SEWING SHADOWS: INVESTIGATING PERFORMANCE RESEARCH IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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SEWING SHADOWS: INVESTIGATING PERFORMANCE RESEARCH IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

This thesis recounts the development through fieldwork in primary schools of a distinctive performance pedagogy that bridges drama and live art. Two inter-connected strands run through the thesis. First, a praxis in the context of the primary school curriculum involves the creation of learning spaces through performance work which embrace qualities of ownership and subjectivity within imaginative and participatory practices. This prompted a shift from live art to more conventional drama praxis and has special benefits for disadvantaged and marginalised children. Historically, the thesis sits within Buckingham and Jones (2001) description of the "cultural turn" towards the creative industries. In the years following New Labour's election victory (1997) a number of influential documents and directives were launched to promote creative learning in schools. The creative agenda emerged at a time when teachers experienced unprecedented levels of control over, and public scrutiny of, their everyday working lives; it was a period dominated by a "bureaucratisation" of education. I have positioned practice in the midst of reform, which at times appeared to be pulling in opposite directions. Secondly, a conceptual framework examines the "crisis of representation" (Denzin, 1997) in relation to lived experience and the written word. Writing often fails to capture the ephemeral nature of the performance studies agenda. In performance, meaning is found in the moments between thought and expression and in the silence between words. But, whilst words cannot replicate reality, writing can offer a deep and long-lasting impression of the world we inhabit. In response to the crisis of representation the thesis works towards a polyphonous account of the research process, weaving between performance texts, narrative stories, diary entries and

the writing of others. Poststructural and phenomenological perspectives have illuminated the shifting space between competing discourses and ways of seeing. Above all, this thesis is the product of work with children, made possible when the desire to imagine outweighs the reality and actuality of the present.

Contents

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Thank you

Introduction

> 'Second to the right, and straight on till morning.'
> That, Peter had told Wendy, was the way to Neverland; but even birds, carrying maps and consulting them at windy corners, could not have sighted it with these instructions. Peter, you see, just said anything that came into his head (Barrie, 2007, p.45).

In the introductory chapter to his fifth book, the performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña presents a compelling definition of performance. He writes, '[p]erformance is about presence, not representation; it is not (as classical theories of theater [sic] suggest) a mirror, but the actual moment when the mirror is shattered' (2000, p, 9). I am drawn to this argument for two reasons, both of which are tied into the main strands of this project. As part of the research inquiry, I have worked towards the establishment of a distinctive performance pedagogy that bridges drama and live art. The mirror, in the moment of shattering, is illustrative of my own performance praxis. I have sought to find a pedagogic practice that foregrounds a "being-in the world" and embodied ways of knowing. I have rejected dramatic representation in favour of a performance methodology, which prioritises being-in the moment of significance.

I'd like to carry Gómez-Peña analogy a little further. The mirror, when shattered, refracts a multitude of different angles and perspectives. The act of transcribing and writing on performance is much like gathering together the shards of broken glass. Whilst the image may broadly be reconstructed, writing does not simply transcribe reality. We experience live performance in a different way from reading and writing. Indeed, it might be said that

writing offers another kind of reality, a refracted image of the original encounter. This, of course, is not limited to the transcription of praxis. It is also the case when trying to capture, in writing, a sequential and historical through-line for the study. Given that an introduction sets out to provide not only an overview, but a map of the route, it would be worthwhile unpicking this particular argument. By way of illustration I offer a fragment of reflective writing:

> *It is a warm afternoon in late June and I am sitting outside at my garden table, surrounded by books, a mug of coffee at my side and a sleeping beagle puppy at my feet. With the children at school and the house to myself I hoped to spend some uninterrupted time working on the introductory chapter. But a neighbour's over-enthusiastic use of hedge-cutters invades the space I am in and I find it impossible to concentrate. I pause and consider the complexity of the task before me. By all account it is a difficult chapter to write, given that I need to thread together the many strands of the study into a coherent whole. Or, at the very least, I need to mark out the major routes, research findings and destinations for the thesis - in terms of how it should be read, understood and the kinds of insights made, deliberated upon, challenged and tested. But, as I struggled (and failed) to block out the whine of garden tools, intermittent coughing from over the garden hedge, overhead aircraft and passing trains on a nearby railway line I am reminded of the impossibility of escaping the present. Or rather, it illustrated the futility of trying to separate the present moment of writing from both the projected future for the thesis and its historical past (June 2010).*

I.1 Memory and Narrative Time

Concerns of narrative time: the past, present and future are pivotal here. Ricoeur (2000) has shown that there is a "reciprocal" relationship between narrativity and temporality and that narrative time differs from ordinary linear time. Contained within narrative modes of writing (this introduction being a suitable example), the past, present and future reside. To put it simply, an introduction is more than a map of its future since it inevitably embraces the past. The analogy of a journey is apt here, especially when considering the distance travelled to reach the final submission. Kierkegaard puts it like this: 'life is lived forwards but understood backwards' (cited in Lawler, 2008, p.19). Therefore, before a trajectory of the thesis can be considered, it is useful to re-visit the ground covered.

I do not intend however, to convince the reader that there has been a straightforward route through the thesis and would like to dispel modernist ideals of linearity and teleological progression from the outset. I have adopted post-structural concerns of displacement and deferral to make sense of the shifting and mercurial nature of the study. Since Lawler (2008) suggests we continually interpret and re-interpret the past to tally with present-day concerns. Hence, our understanding of the past is not fixed into stasis, but rather evolves as we move through life and new experiences. To illustrate this argument I have borrowed examples from fictional and dramatic writing. In the first extract I refer to Michael Frayn's stage play, *Copenhagen*:

Heisenberg: How difficult it is to see even what's in front of one's eyes. All we possess is the present, and the present endlessly dissolves into the past. Bohr has gone even as I turn to Margrethe …

> Margrethe slips into history even as I turn back to Bohr. And yet how much more difficult still it is to catch the slightest glimpse of what's behind one's eyes. Here I am at the centre of the universe, and yet all I can see are two smiles that don't belong to me (Frayn, 2000, p.86).

A central theme in *Copenhagen* is the idea that nothing is certain and least of all the human memory. As Heisenberg points out, all we have is the present which endlessly disappears into the past. Seen from this perspective even understanding our own actions can be an elusive and deceptive exercise. In *Copenhagen* the characters return time and time again to recall memories and fragments of conversations in order to get to some kind of truth and certainty. But each time they try, the past becomes ever more distant. Days, months and years melt into one another as the characters struggle to remember:

Bohr: A curious sort of diary memory is.
Heisenberg: You open the pages, and all the neat headings and tidy jottings dissolve around you.
Bohr: You step through the pages into the months and days themselves.
Margrethe: The past becomes the present inside your head (Frayn, 2000, p.6).

In a vein similar to Heisenberg and Bohr, I have also struggled to understand fully the sequential historicity of the traditional thesis. Ricoeur has shown that 'even the time of the simplest story also escapes the ordinary notion of time conceived of as a series of instants succeeding one another along an abstract line oriented in a single direction' (2000, p.259). How to explain the past when writing from the vantage point of the present, and at the same time, projecting ahead to the future remains an ongoing concern. Paddy, the central

character in Maureen Duffy's novel, *That's How it Was*[1] articulates this argument most elegantly:

> Memory is a funny old thing, with one deaf ear that doesn't catch all the questions you ask and has put the answers in a safe place and now can't find it just like my gran used to. By the time truth's been strained through someone else it's not the same colour anyway … It's like trying to catch a flea on a sheet. You pin it down under your forefinger and just as you shift it a bit, it's away and the chase is on again. When you finally catch it and crack it between your thumbnails, there's a little pop and a nasty mess and that's that. So I feel that even if I do manage to pin down my side of truth it'll probably be dead as a doornail, or hop away if I shift ever such a little. Sometimes I can't tell any more what happened to me, and what I was told by my mother or someone else, or what I just would have liked to have happened (Duffy, 1983,p.16).

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[1] *That's How it Was* (1962), was Maureen Duffy's first novel and is a semi-autobiographical account of growing up in the 1930s and 1940s. The story centres on Paddy, an illegitimate and abandoned daughter of an Irish IRA solider and details her life growing-up in London during the Blitz and her relationship with Louey, her much-loved mother. I was reminded of this novel when I first attempted to write the introductory chapter for the thesis. I was struggling to put down a full account of the history of the study, because every time I turned to look back I saw a different version of the past. In the preface to *That's How it Was*, Duffy writes, '[t]he book is a novel rather than an autobiography … with the consequent selection among characters and events, and the heightened language to evoke them. If I couldn't invent facts, which I couldn't because I wanted to tell a particular truth, the art must be in the style, in a language that was colloquial, with I hoped the energy of the demonic, and charged with imagery' (1983, p.vi). I have not knowingly or consciously invented "facts" for this thesis, neither have I fictionalised the research inquiry. But, I am aware that selecting to write this version of the thesis prevents other stories from being told. The character Paddy's likening of memory to an escaping flea seemed to offer an elegant analogy of this concern.

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I encountered this novel as a first year undergraduate and many years have passed in the meantime. Despite the passage of time though, Paddy's simile of an escaping flea seemed to capture, in the best way possible, the difficulty of attaching any kind of certainty to a historical event – even when it is your own. Memory is an unreliable witness and it has been useful to keep this in mind in the pursuit of a sequential through-line. I have examined the construction of narrative time further into the thesis, with particular reference to Heidegger's application of *Interpretation* within a broader context of *Being-in-the-World*. But, for now, with regards to memory it is worth noting Lawler's observation that:

> People constantly produce and reproduce life stories on the basis of memories, interpreting the past through the lens of social information, and using this information to formulate present and future life stories … if the past is always interpreted through the present, then, equally, this (interpreted) past informs the present (Lawler, 2008, p.19).

I.2 Language: The Crisis of Representation

This argument becomes even more problematic when attempting to convey in written form lived experience. If memory is found to be unreliable then language, similarly, fails in its endeavour to express fully the ephemeral nature of performance studies and ethnographic research. Words cannot adequately describe tones of voice: for example, the highs and lows of intonation, changes in inflection and moments of pause and periods of silence (see also Hirschauer 2006). Often, we find meaning not so much in what was said but in how words are carried (or not carried) in the voice and expressed through the body. This said however, I have also been pulled towards capturing, in writing, lived and

embodied experience in order to make sense (for myself and for the reader) not only of the research process, but of the performance praxis undertaken.

For Denzin (1997) this is the crisis of representation confronting contemporary qualitative research inquiry. It makes problematic the assumption that writing directly conveys lived experience, particularly in light of post-structural concerns of semantic slipperiness and unstable reference points. Denzin suggests that '[t]raditional ethnographers have historically assumed that their methods probe and reveal lived experience. They have assumed that the subject's word is always final and that talk reflects subjective and lived experience' (1997, pp.4-5). This has been a useful starting point in which to consider concerns of representation in my own performance practice and writing. For my own part, there has been a great deal of writing generated for the thesis including diary entries, lesson plans and observations, rehearsal notes, interview data, children's writing, draft chapters, conference papers and published work. But, as Derrida points out, 'writing will never be simple voice painting' (1997, p.12).

In accepting this argument the problem becomes two-fold. It is not just that the text presumes to translate (and in doing so supersedes) the lived event. The transcription of field notes into a highly crafted argument suggests a fluidity of expression and ease of thought (which is hardly ever the case). Any hint of awkwardness, such as stumbling between arguments or inabilities to express fully an idea and even moments when the point of the conversation becomes lost is in danger of being erased in the writing-up process. This is particularly the case when working with children, since shuffling feet, a mispronounced word or worrying the thread of a cardigan sleeve may say more about

what's happening in the encounter than words alone. Hirschauer, writing from a social studies perspective, explains it like this: 'the ethnographer puts into words [that which] prior to this writing, did not exist in language' (2006, p.414).

As a response to the crisis of representation Denzin turns towards Marcus's (1994) definition of "messy texts"[2] as '[redefining] the ethnographic project' (1997, p.xvii). Denzin writes that '[m]essy texts are many sited, open-ended, they refuse theoretical closure, and they do not indulge in abstract, analytical theorizing' (1997, p.xvii). Of these, Denzin cites many examples, including: narrative writing, ethnographic fictions and novels, anthropological and sociological poetry, narratives of the self and performance texts. His list is fairly exhaustive and covers a wide range of ethnographic and anthropological writing styles. Common to all though, according to Denzin, is a desire to position the writer within the writing process and to pit other voices alongside the author's to create a decentred and polyphonous account of the ethnographic inquiry. Therefore, the meaning(s) that we (as researchers) bring to the encounter are offset against other kinds of voices, interpretations and points of view.

This argument places the qualitative researcher in a rather precarious position, caught between the need to describe and explain the field and recognising the limitations of the

[2] Marcus writes: 'While many in anthropology have acknowledged at least the therapeutic value of the 1980s critique of ethnographic writing, there has also been a widespread nervousness, a fear that this has gone on for too long and, as a result, is leading anthropology in unproductive directions, a conviction that innovations in the form of ethnography cannot possible carry the burden that abstract theoretical discourse and clear distinctions between arguments and supporting data once did' (1998, p.187).

endeavour. Deleuze and Guattari put it like this: '[w]riting has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come' (2008, p.515). I would not, however, advocate that the written text is without any kind of validity, far from it. Nor would I privilege the embodied text at the expense of language and words but like Conquergood (2004) I seek to find a dialogic fulcrum between words and praxis. This is a crucial point to establish, since my work sits between performance and pedagogic research and more conventional study in the form of a written submission. Indeed, the term *thesis* refers not only to the written document (of which this introduction forms a part), but also includes the performance praxis undertaken.

I.3 Language and Narrative Truth

Of course, the perception that writing cannot directly reproduce experience is not a new insight, particularly within the context of research-as-practice communities. Within the broad context of this debate I propose to consider the potential for language to create new meaning(s) and also, concerns of truth and validity in qualitative research inquiry (see Polkinghorn 2007). To introduce this argument, I turn to Hirschauer who proposes that writing is a vital and important part of the research process and that words do not simply replace, or mimic, the original encounter. Writing offers the opportunity of finding new ways of seeing and understanding:

> The time-consuming writing process does not simply "preserve" an experience (as a mnemonics technique); more importantly, it slows down its processing. In writing, one focuses on an event anew, thus intensifying the memory of it (Hirschauer, 2006, p. 428).

Hirschauer argues that observational contexts tend to move at a quick pace, which is also the case within performance research. Shifts in body language, changing tones of voice, eye-contact, mood and atmosphere can alter significantly during the course of a conversation, rehearsal or performance event. Writing allows for the possibility of homing in on specific moments which may have been as brief as a few seconds. This is not to say though that language somehow ties down the encounter, as Clough points out, '[l]anguage does not describe … but rather language glances *off* objects just as it "glances off" experience' (2002, p.16; *original emphasis*).

Words cannot replicate reality but can offer a deep and long lasting impression of the world we inhabit. Good writing can be powerful, evocative and insightful. We only have to reflect upon the poetry of Wilfred Owen or Siegfried Sassoon to see the power and beauty of the written word. In the opening verses to *Dulce Et Decorum Est* Owen portrays with vivid accuracy the reality of the First World War. To understand the potential for language however, brings into question concerns of truth and validity (at least from a research perspective). Foucault suggests:

> At the heart of the problem of truth there is ultimately a problem of communication, of transparency of the words of a discourse. The person who has the capacity to formulate truths also has a power, the power of being able to speak the truth and to express it in the way he wants (Foucault, 2000, p.299).

In the aforementioned example of WWI poetry, Owen and Sassoon were both soldiers and experienced the full horrors of war.[3] Because of this there is a certain kind of poetic truth in their writing. Semi-autobiographical by nature, the poems offer a harsh account of life (and death) in battle and in the trenches. In the postscript to the play text *Copenhagen* Frayn manages to side-step concerns of truth and authenticity, claiming the privilege and sanctuary of fictional status.[4] Clough, on the other hand, uses fictional narratives to make sense of educational life-stories. His characters and stories spring from observational records and data but are also creations of experience and imagination. With reference to truth and one particular story, he writes:

> After three days of looking for Nick [in the transcriptions] I found him in my imagination … my understanding of others – in this case Nick and his school – came not from data spilling from tea-chests, nor from reading any of the literature but, indeed, from a setting aside of those things; and from a simple act of imagination that could only have sprung from my own experience. It doesn't matter whether what I wrote about Nick took place in fact; it takes place in an act of imagination driven by profound symbols; the event symbolises in a way which data and analysis could never do (Clough, 2002, p.17).

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[3] Wilfred Owen died in battle in November 1918. He was 25 years old.

[4] With reference to the play Copenhagen, Frayn writes:

> 'The great challenge facing the storyteller and the historian alike is to get inside people's heads, to stand where they stood and see the world as they saw it, to make some informed estimate of their motives and intentions – and this is precisely where recorded and recordable history cannot reach. Even when all the external evidence has been mastered, the only way into the protagonists' head is through the imagination. This indeed is the substance of the play' (2000, p.97).

To some extent the narratives running throughout this thesis may also be considered as stories in that, as Clough (2002) has shown, ethnographic writing is a kind of fiction, albeit a particular kind. I have also sought to counterbalance my own stories alongside those of others and in particular the words of research participants. But, I have not created new characters or personas and the writing refers to actual events, rehearsals and performances that occurred during the course of the doctoral study. I am aware though, to paraphrase Polkinghorn (2007), that transcripts are not mirrored reflections of reality. Writing may allude to a certain historical accuracy – in terms of the technical aspects (what happened, when and with whom). But, for an objective truth this is, perhaps, as far as the written document can travel. Writing is inter-subjective, dialogic and interwoven into other discourses and frames of reference. From this perspective, we might say that the crisis of representation has shifted towards the "crisis of legitimation".

The argument here then, is that whilst there is a gap between memory and time *and* words and praxis, writing can offer new ways of engaging with and making sense of human experience. This is not to say that language somehow overshadows the lived event or, conversely, that words run counter to embodied praxis. Clough, for example, has demonstrated that narrative fictions enable the researcher to put into writing tacit ways of knowing that cannot easily be conveyed in conventional empirical data. For me though, writing (even as a deeply uncertain exercise) allows for the personal, subjective and inter-subjective to emerge and jostle alongside the broader scope and aims of the research inquiry.

I.4 Ebb and Flow

This chapter has begun by outlining the difficulty of finding a sequential through-line and I have raised concerns of memory and narrative time. I have also considered the crisis of representation with regard to language and lived and embodied experience. These have been fleeting considerations and will be articulated more fully as the thesis unfolds. My intention here is to alert the reader, from the outset, to the complexity of putting into words experiential and participatory performance research. Essentially there are two pathways through the thesis. The first concerns the development of a distinctive performance methodology that bridges drama and live art. This makes an important (and I believe necessary) contribution to creative learning in the context of primary school education and has particular and special benefits for disadvantaged and marginalised children. Second to this (but equally as important) there has been a philosophical inquiry into how meaning(s) have been made (and unmade) both in praxis and in writing.

Towards this aim, I have interrogated the meaning-making process from the vantage-point of phenomenological and post-structural thinking and refer to Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and Derrida. In particular, I have appropriated Heidegger's philosophy of interpretation. *Being and Time* is a substantial volume of work dealing with phenomenological concerns of being-in the world, interpretation, care and time. For this inquiry I refer, in a limited way, to Heidegger in order to explore the phenomenological qualities of performance and also to provide a critical framework to examine concerns of interpretation with respect to the research inquiry. Similarly, I have positioned arguments of legitimacy and truth from Foucault's writing on *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth.* I am not suggesting, however, that

my thesis is about phenomenology or post-structuralism, nor is it Heideggerian, Derridean or Foucauldian in its perspective.[5] To borrow a Deleuze and Guttari motif I have followed certain lines of flight that make sense of the ebb and flow between observation, action and participation and also transcription, reflection, critical analysis, writing (and re-writing).

What remains then, is an uncertain account of the journey taken. But for the benefit of the reader I have constructed a through-line of sorts - from the point when I began the study, initiated and conducted praxis through to the written submission. However, I would much rather see such marks in the context of marking a circle around points of concern and interest. Whilst the anchors remain fixed (since I do not wish to let the study lapse in a spiral of continual deferment) there is also room for considerable movement, flux, flow and change. Moreover, such anchorage allows readers to navigate their own route through rather than being led towards teleological closure.

Now that key arguments have been set-up, we are able to move onto the study itself. I initiated the PhD as a pedagogic inquiry into the potential for live art to facilitate a sense of personal and social development for primary school children. Over the course of the

[5] I am aware that there is a certain tension between early twentieth century philosophy and later poststructural criticism. Dreyfus, for example, offers an interesting insight into the relationship between Heidegger and Foucault, with respect to being and power. He offers that, 'it might be illuminating to see how far the comparison of Heidegger's "Being" with Foucault's "Power" can be pushed [given that] Heidegger's and Foucault's concerns converge upon the transformation that issues in modernity and our current understanding of things and of human beings' (Dreyfus, 2004, n.p). I do not wish to enter into this argument though – as my consideration of Foucault and Heidegger concerns them separately and to engage with the relativity of these standpoints would be to digress from the thesis.

inquiry, I broaden my approach to include drama. In the following section I will outline my reasons for bridging drama with live art. This begins with an overview of the research methodologies employed in the study. Next, I outline my initial rationale along with an extract from my RD1a (PhD proposal). I have referred to this document because it offers a useful insight into my original aims and intentions. Moreover, it provides an important benchmark to consider how (and to what extent) my thinking, praxis and methodology progressed and evolved over the duration of the study. This is followed with a description of the research setting and location before concluding with a breakdown of each chapter and the main research findings contained within them.

I.5 Methodology

In many respects, methodology in this study has been unconventional. First of all, this is a practice-as-research submission in the context of educational research. Four projects were created in two primary schools over a four-year period: *Misguide to Park Road* (2006); *Sounds* (2007); *Heroes and Villains* (2008) and *Robin and the Pirate Letters* (2009). In a historical overview of practice-as-research Piccini suggests that '[there are] fundamental epistemological issues that can only be addressed in and through practice' (2002, n.p). Similarly, my performance work with children has informed the research trajectory and development for the study. Crucially, I do not set out to provide a way of working for teachers, or a practical guide to be emulated, but instead use performance as an embodied methodology in order to engage philosophically and critically with the research inquiry. I refer to my own work as praxis (rather than practice) because, following on from Freire (1970), I see knowledge and understanding as not only embedded in practice but also

dialogically active. We might say that praxis is a tacit and experiential research methodology. With this in mind, I deal with praxis thematically rather than contextually (I provide an account of the four projects in a prelude to the main findings, which follows this chapter).

It is worth pointing out, though, that praxis has been undertaken in the context of a school environment. It would have been inappropriate, therefore, to showcase my work to an outside audience (as this would have created unnecessary stress for the school). Moreover, I have been concerned with developing a collaborative response with children and teachers and wanted the children to take ownership of their own work. For this reason, I deal with the four projects within the main body of the thesis, rather than documenting and video recording the process. Due to data protection and ethical codes of conduct when working with children I have not taken photographs of rehearsals and performance work and use the appendices for illustrative purposes. I have included, though, a photograph of the school and a few images from the projects *Misguide to Park Road* and *Robin and the Pirate Letters* because we produced art work and drawings for these two projects.

Practice-as-research was not a strategy envisaged at the beginning of the study. I intended to work at three junior schools in Stoke-on-Trent, beginning with Park Road Junior School (a pseudonym chosen by the Head Teacher of the school). Ultimately, I wished to draw together my findings and conclude upon the effectiveness of live art, which could be disseminated to school teachers and performance practitioners. However, I began to see performance not as an end product but as an integral part of the research process.

Methodologically, I entered into a debate with my own practice, which allowed for a more critical and philosophically nuanced understanding to emerge. For this reason, I realised that to transfer the study to another setting would disrupt the relationship I had built up with children and teachers. It had taken time and experience to set-up the first project and this could not be carried to another setting. It was also important that praxis developed from the perspective of the child and that proximity, rather than objectivity, was the most effective method for realising this aim. I decided to focus the study at Park Road Junior School and it was only when I needed to find a sense of distance that I moved the inquiry to another school. A full account of this argument can be found in chapters three and five of the thesis.

It should also be noted that methodology refers not only to practice-as-research, but also the way data has been assembled and gathered. I am interested in the crisis of representation and the relationship between embodied experience and writing. Therefore, I was anxious to connect the experience of my participants to my own writing, because this had been overlooked in my MA dissertation. Prior to 2004, I was the award leader for all performing arts provision at a further education college and had examined student work for the dissertation. I came to understand though, that any claims I had made, regarding the suitability and appropriateness of live art at post-16 level, had emerged from my own assumptions, desires and needs. Student voices were notably absent. In the concluding chapter of my MA I had written:

> In the learning encounters described … I am the one defining the learning event (student voices are absent, left unrecorded). It might be concluded therefore, that

> decisions about teaching and learning in live art are based upon my own gendered, cultural and ideological standpoints (Piasecka 2005, p. 97).

For this study, I was keen to decentre and challenge the authority of my own voice with the deliberate inclusion of other kinds of utterances. Accordingly, I intended to construct the thesis to include the writing and voices of my research participants. However, as I moved into the writing-up process, I began to see the impossibility of realising this aim. The inclusion of other voices does not automatically resolve the crisis of representation or indeed the crisis of legitimation. Another voice may serve to unsettle the author from a central position, but the words (and writing) of others does not ensure objectivity and is, similarly, subject to the same kinds of fluxes of meaning as the author's.

In response, I adopted a messy style of writing. I found that different kinds of writing allowed for "polyphonous" account of the research process (Edwards *et al*, 2004). For this reason, I placed narrative and descriptive modes of expression alongside critical writing as another way to theorise data. Stories and performance texts have allowed me to transgress more formal forms of scholarly activity in order to see the study from multiple vantage-points. Children's fiction, in particular *Peter Pan* and *Winnie-the Pooh,* has enabled me to engage with critical theory from the perspective of the child and also serves as a reminder of the main focus of the inquiry. I have used the stage plays *Copenhagen* (Frayn, 2000) and *The Love of the Nightingale* (Wertenbaker, 1996) to illustrate key concerns by way of analogy and imaginative example. In many ways, concerns about language and meaning have permeated the thesis and have been a significant factor in the conceptual and philosophical growth of the study. Whilst language and meaning cannot

be easily untangled from other related concerns, a fuller account of this process can be found in chapter four.

Subsequently, I arrived at a way of working which assembled qualitative methodologies taken from different disciplines, performance styles and research paradigms. The end result is a bricolage of sorts – which seeks not to unify but rather, to open-out and mobilise the inquiry. But, of course, these changes did not happen overnight and I have not sought to hide the evolution of praxis in the thesis. Similarly, I have not attempted to rub out periods of uncertainty and confusion in the written submission. The reader will encounter moments of genuine insight and advancement along with instances of failure. Ultimately, the study does not provide a performance methodology for children in all kinds of situations and learning environments. Nor, have I found a singular research methodology that captures embodied and experiential praxis in writing. However, these reflexive findings do not wholly undermine the effectiveness, or indeed the quality of my research investigation since such struggles indicate the conceptual and philosophical maturity of the study. It is fair to say that the distance travelled to reach the final submission has been vast. One reason is that sometimes we can only engage with something (a moment, event, conversation or an idea), after we experience it. This is particularly the case for practice-as-research, but also for ethnographic and anthropological methodologies that situate the researcher within the field.

I.6 Rationale

I began the fieldwork for my doctoral thesis in November 2005, after completing my MA dissertation. In many respects my initial proposal and subsequent fieldwork can be traced back to my MA viva examination, which had taken place earlier that year. My MA dissertation had explored live art study and practice in the post-16 curriculum, with particular reference to the 1999 and 2002 BTEC National Diploma in Performing Arts. The examining panel were keen to discuss the pedagogic and creative potential of live art within educational settings. It was suggested that I had, effectively, articulated the tensions, conflicts and struggles in between structural and post-structural interpretations of educational and performance discourse. However, the potential for live art to foster unique teaching and learning opportunities had remained unresolved.

Underpinning this was the view that whilst post-structural analyses had freed restrictions *I* had perceived to be in place (within the post-16 curriculum) it had also opened out, rather than answered, the issue of live art as a pedagogic practice, a point which I readily acknowledged:

> In the course of writing this dissertation I was prepared for the possibility that live art, its study and practice, may not be feasible in the post-16 performing arts curriculum (and at times, envisaged such an outcome). I did anticipate however, some kind of closure to the study. I did not, as is the case, expect to find that I would be left with so many uncertainties, ambiguities and spaces left open in this area of research (Piasecka, 2005, p.99).

At what became a crucial point in the viva examination (at least from my perspective) the panel suggested that I might consider PhD study to explore live art from the vantage – point of the primary school curriculum. This would not only address the space(s) left open in my MA but also propel the issue of live art from an aesthetic concern to a pedagogic one. In this way I could also revisit arguments made in my MA: and fill the space left by deconstructive critiques (see Grady, 1996).[6] Whether the panel's comments were intended as a passing remark or a serious recommendation is unknown. Nonetheless, I took it to offer unique and exciting educational opportunities. It is worth including a few lines from my PhD proposal (RD1a),[7] as it provides a valuable insight into my original aims and intentions. In the following extract I am describing the potential benefits of live art at primary school level. I have pivoted key arguments upon ideas of social and cultural inclusion and personal and emotional development:

RD1a Extract

The main reason for a multi-centric and multi-perspectival approach to teaching and learning [like live art] is because it is intrinsically valuable; especially in fostering creative approaches. In live art, children are working from inside their own intellectual, psychological, cultural and spiritual selves and are required to enter into meaning-making discourse, which may encourage personal, social and cultural development

[6] Grady suggests, '[w]hile a deconstructive paradigm allows for a substantive critique, it often leaves a vague sense of despair. How to redress the void is my ongoing project as I continue to struggle with refiguring my role as a qualitative researcher and practitioner' (1996, p.69).

[7] Extract from RD1a has been edited for ease of reading.

(Garoian, 1999). Against the backdrop of the audit culture (Stronach et al, 2002; Strathern 2000), live art has the potential to offer the child valuable time and space in which to explore where she comes from and the kinds of issues and challenges to be faced. Because live art is situated within lived experience it invites the child to consider what they actually think about their work. Live art is an open dialogue; it is a place, 'where the disenfranchised and disembodied become visible' (LDA, 2004, p.2). With its resistance to category or academy and its rejection of the virtuosic it seeks to reward originality and personal experience as true experience. Since some primary-aged children already consider themselves in negative contexts of failure, live art has considerable potential in helping children create a genuine relation to the self and in facilitating their social and emotional development.

The main reason for promoting live art is that it prioritises lived experience beyond that of formal and finished outcomes. Live art is more about mapping personal and task-based issues to performance work rather than being concerned with a polished performance. Unlike a conventional dramatic play text, the sequential and processional structure of the work in terms of what, why, when and how emerges through practical engagement. Here, structure is found and grown rather than externally realised in the form of acts/scenes/characters and so forth. It is embedded within the work rather than acting as an external guide or measurement of progress. In this respect, the process of making live art can be similar to devising ensemble-based theatre. As Oddey (1996), has shown, the breadth and diversity of devised work often depends upon the varied and differing kinds of perspectives and experiences individual participants bring to the devising process.

From a pedagogic perspective, an inclination towards process may counter current outcome driven agendas in the primary curriculum and enable a greater equality between children. For example, the use of conventional narrative devices (role-play and script work) may improve literacy for some children, but may also prevent other children from taking part. In Stoke-on-Trent ethnic minorities make up 15% of the school population and whilst many of these children will be English speaking there will be a significant number with English as a second language. Hence, live art may offer another differentiated entry point to learning.

Live art also challenges established notions of virtuosity. Children are able to bring whatever interests or skills they have to their work, including: writing, visual art, movement and sound, without worrying too much about bench-marked standards. The pedagogic implications of this perspective are significant since it shifts focus away from concerns of ability, talent and standards, dependent upon subjective bias and closed cannons of practice. Live art invites personal subjectivities to operate and children are not judged on their ability to be funny or clever or talented. Put simply, children are able to show their work in collaborative and non-judgmental contexts. For children, struggling with low self-esteem and confidence issues, live art potentially provides a safe place in which to move from a marginalized position to a visible one. Moreover, the participatory nature of performance 'makes it possible for all observers to become participants and all participants, creators of cultural meaning' (Garoian, 1999, p.67).

I recognise that live art is a potentially risky subject matter for the primary curriculum. The history of live art covers a great deal of practice that would be unethical or unwise to share with primary school children. Indeed, as part of my MA dissertation I examined the more controversial aspects of live art, with specific reference to the performance work of Ron Athey and Franko B. Ron Athey is a performance artist, whose most infamous work: *Four Scenes from a Harsh Life* (1994) involved the carving on the back of a HIV-positive performer and the offering of "bloody block prints" to the audience. Born to a family of devout churchgoers, Athey's work often has a strong religious and spiritual dimension and is immersed in Christian iconography. What makes his performance work so challenging is the deliberate distance he places between himself and the church. His work, often performed at nightclub venues, juxtaposes religious iconography with sexual references, intravenous drug taking and homosexuality. Ron Athey is currently working on: *Pleading in the Blood, the Art of Ron Athey* (edited by Dominic Johnson) due for publication in 2012. Franko describes himself as a visual artist and painter, who works primarily in performance. Similar to Ron Athey, his performance work often entails the use of blood. In *I Miss You* (Fierce Festival, Birmingham, 2000) he walks the length of a catwalk, white and naked, whilst bleeding from open veins. His work is unflinching and uncompromising in its execution. Whether you are viewing Franko's work as part of an audience, or alone in a small room, there is a sense of intimacy and closeness, which at the same time conflicts with the actuality of his physical presence, his nakedness and blood. His latest performances includes: *I'm Thinking of You,* (2010).

