

**Cultivating Young People's Relationships to a
Theatre Building: New Perspectives in Regional
Theatre**

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Carly Henderson

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures

Contents

List of Figures	3
Abstract	4
Declaration and Copyright Statement	5
Acknowledgements	6
Provocation	7 – 10
Research Context	11 – 20
The Secondary Education Partnership Scheme: Background & Context	21 – 25
Method	26 – 34
Thesis Structure	35 – 39
Chapter 1. Locating Education Programmes in Theatre Buildings: A historiography of developments in practice between 1958 and 2008	40 – 76
Chapter 2. Regional Theatre, Place & Storyness: How the theatre building evokes meanings	77 – 119
Chapter 3. Hidden Spaces, Dusty Objects & Practices: Learning through theatre craft in situ	120 – 162
Chapter 4. The Process of Progress: Developing critical skills as theatre makers and audience members	163 – 200
Chapter 5. Situating Participatory Practice: Learning departments in regional theatres	201 – 243
Conclusion	244 – 251
Appendix 1. Using Photo Elicitation with Young People: Reflections on the method	252 - 257
Appendix 2. Information about the research participants and timeline for research project	258
Journal Article. The Exam Play: An approach to teaching Shakespeare through guided spectatorship	259 – 275
Bibliography	276 – 287

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List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>Work</i> by Ford Madox Brown (1865). Manchester Art Gallery	7
Figure 2: Methods training session (photograph by author, Sept 2014).....	30
Figure 3: Yorkshire Street, Oldham (photograph by James, March 2015) ...	86
Figure 4: Yorkshire Street, Oldham in 1930, Oldham Local Studies and Archives (2015).....	90
Figure 5: A production shot in the stalls bar (photograph by Farhana, Feb 2015).....	97
Figure 6: Coliseum posters (photograph by Tom, Feb 2015).....	99
Figure 7: The Coliseum stalls bar (photograph by Tom, Feb 2015)	103
Figure 8: The Coliseum from Fairbottom Street (photograph by John, Feb 2015).....	107
Figure 9: The Coliseum auditorium from the stage (photograph by Paris, March 2015).....	110
Figure 10: Frank William Makin plaque in the stalls bar (photograph by James, March 2015)	113
Figure 11: A costume in construction (photograph by Paris, Sept 2016)....	128
Figure 12: The fly system (photograph by Tom, Sept 2016)	132
Figure 13: A Studio mark-up (photograph by James, Sept 2016).....	135
Figure 14: Lighting workshop in the Studio (photograph by Riyadur, Sept 2016).....	144
Figure 15: A props table (photograph by Riyadur, Sept 2016)	152
Figure 16: A prop from the basement store (photograph by Paris, Sept 2016)	156
Figure 17: Pre-show workshop with stage technicians (Photograph by Jack, Feb 2017).....	171
Figure 18: <i>Meat Pie, Sausage Roll</i> rehearsal in the Coliseum's Studio (photograph by Olwen, Feb 2017).....	176
Figure 19: <i>Educating Rita</i> Schools' Pre-Show (photograph by Debbie, Oct 2014).....	180
Figure 20: <i>Meat Pie, Sausage Roll</i> rehearsal (photograph by Olwen, Feb 2017).....	183
Figure 21: <i>Gaslight</i> (Production photograph by Joel C Fildes, Feb 2017)..	190
Figure 22: <i>Gaslight</i> (Production photograph by Joel C Fildes, Feb 2017)..	194
Figure 23: <i>Quantum</i> Installation by YEP, Liverpool Everyman Theatre (photograph selected by Chris, 2018)	210
Figure 24: Prop making workshop at the Coliseum (photograph by Jake, Sept 2018).....	216
Figure 25: Work experience week at Royal Exchange Theatre (photograph by Chelsea, Feb 2018).....	220
Figure 26: Barnado's Asha Project in Coldhurst, Oldham.....	227
Figure 27: Debbie with students in her classroom (photograph by author, Jan 2015).....	233
Figure 28: Debbie and students rehearsing for <i>The Dark Night</i> at the Coliseum (Feb, 2015).....	238

Abstract

This thesis contributes to the study of regional theatre, an under-researched area of contemporary British theatre studies. It presents new perspectives on the theatre building as a focus and location for learning, and the development of civic identity amongst young people. The thesis begins with a historiography exploring the development of education activities delivered in regional theatres from 1958 – 2008. I identify and detail a sub-narrative within these histories, relating to engagement practices connected to the theatre building. The thesis presents an argument for education practices that draw on the diverse technical skills and artistry inherent in a producing theatre context, an area that I argue has been overlooked in theatre education research. Using Richard Sennett's theoretical articulations of the skills and value systems inherent in craft, I offer a mapping of craft in theatre education, presenting insights into young people's experiences of learning alongside technicians, stage managers and costume makers.

I explore these themes in a detailed case study approach, focusing on the work of Oldham Coliseum Theatre, a publicly subsidised, producing theatre. A former mill town in the North of England, Oldham has a population broadly made up of people from white British and South Asian backgrounds. Using my role as a working practitioner at the Coliseum as a base for the research process, I present an autoethnographic account and analysis of the development of a model of local secondary schools' provision. Few sources exploring engagement with theatre buildings draw on long-term empirical work with young people. To provide new understandings of the educational and social significance of this engagement in Oldham, in young people's terms, I developed a novel methodology that incorporates and analyses the experiences of eight young people. Utilising photography and photo elicitation, these young people have documented and reflected on their engagement with the theatre over a 4-year period. Their photographs, threaded through the thesis, uncover and illuminate the material qualities of the theatre, as a place, and as a space for learning.

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For my niece, Elysia.

Provocation



Figure 1: *Work* by Ford Madox Brown (1865). Manchester Art Gallery.

From 1852 - 1865, Ford Madox Brown painted *Work*, an oil painting featuring ordinary working people and the conventions of labour within the Victorian social system. The painting depicts a group of navvies digging up a road to build a tunnel, which is typically believed to have been part of the London sewage system. The male workers in the centre can be seen with tools in the process of digging trenches, their facial expressions and muscular physique accentuated to highlight the physical demand of their labour. There is also a woman holding a baby and several children, believed to be orphans, in the centre. Their collective grouping with the navvies represents the class divide in terms of a relationship with work. The dogs in the painting further extend this social symbolism, with a tattered homeless dog positioned near the orphaned children, opposite a groomed dog in a collar and red coat.

The workers are the subjects, accorded heroic status in the centre, with affluent onlookers at the edges; a position the working classes were rarely afforded in Victorian paintings. This symbolism is reinforced by Brown's choice of light and shade, with the workers lit and the 'intellectuals' or 'brainworkers', including Thomas Carlyle, a satirical philosopher and Rev F.D Maurice, in the shade, at the edges of where the work is taking place. These men are portrayed as being idle, watching the manual labour (Walker, 2006: 53). The composition of the painting also makes a social statement through its triangular structure. An aristocratic couple on horseback are positioned at the apex of the triangle, with the navvies and working class woman and orphaned children in the centre and foreground.

The triangle composition as a communicative form is widely used in the visual arts, as it invites the spectator to focus their attention to particular points. As filmographer and camera operator Peter Ward notes, 'a triangle composition is a closed form, which the eye cannot escape' (2002: 69). Semiotician Roland Barthes asserts that the use of this configurative device in theatre, allows the director to 'calculate' what the spectator sees:

The theatre is that practice which calculates the observed place of things: if I put the spectacle here, the spectator will see this; if I put it

elsewhere, he won't see it and I can take advantage of that concealment (1977: 69).

In the theatre, actors are literally placed centre stage, their actions and practices, along with the director's composition are lit, whilst the workers backstage and in the wings are in shade. The processes and practices of the actors and director are privileged in theatre; their work at the apex of the triangle within a hierarchy of labour.

Work represents my intentions for this thesis, which explores the structures of labour in the theatre and asks what knowledge, as theatre educators, we have tended to privilege. The young people, who have documented their engagement with the theatre through photography, like Brown, have placed the theatre's diverse working practices at the centre and foreground of their images and experiences. The young people's responses show that, rather than a view of engagement with theatre and theatre production that focuses on drama and performance, predominant in the field of theatre education, what is privileged is the technical skill and application of the work backstage in the theatre. The young people capture and curate technical and manual work and the practices of theatre making in situ, through their photographs. Their images focus on theatre making 'tools', such as theatre lanterns, set models and props, and backstage spaces within the theatre that are usually concealed within the theatre event. Like the navvies in Brown's painting, theatre technicians and their practices often appear as the subjects of the young people's photographs, and this thesis traces the root of these curiosities. Why have the young people chosen to capture these moments, objects and practices and what can theatre educators learn from this?

Reflecting on the wider field of theatre studies, I argue that research into theatre education has largely focused on processes that draw on performance-based practices, at the expense of the expert knowledge and collaboration inherent in the work of technicians, costume makers and stage managers. Addressing this imbalance, I utilise sociologist Richard Sennett's (2008) articulations of the skills and value systems inherent in craft, to theorise forms of episteme that can be developed through a technical and

craft focused approach to theatre education. Drawing on recent work in theatre studies, influenced by the philosophical approach of materialism and exploring the function of objects, such as props and costumes in theatre, I present an argument for education practice that draws directly on the theatre as a site of production and set of industrial practices. Contributing original, critical insights into young people's engagement with Oldham Coliseum Theatre, this thesis articulates the ways the theatre building provides a context for situated learning and the development of civic identity.

Research Context

I began this thesis with a desire to understand more about what Oldham Coliseum Theatre, a publicly subsidised producing theatre, meant to local young people, as a place. Although there are studies exploring the Coliseum, they set the theatre in relation to its local history, with focus on the plays and actors involved in its repertory work between 1885 and 1985 (Carter, 1986). Since 1986, there has been no detailed study of the theatre in its contemporary context, and in particular, in relation to its broader social and geographic network. As Head of Learning and Engagement at the theatre, I have delivered a range of projects, which have aimed to enhance access to cultural opportunities for young people from all social backgrounds in Oldham. Part of the Greater Manchester metropolitan county, in the North of England, Oldham is one of the most deprived towns in the UK, with high proportions of residents from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, particularly of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. Although I was confident that the engagement practices I was delivering had value in introducing many to their first experiences of watching and participating in theatre, I grappled with what exactly a relationship to the theatre building, with a history dating back to 1885, meant to the young people. These questions are not dissimilar to those asked by my predecessors, the Theatre in Education (TIE) actor-teachers who instigated the TIE movement in Britain in the 1960's. This led to specialist practitioners working in newly established learning 'units' in theatres, as well as now iconic professional theatre companies working solely in schools, such as M6 based in Rochdale, and Leeds based Blah Blah Blah. Their starting point was 'theatre's search for a useful and effective role within society and an exploration of its potential both as an educational medium and force for social change' (Jackson, 1993: 4).

My explorations began with a review of existing research to establish how young people's relationships to theatre buildings have been theorised by others. The historiography, presented in the chapter that follows, sets a historical context for the work of learning departments in British regional theatres. It explores the development of education practices in response to

shifts in funding subvention and education and cultural policy between 1958 and 2008. I demonstrate five key examples of the ways in which education practices have been designed and conceptualised in relation to the theatre building. However, I struggled to locate my professional work and research within the dominant narrative, which stresses the educational and social utility of theatre, mapping education in theatres to a social change narrative. Where does educational work in the complex context of the producing theatre - in terms of its physical building, the relationship between this building and its communities, the diverse skills of its working staff, the history and memories connected to that building, and the economic and institutional pressures that it navigates - fit within these histories? There are few detailed studies that explore young people's experiences of engaging with theatre buildings in relation to this social matrix, particularly that draw on autoethnographic research and the perspectives of young people themselves. As I assert in the historiography, the scope of previous research into these themes is narrow, and this is due to how education practices have been positioned in relation to theatre buildings – dislocated from the theatre building.

Within the narrative presented in the historiography, there are references to education practices delivered in regional theatres in the 1960's and 1970's that aim to connect young people to the wider work of theatre buildings, including their artistic programmes and practices as producing theatres. Within a journal article that sits as an interlinking component of this thesis portfolio, I focus on a specific example of a practice that emerged through my research. 'The Exam Play', a model of work developed in regional theatres in the 1960's, is still delivered in variations at the Coliseum and other theatres, over 50 years on. Using the context of live theatre to explore a set English examination text, typically a Shakespeare play, the practice focuses on the making of a production to inform young people's experiences of spectatorship and their wider understandings of the play. However, as I argue in chapter 1, since the inception of the TIE movement, practices such as the Exam Play, that focus on learning *about* theatre making within a

theatre building, have been neglected in theatre education research.

Learning through Theatre: Essays and Casebooks on Theatre in Education is Anthony Jackson's (1980) first edition of this influential book on theatre and education. The subsequent editions, produced in 1993 and 2013, track and revise shifts in TIE and related practice. In the first edition, Gordon Vallins, who reportedly designed and implemented the very first TIE programme, describes the origins of its development. Created at the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in 1965, the TIE programme derived from an 'awareness of the limitations of the educational curriculum and the lack of impact of theatre on ordinary people's lives' (Vallins, 1980: 3). Vallins and his colleagues developed theatre techniques into a form or medium for learning, to guide children and young people through a subject matter in an active and experiential way. The aim of TIE was to make theatre accessible and relevant to children and young people, by taking performance outside of the theatre building to 're-establish the theatre's roots in the community and broaden its social basis' (Vallins, 1980: 12). By 1977, TIE had turned into a national movement, with over ninety companies delivering work across the UK (Turner, 2010: 13). The success of this new form of theatre 'arguably, represents one of the most significant developments in British theatre since the war' (Jackson, 1980: 1).

In writing about the beginnings of TIE, Vallins describes the Belgrade's pre-existing programmes of work for young people, which included a version of the Exam Play, titled 'Teach in', 'a Young Stagers Committee' and 'Theatre Holiday sessions'. The activities focused on young people exploring,

lighting, production, make-up, costume, writing a script and the general working of the theatre, including the mounting and striking of a set shown back to front so that the young people in the auditorium could see the demonstration ... These activities were shared by actors and technicians (Vallins, 1980: 7).

Vallins' account of these earlier theatre education activities, conversely to the accepted narrative of theatre in education that follows, focus on the *craft* and *technical processes* involved in theatre making. This sub-narrative, which I argue has been marginalised in theatre and education scholarship since the TIE movement, begins to provide a more accurate context for the activities that form part of the Coliseum's learning programmes today. Vallins notes, at the end of the chapter, that 'theatres as buildings are not in themselves important. But what is important is the vital communication between people of thoughts, feelings, ideas and response to the living situation' (1980: 14). A new discourse, focused on the potential of learning *through* theatre emerged, and has arguably continued to dominate the field of theatre education and applied theatre. By learning through theatre, I refer to practices that use theatre techniques and forms as a medium for creative, social and educational exploration and expression.

This thesis argues that the theatre building and practices that explore theatre making within this context, also have the potential to cultivate 'vital communication between people of thoughts, feelings and ideas' (Vallins, 1980: 14). The thesis presents a body of work exploring the theatre building as a focus and location for civic identity, and context for learning with young people. I demonstrate the rich, educational and social possibilities inherent within engagement practices that explore 'lighting, production ... and the general working of the theatre' (Vallins, 1980: 7). Through a journal article exploring the Exam Play, and a longitudinal case study detailing young people's experiences of learning within the theatre building, this thesis rehabilitates the material practices that have been marginalised in theatre education research. Drawing on the work of sociologist Richard Sennett (2008), I articulate the specific forms of learning generated through a technical and craft focused approach to theatre education, opening up a new critical discourse in the field. I then map this approach onto the theatre event to develop understandings into young people's experiences of learning through this prism, as audience members. Initiating discussions with recent work in theatre studies, influenced by strands of materialism, I explore the

function of objects in the theatre and their potential contribution to the learning process. Through this, I present an argument for education practices that draw directly on the environment of a producing theatre as a site of production and set of industrial practices. Contextualising the theatre building in relation to theorists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's articulations of 'communities of practice', I describe the social and educational potential of situated learning within a theatre, alongside theatre staff (1991).

The perception of theatre buildings as representing a class division - a place and art form dominated by the middle class, and not relevant or inclusive for working class communities - formed part of the catalyst for the development of a range of socially and politically motivated theatre practices in the 1960's, including TIE and community theatre. The movements arose from the ambition of artists and practitioners to democratise theatre, 'embracing the idea that theatre can and should be performed anywhere, at any time' (Ogden, in Wooster, 2007: 21). As Vallins describes, taking TIE outside of the theatre building and to the community was a deliberate decision to broaden the theatre's 'social basis'. However, this detachment from the theatre building arguably further side-lined the potential of practices that focused on learning *about* theatre making within this context. In addition, although the aim of TIE was to redefine the identity of theatre within the community, the location of the delivery of the programmes, within schools, perhaps meant that children and young people had less contact with the theatre building itself, as a place. As Nicholson notes:

In the past, egalitarian theatre educators objected to the theatre on the grounds that it encouraged political passivity and they were critical of its narrowly bourgeois tastes. It is the perception for which theatres themselves can take some responsibility: theatre can be an exploitative commercial business. Although this approach to theatre education may have been justifiable at the time, however, it was predicated on a very specific view of theatre, which now seems remarkably narrow (2009: 201).

Today, a range of practices are delivered within theatre buildings, and particularly relevant to this study, are the craft and technically-led practices delivered by the Coliseum, which are similar to those described by Vallins as existing before the creation of TIE. Although in my own practice, I share the ambition of Vallins and his colleagues to broaden the theatre's 'social basis', as opposed to taking theatre into the community, I largely aim to encourage young people to attend the theatre. My intention, in contrast with the TIE actor-teachers, is to cultivate young people's relationships to the theatre building, as a place, and their potential interests in theatre as audience members and participants. My research builds on applied theatre theory and practice by challenging the opposition that is often presented between audience development and theatre education. In my detailed case study approach, I focus on the Coliseum's model of work with local schools to theorise audience development in a way that is not just about ticket sales but an ongoing educational practice.

Attempting to cultivate young people's relationships to the theatre building through ongoing education provision is designed to remedy some of the barriers associated with the theatre, as a place. Theatre buildings, as has been predicated in theatre education and applied theatre discourse, can feel like exclusive spaces and discourage a number of individuals and groups for socio-economic and cultural reasons. However, previous scholarship has tended to reduce the complexities of these barriers to a singular definition, involving the 'elitist aura' of the theatre building (Whybrow, 1994: 267), 'that helps to drive an unfair system of privilege' (Kershaw, 1993: 31). Although discussions around this class barrier are vital, it does not necessarily account for the issues at the Coliseum, which is accessed mainly by white working class people aged 50 - 80 years. My research shows that the problem has less to do with the building feeling/being 'elitist' but a broader set of social concerns. There are high levels of poverty in the town, reflected in the physical surroundings of the theatre building. Oldham also has a high population of Pakistani and Bangladeshi residents, some of whom are classified as within the most deprived in the UK. These cultural and

economic factors combine to form a specific inequality in Oldham, and a specific set of challenges for the Coliseum.

Whilst interrogating the management structures and discourses at the Coliseum that potentially prevent certain individuals and groups from attending the theatre, I study how young people perceive and relate to the theatre building, in its geographic, social and cultural context. Whereas other researchers have made assumptions about the barriers informing young people's engagement, this thesis draws on empirical work with young people to articulate these themes from their perspective. The young people's interpretations suggest that, whilst they feel the theatre's artistic programme is not relevant to them, they are interested in the material culture of the theatre building. They draw on their own memories, and traces of the theatre's history as if the building is a 'repository of cultural memory' (Carlson, 2003: 2). Working with theatre scholars, Kate Dorney and Ros Merkin's arguments about the significance of the 'local' in regional theatre, I explore the meanings that the young people ascribe to the theatre space and demonstrate its potential as a location for developing civic identity amongst young people.

In 2013, Jackson reintroduced regional theatres into his *Learning through Theatre* book series, with a contribution from Steve Ball, Associate Director of Birmingham Repertory Theatre, who describes regional theatres 'as learning resources' (2013: 155). As I explore in chapter 1, in synergy with Vallins' articulations of the education practices delivered at the Belgrade Theatre before TIE, this notion of the theatre building as a learning setting suggests that the practices have almost gone full circle in their focus. The reinstatement of regional theatre into Jackson's discourse is reflective of the space that regional theatres have carved within the field of participatory arts and marks a shift in how theatres have 'reconceived their educational outreach mission' since the TIE movement (Jackson, 2013: 82). Ball's exploration broadly surveys the work of learning departments, with reference to the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester and their work with refugees and asylum seekers, and the New Vic in Newcastle under Lyme, who run

Borderlines, a project for disadvantaged individuals and communities (Ball, 2013: 158 -165). As Ball notes, these practices see a 'shift in emphasis from outreach to inreach activities which provide opportunities to engage with the whole theatre' (2013: 156). Nicholson suggests that this shift, in thinking about the politics of the theatre space, 'not only provides access to different artistic practices but is a symbolic gesture' (2009: 100). Whilst theatres are redefining the educational potential of the theatre building, what social meanings and connections are being fostered with young people? How do young people understand their relationships to the theatre building, as a place, and how can theatres best capture and comprehend this?

Through a cultural materialist approach, that considers the 'entire theatre experience', my longitudinal study explores how young people relate to the Coliseum, as a place, and how they articulate these connections within the context of their personal, social and cultural experiences (Carlson: 1989, Knowles: 2004, McAuley: 2000). My research builds on existing cultural materialist studies in theatre in two ways - it draws on young people's experiences, in addition to that of the researchers, and as opposed to solely exploring the theatre experience in relation to a performance event, it includes young people's experiences of participatory education work in the theatre building. Although I situate my exploration through a case study approach at the Coliseum, the framework and methodology that I have used to undertake the research will be relevant to practitioner-researchers working in other cultural contexts. Particularly in its understanding of young people's experiences of engaging in creative practice in relation to a place, the approach provides a framework for understanding how 'local specificities' inform the production and reception of meanings (Knowles, 2004: 19).

This thesis builds on Ball's work in *Learning through Theatre*, and the broader work of Jackson and Nicholson, providing in-depth understandings into the specific mechanisms used by practitioners working in learning departments to cultivate young people's relationships to theatre buildings. I give a detailed autoethnographic account and analysis of my role in

facilitating young people's engagement with the Coliseum through a model of local schools' provision and include reflections from both teachers and young people. Through this, I examine the way theatres and schools have complementary and necessary roles in developing capacities for introducing young people to cultural provision. Responsible for providing a link between contexts, the theatre building and the communities surrounding it, I see my role as cultivating this space 'in-between' and understanding the community of Oldham in detail. Unlike the practices of TIE actor-teachers and applied theatre practitioners, whose work, contexts of work and skills have been closely examined, the role of practitioners working within regional theatres has received much less critical attention. I reflexively explore this space 'in-between', to develop understandings of where this work is positioned artistically, educationally and socially within the field of theatre education and applied theatre, and in practitioners' respective geographical contexts. Supplemented by reflections from two other practitioners working in regional theatres in the North, I present an account of the specific skills and practices that underpin the role of these workers, and critical insights into some of the challenges of working within the frameworks of a theatre as an institution.

In summary, this thesis addresses three interlinking questions:

- How do young people learn through a technical and craft focused approach to theatre education, within the context of a theatre building?
- How do young people relate to the Coliseum, as a place, through engaging in a model of schools' provision?
- What is the role of learning departments in regional theatres in cultivating links between young people and a theatre building?

In exploring these questions, I use my knowledge and insight of working as a practitioner within the context of a theatre building and critically reflect on the Coliseum's practices to contextualise the study. Through the case study, which I have conducted alongside and within my role as Head of Learning and Engagement at the Coliseum, I focus on one specific project that the

Coliseum delivers with local secondary schools. The Secondary Education Partnership Scheme, described in more detail below, is a long-term programme of work delivered both in schools and within the theatre building, which aims to foster relationships with a broad range of local young people, who perhaps otherwise, would not access the theatre. With the aim of providing new understandings into the learning and engagement practices of regional theatres, the case study maps the experiences of eight young people engaged in the Scheme, over four years.

I explore the young people's experiences of engaging in theatre visits, workshops at the theatre and in school, encountering practices such as lighting and set design. I theorise how young people learn through technical theatre and craft-based practices and how this informs their experiences and critical skills as spectators and theatre makers. Through these encounters, I examine how the young people understand and relate to the theatre building, as a place. Using ongoing reflective practice and research into how education practices function in different theatre contexts, my understandings are grounded in the belief that a situated and bespoke approach to developing community and education work is critical. As critic Philip Hensher notes, 'regional theatre is not a unified thing. Each theatre will have its own flavour, its own history and its own place in the community' (in Dorney and Merkin, 2010: 1). Therefore, although the study focuses on the Coliseum's model of schools' work in particular, it explores through a contextual analysis, the significance of community and context in shaping the provision, as opposed to advocating the model as a 'best practice' approach.

The Secondary Education Partnership Scheme: Background & Context

In 2012, Oldham Coliseum Theatre devised its Education Partnership Scheme with funding from Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, whose focus is on improving access to cultural education, particularly for BAME young people. The Scheme was developed following a shift in Oldham's youth landscape (explored in chapter 5) and an evaluation of the Coliseum's previous work with schools. As part of the evaluation work, learning department team members discussed and reviewed box office bookings, participatory data and conversations and requests from teachers. The majority of our engagement with schools until that time was reactive. It involved delivering ad-hoc workshops and supporting one-off theatre visits that did not necessarily connect young people to the broader work of the theatre building or support teachers in a meaningful way. In developing the partnership scheme, the learning department wanted to understand more about how the offer, both on and offstage, could be embedded in local schools. We agreed that we would develop a more cohesive and strategic approach to our schools' engagement. As I explore in chapter 5, our aim was to develop more in-depth partnerships with local schools and to foster longer-term relationships with teachers and young people, in an attempt to maintain our connections with young people from specific areas in Oldham, where our community partnerships had collapsed due to cuts to funding.

In many ways, this initiative is quite typical of a project delivered by a learning department in a publicly subsidised producing theatre. It reflects and responds to serious concerns around diversity and access. However, my argument here is that it is precisely its typicality that makes it a useful focus for an advanced research project such as a PhD. Whilst, as noted, a situated approach is important - I am not proposing a model of best practice that can be replicated by other regional theatres - I would argue that the in-depth, long-term engagement with this initiative, from the perspective of an embedded practitioner-researcher, provides a solid foundation for the

propositions generated by this thesis. The infrastructure of the project, involving teachers, school communities, young people and theatre staff, provides a strong base of opportunities for detailed empirical research, where I have been able to consistently draw on the perspectives of participants and other practitioners involved in the long-term project.

The scheme was developed through consultations with drama teachers from both mainstream and non-mainstream schools. Teachers were keen to utilise the theatre space and its resources, as they felt this was an area of their teaching practice that they could not replicate in school. The teachers felt as if students would be keen to choose Drama as a GCSE option (a qualification taken by all young people in England and Wales at age 15 - 16), with links in place to the theatre; enhancing their curriculum and subject area both in and outside of the classroom. The teachers highlighted funding as being a key issue, both in terms of their budgets in school and the young people's affordability of theatre tickets. Therefore, a grant from the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation proved critical in allowing the department to test approaches and refine the model over several years (the scheme had been running for two years when this research project formally began in 2014). The consultation process allowed the learning department to develop relationships with key contacts whilst strengthening the offer and making it relevant and accessible to teachers and schools.

The learning department approached four local secondary schools in the first year of the project and developed a programme of work with each school's Drama Department. Although the programme is a relatively structured package of work, there is flexibility within it, to tailor the work with the teacher to suit their students' needs. The package comprises of workshops delivered in the theatre and at school, theatre tickets, pre-show talks and workshops that explore theatre making and an inter-school main stage performance. The scheme typically means that a Year 7 or 8 student (aged 11 – 13 years old), who has drama once a week as a compulsory subject on their timetable, will be engaged in a session led by a practitioner from the theatre

at least twice a year. The student will also visit the theatre to see a performance and/or to take part in a workshop at least twice in that year. We anticipated that we would then see these students at least four times a year, until they were in Year 9 when they started GCSE study.

As part of the scheme, all teachers from participating schools are entitled to sixty tickets a year to be used across year groups with pre-show talks included in the visit. Each year, schools select a group of up to twenty students to participate in an inter-school performance. The groups are selected by the teachers and are made up of students with mixed ages and abilities, based on how the project fits with the teachers' syllabus and timetable. Each group works towards a section of a new play, commissioned specifically for the scheme. The students work with a playwright on a script, inputting ideas and developing characters that the writer then shapes into a coherent narrative. A theme is taken in advance from the main house play programmed for the time of the inter-school performance. This allows the students to see the set in action in the professional performance at least a week before they perform but also practically means that the set onstage links to the themes of the young people's performance. The inter-school performance aims to give ownership of the stage to the young people, to further enhance their relationship to the theatre and provide their school community with an opportunity to perform or watch their peers perform in a theatre space.

Through building relationships with teachers, finding the best way to contact them and establishing their needs and expectations, the learning department developed a practical way of administering workshop bookings and theatre visits. Through this, a pattern of communication with each of the key teachers emerged. This proved critical to the project, as the learning department got a sense of when and how teachers needed support; understanding the kind of activities they would be interested in, what would work for their students and also when to give them space or offer additional help. The long-term partnership approach allows the learning department to

build a programme of work for each school, and students begin to develop a pattern of regular engagement with the theatre and theatre staff. The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation funded each school's place for a year (2012 – 2019) and then schools were expected to 'pay what you can'. By 2019, there were two schemes running, Oldham and Rochdale, developed in 2012 and Tameside, developed in 2015 with Tameside Cultural Services. As the work is delivered predominantly by core, salaried members of staff and is viewed as central to the Coliseum's engagement strategy as a subsidised theatre, the financial aim is for part cost recovery after the schools' first year i.e. the aim is to recover the costs of staff members' time rather than to generate income necessarily.

As the theatre is in an area of high social and economic deprivation, with high numbers of young people of South Asian heritage, the Scheme, engaging with/through both mainstream and non-mainstream schools, provides access to cultural opportunities for those who perhaps otherwise, would not access theatre. As part of their education, the activity is free of charge to the young person and is delivered predominantly within school time. This is important for a number of reasons - it does not rely on parents/carers having to afford theatre trips or facilitate young people getting to the theatre, and it is inclusive of many Muslim young people who attend mosque or madrassa after school. As I explore in more detail in chapter 5, working in partnership with schools is critical to the approach for these reasons but also resonates with the ways in which the learning department has responded to shifts in Oldham's wider cultural, educational and youth landscape. Emerging from this way of working with schools is a sense of a series of relationships developing with young people from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, that I believe otherwise, would be difficult to facilitate.

This model of work is the cornerstone to the Coliseum's engagement with local young people, and to the undertaking of the longitudinal case study presented within this thesis portfolio. I use the young people and teachers'

regular engagement with the theatre as the basis for exploring the themes of this study, to question the relevance of this relationship to the young people. What does the theatre building mean to them, as a space for learning and a place? What is the mutual role of the drama teacher and the learning department in cultivating young people's relationships to the theatre building and to cultural activity? The following section details how my research methods addressed these questions. The methods consider the situated nature of the provision, within the context of an evolving relationship between young people, their teachers, the learning department and a local theatre.

Method

In this section, I outline the methodological approaches undertaken for this thesis portfolio. The thesis comprises three interlinking studies: a historiography exploring the histories and contexts of education practices delivered in relation to theatre buildings, a discrete research study into the Exam Play, and a longitudinal study exploring young people's relationships to the Coliseum and their experiences of engaging in practices through the partnership scheme. I describe the rationale for the approach and design for each component of the thesis and my position as practitioner-researcher in undertaking the autoethnographic research within and alongside my professional role at the Coliseum.

Using my role as a working practitioner at the Coliseum as a base for the research process, this thesis portfolio is methodologically grounded in reflective practice. Philosopher Donald Schön describes reflective practice as 'the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning' (1983: 68). Gillie Bolton notes that reflective practice 'enables us to say, 'I don't know what's going on here, and I want to find out' (2018: 7). From the position of reflective practitioner-researcher, I have been able to bridge my professional practice with critical ways of knowing. I kept a reflective journal throughout the PhD research process, which provided a critical tool and lens with which to reflect on and make sense of my everyday experiences. Bolton uses a metaphor of the theatre to describe reflective practice, which provides an apt perspective for considering my role and position as practitioner-researcher in exploring young people's engagement with a theatre building:

We cannot part the red curtain ... and go onto the stage and beyond. Yet there are acres of stage, rehearsal space, offices, canteens, costume and set stores ... We live our lives in the auditorium of our minds – excitingly and dramatically playing different characters ... but without realising what's beyond the curtain. Reflective practice writing

enables exploration of areas we didn't know we knew, had forgotten, never bothered to develop, never really noticed (2018: 22).

In my professional role at the Coliseum, I am afforded the unique position of having a working knowledge of a theatre building, and access to backstage spaces at the theatre, the offices, meetings where decisions are made, workshop spaces with young people and the green room where actors socialise. However, what is driving these practices, social relations and constructs, and on whose terms? How can I use my position as practitioner-researcher to vitalise new perspectives on the practices of regional theatres? How can I contribute nuanced and reflexive insights into the Coliseum's education practices? Through on-going reflective practice, I have considered areas of my everyday experiences that I 'didn't know I knew'. Throughout this thesis, I draw on my experiences in tandem with the perspectives of young people, teachers, staff members at the theatre and other practitioners, to explore the ways regional theatres cultivate relationships with young people.

In chapter 1, I present a historiography of the developments in education provision produced by British regional theatres. Keen to understand how other researchers have conceptualised young people's relationships to theatre buildings, I looked to critical discourse in the field of theatre education and applied theatre. The chapter highlights the limited research studies into practices delivered with young people in the theatre building, and the role of learning departments in fostering these relationships. The theatre building has either been marginalised and/or is absent within these articulations. This informed the selection of sources I use within the chapter, whilst propelling the wider themes that underpin this thesis. Because of the lack of critical discourse on practices connected to the theatre building, I looked to the archives of regional theatres that have a history of delivering education work (the Coliseum has a relatively short twenty-year history of delivering education activities in comparison to some other regional theatres). I looked at the annual reports and related sources produced by Belgrade Theatre in Coventry and Octagon Theatre in Bolton, where there is rich documentation of a history of delivering education activities, including TIE.

Although there are limitations to using literature produced by regional theatres in exploring this context, sources such as annual reports provided valuable evidence of a pattern of shifts in approach. The Belgrade has been particularly well documented in theatre education, having been the first regional theatre to be built in Britain following the Second World War, and having pioneered the TIE methodology. I begin my exploration at the Belgrade from 1958, to develop understandings of the theatre's early education provision and how this evolved. My approach is loosely chronological and identifies five key shifts in the developments of education provision up to approximately 2008. This 50-year period provided an opportune timescale to explore how regional theatres, and these two theatres in particular, have developed their education provision in response to governmental shifts to funding subvention and cultural and educational policy. I use the annual reports of the Belgrade and Octagon Theatre, in tandem with critical discourse around TIE and theatre education, to trace and detail the cracks in the histories of education practices connected to the theatre building.

Through this work, I recognised a practice that had been widely delivered in theatres in the 1960's and 1970's, entitled the Exam Play. As noted above, regional theatres still deliver variations of this provision today and therefore, I was keen to undertake research that rehabilitated the practice. Focused on enhancing young people's understandings of a given English examination text, young people explore the making of a theatre production to further inform their experiences and understandings of the play. I undertook a research project at the Coliseum to explore its delivery with a class of English Literature students, aged 14 - 15 years old. I use my reflections as practitioner-researcher, in tandem with interviews elicited from four young people to present an account and analysis of the learning generated through the practice. I conducted one semi-structured interview, with the four young people, a week and a half after they had taken part in the practice at the Coliseum. The research study sits at the end of the thesis portfolio, as a discrete, inter-linking study. Collectively, these two areas of work, the

historiography and the journal article, provided the basis for my broader research project. The studies highlighted the gaps in the existing literature and the importance of representing young people's experiences; propelling both the themes I explore and the design of my longitudinal study.

A key challenge in designing the longitudinal case study was capturing young people's experiences of engaging with the Coliseum and tracking the evolution of these experiences over time. I turned to photography as a method for young people to generate and collect data in a relatively fun and accessible way that linked their experiences in place and time, and in a way that opened up an invitation to young people to co-produce the knowledge and understanding arising from this research process. As human kinetics researcher T.A Loeffler describes in her research relating to people's documentation and reflection on their experiences of the outdoors, 'each photograph acted as a memory anchor for the participants as he or she recalled the moment and the affective context surrounding it' (2005: 8).

As part of the 4-year study (2014/15 - 2017/18), I invited eight young people from three diverse secondary schools in Oldham and Rochdale to document their experiences of taking part in activities as part of the Coliseum's education partnership scheme, using photography. The young people were selected in close cooperation with each teacher, who had confirmed their ongoing participation in the scheme, and whose Head Teachers had given consent for their schools' participation in the study. I visited each of the three teachers' drama lessons with their Year 7 students (aged 11 - 12 years) to recruit volunteers. With each teacher, I then selected a group of 2 - 3 students out of those who expressed an interest, taking gender, ethnicity and the young people's backgrounds and interests into consideration i.e. I was keen not to solely engage those with an existing interest or experience of engaging with the theatre. Following this, I approached the parents/carers of these young people for consent with the support of the teacher and school (see appendices for further information about the eight participants and their schools).



Figure 2: Methods training session (Photograph by author, Sept 2014)

The photograph above depicts a group of three of the young people engaged in the research project, participating in an introductory training session in school, designed to teach them how to 'frame' and 'focus' their choices of moments to capture. The training also taught the young people how to use the specific camera that I provided at the start of each session, throughout the research project (see appendices for a timeline of the research project). When I took this photograph, I was standing at the side of Julia's classroom, a teacher I have worked with since 2012, who introduced me to the young people pictured. In my taking of the photograph purposefully, I am able to reflect on this moment within the classroom. By 'purposefully' I refer to the choice of angle I decided on to take the photograph and being conscious of the relevance I accorded to the moment and the subject(s). The photograph, although taken in 2014 (four years prior to my writing here in 2018), unlocks a contextualised memory of the moment in the classroom and the interactions between the young people, whilst practicing with the camera. The photograph acts as a 'memory anchor' in place and time; a visual documentation of the moment, which I am able to reflect on and recall, retrospectively.

In taking the image, I am standing at the side of the classroom, outside of the young people's focus or view. Within this moment, I am observing the young people undertake a collective learning activity. This 'angle' is reflective of my position as practitioner-researcher within the study. Through this method, I was able to adopt a reflexive stance from which to research this process. This position enabled me to assume the role of 'insider-outsider', to reflect on the practices that I am extremely close to, with critical distance, and without my practices being the sole focus. The image illuminates the intimate relationship that the young people have had with the cameras. Until I collected the cameras from the young people after a session, I had very little knowledge of the moments they had captured and who or what they had accorded relevance to in their images. Furthermore, the method, involving young people and a camera, is highly reflective of the themes that have emerged within this thesis, which foregrounds the technical creativity and

embodied learning that can derive through material practice.

The eight students, who have co-guided the themes of this study through their photo documentation, were all in Year 7 (aged 11 - 12 years) at the time the research project began in 2014/15. They were engaged in Drama through their compulsory Key Stage 3 curriculum and received a drama lesson at least once a week until they were in Year 9 (aged 13 - 14 years). It was predominantly during these lesson times that the students engaged in work with the Coliseum, alongside visits to watch performances and to take part in workshops at the theatre. The eight young people have each taken a series of images that capture their experiences of engaging in activities such as theatre visits, performances and workshops over a 3 - 4 year academic period. Through this method of photo-documentation, the young people each developed an archive of their personal experiences, capturing images of objects, spaces and moments that resonated with them throughout the process.

Using photo elicitation, a method where a photograph is 'inserted into an interview', the young people responded to their experiences of the practices on an annual basis (Harper, 2002: 14). In a one to one interview setting, I presented the young people with the photographs they had taken across the academic year and asked them to reflect on their experiences. As Loeffler describes, when using photo elicitation, the authority in the interview shifts from researcher to participant, 'the researcher becomes a listener as the subject interprets the images and their meanings for the researcher' (2004: 1). The images acted as the stimulus for the discussion as opposed to the students being led by questions, to stimulate their own interpretations and intuitive accounts of the moments they captured (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 39). Using photo elicitation within the interviews was both a visual and intersubjective tool for unlocking the young people's memories and experiences of each moment in situ.

Costa notes that it is in this act of reinterpretation of the facts of the past into the present that the participant and researcher 'weave the threads of the narrative as a shared memory' (2001: 82). The young people's interviews provided an opportunity to discuss their interpretations of specific experiences. This acted as a springboard for both myself (as researcher) and the young person (as participant) to reflect on the Coliseum's practices. In addition to the photographs enabling the young people to 'locate' their experiences within the context of the theatre building or classroom, they were able to contextualise these moments within their wider personal and cultural lives in and out of school. Often the young people depart from the 'location' of the image and reflect on personal, social or cultural memories that they associate with the images, such as their knowledge and experiences of Oldham Town Centre and previous visits to the theatre with school and family members. This proved a powerful way of understanding the young people's perceptions and experiences of Oldham and the Coliseum, as places.

Supplemented with reflective writing, I also collected photographs during the research study and interweave my own interpretations with the young people's throughout the thesis. To better analyse the basis of the young people's interpretations of the theatre building, explored in chapter 2, I drew on archival research to understand the geographic and historical significance of the Coliseum's disposition in Oldham. To undertake research for chapters 4 and 5, which explore practices delivered within both the theatre building and the classroom, I presented a teacher from a Rochdale based secondary school with a series of images to interpret and describe. This enabled me to understand and articulate the relationship between the Coliseum and school partners, from a teacher's perspective. Within chapter 5, in particular, in describing the practices of learning departments in regional theatres, I draw on my photography, reflective practice and writing to provide a detailed account and analysis of my experiences of working in a regional theatre in Oldham. These insights are combined and contrasted with practitioners' experiences from the Royal Exchange Theatre and Liverpool Everyman and

Playhouse, who also use a photograph to interpret and describe their practices.

Theatre scholars, Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson, assert that researchers should consider methodologies that 'resist unhelpful dichotomies and fixed binaries which separate embodiment and intuition from intellectual practices, emotional experiences and ways of knowing' (2011: 2). They assert that methodologies that combine and challenge binaries between practice and research demonstrate how 'intuitive messes and aesthetic ambiguity are integral to researching theatre and performance, where relationships between the researcher and the researched are often fluid, improvised and responsive'. My own, and the young people's images and interpretations form the spine through the chapters of this thesis and have been grouped thematically to structure the content of the study. I 'read' and describe the images alongside the reflections elicited in the interview setting to guide, challenge and supplement my reflective practice and analysis. It was a deliberate decision to include the young people's images, my own photographs and that of the teacher's and practitioners interviewed, within the body of the text, as they illustrate the ways the images have provoked creativity and critical analysis. I include a series of reflections based on my experiences of using photography as a method within the appendices, where I offer insights into the practice and make recommendations for future use.

Thesis Structure

This thesis is presented in seven parts, including the historiography, four key chapters that explore young people's experiences of engaging in practices connected to the theatre building and my role in cultivating these connections, followed by a conclusion. Although completed before the longitudinal study in terms of the chronology of the research, I have placed the journal article after the thesis conclusion, as it is a distinct, smaller-scale case study specifically exploring the Exam Play. The critical through-line running through this thesis and connecting its elements is the theme of craft, both as a system of skill and knowledge and its values as a 'joined skill in community' (Sennett, 2008: 51). The theatre building provides an anchor and focus for exploring themes of craft and community in each component of the thesis. The thesis tells a story of the theatre building as a location for the development of civic identity amongst young people, and a context for learning, presenting an argument for education practices that draw on the diverse skills and artistry inherent in a producing theatre context. The following thesis structure aims to guide the reader through this field of work, initially in historical context, through to the young people's initial encounters with the theatre building through the scheme. I then explore their experiences of engaging in the theatre's technical and craft-based practices and the mapping of this approach to their experiences of spectatorship, before presenting insights into my own practices in developing the provision.

As explained above, the first chapter, 'Locating Education Programmes in Theatre Buildings: A historiography of developments in practice between 1958 – 2008', provides historical context for the themes and focus of the thesis. This chapter positions my research in time and situates the contribution of the thesis.

In the second chapter, 'Regional theatre, Place & Storyness: How the theatre building evokes meanings', I draw on the work of Carlson (1989), Knowles (2004), and McAuley (2000), whose studies explore the theatre experience

through a cultural materialist lens. In contrast to the subsequent chapters' focus on objects, craft and the learning experience developed at the Coliseum and other regional theatres, this chapter focuses specifically on the theatre *building*. Considering the 'immediate conditions, both cultural and theatrical, in and through which theatrical performances are produced ... and received', I examine how the young people experience the theatre building and its practices, within its geographic, cultural and social context (Knowles, 2014: 3). Drawing on the young people's interpretations, I examine the Coliseum's cultural history and how this has shaped the artistic and social focus of the theatre's work. The chapter then draws on Carlson's concept of 'haunting', to describe the 'traces of the past' that the young people ascribe to the theatre building (2001). I examine the implications of these histories and narratives on the young people's perceptions of the theatre, as a place. Drawing on the work of Dorney and Merkin, who explore regional theatre and the significance of 'the local', I assert that the 'storyness' of the theatre building, comprising of layers of social meanings, provides a focus and location for the development of civic identity amongst young people in Oldham (Austin, 2012).

