danger of letting everyone just dump in whatever they like.

- Teacher at Theory and Ideology Seminar, NATE '91

²⁵ Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, *passim*.

²⁶ Riffaterre, p. 929.

The obstacles to emancipatory pedagogy can be discerned at several levels: at the political level, the institutional level, and the personal level. It is in the process of discerning the interrelationship of these obstacles at every level that teachers can begin to "deconstruct" themselves and begin to "find" theory. At the political level, teachers can begin by locating their personal rationale for teaching within the wider context of the political agenda of the schools:

teachers and lecturers have their own aims and objectives for what they want to teach, values or skills which may run counter to the dominant value system ... There have been periods when teachers have had to teach in deep contradiction to the national parameters set for educational practice, as in the late nineteenth century during the experiment of 'payment by results' for teachers, and we may be entering another sustained period of this kind of counter-teaching.²⁷

At the institutional level the possibilities for change will be circumscribed by those national parameters for educational practice to a large extent: this does not however preclude the possibility for change beginning at a grassroots level. The National Curriculum is chiefly prescriptive of content: the traditional refuge of teachers from the dictates of content has been the latitude of method. This too is problematic: there is a delicate balance to be maintained between teacher autonomy within an individual classroom and student appeasement of the individual teacher, as evidenced by the following account:

A student in my criticism course last semester told of an earlier teacher who warned her class that she would not tolerate the word "problematize". This student happened to be concurrently taking another course in which it seemed clear that using words like "problematize" would be to his advantage. "What did you do?", my class asked. "What else could I do? he said. "I avoided 'problematize' in one course and plugged it to death in the other."²⁸

The lecturer relating this incident suggests that the closed classroom door is a door shut to dialogue: the remedy can begin in "teaching the conflict". The fear of opening up the door on the debate is in part a fear of the acknowledgement of the other which is prerequisite to authentic dialogue. One of the ways in which theory can serve to change the practice is to question the ways in which teaching is organized:

²⁷ Wheale, p. 8.

²⁸ Gerald Graff, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms: Organizing and Teaching the Humanities Conflict' in *New Literary History*, 21 (1990) p. 830.

This reduction of education to teaching, which goes hand in hand with the glorification of the autonomous, self-contained course as the natural locus of education, fails to see that educational problems are systematic ones that involve not just individual teaching but the way that teaching is organized ... I doubt whether "the classroom" can become effectively dialogical as long as it is not itself in dialogue with other classrooms.²⁹

On the personal level, teachers need to question the basis of the relationships they form with their individual students, and the ways in which those relationships in turn will have a bearing upon the text under study. As long as the teacher's politics, personality and readings serve to determine the standards by which students are judged to fail or succeed, as long as the power to sanction the correctness or appropriateness of response lies with the teacher, students will seek that sanction and deliver what is required of them. Students are malleable to the extent that they can, for the sake of surviving the scrutiny of whatever subjectivities have framed the examination questions, comply with their own indoctrination. The fundamental difference between indoctrination and dialogue is that dialogue is an exchange of knowledge that facilitates the growth and transformation of either participant. Students' self-knowledge ideally should evolve in contradistinction to the teacher's. A very courageous example of the pedagogical value of teacher subjectivity and "otherness" as a constructive means of challenging and investigating student subjectivities is related by Elaine Hobby, whose openness about her own lesbianism completely transformed her teaching of *As You Like It*. This kind of theorized practice is particularly valuable in that it acknowledges and explores the power of the teacher's personal voice as a stimulus to the growth of critical consciousness in her own students:

A key effect of my openness about my homosexuality was to prevent -- sometimes with much hilarity -- the trotting out of unanalysed assumptions about family structures, love and desire, the social roles of women and men, and the application of such "truisms" to the study of literature. It is difficult to say "everyone feels" or "all women want" when the teacher sitting with you manifestly does not feel or want those things.³⁰

If the Left's agenda for education in the 90's is sincerely concerned with creating an unoppressive schools environment conducive to the formation of student subjectivities, an educational climate that is liberating and democratic in the best sense of the word, then that agenda must be prepared to re-articulate the Shakespeare plays in a different voice.

²⁹ Graff, p. 831.

³⁰ Elaine Hobby, 'Homosexuality and Teaching *As You Like It*' in *Shakespeare in the Changing Curriculum* p. 130.

At any cost, the plays cannot be abandoned: "Through our practices as teachers ... we can combat attempts to police our lives and the lives of those we teach. Such an opposition can even be made when teaching Shakespeare." ³¹

³¹ Hobby, p. 140.

CHAPTER FOUR: FOCUSING ON THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

THE TEACHERS' PART

"I want the students that I teach to be critical readers ... I want them to be powerful readers, writers and constructors, and I want them to understand that the texts are culturally constructed. But I want them to realize too how powerful a text is, to be shaken and stirred and not to come away from The Tempest feeling that the only thing that is interesting about it is colonization."

-Teacher at Theory and Ideology Seminar, NATE '91

Against the background of enormous change in Shakespeare studies at University level, secondary-school English and Theatre Studies teachers continue to teach Shakespeare in schools all over England with varying degrees of awareness of the dissent within the academic ranks. A-Level Literature and Theatre Studies students emerging from the schools environment into higher education and university culture may find themselves passing into an alien world of decentred values, re-mapped cultural territories, re-read histories of gender, class, and racial struggle, against which they may be expected to interpret an essentially "rewritten" Shakespeare.

At the same time, as academic debate grows increasingly theoretical, so far away from scripts that even texts give way to "notions of textuality", classroom practice is slowly beginning to shift the focus of Shakespeare studies away from the page to the stage. The momentum of this change was manifest in Rex Gibson's testimony to the National Curriculum English working group, chaired by Professor Brian Cox, at which he persuaded the committee that Shakespeare should be assured a place on the National Curriculum for all students by compelling them to participate with him in an active Shakespeare lesson.¹ English Literature A-Level students working with the AEB 660 syllabus are given the option to write about plays which they have seen in performance. In short, the changes in Shakespeare studies at schools level seem at times almost diametrically opposed to the changes happening at university level. This creates a problem on two levels, which can be viewed from the bottom up or from the top down.

In the first instance, in so far as it is within the school's domain to prepare students for university-level study of dramatic literature, there is a potential loss of continuity of

¹ David Ward, 'Rex's magic island', *Guardian*, 3 April 1990.

learning. The critical gyrations of many postmodern literary theories do not build in any apparent way upon the active approaches to Shakespeare teaching that are gaining such wide popularity in schools. There is a fundamental difference in the types of knowledge that active/dramatic and literary/critical approaches to Shakespeare will reveal, value, and explore. These are not necessarily incompatible; one of the objects of this research project is to postulate ways in which these differing types of knowledge might be incorporated into teaching strategies that allow for mutual enlightenment through juxtaposition of those differences. Nevertheless, the situation remains at the moment one in which teachers in schools and lecturers in university are from time to time working at odds with one another on the contested Shakespearean ground.

In the second instance, viewing the problem from the top down, the time is rapidly approaching when examining boards and school teachers must acknowledge that the rising tide of "political correctness", increasingly influential at university level, will eventually have some bearing on secondary school practices, particularly if those schools, in an increasingly competitive climate of league tables, parental choice, opting out and proposed performance-related pay have any notion at all of market forces. In this recessionary economy, advanced education becomes a palatable alternative to the real possibility of unemployment², and the criterion for schools' desirability remains the level of university entrance their school leavers achieve: Fergusson and Unwin, having researched the increased staying-on rates note that

Parents look to schools with sixth forms to see how many pupils have gained higher education places. Beneath entry to higher education will come further education followed, in order, by entry into employment, then a placement on Youth Training (YT), then unemployment.³

With the press at the gates to university entrance increasing, teachers in schools are obliged to equip their sixth-formers with every possible advantage in the competition. English teachers who are conversant with current trends in literary criticism may find themselves in a better position than their uninitiated colleagues to assist their students in finding a university place.⁴

² See Mike Prestage, "Doors close for the 'lost generation'." *Times Educational Supplement*, July 3 1992.

³ Ross Fergusson and Lorna Unwin, "Staying Power" *Guardian Education*, November 9 1993.

⁴ The publication of such books as Enjoying Texts: Using Literary Theory in the Classroom (Cheltenham: Stanley Thornes, 1989) may be seen as one market response to this need.

But how profoundly are these influences from within and outside the teaching profession actually felt by working teachers? This is what the teacher survey attempts to discover. The survey questions ask teachers, directly and indirectly, to assess the effects of change in Shakespeare teaching on two levels. First, it asks what, if any, is the effect of academic-level study of the Shakespeare plays on schools practice; it also asks how schools practice (that is: methodology, theory, assessment and the learning experience as it is experienced by both teachers and students) is changed when the focus of Shakespeare teaching shifts from the literary/critical to the active/dramatic. Having postulated that there is a fundamental difference between the types of knowledge that each of these approaches affords, it then becomes necessary to explore the nature of that difference, and investigate the possibilities for incorporating different teaching strategies to accommodate that difference.

The limitation inherent in the documentary evidence from either side (i.e. the books, articles, letters, and broadcasts that constitute the public and often political aspect of the debate) is that it remains largely theoretical. As such, the nature of the arguments about Shakespeare teaching tend to revolve around often widely divergent theoretical interests. In order to focus these interests on the research question, that is, to test their currency among teachers in schools, it is then necessary to collect new data, specifically targeted to assess the effects of change in Shakespeare teaching, from within the profession and from without; from the top down and from the bottom up.

In effect, the survey seeks to test academic notions about what should be happening in the nation's A-level and GCSE English and Drama/Theatre Studies classes against teachers' notions about what they believe to be pedagogically possible and valuable as components of their Shakespeare teaching. This must include an investigation of teachers' perceptions of themselves, their practice, their students, and their professional obligations. Again, it is entirely possible that there might be a disparity between teachers' perceptions of their Shakespeare teaching and their students' perception of it (there is an inevitable disparity between teaching and learning). Nevertheless, the teacher stands as the key figure, the responsible agent implicated in a system against whom the following charges have been levelled:

Shakespeare ... has inevitably been incorporated into the dominant ideology, and made an instrument of hegemony. The plays are used in a deeply ideological fashion, to propagate and "naturalise" a whole social perspective Because of the circumstances in which Shakespeare is presented to most people, usually first through school, this upper-class bias pervades everything to do with Shakespeare.⁵

The new petty bourgeoisie (unlike the old, of artisans and small shopkeepers) is constituted not by family but through education ... The combination of cultural deference and cautious questioning promoted around Shakespeare in GCE seems designed to construct a petty bourgeoisie which will strive within limits allocated to it without seeking to disturb the system.⁶

Clearly, from at least one corner in the battle between the cultural materialists and the liberal humanists, there is a concern that the self-confessed "born-again Leavisites" in whose charge the next generation of academics have been left are initiating students into the complacent ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, wielding Shakespeare as a blunt (but powerful) hegemonic instrument.

If we are to assess the effects of change in teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and values concerning the teaching of Shakespeare, then the first step is to begin with the teachers themselves.

Designing the Survey Questionnaire:

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Postal Interview

The survey questionnaire⁷ used in this research was designed with a specific group of teachers, or a purposeful sample, in mind. " Purposeful sampling is selection based on the characteristics of the units (sites or individuals) relevant to the research problem." ⁸ These teachers all had a characteristic interest in Shakespeare teaching, given that they had been my fellow-participants on the 1990 Secondary School Shakespeare Teaching INSET course led by Rex Gibson of the Cambridge Institute for Education at Girton College, Cambridge.⁹ The group consisted of forty one teachers, thirty eight of whom were

⁵ David Margolis "Teaching the handsaw to fly: Shakespeare as a hegemonic instrument", The Shakespeare Myth ed. Graham Holderness Manchester University Press 1988, p. 43.

⁶ Alan Sinfield "Give an account of Shakespeare and Education, showing why you think they are effective and what you have appreciated about them. Support your comments with precise references", Political Shakespeare ed. Dollimore and Sinfield, Manchester University Press 1985, p. 143.

⁷ A copy of the actual survey questionnaire appears in Appendix F.

⁸ William Wiersma, Research Methods in Education, 5th edn, (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon 1991) p. 265.

⁹ I am grateful to Rex Gibson for his support and advice on this aspect of the research.

English. These thirty eight represented a wide geographical spread and age range, male to female ratio was about one to one, the majority of the teachers were from the state sector, and all of the teachers were white. As subject teachers, the majority were English teachers, several were Drama specialists, and a few were teachers of children with special needs. All of them had enough interest in Shakespeare teaching to spend a week of their summer "holiday" on the INSET course, and chiefly for this reason I elected to use them as my sample for my survey questionnaire. Teachers were informed of the nature of my research, and I requested (rather than imposed) their cooperation. The response rate was 35%.¹⁰ This is just high enough to justify analysis of the data collected as representative of the group.

In keeping with the strategies of illuminative research, the questionnaire was presented as a postal interview (i.e. open-ended questions posed with the invitation to answer as briefly or as completely as the respondent desires). This option was chosen over that of a closed-question survey -- the small size of the sample, and the fact that the participants were known to me presented me with the opportunity to collect a rich body of data that would also be relatively manageable. Furthermore, I did not wish to "find what I was looking for" in the sense that the design of a closed-question survey often limits respondents to the choice of given responses, often none of which accurately reflect their beliefs and attitudes. The questionnaire was designed with several objects in mind. First, to discover relevant information about teachers' own experiences of being taught Shakespeare, and being trained to teach it; second, to determine what critical influences teachers were consciously aware of in their practice; third, to discover what teaching methods they either currently used or would consider using; and lastly, to ask them to describe their experiences of real classroom practice, and ideas about the possibilities and circumstances for ideal classroom practice.

Generally speaking, the advantages of any postal interview over a closed-question survey lie in the invitation to respond at length. The attendant disadvantages to this are twofold: first of all there is the relinquishing of a certain degree of control over the responses, making for what is often a rather unwieldy body of data; secondly (and this

¹⁰ I am indebted to those teachers who replied.

pertains to any survey, opened or closed) once the questions have been posed, there is no room for discussion or clarification either of the questions or the responses in the event that there is any misunderstanding on either side. Personal interviews with each of the respondents would have provided the ideal research situation in this instance: however, limitations of time and budget could not allow it. The postal interview seemed the best alternative under the circumstances.

Once the questions for this survey were devised, several colleagues were kind enough to offer their advice, criticisms, and suggestions as to how the survey might be improved. The survey was revised twice before being sent out; even then, it was clear from the responses I received that the questions I had asked were not by any means free from ambiguity, nor exempt from misinterpretation. There is no such thing as a perfectly clear question (nor, for that matter, a straight answer). Nevertheless, for all its flaws I found the survey valuable, not only as a source of data in itself, but as basis for future modifications of a closed-question survey questionnaire aimed at a larger sample.

Part One: Getting the Facts

This section of the survey is very straightforward- asking for: 1) name (thereby also establishing, in a group known to me, sex); 2) school -- useful for future contact; 3) level(s) taught -- to establish range of experience with different age groups; 4) subject taught -- to discern if there was any apparent difference between responses from, for example, English teachers and Drama and Theatre Studies teachers; and finally 5) the syllabus followed at their school. This section of the survey is primarily organizational in its purpose; providing categories across which tests can be made for variations in response. One notable bit of information that was immediately clear from this section of the survey is that both of the teachers using the AEB 660 Syllabus at the time the survey was administered singled it out as praiseworthy both for the coursework element (then under threat from the Conservative Government's push to return to written examinations) and for the lack of constraint they felt in teaching the syllabus. Such praise was conspicuously absent from the responses of all other teachers. It is disheartening now to

add that as of 1996, the government has ruled that the coursework element of the AEB 660 English A-level syllabus will be reduced from 50% to 20%.¹¹

Part Two: The Professional Profile.

Teachers' Experiences of Being Taught and Trained

This section of the survey was devised with the intention of determining whether some sort of continuity exists from one generation of teachers to the next. The notion of teaching as a vocation that is "handed down", i.e. that inspirational teaching produces inspired teachers, informs this to some degree; nevertheless, the questions were posed in such a way as to encourage a balanced response. Specifically, teachers were asked particulars about their degrees, special subjects and training (though one important omission from this section is any question about when teacher training and degree courses were taken. This information would have been useful in determining whether or not the "born-again Leavisites" are all over thirty.)

The Open-ended Questions and An Analysis of the Responses:

Part A, Question Four: What is your own most positive memory of being taught Shakespeare (either at school, college or university level)? Please describe.

Question Five: Likewise, what is your own most negative memory of being taught Shakespeare?

Open-ended questions in this section were focused on the strength of teachers' impressions of their own schooling. Questions four and five in any future surveys would be more usefully posed by being divided into two parts, in each instance asking specifically a) when they had their most positive/negative learning experience; and b) what that experience was. Most (but not all) teachers were specific about when; this information is too valuable to be collected piece-meal and left to chance.

Responses to question four revealed a number of things. The two most frequently reported positive memories were either memories of seeing performances, or memories of

¹¹ AEB 660 English Literature Advanced Level Syllabus, 1996. Booklet Number 07.

particularly inspired teaching. The following extract is particularly vivid to this effect, describing the experience of being taught:

At thirteen -- by a teacher who was an "addict" and who made even the scant biographical details about Shakespeare fascinating and instilled a desire on my part to learn more. He "told" the plays and allowed us to listen just to the poetry washing over us -- we did not come to using texts until we had listened to the "stories" and heard him reading passages....

It could be argued that the way in which this teacher expressed his addictive enthusiasm constituted a performance; nevertheless reports of inspired teaching praised other teacherly virtues as well, regardless of theatrical flair. Intellectual stimulation, particularly at A-level and university level, is also indicated several times as having had a strong and lasting impact:

I remember one lesson with a teacher who did not usually teach us and she encouraged us to discuss the role of Portia in The Merchant of Venice. She made me think about the play whereas the other teacher bored me utterly ...

Being taught in a very small A-level group (four girls) by the headmaster and Shakespeare scholar Guy Boas, at my grammar school in Chelsea-- some sessions on King Lear -- just reading and discussion groups. Good teacher...

... the enthusiasm of my English teacher for the poetry in Antony and Cleopatra ...

Other positive memories reported by teachers were all related to their own experiences of performing, either as a part of an in-class performance, learning single speeches, participating in informal play readings, or acting on the Girton INSET course itself. One teacher reports his most positive memory of performing in class with a note of resentment that it never happened again: " Actually standing up to do a scene in class from Richard II. The only time we ever did." Another teacher's positive memory of in-class performance would appear to have less to do with Shakespeare than with her fellow budding Shakespearean: "Reading Brutus' wife in Julius Caesar because 'Brutus' (Thomas Alexander Worthington) had lovely brown eyes !" Only one teacher reported "no positive memories" of being taught, but adds:

I do remember seeing and enjoying a school production and I quite enjoyed learning some speeches from Julius Caesar for O-level.

Taken together, the majority of positive responses were performance-related. In hindsight, this section of the survey would have been more useful had an additional

question been asked to the effect "Have you had any experience (formal or informal) of performing Shakespeare? Please describe." Without clarifying this, it is impossible to determine whether or not those teachers reporting, for example, " University -- in seminars -- intellectual discussion" as their most positive experience of being taught have done so out of preference for this type of experience, or because they have had no performance experience with which to compare it. Over half of those teachers indicating when they had their most positive experience of being taught indicated A-level or university level study as the time when they were most deeply impressed, though one teacher reports, in partial answer to question 4) "...my father 'taught' me Shakespeare first at the age of seven -- via Lamb's Tales." Despite the majority of positive experiences being reported at post-compulsory education levels, it is impossible to conclude from this that Shakespeare teaching is therefore best endeavoured with students of sixteen plus. For one thing, the omission of any question establishing whether or not these teachers actually had any primary school experience of being taught Shakespeare leaves such a conclusion based upon surmise; for another, every single one of the respondents, when asked further on in the survey what their reaction was to the notion that all students should have access to Shakespeare, responded in agreement.

Responses to question five, regarding memories of negative experiences of being taught, were equally revealing. In some respects, there were no surprises: overwhelmingly, the most commonly reported negative experience was "reading around the class" which seems to have been a necessary evil of the majority of teachers' schooling. Some teachers were more specific than others as to why this was such a distasteful activity, though boredom, impatience, and primarily lack of preparation and understanding of what was being read seem foremost among their reasons. Typical descriptions of this were quite vehement in their disapproval:

Reading Julius Caesar around the class at [age] eleven. It was so boring listening to everybody else -- all 33 of them -- and waiting your turn.

Negative thoughts abound, but the most negative memory is that of "class reading" where each child reads a part of the play in turn going round the class -- all seated at desks of course and not understanding what on earth it was all about. Teachers seemed slightly demented!

Reading the comedies at grammar school and not knowing what was going on. We took parts and sat in our seats. I still dislike the comedies.

Ironically enough, it would appear that the good intention on the part of the teachers to involve every student by giving parts and reading round the room is experienced by the students as exclusion -- the memories related here are not of speaking parts, but of sitting and waiting to speak while others have their say.

Rote learning of speeches was cited among the negative experiences, though one teacher offered this reflection in the wisdom of hindsight her recollections of " an awful lot of learning speeches by heart which at the time I resented fiercely, but now I'm glad I'm so familiar with many texts and know so much by heart." Significantly, negative memories of performance-related activities were all characterised by a lack of understanding, as in this teacher's account:

The Tempest in the third year secondary school. Groups prepared a scene each (and we knew ours ... Ferdinand collecting logs very well) but I didn't have a clue what the rest of the story was about and hated it!

Other negative experiences mentioned included excessive written work, receiving poor marks in Shakespeare, and constant copying of notes off the blackboard. Only one teacher was able to write, when asked to describe her negative memories, "I have none, as I have always enjoyed Shakespeare and had enthusiastic teachers. Many were really inspiring." Interestingly, all but one of the plays mentioned as part of a negative learning experience were also mentioned by other teachers as significant to their positive experiences of learning Shakespeare. Twice as many plays were mentioned as part of a positive learning experience. All that can be concluded at this point is that the nature of Shakespeare teaching for at least half of the teachers responding to the survey was at some point in their educational careers extremely didactic, "unproblematized", what Freire would call a mode of banking education, and what Margolis would decry as the wielding of the hegemonic instrument. What bearing these experiences had on teachers' rationales for Shakespeare teaching (that is to say, their theorized practice) may be revealed further down the survey. What bearing these experiences had upon teachers' own Shakespeare teaching is what the next question attempts to discover.

Part A, Question Six: Of the experiences described above, which would you say most influences your own teaching of Shakespeare, and how?

Question six is unclear to some extent: essentially, it asks two questions, but does nothing to facilitate an organized response. Nevertheless, teachers' responses were extremely valuable. Twice as many teachers reported that their positive experiences (as opposed to their negative experiences) of being taught Shakespeare most influenced their current practice. Where negative influences were reported as an influence on current practice, they served largely as an impetus to correct and improve upon the past. For example, the same teacher mentioned above whose one positive memory of learning Shakespeare at school involved once (and only once) doing a scene from Richard II reported as part of his negative Shakespeare memories "writing notes from [the] board all the time. You accepted that as the method to use" had the following answer to question six: "I never give notes. I try to make sure we are doing something active and involving [for] most/all (I hope) of class".

Interestingly, among the things not looked for but revealed at this point was the desire to make the plays relevant and universal in their appeal. One teacher made this quite explicit:

Shakespeare always seemed to belong to another world/time. I try to make Shakespeare more relevant to my pupils by focusing on the universal truths and applying them to modern situations.

Might this teacher have been, potentially, another member of Terry Eagleton's "Caliban School"? His reaction to the remoteness of Shakespeare is real enough (this same teacher is singular for his report of "no positive memories"); yet his response in practice is unashamedly liberal humanist. The closest any teacher came to arguing for "de-mystification" is revealed in the following response, which is resonant with humility; a far cry from the strident iconoclasm of much cultural materialist theory:

I talk about Shakespeare as a man, an ordinary man and talk about the period in which he lived and try to de-mystify the man and never put him on a pedestal and I always let the students be aware that even I can be mystified, lost, puzzled by some of his writing and that there is no shame in admitting that some of it I do not always find easy or so enthralling.

The honesty and insight of this answer goes a long way towards describing how deeply personal the task of teaching can be. It is precisely this personal dimension that all too often gets overlooked in theory. While there is much more to be said about the implications of this, for the moment let these responses rest on their own merits.

Part A, Question Seven: What special preparation were you given for teaching Shakespeare as part of your own teacher training program?

With the exception of one teacher who had done her teacher training in Christ Church, New Zealand, every single one of the respondents received no special training in Shakespeare teaching whatsoever. Over half the respondents had done a B.A. and P.G.C.E.; two had B.A.s in English and no subsequent teacher training; the remainder had the Cert.Ed, one in addition to a B.Ed; another in addition to a B.A. in Geography and later an M.A. in Shakespeare studies. The fact that no special training in this area was given is remarkable, given the complexity and high level of skill required of teachers at all levels in the task of Shakespeare teaching. On reflection, given the criticisms levelled against teacher training as being an impractical and inefficient waste of public funds by Sheila Lawlor and others on the Right, perhaps it is not so remarkable. The one New Zealand-trained teacher (B.A. followed by a P.G.C.E.) had this to say about her experience: "We had a 'real' English teacher who had been seconded for a year and he taught us all he knew." What precisely this teacher was taught is not indicated, though it is significant that the exchange teacher is regarded as a "real" English teacher by virtue of his nationality. It appears that in at least this instance there is some truth to the cultural materialists' claim that Shakespeare has so saturated English life and culture that his "universality" is assumed (hence the conspicuous absence of attention paid to him on English teacher training courses); there may likewise be some truth to the accusations that Shakespeare, when imported as an instrument of bourgeois hegemony, becomes a tool of cultural imperialism. As I did not anticipate the fact that virtually all of the English-trained teachers had received no specialist training in Shakespeare teaching, I omitted to ask whether or not they felt (particularly after having experienced the INSET at Girton) that specialist training was needed in this area. This is a question I would like to see

included on a future survey. Nevertheless, several teachers further down the survey did volunteer the opinion that all teachers should be given the chance to experience an INSET course with Rex Gibson, having valued it very highly as an important part of their professional development.

Part B: Critical Influences:

Question One: What, to your mind, is the single most important reason for teaching Shakespeare?

Not a single teacher responding to this question listed as the single most important reason for teaching Shakespeare the possibility that teaching Shakespeare could be a point for intervention in bringing about the downfall of capitalism. Nor was foregrounding the material conditions of the plays' construction mentioned.¹² Rex Gibson has done more extensive research on the question, "Why teach Shakespeare?" and concern among secondary-school teachers about the use of Shakespeare as an instrument of bourgeois hegemony is very low indeed on their list of pedagogic priorities. The findings of this survey confirm this. What was surprising, given the fact that all but one teacher had rather vivid negative memories of being taught Shakespeare at school, was the fact that virtually every teacher had some variation on the "universal" theme to offer as their most important reason for Shakespeare teaching. (Or again, perhaps this is not so surprising if these results are interpreted as evidence of successful indoctrination.) Typical responses included:

Shakespeare has something important to say about life and living to anyone who cares to listen (or anyone who is shown how to listen).

He is the best writer in English. His work deals with universal human emotions and is told in such a way that it is timeless.

All life is there!

Other responses were more overtly nationalistic:

Because he is quite simply the best writer in the English language and probably the best writer of any culture.

There's nothing else quite like it is there? ... A wonderful and brilliant part of our heritage.

¹² Sinfield, p. 154.

Acclaimed world-wide as the greatest dramatist to have lived I consider we have, as teachers, a moral obligation to give every student the opportunity to experience the joy that Shakespeare has brought to so many -- even if they reject him afterwards, at least they will have had the chance.

Similarly, another teacher articulated this concern with access to the cultural heritage: in both cases this was presented in a positive light; as empowering students and enabling them to decide the question of Shakespearean merit on their own terms:

probably BECAUSE of the fuss, world-wide acclaim, kids have a right to be able to make up their own minds (access to the cultural heritage and all that) BUT I'm not going to insist on utter reverence ... (if they find it boring, though it's usually the teacher's fault!!) bit disappointing if they hate it but the plays take any amount of knocking!

Various teachers also mentioned the beauty of the language and imagery, the psychological insights to be gained from reading the plays, and the general satisfaction to be gained from learning Shakespeare as the mastery of a difficult task. Again, there are no surprises here, as members of this group were all, by virtue of their participation on the INSET course if for no other reason, enthusiastic teachers with a special interest in teaching Shakespeare, and this is clearly reflected in their answers.

Question Two: What is your reaction to the notion that all students should have access to Shakespeare?

This question was answered (with varying degrees of trepidation) in the affirmative by all teachers. The vast majority replied that they were in "absolute agreement" with this idea; three teachers agreed with slight reservations to the effect that 1) this might prove difficult in practice, 2) it was important that any introduction to Shakespeare must be done in a positive way, and 3) this need not necessarily be a "whole play experience". This overall agreement can be seen as an extension of the idea of the "moral obligation" felt by some teachers to provide access to high culture; it can likewise be seen as another attempt on teachers' parts to correct the past, and give students positive experiences at an early age that they might have missed as part of their own education.

Question Three: What, if any, books of literary criticism of Shakespeare have you found particularly helpful to your teaching?

Though the commonest response to this question was "none", from over 20% of the teachers, nevertheless a wide range of authors and titles were mentioned by the teachers who did find literary criticism useful in their teaching. G. Wilson Knight and A.C. Bradley tied for first place as authors most frequently mentioned. The Casebook Series, Secondary School Shakespeare (a periodical published as part of the Shakespeare and Schools research project), the Penguin Modern Critical Studies, Open University Guides, and general Notes and Master Guides were all mentioned as useful, particularly to students. Teachers also mentioned using reviews of productions and accounts by actors and directors of working with Shakespeare in their class discussions. Finally, all of the following authors were also mentioned once: Kenneth Tynan, Caroline Spurgeon, Andrew Gurr, Peter Thomson, and, from the cultural materialists' corner, Terry Eagleton and Graham Holderness. While the last of these, particularly the last two, might be somewhat surprised to find themselves among the others, their very presence is at least some indication that there is an influence on Shakespeare teaching at secondary school level that travels from the top down; from the university into the sixth form. (The choice of Terry Eagleton as the keynote speaker at the 1991 NATE conference can be seen as an official recognition of this.)

Question Four: What, if any, performances of Shakespeare (in the theatre, on film, radio or television) have you found to be influential to your teaching, and how ?

Of the teachers questioned, 23% could not think of any productions that had any influence on their teaching. Many productions were mentioned by the remaining teachers, and while all teachers were aware of the tremendous impact that seeing productions had on student's enthusiasm for Shakespeare, several were unsure as to exactly how their own interest and enthusiasm for production influenced their teaching. The difficulty that some teachers encountered with this question is best expressed in the following response:

Ian McKellan's Macbeth RSC on video is the one that springs to mind.
Tremendous impact on pupils.
Jacobi's Much Ado RSC gave me ideal version of how that play should be. Not sure it influences my teaching.

What is interesting about this response is the notion of an "ideal version" of a Shakespeare play combined with the uncertainty as to whether or not such notions influence teaching. I sense that this same combination of certainty regarding the "ideal" and uncertainty regarding the influence it has upon teaching may be behind many other responses received, though not articulated as such. The importance of video and film productions of the Shakespeare plays to over half the respondents' teaching practice is some indication of this. This is admittedly a reflection of the constraints on school budgets: it is far more cost effective to show a video or film of a Shakespeare production than to finance trips to see live performances. Nevertheless, the repeated mention of the video of Ian McKellan and Judi Dench's Macbeth, and the films of Polanski's Macbeth and Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet are some indication of the prevalence with which these specific versions of the plays are taught. At what point, if any, these versions pass into student (and teacher) consciousness as definitive, is difficult to say. The danger of this happening is amplified more by increasingly tight limits on the resources which might be used to fund student outings to live performances than by teachers' intentions, conscious or otherwise. Nevertheless, the three film and video versions mentioned, in addition to the Thames Television video of Olivier's King Lear, and the film of Branagh's Henry V, are all recognized as excellent productions, and for teachers without the resources to take students to see live productions, the film and video alternative is preferable to no experience of production at all.