Crucially, for this study, I am interested in subject-orientated praxis and not in artist work per se and felt it unnecessary to cover previously argued ground. Therefore, I have not undertaken case studies of my selected artists or a historical overview of live art because it is not relevant to this particular study. Rather, I refer to practitioner work in order to make sense of my own work with children and teachers. This said, I have been drawn to certain practitioners and artists as the qualities inherent in their work have made sense of my own praxis; albeit at a theoretical level. In particular, I refer to Marina Abramović and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's performance practice and writing. Abramović's work illustrates the participatory and transformational power of performance, based upon ideas of being in the moment and experiential learning. Heathfield writes that Abramović makes work 'in the conviction that the communicative power of art rests, not simply in the object, but in the transfer of force and energy between the body of the artist and the spectator' (2004, p.145). A similar concern of my own work has been to develop communication and participation between my research participants and their wider school community. Abramović's writing on immediacy and experience has made an important contribution to this debate. Gómez-Peña also offers a valuable insight into live art pedagogy, from the perspective of the artist and his writing on belonging and border crossings have been an invaluable resource, both from a praxis and qualitative research inquiry perspective.

Live art though can be a difficult and challenging art form as artists often prioritise concerns of the body, sexuality, identity, race and gender. The two aforementioned artists are no exception. Their work can be unflinching and uncompromising in its execution. The body's relationship to danger, pain and mortality has been a feature in both their

works: for example, in Rhythm 5 (1974) Abramović lost consciousness, due to a loss of oxygen, whilst lying inside a burning star. In other works, most notably of the Rhythm series, she has tested bodily and psychological barriers to the utmost limit. Phelan writes that 'Abramović … learned during the 1970s that the border crossing traversed within performances that work on the art/life divide might be seen as a kind of rehearsal for that other crossing, the one between life and death' (2004, p.19). Similarly, in Ex-Centris (2003) Gómez-Peña presents difficult images of the human body. In defence of his art, he writes:

> Performing against the backdrop of the mainstream bizarre has been a formidable challenge. My colleagues and I have explored the multi-screen spectacle of the Other-as-Freak by decorating and "enhancing" our brown bodies with special-effects make-up, hyper-ethnic motifs, hand-made "low-rider" prosthetics and braces, and what we term "useless" or "imaginary" technology. The idea is to heighten features of fear and desire in Anglo imagination, and spectacularise [sic] our extreme identities, so to speak, with the clear understanding that these identities have already been affected by the surgery of the global media (Gómez-Peña, 2004, p.163).

The ethical considerations of live art have been considerable and I have stepped lightly in my approach, ensuring that all work undertaken in schools is ethically sound and appropriate for age group and circumstance. (A substantive exploration of this point can be found in chapter two of this thesis). As I entered into the study though, I encountered difficulties with live art. This was not because of the ethics of its practice, historical and current, but because I realised that open-ended learning strategies (as exemplified in live art) are not always in the best interests of the child. Some children - and particularly those

with special educational needs - struggled with the fluidity and openness of process-based practice; particularly in the context of a primary school curriculum dominated with outcome-driven agendas. On the one hand, I remained committed to the qualities expressed in the initial RD1a proposal, such as concerns of self-expression, subjectivity and personal experience. But, on the other hand, I came to see the value in established school drama, particularly in the development of communication-based skills in listening and speaking.

This prompted a change in focus towards a performance pedagogy that bridged drama and live art. This however, was not an easy adjustment to make and I battled for some time to hold on to a notion of live arts. But, my desire to continue with my initial research proposal was offset against the immediate needs of my research participants, who were similarly struggling. A key component of live art pedagogy is the ability to challenge one's own practice and in doing so, transferring the relationship of power. This is an important skill to establish if children are to attain personal and social agency. I realised though, that critical engagement depends upon good and open dialogue between participants. Children who had already experienced exclusion and marginality within the school environment were less able to initiate and maintain shared dialogue. For this reason the third project undertaken at the school worked towards building communication skills based upon ideas of friendship, inclusion and participation as part of the workshop process. To support this project I utilised a wide range of performance methods, qualities and styles taken from my own teaching, live art and established school drama: in particular, Meyerhold's Methods of Physical Action and Boal's Forum Theatre.

Perhaps it is not surprising then that four very different projects were created as part of the thesis. Overall, I worked directly with 90 children, all from a junior school in Stoke-on-Trent and also a primary school in Cheshire East. Additionally, I came into contact with many more children as audience members/spectators or in my role as a participant observer. The first project, *Misguide to Park Road* (2006) is probably the closest example of live art pedagogy, whereas, the third project, *Heroes and Villains* (2008), offers the best illustration of how the study shifted ground. I have taken a thematic, critical and philosophical approach to praxis which can be found in part three of this submission.

I.7 Research Setting

The research setting has a special significance in the thesis, particularly in terms of praxis. I have drawn upon Gieryn's assertion that 'place is not just a setting, backdrop, stage or context for something else that becomes the focus of sociological attention, nor is it a proxy for demographic, structural, economic, or behaviour variables' (2000, p.466). As such, the school has been more than just a place to undertake research and I have found that children and teachers imbue all kinds of meanings (shared and contradictory) to the spaces they occupy. In praxis, I have examined the significance of place and space from a formal and symbolic perspective (see Hetherington 1998) in conjunction with the *Oneiric* dimension of space (see Boal 1995). In particular, I have considered the relationship between place and space, identity formation and concerns of belonging and exclusion. A full account of this perspective can be found in chapter 7: *Fishing in Puddles, Place and*

Space in Performance Research. Given this focus, it would be useful to provide a brief description of the research setting. [8]

Located in the city of Stoke-on-Trent, Park Road Junior School is an archetypal Victorian building. Built in 1894, the school is surrounded by high walls and an imposing brick turret. The central feature is the hall, with newer classrooms and corridors leading into it. The lower school is separated from the upper school by means of a corridor. The library is in the entranceway to the foyer and there are two special rooms for additional support needs and counselling. The playground is a large rectangular area of concrete enclosed by doors, windows, brick walls and gates. Over the course of my observation period a mini city-garden was added in the playground for children to grow their own fruit and vegetables. An outside classroom and a climbing wall were also added. As an urban setting the school lacks green fields and wide open spaces and for the casual visitor it can feel cramped. Nonetheless, it is a bright building and many drawings, photographs, posters, poems and stories cover walls, doors and classrooms. In 2006, there were 252 children on roll, ages ranging from 7-11, with an above average proportion of children entitled to free school meals. The majority of children are White British with some children from outside the United Kingdom with English as their second language.

[8] In the vast majority of cases, research findings refer to *Park Road Junior School*. However, a fourth project, *Robin and the Pirate Letters* (2009), was undertaken at a South Cheshire primary school. Set in a semi-rural location, this is a very different kind of location and building and, children enjoy extensive playground facilities and green fields. Here, entitlement to free school dinners is well below the national average and despite taking children from 4-11 it is a smaller school than *Park Road Junior*. In 2008, 197 children were on roll. As a satellite project, I have identified instances when I am referring to this school.

Similarly, the geographical location for the study has been an important semiotic indicator, not just in terms of a context, but also in the kinds of meanings and assumptions brought to the study. Locally known as *the Potteries,* Stoke-on-Trent spans more than twelve miles across six towns: Hanley, Fenton, Stoke, Longton, Burslem and Tunstall; an urbanised archipelago of sorts. There are six Nursery Schools, seventy one Primary Schools, four Special Schools, sixteen Secondary Schools, two Pupil Referral Units and fourteen Children's Centres.[9] The racial background for Stoke is predominantly White British with Pakistani and Bangladeshi as the second biggest ethnic group. For the city's schools, the vast majority of children are White. But, it is estimated that by 2021, 'the population of Pakistani or Bangladeshi family origins is likely to grow by four thousand to reach nine thousand [and] children from populations other than White … will make up around 9% of children' (Simpson *et al*, 2005, p.3).

Historically, Stoke-on-Trent has an important place in the industrial revolution. It is the birthplace of Wedgwood Pottery (1795) and also Moorcroft Pottery (1897). It is a history well documented[10] but it would be worth pointing out a few significant details. For example, *The Leopard*, a public house in the town of Burslem, once owned by Charles Darwin (1850), was a meeting place for Josiah Wedgwood, Thomas Bentley, Erasmus Darwin and James Brindley to discuss the cutting of the Grand Trunk Canal (1765). The

[9] Information cited from: *Directory of schools and children's centres in Stoke-on-Trent*, September 2010, Stoke.gov.uk

[10] In *A Century of the Potteries*, 2010, Alan Taylor offers a photographic history of the city Stoke-on-Trent. Dating from 1900 the photographs show the city in economic prosperity, the War and Post War Years and in economic decline.

canal, later known as the Trent and Mersey, was a key factor in the growth of the industrial revolution. The inland waterways carried bone, clay, coal and later steel across the Midlands to factories, mills and pot-banks. It was a symbiotic relationship: for example, *The Princess,* a steam-power grinding wheel[11] in Jesse Shirley's bone and flint mill in Etruria (1857) was powered by coal delivered by narrow-boats using the canals.

Architecturally, the city's buildings refer to an age when Stoke-on-Trent played a vital role in the nation's economy. Tall, spindly brick chimneys and round-bellied pot-banks jut out across the sky line. The novelist Arnold Bennett offers an evocative image of historical Stoke. The following extract, from *Clayhanger* is commonly thought to refer to the town of Burslem:

> In front, on a little hill in the vast valley, was spread out the Indian-red architecture of Bursley - tall chimneys and rounded ovens, schools, the new scarlet market, the grey tower of the old church, the high spire of the evangelical church, the low spire of the church of genuflexions, and the crimson chapels, and rows of little red with amber chimney-pots, and the gold angel of the blackened town hall topping the whole. The sedate reddish browns and reds of the composition, all netted in flowing scarves of smoke, harmonised exquisitely with the chill blues of the chequered sky. Beauty was achieved, and none saw it (Bennett, 1910, p.20).

But, in recent years, jobs in the pottery industries have been hard to find. Many of the city's pot-banks have closed down along with heavy-based industrial factories (Shelton

[11] *The Princess* is maintained at the Etruria Industrial Museum and is fired seven times a year.

Bar steelworks is one such example[12]). Stoke-on-Trent fell into a deep and long-lasting social and economic decline. According to Barkham, 'three decades ago, more than 50,000 people worked in the potteries; now 6,000 do. Stoke has one of the lowest proportions of people in employment in England and Wales' (Barkham, 2008, p.8). In some parts of the city deprivation is high. Statistical data, including health reports, are not encouraging. According to the Department of Health:

> The health of the people of Stoke-on-Trent is generally worse than the England average. This reflects the level of deprivation in Stoke-on-Trent, with over half the population living in the most deprived fifth of areas in England. Men from the least deprived areas can expect to live over 5 and half years longer than those in the most deprived areas, whilst with women this difference is nearly 7 years. Children in poverty, teenage pregnancy and violent crime are all higher than the England average while GCSE achievement is lower (APHO, 2009, n.p).

Politically, Stoke-on-Trent is a Labour stronghold but there is a growing perception that the city is swinging towards far right extremism. The British National Party made significant gains in the city of Stoke for council elections. In the years between: 2006-2010 the BNP held between nine and five seat. In 2010, Nick Griffin launched the Election Manifesto in the city, describing Stoke as the "Jewel in the Crown" for the Party. In the 2011 council elections the BNP loses all five seats to Labour. In addition to poverty, one reason cited for the rise of the British National Party is a perceived physical and geographical separation between ethnic groups in the city which does not entirely

[12] The main works for Shelton Bar Steelworks closed in 1978. The rolling-mill was kept operational and finally shut-down in 2008, following a 159 year history.

tally with census data. Barkham cites the example of Bentilee, a ward in the East of the city, to illustrate this point. In 2008 The British National Party gained nine seats in the city council, three from Bentilee, even though 'Bentilee residents are overwhelmingly white. Census records show just 1.9% of the population is from black and ethnic minority communities' (Barkham, 2008, n.p). As a counter-response, Community-art initiatives such as those exemplified by Creative Partnerships, attempted to tackle cultural segregation and racism in the city schools with theatre projects such as *Game On* (Reveal Theatre).[13]

Regeneration measures for the city included improvements to the transport infrastructure, namely the re-building of the A500, the planned merger of eight high schools across the region[14] and the proposed University Quarter (2014), an ambitious regeneration project to transform further and higher educational provision in Stoke-on-Trent. Core to the project is a planned sharing of facilities between the Stoke Caldron campus (F.E College) and Staffordshire University (Science and Technology Centre; Media Hub, 2012). Similar regeneration packages were undertaken across the Midlands, for example, a proposed £40m strategic investment to revitalise key areas affected by large-scale socio-economic decline. However, under the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition (2010), there have been significant fiscal cuts, including future funding for Creative Partnerships and some

[13] *Game-On* is a community-arts initiative delivered by Revel Theatre Company. The project aims to tackle racial prejudice and promote social cohesion in Stoke-on-Trent. In 2011, there were 1500 participants from primary, junior and secondary schools in the city. For more information see Reveal Theatre.co.uk

[14] The High schools identified for merger are: St Peter's, Mitchell, Berry Hill, James Brindley, Edensor, Brownhills, Blurton and Trentham, to be replaced with five academies.

regeneration schemes have been withdrawn or put onto hold for the foreseeable future. For example, as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, 2010, projects scheduled to be withdraw include: *Creative Partnerships*; *Building Schools for the Future (BSF*); *A Night Less Ordinary*; Free Swimming for the under 16s and over 60s; *Streetcar,* a £65m Shuttle Bus scheme for the city of Stoke-on-Trent.

Taking all this into account the outlook for Stoke-on-Trent does not appear promising. I have seen, at first hand, the consequences of social and educational deprivation. I have observed children without socks and proper school uniform, those at risk of school exclusion, those in the care system, and I have dealt with challenging and highly disruptive behaviour. Notwithstanding these concerns, this inquiry affords a more complicated and contradictory view of the city. I have worked with highly imaginative children and teachers and have seen the most restrictive and unlikely of spaces transform into vibrant and creative learning environments. Despite the barriers to learning some children face, Park Road Junior School is a happy school. There is a clear sense of community and teachers work hard to provide support and extra activities and visits to museums and parks are commonplace. My own perceptions of the research setting and location matured considerably over the course of the study and this has been addressed in praxis and in writing-up.

I.8 Structure

Structurally, this document falls into four main sections. Part one introduces the main ideas and concerns for the thesis. Part two explores the contextual background for the

doctoral study. I begin with a prelude, which is a straightforward, descriptive account of the four projects undertaken for the study. I then move onto explore educational policy, creativity, ethics and methodology. Part three refers to praxis and participant observation undertaken over a four-year period. I take a thematic and philosophical approach to praxis, divided into four separate, but inter-connected, chapters. Part four draws together praxis and writing in order to conclude upon the effectiveness of the thesis and its benefits for primary school children and teachers.

Chapter one sets out the creative context for primary education over a ten-year period: 2000 - 2010. Post millennium, the political and economic landscape for education changed considerably and teachers and practitioners have seen substantial shifts at the level of rhetoric, policy-making and practice. This chapter focuses primarily on Craft's (2005) assertion that, post-millennium, creativity experienced a resurgence of popularity. Buckingham and Jones (2001) see this as a "cultural turn" towards the creative industries in the wake of New Labour gaining electoral power in 1997. As a consequence, a number of initiatives were launched to promote creativity in schools, notably: The National Primary Strategy for Creativity across the Curriculum (2003) and Creative Partnerships (2002). Hall and Thompson noted 'a more urgent agenda, about standards and accountability, took precedence' (2007, p.316). Accountability, rather than creativity steered policy directives. For example, national testing introduced by the Conservative government (1991) was continued and extended to 14 year-olds (1998)[15] and more

[15] SATs for 14 year-olds were withdrawn in 2008.

radically there was a redesign of the primary curriculum to allow for the national literacy and number hour (1998; 1999).

The tension between the creative agenda and top-down educational policies has given some concern. Hall and Thompson put it this way:

> Policy commitment to the cultural turn would necessitate some loosening of the government stranglehold on the school curriculum and acceptance of a degree of autonomy amongst teachers; it would also, potentially, resurrect Conservative stereotypes of liberal, woolly, arts-based curricula of the 1960s and 1970s. Creating the need to arrive at an operational definition of culture would involve confronting questions of cultural value, heritage and the canon (2007, p.318).

The pull between the creative agenda and more formalised policy initiatives has been a guiding concern for the inquiry: teachers have found themselves caught between seemingly contradictory values. This chapter examines this argument from the perspective of performance praxis, participant observation, an online forum and a conference organised by Creative Partnerships.

Chapter two provides an overview of the ethical dimensions and technicalities for the thesis. Ethics have informed the kinds of performance practice taking place, particularly in the context of live art pedagogy. I outline codes of conduct followed, in particular the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) and Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. To illustrate how ethics have been managed at practice level I consider *The Right to Withdraw* (BERA 2004) with reference

to specific examples of practice. From the vantage-point of the best interests of the child, I also examine my decision to move towards a more inclusive understanding of performance which embraced live art, drama and practitioner methodology.

Chapter three outlines the methodological underpinnings to the PhD with specific reference to praxis and participant observation. I have positioned the thesis in between the liveness of the performance text, observation and interpretation, drawing upon Conquergood's assertion that '[t]he performance studies project makes its most radical interventions, I believe, by embracing both written scholarship and creative work, papers and performances' (2004, p.318). Rather than privileging the written text at the expense of practice (or vice versa) I sought to find dialogue and movement. To explain the methodologies in play in the thesis, I have examined praxis and participant observation from an interpretative vantage-point. The purpose of this chapter is to point the reader towards the main concerns and interests guiding the development of thought and practice. This chapter also includes a break-down of the four projects undertaken as part of the thesis.

I then move on to part three of the submission which deals with the four performance projects undertaken as part of the thesis. Since the relationship between words and practice has been a guiding concern, chapter four considers more fully the crisis of representation. I have found that the kinds of meanings generated through performance practice, observed behaviour, transcription and writing, can be conflicting and contradictory. Deleuze and Guattari put it this way: 'content and expression are never

reducible to signified-signifier' (2008, p.76). To make sense then of what remains, I offer a phenomenological understanding of narrative time (Ricoeur 2000) and a post structural investigation into the relationship (and slippage) between language and meaning. To support my analysis I refer to performance practice, field notes, play text analysis and the writing of others.

Chapter five explores ideas of belonging and ownership from the vantage-point of shared and collaborative practice. The question of what it is to belong (to an identity, a community and even a methodology) is important to consider, particularly when writing about performance because such contexts are continually changing and evolving. I have followed Conquergood's assertion that it is our proximal relation to the research field where meanings are made. I break down this argument into three themes: (1) the borders between paradigms of practice; (2) proximities of belonging; (3) belonging and ownership. By way of illustration, I have considered the performance work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña, with specific reference to his writings on border-crossings and La Postra Nocha's performance *Ex-Centris* (2003). In terms of my own praxis I refer specifically to two projects: *Heroes and Villains* (2008) and *Robin and the Pirate Letters* (2009).

Chapter six explores the relationship between process and outcome with specific reference to live art. Heathfield asserts that '[l]ive Artists bring the spectator into the present moment of the making and unmaking of meaning' (2004, p.9). The performance artist Marina Abramović describes this as a "direct transmission of energy" (2004). For Garoian, live art offers unparalleled educational benefits. Live art is situated within lived

experience and as such allows understanding to emerge from subject-orientated positions. Furthermore, live art is an emancipatory pedagogy since, 'the performance of subjectivity can re-position and emancipate students from hegemonic discourses and practices [and establish them] in centralized positions of power' (Garoian, 1999, p.8). I have come to realise though, that qualities of openness, fluidity and experimentation embraced in live art do not sit so well within an outcome-driven, target-focused curriculum. Moreover, some children struggle to find a voice to critique their own practice (and their relationship to others). At a pivotal point in study I shifted emphasis towards a broader application of performance. From this point onwards performance praxis evolved to meet the best interests of the child (and the group) rather than seeking to establish live art pedagogy. I examine this shift of focus with specific reference to the projects *Sounds* (2007) and *Heroes and Villains.*

Chapter seven examines the significance of place and space from a social studies and performance studies perspective. In terms of the social sciences I have drawn upon the formal and symbolic articulation of place and the representational and marginal qualities of space. To separate the two terms I adopt Certeau's definiton of space as a "practiced place" (1984). For example, Hetherington (1998) suggests that certain places act as focal point in which social identities are formed and maintained, citing city-centre landmarks and shopping malls. Similarly, children attach all kinds of values to the formal spaces they occupy. Moreover, spaces can also be marginal, representational and liminal. As one example of this argument I examine the child's relationship to the school hall. Secondly, from the perspective of praxis I adopt Boal's understanding of the oneiric dimension

(1995). The oneiric dimension is particularly relevant in performance work as these are the moments when we (as performers and spectators) are pulled into the action. In these instances the physical space simply disappears. Imagination replaces actuality and the desire to believe outweighs the reality of the present. By way of illustration I have examined the qualities of the oneiric dimension in performance work and in the games children play.

Chapter eight is the final chapter for the thesis. Here, I re-consider the crisis of representation in relation to lived and embodied praxis. For this chapter though, I propose that despite the limitations of language, writing allows us to share our experience of the world. To illustrate this point, I refer to the stage play *Copenhagen* (2000). The play has a cyclical narrative, analogised by the character Bohr with the line, 'One more draft'. In this way, Frayn shows that despite an overwhelming sense of uncertainty, Bohr and Heisenberg need to understand one another. Crucially, his characters do not reject the idea that their words and actions have significance, because, as Bohr points out, in the absence of certainty they have the meanwhile. This thesis is a product of a particular period of time, dominated by the "bureaucratisation of education" and its findings may well be temporal and provisional. But, it was also significant, and for the remainder of this chapter, I focus on the effectiveness of the research inquiry. This begins with a consideration of the distinctive nature of the study, with respect to the movement between drama and live art and also the qualities of subjectivity and participation in my performance work with children. I then move on to examine proximity as a methodological concern and propose that whilst deeply personal, a close relationship to

the research setting offers an unparalleled insight into the daily lives of children and teachers. Throughout this thesis, I adopt a language of movement and travel to describe the research trajectory. Therefore, I conclude with a consideration of the limitations of the journey and a statement, which looks towards its future potential.

Prelude

> 'I say,' cried John, 'why shouldn't we all go out!'
> Of course it was to this that Peter had been luring them.
> Michael was ready: he wanted to see how long it took him to do a billion miles.
> But Wendy hesitated.
> 'Mermaids!' said Peter again.
> 'Oo!'
> 'And there are pirates' (Barrie, 2007, p.43).

As noted in the introduction this is a practice-as-research submission. For this study, I am interested in pursuing a philosophical inquiry and have used practice to inform and shape my thinking rather than setting out a pedagogic methodology. Adjacent to this, I investigate the crisis of representation from the perspective of post structural and phenomenological standpoints. I do not offer a substantive description or contextual account of my work with children and teachers and instead look towards the potential for writing to offer new ways of engaging with performance and embodied research. For this reason, I take a thematic and critical approach to praxis and refer interchangeably to each project, depending on the context and discussion in hand. The purpose of this prelude is to offer the reader a chronological overview of the four projects and to describe, in simple terms, when and how each project took place and the kinds of data and empirical research undertaken to support the study. It should be noted from the outset that my praxis was supported with extended periods of time as a participant observer and before commencing the first project I had established a good relationship with children and teachers. I

examine the relationship between participant observation and praxis in chapter three of this submission.

Misguide to Park Road was the first project for the study and was inspired by the site work of Wrights and Sites and in particular the Exeter Misguides (2003). Here, Wrights and Sites offer an alternative version of the city map. Visitors and local residents are encouraged to explore familiar and unknown landmarks from a highly personal perspective, which '[aims] to help local people to discover the unknown side of their city and to celebrate each person's unique sense of place' (2003, n.p). Similarly, our Misguide sought to re-connect children and teachers to the school building and the places they occupy on daily basis. A broader concern of the project was to explore the forthcoming transition to secondary school for the current year six. Performance material focused on personal stories and histories drawing upon fictional, imagined, historical and factual contexts (Hodge *et al,* 2006). Children wrote and performed stories about the games they played (real and imagined), of haunted toilets and bell-towers and tales of friendships and fallouts.

There were sixty-one children taking part in the Misguide, who were divided into two separate year groups. Regular lessons were suspended for one week in order for the project to take place and I alternated my time between the two classes, working with each group either in the morning or afternoon. There were four distinct stages to the project, which ran over five full days. I began with asking the children to talk to me (and each other) about their school building and to remember the games they had played and

enjoyed. The children were keen to contribute and there was much laughter and giggling as memories were recalled and shared.

For the next stage I asked the children to take me on a guided tour and to show me where games had taken place and points of interest, which were personal and invisible to casual visitors to the school. Because I was working with two big groups I divided each year class into smaller sub-groups and asked the class teachers to help children write down their memories of school, whilst I toured the building with each sub-group. Participants pointed out a "sick bucket" which is kept in the reception area and is used when children are ill, the place where you go if you've been naughty and sent to the Head Teacher's office, a chipped brick wall, a depression in a patch of concrete, which gathers water, and the school bell-tower. As part of the tour, I encouraged participants to re-look at the building from a personal and shared perspective: for example, I was taken to a cloakroom where an impromptu disco had taken place and a wooden bench in the playground where a boy was "dumped" by his girlfriend.

For the third stage we worked on creating performance material for the Misguide. Participants produced stories, play scripts and poems and interviewed each other and the class teachers. We rehearsed mini-performances and practised narrating stories: autobiographical and fictional. To support their writing and also to offer different ways of engaging with the project, children produced tour guides, maps and posters. The maps, for example, marked out places of interest such as the "haunted bell-tower" and sites, which were personal to the participants. In the spirit of the original Exeter Misguide we

produced alternative distances for the building: for example, we calculated the number of steps between the cloakroom and reception area whilst blindfolded. We also imagined what was behind closed doors, the spaces forbidden to children: such as the teacher's staff room, the cleaning cupboard and the school kitchen. Participants drew pictures of teachers drinking coffee, eating trays of chocolates and sleeping during morning break and discussed at length whether there was a television in the staff room. We produced luggage labels and wrote short descriptive statements about the site and attached these to doors, walls, windows, brick walls and railings.

The guided tour was the fourth and final stage of the project. I divided each class into two groups, creating four performances in total. The groups took turns to show their work to each other and the guided tour lasted approximately twenty-five minutes. For the final performance we laid out A1 sheets of drawing paper and chalk in the school hall and I encouraged participants and teachers to document personal memories of school. I concluded the project with a feedback session with all participants and also with the class teachers and Head Teacher.

For data collection I photographed and copied the participants' work: drawings, maps, scripts and stories, returning them back to the school upon completion of the project. When possible, I made voice recording of group discussions with children and teachers and made extensive diary entries. I have integrated the children's work within the thesis (see chapter seven) and include two photographs of the project in the appendices. I presented a conference paper on this project at the University of Vancouver, British

Columbia, Canada (2007) and published a chapter in *Theatres of Thought: Theatre, Performance, Philosophy* (Watt and Meyer-Dinkgrafe, 2008).

The project *Sounds* was the second and most difficult project undertaking for the study. This said, the problems encountered in this project were responsible, as noted in the introduction, for shifting my practice towards a broader application of performance pedagogy. Because I had worked with such large numbers in the previous year, for this project I wanted to target a specific group. In my role as participant observer I had become aware that there were a few children who could be found regularly outside the Head Teacher's office or their classroom door. Excluded from class, the children were familiar figures and I wished to see if live art pedagogy might offer a way to integrate children at risk of becoming disenfranchised or marginalised within their school community.

The idea for *Sounds* was based on the current science topic. I was keen that the project supported the curriculum, particularly since some of the children I would be working with had already been excluded a number of times from their lessons. In science, the children were learning about sounds waves, vibrations and distance and the function of the outer, inner and middle ear and how sound travels depending on pitch and frequency. I worked with ten children, divided into two groups over an eight-week period. I worked once a week, either mornings and/or afternoons with each group depending on the availability of the children (some of the participants had educational support needs) and the school timetable.

For the first four weeks I worked broadly around the science curriculum, intending to work towards a live art performance installation. I played a comedy sound-effects c.d and asked participants to identify the sounds, we produced a sonic arts recording of early morning sounds, we played play trust games using blindfolds and attempted to write song lyrics. However, the children struggled to develop performance material in the context of live art and I came to see the value of more conventional drama. This prompted a shift in methodology and for the remaining four weeks I prioritised strategies that worked on rhythm, voice and body language and communication skills. I adapted games and exercises from Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1995) and Johnstone *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (1981). Favourite exercises included talking like "an alien" in an exercise called, *A Crocodile ate my Grandmother* and a simple clapping game in which we followed a rhythm set by a participant in the group. The group also enjoyed a drama game called *On the Spot* and we played this at the end of every session. The rules for this game are straightforward – three or four performers would be given ten seconds to prepare for a short scene based on a theme decided by the audience: for example, stuck in a lift, stranded on a desert island or winning the lottery and then losing the ticket!

In the final week I brought both groups together and prepared a showing of what we had been working on for their peer group and class teachers. For the performance we divided the school hall into three sections:

1 A soft area with cushions, rugs, music and headphones. Audience members (year five) were invited to listen to the participants' favourite songs;
2 A table and chairs, with cereal, toast, juice and milk. Participants ate breakfast and in the background we played our sonic art's recording of early morning sounds;
3 A play area. Participants demonstrated the games and exercises we had played during the project.

The play area proved to be very popular and at the request of the class teacher I brought the audience into a circle and asked the children to demonstrate their favourite games and exercises. In total the performance lasted about fifty minutes in length and involved all the year five children and two class teachers and the Head Teacher. The participants received a certificate of achievement, which was awarded to them by a local sports celebrity. Due to the difficulties I experienced in this project I have not presented the children's writing in the thesis or in the appendices and have relied on my own diary entries (for a full account of this project see chapters three and six). The focus of my inquiry has been to critique and scrutinise my own practice and for this project my own writing offers the best method of dealing with these concerns.

The project *Heroes and Villains* prioritised children struggling with low confidence and poor self-esteem. For this project I was keen to connect drama methodology and live art in order to create superhero and villain identities with my participants. I worked with six children from year five over a seven-week period for a full morning or afternoon once a week, depending on the school timetable. To establish communication and trust between

participants I began each session with a warm-up game. We worked in the school hall, the playground and the outside classroom. In week seven I met the children twice, once for a full run-through of material and the following day we presented a performance to their year group and two class teachers. The performance lasted twenty-five minutes in total, which was in two parts: a demonstration of how to throw a fireball and a Forum Theatre performance. This was followed with a feedback session with the six participants.

Not all of the work created in the seven-week period was presented to the audience, for the first four weeks we played without consideration of the final performance (I examine the relationship between process and outcome for this project in chapter six of the thesis). For example, I included an exercise called the cloak of invisibility. Whilst wearing their cloaks the children were asked to complete a series of tasks: smiling, saying hello and initiating a conversation with an agreed number of people. The participants worked in pairs and there was much laughing and giggling as the children retold their adventures back at base camp - the entrance hallway (for a full account of this exercise see chapter four).

For our heroes we discussed the superpowers we would like: flying and the ability to disappear or to make fire. I gave the participants a notebook and asked them to draw a superhero/ villain identity and to imagine special powers. We developed ways of walking, running and flying and conducted fantastical playground battles. In keeping with our theme, I introduced Meyerhold's *Methods of Physical Action* in order to show the children how to throw a fireball. Meyerhold, a student of the Russian theatre director Stanislavski,

developed a way of working referred to as biomechanics. Barba and Savarese note of Meyerhold's methods:

> If we observe a skilled worker in action, we notice the following in his movements: (1) an absence of superfluous, unproductive movements; (2) rhythm; (3) the correct positioning of the body's centre of gravity; (4) stability. Movements based on these principles are distinguished by their dance-like quality; a skilled worker at work invariably reminds one of a dancer … About a dozen biomechanical exercises were practised daily: an actor leaps onto another actor's chest, leaps down, throws a stone, shoots an arrow, slaps another actor in the face, stabs with a dagger, leaps onto the partner's back, the partner begins to run, he or she leaps down again, throws another partner on the shoulder. Or even simpler exercises: to take someone's hand, pull his or her arm, push them (1995, p.157).

We adapt Meyerhold's methods of throwing a stone, isolating and extending the hand, arm and shoulder and finding a new sense of gravity. We replace an imaginary stone with a fireball and add sound effects, leaps and falls. The children practise the exercise for the duration of the project and demonstrate the technique as part of a master class for their final performance.