The third chapter, 'Hidden Spaces, Dusty Objects and Practices: Learning through theatre craft in situ', examines the young people's experiences of participating in practices that explore theatre making, within the context of a theatre building. Through engaging in backstage tours, workshops and demonstrations, the young people's photographs and observations uncover and illuminate the manual labour and artistry involved in constructing illusions onstage, which often go unseen within the theatre event. Drawing on the work of theatre scholar Aoife Monks, who asserts that within theatre and performance studies, there exists a hierarchy of labour between the work of actors and directors and technicians and makers, I argue that this hierarchy is also manifest in theatre education and applied theatre discourse (2014). I assert that dramatic explorations have received much more critical attention than technical and craft-based practices within theatre education research. To redress this, I focus on one specific workshop delivered by a

lighting technician to develop deeper understandings of the social and educational potential of learning through a technical and craft focused approach. Within the chapter, I explore the significance and agency that the young people ascribe to the theatre's props and offer examples for theatrical explorations using a materialist approach.

I extend my exploration of these themes in chapter 4, 'The Process of Progress: Developing critical skills as theatre makers and audience members', mapping the young people's experiences of learning through craft onto the theatre event. Through an analysis of the young people's experiences of pre-show practices, in the first instance, designed to stimulate and enhance their understandings of the making of a production, I explore their experiences of spectatorship, following these activities. Through the young people's insight into the skills, collaboration and work involved in producing a production, I explore the binary between process and product and its usefulness to young people's learning, in understanding how materials and bodies construct fictional worlds. Using the young people's experiences of observing both the production process and product, the performance itself, I explore craft as an overarching critical framework in theatre education, and its potential in developing young people's critical and creative skills as audience members and theatre makers. I draw on Sennett's (2008, 2012) understandings of the communal importance of craft, to articulate the synergies between craft, education and the local.

Drawing together themes of craft and community, chapter 5, 'Situating Participatory Practice: Learning departments in regional theatres', extends the dialogue initiated in my historiography. I explore the current organisation of the Coliseum's education practices and contrast my reflections with those elicited from practitioners working at Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester and the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool. The chapter establishes the specific ways a theatre's broader context informs the approaches of practitioners working in regional theatres and develops understandings of the specific skills and practices that underpin the role of these workers. I draw on Lave

and Wenger's articulations of 'communities of practice' to describe how each practitioner responds to the theatre building to cultivate a skill and knowledge share with and between young people (1991). With a teacher from a school engaged in the Coliseum's partnership scheme, I explore the foundations of the theatre's work with schools and the necessary and mutual role we share in introducing young people to the theatre.

The Conclusion offers an overview of each chapter and draws together the themes of the longitudinal study. I reflect on the possibilities of the approaches presented and areas for potential development and further research. I reflect and evaluate on the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of the study and describe the ways my learning has evolved. Within the conclusion and appendices, I discuss the methodology used within the longitudinal case study and offer a series of reflections for practitioner-researchers and teachers to draw on for future research into young people's experiences of engaging in practices, in connection to a cultural context.

A journal article exploring the Exam Play sits after the conclusion. Although not published, I developed the article with the *RIDE* journal (*Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*) in mind. The journal is aimed at arts education practitioners and scholars, theatre workers, policy makers and teachers. The article offers critical insights into the practice, which combines practical learning into the making of a Shakespeare production or alternative play studied as part of the English Literature curriculum, with spectatorship. The themes of the article chime with my exploration of spectatorship in chapter 4. However, whilst aiming to rehabilitate the practice in theatre education discourse, which historically has received little critical attention, I situate the article within debates surrounding the teaching of Shakespeare. The article interrogates dominant discourse surrounding the efficacy of teaching Shakespeare through drama and makes an argument for guided spectatorship.

Taken together, these seven components contribute new, critical insights into practices delivered by learning departments in regional theatres, which aim to cultivate young people's relationships to theatre buildings. The thesis offers a body of work that critically explores the theatre building as a focus for engagement, and will be relevant to theatre educators, teachers, theatre scholars and researcher-practitioners. The reader is encouraged to go on a journey through the theatre building and consider, through the young people's photographic insights, the significance of practices that often go unseen and unnoticed within the theatre event.

Chapter 1. Locating Education Programmes in Theatre Buildings: A historiography of developments in practice between 1958 and 2008

This chapter sets a historical context for the thesis, which explores the education practices delivered by British regional theatres, an under-researched area of contemporary British Theatre Studies. I identify five key patterns in the development of education activities connected to regional theatres from 1958 - 2008. I explore how the work emerged in response to social and political shifts and the ways the approaches either locate the practices within or dislocate the practices from the theatre building. This is particularly pertinent within discourse surrounding the Theatre in Education (TIE) movement. Motivated by the ambition to democratise theatre and 'based on the perception that theatres as places represented cultural privilege and class division', TIE took place away from the theatre building, within schools (Nicholson, 2009: 59). The TIE 'unit', a team of actor-teachers who delivered the TIE programmes, therefore, arguably worked in tension with the theatre building, compared to the subsequent position of education or learning departments working in regional theatres most prominently from the 1990's.

Jackson, in his *Learning through Theatre* book series, published in 1980, 1993 and 2013, has tracked the evolving relationship between theatre and education from/since the TIE movement. In *Theatre & Education*, Nicholson traces the beginnings of TIE and the social and political tension points that led to its emergence and decline (2008). In *Theatre, Education and Performance*, Nicholson expands and further maps this history and landscape, commenting on the way in which the theatre building as a cultural institution has often been negatively conceptualised in theatre education discourse (2011). These accounts have provided the basis and starting point to this chapter. However, I explore some of the cracks in-between these histories, to locate the theatre building in relation to the development of education provision. I argue that education activities, focused on learning *about* theatre making, delivered within the theatre building itself, have largely

been neglected in theatre education research. There are examples of rich praxis in the making within these histories, exploring theatre craft and the processes of theatre making, however, these explorations were superseded by the plethora of discourse surrounding TIE. Furthermore, we know little about the spatial relationship between TIE units and theatre buildings and how this has evolved through the work of learning departments.

As noted in the methods chapter, the lack of critical discourse exploring education practices connected to the theatre building, prompted me to look into the archives of regional theatres. I looked at the annual reports and related sources produced by Belgrade Theatre in Coventry and Octagon Theatre in Bolton, where there is rich history of TIE practice. I use these sources in tandem with critical discourse around TIE and theatre education, to map the histories of practices connected to the theatre building. Taken together, the literature explores five key shifts - the programmes of work established in newly built civic theatres from 1958, the beginnings of the TIE movement and the relationship of TIE teams to theatre buildings from 1965, the inception of the National Curriculum and decline of TIE, and the subsequent emergence of learning departments from 1986, New Labour's governance and the 'Creative Industries' Policy from 1997, and finally, the McMaster report (2008) and the 'holistic' turn in education activities (Jackson, 2013: 35).

The Belgrade Theatre sparked a substantial increase in theatre building following the Second World War. I begin my explorations from this point, examining the civic renewal of regional theatre and how this led to the development of activities that aimed to attract young people to theatres as part of a civic venture. From here, I examine the emergence of a number of practices at the Belgrade that focused on learning about theatre making, initially from the perspective of writers and actors to that of theatre technicians and other staff across the building. I then explore the beginnings of TIE at the Belgrade and the Octagon and the social and spatial position of the TIE units within the theatres themselves. I argue that the radical politics driving TIE practice and motivating much research into TIE meant that

researchers have often neglected other educational activities in the theatre. Focusing on the Education Reform Act (1988) and the Cork Report (1986), I then examine the implications of shifting education policies on TIE, such as the lack of opportunities the National Curriculum provided for implementing TIE programmes. I examine these shifts in relation to the economic and ideological changes brought about by Margaret Thatcher's government (1979 - 1990). From this point, I explore the decline of TIE and the emergence of education departments in regional theatres, following the restructuring of TIE units.

I recognise the next key shift, post-TIE, as informed by New Labour's governance (1997 - 2010), which encompassed an education policy emphasising the instrumental use of the arts. I analyse the potential impact this had on the work of the learning department at the Belgrade and the Octagon in contributing to a wider set of social and economic agendas. Finally, I examine the position of education activities within regional theatre from 2008, following the McMaster report (2008) and the introduction of the young people's free ticketing scheme, *A Night Less Ordinary*, contributing my own experiences from this point of how it informed the Coliseum's work. I argue that the discourse around audience development and practices connected to the theatre building, captured at the start and the end of this 50-year period, is markedly similar. However, practitioners working in learning departments have inherited the 'political spirit' and creativity of their TIE predecessors, evident in the considerations made in attempting to remedy the barriers which prevent many young people from accessing theatre as a cultural institution (Nicholson, 2011: 208). My approach is loosely chronological and largely focuses on shifts in practice at the Belgrade Theatre and the Octagon Theatre. However, I draw on examples of practice from other regional theatres, including the Coliseum, to highlight shifts and similarities in approach.

The Role of the Civic Theatre

The development of theatre education in post-war Britain is directly connected to widespread belief in theatre's civic role. This is well illustrated in the histories of regional theatres such as the Belgrade and the Octagon. The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry was built on a landscape devastated by war and became of social and civic importance to the redevelopment of the city (Nicholson, 2011: 64). Jackson explores this period of optimism, noting how 'against a backdrop of increasing post-war prosperity, accompanied by a widely shared faith in the necessary and even inevitable improvement of the country's standards of living, it became possible to see theatre as a major means of contributing to that improvement' (1984: 91). Theatre scholar Olivia Turnbull notes that 'many local authorities saw the construction of new theatres as a way of giving physical expression to civic self-confidence' (2008: 48). The initiative at the Belgrade sparked a renewal and heralded an unprecedented boom in theatre building, with twenty new theatres being constructed across Britain between 1958 and 1975 (Jackson, 1984: 89). Although contributions also came from community fundraising, local authorities were the principle funders and became 'the proprietors of the new buildings' (Turnbull, 2008: 49).

The Octagon Theatre in Bolton was constructed in 1966 after Robin Pemberton-Billing, a drama lecturer from Loughborough College, presented an idea for a community theatre to Bolton Borough Council (Pemberton-Billing, 2011: 18). The council had considered the option of building a civic theatre in Bolton two years' prior and were interested to hear Pemberton-Billing's ideas (Pemberton-Billing, 2011: 25). According to a survey by the City Borough of Bolton in 1964, the fundamental objectives to build a civic theatre and integrated Arts Centre in Bolton, would be 'to improve the cultural life of the town' and 'to play a valuable role in making the town more attractive' (Rennison, 1964: 3). The aims of Bolton Council's civic theatre were similar to Coventry Council's; the theatre would serve to improve the visual landscape of the town and act as an emblem of cultural development.

However, Pemberton-Billing's plans for the Octagon Theatre were quite different to the case put forward by the council in 1964. He felt as if his plans for a 'small, intimate, community theatre' may find itself in opposition to the council's grandiose theatre plans. He therefore proposed that it would act as an adjunct to the larger civic theatre when it was built, which the council accepted. However, these plans never materialised, and the Octagon became the only newly built theatre that Bolton Council invested in (Pemberton-Billing, 2011: 24). The proposition that the Octagon would act as an adjunct to a larger theatre, reflects writer and broadcaster, J.B Priestley's vision, who envisaged the organisation of a theatre network where two theatres would function in each town, providing a balance of experimental and touring work (Gale, 2008: 45).

The revival of regional theatre led to the redefining of theatre as a social amenity. The new ventures stressed the 'essentially civic nature of the enterprise' (Jackson, 1984: 92). Encompassed by civic financial support, there was enhanced responsibility to make the new buildings accessible and provide a social utility. The ambition for the theatres was tied to an understanding that they would 'serve' their local community. The theatre buildings would open to the public throughout the day; a philosophy reflective of J.B Priestley's vision of the civic theatre. As theatre scholar Maggie Gale observes, Priestley's vision was for theatre to be viewed as a 'package of public amenities and have no less status than public parks, galleries and libraries'. The buildings would 'reflect local identities and civic pride' (2008: 45). Developed as part of the 'welfare state's social democratic ethos', the theatre buildings were envisioned by local authorities to have more than a theatre function, they were framed as 'community-orientated arts centres' (Turnball, 2008: 51). As Jackson notes, the theatres would aim to be 'much more than playhouses, offering a range of art activities including poetry recitals, art exhibitions, lectures and programmes for school children' (1984: 92). What did these activities envisioned within this post-war period actually look like? How did civic support inform the design and delivery of the education practices developed at the Belgrade and the Octagon?

Both the Belgrade Theatre Trust and the Octagon Theatre Trust adopted a strategy from their inception that would engage young people in attending the theatre. The Belgrade Theatre adopted a 3-year strategy that would ensure that the theatre would be 'firmly established and that a definite style and line of action will have been accepted by the theatre going public'. The strategy included: i) A close working partnership with the Local Education Authority, 'to ensure the provision of special school productions and matinee performances'. ii) The development of an Under 20's club, 'the trust's first step towards encouraging a younger audience'. The club would provide half price tickets to young people (Belgrade Theatre Trust, 1958). Pemberton-Billing's conceptualisation of a community theatre was based on a similar set of objectives, which included: i) An educational programme 'so that local children could be introduced to drama, at an early age, and thus develop an interest that might well last a lifetime and might also help to swell future audiences'. ii) Plays selected based on their dramatic quality and their relevance to local audiences. iii) The theatre would reach out to the community to give talks and demonstrations, to ensure it was embedded in the local area. iv) The theatre would open all day and serve as a 'local amenity, open to all' (Pemberton-Billing, 2011: 29).

The theatres' first strategies, although developed at slightly different times, both emphasise the importance of serving their locality, creating work that was reflective of and relevant to a local audience. The strategies reflect the municipal influence on the theatres' governance, as the authority funding proposed that they open throughout the day and serve as a local amenity. The discourse used in both of the theatre's strategies, states that they had a desire to attract and develop young audiences. The theatres planned to provide discounted tickets and supplementary workshops to engage young people in their artistic programmes. There is little detail in these initial strategies of how the theatres planned to reach young people and facilitate these activities, which appear to primarily rely on drawing people to the theatre building and the young people being able to afford discounted theatre tickets.

Bryan Bailey, the first Artistic Director at the Belgrade Theatre, 'adopted a definite policy to attract young people' (Redington, 1983: 43). Derek Newton was appointed in 1958 and given the specific remit of developing contacts with young people, introducing holiday activity and playwriting workshops (Redington, 1983: 43). In the Belgrade's 1959/60 Annual Report, a separate heading 'Youth and the Theatre' was featured. Under the heading it was reported that 'talks and demonstrations' were delivered during the Christmas holidays:

Theatre Holiday has been of immense value, already for many hundreds of young people there is a link with the theatre's company and staff, a greater understanding and appreciation of actors and the theatre, playwrights and play, than ever before. They do not seek to turn young people into would be actors and actresses, but they do encourage young people to be selective, critical and to understand how vital and real the audience's own contribution is to the living theatre (Belgrade Theatre, Annual Report, 1959/60).

The report suggests that the focus of the activity at the Belgrade in 1959 was largely based on exploring theatre through talks about the plays. The provision focused on young people developing knowledge of how theatre was made, from the perspective of writers and actors, with the aim of this knowledge transferring to their 'understanding and appreciation' of a production as audience members. The emphasis on developing young people's critical responses to a production, indicates that the activity was perhaps largely didactic, utilising 'talks and demonstrations' as the primary method of delivery/engagement. The principle aim was to develop young audiences as opposed to providing provision that engaged young people in participatory theatre-making activity, 'they do not seek to turn young people into would be actors and actresses'. Although the report claims that the activities fostered a 'link' between the theatre's staff and young people, it is unclear who the young people were and how they had been engaged from the annual report. The largely text-focused approach, reflective of the 'talk

and chalk' education practices of the time, may have excluded certain groups of young people.

David Forder was Derek Newton's successor and continued to develop provision at the Belgrade, adding additional projects including a schools' tour with members of the repertory company, titled 'Theatre as Entertainment' (Redington, 1983: 43). Forder visited schools with members of the repertory company, gave talks, demonstrations, and told stories to both primary and secondary school children (Belgrade Theatre, Annual Report, 1960/61). Forder administered an 'Under 20's Club' where those in full time education could benefit from cheap theatre tickets, with access to workshops. He would promote the Under 20's Club during his school visits with 'Theatre as Entertainment' (Belgrade Theatre, Annual Report, 1960/61). Although still linked primarily to developing audiences, these are perhaps the first signs of the Belgrade engaging with educational settings on an outreach basis, and potentially attempting to provide access to more diverse groups of young people. It is notable that the repertory company, rather than a specialised educational unit, as I explore below, delivered this initial period of outreach.

According to Mark Woolgar, several theatres utilised their repertory company for tours in schools (1971: 86). Christine Redington supports this, noting that 'many repertory companies had some form of contact with schools before the emergence of TIE ... usually through the Publicity Officer or the Assistant Director' (1983: 29). The repertory company at Salisbury Playhouse performed extracts from a set English examination text being studied in local schools, as part of a model of work entitled, 'The Exam Play'. The extracts were supplemented by talks and workshops relating to characters and themes from the play (Woolgar, 1971: 86). The principle aim of the work was to provide students with knowledge and understandings of a play from a practical perspective. Woolgar notes, the repertory company would 'work publicly in rehearsal terms on a text which is being studied by schools in the district, a play not necessarily in the company's repertoire, thus involving

them in a considerable amount of extra work'. The Bristol Old Vic and the Oxford Playhouse delivered a version of this practice titled, 'Play Days Plus':

Those attending learn something about the play ... staging it ... designing a production ... what contribution the lighting can make ... They may have an opportunity to take part in a scene. For instance, *The Ladies not for Burning* includes the offstage noise of a crowd wanting a witch's blood ... we staged the crowd scene that might have happened. We considered the various reactions of the types of people likely to be found in a small medieval town ... we sent people into groups to work on this with members of the [repertory] company (Woolgar, 1971: 88).

These activities focus on deconstructing a play through a practical exploration of the staging and technical choices made for a production. Versions of this model of work, although perhaps not entirely abandoned during the TIE movement, began to reemerge on the programmes of regional theatres in the 2000's. Working in the learning department at the Coliseum, I frequently delivered activities directly linked to the producing of a play, from 2010 - 2019. Similarly, the Octagon Theatre deliver 'Investigate', a programme of work linked to each main stage production (Octagon Theatre website, 2012). As Gordon Vallins describes below, in addition to the repertory company, theatre technicians were also actively involved in delivering these building-based activities at the Belgrade in the 1960s. Vallins, originally a geography teacher, was appointed in 1964, following Forder, to assist the Artistic Director and contribute to public relations (Jackson, 1980: 5). His focus was work targeted at young people and he continued to develop a breadth of holiday activity. In writing about the beginnings of TIE, Vallins describes the Belgrade's activities in 1964, as exploring,

lighting, production, make-up, costume, writing a script and the general working of the theatre, including the mounting and striking of a

set shown back to front so that the young people in the auditorium could see the demonstration ... These activities were shared by actors and technicians (1980: 7).

Vallins' activities incorporate broader, more practical learning opportunities within the theatre building in comparison to the more text-focused activities delivered earlier on at the Belgrade, recorded in their 1959/60 annual report. Similar to Woolgar's account, the activities were delivered directly in the theatre building and drew on the technical crafts housed in the theatre. Vallins' approach to this area of provision is markedly similar to the activities delivered at the Coliseum, through the theatre's education partnership scheme, launched in 2012. The activities, examined in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, focus on exploring technical and craft-based practices within the theatre building and include working with technicians as well as actors.

Vallins goes on to describe *Out of the Ashes*, a large-scale performance project produced in 1965 with the Belgrade Youth Theatre. A promenade performance based on the Coventry Blitz, the production utilised site-specific settings, relevant to local areas devastated by the bombings and also areas in the theatre building itself (1980: 7). The project used elements of reminiscence practice, using a local writer to collate a script based on people's memories of the war, which was then enacted by the young people. The performance was fully supported by a technical crew and staff at the theatre. As Nicholson asserts, the *Out of the Ashes* project was 'innovative and radical at the time ... emphasising the social dynamic of participation, the immediacy of improvisation, the significance of vernacular stories and used the energy of popular culture' (2011: 65). The premise of this project, as Nicholson notes, was innovative, and resonates with what many regional theatres arguably aim to achieve today, in engaging young people and community participants directly in the development and performance of their artistic practices. For example, in 2012, the Coliseum staged *Star-crossed* in Alexandra Park in Oldham. A site-specific, modern day take on *Romeo and*

Juliet by William Shakespeare and adapted by Ian Kershaw, the production involved a community chorus of over 30 young people, local brass bands and dance troupes. Similarly, in 2012, Bolton Octagon Theatre staged *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, which saw a young chorus playing directly alongside the professional cast. These examples, like *Out of the Ashes*, involve youth and community participants in the development and production of artistic practice, reflective both in content and demographic of the people and stories of a place.

What is emerging through these earlier accounts of theatre education, is a sense of praxis developing, focused on learning about theatre making, both within the context of the theatre building and through the young people's direct engagement with theatre forms. The repertory company and technicians are also engaged in the activity. However, what follows is reflective of the impulse and arguably necessary ambitions of egalitarian practitioners to broaden the breadth of their social and educational 'reach'. In addition, it is arguably reflective of the ways in which the Belgrade's unique relationship with Coventry Council propelled the TIE method. As Nicholson notes, Vallins' 'dissatisfaction' with his schools-based engagement, led him to rethink the theatre's offer:

The impetus for developing new ways of engaging young people in theatre came when Vallins realised that his visits to schools would be better if they involved children in "doing theatre rather than listening to me chat about it". This dissatisfaction with his own teaching methods, coupled with his belief that the theatre should be at the centre of civic life, led directly to discussions with head teachers (2011: 66).

In 1965, Vallins began to develop a programme of work in consultation with Head Teachers to consider what new strategies the theatre could employ to make a meaningful contribution to education (Redington, 1983: 44-45). Vallins presented, along with the advisory panel of Head Teachers, a proposition that was accepted by the Local Education Authority (Vallins,

1980: 14). Vallins assembled a team, which would become the 'unit', and they began to develop a series of pilot programmes in schools that focused on using performance and participation to explore topical issues (1980: 14). According to Oliver Turner, Coventry was one of the first advocates of the new comprehensive education system, implemented by Labour in 1965 (2010: 4). The comprehensive education system sought to dismantle the tripartite education structure and implement non-hierarchical teaching methods, which focused on a child-centred approach (Nicholson, 2009: 13). The development of child-based drama was also gaining in recognition, formalised by John Newsom's Report, *Half our Future* (1963). The report recognised the contribution drama and experiential learning could have on child-centred education (Turner, 2010: 3). Therefore, educational structures were changing collectively and the Belgrade's existing reputation for providing activities for young people was growing. This provided conducive ground for the development and experimentation of new educational theatre forms. As these developments took place, what happened to the existing practices focused on learning *about* theatre within the theatre building? These practices arguably had room to develop and incorporate further opportunities for participatory practice with young people.

The beginnings of the Theatre-in-Education Movement (1965) and The Arts Council's Young People's Theatre Policy (1966)

In 1965, the Belgrade TIE unit had begun to develop the TIE methodology. In the same year, the Arts Council conducted an enquiry under the leadership of Hugh Willatt, into the 'present provision of theatre for young people in the widest terms, to make recommendations for future developments'. As part of the scope of the enquiry, the committee visited the Belgrade TIE unit whilst they were delivering a programme (Jackson, 1980: 17). In 1966, *The Provision of Theatre for Young People in Great Britain* was published (ACGB, 1966). It praised the Belgrade TIE Unit and criticised other theatres for their 'negligible efforts to reach young people' (Turnball, 2008: 59). Jackson notes, that 'apart from Christmas pantomimes and the occasional Shakespeare chosen to fit with the current O-Level examination syllabus, the

reps themselves, with a few exceptions, made very little effort to reach young people' (1984: 94). Nicholson supports this, noting that 'with the exception of a few enlightened theatre managers at places like the Belgrade ... education was generally considered to be a peripheral activity, sublimated to the interests of the paying public and the artistic programme which remained firmly at the heart of the building' (2011: 208). These accounts suggest that the activities described above were rare, on the 'periphery' of the theatres' existing programmes. The survey concluded that 'financial help should be given to enable the larger provincial companies to establish second companies, to play specifically to young people' and to take account of the new form developed at the Belgrade Theatre (Jackson, 1980: 18).

In 1967, the Arts Council established the Young People's Theatre Panel, after 'a period of exploration and experimentation, in which grants have been made to companies working in many different ways with young people' (ACGB, 1967). Redington notes that the Arts Council 'stimulated the repertory theatres into offering a wider range of activities for young people ... other repertories realized the potential of concentrating their youth activities in and around the TIE team' (Redington, 1983: 30). This suggests that with funding available to work with children and young people, repertories began to duplicate the Belgrade's model. Further TIE units were assembled across the regions at Bolton, Leeds, Edinburgh and Greenwich, which were formed from 1968 – 1970, and shortly after at Nottingham, Peterborough and Lancaster before 1975 (Jackson, 1993: 21). The model produced at the Belgrade had been well publicised, particularly as its development coincided with the inception of the Young People's Theatre Panel (Woolgar, 1971: 84). Pemberton-Billing notes that he was heavily influenced by the work of the TIE team at the Belgrade Theatre and planned to implement a schools' company at the Octagon Theatre that utilised the Coventry model (2011: 88). The influence of the model is reflected in how quickly it was reproduced by other theatres.

In addition to the funding that was available, the growth of TIE was brought about by the then current state of theatre and the social and political counter movements of the 1960s. According to Nicholson, 'although TIE companies accepted local government funding, actor-teachers did not consider themselves to be instruments of civic authority' (2011: 66). TIE was developed at a time when practitioners were suspicious of the role of mainstream theatre, questioning who and what it was for. As David Pammenter, who joined the Belgrade Theatre TIE unit in 1969 explains:

Much of theatre has to do with sexual titillation of the worst order, is nostalgic, backward looking, and safe. It plays to a small percentage of the population, which is, in the main, the middle-class. The values it reflects, often reinforces and fails to explore are usually middle class values and assumptions ... it is true to say that, in general, the theatre does not provide a quality service to its audiences ... young people in particular (1980: 42).

Jackson describes practitioners as 'allying themselves with - and often in the vanguard of progressive movements in both theatre and education' (1993: 19). TIE practitioners were influenced by the work of Brecht and the Workers Theatre Movement of the 1920's and 1930's. Underpinned by Marxist ideology, these alternative theatre movements set out to challenge the establishment. The movements focused on democratising theatre and addressing socio-political issues, taking it outside of theatre buildings and directly to working class audiences. Nicholson notes that 'traces of this theatre history can be recognised in early TIE practice, both in motivation and methodology ... [encompassing] involvement, participation, process and activity' (Nicholson, 2009: 24). This philosophy directly informed the design, content and delivery of the programmes, using theatre as a tool to involve young people in addressing social and political issues, and 'working in schools rather than theatre buildings' (Nicholson, 2009: 24). The methodology of TIE, with its early roots influenced by the alternative theatre movements, has been well documented by Redington (1983), O'Toole

(1976), Jackson (1980) and Schweitzer (1980). Their accounts describe the key educational elements of the practice, which include utilising play, learning by doing and children and young people's physical participation in the theatrical experience. The theatrical elements included a dramatic conflict in the plot, socio-political subject matters and theatrical aids, such as props and costume. The methodology contrasted rehearsal processes leading to performance with progressive educational theories and represented the emergence of a new form of experiential learning and a new form of theatre.

The TIE 'programme' refers to a series of interwoven events involving performance, participation and follow up work relating to a specific topic area. Jackson argues that the concept of the programme was undoubtedly the most important innovation in the work. He notes that it was not just a 'one off' event but a 'carefully structured pattern of work' (1993: 4). The programme provided an overarching structure to the TIE method, considered as a way of developing understandings of a topic area, rather than it being presented and addressed in a 'one off' theatrical event. The approach carefully integrated the educational and theatrical elements around the child's learning experience, whilst leaving opportunities for the classroom teacher to develop follow up work. The experimentations that took place throughout the movement, opened up new possibilities for the educative potential of theatre as a learning medium. TIE also developed what could be considered as the first signs of in-depth partnership working and collaboration between schools and regional theatres. This involved the co-authorship of a programme; planning, co-delivery and follow-up work between members of the TIE unit and teachers.

The theatre related provision delivered pre-TIE, focused on learning about theatre making, has been described as being infrequent and on the periphery of the theatres' main programmes, delivered at a time when a 'certain establishment aura should attach to the [civic theatre] buildings' (Jackson, 1984: 92). These practices appear to have halted in many theatres

when the TIE methodology was introduced, and TIE teams were assembled, and/or they were neglected in theatre education research. Eileen Murphy, a company member of Bolton Octagon TIE, notes how the education department at the Octagon Theatre was 'conceived as an integral part of what was intended to be a lively community theatre. Staff began peripatetic drama teaching in colleges and schools before Cora Williams, a former member of the Belgrade TIE unit, began work in the department and introduced the TIE method' (Murphy, 1978: 5). This suggests that before Williams implemented the TIE model, staff had been delivering in educational settings on an outreach basis, through methods that perhaps focused on learning about theatre practice. Similarly, at the Belgrade, Vallins explains how originally packages of work based on specialist drama teaching in schools, holiday activity and the presentation of children's theatre was planned and presented to the Local Education Authority and the advisory panel of Head Teachers. However, the company eventually focused their efforts on only one area of provision, which was TIE:

The vision of making theatre an integral part of formal education and establishing links with all parts of the community, including children in and out of school, was reduced then as always for the lack of money. The only part to materialise was TIE (1980: 14).

These examples suggest that TIE, particularly at the Belgrade and the Octagon, became the principle form of engaging children and young people in theatre related activity. As Nicholson notes, 'one consequence is that young people were often discouraged from learning about the process of theatre making for themselves and experimenting with how different dramatic forms create meaning. This tended to be left to specialist drama courses' (2011: 200). Although other theatre making practices, described in the earlier section, were not entirely abandoned within theatres at the time, the discourse in the field is largely dominated by TIE practice. Woolgar articulates what he describes as a 'misinterpreted' admiration of the new approach, with reference to the Belgrade's company:

The whole operation is well publicised, and as it is in existence the whole time, it is available to demonstrate its work at conferences and for people who visit it on its home ground and for representatives to go around and talk about it. The example of the Belgrade Theatre's team is possibly misinterpreted by the general public because its work is largely made possible by a sizeable grant given by the Coventry civic authorities (1971: 84).

This suggests that many other regional theatres were unable to develop and disseminate TIE programmes on the same level and to the same scale as the Belgrade's TIE unit, due to their differing practical and financial circumstances. It also indicates that other theatre education practices continued in these theatres, however, the Belgrade's TIE model was particularly well resourced and publicised. Therefore, although other activities may have been delivered, these were poorly documented and critical examinations of them are therefore limited. As Nicholson notes, it is significant that critical accounts of TIE were captured during the movement, which reflects the movement's own appetite for 'grappling with its theory and practices' (2011: 67). Publicity and critical interest, therefore, arguably in part fuelled the movement and the subsequent discourse surrounding its social and political effectiveness, driven by the energy of the practitioners and its followers. A consequence of this was the removal of the theatre building itself from the new methodology, along with the repertory company, the technicians and their practices. Although initially many TIE units were 'housed' in theatre buildings, this was not necessarily where their practice was rooted.

The TIE Unit and the theatre building

Belgrade Coventry TIE began as a unit of four, based at the Belgrade Theatre. Jackson notes that being based at the theatre, the unit was able to,

make use of the theatre's resources (stage management, set and props construction etc.) and were able too, to establish itself a healthy measure of independence, organisationally from the education authority, and on the other hand, as a separate department of the theatre with funds earmarked for work in local schools (1980: 17).

Similarly, Redington points out how the joint venture enabled the company to retain some independence from both institutions, 'it did not have to duplicate the work of the main house or the work of the teacher in the school' (1983: 45). This suggests that there were logistical advantages to the position of the TIE 'unit', housed within a theatre building and outside of the education authorities, allowing them the independence and creative space to devise content and develop forms, specific to their programmes. Pammenter explains how the environment of the theatre was of great importance to the development of TIE for providing this creative, exploratory space:

[Teams were] able to adopt more specific educational aims and explore new approaches with the license of the theatre to create new forms ... only the theatre could have allowed the development to take place' (1980: 38-39).

However, the relationship between the TIE units and theatre buildings has often been characterised as distant and strained. Redington notes that 'there are in fact basic differences in philosophy, method and working schedules that inevitably separate the TIE Company from the repertory theatre' (1983: 126). Fred Hawksley, a member of the Belgrade TIE unit, explains, 'we are in a sense very different, exercising two very definite skills that puts us not higher or lower, but a distance from the main house' (in Redington, 1983: 126). David Beidas, the Belgrade General Manager from 1989 - 2003, goes further than this, noting that 'there was no link between what the rest of the theatre was doing and what the TIE team was doing - they did to all intents and purposes function completely independently' (in Turner, 2010: 15). This suggests that the work of the unit increasingly diverged from the working

practices of the theatre. It also highlights the paradoxical position of the TIE unit; their practices were deliberately separate to the main house and therefore, the work intentionally was not connected. The philosophical underpinnings of the TIE movement emphasised 'theatre for social change rather than building audiences for the future' (Jackson, 2013: 23). Murphy, from the Bolton Octagon TIE Unit, notes that '[TIE] is not actors from the local rep going into schools to dramatise passages from examination texts and advertise their current production' (1975: 5). Murphy points out how the principles and outcomes of TIE were different to practices that connected to the theatre building, and scrutinises provision targeted towards audience development. Gavin Bolton reinforces this notion, arguing that it would have been 'impossible and inappropriate' for the TIE team to advocate or teach children *about theatre* as the 'team's priority must always be a change in understanding' (1993: 44). Practitioners believed the aim of their practice was purely educational and not to foster a legacy and advocate a relationship between schools and the theatre, outside of the TIE programme.

According to Jackson, as the Belgrade TIE unit operated 'with funds earmarked for work in local schools, it was afforded the opportunity to build up close liaison with the schools themselves' (1993: 19). This suggests that the unit acted as the main point of contact between the schools and the theatre, which was advantageous for the continuity of administration and building up a rapport with staff in schools. However, this meant that in effect, no direct contact was made between the schools and the theatre itself. According to Giles Havegral, responsible for setting up the Watford Theatre TIE team, the effect of the unit on the rest of the theatre 'was curiously negative, because of the way the theatre was developed, it didn't allow us to plug into the work they were doing in schools (in Redington, 1983: 127). The expectations of the unit and their position within the theatre building, was therefore convoluted, from the perspective of both people working in the theatre and the TIE unit. Jackson notes that 'TIE was not primarily seen as being an audience building exercise, it was though for the theatres at this early stage, a further valuable link between the main house and the various

sections of the community and further helped to challenge the conventional notions of what theatre was supposed to be' (1984: 95). In *Learning through Theatre*, Jackson also describes the TIE movement as part of a much wider development that took place over the twentieth century to look for and speak to new audiences (1993: 1). The practices encountered by the children and young people may have sparked an interest in theatre as a form, particularly as TIE involved participants in participatory practice. However, the potential interest stimulated by the experience was not related back in any way to the context of the theatre building and its programmes. TIE units generally did not aim to stimulate a relationship between the theatre, as the practitioners stipulated this was not the principle aim of their work. Therefore, without this advocacy from the TIE unit and as they provided the primary connection between the theatre and schools, it is questionable whether TIE did help challenge the preconceptions of theatre, as Jackson suggests, or whether the concept of the unit further affirmed the barrier.

Throughout the 1970's, many TIE units established their independence from the main house by registering as limited liability or charitable companies, funded through the Arts Council and the Local Authority (Jackson, 2013: 26). According to Jackson, 'this gave them a much greater degree of autonomy and control over their work than would have been the case if they were attached to a main theatre' (2013: 26). In 1977, the Bolton Octagon TIE Unit was 'forced to move away with the discontinuance of the Bolton LEA grant' and subsequently became M6 Theatre Company, and even moved out of Bolton to Rochdale (Redington, 1983: 127). Their remit was to tour community and TIE work across the North West of England (Jackson, 2013: 36). The company has gone on to receive national acclaim for their work in the field, and equally the Bolton Octagon Theatre has since continued to extend their youth, schools and community provision. Therefore, the position of the TIE unit was complex in spatial and social terms. Aims were muddled, there were practical and logistical challenges but perhaps at the forefront, was the disconnect between the work and remit of the main house and the philosophical underpinnings of TIE practice. Although learning departments

in regional theatres are arguably much more integrated into the work of the theatre building, the issues that the TIE units faced, particularly within my practice, have not entirely vanished. My role at the Coliseum, similarly, involves navigating the perceptions of the main house programme and often finding alternative ways to engage young people in theatre making practices. I return to exploring some of these similarities and contrasts in the final section and across the thesis more broadly.

The Education Reform Act (1988) and the Implications of the Cork Report (1986)

According to Jackson, TIE generally relied on two streams of funding; the Arts Council and the Local Authority, often allocated specifically through the Local Education Authority (LEA) who were responsible for schools' budgets and education provision in each borough until the 1990's (1993: 19). The Arts Council stipulated that the experimentation of TIE in schools was an important element of the work taking place in regional theatres, however the panel 'looked forward to a time in the near future when Local Authorities will have had the time to evaluate the work in their areas and accept full financial responsibility if they believe it should continue' (ACGB, 1967). The question over who should pay for TIE remained in contention throughout the movement (Jackson, 2013: 25). The form consisted of both theatrical and educational components, on the one hand serving an explicitly educational purpose, and on the other hand, deriving from a professional theatre context.

The election of Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher in 1979, brought about significant challenges to the arts and education. According to Jackson, 'TIE was unable to escape the rapid and far reaching social, economic and cultural changes that came to the forefront in the 1980s: the decline in public funding of the arts, the changed, more censorious political atmosphere of Thatcherite Britain' (2013: 29). Along with the decline of public funding for the arts, TIE faced several further challenges when the Education Reform Act was implemented in 1988. The Act radically changed the content and assessment process of State Education in England and Wales, along

with the managerial and financial controls in schools (Whybrow, 1994: 4). TIE was also previously funded by Local Education Authorities (LEA), who were able to control the central subsidy for schools in each borough. However, the Act withdrew control from the LEA's and placed individual schools in control of their budgets, implemented through Local Management in Schools (LMS). Therefore, as a result, TIE companies faced two concurrent problems - they were forced to sell their work to individual schools, in a climate where teachers were adapting to meet new educational attainment targets (Sextou, 2003: 177).

The Education Reform Act introduced a National Curriculum based on skills and training, with minimal emphasis on arts provision (Jackson, 2013: 29). This led to extremely limiting possibilities for TIE as it struggled to fit in an educational framework that emphasized the teaching of the 'basics' or core subjects. These structures displaced the progressive ideology and experiential learning that provided a fertile ground for TIE (Nicholson, 2009: 36). According to Brian Bishop, the Belgrade's House Manager from 1982 - 1996, when the Belgrade TIE unit was faced with the challenges of the Education Reform Act, members of the unit, 'refused to pander to the National Curriculum' (in Turner, 2010: 15). Many TIE companies began to reduce the format of their practice, providing a performance-only programme that could accommodate larger school groups and thus, providing more value for money to sell to the school. There was also a reduction in personnel and a shift towards project-based funding, which diversified the practice into other areas such as health education (Jackson, 1993: 27).

TIE units attached to regional theatres faced another significant challenge. In 1986, the Cork Enquiry delivered the report, 'Theatre IS for All', after demands from regional theatres to review the position of producing theatre after damaging reductions to budgets under the Thatcher government (Brown and Brannen, 1996: 367). The report recommended that a strategy should be implemented over ten years, where Local Authorities would jointly fund organisations with the Arts Council to stabilise building based theatres

(Brown and Brannen, 1996: 378). The report also recommended that 'a more systematic approach to funding TIE and young peoples' theatre should be established, derived from the funding bodies locally recognised as most appropriate' (in Brown and Brannen, 1996: 379). The implications of the Cork Report on TIE units were damaging as it effectively negated Arts Council funding for TIE provision, placing responsibility onto Local Authorities, who were already facing severe cuts in addition to adjusting to the new LMS control of schools' budgets.

Consequently, Artistic Directors began to restructure their TIE units to accommodate a designated Officer post or a small department rather than supporting a company (Brown and Brannen, 1996: 379). According to Turner, the Belgrade TIE Unit 'became the Theatre and Education Department and was refocused so that it linked far more to the work of the main house' (2010: 15). Similarly, at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, the Leeds TIE unit, made up of eight members was streamlined to two posts (Whybrow, 1994: 199). Theatre scholar, Nicholas Whybrow, argues that the most striking crisis of TIE was transferring the allocation of funds earmarked for Belgrade TIE to the main theatre's management and adapting its artistic and educational policy. He believes that TIE was 'redefined by non-specialists whose primary concern was becoming ever more to do with economics' (1994: 199). Whybrow goes on to note that the provision was,

re-focused to include training young people in theatre skills and developing new theatre audiences through work related directly to main-house productions. Moreover, perennial imperatives of continuity and specialisation - upon which key aspects of TIE such as the function of actor-teacher and the devising of participatory programmes are reliant - may disappear altogether (1994: 199).

This suggests that there was scepticism surrounding the move to creating departments that were more closely linked to the theatre building and its practices. Whybrow raises concerns about the skill and application of the

new practitioners' work and whether close working partnerships with schools would be maintained. I return to examining the specific skills and qualities of practitioners or officers now working in learning departments in the final section, and deepen this exploration in chapter 5, to provide understandings of how the role of these practitioners has evolved from their TIE predecessors.

Jackson notes that TIE in its classic form was an extremely labour-intensive practice and the concept of the unit as a four to eight strong department was not sustainable after LEA cuts to funding (2013: 22). The reduction of the unit to an officer position was a more cost-effective way for the theatres to continue a relationship with schools. Although the implications of both the National Curriculum and the Cork Report had detrimental effects on TIE, the restructuring of the TIE units could be considered to have been an opportunity for regional theatres to align their education provision with the work of the rest of the building. The National Curriculum provided limited opportunities for TIE, with little flexibility to accommodate the programmes. TIE as a form of theatre was arguably not compatible with new assessment regimes, either in Theatre Studies as an examination subject or indeed other areas of the curriculum. It requires engagement with a subject matter and was often misapplied when used to provide students with an understanding of theatre making (Nicholson, 2009: 42). As Whybrow observes, the 'introduction of the Theatre Studies GCSE oriented exam in 1988, witnessed the increased misapplication of companies' work, with pupils being told by teachers to take notes about its formal aspects - set design, acting and so on' (2009: 274).

Although TIE was not the most appropriate method of delivering this area of provision, regional theatres had the appropriate resources to develop and input this specialism. The introduction of the Theatre Studies GCSE provided regional theatres with an opportunity to develop a meaningful area of partnership work, relating to the various aspects of producing theatre. In addition to the Theatre Studies GCSE, in 1996, following a merger of BTEC

(Business and Technology Education Council) and the University of London Examinations and Assessment Council, the examining body, Edexcel, was formed (Edexcel, 2012). Edexcel expanded the range of subjects offered under the BTEC qualification and offered a vocational form of learning. The BTEC aims to 'provide a more practical, real-world approach to learning alongside a key theoretical background' (Edexcel, 2012). The introduction of the Theatre Studies GCSE, followed by the Performing Arts BTEC, opened up new development opportunities for regional theatres to directly engage with young people during school visits and supplementary workshops. The emphasis of both the practical and theoretical elements of the syllabuses focused on students gaining knowledge and an understanding of the constructs of performance, producing theatre and the industry. The BTEC in particular was a significant development for regional theatres, as the focus of the syllabus concentrated on a range of creative disciplines that contribute to the theatre making process.

As Nicholson notes, whilst working as a drama teacher in 1990, 'without the political and educational commitment that characterized the best work, TIE gradually shifted from a movement to a theatrical genre ... given a limited budget, this was a serious consideration for drama teachers'. Nicholson continued a relationship with a local TIE company but also developed links with a local theatre (2009: 41-42). The Bristol Old Vic, in consultation with Nicholson and other local teachers, programmed a series of productions that aimed to appeal to young people. Matthew Warchus, the director of *Master Harold and the Boys* by Athol Fugard (1990), provided Nicholson's students with a post-show discussion that had 'a profound effect on them' (2009: 42). Therefore, although TIE declined, the curriculum stimulated new partnerships between the theatre and teachers, providing opportunities to develop provision that was directly linked to theatre making. TIE units left a legacy for regional theatres, through the subsequent development of dedicated officer posts, whose remit was to connect to local schools and the community. The work of the TIE units also highlighted the necessity of building purposeful

partnerships and programmes of work with teachers that go beyond serving solely as an advocacy function for the theatre.