Those teachers who were able to articulate how their teaching was influenced by their experience of seeing productions of the Shakespeare plays gave reasons which indicate their awareness of both intellectual and emotional challenges and benefits inherent in the experience:

Alan Howard's Coriolanus was magnificent and underlined my belief in passion and commitment and enthusiasm as the best way to teach anything.

All performances have some influence but initially the Zeffirelli film of Romeo and Juliet showed me Shakespearean characters were live beings not mere words on a page.

[The] RSC production [of] Midsummer Night's Dream (last year) at Barbican wonderfully full of innovative ideas and rich comedy- gives confidence to mix and muddle "period" detail of props costumes etc. so that old notion of production fixed in time is challenged.

Other versions help eg West Side Story for Romeo and Juliet. I didn't like the RSC Ferrari and Mantovani production of R&J but I found it very useful for teaching a particular group. They loved the motorbike and the gangleader Tybalt made them feel it was relevant to them.

In sum, teachers' (and students') experiences of performances, of all kinds, have a definite, positive, influence on teaching. In the best of all possible worlds, all teachers would have access to adequate funds to balance film and video versions of the plays against experiences of live performances, thereby eliminating the possibility of students perceiving Shakespeare only as a writer of screenplays and video scripts.

Question Five: Have critical influences served to bring about a change of perspective or a perpetuation of ideas you encountered during your teacher training?

It is difficult to analyse the responses to this questions for several reasons. The question itself is based on the (false) assumption that teachers would have encountered any ideas at all pertaining to the teaching of drama or Shakespeare in the course of their teacher training. Over half the teachers surveyed did not, or could not answer this question. As one teacher put it, "Teacher training had nothing to do with Shakespeare in the first place!" Judging by the nature of responses that did address the question, it is clear that the question itself was unclear enough to be misunderstood. What I hoped to discover through this question was whether teachers felt more convinced of the ideas they held about Shakespeare from their undergraduate days, or if instead they felt their old opinions to be sufficiently challenged to bring about a change in their point of view. (Again, the overriding objective of the survey is assessing the effects of change in attitudes, beliefs, values and practice.) Only four responses were at all enlightening to this effect:

Not so much critical influences but our increasing historical knowledge of the period and presentation and audiences of the time have encouraged me to teach Shakespeare less as an academic exercise and more as entertainment.

I hope I have changed from academic to practical. I started doing drama, read Bolton and Heathcote -- got more interested in theatre side of plays.

The whole post-structuralist debate and the collapse of the idea of passive response ... I've gone in for much more of the recreative responses ... eg modernising scenes, transposing scenes from one era to another etc. putting characters in the hot seat to delve into what students feel their motives are etc.

"Critical" influences? No! Only explorations/discovery in practical terms- Although writers like Drakakis, Evans, Eagleton, Jacq. Rose, Kavanagh etc. do

fascinate me because they are impenetrable, but have blown yet more holes in any restraining or "containing" boxes into which Shp. might have been put. They do encourage more energy to be released from the words themselves rather than psychological interpretations of actors /actresses/ directors. More "What is said?" not "What does he/she feel?"

What emerges from this is that when asked to reflect upon the evolution of the "theory" behind their practice, teachers expressed that they choose to incorporate new ideas and techniques when they believe that they contribute to the value of the learning experience itself. What unfortunately does not emerge from these responses is the degree of a change from earlier beliefs and attitudes about teaching Shakespeare which they might have held.

Question Six: To what extent do you consider Shakespeare to be a political playwright, and the teaching of Shakespeare to be a political project?

Responses to this question fell into two categories. While all teachers agreed that Shakespeare was a "political" playwright, there was often vehement disagreement as to the political nature of Shakespeare teaching. First, it must be said that virtually all teachers qualified their definitions of "political" with variations on the ideas express in this teacher's response:

Insofar as all of us are political beings, involved in our time and each other in particular circumstances -- so is Shakespeare a man writing about events which touched him, or things which threatened his livelihood/ state etc.

This notion of a universalized politicism was then carried through to the second part of the question in the majority of the responses; the idea that " Politics cannot be excluded from a study of his work" was very popular, as was the notion that "some plays are more political than others", with several teachers citing the history plays and Macbeth and King Lear as examples. Many expressed the view that the plays' universal values transcended the "political". Only one teacher expressed an opinion as to the political nature of Shakespeare teaching that evidenced any awareness of cultural materialist concerns:

insofar as virtually anything we do is political (ie to do with power relationships, especially in the context of the school institution) and Shakespeare's concerns are certainly about power in private and social relationships (amongst other things) yes and I believe kids have a democratic right to make Shakespeare their own too, so yes, again!

What was surprising was the vehemence of the responses of those teachers who rejected the notion of Shakespeare teaching as a political project. (23%) The following responses speak for themselves:

I may go into the political situation of the time of the setting of the play and of Shakespeare's lifetime but I do not feel it is my prerogative to use literature to brainwash my pupils in any political direction.

Teaching Shakespeare is only political when one runs into the elitist charge. For example Sue Slipman in the Guardian recently was arguing for more "relevant teaching" for working class kids and arguing against teaching certain literature. I've never heard of such a crazy crazed notion for long time, Obviously the battles are still to be fought.

In sum, despite the energy with which the idea of a political project was flung aside by some teachers, the majority expressed the opinion that it was precisely the lack of a single doctrine that could be associated with the plays that was most useful to them in classroom discussions. As one teacher put it:

Shakespeare seems very balanced and you can get what message you want eg he wants order in the state but does that make him a Thatcher Conservative? Does Katharine's "submission " make him a MCP? Issues are raised by these and get discussed and argued over in class.

In retrospect, this question alone could be the basis of an entire research project.

Part C: Methodology

Question One: What, if any, experience do you have of team-teaching Shakespeare with teachers of other subjects? Please describe. Would you be willing to experiment with such methods if you have not yet done so?

Question Two: With which other subject(s) would you most like to attempt a Shakespearean team-teaching approach?

Only two teachers had any experience team-teaching Shakespeare with other subject teachers though three teachers had set up projects to do this in the future. Both teachers who had the opportunity to team-teach wrote at length about their experience in glowing terms. Significantly, in both instances, team-teaching happened on residential workshops that took place outside the normal school timetable. With the exception of one teacher who was "not sure" whether or not this was an approach he would be prepared to try, all other teachers responding to the survey were emphatically positive about their willingness to try this. The subjects mentioned most often as ones that teachers would be interested in teaching with colleagues were, in order of frequency: History, Art, Drama,

Music, PE/Dance, CDT, Textiles, Sociology, Religious Studies, Humanities and Science. This suggests that perhaps if it were left to teachers themselves to organize the school timetable, virtually all subjects might benefit from the open doors of the Shakespeare classroom.

Question Three: Please give a brief description of the Shakespeare teaching methods you currently employ.

Question Four: If you do not already do so, do you intend to incorporate active teaching methods into your practice? What kind of response do you receive/anticipate?

Despite the tremendous variety of methods that teachers claimed to employ at various times (and at various levels) the use of detailed reading and textual discussion still predominated, particularly at A-level. It seemed that teachers did not feel particularly comfortable with the idea of convincing students that active teaching methods could provide adequate preparation for examinations:

At "A" level, in my present position, methods are somewhat constrained to the traditional analysis of the text. In junior classrooms, a more active, student involvement policy can be followed.

Many teachers, in discussing their current practice, made this same distinction between the active approach at the junior school level (including a range of theatre games, hot-seating, tableaux, mime, role-play, improvisation, scripting and acting missing scenes, and directing) and the literary approach for upper-school/ A-level students. Nevertheless, all teachers responding, regardless of the level they taught, claimed that yes, they did intend to incorporate active methods into their future teaching practice. Their trepidations as to the appropriateness of active methods for upper-school students was carried over into the reactions they anticipated from their students. These were again in many cases divided according to the level taught. Enthusiasm and excitement typified the reactions anticipated from junior school pupils, whereas scepticism, embarrassment, inhibition, and the idea that active approaches were "beneath them" typified the anticipated response from upper-school students. Several teachers also volunteered the opinion that they were likely to encounter a certain degree of criticism from colleagues:

I already do try to use as much activity as I can -- outside in fine weather, in the hall if available. I know I will be allowed to do this, but I also know that most members of my English Dept. will NOT want to adopt these methods.

Response from other members of staff outside my department is likely to be critical -- "too disruptive".

Only a follow-up survey can reveal whether or not these anticipated responses are accurate. It is also possible that the negative anticipated responses could have more to do with teachers' inhibitions and reservations about active methods than they have to do with the reality of students' inhibitions or of colleagues' criticisms or scepticism about their methods. With regard to upper-school students' inhibitions, it remains to be seen if the loss of the enthusiasm that would be required for active exploration of the Shakespeare plays is a necessary casualty of adolescence, or if it is possible that a time will come when students, having experienced active methods from very early on in their school careers will come to accept and respect these methods as enjoyable and valuable components of a "serious" education. The use of active Shakespeare teaching methods in schools is a relatively recent development: any assessment of the changes this has brought about in students' attitudes towards their own learning would have to be measured over a longer period of time than is within the scope of this survey.

Part D: Classroom Practice

Question One: To what experiences of Shakespeare (i.e. as readers, performers, or audience members) have your own students responded most enthusiastically?

This section of the survey is designed with the object of determining the extent to which the material conditions of the school (including the timetable, budget, and examination system) shape and influence classroom practice. It asks teachers not only to reflect upon their experiences interacting with students with regard to the conditions under which they teach Shakespeare, but also to imagine the ideal circumstances under which they would like to be able to teach. This last section of the survey elicited particularly rich responses which were, for all the great variety of suggestions offered, strikingly unified in the consensus that Shakespeare teaching should happen in a theatre rather than a classroom.

One of the most important "material" conditions of the school (if not the most important) is the students themselves. One of the great difficulties with theorising about

classroom practice is that theoretical classrooms are full of imaginary students who apparently exert no material constraint upon teaching practice in the process of negotiating meaning. In fact, time and again teachers responding to the survey qualify their responses to suit the particular group they are teaching with regard to age, maturity, ability, and experience, as in this teacher's response to the previous question, regarding how she anticipated her student's response to active teaching methods:

I'm not really sure how the children will respond. Some but not all will have had some drama experience when they come to me in September. However it is a difficult and immature class and therefore I am not sure how Shakespeare will be received ...

It is the students themselves and the unique relationship that the teacher establishes with them, above and beyond any other consideration of syllabus, timetable, budget, building or board of governors, that determines what teachers do in the classroom. It is for this reason that the first question on this section of the survey deals specifically with the teachers' perceptions of their students' responses. Not surprisingly, over half the teachers reported that students responded most enthusiastically to the experience of being audience members; the remaining teachers reported that students responded most enthusiastically to the experience of performing, directing, and active learning. Of those teachers reporting that students responded most positively to the experience of being audience members, half of them had not yet incorporated active teaching methods into their practice, and therefore their students did not have the chance to respond enthusiastically or otherwise to the experience of performing in an active learning situation. In a certain respect, this is an obvious question: it is fairly safe to assume that most students, given the choice between reading, watching, and acting will be least likely to choose the relatively unexciting option of confinement to a desk with a text in hand to either of the other two. However, the fact that most teachers who had actually used active methods or whose students had been involved as performers in entire school productions reported the active performance experience over the relatively passive audience experience as one which students responded to most enthusiastically is very significant. Certainly this has some implications for those teachers who remain, for whatever reason, in doubt as to the feasibility of introducing active methods to a reluctant

and inhibited group. Changes in practice mean changes in theory: the shift in focus from the page to the stage will necessarily involve the teacher and students in re-thinking not only what is being studied, but the ways in which they relate to one another in the classroom .

Question Two: What opportunities have your students been given through your school to experience live performances of Shakespeare plays? How are these performances funded?

Question Three: How have you modified (or would you modify) your teaching (through specific preparation and follow-up work) to incorporate and accommodate live performance experiences?

The responses to these two questions taken together reveal the extent to which live performance experience is made available to students, the use that teachers make of these opportunities, and the financial constraints under which they happen. There was a fairly wide range of responses to the first of these two questions, from the extreme cases of two teachers who reported either no opportunities at all for theatre outings or few and infrequent ones, to the opposite extreme of another teacher who sent a detailed account of a residential performance and workshop weekend for A-level students. Happily, most teachers reported that their students had regular opportunities to see performances at Stratford, the National Theatre, and the touring RSC. However, with the exception of three respondents whose schools were prepared to offer partial funding of these outings (one of which would only do so if the trip was deemed a necessary part of the curriculum) all other teachers were obliged to ask students to pay for their own tickets, and could therefore only include theatre outings as a non-compulsory part of their studies. The sacrifices teachers were prepared to make in order to insure that students did have the opportunity, despite the lack of school funding, are impressive, as one teacher reports:

Whenever I have organised trips -- on average one per term for any year, each student has to pay total cost --ticket and transport. Organisational nightmare because you can't book tickets until you've got money, and you may get money and be too late for tickets! National Theatre allows block booking (on telephone) to be held one week before cheque is necessary -- this is wonderful! I took 60 students to see a production of As You Like It in October 1989. I am still £15.00 out of pocket! School will supply initial cheque, but recovering money is very time-consuming.

Owing to the fact that virtually all teachers were obliged to include performance experience as a non-compulsory part of their teaching, the follow-up work was similarly constrained. Nevertheless, most teachers felt it was important to prepare students in some way for the experience of live performance. These included requiring students to read the play, or parts of it, often using "big speeches" as a starting point, and when possible, engaging the actors and directors in discussions and workshops either prior to or following the performances. Some teachers would follow-up performances with written assignments, others make a point of not doing written follow-up: "I don't do much written follow-up as I think it 'kills' things." This implied distinction between business and pleasure with regard to theatre outings was quite explicit in two other teachers' responses:

it depends on whether I am taking them to see a production of a text, or whether it is just a trip for pleasure. In the latter case, I will not teach the majority of the students who go.

I would if the class wanted me to, I think. I have always regarded going to the theatre as something we don't have to study for; as a pure treat to enjoy. This might be a cop out.

For the majority of teachers, however, the live performance was an integral part of their teaching; in some instances, the performance is the text under study, as in this teacher's account:

We tend to choose to study plays which are being performed somewhere, in fact ... videos clips/reports on the production are helpful ... we try to time the trip about mid-way/towards the end of study. Teaching gets built around this play, in fact (assignments are often based on the interpretation in the production for instance).

It is worth mentioning that the syllabus followed at this particular teacher's school was the AEB 660 English Literature A-level with a (soon to be abolished) 50% coursework element, which specifically allows for students to write about Shakespeare plays in performance. The whole issue of assessment must be taken up in greater detail elsewhere; for now it is worth noting that if the option to write about plays in performance is excluded from the syllabus altogether in favour of required examinations on Shakespearean "texts", then the erosion of performance- focused teaching (and therewithal student audiences) is very likely to follow.

Question Four: What in your experience, is the greatest obstacle to your students' enjoyment and understanding of Shakespeare?

Question Five: To what extent do you feel that your teaching is constrained by examinations?

Any realistic account of teaching must take into consideration the numerous obstacles and barriers to be overcome en route to understanding. Particularly with "difficult" subjects, such as A-level English Literature, the examination process itself is apt to resemble a hurdle race, with the Shakespeare component of the syllabus looming ominously high.

Question four assumes, perhaps a bit optimistically, that there is a valid relationship between understanding and enjoyment on the part of the students. In defense of such optimism, it can be said that while a student who understands a Shakespeare play may not necessarily enjoy it, the experience of understanding is itself enjoyable. (The student who enjoys the Shakespeare play but does not understand it is at least pre-disposed to learn by virtue of that enjoyment.)

Question five is somewhat more problematic in its assumption: phrased as it is, the respondents are not encouraged to consider ways in which their teaching might be assisted or even liberated by the examination requirements. As it stands, it is a question that establishes a relationship between examinations and constraints upon teaching, and invites teachers to verify the degree of that constraint. A more open-ended question might have served better in establishing precisely what is the nature of the relationship between examinations and teaching. Nevertheless, the responses to these questions indicate that for the great majority of teachers examinations are very constraining, indicating that the assumptions upon which the questions were based were valid ones.

Specifically, responses to question four indicate overwhelmingly that difficulty with Shakespeare's language is still the greatest obstacle to students' understanding and enjoyment. The nature of this difficulty is best expressed in the following teacher's response:

The language is hard. They feel that unless they know the meaning of every word and scabble through all the editor's notes they do not understand it. They always get the drift of the meaning but they are not happy with just that.

This compulsion for precision in understanding is an ingrained part of an examination culture: when students are conditioned to believe that there can be only one "correct" answer to a question, "the drift of the meaning" cannot, to their minds, suffice. Again,

this is related to the examination process to the extent that students believe that first and foremost it will be their literal knowledge of the Shakespeare plays that will be assessed. Teachers also offered variations on the theme of "ingrained prejudice" and "preconceived notions" as almost equally potent as an obstacle to understanding and enjoying Shakespeare. In one case this was a prejudice that clearly stemmed from the home environment of some students: "Prejudice at the outset -- especially from some parents -- 'Shakespeare is: out of date, boring, only for highbrows'." Elsewhere, similarly: "The myth that Shakespeare is only for egg-heads", "... Lack of interest in reading/theatre/music 'CULTURE'! generally, materialism, 'intellectual' sloth ..." Clearly more than one Shakespeare myth prevails: According to the cultural materialists, the "myth" about Shakespeare is that the Shakespearean canon exemplifies national heritage and universal values. For teachers in schools, the more powerful prevailing "myth" about Shakespeare is that he is "only for eggheads". The irony inherent in this is that it is in no small measure due to the haze of academic criticism, commentary, and annotation which veils the Shakespeare plays that they are perceived as inaccessible by schoolchildren: cultural materialists and liberal humanists alike must share in the blame for that.

With reference to question five, dealing specifically with the constraints of examinations, once again the AEB 660 syllabus was singled out for praise:

Not very much at all by GCSE -- we do a 100% coursework syllabus -- for A-level [teaching is constrained] by the board's choice of text, but AEB 660 syllabus is very "free" and questions are open-ended. AEB 660 is an excellent course to follow.

Similar comments about the AEB 660 were reported by the other teacher working with this syllabus. While 23% of the respondents seemed to be suffering under severe constraints (as one teacher put it "Examinations Rule O.K.!") several teachers made a point of distinguishing between the level of constraint they felt at GCSE level (very slight) and the level they experienced at A-level. Their specific complaints were the lack of choice of text at A-level and the lack of available time to teach and explore the plays thoroughly enough to satisfy them. Two primary school teachers added that while the examination issue did not constrain their teaching, they anticipated that there might be a problem with the dictates of the National Curriculum: "...I know that future teaching will

be restricted by the National Curriculum where Shakespeare does not feature for primary aged children and will therefore need to be justified."

Question Six: What, if you could, would you change about the way in which Shakespeare is currently taught?

Question Seven: How would you imagine the ideal circumstances for Shakespeare teaching?

The sheer length and variety of these responses, and the enthusiasm and frustrations which were released through the invitation of these two final questions was remarkable. While every respondent had something unique to add to the ideal picture of Shakespeare teaching, visualized as it was in the remote realm of hope and possibility, it was abundantly clear that the consensus of opinion was that Shakespeare teaching must move away from the academic approach, and the ideal circumstances under which that could happen were in a purpose-built drama facility.

As the survey intends to assess the effects of change, question six places teachers in a position of imaginative power to change in order to determine teachers' perceptions of the direction and shape that change might take. The extent to which this group supported the ideas and practices explored on the Girton course with Rex Gibson is impressive, though it is difficult to say whether these teachers were effectively changed by the course, or if they discovered on the course a reinforcement and practical focus for ideas about Shakespeare teaching practice that they had held but failed to articulate and develop into a useful methodology prior to this training. The fact remains that regardless of the precise nature of the change the Girton course may have wrought upon them, many teachers expressed the desire to see their colleagues among the converts:

send every English teacher to Rex Gibson for four days. Make teachers do it before trying it on kids ...

I would like all English teachers to go to Girton and take Rex Gibson's course.

All English teachers would benefit from a course by Rex Gibson similar to the one I went on.

These suggestions for change in training might best be implemented at the P.G.C.E. level. Considering that all but one New Zealand trained teacher had no special training whatsoever in Shakespeare teaching, the benefits that these teachers derived from

specialized training would justify its incorporation into the training of English and Drama teachers at the very least.

Changes in training bring about changes in attitudes about practice: a strong desire to move away from academic and textual approaches was coupled with the need to change students' and colleagues' attitudes about the appropriateness and accessibility of Shakespeare for all students, with several teachers stressing the need to begin teaching Shakespeare earlier, to younger pupils. This one teacher's response sums up many of the points that appeared repeatedly:

I would move it away from the academic. Try to de-mystify it -- to get away from the idea that it is only for really top people and teacher is going to let you in on the mystery and explain it all to you -- which still seems to surround it. To do more from the first year onwards to overcome consumer reluctance.

Changes in attitude about practice bring about changes in practice itself, and, necessarily, changes in the conditions under which it happens. One teacher's response anticipated this, and noted the obstacles and resistances to change which would have to be overcome:

Move away from the text and towards performance. However, my school, and I believe most schools, are not designed to facilitate this -- no suitable spaces, insufficient time, negative attitudes from those who consider that movement and noise constitutes indiscipline.

This last response looks ahead to the final question, in which teachers were invited to imagine the ideal circumstances for Shakespeare teaching. First among all considerations were more time and more space. What was then imaginatively and collectively constructed in that space by the consensus of these teachers was nothing less than a purpose-built drama facility. Some teachers were content with a few modest improvements and assorted props and costumes: "classrooms with easily moved furniture ... thirty sheet-sized pieces of brilliantly coloured light material -- several strongly made crowns and tough large cardboard boxes." Others gave free reign to wishing; the composite picture of the ideal "classroom" for Shakespeare teaching includes all of the following:

a lighting technician, a musician, a box of splendid costumes, paint/wood/canvas, make-up.

a few tables and chairs at the back, a few props, a few tape recorders, video and still camera, plus perhaps a small stage and balcony.

carpet, lights, blackout on windows, art materials, Shakespeare "awareness" materials around e.g. posters, performance materials/tapes/videos...

These facilities, along with access to professional companies all require funding that most teachers acknowledged to be beyond the reach of most school budgets: "All this is impossible of course !" Changes that cost little or nothing, yet still figured prominently as components of the "ideal circumstances" included abolition of written assessment, flexibility of the school timetable, elimination of syllabus and curriculum pressures, support from other teachers, abolition of negative attitudes, and smaller classes. The last of these could be said to be a costly change in so far as smaller classes would certainly require the hiring of more teachers, unless all teachers were prepared to have more hours of contact time in the school timetable.

The responses of the teachers contributing to this survey indicate a high level of commitment to their students, a conviction that Shakespeare teaching should be a component of all students' education, often a disaffection with the ways in which they themselves have been taught Shakespeare, and a desire to offer an improvement upon that to their own students. The general direction of the change that they perceive as most valuable and effective is one that moves from text to performance; from page to stage.

The barriers and resistance to that change have as much to do with the limitations imposed by schools budgets, examination boards, and availability of facilities as they have to do with students' prejudices and teachers' own reluctance to break old habits and change their routines. This is a complex issue: what constitutes reluctance is often an amalgam of a lack of confidence due to insufficient training and experience, fear of censure or criticism from colleagues, and, perhaps most importantly, an unwillingness to modify the relationship that teachers have established with their students. There is always an element of risk involved for the teacher, who, having established standards of behaviour and discipline as well as modes of textual investigation for the class, suddenly disrupts the expected routine. One teacher who did take that risk describes his students' reaction as follows:

Most think I'm quite mad. Others (5th year, bottom group) keep saying, "Is this drama? It should be English." (!)

Whether or not Shakespeare teaching should, in fact, " be English" is a question to which these findings inevitably point.

CHAPTER FIVE: OBSERVATIONS OF A-LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE SHAKESPEARE TEACHING

On the basis of the information gathered through the survey of teachers' opinions, attitudes and experiences of Shakespeare teaching, in terms of an illuminative research methodology a hypothesis is emerging about the superiority of Shakespeare as Drama over Shakespeare as English. In order to test this hypothesis, it is necessary now to take the research through the stages of observation, inquiry, and analysis. I chose then, to observe Shakespeare teaching both as a component of the AEB 660 A-level English Literature syllabus, and as a set text on the A-level Theatre Studies course as the basis for a comparative case study analysis. These observations took place over a period of two years, from January 1990 to September 1992. Names of the schools and teachers have been changed to protect their confidentiality, and I am deeply indebted to teachers A, B, C and D who so generously welcomed me into their classrooms over such an extended period of time.¹

Non-participant Observation:

Strengths and Weaknesses

Observation maintains a central place in illuminative evaluation, and there are a variety of observational roles available to the researcher, each with its relative strengths and weakness. These roles differ in the degree to which the observer participates in the activity being researched. Broadly speaking, there is a choice of being a participant-observer or a non-participant observer. While I chose the research role of participant-observer while working with other Shakespeare teachers at the NATE '91 conference, for the sake of the classroom practice case studies, I chose the role of complete, or non-participant, observer for a number of reasons. First of all, my education, training and experience of Shakespeare teaching at the secondary school level is fundamentally American: I would not therefore venture into a participant role (as, for example, a team teacher) without first familiarizing myself thoroughly with teaching practices that are

¹ The field notes for these case studies are reproduced in their entirety in Appendices A, B and C.

specifically English. While it is true that practices differ from class to class and perhaps even more pronouncedly from school to school, there are real and fundamental differences between English and American teaching styles. Teacher expectations of student behaviour and responsibility, classroom conditions, layout of desks in the room, modes of questioning and discussion, regulations for the presentation of written work, nature and frequency of examinations, and teacher autonomy all differ substantially enough to provide the focus of an entirely independent research project focused on these aspects alone. These are revelations perceived in hindsight, but had I, at the outset in November elected to participate in the teaching of the plays before fully appreciating the extent of these differences, my participation would have in effect "corrupted" the groups under study. This is not to suggest that participation as an "exchange" teacher might not have proven mutually beneficial, but that the benefit of detachment to the effort to maintain a degree of objectivity was greater for the purposes of research.

The precise degree of objectivity that can be maintained while working as a non-participant observer is difficult to ascertain: I felt simultaneously aware of my own cultural construction as an (American) English teacher, and of the theoretical task I had set myself. Both of these factors may be construed as a type of bias. Nevertheless, I would hope that awareness of the possibility of bias would to some degree mitigate its manifestation. The concept of "progressive focusing" that is so central to illuminative evaluation carries with it an advantage and a burden: in the initial stages of an observation over time, (before any hypotheses have fully emerged), data collection must be as complete as possible. In practice, this leaves little time for evaluation-in-progress, as concentration and energy must be focused on recording what may (or may not) be relevant data. The advantage of this effort to be comprehensive is that it guarantees, in some respects, a degree of objectivity. The attendant burden is the sheer weight of material that must then be sifted through, much of which must then be discarded as irrelevant. I have nevertheless included my field notes in full in the appendices as supporting evidence to the hypotheses which are based upon them.

The possibility for objectivity in the non-participant observer role is generally speaking greater than in the participant-observer role. Participation can so suffuse the

researcher in the culture under study that the participant observer is effectively changed in the process of research, and inevitably forfeits some measure of objectivity. Non-participant observation also compromises objectivity, though to a lesser extent, in that the presence of the researcher will to some degree alter the activities under observation. Despite every effort to remain as unobtrusive and unthreatening a presence in the classroom as I possibly could, I have no doubt that my presence did, to some extent, alter the behaviour of both students and teachers, especially during the early stages of the observations. This difficulty can be alleviated in several ways. The actual activity of conducting the observations often blends in quite easily with the activities being observed: when teachers are lecturing, for example, both the students and I as the researcher listen and take notes; we appear at least on the surface to be doing exactly the same thing. I made a conscious effort to avoid "power dressing" and can measure the success of these efforts by the fact that I was at one point mistaken for an A-level student by an older (and perhaps somewhat near-sighted) member of the faculty. Though initially my furious scribbling in the corner of the room proved disconcerting enough to at least one teacher to merit comment, ("What are you writing?") I found that over time as my presence became an expected and familiar occurrence, my role as researcher became less and less obvious, and ceased, to the best of my knowledge, to alter the behaviour of the classes to any great extent.² Nevertheless, there is no real way of knowing how classroom activities differ when they are not under observation.

Another difficulty encountered in the course of the observations arose when teachers elected to include me in some way in the classroom activities. This happened twice in the course of my time at the school, once with each teacher; though each time, despite the fact that my role as a non-participant observer was compromised, the experience proved valuable and useful. An excerpt from the transcript of the first instance of this occurrence follows:

Today, for the sake of variety, the class is to be divided into three groups for close investigation of Act I scene iii of Othello. Teacher A takes one group, Tim, the PGCE student takes another, and I remain in the classroom with the third. ... Not expecting this, I find myself unprepared to make the transition from observer to

² Graham Hitchcock and David Hughes, Research and the Teacher: A Qualitative Introduction to School-based Research (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 65.

participant-observer smoothly. I introduce myself, explaining that I am an American teacher researching Shakespeare teaching in England. [OC:Immediately having said that, I wonder if it might not have been better to simply tell them my name, as the teacher-student relationship is burdened with so many expectations I may have handicapped my own ability to explore the possibilities for learning outside of the parameters determined by our expectations. Ironically enough, because I am unprepared to "teach", I find myself discovering for the first time things in the script that I hadn't noticed before -- sharing these ideas with the enthusiasm of sudden insight helps to ease the initial awkwardness of the situation ...]

As the scene we are working on is very long, I anticipate that the bulk of the time will necessarily be devoted to actually reading through the text. As I am eager to gauge the level of their understanding through the reading, I put it to them:

RQ: Would you like to take parts and read this aloud or are you uncomfortable doing this?

(Here is, by the way, an example of "Researcher prompting" that I failed to identify at the time.)

I am rewarded for this suggestion with faces wrinkled in various degrees of disgust, shaking heads and averted eyes ... clearly not.

Our silent reading drastically curtails room for discussion -- what ensues is tentative at first: I begin with a question that I hope is fairly straightforward and easy; we carry on in this way, and I find, unfortunately, that I am the one posing the questions:

What effect does Othello's entrance have upon the activity on the stage?

What do you make of Brabantio going unnoticed?

Take a look at Othello's "round, unvarnished tale" -is it really "unvarnished"?

What effect does this tale have on the assembled company on the stage?

Look at the Duke's response -- what does the ellipse at the end of the line indicate perhaps about the nature of this speech's effect?

What does Othello reveal about himself in the tale? What was the nature of this courtship of Desdemona?

[OC:I am trying by this to share with them an insight into the character of Othello- his susceptibility to act upon a hint as it is reflected in the obliquity of the courtship between Othello and Desdemona; the strength of intimacy when oblique communication is based upon correct assumptions, and the tragic consequences when it is based upon the wrong assumptions: he murders Desdemona on a hint. This, I find at the time to be an exciting discovery, and the students respond well to it. It is not however, a point of rhetoric or language that I can at the moment divorce from a notion of character. Having been taken by surprise, I am equipped merely with discovery, and not prepared to exercise or negotiate control.]

(Monday, November 26 - 8:50 - 10:05 a.m. SGS)

Had I been prepared to "teach" Act I scene iii of Othello that morning, I would have had the luxury of making my "discoveries" in the privacy of my home, and then devising means of presentation and investigation within a classroom setting that might have

proved more beneficial to the students. I was also very much aware at the time that the students seemed somewhat disconcerted at first by my questioning: apart from the fact that I had been, up until that point, a relatively silent presence in their midst who had suddenly acquired in one stroke an element of strangeness and difficulty as "American teacher", there appeared to be anxiety about being "correct", (perhaps my role as a researcher carried with it a threatening overtone of "assessor" or "evaluator") as well as insecurity about their ability to imagine exactly what was happening on what is admittedly a very crowded and confused stage at this point in the action. Nevertheless, I found this to be a valuable experience in that it clarified for me how questioning strategies might be used to "interrogate" the text; how difficult, in practice, this actually is; and how the physical aspects of the drama must be incorporated into these interrogations for them to have any theatrical relevance.