As part of the project, we considered everyday heroes such as teachers, doctors and police officers. Participants interviewed each other, the Head Teacher, a dinner lady and a school governor and recorded their findings in their notebooks. Also, over two sessions the children made colourful stickers with special instructions: such as, let everyone join in and protect and be kind. The stickers were handed to the audience and integrated into the Forum Theatre aspect of the performance.

We worked for four weeks preparing a Forum Theatre performance. This followed a simple story-line about a girl who did not have friends to play with at school. In the opening scene the girl is shown sitting by herself and watching a group of children play. In the second scene the girl tries to make friends but is rejected and is laughed at by the other children. In the third scene the girl is shown sitting by herself in the classroom. It was important that the scenes had an everyday quality and that they were something the year five children could relate to. We followed broadly Boals's approach to simultaneous dramaturgy within the Theatre of the Oppressed. Of this, Boal writes:

> We would present a play that chronicled a problem to which we wanted to find a solution. The play would run its course up to the moment of crisis – the crucial point at which the protagonist had to make a decision. At this point, we would stop performing and ask the audience what the protagonist should do. Everyone would make their own suggestions. And on the stage the performers would improvise each of these suggestions till all had been exhausted (1995, p.3).

Boal describes a key a moment in the development of the Theatre of the Oppressed when a woman in the audience, who was clearly frustrated with their attempts to deal with the problem of a cheating husband, entered the stage and improvised the scene herself. For Boal, this was the birth of the spect-actor, 'in a Theatre of the Oppressed, there are no spectators, only active observers (or spect-actors). The centre of gravity is in the auditorium, not on the stage' (2005, p.40). Similarly, we encouraged the audience to take an active role in our forum theatre performance and to improvise scenes with the actor participants.

First, the participants presented the three scenes without stopping. Then, Glowing Devil explained to the audience that the scenes would run again but they should shout stop if they had an idea of how to help the girl make friends. However, rather than asking for the audience to come up with a personal and subjective response, we used the messages on the stickers the participants had made. For example, spect-actors wearing stickers which said "let everyone join in" were asked to consider the problem from that perspective. In this way, we encouraged all participants (actors and spect-actors) to explore a collective and social response to concerns of exclusion in the context of their own particular peer group.

In terms of data collection the participants reflected upon their experience in notebooks, which were kept in their possession until the completion of the project. I also documented workshops and rehearsals in diary form and interviewed the children individually and as part of a group. Rather than using the appendices, I have integrated the children's writing, conversation, performance material and drawings into the main body of the thesis, which can be found in part three of this submission.

Robin and the Pirate Letters was an early reader's project for a primary school in Cheshire East and the only project not to take place at Park Road Junior School. The original impetus for the project dated back to August 2008. I had spent the first half of the summer holiday working on a scrapbook with my six year old. To be honest, this was a thinly disguised attempt at extra schoolwork and my son, rather predictably, saw through my endeavours. I was the one sticking and gluing photographs and writing short

descriptive statements in the scrapbook, whilst he was occupied happily elsewhere. I realised I needed him to take ownership of his own learning and so the following week a letter addressed to my son appeared on the doormat. The letters followed the story of Robin whose Grandfather had been kidnapped by a band of pirates. The letters followed key words and blended sounds for foundation stage and key stage 1 and each letter included a special task. I was able to follow and support his learning from a unique hidden vantage point, particularly since my son believed he was the only person who could read the letters. The effectiveness of the letters prompted me to approach his school with a view to running the project with a larger group of children.

Robin and the Pirate Letters ran in the six-week half term leading up to the Easter holidays. There were ten letters in total (two per week), my own identity as author and creator was hidden and the project was delivered by teachers and teaching assistants at the school. I communicated directly with the Head Teacher and delivered the letters via a pirate chest the children had made with a teaching assistant. Initially, there were twelve in the sample group, in years one and two, but a teacher inadvertently gave a letter to a boy with the same name as one of the participants. Disappointed not be included he asked the Head Teacher for a "magic letter" and so I increased the group to thirteen.

Before commencement of the project I received a brief overview of the reading ability for each child. All participants had a basic level of reading but this varied considerably within the group. The letters were one to two pages in length and I focused on key words and blended sounds. Teachers and teaching assistants supported the children on a one-to-one

basis and the tasks were undertaken in small groups. With each letter there was a task to complete. For example, children were asked to draw pictures of pirates, label galleons, to work out secret codes using a 100 square number grid, to solve simple cross-words and find buried treasure. The letters were printed on parchment, individually addressed, illustrated with pen and ink drawings and sealed with wax. Each week their completed tasks were returned to me and I scanned the children's drawings into my computer and created personalised stamps. For the tenth letter I attended the school and because the children did not realise I was the author I was given the opportunity of seeing the participants take full ownership of the project.

In many respects, *Robin and the Pirate Letters* was a very different kind of project (as compared to the previous three) and it opened out new and interesting lines of inquiry. But, it also moves away from the main thrust of the study to explore performance pedagogy. However, my concern has been to explore the potential for facilitating ownership through creative pedagogy and not an examination of how children learn to read. I approach this project from the perspective of belonging, which can be found in chapter five of this thesis. Data collection is taken from my own diary entries, interview notes from my visit to the school and drawings and pictures produced by the participants during the project. In the appendices I have included a photograph of the project, a sample letter and three drawings produced by the children.

Sewing Shadows

Now that I have outlined the four projects undertaken for the study, it would be useful to explain my title for the thesis. In chapter three of the novel *Peter Pan* Wendy wakes to find Peter sobbing on the nursery floor. Unable to stick his shadow on with soap Peter falls into despair, but Wendy knows how to help him:

> 'It must be sewn on,' she said, just a little patronisingly.
> 'What's sewn?' he asked.
> 'You're dreadfully ignorant.'
> 'No, I'm not.'
> But she was exulting in his ignorance. 'I shall sew it on for you, my little man,' she said, though he was as tall as herself; and she got out her housewife, and sewed the shadow on to Peter's foot (Barrie, 2007, pp.32-3).

I include this reference because "Sewing Shadows" refers to the imaginative leap when we make performance work. It is when the desire to imagine outweighs the reality and actuality of the present. For children, the willingness to suspend disbelief works in tandem with the everyday. At these moments, even the most restrictive of space offers the potential for imaginative play. I have seen a school playground transform into a battlefield, we have fished in imaginary puddles and tunnelled through brick walls. I have seen children, normally shy and lacking in confidence, lead their friends and peers in a demonstration of how to throw a fireball in the guise of a superhero. As noted in the exercise *A Crocodile ate my Grandmother* we invent a new language and in doing so, find new ways to communicate with each other.

There is another important reason for the title of the thesis. My praxis has been characterised by the movement between drama and live art. As such, I adopted a varied and broad ranging methodological approach. But within this spectrum I committed to the idea of performance as self. We have explored performance from subject-orientated positions. In *Misguide to Park Road,* we connected personal and subjective life-stories in imaginative and wishful contexts. For *Heroes and Villains*, participants, cloaked in a shield of invisibility, became secret agents within their school community. Like shadows in the sunlight our superheroes were exaggerated versions of how the child wished to be seen. Rather than adopting another persona or character role-play was in some way part of the child's own identity. From this perspective, we might say that performance pedagogy is both familiar and strange:

> Wendy and John and Michael stood on tiptoe in the air to get their first sight of the island. Strange to say, they all recognised it at once, and until fear fell upon them they hailed it, not as something long dreamt of and seen at last, but as a familiar friend to whom they were returning home for the holidays (Barrie, 2007, p.48).

The Creative Agenda

> There are many misconceptions about creativity. Some people associate creative teaching with a lack of discipline in education. Others see creative ability as the preserve of a gifted few, rather than of the many; others associate it only with the arts. In our view, creativity is possible in all areas of human activity and all young people and adults have creative capacities. Developing these capacities involves a balance between teaching skills and understanding, and promoting the freedom to innovate, and take risks (NACCCE, 1999, p.10).

> The implication [seems to be] that the broader, richer, more creative schooling envisaged is not to come about by government intervention in the current statutory specification of the National Curriculum. Cultural activities should be enjoyable and motivating to both teachers and pupils; they should strengthen the standing of the school in the local community, connect with the requirements of the labour market – but they should support rather than interfere with the study of the statutory curriculum (Hall and Thompson, 2007, p.319).

Foreword

In the years following New Labour's election victory (1997) the creative agenda was a visible and debated concern for schools and teachers. A number of influential documents and policy directives were launched to promote creativity in schools. New funding opportunities had been made available to support teachers and classroom learning, most notably the Arts

Council initiative Creative Partnerships (2002).[16] The cultural landscape for primary education was undergoing rapid change, characterised by periods of uncertainty and unrest. I initiated a PhD study in 2005 and have experienced, at first hand, the tensions and conflicts caught up within the creative agenda. I have struggled to develop creative practice in the midst of reform, which at times appeared to be pulling in different conflicting directions.

Historically, the thesis sits within Buckingham and Jones description of the "cultural turn" towards the creative and cultural industries (2001). The word "turn" is illustrative and I would like to extend its application. In the act of turning, our attention is given over to the manoeuvre. The road ahead is unclear and our priority is to navigate the terrain. My desire to immerse praxis within the everyday lives of children and teachers meant I was not always able to see the wider context. I experienced the "cultural turn" in the moment(s) of turning and as such I am tied inextricably into the fabric of educational policy, rhetoric and practice. It is only now, at the point of submission that I am able to look back on this period of time with a sense of clarity. One reason is because the political, economic and cultural climate for the UK has shifted emphasis. Under the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition (2010) the creative agenda appears to have lost some of its momentum. There have been significant cuts for Arts Council funding, including support for Creative Partnerships. This chapter was initially

[16] According to the Creative Partnerships National External Evaluation Audit Report, 2008, 'Creative Partnerships was initially designed and funded as a pilot programme (Phase 1) from April 2002 to 31st March 2004. This phase had a budget of 40 million. Sixteen pilot areas were selected by Ministers from a list of the most economically and socially challenged neighbourhoods in England. In the July 2002 Comprehensive Spending Round, Arts Council England was awarded funding for Creative Partnerships to continue beyond the original pilot programme. DCMS committed £70 million to continue to support the existing 16 Creative Partnerships and to develop 20 new Partnerships in 2004-2006' (Wood, p.1).

written at the height of the creative agenda and I have been tempted to re-write in order to take into account recent developments and to re-position my thinking with the benefit of hindsight.

However, I am mindful of arguments presented in the introduction to the thesis, primarily those concerning narrative time and memory (Ricoeur, 2000). On the one hand, re-writing would provide the reader with a clean overview and context for the thesis. But, this would also erase the ambiguities and messiness of my own writing and thinking. Proximity has been a guiding concern for the inquiry and I do not wish to infer a false sense of objectivity. For example, the "bureaucratisation of education" has been a dominant feature of the twenty-first century. I have struggled to position creativity within a curriculum preoccupied with accountability, visibility and evidence gathering; the idea of creative play and experimentation does not sit well within these kinds of discourses. To address the emergence of the creative agenda, within the constraints of the audit culture, I adopted a dialogic approach to creativity. However, this is tentatively suggested rather than a sustained line of reasoning, mainly because I was too caught up in the field to realise the complexities and subtleties of the inquiry. I do not wish to explain-away instances of uncertainty because my own praxis (and understanding) emerges from this period of time.

For this reason, I have not re-written the chapter from a more *knowing* position. Instead, I have inserted a postscript, rather than a conclusion. It needs to be recognised that this is not a retrospective account and I would discourage the reader from attaching a greater authority to this section. To borrow from Foucault, I aim '[not to re-discover] a truth hidden deep within

oneself through an impulse of recollections' (2000, p.101) but, rather, to reposition creativity from a present-day perspective. I'd like to interweave another reference into this argument, this time taken from A.A. Milne. To paraphrase the words of his much-loved character, Pooh, the postscript should not be *read* in the context of an "Aha!" There are no "Aha!" moments because as Foucault and Pooh find, truth is "appropriated" and not found:

> "Aha!" Said Pooh, practising. "Aha! Aha!"
> Of course," he went on, "we could say 'Aha!' even if we hadn't stolen Baby Roo" (Milne, 1998, p.93).

With this in mind it would be useful to outline the preceding arguments. Given that the creative agenda spans over a decade, I have divided the chapter into two sections. First, I have examined creativity against the backdrop of the bureaucratisation of education and concerns of professional identity. I have also considered "lifewide" approaches to creativity (Craft 2005) as part of the cultural turn. In the second half I take up the economic rationale for creativity, with particular reference to changing work patterns and the articulation of creativity within the audit culture (Strathern, 2000a). This leads onto a dialogic positioning of creative practice. To illustrate this argument I refer to a conference organised by Creative Partnerships.

1.1 The Bureaucratisation of Education

The last twenty years or so, since the Education Reform Act 1988, have seen remarkable and unparalleled change for teachers and practitioners working in education. There are a number of factors informing this phenomenon. For a start, new technology has radically altered

classroom practice. The introduction of SMART boards across the primary and secondary sector has been a significant factor in re-shaping the ways in which teachers manage teaching and learning. As we enter into the second decade of the twenty-first century, curriculum design and delivery is routinely supported by online web-resources and school portals are commonly used to promote homework and extra-curricular activities such as language lessons, art-clubs and sports. Technological advancement alone would account for a sense of bewilderment teachers have experienced in the face of rapid change since the early nineties. Commentators have identified though, a more widespread sense of instability and insecurity, which had more to do with a crisis of professionalism and identity than the demands of new technology. Woods and Jeffrey note:

> In the years immediately preceding the re-structuring of recent years, there seemed to be a great deal of consistency of social identity and self-concept among the majority of English primary school teachers. Much of the literature of this period speaks of teachers seeing their selves and social identities as isomorphic (2002, p.90).

For Woods and Jeffrey, teacher accounts of personal and social selves were caught up in global, late-twentieth century discourses concerning accountability, targets, standards and achievement. The Reform Act was a critical turning-point for the teaching profession. Craft points out 'since the late 1980s, educational structures, organisations, programmes, curriculum, pedagogies, accountabilities, conditions of teachers' work and their professional status have all been reconstructed' (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996; cited in Craft, 2005, p.7). Jeffrey describes it as the 'rise of a performativity discourse from the importation of an economic market structure' (2002, p.3). Teachers experienced unprecedented levels of control

and direct state intervention into all aspects of their working lives. It was a period of time dominated by a bureaucratisation of education described by Strathern (2000a) as the emergence of the audit culture and Noordegraaf and Abma (2003) as a culture of "management by measurement". [17] New Labour's election victory did little to change this trajectory (Buckingham and Jones 2001). A series of highly significant initiatives were launched (and extended), under the banner of improving and raising standards of achievement in English schools, particularly:

- The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) 2000
- The Common Inspection Framework 2001
- The Children's Act and Every Child Matters (2004)
- National Testing (SATs) 1991; 1995
- National Literacy and Number Hour 1998; 1999

But, as teachers tussled with increased accountability and visibility, another kind of educational agenda emerged, which was seemingly at odds with the audit culture. Buckingham and Jones refer to this as a "cultural turn" towards the creative industries. Hall and Thompson cite New Labour's ideologically nuanced interpretations of "Cool Britannia" as heralding the creative agenda, which emphasised a "lifewide" approach to cultural policy (Craft 2005). Hall and Thompson propose:

[17] The reference for Noordegraaf and Abma was cited in Belfiore, 2006, p.24.

> The rhetorical tension inherent in the notion of the 'Cool Britannia' slogan, associated with New Labour cultural policy after their election victory in 1997, exemplifies the competing and sometimes contradictory discourses which are a feature of subsequent policy documents … The Cool Britannia slogan signified the discursive field on which New Labour sought to establish its cultural policy: a field dominated by the "cultural industries", which include both high culture and popular cultural forms and institutions (2007, p.316).

1.2 The Creative Agenda

Under New Labour creativity re-surfaced and appeared to dominate educational thinking, planning and delivery. As Hartley points out, '[t]he last two decades have seen a search for certainty and standards in education. But now there emerges a quest for creativity … the impetus now is education for creativity' (2003, p.8). Belfiore similarly finds, '[r]eferences to the alleged social impact of the arts still remain an important tool in the advocacy strategy, followed by UK cultural institutions today [and have] pride of place in the current cultural policy discourse' (2006, pp.22-3). A number of key reports and documents were launched and include: *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (NACCCE, 1999); the Arts Council's initiative *Artsmark* (2001); *The Excellence and Enjoyment strategy for Primary Schools* (2003); *The Roberts Report* (2006); *The National Curriculum in Action, Creativity: find it promote it'* (2007). Correspondingly, there has been a deluge of books, handbooks and critical Readers dealing with creativity. Craft similarly finds 'a matched growth in interest within the research community … the last part of the century saw a burgeoning of interest in creativity research as applied to education' (2003, p.116).

Critically though, creativity was re-conceptualised in a very different way to the Plowden years of the 1960s and 1970s.[18] Wood puts it this way: '[t]he revolution in curriculum ushered in by the 1988 Reform Act is being followed by an attempted revolution in pedagogy. The child-centred ideology associated with the Plowden Report (1967) has come under strong attack' (1993, p.355). Craft suggests that the re-emergence of creative learning created a subtle shift of emphasis towards a "lifewide" attitude to creativity. Consequently, creativity was more commonly associated with its "participatory" and "transformational" potential than excellence in the arts per se. For educators, creativity manifested as a cross-curricular and interdisciplinary discourse and practice. This did not mean a ground-swell of creative subjects (such as art, drama, dance, music) but rather, teachers were encouraged to adopt creative strategies to promote learning. For example, Cowley proposes '[o]ur learning in science, maths, history, geography, and so on, will benefit from creative activities and approaches, and both from teacher and children getting into a creative frame of mind' (2005, p.2). In this context, creativity was viewed as a teaching and learning methodology rather than a distinct subject in its own right. Hall and Thompson adopt Belifiore's (2004) argument that under the cultural turn, '[the arts] represent a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves' (2007, p.317).

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[18] The Plowden Report, 1967, *Children and their Primary Schools*.

> 'In relation to the curriculum, the Plowden Report was clear. "One of the main educational tasks of the primary school is to build on and strengthen children's intrinsic interest in learning and lead them to learn for themselves rather than from fear of disapproval or desire for praise". The report's recurring themes are individual learning, flexibility in the curriculum, the centrality of play in children's learning, the use of the environment, learning by discovery and the importance of the evaluation of children's progress - teachers should not assume that only what is measurable is valuable' (Gillard, 2004, n.p).

Craft (2005) cites the distinction made by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (1999) between teaching creatively and teaching *for* creativity as a useful illustration of the perceived benefits of a broad, cross-curricular approach. In an examination of the differences between "high creativity" and "little c creativity" Craft writes:

> Little c creativity has been suggested to be the ordinary but lifewide attitude toward life that is driven by "possibility thinking" but is about acting effectively with flexibility, intelligence in the everyday rather than the extraordinary (Craft, 2005, p.19).

There is a suggestion here that creativity, as a concept (at least in the context of education) has shifted emphasis. No longer perceived as within the sole domain of the arts, creativity is a way of thinking, of dealing with problems and engaging with the world we live in. Key to this argument is the notion that all children (and teachers) are capable of being creative, '[e]very person has it within themselves to be creative, and we as teachers can play a key part in helping our students to map out their own individual journeys' (Cowley, 2005, p.20). Hence, there is an explicit relationship between everyday creativity and personal, social development. The DFES national initiative, *Creativity: find it, Promote it* (2007) is another example of the widespread belief that creativity can be applied methodologically to all subjects in the curriculum and that creative learning is central to success and achievement:

> By providing rich and varied contexts for pupils to acquire, develop and apply a broad range of knowledge, understanding and skills, the curriculum should enable pupils to think creatively and critically, to solve problems and to make a difference for the better. It should give them the opportunity to become creative, innovative, enterprising

and capable of leadership to equip them for their future lives as workers and citizens (QCA, 2007, p.1).

1.3 The Pull and the Push

The push towards creativity has been a highly visible exercise. Moreover, the persuasiveness of arguments found in reports, like the QCA, rest in the assumption that creativity is a good thing (Craft 2003; Belfiore 2004). Certainly, at the point of initiating this study in 2005, there was a considerable pull between creativity and accountability. Frost noted that '[c]entral government is becoming mildly schizophrenic about direction and policy. One minute targets are in, then they're out; testing suppresses innovation, then it is staunchly defended' (2004; cited in Gibson, 2005, p.150). At the level of practice the creative agenda impacted at a time when teachers were also dealing with concerns of professional identity, increased visibility, targets and standards. Responses to questions posted on teachers' Internet chat rooms offers a useful illustration of this perception:

Creativity is the biggest push at the moment (along with the other latest ideas). The head has spent a fortune on buying in an advisor to do Inset and plan with us, and lo and behold so have all the other local schools so this just means that everyone is planning the same topics as each other ... Teachers have always tried to be creative and inspire their classes – but some people are getting very, very rich by regurgitating plans for topic teaching that were around 10 years ago ... It is extremely emotive subject in my neck of the woods – especially when the planning has to stay the same as before the creative lesson – talk about fitting a round peg into a square hole. Now most of my teaching friends are doing as requested when observed and cobbling together the rest of the time (2007).

Sadly, I think lack of creativity is my main weakness! I think it would be easier to do this as part of a team where you can share ideas and talk them through rather than working alone (2007).

I think that creativity has a lot to do with opportunity. Too much of our curriculum is exam focused; the goal constantly in mind is the holy grail of an exam result (2007).

The creative curriculum title can be unhelpful as it almost infers that those who do not teach thematically are not creative. This is something that we have battled with at our school where the cross curricular approach is at the heart of our work but we have not moved to a completely thematic approach (2008).

The 2 classes currently in KS1 started school at a base rate way below the national average and one class has a high proportion of children with learning/behavioural difficulties. All are making good progress and in line with age related experience. OFSTED loved it! (2008).

At our school we are trying to be more topic-based, or at least 'block' subjects in an effort to make teaching and learning more creative, which I believe makes the experience for the kids much more meaningful and exciting (2007).

What do we mean by a creative curriculum? Is this a thematic or topic based approach to the curriculum or does it mean something different (2008).

In effect it is a thematic based curriculum based around a progression of skills across the curriculum. Some have compared it to old topic teaching but there is a difference when it is done well in that schools focus on how skills progress across the year group (2008).

Creativity is a frequent topic for discussion on teachers' chat rooms and it is interesting to see the differing kinds of attitudes and assumptions.[19] At times, there is a perception that creativity has been imposed on teachers. We might see this as an "economies of performance" perspective of government policy. Stronach *et al* write:

> Rejecting the somewhat static apparatus of types, stages and conditions that has generally been brought to bear on professional work, we propose a different reading of the professional as caught between what we call an "economy of performance" (manifestations broadly of the audit culture) and various "ecologies of practice" (professional dispositions and commitments individually and collectively engendered (Stronach *et al,* 2002, p.109).

At other times, the creative curriculum is simply a return to topic-based teaching. Creativity either promotes freedom and innovation or conversely restricts classroom practice. One-to-one interviews with teachers at Park Road Junior School reveal similar conflicted interests, particularly against the backdrop of the audit culture. For example, a year 6 teacher said, 'creativity is all very well, but it doesn't help children pass their

[19] Wilson and Peterson's research into the anthropology of online communities offers a useful insight into the socialisation of online participants. In particular, Wilson and Peterson ask, '[how are new participants] socialized into online practices; how gendered and racialized [sic] identities are negotiated, reproduced and indexed in online interactions; and how Internet and computing practices are becoming normalised' (2002, p.p.453-454).

SATs' (2005). Another teacher at the school described creativity and national testing as a dichotomy (2005).

Hall and Thompson however, suggest that the relationship between creativity and accountability was far from equal. In essence, creativity supported rather than reduced the impact of the audit culture. With specific reference to Creative Partnerships Hall and Thompson propose, [t]he aim of the curriculum should be transformed by the vigour, creativity and innovation of the partnerships … a treat and a pick-me-up for the teachers and the children' (2007, p.319). For *Misguide to Park Road* the Head teacher asked me to schedule praxis after the SATs in the May term. Notwithstanding arguments for an integrated approach to creativity, national testing is an important milestone in the academic year and not just for children. Teachers were very aware of the visibility of SATs, as compared to other schools in North Staffordshire because of the below-average number of children attaining level 4 in English, Maths and Science. Over the duration of the study there was considerable pressure to improve results. It would be misleading to infer however, that teachers did not value creativity, far from it. I have witnessed many examples of creative practice and not just in art and design subjects, but across the curriculum.

To understand the conflicts in play, Stronach *et al* (2002) suggest that teachers are caught between what they would like to teach (ecologies of practice) and professional demands and necessities (economies of performance). I have found that teachers tend to mobilise both accounts at the same time. A teacher at the school described the experience of getting her class through SATs as, "like trying to fit a square peg into a round hole". But, in the same

conversation the teacher also said that tests give children and teachers a direction and focus to work towards. This argument seems less conflicted when taking into account the economic demographic of the school. Park Road Junior School serves an area of considerable economic and social need (Ofsted 2006). Children enter the school with below-average standards in English and maths and SATs, whilst prescriptive (and often impossible to realise), give children and teachers something concrete to work towards.

1.4 The Economic Rationale for Creativity

So far I have considered the political, cultural and personal contexts for the creative agenda. The next step is to examine the economic rationale for creativity. Craft, for example, argues that the purpose of education 'was to make education systems more effective in assisting the nation state to secure higher employment, and maintain economic performance' (2005, p.7). Alexander argues that post 1988 governments and administrative bodies re-marketed existing strategies and agendas to schools, teachers and parents in the pretext of improving standards. Educational reforms were re-designed to meet shifting and often unstable political agendas, which had economic drives. To examine this argument I outline the economic context for the UK with specific reference to changing types of employment and work patterns. This leads into a consideration of creativity within the constraints and confines of the audit culture. I then move to a dialogic understanding of the creative agenda and suggest a far more fluid and discursive relationship between top-down policy directives and localised practice.

The last thirty years or so have seen unparalleled change for the UK labour-market. There has been a decline in traditional "heavy" industries in steel and coal mining, textiles, car

manufacturing and shipbuilding, particularly in the Midlands, the north of England, South Wales and Northern Ireland. At the same time there has been a rapid acceleration of the service industries, call-centres and Internet-driven global communications. This is a phenomenon well-documented. Figures taken from the Office for National Statistics for 2002, show that manufacturing and construction accounted for 20% of the workforce jobs: a 13% decline for manufacturing between 1982 and 2002 (Peele, 2004). Bedarida observed that during the period from 1979 to 1986, 'the manufacturing sector lost 1.7 million jobs, exactly the same number of jobs was created in the services industries from 1983 to 1987' (1991, p.303). By 2002, the combined service industries accounted for 78% of the workforce population. These developments have been rapid and have radically altered perceptions of the workplace and with it, a rejection of the notion that a job was for life. As Craft playfully remarks, 'the "till death do us part" analogy from marriage [is no longer appropriate] except in the sense that marriage and partnership, too, have changed to become more itinerant, transient and network-based' (2005, p.6).

These changes have seen substantial shifts in the nature of work itself and according to Beck 'one that was characterised by risk and uncertainty in a number of spheres' (1992; cited in Allen and Henry, 1996, p.67). At the forefront of this uncertainty is the rise in part-time work and contract service work. Grant, Yeandle and Buckner (2006), noted of the first part of the twenty-first century that part-time workers constitute 31% of the workforce population, of which 48% accounted for all female employment. Grant *et al* observe that because part-time work tends to be low skills-based and low paid (especially for women) it is more likely to result in a transient and insecure workforce. Furthermore, because of the low value attached

to part-time work, women are often working "below their potential" (Grant *et al* 2006), a concern mirrored by Allen and Henry for contract service workers in the late 1990s. In particular, Allen and Henry perceived the deregulation of employment legislation in the 1980s and 1990s, as promoting a "division of labour" and insecure and "precarious" working practices (Sayer and Walker, 1992; cited in Allen and Henry, 1996).

It is reasonable to suggest that the increase in part-time work and sub-contracting has contributed to new employment patterns. Shifts in how and where we work, alongside other such factors as an aging population, single parent families, part-time workers, women in the workplace and migrant workers have significantly altered the economic landscape for the UK and with it our understanding of working life. For example, government legislation for Flexible Working (2002, 2004 and 2006) aimed to support working families with young children, disabled children and long term carers. The legislation enabled workers the legal right to request flexible working patterns that worked alongside family life, such as fitting around the school day. The introduction of this kind of legislation indicates a shift in thinking about employment. It suggests a need for a greater understanding of how and to what extent working life can be *creatively* managed than in previous decades.

The changes in the economic climate for the UK have contributed to a re-thinking of the relationship between education and the workplace. Miles identifies '[a shift] from a meritocratic system to one based on a market emphasis on the acquisition of market capital' (2005, p.506). Miles goes on to argues that 'the future for many young people appears less than bright, not least considering the nature of an increasingly polarised and insecure job

market the brunt of which will almost inevitably be felt head-on by young unqualified people' (2005, p.506).[20] The creative agenda is in part a response to a perceived crisis of confidence for schools to equip young people with the skills needed for future employment. From this perspective, Neelands and Choe suggest, 'creativity is now at the service of the economy' (2010, p.298). A perception voiced earlier in the decade by Collard, the director for Creative Partnerships:

> Creativity is now at the top of the political agenda and recognised to be of fundamental importance to the future of this country. Creative skills are increasingly identified by employers as key to the kinds of skills needed for young people to operate in the twenty-first century (Collard; cited in Bailey, 2005, p.10).

Collard's rationale for Creative Partnerships is stated unambiguously: creativity is linked explicitly to the "needs of the economy" (Gibson, 2005). The positioning of creativity to reflect the rhetoric of industry suggests an "outside-in" application of policy discourse (Dawson, 1994), where the "economies of performance" are prominent (Stronach *et al,* 2002). Neelands and Choe assert, '[t]he most distinctive characteristic of the English model of creativity is that it is paradigmatic of New Labour's Social-market political position' (2010, p.293). From this perspective, the creative agenda operates within Strathern's description of the audit culture. The National External Evaluative Audit Report for Creative Partnerships (2008) offers a useful illustration of this argument.

[20] With reference to Kemp, Miles suggests not that young people are 'failing in the labour market but what are failing are the programmes designed to move them into work' (2005, p.506).

The audit aims to consider the evaluation process for Creative Partnerships under the New Evaluation Framework.[21] A guiding principle has been to establish accountability and consistency. This is shown in two ways: (1) in the terminology used to infer meaning; (2) in the types of methodologies used to gather evidence. Words like "standards", "objectives" and "outcomes" are frequently employed to denote a sense of objectivity and authority: for example, '[t]he planning form prompts teachers and creative practitioners to anticipate and plan impacts and state *what will count* as evidence of impact and *how* they will collect it' (Wood *et al ,* 2008, p.9; *original emphasis*). At a later point in the document there is a concern that schools' evaluation conversations are too descriptive and broad-ranging in nature:

> A confusion between documentation and evaluation persists, despite the training and support we have offered … in order to get to the heart of the learning, a skilled questioner needs to lead partners through the process, bringing an objective point of view and a consistency of approach, and making sure that conversations are focussed and probe to an appropriate depth. We plan to use an evaluation partner in the next

[21] Interestingly, the kind of terminology used in the report resembles other policy documents which appeared at the same period of time. For example, as part of my MA dissertation I explored the Common Inspection Framework for further education colleges. The purpose of the CIF was to provide a systematic, consistent and reliable approach to the inspection process. Its tasks were to provide the following:

- give an independent public account of the quality of education and training, the standards achieved and the efficiency with which resources are managed;
- help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and highlighting good practice;
- keep the Secretary of State, the Learning and Skills Council for England and the Employment Service informed about the quality and standards of education and training;
- promote a culture of self assessment among providers, leading to continuous improvement or maintenance of very high quality and standards.

> academic year to support the creative agents in the delivery of the evaluation framework interviews, in order to achieve this objectivity and consistency, and to benefit from the expertise of a skilled evaluator (Wood *et al*, 2008, p.17).

There are a number of key assumptions running through the above extract. First, there is an attempt to pin down language in order to find certainty in the spoken and written word. But, related to this there is a concern that despite training and support evaluation conversations are lacking in consistency and objectivity. Underpinning this view is a belief that the correct methodologies should be followed and the right questions are to be asked. In other words, to make visible what previously had been hidden from view. For Strathern, transparency, 'rests in the proposition that if procedures and methods are open to scrutiny, then the organisation is open to critique and ultimately to improvement … we might say that audit is transparency made durable; it is also transparency made visible' (2000b, p 313). This is an important argument to establish because it positions Creative Partnerships squarely within an economy of performance perspective. In this context, creativity is paradoxically confined and constrained within the very discourses that seek to validate its practice.