New Labour and the 'Creative Industries' Policy (1997)

In 1997, New Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair was elected and set out a vision to re-articulate the notion of community and citizenship, focusing on equipping the UK workforce for the global economy (Newman, 2001: 1). According to theatre and education scholar Jonothan Neelands, New Labour's governance redefined cultural policy and funding mechanisms in the UK, which resulted in a 'social and inclusive' turn in cultural policy, that coerced 'major cultural producers to engage in various forms of outreach projects with disadvantaged groups' (2007: 312). According to Jones and Buckingham, the 'cultural turn' emphasised by New Labour's Creative Industries policy was the start of a new 'educational-cultural complex, as galleries, museums, theatres, art cinemas and opera-houses strive to justify and secure their existence by brokering partnership schemes to promote cultural activity among young people, both in and out of schools' (2001: 4). This 'educational-cultural complex' had an impact on regional theatres, who began to reframe their provision to contribute to wider social indicators, such as community cohesion, regeneration and social inclusion. The emphasis on the work of learning departments marked the theatres' commitment to the social efficacy of its work beyond the fabric of the building. James Blackman notes that New Labour's investment came with 'significant funding criteria that sought greater justification for its funding and a clearer sense of measurable outcomes' (2010: 189). The criteria resulted in refinements to the aims of the educational provision produced by regional theatres, and a new discourse subsequently emerged in the reporting, reflecting the instrumental benefits of the use of drama and theatre.

In 1998, New Labour established the National Advisory Board for Creative and Cultural Education, with the aim of providing strategic recommendations for the creative and cultural education of young people. The Robinson

Report, *All Our Futures*, followed in 1999, commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The report aimed to 'advance the significance of creativity throughout the entire curriculum' and emphasised the development of the creative skills and personal qualities of young people through cultural education (Fleming, 2008: 30). The emphasis on integrating cultural education into the curriculum as a whole, was a marked difference to the previous recommendations made by the Gulbenkian report, *The Arts in Schools* (1989), that viewed the arts as a way of balancing the emphasis on academic abilities (Fleming, 2008: 30). The Gulbenkian report emphasised the unique capabilities of arts subjects on the curriculum for developing the 'aesthetic and creative' abilities of young people. In contrast, *All Our Futures* highlighted the desire to embed and extend the qualities of the arts subjects across the curriculum, rather than children and young people developing creative skills and interests in the art forms as subjects in themselves.

Prompted by the report, in 2002, Arts Council England launched the initiative, 'Creative Partnerships', which aimed to develop children's creativity and imagination across all subject areas, with an emphasis on collaborating with arts organisations and practitioners (Fleming, 2008: 30). Creative Partnerships characterised New Labour's Creative Industries policy, which aimed to enable young people, particularly from areas of social deprivation, with opportunities to 'develop the skills they need to perform well, not only in exams and extra-curricular activities, but also to succeed in the workplace and wider society' (Collard, 2007: 1). As Nicholson notes, 'it was designed to revitalise local economies by supporting the cultural sector ... to enable young people to become creative-thinking employees. In this conceptualization, the policy is built on the idea that creative individuals possess marketable skills' (2009: 73). The Creative Partnerships Final Report (2006), states that few visits to cultural organisations took place, even though this was initially planned to be part of the scheme:

It is likely that staff in Creative Partnerships Schools did not feel as great a need to take young people to visit arts/cultural venues because of the emphasis on in-school projects involving creative providers' (National Evaluation of Creative Partnerships, 2006: 19).

Practitioners would come away from their settings to 'impart' their creative skills as opposed to the young people visiting the cultural venues for themselves. This highlights how, during this period, the theatre building and practices connected to theatre making were perhaps side-lined. In addition, what is evident when examining annual reports from the period is the increase in extra-curricular activities that were made available through additional grants, particularly through the introduction of lottery funding (ACE Lottery Distribution, 1997/98). The aims of the extra-curricular provision were reflective of the government's Creative Industries policy and were tied to specific instrumental indicators, notably narratives around social inclusion.

In 1997, the Octagon Theatre received £99,976 from the Arts Council, Arts 4 Everyone Lottery grant, to fund the Activ8 Youth Project (Bolton News Archive, Nov 1997). Previously the youth theatre fell under the title, The Octagon Youth Theatre, and was perhaps rebranded to reflect the new aims of the department, which were to 'address the needs and aspirations of young people in Bolton' (Bolton News Archive, Nov 1997). In the theatre's Annual Report (1997), it was recorded that the provision aimed to identify a 'policy of positive action for developing cultural work with young people in the community'. As part of the funding, the Octagon created a 'Youth Arts Worker' post, whose remit would be to work with young people in Bolton's 'peripheral housing estates' (Reddish, 1998: 7). The title of the post is reflective of the context and social aims of the work; a youth worker is typically responsible for the social and personal development of young people. Therefore, the theatre was using the arts to help address common social issues that were affecting young people in that particular community, for example, lack of aspirations and low self-esteem. Caroline Brader, Activ8 Manager from 2003 - 2010, notes that the team specifically sought projects

that addressed social disadvantage, social exclusion and assisted those who were vulnerable (in Pemberton-Billing, 2011: 47). The discourse is centred on the social effectiveness of youth work and community regeneration, rather than the young people's engagement in theatre making as an aesthetic, creative form.

According to the Octagon's Annual Report (2001), the theatre began to develop a programme in partnership with their local Education Action Zone, New Labour policy that aimed to 'raise educational standards and tackle social inclusion in areas of deprivation' through the creation of education and community forums between schools and local partners (Dickson et al, 2002: 183). At the Belgrade Theatre, in 1999, a series of outreach youth theatres were established at local schools, with the aim of engaging young people in extra-curricular drama activities. A two-year project was also established in partnership with the Local Education Authority, funded by the Department of Education and Employment, with the aim of engaging 'under-achieving teenagers in a programme of work experience and an involvement with the theatre' (Belgrade Theatre, Annual Report, 1999). Similarly, in Nottingham, the Playhouse Theatre delivered a series of workshops in primary schools located in the Education Action Zone of Bulwell, with the aim of raising literacy attainment standards (Bulwell EAZ, 2002).

The partnerships between the theatres, the schools and the Local Education Authorities were based on engaging 'under-achieving' young people, with the overall aim of raising educational attainment standards across primary and secondary level. The programmes are reflective of the social and inclusive turn that influenced the work of organisations at the time. The provision reflects the theatres' emphasis on attempting to provide 'impact' through work with targeted communities, to meet specific social and educational objectives. Although it is difficult to determine from the literature, the programmes, like TIE, were perhaps also largely removed from the practices of the theatre building, delivered in targeted pockets of communities across the theatres' localities. However, unlike TIE, there were increased

governmental indicators placed on the funded work. Whereas the early TIE actor-teachers aimed to liberate the theatre form from the establishment, the devices used by theatres at this time, are much more indicative of an acceptance of governmental ideology. However, this was perhaps as much to do with survival, with theatres following the funding out of necessity, with 'recurring governmental pressures to make arts organisations increasingly reliant on commercial sponsorship and other forms of non-governmental funding (Jackson, 2013: 25). Jackson notes that much of the provision produced at the time was tied to specific, short term initiatives that were eventually replaced or curtailed due to austerity cutbacks (2013: 35).

The McMaster Report: 'From Measurement to Judgement' (2008)

Jackson argues that theatre education began to take on a more 'holistic' approach after 2008, when Brian McMaster was commissioned by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to investigate how public subsidy could best be used to support excellence in the arts (2013: 35). McMaster's report followed an Arts Council inquiry into how the public valued the arts, which concluded that the quality of an artistic experience was crucial (McMaster, 2008: 5). 'Supporting Excellence in the Arts: from Measurement to Judgment', as indicated in the title, set out to rearticulate the target-based assessment that provided 'immediate satisfaction but no lasting impact', and put more emphasis on 'excellence, innovation and risk-taking' (McMaster, 2008: 21). The report was criticised for the lack of clarification as to what defined 'excellence', however, it did highlight and stir debates surrounding tensions between the instrumental versus the intrinsic value of the arts. Jackson notes that:

Faced with the contradictory pulls of McMaster's call for a philosophical shift in the discourse of arts funding on the one hand and diminishing funds from the government on the other, as the world lurched into economic crisis, Arts Council England has attempted to

forge, in an era of austerity, and against much opposition, new models of funding fewer arts organisations better' (2013: 35).

One of the tension points within the report is McMaster's call for 'excellence' and also judgment, which begged the question, what defines 'excellent', for who and under whose definition? A few months before the McMaster report was published in 2008, over 150 arts organisations lost their Arts Council funding. The actors' union, Equity, issued a statement to say the Arts Council 'as it is, is not fit to judge what excellence is' (in Turnball, 2008: 22).

I took up my post at the Coliseum, which had retained its funding, in 2010 and within this section, also reflect on my experiences of what this shift meant for the Coliseum. As explored in the above section, the previous discourse surrounding provision produced by regional theatres under New Labour, reflected the instrumental usages of drama and theatre forms. Indicators around social impact were particularly evident in examples of work with young people. The McMaster Report intended to prioritise the aesthetic of the work, reclaiming the intrinsic value of the arts. McMaster proposed that making events free, would act as a long-term strategy for audience development:

I recommend that to overcome the endemic 'it's not for me' syndrome and building on the success of free admission to museums and galleries, for one-week admission prices are removed from publicly funded organisations (2008: 5).

The assumption that paying for a ticket is the only barrier to arts engagement and theatre attendance was particularly short sighted. McMaster's reducing of potential barriers to theatre attendance, to 'it's not for me syndrome', particularly underlined the disregard for the in-depth engagement practices that had taken place through and beyond the TIE movement. In 2009, Arts Council England launched 'A Night Less Ordinary' (ANLO) in direct response to McMaster's recommendations (Arts Council, ANLO Evaluation, 2012: 5).

The resulting ANLO scheme was delivered by over 200 venues across England until 2011, offering free theatre tickets to young people under 26, 'leading to more young people getting the theatre-going habit' (ANLO Evaluation, 2012: 5). From working at the Coliseum whilst ANLO was running, I recall that school groups took up the majority of free tickets. These young people, attending the theatre through ANLO, were engaged through their teacher in school, thus, eliminating the barriers of booking, paying, travelling and attending the theatre by themselves. However, this also essentially meant that schools stopped paying for theatre tickets; most of the school groups who took advantage of the initiative brought young people to the Coliseum before ANLO. This was ideal for drama teachers' budgets, however, for the Coliseum, it did not encourage vast numbers of young people to attend the theatre independently, outside of school.

However, although not an aim of the initiative, it did encourage more enhanced inter-departmental working between the learning and marketing department at the Coliseum. This is something that Steve Ball, Associate Director at Birmingham Rep, describes. Although not specifically in relation to the McMaster report, Ball notes that 'for many years there existed an inherent tension between two objectives of theatres: audience development and theatre education, with theatre educators opposed to the crude notion of getting bums on seats' (Ball, 2013: 157). The Belgrade Theatre regarded their participation in ANLO as enabling 'young people to experience for themselves what the Belgrade has to offer' (Belgrade Theatre, Annual Report, 2009/10). The destination-marketing style language used, indicates that the experience was based on a visit to the theatre, to engage with the building as an attraction. The discourse positions young people as potential consumers, as opposed to solely participants. Through ANLO, which at the Coliseum was jointly managed by the learning department, marketing department and box office, young people were arguably more prevalently valued as audience members themselves, therefore, also the regard of the marketing and front of house teams, and the rest of the building.

The discourse explored in this section surrounding the ANLO initiative, is markedly similar to that explored at the start of the chapter. The 'Under 20's club', developed at the Belgrade in 1960 and the ambitions of Pemberton-Billing at the Octagon in 1966, reflect the theatres' motivations to attract young audiences. However, like these initiatives, McMaster's report does not consider the complexities around young people engaging with cultural institutions or the lack of relevance the programmes may have had to young people. Theatre educators working in learning departments, collectively and within their situated settings, have developed expertise around these challenges. Adopted and revised from the practices of their TIE predecessors, practitioners have developed strategies for engaging young people in theatre buildings. Navigating a spatial and social position from both within and outside of the theatre building, practitioners engage and deliver in-depth partnership work, to foster and build connections with young people, to remedy some of the barriers associated with theatres as cultural institutions. As Nicholson notes, 'many people who now run education departments in regional theatres have inherited the political spirit of the TIE movement and there is a genuine commitment to invite people from all sectors of society into their theatre spaces' (2011: 208).

The genealogy of the practices explored, highlights the evolving approach of practitioners working in learning departments in developing inclusive programmes. Nicholson notes that 'changing the titles of education departments to names such as *Participation* or *Learning* has helped to loosen the idea that the work serves only schools' (2011: 209). For example, in 2011, the Coliseum's team changed from Education and Outreach to Learning and Engagement, designed to be inclusive of other non-formal education practices and participatory activities. Similarly, in 2012, the Octagon Theatre changed the name of their education department from Activ8 to Learning and Participation, when the Activ8 funding ended. This is perhaps reflective of the department's evolving work and symbolises the philosophical integrating of the department with the rest of the theatre building.

Ball notes how learning departments have begun to diversify their practice, with heightened focus on the wider work of the theatre itself, 'with a shift in emphasis from outreach projects to in-reach projects which provide opportunities to engage with the whole theatre' (2013: 156). Although delivering projects outside of the theatre building will always be a mechanism for theatres to engage with communities, this shift is indicative of theatres wanting to introduce people to the theatre building and its broader programmes of work. This re-connecting of learning activities to the theatre building, combined with the more inclusive, reputable space that regional theatres have arguably carved in theatre education practice, is reflected in Jackson's *Learning through Theatre* book series. In 2013, he reintroduced the work of regional theatres, from his first, 1980 edition, which included Vallins' account of the activities delivered pre-TIE, at the Belgrade, to a contribution from Steve Ball, describing the work of regional theatres as 'learning resources'.

A number of other examples of published research from 2008, begin to more prominently explore participatory work in regional theatres. James Blackman contributes a brief summary of formal and informal education work in a chapter of *The Glory of the Garden: English Regional Theatre and the Arts Council* (Dorney and Merkin, 2010). Blackman offers a case study of the 'START Project' delivered at Lyric Hammersmith, in West London. The accredited programme, delivered within the theatre building, targets young people not in education, employment or training, and covers areas such as 'dance, performance, poetry, drama and movement' (2010: 193). Writing in 2010, Blackman notes that 'to their knowledge, the Lyric is the only arts-based organisation in the UK delivering work of this kind' (2010: 193). Established in 2006 – 2007, the project, and Blackman's case study, reflects the turn towards 'inreach' activities, as noted by Ball (2013: 156). Nicholson also refers to the training programme delivered at the Lyric, to highlight how 'participation in theatre as a public space can enable young people to produce their own spaces in which to learn' (2011: 210). Nicholson describes how the project facilitates progression routes for young people and further

opportunities to join programmes such as the youth theatre, Lyric ambassadors and a steering group; projects similar to those described as being developed at the Belgrade in the 1960's. Incorporating interviews with two young people, Nicholson notes the ways in which their participation in the project developed their 'sense of belonging' within the theatre (2011: 212). This shift in narrative, around the theatre building, is reflective of how regional theatres have reconceptualised their role and missions, eroding some of the stigmas that have arguably saturated narratives around the theatre building and its practices over the fifty-year history explored. This chapter has highlighted the shifts in the ways in which education practices have been positioned in relation to the theatre building. Often, as is evident through discourse relating to the TIE movement and through New Labour's governance, the practices are dislocated from the theatre building.

This thesis portfolio aims to build and extend the narrative explored in the later section of this chapter, providing in-depth perspectives into the role and position of learning departments in regional theatres, and the experiences of young people engaged in their work. The projects and research explore within this section provides contemporary, critical insights into the education practices delivered by regional theatres. The chapters that follow build on this, providing detailed insights into their design and delivery, and critically, incorporate empirical work with young people. I provide an analysis of my experiences of working within the learning department at Oldham Coliseum Theatre to develop new understandings of the role of practitioners working within regional theatre settings. This narrative, I argue, has received much less critical attention in theatre education and related applied theatre discourse, than the work of TIE actor-teachers and applied theatre practitioners.

Within this chapter, I have highlighted a strand of practice connected to the theatre building that has been marginalised in theatre education research. Within the components of the thesis portfolio that follow, I rehabilitate practices that draw on the work of lighting technicians, stage managers and

costume makers and explore young people's experiences of learning through this prism. Through a longitudinal case study, conducted with eight young people, I provide new perspectives into the educational and social potential of practices that focus on the craft and technical processes involved in theatre making. In addition, within a journal article that sits as a discrete component within the thesis portfolio, I critically explore 'The Exam Play', detailed in the first section, which was developed in regional theatre in the 1960's and explores the making of a theatre production.

The next chapter marks the start of my longitudinal case study, conducted with eight young people from Oldham and Rochdale over the course of four years (2014/15 – 2017/18). As a means of introducing the young people (and the reader) to the theatre building, I explore their photo documentation and analysis of the theatre's geography, architecture and public spaces. I further and deepen some of the themes initiated through Nicholson's interviews with young people at the Lyric, who describe their relationship to the theatre as providing them with a 'sense of belonging' (2011: 212). This theme, surrounding the social relevance of theatre buildings to young people, is an under-researched area of contemporary British theatre studies and theatre education. I offer a novel methodology for exploring the young people's extended engagement with the Coliseum over four chapters. As demonstrated through this chapter, the majority of literature either theorises theatre buildings as not relevant to young people or fails to acknowledge the potential social and cultural barriers that prevent many people from engaging with theatre spaces. Within the next chapter, I aim to nuance this discourse, exploring how young people relate to the Coliseum, whilst considering some of the potential barriers that may inhibit their engagement. Most of the young people involved in the study, had visited the Coliseum before engaging in the education partnership scheme, for the first time with their primary schools. This underlines and concludes the themes that have emerged within this chapter surrounding the importance of the relationships developed between theatres and schools, whilst setting up the context for what follows. I explore the mutual and necessary role of both schools and learning departments in

introducing young people from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds,
to experiences of cultural activity.

Chapter 2. Regional Theatre, Place and Storyness: How the theatre building evokes meanings

In our rush to abandon the local we are in danger both of missing its importance and missing the subtlety, complexity, diversity and colour it can bring to theatre (Merkin and Dorney, 2010: 3).

In *Theatre Outlook*, writer and broadcaster J.B Priestley describes theatre as 'a communal art of considerable value to our democratic society'. He asserts that theatres should provide 'the framework to our communities' and that we should consider their 'present situation ... economic position ... and future'. Priestley asks, 'what is happening in theatre now and what ought to happen to it in the near future?' (1947: 1). These questions were still as pertinent 70 years on, as the economic position and social relevance of the traditional regional, producing theatre model was again being interrogated. The anxieties around the future of regional theatres were particularly relevant to my professional circumstance in 2018, as Oldham Coliseum Theatre's business model, as with many other regional theatres was being scrutinised. There is constant/recurring pressure to understand the current and future position of theatre in Oldham, balancing preserving the theatre's current audience base and ticket sales with the need to replenish audiences and engage younger and more diverse communities. This thesis does not attempt to address the future viability of regional theatre or explore its social role in the broadest sense. Rather, Priestley's questions form the backdrop to my professional practice and for the discussion in this chapter, which sets the scene and context for the young people's ongoing engagement with the theatre building.

Using reflective practice, archival research and through a detailed case study approach, I explore what the theatre building, as a place, means to local young people and why. The chapter shows that the young people are interested in the material culture of the theatre building. They draw on cultural memory, through their own experiences of attending the theatre or through the materiality of the theatre building and the ways in which it evokes

the stories of others, to affirm a sense of civic identity. As writer and cultural critic bell hooks observes, 'we are born and have our being in a place of memory. We chart our lives by everything we remember from the mundane moment to the majestic' (2009: 5). The young people often locate and contextualise their experiences and memories of the theatre in relation to place. Therefore, I use the term 'civic identity' in a way that is reflective of how the young people recall their personal experiences and describe a sense of community or belonging in relation to the Coliseum and/or Oldham. I argue that there are subtleties and complexities to the young people's relationships to the theatre building that stretch beyond their engagement with the theatre's artistic programme or education practices.

Whilst interrogating the management structures and discourses that condition how meanings are produced through and within the theatre building, I assert that the young people have agency within this meaning making process. As Nicholson notes, drawing on theorist Henri Lefebvre's understandings, 'space always holds different and sometimes contradictory meanings that change over time and according to the context and circumstances. These meanings are neither fixed nor objective, but continually negotiated through social practice' (2011: 11). Given the access, as is the case through the theatre's programme of work with schools, I argue that the young people are both interested and capable of negotiating existing meanings and ascribing their own narratives to the theatre space.

As I established in the previous chapter, regional theatres have a long history of engaging children and young people in theatre education practices. However, as characterised through the TIE movement, these activities were often delivered outside of the theatre building. Predicated on the idea that 'theatres as places represented cultural privilege and class division', specialist practitioners delivered programmes of work with young people directly in schools (Nicholson, 2009: 59). Whybrow notes that this relocating, away from the theatre building, attempted 'to break down the elitist aura of conventional theatre by bringing it to its audience, often targeted at working class children or young people' (1994: 267). Ball notes that theatres are now

'recognising and addressing the invisible barriers which prevent many people from accessing the theatre', which can include feeling 'alienated' (2013: 157). Although as Ball notes, regional theatres have developed mechanisms for addressing barriers to engagement since the TIE movement, in particular, through the specialist work of learning departments, there are few examples of studies that explore these themes using young people's perspectives. Furthermore, the dominant narrative around theatre buildings has tended to theorise the 'barriers' to engagement as a class divide. Discussion around this class narrative is vital, however, it does not necessarily account for the challenges at the Coliseum, which is accessed mainly by white working class audiences. This chapter explores the form these 'invisible barriers' take at the Coliseum, providing nuanced perspectives into how eight young people relate to a theatre building within its broader social, economic and geographic context. The complexities around the young people's engagement derive from the physical location of the theatre building, which is reflective of the town's wider socio-economic context, and a lack of familial relationships or previous engagement through their school. To a lesser extent, the young people note the lack of relevance of the artistic programme. Although the young people suggest that the artistic programme is for 'older people', this does not necessarily detract from their descriptions and experiences of engaging with the theatre building through its education programme.

My focus, within this chapter and thesis broadly, is to examine the education practices delivered by the theatre, which are inclusive of young people from all social and cultural backgrounds in Oldham. However, I return to provide more detail to discussions around cultural barriers to engagement in chapter 5. Oldham has a high proportion of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities who are not reflected in the Coliseum's artistic practices as prominently as its white working class community. Although I attempt to critically address and reflect on these themes, I do so in my own terms, rather than making cultural assumptions about the young people's backgrounds and experiences, when it has not arisen on their terms. Within this chapter, I reflect on some of the

challenges surrounding Oldham's socio-economic context and the mutual role of the learning department and schools in developing capacities to introduce young people to cultural activity. Theorising audience development and the young people's relationships to the theatre building as an ongoing educational practice, I explore their initial perceptions of engaging with the theatre through the education partnership scheme. How do young people understand their interactions with the theatre building through these practices? How does the theatre's history and the aesthetic of the building inform their experiences, and what form do barriers to their engagement with the theatre take?

The Coliseum has been located on Fairbottom Street in Oldham since 1887. It is a mid-sized producing theatre venue with 585 seats in the main auditorium and a black box studio theatre with 50 seats. The theatre's history in Oldham, as a weekly rep, is well embedded into the lives of older audience members and historically, is arguably representative of Priestley's vision, reflecting 'local identities and civic pride' (Gale, 2008: 45). During its repertory period from the 1950's to 1978, the theatre produced work rooted in the North West, with local actors including Jean Alexander and Pat Phoenix, who later became part of the original cast of *Coronation Street*. This history is important to the Coliseum's 'core audience', who still fondly refer to the theatre as 'the rep'.

There are clear, visible indicators, as Priestley suggests, that the communal aspect of theatre is of 'considerable value' to this audience group (1947: 1). They participate in a reciprocal dialogue at Season Launch events with Artistic Director, Kevin Shaw, who, from his onstage seat takes suggestions and critical observations about the previous or upcoming season. In the theatre's bar, a number of groups sit at the same tables on the same evening of a production's run. On entering the theatre, the Duty Manager often greets audience members on a first name basis. It is also physically evident in the theatre building, in the customer comment book and on the plaques on the back of the theatre's seats, inscribed with quotes and messages devoted to loved ones. For many audience members their relationship to the theatre

building reaches beyond their engagement with the play onstage, it is part of a wider interaction with a social, cultural and spatial significance. As Lefebvre argues, space is a social product:

Space is neither a mere frame, after the fashion of the frame of a painting, nor a form or container of a virtually neutral kind, designed simply to receive whatever is poured into it. Space is social morphology: is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism and just as intimately bound up with function and structure (1991: 93).

This suggests that the theatre building, as a space or container, is not devoid of meaning but is active, 'framing', structuring and producing meanings through lived interactivity. This describes the ways in which the 'lived experience' of the Coliseum's core audience is inscribed on the theatre building. Theatre scholar Claire Cochrane supports this, in her examination of the re-building of the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, noting that 'entrenched vested interests and emotional attachments are not so easily obliterated' in theatre:

In theatre which is fundamentally dependent on the effective/affective habitation of space, every performance event no matter how avant-garde in principle has to navigate through layers of past memories and preconceptions (2013: 304).

Cochrane goes on to suggest that when a place is so entrenched in the lives of a specific group of people, a space can be difficult to use for other purposes and with other people:

When performance is regulated within the concrete framework of a purpose-built theatre ... the assumptions of the past, combined with the exigencies of the present, can impose formidable constraints on not only the creative use of allocated internal space, but also the legitimacy and security of the place occupied within the wider external urban environment (2013: 304).

Although there are theatres, such as Contact Theatre in Manchester, that have socially, artistically and spatially (re)built their identity with and for young people, there are also many tired theatre buildings in our regions that are navigating the same pull of the past as the Coliseum. These 'assumptions of the past' have the potential to inhibit the 'creative use of allocated internal space' and could act as a barrier to young people's engagement with the theatre, as a place. These problems, associated with the theatre building, explain why theatre educators have often resorted to taking work outside of the theatre building. However, the young people's interpretations within this chapter illustrate how, whilst feeling that the theatre's programming is not for them, the theatre's history, evoked through the building, acts as a mechanism for them connecting to the Coliseum. The young people describe the theatre as 'old fashioned' and 'retro' but articulate feelings of connectivity towards this history and aesthetic.

My research shows that the young people are interested in the material culture of the theatre building and the ways in which it evokes the past, either through recollecting their own memories of engaging with the theatre or through their observations of how others engage/have engaged with the space. As Carlson asserts, the building takes on the form of a 'repository of cultural memory' (2003: 2). Through this, I argue that the young people have agency within this meaning making process. They are able to 'navigate through past memories and preconceptions', locating and ascribing their own meanings to the theatre building, as a site or focus for civic identity (Cochrane, 2013: 304). As McAuley notes, the 'building or venue is not something fixed and immutable but a dynamic and continually evolving social entity' (1999: 41). This suggests that space is permeable and constantly evolving, and given the access, young people are able to contribute and inscribe their own social meanings to the theatre building. I build on arguments about the significance of the 'local' in regional theatre, prompted by the young people's articulations, which highlight the possibilities and importance of connecting the past and present through continued dialogue into the social fabric of the theatre, as a place. I draw on theories of

'narrativity' in regional theatre, to describe the weaving of past, and importantly future narratives of theatres, as places of social relevance, interaction and as a basis for sustainability (Dorney, 2010: 206).

The young people's observations of the theatre building, explored within this chapter, also have methodological implications. The case study builds on existing approaches undertaken by Ric Knowles (2004), Gay McAuley (2000) and Marvin Carlson (1989), who explore the theatre experience using a cultural materialist framework. Their work highlights the importance of exploring the theatre experience in its entirety and the ways that material conditions shape the broader 'socio-cultural event' (Carlson, 1989: 2). These explorations focus on how meanings are produced through the space, the text, actors, directors and audience members and how in turn, these meanings are received by individual audience members, as part of the 'total event'. However, the ways in which theatre buildings are used, has evolved. The young people's perspectives focus on their experiences of the theatre building, beyond the performance event. They are participating in education activities within the theatre space. Furthermore, what has emerged through the young people's interpretations, as described above, is that they draw on the presence of others in their experiences, with no other users present. Therefore, exclusively looking at only one aspect of a building's use, with only one user group in mind is limiting. Participatory activities bring a new dimension of use and users into theatre spaces, which I argue will potentially further condition the production and reception of meanings for other audience members and groups.

Using photo documentation, the young people have taken photographs based on their interactions with the theatre building and its geography; their photographs illuminating this complex social matrix. I asked the young people, recruited through their schools, to document their interaction with the theatre building, capturing their journeys to the theatre, and objects, people and signs that resonated with them along the way. Their photographs include images of Yorkshire Street, the theatre's location, external shots of the

theatre building, features in/around the building that they feel reflect its remit and function, the people and type of work that takes place and the types of people who may attend. The photographs 'locate' the young people's experiences, acting as anchors in space and time to explore and reflect upon the moment in situ. This 'locating' provides insight into the connections that the young people make between their engagement in the education partnership scheme and any previous experiences they may have of attending the Coliseum.

The chapter is divided into two sections, each section tracing the young people's engagement with spaces in and around the theatre building, starting with their journeys to the theatre. "Shifting Streets" examines how the young people identify with the theatre building within its geography. Through analysing their photographs and reflections, I assert that theatre educators should look beyond the walls of the theatre to understand how 'the entire theatre experience' shapes young people's engagement (Carlson, 1989: 5). Using the young people's interpretations of the theatre's external façade and internal spaces, "Traces of the Past" explores how management structures and discourses frame the theatre's identity and consequently, the agency of core users within the theatre space. Using the young people's interpretations of the theatre's practices and programme of activities, I critically explore some of the challenges associated with engaging young people in the Coliseum's artistic work. I then examine how the young people make meaning through the history of the building and how they articulate a connection to the theatre's past. Through this, I argue that theatre educators should consider the possibilities of the 'storyness' of theatre spaces as a way of fostering connections through and within theatre buildings, that speaks to both their history and future.

Shifting Streets

In *Space in Performance*, McAuley observes how the locations of theatres have received much less critical attention in theatre studies, than the size and layout of the buildings themselves (2010: 9). McAuley notes that this is an indication of 'the extent to which these studies are in fact concerned with the building as an aesthetic object, rather than with its function in a complex social process'. In recognition of this, there have been a number of cultural materialist studies that explore the theatrical experience as part of a wider social interaction, considering the theatre's location as critical in framing the experience. Carlson argues that although we have developed understandings of how audiences might experience the internal layout and appearance of theatre buildings, we know little of where theatres are located, how audiences interact with these locations and what this may mean to them (1989: 10). According to Knowles, these interactions are significant 'both for the ways in which a performance is 'read' and for the experience of the spectator in getting there'. Knowles argues that both physical and psychological factors inform the journeys of audience members and the degree of difficulty in negotiating the 'familiar or unfamiliar' and 'comfortable or uncomfortable' (2004: 80).

This section explores the Coliseum's location and how this informs the young people's experiences. I asked the young people to document their journey to the Coliseum, on their way to visiting the theatre for a workshop or a performance. The schools engaged in the Scheme travel to the theatre in different ways and therefore, the sets of photographs differed between each group of young people. James and John, who attend schools that walk to the theatre as part of the Scheme, in particular, reveal the ways in which the theatre's location affects their overall experience, including their knowledge of the theatre's whereabouts and/or their perceptions of travelling to and engaging with its locality.



Figure 3: Yorkshire Street, Oldham (photograph by James, March 2015)

James: This is the main road to the Coliseum. The Coliseum is on the left, passed the bus stop. I never knew it was there. Now I've been, I notice it but it's hidden, you can't see it from here.

Carly: Did you know of the theatre, even though you hadn't been?

James: I don't think I did. And I know the Town Centre really well. It'd be better if it was on the main road.

Carly: Why's that?

James: Because, you get to know places. If you see places you know they're there.

Carly: What are your perceptions of this street?

James: I don't like walking passed the pubs. I definitely feel, I don't know, a bit like someone is going to shout something at us. There are a lot of drunk people.

James has taken his image from the top of Yorkshire Street, which from where the car is positioned becomes a one-way street that leads out of the Town Centre. On the left-hand side, there are two pubs and, on the right, a takeaway and a bank. The Coliseum is located on Fairbottom Street on the left of the bus stop. The theatre is not visible from the main road and the approach from the Town Centre, which James believes is problematic. Having never previously seen the theatre building, as part of the town he is familiar with, he has never thought to access it, 'I never knew it was there ... it's hidden, you can't see it from here'. In 'Why Buildings Are Known', Appleyard explores the attributes of buildings and the ways in which they capture and hold mental representations in urban landscapes. He notes that visibility is critical in recalling buildings, 'unless a building is seen, it cannot project an image', concluding that only those who use such buildings are able to form a 'mental representation' (1969: 136). As in James' case, the theatre's lack of visibility has the potential to affect people's engagement with the building, as part of a place. Only those with existing knowledge of the theatre will have an insight into its existence and whereabouts, particularly as the signage to the building consists of only a small logo on the side of an old, disused restaurant. Carlson describes how experimental theatre venues,

integrated into 'downtown' neighbourhoods, serve a small and intimate public, 'who know where the theatrical event is taking place and need no external information ... the absence of external signs reinforcing feelings of intimacy and exclusiveness' (1989: 127). Although the Coliseum is not a 'downtown', experimental theatre space, its lack of visibility and necessary signage has the potential to reinforce a sense of exclusivity, nonetheless. Only those that use it or are introduced to it, as in James' case through the partnership scheme, will form a 'mental representation' (Appleyard, 1969: 136).

In order to understand more about the theatre's geography and any significances of its location, I looked towards the building's history, which reveals something of the theatre's social and cultural disposition. The Coliseum has been located on Fairbottom Street since 1887, the approach road to an old colliery. It was originally the 'Colosseum', home to a circus and later a cinema, before closing following the trade depression in the 1930's (Carter, 1986: 17). In 1939, it was taken over by the Oldham Repertory Theatre Club, who had outgrown their home in the Temperance Hall across the road. Their move to the derelict Fairbottom Street building, following a campaign to reinstate repertory work in Oldham, marked the resurgence of theatre in the town. Local people 'built' the Coliseum and continued to watch plays, despite the theatre's numerous financial difficulties and the outbreak of war. The Coliseum, as it was renamed, has remained on Fairbottom Street ever since. The theatre, therefore, was not born out of a civic enterprise, unlike many regional theatres nationally. For example, as explored in chapter 1, the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry and the Octagon Theatre in Bolton, where the theatres occupy a site of significance in the town's geography. Rather, the Coliseum was established from an impassioned local interest and explains the perhaps unfortunate, tucked away location of the building. This context provides an explanation for the Coliseum's geography and an insight into the theatre's social heritage. This history has continued to inform the Coliseum's identity, particularly for season ticket holders who have close social and emotional ties to 'the rep'. However, for young people, particularly

those whose family members do not have this connection, the theatre's location has the potential to remain unknown, appealing to theatre-going audiences and local people who feel part of its history, those who need 'no external information' to access it (Carlson, 1989: 127).

Several of the young people also describe how the area where the Coliseum is located is not a part of town they usually visit. The shopping centre and bus station, where they visit often, are located at the top of Yorkshire Street. They suggest that the lower part of Yorkshire Street, where the Coliseum is located, is on the periphery of what they consider the Town Centre.

Tom: I don't really go down Yorkshire Street

Carly: Where do you go?

Tom: Town. McDonalds, Spindles [shopping centre].

Carlson describes how theatre buildings are necessarily 'placed' in relation to other buildings, and form part of the 'centre' or the periphery (in McAuley, 2000: 45). McAuley notes that 'as cities grow and develop, locations that were once peripheral become central and vice versa' (2000: 45). Drawing a visual comparison between Yorkshire Street, captured in James' photograph and around the time of the theatre's resurgence in 1939, illustrates the ways in which the theatre's location, once part of the Town Centre, has become the periphery. The image below of Yorkshire Street in 1930, pictured on an archived postcard, has been taken from the opposite end of the street to where James was positioned when taking his photograph (Fairbottom Street and the Coliseum are on the right of the bus in this image).



Figure 4: Yorkshire Street, Oldham in 1930, Oldham Local Studies and Archives (2015)

In the image, you can see the businesses that once surrounded the Coliseum, including typical town centre shop, Timpson's, a café and a newsagent, and awnings presumably outside other shops, lining the right-hand side pavement. Unlike James' image, there are several pedestrians on the pavement on the right, and a tram can be seen making its way directly down the street, indicating traffic/travel and potential passing trade. Yorkshire Street formed an adjunct to the Town Centre and its popular market and was part of a daytime economy. McAuley notes that a theatre's 'surrounding buildings and the activities associated with them add a further dimension to the framing function performed by the building' (2000: 45). The subsequent redevelopment of the shops and cafes on Yorkshire Street, into nightclubs, bars and take-a-ways has altered the 'framing function' of the theatre's location. The Coliseum is now located within a night-time economy that the young people seldom access. Both taken in the daytime, the images illuminate the shift in the Coliseum's location from shopping destination to through road.

Cultural management scholar Abi Gilmore, in her study of the relationship between place and cultural participation, draws on Raymond Williams' (1977) 'structures of feeling' to describe the 'interdependencies and contingencies of past and present practices', and their 'emergent, dominant and residual characteristics' in defining Macclesfield's cultural identity (2013: 93). Through the derelict mills in particular but also through a mix of closed down shops, pubs and take-a-ways that now occupy Yorkshire Street and the Town Centre, 'past and present practices' converge to form Oldham's townscape. The changing disposition of the Coliseum and its location reflects the socioeconomic contingency of the area and wider town. Although the theatre building has not moved, its 'place' has changed. This shift in the Coliseum's 'place' is a barrier to access, as James describes when asked about his perceptions of Yorkshire Street captured in figure 3, 'I don't like walking passed the pubs. I definitely feel, I don't know, a bit like someone is going to shout something at us. There are a lot of drunk people'. Similarly, John, who also walks to the theatre with school, notes, 'I never come down here, not

unless we've been coming to the Coliseum. Especially not at night. Not on my own anyway' (2015). This chimes with Cochrane's understandings of how theatre buildings, 'can impose formidable constraints' on the 'legitimacy and security of the place occupied within the wider external urban environment' (2013: 304). The theatre's 'place' has negative connotations for the young people, who associate the area with a culture that they find intimidating and one they do not feel part of.

McAuley notes that the theatre building, in relation to its surroundings, is part of an interplay between 'inside and outside', a notion that is relevant to how we engage in the fictional world of the play and the work that takes place on and offstage (2000: 51). McAuley describes how theatre buildings mark the distinction between inside and outside in different ways, providing 'a different experience of crossing the threshold for the theatregoer and requiring a different kind of physical and mental effort' (2000: 51). For John and James, both from Oldham, passing the pubs and crossing this 'threshold' has a negative emotional effect on their experiences of travelling to the theatre. In contrast, Olwen and Jack, young people engaged in the research project from a partnership school in Rochdale, refer to a different 'threshold'. They described their journey to Oldham as 'exciting' and 'fun' but they did not make any comments about the theatre's direct location. Their journey formed part of the social experience of their trip, travelling together on a mini bus. With little preconceptions about the area, unlike the young people from Oldham, who perhaps have a closer connection and awareness of the town, they were less conscious of their surroundings. The theatre's location, therefore, means different things to different young people, depending on where they live, their journey to the theatre and any previous experiences they have of the theatre's locality.

The young people's interpretations of the theatre's geography illustrate potential barriers to their engagement with the Coliseum, as a place, based on the physical location of the theatre building. The Coliseum's interrelationship with its direct geography and the socio-economic

contingency of the town, has resulted in the theatre's 'place' shifting. The night-time culture associated with its current 'place', negatively affects young people's feelings of safety and their perceptions of the theatre in its locality. Although this section has focused specifically on the Coliseum's geographical context, it highlights the complexities around engagement and access that go beyond the theatre building itself. It also shows the importance of examining how place-based interdependencies condition and inform young people's cultural experiences.

The theatre building itself has been characterised as a place that 'helps to drive an unfair system of privilege' (Kershaw, 1993: 31). Nicholson suggests, 'in this configuration, theatre becomes a place of bourgeois self-righteousness, only really available to traditionally educated, middle class audiences' (2005: 7). These young people's reflections on their relationship to the Coliseum rather complicate this picture. Through archival research and the young people's articulations, this section has illustrated that this class-based description of the barriers to theatre, does not accurately account for the Coliseum's social and cultural disposition. The theatre is a location of identity for working class people, however, not necessarily those without a familial relationship with the place, particularly as it was before the town changed around the theatre building. Building on Nicholson's work, which critiques this conceptualisation of regional theatre, this chapter has demonstrated that this analysis, although broadly vital, is too narrow and that the discourse around barriers to access and engagement with theatres needs to be readdressed. The entire theatre experience needs to be taken into account and examined in a situated way, in order to understand how young people relate to theatre buildings, within their individual contexts.

The following section further explores the young people's perceptions and experiences of engaging with the Coliseum, through a situated analysis. It draws on the themes that have emerged within this section, particularly in the ways that the young people are drawn to the history associated with the theatre building, within the context of the theatre's perhaps fractured

geography and in relation to the 'socio-economic contingency' of the town. Through the young people's photo documentation of the theatre building, its architecture and public spaces, I examine how they relate to the Coliseum, as a space, and the signs and traces in the building that further frame their understandings and perceptions of the theatre, as a place.

Traces of the Past

Lefebvre's understandings of space as socially produced, points to 'the dialectical relationship between command and demand', questioning, 'by who, for who and by whose agency? Why and how?' (in McAuley, 2000: 52). The Coliseum is governed by a set of managerial, strategic and operational conditions that inform the scope of the theatre's work and the ways in which it engages with specific individuals and groups. The Coliseum receives core funding from Arts Council England (ACE), Greater Manchester Combined Authorities (GMCA) and Oldham Council, who each stipulate the fulfilment of a set of objectives. As an ACE, National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), the Coliseum delivers a specific set of outputs, as outlined in *Great Art and Culture for everyone* (2010), a ten-year strategic framework for subsidised arts organisations, libraries and museums. The policy comprises five goals: 1. Excellence 2. For everyone 3. Resilience and sustainability 4. Diversity and skills and 5. Children and Young People. GMCA stipulate a similar set of objectives, specific to the Greater Manchester area and Oldham Council, specific to the borough of Oldham. Through the Coliseum's artistic and participatory programmes, the theatre aims to address and fulfil these goals, delivering and reporting to the Coliseum's board in the first instance and then to each funding body, against each specific framework.

There are a number of ways the goals within these policies create points of tension. Firstly, evoking Lefebvre's questioning, 'by whom and whose agency?'. As a publicly subsidised arts venue, the theatre responds to the Arts Council's framework and definition of 'excellence', 'for everyone'. These priorities, particularly in Oldham, amongst deprived and diverse communities,

are difficult to marry in social and economic terms. Although there is a commitment to engaging young people and diverse communities in the work of the theatre, this is often achieved through its participatory work delivered by the learning department, which I further interrogate in chapter 5. For economic reasons, but also to 'serve' the theatre's loyal audience, the work produced for the main stage is generally targeted towards the theatre's white working class audience. The theatre building therefore is largely frequented by the theatre's core audience group. It became apparent through the young people's documentation that this audience group has agency within the theatre building. Although the young people accessed the theatre space primarily during the day, when this audience group was not present, the signs and traces of their existence are potent in their articulations. This further evokes Lefebvre's questioning about the relationship between command and demand within socially produced space. Within this section, I explore the ways in which management structures and discourses at the Coliseum produce meanings, and consequently, how the theatre's core audience group, coproduce or shape these meanings within the theatre space.

I asked the young people to document the theatre building through photography and to capture images of the theatre's architecture and public spaces that resonated with them in some way. I was interested in their previous experiences of engaging with the space and/or their initial perceptions of the theatre. What emerges, is that whilst the young people articulate a disconnect to the theatre's main stage programme, there is a sense of them feeling connected to the theatre building, its history and its social significance, as a place. They are interested in the material culture of the theatre building and the ways in which it evokes the past, either through recalling their own memories of engaging with the theatre or through their observations of how others engage/have engaged with the space. Whilst unpicking the lack of relevance of the theatre's artistic programme and the implications of this to the young people's relationships to the theatre, I reflect on the possibilities presented through the building, as a 'repository' of cultural

memory and shared social space (Carlson, 2003). Through this, I further probe at the assumptions around barriers to young people's engagement with theatre buildings. I argue that in addition to the young people being capable of navigating 'layers of past memories and preconceptions', they actually draw on, interpret and build on these histories to create their own social meanings within the space (Cochrane, 2013: 304).

Through the young people's documentation of the theatre building, explored within this section, I learned that five out of the eight participants had been to see the Coliseum's pantomime as children. Tom had accessed the pantomime through visiting with his family, but the others described their experiences of attending with their primary school, which highlights the necessary role of schools in introducing many children and young people to the theatre. Farhana captures and describes a photograph of King Rat in *Dick Whittington*, which is on the wall in the stalls bar.



Figure 5: A production shot in the stalls bar (photograph by Farhana, Feb 2015)

Farhana: This is the baddie from panto.
Carly: Do you remember his name?
Farhana: No, but it was Dick Wittington, he was the rat. King Rat, that's it!
Carly: When did you come to see the panto?
Farhana: We went to them at school.
Carly: At primary school?
Farhana: Yes. He's been in a few of them.
Carly: Did you enjoy coming?
Farhana: It was so funny! I miss it!
Carly: Well you can come back and see it this year.
Farhana: Oh my god, that would be so good!