There were practical as well as theoretical drawbacks to the role of non-participant observer. Practically, in order to maintain my relative invisibility, I felt compelled to refrain from making even simple requests (for example, "Would you please repeat that?") that might draw attention to my presence in the room. Classes that took place in ST1 in particular were plagued by the pounding of feet on the gymnasium floor directly above the room. Theoretically, while what Sinfield would term "possibilities for intervention ³" did occur, the non-interventionist nature of my research role made it impossible to test out the validity of those possibilities. The "possibilities for intervention" are to my mind, those moments or opportunities within the natural course of classroom interaction that present themselves for critical thinking and compassionate imagination, points where the lessons begin to lean in this direction, but for various reasons either do not follow through or fail to make an explicit connection between things as they are and alternatives as they might be. A case in point, among many, occurred on the very first day of observations in a class of first years working on a section of The Tempest:

(Teacher A pauses to write the names CALIBAN, ARIEL, PROSPERO, MIRANDA, and SYCORAX on the board.)

³ Sinfield, p. 154.

SR1: "Prospero -- that's like prosperous."

TA: "Yes, there is that sense about him."

SR2: "Ariel -- that's like Ariel automatic: you should write automatic after his name on the board."

TRD: "No, it's not like Ariel automatic: this play was written long before that."

(Friday, November 16 - 8:50 - 10:05 CGS)

There was certainly an element of light-heartedness involved on the part of the student who suggested that the teacher should write "automatic" after Ariel on the board; he was making what passes for a joke among eleven year olds. Nevertheless there is an element of truth in what he said, and for this reason the interchange could be regarded as an opportunity for intervention. Hamlet cigars, Othello board games, and Cassio computers might all have been cited and explored as various examples of how Shakespeare has saturated everyday life, though clearly such an investigation would have remained peripheral to the main objectives of the lesson in question. What is valuable in this is that the accumulated record of classroom interactions enables me to focus on these moments as a means of testing the students' perceptions of their possibilities. As there is always a gap between what a teacher intends to teach and what the students come away with having learned, this record makes it possible for me to "play back", focus, and investigate student's perceptions of interactions such as the one cited above. Perhaps the mere re-presentation of opportunity, if not the full exploitation of it, would be enough to gauge its degree of interest or relevance to the students. It would in any event be an interesting experiment.

Pre-Observation Categorisation Scheme

As it is physically impossible, with only pen and paper to hand, to record everything that transpires in the course of a given lesson, some means of reducing the amount of data collected must be employed. For my purposes, as the negotiation of meaning between teachers, text and students is paramount, I had devised a system of pre-observation categorisation of classroom interactions which would allow for at least some degree of selectivity and focus. I began with the best of intentions to record and classify all

classroom interactions as follows, with observer's comments throughout designated as OC.

TS = Teacher statement SS = Student Statement

TQ = Teacher question SQ = Student Question

TR = Teacher response SR = Student Response

TA = Teacher affirmation SA = Student Affirmation

TRD= Teacher re-direction SRD=Student Re-direction

TC = Teacher Challenge SC = Student Challenge

In theory, these categories of statement, question, response, affirmation and challenge were meant to be adequate to the task of classifying any classroom utterances made with regard to fact or opinion, any questions asked, any encouragement given, any challenges made, and any digressions from which students or teachers need pulling back.

However, in practice, I found that after a time these categories were in many ways inadequate. This particular categorisation scheme is devised with the intention of focusing on those elements of classroom interaction that represent or reflect ways in which meaning is negotiated, and provides a framework within which recorded exchanges can be classified as they occur in terms of the relative teacher and student power over meaning. The inadequacy of these categories became apparent in specific moments that defied classification: meaningful exchanges occurred that were neither questions or responses, challenges, affirmations, or re-directions. The categories of Teacher/Student statement proved inadequate almost immediately for a number of reasons: they were far too imprecise in that they failed to distinguish statements of fact from statements of opinion, and in any investigation into power over meaning in a classroom context, it is extremely important to distinguish between the two. These categories were also inadequate to the extent that they failed to distinguish between teacher prompting and student baiting, both very common strategies in the struggle for power over meaning within a classroom context. The instances of prompting and baiting were immediately recognizable as such, so that rectifying this imprecision could be done in retrospect.

I had initially made no attempt to distinguish between male and female student responses, assuming that the struggle over meaning would be carried out between the teacher and "the students". As it happened, differences between male and female student opinion and contribution to discussion proved to be increasingly marked; it became clear that meaning was negotiated not only between the teacher and students, but significantly among the male and female members of the class, with the teachers at Springfield Grammar School, both female, aligning themselves from time to time with the female students. While the focus of my investigation was not specifically on gender related negotiations of power over meaning, I felt that the differences between male and female perspectives were important enough to include in the recorded data, and proceeded to do so about midway through the observations. This is one instance of "progressive focusing" that would have been better employed as part of the pre-observation scheme.

Entering the Field: First Impressions

When generalizing from an ethnographic research study, it is important to specify the conditions of the setting and the methodology, so that the bases for comparison (or lack thereof) can be established.⁴

The focus of my attention in the early stages of these observations was directed toward absorbing the culture of the school on a macro and micro level. "Macro" factors, such as the innovations in the AEB 660 syllabus, or changes in the moderation procedures for the A-level students caused repercussions that extended throughout the school. "Micro" factors affecting the learning milieu included very specific things like the location of classrooms below a poorly sound-proofed gymnasium floor or, in another classroom, the oppressive over-heating during the cold weather and the resultant listlessness of students and teachers (and researchers); or, at the very first school I visited for a one-off observation, the fact that the class was being held temporarily in a storage closet.

Emotional as well as physical factors contributed tremendously to the learning milieu. Two of the four A-level groups under observation were preparing the same play, Othello, for examination; one A-level class was comprised largely of students who came from a GCSE background with very little prior examination experience: (this due largely to the fact that the AEB GSCE syllabus at the time had a 100% coursework element) and

⁴ William Wiersma, Research Methods in Education 5th edn. (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1991) p. 242.

there was a palpable difference in the level of sophistication and security in dealing with a Shakespeare play exhibited by the two groups. While the other A-level group seemed relatively unfazed, the group who had done the AEB GCSE, many of whom were approaching examinations in English for the first time, were noticeably more intimidated. Teaching styles also differed tremendously between the two teachers, as did their relationships with the classes and approaches to the text. What I found most interesting was the fact that the "lower" the level of the students, the greater their opportunities for dialogic investigation: in effect, the more authority and creativity they were afforded in drawing their own conclusions and interpretations of the text itself. The most innovative and enjoyable lessons that I witnessed, on the part of both the students and the teachers, were those in which Shakespeare was being explored as a non-examined text. Teacher A's first years, for example, clearly relished the opportunity to act out, albeit at their seats, the segment of The Tempest that they were studying as part of their "monster" unit; and their resulting pictures of Caliban reflected creative responses to the text that might not have been possible under examination circumstances. Teacher B, in a similar way, working with an older group of students on The Tempest, also as a non-examined text, was able to explore theatrical possibilities in such a way as to generate a wealth of student response and ideas that, had she been teaching the play as an examined text, might not have been feasible:

(Today's discussion focuses on Maria's proposal for a black-and-white costumed, ten minute version of The Tempest. The students are considering production values: staging, costume; the importance of clothing and its relationship to status. They discuss these issues initially in modern terms.)

TQ: Why in hospitals do doctors wear white coats? Why will the tea-lady in the same hospital wear something rather different?

(Several students make the connection between the white coat and the doctors' status. She continues:)

TQ: Where else do you see it?

SR1: In the church ...

SR2: In the courts ...

SR3: Cooks ...

TQ: What are the ways in which people are distinguished in the army?

SR: Stripes.

TQ: How then could we distinguish between good and evil people, the degrees of good and evil in these characters' costumes?

(Prospero is seen by the students to be a Merlin-like magician, Trinculo the traditional jester in cap and bells, Stephano, the white-gloved butler)

TQ: What about Ferdinand -- are you going to serve him up in white?

SR: He would have to be white.

TQ: What about Gonzalo? He has done something to save Miranda and Prospero, but did he do enough by choosing to stay in that imperfect society? Should he be in grey?

SR: He should be in white.

TA: You could say that he should be entirely in white; that is the point of declaring yourself when you're among evil people -- still, you have to indicate that he is a member of that group.

SR: He could be in white with a black waistcoat underneath.

(Focusing now on Ariel, the teacher describes costumes in a production that she has directed, Derek Jarman's boiler-suited Ariel, and the recent Barebones Theatre production's "company" Ariel: then asks how they would costume Ariel and Caliban in their production?)

SR1: Ariel in blue ...

SR2: Caliban in green ...

TS: You might want to experiment with Ariel as a disembodied voice ...

SA: Yeah, just swing a chiffon across the stage every now and then!

(This promotes general laughter all around).

(November 28- 2:20 - 3:30, SGS)

The tone of relaxation, excitement and creative engagement that marked this particular lesson and others like it in this class was a world away from the intense concentration of the A-level lessons on Othello that both teachers conducted with their other classes. The pattern of interaction in these classes fell time and again into one of long series of teacher statements spoken into a great absorbing body of student silence.

It would however be premature to judge the level of student creativity on the basis of observation alone for a number of reasons. For one thing, those students who contributed most to sessions such as the one quoted above tended to be time and again the same small handful of students who were clearly comfortable and confident contributing their ideas to the group. One can only guess at the level of creative engagement of those students in the group who tended to remain silent in the course of these classroom brainstorming sessions. For another thing, to assume that examinations necessarily curtail or

somehow inhibit creative and critical student responses is to deny the possibility that the examination itself may prove to be a liberating opportunity for some students. Speaking from my own experience as a teacher (and a student) , I have discovered that there are certain students whose sense of security and capability is reinforced by knowledge of the parameters within which the examination questions are posed, which are not necessarily the same parameters within which the questions must be answered. (One question that these observations have served to foreground deals precisely with this issue: might it not improve the learning milieu for Shakespeare teaching if students were allowed a variety of assessment options, that enabled students to choose for themselves the modes in which they felt most capable and comfortable making their critical and creative responses to the texts?)

As mentioned above, the A-level group appeared to exhibit a level of sophistication and confidence that perhaps comes of knowing that they are at the top of the school and that much is expected of them. This was reflected in the no-nonsense yet friendly tone of the teacher-student relationships, and the very mature level of behaviour in the class. However, as students began to interview for university places, and deadlines for coursework folders grew nearer, the pressure of these expectations eroded the confidence of some to a substantial degree. The exchange recorded below is typical of many that I witnessed as the coursework assessment deadline approached:

(The deadline is about one month away. A student enquires about her coursework essays, already written and marked in her coursework folder. The students are required to write eight essays on at least six texts, plus one extended essay. The teacher has been encouraging them to make a good show of the essays that remain to be written:)

TC: "This is the bit you can do something about; it's 50% of the grade."

SQ: "Can we re-write them?"

TR: "No."

SQ: "Why not?"

TR: "Because it's already marked, isn't it?"

SC: "But what's the difference between writing a new essay and re-writing an old one?"

TR: "Because it's a burden on both of us -- have I got time to be re-marking essays?"

(The student persists -- finally the teacher relents:)

TR: "Because I'm a soft touch I'm sure I won't deny you the chance to re-write ..."

(Wednesday, February 6, 2:20 - 3:30 SGS)

The group who had done the AEB GCSE, approaching examinations in English for the first time, visibly grew in their level of confidence in dealing with the text, so that by the time observations ceased, the level of confidence of the two groups working on Othello appeared to me to be approximately the same, though the AEB GCSE group did have an additional two weeks to work on revising the play.

The Learning Milieu and Examinations

The issue of the upcoming examinations on Othello became a major preoccupation that surfaced several times in each class: since the whole examination process has come under attack from cultural materialists in particular, the ways in which the examinations were approached in each of these classes bears somewhat closer inspection.

Teacher A, teaching the play for A-level with her group, was particularly keen to convey to her students a sense of the play's theatrical values, and reinforced the importance of this by couching her observations, questions and suggestions about the text-as-script in terms of examination expectations from beginning to end.

During the very first lesson on Othello, she concluded with the following comment:

TS: "This is a play; this is not a novel -- you must write about it as a piece of theatre. The AEB like it very much if you remember this while you're writing your exams: they'll say, 'Well done!'".

(Monday, November 19, 8:50 - 10:05 SGS)

And her comments throughout the teaching of the play reflected the nature of the task at hand. Examinations were approached professionally, as a necessary requirement. She took the role of coach in this, alerting the students to what was expected of them in an examination situation as the lessons progressed, acknowledging their eagerness to succeed in the tasks that would be set for them, as in the following examples:

(She draws their attention to a lengthy gloss on II, i, 109-166 in the Arden edition:)

TC: "Your editor gives you a long footnote on this: because you're all keen A-level students you should read this. (Reads the footnote, in its entirety, aloud.) Now I would dispute with this. I think we get a lot more out of this, about Iago in particular. One of the favourite exam questions is 'Is Iago really evil?'... Not riveting stuff, but passages like this should show how single-minded Iago is in his designs"

(Wednesday, December 5, 2:20 - 3:30 SGS)

(On III,iv 55- of Othello:)

TC:"You've got to think about the tone of this for your actors -- is she [Desdemona] scared, is she anxious, is she wary? Something you need to consider while you're doing your revision."

(Wednesday, February 27, 2:20 - 3:30 SGS)

(On Act IV, line 192 of Othello:)

TC:"How would you have your actor say this line or play this scene? They like to throw questions like this at you now and again. You'd do well in your revision to consider these things."

(Monday, March 4, 8:50 - 10:05 SGS)

Or, as the mock examinations approached, which all students were required to take, the advice and commiserations reflected a sense that the examinations were a part of the school culture that not only students but teachers must "endure" to some extent:

TS:"Plan your work, make notes on the paper and then get down to it. Don't worry about the smoothness and fancy phrases."

SQ:"Are they marked in the same way our essays are marked?"

TR:"No- they're not looking for the same thing. They won't expect the exam answers to be polished and considered ... The exam is 50% and the folder is 50% at the end of the day. When you think about it numerically, it hardly seems worth it, but you just have to get on with it."

(Students then discussed the seating arrangements in the examinations hall, the advantages of sitting near the door in the event that they needed to use the loo; the necessity for doctors' notes in the event that medication was needed. They talked generally about invigilation, from both the students' and the teachers' points of view. The teacher claimed to vastly prefer invigilating A-level examinations over GCSE because it was impossible, while invigilating the GCSE examinations to get on with other work, as the GCSE examinations were much more closely policed.)

(Monday, December 17 8:50 -10:05 SGS)

The nature of the level of performance expectation for these A-level students was not only a matter of intellectual capability, but of trust in their maturity and honesty as well.

Clearly if the GCSE examinations were so much more closely policed, a degree of mistrust had been incorporated into the invigilation policy.

The other group preparing for examinations on Othello were not nearly so experienced in examination techniques: when the mocks approached for this group, they served more as a training ground than as a way of predicting their future success on the final examinations. Teacher B found it the wisest course to coach this group first in deciphering what the parameters of the questions were, and then, later on in the process of preparing for examinations, to instil some confidence in the authority of their own responses, as the following two excerpts should indicate:

TS:" Here they say 'You may assess the poem in any way you wish but you may wish to consider the following ...' -- now, coming from a GCSE background, you won't have had much examination practice; unless you're a very strong candidate, I suggest you follow their advice."

(At this point silence in the room is complete; attention very tense, as she continues)

TS: (They look at section B) "Again, look at the wording: 'You may find it helpful to consider the following:' You see, there it is again. You don't have to answer section A before section B; you may be happier launching into prose. You must divide the total time allowed by the number of questions and then I would go so far as to divide that time between the different parts of the answer."

SR:" I would need a calculator by me; I'm absolutely crap at maths -- I would spend the first two hours figuring out how much time I had!"

TA:" Well, I sympathize entirely, but it's fairly straightforward. I suggest you do what I've always encouraged you to do -- make all your decisions at the planning stage, make all your notes in rough. The actual text you'll be given I don't think you'll have any problems with You must look at the questions in this light: ask yourself, 'Which is the most straightforward question? Which am I most likely to do best on? What do I have to do to answer it?' You can see, can't you, that memorising essays done before simply won't help you with this kind of question- what you do need is to be able to find your way around a text."

(December 4, 11:40 - 12:55 SGS)

Teacher B's strategy in working with this group in preparing for the examinations involved setting them timed essay questions for homework and classwork on the days when she was called away on other business. Above all, it appeared that her prime concern was to foster a sense of independence and student authority as the following comments and exchanges on the subject of examinations will show:

(The class has been working on collecting and sorting images in the play: literally writing down on slips of paper and sorting into envelopes images under the

headings of Money, Heaven and Hell, Medicine, Water, Light/Dark, Animal, Celestial, Food, Music, Horticultural, Body, War, Nautical, and Magic. Upon arriving at the Celestial category, the teacher found very little forthcoming:)

TQ: "What about celestial images?"

SR:[Silence]

TQ: "So no one's actually gone through and checked out the placement of celestial images in this play?"

SR: [Shamefaced silence]

TS: "It's no good me telling you what to think about this play -- It's about time you started doing some work for yourselves. The examination is coming up very soon, and me feeding these things to you is not what it's all about"

(Later in the same lesson, she sets a timed essay question for them to write on for tomorrow: "Comment on the function and importance of the imagery in Othello." She once again reviews the discoveries about imagery that they have made in the course of this lesson and others as a guide for this assignment:)

TS: "You've got to know which quotations support your argument. What sort of things might find their way into your introduction?"

SQ: "Does it matter if you use 'I' in the essay?"

TR: "The AEB moderators aren't going to care about that. What they are looking for is your engagement with the text, and believe me, the moderators can tell when students have been told what to think when they get a whole pile of essays with the same opinions and the same examples. There's a big question mark hanging over the whole enterprise when a moderator feels like he's not marking the students' work, but the teachers'. You would do well to prepare your own responses to this play."

[OC: This frankness is greeted with that small measure of fear that masks the unasked question, "But what if our own responses aren't good enough?" mingled with the realization that perhaps their own responses will be good enough, and if parroting really is recognizable and scorned, if sincerity and authenticity really are valued, then perhaps they have a chance of success.]

(Tuesday, March 5, 11:40 - 12:55 SGS)

It is difficult to draw any final conclusions about the extent to which the examinations either constrain or liberate student response without having their responses (and results) to hand. It is possible to say, based on the above evidence, that neither Teacher A nor Teacher B, in the process of preparing their students for examinations, resorted to telling their students what to think or how to respond.

Ways into *Othello*:

Two Approaches

In many ways, I found that the most interesting comparisons stood to be made between the work that Teachers A and B did with their respective groups on teaching Othello as an examination text. The fact that I was able to observe over time two teachers at the same school, working on the same syllabus, with the same play in fundamentally different ways is itself evidence of the necessity for further investigation into classroom practice by theoretically informed observers as a safeguard against generalizations. The teaching of Shakespeare, even the same Shakespeare play being taught in the same school, is a highly idiosyncratic affair.

Teacher A's teaching style was marked by affection and respect for her students as young adults, enthusiasm for the material and a keen theatrical sense. While the lessons almost invariably took the form of a lecture, she troubled herself to ask, time and again, questions pertaining to the theatrical realization of the play which demanded imaginative and individual responses from the students. The physical conditions in which her classes were held were in no way conducive to any active explorations of theatrical alternatives: the room itself was so cramped that more than once I found myself writing out my field notes wedged into a corner seated on the floor for lack of chairs. The time constraints were also a factor: this particular A-level group had been badly juggled about, split and reformed, teachers lost and reshuffled, the result being that many students needed to catch up on or review work that had been interrupted in the course of all these administrative changes. There was very little available time to explore the play in any but the most hurriedly efficient fashion and still have the students adequately prepared for the examinations. While it is easy to criticize the lecture approach as a form of "banking" education, it must be acknowledged that, under the circumstances, it appeared that any abdication of student authority was manifest as trust in the teacher. It must also be acknowledged that questions of power and authority must be considered within the very specific context of the classroom itself, and the unique relationship that each teacher

establishes with each class. Teacher A's class was, like every class, a group of individuals, whose individual needs were tempered by the academic, social and cultural codes of the group. A clear instance of this is evident in the following exchange:

(On Act IV, line 155- of Othello.)

SR: "It's a bit like the Lord's Prayer here."

TA: "Yes! Brownie points for Linda! Yum Scrum, that's good!"

(Monday March 4, 8:50 - 10:05 SGS)

It must be added that there was no note of sarcasm in the above exchange, but rather a note of real enthusiasm and affection. This is one moment that I witnessed to be mutually empowering for both teacher and student that explicitly acknowledged the social parameters within which it was acceptable for student contribution to be made. Linda was not looking for "brownie points"; this was clear by the tentative almost inaudible way in which she offered her (unsolicited) contribution. The teacher's comments simultaneously exposed and defused the fear of contribution to discussion in a very constructive way.

Teacher B's approach to Othello differed primarily in relation to the needs of her group. Given their relative lack of experience in finding their way around a text, she repeatedly set them tasks that required them to physically manipulate the text. The imagery collection exercise cited above was one example of this. During the final weeks of the observations, as the students grew in confidence, she turned the lessons over to the students completely, assigning the different acts of Othello to pairs of students to present to the class. This prompted a variety of approaches, all of which reflected a confidence and familiarity with the text which had not seemed possible in the previous weeks. This group appeared to come away with a very strong sense of character and imagery, though not necessarily any real sense of the play's theatricality.

Critical Consciousness and Compassionate Imagination:

The Evidence in Practice

The next major task that remains in analysis of the classroom observations is to review the lessons for instances of both critical thinking and compassionate imagination. At this point it is safe to predict that it is the latter that prevails in practice. Why this is so is yet

to be determined. It should be evident from this assessment that what is learned is inseparable from how it is taught. A pedagogic programme cannot be formulated in an "ism" isolated from the realities of classroom practice; the instructional system must be adaptable to the learning milieu.

The emergence of a critical consciousness must happen in a climate of dialogic investigation. Too often the learning milieu in which the A-level English Literature Shakespeare teaching happened was so constrained by the instructional system as to militate against a climate of dialogic investigation. In spite of this, there were, inevitably, moments when teachers and students encountered questions of race, class, and gender which compelled them to make their own meanings within the text at hand, as in these exchanges, early in the observations of Teacher A's Othello classes:

TS: ...what we think about Othello is coloured by the fact that what we know about Othello is what Iago tells us -- we have to ask ourselves; Is that fair? What does that say about the world that they inhabit?

(Monday November 19, 1990 8:50 am SGS)

Two days later, the teacher focuses in specifically on Iago's racism by allowing the students to draw their own conclusions from the textual evidence:

TQ: What would you think of someone, who speaking of a third party, just talking amongst yourselves, would refer to someone as "thicklips"?

SR: It's a racist comment.

(Wednesday November 21, 1990 2:20 pm SGS)

The temptation remains to by-pass the moment of dialogic investigation and "bank" a bit of political consciousness directly into students' heads. This hazard was recognized and roundly condemned by one of the teachers responding to the postal interview in the previous chapter: "... I do not feel it is my perogative to use literature to brainwash my students in any political direction." While it could hardly be called "brainwashing", Teacher A was not immune from this temptation, as is clear from her comments on Iago's speech which begins "Virtue? a fig! 'tis in ourselves, that we are thus,/ or thus: ...

TS: "'Tis in ourselves"... it's what the Tory party has been telling us all along what was up to us to do!

Because the point was not taken further in discussion, the effect of this was to clarify the teacher's own political sympathies in a climate that was devoid of any student input.

The critical consciousness, according to Freire, is one that has learned "to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality."⁵ The limitation inherent in this definition is largely a sin of omission: contradictions of race, sex and gender also constitute oppressive elements of reality. These three elements may also be construed as "social contradictions", and though they are not named explicitly within Friere's notion of "conscientizacao" or critical consciousness, they are likewise perceived through dialogic investigation, as evidenced above, and in the following exchanges from a final lesson on As You Like It between Teacher C and his students:

TQ: Where does her [Rosalind's] power operate?

SR1: In the forest, where she's in disguise.

TQ: What about Touchstone and Audrey? They're quite apart from all this control. If that's so, what does he represent? How would you describe him?

SR (Various): Cynical. Realist. Courtly. The fact that he's a clown -- he's playing a role; it's ironic.

TA/Q: He also doesn't change. Why is he successful? Think about it. There's no hurry on this. Is her [Rosalind's] power going to operate when she gets back home? Are women going to be in charge of the court? Remember the court at the beginning and the macho violence and the wrestling. If the forest was so great, why do they go back?

SQ: Now that Rosalind's had a taste of power, won't she be a bit miffed about giving it up?

TA/Q: Think about it. To go from a place of masculine, to one of androgynous values -- think of a scheme for what happens. I want to go back to Touchstone: cynical, realist, ironic -- that's Jacques, too, isn't it? What's the difference?

SR: Well, Jacques hasn't got a girl.

TQ: Why is William in the play?

SR: He's someone for Touchstone to boss around.

TA/Q: And you know Touchstone is going to succeed. If we were going to make a chart of fantasy and reality in As You Like It, where would Rosalind fall?

SR: On the fantasy side.

(January 28, 1990 1:20 pm MS)

5 Freire, p. 28.

All of the teacher's questions are pointed toward the aim of enabling his students to identify the various spheres within which power can operate in the play, the conflicting sets of values between those spheres, and the social structures which determine which of the characters will wield various types of control, and which of them will either disrupt or escape from the strictures of those social structures.

What cannot be determined, however, from the above exchange, largely because it is extracted from the only lesson observed with this particular class, is the nature of the work which preceded this final lesson on the play. If the long observations of the A-level teaching on Othello are anything to go by, this teacher likewise would have had to devote a good deal of his class time teaching about the play as a Renaissance play: that is, teaching about elements of style, structure, rhetoric, language, and theatricality, which, while they are inevitably bound up in the politics of the plays at hand, must necessarily first be discerned separately in order for students to see the political elements clearly through them.

The following exchange proves particularly enlightening on this point. Four lessons into Teacher B's revision of Othello with her A-level group, she set them the following essay question for homework :

Othello -- Women caught up in a man's world of politics, intrigue, and violence: How important a theme do you consider this to be in Othello?

During the sixth lesson with this group, the students have been asked to prepare a discussion of Act III from a particular character's point of view. The discussion which follows can be usefully considered within the parameters of the essay question set two days previously:

Claire begins, choosing to talk about the events of Act II from Desdemona's point of view. She talks about how she feels in character:

SR1: Upset; perplexed.

TQ: Did anything cross your mind when Cassio disappeared as Othello entered?

SR1: I understood he was upset about confronting him.

SQ2: (Both boys want to know why Desdemona is so persistent about taking Cassio's part - the implication is that it is none of her business.)

TR: Don't you think that you're considering this only on the personal level rather than the political level -- Montano is after all a very important person.

SR1: I don't understand the politics of it; I know that Cassio is my very good friend, and I have a duty to him as my friend.

The teacher here stops to make several points: that Cassio is a womanizer, and that Desdemona fails to understand Othello's understandable jealousy.

TC: Would it be better to cast Cassio adrift for political reasons? It's a theatrical question: what advice would you give to an actress playing Desdemona? We tend to think of her as pure, but there's the problem of her persistence on Cassio's behalf. How flirtatious would you have her play it?

(February 6, 1991 11:40 am, SGS)

What is clear from the above exchange is that part of the teacher's job in working with students on the Shakespeare plays is to enable them to place themselves both inside and outside of the structure of the play itself. What is also clear, is that access to the political level of engagement is through the personal. It is because this student has been encouraged to imagine compassionately the plight of Desdemona in Act III of Othello that her critical consciousness has been called to account. While the student quoted above claims "I don't understand the politics of it; I know that Cassio is my very good friend, and I have a duty to him as my friend", it is precisely this perplexity which enables her to see the social and political contradiction which constitutes an element of oppression in Cassio's life, and, with tragic consequences when she takes Cassio's part, in Desdemona's life as well.

Moments like these were, however, exceedingly rare in the A-level English literature classes. Bearing in mind that the A-level set Shakespeare text was being taught in both the Othello classes as an examination text, the very real constraints of time and space were exacerbated by the necessity to prepare students adequately to be assessed on their knowledge not only of the political issues in Othello, but also on their knowledge of plot, language, themes, and characterization that constitute the play's unique theatricality.

How does the teaching of Shakespeare change then with regard to these issues when Shakespeare is being taught not as "literature" but as a component of the Theatre Studies A-level? An analysis of the differences in emphasis, theory, methods, assessment procedures and classroom practices will form the basis of the chapter to follow.

CHAPTER SIX: OBSERVATIONS OF A-LEVEL THEATRE STUDIES

SHAKESPEARE TEACHING

The next necessary step in the observations is to transfer attention away from A-level English Literature Shakespeare teaching and concentrate instead on A-level Theatre Studies Shakespeare teaching to see what might be revealed through a comparison of the two. With the shift from A-level English Literature to A-level Theatre Studies, the focus on Shakespeare shifts from that of the touchstone of the English literary canon, wherein Shakespeare is held up as "England's greatest poet" to a concentration of attention upon Shakespeare as a playwright among playwrights, and a theatre practitioner among practitioners. Shakespeare, in the Theatre Studies A-level, must share the spotlight on the syllabus with Brecht, Lorca, and Berkoff in such a way as to draw students' attention to the ways in which theatrical practices have evolved across time and space -- historically and geographically -- so that students studying Shakespeare at A-level as a component of the Theatre Studies course come to know Shakespeare as a playwright whose work must be considered within the scope of an enormously varied, continually changing performance tradition. The large practical component to the Theatre Studies A-level is designed to equip students with the necessary practical knowledge and technical vocabulary of theatrical production to enable them to consider and compare the theatrical merits of each playwright on the syllabus in ways which transcend the relatively flat dimensions of the literary text-reading that goes on in the A-level literature courses.

Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors, then, as a set text of the Theatre Studies A-level, should be read as a script among scripts, by students whose knowledge of performance history and theatrical practice is broad enough to judge the merits of the play and to place it historically in terms of its innovation and tradition, and whose familiarity with rehearsal techniques and the technicalities of modern theatrical production will afford them a depth of knowledge sufficient to make meaningful explorations into the varied production possibilities for the Shakespeare play as a piece of theatre to be performed here and now. The balance between reverence for tradition (sometimes articulated as a "museum piece" mentality about Shakespearean productions) and enthusiasm for the immediacy of theatrical practice (which draws upon the experimental

and exploratory virtues of rehearsal techniques) is struck in such a way as to disentangle Shakespeare to some extent from the accumulated cobwebs of the Cultural Icon. This is at least theoretically possible. How this theoretical possibility holds up to the reality of classroom practice is what the following chapter will attempt to determine.

A Basis for Comparison:

The Instructional System and the Learning Milieu

In keeping with the principles of illuminative research which allow for the growth of an emerging hypothesis, this part of the classroom observations has been organized around the question raised by the preceding observations. Before determining whether or not Shakespeare should, to paraphrase one bemused student, "be English or drama", it is necessary to ask: **Is there any substantive difference between the method and content in the teaching and learning about Shakespeare that happens in the Theatre Studies A-level, and that which happens in the English Literature A-level that can be plausibly attributed to differences in the method and content of the courses themselves and not solely to differences in the teaching styles of individual teachers?** In order to determine the answer to this, and, more importantly, to determine the specific ways in which any differences are manifest, it is useful first to delineate the broad differences in the schools themselves. The learning milieu of the individual classroom is circumscribed by the wider culture of the school, which is itself further circumscribed by the community, county, and nation. Central to the instructional system within which the learning milieu is articulated, the National Curriculum spreads out even into the independent sector with a ripple effect. The independent school at which these observations were carried out is no exception. However, though the influences of central government regarding the National Curriculum directives are keenly felt, they are manifest here as a matter of voluntary school policy, and not as a matter of legal obligation as they are in the state sector.