1.5 The Dialogic Curriculum

However, to infer that creativity is wholly reliant on top-down policy directives does not take into account the struggling nature of policy discourse, nor does it recognise creativity as a dialogic process. Arguably, a dialogic position would allow for a more fluid understanding to emerge between educational policy and curricular practice. A useful way in which to examine the dialogic curriculum would be to consider creative practice in a local context, since this illustrates Stronach and MacLure's (1997) view that teachers dialogically translate top-down

agendas, policy statements, and national strategies into familiar every-day working definitions. A conference for Creative Partnerships in the city of Stoke on Trent has been selected for consideration.

Creative Partnerships has been running in Stoke on Trent, since 2005[22] and is at the forefront of the Arts Strategy for Children and Young People's Services 2006-2011. In the two years since its inception 17 schools have formed "strategic partnerships" (CP, 2007) with a broad range of creative practitioners: contemporary dancers, dramatists, artists and film-makers. *Hearts on Fire,* one of the first projects initiated by Creative Partnerships, sought to address key issues facing young people in Stoke on Trent and also to connect young people to their wider community. Schools participated in site-specific dance projects, story-telling and poetry workshops and drama classes with professional theatre directors and actors. For example, children from Longton High School worked on a drama project with the theatre company *Reveal Theatre* to explore the connections between science to creativity. The project resulted in a performed debate between creationists and evolutionary standpoints. Pupils from St Thomas More Catholic College and Haywood High School, in collaboration with filmmakers, scripted and edited ten short films exploring the influence of Britannia Stadium and Port Vale Football Club for Stoke on Trent communities (CP, 2007). The primary aim of Creative Partnerships is to establish a coordinated creative strategy between practitioners, teachers and school children, described as the "full circle effect".

[22] In 2009 Creative Partnerships for Stoke-on-Trent was managed by Partners in Creative Learning.

In 2008 Creative Partnerships ran a conference for teachers, creative agents and practitioners: *Opening up the Dramatic Enquiry, Creative Adventures in drama and thinking.*[23] The aim of the conference or, rather the aim of the dramatic enquiry was to find unity through drama and philosophy (Poad, 2008). The term "unity" is interesting and worth exploring as an example of dialogic practice. From the outset there appeared to be differing and conflicting ideas regarding the role and function of Creative Partnerships. Teachers' tended to place emphasis on educational outcomes: for example, citing children who improved written and oral skills because of their participation in the project. Concerns of standards and achievement in literacy were prioritised rather than subject-specific dramatic practice. Teachers also expressed anxiety about finding correct dramatic conventions for drama work and also the difficulty of leading philosophical discussions with junior school children.

Creative agents and practitioners referred specifically to theories of process drama, citing O'Neill and Heathcote.[24] Dramatic unity was discussed in the context of process, group identity, vocal confidence and ownership of practice. Interestingly, creative practitioners

[23] Conference spearheaded by Creative Partnerships, Stoke on Trent, 13/03/08, Victoria Hall, Stoke on Trent. Keynote speakers were Gordon Poad, director of Cap-a-Pie theatre company and James Nottingham.

[24] With reference to Dorothy Heathcote, Cecily O' Neill writes, 'the chief method by which Dorothy Heathcote intervenes, and the most closely identified with her teaching, is by taking a role in the drama. In her hands this becomes an extraordinary subtle, flexible and effective means of prompting learning … Heathcote goes far beyond the objectives of personal development and social adjustment which satisfied drama teachers in the past. Her aim is to build on her pupils' past experience and give them a deeper knowledge not just of themselves but of what it is to be human, as well as an understanding of the society they live in and its past, present and future' (1984, p.12). At the conference for Creative Partnerships creative agents referred to O' Neill's and Heathcote as an example of process drama in schools, with particular reference to the social potential for drama work in schools.

described a sense of tension between the practicalities of process drama and the schools' desire to have outcome-driven performances. In response, Creative Partnerships discussed the need for a greater dialogue and shared understanding between creative agents and schools. But, to find unity through creative practice and/or conversation may not be possible (or desirable). This is because when we deal with terms like "creativity" and "unity" we are also engaging in a power struggle between local contexts, national directives and professional/personal concerns. Post-structural analyses show that language gives rise to a multiplicity of meanings and interpretations. It is not so simple to unify understanding because meaning circulates between personal, local, social and cultural contexts. Wittgenstein explains it like this:

> The criteria which we accept for … "understanding", are much more complicated than might appear at first sight. That is, the game with these words, their employment in the linguistic intercourse that is carried on by their means, is more involved … than we are tempted to think (n.d; cited in McGinn, 1997, p.97).

A dialogic understanding of creativity, particularly when viewed in a local context, illustrates the difficulty of establishing a unified understanding. But this is not to say that accounts of Creative Partnerships are misplaced. To explain, practitioners perceive creativity as a specific discipline and a particular way of working via a discourse of their own professional practice as dancers, actors, film-makers and visual artists. Teachers, though, privilege the educational advantages of the partnership. Similarly, Creative Partnerships are caught between the inter-personal and social benefits for creativity and a funding rationale, which is located within a discourse of economic policy. Therefore, the purpose of Creative Partnerships may mean

something different to all parties. To put it simply, teachers make sense of creative practice in the context of their own school and practitioners articulate practice within a subject-specific discipline. Both are valid descriptions of active practice; as Foucault suggests, 'it is always possible to discover something different and to more or less modify this or that rule' (2000, p.297). Arguably, approaching Creative Partnerships from this position allows for a more fluid and discursive relationship to emerge, which top-down perspectives tend to freeze.

1.6 Postscript

In October 2010 the Conservative Lib-Dem Coalition announced the withdrawal of funding for Creative Partnerships, as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review (2010).[25] The decision to cut funding from Creative Partnerships provoked a storm of protest and debate. Collard writes:

> We are obviously very disappointed with the decision to withdraw funding from the Creative Partnerships creative learning programme, which has benefited over 1 million young people and thousands of schools across the country. Whilst we know that arts should not be exempt from the difficult decisions facing the country in this tough economic climate, it is disappointing that a programme which is expected to

[25] A snapshot of the Comprehensive Spending Review (BBC News):

- Retirement age to rise from 65 to 66 by 2020;
- English schools budget protected; £2bn extra for social care;
- NHS budget in England to rise every year until 2015
- Regulation rail fares to rise 3% above inflation
- Bank levy to be made permanent.
- About 490. 000 public sector jobs likely to be lost;
- Average 19% four-year- cut in departmental budgets;
- Structural deficit to be eliminated by 2015;
- £7bn in additional welfare budget cuts;
- Police funding cut by 4% a year.

> generate nearly £4 billion net positive benefit for the UK economy – the equivalent of £15.30 of economic benefits for every £1 of investment in the programme – is bearing the brunt of the cuts in funding. Since its launch in 2002, Creative Partnerships has had a positive impact on the attendance, aspirations and attainment of children and young people, particularly in schools with challenging behaviour (Collard, 2010, n.p).

Funding has also been withdrawn from *A Night less Ordinary (*an ACE initiative, which offered free theatre tickets to anyone under 26) and *Find Your Talent* (CCE). The future of many frontline arts organisations is uncertain, despite assurances that 'a focus on children and young people remains a priority for the Arts Council' (ACE, 2011, n.p). The cultural turn appears to have reached an impasse, or at least lost some of its momentum. For example: in an article posted in the TES online, '[t]he future of hundreds of arts and cultural projects in schools is hanging in the balance as major theatres, orchestras and museums look to make huge savings in the face of Government cuts' (2010, n.p). We might find that the "quest for creativity" (Hartley, 2003) has been replaced with a need to find 'a degree of stability in a very challenging economic climate' (ACE, 2010, n.p).

It is too soon yet to see how (and if) the creative agenda fits into the new funding regime. ACE point out that they are dealing with 'real-term [cuts] of £457m over four years … and we will need to consider carefully our options' (2010. n.p). Under New Labour, creativity was an important part of the UK economic strategy. Post 2010, the raison d'être for Creative Partnerships no longer appears relevant, or to paraphrase ACE, "sustainable". Now that the political landscape has changed (and with it the economic context), creativity will need to be redefined; at the level of rhetoric and educational practice. For Collard the outlook is bleak, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds:

> What characterised Creative Partnerships and Find Your Talent was the way in which these programmes reached out across the country to provide opportunities for young people in some of the most disadvantaged communities … The children and young people we have worked with will have nowhere else to turn, particularly when the impact of cuts elsewhere filter down through local authorities and other programmes. As a result a whole generation of young people will grow up without having access to the arts and this is not something that can be fixed once public finances are restored (Collard, 2010, n.p).

The future for Creative Partnerships (and similar projects), is unknown but this may not signal the end of creativity. For the past decade, teachers have been encouraged to adopt creative methodologies as part of everyday teaching: for example, at Park Road Junior School children benefit from a wide range of creative learning opportunities, including a class hamster to support PSHE and darts lessons to develop number skills. This does not mean though, that the creative curriculum has been equally embraced. For some teachers, teaching creatively is a natural style of delivery whilst others flounder in this kind of practice. Teachers were also reluctant to be identified as "creative". A perception prevailed that this was the domain of the artist even though policy rhetoric emphasised a cross-curricular definition of creativity. Creative Partnerships may be partly responsible for facilitating this idea, since its remit is to bring creative practitioners *into* a school setting.

In the preamble, I argued against a conclusive account of the creative agenda. Perhaps, if my own praxis was not so tightly interwoven into the cultural turn it would be easier to find a sense of objectivity. For example, Neelands and Choe's (2010), examination of the rhetoric underpinning Creative Partnerships offers a valuable insight into the tensions between

creativity and social market-forces. For my own part though, I am aware that this leaves certain gaps in my inquiry. At the point of initiating PhD study the primary curriculum appeared to embrace creativity whilst constraining practice within a language of accountability and evidence-gathering. One-to-one interviews and appraisals of Internet chat rooms revealed a deep uncertainty at the heart of the creative agenda, but, at the time, did not explain the continuation of creativity in the context of the audit culture. For this reason, I turned towards a dialogic positioning of creativity as it offered perspectives other than prescriptive top-down policy rhetoric.

However, I came to realise that I had tethered creative discourse to a specific articulation of practice. I had used dialogic perspectives to confirm the value of creativity rather than interrogating the meaning-making process. Paradoxically, instead of mobilising meaning I had smoothed away conflict and tension. This is not to undermine the potential of poststructural analyses but to suggest that (in this instance) I had been too anxious to reconcile difference. I had also looked towards participant's accounts of creativity instead of my own. I was so caught up with the complexities of developing praxis I had not recognised my own work as dialogic. I only fully understood this point when I emerged out of practice into writing-up.

Consequently, I was tempted to retrace my steps in order to re-position my thinking or, as Rabbit suggests to Pooh, see it from the perspective of the "Aha!" In the chapter, *Kanga and Baby Roo come to the Forest* the animals wake one morning to find a stranger in their midst. Rabbit leads an attempt to rid Kanga from the forest. His plan is simple, to kidnap Baby Roo:

> "The best way" said Rabbit, "would be this. The best way would be to steal Baby Roo and hide him, and then when Kanga says, "Where's Baby Roo?" we say, 'Aha!'"
> "Aha!" said Pooh, practising. "Aha! Aha! … Of course," he went on, "we could say 'Aha!' even if we hadn't stolen Baby Roo".
> "Pooh said Rabbit kindly, "you haven't any brain".
> "I know", said Pooh humbly.
> "We say 'Aha!' so that Kanga knows that *we* know where Baby Roo is." 'Aha!' means 'We'll tell you where Baby Roo is, if you promise to go away from the Forest and never come back.' Now don't talk to me while I think."
> Pooh went into a corner and tried saying 'Aha!' in that sort of voice. Sometimes it seemed to him that it did mean what Rabbit said, and sometimes it seemed to him that it didn't. "I suppose it's just practice," he thought. "I wonder if Kanga will have to practise too so as to understand it" (Milne, 1998, pp.93-4).

In this context an "Aha!" works in two ways. First it infers an awareness of prior events, which may not have been the case. Secondly, it changes the past. To make sense of the present we look to the past but our perception of the past is informed by our understanding of the present. As Pooh points out, just because we say "Aha!" doesn't mean it happened. whether it happened in the way we intended and indeed, whether we even know what we intended. It is also unlikely that we will arrive back at ourselves. To interject a final reference, Harwood re-formulating Derrida remarks:

> There is no Ariadne in the Derridean Labyrinth: one's thread is simply the 'trace' of where one has been, a path which can never be retraced except by repeating one's exact words and hence returning to the point at which one became lost (Harwood, 1995, p.166).

To put it simply, it is not possible to say with any certainty what happened at a particular moment because I am no longer there. In looking back, we might lose sight of the journey.

Chapter Two

Ethics

> Researchers and research gatekeepers alike need to ask: Whose interests are being served by the research? What are the views of the research stakeholders, that is, the children themselves, those who are seen as the beneficiaries of the research (Farrell, 2007, p.168).

> Children, like adults, are more likely to share their ideas, feelings and perspectives if they feel that those ideas will be treated with respect. To build respectful relationships with children means creating safe spaces in which children have the expectation that they will be listened to carefully and be given the time to think and respond' (MacNaughton and Smith, 2007, p.114).

This chapter details the ethical dimensions to the thesis. As a collaborative undertaking, made possible with the continued support of children and teachers, it was necessary that a robust ethical framework was built into the study from the outset. The first part of this chapter outlines the codes of conduct when researching with children and young people. The second half of the chapter takes the view that ethics is an active practice. Due to the durational and participatory nature of the study it was important that ethics informed the research process. As Alderson notes, '[e]thics is … a vital part of every stage of the project, raising questions and proposing standards, especially about fairly powerless groups such as children' (2007, p.30). To illustrate this point I will examine the *right to withdraw* from research participation and will offer strategies to allow privacy and space within group-orientated practice. Ethics have also informed the development of

performance praxis. Initially the thesis began as live art study but gradually moved towards a broader application of performance, to include drama. I have explained this shift in focus from the perspective of the "best needs of the child" and the ethics of process-based practice.

2.1 Codes of Conduct

Research undertaken for the thesis complies with codes of conduct for working with children and young people. I have followed ethical guidelines set out by BERA (2004) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Data Protection Act (1998).[26] Broadly speaking, the researcher has an obligation to ensure the following guidelines are put in place before research takes place:

- Voluntary Informed Consent
- Right to Withdraw
- Privacy and Data Protection
- The Principles of Respect

Voluntary Informed Consent

Participation in the performance projects was voluntary. I explained to each group that participation would involve practical workshops and performances. I also outlined possible research outcomes: for example, publications and conferences. Parental permission was also sought regarding participation, photographs and audio recordings. I

[26] I have an Enhanced Criminal Record Certificate, which was updated during the study. Certificate number: 001124320000, 2006

have not taken photographs of individual children engaged in performance work as some parents did not wish to have their child photographed.[27] Appendices include photographs of drawings, notebooks, diaries and images of the school building. Children were active participants (see Alderson, 2007) and exercised a high degree of autonomy and decision-making in the research process. All participants were offered the right to withdraw from the research process, without fear of negative repercussions.

In addition, as a participant observer, I worked with many more children and teachers as part of everyday classroom activity. Participant observation has offered a useful insight into the everyday working lives of children and teachers and also informed the development of praxis. I was careful to avoid Freebody's concern that researchers do not 'render those people cultural or ideological "dopes" by presuming those everyday ways and wisdoms as pre-scripted but unrecognized representations of either an underlying substrate of The Truth or an unseen ideological programme' (2003, pp.215-16). Therefore, my relationship with children and teachers has been one of agreed and informed collaboration and I have communicated fully and openly with Head Teachers at both schools.

[27] This in itself raises questions over the right of the child to be respected. The child may well choose to be photographed but this needs to be balanced with parental rights. I also did not wish to publicly identify participants whose parents had not agreed for photograph to be taken as this would have been evident to other children. For the project *Heroes and Villains* parents did not withhold permission but when I attempted to take photographs the children changed what they were doing and competed with each other to have their photograph taken. I am not a skilled photographer and was often too busy working and rehearsing with children to take photographs. After some experimentation, I decided not to pursue photographs of actual workshops and performances as these were not a good representation of the work.

Privacy and Data Protection

To preserve anonymity I have not disclosed the name of the school, individual children or teachers. For the project *Heroes and Villains* participants are referred to by their superhero identities. Macnaughton and Smith argue that 'there are clear ethico-political principles [with respect to data ownership]' (2007, p.116). All research materials belonging to the child, for example, drawings, scripts, letters, maps and notebooks were returned. For the project *Robin and the Pirate Letters,* ethical concerns were slightly different as it was important that my role as author/creator was hidden. In this instance, Head Teacher and parental consent was sought. *Robin and the Pirate Letters* was an early-readers' scheme to support high frequency words and each week participating children received two "magic" letters. Each letter was geared to the child's reading ability and included maps and drawings. I also scanned drawings produced by participants to create personalised stamps. With the support of the class teacher children made a pirate chest to store their letters. Upon completion of the project all artwork and letters were returned to the participants

The Principles of Respect

Respecting children's rights is a fundamental part of the research process. Alderson asserts that '[w]hile social research entails only small risks, if any, these may be serious matters for the child concerned' (2007, p.27). Alderson says that even asking a child who they live with can cause discomfort and distress.[28] Arguably though, performance can

[28] Once, I asked a boy where he had been the previous week and he said that he had been at court with his foster parents. Although he did not seem distressed and offered the information openly and freely it felt like I had strayed into his personal life.

offer a safe space to explore conflict and identity formation. Kurahashi finds in the context of therapy that theatre 'creates a site for expressing the "unspeakable" and for symbiotically creating a kind of communal healing' (2004, p.25). Performance, unlike conventional forms of research inquiry, enables the child to participate and negotiate in the production of meaning. Morrow writes that 'a major challenge for researchers working with children lies in the disparities in power and status between adults and children' (2007, p.153). Performance uniquely shifts the power balance between researchers and participants. To follow on from Boal (1995) power becomes dialogic and transitive.

MacNaughton and Smith argue 'if we are to honour children we must not only note what they say but also take its politics seriously' (2007, p.120). Performance allows us (as adults) to see the world from a child's perspective. In the project *Heroes and Villains* participants created super-villain identities and transformed the playground into battles of huge and fantastic proportions. For *Misguide to Park Road* we fished in puddles, tunnelled through brick walls and played world cup football. To ensure children's rights means giving witness to their thoughts and opinions (Danby and Farrell, 2007). Performance allows children to commit to the research process as partners and collaborators rather than recipients. Moreover, performance locates the research narrative within the child's own voice. A respect for children requires recognition of what matters to them (which may not be the same for adults). *Misguide to Park Road* enabled children to tell stories about their schools lives, which were individual and unique. *Heroes and Villains* offered the child an opportunity to enact change and form friendship groups from

the safety of a superhero identity. *Robin and Pirate Letters* encouraged children to see reading as exciting and magical. Above all, and across the four projects, we have played and told stories. In the belief that children make sense of their lives through the games they play and the stories they tell:

> "Do you know," Peter asked, "why swallows build in the eaves of houses? It is to listen to the stories. O Wendy, your mother was telling you such a lovely story" (Barrie, 2007, p.38).

2.2 Ethics in Practice: The Right to Withdraw

Research contexts are never static and are open to degrees of change, especially when working in educational settings. At a simple level, it cannot be assumed that methodologies suitable for one particular group will work with a different group of children. Alderson (2007) argues that it is useful to see ethics as an active practice and in the context of activity rather than a written guideline. This however, can be difficult to manage within the flux of live research. Given that the study involved a substantial amount of practical participation the *right to withdraw* (BERA 2004) is selected for examination.

The Right to Withdraw

> Researchers must recognize the right of any participant to withdraw from the research for any or no reason, and at any time, and they must inform them of this right. In all such circumstances researchers must examine their own actions to assess whether they have contributed to the decision to withdraw and whether a

> change of approach might persuade the participants to reengage. In most cases the appropriate course of action will be for the researchers to accept the participants' decision to withdraw. Researchers must not use coercion or duress of any form to persuade participants to re-engage with the work' (BERA, 2004, pp.6-7).

Under the revised ethical guidelines set out by BERA the *right to withdraw* must be made clear before research commences and for the duration of the study. Importantly, a child has the right to withdraw, at any stage, from a research project. Three-quarters into *Sounds* a boy decided to withdraw from the project. In this instance the participant selected not to discuss his reason for withdrawing and although disappointed, I did not attempt to persuade him to continue. I also made sure that he received a certificate of participation, along with his peers at the end of year *Leavers Assembly*. There is an amusing and humbling anecdote to this story:

> *On the morning of the assembly I arrived earlier than usual and walked into the school hall to be greeted with a loud cheer. Somewhat surprised, it took a few moments to realise that I had been mistaken for a well-known dart player who was visiting the school. I was taken-aback when the Head Teacher promptly handed my certificates to the dart player who added his own autograph before handing them out. Absurdly, I felt disappointed and a little diminished. This had been a difficult project and I had been looking forward to the presentation. But the children though were delighted, a signed certificate from a local celebrity generated an excitement with their peers in a wholly unexpected way. I mulled this over on the drive home and realised that the project was no longer mine. The*

children did not need me to present the certificates because in working through their difficulties they came to own their work.

It would be misleading to suggest, however, that facilitating the right to withdraw is a straightforward exercise, particularly within educational settings. Morrow suggests that '[i]n all school-based research there is an uneasy sense that because the research takes place in school, because they have taken letters home, and because their schools, teachers and parents have agreed, they are a captive sample' (2007, p.158). Children are well used to being directed through tasks, which they may or may not wish to engage in. Some children are familiar with imposed separation: for example, instructed to sit outside the Head Teacher's office or to stand *outside* their class room door. It is however, quite different for a child to initiate their own separation. For some children, imposed separation is the norm. I became aware of familiar figures lingering outside classrooms, standing outside the Head Teacher's office; lonely children, never quite in one space or another.[29] My first project *Misguide to Park Road* had introduced me to some of these children. In that first year a particular boy stands out. Without socks, a jumper far too big and a smile to match I gained a shadow that was eager to please and to be liked but also difficult to teach. Teachers spoke fondly and then gave me terrible accounts of broken homes and foster care. Too many times positioned as an outsider in a literal and educational sense, he appeared on the outer edges of school life.

[29] The school have put into place a number of measures to reduce the number of children standing outside classrooms or Head Teachers office. The sticker chart strategy is one such initiative, and teachers feel it is working to keep children in their classrooms. From my own experience the number of children outside the classroom has reduced over the four years I was there.

The following academic year I initiated the project *Sounds*. Its remit was to facilitate a community of inclusion and belonging for children at risk of exclusion and/or marginalisation. I intended the project to be a beneficial experience and wanted children to take ownership of the project. It was important, then, that participants opted into the project and were able to withdraw if wished. But a nominated role in a performance or workshop activity can make it difficult for a child to withdraw. Indeed, much of the value attached to educational drama is pivoted upon the collaborative and participatory qualities of the work. If a child wishes to withdraw from a performance she is at risk of presenting herself unfavourably to her friends and peers. Morrow finds 'that if children in a whole-class situation are asked for their consent they all tend to say yes, but a minority of them will simply not participate at all, will write minimally, and/or say virtually nothing in discussion' (2007, p.158). Unlike a classroom though, performance does not allow a child to hide and may propel her into activities she might find uncomfortable or distressing. For example, a child participating in *Sounds* needed repeated assurances that the project would not be performed to the whole school in morning assembly. Similarly, children participating in *Heroes and Villains* initially found the prospect of performing to an audience equally daunting. Such concerns should be treated sensitively and with understanding. Cowley (2005) is keen to stress the diversity of roles within performance, particularly within production work and cites the example of less confident children taking on backstage roles. However, this does not remove a child from an activity but rather shifts the child into a hidden position; which may or may not be advantageous.

The weight of expectation from peers, researchers, teachers and parents can be great and I needed to find strategies that would provide a safe way out of a project or activity if needed. Moreover, since decisions to participate (or withdraw) are often made on contexts that are continually changing, a way back in. For the project *Sounds* I created the "Nothing Chair" inspired by an idea in Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005). In the novel Safran Foer imagines a "Nothing Space" for two of his characters, he writes:

> Only a few months into our marriage, we started marking off areas in the apartment as "Nothing Places", in which one could be assured of complete privacy, we agreed that we would never look at the marked-off zones, that they would be nonexistent territories in the apartment in which one could temporarily cease to exist (2005, pp.109-10).

The characters in Safran Foer's novel eventually find themselves trapped between nothing and something. Notwithstanding the irony of the situation for Safran Foer's characters, the idea of creating a temporary refuge within a teaching space appealed. Primarily, it allows the child to escape their work without leaving the room. My own memories of primary school, other than recollected lessons and games, are the times spent daydreaming. I have a particularly vivid memory of a maths test in which I spent most of it looking out of a window. The content of the test and my subsequent achievement (or most likely, lack of achievement) is long forgotten, but thirty years on the daydream holds; as the children's laureate Michael Rosen (2007-2009) said, '[d]o not tell people off for daydreaming. Poems come from daydreams' (2009, n.p). The current day tendency to arrange desks and tables into working groups makes it increasingly difficult for the child to withdraw (if

only for a few moments), from an activity. In this configuration the freedom to daydream, or simply to observe, is restricted. The Nothing Chair, therefore, provided an imagined and a tangible sense of invisibility. For the children working on the *Sounds* this was a useful device because it allowed a temporary place of refuge without the need for imposed separation. The rules for the Nothing Chair are as follows:

- On the Nothing Chair you are invisible and cannot be seen;
- because you are invisible you cannot communicate with your group;
- because you are invisible we cannot communicate with you;
- to stay invisible you must remain seated on the Nothing Chair;
- you can stay on the Nothing Chair for as long as you like;
- you will not be asked to leave the Nothing Chair (other than in an emergency situation, such as a fire drill);
- you can only sit on the Nothing Chair if it is available (and no one else is sitting on it);
- you do not need to ask permission to sit on the Nothing Chair;
- you may return to session at any time.

Initially, children competed for an opportunity to sit on the Nothing Chair and attempted to divert attention to the chair by signalling to their friends in the group. But, as the workshops continued and as children became more engaged in their own work the chair was used far less frequently. In the last two sessions, with the exception of a child[30] with

[30] Gender and nature of learning difficulties withheld for confidentially reasons.

special learning difficulties the chair was not used. For the purposes of this project the Nothing Chair was useful in two ways. First, it gave a child an opportunity to withdraw for unspecified periods of time and because the chair was in the same room it provided a way back into the activity. It was relatively easy to re-enter a session without feeling left behind in the work. Secondly, some of the children struggled with collaborative work and there were behavioural problems during the project. But, often a child would initiate a move to the chair before I had a chance to intervene in a situation. The chair became a space in which the child was able to address and manage their own behaviour before returning to the group. This suggests a fluid and self-regulated understanding of power and discipline, shifting responsibility for behaviour from the teacher to the child.

The Nothing Chair is an example of how ethics, in this instance the right to withdraw, were built into the study. Within an educational setting however, children are often absent from an activity or project due to many reasons other than non-participation. It is quite common for a child to be absent due to illness and family holidays. Within school itself, children may be required to attend additional support lessons, mentoring sessions, school trips, swimming and ICT. The first workshop for *Heroes and Villains* needed to be rescheduled because the group were visiting their feeder high school[31] and a boy missed the last session due to a family holiday in Spain. Therefore, to ensure that all children

[31] This was a common complaint voiced by my undergraduate students involved with work placement opportunities in educational settings. Often workshops and projects would be planned for a certain group of children only to find the children absent from school or attending additional support classes. During my own study it was not uncommon for children to be away from school, particularly towards the end of term. Some children were also scheduled to be with special support teachers and classes.

benefited as equally as possible workshops were planned as individual sessions, whilst concurrently moving towards an end project. Central to this kind of performance pedagogy is a privileging of immediacy and process beyond that of conventional theatrical outcomes: for example, a performance. The implications of this particular argument have been examined in greater detail further into the thesis (see chapter six). But for now, it is worth noting the need to see ethics as an active practice. The right to withdraw is a fundamental part of the research process but as David *et al* have shown, 'the very nature of being in a school context generally tips the power away from children who are taught to comply with teachers' requests from the moment they arrive' (2007, p.130). From an ethics perspective the Nothing Chair facilitated a sense of autonomy and privacy in a performance-orientated context. Ethics then, is much more than an adherence to a written guideline; it is a way of working, researching and thinking with children. Alderson argues that:

> Ethics guidelines can help us to work towards high standards, rather than simply avoid low ones. The three frameworks of principles, rights and outcomes offer such broad guidance that researchers have to work out how best to apply them in the context of each project (Alderson, 2007, p.35).

2.3 Live Art

A chapter examining ethics would not be complete without acknowledging the complexity and awkwardness of live art. By its very nature, it is a transgressive and challenging art form, involving challenges to fixed art, creative and cultural boundaries. Initially, the thesis began as an examination of the pedagogic potential of live art at

primary school level and I have published a chapter in this area (2007). To reinforce a position stated in the introduction to the thesis, I did not refer to current or historical practice with children and teachers. Whilst there are many examples of artwork and performances suitable for children there is a core of work which is highly charged and problematic. My interest in live art springs from a desire to work in a subject driven context and not from particular practitioner/artist work. To put it simply, I applied ways of working, which are more normally associated with live art and contemporary performance than conventional script-based or role-play drama. One way of looking at this argument is to suggest that live art deals with realities and actualities, unlike drama, which tends to analogise in a fictional way. Live art is a subjective discourse and can offer opportunities for participants to extend, through practice, life experiences into new ways and modes of thinking. For Garoian, '[live art[32] enables] artists, teachers, and children to critique cultural discourses and practices that inhibit, restrict, or silence their identity formation, agency and creative production' (1999, p.5). In this respect, live art pedagogy is a formative learning strategy and may enable the child to develop and control their own voice within group-orientated practice.

However, as I moved into the thesis it became apparent that the pedagogic values embodied within live art, such as openness and subjectivity, whilst enabling in some instances were limiting in others. This impacted most significantly in the project *Sounds.*

[32] Garoian is writing in a transatlantic context and in America the terms tends to be "Performance Art". For ease of reading, though, and to avoid unnecessary confusion with my own use of the term performance, I refer through-out to live art. Peter Harrop offers a useful exploration of the difference between performance studies provision in Britain and North America (see Harrop, 2005).

In this instance, subjectivity rather than enabling created a restrictive and negative discourse. A participant described himself as "under a black cloud" before going on to say that he was "brought up wrong". As part of sticker-chart strategy at the school children began each morning with a sticker of a sun posted over their name on a board displayed in the classroom. Over the course of the day stickers either stayed as a sun, or changed to an image of a rain-cloud or a black-cloud, depending on behaviour. The licence to speak therefore was offset within the child's perception of his own learning and status at school.

In a teaching culture dominated by clear aims and outcomes the participants also struggled with the organic and evolving nature of live art. Unused to open-ended learning strategies the children actively worked against my attempts to weave in discussion and abstract thought. Live art is an unfamiliar practice and I struggled to convey a secure sense of the work when its form often eludes capture. The difficulties I encountered in this project were responsible for shifting the study into a broader application of performance pedagogy, to include drama. Field notes taken at this period of time illustrates this shift of focus. The following extract refers to a song writing workshop. This was a follow-up from a previous session when the children created a sonic art soundscape of early morning sounds. I intended the lyrics to be recorded onto discs as part of an installation for the final week:

This was a disappointing workshop. Both groups were unresponsive, difficult to manage and arguing broke out between two boys. There was another group working in our usual

space and so we worked in the foyer before moving into a classroom. Most of the lyrics were unsuitable for recording. I ended the session on a positive note, but I feel that I am failing the group. I think it would be best to rethink my strategy and to focus on building communication skills. Essentially, the group are struggling with the organic and evolving nature of live art methodology. I now realise how difficult it is to make work that doesn't have a predefined structure and outcome. Perhaps for most children this would be an enabling exercise, but for some, its very openness restricts and hinders creative practice. These children would benefit from a clearer structure and shorter task-based activity. I will also see the Head Teacher regarding lack of space and if necessary, will move the sessions to another day/time (18th May 2007).

Although Live Art praxis was central to my study, I needed to find an approach that gave the children some kind of a familiar structure to their work. This was not an easy decision to make and I was caught within my own research needs and imperatives. I was concerned that a move away from live art would derail the PhD, which would have significant implications for progression. But, as a researcher I had a responsibility to ensure the well-being of my participants. Farrell, as noted, puts this argument succinctly: '[w]hose interests are being served by the research' (2007, p.168).

Alderson similarly asks whether research is "worth doing" and 'the equation of hoped-for-but-not-yet-known benefit needs to be balanced between risk to children in the project and possible gain to children in the future' (2007, p.31). Whether or not research is worth doing is not a straightforward question for praxis-based research. Contexts are never

static and what might be worthwhile for some children may not be for others. Pedagogically, I remained committed to the openness and fluidity of live art but recognised that dramatic structure offers a useful frame in which creative practice might operate. This was a pivotal moment in the trajectory of the PhD and one that forced a re-consideration of the research aims. Field notes taken from the fifth workshop capture this shift in focus:

This was an effective and enjoyable session. I ran a workshop, which was primarily concerned with developing the children's communication and listening skills. For this I used games taken from Boal and Johnstone[33] and exercises developed through my own teaching practice. There was a moment when the group, engaged in a clapping game, began to listen to each other and to modify their own rhythms. Although, a relatively minor moment this was a massive step-forward. We also played improvisational games with made-up language. I found that this exercise encouraged the group to listen to the nuances of the voice (pace, tone, pitch) in a far greater way than usual. The Head Teacher also commented on this session, commenting that the children appeared to be responding in a positive and responsive way (25th May 2007).