Farhana describes how she went to the pantomime with her primary school, which is local to the theatre. The pantomime is accessed by over 10,000 children a year from primary schools local to the Coliseum and provides many with their first experiences of live theatre. Farhana suggests that this experience has had a lasting impression on her memories of the space, recalling the specific actor, Andonis Anthony, and his role in *Dick Whittington*. The production photograph has acted as a 'memory anchor' to her experience, the visual trace of the production re-connecting Farhana to a childhood experience in the theatre building. As art critic and novelist John Berger notes, 'the thrill found in a photograph comes from the onrush of memory (1992: 192). This is obvious when it's a picture of something we once knew'. Although Farhana describes fond memories of the pantomime, drawing on the image of the production photograph to reminisce about her experiences, she describes it as something she misses. Farhana and I then joke that she can come back and watch the pantomime again, both knowing that she is perhaps too old for the experience. Farhana's image of the production photograph highlights the potency of photography in recalling memories 'of something we once knew', whilst pointing to the fact that the theatre's programming is perhaps no longer relevant to her as a young person (Berger, 1992: 192). Similarly, Tom highlights in his interpretation of

two of the theatre's posters that the theatre's programme, aside from the pantomime, is intended for an older audience.



Figure 6: Coliseum posters (photograph by Tom, Feb 2015)

Tom: This is of adverts for shows.
Carly: Why did you take this photo?
Tom: They tell you what's on.
Carly: Would you, as a young person, come and see these shows?
Tom: Erm. Not really.
Carly: Why's that?
Tom: They're for older people. My mum and auntie would come.
Carly: Do you know what the shows are about?
Tom: No.
Carly: What would you like to come and see at the theatre then?
Tom: Not sure. I liked seeing the panto when I was a kid.

Tom has captured two posters outside of the theatre building, advertising *The Pitmen Painters* by Lee Hall, which explores the Ashington Group miners and their taking part in an art course, and *Our Gracie*, written by Philip Goulding, which explores the life of Gracie Fields, from living above a chip shop in Rochdale, to receiving international acclaim. These plays are rooted in Northern, working class contexts and are typical of the Coliseum's main house programme. Tom describes how 'these are adverts for shows' and how he would not necessarily think to watch them because they are for 'older people'. Like Farhana, Tom highlights having seen the pantomime when he was younger, 'as a kid', but suggests that the two productions advertised are also not relevant to him. There is a clear generational barrier to Tom's engagement with the advertised performances but not necessarily one rooted in his social background. As Tom notes, 'my mum and auntie would come'. Tom seems to be aware of the likely audience demographics for the productions advertised even if, as noted, he does not know about the content of the plays. This perhaps derives from Tom's visits to the theatre with his family to see the pantomime and through these experiences, he feels this is a place where his family attends or perhaps would attend, or the images/posters themselves are reflective of his background. For example, the words '*Our Gracie*', my emphasis reflective of the Northern term used to describe someone in the family.

The lack of relevance of the theatre's main house programming has often proved problematic to my work within the learning department and underlines the motivation for the Theatre in Education (TIE) movement. Work that was relevant to young people was developed and taken outside of the theatre building to 're-establish the theatre's roots in the community and broaden its social basis' (Vallins, 1980: 12). Unlike the TIE actor-teachers, whose work was proactive, against the grain and deliberately separate to the work of the theatre, my practices in managing and delivering the education partnership scheme reflect an acceptance of this discourse. In many ways the development of the scheme at the Coliseum, which I explore in more detail in chapter 5, was designed to build solutions within and around this challenge. Rather than neglecting the theatre building, the learning department made a deliberate decision in 2012, to find alternative ways to remedy this disconnect, designing participatory activity that still connected young people to theatre making within this context. The theatre tickets included in the scheme are for main house, produced productions and are used predominantly with students in Years 9 –11 (aged 13 – 16 years). Tom was in Year 7 at the time of the interview. There is also emphasis placed on wrap-around activity, such as pre-show talks and workshops, to make the experience more relevant and enjoyable to young people. One of the key contributing issues at the Coliseum, is that the studio theatre, with a more relevant programme of work for young people, has only 50 seats. The learning department are unable to discount or include studio tickets within the scheme, as there is not the capacity. Studio companies who present work in the space rely on a box office split. Therefore, in the case of the Coliseum's education partnership scheme, the show is deliberately, not necessarily the thing. Rather, the learning department draw on the practices of theatre making within this context to provide opportunities for engaging young people in the theatre's work/space.

Although as Farhana and Tom have highlighted, the theatre's main house programme lacks relevance to them as young people, the interpretations that follow suggest that the theatre building and their engagement with it, in some

capacity, is of value to them. This indicates that the theatre building is significant to them as a place, and that there is value in inviting young people into the theatre space, as opposed to rejecting the building entirely, like the TIE actor-teachers. The young people's interpretations of the theatre building, as a place, to some extent respond to Priestley's vision for theatre, as providing 'the framework to our communities' (1947: 1). The young people's articulations of the theatre building evoke a sense of what the theatre means or could mean in social terms.



Figure 7: The Coliseum stalls bar (photograph by Tom, Feb 2015)

Tom: This is the bar. It's pretty old fashioned looking but homely.
Carly: What do you mean by homely?
Tom: Like, it's not dead modern. It's cosy.
Carly: Do you think it would be more appealing if it was modern?
Tom: No because it's how people like it.
Carly: How who likes it?
Tom: The people who live here.

Tom has captured an image of the stalls bar area, a corridor-like space, with no natural light. It is a space that we find problematic for these reasons; it is difficult to manoeuvre in when busy, with limited and clunky booth seating and chairs. Tom describes the bar area as looking 'old fashioned' and notes that it is not 'modern'. Similarly, Farhana notes that the space is 'just how I remember'. However, Tom suggests that he does not feel the space should change or be updated because of how it feels. The simplicity of the bar space and perhaps its lack of pretension, makes Tom feel comfortable. Tom's use of the words 'homely' and 'cosy' and the sense of familiarity in Farhana's description, reflect the intimacy of the space and a feeling of comfort within it. These terms relate to the usage of the word 'house', which also resonates with the theatrical term 'playhouse', used to describe the auditorium or theatre building. Curator and theatre scholar Juliet Rufford argues that there are grounds for 'reclaiming the idea of the theatre as a house':

The ideal of a house as a home, as a refuge full of objects and memories, has never been more widely desired and hard to achieve – than at this time of uneven development, precarious employment and rising property prices (2015: 62).

Rufford suggests that while 'refusing to peddle social fantasies of the home', theatres could 'model a more convivial, shared sense of place – one that would link to other houses (e.g. coffeehouses, public houses)'. There is a sense that, for Tom, the bar evokes a feeling of being a shared social space

and/or this is a space that he has experienced as feeling inviting or welcoming. This chimes with his articulations of the theatre's posters, where he seems to recognise the way the theatre serves his community, almost accepting that the productions are not aimed at him. Tom notes that the aesthetic of the bar is 'how people like it ... the people who live here', which suggests that the space is convivial, 'local' and reflective of the identities of the people who are part of this geography. Social geographer Doreen Massey indicates that the feeling of comfort is a measure of how we identify with a place:

One way in which identity is connected to a particular place is by feeling that you belong to that place. It is a place in which you feel comfortable, or at home, because part of how you define yourself is symbolised by certain qualities of that place (1995: 89).

This suggests that the 'qualities' of this space in the theatre building, evoke a sense of belonging for Tom. Massey suggests that this derives from feeling as if you can identify with a place. Tom is local, and he implies that the people who come here are also local, 'the people that live here', referring to something of the theatre's place or identity within the town. As Tom previously explains, he has visited the theatre before, with his family for the pantomime. The space and its 'qualities' are perhaps significant to Tom because of his experiences; the theatre is a place that he relates to and somewhere that is familiar. Therefore, although through the previous image, Tom suggests a lack of connection to the theatre's artistic programme, he feels connected to the theatre building itself in some way. He is able to navigate and configure the 'layers of assumptions and preconceptions' of the theatre building, understanding the intended audience for the theatre's advertised programme, whilst perhaps still feeling as if the building is of some value to him, as a place (Cochrane, 2013: 304). Furthermore, Tom's articulations are quite humbling, although he describes the theatre's programme as targeted at older people, it is as if he is almost appreciating of

this. Although he is not the target audience, he understands the theatre's role in serving the wider community.

John's interpretation of the theatre's façade builds on this idea of the theatre reflecting local identities. Like Tom, he describes the building as looking old, 'retro', but points to its social and historical significance within Oldham.



Figure 8: The Coliseum from Fairbottom Street (photograph by John, Feb 2015)

John: The Coliseum from outside. Proper retro!

Carly: Retro?

John: It's quite grand looking I suppose but it's really old. It's been here for years.

Carly: What do you know about it John?

John: That it's a part of Oldham. It's got a lot of history and famous people have performed here.

John's description of the external façade of the building as 'retro' and 'grand' suggests that the building looks deliberately old. However, he notes that the theatre's age is the reason for this. John articulates an understanding of the history of the building, which he considers 'a part of Oldham'. Having grown up in Oldham, John perhaps relates to the building on a personal level - he later explained to me how he had previously attended the theatre with his grandmother, who had passed this information on. His interpretations of the aesthetic of the building, combined with his articulations of the theatre's heritage, echoes the perceptions elicited from Tom. These two young people, who have a familial relationship with the theatre building, describe the theatre as a location of local history and identity. This is also evident in Farhana's articulation, who locates her previous experiences of attending the theatre as a tradition with school, within the context of her childhood. As hooks notes, the past can act as a 'resource', 'we know ourselves through the art and act of remembering' (2009: 5). Their recalling of their past memories and their interpretations of the 'old', perhaps resonates with a theme that emerged in the previous section. The young people articulate the theatre's direct geography as being bleak and there is a sense they feel disconnected from it, whereas they describe the 'old' style of the theatre building as something that appeals to them. There is perhaps something nostalgic or romantic about the building, which contrasts with the theatre's arguably fractured and incoherent surroundings. Set within this context, the theatre building perhaps represents a sense of community, heritage, or the local. A place that is stable and rooted within an otherwise shifting and uncertain socio-economic context. As hooks goes on to note, 'the past can

serve as a foundation to revision and renew our commitment to the present' (2009: 5). The materiality of the theatre building, set against this backdrop, and within the context of their own previous experiences, provides a focus and location for their configuring of their memories, identity and sense of belonging.

In *The Haunted Stage*, Carlson explores how memory informs the production and reception of meanings produced and reproduced in theatre:

Theatre spaces, like dramatic texts and acting bodies, are deeply involved with the preservation and configuration of cultural memory, and so they are almost invariably haunted in one way or another, and this haunting of the space of performance makes its own important contribution to the overall reception of the dramatic event (2003: 132).

Carlson's concept of 'haunting' suggests that cultural memory is responsible for our (re)configuration of theatre events. Previous encounters with spaces, texts and actors contribute to the way a production is processed and experienced in the present. Farhana, Tom and John demonstrate that the space activates their cultural memories, recalling their own previous experiences of attending the theatre, through their images. Paris, on the other hand, had not visited the theatre before engaging in the scheme but her interpretations of the building are evocative of Carlson's conceptualisation. Paris also reveals that she has made meaning through the 'old' characteristics and feel of the space. Her articulations draw on the theatre space as a 'repository' of meaning, 'haunted' by the social interactivity of its past.



Figure 9: The Coliseum auditorium from the stage (photograph by Paris, March 2015)

Carly: What were your first impressions of the theatre building, Paris?
Paris: It's really good.
Carly: What's good about it?
Paris: Just being here and looking around.
Carly: Is it what you expected it to look like?
Paris: It's just, like, special. It's got that old style.
Carly: What, in this photo in particular?
Paris: Yes, this one, you see like, its past. Some parts look newer, but this, you see it all.

Paris believes that the 'old style' of the building is in some way special perhaps because the décor and traditional style of the theatre is distinctive to other buildings that are familiar to her. She describes 'seeing' the past in the style, which suggests she connects in some way to the history of the building. Although Paris had never visited the Coliseum before, her interpretation of the space is similar to Tom and John's; she perceives the building as looking old but feels connected to it for this reason, 'it's special. It's got that old style'. Furthermore, Paris' image, taken from the stage, captures the Circle area in the auditorium. The seats are empty, absent of people, however, there is a sense that she is drawing on a particular social history or narrative, 'you see it all'. This is similar to the other young people's images and articulations of the theatre's public spaces. Although there are no people present in the images, they are referring to the agency of 'people' within the theatre building. For example, absent of people in the bar area, Tom suggests it evokes a feeling of being a shared social space, 'how people like it'. This highlights the effectiveness of the method in exploring the theatre experience; the young people are considering the context and filling in the blanks within their images, as Berger suggests:

Memory is a strange faculty. The sharper and more isolated the stimulus memory receives, the more it remembers; the more comprehensive the stimulus, the less it remembers. This is perhaps why black-and-white photography is paradoxically more evocative ... It

stimulates a faster onrush of memories because less has been given, more has been left out' (1992: 192).

The space, although isolated from people, is evocative of human connection and social meaning. The young people are imagining the space inhabited by others, suggesting that they are interpreting the interrelationship between the theatre's public spaces and its publics. James furthers this idea by assigning a social story to an individual audience member, gesturing towards the traces of people that are connected to the theatre building in some way. James, in his descriptions of the plaques around the theatre's spaces, links a personal story to the theatre space.



Figure 10: Frank William Makin plaque in the stalls bar (photograph by James, March 2015)

James: You can't see it that well but this says, *Frank William. A true friend of the Coliseum.*

Carly: Who do you think he is?

James: Don't know but he's probably dead.

Carly: (laughs)

James: He is! That's what these things are for. Maybe he sat here sometimes. They're on the seats too.

Carly: Why do you think that is?

James: For people who liked coming here and seeing the plays.

The plaque holds the name and a memory of 'Frank William Makin' who has previously connected with the theatre in some way, 'a true friend of Oldham Coliseum'. Similarly, James picks out the plaques on the seats in the auditorium, 'they're on the seats too'. James has made a connection between the histories of people who attend(ed) the theatre and their attachment to the building, 'people who liked coming here', 'maybe he sat here sometimes'. James, like the other young people, is articulating the social significance of the theatre building as a place, through reading the materiality of the space.

Paris and James, unlike Tom, Farhana and John, had never visited the Coliseum before engaging in the scheme. However, they are also ascribing social narratives and histories to the theatre building. James connects the histories of people who attend(ed) the theatre to specific areas of the building, tracing their attachment to the space through the plaques. Paris draws on the history of the auditorium, 'seeing its past'. This suggests that the theatre space embodies social narratives and traces of the past, which are not necessarily reliant on the young person's own memories or previous encounters with the space. This builds on Carlson's concept of 'haunting' in two ways. It places emphasis on the audience's role in building the 'repository' of cultural memories within the public spaces of the theatre building, independent from the performance and auditorium. It also suggests that meanings do not solely derive from the recycling of our own cultural memories but are stimulated by how we contextualise the meanings

produced by others within the theatre space; we are able to 'read' the space and fill in the blanks. The recycling that Carlson refers to in theatre is grounded in the re-presentation, re-staging and re-articulation of theatre plays, actors, props and sets. However, as the young people have demonstrated this can also be applied to the theatre's social spaces and the recycling of cultural memories between people. The young people are drawing on the material culture of the theatre building and the signs of others, which 'haunt' and give meaning to the space.

Design consultant Tricia Austin describes how narrativity, 'a term that describes the degree of storyness of a text', can be applied to exhibition and architectural practice:

All spaces can be made to tell a story. For example, sand dunes can tell a story of natural forces, in the forms shaped by wind and sea power, high-rise tower blocks can tell a story of socio political forces, in the forms shaped by urban concentration, favelas tell a different story of urban development, shaped by dispossession ... Thinking of spaces as stories highlights the quality of audience or user experience, the message or content, and the degree of authorship and intentionality in the environment (2012: 10).

The young people illustrate that the Coliseum has a degree of 'storyness' as a building, perhaps because of its history and the 'degree of authorship' that its publics have inscribed on the space, through the signs of their presence and the physical wear and tear of the theatre building over time. We tend to locate the 'storyness' of a theatre space, within the auditorium, involving the stage and the fictional world of a play. However, the young people's interpretations highlight how the theatre's architecture and public spaces also evoke narratives, feelings and the imagination. Austin goes on to note that drawing on this 'storyness' and considering the performativity of space, can become 'explicit strategies or devices available to the creative practitioner' (2012: 10). Similarly, Dorney describes this weaving of memories and meanings as 'narrativization' and suggests that it 'appears to be crucial to the

survival of regional theatre' (2010: 206). By drawing on and recycling the social history of a theatre building, new meanings and interpretations are produced and given life.

The young people's interpretations suggest that rather than these 'layers of past memories and preconceptions', coproduced by others, being a deterrent or a barrier to their engagement, they actually provide them with a way of connecting to the social fabric of the theatre building, as a place (Cochrane, 2013: 304). The aesthetic of the building evokes connotations of being old fashioned but not necessarily as a place that the young people feel alienated from. The young people indicate that engaging with the presence of others in the theatre space is of interest to them. The age and aesthetic of the building enhances this feeling of connecting to people and the past. There is also a sense of belonging in the tone of our discussions together, which counters that suggested by Cochrane that 'the assumptions of the past, combined with the exigencies of the present, can impose formidable constraints on ... the creative use of allocated internal space' (2013: 304).

Although as the young people have demonstrated, the theatre's artistic programme is not relevant to them, there is perhaps something about the theatre building, as a social space, that is particularly pertinent to these young people from former industrial towns, Oldham and Rochdale, on the outskirts of a city. There are limited public spaces for young people to access and limited resources within the boroughs, which I explore in more detail in chapter 5. The young people's interpretations suggest that there is something 'special' about the theatre building, something social and comfortable, that contrasts with their understandings of the theatre's direct locality, explored in the previous section (Paris, 2015). To refer back to Rufford, 'the ideal of a house as a home, as a refuge full of objects and memories, has never been more widely desired and hard to achieve'. As Rufford asserts, whilst 'avoiding to peddle social fantasies of the home', there is an argument for reclaiming the idea of the theatre as a house, a local space, where memories and people are brought together (2015: 62). Merkin and Dorney support this, asserting that regional theatre 'at its best, can

provide a sense of life, a sense of who we are in its complexities and contradictions, a sense of community' (2010: 2). The young people draw on this sense of the local in their articulations, suggesting that the building provides a way of affirming their civic identity, connecting and rooting people with and alongside others.

However, stimulating this connectivity relies on facilitating young people's access and evolving relationships to the theatre building. As Nicholson asserts, the meanings of spaces although not fixed, are 'negotiated through social practice' (2011: 11). The perception of theatres as pertaining barriers to young people's engagement perpetuates when groups of people are not given the opportunity to navigate and subsequently enhance the story of a building. This highlights the mutual importance of learning departments and schools and other youth providers in fostering ways to engage and connect children and young people to theatre spaces. This is evident within Farhana, Paris and James' descriptions in particular, who each note their engagement with the theatre through school - Farhana through her primary school and James and Paris through the scheme. As Dorney asserts, through preserving and building on memories and articulations of the past, theatres still need to look to the present and the future (2010: 206). Regardless of the economic complexities around programming and audiences, theatres need to be inventive about the use of the space in order to provide these access points, to revive and regenerate the 'storyness' of a building. The invitation to access, configure and contribute memories within the theatre space can build and nurture a sense of ownership. Through ongoing work as part of the education partnership scheme, that I document through the length of the study, the young people will access further experiences within the theatre building. Here, they ascribe further meanings to the theatre, as a place, and thus, contribute to its evolving narrative.

In summary, this chapter has highlighted some of the barriers to young people's engagement with the theatre building, notably, the Coliseum's physical, geographical surroundings, which as Carlson notes, can affect the way that people experience and anticipate their visit to a theatre (1989: 2).

John and James' descriptions of their journeys to the theatre past the pubs, highlights how broader geographic, social and economic factors can influence young people's overall experience. The theatre's interrelationship with its broader social context is something that the young people, particularly those who had an existing connection to the Coliseum, identify in their interpretations of the theatre building. They refer to the Coliseum's cultural disposition in the way that they describe the theatre as part of the town's identity, 'this is how people like it' (Tom, 2015), 'it's part of Oldham' (John, 2015). This suggests that place, both in its geographic and conceptual sense is a key factor in shaping the way that young people identify with theatre buildings. The young people described the theatre building itself, overall, with fondness, in particular those with a familial relationship or those who had attended previously with school. However, these descriptions were not exclusive to young people who had attended the theatre before. When inside the building, Paris and James detailed the social interactivity evoked through the theatre space and its past, and Paris noted that the building was 'special' (2015). The aesthetic of the building perhaps enhances their feelings of connecting to the past and others, as James pointed out in observing the plaques on the seats. The young people's articulations show that they are capable of interpreting and building on the social stories of the theatre space.

The chapter highlighted the methodological implications of the young people's experiences of the theatre building. In researching the theatre experience, I have argued that researchers need to consider the use of theatre buildings beyond the performance event in question. I have drawn on cultural materialist studies to understand young people's experiences of the theatre within its broader social, geographic and cultural context. However, existing studies have tended to focus solely on theatre as a performance event and the experiences of an audience member. Ric Knowles actually separates participatory activity from the theatre event, noting that backstage tours employ 'their own kind of theatricality' (2004: 67). This chapter, however, has demonstrated that we cannot easily separate meanings

between activities, participants and audiences within studies into experiences of a theatre building. As Cochrane notes, 'past memories and preconceptions are not so easily obliterated' (2013: 304). As in the Coliseum's case, a diverse range of activities, events and performances, crosscutting traditional theatre-going conventions, now occupy the theatre's spaces. In order to fully understand how theatre spaces produce meanings, studies need to be broader in considering how different people interact with theatre spaces in different ways, how a range of participants, stakeholders and audiences inform the production of new layers of meaning, and how this informs the overall 'storyness' of a building.

Chapter 3. Hidden Spaces, Dusty Objects and Practices: Learning through theatre craft in situ

In chapter 2, I established how the 'physical surroundings of performance' shape young people's experiences of attending the theatre (Carlson, 1989: 2). The young people's documentation focused on their experiences of the theatre's locality and the building's public spaces, their journeys to the theatre, through front of house areas and in the auditorium and bar areas. Their engagement with these spaces produced a range of narratives evoking memories of their own previous experiences and the stories of others. The young people ascribed stories to the spaces based on the traces of audience members past and present, 'people who like to go and see the plays', 'older people', 'people who liked coming here' and also to people they associated with spaces in the theatre's locality, 'drunk people'. The young people are drawing on narratives of audience members specifically in their descriptions of the theatre's public spaces as opposed to members of staff or actors. This suggests that meanings are structured within the theatre building through the organisation of the space. As Lefebvre asserts, 'the space thus produced also serves as a tool for thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control' (1991: 26).

The theatre building is divided into public and private areas which control and condition how meanings are produced. McAuley refers to these private areas within the theatre as 'practitioner spaces', 'areas around, under or above the stage that the spectators never see' (1999: 63). McAuley notes that 'it is difficult to write about this area of the overall theatre space as it has never been systematically documented in the past and is, still to this day, regarded as private by practitioners'. Through the Coliseum's education partnership scheme, in addition to a range of drama workshops delivered within the theatre and in the young people's schools, the practitioner spaces of the theatre building are often utilised as learning contexts. Within these spaces, the young people explore the technical crafts housed in the theatre building including lighting, sound, props and costume. The young people explore these practices through demonstrations and activities, often delivered by

members of the production team. This chapter explores the young people's experiences of engaging in the practitioner spaces of the theatre building which, as McAuley describes, are usually 'difficult to write about'. The young people have documented, uncovered and ascribed new meanings to the theatre building through their engagement with these spaces. They have placed the backstage practices 'that the spectators never see' at the centre of their images (McAuley, 1999: 63). The young people's responses show that, rather than a view of engagement with theatre and theatre production that foregrounds dramatic and artistic practices, predominated in the field of theatre education, what is privileged is the technical skill and craft of the work backstage. This chapter presents an argument for theatre education that draws on the theatre as environment and set of industrial practices, speaking to the binary that has often been set up between the artistic and the technical in British Theatre Studies and theatre education research. I offer a mapping of craft in theatre education that draws on craft as a system of skill and knowledge and its values as a 'joined skill in community' (Sennett, 2008: 51).

As explored in chapter 1, regional theatres have a long history of delivering educative activities that focus on exploring the mechanics of producing theatre. However, through the development of TIE, a new discourse emerged, exploring theatre's potential as a learning medium and these practices were consequently marginalised in theatre education research. Programmes of participatory theatre, rooted in socially relevant subject matters were delivered in schools, away from the theatre building. These programmes were delivered by specialist 'actor-teachers' who were 'trained or experienced in both theatre and education' (Rosenberg, 1974: 45). In comparison to the rich documentation of TIE praxis and the work of actor-teachers, we know very little about the social and educational potential of practices that focus on learning *about* theatre making, delivered by technicians in the theatre building.

The historical context of TIE and approaches to theatre education and applied theatre more broadly, have arguably led to critical explorations that foreground young people's participation in drama or a dramatic/exploratory

process over explorations into other aspects of theatre making, such as theatre craft. Terms such as 'learning by doing', 'active' and 'physical' denote young people's role taking in a drama or scenario. Within these scenarios young people are positioned as actor/participant and are engaged in a creative process with a director/facilitator. Although the 'participant' and 'facilitator' are not strictly or necessarily assuming the roles of 'actor' and 'director' in a participatory workshop setting, the mode of interplay within this context rests on a similar theatrical-social dynamic - the dramatic process of ensemble working. Theatre and education scholar Jonathan Neelands, argues that an ensemble-based approach values the 'processes of social and artistic engagement and experiencing of drama' (2009: 3). The social and educational potential of working through drama is a well-researched area and, as a drama and theatre practitioner, my practice is built on this premise. However, my aim here is to demonstrate how, as theatre practitioners and researchers, we have perhaps neglected other areas of theatre making practice that are also social, embodied and imaginative in their nature.

Reflective of the wider field of Theatre Studies, we have tended to privilege the work of actors and directors in our practices; drawing from performance related disciplines and applying them to social and educational workshop settings. As Monks asserts, in describing costume making in 'In Defence of Craft: A Manifesto', 'let us create an approach to theatre scholarship that does not replicate the class hierarchies of the theatre':

The scholarly field of Theatre Studies is missing a key historical framework, that of craft at the theatre. The work of designing, making and wearing costume that goes on backstage, in the rehearsal room, the wardrobe and the dressing-room, remains mysterious, often unacknowledged, and given far less status by critics and scholars than the work of actors, writers, directors and sometimes scenographers onstage (2014: 175).

I argue that these hierarchies are manifest in theatre education praxis, where the collaborative work that goes on behind the stage and the modes of teaching and learning that facilitate the acquisition of these skills and practices, remains largely unacknowledged in the field. Through 'situated learning' at the Coliseum, young people are introduced to the practices of stage managers, costume makers and lighting and sound technicians (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Instead of exploring theatre from the position of an actor/participant, through an ensemble-led, dramatic approach, the young people are engaged in learning about theatre craft and technical processes in situ. The themes that emerge from the young people's engagement in these practices echo and further Monks' call to arms. Their photographs and interpretations uncover the hierarchies of labour present within the theatre whilst illuminating the rich opportunities afforded for developing young people's technical creativity, through learning about the actual work and labour involved in this context.

The young people illustrate that learning through a technical and craft focused approach to theatre education also evokes imaginative responses that are highly embodied in their nature. As Sennett argues, 'technical understanding develops through the powers of imagination' (2009: 10). Sennett notes how craftwork brings together two domains, the 'invisible and the palpable', where the craft worker constructs 'clarity from obscurity' (2009: 210). The young people's interpretations of their encounters with the theatre's staff and their practices illuminate the ways in which the imagination is critical in these areas of work; the 'language' of craft, directing and guiding 'bodily skill' (Sennett, 2009: 10). Imagination and embodiment are heavily associated with the process of the actor in theatre and are terms we also associate with dramatic processes within theatre education. As Neelands notes, through dramatic ensemble-based approaches, young people 'construct practical and embodied understandings of a play' (2009: 173). In exploring how the young people engage imaginatively and physically through technical and craft-based practices, I aim to disturb the binary present within

theatre education discourse, which often separates the dramatic/imaginative from the material/technical.

Within these backstage, practitioner spaces at the Coliseum, which are utilised as learning settings, the young people are engaged in learning alongside theatre technicians. The interactions between the young people and the facilitators, the technicians, are based on an apprenticeship model of learning. Lave and Wenger describe an apprenticeship model in their articulations of 'communities of practice' as 'legitimate peripheral participation'. The young people are learning about theatre making in situ, engaged in the production team's 'community of practice'. Lave and Wenger note that this model of acquiring knowledge provides a way of thinking about apprenticeship that speaks to the 'relations between newcomers and old timers, about activities, identities, artefacts and communities of knowledge and practice' (1991: 29). As theatre educators, we have tended to privilege the 'socially-engaged', ensemble-led approach to facilitation and learning in theatre, for its qualities in foregrounding 'enablement, participant-centeredness and processes that involve equitable negotiation between those involved' (Preston, 2016: 1). However, within the learning context described within this chapter, the young people are developing skills and knowledge from 'old timers' (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 29). There is little 'negotiation' in the content produced or in the execution of the technicians' instructions. However, I argue that this model of learning is nonetheless social. As Sennett argues, in articulating how craft workers learn, 'the spoken word seems more effective than written instructions. You have to be in the same spot; learning becomes local' (2009: 179). The theatre's production staff operate within an equally important collaborative and social framework as the actors and director in the rehearsal room, which the young people are experiencing for themselves – 'they are in the same spot'. How do young people experience learning through this approach and how does this model of teaching/facilitation frame the social exchange between the technicians and the young people?

In addition to the ways in which the young people's experiences of these practices speak to the binary between the technical and the imaginative within theatre, they also reveal the potential of material practice in mediating distinctive kinds of learning. In chapter 2, the young people demonstrated that they were interested in the material culture of the theatre building within its public spaces. Within this chapter, they reveal divergences in meaning between the public and private spaces of the theatre building; the 'storyness' of the practitioner spaces evoke a different narrative (Austin, 2012). Furthermore, there are contrasts in their interpretations of the theatre's materials backstage, from industrial, work related objects and practices explored in the theatre's workshop settings to something fictional and fantasy-like in their investigation of props. This raises questions about the diverse opportunities for learning afforded through material culture. It prompts us to consider the ways the material and imagined aspects of theatre both collide and fuse in concert in this setting, opening up ways into thinking about theatre education that better reflect the entirety of theatre as a communicative form. Drawing on these themes, I offer a mapping of craft in respect to theatre education, exploring how the material can unlock the immaterial through the ways in which theatrical objects 'speak'. Here, I initiate conversations with research into new materialism and suggest ways in which the 'language' of theatrical objects can be explored to erode material/immaterial binaries.

The chapter is divided into three sections, examining the young people's engagement with the theatre's backstage spaces, practices and objects. "Hidden Spaces" explores the young people's experiences of the theatre's backstage areas, which I contrast with their initial encounters with the theatre building, documented in chapter 2. I examine the structures of space within the theatre building and question how architecture facilitates particular kinds of learning experiences. "Material Practices" develops these questions, looking specifically at one workshop delivered by a lighting technician at the Coliseum to explore the social and educational potential of learning through a technically-led theatre practice. Reflecting on the interaction facilitated

within this workshop setting, I argue that approaches to learning through craft and technical processes deserve more critical attention as imaginative, embodied and social approaches to learning in their own right. “Dusty Objects” explores the stories and meanings that the young people ascribe to the objects they encounter within the theatre’s backstage areas. I question how props and other theatrical objects can facilitate learning within a materialist approach to theatre education.

Hidden Spaces

In *Learning through Theatre: The Changing Face of Theatre in Education*, Jackson’s (2013) third edition of this influential book on theatre and education, Steve Ball, Associate Director of Birmingham Repertory Theatre, explores the notion of ‘regional theatres as learning resources’ (2013: 155). He asserts that, this shift, towards activities that take place within the theatre building, ‘utilise the unique contribution that a producing theatre can make to the learning process. This approach considers the theatre – its stages, resources, productions and staff’ (2013: 156). Although Ball (re)opens this dialogue in Jackson’s book series, there is little exploration into the social and educational possibilities of these learning experiences and, in particular, how young people make meaning within the theatre building through these approaches.

As part of the Coliseum’s education partnership scheme, the spaces within the building, where elements of the theatre making process take place, including stores and workshop areas, are utilised as learning contexts. The motivation for this approach at the Coliseum is to illuminate the practices of theatre making within a producing theatre context. However, it also derives from various other factors, including lack of space within the building and the ways in which the learning department has developed education activities around its main stage programme, which does not necessarily appeal to young people, as observed in chapter 2. These factors have led the learning department to rethink the delivery of education activities in the theatre building. In chapter 5, I explore the practicalities of delivering these

programmes within the theatre building and expand on how they evolved within/alongside the theatre's broader work and remit in Oldham. Within this chapter, I focus on the young people's experiences of engaging with these spaces and the learning presented through working within these backstage contexts alongside theatre staff.

In giving young people access to these practitioner spaces, what new meanings will they ascribe to the theatre building, and what can these spaces, as sites of work and production, contribute to the learning process? (McAuley, 1999: 63). The young people took part in drama and technical theatre activities at the Coliseum over three visits. This included a tour of the building, where we made stops at various backstage spaces, and their engagement in demonstrations and exercises within these spaces. The young people captured large quantities of photographs within spaces in and around the building, which propelled my investigation into their learning within these contexts. Similar to their photographs and interpretations used to describe the theatre's public spaces in chapter 2, which were underpinned by social narratives and a 'storyness' based on the theatre's past, their interpretations of the theatre's practitioner spaces are visceral and reflect their interest in material culture. Their images of these spaces, however, are industrial in their nature, and the materials and objects they capture are functional. The young people have curated the labour and 'work' of theatre backstage.

During the backstage tour, the group stopped at the wardrobe department for a talk with the Wardrobe Supervisor. The group were shown around the space whilst two members of the department demonstrated how they were constructing a costume, stopping to explain what they were doing and where they were up to in the process. Paris has captured an image of a mannequin that was being worked on at the time. In the image, we see a basque and skirt have been buttoned and pinned to the mannequin of a female body, which has been padded to form the actor's dress size. In the background, we see another mannequin, unclothed; the images illuminating the 'hidden' or 'illicit' nature of the theatre's backstage world.



Figure 11: A costume in construction (photograph by Paris, Sept 2016)

Paris: This is when we finally got to go in the costume room. I find this most interesting. I like textiles and designing things so getting to know how it all works is really cool. At that moment in time, they weren't finished so that's why they still have pins in them

and stuff. They were making the wigs as well. You got to see the designs as well.

Carly: What was the costume, Paris? What were they making?

Paris: It was like Victoriany. So, they're made to suit that time in the play. Other times, say for a play that was, you know, that was about today, they might buy the clothes, but these were specially made.

Paris' image of a female torso/mannequin signals a sense of entering into the 'unseen'. It evokes what sociologist Erving Goffman describes as our 'front/back stage behaviours, where we 'control and manage our public image' (1959: 22). Usually left in the 'backstage', Paris brings the 'undressed' mannequin to the forefront in her image. This resonates with the idea of the backstage space, being home to 'hidden' behaviours in the theatre, perhaps also reflecting her own vulnerabilities as a young woman around self and adulthood. Paris' description of the photograph, however, is quite methodical and informed. She circumvents the metaphorical symbol of the mannequin/torso and focuses on its purpose as a 'tool', as part of a material practice, using the mannequin as a 'tool' to describe her understanding of the process.

Paris relays the information she was given about when costumes are bought or specifically made for a production, 'they're made to suit that time in the play ... other times ... they might buy the clothes, but these were specially made'. Paris has learned something of the working methods of the wardrobe department, capturing theatre craft in situ and the context surrounding the work of the maker, 'at that moment in time, they weren't finished so that's why they still have pins in them and stuff'. Paris recognises that she has documented the costume at a particular stage in the process of its construction and suggests she feels as if she has discovered something new in this experience, 'I find this most interesting'. The unfinished nature of the depiction of the costume and the materials, such as the pins that construct it, suggests that she is learning something about the labour and work involved

in theatre making. Far from the imagined life of a 'finished' costume and the actor's depiction of the character wearing it onstage, she is describing the work behind the costume.

In *The Actor in Costume*, Monks challenges Aristotle's denotation of the spectacle and the technical components of theatre as 'the least important part':

As a result of this anti-visual, pro-text tradition, audiences and scholars are often trained to look beyond the surface of the visual landscape of the performance towards the meanings lying beneath that landscape. In this approach to theatre, the audience is made to ignore the costumes themselves, and view them simply as the clothes of the character, or a symbol of a deeper emotional or political landscape of the mise-en-scene. The surfaces of costumes are viewed as a means to an end rather than an end in themselves (2010: 10).

Monks suggests that audience members are trained to look at costumes in a certain way, either to discover a deeper, semiotic meaning or to consider them with reference to an actor's depiction of a character. Monks argues that we connect a costume to an actor in a performance 'seamlessly', rather than viewing costumes as a 'means to an end in themselves'. Paris' image stretches Monks' argument as she has captured the actual constructing of the costume - the pins which are literally holding the 'seams' of the skirt on the mannequin. She is not only separating the actor/character from the costume, she is getting under the skin of the costume itself. Paris' image, therefore, is even further removed from the 'anti-visual, pro-text tradition' that has been elevated in theatre scholarship (Monks, 2010: 10). The costume is not remotely finished, in construction on a mannequin. However, Paris suggests that seeing this assembling is of interest, 'getting to know how it all works is really cool'. Paris has gone backstage to a usually hidden space and is learning alongside the wardrobe team about their work. Carriger asks, 'is a costume part of the actor or the character or the material context of the

performance?’ (2017: 42). Here, the costume and/or the performance is not necessarily the thing. Paris has removed the costume from the actor, character and the ‘material context of the performance’, locating the costume in the context of where it is made.

Similar to Paris’ image of the mannequin, Tom has captured a photograph of the fly system and relays how this element of theatre practice ‘works’. The image depicts a metal cage, protecting the fly system and the rope that operates ‘Bar 26’. The sign with the information about the load, ‘S.W.L 200 Kg’, is the focus of the image, which explains that the safe working load of the bar is 200kg. This weight is distributed across the bar within the counterweight system. The photograph is raw and industrial and not something that we would usually associate with a scenic backdrop. Tom has gone behind this scenographic illusion and captured, through his image, the actual workings of the flies’ backstage.



Figure 12: The fly system (photograph by Tom, Sept 2016)

Tom: These are the ropes that work the different pieces of scenery coming in.

Carly: Did you know that's how it worked?

Tom: No. I didn't really think about it to be honest. I think 'cause it's the backstage stuff you don't see it when you're out there.

Carly: Do you think it's important to see it?

Tom: Well, not important, but it's good to know. When I watch a show now, I can think, that's how they do it.

Tom suggests he understands the fly system as an element in constructing an illusion onstage but has chosen to capture an image of the apparatus instead of the 'finished' scenery itself, 'these are the ropes that work the different pieces of scenery coming in'. Like Paris' image, there is an 'unseen' feel to the photograph and Tom's articulations. Tom has learned something new in relation to this backstage space within the theatre building that he would have otherwise not seen from the auditorium, 'you don't see it when you're out there'. I asked Tom 'do you think it is important to see it?' and wonder whether, had I asked do you think it is important *not* to see it, how his explanation may have differed. He appears to answer from the perspective of an audience member watching a performance, 'well, not important, but it's good to know'. Tom recognises the bars and fly system as being apparatus in constructing the illusion and believes they are not important to the audience. However, he notes that, 'when I watch a show now, I can think, that's how they do it'. This suggests that looking and learning about these 'hidden' practices and operations has informed his future frame of reference as an audience member. He will be able to look beyond the proscenium arch, as a divisive frame in the theatre, to the practices backstage that this architecture usually conceals.

There is something about Paris and Tom's images and articulations of 'how things work' that actually go beyond theatre craft; they are encountering the industry or 'work' of theatre. Their images and our discussions together illuminate the practices of labour backstage in the theatre that are far removed from the imaginary worlds created onstage. Within these instances,

the themes of labour and the material are prominent, and the 'worker' feels present. Here, Tom has captured an image of the fly system and the technician's hands in demonstrating the motion of how the system operates. Tom has illuminated the embodied nature of this practice backstage, through capturing the technician miming the motion of the ropes. Miming and embodiment are terms/techniques that we usually associate with the work of the actor. Tom and Paris, however, are giving agency to material practice and the materials within these spaces; the 'tools', the 'work' and the workers, as embodied systems of knowledge and practice in their own right.

James' image further energises and gives agency to a particular material practice within a space in the theatre building. He captures the mark-up on the floor in the studio theatre; the rehearsal space for the Coliseum's home-produced work, participatory space and theatre space for studio performances. At the time of taking this image, James had participated in several drama workshops in the studio, one of which where the mark-up was mentioned as the young people entered the space. Within these instances, the drama workshop took place on top of the mark-up left on the floor from rehearsals that had then moved to the stage itself. James, however, decides to capture and describe the mark-up, something he has learned about the space, rather than specifically describing his experiences of the drama workshop. His deliberate focusing on the mark-up in his photograph and the way he immediately relays its purpose through our interview, suggests that he made a conscious decision to capture and document a technical practice associated with this space. For James, the 'storyness' of the space and this trace of theatre practice reflects themes of function and work.



Figure 13: A Studio mark-up (photograph by James, Sept 2016)

James: This is the studio.

Carly: Why did you take this photograph?

James: That's called the mark-up. They use two points on the floor to do it.

Carly: Well you know more than me about that. Was it strange doing a workshop in here with that on the floor?

James: You get used to it. The actors need it, to know where to stand.

Carly: We've used this space a few times haven't we, what do you remember about it?

James: When we were in there, they'd been doing rehearsals. Think they had notes and stuff on the walls.

I asked James why he took the photograph and he responds, 'that's called the mark-up. They use two points on the floor to do it'. He is articulating his knowledge of the work in this space, observing the 'notes and stuff' on the walls and the function of the tape markings on the floor, telling the actors 'where to stand'. Although used on occasions as a participatory drama workshop space with James and his class, his reflections suggest that he is interested in the studio as a workspace. There is perhaps something pertinent about working within/alongside the technicians and actors within this situated context that has interested James. The theatre building as a site of work perhaps locates and frames the young people's experiences. Furthermore, like Paris and Tom's images, James' disturbs the hierarchy of labour within the theatre, focusing on, and choosing to capture the actualities and practicalities of the work involved in constructing illusions onstage. Although the intention of the tape markings is to assist the director and actors in creating compositions of images for the stage between characters, James appears to be revelling in the materiality of this process; the work involved in making theatre, backstage.

Paris, Tom and James have all given focus to functional materials and objects in their images, picking out pins, grids, ropes and tape that are usually unseen or concealed onstage. These materials are the 'tools' of the trade and something they understand as belonging to the practitioner spaces

of the theatre building. There are synergies between how they are distinguishing these materials as traces of work within the theatre building and the ways in which they ascribed social narratives to the theatre's public spaces in chapter 2. James focused on the traces of audience members past and present through the plaques and signs in the theatre's bar and auditorium and here, notes the function of the tape within the rehearsal process. Within these backstage areas, however, their images of these traces of interaction with the theatre building are much more surprising, confronting and sterile. They are uncovering the reality of backstage life and work, within old rooms and dark corners of the building; exposing narratives of labour, usually lost or hidden within the theatre event.

Theatre scholar John Lutterbie draws on Lefebvre's understandings of abstract space to distinguish between how space is produced in the making and in the presenting of theatre (2001: 124). Lefebvre acknowledges natural space, 'revealed (and concealed) in the process of its inhabitation'. Lefebvre notes that the representation of this space is limited to 'works, images and memories'. The combination of these forms leading to abstract space, which functions 'positively vis a vis its own implications ... the locus, medium and tool of this positivity' (Lefebvre, 1991: 50):

The scenographer engages with the director in the conceptualisation of the design and then enters into relations with the technical director and various crews in the realisation of the concept in material form. What is paramount is the finished product, the 'works, images and memories' revealed in real space for an audience, a product that also conceals the labour and artistry and the collaborative process that led to the final representational form. This is equally true of the rehearsal space, a produced space in which relations of power and authority come into play in the development of the production, but which disappear in the finished product. What is important is the show, not how it gets there (Lutterbie, 2001: 124).

James, Tom and Paris are noticing, documenting and engaging with aspects of theatre production that go beyond the 'finished product'. They are challenging the notion of the material in theatre, described by Lutterbie, by revelling in the 'labour and artistry' of the theatre making process as opposed to the aesthetic qualities of this process realised. The young people have subverted this hierarchy of labour in theatre, through capturing and uncovering the 'works, images and memories' of the work and the 'workers', through their first-hand access to these spaces and practices. What is important to the young people within these instances is not 'the show' but 'how it gets there' (Lutterbie, 2001: 124). Why have the young people chosen to capture these aspects of theatre making within the practitioner spaces of the theatre building, and what could this mean to theatre educators?