Alma Grammar School is one of the many schools which comprise Bristol's disproportionately large independent sector. (The national average for independents is

7%; Bristol accommodates over twice that rate, with 16% of its schools within the independent sector.) This high proportion of independents, coupled with a flagging economic climate, has stepped up the level of competition among Bristol independents; one of the effects of this is a desire on the part of the independents to assure parents that they can deliver the National Curriculum. In Alma Grammar School's case, the school's policy is to make all ten National Curriculum subjects compulsory to the end of Key stage 3 (age 14). All students at Key stage 4, (ages 14-16), must take the core curriculum subjects, English, Maths and Sciences, to GCSE level, as well as three of the seven foundation subjects -- French, History, Geography -- also to GCSE examination level; Physical Education and Religious Education must also be studied, though not examined. Theatre Studies loses its status as a compulsory subject on the school's timetable at the end of Key Stage 3 (ages 11-14); thereafter, it is assigned to one of two option blocks, where it competes on the timetable against German, Religious Education to GCSE level, Design Technology, Art and Music. In practical terms, what this means is that despite a generous endowment to the school which funded the completion of a new performance space for the school last year, and concerted effort on the part of a small but enthusiastic Drama department to foster interest in Theatre Studies at GCSE to carry through to A-level, the combined pressures of timetabling the whole of the National Curriculum as compulsory rather than optional at Key stage 3, of making a large number of subjects compulsory to GCSE level, and budget constraints upon staffing needs have seen the Drama department teaching staff halved from two to one. Student numbers, however, have increased from 18 to 22 enrolled in Theatre Studies at GCSE, while A-level Theatre Studies student numbers have decreased from nine to seven within the time that these observations began and ended.

The school maintains boarding facilities which house roughly 20% of the total student body, and largely because of this boarding element and the attendant need for protracted student supervision, and the traditions in which the culture of the independent boarding schools are steeped, the school continued to hold Saturday morning instruction during the time that these observations were made. Saturday morning instruction has since been abolished during the school year of 1992 -93. Even given the differences in

funding and facilities between state and private sector schooling, it should be borne in mind that culturally, socially and economically there was in fact very little difference between the student populations of Springfield and Alma Grammar Schools. Springfield is situated in a well-to-do area of the city, and competition for places is very high. The A-level students there in particular shared much in common with the A-level students at Alma Grammar School by way of scholastic expectations and ambitions.

Previously a single-sex school up until the sixth form, Alma Grammar School had recently merged with an independent girls' school in the summer of 1991 and for the first time that autumn was adjusting to the presence of girls in the lower and middle schools. These girls comprised roughly 25-30% of the theatre studies pupils at GCSE level that year. (The lower sixth formers under observation were not, however, representative of this change, in that this group, like sixth formers of previous years did not include girls who had come up through the lower and middle schools. All of the boys however had come up through the school, though socially this appeared to be less of a mutually binding factor than the fact that four of the nine Theatre Studies students were boarders. This living arrangement seemed ideally suited to the demands of school rehearsal schedules, and considerably enhanced the solidarity of the class as a performing group.)

Observation and Inquiry:

Focusing the Questions

In order to shape an emerging hypothesis, progressive focusing must happen through direct inquiry. While illuminative research progresses through the stages of observation, inquiry and analysis, it is more accurate to describe the process as inquiry-led. No observation is entirely innocent of imperative; we look in order to discover, and the background to discovery is always interrogatory, if only to ask the question, "What is there?" These observations are equally inquiry-led. I entered the Theatre Studies classes, having come from my own experience as an English teacher teaching Shakespeare, and from the previous year's observations of A-level English Literature Shakespeare teaching. By this point it was fairly clear to me what I wanted to find out; it was also clear that the

questions I had framed to focus the inquiry emerged directly from the order in which these observations were conducted -- had the Theatre Studies observations been conducted prior to those of the English Literature classes, it is very likely that the questions generated by this order of approach would have differed substantially. Nevertheless, as the great tradition of Shakespeare teaching at A-level has been established within the English Literature class, the Theatre Studies A-level being a relatively recent innovation established only within the last decade, it seemed a legitimate strategy to test the "norm" of English Literature teaching against the "alternative" of Theatre Studies. These then, are the primary questions which led the inquiry behind these observations, each of them seeking to focus upon the specific nature of the differences between Theatre Studies and English Literature teaching:

1. Within a set time period in the Theatre Studies class, what is the proportion of teacher statements to student questions?
2. What is the nature of the fluidity of that exchange -- that is to say, how many teacher statements about the play text, when subjected to student inquiry or challenge, are then submitted to a re-negotiation/re-evaluation?
3. What, typically, characterizes the exchanges, activities, and explorations that happen in the Theatre Studies classroom?
4. How do gender roles complicate the classroom interactions and relationships in terms of male/female student ratio, the fact that the class is taught by a male teacher, differences in attitude involvement, and contribution of the students to classroom discussion by sex?
5. How does the process/product mentality alter under the assessment requirements for Theatre Studies examinations? (for example, are students comfortably able to incorporate rehearsal techniques as a learning process into a response to an examination question about possibilities for rehearsals of a particular play without being distracted into an emphasis on the product -- both the "product" that is the finished theatrical production, as well as the "product" that is the examination answer itself?)

6. How do Theatre Studies classes prepare students for the non-written assessment of their work?
7. What, if any, attitude differences regarding examinations exist between Theatre Studies students and English Literature students, and how might these differences in attitude reflect upon the differences in the types of things that students are being called upon to learn, and the ways in which that learning happens?
8. Will the lower sixth-formers under observation still be comfortable with active learning techniques when they have reached the upper sixth form?
9. Is there any significant increase in the amount of student-led investigations, student-initiated explorations of possible meanings and interpretations of the play text which are specifically encouraged by a theatrical approach to the Shakespeare play?
10. With reference to the above question, does there exist a comparable basis for the scope of student interpretations and possibilities for meaning that is specifically encouraged by a literary approach to the Shakespeare plays?

Articulating these questions prior to entering the field for a second time enabled me to remain continually conscious not only of what I was observing, but why. I have attempted to frame the nature of the questions themselves within the structure of a problematic: that is to say, in asking "What is there?", the unvoiced question is likewise generated, "What is not there?" equally, in observing "How does this happen?" the unvoiced question asks, "How might this happen?" Whatever hypotheses emerge from this investigation must therefore be tested against their alternatives.

Re-Entering the Field:

The Theatre Studies Class

Theatre Studies was being offered at Alma Grammar School for the first time as an A-level subject in the Autumn that these observations began. The head of the Drama department whose classes I observed, like the great majority of Drama teachers at secondary level, was an erstwhile English teacher, attempting to teach Theatre Studies at A-level for the first time. His experience of directing the school play in previous years,

and long-standing campaign to teach Theatre Studies to A-level was recognized by the school at last, as the A-level was slotted into the timetable as an option for lower sixth formers. By way of preparation to teach the practical component of the course, this teacher was being sent on a short course in Theatre Technology and Design at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth. This was a two-part course; when the observations began, he had attended part one on Theatre Technology, including lighting, set construction and stage management over the previous summer; part two on Theatre Design was to continue the following autumn. In addition to this, the school also funded his attendance at a one-day conference on Drama teaching sponsored by the English Speaking Union at St. Catherine's College, Oxford. (This was a conference which I was fortunate enough to be able to attend with him.¹)

The class itself consisted of five females and four males, all of them white, all but one of them, a male, also studying A-level English Literature. The A-level Shakespeare set text for Theatre Studies that year was The Comedy of Errors. Interestingly, from the point of view of work on this particular play, two of the girls in this group were identical twin sisters. The teacher admitted to me in private conversation that while he was intrigued and excited by the unique insights that they might contribute to the class in regard to the subject of identity in general and to the treatment of twinship in Comedy of Errors in particular, he was equally concerned not to abuse the opportunity that the presence of the twins presented, preferring them to initiate any discussion on the subject of twinship, rather than to press them into service on the subject at the price of their privacy and individuality.

I was invited by the Theatre Studies teacher to begin my observations of this group with a preliminary discussion lesson, following a performance of David Thacker's production of Winter's Tale at the New Vic in London (prior to actual work on The Comedy of Errors.) I was extremely fortunate in that I had been able to attend this performance with the class on the previous night. This performance was attended with a view to the Theatre Studies examination requirement to write about plays seen in performance (A-level Paper Three), in addition to the fact that all but one of the students

¹ Thanks to the University of Bristol Postgraduate Scholarship Fund for Conference fees and travel expenses.

were also studying The Winter's Tale as the set text that year for A-level English Literature. Attendance at performances was not compulsory and funding for tickets was not subsidized by the school, though opportunities to attend performances were plentiful. In the course of that school year alone, students in the Theatre Studies class were given the opportunity to attend eight performances: The Marvellous Boy, I Can Give You a Good Time, The Comedy of Errors, The Winter's Tale, Julius Caesar, Frankenstein, Metamorphosis, and Agamemnon. These trips were arranged by English, Drama and Classics teachers, with the school providing block bookings, transportation, chaperones and often a packed lunch or dinner. Opportunities for the students themselves to perform were also impressively numerous -- students in this group participated on-stage and backstage in the school play, Brecht's Caucasian Chalk Circle; the sixth form play, Dario Fo's Elizabeth; a piece devised by the students themselves entitled Moving Pictures, which was later performed by these students at a drama festival in Spain; and an original adaptation by sixth form Classics students of Aristophanes' The Clouds. Suffice it to say that the theatrical life of the school was thriving, and the benefits of this to the theatre studies students was very much in evidence from the very outset of these observations.

The observations themselves began early in the school year of 1991, on October 9, and continued until December 12 and the term break. Thereafter followed a long hiatus during which time work on The Comedy of Errors was temporarily shelved while the class began work on The Caucasian Chalk Circle which carried through to the performance of The Caucasian Chalk Circle as that year's school play, performed for three nights for an audience of parents, friends, and school governors. Work on The Comedy of Errors did not resume until May 7, and thereafter continued until the end of the school year, the last class before examinations being taught on July 2. I also made several follow-up visits to observe this class in their continuing work on The Comedy of Errors during the autumn term of the following year, the implications of which will be discussed below.

First Impressions

As mentioned above, I had a tremendous advantage with this group in that on the evening immediately prior to my first observations, I was able to accompany the class to a performance of The Winter's Tale. This performance was the subject of discussion in the first lesson observed. As the lesson progressed, it became clear that talking about productions was something that most students in the class were very comfortable doing. They had also seen, in the previous week, Public Parts' production of The Marvellous Boy, and in discussing The Winter's Tale, they freely compared various stage effects such as the lighting, the use of live music, and the staging itself, between the two productions. Their knowledge of production possibilities was augmented by their own performance experience, which was immediately apparent from the first moments of observation in this class:

The class begins with talk of a trip to Spain at which these students will be participating in a drama festival being organized for May half-term. The teacher asks each student about the progress they are making on their video projects -- they are working on 'talking head' monologues; one boy explains that he is experimenting with the idea of T.V. as a mirror, and this is encouraged by the teacher. Discussion then turns to the performance we have seen of The Winter's Tale, and the Public Parts production of The Marvellous Boy. The teacher asks for any immediate reactions:

SRF: I didn't find the Shakespeare boring, but the Public Parts [production of The Marvellous Boy] had more for me.

TS: I'd like you be jotting down what questions we might be asking ourselves about both productions.

SQF: What do you mean?

TR: Well, for instance, we've talked about staging things in the round, and now we've had the opportunity to see the Shakespeare play done in-the-round -- that should throw up all kinds of questions for you about how that actually can work.

The teacher, in encouraging these students to frame their own questions about what they had seen, enabled the group to discover for themselves what the specific effects of staging the play in-the-round were upon the lighting, set, blocking and audience perceptions. Taking their cue from the teacher and then thinking through his initial suggestion as to the types of questions they might be asking themselves, the following discussion developed:

SQF1: Did the total lack of set in Winter's Tale make you concentrate more on the play?

SRF2: I think that when the play got long-winded, if there had been a set you would look at the set and not concentrate on the play.

SRF3: I thought it was great -- especially in that scene with the king in his black coat -- all you could see was him. In the harvest scene it was like a breath of fresh air.

SRM: You could imagine the room that it's in.

TA: If we're being allowed to, encouraged to, made to imagine things, that puts a whole different emphasis on the audience's part in this.

SRF: I think it was good that we could see it from above, especially the dancing -- we could see the patterns; I'm sure other people did.

SQF: What advantages or disadvantages did you find when the play was performed in the round?

SRM: It makes it seem more real; like you're looking at events as they're actually happening. When it's all in front of you, it's like watching T.V.

SRF: I find it a bit annoying; I couldn't always see people's faces.

SRM: But that's like real life, isn't it?

TA: It's an advantage and a disadvantage as well.

SRM1: Well, they did a lot of moving around for everyone to see -- while the king was ranting at the queen ...

SRM2: And when that bloke nicked the guy's wallet -- he had to walk all the way around to show everyone he'd done it.

(The teacher then leads them to a general conclusion about the ways in which staging a play in the round affects the blocking.)

SRF: One thing I really liked was the way in which the theatre in the round gave you the chance to use marvellous lighting effects -- like when the queen was standing in the centre with that spot on her with those shapes and colours coming out ...

(The teacher at this point explains the use of gobos, and passes around a theatrical lighting catalogue.)

SRF: I was disappointed that we didn't see the bear!

SRM: We couldn't though -- he would have had to trample over the baby because the baby was in the middle.

(The bell rings -- they are given the assignment to write up their impressions of both productions while they are still fresh in their minds; sketches can be included as part of their notes.)

(Thursday, October 10, 11:20-12:00, AGS)

Above anything else, the strongest impression that I came away from this lesson with, that emphasized the greatest difference between that first lesson and the first lessons

observed when Shakespeare was being taught as part of the English Literature syllabus is the fact that discussion of a Shakespeare play as a piece of theatre happened naturally and unselfconsciously. That Shakespeare wrote scripts for production went without saying; in contrast, the teacher introducing her A-level English Literature class to Othello was compelled to remind her students, despite the fact that they too had recently seen a production of the play at the Bristol Old Vic, "This is a play; this is not a novel -- you must write about it as a piece of theatre. The AEB like it very much if you remember this while you're writing your exams: they'll say, 'Well done!'" (Monday, November 19, 8:50 -10:05, SGS) The AEB is to be applauded for this -- certainly encouraging students to think and write about Shakespeare as a playwright is a step in the right direction -- though what is revealed in this teacher's comment is both the unaccustomed nature of the task for these English Literature students, as well as the fact that the examination itself remains the primary incentive to modify the ways in which students viewed the plays. Granted, this initial discussion with the A-level Theatre Studies class was also prompted by the need to prepare students to write paper three of their examinations, which required them to discuss knowledgeably plays which they had seen in production. An entirely different set of examination problems would arise with the Theatre Studies class, the nature of which will be discussed in more detail below. At this point however, it is fair to say that from the very outset, the Theatre Studies students' sense of Shakespeare as a playwright among playwrights, writing scripts for theatrical production (rather than texts for examination) was already evident.

The importance of discerning the difference between the literary text and the theatrical text is essential to the process of negotiating and re-negotiating meaning. Whether or not the classroom becomes a place within which this can happen depends largely upon the individual teacher's willingness to move away from prescriptive meanings of the literary text and into the realm of theatrical possibilities. Wendy Greenhill, Education Director for the RSC illustrates a case in point:

I have been very exercised by a comment I heard made some years ago by a teacher of English who had seen a production of King Lear and was taking part in a post-performance discussion with a member of the company. She said that there were four major themes in King Lear but the production had dealt with only three. Where was the fourth?

Although I think I can understand why such a comment might be made, it seemed to me clear on this occasion that it arose from a tightly prescriptive idea of the meaning of the literary text of King Lear and less sensitivity to the fresh theatrical text created by this particular production.²

Enabling students to discern this difference between prescription and possibility necessitates likewise a difference in teaching method and style. This particular A-level Theatre Studies teacher's style differed radically from both of the other two teachers observed teaching Shakespeare for the English Literature Syllabus. While some of these differences could be attributed to the fact that the Theatre Studies teacher was a male, and therefore would necessarily relate differently to his class compared with either of the other two female teachers, in other ways it was clear that his teaching method and the style he adopted were directly shaped by the task at hand. Classes never took the form of a lecture -- more often than not, this teacher encouraged his students to frame their own questions, conduct their own explorations with the scripts, with his comments serving primarily to focus, affirm or re-direct discussion along a path of solid understanding. The sense of learning as a process of mutual exploration and negotiation of meaning came across quite clearly and strongly. There are decided advantages as well as disadvantages to this approach, chief among the disadvantages being the tremendous amount of time required to allow students the luxury of finding out for themselves what might undeniably be more quickly told to them outright. With specific reference to the first of the focusing questions behind these observations, it must be said that the total amount of time spent on The Comedy of Errors as a Theatre Studies set text greatly exceeded that spent on Othello as an English Literature set text. Time spent in the Theatre Studies class on The Comedy of Errors exceeded 260 hours, as opposed to an average of 101 hours of class time spent on Othello in the English Literature classes. This lack of time will in itself put considerable restraints upon the A-level English Literature teacher who simply will not have the hours in the timetable to explore a Shakespeare play that must be taught and revised along with other texts (several of them novels presumably perceived by sixth formers as rather formidable tomes) competing for the same hours in the timetable. The lecture format which predominates in the upper sixth form A-level English Literature

2 Wendy Greenhill, 'Whose Text is it Anyway?' Paper delivered at the Conference on Shakespeare Teaching, Stratford Upon Avon, 4 August, 1992 p. 17.

classes preparing for examinations is ideally suited to the task of preparing students to process a tremendous deal of information about the play itself (including plot synopsis, character analysis, production possibilities, critical interpretations, as well as knowledge of symbols, themes, metaphors, and, in some rare cases, ideology) thoroughly and efficiently within a limited period of time. On the other hand, the A-level Theatre Studies examination requires students to deal specifically with theatrical possibilities -- knowledge of the process of exploration is fundamental to this, and these processes are necessarily time consuming. Given the fact that a series of play texts are on the whole shorter works requiring less reading time than the usual sampling of poetry, prose, plays and novels which comprise an A-level Literature syllabus, this need for time is not necessarily a liability for the Theatre Studies teacher. However, a potential disadvantage to the exploratory approach manifests itself during these observations as time went on. Students became so wrapped up in the process of exploration that they lost sight from time to time of their object, moving further and further away from the script at hand. The teacher was nevertheless aware of this, and was compelled to redirect his students to the play text. Evidence of this arose while the students were working on Egeon's opening narrative, explaining his plight to the Duke in Act I, i of The Comedy of Errors. Much class time had been spent on this speech as the basis for a shadow-play, performed with back lighting behind a parachute silk. The teacher had stressed throughout the importance both of the clarity of the shadow "pictures" which the students had devised to narrate the events of the speech, as well as the coherence of tone and movement of the piece. In deciding as a group how to depict the individual events of Egeon's story, a balance of humour and gravity had to be struck; as for the theatrical viability of the piece, fluidity of movement from one picture to another was paramount. Until this point in the observations, these difficulties of tone and fluidity had been the major preoccupation with the piece. It had been rehearsed, revised, and re-rehearsed. On this particular day, satisfied that the piece was finished, the teacher had elected to videotape the shadow play so that the students could evaluate their work from the audience's perspective. When the camera began to roll, however, a new and unexpected difficulty arose:

(The light behind the parachute silk is lit, with an additional back light on the Duke which effectively and significantly throws a long shadow. The other drama

teacher enters the theatre at this point to sit and observe. They begin. While the Duke reads through the opening lines, the shadow players stand in readiness for the first shadow picture -- however, they fail to listen to the narrative closely enough to progress from picture to picture.

TQ: What's the problem? Have we forgotten what we're doing?

(The students break and come out from behind the screen.)

SRF: Sir, we know what we're doing but we haven't got the cues.

TR: Surely the cues come from the speech.

(They take it again. They manage to get through the first picture, but break too quickly.)

TRD: Hang on; surely that's a much longer process ...

SQF: Are we doing that again?

TR: Yes, please -- this is the last time we'll do it with the speech. If it doesn't work, then we'll walk the whole thing through -- from cue to cue.

(Again, they stop, going back to the cue "drew me from kind embracements of my wife", but then they miss the initiation of the pregnancy on "pleasing punishment that women bear" -- At this point they decide to stop, come in front of the screen, and walk it through cue-to-cue so they are quite sure of what words to move on; though it appears that they are unsure of when to move without being told. Difficult to know; at this point, also hard to say if it matters -- as in the enactment of the words the meanings nonetheless become clear.)

(Thursday, December 5, 1991 11:20 - 12:40 AGS)

By the end of the lesson, things were put right and the video was made without further mishap. Nevertheless, this compulsion to steer the students back to the text was in essence exactly opposite to that of the English Literature teachers. Their task was to remind students that Shakespeare wrote scripts; this teacher's challenge was to steer his students through the process of rehearsals and explorations back to the product which is the script, or production text itself. Again, the predominance of the exploratory format in Theatre Studies classes seems less a matter of individual teaching style than a matter of imperative given the nature of the task at hand. Returning again to the overall focusing question of this part of the research, that is: Is there any difference in the method/content between English Literature and Theatre Studies courses themselves which directly affect the method/content of the learning about Shakespeare which happens in both Theatre Studies and English Literature courses, my immediate (and enduring) impression is that the evidence shows that the answer is emphatically "yes", and that this difference is

manifest most clearly in the methods of classroom investigations of the Shakespeare play. The classroom observations, in witnessing that difference, must ultimately address the theoretical component of the effects of the change from a literary to a theatrical focus in Shakespeare teaching. In the act of learning "about" a Shakespeare play, many other things are happening simultaneously: students learn about themselves and about their world; in that "about" is hidden the real object of scrutiny. A methodology that enables students to learn through its object necessarily will be determined by a set of educational values. Teaching Shakespeare for critical consciousness and compassionate imagination values judgement over memorization; values the articulation of the question over the reiteration of the answer; values the discerning respect of difference over the uncritical and naive assumption of sameness (which is a form of domination). Whether the literary or theatrical approach is inherently more inclined to encourage these values remains to be seen.

Explorations and The Nature of the Exchange:

Challenge and Re-negotiation in Classroom Interactions

Focusing questions two and three both deal with the specific nature of classroom interactions between teacher and students in the Theatre Studies classes. Question two focuses upon the fluidity of classroom interactions -- that is, the latitude accorded students and teachers for challenge and re-negotiation of meaning -- a question of the form of the exchange; whereas question three concerns itself primarily with the characteristics of active classroom explorations of the plays -- a question of the content of classroom activities. As always, where the primary focus of inquiry is upon the specifics of what is happening and how it happens, the broader background behind both of these questions must posit the alternatives: what is not happening, and how else might it happen -- this then forms the basis for comparison with the English Literature classes.

In dealing specifically with production alternatives in the Theatre Studies class, the need for the group's consensus and coherence of tone became very clear. In choosing to do active drama work on the opening sequence from The Comedy of Errors, this

teacher was also making a choice about the form that the lessons would take. Any fruitful exploration of theatrical possibilities demanded that discussions take place within a forum which facilitated a fluid exchange of ideas. There is a clear example of this principle at work in the discussion recounted below -- the teacher's role is that of an arbitrator, seeking to bring together a number students' ideas about production alternatives into one workable and coherent vision:

The students have assembled together a list of seventeen events recounted in Egeon's opening speech before the Duke³ and the assembled people of Ephesus. After considering the list again as a group, twelve of the seventeen events listed on the board are starred as essential to the narrative -- it is these twelve events which the students intend to show in their shadow play:

- *2. Egeon's marriage.
- *3. Voyages taken for his work.
- *5. Egeon's wife becomes pregnant.
- *7. Wife gives birth to twins.
- *8. In the same tavern, a poor woman also gives birth to twins on the same night.
- *9 Egeon buys the poor woman's twins to serve his own sons.
- *11. They all set sail for home.
- *12. There is a terrible storm.
- *14. The sailors abandon ship.
- *15. Egeon's wife ties the youngest twin to a mast with a slave twin, and Egeon ties other twins to another mast; two on each timber.
- *16. The ship's mast splits as it hits a rock.
- *17. Both parties are taken and looked after, (a) Wife and her twin and slave by fishermen, (b) husband Egeon and his twin and slave by a passing ship.

This list reflects work that the students have done thus far to Act I, i line 123. With reference to the specific events listed above, having decided upon what they will show, the discussion and improvisational work which follows compel the students to bear in mind continually how they will show these events from behind a screen:

TS: Right -- that's good. Now all we have to do is do it: we know we have to begin with the marriage.

(A student directs -- three students stand at the centre, taking the parts of Egeon, Emelia, and the priest. The priest blesses the couple, who turn to one another and join hands.)

TC: How about his voyages? How will we show that?

SRM: She can be wiping a tear from her eye and waving a handkerchief after him.

(This too is acted out by volunteers from the group.)

TA: It's good; because you're thinking in terms of gestures which have a universal quality.

SQM: When is this going to be set?

3. This speech is reprinted in its entirety on pages 106 and 107 of Appendix C.

TA/Q: That's what we'll have to decide, won't we? (There follows now some talk of the classical names in the play as a hint to the setting.) ... But let's work at this bit -- what about her getting pregnant?

SRM: Pump up a space hopper under her shirt!

TS: Remember we're working in silhouette.

SRF: Ah! You could have a fan, and she could open it up on her belly like this. (She demonstrates- this is greeted with general approval.)

TA/Q: I think your fan idea is really elegant ... How about number seven? [wife gives birth to twins]

SRM1: Deflate the space hopper!

SRM2: We can have the stork!

TA: A sort of jumbo jet can fly in and deliver the twins -- that does have some appeal, doesn't it?

SRF: You can have sort of a mechanical bird.

TA/Q: You can do whatever you like with this -- in the production that we saw there was a bit of effort and groaning -- bringing in a stork makes it rather comical -- How do you want to do it?

SRM: Well, he's remembering this, so it will be rather romantic.

TQ: What about number eight? [a poor woman gives birth to twins on the same night].

SRM: You could have the screen divided and have them both giving birth at the same time.

SRF: The rich side should be on a bed ...

SAM: A four poster ...

TC: How will you show that?

SRF: A cut out ...

SRM: Or it could be people ...

(The discussion continues, as decisions are reached with regard to each of the individual points listed on the board. When they come to the portrayal of the storm sequence, the question of tone comes up again).

TS: Now we're getting into the storm -- we'll need to work with a real gauze in order to actually see it. The bit at number fifteen [a twin and slave is tied to either side of the mast] is very important ... there are so many people tied to the mast we should assume that the mast is horizontal. I suppose that as long as it's clear how they're distributed you'll be alright. How will you show the splitting of the ship?

SRF: With hands -- when the ship splits, have all the hands reaching out towards each other from opposite ends ...

SRM1: We could bring in the split screen again ...

SRM2: Have a guy with a fishing line catch the wife ...

SRM1: Or, he could have a net ...

SQM2: What's fishier than a fishing line?

TC: You've got to decide at this point what you want the tone of this to be -- how comical? With storks and fishing lines or not?

SRM: You've got to have some funny bits or no-one will be interested.

TS: I think the shadow play idea is interesting in itself, but remember, you set the tone of the rest of the production from the opening scene. Have a think about this and we'll talk about this next time.

(Monday, 11:20 - 12:40, November 18, 1992 AGS)

What is interesting about the way in which this exploration progressed is the fact that the teacher's affirmations of students' ideas appeared to encourage students to likewise affirm and develop one another's ideas. No ideas were dismissed out of hand (not even the space hopper pregnancy), and as a result, suggestions which began in jest progressed in earnest. It is significant too that while some of the boys in the class initially offered most of the more comical suggestions, particularly regarding the portrayal of the double pregnancy and birth sequences, in the end it was also one of the boys who suggested the "romantic" tone of memory which the group would come to agree upon as most appropriate for their piece. What happens in this lesson is a practical group exploration of the theatrical possibilities for narrating a difficult and complicated chain of events which is essential to the audience's understanding of the entire play. The production decisions involved regarding the style, tone, the balance of emphases between comedy and tragedy, and the execution of these effects through costume, scenery lighting and action, are only discussed on a practical level at this stage in the lessons. The theoretical justifications for these decisions would be extrapolated at a later date, in the following lesson, which followed on some weeks after the improvisational work. Dealing directly with the same text, Egeon's opening narrative before the Duke of Ephesus, this lesson moves a step further from the realm of action and gesture into that of the words and ideas, and feelings behind the gestures, the motives behind the actions. It is transcribed below in full:

TQ: We've been looking at the narrative; what feelings do we see -- what emotions in a sense are invested in the narrative?

SRF: Hopeless and helpless ...

TA: That's quite a strong phrase -- the alliteration of the "H" sound helps to emphasize that.

SRF: What about determination? He has to tell his own story.

TQ: Is determination really the word we want?

SRF: Desperation perhaps ...

TQ: What does he say?

SRM: "A heavier task could not have been imposed/ Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable."

TQ: Why is it a burden?

SRF: It brings back the memories.

TQ: What's his current situation?

SRM1: He's a prisoner ...

SRM2: He's condemned to death ...

TA/Q: He's in a desperate situation -- helpless and hopeless and he's compelled to tell this unhappy story, condemned to death. So -- why is it called The Comedy of Errors?

SRF: It's a bit like black comedy.

TQ: Is it? Do you think that Shakespeare tried to make it funny but failed?

SRM: It wouldn't work -- it has to be sad.

SRF: People laugh at dreadful things.

SRM1: If this bit wasn't sad, the end wouldn't be any good at all.

SRM2: It's a transition from tragedy to comedy.

TA: So when Shakespeare says "comedy", it isn't uniformly comic.

SSM: He might have left it open for the actors to interpret.

SSF: I think there's a very thin line between tragedy and comedy. I know when I'm upset, the one thing I want is for someone to crack a joke -- if I were going to direct this bit, I'd make the sad bits really over the top and people would laugh.

TQ: We've used this word "tragedy"; what is it?

SRF: When something terrible happens and there's no reason for it -- like when a couple want a child and it dies.

SRM1: Or when it isn't someone's fault like in Romeo and Juliet; they both kill themselves for no good reasons.

SRM2: But if I lose my pen, I think that's tragic, but someone else might not.

SRM1: Like Egeon -- he has a lot of wealth to start with, but he loses everything.

TA/Q: We saw that losing in The Winter's Tale; but do you think Shakespeare would write a tragedy about Rowan losing his pen?

(They laugh.)

SRF: People would probably need to know the tragic bits so that they would understand the comedy that comes later. People laughed at different things then; it was probably a real raver in Shakespeare's day ...

(The teacher here talks at some length about Phyllida Lloyd's production of The Comedy of Errors, which was, in his opinion, a real "raver" for our times.)

(Another girl in the class then digresses at some length to talk about Alan Ayckbourn's Confusions with relation to this.)

TQ: Is Egeon's situation really tragic? What's his tragedy?

SRM: Loss of his family.

TA/Q: In something he couldn't control -- a storm -- so why is it a comedy?

SRF: It has a happy ending.

TQ: But it has the potential to be tragic -- what if Egeon doesn't find his sons? What if he's executed?

(They laugh.)

TS: We're laughing, but you see that structure of confusion and resolution, that tragic potential is the formula for Shakespearean comedy. "Comedy" doesn't really mean funny "ha ha" necessarily.

SQM: What about the other way round?

TQ: What do you mean?

SRM: People who have everything in place and lose it all by the end -- that's tragedy.

TC: Can you think of some examples?

SRM: That movie Purple Haze -- it starts off great, then the guy goes to Vietnam; it's terrible.

SRF: Some of those Mr. Bean Sketches start off great but terrible things always happen to him but it's funny.

TRD: Talking about the structure of this play, there's an emotional structure too, the places that the audience is taken through -- what other words may we pick out from that speech that describe the emotional structure?

SRF1: "Hapless."

SRF2: "Did we not retain much hope."

SRM1: "Piteous."

SRM2: "Sad stories of my own mishap."

SRM3: "Tragic."

SRM4: "Sorrow."

TA: So we're given indications all the time ...

SSF1: I don't think he's feeling sorry for himself; I think he's trying to make the Duke feel sorry for him.

TQ: Do any of you agree with that?

SRF1: I don't think he's using it to make the Duke feel sorry for him.

SRF2: I think the fact that he's got to save his life just helps him to say it all a little bit better.

TQ: He says "By the doom of death end woes and all" Rowan, what do you think?

SRM: I suppose yes, in a way I'd feel sorry for myself if those things had happened to me. I don't think he's got much to live for.

SRF: I don't think he really wants to die.

TQ: He says:
 "But here must end the story of my life;
 And happy were I in my timely death,
 Could all my travels warrant me they live."
 It's not entirely straightforward, is it?