Initially, I was caught then, between a need to continue with live arts whilst also ensuring a positive outcome for the child. But the needs of the child were paramount and as a consequence the thesis needed to open out to encompass a broader understanding of

[33] Keith Johnstone's (1981) publication, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* is an invaluable resource for teachers/practitioners working in performance. I have used this text many times in my teaching career and his ideas can be transferred to all age groups.

performance pedagogy. Many of the qualities embedded within Live Art remained central, particularly concerns of immediacy, belonging and ownership. But, as the project transformed I began to see with greater insight the dialogic and creative space between process-based practice, such as Live Art and more conventional drama. Importantly, I saw the benefit gained from drama in terms of developing communication-based skills. Moreover, decisions which were initially taken in the best interests of the child served to strengthen the development of praxis. Without question, this was a healthy and positive turning-point in the trajectory of the thesis. It also offers a useful illustration of the need for ethics to underpin and actively inform educational research practice.

Chapter Three

Methodologies of Practice

> In life in general, and in qualitative inquiry as a particular kind of research pursuit, we are always engaged in trying to "make something of that"; we are always about the business of construing the meaning of something (Schwandt, 1999, p. 452).

> **Bohr** At least I knew where I was. At the speed you were going you were up against the uncertainty relationship. If you knew where you were when you were down you didn't know how fast you'd got there. If you knew how fast you'd been going you didn't know you were down (Frayn, 2000, p.24).

This chapter sets out to explore the methodological underpinning to the thesis, following on from Conquergood's assertion that '[w]e challenge the hegemony of the text best by reconfiguring texts and performances in horizontal, metonymic tension' (2004, pp. 318). I have positioned my research in-between interpretative and narrative ethnographies in education (Denzin 1997; Clough 2002), contemporary performance pedagogy (Garoian 1999; Boal, 2002) and performance ethnography (Conquergood 2004). As such, the kinds of methodologies struggling within the thesis seek to capture the liveness of the performance text alongside the demands of the qualitative research inquiry.

In the introduction, I outlined the two main strands running through the thesis. The development of a distinctive performance pedagogy that bridges drama and live art and

the uncertainty of putting into words lived and embodied praxis. The connection between the two is a recurring theme for the thesis. But, for this chapter I would like to focus on methodologies of fieldwork, specifically praxis and participant observation. Such an examination offers a useful insight into the day-to-day workings of the inquiry, particularly since participant observation informed the development of praxis in unexpected ways.

This chapter begins with an exploration with an understanding of the epistemological standpoint to the study. I then explore participant observation and examine ways of seeing. This is followed with a philosophical inquiry into the relationship between observation and praxis, with particular reference to interpretation. To support my writing I reference the play text *Copenhagen* (Frayn, 2000). I have selected this particular text because it deals with theoretical concerns of uncertainty and loss of knowing, which is highly relevant to my own work. As a work of fiction, the text also allows for complex ideas to be explained through analogy and example.

3. 1 Epistemological Standpoint

I began visiting Park Road Junior School as participant observer in November 2005, whilst preparing and planning my PhD proposal (RD1) and so was in the process of drawing together my intentions for the project. I felt it important that the proposal and subsequent study reflected issues emerging from seen, engaged and collaborative practice rather than imposing an objective, external concern over the subject area. I was introduced

to the school through my position as a Senior Lecturer at Staffordshire University.[34] As part of my post I was responsible for delivering outreach drama workshops for primary and secondary schools in North Staffordshire. A group of my undergraduates had been offered a work placement opportunity and this bought me into contact with the Head Teacher. I eventually spent four years at the school, primarily working with year groups five and six, although the longitudinal quality of participant observation has given an impression and overall feel for the school. A working pattern for fieldwork was established: autumn/spring for participant observation and spring/summer term for praxis.

Professionally, my working life is concerned with contemporary performance practice and teaching. I have lectured in further and higher education sectors and combine teaching with professional practice. As a performer I have shown work at the National Review of Live Art and in Western and Eastern Europe. Without question, this informed my own praxis for the study. But, I am also interested in a broad range of theatre and performance and have many years of experience running drama workshops and directing youth theatre. Educationally, my first degree and postgraduate MA were also taken at MMU (Cheshire) in Contemporary Arts.[35] In terms of locating a standpoint epistemology then, at least in terms of where *I* positioned myself at the beginning of the study, performance was crucial methodology for the thesis.

[34] I left Staffordshire University in 2011 for a Senior Lectureship in Drama and Theatre Studies at the University of Chester.

[35] There was a period of nine years between my first degree and beginning postgraduate study.

It is fair to say therefore, that I have privileged practice and the embodied experience beyond that of more conventional ethnographic modes of data gathering, such as questionnaires and interviews. In many respects, I am drawn to Denzin's (1997) articulation of performance as an interpretative ethnographic text; Conquergood's (2004) call for radical interventions to performance studies research and Turner's (2004) performing ethnography and experiential pedagogy.

However, such terms are made with caution since this is not entirely a performance-based thesis. Nor, is it wholly an educational study. It is inter-disciplinary and dialogical moving between educational research and contemporary performance, wherein the "paradigm wars" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 472) are played out not only within the social sciences in terms of qualitative research methodologies, but also within the performance studies community concerning theory and practice. Recognition of the continuum between the two is required and evidence to its trajectory, shuttling (and sometimes colliding), between interpretative standpoints, ethnographic techniques, narrative strategies, workshop strategies and performance techniques, depending upon the context in hand.

However, the positioning of the thesis between educational inquiry and performance studies has been challenging. There are dominant and persuasive discourses circulating between the two, informing methodologies of practice, styles of writing and knowledge claims. More importantly, what constitutes valid, worthwhile knowledge is particular to specific disciplines and these do not necessarily communicate fluidly and easily with each

other. At the level of writing there are significant differences between the social sciences and the arts and humanities. For example, in educational writing it is common to refer to other publications within the body of the text. In the arts however, it is usual to find a more fluid and personal mode of expression. At the point of writing-up, I needed to find a suitable approach, which suited the two disciplines. The view of the researcher self as a "transgressive self" (Lenzo 1995),[36] was useful to adopt. It offers the opportunity of finding multiple-vantage points from which to examine the shifting and competing space between the differing research methodologies for the thesis.

For this reason, I have sought to find a "messy" style of writing that allows room for different kinds of voices and knowledge claims. I thus become a narrated self (in relation to sharing my values and dispositions) and also responsible for narrating the experience of others, articulated and framed within a post-structural framework. Hence, praxis, whilst dominant, has not been the only methodological device used to capture significance. From the outset, I adopted interpretative and narrative modes of writing as a means of developing evidence-informed practice for creative learning. I have included fictional characters from novels, books for children and stage plays, as well as critical theorists and philosophy. Later in the thesis I refer to participants via their superhero identities.

[36] In an article exploring validity issues in post doctoral research, Lenzo writes, 'I focus on the rhetorical handling of the construction of the researcher-as-self – the construction of a transgressive self – that is decentred, situated, and multiply positioned' (1995, p.17). I was prompted to include this example as my own doctoral thesis moves between multiple sites of knowing and dealing with research data.

In addition to providing other ways of engaging with complex ideas, such endeavours also remind the reader of the main focus of the inquiry. This inquiry has been developed with children and it is important that their voice is heard. I am interested in exploring ways in which children might reflexively view their own practice and participation in the research process. I have encouraged participants to explore their work through stories, imaginative writing, diaries and drawings. I did not want the transcription of research material to privilege the academic voice over and beyond that of the participants. In defence of performance ethnography Conquergood argues that '[o]nly middle-class academics could blithely assume that all the world is a text because reading and writing are central to their everyday lives and occupational security' (2004, p.313). Here, Conquergood is referring to ethnographic research practices that subjugate and suppress the voice of minority groups. Arguably, the licence to speak through stories, drawing and performance allows children to contribute to the research process in their own way, appropriate to age-group and circumstance.

3.2 Participant Observation

In addition to praxis I attended Park Road Junior School as a participant observer**.** I observed children (across all ages) and teachers in normative, everyday modes of behaviour. I also supported teachers with classroom activities, helped children who were struggling, led practical workshops and attended school assemblies. I observed children in lessons, standing outside classrooms, at lunch and playing outside. I accompanied a year six group to a World War II exhibition and participated in prize-giving events. The research findings gathered through participant observation have informed the thesis in a

number of different and interconnected ways. First and foremost, they have revealed how teachers conduct their everyday working and professional lives, foregrounding the tensions, struggles, conflicts *and* possibilities and opportunities for creative practice. Participant observation has provided a contextual backdrop for educational discourses informing primary provision in the first decade of the twenty-first century, in particular the re-emergence and re-articulation of creativity as a cross-curricular and inter-curricular learning and teaching strategy.

Creativity (as a term and activity), seen through the lens of participant observation, has provided an important conceptual frame in which to position praxis at the school. This has been a crucial undertaking, since my work resonates in a different way from applied theatre and established methodologies, such as those exemplified through Creative Partnerships. Importantly, it has facilitated the development of the inquiry, enabling me to move from an externally driven position of *outsider* to one of familiar observer. Practice undertaken in the study then, has been set against an actual context, driven by genuine curricular concerns and evidence-informed insights rather than imagined or imposed issues. Participant observation opens out issues and concerns, hidden from casual or irregular visitors to the school and this has been a valuable methodology. In short, participant observation has opened out the study to include the wider space within which praxis sits.

3.3 Ways of Seeing

My route through participant observation, however, has not been straightforward. I became increasingly aware of the difficulty with this kind of fieldwork. There were two main reasons that contributed towards this concern. First, I was new to this particular kind of research methodology and whilst I have considerable experience of teaching in further and higher educational contexts and have directed youth theatre I had never taught in a primary school setting. I was entering then, into new and unfamiliar territory and much of my early fieldwork sought to carve out and establish a "knowing" space in which I might position the thesis. I am prompted to recall my first hesitant steps into fieldwork:

I arrived early and wait, somewhat nervously, in the staff room during morning assembly. Alone, I take the opportunity of browsing through the many handouts, posters, notes, scribbles and calendar announcements, which cover notice-boards, coffee-tables and chairs. My first impressions are of a busy and industrious school, but also one, which was reassuringly down-to-earth. Unused by the haven of teacher staff rooms, I am surprised (and overwhelmed), by the number of cellophane-wrapped plates of biscuits, cakes and boxes of chocolate balancing on top of magazines, educational supplements, promotional leaflets and brochures. Coffee mugs filled the sink, which made me pause. I had been directed to make myself a drink, but which mug should I take? What if I, inadvertently, used another teacher's mug? This wouldn't bode well on my first day. I was pulled out of my reverie by the unmistakable sounds of footsteps (of which there were many) and a fair amount of jostling, pushing and giggling. Assembly had finished and it was time to go to my first observed session.

To my discomfort it emerged that the year six teachers were not expecting me and a little surprised to find me waiting outside their classrooms; but both agreed for me to sit in during their lessons. Because this is a fairly big school the year group were divided into two classes. I spent the first part of the morning observing the literacy hour and after first break, with the number class.[37]

In number, the class were leaning about time. It was a noisy lesson and for the most part I was distracted by a group of boys I was sitting with. The teacher began the lesson with a space-invaders game on the smart board, which the children appeared to know and like and there was much pleading and begging for "a turn". On the whole, I found the number lesson far more creative than the literacy session I had observed that morning. We sat in small groups and there were lots of opportunities for collaborative work, but a lack of visual and tactile props for the children to use (i.e., a clock, or pictures of clocks), made the lesson seem much harder than it actually was. I observed lots of possibilities for creative learning, but it was a small classroom and children had diverse needs. The boys on my table were disruptive and teasing took place. A boy on my table was picked on for not wearing socks and another boy was told he was "thick" (November 2005).

When reading back over this account, at the point of writing-up, I am struck by a tangible sense of uncertainty and unease. Unused to this kind of research activity, I was initially unsure where to direct my gaze in order to capture the most useful and appropriate observations. I am reminded of a conversation in the play text *Copenhagen.* In the

[37] By 2009, at the time of writing-up, the term "number" had gone back to maths.

following extract, Heisenberg and Bohr are debating the certainty of memory, using the analogy of Schrödinger's cat:[38]

Heisenberg Isn't that how you shot Hendrik Casimir dead?

Bohr I never shot Hendrik Casimir.

Heisenberg You told me you did.

Bohr It was George Gamov. I shot George Gamov. You don't know – it was long after your time

[…]

Heisenberg It was Casimir! He told me!

Bohr Yes, well, one of the two.

Heisenberg Both of them simultaneously alive and dead in our memories.

Bohr Like a pair of Schrödinger cats…

(Frayn, 2000, p.28).

Not knowing which way to look seemed, to me, a makeshift Schrödinger's cat for a research novice. When I began participant observation everything seen and observed was believed to be both significant and misleading. Similarly, in the diary notes there is a perception that there is a right (and wrong) way for children and teachers. There are underlying criticisms towards teachers for not supporting creative strategies for teaching and boys in particular are perceived as loud and disruptive.

[38] Here, Frayn is referring to Erwin Schrodinger's thought-experiment *Schrodinger's Cat* (1935). In the experiment, a cat is placed in a steel chamber with a vial of poison. Schrodinger proposes that, hypothetically at least, until the chamber is opened the cat is both alive and dead. Frayn uses this example as a way of outlining the uncertainty of the human memory.

But, as I moved into the inquiry, such ideas were replaced with more meaningful insights into the lives of children and teachers. It may well be that everything seen and heard in school is potentially significant and misleading. But, I have come to realise that there are no perfect paths to take, or right arguments to follow and meaning is not hidden, somewhere, until it is reclaimed. It is not about picking up the right mug (to return to a metaphor used earlier), or chasing the "best" line of inquiry. In fieldwork, decisions are made in the moment: for example, a change in body language or tone of voice can shift our attention elsewhere. Often, we do not see when a change occurred, but the effects. Of course, where we choose to look and the decisions we take will affect our understanding. This raises an interesting argument in relation to observation because, as Bohr says, it is not possible to look in more than one direction:

Bohr They're either one thing or the other. They can't be both. We have to choose one way of seeing them or the other. But as soon as we do we can't know everything about them (Frayn, 2000, p.69).

We find meaning in observation because of the kinds of interests we have and the decisions we make. Stronach and MacLure point out, 'to engage in the act of writing one story, in one way, is always to opt (consciously or not) not to write something else' (1993; cited in Garratt, 1998, p.234). Moreover, interpretative analyses have shown that we do not see "mere acts", but "interpreted acts" (Goffman 1992). Re-considering participant observation from this perspective challenges (my) earlier assumptions regarding classroom behaviour.

3.4 Between Praxis and Observation

Participant observation has provided a contextual and educational backdrop for the development of praxis and has proved a useful strategy to get to know children and teachers. Conquergood says that this is the difference between, 'knowing that [and] knowing about' (2004, p. 312). In some respects, praxis and observation reflects the two key methodologies within the thesis as both are established in their field. However, as I progressed with the inquiry the space between praxis and observation became less clear. Or rather, it became increasingly difficult to separate the two methodological approaches. The performance *Misguide to Park Road* illustrates this particular point. The sixty-one participants in the group all responded with a high degree of vocal and physical enthusiasm and energy. Hence, planning, preparing and performing the *Misguide* with such large numbers caused much noise, excitement, disruption and a degree of confusion to the normal working week; we worked in classrooms, corridors, doorways, toilets, cupboards and the playground, school hall and library; to the bemusement of other teachers and year groups.

Had this been an isolated project it would have been, perhaps, easier to overlook the more negative impacts of the project in terms of disturbances to other classes, caused mainly by children outside of their normal classroom environment. However, I was also mindful of my ongoing role as participant observer and needed to balance the creative demands of the project, in terms of sound levels and physical presence alongside expected codes of behaviour. My desire, therefore, to work within the wider constraints of the school – keeping noise levels to a minimum, ensuring that children did not run amok around the

school building. This sprang not from a top-down enforcement of power. Foucault suggests that disciplinary power is far more subtle and coercive. It is embodied and enacted, realised through the body, 'becoming part of the cultural air that we breathe' (Brookfield, 1995, p.15). I was caught then, within a near Foucauldian stranglehold of my own making. Participant observation had facilitated my entry into creative practice, whilst at the same time, limiting and restricting the articulation of the practice from within.

I thought that I could sit in-between praxis and observation but when we occupy a ground the space surrounding us shifts also. Frayn explains this point in the following way:

> **Heisenberg** Exactly where you go as you ramble around is of course completely determined by your genes and the various forces acting on you. But it's also completely determined by your own entirely inscrutable whims from one moment to the next. So we can't completely understand your behaviour without seeing it both ways at once, and that's impossible. Which means your extraordinary peregrinations are not fully objective aspects of the universe. They exist only partially, through the efforts of me or Margrethe, as our minds shift endlessly back and forth between the two approaches (Frayn, 2000. pp.69-70).

In this extract, the character Heisenberg explains the impossibility of holding two perspectives, at the same time. This suggests that understanding is relational but also, temporal (see also Schwandt 1999), as we shift between ways of seeing, doing and knowing. If, as Heidegger suggests, interpretation is positioned and intentional then articulating the movement, slippage and connectivity between observation and praxis

offers a way of capturing meaning(s) and knowledge claims. Heidegger proposes, '[i]n every understanding of the world, existence is understood with it, and vice versa. Any interpretation which is to contribute to understanding, must already have understood what is to be interpreted' (1996, p.194). To put it simply, there is no neutral ground between observation and praxis. I understand praxis because of my proximity to participant observation. Likewise, praxis informs how I interpret the behaviour of others. As Heidegger points out, interpretation is based in fore-sight. *Being-in* the world suggests that we interpret a moment (or event) because of the understanding we bring to it, therefore '[a]ll interpretation is grounded on understanding' (Heidegger, 1996, p. 195).

As *I* move then, from outsider to familiar observer and from observer to practitioner, my relationship with the school (children, teachers), and also with my own praxis transforms into new interpretations, perspectives and ways of working. New meanings and interpretations replace previously held preconceptions concerning the possibilities and limitations of practice. Sometimes, change can be gradual and imperceptible, creating persuasive and comforting impressions of continuity. Or, it can be unexpected, sudden and violent, forcing a re-think and a re-strategisation of research aims and practical outcomes and in doing so, creating new pathways and destinations for the thesis. Frayn captures this argument, rather nicely, in a conversation concerning the uncertainty principle:

Margrethe Some rather swift ski-ing going on here, I think.

Heisenberg Your ski-ing was like your science. What were you waiting for? Me and Weizsacker to come back and suggest some slight change of emphasis?

Bohr Probably.

Heisenberg You were doing seventeen drafts of each slalom?

Margrethe And without me there to type them out.

Bohr At least I knew where I was. At the speed you were going you were up against the uncertainty relationship. If you knew where you were when you were down you didn't know how fast you'd got there. If you knew how fast you'd been going you didn't know you were down.

[…]

Heisenberg The faster you ski the better you think.

Bohr Not to disagree, but that is most … interesting.

Heisenberg By which you mean it's nonsense. But it's not nonsense. Decisions make themselves when you're coming downhill at seventy kilometres an hour. Suddenly there's the edge of nothingness in front of you. Swerve left? Swerve right? Or think about it and die? In your head you swerve both ways…

(Frayn, 2000, pp. 24-25).

To echo Frayn here, the movement between praxis and observation has been considerable and trying to map its trajectory is much like following the ski lines of slalom. Particularly since (to carry the ski analogy further) the ground behind us gets far less visible the further we move away. But, as Guignon asserts of Wittgenstein, '[t]he difficult thing is not to dig down to the ground; no, it is to recognise the ground that lies before us as ground' (1991; cited in Schwandt, 1999. p.453). Therefore, praxis and observation have not pulled-apart and been isolated in order to uncover inherent truths within either approach. But rather, I have sought to understand the positionality between the two. To put it simply, I interpreted praxis in the context of my understanding of the school, illuminated through participant observation.

The school then, becomes a fully nuanced space transforming meanings over time. For example, diary notes, taken from an early session at the school, read like a commentary from a penal colony:

Children file into the hall (like prisoners) flanked either side by teachers. A teacher marched over to a boy who had managed to squeeze behind a bookcase and forced him to face the front. When a particular group of children were told to be quiet a round of coughing broke out, which infuriated the teaching staff (11.11.05).

Likewise, I was initially taken-aback by the concrete and seemingly unimaginative playground,[39] particularly since my own children attend a village primary school with abundant outdoor space, green fields, trees and playground equipment. But, praxis has rendered a quite different interpretation of the space, drawing out the possibilities for creative and imaginative activities in the most restrictive of environments:

The school playground is a large rectangular area, flanked by windows, brick walls, wire fencing and overlooked by the old school turret. At the far end of the playground there is a narrow strip set aside for the school garden and in front of this a wooden outside classroom with a raised stage and a row of benches. From an outsiders perspective it is an imposing and confined area, particularly since the schools lacks open, wide green spaces, characteristic of many village primary schools. But for the children it is theirs and

[39] During my time at the school a number of improvements have been made to the playground, including play equipment, an outside teaching area and school garden.

one that resists a singular reading since many kinds of games and activities take place here: football and ball games, skipping, gardening, drawing, dancing, singing, role play, talking, fighting and playing. In this space children have battled with gigantic alien spiders, played world cup football, tunnelled through brick walls, caught fish, made vows of everlasting friendship and have had hearts broken (2008).

The difference in attitude between the two accounts towards the school building, teachers and children is significant and should not be underestimated. I have, for instance, struggled with finding a suitable space to work practically with children and was frustrated on many accounts when the school hall was prioritised for other classes and projects. However, space, like anything else, is negotiated: for example, for *Heroes and Villains* I moved a year six class from the hall into a classroom because I needed room to prepare for a performance the following day. Whilst I remain convinced that children and teachers would benefit considerably from more space, free of tables and chairs, I have seen how teachers maximise school space to facilitate creative activity. The school librarian, for example, regularly creates large-scale art displays for the library and corridors leading to the hall, staff room and upper school classrooms. In 2009, the school was transformed into a secret garden; children made flowers, trees, sky, grass and birds to decorate entire walls and ceilings. It was a highly effective display and goes some way to challenge my earlier impressions of the school.

Earlier in this chapter, I included field notes for my first observation. I express a deep anxiety and unease over knowing where to gather the best meanings for the study. It is

fitting then, to end with my last visit to the school. This account, written in 2009, offers an understanding of the observation process, which could only be gained through being there and spending time at the school. It is also heartfelt, conveyed in the closing few words:

It's time to leave but I linger and sit, for a while, in the school library. It's dinnertime and from where I am sitting I can see children playing outside. I watch them casually, thinking about the children I have worked with. Boys run past me, heading down the corridor and I hear a teacher loudly and sternly admonish a child, "will you be quiet!" The teacher's voice floods the space I am sitting in but I am not unsettled, nor do I frantically search for somewhere to hold the memory until an opportunity emerges to use it. I am reminded of earlier visits to the school and deep-seated worries that I would miss something significant or be misdirected. Now though, I attune to the geographical, structural, physical and corporeal and meaning seeps in; a fully nuanced space emerges. It occurs to me that I now know what it is to see and hear and it is my last visit to the school (July 2009).

The route through fieldwork has been interesting and many methodologies have been adopted and followed. Rather than a straightforward journey, fieldwork can be best described as a series of interruptions, turns and crossroads. The kinds of performance practices undertaken in the thesis resist empirical methodologies that seek to capture meaning within a unitary vision. Contemporary performance (and none more so than those embodied within live art) is a discursive and multi-centric practice and one that

seeks to re-position and disrupt the conventional audience/spectator relationship. I worked towards experiential and embodied ways of knowing and as such needed to find a research approach that facilitated conversation between praxis and qualitative inquiry. Methodologically, I arrived at a multifaceted approach, moving between performative, embodied, narrative and interpretative ethnographies and epistemological standpoints. For Conquergood, blending practice with observation both opens out and deepens the research inquiry:

> Original scholarship in culture and the arts is enhanced, complemented, and complicated in deeply meaningful ways by participatory understanding and community involvement of the researcher [and is] coextensive with the participant-observation methods of ethnographic research (2004, p.320).

3.4 Part Three of the Thesis

With these comments in mind it would be useful to introduce the next section of the thesis. Part three deals specifically with the four projects undertaken for the study. As noted in the prelude, I have not followed a chronological order and refer interchangeably to each project, depending on the focus of the chapter. I begin with the "crisis of representation" in respect to putting into words lived and embodied experience. In the play text, *The Love of the Nightingale,* the character Procne asks, '[w]here have all the words gone?' (Wertenbaker, 1996, p.297). Here, Procne is expressing a deep concern with the futility of putting into words lived experience. She cannot convey a sense of her world because as a newcomer to the city of Thrace she is without a shared and cultural history. For Procne, meaning lies not in the words used but in the nuances of the voice

and in the silences in-between. Her lament echoes in my own praxis. I have struggled to capture in writing my own experience and that of others. As a response, I have turned towards the performance text as an embodied way of knowing.

The remaining three chapters deal with themes of belonging, process and outcome and the significance of place and space in performance research. I did not set out to examine praxis from these perspectives. But rather, the themes evolved during the process of making work and in writing-up. For example, concerns of belonging emerged as I entered more fully into the inquiry. Following on from Conquergood (1991) I sought to find a proximal relationship to the research field. However, I became increasingly aware that proximity, whilst opening out the inquiry, blinded me to other perspectives. For this reason, I initiated the project *Robin and the Pirate Letters* for a different school setting. For chapter seven, I connected the two research disciplines for the thesis. From a social science perspective, I examined the formal significance of place and space and found that children imbue all kinds of meanings to the spaces they occupy. In terms of praxis, I have explored Boal's (1995) articulation of the oneiric dimension in site work.

Chapter Four

Where have all the Words Gone? Language and Meaning

> My own words take me by surprise and teach me what I think (Merleau-Ponty, 1952; cited in Derrida, 1997, p.11).

> Language is neither informational nor communicational. It is not the communication of information but something quite different: the transmission of order-words, either from one statement to another or within each statement, insofar as each statement accomplishes an act and the act is accomplished in the statement (Deleuze and Guattari, 2008, p.87).

> [H]ow can we continue to live and work in a world where truth appears fleetingly and at once begins to decay? … [and] how can language, which regularly falls apart, secure meaning and truth? (St Pierre, 1997, p.176).

In many respects this chapter sets out an uncertain argument for language and meaning, in as much as the research findings for the inquiry have raised as many problems as possibilities. As a performance-based PhD study, this is not without irony, as communication (spoken and written) has been at the forefront of my work with children and teachers. However, the kinds of meanings emerging from praxis and observed behaviour have been conflicting and contradictory and sit uneasily alongside the writing-up process. From a performance studies perspective this is a highly pertinent point and has given rise to much debate within academic and practice-as-research communities (PaR). My concern here though, lies in trying to navigate the field left open. To convey in

words a multiplicity of interpretations, meanings and vantage points, whilst at the same time, recognising the limitations of language when trying to capture, in writing, embodied and shared practice.

In recent decades similar concerns about language and meaning have surfaced in educational writing. Garratt, writing that '[t]he rise to prominence of the so-called "linguistic-turn" in contemporary qualitative inquiry has led to an outpouring of "postmodern" analyses of educational research' (Garratt, 1998, p.218). In a climate of radical uncertainty and unknowing, it is not surprising therefore, that educational researchers have turned to more imaginative modes of writing and interpretative analysis. Clough (2002), for example, suggests that a fictional account offers a greater insight into the modus operandi of lived events and experiences. Likewise, Lawler (2008), writing from a social studies perspective adopts a narrative, interpretative approach to understanding identity politics.

From my own part, narrative and interpretative methodologies have made room for the many (and competing) voices in this study, which has been particularly valuable when attempting to construct meaning(s) from shared practice. Diary entries, children's notebooks, stories and performance texts, for example, have been woven into the writing-up process as a 'polyphonous account of the research process' (Edwards *et al*, 2004, p.170). The reader accordingly will encounter shifts and turns in writing throughout the thesis as a whole in order to counter "the crisis of representation" (Denzin 1997). Narrative strategies have offered ways of knowing and understanding oneself and also,

the fictions of others. The aim of this chapter seeks to disentangle the differing kinds of meanings caught within the thesis: my own voice, as practitioner/observer/researcher and the voice(s) and practice of others (children/teachers), whilst, at the same time, recognising the possibilities and limitations of the endeavour. I begin with a post-structural examination of the relationship between language and meaning. Here, notions of hegemony and hierarchy have been replaced and the process of understanding is one of continual displacement and deferral.

4.1 Where have all the Words Gone?

In *The Love of the Nightingale,* playwright Timberlake Wertenbaker explores the function of language at its most fundamental level. For the play's characters, understanding is not easily found through words used, but rather, meaning rests somewhere between thought, voice, words and intent. The character Procne, separated from her much loved sister and exiled to Thrace, the homeland of her husband, discusses with the female chorus the impossibility of attaching meaning to words:

Procne: Where have all the words gone?

Echo: Gone, Procne, the words?

Procne: There were so many. Everything that was had a word and every word was something. None of these meanings half in the shade, unclear.

Iris: We speak the same language, Procne.

Procne: The words are the same, but point to different things. We aspire to clarity in sound, you like the silences in between
(Wertenbaker,1996, pp.297-99).

Despite sharing a common language with the female chorus, Procne articulates a greater anxiety regarding words and meaning. Key to this concern is the view that meaning is to be found not only in the words chosen and said, but also in how words are spoken: nuances of tone, pace, pitch and pause; described beautifully in the play text as the silence between words. Since meaning also rests within its social and cultural context, as an outsider, Procne cannot connect with her female counterparts as she is without a shared history:

Helen: You will always be a guest there, never call it your own, never rest in the kindness of history.

Echo: Your story intermingled with events, no. You will be outside (Wertenbaker, 1996, p.298).

As Barthes has shown, language functions through a complex web of semiotic and linguistic sign systems and it is impossible to separate words from their specific historical, social and cultural context and usage. Within this debate the primary import of the written text as an instrument of truth, authenticity, validity and reliability is challenged. The implications of this argument are significant, since this suggests that the relationship between words and meaning is, at best, illusory and one that is articulated through specific givens and cultural constraints. Derrida, taking this argument further, suggests that meaning cannot be attached to words per se but rather, '[t]he absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely' (1997, p.280). Derrida is establishing the futility of pinning meaning into language itself, since there is a certain kind of play between the sign and signified. Meaning cannot be found *in*

words and nor indeed *in* writing, since, according to Derrida, '[Writing] does not know where it is going, no knowledge can keep it from the essential precipitation towards the meaning it constitutes and that is, primarily, its future' (Derrida, 1997, p.11).

Like Procne, I also found the meaning of words somewhat elusive. I have grappled to find a language that makes sense of performance practice and observations undertaken for the thesis, but also, a language that articulates the lived experience of others. As an educational study, albeit seen through the lenses of performance, this has been a shared and collaborative undertaking with children and teachers and it has not been easy to unravel the experience of others, from my own predilections, in writing-up, or indeed during practical activity. Schwandt says this is because, 'language is not private but shared, hence, meaning is not subjective but intersubjective' (1999, p.453). Aspland shares a similar concern for her own doctoral thesis examining postgraduate supervisory experience for overseas students.[40] Of this, she writes: '[a]s the researcher I could never really get to know the "I" in relation to each woman's supervisory experiences, for it immediately becomes the reflective "Me" with the completion of an action or reported action' (2003, p.135). How best then to convey meaning, when understanding is situated in the temporal and ephemeral nature of performance and shared practice, has been an ongoing source of concern.

[40] By overseas students, Tania Aspland is referring to students from outside Queensland, Australia. Despite the difference in time frame (this was written before I began my own doctoral study and geographical separation) I am struck by the similar problems and concerns we both faced in trying to capture the lived experiences of others.

This argument proposes that *Writing* is another kind of knowledge production. From a phenomenological perspective, meaning is not carried via the mind to the written word, but in the act of writing itself:

> Communication in literature is not the simple appeal on the part of the writer to meanings which would be part of a priori of the mind. Rather, communication arouses these meanings in the mind through enticement and a kind of oblique action. The writer's thought does not control his language from without; the writer himself is a kind of new idiom, constructing itself (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; cited in Derrida, 1997, p.11).

For Merleau-Ponty there is interconnectivity between language and the construction of self and identity. Language does not simply carry meaning, but rather, *its use* constructs our relationship to the world (and others). As Derrida asserts, '[m]eaning is neither before nor after the act' (1997, p.11). This is a significant argument to establish because it suggests that the meaning(s) we bring to an event are re-interpreted through the act of writing, or as Lawler (2008) suggests, through the stories we tell ourselves. Arguably, the kinds of narratives found within this study are indeed stories. Whilst these may refer to actual events and happenings and involve real people, the process of seeing, thinking and writing is, in itself, an interpreted act. There is 'no unmediated access to the facts of the matter, nor to a straightforward unmediated experience' (Lawler, 2008, p.18). Crucial to this suggestion is the relationship between time and narrative.