In *Not Magic, but work*, McAuley documents the process of the making of *Toy Symphony*, a play by Michael Gow, produced at the Belvoir Street Theatre in Sydney in 2007. Her account covers the collaborative nature of theatre making in its entirety and notes how the aesthetic choices of the director and actors often contrast with the labour being undertaken alongside the rehearsal process. McAuley describes the technical production in theatre as a 'parallel universe':

All around, from all sides, there are people working, waiting for a cue, fixing things. The place is surrounded ... what struck me was that Brecht's exhortation to the actors to reveal to the audience that what was going on was *not magic/but work*, could be turned on its head because what I was experiencing was the magic of work (2012: 137).

McAuley notes that within this instance she was sitting in the auditorium, waiting for the dress rehearsal to begin, with technicians calling out instructions to each other across the stage. She felt 'the impact this created on the interpenetration of theatre as work space and theatre as imaginary world' (2012: 137). The young people, like McAuley, are afforded a particular kind of access and status within their experiences. From this position, they are within the midst of work and confronted with the strange un/reality of

being 'in-between' worlds. The impromptu and live nature of their insight into these working practices and spaces has perhaps heightened their experiences, for example, the mark-up left on the floor, the costumes mid-way through their construction. The 'unfinishedness' of the practices and operations that they have encountered reveal the labour and artistry involved in constructing but also concealing this world of work within the theatre building. Accessing this abstract space, this adult work context, provides them with entry into a world that is usually concealed and rarely accessed by a young person. As a result, a new collection of spatial and social narratives, usually kept secret, has emerged, detailing the working practices of the technicians and the spaces they occupy. There is a sense of discovery in their engagement in these practices, within these hidden spaces that almost rivals the access of an audience to a world created onstage. Their images accord a particular aesthetic to this parallel offstage world. They are perhaps seeing, as McAuley describes, the 'magic of work', engaging in hidden spaces and moments of practice that otherwise 'disappear in the finished product' (Lutterbie, 2001: 124).

The young people are drawing on theatre as a site of production and set of industrial practices, which suggests that they are interested in developing technical knowledge of theatre production. In addition to the materials, the ropes, the pins and the tape that serve theatre and theatre production, it is perhaps their relationship to the makers that has intensified their experiences. There is a sense of going behind the scenes and meeting the mechanics or the workers that makes them feel closer to the inner workings of the theatre. Therefore, there is also perhaps a social aspect to their experiences and being 'in' on this world that is pertinent. McAuley notes that 'backstage is the world of work, of craft, it belongs to those who have the skill to make it work, and it seems that their power to do this, is in part dependent on keeping the working reality of the theatre carefully hidden from the eyes of the profane' (1999: 64). The concealment of these practices perhaps reinforces this sense of the young people feeling like participants within the workers' 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Theatre scholar

Alice Rayner makes a similar point in describing backstage tours, 'there is a sense of gaining secret knowledge about the truth behind the illusion of the stage space ... Not only is there the access to secrets; there is also a shared community bond that goes into participation in the work' (2006: 141).

The Leicester Curve, opened in 2008, is the only theatre in the UK without a traditional backstage area. The workings of the theatre can be seen from the street, and as Artistic Director Paul Kerryson describes, this opens up interesting opportunities for discovering how theatre is made, 'imagine a young person coming to the theatre for the first time and finding the whole creative infrastructure revealed' (2008). Critic Alfred Hickling notes that the Curve is 'a theatre without secrets' (2008). When pondering the themes within this section with Lesley Chenery, Head of Production at the Coliseum, I asked whether our practices were getting close to what the Curve was doing. Lesley commented:

Of course you can see in and that whole backstage world is revealed, but only perhaps architecturally. Here they are with them. Literally next to them, learning. That's something different (2018).

The young people have drawn on something about this social interaction that is important. Rather than solely 'seeing in' to the world of work at the theatre, as Lesley suggests may be the case at the Curve, they are learning with or alongside the makers or workers in their spaces. This notion of learning alongside, in situ, perhaps provides the young people with an experience that goes beyond theatre education. In addition to being given entry into this work-based, 'community of practice', they are learning through a different frame to that found in applied theatre or theatre education contexts, which largely foregrounds the idea of dramatic ensemble working (Lave and Wenger, 1991). They are learning within a working theatre environment and through a model more likened with apprenticeship. Within the next section, I extend and deepen my exploration of the educational and social exchange afforded through learning about technical and craft-based practice within this

setting, further challenging the binary that is present between the material/real and fictional/imagined within theatre education research.

Material Practices

The previous section focused on the young people's interactions with the spaces and materials found in the practitioner areas of the theatre building. The young people illuminated the hidden and unseen feel of these backstage areas, exposing their dark and worn condition and the labour and artistry present within the theatre building, usually concealed from the purview of the audience. The young people articulate a sense of discovery in seeing this infrastructure revealed, 'seeing how it all works' and getting to meet the makers or workers themselves in situ (Paris, 2016). This section builds on the young people's experiences of engaging in the backstage world of the theatre but focuses specifically on the learning facilitated within a lighting workshop, where young people practically learn about/through a technical process. I expand on the young people's interaction with the theatre's staff, closely examining the nature of the learning developed and the social exchanges between a technician and a young person.

In comparison to understandings of the educational and social potential of learning through drama and applied theatre practice, we know very little about the teaching of technical practices within theatre education. Theatre educators have predominantly modelled learning within drama workshops on 'professional theatres' understandings of ensemble artistry', to facilitate finding mutual understandings, common goals, emotion and truth (Neelands, 2009: 173). Practices that facilitate the acquisition of technical skill, how things work and craft, on the other hand, have not received the same critical attention. Within the workshop described in this section, rather than exploring the fictional and dramatic aspects of theatre through an ensemble-based approach, the young people are engaging in a material/technical practice. They are learning about lighting design and operation, whilst discovering a text. Although there are practical differences between the approaches described here and the setting of a drama workshop, I draw on the idea of

the ensemble to provide a comparison into the type of learning and social meanings stimulated. I argue that, although the workshop focuses on the tools and objects that construct fictional worlds in the theatre, the learning is facilitated within an equally important embodied and imaginative framework.

Furthermore, the interaction between the technician, as facilitator, and the young people, as participants, although based on a different mode of interplay to that found in a dramatic, ensemble-led workshop, is none the less social. Within an ensemble-based workshop, the facilitator and participants, 'construct practical and embodied understandings of a play' (Neelands, 2009: 173). Within Neelands' example, we can imagine the facilitator guiding the participants' collective exploration of a text, theme or idea, practically, through drama activities, modelling characters and settings through the 'immaterial'. The teaching and learning here, however, is based on working with the material. The young people are learning about how the lights operate and are taken through a manual process using the lighting equipment. This requires a kind of knowledge share that is perhaps less open ended than within Neelands' workshop. The young people are instead required to follow a set of instructions. The knowledge share is based on an apprenticeship model of learning, 'the process through which a more experienced person assists a less experienced one, providing support and examples so the less experienced one gains new knowledge and skills' (Dennen and Burner, 2007: 426). Although the framing of the learning inherent in the workshop is different, what emerges is that the technician and the young people also collaboratively 'construct practical and embodied understandings of a play' (Neelands, 2009: 173). This section explores the nature of the learning developed through this technically focused exploration and examines how the theatre's tools and materials alter or shift the facilitation/learning dynamic.

Within the example offered here, a class of young people, over a two-hour workshop, looked at a text and made lighting choices for a particular scene. The technician, Liam, showed the group a palette of lighting effects and demonstrated how to handle the lantern, including how to lock and unlock

the chains, close the barn doors to narrow the light and how to position the gels and gobos. Liam then asked the young people to observe three of their peers reading a section of a scene from a play and adapt the lighting according to how they felt it added to the mood and atmosphere. The aim of the workshop was for them to understand the processes of lighting operation and design, making choices about lighting effects in relation to a text and for them to understand practically how this is executed onstage. During the workshop, research participant Riyadur, took a photograph. Using his interpretations of this photograph and my own reflections having observed the workshop, I first explore the specific skills and knowledge Riyadur is developing before focusing on how this knowledge was facilitated through his interactions with Liam.



Figure 14: Lighting workshop in the Studio (photograph by Riyadur, Sept 2016)

Riyadur: This was for the lights. When you put them on they make a different colour onstage. We had blue, orange, pink and red.

Carly: What did you do with them?

Riyadur: So we had a task. You had to shout, 'going dark' when you were turning the main lights off. You use those for making different colours on the stage. Red light was danger, love or blood. Blue light was like, if it was a nice kind of scene. Light blue I think might have been morning. If there's a scene going to happen outside, you might put that on. I picked red.

Carly: Why's that?

Riyadur: Because I wanted that, you know like, anger and (pause) temper when they said their words. You know to bring that out?

Carly: And who delivered this workshop Riyadur? Who led the workshop?

Riyadur: He was called Liam. He was a technician and showed us how he does it.

Riyadur has captured an image of some of the lighting gels used in the workshop, on the floor in the Coliseum's studio. The space is absent of natural light, with the only light coming from the theatre lanterns. There is also a pair of scissors laying next to the gels that the young people used to cut the gels to size. I observed that when Riyadur took the photograph, he waited until one of his peers had turned the light up on the fader to catch the blue pool of light on the floor, in his image. Reflecting on his photograph, Riyadur describes how he had used the gels in the workshop and explains the various significations of their colours. He notes that 'when you put them on they make a different colour onstage'. He then describes how he decided to use the red gel to connote anger in the scene. Riyadur has described the process of 'how it works' and then connects these practical understandings to an emotion. He identifies the dramatic action as fuelled by anger and selects red as the colour to light the scene, 'to bring that out'. Riyadur has made an artistic choice to produce a meaning in the play, constructed

through a technical-material form, mirrored through his capturing of the blue light in his photograph.

Engaged in a creative technical task, Riyadur has interpreted an emotion and executed the 'effect' practically. Unlike learning that takes place within a typical drama-based approach, Riyadur has made a choice about the character's emotion, without embodying that emotion. Through the work of Stanislavski (1937), Boal (2000), and within drama in education approaches, through the work of Bolton (1984), Neelands (2001, 2002, 2009), O'Toole (1992) and Heathcote (1980), young people are encouraged to find felt meanings and develop empathy through their exploration of character and their interactions as part of an ensemble. As Neelands notes, 'to find oneself in the other and in so doing to recognise the other in oneself' (2001: 44). Here, the young people are engaged in constructing and executing an intended effect or meaning onstage through a technical communicative form, rather than in their direct involvement in creating and relating to a character. Riyadur's image and articulations, however, are also reflective of his embodied and imaginative engagement in the technical 'task' and his consideration of the emotional. Firstly, he is physically engaging in the practices of lighting operation, attaching the lantern to the bar, cutting and inserting the gel etc. He then illustrates that this embodied, technical practice has evoked a reflexive exploration of empathy. Removed from the character, he is thinking about anger as an emotion *through* his engagement in the material. Finally, Riyadur is imagining the intended effect of the lighting on an audience member, using his understandings of anger as an emotion, and the effect the red gel may have in accentuating the mood. Theatre scholars Nick Hunt and Susan Melrose argue that technicians exercise 'dreaming' in their practices, 'imagining technological potential ... what if we could? How can we?'. They argue that this dreaming 'enters in to the realm of the fictional-affective ... what would it be like if?' (2005: 80). Riyadur is imagining or 'dreaming' the intended effect of the lighting on an audience. He is using his imagination to connect both the material and fictional aspects of the play and executing this through a physical, embodied task.

Furthermore, Riyadur's experiences of this learning, brings the work of the technician/labourer of theatre into the forefront, focusing on the processes of production, as productive of meaning for the worker (in this case, Liam and Riyadur). Paris, Tom, James and Riyadur are learning about 'how things work' and the processes of theatre making through observing and handling the theatre's materials, with and alongside the workers. Paris notes 'getting to know how it all works is really cool'. Tom notes, 'I'll be able to think, that's how they do it', and Riyadur notes how the technician 'showed us how he does it'. The young people are engaging in the material qualities of theatre and theatre production. They are thinking through a technical prism about how meanings and illusions are produced in theatre and, in doing so, are developing technical creativity and experiencing felt meanings through these encounters in their own right. As outlined by Monks, '[spectators] are trained to look beyond the surface of the visual landscape ... towards the meanings lying beneath the surface ... a deeper emotional or political landscape' (2009: 10). Theatre educators have perhaps adopted this view from critical frameworks in Theatre Studies that reduce technical works to only components in serving the production, as opposed to the practices also being distinctive and capable of producing meanings.

Through learning about these practices, the young people are engaging in a model of teaching and learning that differs from dominant approaches within theatre education. They are handling materials and collecting knowledge based on how these components and elements of theatre practice operate within a theatre building. Within this context the learning is, as Riyadur notes, 'task' based and guided by a clear frame. In the workshop, Liam demonstrated systematically, how to attach the lantern to the bar using safety gloves, selecting and inserting a gel and then locking the lantern onto the bar, before positioning and focusing the light. The young people were expected to observe, practice next to Liam and then follow this process, step-by-step independently. The learning exchange within this context is somatic and based on a highly embodied social interaction. As Sennett argues, within a craft-based context, gesture is a highly communicative form,

providing the 'teacher' and the 'learner' with a medium to show and tell, 'we need to see the bodily gesture to understand the act' (2012: 207). Although the technician/facilitator did not deviate from the practical process or allow the students to move beyond the frame of the task, Liam and the young people, from a technical perspective, are still 'constructing practical and embodied understandings of a play' (Neelands, 2009: 173).

This model of learning mirrors how technicians learn in the industry. The practices are handed down and the skills acquired through practical training. As Hunt and Melrose observe, within the theatre profession,

junior technicians learn from senior ones through observation, imitation and listening... [The practices of these workers have been] retold, altered, amalgamated, passed on, and recombined until they have become exemplary (2014: 75).

Sennett supports this idea of the accumulation and sharing of knowledge in craft-based settings, noting how, within the workshop or laboratory, 'the spoken word seems more effective than written instructions. You have to be in the same spot; learning becomes local' (2009: 179). This echoes the comment by Lesley Chenery, Head of Production at the Coliseum, in describing the theatre's education practices, 'here they are with them. Literally next to them, learning'. There is something intimate about the knowledge share in this setting and the handling of materials between 'workers'. Riyadhur is 'in the same spot' as Liam (Sennett, 2009: 179), 'observing, imitating and listening' (Hunt and Melrose, 2014: 75). The mode of teaching and learning, therefore, is highly situated, using the theatre's materials in situ but also the methods of how the craft is practised in a professional theatre environment, to engage the young people.

The interactivity afforded through the exchanges between Liam, 'the more experienced person' and Riyadhur, the 'less experienced one', should be valued as a unique, social experience in its own right (Dennen and Burner, 2007: 426). Within this context, the young people are engaged in work-based

practices as ‘apprentices’ or ‘junior technicians’ and trusted to follow a set of instructions. As Riyadur notes, ‘his name was Liam. He was a technician and showed us how to do it’. What is perhaps pertinent to Riyadur is a sense of engaging in a hands-on model of learning based on direct human interaction. He is not in a classroom, sat behind a desk, interactive whiteboard, computer or phone, he is next to Liam, looking, listening and learning. The social cooperation and ‘being with’ within this setting is afforded through working with a set of tools and through a manual process. The material, in this instance the lighting equipment, acts as the focus for building and developing the social connection between Liam and Riyadur.

Within a rapidly developing globalised society, advances in technology continue to shift how and where young people collect and share information. In this instance, Riyadur is learning in his local theatre alongside a worker. This challenges ways of thinking about the entirety of theatre as an educational, communicative and social form. There is perhaps something about the cooperation and learning within this setting, which resonates with the themes of community and belonging, explored in chapter 2. In communities of practice, ‘understanding the technology of practice is more than learning to use tools; it is a way to connect with the history of the practice and to participate more directly in its cultural life’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 101). The young people’s engagement with the theatre’s staff, through this model of learning, perhaps reflects a sense of engaging in the history of the Coliseum and participating in its life as a working producing theatre. The social interaction within this scenario reflects the broader aims of the Coliseum’s work with schools; developing relationships through a localised model of engagement. Within the next chapter, I extend my exploration of the social resonance of craft, community and education, in relation to the theatre event, and further this in chapter 5 where I explore the underpinnings of the Coliseum’s work in the community in more detail.

Within the next section, I explore the meanings that the young people attribute to the theatre’s objects and materials, and how they contrast with those explored so far in this chapter. The young people describe their

engagement with props, within the practitioner spaces of the theatre building, through imaginary reflections. I explore how they articulate their interactions with the props and the fictional meanings and histories they attribute to these objects. This prompts further questions about the possibilities of learning through a technical and craft-based approach, whilst highlighting the divergences in meaning that emerge through learning within the liminal, backstage space of the theatre.

Dusty Objects

In this section, I explore Paris and Riyadur's encounters with props during a backstage tour. A member of the stage management team led the tour, which revealed the 'nooks and crannies' of the building backstage and specific information about their role and practices, before, during and after a production. This included how they source props, set the props table, prepare the 'quick-change' area and details such as how the traffic lights on the curtains operate, telling the actors positioned upstage when to enter. Through Paris and Riyadur's documentation of the tour and my subsequent grouping of data, collected by other young people engaged in the research project, I discovered reams of photographs of props. Within these instances, the props were not explored in any detail, as the learning department often facilitate in pre-show workshops, as explored in chapter 4. Paris and Riyadur encountered them on the props tables in the wings and in the props store in the basement. However, their photographs and subsequent reflections of these objects are fictionally rich and descriptive, which presents a stark comparison to the meanings evoked through the theatre's industrial objects and materials explored so far in this chapter. Their descriptions of the props are almost poetic, which suggests that they are reading the materiality of these objects in new and different ways. Why might there be this divergence from the raw and industrial materials presented through their photographs in the previous sections to something fantasy-like? Drawing on studies that examine the 'life' of theatrical props, I explore how and why these objects, within this liminal backstage space, are producing these meanings for the young people. I investigate the theatre space and how its locating of the

objects, frames and unlocks the young people's imaginations and articulations of the life of the props, their histories and the characters connected to them. Building on these understandings, I aim to further articulate the potential of material practice within theatre education, mapping the use of props as collaborators and mediators of learning.



Figure 15: A props table (photograph by Riyadur, Sept 2016)

Carly: What's this picture of here, Riyadur?

Riyadur: The props that they use. There's a telephone and it just sort of reminded me of the olden days. I wanted to focus on that one a lot (points to the top left of the photograph) because it looked really interesting but I didn't even know what it was.

Carly: Why do you think it looked interesting?

Riyadur: It's like an artefact.

Riyadur has captured a photograph of a props table, set and ready for a production. In the photograph, you see white tape markings, separating and organising the objects on the table, with a number of old telephones placed within the demarcated boxes. Unlike James, who focused on the tape on the floor in the studio, explored in the first section, Riyadur circumvents these markings to 'focus' on the objects themselves and in particular, an old wall mounting telephone device in the top left-hand corner. He describes the prop telephone as looking 'really interesting' and then explains that the props are like 'artefacts'. This suggests that he attaches an historical value to the object, as the telephone 'reminded' him 'of the olden days'. He later, again, uses the word 'artefact' to describe the props in the store, 'underground', and expands on his understandings of the age of the objects.

Riyadur: We went underground to look at all the artefacts.

Carly: What do you mean by that, Riyadur? Artefact?

Riyadur: The props that they use are really old. They're like delicate, fragile.

Riyadur believes that the props are 'really old, delicate and fragile', appropriating them to real life as opposed to the fictional world of the play. This is perhaps because he has gone backstage, behind the 'spectacle' to encounter an odd kind of reality/unreality, which has led him to question the narrative of the objects he has encountered, understanding the props as something precious, 'delicate'. Riyadur's image illustrates the duality of the theatre building, between the fictional worlds created onstage and the

workings of the theatre backstage; the functional tape markings on the props table, contrasting with the historical 'artefacts' placed within them.

There is perhaps something about the theatre's backstage space and in particular, the props store where these objects are kept that makes this reality/unreality juxtaposition more intense. As Riyadur describes, 'we went underground to look at the artefacts'. Within his description, he is describing how the space informed his experience. I often find that the props store in the basement is a space in the building that particularly interests young people. They are always excited to see the collection of objects in the store, categorised and organised, but none the less random. The eclecticism of the objects kept 'underground', perhaps makes them more interesting to explore, as if excavating antiques or old remains. The 'storyness' of the space appears to evoke something deeply imaginative and playful for the young people.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard describes the significance of different spatial dynamics on our metaphors, memories and experiences. He notes that the cellar is a space where,

secrets are pondered, projects are prepared. And underneath the earth, action gets underway. We are really in the intimate space of underground manoeuvres. It is in a basement such as this that the antique dealers that carry the novel forward, claim to link people's fates (1958: 22).

Bachelard suggests that it is the imagination, which gives meaning to these spaces, augmenting 'the values of reality' (1958: 3). He asserts that it is 'not enough to consider the house as an *object* ... We must go beyond the problems of description ... in order to ... reveal an attachment that is native in some way to the primary function of inhabiting'. The basement represents depth, an intimate space under the stage, an 'underground world' (Bachelard, 1958: 22). This perhaps frames the young people's experiences of uncovering or discovering objects in the space. Furthermore, unlike for

example, museum objects or artefacts, protected behind a glass screen and appropriated with captions of text-discourse, these objects are open on a shelf, dusty, placed side by side. They defy a single time period and fixed contextualisation. The way that the young people encounter the objects within this space perhaps unlocks their imaginations. The meanings of the objects are open to the 'finder's' interpretation, encouraging them to 'caption' the objects for themselves. Like Riyadur, Paris describes going down into the basement where there are 'old glasses and bottles'. Here, she encounters an object and ascribes or 'captions' it with her own imagined narrative.



Figure 16: A prop from the basement store (Photograph by Paris, Sept 2016)

- Paris: We went downstairs into the storage room and we looked at all the things. There was like, old glasses and bottles. I found this picture really nice of the butterfly in the jar.
- Carly: Why's that?
- Paris: The things mean something and it caught my eye. It made me think, 'who does this belong to?'
- Carly: Who does it belong to?
- Paris: A character might have kept it. Maybe they collected it? It's like the props are memories from different plays or something.
- Carly: What do you mean by that, Paris?
- Paris: Like, loads of people have used these and loads of plays have gone on. Maybe 'cause they're not as empty as new things.

Paris describes how the collection of props 'mean something' and how the butterfly in the jar caught her eye. It made her question, 'who does it belong to?'. She reflects on the character who may have 'kept it' or 'collected it', which suggests that the object is stimulating a story. In *The Stage Life of Props*, theatre scholar Andrew Sofer asserts that we should view props as 'an entity rather than as a symbol, tool as well as trope' (2003: vii). Paris is assigning a character and a story to the object, without any contextual understanding of its history or use. It is in itself an 'entity' with a narrative and an 'owner'. Sofer also asserts that 'a prop exists textually only in a state of suspended animation. It demands actual embodiment and motion on the stage in order to spring to imaginative life' (2003: 3). This suggests that beyond the stage, when a prop is not being utilised in the dramatic action of a play, it does not have an imagined life as an object. However, Paris is imagining a backstory based on this object, motionless in the prop store, without any animation or interaction from an actor, 'it made me think, who does this belong to?'. Therefore, although she has no textual understanding of the object itself, it has the ability to 'spring to imaginative life'.

There is also a duality in Paris' interpretation of the object - its imagined 'life', potentially belonging to a character that has collected it and its life as a theatrical prop. She is describing the interrelationship that the prop mediates

between its life on and offstage, 'it's like the props are memories from different plays or something. Like, loads of people have used these and loads of plays have gone on'. Her reference to the props as 'memories' chimes with the way that she describes the auditorium in chapter 2, 'you see like, its past'. Paris is ascribing histories and narratives to objects and spaces within the building. Monks asserts that 'costumes and props pose a particular problem for the tension between theatre's impulse to erase itself and to remember itself in subsequent performances ... [they are] a material memory of performance' (2009: 140). The prop, like the auditorium, holds meanings and narratives that Paris seems to be drawn to. She notes that because the prop is old, rather than new, it stimulates more meanings, 'they're not as empty as new things'. This suggests that the prop as a material memory of performance, is 'haunted' with connotations of previous stories, histories and usages (Carlson, 2003).

Like Riyadur, Paris is ascribing historical values and meanings to the props as artefacts or relics. The young people are drawing on the agency of the objects as producers of narratives. However, similar to the ways in which they ascribed meanings to the theatre building, explored in chapter 2, in ascribing their own meanings to the props the young people suggest that they also have agency within this meaning making process. They are interpreting, recycling and layering new meanings in response to the props. Sofer asserts that 'text-based critics are trained not to see the temporal and spatial dimensions of the material prop in performance' (2003: vii). The young people, however, impulsively and unprompted, draw on the agency of these objects to create their own meanings. Their imaginations defy the constraints and conventions placed on the text-based theatre critic, trained 'not to see the temporal'. This raises questions about the ability of the material theatre to coproduce new modes of dramatic enquiry *with* young people. There is potential to develop approaches to theatre education that draw on this recycling of theatrical materiality, and both the creative agency of props and young people. Theatre education scholarship has arguably largely focused on the creative possibilities of working through the immaterial

with young people, through their participation in drama. However, the young people's interpretations demonstrate that highly imaginative and open-ended responses can be evoked through material-based practice. So, what could this approach look like in practical terms?

This approach considers the object, prop or costume as mediator or collaborator in the creative process. It prompts the learner to think through the material creatively, as opposed to it solely serving the creative product. As Rayner suggests:

A telling exercise ... for the significant use of objects would be to give a prop list from a play. Such a list would imply the time and place of the play or performance; it would suggest differences among symbolic, iconic, and realistic elements. It would speak of a world. A prop, like a souvenir, can hold an entire play (2006: 73).

Similarly, Paris' interpretations prompt the consideration of prop making or the sourcing of objects that could become the instigators to build imagined worlds and characters. In the previous section, engaging with the lighting equipment served as a tool to stimulate Riyadur's creative engagement with a text. The approach could involve furniture or a set model as the instigator to the exploration of a setting or a world. Another exercise could involve story making through engaging in site-specific settings as repositories of pre-existing material traces. As theatre maker Armand Gatti describes in his staging of a play about a factory worker. The factory as a setting for the work 'authored' the play:

There was grease, there were acid marks ... you could still see traces of work ... there were still work clothes around; there were still lunch pails in the corner etc. In other words, all these left over traces of work had their own language (in Carlson, 2003: 134).

These examples highlight how the material can unlock the immaterial and the ways in which it 'speaks', it has a 'language' and carries narratives and meaning. Rather than setting the material/imagined up in opposition in

theatre, meanings can be constructed in the space 'in between'. As theatre educators, we have tended to privilege the practices of the actor within our approaches and the somatic and verbal language of theatre; thinking through movement and text to cultivate artistic, educational and social meanings. Thinking through the material, however, draws on a different dimension of language and meaning making, considering the agency of objects in the theatre and their ability to inform the creative process. This chimes with thinking in new materialism around objects in theatre. As theatre scholar Rebecca Schneider notes:

Most scholars consider living humans to be the only agents with their fingers on the puppet strings of otherwise inanimate objects and otherwise inanimate people - not the other way around. Props, computers, projectors, pullies, dollies, light boards, costumes, cameras, and other paraphernalia of (co)production, curation, choreography, and display serve human artists, not the other way around. But the 'other way around' perspective is at least in part what the new materialism is re-evaluating (2015: 10).

In addition to the ways in which the young people have drawn on the agency of the theatre's 'tools', materials, props and other objects in the space, they have also drawn on the agency, as Schneider points out, of the cameras – the tools/objects that they are using in the process of capturing this meaning-making. I return to the role of the cameras in documenting these experiences in the conclusion and appendices. Within the next chapter, I further explore the themes that have emerged here. I examine how the agency of the theatre's material practices and objects inform young people's experiences of spectatorship.

This chapter set out to rehabilitate craft and technically led approaches to learning in theatre education. As raised by Monks, there exists a hierarchy of labour in theatre scholarship, which has tended to privilege the work of the actor and director at the expense of other practices in the theatre (2014). This issue is manifest within theatre education discourse, which largely

foregrounds dramatic approaches to learning over technical and material practices. This chapter has highlighted the rich and diverse opportunities afforded through learning *about* theatre making, and the ways in which, to some extent, learning through a situated model perhaps extends beyond theatre education. Within the first section, I described the ways in which the young people draw on processes of work and labour in their experiences of the theatre's workshops and backstage spaces. Their interpretations suggest they felt they had been given access into both the adult world of this work-based environment and insight into the makers or workers' practices in disguising this labour and artistry within the spectacle of the theatre event.

The actual layout and architecture of the theatre space is significant to the framing function of the young people's experiences, both in learning about practices in situ, such as in workshop rooms and backstage areas, to 'excavating' relics and artefacts in the basement. The space itself, as a proscenium arch theatre, arguably has agency in evoking a particular kind of learning experience. The onstage/backstage juxtaposition of the space perhaps provides a more intense gateway 'in-between' worlds. The young people demonstrated that there is a spatial duality to learning within this context; drawing on both the fictional world of a play and its material and constructed form. They ascribed fictional stories to objects within the theatre space when removed from the fictional world of a play. For example, Riyadur referred to the telephone as both a prop and an 'artefact', and Paris ascribed both a fictional and a theatrical story to the butterfly in the jar. The agency and framing function of the theatre space indicates, therefore, that there are opportunities to explore theatre making that draw on this space 'in-between'. I believe there is further space to investigate this duality and the ways in which the props in particular, mediate diverse narrative structures.

The mode of teaching and learning within the lighting workshop emerged as presenting a contrast with dominant approaches in theatre education and applied theatre. Theatre education practice and research has predominantly focused on the dramatic work of the ensemble, adopting the interplay between the director/facilitator and actor/participant to collaborate, connect

and drive learning. Within the context of a theatre building, apprenticeship is the model utilised for sharing and acquiring knowledge in technical disciplines. Although there is a clear and perhaps more rigid frame guiding the learning, the example highlighted the technical creativity developed in the workshop, and the social connection stimulated between Riyadur and Liam. I argued that this opportunity to learn side by side is highly social and embodied. I argued that, particularly in an ever-evolving globalised and technologically driven society, these themes are pertinent. Furthermore, this interaction, as Sennett notes 'is local' and reflective of the Coliseum's work with schools in its broadest sense.

Within the next chapter, I map the young people's experiences of learning through a technical and craft-based prism onto the theatre event. I explore the young people's experiences of learning about the theatre making process, from design and conception to the production opening to an audience. I then explore the young people's experiences of spectatorship, following these activities. Within the pre-show activities, the young people draw on the skills and collaboration inherent within the theatre making practices of both the actors and technicians. Here, I extend my articulations of craft to performance, to describe the wider collective skills and processes inherent in theatre production. Using the young people's experiences of observing both the production process and product, the performance itself, I describe the usefulness of the process/product binary in theatre education, in providing young people with understandings into the ways bodies and materials construct fictional worlds.

Chapter 4. The Process of Progress: Developing critical skills as theatre makers and audience members

In the previous chapter, I explored the young people's experiences of situated learning within the theatre building, as 'peripheral participants' in the production team's 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The young people captured candid images of traces of labour within the theatre's backstage spaces, describing the work involved in theatre production. Their images and articulations illuminated and detailed the theatre's technical and craft-based practices whilst drawing on the agency of the theatre's materials and objects within these spaces. Through exploring the young people's experiences of taking part in a lighting workshop, I presented an account of the social interactions inherent within these learning experiences. I argued that explorations into these practices offer rich and diverse opportunities for developing young people's technical creativity, through material forms of learning that are also embodied, social and imaginative in their nature.

This chapter develops these ideas, exploring how young people's insight into the production process may resonate with their experiences of spectatorship and theatre making. I show that learning through theatre as a set of practices and a process of production, from conception to 'performance', can enhance young people's critical skills as both audience members and theatre makers. The young people's interpretations illustrate that observing and learning about the collective 'work' and habits of a theatre company, including the technicians and the actors, in a producing theatre environment, provides them with a skill and behaviour system with which to model their own practices. The young people apply their learning to their experiences as spectators and theatre makers, drawing on the technical and material aspects of the production in their interpretations as spectators, and reflecting on their own skills, habits and behaviours in the Drama classroom. Through this, I assert that craft offers a rich overarching critical framework for theatre education. Eroding or resisting dichotomies between the technical and the artistic, craft offers an articulation of the artistry and value systems of theatre

production that encompasses skill, collaboration and work, across discipline areas.

The relationship between process and product has been frequently explored in theatre education and applied theatre discourse and recently scholars have challenged the outmoded binary set up between these two forms of engagement or participation. As Nicholson reflects, on her time as a drama teacher, 'sharp distinctions between spectatorship and participation, or process and product, seemed unhelpfully restrictive' (2011: 203). Much research has been undertaken into young people's experiences of taking part in a dramatic process, and there is a growing body of research into experiences of spectatorship that values the 'active' and creative contribution of individual audience members (Rancière, 2009). However, there is perhaps less understanding of young people's experiences of observing and learning about the process that leads to the product, the theatre event. What happens when young people are 'active' spectators in both the production process *and* theatrical product? I argue that this process/product binary, in relation to theatre education, is helpful. Seeing technical works in progress and then realised, provides young people with understandings into the ways bodies and materials construct fictional worlds.

Within the theatre event, traces of the theatre making process are usually concealed from the audience. The theatrical product masks or replaces any details of this process to facilitate the audience's engagement in the 'illusion' or 'spectacle' of the production. This resonates with Sennett's understandings of the processes of the craft worker:

Getting things in perfect shape can mean removing the traces, erasing the evidence of a work in progress. Once this evidence is eliminated; the object appears pristine. Perfection of this cleaned up sort is a static condition; the object does not hint at the narrative of its making (2008: 258).

Sennett points out that in finishing a product, the craft worker erases any evidence of the process and the narratives of labour *behind* that making process. A set, for example, is cleared of these traces before the theatre event. The workers' footprints on the stage floor are painted over or 'cleaned up', their tools removed, and wires and tape are disguised or 'eliminated'. Likewise, the actor's 'work in progress' is left behind when they enter into the performance as a character. Audiences are largely positioned to look at the product of this labour, the theatrical set, characters and props, and consider the fictional/imagined world of a play or its conceptual connotations, rather than 'the narrative of its making' (Sennett, 2008: 258). Through extending the 'parameters' of the theatre event, to include pre-show talks, tours and demonstrations, young people are invited to explore the narratives behind the set, characters, costumes and lighting, before watching a production. I examine the potential significances of these process narratives to their experiences as audience members and how this may inform their own critical skills as theatre makers.

In exploring these process narratives, the young people draw on the embodied skill, knowledge and behaviours inherent in both the work of the actors and the technicians. Through seeing the rehearsal and production process before the theatre event, the young people articulate the intense and often gruelling mental and manual processes involved within both of these disciplines; extending articulations of work and labour across both areas of practice. Furthermore, they draw on the collaboration inherent within and across these discipline areas to reflect on their own personal skills and behaviours in the drama classroom. What then emerges from the young people's articulations of watching the performance, following engaging in pre-show activities, is that they layer narratives about the material aspects of theatre and theatre production with the fictional narratives of the play. They oscillate between the material/technical and fictional/imagined in their experiences and recollections of the production. This supports several other articulations of the theatre experience that describe the spectator as having a dual register; switching their focus between the material reality of a

production and the fictional world of the play. Theatre scholar Bruce McConachie uses the term 'blending', which is rooted in cognitive studies, to describe how audiences 'make possible the doubleness of actor/characters' (2008: 42). Similarly, theatre scholar Anthony B. Dawson describes spectators' engagement with an actor and represented character as 'double consciousness' (1996: 36). I explore these terms with reference to the young people's articulations and assert that, through the pre-show activities, the young people enter into the performance with a heightened sense of the material. They enter into the frame of the theatre event with a 'paratext' of the production process, which I argue, enhances their understandings and articulations of the fictional/performance text (Genette in Purcell, 2013: 148).

This resonates with Reason's exploration of children's experiences of theatre in *The Young Audience* (2010). Reason argues that children often respond 'to both the material and the evoked at the same time' (2010: 75). Reason notes how, through his study, the children's engagement with the technical aspects of a particular piece of theatre, 'perhaps actively motivated' their engagement with the narrative. I draw on Reason's understandings to further explore this theme, asking how theatre educators could utilise these opportunities to develop young people's understandings of both the material and fictional aspects of theatre and theatre production. Through this, I argue that craft has the potential to offer an overarching critical framework for theatre education. Evoking what Sennett describes as 'joined skill in community', I assert that this articulation of theatre education, whilst speaking to the social values and principles of applied theatre theory and practice, encompasses a broader range of technical skills, artistry and systems of knowledge (2008: 51).

Whilst attending to these questions and observations, this chapter further rehabilitates the education practices of regional theatres, contributing critical insights into the humble pre-show/post-show talk. Pre and post-show tours and talks offer insight into the themes and narrative of a play and the artistic interpretations of the actors, director, designer and technicians. However, as I argued in chapter 1, few studies critically explore these traditional and

perhaps seemingly basic practices. Regional theatres also have a long history of delivering a related practice traditionally known as the 'Exam Play', which I explore in a journal article as part of this thesis portfolio (Woolgar, 1971: 87, Jackson, 1980: xi). Designed to enhance young people's understandings of an exam text, the Exam Play practically explores the making of a theatre production. Often these are delivered in line with the English Literature curriculum, where students are expected to study the key themes, plot and characters of a Shakespeare play. Young people are introduced to these elements before watching a production, allowing them to more readily engage with the action and the Shakespearean language.

The pre-show activities I examine in this chapter are to some extent, less structured in format and focus than the Exam Play. At the Coliseum, they are offered to partner schools to embellish the young people's experiences of attending the theatre and sometimes serve to enhance or support young people's understandings of a play if 'reviewing' as part of their GCSE Drama exam (taken at aged 15 - 16 years in secondary schools in England and Wales). They are either delivered directly before the young people watch a production or scheduled as a separate 'theatre experience session'. The content of the sessions varies due to the working nature of the building - the people and spaces available often inform what is possible on a particular day. However, broadly, they include a detailed talk and tour of the set and backstage areas or a visit to the rehearsal room and a workshop. With theatre staff, the learning department develop practical activities around the practices explored in these contexts, often with members of the production team or director. Due to practicalities around facilitating these activities within a producing theatre building, as in the previous chapter, the young people often experience these practices as works in progress. The practices are 'live' in the sense that they are experiencing the work of theatre making with theatre staff in situ.

The examples offered here focus on pre-show activities that connect to two separate performances, both documented by young people, Jack and Olwen. I first explore their experiences of engaging in a pre-show talk and tour with

stage technicians, Kev and Adam, focused on the design and build of the set for the production, *Gaslight*. *Gaslight* is a Victorian mystery thriller written by Patrick Hamilton in 1938, author of the novels *Hangover Square* and *20,000 Streets Under the Sky*. The play focuses on the character, Bella Manningham, who becomes convinced that she is losing her mind and that there are people dwelling in the attic of her home. The pre-show activities for *Gaslight* focused on exploring the set of the production, the work of the designer and Kev and Adam's brief in translating the design for the Coliseum's stage. *Meat Pie, Sausage Roll*, a commissioned play by Cathy Crabb and Lindsay Williams, is set during Oldham Athletic Football Club's 1990/91 season. A bride to be and football fan, Mandi, has booked a wedding that falls on the last day of the football season, which tests her loyalties. The pre-show activities for this production involved young people taking part in a drama workshop to explore the themes of the play and watching a rehearsal with the actors in the studio.

As the use of photography in the theatre is prohibited during performances, the young people did not take photographs of their experiences as audience members. Within these instances, I instead replaced the young people's photo documentation with the professional production photography produced by Joel C Fildes. This allowed me to continue to use the method in the interviews with the young people, analysing their experiences through photographs that they could not have otherwise captured. Because of extending the method to include production photography, I discovered it to be an extremely effective way of eliciting young people's recollections of their experiences as audience members. I reflect on this in my conclusion and suggest that regional theatre practitioners, teachers and scholars could make substantial use of this documentation in exploring and understanding the theatre experience.

The chapter is presented in two parts, both exploring the relationship between the production making process and the theatre event. "The Process of Progress" initially examines this process/product binary and how it illuminates the mental and manual processes inherent in both the production

and rehearsal process. I include reflections from Debbie, a teacher from a Rochdale based secondary school to explore what she also feels is happening through these pre-show activities. “Material Narratives” explores how, through giving prominence to the theatre’s material practices and objects beforehand, young people enter into the theatre event with a ‘paratext’, an additional frame with which they watch the performance, which gives heightened agency to the theatre’s material narratives (Genette, 1987). I examine the various registers that the young people adopt in their experiences of the performance and the ways they blend the material and fictional narratives of the play. Taken together, these sections articulate the potential of craft in providing an overarching critical framework in theatre education that incorporates the development of technical knowledge.

The Process of Progress

Theatre educators, particularly in the 1980’s and 1990’s, debated whether participation in drama and theatre should be understood as an evolving process or as an aesthetic product (Tschurtschenthaler, 2013: 24). Recent scholarship critiques the binary set up between these two forms of engagement or modes of participation. As Nicholson notes:

The agency of young spectators unfixes the theatrical product, and challenges outmoded oppositions between process and product by valuing the creativity that audiences bring to the theatre or performance event (2011: 203).

Nicholson equates the learning that can take place through young people’s participation in a dramatic process to experiences of spectating. Arguing in line with Rancière, Nicholson asserts that the theatrical product is ‘unfixed’ and open to creative interpretation. Meanings are produced by the spectator as an ‘active participant as opposed to a passive voyeur’ (Rancière, 2009: 4). However, the framing of the exchange between the theatrical product and the audience within the theatre event is, to a degree, ‘fixed’ or limited. In a traditional theatre context, traces of the production process are cleared away

or masked at the start of a performance. As Nadia Malik notes, 'when we meet a character in a performance, the implicit understanding is that they have existed until the point where we join their journey and will continue existing after we leave them' (2014: 107). Although meanings are open to interpretation from this point, they are constructed through this accepted framing and are usually limited to the fictional text that is presented. However, what happens when these parameters shift? What can young people learn from meeting the actors out of role and learning how the set has been realised? Within this section, I explore young people's participation in pre-show talks and workshops that further 'unfix' the performance event. I argue that learning activities situated within the intersection between the theatre making process and the theatrical product, provide unique opportunities for critical thinking and reflection in theatre education. The young people's interpretations demonstrate that these insights provide a model of the behaviours, social relations and skills involved in theatre making as 'work'.

During their visit to learn about the making of *Gaslight*, Jack and Olwen met with the Technical Stage team, Kev and Adam, who are responsible for working with the designer and builders to produce the theatre's sets, from conception to realisation. They work closely with the stage management and sound and lighting departments to ensure that the set functions on and offstage, including working the fly system and any trucks. Kev and Adam laid out the plans for the *Gaslight* set and the scale model box. Adam and Kev walked and talked through the various stages of the set design and building process before the young people toured the set. They described the challenges that they had encountered and worked through and drew on the practices of the stage managers' and lighting technicians' to describe the props, furniture and lighting.

Jack's photograph captures Adam and Kev describing the process of planning and building the set. In the photograph, there are a series of ground plans laid out on the edge of the stage, a scale model box and some

illustrations of the set. On the stage itself there is a fireplace positioned on the right hand and a rug, near to where Kev is standing on the stage.



Figure 17: Pre-show workshop with stage technicians (Photograph by Jack, Feb 2017)

- Jack: We were looking at here, like, what happens before.
- Carly: What did you learn from that?
- Jack: Well, you don't usually see how they come up with the ideas, like do they write them down, or draw stuff up or how they make stuff, if you know what I mean?
- Carly: Yes, that's a good point. So the processes and the documents that are part of that.
- Jack: Yeah, you see how something's been made and what's been changed.
- Carly: Can you remember anything that had been changed?
- Jack: Well, they have to talk through what's possible. If something's not going to work or fit, it has to be changed.

Jack notes that 'this is what happens before' and how 'you don't usually see how they come up with the ideas'. He suggests that he has learned something of the practical methods and materials that guide the process, 'like do they write them down, or draw stuff up or how they make stuff'. Jack's attention to the tools and materials that shape set design and building as a practice is similar to the way that Paris, James, Tom and Riyadur capture and describe the materials found backstage in the previous chapter. Jack draws on the agency of the theatre's materials in this process to question and articulate his newfound understandings. He describes how seeing the ground plans, white card model, set model and the actual set realised has enabled him to understand the entirety of the process, 'you see how something's been made and what's changed'. In describing the craft involved in architectural processes that are closely aligned to the practices of the theatre designer and builder, Sennett argues that the process is a kind of 'circular metamorphosis'. He uses architect Renzo Piano's process to describe this alternation:

You start by sketching, then you do a drawing, then you make a model, then you go to reality – you go to the site – then you go back to the drawing. You build up a kind of circularity between drawing and making and then back again (2009: 40).

Sennett notes that the drawings and observing the site are critical in 'crystallising and refining the practice' (2009: 40). Jack has mirrored this practice in his learning, seeing the drawings, set model and 'site' side by side; unifying the process. Jack is looking at the transpositions across each stage of the set building process. He is tracing the transformation and realisation of this process towards the finished product, the finished set. The distinction between process/product and unfinished/finished is therefore highly relevant to Jack's experience within this context. The intersection(s) between these stages of the design and building process propels his understandings of the relationship between mental and manual labour, thinking and making and the ways materials are manipulated. He alludes to the changes in creative 'ideas' and directions informed by the physical negotiating of the space, the theatre's materials and the social negotiating between people of ideas, 'they have to talk through what's possible. If something's not going to work or fit, it has to be changed'. Sennett describes how 'the craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others' (2009: 289). He asserts that the practising and revision involved in craft reflects the social practice of building relationships. Jack's reference to the negotiations, that take place prior to the final design being agreed, provides insight into the backstory behind the set and the social relations of the production team, director and designer.