He assigns scene ii for homework. Class dismissed.

(Tuesday December 10, 1991 9:40-10:20, AGS)

While this lesson may appear at least superficially to resemble any A-level English Literature class discussion of a Shakespearean comedy, there are a number of notable differences. First of all, discussion of this length and nature -- searching, exploratory; gradually refining general ideas into specific examples and subtle conclusions -- would be in itself a bit of a luxury for the English Literature teacher due to the constraints of time. Secondly, any theatrical insights into the stage interpretations of the comic/tragic balance are initiated by the students themselves: "He might have left it open for the actors to interpret"; "... If I were going to direct this bit." The difference becomes clearer when the very high level of student response in the lesson transcribed above is compared with the following extract from a typical A-level English Literature lesson on Othello; despite the teacher's efforts to inject an awareness of the variety of theatrical possibilities into her teaching, these ideas are never fully discussed by the students, as the lecture mode prevails:

(Teacher refers to Act I, i, line 83, Brabantio at a window.)

TC: If you were directing this moment, how would you present this? what would you do? What kind of person is Brabantio? If you were directing him, what would

you want him to look like? How might this add to his character in any way? What would this say about the relationship between Desdemona and Brabantio? It's adding these kind of dimensions to your essays that will make the difference in your examinations ...

(She continues along, asking numerous questions. Owing perhaps to the insufferable heat, the group is rather listless; the great majority of explications are delivered by the teacher without student comment, and questions that are thrown out to the group go for the most part, unanswered. Noticing this, she comments to one student in particular:)

TS: You look confused; we're on page twelve ...

(Wednesday November 21, 1991 2:20 -3:30 CGS)

This is not to suggest that the Theatre Studies students were never seen to be listless and unresponsive; however the form the Theatre Studies lessons themselves afforded them far less opportunity to be so.

Another striking difference in this discussion is the fact that The Comedy of Errors is discussed on one level as a performance text among a wide variety of other performance texts: Ayckbourn's Confusions, Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale and Romeo and Juliet, Purple Haze and the "Mr Bean" comedy sketches. The definition of tragedy and comedy that the class comes to discern from this discussion is arrived at through a dialogic investigation, rather than assimilated unquestioningly as a classical notion or textbook definition to be "banked" into their brains for future reference.

Finally, and most importantly, students in the Theatre Studies classes were on the whole far more willing than their counterparts in the English Literature classes to risk some degree of emotional investment in class discussion. In both the general discussion of comedy and tragedy (" I think there's a very thin line between comedy and tragedy -- I know when I'm upset the one thing I want is for someone to crack a joke") and in specific discussion of I.i of Egeon's role in The Comedy of Errors, ("... I'd feel sorry for myself if those things had happened to me -- I don't think he's got much to live for.") students are comfortable with the notion of empathy. The atmosphere that pervaded the class was one of ease and genuine intellectual as well as emotional involvement of a type that many of the English Literature students would have found palpably embarrassing. Granted, the Theatre Studies students were lower sixth formers at the time of these observations, while the English Literature students mentioned in the above example were, at the time they were observed, upper sixth formers. Nevertheless, for such a world of sophistication to

enmesh itself in the psyches of upper sixth formers so as to prohibit them from offering even a mere opinion to classroom discussion without risking the sneers of their classmates cannot be solely attributed to a summer's growth. The difference in atmosphere between these two groups must be accounted for in other ways: age difference is only one factor. Another factor may be found in the fact that academically, Springfield Grammar school is a far less competitive school than Alma Grammar School (albeit Springfield Grammar is one of the few remaining selective state schools in the County of Avon that still requires students to sit an entrance examination) but the most significant contributing factor to that difference in atmosphere may lie in the fact that empathy is, in fact must be actively encouraged in the Theatre Studies class in order to enable students to make informed decisions and choices about character interpretation, directorial vision, and the ways in which these will be reflected and emphasized in the overall production itself.

Getting into Character:

A Challenge to Consensus

Focusing question four asks specifically about the nature of the exchanges, activities and explorations which happen typically in the Theatre Studies class. Looking over the lessons as a whole from beginning to end, a number of things become clear in answer to this: first, that there is a pattern of activity that balances all active work between periods of text-based preparation and follow-up discussion and reflection, often in the form of written assignments, and second, that active drama work on the play moves from group work to individual work; and from concentration on the "external" considerations of blocking, lighting, costume and set to the "internal" considerations as to how, within the production parameters determined by the group, the individual students will define specific character portrayals and motivations.

This movement from external to internal considerations began a couple of weeks after work on The Comedy of Errors resumed after a long hiatus during the term break. Students had begun the term with a written assignment discussing the ways in which they

would produce Act I, i of the play. A transcript of their discussion of these essays follows below:

SSF: I thought it might be a good idea to have Egeon actually coming in and out of the story as he played it; acting like God in a way -- directing it -- then I talked about what we did with the strangeness of the town, and that idea of the scenery closing in; Rowan's idea -- then I wrote about what we did in class with the exaggeration of the gestures in the telling of the story, and then I wrote about the costumes, because the two Antipholuses have to be costumed the same because otherwise the Dromios would notice a difference.

TA: Good -- you've written mostly about what we've seen and done.

(The next girl gives a very similar account. By the time we come to the third girl:)

SSF: Mine sounds the same as everyone else's.

TR: That's because we're writing about a common experience. ... Debbie ?

SSF: I talked about using gobos in the play -- in the first act -- I always imagine this as taking place in almost complete darkness; I don't know why- but I would want clouds with a gobo as Egeon tells his story.

TA/Q: That's good -- there's a dark feeling to the opening of this comedy. What's your rationale for the clouds?

SRF: They represent memory, don't they?

SRF2: If the clouds were whizzing by very quickly, they could show the passage of time with the sun coming up and down.

SSF: Yes -- and I thought I wouldn't dress the Dromios exactly the same -- I think it's confusing enough for the audience and we should treat them as if they know what's going on. And I think that there's something in the lines to suggest that Dromio of Syracuse should be a bit more sarcastic -- because he's different.

(Teacher then calls upon another student to share his ideas.)

SSM: In the first act I have a shadow play but there are walls on either side so that when we see it, it's like a projection of Egeon's thoughts. When the Duke comes on, I want him high up, but seated on a throne. When Antipholus has that speech about the jugglers, I think he should have a really bright light suspended from above, but the people around him in total darkness, then each one would be lit as they talked about it.

(Another student is called upon to share his ideas.)

SSM: I talked about maybe using puppets to tell Egeon's story. I also thought about having the Duke's voice come over on a speaker system, so it could reverberate around the audience. Like Claire I see the play as being very, very dark -- most of it in fact; particularly the opening bit.

TA: Making the Duke invisible gives him more power; makes him more god-like.

(Another student is called upon.)

SSM: I haven't finished, but I have an idea about the scene in the market-place: have the market-place sounds coming over on a loudspeaker, but the actual people

could not speak at all -- the only people who actually speak are Dromio and Antipholus -- it could be very unnerving.

TA/C: There's been a lot of fruitful thought here -- one thing I think we've forgotten though is in thinking like directors about sets, lights, and costumes, you've forgotten about your actors: how, even if your Duke is a disembodied voice reverbing around the auditorium, how is he going to deliver his lines? What degree of pity or compassion will you allow him to show? What, as a director, is your briefing to the actors? That's your next assignment -- give yourselves a week, and remember: in the rehearsal hall, your first duty is to your actors.

(Thursday May 14, 1992, 11:20 - 12:00, AGS)

At this stage, work on character began in earnest, and lessons became gradually more text-based. Having dealt with physical pictures in the shadow-play, as well as with the use of exaggerated gestures as a means of clarifying archaic language,⁴ this new concentration upon the subtleties of language, and the acting challenge that this represented proved intimidating to many of the students. There was a wide diversity of acting talent in the class (one girl in particular seemed to have the lion's share of this, taking on the lead roles in both the school play and the sixth form play, as well as acting with the National Youth Theatre) and awareness of that diversity, particularly among the boys, presented a hurdle to be overcome. The teacher began by working gradually towards active work on character, beginning first with desk-bound activities, then using this written work as a basis for improvisation:

TS: O.K. -- I'd like you now to list the characters of Act III, and tell what their role is -- you need to look at the text closely for this. Tell how they relate to other people, and what their objectives and aims are when they come onto the stage. Then, I'm going to ask you to improvise the act.

SQF: What, today?

TR: Well, it depends on how soon you get this done. I told you to list the characters and their roles: is there a difference?

SRF: The character is who they are and the role is what they do.

TA/Q: Let's take an example: Dromio of Ephesus, for example. Dromio is his character; what's his role?

SRM: Slave to Antipholus.

TA/Q: So: how they relate to the other characters, how they function. Are we clear on character and role?

(There is general assent as the students continue working quietly at their desks.)

(Monday, May 18, 1992 11:20 - 12:40, AGS)

⁴ See Transcript of field notes for May 11, 1992 (Lesson XVII C pp. 136-141 Appendix C.

One of the first things that the students comment upon while doing this written exercise is that the level of confusion in the text itself is far more impenetrable on the page than on the stage. At one point, one of the girls stops to ask:

SQF: But I don't understand -- why does Antipholus go along with [Adriana]? He knows he's got a brother -- why doesn't it click that if he's being mistaken for this woman's husband, then it must be his brother's wife?

TQ: What would happen if he did?

SRF1: The play would be over a lot sooner!

SRF2: Maybe he figures he might be this woman's husband -- like he got hit over the head and has amnesia.

TA: He does say, "Am I in earth, in heaven or in hell, sleeping or waking?" So, he isn't really sure, is he?

(At another point, further along in the same lesson.)

TRD: I'll ask you to tell me about these characters now and if any of you want to add, subtract, multiply or divide anything -- tell us ... Kev?

SRM1: Luciana, Adriana's sister. Her role is to comfort her sister.

SRM2: Adriana -
- in the first scene she wants to see Antipholus return, and in the second, she wants to prove that she's not an adulteress herself.

TQ: Anyone want to add to that?

SRF1: Her objective is to bring her husband and bring him back home.

SRF2: In the second scene she knows it's him but she doesn't, so her motive is to find out if it is her husband.

SRF3: No -- she thinks it's really him.

SRF2: But they must be really thick -- they're from different countries -- they must speak different languages!

SRF1: But if we saw [the teacher] Mr. Richardson speaking Chinese, we wouldn't say "Look, it's Mr. Richardson's Chinese twin brother", we would still think it was him!

SAF3: Yes, we would think Chinese was his second language.

TQ: What would you think?

SRF1: That it was a joke -- a wind-up.

SRF2: But Antipholus of Ephesus must know he has a twin, and he would have told his wife --

SRF1: But only Antipholus of Syracuse knows --

SRF3: Well, I think she's very suspicious -- because she thinks he's been fooling around on her.

TA/Q: Well, she is wondering where he's been -- there is a subtext to her motive -
- do we accept this?

SRF2: You know that naff production that we saw -- on the stage it's really easy to understand -- that confusion just isn't there.

(Monday, May 18, 1992 11:20-12:40, AGS)

When it comes time to do the actual improvisations, the class is divided into two groups, each of which presents the same scene. This is the first time that the whole class is not working as a single group and consequently the first time that variations in interpretations of the characters become evident. After struggling through their initial confusion, character, role and motivation become clear and the improvisations reflect a solid understanding of the scene. Once again, there is a very high degree of empathy with the characters, as this extract from class discussion of the improvisations will show:

TQ: How real is this situation?

SRF3: Very real.

SRF2: It could happen today, it could happen in Victorian times, it could happen then; it's just human emotion isn't it? This kind of thing still happens all the time.

TQ: So is Shakspeare writing about us?

SRF4: I think Shakespeare's writing about being human -- people still think the same way, do the same things.

TQ: What about the Dromios?

SRF4: They're hard done by. I think it's really mean of Shakespeare in a way to have these two sets of twins and one of them has to serve them all the time.

TQ: Does that still happen?

SRF2: Oh yes, it happened in the slave trade, but even here when we used to have prefects and plebs; there were always people who were beneath other people.

SRF5: I think Dromio's above it really, in a way -- and he's like a brother to Antipholus; they must know each other inside and out ...

(Thursday June 4, 1992, 11:20 - 12:00, AGS)

It is the students themselves and not the teacher who first articulates the idea of universals in this discussion. "Is Shakespeare writing about us?" can be said to be a leading question, but for all that, it remains essentially open-ended. On the subject of the Dromios and their social status, this group will come to learn that the Dromios were

played in blackface well into the 1950's⁵, adding a new dimension to their perception of the Dromios as "hard done by." Here at least would seem to be once instance in which notions of universal value and cultural materialist thought could find a common ground.

Character work was carried through to its logical conclusion: as the focus narrowed from class work, to group work, to individual work, ending in the "hotseating" of individual students in character. A favourite technique of drama teachers, successful hotseating depends upon a thorough knowledge of the script, as well as an imaginative engagement with the character both within the limits of the script itself and beyond the script. It takes character motivation to the point where characters themselves can be challenged in role to consider the hypothetical -- test out individually the theatrical alternatives; what is not there in the script. It is however clear from the excerpt below that where the hotseating is least successful is where the student involved has neglected to pay careful attention to what actually is in the script:

(Debbie is being hotseated as Luciana.)

SQM3: How do you feel about your sister?

SRF: I'm concerned about her.

SQF: What about marriage? How do you feel about that?

SRF: No -- not for me; I haven't found the right man yet.

SQM: What's your idea of marriage?

SRF: I'll be home for him.

SQF: So you'll be in a really square marriage.

SQM: What's your idea of the perfect man?

SRF: Strong, dependable, reliable.

SQF: Do you think your sister's husband is reliable?

SRF: I think he's alright.

SQF: So you wouldn't mind your husband doing what Antipholus does?

SRF: I think Adriana makes mountains out of molehills -- I wouldn't get so worked up about it.

5. One of many aspects of the performance history of the play discussed at a schools workshop at the Theatre Museum in London, which I attended with the class on Friday, 12 June, 1992. See Appendix C, pages 158 -164.

SQF: What do you think of Dromio?

SRF: Well, I like him but he needs to be kept in line.

TQ: What did you think about your brother-in-law chatting you up?

SRF: I was a bit concerned, a bit shocked really.

SQF: Will you tell your sister?

SRF: I don't think so.

TRD: Maybe you will -- I think you will -- it says so in the text.

(Tuesday, 16 June 11:20 - 12:40 AGS)

One aspect of the active drama work which has gone without comment but is clear from the example above is the distribution of male and female contributions to this type of exploration. Particularly in instances such as the one cited above, the boys in the class were on the whole far less forthcoming with their contributions. (What contributions they do make in the exercise above are mostly questions limited to Luciana's physical appearance.) Again, looking over the pattern of responses of the lessons as a whole, initially the boys in the class would appear to be contributing far less to classroom discussions. However, particularly when the lessons are concerned with actually doing any practical work, responses from the boys tended to dominate. When the class was set the task of each choosing an individual character to explore in depth in terms of their primary and secondary motivations on stage, three out of the four boys in the class chose very minor character: Balthasar, Angelo, and Luce, the kitchen maid. There was no such reluctance among the girls, all of whom chose to explore the major characters in the play. In partial answer to focusing question five then, regarding the role that gender plays in classroom interactions, it would appear that in this particular class, with five females, four males, and a male teacher, the difference is not so much one of the quantity of responses from the males and females as in the quality of response; the boys seemingly far less reluctant to contribute to discussion which centres on the "externals" of creative production work, and the girls far less reluctant to involve themselves with the "internal" work of psychological motivations in character development.

Correctness and Creativity:

The Problem with Examinations

On Wednesday, the third of June, this class was given a three-hour mock examination⁶. Students were allowed to consult their texts of The Comedy of Errors, as well as their notes of performances seen.⁷ Two of the exam questions reproduced below dealt directly with The Comedy of Errors:

2. EITHER:

a. Discuss some of the ideas which might be usefully explored by the actors and the director during rehearsals for Act II of "The Comedy of Errors."

OR:

b. Outline and justify your ideas and design for either setting or costumes for a production of "The Comedy of Errors" today.

The problems encountered by the students in answering these questions bring into focus a fundamental difficulty with getting away from the notion of there being a "correct" response to questions of interpretation. Focusing questions six, seven and eight all deal with the examination experience for the Theatre Studies student; the outcome of this mock examination has particular relevance with regard to question six. This asks if students are comfortably able to incorporate rehearsal techniques as a learning process into an answer to exam questions about possibilities for rehearsals of a play without being distracted into an emphasis on the product (both the product that is the finished, theatrical production and the product which is the examination question/answer itself.) A transcript of the class discussion of this follows:

TS: Now; Comedy of Errors -- Debbie scored very highly on that because she answered the other question; 2b. But the one which tripped everyone up was 2a. because everyone answered it in terms of what they would do in production ... What they're looking for here is ways in which the actors might explore the text; things like making Antipholus feel like a stranger in a strange land. We had a lecture about this⁸ in which a director talked about a year's rehearsal of Midsummer Night's Dream where he blindfolded his actors and set them loose in New Forest. The point is that it's about rehearsals and everyone answered it as if it

⁶ A copy of this mock exam is included in the Appendix G.

⁷ This group had also seen a production of The Comedy of Errors at Bath College of Further Education before beginning work on the play.

⁸ Reference to English Speaking Union's Conference on Drama Teaching, St. Catherine's College Oxford, October 12, 1991.

were a performance question. You need to talk about ways of exploring the characters, ways of exploring the relationships, ways of exploring the language; it's difficult for us because we're not party to professional productions. But there's nothing to stop us from, say, writing to Phyllida Lloyd and asking what she did in rehearsals for her production of Comedy of Errors at the Manchester Royal Exchange.

(Monday, June 8, 1992 11:20 -12:40, AGS)

The impetus which students felt to "be correct", and to pin down rehearsal possibilities into a finished production was at odds with the set task to explore theatrical alternatives. The second difficulty which students encountered with this particular examination came out in the final question:

3. EITHER:

a. Refer to one of the productions you have seen and discuss the director's interpretation, as you understood it. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the approach taken.

OR:

b. Consider your response to the set design of any two of the productions you have seen. Discuss the effectiveness of the designs in contributing to your experience of the performance.

The primary difficulty which students encountered with this question is made clear by the teacher's explanations below. Again, a confusion between the process and the product seems to be at work, this time, however, it is neglect of the product that is the play text which is at the root of students' confusion and difficulty:

TS: In the third one, the performance question, the problem is you have to know the text -- for instance, what would be wrong with people saying how clever it is to have Grusha and the Soldier on opposite sides of the river when they meet again?

SRF: It could be what Brecht wanted in the first place.

TQ: Could be?

SRF: Well it was.

TA: Yes, it's in the dialogue, there are references to the river in the stage directions -- the point is that you've got to know what is specified in the script and what's not before you begin to write about a director's interpretation of that script in production. In terms of writing generally about facial expressions and gestures, you'll go a lot further being specific -- tell what gesture with what line ... You don't want to worry about this; the whole purpose of a mock exam is to see where I'm going wrong -- perhaps I didn't emphasize enough the need to know the text when answering questions about performance and interpretation -- but now we know. For the most part these examinations were very enthusiastic and very knowledgeable, but you mustn't take it to heart if you haven't done as well as you might have.

(Monday June 8, 1992 11:20 -12:40, AGS)

The need to incorporate active drama work into the assessment of Theatre Studies at A-level creates a particular set of demands upon the students and teachers. Students must achieve a balance between knowledge of the rehearsal process and knowledge of the product that is the play text. The teacher on the other hand is compelled to sacrifice to some extent his traditional authoritarian role as the guardian of the "correct" response, and act rather as a facilitator of group explorations and arbitrator of a variety of responses to a script, in effect creating a climate for dialogic investigation within the classroom, while at the same time preparing students to face up to an examination which requires thorough knowledge of a script which for the most part remains inviolable, uncut and untampered with. The Theatre Studies A-level is still relatively new; perhaps there will come a time when examination questions might deal directly with the possibility of cutting scripts and transposing scenes of a particular play in production, but for the moment, students must articulate their answers by reining the freedom of their imaginations within the precise parameters of the script.

Follow-Up and Summary

The school year at Alma Grammar School ended before work on The Comedy of Errors was actually completed. Curious to see how their work was progressing, I returned to the class early in the following autumn term to assess the effects of a summer's growth upon the group. There was one less student in the class; one of the twins had left school, and with her went the elegant symmetry of many of the past year's improvisations. The class was left now with four boys and four girls; many of them visibly matured over the past summer. The confidence and sense of ease that this group felt working with one another was still intact; if anything, it appeared to have grown. The lesson was taken in the theatre, a double-period practical session, in which the students were set the task of improvising the first four acts of The Comedy of Errors by way of review of work done before the summer break. They voluntarily divided themselves into two groups (each group a mixed group of two boys and two girls), one group taking acts one and two, the

other acts three and four. They set about this task with energy and enthusiasm, jotting down the main plot elements to be covered in the improvisation on large sheets of paper as a guide, and constructing outrageous paper hats for the Dromios. I came away from the lesson confident that despite teachers' convictions that upper-sixth formers would never do active drama work on a Shakespeare play, this group at least, with only one year's previous experience of this type of work, and still in the first flush of upper-sixth form sophistication, could prove them wrong.

What these students are learning about Shakespeare is equally as important as the way in which that learning happens. The teaching methods required of the Theatre Studies teacher are not without their difficulties, nor are these difficulties necessarily unique to the Theatre Studies class. Time spent on a play text is something that, with the demands that will be made upon the students who choose the traditional route to higher-level Shakespeare study through an English literature degree at university, might soon become a luxury that they can't afford.⁹ Whether students have become accustomed to spending half a term on a single play for A-level English Literature, or even an entire term and a half on a play for A-level Theatre Studies, once at university, should they elect to take a degree in English Literature, they may be expected to prepare an entire play in as little as a week or even a single evening. Should they elect to take a degree in drama, these constraints of time are far less likely to be felt. If the time spent at A-level is in fact an investment in their future independent learning; if the process of protracted exploration of a play text in the Theatre Studies class equips students with the tools to carry on developing their creative understanding whether within a university setting or not, then that time is time well spent. The ways in which the students themselves value these various learning experiences may give some indication, and will form the basis of the student survey questionnaire in the chapter to follow.

⁹ Non-traditional university study (i.e. a degree in Drama) can afford students the luxury of extended time spent in active exploration of Shakespeare scenes, if not entire plays.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE STUDENT LEARNING SURVEY

Throughout the long debate which has exercised politicians, academics and educationalists about the teaching of Shakespeare in schools, one vitally important voice has remained conspicuously absent: that of the students themselves. This is evidence of the wider implications of "banking education", manifest in an attitude which posits students as passive repositories of education rather than active participants in a process which might otherwise be dynamic, active and mutually enlightening for teachers and students alike. This power relationship between active teacher and passive student is reflected back upon teachers themselves and reproduced on both practical and theoretical levels. On the practical level it is reproduced between government educational policy makers and teachers in schools; on the theoretical level it is reflected in the relationship between teachers in schools and academics whose expertise in current literary theories persuades them of their ability to pronounce as well on educational matters. Teachers continue to find themselves at best the passive repositories, at worst the target, of current government policy and academic theory, excluded from decisions that affect their working lives. As a case in point, Dewar and Chater note that

Consultation is a purely anaesthetic process if the wishes of those consulted are ignored. The summary of that consultation process in the rare *National Curriculum Consultation Report* (September 1993) amounts to three pages, makes no mention of assessment and ignores the profession's overwhelming rejection of the 1993 revisions.¹

That neither educational policy makers nor academics are practitioners of secondary school Shakespeare teaching further complicates the picture. The less day-to-day contact one has with students, the further away from classroom practice one's experience and expertise lies. Assumptions about what students want, need and enjoy, formulated at such a distance from the reality of their school experiences are bound to be, at best, ill-informed. Students need not be passive repositories of learning, to whom the National Curriculum is "delivered" (as freight to a depot) when it is possible for them to be active participants in their own education. The inclusion of a student learning survey in this research is an attempt to balance what the students themselves think and say against what has been thought and said about them.

¹ Alan Dewar and Pauline Chater, 'Weary Alarm Bells: The debate on English syllabuses moves on, but teachers' voices remain unheard', *Times Educational Supplement*, 15 April 1994, p. 19.

Specifically, the student learning survey was designed with a number of purposes in mind. First, to create a means of testing my own perceptions as a researcher into classroom practices against students' perceptions of those same practices. Second, to create a framework within which students can assess and value the various methods and activities employed by their teachers, thereby checking teacher opinions against students' perceptions. (The intention here, in part, is to measure what, if any, discrepancy might exist between what teachers believe they have taught and what students believe they have learned.) Third, to determine what, if any, association might exist between students' enjoyment of various learning methods and the degree of educational merit which students judge these various activities to have. (Given that the purpose of the theatre has proverbially been to both instruct and delight, asking students to consider the merits of their instruction against the level of their enjoyment is imperative in a student survey of their learning about the Shakespeare plays.) Fourth, to assess what, if any, association might exist between students' attitudes about Shakespeare and the ways in which Shakespeare has been taught to them. And finally, what if any association might exist between students' experience of Shakespeare in schools and the potential for students' continuing enjoyment of the plays (beyond A-level study) either as audience members, teachers of drama or English, or workers in the theatre.

As in the teacher survey, the primary research question which forms the focus of inquiry in the student survey is: *How do we assess the effects of change in Shakespeare teaching ?* Again, two types of change concern us primarily: the political shift, which is being initiated at the university level, from liberal humanist approaches to Shakespeare teaching to the new historicist and cultural materialist approaches, and the practical shift, which is being initiated at the schools level, from desk-bound, text-bound Shakespeare study to the performance-based, active method. Ideally, an assessment of the effects of change will be conducted over time, allowing for comparisons to be made across a wide enough interval for the cumulative effect of what we perceive as gradual changes to be thrown into relief. As this survey could not be conducted under ideal conditions (which would allow for at least a generation to pass between a first and second survey of student attitudes and classroom practices) it is hoped that the survey results can at least reflect a

fairly diverse picture of the effects of change in Shakespeare teaching on these particular students.

Survey Design, Quantitative Analysis and Illuminative Research Methodology

In an ideal research situation, no time and expense would be spared in gathering the data necessary to test out the effects of change delineated above. Random selection would be possible and depth of responses would be acquired through interviews with each individual student participating in the survey. Given the limitations of time and budget this survey has been designed to focus as completely and efficiently as possible on the research questions aimed at a small but specific sample, all of whom were selected through the case study selection process. All of those surveyed were students of teachers who had allowed me to observe their Shakespeare teaching as part of this research. In the case of the Theatre Studies students, I was able to survey the opinions of the same students I had actually observed during the school year of '91-'92. This allowed me to consider the survey results within the context of what I had already learned from extensive observation of the classroom practices of the individual teachers involved. Though the scope of this survey has been designed to allow for numerical results to be checked against observation, the entire survey itself can nonetheless serve as a pilot for a much larger survey of students on a regional if not a national scale.

This survey was designed as a closed question² survey of student attitudes, classroom practices, student opinions, and factual data for quantitative analysis using the SPSSX³ computer program. The bulk of the research methods employed to this point have been primarily qualitative: survey by postal interview, participant observation, and observation. This has been in keeping with the principles of illuminative research, which value a qualitative collection of data as a means of focusing upon an emerging hypothesis over a quantitative collection of data as a means of testing the validity of a hypothesis that

² A final, open-ended question was added at the very end of the survey, inviting students to add any further comments with regard to their Shakespeare learning. While this provided some useful and illuminating responses from those students choosing to reply, this final question could not be included in a quantitative computer survey analysis.

³ SPSSX = Social Sciences Statistical Package

is fully "emerged" and clearly articulated at the very outset of the research. While quantitative method and illuminative research principles are not mutually exclusive, a switch to quantitative method at this stage in the research project needs some justification. The primary justification for a quantitative element to the research is the need for triangulation: that is, the testing out of data gathered through different research methods:

Triangulation is qualitative cross-validation. It assesses the sufficiency of the data according to the convergence of multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures.⁴

What information I have gathered through postal interview of teacher opinion and experiences is then tested out against what I have observed in classroom and then tested again against students' responses to a quantitative survey. In this way, both the data itself as well as the methods employed in gathering that data are subject to inquiry. On a more practical level, the use of a quantitative survey simply facilitates the interpretation of data, given the length of the survey and the number of subjects in the sample.⁵ Designed as it is to detect associations and variances across a wide field of questions pertaining to attitudes, opinions and classroom practices, this survey is most accurately and efficiently analysed quantitatively. The quantitative data which emerges from a survey of this nature is valuable only in so far as it is considered as an integral part of the whole research picture. The survey is in four parts, each of which will be described below.⁶

Part A: Attitude Survey

The first section of the survey consists of thirteen statements about Shakespeare teaching about which students are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree along a four-point Likkert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The exclusion of a "Neutral" category of response was deliberate, as this compelled students to reflect upon their feelings and respond decisively one way or another to the statements. Within the limits of the questions asked there is a balance of positive and

⁴ William Wiersma, *Research Methods in Education*, 5th edn (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1991) p. 233.

⁵ There were 6 subjects in the pilot survey; 30 in the actual survey.

⁶ See Appendix H for a copy of the actual survey.

negative statements in order to ensure the neutrality of the survey itself. The statements were deliberately articulated in the first person in order to elicit a personalised response: there is a great difference between asking a student to respond to the statement "Shakespeare is the world's greatest playwright" and asking that same student to respond to the statement "*I believe* that Shakespeare is the world's greatest playwright". In this way it is possible to discern the difference between what is generally held to be true and what is a matter of personal conviction.

The survey focuses upon those attitudes which may be directly shaped through students' learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom, in the theatre as well as in the examination halls. It attempts to discern how pervasive is the influence of the government agenda to reinforce a notion of "common cultural heritage" as well as that of the radical academic Left to disrupt that notion. These opposing influences must then be balanced against the reality of classroom practice, as delineated in the section to follow. What this survey does not, and cannot, do, is assess the effects of educational influences beyond institutional control. The students in this survey are posited very much at the centre of a convergence of cultural, governmental, and educational motivations with regard to Shakespeare teaching. This, however, is to assume that students' education begins and ends in the schools. The very powerful and compelling effects of family life, and the influence of peer groups upon students' education will necessarily be reflected in the survey results, though to what extent it is beyond the scope of this research to say. In assessing the effects of change upon students in Shakespeare teaching, the focus falls upon the changes which are happening within cultural, governmental, and educational institutions.

Parts B and C: Practice

The second and third parts of the survey list ten different experiences of Shakespeare teaching which students may have possibly encountered in the course of their A-level studies. These are listed as follows:

1. Close reading of the text.

2. Reading parts aloud around the class.
3. Watching film or video productions, or listening to recordings of the plays.
4. Any kind of project work, written or otherwise, on topics relating to the plays.
5. Seeing live performances.
6. Visits from (or to) educational theatre groups for workshops on the plays.
7. Acting out scenes, or memorizing speeches for recitation in class.
8. Exploring the plays through active drama work (e.g. improvisation, mime-work, theatre games).
9. Learning about Shakespeare with other subject teachers (e.g. music, history, art or science).
10. Performing a role or otherwise participating in a school production of a Shakespeare play.

Students were then asked to indicate the frequency with which they experienced each of the above items.

In Part C of the survey, these same ten practices are listed again, and this time students are asked to rate each of these items in turn in terms of learning and enjoyment, ticking NA if the activity does not apply to their learning experience. Options given for rating the learning experience were: I learned a great deal; I learned a bit; I learned very little; I learned nothing at all; and NA. Options for rating the enjoyment of each experience were: I enjoyed this very much; I enjoyed this a bit; I disliked this; I strongly disliked this; and NA.

Part D: Future Plans

The fourth section of the survey asks four short yes or no questions with regard to possible practical applications of students' Shakespeare learning in the future. Learning Shakespeare has been deemed important enough by the government to warrant it being legislated into the National Curriculum. It is therefore evident that something is hoped to be gained by this, that there is some investment being made in the future through the medium of Shakespeare teaching. From the academic Left, the hope is more focused on continuing and increasingly radical change. Students, however, are not likely to articulate

the future effects of their Shakespeare learning in terms of a conservative agenda to impose a false sense of national heritage and ensure the future of the tourist trade in Stratford, nor are they likely to anticipate their revision of *Othello* at A-level as a rehearsal for the overthrow of bourgeois hegemony. They will, however, assume their places in the world of work, education, and recreation. This section of the survey is designed to discover what, if any, role their learning about Shakespeare may have upon the choices that they make in these fields.