4.2 Narrative Time and Interpretative Fictions

For Ricoeur, there is a "reciprocal" relationship between time and narrative, suggesting 'that narrativity and temporality are closely related' (2000, p.256). In adopting an essentially Heideggerian understanding of "within-time-ness", Ricoeur says that narrative time operates in a different way to linear time, since it affords the possibility of moving between the past, present and future. Hence, when we engage with narrative and interpretative writing, we are also dealing with time as fluid and temporal. Writing does not fix time (and by extension meaning) into stasis, but rather, narrative time produces meaning. Ricoeur writes, '[w]hen someone, whether storyteller or historian, starts recounting, everything is already spread out in time' (2000, p.260). Therefore, when a particular event is narrated, the past, present and future are laid out for the reader. The past of the story informs the present (and its future) and the latter tells us how to interpret the past. Lawler sees this as 'life as being both lived and understood forwards *and* backwards in a "spiral movement" of constant interpretation and reinterpretation' (2008, p.19). An example of writing, for a school outing to a World War II exhibition (2005), offers a useful illustration of this point:

The unmistakable scream of an air-raid signal filled the room and somewhat startled, we looked towards our museum guide for reassurance. "This is not a drill" she said, "you need to make your way to the air-raid shelter". Excitedly, I gathered together my group of children and saw, with some pleasure, that unnerved by the rising sound of the signal they were moving at a quick pace towards the door. On route, girls clung on to each other and held hands. Much giggling ensued and for a brief time it felt very real. I caught

myself thinking that this was such a good example of experiential learning and how it would support my doctoral thesis. I imagined children sharing this with their parents and friends back at school. They would tell in a hushed voice, with wide-open eyes, how it felt to be in a real air raid, to be taken to a confined space and to wait for an infinite amount of time in the dark. I was already mentally writing up my field notes when a boy in front of me suddenly lashed out at another child and punched him heavily on the shoulder. I intervened and the boy was reprimanded, but the moment was lost and I felt absurdly disappointed. After, as we waited in the dark for the all clear it seemed to be more than a simple playground lashing out between boys. The punch, vicious and unwarranted, signified how little understanding I had. I was no closer in knowing the children, and my hopes for the study, at that point, seemed thin on the ground (2006).

In this story, the time moves from the present (the mock air-raid shelter) to a projected future, as children retell their experience at the museum, back at home with parents. The future narrative is bright, with knowing and understanding, which my (present) self foresees. For Heidegger, foresight is part of the process of finding meaning: of interpretation, '[i]n every case interpretation is grounded in *something we see in advance* – in a *fore-sight'* (1996, p.191; *original emphasis*).But, the sudden and unexpected punch between the boys hurls the narrative back to the present and, at the same time, points to the past, shown in the line, 'I was no closer in knowing the children'. Such admissions indicate a past wrought with anxiety, which the trip to the exhibition had hoped to resolve in some way. Interpretative modes of writing then, allow the writer (and reader) to move between temporal timeframes and uncertain anchor points of knowing and unknowing.

Attempts to pinpoint moments of change, insight and confusion during the course of the study have been an uncertain exercise. For example, one of the challenges of writing-up has been the analysis of field notes taken over a four-year period. These cannot be seen as reliable indicators of past feelings and observations. If writing is to be understood in the present, narrative time shuttles between the past, present and future. Writing may appear to be teleological in purpose but this is because narrative structures '[work] to naturalize the plot' (Lawler, 2008, p.19). To understand the complexity of this argument, field notes from an observed session at the school have been selected:

Today, Year 6, were working on the differences between biographic and autobiographic writing styles and were reading extracts from Jack Warner's life at school. Children sat in rows facing the teacher and whilst some were attentive, others were much less so. I noticed that a boy sat throughout the literacy lesson without any reading material. After first break, the same boy didn't do any work during number. Later, I mentioned this to the teacher and she said that the boy regularly didn't participate in literacy and maths. Halfway into the session, the teacher asked if I could take some of the children out of the class to work on drama freeze-frames. The children were extremely enthusiastic and receptive to this idea but, probably because they saw it as a way of getting out of the class. Likewise, the teacher saw it as a way of reducing her class as this enabled her to undertake more focused work with smaller groups.

During first break I discussed creativity with the Year 6 teachers. I was given the impression that creativity is all very well, but this doesn't help children pass their SATs.

Mrs. A. referred to this "as a dichotomy". Both teachers were positive, but demonstrated ambiguity over the creativity agenda. Mrs. A. told me how much she loved teaching and that she came from a creative background. Mr. B. was also very positive but had firm ideas about the distance between teachers and children. He was keen to stress that children should not refer to me by my first name (November 2005).

On one level, these notes reveal an uncertainty about the observation process. Here, I am unsure what to record and the writing moves awkwardly between what is observed on the one hand, and deemed to be significant on the other. For example, the boy who sat throughout the lesson without reading material is seen as a problem. Rather than noting down his behaviour in the class, I selected to include the teacher's comments regarding the child, 'the child regularly didn't participate in literacy and maths'. Similarly, writing for the drama freeze-frame reveals little about the exercise. I am more concerned with the reasons why children and teachers acted in certain ways. The conversation with the Year 6 teachers suggests an attitude towards creativity and discipline and it is not entirely clear whose attitude is revealed here. Overwhelmingly, in this extract, nuances of voice, body language and spatial codes are overlooked for my own (and teachers) predispositions and assumptions. The writing reveals more about my own values towards the study than the observed behaviour of others. I am not simply observing and writing, because I am thinking and making judgements about what I am observing - and of course, this affects what I get to see.

At the point of writing-up though, four years later, I am compelled to insert a follow-up commentary onto the notes:

In retrospect, I have come to see the school as an incredibly creative learning space and none more so than the teachers I observed during my time at the school. I have seen a fashion show made out of rubbish and recycled material, Christmas plays written and performed by children, concerts (music is a strength of the school), fun assemblies, school artwork, mock news reports, radio plays and many stories and poems covering walls and doorways (2009).

There is a gap then, between what is seen and done on the one hand and, on the other, interpreted and articulated through speech and writing. But, as Schwandt points out, 'there isn't first a silent act of comprehension followed by public recitation, rather, understanding and speaking meaning are intertwined' (1999, p.456). Heidegger sees this as 'the development of understanding we call interpretation' (1996, p.188). For Heidegger, we reach understanding not because we interpret the world we live in, but rather, our understanding of *Being-in-the-World*, shapes the possibilities of interpretation:

> In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a "signification" over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within the world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world … When something is understood but is still veiled, it becomes unveiled by an act of appropriation, and this is always done under the guidance of a point of view,

> which fixes with that regard to what is understood is to be interpreted (Heidegger, 1996, p.191).

Schwandt believes that the philosophical implications of this proposal are significant. If understanding is assembled, rather than uncovered through language, it brings into question the kinds of truth claims emerging from qualitative research inquiry. This supposes that the linguistic sign is not tied to a universal, nor constant signified, but that 'language is a heterogeneous, variable reality' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2008, p.111). In many respects these concerns have resonated through the inquiry as a whole. Struggles to capture meaning (and understanding) in words are not confined to this chapter. Field notes, diary entries and interviews, in addition to the writing of others, have been circumnavigated in an uneasy way as meanings are made (and unmade) in the study. For Schwandt, understanding is relational, temporal and provisional and the truth, 'is the best account possible. It is the truth that is disclosed by the better – the more perspicuous, the more coherent, the more insightful' (1999, p.454). For praxis-as- research though, our ability to find the "best account" is ever more elusive, because as Deleuze and Guattari argue, 'content and expression are never reducible to signified-signifier' (2008, p.76). The remainder of this chapter then, sets out to explore the limitations of language when attempting to make sense of embodied practice.

4.3 Heroes and Villains

The project *Heroes and Villains* offers a useful illustration of the relationship between words and meaning. The following extract is taken from a segment of an interview

conducted towards the end of the project. Here, children are discussing their favourite exercises:

When we were doing the heroes and villains and we had to sit on the chair and when we walked and sat on the Queen's chair ... it was different to all the others coz we weren't acting out a play, it was like a game.

Well, we liked doing the part where J and K were the robbers, I was the police officer and you had to keep still for the photos and they were robbing the grannies and this was the best, best drama and learning we ever came to.

I think that I liked where we were doing that play where I am the teacher and doing the fire balls. I like that you can make it up yourself and say what you want. I think that I have learnt more and that I am not quite shy like I used to be.

It's been like drama, it's more than drama. It's like a big, big film.

In the above, children refer in a positive and enthusiastic way to the exercises they most enjoyed and the words "like" and "best" are used easily and often. However, a different kind of understanding (or misunderstanding), is also evident, suggesting uneasiness about the kinds of performance practices taking place. Here, the child is struggling to articulate a practice that is recognisable on some level, but is different to conventional drama: 'it's been like drama - it's more than drama'. I am drawn also to the lines: 'it was different to

all the others coz we weren't acting out a play, it was like a game'. I am tempted to weave in further analysis at this point, marking the points at which meaning shifts between the known and the familiar, to the unknown and the unfamiliar. Auslander, in his application of Derrida writes that, 'every mental or phenomenal event is a product of difference, is defined by its relation to what it is not rather than by its essence' (Auslander, 1998, p.59).

But, I wonder whether this is the complete story. These comments were made during an evaluative session at the end of a practical workshop. I had sought agreement from the children to record their feedback and explained that I might use their observations in writing-up. The children were happy to oblige; this was not the first time I had recorded their voices and they competed for a chance to speak into the recorder. But at the point of writing up, I re-visit their comments and I begin to question the influence I may have had in the creation of their feedback. For example, had I shown in some way, through eye contact, tone of voice or shifting body language, that I was happy or even unhappy with their response? A deep-seated desire to find a language to validate praxis may have, unconsciously, played out through the body. The child may have therefore read into my behaviour and altered her response accordingly.

4.4 The Language of Others

From a post-positivist and interpretive standpoint, the word can no longer act as a version of an empirical truth but a dialogic exchange of intentions, assumptions, interpretations, confusions and misunderstandings. The complexity of this argument is heightened when the researcher needs to articulate the values and disposition of others. Particularly, when

interpretations spring from shared practice and it is not so clear to see where observation ends and practice begins. Moreover, the observed may disrupt the viewing process, perhaps in a knowing and deliberate way, or for reasons hidden to the observer (and observed). Conquergood for example, critiques Geertz's assumption that '[d]oing ethnography is like trying to read … a manuscript' (Geertz 1973; cited in Conquergood, 2004, p.316). He cites that 'the will-to-know' (Conquergood, 2004, p.317), is largely absent from ethnographic studies that privilege written text at the expense of embodied and experiential ways of knowing. I found it not so easy, however, to avoid staking claims for understanding and meaning upon the written word. Here, I am writing about an exercise called Secret Agents:

In order to become a secret agent the child needed to complete two tasks: the first required him to initiate a secret dialogue with his peers and teachers in the guise of a superhero or villain. This was a simple, but effective exercise and one that was hugely enjoyed by all participating children, possibly because it appeared to be a slightly subversive (and naughty) game. I asked children to complete a circuit of the school building, but in order to successfully complete their mission they needed to say hello, smile and initiate a conversation with an agreed number of people. With much enthusiasm they sped round their school, enjoying the opportunity of engaging in a secret task known only to the workshop participants.

The value of this activity becomes apparent when we remember the kinds of children participating in the project. For children struggling with low confidence levels engaging

in conversation with friends and teachers is not easy and often overlooked within the demands of the school day. The Secret Mission gave the child a reason to initiate visual and spoken communication and because it was a secret exercise it gave a hidden safety net; an imaginative cloak of invisibility.

Field notes, taken after the session, record a general air of excitement for this activity. Children respond in an extremely positive way and there is much laughing and giggling. However, in the act of writing-up, I overlook the physical and embodied text and rely on a diary entry taken from Glowing Devil's notebook: 'Ninja Angel and Nethers go to the classroom and have to act their hero and Miss S., just smiled, ahh hee, haa, hoo!' The "truth" of this statement however, is challenged during a final visit to the school in 2009. Ostensibly, I am there to take photographs of the school building and to speak with the Head Teacher. But I also take the opportunity to meet up with the children who participated in *Heroes and Villains:*

The children are pleased to see me and we talk easily about the project. We reminisce about favourite games and activities. It was revealed during our conversation that Ninja Angel and Nethers didn't actually go into their classroom.[41]

Ninja Angel: Miss, you know when you asked me and Nethers to go into our class and pretend to be superheroes, well we didn't do it.

[41] The dialogue has been taken from memory after the event as this was an unstructured conversation and not recorded. Whilst the actual conversation might have differed in terms of words used, grammatical structure I have endeavoured to capture the essence of the discussion.

M.Piasecka: Why didn't you?

Ninja Angel: We were too embarrassed. We thought Mrs S. would tell us off.

M.Piasecka: Why have you told me now?

Ninja Angel: (Ninja Angel shrugs, there is a pause) I don't know.

4.5 Performance: an Embodied Text

This was a pivotal moment in writing-up and forced a reconsideration of how meanings are drawn from the study. The struggle to validate practice at the school had unwittingly overshadowed the kinds of knowing that can only emerge through praxis. The above example would have had a greater currency if the text had rested upon the physical and embodied. This is not to say however, that the written documentation is without merit. As Conquergood suggests, performance ethnography places the observer into a unique position, since it offers the opportunity of multiple-vantage points and ways of knowing. Turner *et al* attend to this argument in their example of performance studies ethnography/anthropology in the University of Virginia:

> Our aim was not to develop a professional group of trained actors for the purposes of public entertainment. It was, frankly, an attempt to put students more fully inside the cultures they were reading about in anthropological monographs. Reading written words kowtows to the cognitive dominance of written matter and relies upon the arbitrariness of the connection between the opened or printed sign and its meaning. What we were trying to do was to put experimental flesh on these cognitive bones (Turner and Turner, 2004, p.270).

Turner *et al's* call for an embodied way of knowing resonates throughout this inquiry and has transformed the meaning-making process. There have been many instances of praxis that might illustrate this statement - but for ease and continuity of reading, I have returned to the example of my last visit to the school. The project *Heroes and Villains* prioritised children struggling with low confidence and poor self-esteem and aimed to build communicative bridges by which friendship groups might be formed. I was interested therefore in seeing whether the project had any kind of short term or long-lasting affect. But when I raised the questions of shyness and confidence with the children they all reiterated an on-going sense of exclusion:

I am still shy

I don't like to put my hand up in class

I don't have friends in my class.

However, a practical session[42] following our discussion challenges this perception:

With the exception of one child who worked slightly apart from the group and remained vocally and physically distant throughout, children worked closely together, sharing eye contact and mimicking tone of voice and facial expression. It was a noisy session, with much prompting and interrupting as games and workshops are half-remembered and

[42] I had intended only to talk with the *Heroes and Villains* group but the children were keen to play some of the games and workshops we had undertaken during the project. It was extremely fortuitous that I agreed, since the practical session revealed a very different response to the discussion regarding shyness.

recalled. A child, who had only minutes earlier expressed a high degree of shyness, played and performed with confidence, establishing and maintaining vocal ease and relaxed body posture. She was also responsible for leading her peers through the workshop. I noted that she would often direct her gaze towards mine and so, during a pause in activity, I remark that she is doing really well and not shy at all, at which point she smiles and returns back to her group. Afterwards, I discuss this with her class teacher and I am unsurprised by the teacher's perception of a happy, confident and intelligent child (July 2009).

There are, perhaps, many reasons why the children said they were shy. But one reason may have some root in the original impetus for the project. Teachers selected children whom they felt would benefit from a project that would place them, uniquely, at the centre of the learning experience and not because of a perceived deficit: too shy, timid or introverted. But, it was also important that participating children understood the pedagogic aims of the project, without drawing attention to individual struggles with shyness and confidence. I was careful to ensure that the children perceived their inclusion in the project positively. We discussed how their performance practice, notebooks, pictures, interviews and performance work would be integrated into the thesis. But this did not prevent children referring to their own perceived exclusion in their classroom community. The following has been taken from notebook entries and in conversation:

Well, I used to be shy but now I am not. Because you can, like, show off and show what you have really got inside you. I think that I'm not shy anymore because when before

when someone asked me to do something I'd say no, because I was not really like that, I can do what other people can do when before I couldn't. Now I'm not afraid of doing stuff that I didn't use to (Ninja Angel, 2008).

I've been performing in front of Mrs P., and all my shyness has really gone, I don't know what has happened to my heart, but after doing things with Mrs P., I am not feeling a little bit shy … but now all my shyness has gone, I have got new feelings which makes me not get shy in front of the teachers and all of our class (Shining Angel, 2008).

It may be therefore, that the children believed it necessary to adopt a stance of exclusion in order to be re-allowed into the workshop, as this was seen as a precursor for the project in 2008. Children also appeared to have genuinely enjoyed and valued the project: for example, they asked, repeatedly, when I was coming back to work with them and whether I would take another project to their High School in September 2009. Such claims are approached with caution though and I tread carefully in trying to construct meaning through storied events. The point here is not to prove another argument or knowledge claim, but rather to demonstrate that through performance and practice new meanings emerge, which were unrealised in words. Polkinghorne sees this as a particular concern for research premised upon narrative modes of inquiry and argues that 'validity threats arise in narrative research because the languaged descriptions given by participants of their experience is not a mirrored reflection of this meaning' (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.480).

4.6 Concluding Remarks

In many respects, this chapter has raised new problems. Rather than finding ways to capture and secure language, I have unsettled the meaning-making process. From the perspective of observed behaviour, field notes cannot be reliable indicators of past events, histories and memories. For Ricoeur, time and narrative are reciprocal, moving between past, present and future, whereas understanding is conducted in the present. Lawler suggests memory is reconstructive. The process of writing up, then, sits within ongoing and unstable frames of reference, which are at best temporal, relational and provisional. Similarly, the relationship between embodied praxis and the written word is uncertain. Gómez-Peña puts it like this:

> Our system of thought tends to be both emotionally and corporeally based. In fact, the performance always begins in our skin and muscles, projects itself onto the social sphere, and returns via our psyche to our body and our blood stream, only to be refracted back into the social world via documentation. Whatever thoughts we can't embody we tend to distrust (Gómez-Peña, 2004, p, 80).

It would be misleading to suggest, however, that meanings cannot be found, far from it. But, if we are to find the "best accounts" possible (Schwandt 1999), then ideas of truth, certainty and reliability need to be held gently and passed with care between different kinds of voices, interpretations, perspectives and ways of knowing. Sometimes, meanings can last for a good while and at others, it is fleeting, leaving behind just a trace of its presence. Perhaps, though, it is in the moments of struggle, confusion and misunderstanding when we understand the most (St Pierre 1997; Garratt 1998).

Chapter Five

In the Thick of It: Borders and Belonging

> I make art about the ongoing misunderstanding that takes place in the border zone. But, to me, the border is no longer located in a geographical site. I carry the border wherever I go. I also find new borders wherever I go. In fact, there is a border right now. Can you feel it? (Gómez-Peña, 2000, p.147).
>
> A boundary is more like a membrane than a wall (Conquergood, 2004, p.145).
>
> Yo ho, yo ho, the pirate life,
> The flag o'skull and bones,
> A merry hour, a hempen rope,
> And hey for Davy Jones
> (Barrie, 2007, p.61).

This chapter sets out to examine ideas of belonging following on from the view that '[p]roximity, not objectivity, becomes an epistemological point of departure and return' (Conquergood, 2004, p.149). The educational significance of belonging tends to surface within: ethnicity and race,[43] gender and sexuality, [44]self-esteem[45] and citizenship

[43] For the experience of Black Caribbean Pupils see Demie, 2005; in the context of Race and Education see Hassan, 2009; Tomlinson and Craft (Ed) 1995.

[44] For education and equality see Cole, 2006.

[45] For belonging see Ma, 2003, who used extensive data from surveys of 240 schools in Canada to explore the differences in perceptions of belonging. The study revealed differences that were contained within institutions rather than between them.

education.[46] In these contexts, questions of belonging (to a group/school/community) are typically premised upon ideas of inclusion and exclusion, notions of Otherness, constructs of identity and personal and social responsibility. For the purposes of the chapter though, I have considered belonging from the perspective of shared and collaborative performance praxis, and three themes have emerged: (1) borders between paradigms of practice, (2) proximities of belonging, (3) belonging and autonomy. Projects selected for consideration in this chapter are: *Heroes and Villains* (2008) and *Robin and the Pirate Letters* (2009). To support my analysis I have referred specifically to Dwight Conquergood (1949 – 2004). In his obituary of Conquergood, Johnson asserts that he was instrumental in re-thinking ethnographic practices, writing:

> Dwight Conquergood's scholarship was integral to the gradual paradigm shift from "Interpretation Studies" to "Performance Studies". He advocated envisioning performance as a "border" discipline that rigorously challenged positivism, expands the meaning of texts and privileges embodied research (Johnson, 2005, p.11).

For my own part, the notion of performance as a "border discipline" has been invaluable in terms of engaging with the research field. It has also offered an unparalleled view of the movement between paradigms and ways of knowing. Caught between two very different research domains, performance ethnography has opened out the possibility for movement between educational research and the performance studies agenda. With this in mind, I begin this chapter with an examination of borders and in-between spaces.

[46] For concerns of citizenship see the Crick Report, (QCA) 1998; Halliday, 1999; Piper and Garratt, 2004.

5.1 Borders and In-Between Spaces

According to Conquergood ethnographic fieldwork has changed significantly in recent years. Modern modes of travel, global communication and the mass media have contributed towards a re-thinking of what it is to belong to a particular country, place or group. This is not to suggest an absence of borders and free travel between people and places, but to recognise that boundaries are not just lines on a map; they are as much ideologically and politically motivated. Rosaldo puts it this way, 'if ethnography once imagined it could describe discrete cultures, it now contends with boundaries that crisscross over a field at once fluid and saturated with power' (1989; cited in Conquergood, 1991, p.184). Conquergood suggests that the modern-day researcher sits within contexts that are continually changing and moving and positivist beliefs in objectivity have been replaced with post structural notions of proximity, partiality, temporality and dependency (see also Turner et al, 2004).

Conquergood also believes that an increased awareness of borders and in-between spaces has led to greater traffic between research paradigms and in particular, between theory and practice. He argues for a performance studies agenda that embraces both scholarly written texts and practical exploration. The notion of borders is crucial to this respect, '[pointing] to transgressive travel between two domains of knowledge … [opening] the space between analysis and action, and to pull the pin on the binary opposition between theory and practice' (2004, p.311). In terms of contemporary performance the pull between theory and practice tends to emerge in the body. Gómez-Peña, for example, repositions the idea of the border as an aesthetic and artistic concern. In his own words, he

is ‘a migrant provocateur, an intercultural pirate … a border crosser’ (Gómez-Peña, 2000, p.9). In many respects, Gómez-Peña, performance methodology is a useful starting-point to examine belonging from the perspective of the “borderlands” (Rosaldo 1989).

5.2 The Borderlands

Guillermo Gómez-Peña sees belonging (to somewhere, to someone, to oneself) as a fractured narrative rendered through disparate shifting, competing and colliding needs, wants, dreams, longings and fears: ‘I don’t aspire to find myself. I whole heartedly accept my constant condition of loss. I embrace my multiple and incomplete identities, and celebrate all of them’ (Gómez-Peña, 2000, p.10). Gómez-Peña critiques, antagonises and repositions the cultural, racial and gendered body, preferring to occupy a place between borders: national, linguistic, political and aesthetic. In collaboration with the art collective *La Pocha Nostra*[47] Gómez-Peña has established a prodigious amount of practice, spanning many years, across numerous continents and with artists from all kinds of nationalities, languages, disciplines and ways of working. The work has been well documented by Gómez-Peña himself[48] (see also Garoian 1999; Heathfield 2004). Most known for his “living museums” Gómez-Peña offers up tableaus and images that play upon our cultural, racial, gendered desires, fantasies and fears. Provocatively drawn, these

[47] La Pocha Nostra was established in 1993 by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Roberto Sifuentes and Nola Mariano (see www.pochanostra.com).

[48] Other books include: *Warrior for Gringostroika* (1993); *The New World Border* (1996); *Dangerous Border Crossers* (2000); *Temple of Confessions*; Gomez-Pena and Sifuentes (1996).

images present parodied versions of the non-white European: 'Now, have any of you fantasized about being from another race or culture? Which one? Black, Indian? Native American? Mexican?'(Gómez-Peña, 2000, p. 30).

For Gómez-Peña, performance offers the best opportunity of exploring identity from other perspectives. A workshop for *La Pocha Nostra* in Los Angeles *Impersonate your favourite subculture*, invites participants to dress as their most desired/feared other: for example, a student dresses as a Native American Indian and spends the day travelling on the public transport system; an American/Japanese student adopts the clothing of the Geisha (Gómez-Peña, 2005, p.117). The purpose of the exercise is for students/participants to witness, at first hand, identity as a "liquid" (Bauman 2006), mutable, contested and artificial construct. Unlike virtuosic forms of theatre, which privilege psycho-emotional connections to character and role, Gómez-Peña establishes belonging through costume, make-up, props and music. Identity is applied, critiqued and manipulated rather than a cultural, racial and gendered given. In *Ex-Centris* as part of Live Culture, Tate Modern (2003) audience members/participants were encouraged to explore the culturally forbidden: a female, wearing only a black balaclava, cradles a M16 rifle; on a raised podium a body of a male, wearing a codpiece, a knee-guard and rubber tubing around the face offers his body as canvas for audience/ participants to write upon: Gómez-Peña, presents a fractured, crippled, trans-sexual/ trans-cultural image; props include: Mexican hats, Native American headwear, women's shoes, a steel wheelchair, body armour, a banana (Heathfield, 2004). Garoian referring to *Borderama* (1995) asserts:

> the broad metaphor in Gómez-Peña's performance pedagogy represent the contested zone – the liminal, contingent, and the empheral, where cultural codes and binaries are intentionally challenged and reconstituted (Garoian, 1999, p.66).

Gómez-Peña believes that the borders are 'no longer a geographical site' (2000, p.147), replacing the map with the cartography of the body. Trinh puts it like this, '"I" is, therefore, not a unified subject, a fixed identity, or that solid mass covered with layers of superficialities one has gradually to peel off before one can see its true face. "I" is, itself, *infinite layers'* (1989; cited in Conquergood, 1991, p.184, *original emphasis*). The aforementioned example of *Impersonate your favourite subculture* exemplifies this point. In a similar exercise for *Heroes and Villains* (2008), we play with the idea that we can (quite literally) step into another identity. Here, the children and I work towards finding a movement vocabulary for our superheroes and villains and we share these with each other. The exercise concludes with a battle of huge and fantastic proportions: *Fireballs launched across the space in rapid succession were swiftly and deftly counterattacked with bolts of lightning and thunder. Stealth ninja moves were swept aside by the power of the Shadow and the magnetic force field thrown out by Nethers catapulted archenemies into the stratosphere. It was a busy morning (11/06/08).* In an earlier project, *Sounds* (2007), we exaggerate, parody and mimic our own and partner's style of moving and it becomes a favourite exercise for the group.

The positioning of performance into the borders enables Gómez-Peña practice to move between paradigms and hegemonies of practice. His work crosses the space between theatre, dramatic tableau and art installation and exemplifies the postmodern performance

text. In the context of postmodernism, Birringer sees 'nearly invisible boundaries separating theatre performance from dance, music, film, television, video, and the various performance arts disciplines' (Birringer, 1993; cited in Denzin, 1997, p.93). I have also attempted to cross between research paradigms, subject boundaries and methodologies of practice. Indeed, much of this thesis has been concerned with trying to navigate the space between competing discourses. I have positioned praxis in the "busy intersections" (Rosaldo 1989), between live art, contemporary theatre and educational drama in order to find the best vantage point for the thesis.

I have found however that it is not so easy to move between borders, or indeed to belong to a notional borderland. The routes through performance paradigms are not wide-open spaces, with free moving traffic and their boundaries not always visible. Borders are partial, provisional and temporal and the meanings we take from these are, at best, relational. Schwandt explains it like this, '[w]hen we seek to understand what others are doing and saying, we are always standing in this in-between of familiarity and strangeness' (1999, p.458). My own efforts to position the study in-between live art, drama and the creative agenda offer a useful insight into this argument

5.3 Paradigms of Practice

From the outset of the study, teachers tended to refer to my work at the school as "drama" even though I avoided using the term, preferring the word "performance", since my praxis shared a closer relationship to contemporary performance and live art. Initially, I felt that drama pointed towards psycho-emotive role-play, logocentrism and virtuosic concerns

and wished to move away from dominant hegemonic practice. Teachers, however, used the word drama to denote a wide variety of exercises, including movement, tableau work, mime, improvisation and practical topic work. For example, as participant observer I have created many freeze-frames, choreographed movement for the poem *The Jabberwocky* and helped children to dramatise a mock news report for a modern day version of *Romeo and Juliet.* There was though, an expectation that my praxis would conclude with a conventional performance of some kind. It took some time to overthrow a perception that my work would not, for example, be shown in morning assembly. Contrarily, the use of the word "performance" worked towards this idea as teachers saw this as a theatrical term.

The term creativity also created confusion, at least in the context of participant observation. Teachers were unsure whether I was there to see creativity in the classroom, or to provide creative learning strategies and I was never entirely sure whether creative lessons were engineered for my benefit or for the children. For example, I was once asked to take a group into the school hall and to find a creative way of learning addition and subtraction. I was under the impression that I was there to observe the lesson and was thrown by this request. I have a vivid memory of rolling up balls of paper and making hopscotch of sorts under the watchful gaze of equally confused children, whilst all the time thinking that somehow my role in the school had been misunderstood.

It was not until after my second year at the school that I began to see how the borders between performance paradigms might blur and bleed into one another. The project *Sounds* was instrumental in facilitating a move between live art and drama, which resulted

in a broader understanding of performance pedagogy. As I settled into the research I became less concerned with terms and definitions. I realised that my own desire to work outside of established drama practices had prevented me from seeing some of the values inherent in this kind of work. Moreover, this had blinded me to the possibility of working in-between performance paradigms. It was only when I relinquished the hold I had maintained for live art that the route between contemporary practice and drama became clear. To put it simply, I had learnt to trust the process of making performance work, which responded to the needs of participants. Rather than closing down borders this opened out the potential for traffic between domains of practice. This proved to be a turning point in the thesis and the project *Heroes and Villains* reflects this change of focus.

5.4 Proximities of Belonging

Conquergood asserts that 'the obligatory rite-of-passage for all ethnography-doing fieldwork-requires getting one's body immersed in the field for a period of time sufficient to enable one to participate inside that culture' (1991, p.180). Initial struggles to find a space to position the study had unwittingly prevented me from working inside the culture of the school. I was more preoccupied with establishing a performance methodology than listening and responding to the research environment. As I entered into the third year of the inquiry I began to see, with greater insight, the lives of the children I had observed. Prior concerns of belonging to a subject area were replaced with a deeper and closer relationship to the school, children and teachers. This is not to suggest however, that the study had resolved itself in some way, far from it. Conquergood says that, '[e]thnographic

rigor, disciplinary authority, and profession reputation are established by the length of time, depth of commitment, and risks (bodily, physical, emotional) taken in order to acquire cultural understanding' (1991, p. 180). Similarly, the decision to move away from live art to a broader application of performance pedagogy seemed, at the time, as a risky endeavour. I was acutely aware that switching paths might have derailed the PhD study, or at best, revealed inconsistency and uncertainty on my part.

I have come to realise that such struggles are commonplace. In rejecting objectivity for partial and provisional understanding the ethnographic researcher sits within contexts that are forever changing. For example, at the point of initiating *Heroes and Villains* it was impossible to see ahead of the study, as I shared a historical timeframe with the participants. Fabian describes it like this:

> Only as communicative praxis does ethnography carry the promise of yielding new knowledge about another culture [and] that fieldwork is a form of communicative interaction with an Other, one that must be carried out coevally, on the basis of shared intersubjective time and intersocietal contemporaniety … Communication is, ultimately, about creating shared Time (Fabian, 1983; cited in Conquergood, 1991, p.183).