Scenographer Sofia Pantouvaki asserts that the process of design follows a procedure, which encompasses 'trials and mistakes, successes and failures. The designer ... has to collaborate with a surprisingly large number of partners at different phases' (2010: 67). Kev and Adam, as stage technicians, relayed their part in this process, describing the negotiations that took place in the white card meeting that determined what elements of the design were possible. Jack has presented an account of this social process in describing how the set is produced, learning something of the collaboration and behaviours necessary in orchestrating the production of the set to achieve a common goal. It is significant that Jack's understanding has

been developed from the stage technicians' perspective, as opposed to the designers. With expert knowledge of the theatre building, it is Adam and Kev's job to negotiate ideas and solutions with the designer. With close working understandings of the possibilities and constraints of the theatre building, they are responsible for practically realising the designer's creative vision in the Coliseum's theatre space. Within the pre-show workshop setting, Adam described how designers often do not consider the lower height of the ceiling in the wings in their initial designs and Jack notes, 'if something's not going to work or fit, it has to be changed'. Jack is relaying his understandings of set design from a practical perspective. This would have perhaps differed if the workshop had been with the designer, who works within a largely conceptual framework. What knowledge is Jack developing from the stage technicians in this instance and how can this knowledge be theorised in the context of theatre education?

In exploring the relationship between 'lay' and 'expert' knowledge in craft agriculture, scientist Brian Wynne notes that the processes are 'highly dynamic systems of knowledge involving continuous negotiation between mental and manual labour, and continual interpretation of production experiences' (1996: 68). Jack draws on the relationship between 'mental' and 'manual' labour in describing Adam and Kev's role in the process of constructing the set. He draws on their expert knowledge of the theatre building, and their practical understandings of how materials interact, move and operate with the theatre i.e. things fitting in the wings. He also refers to the 'continual interpretation of production experiences' that guide the design and build of the set in his reference to the set plans, drawings and materials, 'like do they write them down, or draw stuff up or how they make stuff'. Jack has engaged in the narratives of the set, based on the labour and artistry involved in its making and realisation, as opposed to its conceptual underpinnings. Learning of this dynamism between mental and manual processes is not something that is usually associated with theatre education. However, through exploring this element of theatre production from a practical, as opposed to a conceptual perspective, Jack has gleaned

technical understandings into the synergies between thinking and making, head and hand, and the behaviours and cooperation necessary in mediating ideas within this 'dynamic system of knowledge' (Wynne, 1996: 68). These understandings, as I argue below, have the potential to extend the parameters of the theatre event to a wider learning context, whilst also linking to the processes of the actor.

In Olwen's description of what she experienced in the rehearsal room, she captures and describes the working process of the actors as something also embodying a set of mental and manual skills and knowledge.



Figure 18: *Meat Pie, Sausage Roll* rehearsal in the Coliseum's Studio (Photograph by Olwen, Feb 2017)

- Olwen: We went to watch a rehearsal of *Meat Pie, Sausage Roll* and we got to see how they slowly structure and like, direct the scenes.
- Carly: What did you see?
- Olwen: Just the same thing, over and over, getting polished and tweaked. It was one scene but they reworked it and had to go over movements and stuff.
- Carly: Did your experience of watching this rehearsal in any way influence how you watched the performance?
- Olwen: Yes, because you see the development of how it was in the rehearsal room to the stage. Like the little bits that might've changed or the progression.

During the rehearsal, the young people and their teacher were sitting around the sides of the space. The actors in the image are using temporary platform rostras to rehearse the scene and are wearing their own clothes. The director gave the young people some context into the scene that they were rehearsing and then carried out the rehearsal as normal. As Jack notes 'they just carried on as if we weren't there. We were like flies on the wall'. The director and actors worked through one of the scenes, discussing and repeating the same set of actions with slight changes to blocking and delivery. Similar to Jack, who refers to the processes involved in the design and build of the *Gaslight* set, Olwen suggests that she has uncovered a working practice in her experience, 'we got to see how they slowly structure and like, direct the scenes'. Observing the process has provided Olwen with an understanding of the structures of a rehearsal at the theatre. She also draws on the collaboration present in the rehearsal room and the exchange between the director and actors. Like Jack, she has also observed a social process.

Olwen notes that she saw 'the same thing, over and over, getting polished and tweaked. It was one scene but they reworked it and had to go over movements and stuff'. Olwen's tone suggests that this repetition and honing of the same scene and movements was quite arduous. She has captured a

messy moment in practice and has almost stripped the glamour away from the actors in her descriptions. Her interpretations of the rehearsal room, seeing 'the same thing, over and over', has revealed perhaps new understandings of the labour also involved in the rehearsal process. In her ethnographic account of the rehearsal process, McAuley traces the origin of the word 'rehearsal':

From the word 're-herser', a term used in agriculture. It refers to the practice of preparing the soil before planting seeds, and the implement used, 'the herse' is a frame with metal spikes that pierce the soil when dragged along ... The original word both noun and verb is 'harrow' but as is often the case with English, the original French word holds a different meaning. A 'herse' is a wooden frame with prickets, set up in the sanctuary of a church (2012: 1).

McAuley concludes that tracing the etymology of words reveals them to be crystallised, layered and often superseded through time. She notes that 'the semantic system indicated by the word 'rehearsal' provides an extremely rich context for consideration of theatrical practice: nurturing the soil, providing the organic conditions for new growth ... providing illumination ... and the sense of the supernatural'. In Olwen's description of observing the rehearsal, she describes the repetition of the process and alludes to the labour involved in this, 'they had to go over movements'. Therefore, the semantic systems of the word, 'rehearsal', rooted in agriculture, provide a context for describing the labour involved in the work of the production team but also of the actors. Jack relays his understandings of the stage technicians' work in practical and manual terms, drawing on the relationship between mental and manual knowledge, and Olwen draws on the actors' somatic and repetitive task of reworking a scene in preparing for a performance. Previously the young people have highlighted a division of labour in the theatre's spaces and a hierarchy between the work of the actors and the production team. However, for Olwen, watching a rehearsal revealed the process to be gruelling, something that the young people were not privy to in their explorations of the theatre building, examined in the previous chapter. I return to Olwen's

experiences of the rehearsal room in a moment, however, here, this indicates that acting, like the technical works described, can be explored with young people as work; a manual and mental practice.

Aligning their practices with that of the technicians, illustrates the collective labour and production that goes into the theatre event. This resonates with something that theatre scholar Christin Essin explores in documenting the practices of stage technicians on Broadway, in New York (2015: 199). Essin positions 'backstage labour as a choreographic mirror to the onstage labour of the performer'. Essin draws on *Ghosts* by Rayner (2006), to describe the way in which technicians backstage,

see through the onstage *apparition* as witnesses to actors' offstage transition into characters. In other words, stagehands more easily recognize the performers' onstage activity as a kind of representational labor, work ideally unrecognisable as work to spectators. Actors, from their perspectives, are also privy to stagehands' offstage work, likewise hidden from spectators' view (2015: 199).

Essin goes on to note that 'a materialist backstage history helps demystify specialised practices of theatrical labor and advance notions of a united theatrical labour force with mutual professional goals, economic investments, and political interests' (2015: 199). For Olwen, seeing through this 'apparition' has perhaps demystified the role of the actors and almost stripped them of a higher, virtuous status as workers in the theatre building (Rayner, in Essin, 2015: 199). This resonates with something that teacher, Debbie and I discussed.

Debbie has been engaged in the education partnership scheme since 2012 and regularly attends workshops and performances at the Coliseum with her students. Debbie took the photograph below during the pre-show talk that accompanied her class' trip to see *Educating Rita* by Willy Russell. Onstage, are lighting and sound technicians Lorna and Mike, describing the lighting

design for the production and the various areas that are lit onstage throughout the performance. Shortly after Mike and Lorna finished their talk, there was a Q and A session with the actors.



Figure 19: *Educating Rita* Schools' Pre-Show (Photograph by Debbie, Oct 2014)

- Debbie: We came to see Educating Rita. They came early to see the show and then we had a talk about how they'd designed the set and the lighting. It was really interesting for the pupils to see the other side of things.
- Carly: Do you think there are any specific things, unique to this environment that they take from these experiences?
- Debbie: It definitely helps them to understand how lighting and design choices affect mood. Even if it's not something they currently have to do practically or in their written exam. It's that understanding. I really liked the fact that they could visibly see, side by side pretty much, how the actor, Rita, had transformed herself. She was quite posh in the interview and then she came out as a totally different person with a different voice and persona.
- Carly: This is something I'm really interested in. I feel as if when students then watch a performance, they get a sense of that process. Seeing it in a vacuum is sometimes a real shame.
- Debbie: Yes, definitely. Seeing that transformation helps them to understand that process. And they're intrigued by it, it's not the everyday for them.

Affirming Jack and Olwen's interpretations of these experiences, Debbie notes how the young people 'could visibly see, side by side pretty much, how the actor [playing] Rita had transformed herself. She was quite posh in the interview and then she came out as a totally different person with a different voice and persona'. Through extending the parameters of the theatre event, young people have met the actor before meeting the character, disturbing the 'apparition' or accepted framing of the world of the play (Rayner, in Essin, 2015: 199). As opposed to entering into the performance with 'the implicit understanding ... that [the character has] existed until the point where we join their journey', the young people understand the character as the work of the actor (Malik, 2014: 107). As Debbie notes, 'seeing that transformation helps them to understand the process'. Olwen describes how, through seeing the

actors' process beforehand, 'you see the development of how it was in the rehearsal room to the stage. Like the little bits that might've changed or the progression'. In relation to the set, Jack describes how, 'you see how something's been made and what's been changed'. Seeing and hearing how an actor changes their voice and physicality to create a character and seeing the developments in a set from drawings and plans to a physical build, exposes and illuminates the collective traces of labour, involved 'in getting things into perfect shape' (Sennett, 2009: 258).

Through observing the production process within the context of a producing theatre, the young people are accessing a system of knowledge, which, as Debbie notes 'they're intrigued by ... it's not the everyday for them'. The young people are presented with a model of the behaviours and skills necessary in the work of theatre making, and the technicians' and actors' collective practices, as a 'united labour force' in cleaning, honing and perfecting their craft (Essin, 2015: 199). Sennett describes this honing as the 'rhythm and ritual' of craft, 'which governs the development of human skills' (2002: 200). He notes how, the first stage of honing a skill depends on 'ingraining a habit', gaining confidence in the body or a tool and becoming accustomed to the skill. The second stage involves 'questioning the habit, experimenting and improving on technique', the third involves the techniques as 'a habit of the hand', where the 'worker' gains 'fluency and confidence ... a rhythm thus appears, ingraining habit, questioning the habit, re-ingraining a better habit' (2002: 200 - 201). Through a reflective and distanced stance, the young people have observed this ritual of practice, learning about the construction, questioning, re-construction and manipulation of tools, images, materials and bodies, as well as the social negotiating necessary to undertake these practices collaboratively.

Olwen illustrates how seeing this model of behaviour and honing of skill and habit has informed her own practices as a theatre maker. Her descriptions draw attention to the actors' skill in 're-ingraining the habit', which she compares to her own practices in the drama classroom (Sennett, 2000: 201).



Figure 20: *Meat Pie, Sausage Roll* rehearsal (Photograph by Olwen, Feb 2017)

- Olwen: They work, like differently. We get directed and get tips and stuff but you got to see, like, how quickly they take that on. How they work in this environment is different.
- Carly: When you say take it on, what do you mean?
- Olwen: So like, how fast they pick up what's being said by the director. 'Can you just move that there or can we change that?' They just change what they're doing really quickly.
- Carly: And did you see that?
- Olwen: Yes, we saw them taking on direction. Like, the director asked them to alter something and they chatted about it and did it again. It doesn't happen like that in school.
- Carly: Why's that? What do you think it is they're doing?
- Olwen: They're used to it. They know how to use the tips properly.
- Carly: That's such a good point Olwen. It can be quite difficult sometimes getting young people to listen to direction.
- Olwen: Yeah, like, either not really taking it, like listening to it, or not knowing what to do with it.

Olwen's image, taken from the same angle as her previous image but with a wider lens also captures the director, Kevin Shaw. Kevin can be seen in the centre right of the image, leaning forward as if he is watching the action. Olwen describes her experiences of watching the actors respond to directions from Kevin in the rehearsal room, noting how they 'work differently'. Olwen contrasts her own experiences of rehearsals in school with what she observed in the context of the theatre and describes 'how fast they pick up what's being said by the director'. She notes how the director asked them to alter something and they 'chatted about it and did it again. It doesn't happen like that in school'. Olwen touches on how young people often struggle to respond to direction, highlighting what I also believe can be a challenge during a rehearsal process with young people, 'either not really taking it, like listening to it, or not knowing what to do with it'. I have often found facilitating young people's application of direction in the rehearsal room difficult to master. As Olwen summarises, it can sometimes feel as if

the young person does not know how to physically apply what is being said. Drama educator Anton Franks supports this, arguing that although there has been reference to 'embodiment' and 'body language' in both practical and theoretical explorations of learning in drama, there has been little exploration of the material presence of the body:

There was a tendency to see right through the bodily presence of students to get to the learning. The invisibility of the body appeared to me as emblematic of the continued dominance of a dualistic view of learning, one that separates mind from body. It is as if the making of meaning and the processes of learning could be abstracted entirely from the social and individual bodies of students (2015: 1).

This suggests that the physical and material co-presence of the body in drama learning is often neglected to reach a learning objective. Franks notes that the drama educator is often preoccupied in negotiating 'social relations and the aesthetic shapes of drama'. However, through observing the actors, Olwen is noting the actors' material presence and co-presence in the rehearsal room, witnessing their physical response to direction. Furthermore, she has observed this action as an evolving technique, involving the mental processing of information and its physical application. Olwen is referring to the actors' skills in connecting the mind and body and their behaviours in repeating and honing their craft, 'ingraining the habit, questioning the habit, re-ingraining a better habit' (Sennett, 2000: 201). Through observing the rehearsal process, she has witnessed the relationship between the mind and body through the actors' physical application of direction and their practical co-working and co-presence as an ensemble. Conversely, to the accepted narrative in theatre education, Olwen is learning about embodiment and ensemble working, without embodying a character or working practically in an ensemble.

Moses Goldberg explores the *Theatre Product in Relation to Teaching Dramatic Process* and cites a list of benefits that may be associated with 'arts experiences', which he describes as 'the actual exposure of the child to

an artistic product'. On the list of possible benefits, Goldberg describes 'modelling':

Seeing a performance by well-trained actors gives a behavioural model for their own classroom arts activities. Student athletes demonstrate hero-worship towards professional sports figures. Should not aspiring artists have access to similar role models? (2011: 272).

The young people's attention to the technicians and actors' craft, the manual and mental skill and behaviours involved in their work, demonstrates that 'modelling' as a concept is useful. Actually seeing the actors 'take on direction' is a device for young people to understand how to exercise their own craft as theatre makers (Olwen, 2017). Within the instance described, the young people were observing the actors adapt and apply different physical actions upon direction; seeing the relationship between mind and body, head and hand. Both Olwen and Jack's articulations within this section also draw on the social behaviours necessary in this working context. Jack draws on the collaborative negotiations involved in the technicians' work and Olwen contrasts the way her and her peers rehearse at school with that of the professional actors in the rehearsal room. However, their observations are not in relation to 'hero-worship' as Goldberg suggests. Rather, they are referring to the work involved in crafting a character for performance and realising a set, which is perhaps more sophisticated and pragmatic than the 'modelling' suggested by Goldberg.

Nicholson observes how previous studies into young people's experiences of spectatorship have failed to consider how their experiences of watching theatre, may impact on their skills as theatre makers and vice versa. She questions,

the ways in which participation might be reconceptualised to demonstrate the relationship between personal engagement, creativity and emancipated spectatorship (2011: 204).

Nicholson draws on how experiences of spectatorship and performance may build upon one another to inform young people's creativity and development as theatre makers. Olwen's reflexive interpretation draws on her own experiences that she contrasts with the actors' working practices. However, Olwen's learning here derives from observing the actors' process in the rehearsal room, as opposed to the 'product' onstage. It is the experience of seeing the actors 'at work' that has provided her with this analysis, rather than solely seeing the actor, in character, during the performance.

Understanding the evolving practices of theatre craft, as both a manual and mental process, has provided Olwen and Jack with examples of how to improve their own work as theatre makers. In response to Nicholson's call for the potential reconceptualisation of participation, I argue that craft offers a rich, overarching critical framework. As Sennett points out, the learning stimulated through the mental and manual dynamism of craft arguably stretches beyond the parameters of the workshop or in this case, the theatre building/learning context, shaping 'our dealings with others' (2009: 289).

This broader, more encompassing articulation of theatre education erodes the binaries between the material/technical and the dramatic/artistic, whilst still placing theatre making within a social model. The value systems inherent in craft 'governs the development of human skill' and symbolises something deeply social, 'the craft of cooperation' (Sennett, 2012: 200). Whilst speaking to the social values underpinning much drama and applied theatre praxis, craft offers a framework which encompasses a broader range of theatre making disciplines. It is inclusive of a wider range of practices and systems of knowledge than, for example, the ensemble model articulated by drama and education scholar, Jonathan Neelands, in 'Acting Together: Ensemble as a democratic process in art and life' (2009). Craft draws on both mental and manual practices, which, whilst as noted above, offers a useful device for drama learning, speaks to the diverse skills inherent in technical theatre practice. As a framework, it provides a link between 'personal engagement, creativity and emancipated spectatorship' (Nicholson, 2011: 204). Within the next section, I further articulate these themes, exploring how this framework

can incorporate and inform young people's experiences of spectatorship. Through engaging in the activities explored within this section, I show that the young people's responses, rather than a view of theatre that privileges the artistic and conceptual meanings produced through the work of the actors, director and designer, are also drawn from the technical and material aspects of the production.

Material Narratives

Monks argues that although theatre is a visual art form, 'the traditional philosophical approach [to spectatorship] has been to repress this dimension of performance in favour of viewing theatre as simply the manifestation of text onstage' (2010: 9). This tendency is also evident in traditions of theatre going amongst school students. As Mike Fleming in *Teaching Drama in Primary and Secondary Schools* demonstrates in reference to students watching a performance, 'it is not enough for students to talk about scenery, acting and lighting of a play unless this derives from their felt experience of what it means' (2013: 88). He argues that theatre educators place too much emphasis on an analytical response and students' intuition is limited as a result. Although Fleming makes a valid point about the expectations and perhaps limitations often placed on students in their critical experiences as spectators, he suggests that without engaging emotionally with the action onstage, their engagement with the material aspects of theatre are inadequate. However, as the young people have demonstrated up to now, their responses to the visual/material aspects of theatre are intuitive and productive of meaning in their own right, without necessarily deriving from felt experience.

Within this section, I explore the young people's experiences of watching *Gaslight* and the elements of the production that they draw on to make connections and meanings. I question how their engagement with the theatre's material practices, explored in the previous section, may have impressed on their experiences as spectators, and how they recall and reflect on these moments during our interviews together. Through

encouraging young people to draw on the technical and material aspects of the production, I argue that their engagement in the fictional/performance text is enriched. Through this, I further foreground the concept of craft as offering a framework for young people's critical engagement in theatre that speaks to the learning opportunities inherent in both the technical and the artistic.

I presented Jack and Olwen with images from the production, *Gaslight*, taken by professional photographer, Joel C Fildes. The format of the interview was the same as when I have used photographs taken by the young people, showing them a series of images and encouraging them to take the lead in describing their experiences. Using Fildes' images, the young people talked through various aspects of the production. Within this section, I focus on two examples of conversations elicited through images of *Gaslight*, which highlight the young people's engagement with the material and technical aspects of the production. Emerging from Jack and Olwen's interpretations of these images is a strong sense of how, through engaging in the pre-show activities, they developed a parallel narrative to the fictional/performance text, of the production process. These narratives informed how they watched the overall performance and subsequently how they describe their experiences.

Through this particular photograph, Olwen draws on the mirror that formed part of the *Gaslight* set. She notes how 'they had to position the mirror like that so it didn't reflect the light'. Olwen begins by describing a narrative she learned of the mirror within the pre-show workshop and then goes on to describe how this narrative informed her experiences as a spectator, during a moment in the play.



Figure 21: *Gaslight* (Production photograph by Joel C Fildes, Feb 2017)

- Olwen: This is interesting and you can see it here. The amount of work they have to put in to get it to fit that time period, like it's really detailed, the pictures and mirrors. They had to position the mirror like that so it didn't reflect the light. All these tiny little details that they add in.
- Carly: Good memory Olwen. And did knowing about the details affect how you watched it in anyway?
- Olwen: You remember the little facts you've learnt about it. From back there, when you see the mirror, you're watching the lights going, right, yeah, that worked!
- Carly: And how did it feel knowing that?
- Olwen: I don't know really, it's just like, enlightening having these stories.

Olwen describes how during the performance she remembered 'the little facts' she had learned during the pre-show activities and recalls, 'from back there, when you see the mirror, you're watching the lights going, right, yeah, that worked'. Olwen is drawing on the narratives behind the making of the set, the labour and artistry involved in the production process. This is a recurring theme in the young people's experiences and articulations of learning through this prism. They are interested in the construction of the object, character, set or prop; the process that led to its 'finished' form onstage. Olwen notes that when she saw the mirror and the lights presumably coming up, her attention as a spectator turned towards the object, activating the narrative of a working practice behind that object.

Literary scholar Gerard Genette describes the text accompanying a literary work as a 'paratext', the 'verbal or other productions, such as the author's name, a title, a preface, any illustrations' that accompany the main text (1997: 18). He notes that the paratext, 'surrounds ... extends ... presents ... makes present' the text of a book. Borrowing Genette's term, Olwen has entered into the frame of the performance event with a 'paratext' of the production process. Her initial encounters with the set and the technicians provided her with a more informed frame of reference entering into the

production. Olwen has developed a paratext of the material aspects of the production, learning something of the period of the play as well as the working practices that work towards producing these fictional elements. This paratext, although separate from the main 'text', 'surrounds and extends' the production itself and both 'presents' and 'makes present', in this case, the mirror. Gennette goes on to note that the paratext of a book provides a 'reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it' (1997: 19). The paratext of the production process, embedded in the mirror, gave heightened agency to the mirror as part of the set, adding an extra layer of meaning to Olwen's reception as a spectator. Resonating with the themes that emerged in chapter 3 and in the previous section, this suggests that young people are also interested in the technical and material aspects of theatre and theatre production, as spectators. As Olwen notes, 'it's enlightening having these stories'.

Olwen's interest in the technical, as a spectator, is shared with children studied by theatre scholar Matthew Reason in his influential study of children's experiences of watching theatre in *The Young Audience* (2010). Reason analyses drawings produced by children following their engagement in a performance. He asserts that 'engagement with the technical and material aspects of the performance can be read as a positive engagement, valued in its own right' (2010: 73). Reason also observes, through a number of the children's drawings and articulations of a piece of puppet theatre, that 'interest in the mechanical workings of the puppets was particularly noticeable in the instance where a puppet moved without visible assistance'. He notes that some of the children produced drawings speculating how this may have worked, including 'set plans and cut away models that revealed the hidden workings of the production' (2010: 74). It is interesting that like Olwen and the other young people engaged in this study, young children are also fascinated by 'what worked', the technical aspects of theatre production. Reason goes on to suggest that 'we should celebrate the processes of theatrical illusion, rather than the illusion itself, as a way of engaging their technical creativity'. He argues against articulations of theatre for young

audiences that in a 'well-meaning' but often 'patronising' way aim to 'protect the magic of the illusion'. He notes that 'children have the ability to juggle contradicting interpretations and to see simultaneously on two levels' (2010: 74). Rather than taking away from the performance itself, the children in his study were comfortably able to switch between their engagement with the real/material and the fictional within their experiences.

In describing the material narratives behind the gaslights on the set of the production, Jack suggests, in line with Reason, that within a specific moment of the performance he switched registers and recalled the story relating to the gaslights. The lights and his technical engagement with the lights was activated within that moment, as a result of entering into the production with a 'paratext' surrounding these objects. In his experiences and articulations, Jack oscillates between this material narrative and narratives of the objects' historical, metaphorical and fictional relevance to the play.



Figure 22: *Gaslight* (Production photograph by Joel C Fildes, Feb 2017)

Jack: This is a good one of the lighting. They couldn't use real gaslights as that'd be dangerous but they have to look like gas because they didn't have electricity.

Carly: So how did they create the effect?

Jack: Like dimmer with the lights. Sort of slower to come on.

Carly: And do you think they achieved that?

Jack: Yeah it felt old. They switched them on and they came on gradually.

Carly: And what was their significance Jack, in the play?

Jack: They are really significant. The girl, here, sees them flickering. She thinks she's going mad but it's actually her husband doing it. He's gaslighting her. It's what the play is about.

Jack describes how 'they couldn't use real gaslights as that'd be dangerous', relaying the technical narrative *behind* the object. He then notes, 'they have to look like gaslights because they didn't have electricity', which suggests he has learned something of the historical context of the play. He then braids these narratives together, describing how as a spectator he noticed the lights were dimmer, to reflect how a traditional gaslight works and 'sort of came on slower'. Jack is alternating between the material/real and the fictional/imagined; oscillating between two parallel narratives. Jack also notes that the lighting 'felt old', which suggests that as well as activating narratives behind objects in the set, the exploration into these material processes also encouraged critical reflexivity into his own felt response to the play.

McConachie uses a cognitive approach to describe the audience experience. Drawing on the work of cognitive scientists, Fauconnier and Turner in his investigation, he describes how 'conceptual blending' works in relation to an actor's portrayal of a character. He asserts that an actor blends concepts of themselves with their concept of a role. McConachie describes this process as 'blending identities' and notes that the spectator is also active in constructing and blending the identity of the actor with that of the character:

To create an actor/character, spectators take knowledge from three different mental concepts – certain qualities from the conceptual, primitive actor, (that he/she is alive, can move, and has a certain past, faces specific situation, in the present etc.) and the cognitive concept of identity. While identity relies directly on memory, audiences combine their general knowledge of the basic level concepts of actor and character with specific information about which actor and what character, taken from the performance they are watching as well as from memory (2008: 42).

This suggests that both the actor and spectator blend the identities of the actor and the role and the real and the fictional, using general knowledge and memory to support the construction of the character. Although McConachie references props and puppets elsewhere in *Engaging Audiences: A cognitive approach to spectating in theatre* (2008), he does not reference how blending manifests in relation to other material elements of a production. However, Jack and Olwen demonstrate that theatrical objects and materials can 'blend' two or more 'concepts' within the performance event, in a similar way to how Paris and Riyadur described the agency of the props in chapter 3. As spectators, Jack and Olwen are blending narratives of the fictional, the real, and the working processes behind the real. Olwen refers to how the mirror was positioned and how it interacted with the light. Jack notes the 'old' feel of the play, the gaslights fading and the way the effect was produced. They are blending concepts of the objects, based on their theatrical/material life and their fictional life in the world of the play.

Jack and Olwen are able to oscillate between these modes of reception, drawing on the material and the fictional agency of the objects in multiple ways. Their experiences are layered with different meanings, neither appearing to detract from their engagement in the overall production. In *Theatre & Mind*, McConachie asserts that 'actors and spectators with a lot of experience will usually oscillate in and out of their blends throughout a performance' (2013: 24). He notes that 'those who have watched a performance before' can shift their register from the fictional to the real and

vice versa, pulling back 'from their involvement in the blends of the play' (2013: 24). Olwen and Jack oscillate between registers during the performance, pulling back from the fictional narrative to observe the material objects of the production and the way they work, in tandem with the lighting. They demonstrate that young people are capable of switching registers, of engaging in multiple narratives as spectators with perhaps less experience of spectatorship than McConachie suggests. This supports Reason's articulations that even children are capable of 'perceiving the workings of the medium itself and appreciating the illusion that is produced: they are following not just the story but the processes of the construction of the story' (2010: 84).

Furthermore, Jack's alluding to the gaslights appears to actually propel his understanding of the fictional narrative. He notes, 'they are really significant. The girl ... sees them flickering. She thinks she's going mad but it's actually her husband doing it. He's gas-lighting her. It's what the play is about'. The material in this instance has affirmed and concretised Jack's understandings of the play. His knowledge of the gaslights and their intended effect has informed how he has read the performance, understanding the significance of the gaslights to the narrative and the social relevance of the play. Reason, similarly, draws on this in his account of children's experiences of a piece of puppet theatre. He articulates how the technical served as a way of 'actively motivating' some of the children on an emotional and imaginative level:

It is revealing that this technical engagement into how the puppet worked was accompanied by or perhaps actively motivated several of the boys to be significantly more interested, imaginatively and emotionally in this character. They imagined dialogue for the character to say or created short stories or explanations about what it was doing, thus taking the action further in their imagination than the elements afforded by the performance' (2010: 73).

As Reason asserts, engagement in the technical has the potential to actually propel the fictional narratives of a play. Certain children and young people

may be more interested in the technical aspects of theatre, which, theatre educators have arguably tended to repress. This impels how we may encourage young people's engagement in multiple theatrical narratives, both material and immaterial, as opposed to solely foregrounding a singular 'reading'. It also suggests that pre-show activities that extend the parameters of the theatre event are useful in stimulating this context for learning. Through opportunities that explore the narratives behind the theatre's materials and practices, young people's engagement with the material and visual aspects of theatre, as well as the emotional, text based and semiotic is encouraged. We may craft a kind of spectatorship where the material narratives blend with those of the actors, directors and writers. As Monks asserts, 'let's get rid of the upstairs/downstairs structure to our attentiveness to the event, or rather the onstage/backstage approach, and instead begin to attend to the work in the wardrobe, in the props store and on the stage as a set of continuous and discontinuous practices' (2014: 2). With knowledge of the material practices and crafts that are working in tandem with the fictional narrative of a play, young people may choose 'to stay within the dramatic frame or temporarily un-blend their actor/character integrations', or in this case their engagement with the theatre's technical aspects and material/real objects (McConachie, 2013: 24). With a paratext to draw upon, their ability to oscillate between the fictional/material blends is arguably heightened, along with their critical engagement with the entire production.

This chapter has demonstrated the possibilities for learning that emerge from exploring the collective practices of theatre production and how this informs young people's critical skills as spectators and theatre makers. In relation to exploring the producing of a theatre set, Jack described how looking at the set plans and the actual set provided him with insight into 'how something's been made and what's been changed'. Olwen described how, through seeing the actors rehearsing, 'you see the development of how it was in the rehearsal room to the stage. Like the little bits that might've changed or the progression'. This was supported by teacher, Debbie, who noted how 'seeing that transformation helps them to understand the process'. The young

people's engagement in the theatre making process, through observation and a more reflective stance, revealed the labour and artistry involved in both the work of the technicians and the actors. The young people drew on the mental and manual capacities involved in both of these aspects of theatre making, developing understandings of the practical and physical application of skill, and the honing of this skill as a craft through continuous revision. Learning of this synergy between mental and manual processes is not something that is usually associated with theatre education. However, this articulation of theatre education has the potential to encourage young people's understandings of theatre practice as a 'dynamic system of knowledge', involving a relationship between head and hand (Wynne, 1996: 68).

Jack and Olwen's articulations of their learning highlight the potential of pre-show activities in providing insights into practical aspects of theatre making that are otherwise lost or hidden in the theatre event. The activities provided the young people with a model of behaviour, and insight into the social aspects of theatre making necessary in working in this environment. Both Jack and Olwen describe the ways the technicians and actors negotiate with other people, listening and cooperating in order to achieve a common goal. In learning of this collective system of production, I argued that craft offers a rich framework for theatre education, that considers a broader range of theatre making skills and disciplines, including technical theatre, whilst speaking to the social values inherent in theatre production as a 'joined skill in community' (Sennett, 2008: 51).

The young people's experiences of engaging in this model of learning informed how they watched a production at the Coliseum. The narratives they developed of the process, inscribed on objects within the set of the production, including the mirror and the gaslights, giving further prominence to the agency of the theatre's objects and material practices. The young people demonstrated that rather than these 'process' narratives, developed prior to the theatre event, taking away from their intuitive responses as spectators, they were able to comfortably 'blend' their engagement and

knowledge of the fictional/material as spectators. Jack and Olwen were able to switch registers in the performance, drawing on their understandings of the material, which I argued at times actually heightened their engagement with the fictional 'text'. Supporting Reason's findings into children's responses to the technical aspects, the chapter illustrated that similarly, young people are interested in this aspect of theatre production; children and young people's 'technical creativity' should be celebrated (2010: 74).

The professional production photography produced by Joel C Fildes provided an interesting addition/diversion to the method where the young people were unable to take their own photographs. Within these instances, the photographs provided a mechanism for the young people to legitimise their knowledge of the production, sharing critical insights into the performance as spectators, capable of interpreting the theatrical devices and techniques used in the production. The photographs also provided a secure anchor in understanding and eliciting their experiences of the performance. The young people were able to recall, in a detailed way, the moments of the play captured in the images and the context surrounding these moments, for example, what was happening in the scene between the characters. I further explore production photography as a potential methodological and educational device in my conclusion and appendices.

Within the next chapter, I explore my role in facilitating the education partnership scheme and reflect on my experiences of developing the activities explored in this thesis. I develop some of the themes that have emerged within this section, relating to the collective practices inherent in a regional, producing theatre context. Whilst exploring my own skills and experiences of working in the theatre building alongside theatre staff, I reflect on the ways in which I respond to the theatre's 'community of practice' to produce social and educational learning experiences. In addition to exploring my internal working environment, I look outwards, to reflect on the ways my wider working context shapes my role and practices, drawing together themes of craft, the local and education that have underpinned this thesis.

Chapter 5. Situating Participatory Practice: Learning departments in regional theatres

This thesis up to now has focused primarily on exploring young people's experiences of engaging in theatre education through a craft and technically focused prism at the Coliseum. The young people's engagement with theatre practice as a 'dynamic system of knowledge' draws on the relationship between hand, head and the body and the collaboration inherent in the theatre making process (Wynne, 1996: 68). The young people have produced narratives based on their imaginative and embodied engagement through learning about this system of knowledge, as both 'peripheral participants' and spectators (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Within this chapter, I draw together themes of craft, community and education that have underpinned this thesis, focusing on my role in cultivating experiences with and between young people and the theatre building. Reflecting on my own practices, I describe the ways in which the theatre building and its geography informs my work, and the ways in which I have negotiated shifts within Oldham's social, economic and political landscape. I critically explore the design and motivation for the Coliseum's education partnership scheme and contrast this with other practitioners' work with young people in theatre settings. Through this, I aim to illustrate the 'local specificities', both internal and external that inform the development of various provision, articulating the social, educational and artistic underpinnings of practitioners' work in regional theatres, and their role within their respective settings (Knowles, 2004: 19). I interrogate the exclusion of the work of learning departments from applied theatre discourse and re-position the practices within a social-educational framework.

The histories of learning departments in regional theatres connect to the TIE movement that emerged in the 1960's. As explored in chapter 1, TIE 'units' were made up of teams of actor-teachers who visited schools to deliver programmes of participatory theatre. Although originally based in theatres, TIE units were funded through both Local Education Authorities and the Arts

Council. As Jackson notes, this position enabled them to 'make use of' the theatre's resources, whilst 'establishing a healthy measure of independence, organisationally from the education authority and ... as a separate department of the theatre' (1993: 19). Jackson notes that 'although TIE began and initially developed through the establishment of TIE units attached to regional repertory theatres ... there soon emerged several alternative patterns' in the 1970's. Many companies decided to set themselves up independently, which Jackson notes, 'gave them, of course, a greater degree of autonomy and control over their work than would have been the case had they been attached to a main theatre' (1993: 22). The economic, educational and cultural changes that unfolded in 1980's Thatcherite Britain, led to the demise of TIE and either the collapse or restructuring of the TIE unit. Brown and Brannen note, that in addition to these economic repercussions, the shift away from housing TIE companies in building-based theatres was also 'partly in response to changing views amongst some artistic directors as to how best to support the educational role of companies' (1996: 379). This refocusing led to a significant shift in the framing of educational activities, towards work that aimed to link 'far more to the main house' (Turner, 2010: 15). The legacy of the TIE movement not only provided a pioneering set of techniques, underpinned by a commitment to social change, but a 'significant shift in the policy of the Arts Council towards theatre for young people' (Jackson, 1993: 18).

This history details the emergence of learning departments whilst providing some context into the current and perhaps divergent position of practitioners working in regional theatres today. Although TIE and the work of actor-teachers has been well documented, there has since been little investigation into the structures and practices of learning departments. What are some of the qualities, skills and intentions that connect or separate the work of these practitioners from their TIE predecessors? How have their practices developed within their individual contexts and evolved collectively? Ball responds to some of these questions in a chapter titled, 'Regional theatres as Learning Resources' in *Learning through Theatre: The Changing Face of*

Theatre in Education (Jackson, 2013). This chapter and thesis broadly, develops Ball's work and builds upon some of his understandings of the role of learning departments in regional theatres. Ball notes that 'education practitioners in regional theatres do, like the actor-teachers they have largely replaced, possess a hybrid of teaching and performance skills' (2013: 165). Although practitioners working in learning departments in regional theatres continue to utilise the techniques developed by TIE actor-teachers, I argue that the role has evolved substantially more than Ball suggests. Differing in philosophy and creative approach, the role encompasses a broader set of skills and working practices.

The philosophical underpinnings of the role of the TIE actor-teacher firstly meant that their work was deliberately separate to the work of the theatre building. As Jackson notes, 'theatre for social change rather than building audiences for the future was the way that most practitioners preferred to see their work' (1993: 18-19). Regional theatres have since come a long way in 'reconceiving their educational and outreach missions' (Jackson, 2013: 82). As a result, the development of 'much more harmonious inter-department relationships, with marketing and learning teams' has emerged, 'who by and large work together to develop audiences and promote learning and participatory activities' (Ball, 2013: 157). This reconceptualisation of the theatre building and a more general acceptance of the potential contribution of the practices to audience development, has led to new and renewed methods and processes for engaging young people in creative practice that connects to the work of the theatre building.

In contrast to TIE actor-teachers, working more prevalently within the theatre building requires a closer negotiating of the politics of the space and the rhythms and operations of the theatre's practices, designing and delivering activity that responds or correlates to the work of the setting. Unlike TIE actor-teachers, whose work was set up away from the theatre building, bringing people to the theatre requires mechanisms for mobilising connections to and within the theatre space. In addition, the skillset of TIE actor-teachers was specifically twofold from the outset as the programmes of

work were more specific. As Vallins explains, 'TIE members should be actors who could teach – and ideally had received some kind of teacher training – or teachers who could act' (1980: 12). Rosenberg supports this, noting, 'by combining skills in both fields, the actor-teacher is able to maximize the potential of each' (1974: 45). The move away from delivering TIE programmes has led to a diversification in the creative approach of practitioners, who draw on perhaps a more diverse array of theatre making practices and art forms to deliver broader programmes of work.

Undertaking this work in connection to the theatre building therefore involves a different set of skills and working practices. My understandings of the role align more closely with applied theatre scholar, Kay Hepplewhite's articulation of the applied theatre practitioner:

Their expertise is made up of a combination of qualities and skills that build on a foundation of art form knowledge, blending the ability to guide creative performance activity with facilitation of positive engagement through interactive exchange, which in turn, ethically takes account of context and objectives (2017: 2).

Hepplewhite's understandings of the applied theatre practitioner take into account a broader blend of creative and social skills than Ball describes as inherent in the role of practitioners working in regional theatres. However, how the art form is understood and operationalised, particularly from my perspective, differs when working in the context of a theatre building. The theatre building is part of my creative practice and the 'positive engagement' I aim to facilitate. The building is a key component in a coaction between production and place that involves people as well as material objects and practices. Whereas applied theatre practitioners draw predominantly on a foundation of *performance* related art form knowledge to mediate 'creative performance activity', I draw on the theatre building to facilitate learning about the entire theatre making process, facilitating social connections through the materiality of the theatre building, as the practices explored in this thesis have demonstrated. Unlike TIE actor-teachers, whose base in the

theatre building enabled them to solely 'make use of' the theatre's resources, the theatre building and its resources are the basis of my creative practice (Jackson, 1993: 19).

Applied theatre discourse, however, has largely excluded the practices of learning departments in regional theatres. In 'Applied theatre: An exclusionary discourse?', theatre scholar Judith Ackroyd notes that although the terminology and definition of applied theatre practice has evolved, a strong identification of the work has been subject to location, 'identifying applied theatre as beyond theatre' (2007: 4) - 'beyond conventional theatres' (Thompson, 2003), 'not taking place in traditional theatre settings' (O'Toole, 2007). This is echoed by Sheila Preston in *Applied Theatre: Facilitation*, 'applied theatre represented a broad diversity of community-based and socially engaged theatre and performance practices that often happened beyond the conventional boundaries of traditional theatre spaces' (2016: 5). The ways in which applied theatre has been defined as taking place outside or 'beyond' the theatre building, implies that the practices of practitioners working in regional theatres are somehow less conducive to producing social meanings.

Within this chapter, I aim to rearticulate the role of Learning departments practitioners working within regional theatre settings. Whilst acknowledging the systematic and political underpinnings of the role, working on behalf of an institution, I develop new perspectives into the social and educational intentions of the work. Driven by the aim of eroding barriers to accessing theatre, practitioners working within these settings largely aim to cultivate a shared, social space for learning and interactive exchange. Although 'attached' to the building, I argue that the work is highly situated. The ways in which these practitioners design their practices within the context of a theatre's geography, means that, like applied theatre practice, the work is 'subject to location', and/or often takes place outside of the theatre building. In *Theatre, Education and Performance*, Nicholson interrogates the exclusion of the work of regional theatres from this discourse. She argues that 'many people who now run education programmes in regional theatres have

inherited the political spirit of the TIE movement and there is a genuine commitment to find inventive ways to invite people from all sectors of society into their performance spaces' (2009: 208). I build on this supposition to reposition the practices of these workers, closely examining how space and place inform the social intentions of the work.

I extend my exploration to include examples of practice developed and delivered within two other regional, producing theatres based in the North, to highlight this nuance in approach. I draw on reflections from Chris Tomlinson, Associate Director of Young Everyman and Playhouse in Liverpool (YEP) and Chelsea Morgan, Schools Programme Leader at Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester. The practitioners' articulations of their work in their respective settings illustrate the 'divergences in meaning' that derive from differing theatre settings, and the ways in which participatory practice works both in 'concert and in tension' with the broader theatre context (Knowles, 2004: 19). Using a photograph that they feel best captures their practice, Chris and Chelsea reflect on their roles in developing the projects described, in their work settings. I contrast the practitioners' perspectives in relation to the example of practice they have chosen to capture, as opposed to comparing the theatre's broader programmes themselves; their examples do not exclusively represent the theatres' work with young people but an example with which to explore their situated practices.

In contrast with applied theatre practitioners and the TIE actor-teachers, their reflections illustrate how the theatre building forms a critical part of their work in designing and delivering activities with and for young people. Although in each circumstance the practitioners' approach is distinct, they each draw on the collective practices of the theatre building to facilitate social and educational exchange. I argue that the theatre building, as a 'community of practice', facilitates a unique kind of knowledge share with and between young people (Lave and Wenger, 1991). I explore the specific skill and knowledge that underpins the collective work of the practitioners in facilitating these interactions, to theorise and provide new understandings into their role

and working practices. This exploration forms the first section of the chapter, “The Regional Theatre Practitioner and the Theatre Building”.

Returning to Oldham, to undertake a more detailed situated analysis of the social and political underpinnings of the role, I reflect on the mechanisms I have developed to cultivate young people’s connections to the Coliseum. I examine co-delivery with community workers and teachers and how the various spaces in which the activity operates contributes to developing relationships. I utilise reflections from Debbie, a teacher engaged in the Coliseum’s education partnership scheme, to explore the role of drama teachers in supporting these links between students and the theatre. This forms the second section of the chapter, “Mapping Local Networks”, which probes questions around partnership work and place. I explore the importance of collaboration in cultivating local networks and ecologies of engagement. Taken together, the sections trace the relational systems surrounding participatory work in regional theatres and the ways the theatre building informs the work of practitioners based within these contexts.

The Regional Theatre Practitioner and the Theatre Building

This section explores the role of the regional theatre practitioner. I aim to develop both understandings of the distinctive processes of these practitioners in relation to their contexts of work and the collective qualities and characteristics that underpin their practices. I draw on reflections from Chris and Chelsea to explore their approaches to their work at Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse and Royal Exchange Theatre. Liverpool Everyman Theatre was founded in 1964 in Hope Hall, which was once a chapel and converted into a theatre. The theatre is on the outskirts of the city centre, ‘in an area of Liverpool noted for its bohemian environment and political edge ... the Everyman built a reputation for ground-breaking work’ (Liverpool Everyman website, 2018). The Playhouse Theatre started as a music hall in 1866 and became a theatre in 1911 on the formation of the Liverpool Repertory Company. In 2000, the two theatres merged into one trust, operating out of two different sites. The Royal Exchange Theatre is set in the

Great Hall in the Royal Exchange building, one of the world's centres for cotton trade until the Second World War when the building was hit in the Manchester blitz. In 1973, the building was taken over by Braham Murray, Casper Wrede, Michael Elliott, Richard Negri and James Maxwell who founded the Royal Exchange Theatre Company in 1976. A theatre module is suspended in the Great Hall, which provides the architecture to the theatre auditorium itself. In 1996, an IRA bomb devastated the building, which re-opened after substantial fundraising and rebuilding, in 1998 (Royal Exchange website, 2018).