At the very end of this survey, students were invited "to add any further comments you wish to make on your experience of learning Shakespeare in the space below." Conditions of conducting this survey had much to do with the level of response to this invitation. The students to whom I personally delivered the survey were by a wide margin the most responsive. In retrospect, a more fruitful body of response might have been gained had the question been more focused: *What would you imagine the ideal conditions for learning Shakespeare to be ?* This would have allowed for students to express a wide variety of opinions, as well as providing a basis for comparison with teachers' responses to a very similar question put to them in the earlier postal interview: *What do you imagine the ideal situation for teaching Shakespeare to be?* Prompted by the far from ideal conditions under which many of them were compelled to work, this invitation to the teachers brought out a very rich body of ideas and imaginings released into that limitless world of hope and possibility. Nevertheless, the invitation to the students as it stands did elicit a number of valuable responses, which will be included in the appendices.

Results of the Frequency of Variables Analysis

The first and most fundamental task in survey analysis is a frequency distribution for all variables (that is all possible responses) in the survey. The results of this initial test indicate in what direction further investigations might be made and will form the basis of any subsequent tests. While each individual student's responses are unique, it is the degree to which and the ways in which students concur with one another which will reveal a clear picture of the students responses as a group . In attempting to construct a

dialogue between students and teachers, the conversation may have its starting point with this conglomerate profile of student attitudes and opinions. For ease of comparison, valid percents (i.e. percentages based upon those students actually responding to any given question on the survey) will be given in all instances.

The Students

Thirty six students participated in the survey, six of whom were part of a pilot group. Of those thirty six, thirteen were students at Alma Grammar School, and twenty one were Springfield Grammar School students. Two additional members of the pilot group were students at neither school. Thirty of the students were lower sixth formers; six were upper sixth formers. Three of the students failed to indicate either their sex or their names; of the remaining thirty three, fifteen were males and eighteen females. Eleven of the thirty six students responding were Theatre Studies students, while thirty five (97.2%) were also studying A-level English Literature (as already mentioned, most Theatre Studies students -- ten in this group -- also studied English Literature). Of the Theatre Studies students, nine chose to respond to the survey with regard to ways in which they experienced Shakespeare teaching as a component of the Theatre Studies syllabus. This gives a very neat breakdown of respondees, 75% of whom are responding as English Literature students, and 25% of whom are responding as Theatre Studies students. This is also a fairly accurate reflection of the ratio of English Literature to Theatre Studies students observed, as three separate English Literature classes were observed to the one Theatre Studies class. The possibility of overlap remains to the extent that the students responding as Theatre Studies students may have failed to keep separate in their minds the methods and practices used by their teachers in both the English Literature and Theatre Studies classes, though particular care was taken with this group of students to stress the importance of keeping these experiences discrete when the survey was administered to them.

The results for the initial frequencies variables analysis create the foundation for further investigations based on the following hypotheses; it should, however, be borne in mind that, given the size of the sample, all results will be descriptive of the sample itself

and corroborative to the observations in the case studies rather than representative of the population at large.

1. That differences will exist not only between the teaching methods employed with the Theatre Studies students and the English Literature students, but also between the attitudes that these respective groups are likely to have about Shakespeare and Shakespeare teaching.
2. That a cross-tabulation between perceptions of learning and enjoyment for the ten activities listed will more firmly establish the relationship between the two as mutually enhancing.
3. That in practice, there is less polarization between attitudes that would, in theory, appear to be irreconcilable with regard to these students' attitudes about Shakespeare and Shakespeare teaching.

In order to test these hypotheses, a series of specific cross-tabulations will be required. The cross-tabulation of variables is a two-way frequency distribution which will allow for a comparison of responses between the two groups. More than specific descriptive data cannot be expected from as small a sample as this -- in order to do any kind of factor analysis or analysis of variables, a much larger sample would be needed. Nevertheless, the results for the cross-tabulations should provide evidence for the validity of these hypotheses as they pertain to this particular group of students.

Testing Hypotheses

The first of these hypotheses -- that a difference will exist between the methods employed with Theatre Studies students and English Literature students as well as between the attitudes which these students will have about Shakespeare and Shakespeare teaching in general -- was tested by doing a cross-tabulation of all variables by respondent. This results in a breakdown of the frequency of responses for all variables divided into two groups; one for those responding as Theatre Studies students, the other for those responding as English Literature students. As the groups are of unequal size (the English Literature group being three times the size of the Theatre Studies group) percentages were calculated for all categories in order to form a basis for comparisons between the two groups. The results both for the initial frequencies variables and for the cross-

tabulation by respondent are summarized below as follows, with column percentages only given for the cross-tabulations for ease of comparison.

Part A: Responses to the Attitude Survey

Given the nature of the group itself, that is, all A-level students studying either English Literature or Theatre Studies (and in many cases both) it is reasonable to have certain expectations about a high level of commitment, motivation and enthusiasm for studying Shakespeare as a component of these A-levels. While many of the responses serve to confirm expectations, there are a few surprises.

1. I believe that the teacher's enthusiasm for Shakespeare is a very important factor in my ability to appreciate the plays.

This statement is the only "neutral" statement among the thirteen in that it does not attempt to gauge a positive or negative attitude toward learning Shakespeare per se so much as it tests students' agreement with teachers' claims to this effect as reflected in the teachers' survey. It also attempts to indicate to what extent students are prepared to take responsibility for their own learning and appreciation of Shakespeare.

In the initial frequencies variable, the vast majority of students (97.2%) were in agreement; only one student disagreed. As a witness to the very high degree of enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers concerned, this result comes as no surprise. It is also completely in accord with the feeling of the teachers surveyed earlier, many of whom indicated inspired teaching by enthusiastic teachers as fundamental to their own appreciation of Shakespeare.

(This forms an interesting comparison with the relatively small percentage of positive responses with regard to Shakespeare teaching that Susan Leach received from teachers that she surveyed in 1989-90: "the attitudes of many of this subgroup had been shaped by enthusiastic teaching which they had received as students."⁷)

⁷ Susan Leach, Shakespeare in the Classroom: What's the matter?, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992) p. 44.

When the same question is broken down by respondent, the differences are minimal, as summarized below.

1. I believe that the teacher's enthusiasm for Shakespeare is a very important factor in my ability to appreciate the plays.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE. ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	51.9	55.6
AGREE	44.4	44.4
DISAGREE	3.7	0.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

The small percentage of English literature students who disagree may be accounted for by the fact that a text-based approach to the plays is more amenable to individual study, and less dependant upon the inspired leadership of the teacher through active group explorations of the drama.

2. I believe that all students should have the opportunity to experience a live performance of a Shakespeare play.

This is the first of the positive statements about Shakespeare teaching. A belief widely held by the teachers participating in the earlier survey, it is also widely held by the students: all thirty six agreed with this, twenty six of whom (72.2%) agreed strongly. The cross-tabulation for the same question appears below:

2. I believe that all students should have the opportunity to experience a live performance of a Shakespeare play

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE. ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	70.4	77.8
AGREE	29.6	22.2
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

That the Theatre Studies students hold this opinion more strongly than the English Literature students is no surprise, given that their interest and focus on the Shakespeare plays in the Theatre Studies course is performance based.

3. I think Shakespeare is boring no matter how it is taught.

The first of the negative statements, this makes no concession to methodology. This statement also serves as a counterweight to some of the more "bardolatrous" statements to follow.

Only two students agreed with this statement; of the remaining thirty four (94.4%) of the students who do not think Shakespeare is boring no matter how it is taught, eighteen disagreed strongly, sixteen disagreed. When this group is broken down by respondent, the results are as follows:

3. I think Shakespeare is boring no matter how it is taught.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE. ST.
AGREE	7.4	0.0
DISAGREE	37.0	66.7
STRONGLY DISAGREE	55.6	33.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

The difference in opinion between the two groups of students is so small as to be negligible. The very small percentage (7.4%) of English Literature students who find Shakespeare boring no matter how it is taught does not suffice to support the judgement that English Literature therefore offers an inherently boring approach to Shakespeare as opposed to the Theatre Studies approach.

4. I believe that the study of the Shakespeare plays at A-level should draw students' attention to the ways in which the plays explore values which are sexist, racist, and elitist.

This statement is positive in so far as it advocates a cultural materialist view of Shakespeare teaching. It has been carefully worded so as to avoid calling *the plays themselves* sexist, racist and elitist, and seeks instead to ask students to consider the ways in which *the plays explore* such values. This statement stands as both a counterbalance to positive statements about a more liberal humanist approach to Shakespeare teaching, and as a means of testing out how much currency the cultural materialist view has among A-level Shakespeare students. What is interesting to see is the level of polarization in students' responses with regard to these opposing critical stances.

For all their insistence that Shakespeare is not being taught in this way, and the urgency that informs their admonition that it should be taught in this way, one would think that the voices of the cultural materialist critics were not being heard. They should take heart then, from the responses to this question: while they do not indicate that Shakespeare teaching is in fact drawing students' attention to the ways in which the plays explore values which are sexist, racist, and elitist, the students are at least in agreement that they should be taught in such a way. However deeply entrenched liberal humanist ideologies and teaching strategies may be, they are at least not perceived by these students to be incompatible with cultural materialist aims (cf. responses to Question Five).

Twenty six students agreed, five of them strongly agreed, (86.1 %) Only five of the students surveyed disagreed with this statement. When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

4. I believe that the study of the Shakespeare plays at A-level should draw students' attention to the ways in which the plays explore values which are sexist, racist, and elitist.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	11.1	22.2
AGREE	70.4	77.8
DISAGREE	18.5	0.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

The first of an interesting series of differences begins with this result. The fact that all the Theatre Studies students agree with this statement, 22.2% strongly, as opposed to the 18.5% disagreement for the English literature students, with only 11.1% in strong agreement may indicate something about the nature of the approach to the plays inherent in the Theatre Studies A-level. The key word, I believe, is explore: text-based approaches, with their emphasis on the written examination and essays, are less interested in exploration of performance possibilities and varieties of interpretation than they are in textual proof of thematic propositions. This result is even more interesting when read against and reconciled to the result to follow:

5. I believe that the Shakespeare plays show us universal truths about human nature.

This statement serves to balance the statement preceding it, in that it espouses a decidedly liberal humanist view of the Shakespeare plays. It also stands as a means of discerning just how deeply entrenched this essential component of "the Shakespeare myth" is among this sample group: if it is true that most English teachers are in fact "born-again Leavisites", then some evidence of that legacy should be reflected here. Finally, it serves as a means of testing individual responses against what was observed to be a consensus to this effect in observations of the Theatre Studies A-level class.

While the belief in universal values still holds true among the great majority of students, in fact, students were more firmly in agreement with the preceding statement. Three students chose not to respond to this statement on the survey; of those responding, only three were in strong agreement, twenty three (78.8%) in agreement, and seven (21.2%) in disagreement. As a percentage of the total group of students responding, 21.2% is large enough to indicate that perhaps the fortress of Leavisism is far from unassailable.

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

5. I believe that the Shakespeare plays show us universal truths about human nature.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	12.5	0.0
AGREE	58.3	100.0
DISAGREE	29.2	
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

While none of them hold the opinion strongly, the fact that 100% of the Theatre Studies students agree with this statement (as opposed to the 29.2% of the English Literature students who disagree) is remarkable. That all of those Theatre Studies students also agree that the plays should be taught so as to draw students' attention to the ways in which the plays explore values which are sexist, racist, and elitist suggests that within a performance-based approach to the plays, an exploration of sexist, racist and elitist values is not irreconcilable to the exhibition of universal truths about human nature. The fact

that performance of a Shakespeare play requires a point of connection between the actors and the characters, as well as a point of connection with the audience, provides the key to this. Without an implicit belief in universal truths about human nature, an actor/student has severely limited means of making the connections necessary for a believable performance. The 29.2% of the English Literature students who disagree that the Shakespeare plays show us universal truths about human nature are less likely to have been compelled to make compassionate connections with their characters than they are to have used the text as evidence in support of thematic questions. While the nature of the questions set in English Literature examinations often can be construed as based upon an implicit belief in universal values and truths⁸, the nature of the task of answering the written essay question is itself disputatious, and therefore one in which the delineation of differences is as valid as the cataloguing of connections. On the other hand, any number of written arguments may be made against the validity of universal truths about human nature as evidenced in the Shakespeare plays; the question remains as to how many of those arguments would prove performable.

6. I believe that Shakespeare is the greatest poet/playwright in the English language.

Another positive statement, though again carefully worded so as not to proclaim Shakespeare *the greatest poet/ playwright*, but the greatest poet/playwright *in the English language*. This is particularly relevant to Theatre Studies students participating in the survey, who are reading Shakespeare alongside Brecht and Lorca, among others. Again, with an eye to the cultural materialists' claims, this statement also stands as a means of measuring just how pervasive the influence of the Shakespeare myth is.

While only one student chose to disagree strongly, and one to agree strongly, overall percentages for agreement came to 44.5%; with 55.6% in disagreement. Again, as in the previous statement, students disagreeing with the Leavisite line are in the majority—given that they are all studying Shakespeare at A-level in one form or another, the level

⁸ Alan Sinfield, "Give an account of Shakespeare and Education, showing why you think they are effective and what you have appreciated about them. Support your comments with precise references," Political Shakespeare: new essays in cultural materialism, ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985).

of disagreement with this statement would show that Shakespeare's place at the pinnacle of English literature is very precarious in the perceptions of this group of students. When broken down by respondent, the results remain essentially the same:

6. I believe that Shakespeare is the greatest poet/playwright in the English language.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	7.4	0.0
AGREE	37.0	44.4
DISAGREE	51.9	55.6
STRONGLY DISAGREE	3.7	0.0
TOTAL	100.00	100.00

44.4% of both the English literature and the theatre studies students agree with the statement; 55.6% disagree. The only difference between the two groups is the strength with which these opinions are held, with 7.4% of the English literature students strongly agreeing, and 3.7% of the same group strongly disagreeing.

7. I believe the Shakespeare plays should be taught to students of all ages.

Recent government legislation states that "some Shakespeare" should be taught to all students by the time they reach the age of fourteen. What Shakespeare, or how much Shakespeare, is to be left to the teacher's discretion in so far as he or she is in a position to determine whether the student is intellectually equipped to tackle one of the three legislated plays, or, in the event that the student in question lacks the good gifts to plough through an entire play, if that student would perhaps be better off dealing with the Seven Ages of Man speech from As You Like It. Essentially a positive statement, this stands chiefly as a test of student opinion against teacher opinion as reflected in the previous survey. Teachers surveyed on the Girton course were in agreement that Shakespeare could be taught to students of all ages, and indeed should. All of them had experienced some specialist training in the active method, which is held to be particularly beneficial for teaching Shakespeare to younger school children.

Students believed for the most part that Shakespeare should not be taught to students of all ages. Three students chose not to answer this question; of the remaining

students responding, only four strongly agreed, nine agreed, (39.4%) while seventeen disagreed and three strongly disagreed. (60.6%). Teachers appear to be far more confident of the feasibility of Shakespeare for all ages than the majority of the students themselves. When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

7. I think the Shakespeare plays should be taught to students of all ages.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	8.3	22.2
AGREE	33.3	11.1
DISAGREE	45.8	66.7
STRONGLY DISAGREE	12.5	0.0
TOTAL	99.9	100.0
NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS:		3.0

It is interesting to note that the Theatre Studies students who strongly agree with this statement form a percentage nearly three times higher than the English literature students falling into the same category: this suggests that perhaps they perceive their own experience of learning Shakespeare as being adaptable and applicable lower down the school, but unfortunately, this can only be a matter for speculation.

8. In my opinion, the greatest obstacle to understanding Shakespeare is the difficulty of the language.

Another negative statement, this reflects the opinion of the great majority of teachers surveyed that the single most important obstacle to understanding Shakespeare is the language. Good practice in active method deals directly with complexities of language -- the student responses to this statement can be tested against their experiences of active teaching method to discern whether or not there is any association between this and students' perception of Shakespeare's language as difficult.

The responses to this statement tally with the results of the teacher survey: six students strongly agreed, twenty two agreed, (77.8%) and eight disagreed (22.2%). While the majority of students agree that the language is the greatest obstacle to understanding Shakespeare, the disagreeing group is large enough to warrant closer investigation: for

example, what is it about how this group has been learning Shakespeare that compels them not to view language as the greatest obstacle to understanding? When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

8. In my opinion, the greatest obstacle to understanding Shakespeare is the difficulty of the language.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	18.5	11.1
AGREE	63.0	55.6
DISAGREE	18.5	33.3
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

Here we have a set of figures which can be taken as the first piece of evidence in support of the hypothesis that differences in attitude between the two groups may be related to differences in teaching method. The percentage of students in strong agreement with this statement among the English Literature students is considerably higher (18.5%) than that of the theatre studies students (11.1%). Overall, for the English Literature students, 81.5% agree that language difficulty is the greatest obstacle to understanding Shakespeare as opposed to 66.7% of the Theatre Studies students in agreement; 18.5% of the English Literature students disagree with the statement, while 33.3% of the Theatre Studies students disagree. That Theatre Studies students find difficult language less of an obstacle to understanding than English Literature students is clear: whether or not this is coincident with a higher incidence of text-based study among the English Literature students and active approaches among the Theatre Studies students remains to be seen in the results to follow.

These results are further illuminated through a cross-tabulation of responses to this question against responses to question 8, Part C, wherein students are asked to indicate the amount learned through "Exploring the plays through active drama work (e.g. improvisation, mime-work, theatre games)": of the 27 students who agree that language is the greatest obstacle to understanding, 17 have no experience of active drama work; likewise of the 8 students who disagree with the notion that language is the greatest obstacle to understanding, at least five of them claimed to have learned either a great deal

(three) or a bit (two) from the use of active techniques in the classroom. The numbers are admittedly too small to be conclusive, though they do point to the question as to how many more students might disagree with the idea of language as an obstacle to understanding if more of them had some experience of active methods.

9. I believe that Shakespeare is out of date and irrelevant to the lives of young people.

This stands as a negative statement to measure how far students agree with the notion that Shakespeare is no longer our contemporary and tests how precarious his position in the canon is. Teacher opinions on this subject were overwhelmingly in disagreement, though this was to be expected from a sample of teachers on a summer course in active Shakespeare teaching methods. Academic opinion is divided, as is that of theatre practitioners.⁹ How successfully teachers have been able to communicate their convictions as to Shakespeare's continuing relevance should be reflected here.

The responses to this statement indicate clearly that the notion that Shakespeare is still our contemporary has been firmly established among these students. Only one student chose to agree with this statement; of the remaining thirty five who disagreed, (97.3%) fifteen strongly disagreed. When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

9. I think that Shakespeare is out of date and irrelevant to the lives of young people.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
AGREE	3.7	0.0
DISAGREE	63.0	33.3
STRONGLY DISAGREE	33.3	66.7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

This is a much more strongly held opinion among the Theatre Studies students, with the percentage of students in strong disagreement with the statement (66.7%) over twice as high as that for the English Literature students in the same category (33.3%). Why the Shakespeare plays should appear to be that much more relevant to students who

⁹ See Rosalind King, 'Dramatic dialogue', *Times Educational Supplement*, 5 March 1993, p. 9.

encounter them via the Theatre Studies route may again be related to the fact that performance-based study compels the student that much more strongly to make connections, to explore performable premises and to portray believable characters. An "irrelevant" Shakespeare ceases to be a viable performance script in the traditional sense; that same "irrelevant" Shakespeare can nevertheless bear a great burden of critical scrutiny as the subject of literary inquiry.

10. I think it is important to study the Shakespeare plays in school to help keep alive part of our national heritage.

A positive statement, quite conservative and liberal humanist, this stands in opposition to statement four in particular ("I believe that the study of the Shakespeare plays at A-level should draw students' attention to the ways in which the plays explore values which are sexist, racist, and elitist") and to some extent to statement nine immediately preceding it as well. Responses to these statements should indicate how far these issues have been polarized in students' opinions.

Twenty three students (63.9%) agreed with this statement, six of those (16.7%) agreed strongly. But the level of disagreement, thirteen students (36.1%) is significant, particularly among a group of students studying Shakespeare at A-level, beyond the age of compulsory schooling. The reaches of bourgeois hegemony have not infected the prejudices of this substantial minority of students who do not regard the supposed essential Englishness of Shakespeare as adequate justification in itself for studying the plays in schools. When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

10. I think it is important to study the Shakespeare plays in school to help keep alive part of our national heritage.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	7.4	44.4
AGREE	51.9	33.3
DISAGREE	40.7	22.2
TOTAL	100.0	99.9

There is a marked difference of opinion between the two groups. Bearing in mind that overall, 55.6% of both the English Literature and the Theatre Studies students

disagreed that Shakespeare was the greatest poet/playwright in the English language, keeping alive the national heritage through Shakespeare study scores quite high for both groups, especially so for the Theatre Studies students. With 77.7% of the Theatre Studies students in agreement (44.4% of those strongly in agreement) as opposed to the 59.3% of the English literature students in agreement (with only 7.4% in strong agreement) it is clear that Shakespeare the Englishman is most highly prized by students of the theatre.

11. I think Shakespeare examination questions should be eliminated: students can learn as much, if not more, without being examined.

This stands as a negative statement, which on the surface has more to do with practice than with politics, though at the same time it is intended to gauge how deeply students are implicated in their own institutionalization. Teacher opinion on this subject varied, though those who were among the strongest advocates of active method despaired of examinations which did not, and could not, test students in ways which were compatible with the ways in which they had been taught Shakespeare. Academic opinion is divided more along the lines of how examinations might be changed, rather than whether or not the examinations should be eliminated.

One student chose not to respond to this statement. Of the thirty five remaining students (40%), one strongly agreed and thirteen agreed; nineteen disagreed and two strongly disagreed (60%). Whether the high level of agreement with this statement stands in spite of or because of the prospect of A-levels remains to be seen; at any rate, the minority of students who agree that Shakespeare examination questions should be eliminated is substantial. When broken down by respondent, the results are as follows:

11. I think Shakespeare examination questions should be eliminated: students can learn as much, if not more, without being examined.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
STRONGLY AGREE	3.8	0.0
AGREE	42.3	22.2
DISAGREE	50.0	66.7
STRONGLY DISAGREE	3.8	11.1
TOTAL	99.9	100.0
NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS:		1

Here again there is a marked difference of opinion between the two groups. Over all, the percentage of English Literature students who agree that examination questions should be eliminated (46.1%) is over twice as high as that for the Theatre Studies students (22.2)%. This says as much about the difference in the examination questions themselves as it does about what students value as learning. Classroom observations of the two groups, with particular reference to the ways in which preparation for the A-level figured in the lessons, bear this out. The need to prepare students for the examination was far more keenly felt in the English Literature lessons; the nature of that preparation was very much a matter of enabling students to understand clearly what was being asked of them in the questions themselves, and to anticipate the examiners' expectations in their answers. While deciphering the questions in the mock examinations figured equally highly for the Theatre Studies students, it was strikingly clear that the written explorations of performance possibilities which characterized the A-level Theatre Studies examination questions were, at first, most disconcerting to the students accustomed to a school culture of "correctness" for the ways in which examiners' expectations could not be anticipated. As a learning experience then, the examination itself can be seen to be more highly valued by the Theatre Studies students, perhaps because it invites students to explore alternatives in performance which, while they can be judged to be coherent or incoherent, so long as they are grounded in a thorough knowledge of the script, cannot be judged to be correct or incorrect.

12. I think that Shakespeare should be eliminated from the A-level literature syllabus.

In the Times Educational Supplement's "Shakespeare in the Curriculum" debate, director Michael Bogdanov "somewhat unhelpfully, suggested a moratorium on the playwright and a ban for the next 20 years"¹⁰ as a means of obliterating from the collective cultural consciousness any trace of unearned, untested, and uncontested reverence for the bard. This negative statement, in hindsight perhaps too negative, might have been more

¹⁰ Frances Rafferty, *Times Educational Supplement*, "Director calls for Ban on the Bard" December 4, 1992. pp. 1&3.

usefully phrased as a positive statement: (i.e. " I believe that Shakespeare should be a compulsory component of the A-level English Literature syllabus." Nevertheless, the intention behind this statement is to gauge how strongly entrenched are students' perceptions of Shakespeare as an indispensable component of the English literary canon.

Five students (13.9%) agreed with the statement; of the thirty one students disagreeing with this (86.1%), eighteen of them (50%) disagreed strongly. When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

12. I think that Shakespeare should be eliminated from the A-level literature syllabus.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
AGREE	18.5	0.0
DISAGREE	33.3	44.4
STRONGLY DISAGREE	48.1	55.6
TOTAL	99.9	100.0

None of the Theatre Studies students entertain the possibility of eliminating Shakespeare from the A-level English Literature syllabus; likewise, it is the Theatre Studies students, with 55.6% as opposed to 48.1% of the English Literature students strongly disagreeing, who are more emphatically in disagreement with this statement. This is somewhat contrary to expectation in that if Shakespeare study is to be coveted in any way by the Theatre Studies students, we might anticipate a certain willingness among them to see the study of Shakespeare as literature eliminated without too much protest. On the other hand, the fact that 18.5% of the English Literature students agree that Shakespeare *should* be eliminated from the syllabus suggests that this degree of dissatisfaction might not be felt among those same students were they to study Shakespeare as a part of a Theatre Studies course.

13. I think that Shakespeare should be eliminated from the A-level Theatre Studies syllabus.

Another negative statement, this, like the preceding statement might have been more usefully phrased in the positive: (i.e. "I believe that Shakespeare should be a compulsory component of the A-level Theatre Studies syllabus".)

While responses to this statement were not quite as emphatic as those given above in that fewer students chose to strongly disagree, results would seem to indicate that these students are more prepared to see Shakespeare as an essential component of the Theatre Studies A-level than of the English Literature A-level.

Of the 75% of the students who did respond, two students (7.4%) agreed that Shakespeare should be eliminated from the Theatre Studies syllabus and twenty five (92.5%) disagreed, twelve of those strongly. There is a difficulty in that nine students (25%) chose not to answer this question. Notes scribbled in on a number of the actual questionnaires in which this question was left blank indicate that the missing values for this response were primarily among English Literature students who were not also taking the Theatre Studies A-level and therefore either did not have or did not feel entitled to have an opinion on this matter. When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

13. I think that Shakespeare should be eliminated from the A-level Theatre Studies syllabus.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
AGREE	11.1	0.0
DISAGREE	44.4	55.6
STRONGLY DISAGREE	44.4	44.4
TOTAL	99.9	100.0

The difference between the two groups is even smaller here, with only 11.1% of the English Literature students in agreement. Once again the Theatre Studies students stand in 100% disagreement with the statement, though oddly enough, they feel less emphatically about the elimination of Shakespeare from the Theatre Studies syllabus than they do about the elimination of Shakespeare from the English Literature syllabus. This can be taken as an indication that they do not in fact covet Shakespeare study as "rightfully" or solely within the province of the theatre. One of the ways in which we can interpret the result of the 11.1% of the English Literature students who *would* happily see Shakespeare eliminated from the Theatre Studies syllabus is that these perhaps are students who *do* covet Shakespeare, or perhaps there is an overlap between these students and those who would also see him eliminated from the literature syllabus.

What do these responses actually tell us at this point? The picture that is emerging of these students is already far more complex and varied than might have been expected. These are students who, perhaps not surprisingly, respond positively to teachers' enthusiasm for their subject but do not, for all that, continue to regard Shakespeare as the greatest poet/playwright in the English language, nor is the need to preserve the national heritage very high on their list of rationales for continuing to have Shakespeare taught in schools. They acknowledge that Shakespeare is difficult, particularly the Shakespearean language, and are far less convinced than their teachers of the wisdom of teaching Shakespeare to students of all ages. Still, they agree for the most part that Shakespeare should continue to be included for study at A-level in both English Literature and Theatre Studies, while a substantial minority question the educational merit of examinations. Most interestingly of all, the Shakespeare that is being valued here among these students is one that is contemporary, who should be taught in such a way that explores values that are sexist, racist, and elitist, that does not necessarily reveal universal truths, but that nonetheless continues to be relevant to their lives.

Part B: Classroom Practices

Part C: Learning and Enjoyment

Parts B and C of the survey must be considered together; Part C asks for an evaluation of the classroom practices listed in Part B on the basis of learning and enjoyment. There is a problem with the results for this section of the survey in that careful examination of the actual surveys when read together with the computer printout reveals that many students' responses are inconsistent. While provision has been made for students to respond consistently, they have not always done so. Because human beings are fallible subjects with unreliable memories, the data gleaned from this section of the survey will likewise be flawed. The extent of the discrepancy between parts B and C in the survey must be taken into account, and will be provided for each set of responses.

Instructions to the students for this section of the survey were, as mentioned above:

Please check what experiences of Shakespeare teaching you have had as a part of the A-level course you are currently taking as indicated: Frequently (at least once a week) Occasionally (at least once a month) Rarely (once a term or less) or Never.

Despite specific limitations to the otherwise nebulous terms "Frequently", "Occasionally" and "Rarely", discrepancies also appeared among students from the same class, whose perceptions of the frequency of certain activities varied substantially. None of the information gathered from this section of the survey can therefore be regarded as objective fact; what we are dealing with are subjective perceptions of the frequency of certain classroom activities. It is not so much the accuracy of these perceptions as the relationship between the perceived frequency of these activities and the ways in which students have valued those same activities in terms of learning and enjoyment which concerns us.

Similarly, the scale on which students are asked to rate their learning: "I learned a great deal", "I learned a bit", "I learned very little", "I learned nothing at all", is also, to a large extent based upon subjective and relative evaluations. Because the very nature of the task of quantifying knowledge that is not factual is so nebulous, it would be difficult to determine if one student claiming to have learned a great deal from a particular classroom activity did in fact learn more than another claiming to have learned very little from the same activity. The same can be said of the scale upon which students have been asked to rate their enjoyment ("I enjoyed this very much", "I enjoyed this a bit", "I disliked this", and "I strongly disliked this"): it tells us not so much about the *amount* of enjoyment to be gained from any particular learning experience as about the *relationship* that may exist between perceived degrees of enjoyment and learning with reference to specific classroom activities. Any consensus among students with regard to what are perceived to be valuable and enjoyable activities will also be detected here. For ease of comparison, results of the analysis of variables for both parts B and C will be considered together for each item.

In order to ascertain students' perceptions of any substantive differences in classroom practices between Theatre Studies and English Literature A-level Shakespeare teaching, a frequencies-variables-by-respondent was then run on the computer.

Comparisons are based upon relative percentages. I have grouped together results for frequency with those for learning and enjoyment for ease of comparison.

1. Close reading of the text.

Reported frequency breaks down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	19	54.3
OCCASIONALLY	8	22.9
RARELY	7	20.0
NEVER	1	2.9
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	24	68.6
I LEARNED A BIT	8	22.9
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	2	5.7
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	1	2.9
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.00
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	14	40.0
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	15	42.9
I DISLIKED THIS	6	17.1
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

These results, taken together, indicate that close reading of the text is reported by over 54.3% of the students surveyed to be an activity that takes place at least once a week, a practice that they value more for its educational merit than for the sake of enjoyment. Only one discrepancy between reported frequency and enjoyment and learning for this activity was detected.

When broken down by respondent, the results are as follows:

1. Close Reading of the Text.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	42.3	88.9
OCCASIONALLY	30.8	0.0

RARELY	23.1	11.1
NEVER	3.8	0.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	63.0	87.5
I LEARNED A BIT	25.9	12.5
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	7.4	0.0
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	3.7	0.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	37.0	50.0
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	40.7	50.0
I DISLIKED THIS	22.2	0.0

MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 1

At first glance these results seem to run counter to expectation: apparently, Theatre Studies students report doing considerably more close reading of the text than the English Literature students -- not only that, but they claim to be learning more from it and enjoying it more. With close textual analysis being reported by the teachers responding to the postal survey as the enduring staple of the A-level English Literature class, the fact that over a quarter of the English Literature students surveyed report this as rarely or never happening is surprising: certainly this result does not concur with observations of the English Literature classes. Perhaps it is a matter of wishful thinking. On the other hand, the fact that 88.9 % of the Theatre Studies students do report close textual analysis as a frequent class activity is not surprising if we consider that all good active drama work is very strongly text based: the success of this type of close textual analysis is reflected in the high figures for learning and enjoyment, both of which considerably exceed the percentages for this same item as reported by the English Literature A-level students. It is worth bearing in mind that close textual analysis need not be a paper and pencil affair in order to be a useful and enlightening component of students' Shakespeare studies.