Key to this argument is the view that the researcher is "in the thick" of the experience (Conquergood, 2004) and as such, shares the meaning-making process as it unfolds with the participants. The focus here is on communication, participation and collaboration. I was more able to understand my research group because we shared similar kinds of struggles and tensions. As Conquergood asserts, ethnography is about being-in and

experiencing the research culture, rather than observing it from an outsider's perspective. Whereas, in *Sounds,* I battled for some time to impose a performance methodology over the needs of the group, I had a very different response to *Heroes and Villains.* Of the four projects undertaken, this one illustrated in the most demonstrable way the value of participatory and collaborative performance praxis. Written and spoken feedback, in addition to performance practice, indicates that children enjoyed *Heroes and Villains* and felt a genuine sense of belonging to the project. The following extracts have been taken from the children's notebooks. At the end of each session I asked for a few words of feedback, which were kept in the child's possession. Participants were encouraged to write whatever they liked:

Black Hole:

- *This lesson was very, very good. I can't wait till next week. Thank you.*
- *This was a really good lesson because we did about heroes and villains.*
- *This lesson is really good because it was about Forum theatre and it was the best lesson yet and I hope that next week is better.*
- *This lesson was really good and I hope next week is better.*
- *This week was the best week ever and tomorrow we have to perform on a stage.*

Shining Angel:

- *Today we did some plays about heroes saving people. I really enjoyed it. IT WAS FUN!*

- *Today it was brillant [sic]. Shelley is a really good teacher, it's fun being with her. We really enjoyed it. IT WAS GREAT!*
- *Today was the bestest [sic] lesson we ever had. ITS GREAT FUN!*
- *We all love u Shelly [sic].*

Super Spartacus

- *I thought this group is the best and we played games. I like the games best.*
- *I liked when we performed and asked people who is a hero.*
- *I liked this lesson because we played.*
- *I like today it was fantastic*

Glowing Devil

- *Today is has been really FUN! and Shelley is ded [sic] nice.*
- *Today was brilliant and I've made a villain up who is called Ninja Fireball and Shelley is so nice.*
- *Brilliant and Shelley is sooo nice.*
- *Today was good and I coloured in my villain and hero.*
- *We all love you Shelley.*

On one hand, I felt a great deal of satisfaction after reading the children's feedback. In all instances the project is described in glowing terms. It is not my intention to undo the children's comments here and I have tackled concerns of language, authenticity and truth

in the previous chapter. I am aware however, that the diary entries say more about my own role as teacher and practitioner than the project itself, shown for example, in the lines, 'Shelley is so nice' and 'Shelley is a really good teacher, it's fun being with her'. I have not included these comments to elevate my status, but to suggest that my proximal relationship to the school had fed directly into the children's writing. Face-to-face modes of research are necessarily personal and inter-subjective and as Conquergood points out 'interpersonal communication is grounded in sensual experience' (1991, p. 181). It is not surprising therefore, that children had referred to me in their notebooks as it was an experiential project shared by all participants.

But, I also wished the study to have a broader and transferable application, which could be disseminated to primary school teachers. Whereas ethnographic fieldwork was an important part of the thesis, this has also been a pedagogic inquiry into praxis. In order to critically assess its effectiveness for other teachers I needed to be able to step away. I found though, that I was tied into the study. On the one hand, proximity had brought me closer to understanding the lives of children and teachers. But, whilst enabling it had blinded me to other ways of seeing. To put it another way, I was unsure whether the effectiveness of *Heroes and Villains* was due to methodologies undertaken or because of my own teaching abilities. In all honesty, it was probably a mixture of the two. But, although I could articulate a greater understanding of the research environment I was less able to say with any certainty that the project would work without my direct intervention. Moreover, children were unable to separate their own involvement in the project. For

example, in the previous chapter I referred to a moment when I realised that children had lied about the exercise for *Heroes and Villains*.

I needed to find a methodology that allowed a close proximity whilst at the same time, a degree of distance. I also sought to find an approach that gave the learning experience directly to the child; to facilitate a greater sense of autonomy. This prompted the creation of the project *Robin and the Pirate Letters.* In many respects, this was a new departure in terms of praxis for the thesis. Although the findings in this project are applicable to the study as a whole I have taken a different methodological approach. Rather than a collaborative exercise, I withheld my identity as author/creator and the project was delivered by teachers and teaching assistants at the school.

5.4 Robin and the Pirate Letters

Robin and the Pirate Letters is an early readers' initiative for children working at foundation stage and key stage 1. In recent decades there has been a wealth of publications and research concerning early childhood reading. In terms of how children learn to read, Wyse and Goswami note that following the "Rose Report" (2005) there has been a wholesale emphasis upon synthetic phonics. In a far-reaching review of current literature, Wyse and Styles find that, '[w]hile other anglophone countries have imposed systematic phonics on their education systems … England is the first to impose synthetic phonics on all school settings, including schools' (2007, p.36). Goswami similarly finds that 'proponents of synthetic phonics argue that there is only one way to the alphabetic system, and that the failure of schools to adhere to this (and only this) teaching method is

the direct cause of the slow pace at which many English children learn to read' (2007, p.273). Related to this but from a sociological perspective, Griswold *et al* (2005) explore the relationship between reading and social class. In an earlier study, Cosgrove and Morgan (2000) examine the correlation between reading ability and television and computer games usage in Ireland.

Given the priority given to reading, particularly since the introduction of the National Literacy Framework (1997), concerns over how and when children read occupy a dominant position in educational reviews and research. Wyse and Goswami cite the American National Reading Panel (2000) as, 'one of the most significant contributions to question about research evidence and teaching of reading' (2007, p.693). The National Reading Panel was formed by American Congress in 1997 to conduct a large-scale research inquiry into the most effective methods for teaching reading and phonic instruction. I entered into this debate from the vantage-point of practice rather than empirical inquiry. Rather than examining how children learn to read, I am interested in exploring how autonomy facilitates a greater enjoyment of reading. I have looked towards the experience of reading rather than the mechanics of learning. The former Children's Laureate, Michael Rosen, argues that 'children's lives are circumscribed by explicit and implicit rules. These come ultimately from all the adults around them. No matter how hard we as adults try, we find it very difficult to grant children autonomy over parts of

their own lives' (2009a, n.p).[49] *Robin and the Pirate Letters* aimed to create a magical and autonomous reading experience for young readers, within a supportive setting.

Robin and the Pirate Letters worked on the premise that only the child could see the printed text. This required some ingenuity (and imagination) from the adult participants, but it was a necessary element of the project. For new or tricky words, readers were encouraged to sound or spell out the word. In effect, the letters formed a short story. Robin, the central character, had written to the participants for help. His Grandfather, a magician, had been kidnapped by a band of pirates; led by Pirate Black Jack. To help Robin find and rescue his Grandfather a task was included with each letter. For example, in the third letter the Grandfather disappears into a magic box at the end of a magic show. For this task, the reader helps Robin find his way through a secret tunnel. In the fifth letter the Grandfather is held captive in a cave. To free him the reader must solve a secret code. In the sixth letter, Robin and his Grandfather escape on a small boat; but it is dark and they need a light from a lighthouse:

[49] This reference was taken from: 'What is children's poetry for? Towards a new, child-specific 'Apologie for Poetrie' (Philip Sidney, 1579). Presented at the Philippa Pearce Memorial Lecture, Homerton College, Cambridge, September 10 2009.

Drawings of a lighthouse: to help Robin and his Grandfather see their way through the dark (2009).

The letters worked alongside the child's own learning stage and focused on key words and sounds. In the above example, the letter concentrated on "ight": l**ight**, l**ight**house, n**ight**. The first letter focused on the difference between the words "like" and "live": I *like* it here and I *live* here. Tasks were also matched to the stages of learning. For example, at the school teachers use a 100 number grid to help develop maths skills. To help the reader solve the secret code in letter five (and in keeping with theme) I designed a pirate version of the 100 number grid adorned with skull and crossbones. I differentiated each letter depending on reading ability and followed the progress of each participant. For three readers, I needed to make the letters easier and to include greater repetition of key sounds. The readers noticed this: in my visit to the school two boys commented, 'it's the word *have* again'.

Feedback was gathered in communication with the Head Teacher. We discussed participant and teacher response. For the first letter, I included pre-printed stickers for children to label a pirate galleon. However, I received feedback that these were too small and arguing broke out in one group because labels were mislaid. As an outsider (in the fullest sense of the word), my main contact with the group was via the letters and tasks returned to me each week. To encourage autonomy, I scanned individual drawings to create stamps for the next letter. The child's ownership of the project was then visible in a literal sense. It also instilled a sense of magic and wonder, especially as the letters were posted in the magic pirate chest children had made themselves. For the last session, I went into the school to help the children read their letters. It was a remarkable opportunity to have my own work explained to me, from the perspective of the child. Participants described, to me, the character Robin and how his Grandfather had been kidnapped by Pirate Black Jack. They told me about the pirate chest, the stamps and the secret tasks. A small boy showed me the stamp on his letter; it was his drawing of Pirate Black Jack. I acted surprised and asked how it was possible. With a big smile and drawing a circle in the air, he said, 'it's magical'. Before I left, I asked the children if I could write down their thoughts of the letters:

It was quite fun reading it and had a good ending. I did really enjoy it and it was very good fun.

The letters were very interesting and I loved them and I liked them very much.

I liked reading the letters the best. It was fun and I liked the pictures. My favourite thing is writing.

Very, very, very, very, very, very good.

If you read it for a long time you will get some ideas. You might write or a picture or pretend you are someone else.

I liked the activities. It was magical.

It had a pirate in it. It was fun and it had a boy called Robin. I liked it.

They were fun. They were really good. I liked doing the stuff.

I am aware that much more needs to be done in order to realise the full potential of this project. I am confident that the children enjoyed and valued the experience, based a little on their comments and teacher observations. But mostly, I have taken into account their enthusiasm to produce drawings and maps, answer puzzles and solve clues. This however, is tentatively suggested and requires further application and research. First, the project requires a more detailed consideration of how children learn to read. Wyse and Goswami argue, '[there is] no reliable empirical evidence that synthetic phonics offers vast majority of beginners the best route to becoming skilled readers [and current research suggests] contextualised systematic phonics instruction is effective' (2007, p.691). Given

the controversies surrounding this argument it would be useful to offer a different kind of research methodology, in order to explore phonics using a narrative methodology framework.

As a preliminary study this was a small sample group over a short period of time. In order to ascertain how the project might secure reading, it needs rolling out to more children and across the school year. To be effective and wide ranging, evidence gathering needs a systematic and varied approach: to include questionnaires, interviews, conversation and observation as well as narrative methodologies. I realised this during the project but felt that to take this further would interrupt the completion of the thesis. I initiated *Robin and the Pirate Letters* due to concerns of proximity. To shift the study towards this particular debate, whilst interesting, would hinder my ability to move into writing-up. It also moves away from the main focus of the inquiry, concerning performance pedagogy. Therefore, in the context of this inquiry, I have privileged ideas of belonging and autonomy instead of the acquisition of reading skills. Of importance was the child's willingness to enter into make-believe and imagination and in doing so, connecting learning to experience.

For Conquergood, 'the bodily nature of fieldwork privileges the process of communication that constitutes the "doing" of ethnography: speaking, listening and acting together' (1991, p. 181). Belonging is crucial in this respect. It is only when we (as researchers) see the world from the perspective of our participants that we begin to understand their lives (and what is important to them). To arrive at a sense of belonging takes time, commitment and a willingness to enter into the unknown and to be surprised. I

initiated the study intending to work in a particular paradigm and was unprepared for the shifts and turns. As I emerged into the field, new understanding came to light which could only have emerged through being there, in the moment(s) of meaning.

In opening out the borders between disciplines, paradigms and ways of seeing and doing, Conquergood has shown the potential for ethnography to engage with the embodied and the corporeal. embraces this condition wholeheartedly. From the perspective of the borders, Gómez-Peña maps the border onto the body itself, offering a playful yet serious critique of contemporary cultural politics. Conquergood writes, '[f]rom the boundary perspective, identity is more like a performance in process than a postulate, premise or original principle' (1991, p.185). Similarly, I have sought a border position, in-between educational research and performance studies and in doing so, blurring the space between observation, praxis and writing-up. Initial struggles to locate a standpoint were replaced with a more meaningful and nuanced understanding of the field. I arrived at a participatory and collaborative understanding of praxis, which responded to the needs of the participants. But, moving into the inquiry, whilst enabling, had blinded me to other ways of seeing. *Robin and the Pirate Letters* offered an opportunity to re-examine concerns of belonging within a narrative methodology. In replacing participation with a different kind of proximal relationship, participants were encouraged to engage with the imagined and the magical from the perspective of autonomy and ownership.

My work with children and teachers has shown that we do not fix belonging into stasis. Our understanding of what it is to belong, to an identity, a community or a belief system

will change, depending on our relationship with others. From the perspective of ethnography this affects how we engage with our research. I began the study as an outsider in the context of the school, but epistemologically located in contemporary performance practice. Over time, prior concerns of belonging to a specific way of working were replaced with fluidity and proximity, opening out the potential for traffic between disciplines and ways of seeing. Conquergood says that 'this is the view from ground level, in the thick of things' (2004, p.312).

Process and Outcome

> The master asks the student: "what have you been doing today?" The student says, "I learnt so many verses, I read so many books, I did this and that – it's a huge list". Then the student asks the master, "what have you done?" He says, "I cooked rice, I ate rice, I washed the bowl". The student is completely disappointed. Then the master says, "but I really cooked the rice, I really ate the rice and I really washed the bowl" (Abramović, 2004, p.148).

> Knowledge is acquired … via the senses and not solely in the mind. Before all else, we see and we listen (Boal, 1995, p.28).

One of the most compelling reasons for exploring live art in school is its relationship between personal and shared cultural and social histories. Heathfield suggests, 'one consequence of this work, amongst many others, is to explore in all of its intricate ramifications our psychological and social dependency upon naming and identity' (Heathfield 2004, pp.9-10). Live art invites children to explore subjective understandings of their world within shared and participatory contexts unfettered by character, scripted dramatic narrative and fictional plots. Central to this argument is a privileging of process beyond that of formal theatrical outcomes, denoting an embodied presence in the work beyond that of dramatic representation.

From an educational perspective, the relationship between process and outcome is complicated and worth considering, particularly since process does not sit easily within a teaching culture dominated by clear aims and outcomes. First, with specific reference to live art, process-based practice offers teachers and children opportunities to contest dominant pedagogical practices and to explore new teaching and learning methodologies. Garoian suggests this is 'a paradox that requires both students' critique of pre-existing discourses and practices and a reflexive process through which they continually negotiate their positionality within the culture' (1999, p.8). I have come to realise that there are difficulties with this kind of working, especially with vulnerable and educationally disadvantaged children. Unused to open-ended learning strategies these children struggled finding a route through practice, when in terms of its outcome, process is heavily dependent upon critical reflection and thought.

Secondly, live artists and contemporary performers often utilise performance methodologies in order to comment upon, critique and challenge established artistic and theatrical cannons of practice. Garoian asserts: 'it has provided artists with a position from which to engage historical ideologies, to question the politics of art and to challenge the complexities and contradictions of cultural domination' (1999 p.19). Arguably though, learning to critique and to be critically reflexive about our own work is a difficult and complex skill and one that might be beyond the level ability of Key Stage 2. Furthermore, the establishment of the Cannon, in art, literature and drama is well established across all key stages, as Cowley proposes: '[w]e need to expose our students to the creative efforts of those who have gone before, to develop a backdrop of experience which informs their

work' (2005, p.10). Therefore, a practice that seeks to decentre cannons and dominant ways and methodologies of working may be counter-productive, at least from the perspective of the primary/junior school curriculum.

These concerns prompted a shift in focus towards a broader application of performance, and, as a consequence, a nuanced understanding of process and outcome emerged. I initially saw process and outcome at the opposite ends of the spectrum and believed that conventional performance outcomes privileged virtuosic concerns, ability, skills and standards, whilst process facilitated a greater equality between children. However, I came to see the value of working in both contexts and that it was possible to embrace both process and outcome in my work with children. These changes were gradual, but two projects, in particular, illustrate the travel between two very different ways of working. For this chapter, I outline the difficulties I encountered in the project *Sounds* to establish process-based praxis. I then move onto *Heroes and Villains* to consider the benefits of bridging process and outcome in performance work.

But, before this is to take place, it would be useful to articulate what is intended with the term "presence" specific to this inquiry. My praxis has a close relationship to phenomenological ideas of physical embodiment and experience and this is crucial to the production of meaning. To explain this point, and by way of critical analogy, I refer to the performance artist Marina Abramović, the stage play *Copenhagen* and also Heidegger in a broader context of being-in the world.

6.1 Being-in the World

In *Marina Abramović Presents* (2009)[50], a durational Live Art event in Manchester (2009), Abramović extolled the virtues of attending to performance works with full and open senses and requested that spectators remain in the gallery for the duration of the event: four hours in total. For Abramović, experiencing the passage of time with the performers is crucial to receiving the work, described as 'a direct transmission of energy' (Abramović, 2004, p.146). This transmission of energy however, is made possible only through truly being there, *being in* the work. Before spectators were allowed into the gallery Abramović explained (and demonstrated) the need for the audience to take an active role in the creation of meaning. This included an exercise, which asked the audience to look into the eyes of a stranger for periods of time. The point here was to reinforce the idea of looking and re-looking, with a heightened awareness of presence. Abramović is keen to stress that the idea of duration is a shared responsibility for artist and audience, arguing that '[the audience] have to make this radical step of not being an observer anymore, or a passive thing, but being participants. It is essential' (Abramović, 2004, p.151).

Phelan describes Abramović's work as a special, unique relationship between audience and spectator and not typical of theatre relations. 'Of this performance Phelan writes:

[50] An evening of Live Art Performances at the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, curated by Marina Abramović as part of the Manchester International Festival (2009). The gallery was completely emptied of all art works (paintings, photographs, sculptures) for the event. Audience members were requested to remain in the gallery for the duration of the performance and provided with lab coats to wear. Those audience members who remained in the gallery for the duration were presented with a certificate of participation.

> Performed in Naples in 1974, *Rhythm O* remains one of the most compelling performances of that fecund decade. Assembling seventy-two items on a table in a gallery with a window open to the street, and agreeing "to take full responsibility for the event", Abramovic invited the audience to use the objects on the table in any way they desired. These items included a feather, a gun, a razor blade, a bullet, a perfume bottle, lipstick, a Polaroid camera, a rose … Rhythm 0 demonstrated that what makes live performance a significant art form is that it opens the possibility for mutual transformation on the part of the audience and the performers (Phelan, 2004, pp.18-19).

This idea supposes that performance bypasses the normal, intransitive qualities of conventional theatre, shifting the power relationship between teacher/student and performer/spectator. In this context, meaning unfolds as we experience the work; as Heathfield suggests 'Live Artists bring the spectator into the present moment of the making and unmaking of meaning' (Heathfield, 2004, p.9), but, as Heathfield also acknowledges, 'often "being there", in the heart of things, you are reminded of the impossibility of ever being fully present to oneself, to others, or to the artwork' (Heathfield, 2004, p.9).

Frayn, in the play *Copenhagen*, explains this argument through the character Heisenberg:

Margrethe If it's Heisenberg at the centre of the universe, then the one bit of the universe that he can't see is Heisenberg.

Bohr So…

Margrethe So it's no good asking him why he came to Copenhagen in 1941. He doesn't know!

Heisenberg I thought for a moment just then I caught a glimpse of it.

Margrethe Then you turned to look.

Heisenberg And away it went.

(Frayn, 2000, p.72).

Here, Frayn raises a dual problem of being and understanding. Heisenberg cannot fully understand events as they happen because when he is thinking he is no longer experiencing. The character Margrethe explains it like this:

Margrethe I've typed it up often enough. If you're doing something you have to concentrate on you can't also be thinking about doing it, and if you're thinking about doing it then you can't actually be doing it.

(Frayn, 2000, p.72).

Being in something and experiencing events as they happen is not quite the same as understanding. From a performance perspective, the desire to know and to interpret is threaded upon the lived, embodied and corporeal. For Heidegger, *Being*-in is a way of knowing and experiencing the world, which he refers to as Dasein:

> We must keep in mind that knowing is grounded beforehand in a Being-already-alongside-the-world, which is essentially constitutive for Dasein's being. Proximally, this Being-already-alongside is not just a fixed staring at something that is purely present-at-hand. Being-in-the-world, as concern, is fascinated by the world with which it is concerned … Looking at something in this way is

> sometimes a definite way of taking up a direction towards something – of setting our sights towards what is present at hand (Heidegger, 1996, p.88).

The "present at hand", from a live art perspective, is the moment when we, as performers and/or spectators are drawn into the work. Montano sees it as 'a chance for the mind to practice paying attention, a way to stay in the moment' (cited in Garoian, 1999, p. 49). Whether or not the work carries meaning relies less on the quality of the finished outcome, than the dual responsibility brought to an event. The relationship here is one of dependency, relation and transformation (Phelan 2004). The concept of real time is pivotal to achieving this aim, which is perhaps why so many performance artists choose to make works that push time and duration to extraordinary limits. Historically, live art's preoccupation with time is well documented and also marks its separation from conventional script-based theatre. [51] Heathfield writes, '[p]erformance's birth within and against theatrical form is equally rooted in an engagement with the time of enactment and its disruptive potential in relation to fictive or narrative time' (2004, p.8).

The project Heroes and Villains exemplifies the phenomenological nature of performance. The project itself was divided into four interconnecting sections: (1) Superheroes and Villains, (2) Throwing the Fireball, (3) Secret Agents and Tasks and (4) Forum Theatre. To illustrate this argument the fireball demonstration has been selected. To explain, "Throwing the Fireball" is based on Meyerhold's methods of physical action (1922) and Barba and Savarese's (1995) understanding of oppositional and equivalent action to every

[51] The list here is exhaustive since time and duration is a common theme in most performance works. For further information see Goldberg, 1998; Heathfield 2004.

physical action (much in the same way that comic book characters are drawn). In keeping with our theme of heroes and villains, Meyerhold's notional stone was replaced with an imaginary fireball. To perform this well takes a great deal of discipline, focus and awareness of how the body moves. Moreover, the exercise provides a creative way in which to test issues of conflict and physical contact within a controlled and safe space. The children had practised the exercise for a number of weeks in order to run a master class for the audience. In this extract, participants are referred to by their superhero pseudonym:

Fireball demonstration:

Ninja Angel explained the rules to the audience, drawing attention to correct procedures for handling and throwing a fireball. Health and safety rules were discussed and demonstrations given by the performers. The audience was extremely anxious to take part and, similarly the participants were keen to show them. For children, described by their teachers as shy, nervous and unwilling to take part in group-led discussions, this was a remarkable achievement. As I watched the session unfold, I saw my own role as teacher and workshop leader disappear and become redundant as they (the children) became the focus of attention – not just as performers in a project, but also as experts in their field (08.07.08).

Performance, in offering lived experience within a real time frame, invites performer and spectator to attend to the meaning-making process as it happens, suggesting that meaning is not contained within an event but rather, emerges in the mercurial interplay between

performance, performer and spectator (Schechner 2002). Martin extends this point, proposing that without the body we are unable to realise political consciousness, '[i]n order to agree we must be shown. To disagree we must show. To move beyond these two poles of consent, we must cease the reciprocation of watching. In order to stop behaving like spectators we must begin to be performers' (1990, p.2). The moment when children became responsible for leading their friends and peers through the performance was highly significant. Firstly, it gave control to the child (and not the teacher), thus decentring hierarchical concerns of knowledge and power, an argument shared by Pollard *et al,* who write, '[s]ince understanding [is] constructed in the mind of the learner, it is essential that learners exercise a degree of control in the process' (2001, p.19). Secondly, the participatory context of performance allows potentially vulnerable children to take risk in a safe and non-threatening space. If, as Abramović (2004) suggests, performance can be a transformational experience the pedagogic implications are worth pursuing. But, in order for performance to be truly effective, as pedagogy, it needs to benefit performers and spectators alike, as Freire (1972) writes:

> No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire, 2006, p.54).

For Garoian, performance affords an emancipatory pedagogy, offering unique opportunities to test and challenge persuasive modes of thinking, from subject-orientated positions. For this reason, it is a reflexive practice. To put it another way, the process of

making performance demands a certain movement between practical action, reflection and thought. Phenomenologically, this suggests that understanding is to be found somewhere between the moment of making and contemplative thought. For my own part, the relationship between thinking, showing and doing (Schechner 2002) has led to significant insights regarding process-based practice. The performance project, *Sounds*, offers a useful example.

6.3 Sounds

The project, *Sounds,* sought to offer creative and imaginative strategies to support the teaching of science at Key Stage 2. Of the children selected, some[52] had been identified as struggling and prone to disruptive and challenging behaviour. As this was my second major project at the school I was keen to include children I had seen excluded from lessons, those lingering outside classroom doors and the Head Teacher's office. I intended to explore the possibility of process-based practice to raise achievement and thereby, improve behaviour. Moreover, such children require the licence of their own position and it is the experiential potential of live art that creates a genuine relation to the self. Of his own pedagogic practice, Gómez-Peña writes, '[t]o me, one of the most radical and hopeful aspects of performance is precisely its transformational dimension. Students and young artists can discover the political, poetic, sensual, and spiritual possibilities of performance' (2005, p.97).

[52] It should be noted that not all of the children taking part in the project were identified as having behavioural problems.

From this perspective, live art demands a certain amount of critical engagement and also depends upon the willingness of the participants to create work. Here, the process of making, selecting, editing and shaping workshop material is a crucial part of its practice. Unlike a conventional play text or devised drama the words, roles and scenes are not already laid out in readiness for the child/teacher to pick up. Often, the shape, form and content of the work are unknown factors in the initial stages (which is particularly the case for live art). In this context, performance can be seen to evolve and grow into itself. For some children such freedom may be a liberating and empowering experience, for others though, it can, indirectly, create a sense of vulnerability, confusion and powerlessness:

For the morning session, I asked the children to listen to and identify sounds from a comedy-horror and city sound effects tape. My intention was to create a sonic arts c.d. with the children and this was to be a fun example. The group listened for a while but grew bored quickly. There was much jostling and shoving and singing of a nursery song, Mary had a Little Lamb, but with the word 'fart' inserted. I lost control of the group. One child spent most of class making duck sounds and I repriamanded another for flicking bogies. Eventually, the Head Teacher (whose office was the room next door) intervened (04/05/07).

This morning we worked outside, using the poles in the playground for a trust exercise. Using blindfolds, the children took turns to weave their partner between the poles. For most, it was an effective exercise with the exception of one child, who repeatedly allowed

his partner to bump into the poles. Later into the workshop he told another child to "fuck off" and then, immediately excluded himself from the group and refused to listen and take part. Another child used the morning as an opportunity to do handsprings off the mini stage (11.05.07).

Rather naively, I imagined that children would seize the opportunity to create and discuss performance work from the vantage point of their own lives. In actual fact, children were unable to see ahead to imagine the work because they were entirely unused to open-ended learning strategies. Field notes, scribbled after an exceptionally difficult session, reveal a growing sense of unease about the project, 'the children don't understand what they are doing and this is my fault – need to re-think strategy, but, struggling to find a way to make it work' (18.05.07). Although, *Sounds* presented many challenges, in retrospect, it led to important insights concerning subjectivity and process. Primarily, in order for children to develop the ability to reflect upon their own work (and of others), the development of communicative skills, in listening, talking and sharing is essential. Boal puts it like this, '[t]he Theatre of the Oppressed is the theatre of the first person plural' (1995, p.45). But, at this point, we could not move forward because we found it difficult to understand each other. A number of practical games and activities were undertaken, to address these concerns (many adapted from Boal, 2001). But, of these, "Alien Talk" stands out:

Alien Talk

The rules for Alien Talk are straightforward. Children are allocated into pairs and given a secret conversation topic: for example, 'A Crocodile ate my Grandmother' and 'Aliens landed in my back garden.' Using only made-up, alien language, children had to convey as much meaning as possible to their group:

Children loved this exercise and over the course of the morning we became highly skilled in babble. I am sure that for teachers and children passing by, it sounded like nonsense. But, I could see that children, at last, were talking and listening to each other (25.05.07).

Albeit a simple exercise, Alien Talk enabled dialogue to emerge between participants. The removal of conventional speech patterns encouraged children to listen and respond to the nuances of the voice: tone, pace and pitch, in a more intense way than usual. For the remainder of the project, workshop praxis concentrated on the immediate needs of the participants: for example, we worked towards building effective lines of communication and as a consequence, trust was restored.

I have come to realise that our sense of self is dependent upon how others perceive us. For children involved in the *Sounds* project, self-worth was negated by ongoing battles with other children, adults and teachers. If this is the case, a critical and reflexive practice may not be in the best interests of the child. However, a pedagogy that facilitates genuine dialogue between participants might act as a catalyst for shared understanding. Abramović (2004) notes for her own work that she begins with personal experience, the

act of framing the work within a performance, shifts the personal into a shared, social space. Hence, the pedagogic value of this practice lies not so much in its subjective origin but rather its socially driven possibilities.

The remainder of this chapter then, seeks to examine the potential for performance to promote participatory learning. For this, the project *Heroes and Villains* has been selected, with reference to the exercises: Superheroes and Villains, Secret Agents and Tasks and Forum Theatre. Once achieved, I move onto a closer examination of the project in respect to the developmental relationship between the process of making work and the final outcome. I wish to understand, in a deeper way, the pedagogic value of participatory practice. Here, educational positivist beliefs in textual certainty have been displaced and the body is repositioned as the site of learning and subject of the work, in many ways drawing a parallel to Boal's image theatre. Schwandt sees this as freeing qualitative inquiry from the hegemony of "reading" the text:

> If, following Gadamer, we model understanding not on textual interpretation, reading, nor the "object" of the text, but on an educational "process", a process of learning. On this model, understanding and interpretation are not acts of an individual conscious mind but enactments, performances, or a kind of praxis (Schwandt, 1999, p.455).

6.4 Superheroes and Villains

For the first stage of the project, I asked the children to imagine that they had been given superpowers and to draw a picture of themselves, as a superhero, in their notebooks. For

the duration of the project the children were referred to by their superhero names: Shining Angel, Super Spartacus, Lord Kroak, Glowing Devil, Black Hole and Ninja Angel. Likewise, for the purposes of this chapter, the participants are referred to as their superhero identities:

Shining Angel

'We are the heroes that make you heroes!

But not like that. You have to do a mission.

Your mission is to let people join in and

do not shout at them.'

Ninja Fire Ball

'I'm the only Ninja Angel in the world.

I am the best of the best.

I am going to make you a hero for the day.

Your mission is to make people safe and look

after them. Make sure they aren't harmed.'

Similar to Boal's argument for '[m]aking the body expressive' (Garoian, 1999, p.59), we reached an understanding of our heroes and villains through the perspective of the body. Games and exercises developed a physical presence for our heroes and villains, such as walking, running, flying, crawling and throwing fireballs. Individual motifs were shown to the group and shared, copied and parodied. Critical to La Pocha Nostra's pedagogy (2000) the body is the site where multiple identities might be played out and contested. In

this context, identity, as constructed upon the body, is exaggerated, satirized and distorted. For example, inspiration for our villains came from cartoons and comic books. Given that the pedagogic aim for the project was to build communicative bridges between children, it was important that other children (and adults) were not perceived as villains. For example, it would be very easy for children to equate personal experiences of bullying to the notion of villainy, but this would not allow children or teachers to move much beyond a subjective response to the project brief. A playful and imaginative response, though, allows children to explore the concept and to take risk within secure activity:

For this session we had been playing with image theatre, tableau and movement work in order to create the villains for our Heroes and Villains project. The children had been experimenting with how their villains walk and talk and appropriate names and superpowers were created: Nails, Devil's Hot Ball, Ninja Ball, Nethers, Fire Ball and Shadow. The playground is normally quiet at this time of the morning and teachers or children happening to pass by would have seen us leaping, swirling, crouching and crawling across the tarmac. For anyone looking a little closer and paying a little more attention, they may have realised that a battle of huge and fantastical proportions was taking place (11/06/08).

Due to the pedagogical framing of the project within shared practice we also approached the idea of an everyday hero from a wide range of personal, social and cultural reference points. For example, Gods, teachers, police officers, fire officers, parents, siblings and friends emerged as possible heroes. This notion of cultural and social difference was

picked up and explored by the children as part of the project, 'we are all different and this makes us the same' (Lord Kroak, 2008), referring to a specific imaging theatre exercise (Boal 1995), in which children were asked to consider heroes from shared and different cultural backgrounds. Children also sought definitions from adults working at their school, diligently writing down their findings in their notebooks. For example:

Heroes and Villains (11.06.08). We are doing a project about heroes and villains. Who is your everyday hero and why?

Interviewer: Ninja Angel

Interviewee: (School Governor)

Response: Mrs P., because she is a good Head Teacher and helps the School

Interviewer: Shining Angel

Interviewee: (Head Teacher)

Response: My heroes are the children in this school I meet every day. They have many qualities to admire.

Interviewer: Glowing Devil

Interviewee: (Teacher)

Response: Anyone that makes me happy but [the Head teacher] is at the top of my list.

Interviewer: Black Hole

Interviewee:(School Secretary),

Response: My daughter because she is working, doing her exams and having a baby.

On a practical level, this exercise enabled the participants to consider other perspectives than their own, a useful starting point in the creation of shared practice. Similarly, I found the phrasing 'we are doing a project about heroes and villains' particularly insightful, since "we", from the vantage point of the child, suggests a subjective and collaborative response. It is worth noting that for this exercise, I trailed behind the children, as they navigated the school building very much enjoying their newfound status as researchers and interviewers.