The Everyman and Playhouse, the Royal Exchange and the Coliseum are all producing theatres based in the North of England. However, they are vastly different in terms of size, funding subvention and their history and 'place' within their local/regional contexts. Although it is too vast to cover meaningfully within this chapter, a broader, more detailed comparison into how geography and place informs the educational work and remit of regional theatres would be an interesting area for further exploration. For example, the Royal Exchange Theatre, the largest producing theatre in the North, delivers the 'Local Exchange' project, which assumes a situated approach to community engagement, away from the city-centre theatre building. This raises questions about the 'place' of the theatre in relation to its geography and how 'the local' within this context is being conceptualised through community engagement. Within the next section, I consider these questions in relation to my work at the Coliseum, exploring how geography and place inform my role in oscillating between the theatre building and its local context. However, within the scope of this section, my focus is to illustrate the practitioners' situated role and skills in cultivating relationships and learning within/through a theatre building. My aim is to articulate, in a nuanced way, the ways in which the theatre building informs the social, educational and artistic focus of the practitioners' work with young people. Through this, I develop new perspectives into the creative practices of these practitioners, whose role has largely been absent in theatre education and applied theatre discourse. I argue that within each example, the theatre building co-produces

a particular kind of social and educational exchange. Each practitioner draws on the collective knowledge inherent in the theatre making practices of the building, to provide a model for learning with and between young people. The theatre building is a 'community of practice', a knowledge based social structure that has the potential to develop 'a common sense of identity' (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

I asked Chris and Chelsea to take a photograph that they felt best captured their practice working with young people on behalf of a regional theatre. I specified that the photograph should represent their role working within this context, in whatever form, or setting they felt best illustrated this. The photograph should not contain the faces of young people, as it was beyond the ethical consent framework of this study but that they would have the freedom to describe the context surrounding the photograph to 'colour in' any gaps. Their selected photographs in the first instance illuminate their connectivity to the theatre building and their personal, social and artistic experiences of working with young people in these settings. Alongside my own approach at the Coliseum, I contrast how the practitioners respond to their respective environs and the ways the theatres' architecture and spaces structure their working practices.

Chris Tomlinson, Associate Director of Young Everyman and Playhouse (YEP) in Liverpool, describes a photograph that he feels best captures his practice working within the Everyman Theatre building. In 2014, the Everyman Theatre reopened after a refurbishment with a new youth space. Chris describes the artistic, educational and social opportunities that have emerged through this dedicated space.



Figure 23: *Quantum* Installation by YEP, Liverpool Everyman Theatre (Photo selected by Chris, 2018)

- Carly: Please can you describe what's in the photo?
- Chris: It's taken from one of our YEP actor shows 'Quantum'. A devised collaborative performance where our young actors would improvise scenarios and scenes, and our young writers would then go away and script a narrative. The actors shared roles on this interactive walkabout performance, which used various public and back stage areas, culminating in a final scene on the main stage. Here in the picture you see a scene where a young physics enthusiast has blown up her shed and it has been captured by our designer from Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts as an installation piece showing the shed in loads of different positions around the room as though it's been caught in time.
- Carly: Why did you choose this picture to capture your practice?
- Chris: I thought in one shot it encapsulates all that goes on in YEP and out of our main studio space where all the strands will gather, meet, interact, work and have their sessions through any standard week. It's a workshop come performance space. Fully fitted with technical support.
- Carly: How do you respond to the theatre itself in your work, the building and the space?
- Chris: We often run separately to the building in terms of how we create our work as it's about the young people's voice, however YEP does run hand in hand with the main building. We are now one of the 3 main pillars in the buildings' manifesto and essential to the makeup of the building. The young people have direct access to the building and spaces to use independently.

Chris describes the photograph of an installation that formed the set for the performance, *Quantum*, produced in 2016 by YEP, a young company of actors, writers, producers and technicians. The installation, designed by a student from LIPA (Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts) is reminiscent of, and perhaps inspired by Cornelia Parker's 'Cold Dark Matter'. The student's

work perhaps reflects the ways that LIPA promotes awareness and study of practice in contemporary art (beyond theatre) and encourages the students to think of themselves as and in relation to artists. The photograph appears to be a production shot or of high quality, with the composition considered, capturing the installation in the studio space, lit but absent of people. The photograph perhaps captures the set, moments before performers and audience members interacted with the space. Chris notes that he has chosen the photograph as it captures 'all that goes on in YEP and out of our main studio space where all the strands will gather, meet, interact, work and have their sessions through any standard week'. There is a sense of the photograph representing artistic accomplishment for Chris; the finished product of his work with the young people in getting to the point of the show opening.

The quality and resource of the production evident in the photograph represents Chris's role in facilitating a level of artistic standard, working with a designer to produce the young people's production. However, Chris indicates that the culmination of the artistic product is mutually informed by the social interaction of the young people throughout the process. The studio space is where the young company 'gather, meet, interact and work'. The relationships the young people form with one another is perhaps of greater importance within Chris's practice than the examples that follow, encouraging young people to work together within the theatre space as an ensemble through a youth theatre model. Although there are a variety of models that define youth theatre, typically it takes place 'outside of formal education and is founded on the voluntary participation of young people' (Hughes and Wilson, 2004: 58). Chris describes how the young people are 'drawn from across diverse areas of the city'. This suggests that the youth theatre also has a social role, facilitating a space for diverse young people to develop new social encounters through the process of making theatre. As applied theatre scholars Jenny Hughes and Karen Wilson note, 'youth theatre can offer a context, outside of normal routines, for young people to explore uncharted social territories or individual possibilities and

experiment with different ways of playing a part in social processes' (2004: 69). Chris's role involves facilitating a social space for the development of the young people's relationships to one another. It is the process of working towards a shared artistic goal that facilitates this social interplay.

Chris's model of youth theatre replicates that of a professional theatre company, with assigned roles and responsibilities that contribute towards the creative process, 'to get this room to what you see in the picture has taken everyone involved in the process, technician, writer, designer, performer'. With a defined space at the Everyman to undertake the work, YEP are working in parallel to the professional company. The space facilitates YEP, as a company to 'gather' and 'meet'. Chris's role, therefore, is in the artistic stewardship of the young people. He is facilitating the development of the young people's social relationships to one another as an ensemble whilst guiding their work artistically. As Chris describes, 'the focus I say would be to inspire the young people in an artistic outlet ... to enable them to work across their own strands to develop their own interests and skills within a safe environment'. Chris indicates that he is responsible for facilitating a 'safe' space for young people, coordinating resources and a supportive environment within the theatre building to support their ideas and the execution of their work.

Chris notes, 'we run separately to the building in terms of how we create our work as it's about the young people's voice'. Chris's emphasis on this independence and agency in the creation of work with young people is supported in the organisation's mission, 'we're now one of the three main pillars in the buildings' manifesto'. These pillars include the Everyman, Playhouse and YEP. This structure is designed to align the young people's work, as a prominent 'pillar', with the buildings' professional work. As Chris describes, one of the aims of his practice is for the young people to 'understand the level of work going on in a regional theatre environment.' Although Chris references the importance of young people understanding the 'work' of the professional company, the YEP to some degree, is socially and artistically 'separate' or independent from the rest of the Everyman and

Playhouse's operations - it has its own space and artistic identity. Philosophically, however, in terms of the place of the work within the organisation, it is valued equally to the main house programmes. Chris's image actually accentuates the place of the work at the theatre. It is architectural and evocative of the infrastructure of the theatre and status the YEP's work occupies within the organisation.

In contrast, the way the Coliseum structure young people's activity, spatially, artistically and socially within the building differs. The design of the programme is informed by the Coliseum not having a dedicated space for young people's participatory work. When we designed the education partnership scheme with teachers, we were keen to invite young people into the theatre space and there is a performance opportunity embedded. However, out of necessity, the practices delivered in the theatre, largely involve exploring the existing theatre making practices of the professional team, rather than the young people having creative autonomy of a space and the work themselves. It has also been modelled with both mainstream and non-mainstream schools, to complement Oldham's wider cultural offer. Oldham Theatre Workshop, which began in 1968, delivers a rich and wide-reaching youth theatre, therefore in order not to duplicate, the Coliseum's work with young people focuses on activities delivered through and with schools. As I explore in the next section, this enables the theatre to work in a different way with young people and offer, arguably, broader access to a diverse range of young people, who perhaps otherwise would not access a youth theatre model.

As the photographs throughout this thesis illustrate, much of the work with young people at the Coliseum is facilitated through direct collaboration with a range of staff members in spaces across the building. There is not the physical space or resource to facilitate the level of independent access to the studio theatre, as described by Chris. Therefore, the learning team have modelled a way of working which responds to the building as a place of work. At the Everyman, a dedicated space, physically and philosophically has been carved out for young people's work, whereas at the Coliseum, education

practices largely fit around the theatre's existing practices. Spatially, the Coliseum's work with young people is secondary to the work in development for the main house, but socially and educationally perhaps more tightly linked than the practices described by Chris. How does this differentiation in space and programme design inform how I deliver activities with young people at the Coliseum? The example of practice I have chosen to describe for this section represents this contrast in approach. It illustrates a different way of working within the theatre space and a different kind of social interactivity facilitated within the context of a theatre building, between a young person and a stage manager.



Figure 24: Prop making workshop at the Coliseum (Photograph by Jake, Sept 2018)

This photograph was taken by an assistant facilitator in the Coliseum's education suite; a small room at the side of the stage, also often used as a bar area. The adult on the left of the photograph is Jane, the Coliseum's Stage Manager, working with young people from a local non-mainstream school. Within the workshop, Jane showed the young people examples of props she had made for various pantomime productions and assisted the young people in making an elaborate pantomime-style cake. Pictured on the bottom left, are three foam circles that make up the tiers of the cake. In the moment the photograph was taken, both Jane and a young person have their hands on a piece of foam with their attention focused to the particular place Jane has directed the young person towards. The young person with the paintbrush is about to carry out Jane's instruction of painting PVA glue onto the section. The photograph represents the interactive exchange that I facilitate at the Coliseum through the theatre's education partnership scheme. As explored in chapters 2 and 3, the production department at the Coliseum are often in direct contact with the young people engaged in the scheme, who learn alongside the production team as they demonstrate or carry out their work.

Within the workshop, an assistant facilitator, Jake, who was working with the learning department, was documenting the process and stepping in to help when it was required. What was my role in this moment and the skill I was passing on to Jake within this workshop? Although not visible within the photograph, I am sitting beside the young person on the right, assisting her gluing gauze onto a piece of foam. Jane was leading the workshop - I had little prior knowledge of the making of the pantomime cakes. Therefore, like the young people, I was learning in situ from Jane's demonstration and instructions. However, equally, my role within this scenario was assisting Jane. Working with young people and understanding how to articulate instructions to make sense of the practices for the young people, is where my experience lies, and in these instances my role is in supporting the production team to do this rather than leading the work myself. Therefore, being aware of individual moments in a workshop and how these unfold and

build upon one another to facilitate the young people's learning is critical to my role in these instances. Although not leading the workshop, I am aware of these dynamics, tuning in to a group's needs and the development of their relationships and experiences to facilitate and foster a context for 'positive engagement' (Hepplewhite, 2017: 2).

Similarly, to Chris, I am responsible for facilitating 'positive engagement' between people, with and within the theatre building but particularly within this example, between young people and with other staff members at the theatre (Hepplewhite, 2017: 2). Through Chris's approach, the young people's connectivity to one another is paramount, developed through their creative activity as an entire theatre company. Within the practice described within my example, the interactive exchange is between a staff member and a young person. The specific practice of prop making is hands-on and based on working with materials and therefore, a different learning experience defines the 'interactive exchange' (Hepplewhite, 2017: 2). This is illustrated in the photograph with the young person and Jane, both handling the same object. Their focus, literally, is the object itself. A social connection or relationship may be developed as a result of making an object as the shared common goal. As explored in chapter 3, these practices with staff members perhaps evoke a different kind of social and educational experience for the young people. Within this instance, my focus is on facilitating learning in situ which requires mutual support from theatre staff in the building and equally, knowledge and understanding of broader theatre making practices to coordinate the activities.

This is something Chelsea, Schools Programme Leader at Royal Exchange Theatre, describes in her reflections. Chelsea is responsible for the theatre's work with schools and works alongside other Leaders in the team, who manage programmes of work with adults, young people and community participants. Chelsea's image depicts a group of young people taking part in activities in the module, the Exchange's auditorium; a modular structure suspended in the Great Hall. Chelsea describes how the activities form part of the Exchange's work experience provision, something the theatre is 'trying

to do more of'. Chelsea describes the intentions behind this shift as aiming to improve access to careers and to the theatre space, 'giving young people more creative control'. The Exchange's ambitions for the space are similar to what Chris describes as having been achieved at the Everyman and similarly, within Chelsea's example, the work experience week is set up and programmed independently to the rest of the theatre's activity. The young people receive mentorship from departments in the theatre to undertake a creative project for themselves, as opposed to directly working alongside the theatre's technical teams.



Figure 25: Work experience week at Royal Exchange Theatre (Photograph by Chelsea, Feb 2018)

- Carly: What's this picture of?
- Chelsea: It's of our work experience week and it's showing young people working in the module.
- Carly: Why did you choose this picture to capture your practice?
- Chelsea: It captures what we're trying to do more of, which is introducing young people to different career pathways. We're focusing more on different careers in the industry. So, during this week, the young people took over the module. They learned about all aspects of producing theatre and were encouraged to put these into practice themselves.
- Carly: What brought about this change? Why are you doing more work around careers?
- Chelsea: Year on year, it's become more practical and it's about giving young people more creative control. More access. We want them to experience these careers for themselves within the theatre space.
- Carly: What do you consider is your role in facilitating these experiences?
- Chelsea: Internally, it's about supporting members of staff. The young people are mentored by each department. They don't necessarily have this expertise so it's about supporting them to feel confident in working with young people. It's about developing their practice too.
- Carly: How do you respond to the theatre itself in your work, the building and the space?
- Chelsea: Well, I had to learn about working in the round. I'd obviously watched things in the round but didn't know how unique things like sound and lighting were to the space. I had to learn that.

Similarly, to my understandings, Chelsea suggests her role in the space is in facilitating learning between the young people and other departments at the theatre. However, Chelsea explains that this exchange is based on the young people working independently to put the skills or knowledge they have

acquired into practice for themselves. This is illustrated in the photograph, where a group of young people are enacting a scene in the Exchange's main auditoria with other young people watching and taking notes. Chelsea explains that she chose this photograph as it represents a shift in the Exchange's work with young people. Part of her role within this shift has been to support staff in mentoring young people, 'internally, it's about supporting members of staff ... They don't necessarily have this expertise so it's about supporting them to feel confident in working with young people. It's about developing their practice too'. This suggests that Chelsea is supporting both the teaching and learning between the production staff and the young people, giving staff the skills and knowledge necessary to undertake the work and in doing so, she points to the expertise inherent in her role. The skills Chelsea is passing on, could include the manner in which the technicians should communicate with young people, ensuring the activities and instructions are framed appropriately and to the correct level. Within my example, this was part of the process prior to the workshop, giving Jane a frame to develop a workshop that was suitable for the young people, group size and objectives.

Chelsea is passing on these skills as a facilitator to technical staff, who are passing their skills and knowledge onto young people. She is mediating a skill share within the theatre space. The technical staff are therefore learners as much as the young people within this project. Chelsea, however, also suggests that she required/acquired an understanding of the production team's practices to facilitate this skill share, 'I had to learn about working in the round. I'd obviously watched things in the round but didn't know about how unique things like sound and lighting were to the space. I had to learn that'. Chelsea suggests that 'learning' the space was critical to her skillset when she started working at the Exchange, an in-the-round theatre, for the first time. Similarly, at the Coliseum, the learning team regularly work with the production team to develop closer understandings of their practices. This has included more formal training set up between the departments, where the production team have led a workshop with the learning team focused around

lighting and set design and in more informal contexts. For example, in workshops with young people or in 'white card' meetings, the learning team has been present in the production team's discussion of a set design. Through these experiences, practitioners working at the Coliseum, like Chelsea, absorb and then are able to relay 'expert' knowledge, specific to the theatre making practices of the space, to young people.

The practices described illustrate the ways in which the theatre building locates and mediates a social and educational exchange with and between young people. The practitioners all draw in some way on the collective knowledge and practices of production inherent in the theatre building, as a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Within each theatre context, the learning is situated and reflective of a set of practices, specific to the theatres' spatial, material and social systems of knowledge. As Wenger notes, 'these practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time' (1998: 45). The building and the structures of knowledge within the building, frame and contain the activities and meanings produced by the practitioners with and between young people. At the Coliseum, education activities are delivered in situ, where young people learn alongside/within the professional team's 'community of practice'. The theatre's proscenium arch configuration directly informs both the delivery of the activities and the young people's experiences of learning about theatre making within this context. At the Exchange, Chelsea mediates a skill share between the technical department, who learn how to work with young people, the learning department, who 'learn' the space and the technician's practices and the young people who instigate and draw from both of these skill shares. They are engaged in 'joint activities and discussions, [they] help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other' (Wenger, 2007). For Chris, the work of the YEP replicates a professional company's model of production. He is drawing on the collective practices of the various YEP strands that mirror departmental areas in the theatre, to facilitate young people's producing of a production in the theatre building. The studio space at the Everyman facilitates in itself, a 'community

of practice', where the young company 'gather, meet, interact, work'. The YEP's dedicated space, has provided young people with the autonomy to actually guide and define this system of knowledge.

This articulation of the theatre building as a learning context, resonates with theatre scholar Mick Wallis' understandings of the theatre building as a 'place of communal figuring and thought', and a 'machinic entity' (2014: 5). Thinking of the theatre as a machine, a community of practice, evokes themes of labour and the local that have been prevalent throughout this thesis. The theatre building, as a site of production, draws the skill and labour of individuals together through the collective practice of theatre making. Wallis goes on to describe the theatre building as a place where both construction and reflection exists:

Theatrical play is both part of and distinct from everyday life, theatre has a peculiarly doubled or enfolded position as being both part of the human-crafted environment and a means to reflect on and reveal what humanity has crafted (2014: 5).

The notion of the theatre building as both a 'human crafted environment' and site for reflection, evokes the sense of 'doubleness', that has been prominent in the young people's experiences of learning throughout this thesis, through their engagement with the theatre's practices, spaces and objects, and as spectators. The examples presented within this section support and further this idea. The theatre building and the practices of theatre making engage young people in a 'human-crafted environment', whilst providing a setting and a means to 'reflect on and reveal what humanity has created' (Wallis, 2014: 5). Each practitioner is cultivating young people's engagement with the theatre as a site of production, and in doing so, giving them access to real work/life social scenarios. The practices provide a context for young people to see and experience a place imagined and transformed or an idea come to fruition through the practices of theatre making. At the same time, they are experiencing human connection, collaboration, negotiating ideas and forms within and through constructing this 'world'. They are engaged in 'communal

figuring' (Wallis, 2014: 5). Although these practices differ in methodological terms to the pedagogies and intentions of applied theatre and TIE, as socially engaged practice, the meanings facilitated within and through this context, arguably 'addresses something beyond the form itself' (Ackroyd, 2000: 1). They evoke, 'a common sense of identity' (Wenger et al., 2002).

Within this section, I have established some of the ways regional theatre practitioners cultivate and mediate relationships between the theatre building, its staff and young people, as part of a social and spatial interplay. I aimed to reinstate the educational potential of the theatre building in co-producing meanings and experiences within this process. With the intention of repositioning the role of the regional theatre practitioner, I have illustrated some of the ways these practitioners work to liberate the theatre space for young people. They work to foster relationships with and between young people through their engagement with the building and its practices as a site of production, whilst fostering their relationships to theatre staff and the building, as a place. In addition to this internal managing of social relations, practitioners work externally to foster partnerships to enable young people, who perhaps otherwise, would not access theatre, the opportunity to engage with the space. This mapping as a practice requires an understanding of a youth and community landscape and the ability to develop a network of partners to support the work. Within the next section, I look outwards and reflect on my work specifically in its external context. Through these reflections, I aim to further and deepen understandings of the role of regional theatre practitioners in relation to place, exploring how geography and locale inform the interplay between the theatre building and its community.

Mapping Local Networks

In the previous section, I explored the skills and approaches of regional theatre practitioners in creatively responding to the theatre building, to facilitate connections with and between young people, staff and the theatre building. I argued that within each setting, the theatre building, as a unique 'community of practice', locates and mediates a particular kind of

educational, artistic and social exchange (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Within this section, I return my focus to the Coliseum to explore how the theatre's geography, my external context, informs the development of the theatre's work with young people. I reflect on the ways that I have responded and adapted to changes affecting Oldham, further highlighting how 'local specificities' inform the development of the work (Knowles, 2004: 19). To establish the ways in which geography informs my role, in the first instance, I describe and unpick the history of the learning department's work with young people and how it has evolved since 2010, alongside shifts in Oldham's geographic, political and social landscape. Using an image of a closed-down centre in Oldham, I reflect on the breakdown of a web of partnerships that followed cuts to funding and subsequent changes to facilities and staff within one of the Coliseum's outreach bases. The shift collapsed years' worth of work that had gone into developing links with the partner organisation and the young people that accessed their service.

I explore how the learning department refocused their practices following this closure, which led to the development of the education partnership scheme. I reflect on the partnerships that the department has since developed with local schools and some of the tensions around working within formal education settings. Debbie shares her insight into these themes from a teacher's perspective. Using photographs taken of the Coliseum's work with her students, she reflects on the moments captured in practice. The photographs illustrate, how, work delivered both within the theatre building and the classroom, shapes the building and bridging of relationships with young people. I explore my role, alongside Debbie, in introducing young people to the theatre to describe the mutual and necessary role of teachers and learning departments in cultivating young people's relationships to theatre buildings. I begin with a short history of the learning department's work in Oldham to illustrate how I have negotiated shifts in my internal and external context, and the systematic pressures that derive from working for a cultural institution.



Figure 26: Barnardo's Asha Project in Coldhurst, Oldham

The photograph depicts the closed-down Barnado's Asha Project where I delivered many community projects up until 2013. The photograph takes me back to the times that I visited the centre and worked with children, young people and families on a range of projects. It reflects the poverty of the area and the collapse of a large area of my work. The centre, located in Coldhurst, is a mile away from the Coliseum, located on a main street running through Oldham. According to Oldham Council's (2016) ward profile, Coldhurst is 'Oldham's most deprived ward':

[D]ensely populated, diverse, with a high proportion of residents of Bangladeshi origin (60.2%). Median household income is low (£17,335), and there is a higher dependency on out-of-work benefits (21.1%) which is the highest in Oldham. Levels of employment are low (39.6%), and a high proportion of those employed are employed part-time. Coldhurst's housing stock has the largest proportion of socially rented properties (46.4%) and a growing number of private rented properties (11.6%). Large proportions of households are receiving Council Tax Reduction and/or Housing Benefit (56.1%), have pre-pay energy meters (35%), are in Fuel Poverty (15.8%). (Ward Profile produced by Oldham Council's Business Intelligence Service, 2016).

These statistics provide some context for the work of Barnado's Asha Project, whose primary aim was to support families. When I began working at the Coliseum in 2010, the partnership with Barnado's was already established and much work had been delivered with families from the area. My role initially was to maintain this partnership, building on the relationship with the organisation whilst developing my own identity with staff at the centre and the groups who met there. Over several years, I got to know this community and the staff from Barnado's, who also worked closely with Robin Hill Youth Centre. Youth work in Oldham originally operated through a network of youth centres located across the borough, and with local grants, there was funding more readily available to deliver community-based projects. However, in 2012, the youth service was restructured and centralised following substantial government cuts to youth provision. As

outlined by sociologist, Will Mason, in 'Austerity Youth Policy: Exploring the distinctions between youth work in principle and youth work in practice':

On the 1st February 2010 the Cabinet Office and the Department for Education published the Coalition Government's *Positive for Youth* policy paper (CO and DfE, 2010). This paper brought together all of the government's policies for young people aged 13-19. In particular, the policies outlined within *Positive for Youth* set out a new partnership approach for giving young people more opportunities and better support ... with voluntary and community groups and local businesses drawn in as full partners' (CO and DfE in Mason, 2015: 58).

Mason notes that the policy with its 'new partnership approach' signalled the Coalition Government's economic withdrawal, placing more emphasis on the support of businesses and volunteers to support the implementation of youth provision (2015: 58). Davies recognised that by 'mid – 2011, the average budget cut to education-based youth services was 28%, with some authorities cutting by 70, 80 and even 100%' (in Mason, 2015: 58). Oldham's youth network collapsed and many of the Coliseum's key partners, the youth theatre managers, were made redundant. The Youth Zone, *Mahdlo*, was built in the Town Centre with subsidy from major funder, Onside. However, for the learning department at the Coliseum, this led to a breakdown in the network of community partners working in specific pockets of the town, including links with young people at Robin Hill Youth Centre. At around the same time, Barnado's Asha Project lost its funding and the centre was closed. The breakdown of this network in Coldhurst limited the opportunities available to deliver community work, with no centres or contacts to draw upon to engage local young people, children and families. The network not only provided spaces within this community to deliver provision but specialist knowledge, relationships and understandings of Coldhurst, as a place.

Although on a personal level, I felt committed to continuing work in Coldhurst, it is important to point out the systematic pressures of my role and

the expectations around meeting engagement 'targets'. The theatre receives subsidy from Arts Council England to fulfil a set of goals, which include engaging children and young people from diverse backgrounds. However, these issues are complex, and as previously noted, highly situated – even in individual pockets of a town. Many areas of Oldham including Coldhurst, are both deprived and culturally diverse, and the cultural assumptions around engaging with theatre, particularly within some of these Muslim communities needs careful consideration. As Nicholson observes, drawing on gift theory to question the ethics and motives of applied theatre practice:

What do we as practitioners expect in return for our labours? Artistic satisfaction? The participants' acquisition of skills or abilities? Do we ask participants to adopt new ways of thinking or different political values? Do we expect them to change their behaviour in particular ways? (2005: 161).

There are fractures between my personal commitment to the work, the sustainability of the theatre and the necessity to develop new audiences, the cultural assumptions around representation within Islamic culture that are values shared by some of Oldham's Muslim communities, and how communities themselves are 'engaged' in our assumed value systems of the work.

The activities delivered in Coldhurst were largely co-designed by the participants and the centre. The partnership was critical in that the community trusted the centre as an organisation and physical space, and the work developed was in response to their interests and needs. For example, as requested by residents, we often delivered programmes for families in the school holidays. With little disposable income, the programmes were useful in providing family-friendly activities on the doorstep in Coldhurst that engaged children and young people when they were off school. However, as centres closed, holes in provision emerged and pots of funding dried up, the Coliseum retreated to other organisations and potential partners left in the community, working with children and young people. In addition to social

housing providers, who also make up a significant proportion of the Coliseum's partnerships, we turned to local drama teachers operating in the areas where we had previously delivered community work to start a new dialogue. Redirecting our focus towards schools as a contingency to work with these children and young people, takes away some of the autonomy that residents in Coldhurst had on how, where and when they engaged with the theatre.

This illustrates some of the politics and tensions inherent in the practices of learning departments in subsidised regional theatres. Conversely, however, although this may be because I have worked at the Coliseum for nearly ten years and am connected to certain communities on a grass roots level, I have since noticed a marked shift in my role on a pastoral basis, as a result of austerity. I am often asked to help with visa and job applications and come into direct and regular contact with issues around housing, job seekers' allowance and safeguarding. Although as Ball notes, 'theatres themselves are not education organisations or social services departments', these issues are reflective of the socio-economic context of the theatre, nearly a decade of austerity and cuts to welfare spending (2013: 157). As political scientist Mark Blyth notes, 'few of us were invited to the party but we are all being asked to pay the bill' (2013: 13). Therefore, in a sense, my social role has heightened. I am the contingent in assisting in challenges faced by the community, either because the circumstances of the people we work with have worsened and/or they are finding fewer services to turn to.

Although the education partnership scheme, developed with teachers, conditions how young people engage with the theatre, working with mainstream and non-mainstream schools provides access to theatre for a broader range of young people, than was otherwise possible following the collapse of the youth provision. The model provides access to cultural activities, free of charge, and is delivered within school time. The key aim of the scheme from inception was to build an identity amongst local students, to enhance their engagement with the theatre and in doing so, solidify our relationships with teachers and schools. The shift that emerged through the

scheme, working within formal education settings, presented a new way of working for the Coliseum, and as a practitioner, I had to adapt my creative practice and ways of working. As explored in the previous section, delivering activities in the theatre building requires negotiating the theatre space, its patterns of work and activities. Similarly, working in long term partnerships with schools requires understandings of frameworks and structures of formal education and the teachers' role in fulfilling their curriculum objectives. The image below unpicks some of these themes from teacher, Debbie's perspective.

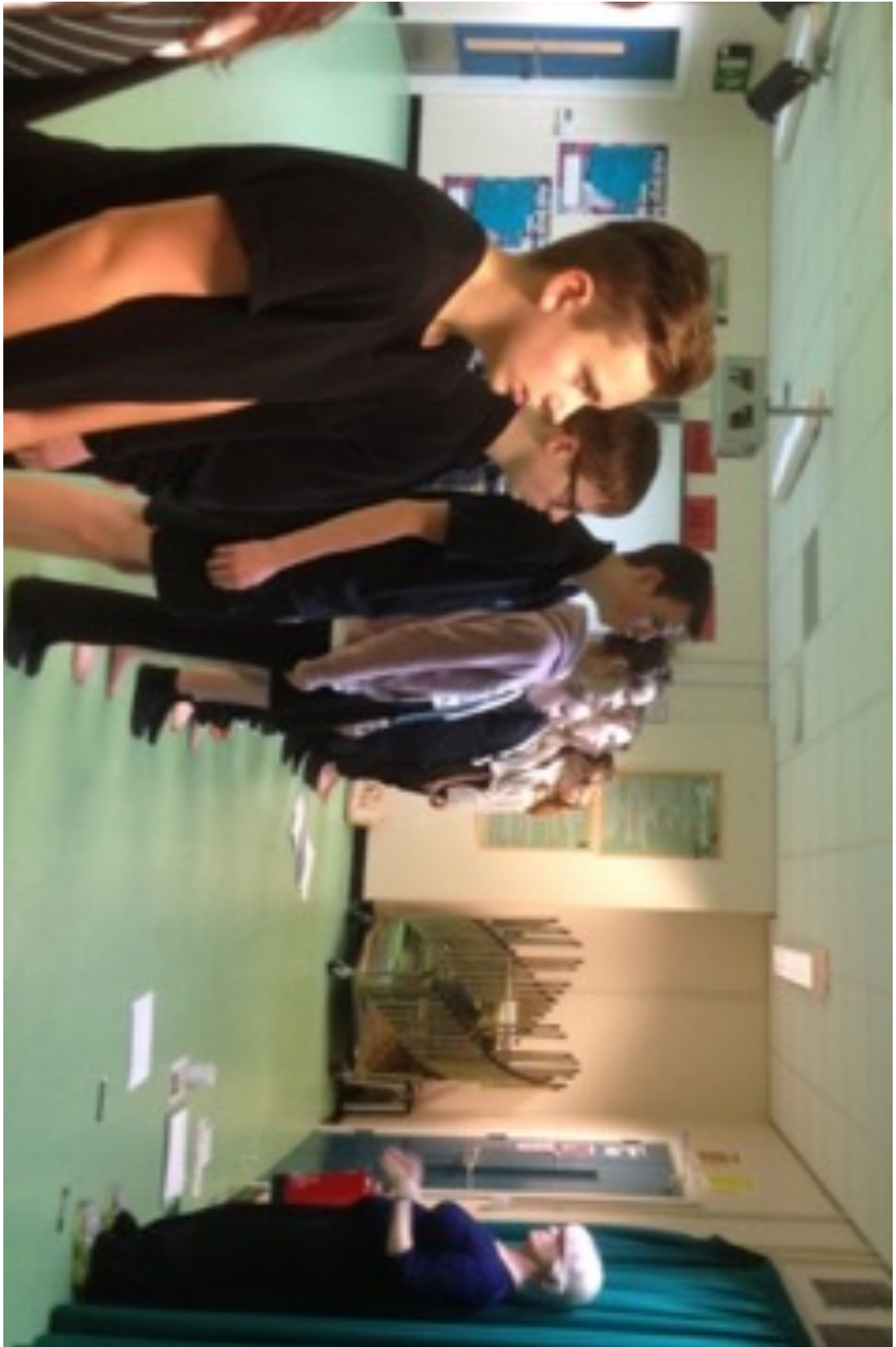


Figure 27: Debbie with students in her classroom (Photograph by author, Jan 2015)

- Debbie: This was for 'The Dark Night'. I remember they stood in a line and we did choral speaking with them. It was, 'the fire it burns, it burns the walls, the walls in flames, the flames they burn'
- Carly: I remember those lines like the back of my hand!
- Debbie: Me too! In that process, we trained the pupils to understand how to build up the tension of something vocally. It started off as a stage whisper and was accumulative, it got louder and louder.
- Carly: The way you describe the process Debbie, is how it feels working with you. It's always really collaborative when we're together in the classroom.
- Debbie: I feel supported and I think that's helped me develop my practice. It's challenged me to do more things. I feel like we're equals. That's really important. It makes me feel more confident.
- Carly: What do you think it is that makes you feel supported; is the way we work together?
- Debbie: Yes, I mean I've had other people come in from outside, but sometimes they're a bit, kind of hoity toity, if you know what I mean? It's nice when it's easy. Mutually working towards the same thing.

The image captures Debbie and her students in her drama room at school, rehearsing for the 2015 inter-school performance, *The Dark Night*, which would play at the theatre a month later. The group was given a skeleton script, a sketch of a play, to flesh out and devise around, that linked to the Coliseum's main stage performance, *The Mist in the Mirror*. Adapted by Ian Kershaw from the novel by Susan Hill, writer of *The Woman in Black*, *The Mist in the Mirror* was a new gothic 'fireside' story. The inter-school performance comprised of a collection of ghost stories, each performed on stage by participating school groups with *The Mist in the Mirror* set used as a backdrop. As Debbie notes, the image captures the moment when the students were rehearsing a piece of choral speaking. The students initially

began chanting the lines forcefully in unison, before we experimented varying tone, volume and intonation. Debbie notes how 'we did choral speaking with them', suggesting a sense of co-delivery, where there was no definitive 'lead' within the session.

The content and form of the session Debbie describes is firstly significant to what follows as it plays an important role in stimulating a collaborative context. Each year, partner schools are invited to create a performance for the Coliseum's main stage. The learning department employs a writer to create a series of skeleton scripts in response to a Coliseum main stage production. The skeleton script thematically links to the main stage production and presents the school group with a narrative arc, which links to other school groups' pieces. The script includes suggested dialogue and starters for devised sections, such as 'the house has been a victim of a fire ... we hear the voices of those who used to live here'. The writer's prompts provide room for exploration, discussion and devising, and practically enable teachers to tailor the piece to suit their cast breakdown and class' needs. Writer Rob Johnston allows space in the scripts for teachers, visiting practitioners and students to devise and explore the world they are creating together, whilst giving enough structure and direction to link the schools' pieces together coherently.

This process gives the teacher and students creative agency. When working with Debbie, as with other drama teachers from the partnership scheme, the process is collaborative. It involves both Debbie and I dipping in and out of leading and steering exercises, using suggestions from the students. I was standing at the side of the classroom when I took the photograph, which is reflective of my position within this context as researcher and as practitioner within the education partnership scheme as a whole. As illustrated through the previous sections, although a proportion of my practice involves delivering drama and theatre workshops, much of my work involves supporting other members of staff in their delivery, and the teachers. Debbie describes the importance of this co-facilitation, 'I feel like we're equals. It makes me feel more confident'. This suggests that the process in the room is

shared, as opposed to a practitioner entering the space as an outsider with a separate agenda to the teacher. Debbie alludes to this when she describes how she has worked with other practitioners, 'it's nice when it's easy. Mutually working towards the same thing'. As drama and education scholars Pamela Howell and Brian S. Heap note in their mapping of teachers' practices in process drama:

The perceived separation of the artist from the teacher ... can sometimes be encouraged by artists in schools' projects. We sense a dangerous precedent here. It becomes all too easy for two erroneous assumptions to be made, namely that teachers cannot be considered to be artists in their own right, while artists on the other hand can be accorded the status of teacher (2005: 58).

Adopting this 'expert' role can undermine the creativity of the teacher. Particularly when working with drama teachers, there is a danger of practitioners from professional settings undermining the teachers' own skill and practice. Through co-delivery, where the teacher and practitioner work together towards the same agenda, the teacher is empowered to share the creative process with the students, which as Debbie describes, makes her 'feel more confident'. Establishing this collaborative dynamic has taken time to master over the course of the scheme. It derives from getting to know the teachers as individuals and as practitioners. I know the way Debbie works as a teacher in managing her classroom and as a practitioner - she has a dance background and creates work where the physical drives the narrative. With this knowledge as a co-facilitator, I am able to step in and out of the delivery, allowing Debbie and the students autonomy of the work. Much like my role working with Jane, described in the previous section, this method of co-delivery values Debbie's artistry and supports her relationship with the students in the creative process.

The photograph below was taken by a colleague and is a mirror image of the scene in Debbie's classroom. It illustrates how the practice operates across sites, bridging the classroom with the context of a professional theatre. The

students are stood onstage whilst Debbie, stage technician, Kev, and I watch their rehearsal from the front row of the auditorium. Within this instance, the authority shifts to Kev, who is running the rehearsal. The young people are expected to follow his instructions within this context, working within the structures of the theatre's 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, I had initially developed a relationship with Debbie and her students in the classroom, within their space. Debbie indicates that the young people's connectivity to the theatre building has developed through this bridging and building of relationships. In this sense, my role is in working 'in-between' contexts, facilitating a kind of spatial and social exchange with the young people.



Figure 28: Debbie and students rehearsing for *The Dark Night* at the Coliseum (Feb, 2015)

- Debbie: It was an absolutely brilliant day. More than anything, by the end of that day, I'd really bonded with those kids. It was out of school in a professional context and we had to rise to it, together. It was challenging but rehearsing in that environment was a really good experience.
- Carly: Do you think that built up any connections between the students and the theatre?
- Debbie: Following that, I've had no problems getting these students to the theatre. With kids who haven't had the same experience, I struggle. So yes, that definitely gives them some motivation for coming back.
- Carly: Why do you think that is?
- Debbie: They've performed there. They've worked there. They know you and it kind of makes them feel important I think. They feel connected to it.
- Carly: What for you makes a relationship with the theatre work?
- Debbie: It works because it's close and consistent. It's in their grasp. Either because it's local and they see local people doing it or because going isn't out of the ordinary.

Debbie notes, 'they've performed there. They've worked there. They know you'. Debbie suggests that building contact with the young people, over a period of time, both within the classroom and the theatre, has had a positive influence on their perceptions of the theatre building, 'I've had no trouble getting these students to the theatre'. This suggests that the learning department enhances the 'conditions of reception', in introducing young people to the space (Knowles, 2014). Debbie suggests that the engagement has given the young people confidence and motivation to come back to the theatre as audience members, 'it kind of makes them feel important I think. They feel connected to it'. In addition to the role of practitioners working in the learning department in mediating these connections, Debbie is playing an equal role on behalf of the school. Debbie encourages young people to traverse 'the familiar and unfamiliar' and 'comfortable and uncomfortable'

(Knowles, 2004: 80). Madonna Stinson and Bruce Burton in their study into 'The Impact of teachers on young people's engagement with theatre' in Australia note how the teacher's role in engaging young people is threefold, 'as model, as mentor, and as guide' (2016: 68):

Drama and/or English teachers operated as both caregivers and gatekeepers for these students, extending young people's cultural awareness by facilitating their participation in the performance event and supporting their responses as audience members ... Through modelling their own enthusiasm for playwrights, artists, and companies, these teachers stimulated their students' positive anticipation for performance events (2016: 70).

The drama teachers' role is critical in supporting these introductions to the theatre. Their role is increasingly important in providing young people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds with these experiences, where there are fewer resources for youth and community provision outside of school, as explored above. However, drama teachers' roles and their part in facilitating partnerships with theatres, is also in jeopardy. Because of changes to education measures within British schools, also introduced by the Coalition government in 2010, responsible for the collapse of youth services, drama and other arts subjects, between 2010 and 2019, were progressively being dropped from the curriculum by many schools. As Lesley Burgess and David Gee explain in their teachers' companion to art and design:

The Ebacc [The English Baccalaureate], a performance measure, is used to identify the ranking of a school in the school performance tables; it is also taken into account by many parents when selecting schools. Used by Ofsted [the UK Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills], it shows where students have secured a C grade or above across a core of academic subjects at KS4 [exam and school age 15-16]. The Ebacc is made up of English, Mathematics, Humanities (History or Geography), the Sciences and a language ... The introduction of the Ebacc has led to schools

prioritising these subjects over others and putting their resources and funds towards them. The impact on the option choices at the end of KS3 [school age 14-15] has been significant ... with subjects not included in the Ebacc being reduced or removed (2015: 72-73).

Between 2013 and 2019, five out of sixteen teachers engaged in the Coliseum's education partnership scheme left their posts, due to the implementation of the EBacc and the subsequent collapse or narrowing of Drama and other related Arts subjects from their schools' curriculums. The emergence of the Ebacc has highlighted the need for enhanced support for drama teachers who are still in post. Within a supportive/responsive role, the learning department has forged close working relationships and friendships with teachers. Debbie notes that she 'feels supported'. Trevor, a teacher from a Rochdale based school echoes this, 'it's the support that you feel. It can be quite isolating as a drama teacher in this educational climate and it makes you feel like, *we're in this together*'. Previously there were two drama teachers at Trevor's school but his colleague, whom we also had a strong relationship with, took voluntary redundancy following the school's decision to downsize the department. Both Debbie and Trevor are the only drama teachers in their schools and the partnership perhaps gives them, as Trevor suggests, an ally. However, there is a danger that this mechanism for engaging children and young people through their schools, will break down altogether because of the Ebacc.

This challenge is troubling and evocative of the themes explored in chapter 1, highlighting the complex and contradictory ways in which governmental policy continues to shift and inform arts engagement. On the one hand, the arts are marginalised in education, and on the other, funding bodies demand 'excellence', sustainability and diversity. As critic Matt Trueman notes, writing in *The Stage* in 2018, 'austerity has left theatres in an impossible, contradictory position' (Trueman, 2018). I have found traversing these issues difficult to manage, which brings me back to chapter 2 and my search for what the theatre building means to young people in Oldham. Through negotiating these tensions, the learning department and local teachers have

devised and refined a model that as far as it can, supports its own local ecology of arts education and engagement. As Debbie describes, it functions as it is 'close and consistent. Either because it's local and they see local people doing it or because going isn't out of the ordinary'. Despite the challenges, this localised, ongoing model of theatre education and engagement symbolises the roots and relationships of a regional theatre in its community. As Sennett notes:

Our modern economy privileges pure profit, momentary transactions and rapid fluidity. Part of craft's anchoring role is that it helps to objectify experience and also to slow down labor. It is not about quick transactions or easy victories. That slow tempo of craftwork, of taking the time you need to do something well, is profoundly stabilising to individuals (Sennett, in American Craft Council Online, 2009).

These practices stretch beyond educational outcomes, ticket sales and 'quick transactions' and instead reflect the careful crafting of relationships that are afforded through working with young people over a period of time. The theatre building can provide a local, 'anchoring role' that is 'stabilising' to young people.

This chapter has drawn together themes of craft, education and community that have underpinned this thesis, demonstrating the ways in which practitioners working in learning departments, cultivate relationships to theatre buildings in a highly situated way. The theatre building as a site of production provides a stimulus to the practitioners' work. It fosters a 'community of practice', evocative of craft and the local, and provides a setting for 'communal figuring' with and between young people (Wallis, 2014: 5). Unlike TIE actor-teachers and applied theatre practitioners, the practitioners explored here, draw on the theatre building as part of their creative practice. However, the design and delivery of the programmes in their respective settings are in response to the distinct models of production inherent within each setting, informed by the architecture of the building and

its stage configuration, as opposed to necessarily the artistic work of the organisation.

In addition to exploring the methods and approaches for engaging young people in the theatre building, this chapter has illustrated a range of both internal and external factors that shape practitioners' work. I have drawn on my own experiences of working in the learning department at the Coliseum to explore the ways in which geography and community inform the design and delivery of the programmes. I have aimed to highlight some of the systematic pressures of working on behalf of a theatre institution, and the way in which I have attempted to navigate some of these tensions. A critical part of the Coliseum's work is building and maintaining its partnerships with local teachers and community and social housing providers. With these contacts, we are able to facilitate a web of support for enhancing access to the arts, where many services have collapsed, and resources are fewer. Particularly for some of the young people engaged in this research project, their relationship to the theatre has been cultivated because of these partnerships and the commitment of their teachers in supporting these links.