2. Reading parts aloud around the class.

Reported frequency for this activity breaks down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	14	40.0
OCCASIONALLY	13	37.1
RARELY	7	20.0
NEVER	1	2.9
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	11	31.4
I LEARNED A BIT	15	42.9
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	7	20.0
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	2	5.7
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	16	45.7
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	13	37.1
I DISLIKED THIS	4	11.4
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	2	5.7
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

Given that the teachers responding to the teacher survey indicated reading parts aloud around the class as the most frequently mentioned negative memory of being taught Shakespeare, it is remarkable that 40% of the students surveyed are still listing this as a frequent classroom practice, and 45.7% report enjoying it very much. Of these students, 31.4% feel that they learn a great deal from it. Only a very small percentage of the students surveyed, 5.7%, both strongly disliked this and claimed to learn nothing at all from it. Only one discrepancy between reported frequency of this activity and learning and enjoyment was detected.

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

2. Reading parts aloud around the class.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	30.8	66.7
OCCASIONALLY	38.5	33.3
RARELY	26.9	0.0
NEVER	3.8	0.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	18.5	75.0
I LEARNED A BIT	48.1	25.0
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	25.9	0.0
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	7.4	0.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	40.7	62.5
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	37.0	37.5
I DISLIKED THIS	14.8	0.0
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	7.4	0.0

MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 1

While it continues to happen with less frequency in English Literature classes than it does in Theatre Studies classes, a sizeable proportion of these English Literature students continue to dislike it and to claim to learn little or nothing at all from it. It would appear logical to conclude that perhaps this is a practice best abandoned were it not for the fact that among the Theatre Studies students, this is a far more frequent and enjoyable activity from which 75% of the students claim to have learned a great deal. It is not the activity itself which is at fault: it could be argued that the fault is in ourselves to the extent that Theatre Studies students will be naturally more inclined to enjoy and learn from reading parts aloud, whereas the English Literature students, having expressed no predilection to be anything but bookish, might justifiably plead shyness and/or incompetence in the face of the enforced pressure to "perform". Again, this does not constitute a sufficient argument for abandoning the practice in an English Literature class; so much of the sense of Shakespeare is bound up in the sound that to forego reading aloud in the teaching of it would be a serious omission. Text-based vocal work that is both exploratory and enlightening can be incorporated into the English lesson without putting individual students under pressure to perform, though without specialist training in this type of work many English teachers will be ill-equipped to attempt this.

3. Watching film or video productions, or listening to recordings of the plays.

Frequency results for this activity break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	3	8.6
OCCASIONALLY	15	42.9
RARELY	13	37.1
NEVER	4	11.4
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	11	31.4
I LEARNED A BIT	13	37.1
1 LEARNED VERY LITTLE	3	8.6
NA	8	22.9
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.00
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	12	34.3
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	13	37.1

I DISLIKED THIS	2	5.7
NA	8	22.9
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

The discrepancy between the reported frequency of this activity and enjoyment and learning is somewhat higher here: only four students reported never watching films or videos, or listening to recordings of the plays, while twice as many indicated NA with regard to their enjoyment and learning of these experiences (which, by their responses, we are led to believe they never had.) Nevertheless, students have indicated a high degree of enjoyment and learning for these activities. The frequency for these activities is fairly high: considering the pace at which A-level study of the plays proceeds, and the amount of classroom time which is taken up by watching a film or video, even a once-a-term videotape viewing would be relatively high. Viewing of film and video productions forms a very important part of students' Shakespeare learning experience, particularly in those instances when videotaped productions constitute students' only opportunity to view the play being studied in performance. "Video is now common in English classrooms, where 'seeing the video' has become equated with 'doing the book.'"¹¹ What these survey results cannot tell us is how the video tapes, films and recordings are being used. Are students, for example, being offered the opportunity to view the Olivier Othello against the Orson Welles version; would the use of a video like Making Shakespeare, which places Othello at the centre of issues of race and gender and explores the ways in which our perceptions of these ideas change and are changed by theatrical representations across the generations, be counted by the students as viewing a film or video production of the play? The question remains too as to what then is actually being taught when the videotaped or filmed performance rather than the playscript or live performance becomes the object of study. The one represents performance choices made once and for all, conveyed in a language that negotiates compromises with theatricality at every turn; the other represents performance possibilities and choices made and re-made, even un-made with every ensuing performance, in a language that is essentially theatrical. Which of these best serves the interests of the Shakespeare student remains debatable. Questions pertaining to

¹¹ Leach, p. 60.

the use of film, video and sound recordings of the plays, either in lieu of or as a supplement to live performance experiences, are numerous enough to form the basis of a separate, in-depth survey. For the purposes of this survey, it suffices to ask if the frequency with which film, video and audio tape recordings of the plays are being used in the classroom is commensurate with the educational value that students believe this activity to have. The answer to that question is yes, given that only three students felt that watching films and videos left them feeling as if they learned very little, and only two students claimed to have disliked this. The majority of students feel that they are learning something from this activity, and that this is an activity that they enjoy.

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

3. Watching film or video productions, or listening to recordings of the plays.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	11.5	0.0
OCCASIONALLY	46.2	33.3
RARELY	30.8	55.6
NEVER	11.5	11.1
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	37.0	12.5
I LEARNED A BIT	40.7	25.0
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	7.4	12.5
NA	14.8	50.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	37.0	25.0
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	40.7	25.0
I DISLIKED THIS	7.4	0.0
NA	14.8	50.0

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 1

There is a problem with this set of results in that a discrepancy of 38.9% exists between those Theatre Studies students reporting this as an activity that never occurs in their classrooms and those responding NA to questions pertaining to their learning and enjoyment. During observations of this class, these students had several opportunities to attend live Shakespeare performances, though they did not at any time view any recorded performances. How then do we account for the discrepancy? Again, human beings are fallible subjects: very likely they have seen or heard recorded performances as part of another class, most likely their English class, and it is the memory of that experience that

most directly influences their response. Given the unreliability of this data, any comparison that can be made between the two groups will be likewise questionable.

It would appear that the use of recorded performances is far more frequent in the English Literature classes; this may be a reflection of school budget constraints on sponsoring trips to live performances. Bearing in mind that the Theatre Studies group came from an independent school, school funds for sponsoring student trips to live performances as well as individual student's parents' means are bound to be far more plentiful. If the recorded performance is used less frequently in the independent school's Theatre Studies class, it may be in part because those students have far greater access to the alternative of a live performance. For the English Literature students, the use of recorded performances is rated much higher for both learning and enjoyment. It may be that English teachers themselves, forced to avail themselves of the videotape in lieu of the class trip to the Barbican, are developing with their students a higher level of video literacy and "reading" the recorded Shakespeare performance in ways not immediately available to the student of Theatre Studies.

4. Any kind of project work, written or otherwise, on topics relating to the plays.

The level of discrepancy for this response was fairly low. One student did not respond to the question with regard to frequency; two did not respond to either the enjoyment or the learning assessment question related to this. Of the students responding, three claimed never to have done any kind of project work, written or otherwise, while four students ticked NA with regard to enjoyment and learning. This leaves a discrepancy of one, with five missing values across three separate but related questions. The numbers for the frequency of project work break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	7	20.0
OCCASIONALLY	17	48.6
RARELY	8	22.9
NEVER	3	8.6
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	14	41.2
I LEARNED A BIT	13	38.2
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	2	5.9
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	1	2.9
NA	4	11.8
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.0

I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	10	29.4
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	14	41.2
I DISLIKED THIS	5	14.7
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	1	2.9
NA	4	11.8
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.0

The designation "Any kind of project work, written or otherwise" would appear to be all inclusive -- certainly given that the twenty one Alma Grammar School students participating in the survey were all following the AEB 660 syllabus for the English literature A-level, "project work" might be understood to mean anything to do with the A-level course work folder. But by qualifying this as "project work ... *on topics relating to the plays*", I hoped to clarify that I was looking for something peripheral, a project that had grown out of an initial central focus on a Shakespeare play; a report on seventeenth-century explorations in the New World growing out of a study of The Tempest, for example, or a dance piece on themes of inter-racial relationships growing out of work on Othello. Having failed to be quite so explicit in the instructions, the responses are therefore open to some degree of interpretation: without specific examples, there are no grounds for agreement as to what "project work on topics relating to the plays" is. However, whatever the students responding to the survey understand this to be, project work is among the most valued of learning experiences they have, with 41.2% claiming to have learned a great deal from it; and 38.2% learning at least a bit. These figures are somewhat higher than the percentages for enjoyment, with 29.4% claiming to have enjoyed it very much, and 41.2% claiming to have enjoyed it "a bit". The negative responses for enjoyment of project work include one student answering in the "Strongly

Disliked" category; the first time this category has been used in the responses since "Reading parts aloud around the class", and five students claiming to have disliked this. Given that what students may have understood "project work" to be (i.e. the AEB 660 coursework folder) may also be strongly tied to feelings about success and failure in assessment, it is not surprising that there is a somewhat negative cast to their evaluations of how enjoyable an activity this is. Questions beget other questions; these results leave me wanting to know what the projects were, if they were assessed, how they were assessed, how satisfied the students felt with the equity of those assessments, and what if any relationship exists between the degree of adjudged success in these projects and the students' enjoyment.

When broken down by respondent, the results are as follows:

4. Any kind of project work, written or otherwise, on topics relating to the plays.

	ENG. LIT	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	19.2	22.2
OCCASIONALLY	42.3	66.7
RARELY	26.9	11.1
NEVER	11.5	0.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	42.3	37.5
I LEARNED A BIT	30.8	62.5
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	7.7	0.0
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	3.8	0.0
NA	15.4	0.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	26.9	37.5
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	38.5	50.0
I DISLIKED THIS	15.4	12.5
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	3.8	0.0
NA	15.4	0.0

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 2

Project work is reported as happening less frequently in the English Literature classes, with 48.4% reporting this as rarely or never happening in their experience, as opposed to 11.1% reporting this as a rare occurrence in the Theatre Studies classroom. This can, I believe, be taken as a fairly accurate estimate. Theatre Studies students, being aware of the distinction between the playscript and the production, are far more likely to get involved with project work on production aspects of the Shakespearean playscript as a natural component of their studies. This concurs as well with classroom observations. It is

the English Literature students, however, who rate the experience higher for educational value -- during the course of classroom observations, I only once witnessed a week's worth of lessons given over to production-related project work [see Appendix A]. These lessons were particularly animated, marked by a high level of student contribution, a lively and quick exchange of ideas, and an exceptionally good standard of classroom management which allowed that exchange to flourish. While not all students were comfortable with initiating ideas about production alternatives, certainly most seemed to benefit from discussion of the alternatives on offer. This is still, for all that, an activity that is disliked by a small percentage of students; strongly so by some of the English literature students.

5. Seeing live performances.

The teachers responding to the earlier survey were willing to make tremendous sacrifices to make live performance experience possible for their students, even to the point of paying for theatre tickets out of their own pockets. They were also unanimous in their belief that seeing live performances was, more than any other single factor, vital to Shakespeare teaching. Students responding to this survey, most of whom have had both the means and opportunity to see a number of productions, bear this out overwhelmingly: seeing live performances rates as both the most enjoyable and as the most instructive of all the activities listed. The figures break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	3	8.6
OCCASIONALLY	13	37.1
RARELY	13	37.1
NEVER	6	17.1
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.00
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	18	51.4
I LEARNED A BIT	8	22.9
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	1	2.9
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	1	2.9
NA	7	20.0
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	19	54.3
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	8	22.9
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	1	2.9
NA	7	20.0
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

The discrepancy for this set of results is low: 20% of the students who list NA for both learning and enjoyment of these activities against the 17.1% who claim never to have seen a live performance. This discrepancy is in fact only in the information recorded by a single student; nevertheless, this activity remains highly valued on both scales by a clear majority of students. While it would be useful to know what were the prohibiting factors in the six (or seven) students excluded from a class activity who claim never to have seen a live performance, it is safe to assume that the opportunity (though not necessarily the means) to see a live performance at least once was open to all of them. The figures bear out that the majority of the students felt that they learned a great deal from the experience of seeing live performances of a Shakespeare play.

When broken down by respondent, the results are as follows:

5. Seeing live performances.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	3.8	22.2
OCCASIONALLY	30.8	55.6
RARELY	42.3	22.2
NEVER	23.1	0.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	51.9	50.0
I LEARNED A BIT	18.5	37.5
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	0.0	12.5
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	3.7	0.0
NA	25.9	0.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	51.9	62.5
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	18.5	37.5
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	3.7	0.0
NA	25.9	0.0

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 1

There is a slight discrepancy between English literature students responding NA for this activity (25.9%) and those reporting experience of live performances as never happening (23.1%). Nevertheless, figures for both learning and enjoyment are very high for this activity from both groups. The only real difference between the results for the two groups is in the frequency level -- bearing in mind that the results for the Theatre Studies group are all coming from an independent school with, as mentioned above, a well funded drama department and a student population of considerable means, it is not surprising that the incidence of live performance experience is substantially higher. Students' assessment of the value of the experience of seeing live performances is almost unanimously favourable, with only a single student (3.7%) claiming neither to have enjoyed nor to have learned from the experience.

6. Visits from (or to) educational theatre groups for workshops on the plays.

The figures for frequency of visits with educational theatre groups break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	2	5.9
OCCASIONALLY	5	14.7
RARELY	12	35.3
NEVER	15	44.1
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	7	20.6
I LEARNED A BIT	10	29.4
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	1	2.9
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	1	2.9
NA	15	44.1
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	8	23.5
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	9	26.5
I DISLIKED THIS	1	2.9
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	1	2.9
NA	15	44.1
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.0

With a substantial minimum of 44.1% of the students responding never having experienced a visit from (or to) an educational theatre group, a result consistent with the

figure responding NA in Part C, two students reporting this as a frequent occurrence, and five reporting it as an occasional one, the seventeen students who claim to have both enjoyed and learned from these visits can count themselves fairly lucky and unusual. Theatre-in-education workshops tend to be very expensive; this may be a luxury that an independent school like Alma Grammar School can more readily afford than Springfield. This data is reliable to the extent that it reveals that, though a relatively rare activity, workshops with educational theatre groups are valued by those students who are able to participate in them. This highlights as well a peripheral issue: if the frequency of theatre-in-education group visits is dependant upon the availability of diminishing funds, then the specialist skills required for this kind of teaching may eventually have to become part of the repertoire of the ordinary classroom teacher's skills if students are to benefit from this type of learning at all.

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

6. Visits from (or to) educational theatre groups for workshops on the plays.

	ENG. LIT	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	0.0	22.2
OCCASIONALLY	8.0	33.3
RARELY	32.0	44.4
NEVER	60.0	0.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	7.7	62.5
I LEARNED A BIT	30.8	25.0
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	0.0	12.5
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	3.8	0.0
NA	57.7	0.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	7.7	75.0
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	30.8	11.1
I DISLIKED THIS	0.0	12.5
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	3.8	0.0
NA	57.7	0.0

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 2

Again, a slight discrepancy exists between those English literature students reporting this as an activity that never happens (60.0%) and those responding NA for this activity for learning and enjoyment (57.7%). This is a statistical quirk produced by the fact that both missing observations are from English Literature students in Part B, whereas in Part C, one of the missing observations is from English Literature and one is

from Theatre Studies. Considering how rare an activity this is among the English Literature students responding, the 30.8% who claim both to have enjoyed and learned from visits with TIE groups is quite substantial. What is surprising to me is how highly the Theatre Studies group have rated this activity given the general disappointment felt by this group with at least one major aspect of their outing to the London Theatre Museum for acting and production workshops on The Comedy of Errors [See Appendix B]. Clearly their experiences of this type are frequent enough for this one disappointment not to have outweighed the overall value of TIE workshops in their assessment.

7. Acting out scenes, or memorizing speeches for recitation in class.

The figures for the frequency of this activity break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	8	22.9
OCCASIONALLY	7	20.0
RARELY	8	22.9
NEVER	12	34.3
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	9	26.5
I LEARNED A BIT	9	26.5
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	3	8.8
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	2	5.9
NA	11	32.4
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.0

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	9	26.5
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	10	29.4
I DISLIKED THIS	3	8.8
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	1	2.9
NA	11	32.4
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.0

Memorization appears to have fallen out of favour among the progressive educationalists; that at least 34.3% of the students surveyed report never having memorized a speech or scene from a Shakespeare play may be evidence of this. Though this is a learning strategy which is relatively rare, with 57.2% of the responding students reporting it as occurring either rarely or never, the figures for enjoyment and learning are surprisingly high, with 26.5% of the responding students claiming both to have enjoyed this activity, as well as having learned a great deal from it.

In spite of the reservations that many may have about memorization, as a learning experience it has the one virtue of being "quantifiable" in that either one is capable of memorizing an entire speech verbatim or not: it is the one opportunity, provided that there is a consensus on the edition of the text being used, for students to be unequivocally correct in a subject that is more than usually plagued by changing fashions and subjectivities in assessment. This then throws up another set of questions: what counts as learning?; what has a student who has memorized a speech or scene learned, what have they intuited, and what have they understood? Memorization as a mental exercise has often been dismissed as parroting, and while it may be true that it is possible to memorize a speech without fully understanding its meaning, I would suggest that a possible explanation as to why these students value memorization is that equally it is impossible to memorize a speech without intuiting something of its meaning, if nothing else than the relationship of the sound of the speech to the sense of it. Furthermore, while the intrinsic value of memorization may be debatable, the act of memorization itself insures that any subsequent learning based upon the memorized text does not happen in a vacuum. In literary as well as performance-based approaches, the memorized speech is the thing itself, the real object of study. Once the actor is off-book, once the student has memorized the speech or line, the first step toward authentic ownership has been taken. What those nine students who felt they learned a great deal from this activity count as learning we cannot know; it suffices that for them, memorization continues to be a valuable learning experience.

When broken down by respondent, the results are as follows:

7. Acting out scenes, or memorizing speeches for recitation in class.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	15.4	44.4
OCCASIONALLY	7.7	55.6
RARELY	30.8	0.0
NEVER	46.2	0.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	19.2	50.0
I LEARNED A BIT	19.2	50.0
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	11.5	0.0
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	7.7	0.0
NA	42.3	0.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	11.5	75.0
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	30.8	25.0
I DISLIKED THIS	11.5	0.0
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	3.8	0.0
NA	42.3	0.0

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 2

A small discrepancy occurs among the English Literature students between the NA responses (42.3%) and those reporting that this is an activity that never happens (46.2%). Not surprisingly, not only is this a far more frequent activity among the Theatre Studies students, but it is also far more highly valued for learning and enjoyment. Like reading parts aloud around the class, the practice of acting out scenes or speeches in the classroom presents students with the pressure to perform in front of an audience of their peers and all the attendant intimidation and potential embarrassment associated with it. However, when these figures are compared with those for learning and enjoyment for reading parts around the class (see above) it is clear that however intimidating this may be for the English Literature students, memorization for recitation and acting out of scenes in class, despite being a far less frequent activity than reading parts aloud around the class, is far more highly valued among the literature students. This is not to suggest that English Literature students can then be expected to enjoy and learn from this activity at a level on a par with Theatre Studies students; I suspect that precisely that element of performance serves to intimidate the one group to the same extent that it serves to motivate the other. This does suggest that memorization is potentially a very valuable learning experience for all students, in so far as the meaning of the speeches is bound up in the sound; but that strategies to identify and overcome obstacles to enjoyment and

learning for those students who are inclined to be intimidated by the prospect of performance must be developed before the full potential value of that experience can be realized.

8. Exploring the plays through active drama work (e.g. improvisation, mime-work, theatre games).

The figures for frequency of use of active methods break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	6	17.1
OCCASIONALLY	9	25.7
RARELY	4	11.4
NEVER	16	45.7
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	9	25.7
I LEARNED A BIT	5	14.3
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	4	11.4
NA	17	48.6
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	11	31.4
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	2	5.7
I DISLIKED THIS	5	14.3
NA	17	48.6
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

Active drama work has long been a component of Theatre Studies courses: students who do a Theatre Studies A-level are usually familiar with and expect to be taught in ways which make use of a variety of drama techniques. This is not always the case with English Literature students, whose teachers may or may not have the specialist training to conduct a class using active method. Still, given the figures above, a number of things can be discerned. First, that it is a relatively rare technique, with 45.7% of the responding students reporting that it is never a part of their Shakespeare learning (and

48.6% checking NA for enjoyment and learning: a discrepancy in the reporting of one student). Second, that in spite of the five students who disliked this, and the four who feel that they learned very little from it, the percentage of students responding positively to these techniques is quite high: over half of the responding students who actually experienced active drama work rate it both as an activity that they enjoy very much, and as one that they learned a great deal from. Given that many of the teachers responding to the earlier survey, all of whom had trained in active method, were of the opinion that active drama work was inappropriate to the needs of their sixth formers, this result may come as a surprise.

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

8. Exploring the plays through active drama work (e.g. improvisation, mime-work, theatre games).

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	0.0	66.7
OCCASIONALLY	23.1	33.3
RARELY	15.4	0.0
NEVER	61.5	0.0
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	7.7	77.8
I LEARNED A BIT	11.5	22.2
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	15.4	0.0
NA	65.4	0.0
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	7.7	100.0
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	7.7	0.0
I DISLIKED THIS	19.2	0.0
NA	65.4	0.0

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 1

Again a slight discrepancy exists between those English Literature students responding "Never" and "NA" -- these figures are not identical, as they should be. Nevertheless it is clear enough that the "active" exploration of dramatic texts remains very much the province of the Theatre Studies class, where it rates very highly for both learning and enjoyment among the students. As rare as it is among the English Literature students, most students who claim to have experience of it actively dislike the use of theatre games, tableaux, mime etc. as a component of their Shakespeare learning. Given the 100% enjoyment rating among the Theatre Studies students, it has to be asked why this might

be so -- assuming there is nothing inherent in the techniques themselves to make them disagreeable to students according to the "discipline" under which they come to study Shakespeare. On the basis of observation of attempts at "active" teaching among Literature students and Theatre Studies students, and against the background of my own training and experience of teaching with these methods, I would conclude that much of the dissatisfaction that English Literature students might feel with active method stems from an exposure to teachers who are themselves lacking in specialist training and the confidence to teach effectively with these methods. Students may also approach the difficult subject of English Literature at A-level with an element of self-conscious seriousness that will not brook the possibility that "frivolous" activities of this nature might actually have something valuable to teach them. This is what at University level Fred Inglis calls "making your subject difficult to do"¹². It is this mentality within the universities that allows Terence Hawkes confidently to dismiss active drama work as "like finger painting" on a televised debate about the prominence of Shakespeare in British culture¹³. I would seriously question the wisdom of dismissing this "finger painting" out of hand when these results suggest that it is not the methods themselves which are at fault, but the ways in which these methods are perceived as appropriate or inappropriate means of serious study that prejudice students' disposition to allow those methods to succeed.

9. Learning about Shakespeare with other subject teachers (e.g. music, history, art or science).

The figures for frequency of cross-curricular teaching break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	2	5.7
OCCASIONALLY	2	5.7
RARELY	7	20.0
NEVER	24	68.6
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.00

¹² Fred Inglis 'Recovering Shakespeare: innocence and materialism' in Shakespeare in the Changing Curriculum ed. Lesley Aers and Nigel Wheale (London: Routledge, 1991) p. 59.

¹³ 'Is Shakespeare Overrated?' with Clive James in the Chair -- Terence Hawkes, Sec. of State for Ed. Kenneth Baker and Fiona Shaw participating.

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	2	5.7
I LEARNED A BIT	7	20.0
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	1	2.9
NA	25	71.4
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.00

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	2	5.7
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	7	20.0
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	1	2.9
NA	25	71.4
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.00

Cross-curricular teaching is a very rare occurrence: this much was clear from the teachers' survey, the primary obstacle being the lack of flexibility within the school timetable which would allow for different subject teachers' classes to be scheduled at compatible times. Nevertheless, this was an idea that many teachers found appealing, virtually all of them expressing the desire to be able to attempt it with their own classes. The obstacles to its occurrence may be reflected in the responses of 24 students who claim that it is never a part of their learning. There is a discrepancy in the responses of one student; as many as 25 of the responding students may not have experienced cross-curricular teaching (71.4%). This leaves us with a very small group of students (10-11) from which to draw any kind of conclusion about the value they place upon this method of teaching. Of the nine students (25.7%) claiming to have benefited in some way, only two are enthusiastic enough about this approach to claim have learned a great deal from it, or to have enjoyed it very much. Nevertheless, given that 71.4% of the sample did not experience any kind of cross-curricular teaching, that 25.7% is actually quite a high percentage of students who have responded favourably to this technique.

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

9. Learning about Shakespeare with other subject teachers (e.g. music, history, art or science).

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	0.0	22.2
OCCASIONALLY	3.8	11.1
RARELY	15.4	33.3
NEVER	80.8	33.3
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	0.0	22.2
I LEARNED A BIT	15.4	33.3
I LEARNED NOTHING AT ALL	3.8	0.0
NA	80.8	44.4
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	3.8	11.1
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	11.5	44.4
I STRONGLY DISLIKED THIS	3.8	0.0
NA	80.8	44.4

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 1

A slight discrepancy exists this time between those Theatre Studies students responding "Never" for frequency and "NA" for learning and enjoyment. Nevertheless, it is clear that a collaborative approach to Shakespeare teaching with other subject teachers is much commoner among the Theatre Studies students than it is among the English Literature students. Two factors chiefly would account for this. First, the fact that the Theatre Studies students are all coming from a considerably smaller independent school means that within the school itself, while the timetable is no more flexible than most, the faculties are small enough so that teachers are freer to make arrangements among themselves to share the odd lesson or to teach one another's classes. The second factor which might account for the difference is the fact that Theatre Studies is by its very nature a collaborative venture: every year this school makes a policy of producing one of the Theatre Studies A-level set texts for production, and consequently, teachers from the art department, the music department as well as the design and technology department will invariably get involved.

10. Performing a role or otherwise participating in a school production of a Shakespeare play.

The figures for frequency of participation in a school production of a Shakespeare play break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
FREQUENTLY	2	5.7
OCCASIONALLY	2	5.7
RARELY	8	22.9
NEVER	23	65.7
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	6	17.6
I LEARNED A BIT	3	8.8
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	1	2.9
NA	24	70.6
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.00

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	9	26.5
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	1	2.9
NA	24	70.6
MISSING	2	
TOTAL	36	100.00

These figures may be considered unique in that participation in school productions of Shakespeare plays for students is likely to be voluntary, and therefore an activity taking place outside of the classroom. Another unique characteristic of this set of figures is that this is the only activity which no one reported to have disliked, strongly or otherwise. It remains an extremely rare activity, with as many as 70.6% of the responding students claiming to have no experience of it, but for those students who have experienced it, it is among the most highly rated both for learning and enjoyment. The question remains, then, why so few students experience it.

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

10. Performing a role or otherwise participating in a school production of a Shakespeare play.

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
FREQUENTLY	3.8	11.1
OCCASIONALLY	3.8	11.1
RARELY	23.1	22.2
NEVER	69.2	55.6

I LEARNED A GREAT DEAL	12.0	33.3
I LEARNED A BIT	4.0	22.2
I LEARNED VERY LITTLE	4.0	0.0
NA	80.0	44.4
I ENJOYED THIS VERY MUCH	16.0	55.6
I ENJOYED THIS A BIT	4.0	0.0
NA	80.0	44.4

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 5

Again, discrepancies exist on both sides for both the Theatre Studies students (11.2%) and the English Literature students (10.8) responding "Never" for frequency and "NA" for enjoyment and learning. Furthermore, as neither school participating mounted a full-scale production of a Shakespeare play during the time that this survey was administered, these results reflect what students have chosen to understand by "performing a role or otherwise participating in a school production of a Shakespeare play": either they are basing their responses upon performing individual scenes within the classroom, or they are basing their responses upon experiences of productions participated in outside of school. As several students, particularly in the Theatre Studies group, also belonged to youth theatre groups, this is entirely possible. Either way, this is clearly an activity which is far more frequent among the Theatre Studies students -- this is largely a reflection of the nature of the course. It is also more highly rated among these students for both learning and enjoyment. However, with over half the students in either group at the very least having no performance experience whatsoever, it is difficult to make any conclusive judgements as to the students' perceptions of the educational potential of this activity.

Part D: Future Plans

The four questions which comprise this section seek to establish whether or not students' experience of Shakespeare teaching might have any bearing upon the choices they are likely to make in the world of higher education, work and leisure. The questions themselves have been posed as "Yes" or "No" questions; in hindsight, owing to the fact that a number of students chose to write in "Maybe" and "Not sure" as more appropriate responses than the ones made available to them, a broader range of responses than a

simple "Yes" or "No" might have rendered a more accurate picture of the feelings of this group. As they stand, the responses to this section are nonetheless revealing.

1. After A-levels, do you intend to study drama or English at a higher education level?

In hindsight, an improvement could have been made to the wording of this question: it should have been phrased in such a way that students could indicate which subject they intend to study at a higher education level. Shakespeare does not appear in the question at all, but since Shakespeare can hardly be avoided in either English or drama study at a higher education level, it is safe to assume that a student prepared to continue to study either drama or English beyond A-level is prepared to study Shakespeare, however unwillingly.

The responses to this question break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
YES	15	45.5
NO	18	54.5
MISSING	3	
TOTAL	36	100.0

1. After A-levels, do you intend to study Drama or English at a higher education level?

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
YES	33.3	77.8
NO	66.7	22.2

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 3

The problem of not knowing which subject students intended to study further is exacerbated by the fact that all but one of the Theatre Studies students were also taking an English A-level. Enough of the Theatre Studies A-level students were pursuing specific production interests in set, costume, and lighting design for the Theatre Studies A-level to offer them a practical introduction to vocational training that several at the time believed they wished to pursue further. In fact, of the nine Theatre Studies students, only two went on to study drama at university; one went on to do a Foundation Art and Design course, one went on to do Sociology and Physical Education, two went on to do Estate

Management courses, and three, at this writing, had not continued with any further education at all.¹⁴

2. Would you, simply for your own enjoyment, attend a performance of a Shakespeare play?

A straightforward question, it allows students to identify themselves (or not) as future audience members, and for a picture to emerge as to the type of audience they perceive themselves to be.

The responses to this question break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
YES	31	86.1
NO	5	13.9
TOTAL	36	100.0

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

2. Would you, simply for your own enjoyment, attend a performance of a Shakespeare play?

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
YES	88.9	77.8
NO	11.1	22.2

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 0

That the audience for future performances of Shakespeare plays is likely to be comprised in part of erstwhile A-level English Literature and Theatre Studies students should come as no surprise -- this could be regarded as what Bourdieu would call a classic instance of cultural reproduction, with students exercising the opportunity to exchange the common cultural currency.¹⁵ What is remarkable to see here is that a smaller percentage of Theatre Studies students than English Literature students would attend a performance of a Shakespeare play for their own enjoyment. Whether this reflects a preference for actually performing themselves or is indicative of a wider range of experience as audience

¹⁴ These facts were verified confidentially through the school.

¹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, 'Systems of Education and Systems of Thought', in *Readings in the Theory of Educational Systems* ed. by Earl Hopper (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1971, reprinted 1972) pp. 157-183 (p. 162).

members, and therefore a greater breadth of choice in theatre-going, remains to be seen. The Theatre Studies students participating in this survey had a very wide range of theatre going opportunities available to them. Again, the fact that they are less likely to see a Shakespeare play for their own enjoyment may reflect the nature of their studies, which considers Shakespeare as a playwright among playwrights, and which puts them in the position to make an informed choice about which playwright's work they would prefer to see.