Conclusion

This thesis has provided new perspectives into the experiences of young people engaged in a series of learning practices with their local theatre. As I initially laid out in my historiography in chapter 1, exploring the developments in the education practices delivered by regional theatres, there has existed a sub-narrative of practices connected to the theatre building, which has been marginalised in theatre education and related applied theatre research. This thesis contributes critical insights to this area of theatre education, detailing and rehabilitating the theatre building itself as a focus and location for engagement and the development of civic identity amongst young people. In chapter 1, I presented an analysis of a series of shifts in the education provision delivered by regional theatres from 1958 – 2008, and illustrated how, in many ways, the educational focus of the practices has returned to their pre-TIE state. With heightened commitment to ensuring that the theatre is accessible to young people from all social backgrounds, values inherited from the TIE actor-teachers, regional theatres are now more prominently aligning their education practices with the theatre building. Although research exploring the participatory practices of regional theatres is emerging, few existing studies draw on empirical work with young people to explore their experiences of this engagement. Furthermore, much of the existing research focuses on the practices of a few institutions, notably the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry. This thesis has provided a detailed account and analysis of young people's experiences of engaging in a model of schools' provision at Oldham Coliseum Theatre – an institution with a comparable history in a location with a distinct socio-historical context.

In chapter 2, I explored the young people's initial perceptions and experiences of engaging with the theatre building through the Coliseum's education partnership scheme. The young people captured and described their journeys to the theatre, images of the theatre's geography and the theatre building itself. Through this, I highlighted the complex barriers surrounding young people's engagement to theatre buildings, notably in

Oldham, this included the location of the theatre building which the young people associated with a night-time culture. The chapter then explored the young people's interpretations of the theatre's public spaces, including front of house, bar areas and the auditorium. The young people were interested in the theatre's history and its identity as a communal space and place in Oldham, drawing on traces of the past within the building to interpret and describe the social significance of the theatre. I argued that the theatre's history and the material culture of the theatre building, acted as a mechanism for their feelings of connectivity and belonging within the theatre space. The chapter, and thesis broadly, builds on applied theatre theory and practice by challenging the opposition that is often presented between audience development and theatre education. I have theorised audience development in a way that describes young people's engagement to a theatre building as part of an ongoing, local, education practice.

I drew on theories of narrativity to describe the 'storyness' of the theatre space and the way in which it evokes a sense of the local. I further reflected on my own practice in cultivating young people's relationships to the theatre building in chapter 5, interrogating the implicit values systems attached to the notion of a theatre 'reaching out' to a community. The work of the scheme and the Coliseum's broader participatory programmes aim to address inequalities around access and engagement, inviting young people to share in contributing and experiencing the theatre, as a place, and a space for learning. However, as noted in chapter 5, there is more work to be done in Oldham to make the theatre building reflective of its wider community. A personal endeavour of mine, following this PhD, will be to explore and cross-analyse the ways other groups understand their relationship to the theatre building through empirical research.

Reflecting on the wider field of theatre studies, this thesis has argued that practices that focus on learning through a technical prism have been overlooked in theatre education research. Drama and theatre education research has tended to focus on the social and artistic efficacy of ensemble

based, dramatic approaches to learning, drawn from the practices of actors and directors, at the expense of technical roles like the stage manager, costume maker or lighting technician. This thesis has contributed to redressing this imbalance, providing new perspectives on the potential of learning through craft and technical theatre practices. The young people's photographs and reflections uncover the hidden labour and artistry inherent in the theatre building, giving focus to the theatre's workers, tools and objects. Evocative of Ford Madox Brown's painting, *Work*, the young people dispense of the hierarchies often presented in theatre and instead capture and curate their engagement with theatre as an environment and set of industrial practices. I presented an argument for the social significance and 'being with', afforded through working alongside technicians, in a similar way as they learn in the industry. I drew synergies between these themes and those explored in chapter 2, detailing the significance of the local, and argued that theatre buildings offer a unique environment for both constructing and reflecting on the world we live in. Richard Sennett's (2008, 2012) theoretical articulations of craft and Hunt and Melrose's (2014) articulations of the work of theatre technicians have been vital in articulating the young people's learning.

I further drew on these sources in chapter 4, exploring the young people's experiences of learning about the entirety of the theatre making process, from design, construction and rehearsal, to a production opening to an audience. The chapter developed new perspectives into young people's understandings of the mental and manual skills and processes involved in both technical theatre practice and performance, extending the theme of craft covered in the thesis across discipline areas. Learning of this dynamism between mental and manual processes is not something that is usually associated with theatre and drama education. However, the chapter established that seeing the process of professional practice unfold, helps young people to understand the skills, collaboration and work involved in theatre making. I argued that the learning offered a model for them to analyse, evaluate and improve their own practices as theatre makers.

I then mapped these themes onto the theatre event, to develop understandings of how this learning informed the young people's critical skills as audience members. I argued, in line with Matthew Reason that the young people's engagement with the theatre's material and technical practices supported their engagement with the fictional narrative of the play. Taken together, chapters 3 and 4 illustrated the potential of craft in offering an overarching critical framework for theatre education. I argue that this articulation of theatre education erodes binaries between the artistic and the technical, providing a model for learning that better encompasses theatre as a communicative and collaborative form. I believe there is further scope to explore young people's experiences of learning through technical and craft-based theatre practices. With very little research into this area of theatre education, there is space to develop critical discourse and a dialogue around this aspect of learning which may better align these theatre education forms with applied theatre research and practice.

The young people's captivation with the theatre's objects, evident throughout this thesis, suggests that there are also rich and diverse opportunities for exploring this area of theatre practice with young people. Within each chapter, the young people have drawn on the agency of the theatre's objects, from the theatre building itself, to seat plaques, tools, costumes and props. I have drawn on recent work in theatre studies into strands of new materialism and have offered a mapping of craft in theatre education within my working context. However, I believe there is more scope for this area of study, particularly in the ways the young people often situate their experiences and interpretations in a liminal space between the material and the imagined. This was particularly evident in Paris and Riyadur's articulations of props in chapter 3, and Olwen and Jacks' engagement with the *Gaslight* set in chapter 4. There is further room to explore the register that young people adopt in these instances, oscillating between their engagement with the material/real and the fictional/imagined. How can the material unlock the imagined in theatre education and equally how can the

imagined unlock material explorations? What is happening in this space in-between?

Chapter 5 illustrated the situated nature of the regional theatre practitioners' role in developing and delivering learning and participatory activities with young people. I drew on interviews with teachers and other working practitioners in regional theatres to illustrate the ways in which this activity is designed in response to a theatre building, its practices, architecture and its geography. These internal and external factors highlight the responsiveness of practitioners in mapping and navigating their local context and the ways in which they draw on the theatre building as a community of practice. I utilised Lave and Wenger's (1991) articulations of communities of practice to describe the position of the learning provision in each theatre building. There have been few critical studies exploring the role and function of practitioners working within regional theatres and the chapter, thus, provides new understandings into the ways in which these practitioners design and deliver their work. The chapter also highlighted the mutual and necessary role of teachers and schools in cultivating young people's engagement with theatre buildings. I initiated these discussions in chapter 2, drawing attention to the fact that 5 out of the 8 young people engaged in this study, were introduced to theatre through their school. I deepened this exploration in chapter 5, highlighting the Ebacc and the marginalising of arts subjects as an area of concern. With fewer drama teachers in post, the opportunities for regional theatres to engage young people from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds through their schools is limited.

In order to understand the young people's experiences of engaging in these practices with the Coliseum, I followed a group of eight young people over a 4-year period. I was keen to understand the engagement in the young people's terms, rather than in terms of pre-determined educational outcomes or indeed practices of consumption i.e. ticket sales. To do this, I developed a novel methodology comprising of photo documentation and elicitation, where the young people captured and reflected on their experiences through

structured informal interviewing. I believe the method is a strength of this study and offers a potential framework for future researchers. Within the next section, I offer a series of reflections on using photography in research projects with young people. I cover areas such as training, analysis and the potential of using production photography to explore young people's experiences of spectatorship.

The method, however, has presented limitations. Due to ethical issues, I instructed the young people not to capture the faces of people who had not given consent for their image to be used in this study. Although the young people photographed the backs of their peers' heads and were inventive about how they captured these moments, largely there was an absence of their classmates in the data. The young people may have ascribed further meanings to the theatre building, as part of their class/schools' collective engagement with the theatre through the scheme. However, these themes did not emerge, possibly because of the restrictions of the method and my ethical framework. Future studies may wish to consider attaining the consent of a full class so that a diverse range of images of the young people can be included. In addition, the selection process of the images used for the study could be considered a limitation. Where there was a clear theme emerging across the young people's collections of images, I utilised the interview that best described or contrasted with the dominant view of the group. If I were to undertake a similar study again, I would perhaps engage fewer young people as research participants and include their images more consistently throughout the study. However, there was not the space to include all of the young people's images throughout the thesis.

Photography has unlocked areas of the young people's experiences that I believe would not have been possible through another approach. The young people's photographs have uncovered areas of the theatre building and their experiences of engaging with these spaces and practices in a particularly enriching way. For example, in chapter 4 in particular, Olwen uses a photograph to reflect on her own practices. This suggests that the method

became part of the pedagogy rather than just research method. Therefore, their images have illuminated both areas of their own practice and theatre practice within the theatre building that are often concealed or go unnoticed. Essin argues that ‘the photographer/filmmaker who takes a camera backstage has the potential to not just represent, but *aestheticize* backstage labor, asking a viewer to consider the beauty and worth of a subject previously deemed insignificant or undeserving of attention’ (2011: 35). This view of the photographer backstage is particularly pertinent to the context of this study. Although the young people accorded relevance to backstage labour, perhaps often ‘deemed insignificant’, their interpretations value ‘how things work’ and the craft of this labour. The view of aestheticizing technical practice, and indeed theorising this practice in academic writing, is somewhat troubling. This study has drawn on the imaginative and social qualities of technical and craft-based practice. However, it has largely aimed to resist the dichotomy between the technical and the artistic, articulating the practices as productive of meaning in their own right. As described above, I believe there is further space to develop and nuance language around technical practice and creativity in education settings, developing a discourse that values the distinct qualities of these skills and practices whilst speaking to the binary between the technical and the artistic.

I delivered the longitudinal case study alongside my own reflective practice and collaborative work with teachers and practitioners working in other regional theatres. Although it fell outside of the scope of this research, my hope is that the study may inspire further research projects into young people’s experiences of engaging with regional theatres. This will provide grounds with which to compare and contrast the situated nature of young people’s engagement with theatre buildings. There is space for research that also pays greater attention to the geographical differences in regional theatres’ approaches and the ways in which practitioners navigate their specific geographies and settings. This theme emerged in contrasting Chris and Chelsea’s articulations of working in city-centre based regional theatres, with that of my own at the Coliseum, where I noticed a difference in their

conceptualisations of their engagement with their 'local' community. My hope is that this research study will inspire other practitioners to critically explore their engagement practices from inside/within theatre buildings. Therefore, I hope this thesis opens up a space for new critical dialogue around participatory practice in regional theatres that details the challenges and complexities of working within the frameworks of an institution.

Appendix 1. Using Photo Elicitation with Young People: Reflections on the method

When I began using photography and photo elicitation as methods for undertaking this thesis, I had not anticipated how much the visual would unlock the themes of the research or the study as a whole. My learning of the method evolved throughout the process and what emerged helped me practically, working through a material-based practice and in organising the project, and also methodologically, in conducting the interviews and analysing the data. I offer this section as a way of sharing my experiences and challenges and to open up possibilities for future study. This is not a step by step guide or an academic review of the method, rather an informal series of observations into what worked and what did not work that unfolded throughout the process of the study. I offer ten reflections for using the method with young participants, as a way of them documenting and reflecting on their experiences of taking part in a project.

1. Be clear on the reasons for using photography

My research focuses on young people's experiences of taking part in activities with/within a building-based theatre over a period of time. Therefore, I required a method of documenting these experiences that linked the young people back to these moments in situ; as a way of them reflecting on their experiences within the theatre building, as part of an evolving relationship.

Each photograph acted as a memory anchor for the participants as he or she recalled the moment and the affective context surrounding it' (Loeffler, 2005: 8).

To elaborate further on Loeffler's point - what emerged through my research is that place is important. You need something to 'anchor' a memory to. I believe the reason this method worked effectively for this study is because, to a degree, the practices I was exploring were site-specific. If, for example, you are asking young people to document and reflect on a project, where every workshop out of a series of ten workshops is in the same place/room

and with the same people, the young people may not be able to differentiate/distinguish the memory/moment (particularly, as in this case, where the young people were in school uniform). I found that the 'anchor' works effectively when it takes them back to a specific place, time and moment. In instances where I was working in the classroom, young people often struggled to differentiate the photographs as vividly as when at the theatre in diverse contexts.

2. Consider your schedule

As described above, photography is a tool for young people to record and reflect on their experiences. It enables the young people to recall a memory and an experience. However, in year 1 of the study, I originally scheduled the interviews at the end of the academic year (approx. 9 months after the project began). Photo elicitation relies on the interview stage and the participant contextualising the photograph and, therefore, until the interviews were complete I did not have the complete data set and was delayed in my analysis. I corrected this for year 2 of the study. Therefore, it is important to consider a schedule and timeline for the project, including when you are going to undertake analysis.

3. Consider your equipment

Whilst there were cameras available in the theatre that I used, these were outdated, and the picture quality was poor. This was frustrating for the young people and myself. For ethical, health and safety reasons etc., I could not let the young people use their phones. Therefore, where possible, use high quality equipment.

Practically, I labelled the three cameras, A – C (I had no more than 3 participants in each school) and noted which young person was using which camera at the start of a session. For example, Jack and Olwen were in the same class. When I went to visit them in school or they came to visit the theatre, I gave each of them a camera. I noted Olwen was using camera A and Jack, B. At the end of the session, I collected the cameras from them

and uploaded each set of images into a dated, data locked folder for each participant. At the end of each session, the batteries were charged, and the SD card cleared once the images were uploaded.

4. Deliver a training session with the research participants

I delivered a training session at the start of the research project with small groups of the young people. This proved key to the study as it helped them (and me) to understand how the research method was going to work in practice. I scheduled a 45-minute session with each group of young people, either within or before their drama lesson. Initially I talked them through how to use the cameras and then explained why I needed the data. I talked through the project and explained that they were documenting their experiences. I explained the issues around consent and, therefore, what images could be captured – views taken of people from behind, workshop resources and spaces as opposed to people's faces.

To deepen our exploration, I asked them to consider their journey to school and to describe 5 images that captured their journey. I asked the young people, 'how can you best document this experience? How are you feeling and what are you learning?' How can you tell a story through your images? Within their drama lesson, we then put this framing into practice. The young people captured images of resources, their class in action from different angles such as their feet and shots off their peers' hands and gestures. Their images as a result were thoughtful. In the first year, the young people took between 10 – 15 images each of any session, towards the end of the project, this lessened. This suggests they became more selective about the moments they wanted to capture.

5. Talk the whole class or group through the research project

Critically, the session described above allowed their classmates to get used to the idea of their new role as class photographer. Within the first few sessions, their classmates tried to get in on shots and take selfies. However,

within the first year, their classmates were overall quite considerate of their task.

6. Keep interview questions open ended and let the participants lead

The young people and I got better at discussing the images in the interviews together as the years went on. In year 1, not knowing the young people, my questions were too rigid and consequently the young people's responses often felt jarred. In year 2, having got to know the young people better, it was much more relaxed, and the young people felt free to discuss and talk about their experiences. I noticed that in year 2, they were excited to see their images. This was a real turning point as I realised this meant something to them, they had invested in this study and deserved the space and time to critically analyse and reflect on their experiences. The images began to lead the young people in the interviews and they began to lead me through their process. In year 3, this altered again, I felt as if the young people were more analytical about the practices themselves, and in year 4, I got a sense of their technical vocabulary for theatre practice evolving. There was a sense of their knowledge growing and unfolding and I largely left the young people to lead and operate the laptop from that point. I found that they lingered on certain images longer than I would have accorded relevance to, suggesting that something in the image had captured their attention. This is particularly evident in Olwen's articulations in chapter 4, in reflecting on her own experiences of rehearsals. She unlocked an element of her own practice through the method.

7. Look for visual themes

Rather than going straight to the interviews, to group the themes of the data for this study, I first looked at the images. The young people engaged in this study took part in similar activities throughout the year but at slightly different times. There were two clear themes that emerged through the young people's photographs, i.) The spaces in the theatre building where staff members were working, for example, making costumes, props etc. ii). The

props store in the basement. Within these instances, a clear visual theme emerged before I had listened to the interviews.

8. Read the images

It is easy to become too focused on the young people's interviews and contextualisation of the images and neglect the images themselves. Reengaging with the images enriched my analysis. The images were also telling a story and I began to better marry the young people's intentions in capturing the photograph, with their knowledge and experiences of working within the theatre building. For example, Tom accorded relevance to an image of the fly system. He was telling me how it operated but I had initially failed to describe this to the reader. The image and the interview work together. Therefore, let the images speak. What has the young person captured, at what moment and why?

9. Triangulate the data with teachers and group leaders to develop different perspectives

I interviewed two teachers engaged in the scheme as part of the study. Although not prominently included as an aspect of the study, I used photographs captured by the young people in photo elicitation interviews with the teachers. This provided an opportunity to triangulate the young people and teachers' experiences, with my understandings and intentions. This produced interesting insights into the synergies and sometimes contrasts between the adults' and young people's perceptions of what was happening. On occasion, the young people's articulations actually stretched the adults' expectations of their learning and understanding.

10. Consider what other sources of photography are available

Within chapter 4, I explored the young people's experiences of spectatorship. During a performance, the use of photography is generally prohibited, therefore, I used production photography captured by Joel C Fildes. Production photography in the theatre is usually taken at the dress rehearsal.

Although the young people did not take the photographs themselves, they were able to recall the various moments in the production that were captured in the images. I presented the young people with eight photographs and they guided me through each image, explaining what was happening, who the character was and, occasionally, how they felt. To my knowledge, production photography is not usually something that is widely used as a tool in educational contexts, apart from perhaps in education packs. I suggest this is an area for theatre educators and teachers to explore, in storyboarding or discussing a production retrospectively with young people.

Appendix 2. Information about the research participants and research timeline

The eight young people who were involved in this research project are:

- Riyadur, Paris, Tom, John, James and Farhana. The young people are from state funded, mixed gender, Oldham based schools with Academy status (independent from local authority control). The young people live between 1 and 5 miles to the Coliseum.
- Olwen and Jack are from a state funded, mixed gender, Rochdale based school with Academy status. The young people live approximately 10 miles from the Coliseum.

Timeline of Research Project:

Sept 2014 – Jul 2015 Students in Year 7 (aged 11-12 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are recruited - consent is attained from students, parents/carers and Head Teachers at the schools. - Students take part in a methods training session in school. - Students take part in at least 2 practical workshops at the theatre. - Workshops are also delivered in school. - First set of interviews undertaken.
Sept 2015 – Jul 2016 Students in Year 8 (aged 12 -13 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students take part in at least 2 practical workshops at the theatre. - Workshops are also delivered in school. - Second set of interviews undertaken.
Sept 2016 – Jul 2017 Students in Year 9 (aged 13 – 14 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students take part in at least 2 practical workshops at the theatre and visit the Coliseum to see at least 1 performance. - Workshops are also delivered in school. - Third set of interviews undertaken. - Farhana, John and James do not opt for Drama GCSE. They do not participate from 17/18.
Sept 2017 – July 2018 Students in Year 10 (aged 14 – 15 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students take part in at least 2 practical workshops at the theatre and visit to see a performance. - Workshops are also delivered in school. - Final set of interviews are undertaken. - Evaluation with teachers and young people.

Journal Article. The Exam Play: An approach to teaching Shakespeare through guided spectatorship

This article explores the 'Exam Play', an approach to teaching Shakespeare developed in regional theatres. The practice centres on young people exploring a play, as part of the English Literature curriculum, through the analysis of a theatre production. Students take part in a workshop prior to watching a play, where they are introduced to the artistic and technical choices made for the production. Consequently, entering into the performance with a more informed frame of reception. The article sits as a discrete research study within this thesis portfolio, which contributes new perspectives on the education practices delivered by British regional theatres. The Exam Play emerged as an area of focus for this article through undertaking research for chapter 1, 'Locating Education Programmes in Theatre Buildings: A historiography of developments in practice between 1958 and 2008'. Originally developed in the 1960's in regional theatres, in response to the English O-Level qualification, which required students to study a Shakespeare play, versions of the Exam Play are still delivered today, over 50 years on. This article presents a case study of the practice, focused on *Macbeth*, delivered at Oldham Coliseum Theatre with a group of Year 10 students (aged 14 – 15 years old). The article interrogates the dominant discourse surrounding approaches to teaching Shakespeare through drama and makes an argument for guided spectatorship as an 'active' and imaginative approach to learning in its own right.

In 'Teaching Shakespeare: A history of teaching Shakespeare in England', Shakespeare and education scholar Tracy Irish explores the developments in classroom practice to teaching the plays. Irish notes that there has been a long tradition in British secondary schools since the twentieth century that has 'regarded the plays as literature rather than drama' (2003: 2). These issues are connected to a series of debates surrounding the cultural politics and constructs of Shakespeare's place on the curriculum, as explored in detail in *Shakespeare Valued* by Sarah Olive (2015). Although from as early

as 1908, it has been advocated that the texts should be read aloud, studies of the plays within the classroom are often undertaken through text-based analysis (Irish, 2003: 2). Part of the reason for this approach is the pressures placed on testing students' knowledge of the plays through examination. Assessments have arguably led teachers into utilising a desk-based approach in the classroom, to ensure that students have the necessary literary knowledge to apply their learning in a written exam. To remedy this desk-based approach, educators such as Rex Gibson have developed approaches and toolkits for teaching Shakespeare through drama, such as the 'Shakespeare and Schools Project' initiated in 1986. Gibson believes students were 'trapped ... in a discourse of literary criticism' and needed to instead, experience the texts on their feet through practical exploration (Gibson, 1994: 144).

Within this article, I argue that in attempting to remedy the desk-based approach through dramatic methods, the potential to learn through spectatorship and more critical and reflective modes of analysis has been overlooked. Spectatorship has similarly, been 'trapped ... in a discourse'. As theatre and education scholar Dan Urian argues:

[T]he supposition that students will learn more from their participation in 'acting out' than from the more reflective and distanced experience of sitting and watching has remained largely unquestioned (1998: 131).

As Irish notes, although this may not be reflected in all classrooms and schools, 'those who have written about teaching Shakespeare in the last century have overwhelmingly encouraged an active approach' (2003: 4). It has been widely argued within theatre education research that students develop more refined understandings of Shakespeare's characters and language through 'acting out'. As Gibson notes, 'when students have responsibility for a character or a line - the characteristic response is a close, detailed, imaginative exploration of Shakespeare's language' (1994: 143). This suggests that a student's physical engagement in embodying a

character is more effective to their learning than watching an actor embody a character and speak Shakespeare's language. However, through this article I demonstrate that learning can also derive from the more distanced and reflective position of spectatorship. I interrogate the discourse surrounding 'active' and 'passive' approaches to teaching Shakespeare which have arguably problematised assumptions around the efficacy of 'watching' the plays. As asserted by Jacques Rancière in the *Emancipated Spectator*, there is a tendency to link 'viewing' with 'passivity' and 'acting' with 'knowing' (2009: 2). This suggests that spectators are less cognitively and actively engaged in the meaning making process. Gibson's terminology accentuates the tendency to articulate only physical, dramatic practices as 'active':

The dramatic context demands classroom practices that are the antithesis of methods in which students sit passively without intellectual or emotional engagement (Gibson, 1998: xii).

Although Gibson is interrogating the desk-based approach to learning, he suggests that 'passivity' derives from students sitting and not engaging practically and emotionally with a character.

In a collaborative project between University of Warwick and the RSC, developed in 2009, drama and education scholar Jonothan Neelands draws on rehearsal techniques to provide a link between the context of the professional theatre and the classroom. Within the 'action-centred' approach, students explore a play practically and collaboratively as part of an ensemble:

The ensemble serves as a bridging metaphor between the social and the artistic; between the informal uses of classroom drama and professional theatre (Neelands, 2009: 10).

Although Neelands' methodology provides a link between the social experiencing of drama and theatre as a context, the emphasis of the approach is on the values, relationships and behaviour of a learner/actor as part of an ensemble. The 'Stand Up for Shakespeare Manifesto' (2010),

developed by University of Warwick and the RSC, advocates students seeing Shakespeare plays live, as a valuable cultural and educational experience. However, this is reflected as an addition to the learning that takes place within the action-centred approach, rather than as an active pedagogy in its own right. Neelands argues, 'at the heart of all forms of theatre and particularly Shakespeare's dramatic imagination is the behaviour of the actor' (2010: 250). This assumes that the actor is central to the meaning making process rather than considering the spectator's 'behaviour', as an active interpreter of images, action and language, at 'the heart' of the exchange. Similarly, Gibson notes that teachers should 'treat the plays as plays for imaginative enactment' (1998: xii). However, as theatre scholar Jean Howard comments, although the play texts themselves were written for actors, they were produced for an audience:

I assume that in writing plays for performance Shakespeare was partly writing with an eye to the potential responses of the audience; that is, as he orchestrated the play, he was indirectly orchestrating the theatrical experience of the viewer (in Purcell, 2013: 66).

By concentrating on a play from the perspective of an actor, the possibilities of theatre as a discursive, communicative form are arguably limited. I aim to nuance the discourse surrounding spectatorship and articulate students' experiences of learning through this lens, which I argue is nonetheless 'active'.

Urian argues that teachers have struggled to find accessible ways to structure and develop students' skills as spectators for performance. In response to this, Urian presents a framework for 'guided spectatorship' that provides students with an introduction into how to respond to theatre more acutely as spectators (1998: 134). The framework aims to develop spectatorship as a craft, bringing students 'closer' to a theatre performance. He notes, 'it is not intended to restrict students to a particular approach or conception of drama but rather to introduce a dialogue with the work; the aim is to create an informed spectator' (Urian, 1998: 134). Urian's framework

offers a useful articulation for describing the Exam Play, where students explore a Shakespeare play through the analysis of the making of a production and the effects of live performance.

In this article, I map a group of students' experiences of learning within the Exam Play workshop and performance and describe how this learning converges, using a framework presented by Susan Bennett. Bennett describes how an audience's reading of a production works within a two-frame model (1997: 139). The 'outer frame' consists of 'all the cultural elements which create and inform a theatrical event' and the 'inner frame', which contains 'the dramatic production in a particular playing space'. Bennett notes that these frames are interactive. The reading of the production in the inner frame will be heavily influenced by the cultural experience and expectations of the outer frame, which in turn will affect and 'rewrite cultural assumptions' (1997: 139). She observes that spectators 'come to the theatre as a member of an already constituted interpretive community'. The students who took part in the case study were part of a 'constituted' group - a Key stage 4, GCSE English school group, bringing to the performance a set of preconceived ideas, assumptions and a pre-existing textual knowledge of the play (I was aware that the students had read the play in class, having liaised with their English teacher beforehand. The teacher informed me that in general, the students had little experience of going to the theatre). Adopting Bennett's theoretical framework, I describe the workshop and the ways in which it developed the students' 'outer frame' of knowledge, before exploring how this developed a unique and stimulating 'inner frame' reading of the production through a managed experience of engaged spectatorship. Finally, I explore how the young people's experiences of both the workshop and performance fed back into their 'outer frame' body of knowledge, to enhance their 'cultural assumptions' of the play.

Developing Spectatorship

Within an Exam Play workshop at the Coliseum, students explore the artistic interpretation of a performance, including the style and the design of the

piece, the process of producing the production and the actors' interpretation. It is significant that the workshop usually takes place before seeing the production, introducing what can be for some students, a new learning context, theatrical dialogue and mode of analysis. Bennett notes that 'cultural systems, individual horizons of expectations and accepted theatrical conventions all activate the decoding process for a particular production' (1997: 86). The workshop aims to enhance students' understanding of the conception of a production so that they enter into the performance with a more informed set of ideas about the artistic, technical and aesthetic framing of the play. This aims to develop their knowledge of 'cultural systems' and enhance their 'individual horizons of expectations'. Furthermore, it functions to develop students' critical and semiological skills as spectators, exploring how meanings have been interpreted and presented from the text. This assists them in recognising and interpreting theatrical signifiers for themselves in the performance, building students' understandings of 'theatrical conventions'. To illustrate this dual function, I describe what happened in the workshop and how the students responded to two of the exercises delivered. The exploration of the set demonstrates how providing a prior investigation of design and staging can build on students' cultural expectations, thus, entering into the performance with a more informed 'outer frame'. The exploration of the lighting demonstrates how students' critical and analytical skills as spectators can be developed to enhance their ability to decode signifiers in the production.

When students arrived at the Coliseum for the *Macbeth* Exam Play, they were seated in the black box studio theatre, which was in a preset state ready for the performance. The students were introduced to the actors who explained which characters they were playing. The actors were dressed in black, contemporary military style costume, including boots, T-shirts and military trousers. The costumes were reflective of the setting of the play, set in the context of war but with a modern aesthetic. The set was quite minimalistic, with images of willow trees projected onto a cloth on the back wall, and several crates positioned in the corners of the stage, dressed with

replica weapons, such as guns and bullets. I asked the students where *Macbeth* was set and what they had expected to see in the performance space. One of the students replied, 'a castle', and another student added, 'the heath'. I then asked the students to consider, using their knowledge of the play, what theme the designer was trying to highlight. The students were invited to come into the performance space for a closer look at the set and props and to consider the actors' costume. The students described the set as evoking themes of 'fighting, fighting for the crown', 'war', 'greed'. In two groups, they were given the task of using the crates to create the heath and the castle; the students' initial conception of the settings of the play. They were encouraged to stand back and consider how their creation looked from an audience's perspective and how the actors might utilise the set in their performance.

The practical exercises prompted students to consider and interpret the symbolism of the set and costumes, which they collectively recognised as relating to themes of kingship, war and ambition. One of the students noted, 'the actors aren't in old style costume'. One of the actors responded to this, asking 'why do you think that is?'. The student explained, 'because there's still war. People still fight for the same thing'. The exploration, delivered with the actors, instigated by the set and costumes, the material aspects of the theatre production, prompted a discussion of the themes of the play and its contemporary relevance. The students and actors shared their interpretations, collectively uncovering moments in the text where these themes were particularly pertinent. The learning came directly from an aesthetic stimulus, alluding to how meanings had been encoded in the production and their broader cultural relevance, thus, building on students' outer critical frame.

The exercise also enhanced the students' understanding of the cultural systems and conventions that inform an artistic conception of a performance. The students' initial suggestions indicate that they had expected to see something much more literal and naturalistic than the abstract, minimal set and contemporary costumes presented. Their expectations of the setting and

costume were drawn from the imagery they had created through a literary reading of the play in class and as most of the young people seldom attended the theatre, they had assumed that the setting and characters would be depicted through traditional costumes and through a naturalistic setting. The exploration had provided students with a context to expand and enhance their understanding of how a play could be translated into a theatrical performance, informing their outer frame of knowledge so that they could more easily connect with and understand what had informed the production. As one of the students noted in the interview:

Because we looked at how things were set up, it helps you get an idea of what it's like so you can follow it better.

The student's response to the exercise suggests that it had enhanced her engagement with the play as a spectator by introducing a theatrical dialogue, which made it easier for her to connect with and 'follow' the performance. By providing an accessible introduction, which builds on students' outer cultural frame of knowledge, they enter into the performance as more informed spectators. As the student describes, 'it helps you get an idea of what it's like'. The workshop had perhaps given confidence to the student into what to expect, allowing her to more fully engage with the narrative.

To facilitate the exploration of the lighting, a technician demonstrated three basic states, a cold and a warm wash, and a centre stage spot. The technician explained that lighting creates mood and can signify times of day, as well as providing focus to certain characters onstage. The technician asked the students to discuss how these options could be used to build atmosphere in the scene where Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo. The actors performed the scene and students stopped the action to indicate where and how the lighting could be used whilst a technician applied their suggestions. The students had different reasons for making their choices to light the scene. Several groups opted for the warm wash to symbolise the theme of guilt and Macbeth having 'blood on his hands', whereas other groups selected and applied the cold wash to symbolise the supernatural

presence of Banquo. In the interview, one of the students refers back to this exercise. He alludes to how he had perhaps exercised this decoding process in the performance:

The lighting as well. When it came on for when they had something on their conscience. It happened quite a few times to different characters.

The student's identification of the lighting design and the specific moments in the play where this was applied to highlight a theme, suggests that he had perhaps been more aware of this aspect of the production because of the practical exercises. In addition to recognizing the lighting effect, he is articulating the ways in which it was used to underscore a theme in the play and moments where the character's conscience was metaphorically 'speaking'. The lighting exercise, therefore, served as a mechanism to enrich the young person's understandings of a particular narrative theme in the inner frame of the performance. Moreover, this specific lighting cue had not been explored and described in the workshop. Therefore, the student had identified this technical signifier, independently. This demonstrates a specific, contextualised reading that could only have been afforded in a theatre space through the lens of a spectator. Through a more reflective, distanced stance, the student has actively interpreted a series of meanings, and the actor and lighting technician's joint role in orchestrating these visual signifiers.

In 'Acting Together; ensemble as a democratic process in art and life', Neelands contrasts the 'pro-social emphasis, in the ensemble model of drama', with the 'pro-technical, subject based approach' (2009: 173). Under Neelands' definition, the pro-social emphasis values the social and artistic experiencing of drama, whereas the pro-technical approach foregrounds a 'subject based knowledge of plays, styles, periods and genres'; the 'products' in drama leading to a 'representational theatre' (2009: 187). He draws this theory from Basil Bernstein's distinction of 'collection codes' and 'integrated codes', where students either collect knowledge, working within a received frame or construct knowledge collectively (Neelands, 2009: 173). Neelands

argues that a pro-technical approach proscribes the contents of drama as a collection code subject, focusing on drama and theatre as a 'product' and the subject as a 'discipline'. He believes these outcomes become detached from the experience of drama and the qualities of the process.

The Exam Play workshop to some extent utilises a pro-technical approach, examining the form, style and the artistic choices made for a production. The theatrical dialogue used is specific to the discipline and the exploration of the play is based on a pre-made theatrical 'product' and the process of producing the product, rather than the students' direct involvement in the process of creating the world of the play and the characters within it. However, I am arguing that the rigidity of the pro-technical approach, suggested by Neelands, was not apparent within the case study. Although the learning is highly contextualised and there is a clear frame guiding the exploration, rather than limiting the learning possibilities, the technical knowledge explored acted as an intersection into the learning, opening up in-depth opportunities to explore character, setting and the themes of the play. The dialogue that emerged from the exploration was based on their practical exploration of the theatre's set and discussions with and between the students, actors, and the technician. For example, in exploring the set, the students were welcomed into the 'actors' space' to explore and discuss the design, which led to discussions around the themes of the play. Through exploring the lighting, the students were engaged in experimenting with different moods and atmospheres with the technician. Meanings were constructed collectively as students were encouraged to consider and interpret what was presented. Therefore, the binary of the approaches, suggested by Neelands, becomes less acute when there is a dialogue about the 'product'. This dialogue deconstructs and reconfigures meanings; the exploration inhabits a pro-social dimension.

The interactivity afforded through the workshop and the opportunity to explore the material aspects of the production, through planned activities in the space, avoids reducing students' critical thinking to a proscribed 'reading' of the production and text. Rather, the approach encourages students own

critical responses. As Mike Fleming points out when referring to students watching a theatre performance, if too much emphasis is placed on an analytical response, students' intuition is limited:

It is not enough for students to talk about scenery, acting and lighting of a play unless this derives from their felt experience of what it means (2013: 88).

This suggests that instructing students to simply comment on the separate elements that make up the theatrical sign system can limit their responses as spectators. However, unlike Fleming's articulation, the students' understandings did not necessarily develop through their 'felt experience'. For example, the student who identified the lighting effects that related to Macbeth's conscience, was not embodying or feeling these emotions but rather, was able to identify them as a spectator. He observed how the actor playing Macbeth experienced or represented these felt understandings, enhanced through the lighting. Therefore, meanings do not solely derive from felt experience, as has been predicated in theatre education discourse, but can also emerge through a spectator's engagement with material aspects of a theatre production.

Character and Spectatorship

It is evident from the students' accounts that they had exercised the learning developed within the workshop, as spectators watching the performance. Within the interview, the students discussed moments in the play and their experiences and interpretations of the characters. As 'active interpreters', the students were able to draw on their knowledge from the workshop and their own personal experiences to understand the characters' feelings and intentions (Ranci re, 2009: 13). As two of the students exchanged:

Some of it I thought was quite scary! Especially with Lady Macbeth. I think because you could see in her eyes she was feeling, like, about to break.

Yes, she was acting the part where she says, 'out damned spot' and you could tell she was scared herself. The way she said the lines you felt for her.

This dialogue suggests that as spectators, the students connected emotionally with the character of Lady Macbeth through the actor's performance. The students describe how the actor presented the feeling of fear and tension, 'you could see it in her eyes ... she was about to break', 'she was acting the part ... and you could tell she was scared herself'. The students are concurrently describing how this made them feel, 'some of it, I thought was quite scary, especially with Lady Macbeth...', 'the way she said the lines you felt for her'. The students have associated the actor's vocal performance and facial expression with the feeling of fear and angst, this portrayal leading the students to feel empathy and fear. The students' emotive and sensitive responses demonstrate personal reflexivity, drawn from their understanding and experience of emotion. Similarly, the students respond to the physicality of the actors' performances, their gesture and movement, drawn from their own knowledge and experience of how emotions affect physicality. As one student reflected upon, when describing the character, Macbeth:

You could tell he was considering it when he looked up and was stuck with what to do.

The student has considered the actor's performing of the emotion through an action, which led him to the conclusion that the character was facing a decision. The attention to the actor's movement suggests that the student associated the image of the actor, looking up, with the feeling of irresolution. Rancière observes that the spectator 'composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her' (2009: 13). This suggests that a spectator synthesises images created onstage with their experiences and understandings of emotion, feeling, action and expression. The performance led the students to 'compose' personal, embodied responses as spectators, based on their understandings of a range of kinaesthetic and emotive

behaviours. Subsequently, this enabled them to reflect upon, share and conclude what the characters were experiencing.

Neelands compares the pedagogy of the 'action-centred' approach to the 'situation of experience' proposed by John Dewey, characterised by facilitating experience-based, real world, problem solving opportunities (Neelands, 2010: 249). Students embody Shakespeare's characters 'to see the world from different points of view'. The relationship to the characters and action within the text is achieved by becoming immersed in the practical problems of the play as actors:

The classical actor and learner within the ensemble-based classroom develop their own and others' narrative imaginations through the process of 'becoming' Shakespeare's characters in language and deed. Acting requires from both an embodiment and manifestation of the subtle and complex natures of Shakespeare's characters in whose shoes they stand. They can find empathy through the language and its action on us (Neelands 2010: 249).

Within Neelands' articulation, students are facilitated to 'become' characters from the play, to 'find empathy'. He suggests that the learner/actor, from the process of embodying a character, understands and comprehends a character's subtleties and complexities, more acutely than the learner/spectator who observes and reflects on an actor's presentation of the character. However, as demonstrated by the students' responses, as spectators they empathised with the characters and identified emotive subtleties in their action, drawn from their individual experiences, both somatic and emotional. As Freshwater notes, 'our entire experience of the world is embodied, and this embodiment frames our every perception and thought' (2009: 19). Therefore, the 'importance of experience', emphasised by Neelands and appropriated through physical, dramatic methods is arguably as potent and reflexive when experienced through guided spectatorship. Within both approaches, the students are reasoning with the characters' decisions based on their own lived experiences.

Furthermore, the depth of the analysis elicited from the students in their account of the performance, suggests that by observing the character in performance rather than embodying the character, they also learnt from the actor. The students frequently refer to both the character and the actor in their responses. They merge their description of the actors' performance and the fictional character and world that the actors are creating or representing, for example:

I felt angry at him but it was good to watch how he did that.

Where she says her lines...

When he looked up...

The students are juxtaposing their knowledge of 'action' carried out by the actor and 'objective' stimulated by the character, thus, adding an extra layer of analysis to their reading of the play. Dawson refers to this phenomenon as the 'personation process', whereby 'interiorization' is produced firstly through the actor's assumption of the character, leaving his or her own body behind and secondly through the spectator's double consciousness. The young people are responding to the represented person and simultaneously being aware of the constructs of the fictional character (1996: 36).

Within the workshop, students are first introduced to the actors out of role, which allows them to gain a basic knowledge of the actor, their personality, physical traits and mannerisms. This enables the students to draw a comparison between the actor and their physical, vocal and emotional presentation of a character in performance. The students, having engaged with the actors out of role and learning about their process are able to consider the subtleties of characterisation, understanding how the actor has interpreted and built the character. Comparably, through textual analysis alone or through Neelands' approach, the student is solely responding to the character and applying their own knowledge of their lived experiences to the scenario, at the expense of the nuanced learning that can also be acquired through the analysis of the actors' embodiment of character.

Rancière notes that the active interpreter 'observes, selects, compares, interprets' (2009: 13). The students' reflections as spectators within the inner frame, suggest that their weaving of the actors' performances with the characters' objectives also derived from their pre-existing knowledge and exploration of the text. As one student noted:

I hadn't picked out from the book before that he was, like, struggling with that decision and it's obvious now when I look back.

The performance presented the student with an alternative solution that she had not previously considered and demonstrates that she was selecting and comparing the actor's performance of Macbeth to her existing interpretation of the character. This synthesis between her textual and theatrical reading of the play led her to question and consolidate her knowledge and understanding. Meanings she had developed through a textual analysis were supported by what she saw and felt during the performance, which she then cross-referenced with the text. The aesthetic distance and reflection afforded through spectatorship, allowed for a rich, reflexive synthesis of the student's interpretations. As Bennett notes, the work of the spectator within the inner frame, feeds back into the outer frame, 'rewriting cultural assumptions' (2013: 2). As a learning paradigm, this synergy of meaning making between textual analysis and live performance, demonstrates how spectatorship can appropriate and challenge students' understanding of a play. Although the practice is ephemeral, experienced in the context of a theatre, the learning feeds back into the students' broader body of knowledge, their outer frame. This can be revisited and reflected upon, as the classroom teacher describes, the learning continued to challenge and inform the groups' exploration in class:

We've continued to reflect on the performance in class. It's acted as a reference point for our study. The students frequently refer to the way scenes were performed in the performance. We've also discussed alternatives for staging, given that the students had a context and an image of the theatre to refer to.

This suggests that the performance continued to inform students' learning within their classroom setting, with the students referencing and discussing the play in the outer frame. Therefore, the learning within this section has illustrated an interplay between several modes of analysis, including the characters' objectives, the actors' performance, the student's technical understanding, their own intuitive understandings and experiences, their textual knowledge and the knowledge of their peers through discussions in class.

Neelands argues that, 'ideas that form in the imagination are only given substance when they become material actions' (2010: 250). Theatre education research relating to teaching Shakespeare has tended to argue that students acquire a more detailed understanding of a play through a dramatic approach. Investigations into spectatorship have arguably been marginalized as a result of the discourse. This article, whilst interrogating this discourse, has rehabilitated the Exam Play, and the idea of guided spectatorship as an approach to teaching the plays. The students' accounts of the practice suggest that their role as spectators produced varied, personal responses to the performance, rich in knowledge of the Shakespearian text and the theatrical context.

The students' attention to particular moments in the play, where they felt empathy for the characters, demonstrates that an understanding of a character's emotional experience can be achieved through watching an actor's representation. Their consideration of the combined effect of action, language and emotion, demonstrates that this knowledge is not only acquired through an 'active' exploration. In particular, their responses to Lady Macbeth and Macbeth suggest that the actors' performances led to feelings of empathy and an understanding and/or consideration of why the characters were feeling the way they were. Their attention to Lady Macbeth and Macbeth's use of gesture, suggests that they were using their own embodied understandings of fear and angst to empathise and contextualise their understandings of the characters' behaviour.

The workshop, building on students' outer cultural frame, acted as an essential part of the students' analysis as it both prepared and challenged their responses, leading to observations based on a synthesis of image and text. Therefore, a textual reading of the play in class before watching a production is a helpful way of stimulating multi-layered interpretations. The structure of the practice, with the workshop delivered first, was central to the development of their analysis of the play. The workshop provided a context for the students to discern the theatrical meanings, analysing the images created onstage and how these meanings were communicated. Their ability to articulate the theatrical sign systems, without fully understanding the complex approach of semiotics suggests that the workshop served to provide an accessible way of introducing students into decoding the signs and intentions of the designer, director and actors. Furthermore, the workshop demonstrated that the acute binary described by Neelands between the 'pro-technical' and 'pro-social' emphases of the approaches in drama studies, can be eroded through a collaborative exploration of a play. The artistic 'product' and the theatrical dialogue used to explore the 'pro-technical' elements of the play, such as the style, design and form, led to the collective exploration of new meanings, thus, taking on a pro-social dimension.

The learning developed through the outer frame of the workshop, informed the students' interpretation within the inner frame, building, through a progression, their analysis of the play. The students and teacher both noted how the performance had acted as a reference point for further study which suggests that by developing spectatorship and framing the learning context, the practice can continue to influence students' responses and inform their broader outer frame of knowledge.

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