3. Would you consider teaching Drama or English as part of your future career plans?

Again, like the first question in this section, this question would have been better phrased to allow students to indicate which subject they might consider teaching, English or Drama. The major limitation to this question, as to the following one, is the very slim degree of certainty with which the average sixth former can be expected to conceive of his or her future plans.

The responses to this question break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
YES	9	25.7
NO	26	74.3
MISSING	1	
TOTAL	36	100.0

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

3. Would you consider teaching Drama or English as part of your future career plans?

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
YES	19.2	44.4
NO	80.8	55.6

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 1

These results are somewhat surprising in that teaching has traditionally been among the sensible career options for students specializing in English Literature at University level -

- that over 80% of these students reject the idea may say as much about the current state of the teaching profession as it does about the students themselves. Over twice as many Theatre Studies students would be prepared to consider teaching as a career option -- 44.6%. This may reflect the greater likelihood of finding employment as a teacher than as a jobbing actor if one is inclined to attempt to make a living wage in the capricious world of the performing arts. However peripheral drama teaching may be to centre stage, it may be near enough for this 44.6%. Still, the majority of students in both groups find teaching to be the least attractive option of all proposed.

A second test was done on the students responding "Yes" to the teaching option to see how the frequencies variables would look with regard to the attitude questions only. As a group the most strongly held attitudes directly relate to the ways in which these students believe that Shakespeare should be taught, with 77.8% strongly agreeing on the importance of the teacher's enthusiasm, and an equal 77.8% strongly disagreeing with the statement that Shakespeare is boring no matter how it is taught.

4. Would you consider working in the theatre as an actor, director, designer, stage manager, etc. as part of your future career plans?

Finally, after having assessed the places of today's Shakespeare students on either side of the classrooms and seated in the audiences of tomorrow, concession must be made to the possibility that some of them might just imagine themselves working on the stage or behind the scenes in tomorrow's theatres.

The responses to this question break down as follows:

	FREQUENCY	VALID PERCENT
YES	17	50.0
NO	17	50.0
TOTAL	36	100.0

When broken down by respondent, results are as follows:

4. Would you consider working in the theatre as an actor, director, designer, stage manager, etc. as part of your future career plans?

	ENG. LIT.	THEATRE ST.
YES	32.0	100.0
NO	68.0	0.0

NUMBER OF MISSING OBSERVATIONS: 2

No surprises here among the Theatre Studies students, as all of them were clear that one of the main reasons why they elected to do the Theatre Studies A-level in the first place was their desire to eventually find work of some sort in the theatre. (Though again, it should be remembered that two years on, only two of the nine students had gone on to study drama at university.) The 32% of English Literature students who would also consider this as a career option is somewhat surprising, given that this substantially exceeds the percentage considering teaching as a career option. Again, the glamour factor may have a lot to do with this result, whether students' perceptions of the possibility of a life in the theatre are closer to the decadence of Withnail and I or to the sentimentality of Kiss Me Kate, the attraction either way is very strong indeed.

When a further frequencies variables for Part A of the survey was run for those students responding "yes" to the possibility of a career in the theatre, this group revealed itself to be far less conservative and "bardolotrous" in its attitudes than the group of potential teachers. The majority of this group do not agree that Shakespeare is the greatest poet/playwright (64.7%), and 76.5% do not consider Shakespeare's contribution to the health and vigour of the heritage industry adequate reason for keeping the plays on the boards. While there is 100% agreement from both groups as to the importance of the experience of live performances, this group is far more strongly convinced of it, with 76.5% in strong agreement as opposed to 33.3% of the group of potential teachers. What is revealed in the comparison between these two sub-groups is congruent with the findings from the teachers' responses to the postal interview: that teaching is a profession which is largely self-generating, with one generation of teachers inspiring a small minority of students whose dedication to the subject will carry into the next generation of teachers. This remains, with regard to Shakespeare teaching, largely a literary love affair,

with the shift to performance-based teaching methods happening only very slowly and subtly over time.

Though these projections are purely speculative, it is interesting to note the order of preference that the responding students indicated for the proposed future plans listed above. Attending a performance of a Shakespeare play, purely for their own enjoyment, was by far the most popular option, with 86.1 % of the students responding positively to this suggestion. The most surprising result is to be found in the next most popular option; that of the possibility of a career in the theatre, with 50% of the responding students responding positively to this suggestion. With only 30.6% of the students participating in the survey actually taking the Theatre Studies course, this figure is considerably higher than might be expected if we were to predict the likelihood of students considering a career in the theatre on the basis of their enrollment in the Theatre Studies A-level.

The figures for further study of English or Drama are also relatively high, with 45.5 % of the responding students answering "yes" to this question; ultimately, decisions with regard to further study are, of course, to a large extent contingent upon the actual A-level results. A teaching career remains the least popular option, with only 9% of the responding students considering this.

Summary of Findings

The findings above indicate that, for the most part, the participating students report that text-based approaches to the plays, that is, close reading of the text, reading parts aloud around the class, and project work, written or otherwise, are still by far the predominant means of approaching the Shakespeare plays in their A-level English and Theatre Studies classrooms. Most students also have the opportunity to experience the plays in performance, either through audio, video and film productions, or live performances of the plays, though this is, for practical reasons, comparatively rare. Active drama work, memorization and performance of scenes, or participation in entire productions are relatively rare among the English Literature students, while these techniques are in fact perceived to be in frequent use among the Theatre Studies students. The material

constraints of the schools themselves can be seen to be reflected in the rarity of those activities which are dependent upon school funding resources, such as visits from theatre-in-education groups, as well as those activities which must be accommodated to the degree of flexibility in the school timetable, such as cross-curricular teaching.

As to the relationship between learning and enjoyment, this appears to be firmly established, though more marked in those activities where students take an active rather than passive role: watching films and videos scored lower on learning and higher on enjoyment, while seeing live performances scored higher on both learning and enjoyment. Even within the relatively passive act of being an audience member, a distinction can be seen between students' appreciation of the recorded and the live performance. I would suggest that this is because students can participate as audience members at a live performance in ways that are simply not possible for them through the recorded performance, the effect of which is reflected in the figures. The nearest that the figures come to parity between learning and enjoyment is in the results for participation in an actual performance. Not only that, but this also ranks most highly of all for both learning and enjoyment among those students who had actually participated in a school production of a Shakespeare play. It would appear that those activities that allow for a creative interaction between the students and the Shakespeare plays are those which are most highly valued by students, and perceived as most effective.

Finally, the survey analysis, when broken down by respondent, does reveal considerable differences in attitude, classroom practices and students' perceptions of their future plans in relation to their current experience of Shakespeare teaching. What it does not indicate, and cannot indicate, is the relationship between cause and effect in this matter. Are the Theatre Studies students' attitudes, for example, shaped by their experiences of a variety of classroom practices unavailable to the average English Literature student, or is it the case that the Theatre Studies students are far more amenable to a wider variety of classroom practices because of the attitudes that they bring with them to the classroom at the outset? Both instances are likely to be true to some degree, and the relationship between cause and effect in teaching is likely to be a dynamic one. Given that, it is most useful to focus upon those elements of teaching over which we have

some degree of control; that is the classroom practices themselves. What is very clear from this breakdown of results is that the Theatre Studies students are experiencing a far wider repertoire of classroom practices with far greater frequency in relation to their learning about Shakespeare than their fellow English Literature students; they also appear to be enjoying and learning from these experiences to a greater degree. While it cannot be assumed that English Literature students too would therefore benefit in equal measure from exposure to a wider repertoire of classroom practices, certainly there is nothing to be lost by attempting this. On balance, it could be argued that the English Literature students themselves are encouraged to develop a wide variety of reading skills through their study of poetry and prose that will come to bear upon their study of Shakespeare which this survey cannot discern. The evidence suggests that whatever bearing these literary skills may have upon the A-level English students' learning and enjoyment of Shakespeare, the Theatre Studies students appear to be better equipped to enjoy and learn from their experiences of the plays, albeit somewhat less inclined to sit through a performance of a Shakespeare play.

With regard to the relationship between learning and enjoyment, the survey results throughout indicate that there is a very high correlation between the level of enjoyment indicated and the amount that students claim to have learned from any one of the ten indicated activities. A cross-tabulation of the variables for learning and enjoyment only serves to make it even clearer: students feel that they learn most from those activities which they most enjoy, and most enjoy the activities from which they feel they learn the most.

Finally, a series of cross-tabulations designed to determine the extent of polarization in students' attitudes reveals that students when asked found no considerable difficulty in admitting two seemingly incompatible possibilities. When, for example, a cross-tabulation was done between students responding to the statement "I believe the Shakespeare plays show us universal truths about human nature" and the countering statement, "I believe the Shakespeare plays should be taught in ways that explore values which are sexist, racist, and elitist"; there is an overlap of agreement of 51.5%. It can be argued that either the values explored in a given play are universal and therefore pertinent

to everyone, or those values are the product and reflection of an oppressive society which is implicated on sexist, racist, and elitist grounds. What these responses, rather encouragingly I think, allow, is the possibility that a common humanity can be discerned even through the skewed perspectives of whatever sexism, racism and elitism might pervade the plays. Whom does knowledge serve? What, given the evident compatibility of these attitudes, might these students know about Shakespeare, and who is served by that knowledge? If they can find at least some example of human failing as it is manifest in the varieties of oppression -- in that sexism, racism and elitism -- and yet still find affirmation of a sense of universal values, perhaps it is because all varieties of oppression seek to deny the same essential truth: all seek to break the connection between one suffering soul and another that constitutes a common humanity. In a sense, one cannot talk meaningfully of any mode of oppression which posits the power of one being or group over another, without a tacit understanding that we are all essentially the same in that we are all born equally deserving of the freedom to act, the responsibility to act in a manner which is useful to society, and the right to have those actions valued. Oppression is the state in which we are denied the opportunity to express and develop our sense of liberty, usefulness, and worth that contributes to our consciousness of the dignity of individual human existence. If students come to even a tacit understanding of this, then this is knowledge by which I believe we are all well served.

How does our perception of Shakespeare teaching alter when this handful of student voices is added to the picture? Admittedly, this is not a very large group, nor have they been given free rein to voice their opinions on the subject of their own experience of Shakespeare teaching -- the responses available to them have all been shaped by my own intentions as a researcher, by the background of critical commentary that awaits many of them at university level, and by the comments of teachers participating in the earlier survey. Given all that, however, the picture that emerges is one in which, while these students' experiences of A-level Shakespeare teaching have been highly valued as intellectually challenging, and, particularly in the case of the Theatre Studies students, imaginatively varied, the students' estimation of Shakespeare's value as "cultural currency" shows no sign of slipping into reverence. Teachers may continue to regard

Shakespeare study as the gold standard of the English Literature A-level, as does Prince Charles: in fact HRH Prince Charles will initiate, in this summer of 1994, The Prince's Shakespeare School in conjunction with the RSC for the purpose of giving teachers specialist training in Shakespeare teaching.¹⁶ Perhaps, too, those few students who may pass out of their A-level English Literature and Theatre Studies classrooms to find themselves one day in front of classrooms of their own with a battered stack of that year's set text Macbeth in the storage cupboard, those same students who strongly believe in the value of the teacher's enthusiasm, and equally strongly oppose the notion that Shakespeare is boring no matter how he is taught, will continue to hold up Shakespeare as the touchstone: "not for an age but for all time". But for the majority of these students, it would appear that the power of Shakespeare teaching as "an instrument of bourgeois hegemony" has yet to be proved. He is neither the playwright they most wish to see performed, nor is his importance to the heritage industry sufficient grounds to warrant his continued study. It is anyone's guess how these same students would react to these survey questions in twenty years' time, when they reach a possibly comfortable middle age and perhaps have children of their own upon whom to inflict a season's subscription to the RSC; but if there are any theatres left to attend in that distant time, it would appear from the results of this survey to be a safe bet that the future generation's Shakespeare students will continue to value learning through live performance over striving with the printed page.

¹⁶ See Advertisement for 'The Prince of Wales' Shakespeare School', *Times Educational Supplement*, 25 March 1994, p. 14.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

Teaching, like politics, is the art of the possible. No wonder the editors of Shakespeare Reproduced lament that many university press books do not get widely read. And for the few who do read such books, the practice of reading and/or writing criticism and the practice of teaching can be discrete activities, even as undertaken by a single individual. It is only too easy to read and/or write as a born-again post-structuralist/Marxist and still teach like an unregenerate New Critic.¹

This attempt to assess the effects of change in A-level Shakespeare teaching is grounded in a faith in "the art of the possible." The nature of the change in Shakespeare teaching, both practical and political, is brought about through the agency of individual teachers and circumscribed by their perceptions of what is possible. The substance of Shakespeare teaching itself changes within the framework of the discipline through which it is taught: the Shakespeare that is taught on the A-level English Literature syllabus differs considerably from the Shakespeare that is taught on the A-level Theatre Studies syllabus. Influences from within the teaching profession have brought about a practical change in methodology, and with that change in method has come an attendant change in theory. Whether consciously or not, those exceptional English teachers who are counting themselves among the converts to the Rex Gibson school of active Shakespeare teaching, as well as the Theatre Studies teachers who will use the active method as a rule, are returning to the real investigation and exploration of the relationship between mind and body, between sound and sense, and, most importantly, between meaning and feeling. This effectively militates against the positivism that saturates so much of schools culture, and reflects Gibson's own understanding of Habermas and the liberatory effects of critical theory:

Habermas argues that the knowledge about society generated by critical theory is superior to other forms because it can enable its possessor to free himself or herself from bondage. Knowledge and the interest in emancipation coincide, and thus make for those unities which positivism severs: theory with practice, means with ends, thought with action, fact with value, reason with emotion.²

The active teaching techniques which he has worked to develop with teachers throughout the country facilitate investigations of the plays through theatrically plausible, playable alternative interpretations through a highly text-based approach. Enacting the

¹ Howard Mills, Working with Shakespeare (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) p. 12. Quoting Jean Howard and Marion O'Connor, eds., Shakespeare Reproduced: The text in history and ideology (London: Routledge, 1987).

² Rex Gibson, Critical Theory and Education (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986) p. 37.

text demands that theories of playability be supported by evidence: if in learning about the Shakespeare plays we wish to learn about the thing itself -- the play that's the thing -- then active approaches must be text based. The "interrogations of the text" are expressed through explorations of the script: whether or not these then evolve into Sinfield's points for intervention is contingent upon the critical consciousness of both the teacher and the class itself. What the active approach does facilitate, if not guarantee, is a climate of challenge and dialogic investigation.

This much is evident from the classroom observations. The structure of classroom communication itself determines the nature of knowledge that can then be discerned through that structure. The first indication of this arose when it became evident that the pre-observation categories that I had determined for myself were not only inadequate, but in many ways, entirely ambiguous. Having designated "Teacher Statement" as a viable category in theory, in practice I was compelled to ask whether a teacher ever makes a simple statement that is not also intended to direct the course of discussion toward a specific end. Likewise, when students challenge a teacher's statement, is that most marked as a challenge to the teacher's disciplinary or intellectual authority? In one sense, the very concept of challenge presupposes a hierarchy: instances of teacher challenging -- that is, students challenging the teacher, particularly in the English Literature classes, most often occurred when both the teacher and students were on an equal footing, the challenge itself constituting an issue over which the struggle for dominance is waged. This dominance may centre around the intellectual struggle for negotiated meaning, or the disciplinary struggle for authority. In both the Theatre Studies classes and in the English Literature classes, the teacher is always the assumed leader, director and re-director. The style of leadership is nonetheless very different. This is revealed in a comparison of the patterns of interaction within the different classes, particularly in the frequency with which both the student challenge and response is met with a teacher re-direction. As an observer, I found I used this term more frequently to describe a teacher's response to students in the English Literature classes than in the Theatre Studies classes. The level of student response in the Theatre Studies classes is also markedly higher than it is in the English Literature classes. The pattern of interaction in the Theatre Studies

classes often falls into one of teacher question - student response - teacher affirmation/question - student response, carrying on at times at great length. Sustained interactions of this nature were generally far less frequent in the English Literature classes, particularly in Teacher A's classes, where the pressure to cover a great deal of material in a very limited time was perhaps most keenly felt.

What is also very marked, however, is the frequency with which the teacher challenge arises in the Theatre Studies classes. To some degree, the decision to designate a teacher's question as a challenge or not is a matter of personal choice. The criteria I used in deciding whether or not a teacher's question constituted a challenge to the students' creative and intellectual abilities were the openness of the questions and the latitude of response those questions generated. Questions with regard to facts, e.g. "What is the name of Adriana's sister?", have only one correct response; questions with regard to possibility, e.g. "How are you going to stage the opening scene?", challenge the student to consider a limitless field of response. It became increasingly clear in the course of the classroom observations that the opportunity for the teacher to challenge the students arose more frequently in the Theatre Studies classes precisely because the students themselves were being continually asked to make choices, and to consider practical alternatives. When in the Theatre Studies classes students were being asked to decide for themselves questions of tone in their experiments with Egeon's opening narrative³, they were being challenged to use their authority in real and practical ways which, though encouraged as a sound examination strategy in the English Literature classes⁴, were never properly enacted.

When we talk about method, theory and practice, it is useful to bear in mind current theory's failure to deal with language as a means of communication, or with questions of intentionality.⁵ This has to be applied not only to the Shakespeare plays but also to the classrooms in which they are taught. In reconciling the objectives of literary theorists and secondary school teachers, in imagining the possibility for teachers to read, write and teach with integrity from a consistent critical perspective, it must be

³ See Field Notes : Lesson V C; 18 November 1991.

⁴ See Field Notes : Lesson II, 21 November 1990.

⁵ See Brian Vickers "The Diminution of Language" in Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

acknowledged that the teacher is compelled, by virtue of the task at hand, to use language as a means of communication. This becomes most evident precisely in those lessons when the language itself becomes the focus. In particular, the long and detailed work that transpired in the Theatre Studies class's work on the shadow play rendition of the opening of The Comedy of Errors makes this very clear. At the level of the practical task of simply conveying essential information, and of the level of putting that information into an emotional context which would then determine the tone of the whole production, the importance of marrying the words to "universal" gestures is paramount.⁶

What is also clear from a careful reading of the field notes, is that character is the first point of connection for the vast majority of students. The route to character through imagery taken by Teacher B in her English Literature A-level⁷ is nicely mirrored by the entirely different approach of the Theatre Studies teacher, who conversely arrives at imagery and theme through character.⁸ This latter approach is not one that need be exclusive to the Theatre Studies classroom; Teacher A's English Literature classes also speak compellingly of character from the outset. The key to teaching Shakespeare in such a way that allows for students to cultivate both a compassionate imagination and a critical consciousness may be seen to lie in creating a classroom climate of dialogic investigation which focuses inevitably on questions of character.

At the intersection between theory and practice there is an opportunity to imagine an ideal that can actually succeed in real secondary school classrooms. Shakespeare teaching is already "succeeding" in many ways in classrooms throughout the country; the evidence gathered in this study as to what constitutes that success in a handful of Bristol A-level classrooms, and what implication that success may have, pernicious or otherwise, is a matter for interpretation. It is clear enough from the lessons observed taught by a variety of teachers that A-level students studying Shakespeare will inevitably be confronted with the task of questioning their own values as well as the values explored through the characters in the plays. The focus and emphasis that these explorations take are determined by the subjectivity of the teacher as well as that of the students. Teacher A

⁶ See Field Notes: Lesson VC, 18 November 1991.

⁷ See Field Notes: Lesson VIIA, VIIIA, and IXA.

⁸ See Field Notes: Lesson XXVI C, 18 June, 1992.

did not approach Othello without touching upon questions of racial prejudice⁹; Teacher B, on the other hand, barely mentioned this in her approach to Othello, and chose instead to focus on the play's sexism¹⁰, identifying with Desdemona as the true victim of the tragedy. Teacher C, in dealing with The Comedy of Errors, could hardly omit exploring questions of identity, teaching this play as he did to a group of nine students, two of whom were identical twins themselves. But his choice to also explore questions of class with this group, who found parallels to the Dromios' experience in the now expired system of prefects and plebs at their school¹¹, was again a matter of the teacher's guiding subjectivity, as was teacher D's focus on issues of power as it is circumscribed by class and gender in As You Like It.¹²

Shakespeare teaching can serve to develop and exercise students' critical consciousness by an approach in which the values embodied by the playscript become the things to be interrogated as they are experienced by each individual character in the play itself, and again as they are interpreted by the individual audience member or reader. What this division of experience constitutes is an opportunity for the rehearsal of a compassionate imagination: the body itself invites it because suffering is something we both experience and articulate physically. "Pain, whether existential or physical, is intimately connected to the pedagogic encounter."¹³ By putting the body back into Shakespeare study, we free up the possibility for the mind to puzzle out the mystery of movement on the stage. We clash or embrace, wound or heal, approach or abandon one another physically before we intellectualize these relationships in any other ways; our bodies manifest our thoughts:

a way of moving in space is a manifestation of a way of thinking: it is thought stripped naked. Analogously, a thought is also motion, an action -- ... the performer can start from the physical or from the mental, it doesn't matter which, provided that in the transition from one to another, a unity is constructed.¹⁴

⁹ See Field Notes: Lesson II, 21 November 1990.

¹⁰ See Field Notes: Lesson IV A 18 December, 1990.

¹¹ See Field Notes Lesson XXII C 4 June, 1992.

¹² See Field Notes: Lesson IB, 28 January 1990.

¹³ Peter McLaren, Schooling as a Ritual Performance: Towards A Political Economy of Gesture (London: Routledge, 1986) p. 12.

¹⁴ Eugenio Barba The Secret Art of the Performer - A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology. (Routledge : London and New York, 1991) p. 55.

With this in mind, some light is thrown upon the question raised in the teacher survey as to whether Shakespeare should "be English or Drama"; if Shakespeare as "English" can be seen as analogous to a pedagogy with a mental starting point, and, as "Drama" as analogous to pedagogy with a physical starting point, then it should not matter, provided that "in the transition from one to another, a unity is constructed". In the absence of the physical space or theatre, the literature teacher may be compelled to work within a theatre of the mind, but even this is a space within which the gesture may be interpreted, and the sign sensed.

Because our language, our history and our cultural bearings also continue to change, the plays as written in Elizabethan English for an Elizabethan audience will become increasingly difficult for young modern students to contend with. "The past is a foreign country", but it need not be inhabited entirely by hostile strangers.

If language presents a potential barrier to students' understanding and enjoyment of the plays, then character presents the bridge. Once the voice is bodied, then the message can get through. To think in terms of character serves not only as a means of facilitating the communication of the message, but as essential to the formation of subjectivity.

the engagement of learners in acts of thinking, imagining, feeling, knowing and meaning is a bodily engagement ... Learning is, essentially, self-chosen and requires personal space. It alters both the learner and the world in which the learner dwells.¹⁵

The critical consciousness must be informed by a compassionate imagination. Allowing students to develop their compassionate imagination won't bring about the downfall of capitalism either, but this, too, is a point for intervention.

The emphasis on matters textual in contemporary Shakespeare criticism has had a pernicious effect in that by seeking to define more accurately the nature of "man the historical animal", whose texts and histories are bound up in one another inextricably, the new historicist critics have marginalized the nature of "man the theatrical animal", as a maker of masks and performer of rites and ceremonies; as a creature bound up in the power of his own persona -- and character is as much a matter of choice to the theatrical

¹⁵ Bernard T. Harrison, 'Realizing through Writing - the learner as a creator of meaning', *Aspects of Education*, 42 (1990) p. 45.

animal as it is a matter of cultural contingency. The study of Shakespeare is also the study of character. "In making history man makes himself"¹⁶ -- the historical animal is the theatrical animal. So much of neo-Marxist literary and educational theory is enamoured of the notion that we are creatures of cultural construction, of contingent circumstances that we are in danger of becoming blinded to the fact that we can create and carve our own masks, wear them willingly, present our personae and form our characters with clear intentions. Teachers who are in the business of enabling students to develop their subjectivities can find themselves at an impasse on this point:

Simply to replace the schismatic "individual and society" with an all pervasive set of social determinations is to leave us not just without a concept of historical agency, but also without an acknowledgement of subjectivity, without ways of theorizing and discussing the inward life of thought and feeling. And for the left to leave that linguistic space open, and to evacuate from its own educational accounts a language in which it is proper to talk generously and compassionately about teachers and students as people driven and deceived by all kinds of fancies, is to make room for those wishes to be fulfilled by the kinds of dreams which more conservative fancies have to offer.¹⁷

In writing an evaluation of the influence of cultural materialism upon her own A-level Shakespeare teaching, Cathy Davies's reservations also centre on precisely this point:

In my students' responses to Much Ado about Nothing there is much evidence to suggest that they are more optimistic than most cultural materialists about the individual's ability to gain freedom ... This explains their interest in those characters in the play who are constructed in such a way as to suggest they are free. Perhaps, if I were sufficiently politically committed to identify Beatrice and Benedick as representatives of bourgeois individualism, they might not have been so optimistic, for then the determination of the individual social positions and birth would simply be replaced by determination by voluntarily undertaken contracts. Yet, it may be that the latter contains a greater potential for individual freedom: do Beatrice and Benedick represent the illusion of freedom, or the beginnings of it?¹⁸

However, with this reservation in mind, she also believes that

the influence of cultural materialism upon teaching Shakespeare at A-level should nevertheless be seen as positive: both in terms of guiding students toward a greater understanding of how a text works, and of encouraging a better awareness of the relationship between the individual and her culture. Perhaps this will lead to increased recognition of how freedom can be achieved by changing that culture.¹⁹

¹⁶ Norman O. Brown, Life Against Death (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1970) pp. 15-16.

¹⁷ Alston Light. 'Two cheers for liberal education' in Dialogue and Difference - English into the Nineties, ed. Peter Brooker and Peter Humm. (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 37.

¹⁸ Cathy Davies, 'Cultural Materialism and the Teaching of Shakespeare's Plays at A-level: an evaluation' (unpublished MA dissertation, Cambridge Institute of Education, 1992) p. 40.

¹⁹ Davies, p. 40.

This is really the heart of the matter; the true meaning of liberatory pedagogy is found in educating students to be people who act for change. The injunction to "Be critical, be meaningful, be emancipatory"²⁰ was one that I took to heart as a young teacher in training. But even such a radical injunction as this is predicated upon a faith in language as a means of communication and expression of intentionality. In order for teachers to be critical, to develop in themselves and their students a critical consciousness, there must be a means of establishing a point of connection between the world as it is and the world as it might be. This must be established through language, because the world is what we create through language, when we attempt to speak to one another of our differing experiences and of what hope or possibility the world might hold. In order to be meaningful ourselves as teachers, and to encourage and nurture our students' abilities to be meaningful, we must again ground our efforts in a faith in language. To be meaningful is to have the power to create our own definitions, and to make our own judgements. Definitions and judgements which are not expressed and understood in a common language are a nonsense; they are meaningless. Finally, to be emancipatory is likewise grounded in a faith in language. An emancipatory teacher is one who has left students with the critical consciousness to perceive and express the possibility of a different world, and the power to create their own meanings to eventually realize that world. Radical educational theory is grounded in the belief that teaching is about change -- that education is about leading students out to perceive the differences between the world as it is and the world as it might be, and enabling them to make a difference in the world. How should Shakespeare be taught to best achieve that end? Contemporary literary theorists predicate their investigations and explorations of the Shakespeare plays on a number of beliefs that are diametrically opposed to the ends of radical educational theory. The fundamental problem is that of language itself. Whatever one may think of Brian Vickers' broad indictment of contemporary literary theory, his specific accusations that much of contemporary literary theory is responsible for the systematic diminution of language ring true.²¹ When whole schools of criticism are

²⁰ This was the oft-repeated battle cry of Prof. Henry Giroux during his Sociology of Education seminars, Tufts University 1982-83.

²¹ Vickers, *passim*.

grounded upon a belief in language as suspect, then teachers and students who are left to contend with that criticism are denied not only the opportunity to interrogate the meanings and values they perceive in the plays, but also the means of expressing those definitions and judgements with any degree of certainty. More importantly, we deny students the opportunity to understand that language operates not only in the realm of ideas, but in also in the realm of the imagination. The "Jacobethan" drama in general, and the Shakespeare plays in particular, draw their force from the power of their images. This includes the whole vocabulary of stage pictures, from the simple mechanics of blocking to the endless scenic embellishments that production possibilities afford, as well as the verbal images that are essential to the development of plot, theme and character.

There are, of course, practical obstacles to the practical application of current literary theory at a secondary school level, in terms of intimidation, unfamiliarity, and lack of specialist training (not to mention hours in the day) for teachers faced with the task of assimilating and applying a great body of change in literary theory to their teaching strategies. Moreover, however, on a philosophical level, there are problems with the incompatibility between the theoretical underpinnings of much cultural materialist criticism and the aims of radical educational theory, with which, ironically and paradoxically, it claims much in the way of a common heritage.

Compassionate imagination enables students to create and re-create character. This is not in the end so terribly far divorced from the preoccupations of much current criticism: re-writing the Renaissance; re-thinking, re-visioning, re-reading, self-fashioning: on one level all these words in a rash of titles beg the question of the critics' ability to re-connect with the (authorless) works of dead white males. The newest "somatic" criticism and the passive place of the body in literary studies as an objectified thing, inscribed (sometimes quite literally, as in Kafka's "The Penal Colony") by the conditions of the prevailing society, point to the place where the autonomy of the author and the authenticity and integrity of characters in a Shakespeare play fall apart. The fashion is to believe in, to re-cover the body but only in so far as it, like the texts that we write, is a thing determined, stooped, bent and subjugated by "historicity". Characters then have meaning only as representative of so many objectified bodies, marginalized

voices and displaced desires. But for students in schools, learning about the Shakespeare plays at A-level, the body is something very real indeed. Re-incorporating the body into the learning process can point the way out of that subjugation which permeates school life:

students put their bodies symbolically "on hold" upon entering the school at the beginning of the day. It was as though saturating the senses was equivalent to alienating the intellect. The ritualized practices of school research have, throughout history, overlooked the fact that the body plays an important part in the acquisition of knowledge.²²

In coming to the end of this research, perhaps it is more useful and practical to speak not so much in terms of assessing the effects of change in Shakespeare teaching at A-level, as of analysing the potential for continued change. The evidence of this research shows that current trends in literary theory, however useful they may be, are only having a very minor impact on the ways in which students are being taught Shakespeare at A-level. Government pressures to return to paper and pencil examinations will work against what changes might have begun; the AEB 660 50% course work option for the English A-level, in use at Alma Grammar School at the time of this research and repeatedly praised by teachers responding to the postal interview will be the last syllabus of this kind after 1995. As of 1996, the course work option will be reduced to 20%. The study of the Shakespeare plays will not profit by being bowed under a culture of correctness. The 50% coursework option presented students with a fair field for the exercise of their subjectivities; with the reduction of this, they will more than ever be compelled to learn, as the teachers will be compelled to teach, "to the test." While in theory, the examination answers might prove less constrained than the examination question might lead us to believe possible, preparing students with the mental skills as well as the necessary textual evidence to construct a coherent and well-supported answer to an examination question all but precludes any real freedom of thought on the students' part. For the most part, only those teachers with specialist training in the active method would be capable of introducing any level of active exploration of the plays, given, for example, the time constraints under which Teacher A was made to teach her admirable Othello in thirteen lessons. The way in which she taught the play so that her students might confidently and

²² McLaren, p. 217.

successfully proceed through their examinations is itself evidence of a skilful and highly trained teacher, but this allowed her little room for authentic theatrical explorations of playable alternatives with her class.

The key to teaching Shakespeare in such a way that allows for students to cultivate not only a critical consciousness but also a compassionate imagination lies not in stressing the historicity of the text and the textuality of history, but rather in stressing the theatricality of the text and the textuality of theatre. The teachers' job well done is one which eventually enables the student to carry on learning without them. Ultimately we strive to enable students to unlock their own meanings through the Shakespeare plays. We start by acknowledging difference. The key to that secret initiation into what constitutes the specialist knowledge about Shakespeare is acquaintance with the boundaries between that world and ours; the past is indeed a foreign country. However, in order to lead students out to the point where they have the power to create their own meanings of and through Shakespeare, to re-territorialize that map of the protean world of continuing performance of 36 Shakespearean plays, and to see in that world the possibilities for change in their own world, depends entirely upon the extent to which students' critical consciousness has been raised, and their compassionate imagination developed.

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