Secret Agents and Forum Theatre

For Secret Agents and Tasks, children designed and created stickers to give to the audience at the beginning of the performance. In many respects, stickers are a familiar strategy for the primary/junior school child. Recent initiatives, particularly those introduced in the first part of the twenty-first century, such as *Every Child Matters* and *Personalised Learning* (2002), have placed the child at the centre of their learning, metaphorically and literally. For the latter, stickers are used to identify individual goals working towards and achieved, to show house points gained and golden time accumulated. Stickers, showing success, are placed inside individual record books and also made public on the walls of classrooms. Additionally, during my time at Park Road

Junior School, stickers were used to denote standards of behaviour.[53] In this project though, children created their own stickers and in doing so, uniquely decided what was important to their own lives. Moreover, the act of wearing the stickers created an immediate and visual bond between the performer and spectator. Overwhelmingly, wording on the stickers referred to concerns of cohesion and inclusion:

- Your mission is to make people safe and look after them.
- Today be an Everyday Hero.
- Protect and be kind

The stickers also related to a Forum Theatre exercise (Boal),[54] wherein members of the audience were invited to intervene in pre-rehearsed scenes. The stickers were used as a way into the exercise, for example: spectators with stickers 'let everyone join in' were encouraged to consider interventions that enabled a more inclusive and fairer scene to emerge. Boal sees this as '[trying] to invert this immobilisme, to make the dialogue between stage and audience totally transitive' (1995, p.42). In this context, images of

[53] Some of the children participating in the *Sounds* project were regularly placed under a black cloud.

[54] Forum Theatre is part of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed.* In a forum theatre performance actors would typically present a series of short scenes to an audience, based on an idea of oppression (worker's rights for example). The audience would be encouraged to stop the action at any point in the performance and to enter the stage in order to participate in the scene. The legacy of Boal's theatre is long-lasting and his influence extends well into the 21st century. In 2008, I attended a conference at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, to present a research paper on the ethics of live art pedagogy in primary school settings. The conference explored the intersections between law and theatre and focused on Boal's Forum and legislative theatre as a methodological approach to facilitate change in the Canadian legal system.

shyness, exclusion and oppression move from subject-orientated feelings to a collective concern: 'I liked it when we had to shout stop! And people had to make it a bit better so people could have ideas' (Glowing Devil, 24.06.08). Writing, taken from the children's notebooks, suggests that they valued this aspect of the project:

This lesson is really good because it was about Forum Theatre and it was the best lesson yet. I hope next week is better … It was useful and extraordinary (Black Hole, 24.06.08);

I liked this lesson because it is exciting and it is amazing and easy. I don't feel shy like I used to be and I understand the lesson (Ninja Angel, 24.06.08);

We changed the scenes […] I thought it was great and easy. It made me feel brave about myself (Lord Kroak, 24.06.08).

6.5 Between Process and Outcome

As indicated earlier in the chapter, the relationship between process and outcome for any kind of performance is extremely complicated. Indeed, post Heathcote the legacy of educational drama has pivoted the value of process beyond that of formalised theatrical outcomes. It is not so easy however, to separate process from outcome, particularly since school itself is an outcome driven culture. For example, in every project undertaken at the school there was an expectation, from children and teachers, that the work would conclude with a showing of some kind. For some children, the idea of performing in front of their friends and peers was daunting and a worrying prospect. This said however, there

are unique skills gained through performing to an audience. The development of good, clear communication, spatial awareness and understanding of mood, tone and atmosphere are key transferable skills – particularly useful for children struggling to find ways to make and sustain friendship ties.

I have also come to realise it is too simplistic an argument to suggest that process ends when the outcome (performance) begins. For example, at certain points during the project children participated and played without consideration of how their work connected to the end performance. But, at other times during the process there was a deliberate shift from playing to an almost uncomfortable awareness of self. At these points, qualities such as listening, responding and sharing ideas changed as the children became aware that they were being observed. Body language and the use of the voice, in terms of range, volume and control fluctuated, depending upon how comfortable the children felt at these times. Additionally, in the last three weeks there was a definite shift in how the children perceived their own work, placing greater emphasis on their performance outcome for their class than on workshop games and activities. The following account offers an insight into this point:

It was a sunny morning and so taking advantage of the weather, the extra space and the opportunity of making a little noise we moved the session to the outside classroom and used the raised platform as an impromptu stage. But, I found that the children became self-aware, which hadn't been an issue when we were working in the school hall on the flat floor. For some of the children, Glowing Devil in particular, this was an incentive to

try harder and to speak louder. I noticed that she would often look towards my direction, as if to check for my approval. But for Shining Angel, Super Spartacus and Ninja Angel the raised platform was a real barrier. Body language suggested genuine unease and I struggled to hear them, even though the area was extremely small, a few metres rectangular and unconstrained by curtains and walls (25.06.08).

In this instance, the child perceived the raised platform as a stage and attached outcome-related signification onto it. For example, there was a great awareness of being watched, which was self- consciously reflected through the body. The exercise, which had taken place the day before, became muted. I struggled to hear the children and their work closed into the space. In the following session we moved back into the school hall. I was mindful to observe how the children responded to a similar exercise. I found that when I was working alongside the children they responded well: voices loud and confident, body relaxed. However, when I moved to a front-facing position the children interpreted this as a signal that the work had shifted from a process of playing to a performed outcome. Sometimes, children responded with ease, but at other times, I needed to re-work the exercise, gradually stepping away from the group as confidence levels were established. Indeed, the focus leading up to the final performance centred on negotiating the space between the workshop process and the performance outcome. Writing taken from children's notebooks, indicates that the value of the project had evolved from an enjoyment of playing, 'I like this lesson because we played' (Super Spartacus, 11.06.08), to the demands of showing work to an audience, 'I enjoyed this session because we are

doing something for our class' (Ninja Angel, 25.06.08). Consider, for example, diary notes for our penultimate session:

The group were eager to rehearse and plan for their performance and spent a great deal of time discussing and reflecting upon their work. The children led the session, encouraging each other, prompting forgotten movements and lines etc. Ninja Angel who had previously struggled speaking aloud in-group situations was the teacher for the fireball demonstration and was enjoying the attention this gave her. The group were generous, giving her lots of positive feedback and praise. Half way into the sessio, though, Black Hole inexplicably broke a front tooth. A rather animated conversation ensued as the children discussed how the role should be covered, whilst Black Hole went to the school secretary with his tooth. He returned a little while later, tooth wrapped in tissue and continued with the session as if nothing had happened (07.07.08).

Interestingly, in his diary entry Black Hole makes no mention of his tooth: '[t]his week was the best week ever and tomorrow we have to perform on a stage'[55] (07.07.08). Had this episode occurred earlier in the process perhaps he would have attached greater significance to the event. But, by this stage all children were focused on the performance to take place the following day and a missing tooth (at least during the rehearsal), was not

[55] I also found the use of the word 'stage' interesting, as the children knew that we were showing our work in the school hall – and, on a flat floor.

a priority.[56] Or rather, Black Hole was more concerned with losing his part in the performance.

This is not to say however, that outcome prevails over process in this kind of practice. As this chapter has shown, performance has a close relationship to phenomenological ideas of being-in the world. Because of this, performance tends not to create finished, polished outcomes in the form of conventional play-texts. Performance is dialogical and the kinds of meanings it produces are provisional, mercurial and contingent. For this reason, it is a participatory pedagogy. For the children involved though, performing and presenting work to an audience develops important social skills, which can be transferred to life beyond the performance space. Put simply, if subjective pedagogy gives children a reason to communicate, the development of good communication skills in talking, listening and seeing enables children to realise fully the potential for shared understanding.

[56] Black Hole did not have to spend long without his front tooth. He arrived for the performance the next day, with both front teeth!

Chapter Seven

Fishing in Puddles: Place and Space in Performance Research

> If you've ever stood, in the early hours of the morning, and watched a city fill with snow, you will know that the first walker changes everything (Wrights and Sites, 2006, p. 61).
>
> [The] oneiric space is not dichotomic because, in dreaming, we lose our consciousness of the physical space in which, we, the dreamers are dreaming (Boal, 1995, p.22).

Educational research and writing on the significance of the school building and issues of place and space have previously tended to be concerned with debates over class size, economic class divides between wealthy schools and underprivileged areas and gender divides and racial community groupings . The school has also been approached from a visual sociological perspective. Prosser and Warburton's (1999) use of cameras to record and observe classroom interaction offers a useful insight into the proxemical configuration of the classroom as a way of understanding the development of a school culture. More recent debates and, in particular, those caught up within the Building Schools for the Future programme (BSF 2008), address the use and management of Information Computer Technology and issues of sustainability, flexibility, long-term adaptability and community cohesion.

In this chapter, the terms *place* and *space* refer to and denote the formal structural, physical, architectural and permanent qualities of the school building. The terms also signify the informal, personal, cultural, proxemical and temporal manifestations and applications of space and movement. To separate the two terms I adopt Certeau's definition of the difference between place and space. According to Certeau, '[a] place is … an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability' (1984, p.117). In this context, the term place refers to the permanent and fixed aspects of the school building, for example, the classroom, the school hall, library and playground. The term space, however, refers to the movement and use of a given place. Certeau writes, '[s]pace occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporise it and make it function … a street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers' (1984, p.117). Space can also refer to the symoblic and representational meaning(s) we bring to a place. In short, 'space is a practiced place' (Certeau, 1984, p.117). To illustrate this argument, I consider the school hall as a representational and marginal space. I also reflect upon the transitional and liminal qualities of space, shown through an example of a school playground.

From a contemporary performance perspective, I consider site-specific practice (see Wrights and Sites 2000) and the oneiric dimension (Boal, 1995). Within the performance studies community, site-specificity continues to be a highly visible area of research.[57] A consideration of site has been particularly important, since performance praxis for this thesis has been undertaken in non-theatrical venues. Persighetti, writing of the Quay

[57] See Kaye 2000; Pearson 2010.

Project at Exeter Docks (1998) suggests that '[i]f site-specific work makes any departure from the usual premise of theatre it is made out of a desire to let PLACE speak louder than the human mediator or actor who enters the place' (Persighetti, 2000, p.9; *original emphasis*). Not wishing then, to ignore the given place (in this instance the school building), performance material has deliberately played with notions of place and space.

Place and space also refer to Boal's understanding of the oneiric dimension (1995). Linked to this term is also the idea of metaxis, 'the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, autonomous worlds: the image of the reality and the reality of the stage' (1995, p.43). For Boal, metaxis is an important element of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Boal suggests:

> If the oppressed-artist is able to create an autonomous world of images of his own reality, and to enact his liberation in the reality of these images, he will then extrapolate into his own life all that he has accomplished in the fiction. The scene, the stage, becomes the rehearsal space for real life (Boal, 1995, p.44).

Boal's writing on metaxis offers a useful way to undertand the transitive relationship between the reality of the stage and every-day life. Importantly, metaxis allows the spect-actor to truly understand oppression rather than witnessing its effect. In other words, to embody two realities and two autonomous worlds, 'her reality and the image of her reality, which she herself has created' (Boal, 1995, p.43). Boal's contribution to theatre and drama therapy is far-reaching and the idea of metaxis is a crucial aspect of his work.

Here though, I concentrate on the oneiric dimension. For Boal, the oneiric dimension has a special magical quality, 'the observer is drawn of her own volition into the vertigo of dreams, she loses contact with the concrete, real, physical space' (Boal, 1995, p.22). For this chapter, I deal with the divide between the formal and symbolic space from the perspective of play. I am interested in the games children play, as an act of imagination, rather than engaging with instances of oppression. The oneiric dimension, in particular, offers the most useful way of dealing with the main themes of the inquiry. This chapter begins then, with a consideration of the formal place.

7.1 The Formal Place

Formal places can be symbolic, marginal and representational (Hetherington 1998) and liminal and transitional (Turner 1976).[58] Hetherington's contribution towards an understanding of identity politics suggests that certain places act as a focal point for social cohesion and collective belief systems, citing 'shopping malls, street corners, city centre landmarks [in addition to] festival sites, sacred sites, Greenfield sites' as places whereby group identity might be formed and maintained (Hetherington, 1998, p.106). In terms of the school building this is analogous to the classroom, school hall, playground, staff room and Head Teacher's office. A useful starting point to examine this perspective would be to consider the school hall. Alexander's (2001) far-reaching comparison between English, European and American primary educational provision notes that, architecturally, the traditional English school hall tends to occupy a central position in school layout. The

[58] Here, Turner has expanded on Van Gennep's (1960) articulation of liminality in the context of anthropology. For the purposes of this thesis I have re-imagined liminality within a modern-day educational setting.

design dates back to the Victorian period, when the school hall would be partitioned into separate classrooms. Park Road Junior School, built in 1894, is an archetypal Victorian School building, with newer classrooms and corridors leading into the hall. An archive photograph of the school hall, circa 1900, shows how the room was partitioned (see figure 1).

Figure 1

The School Hall
Wooden partitions divide the hall into sections. Decorative tiles are visible on the back wall. These remain in place and can be seen in the school today.

The current day usage of the school building places great emphasis on the import of the school hall. The place is used for morning assembly, school plays, celebrations, festivals, recitals, dance classes, a vast array of group work and a place to eat school lunch. Arguably however, the place is more than a communal area, Hetherington has shown that, '[t]he link between establishing an identity and the space is a symbolic one' (Hetherington, 1998, p.108). The centrality of the school hall facilitates the creation and

development of a school identity; here is where normative modes and codes of behaviour and identity are established, affirmed and re-informed. Morning assembly in the school hall is the place where guiding values are underpinned and acted upon which, for English schools, post the 1988 Education Act, tends to be Christian, multi-faith or spiritual in nature. At Park Road Junior School, assembly also instils a sense of community, belonging and shared understanding. The school motto: *Learning Together, Working Together, Playing Together* placed prominently at eye-level in the hall connects and inscribes the intended aims and aspirations for children and teachers onto the fabric of the school building. The Victorian tiles decorating the back wall are a visible reminder of the history of the building. There is a sense of permanence, continuity and locality since many of the children have grandparents who went to the school.

Symbolically then, the hall has a social and cultural significance beyond that of its communal everyday use. But, paradoxically, the hall can also be a marginal and representational space. The school hall is a place where children who have been excluded from class can be found lingering outside classrooms, kicking feet against low wooden gym benches. Children, instructed not to stray too far from their classroom door, inhabit a narrow strip of land that runs around the outer edges of the hall. The centre can be noisy and busy, with music lessons, singing and dancing classes and indoor P.E., taking place and so forth. But, for the excluded child, occupying the margins can be a lonely and isolating experience. Hetherington (1998) suggests that marginal spaces can be electively chosen by excluded and disaffected community groups. In this context, though, marginality, *Otherness,* is fostered upon the child. Children and teachers are acutely

aware of the semiotic significance of the space between the centre of the room and the walls of the hall. It is a highly codified and nuanced space, 'the elsewhere in which meanings are sought' (Hetherington, 1998, p.120). Performance extracts from *A Misguide to Park Road* (2006) reveal paradoxical and conflicting attitudes towards the school hall, which are more closely tied to notions of exclusion than ideas regarding cohesion. To illustrate this argument the following extracts have been taken from performance material written by children for the *Misguide*:

In the Hall

This is the place where you stand if you've been naughty in class. I remember the time when I was sent out of the class for talking about "Celebrity Big Brother" instead of practising my times tables. The person I wanted to win was Preston but sadly he lost. So did I because I had to stand outside for half an hour. Boring!

In May this year C was listening to her teacher when a boy walked past and pulled her hair and told her she was a mouse, so she just ignored him then he did it again so she told him shut to up. The teacher heard C and send [sic] her out. That's the reason why she was sitting there.

I got sent out of class for making stupid noises and going boga goga [sic]. I wish I never did it now because I got well done by my mum and didn't go to school for 2 days, but the next day I did the same but this time Mr. B. sent me to the toilet and I heard a noise and it

was coming from the girl's toilet and it was like they was having a disco, but oh well and I walked off and I never heard it again.

The identification of the representational space is important in this context, since it suggests that a space can hold a semiotic value, quite apart from its functional use. From this perspective, the difference between place and space can be paradoxical, most telling in the lines: 'This is the place where you stand if you've been naughty in class' and 'I got sent out of class for making stupid noises and going boga goga'. In the second story, C was listening to her teacher, but a boy pulled her hair and called her a "mouse". Here, the writer fully understands the implications of the school hall. There is a sense of unfairness and injustice for C who ends up sitting on the other side of her classroom door. The application and demarcation of space, in this instance, the space around the outer edges of the room, suggests that children and teachers at certain times perceive the hall in a negative context. Hence, by virtue of being there, in a marginal space, the child is thus rendered to a marginal position within the broader context of her school community.

7.2 The Naughty Room

Similarly, the project *Sounds* revealed paradoxical perceptions of place and space: for example, the first session was held in small rectangular room referred to by teachers as the *Mentor's room.* The room had been set aside to provide additional support and counselling for children who were experiencing problems either at school or home, such as behavioural concerns, cohesion issues or learning difficulties. Importantly, the room was intended to be a warm and non-threatening place and there was nothing in the room

that particularly signified otherwise. However, it became clear during the session that children had a very different attitude towards the purpose of the space:

Due to a lack of space we were directed, after much fuss, to the mentor's room. Once inside, bickering and fighting broke out between the boys. When I attempted to intervene another child commented that it was because they were in the naughty room. I attempted to challenge this perception of the space, but the group were quick to point out that they had been taken to the room before; when they had been naughty. With some protest I replied that they hadn't been naughty and that we were only using the space to talk about a project I wanted to undertake with them. I was unprepared for their response, which addressed their own behaviour rather than any aims and intentions I had for the work: "I've been brought up wrong", said one child, also saying that "We are under a black cloud". Another child asked if I was there "to straighten him up?" I tried with some difficulty to pull the session together and to explain the kinds of workshops and activities we would be undertaking, including a performance. There was some restlessness and it was clear that we needed to find somewhere else to work. The bell rang for break and as the group filed out a child looked over and said in an accusatory tone: "We have sat here for all this time and haven't done anything" (20.04.07).

Sounds presented many challenges throughout the duration of the project and it took considerable time to overthrow a perception, held by the children, that they had been selected on negative grounds. Whilst it is fair to say that *Sounds* prioritised children who would normally be found lingering outside classrooms and the Head Teacher's office, this

was not intended as a PSHE project for marginalised and excluded children. Rather, *Sounds* offered a differentiated and creative teaching strategy to support the teaching of sound as part of the science curriculum for a select group of children. However, the inadvertent use of the *naughty room* revealed the kinds of paradoxical values and meanings that children attach to the spaces they occupy, which are not immediately known to their teachers and visitors to the school. Unlike the example of the school hall however, children and teachers had conflicting perceptions of the room. Both groups identified the room as place for marginalised and disaffected children. For teachers, it was genuinely intended to be a supportive and secure place for children to discuss personal worries and concerns. Children working on this project though, seemed unable to move past the idea that it was designated as a room for naughty children.

7.3 The Transitional and Liminal Space

Transitional spaces are the spaces caught between places: corridors, entrances, partitions and doorways. At Park Road Junior School, for example, the lower school is formally separated from the upper school by the means of a corridor. In the main, such spaces are traversed without significance, but occasionally, a transitional space can become a liminal space. For Turner, liminality is the moment caught between stages, which he refers to as the "betwixt and between":

> Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arranged by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety

> of symbols in many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions (Turner, 1969; cited in Schechner, 2002, p.58).

As a cultural anthropologist Turner was essentially concerned with ritual and the liminal, referring to sacred acts of ritualised behaviour. Importantly, for an event or activity to be considered as liminal, a permanent transformation needs to take place. For more temporal transformations, such as those concerning the arts and cultural practices, Turner developed the term "liminoid" (see Schechner 2002). Schechner has taken the concept of the liminoid into a workshop and performance context, writing that '[l]iminoid rituals effect a temporary change – sometimes nothing more than a brief experience of spontaneous communitas or several-hours-long performance of a role' (Schechner, 2002, p.63). The consideration of the performance site as liminal or liminoid raises interesting questions regarding the blurring of the permanent and temporal in contemporary performance practice. In particular, aesthetic practice that shifts the notion of site onto the body, thus leaving marks, scars and traces (see Kira O'Reilly, *View, Nearer to the Time* 2005; Tehcheng Hsieh series of *One Year Performance's* 1978-1986; Ron Athey, *Hallelujah* 1998), becomes not only a historical palimpsest of past works, but also antagonises the relationship between the liminal (the permanent) and the liminoid (the temporary). Likewise, for artists working within transitional spaces, the act of crossing has the potential to become a permanent, life-changing event. Abramović and Ulay, for example, walked the Great Wall of China from opposite ends, finally coming together in order to end over a decade of collaboration. Of this performance, Abramović writes '[o]n June 27, 1988, at Er Lang Shan, Shenmu in Shaanxi province, after walking 90 days each, over a distance of 2, 000 kilometers we met to say goodbye' (Abramović, 1998, p. 311).

Since this is primarily an educational study however, it would make sense to loosen these terms from their anthropological and performance studies origin and to rearticulate *liminality* within an educational context, to make sense, as it were, of key moments and events that take place in a school setting that might be considered as liminal. The following narrative, seen through the perspective of my son's primary school, offers an illustration of the school space as an occasional liminal space:

In September 2006 my son began primary school and for the first two weeks I escorted him to the reception classroom. However, in the third week of term his class lined up in the playground with the rest of the school. Accompanied by his teacher and new friends, he made his first independent steps into school. For the reception class this first walk, across the playground, was an important rite of passage since it marked graduation from babyhood to childhood. In September 2009, my son progressed to the juniors. At his school the juniors enter and exit the building from a different doorway from the infants. However, on the first day of term it rained and so children were denied the opportunity of lining up and walking into school. A missed opportunity, which was also noted by the Head Teacher, (she commented that it was a shame that children did not walk into school on their first day back). At the other end of the school spectrum, the year 6 on the last day of the summer term are allowed out of school early. Their classroom opens out onto the playground and encouraged by teachers, who wait at the entry/exit of the doorway, children run out of school, shouting and cheering the end of their junior school years. As with the reception class's march into school this is a deeply moving event and parents, children and teachers can be seen crying, laughing and hugging each other.

The liminal space in this account is the school playground. The space is marked and crossed in highly significant ways. For the reception class the space is traversed with a disciplined and ordered walk and most children manage this without looking back. But for some it is a traumatic event and there is some crying. School uniform is worn proudly and a little self-consciously. There is a tangible sense of newness and apprehension. Conversely, the year 6 children run with abandonment across the space towards parents and friends. Clothing is marked, names are scrawled in biro on white shirts, a traditional and well-established practice for those leaving school. Importantly, the space once crossed can never be the same again. A child in the reception class cannot re-begin school and for the child at the end of year 6 there is the knowledge that, come the following September, she will start secondary school.

7.4 Misguide to Park Road

A Misguide to Park Road, performed in May 2006 was the first project undertaken at the school. The work was inspired by the site work of *Wrights and Sites*, with particular reference to *A Misguide to Anywhere* (Wrights and Sites 2000). *Misguides* are alternative ways of seeing, engaging, attending to and walking through the physical and structural landscape. Suggestions for Misguided walks are varied and include: night walks in an unknown part of a city; revisiting familiar landscapes and environments; finding new places to sleep overnight, so as to awake to new sights, smells and sounds and 'for stepping off the road's conveyor belt and seeing what lies to one's side' (Wrights and Sites, 2006, p.7). Crucially though, a misguided walk sets out to connect the physical and structural, formal and informal landscape with the human and corporeal. Place and space

take on new meanings when we, as audience/walker, semiotically read *space* through the perspective of the body, intervention and personal experience. A misguide therefore, transcends a neutral and impersonal geographic and historic reading of a site. Such walks are inherently personal, contextual and imbued with meaning:

> Walking disrupts space. Suddenly the landscape has a person it in. Or two. Or a multitude. How and where and with whom we walk … makes a difference (Wrights and Sites, 2006, p.61).

For our version of *A Misguide* we created a guided tour of the school building, performing and re-telling stories, memories and histories. The sixty-one children involved in the *Misguide* offered a unique opportunity to connect as an individual to their school building and thereby their school life, whilst at the same time being part of a much bigger, collaborative project. Thematically, the work set out to explore the transition to secondary school, which for the current year 6 was an ongoing source of discussion. Memories of starting junior school and being in the lower school were dominant in the *Misguide*. But also, through performance, children explored their worries and fears about starting secondary school:

The First Day of School

It was the first day [of school]. The Bell rang for the morning break. We all rushed into the playground. I found myself just standing in the middle of the school yard. I did not have anyone to play with but all around me it seems to me that everyone had someone to play with, except for me. I walked to sit down on the bench and in the distance was a wall

and there was a little opening. I walked slowly to the open space next to the wall. I found myself looking down at a little space with a door and I was leaning over a black gate. I did not find it very amusing at all. I went to turn around when I heard a bang. The handle on the door sckweek [sic] and then everyone started to crowd around, the door began to open, my heart began to pump louder then I just shot up and realised that it was just a dream. I went to school that morning and it seemed just a normal day.

The Seat of Death

There is a strange phenomenon that only strikes Year 6. It's patchy and I think there was a deadly gas coming through the gas vents. And there is only one vent in the school and its right by one seat in Year 6!! When it starts to get you, they say you start coughing out … blood! Then, you feel your body rotting from the inside out. Your ears start falling off. All of your skin opens up and you can see yourself rotting. The boy who last sat in that seat died of the dizzies! [sic]. I mean, he actually died in this seat!!!!

GUESS WHO SITS IN THAT SEAT NOW?

I thought it was scary at first but now, now I am a zombie! There's no stopping me. I am going, I'm going, I'm going to high school!

To support their performance work and also to allow children to work across a range of disciplines and art forms, we produced tour guides, maps and histories of the school, inter-weaving easily between the actual and the imagined. Importantly, our *Misguide* allowed for a symbolic and representational understanding of place and space to emerge through the telling and enactment of personal stories and histories. Favourite sections of

the performance include stories about ghosts who supposedly haunt the bell-tower and the girls' toilets, a bench where one pupil was "dumped" by his girl-friend and heroic playground adventures, featuring giant spiders, aliens and world-cup football. The project prioritised spaces often overlooked or invisible to casual visitors to the school: secret hideaways, nooks and crannies; spaces where friendships are forged for a lifetime:

The Cloakroom

In year 4 we had a disco in the cloakroom. My friend J had a laser, a dark blue one. Everybody went in the cloakroom so my friend said lets have a disco so my friend J got his laser out and he was shining it everywhere then R said everybody lets boogy woogy [sic]. My best friend M was dancing like mad. The disco lasted 20 minutes and then the prefects came so we all rushed out and went into the playground.

The Dumping Bench

When I was in year 5 at last break, I went up to the benches where hearts are broken and dreams are shattered. I sat down next to my girlfriend to talk to her about the disco the next day to see if she would dance with me to Titanic. She turned around with a zombie like expression on her face. All her cronies turned and stared at me and she said "I'm sorry but you're dumped." I looked at her with a sad expression on my face and said "why?" "I don't know" she replied. "Fine" I said, and walked off.

To take the example of the second text, *The Dumping Bench*, the formal space (in this instance a playground bench), enables the child to inscribe a sense of self and belonging

over the physical landscape. In doing so, connecting personal, lived experience in a meaningful way with the broader context of the history of the school. Similarly, the impromptu disco (which had taken place quite unbeknown to teachers) described in *The Cloakroom,* was remembered with much enthusiasm and prompting of half-recalled memories. The articulation of self as belonging to somewhere in a particular space and time with others, resonates loudly in this kind of performance practice. Notwithstanding the ephemeral nature of performance, such works act as a kind of performative version of the old school desk; a palimpsest of where we have been and what we hope to achieve. Put simply it gave children who were nearing the end of their junior school years the chance to say: *I was here* and *this is how I felt.*

7.5 The Oneiric Dimension

For Boal performance has the potential to break down the formal and physical space; to blur the lines between the real and the unreal. Referred to as the oneiric dimension, these are the moments when we, as performers and spectators, 'are drawn into the space of the dream, whether we are asleep or awake' (Boal, 1995, p.22). This is not to suggest though, for site-centred work, that the formal space becomes redundant or overshadowed by the performance work much in the way that a theatre building might in conventional drama. But rather, the formal and physical space acts in tandem with the dream and the magical. The following performance extracts from the Misguide offer an illustration of the imaginative interplay between the formal and the oneiric dimension. The first example concerns a patch of concrete in the playground. To the casual observer there is nothing particularly significant about the area other than a slight depression in the concrete. But,

when it rains, water gathers in a puddle, which the children refer to as "Water World". The second text refers to a game that was played in year 5, which was remembered with much enthusiasm and the third concerns a brick wall:

J was sitting next to water world telling a joke when he got pushed in a puddle down the bottom of the playground. The puddle is called "Water World" and appears when we had a lot of rain. It is strictly forbidden to stand by it but J wanted to catch a stray fish and wishing he had his fishing net and next thing he was on his back in the Water World.

When we were in year four at first break [we] sat on a bench and out of the blue it suddenly transformed into a car. When we looked in the mirror we saw five ginormous [sic] spiders started to chase us, as we started to drive we started to slow down but we carried on driving then out of nowhere the five spiders leapt up and landed on top of the car when it started to attack us. So we wound up the windows and then acid rain came shooting down from the sky and burnt all the spiders around me. But what I didn't know was that it had laid millions of tiny eggs that were growing rapidly inside my car.

When [we were in year 4] we found a radio aerial and a piece of cement from the wall. We thought it would be fun to start to chip cement from the wall. So we took turns to chip out cement. We did this for about a month until there was hardly any cement left on the side that we could see. Luckily we were never caught and were always on the lookout for teachers. On the second week we found coal in the wall and kept chipping until we had pockets full of the coal. They have not replaced it even to this day.

In “Water World” we move easily between the actual (a puddle of water) and the fantastical (a fish). In the second text, a playground bench transforms into a car and is surrounded by enormous spiders. The third is particularly interesting, since the divide between the formal and the oneiric dream space is broken down in a literal sense (the picking away of the cement) and as an act of imagination. In truth, the children had chipped away far less cement than the story suggests and the brick wall shows no signs of lasting damage. The reality for all these performance texts of course is that these events never happened (at least in terms of how they have been retold here). For example, in “Water World” it is likely that children are asked to stay away from the puddle to prevent spending the rest of the school day in wet clothes, rather than the implied risk of water, resplendent with fish. However, this is unimportant. What matters is the connection the child has with place and space and the events that make sense of his life. Hence, it is not necessary to catch a real fish. In this context, desire and imagination are enough. Similarly, the story of the giant spiders attacking the boys as they tried to escape in their car allows us (adult viewers/readers) into the dream space normally reserved for children. From an outsider’s perspective, the playground is a rectangular block of concrete, enclosed on four sides by brick walls, windows and doors and overlooked by an imposing Victorian Bell Tower. However, when seen from a child’s perspective, the space opens out to include the improbable alongside the possible. Persighetti suggests that ‘in a society where the gap between dream and reality is not as divided as in western European culture(s), the power of place is often overwhelming’ (Persighetti, 2000, p.9). Arguably, school (and the places children occupy), can be places where dreams and imagination collide with reality and actuality.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

The significance of place and space has been a meaningful one for this study. Hetherington's understanding of identity politics through an examination of the formal and representational space has been particularly useful, since it illustrates the symbolic and contradictory values children attach to the spaces they occupy. The school building is an important place and has the potential formatively to affect school lives. The School Hall for example, is a highly codified and nuanced space and it is not surprising therefore, to see the same children occupying the margins of the room on a weekly basis. David Miliband, referring to the *Building Schools for the Future* programme, states that 'school buildings should inspire learning. They should nurture every pupil and member of staff. They should be a source of pride and a practical resource for the community' (Miliband, 2003; cited in DCSF, 2008, p.4). But arguably, the school building is much more than this suggests. This thesis has shown how children attach meaning to the smaller, hidden and inconsequential places: a playground bench, a brick wall, a puddle, a simple walk across the playground. To return to an earlier example of the disco in the cloakroom, the room held significance because lasting friendships were formed here. In this story, a genuine sense of belonging and participation emerges. The word friend is used easily and often and its importance should not be under estimated when considering the social and emotional well-being of children. For teachers, the final year of school was characterised by SATs and dominated conversation in the staff room. Children involved in the *Misguide* project though, sought to make full sense of their school lives through an attachment to place and space. *The Seat of Death,* a humorous re-working of a conventional Zombie-

story, reveals uncertainty (and some anxiety) about the forthcoming transition to secondary school.

Similarly, Boal's articulation of the oneiric dimension has a special resonance for this study. In this context place and space have the potential to open out, include and embrace the dream and the magical. In the example of "Water World", imagination is all that is needed to bring fish into existence. In the oneiric dimension children enter into a make-believe world without limitations and of endless possibilities. For example, in *The First Day of School* (referred to earlier in this chapter), the child begins with telling her audience that she felt excluded on her first day of school: 'I found myself just standing in the middle of the school yard. I did not have anyone to play with but all around me it seems to me that everyone had someone to play with, except for me'. But, a perception of an unhappy, lonely child is overthrown as the narrator/performer is thrown into a world of dream and magic: 'I walked slowly to the open space next to the wall. I found myself looking down at a little space with a door and I was leaning over a black gate'. As the text continues the narrator moves into a central and highly visible position: 'and then everyone started to crowd around'. Able to manipulate her own story and no longer positioned as an outsider, the child can show how she wants to be seen and what she wants to become. Our connection to the physical, and imaginative space, then, is crucial to developing an understanding of self and our relationship with others.

Chapter Eight

Messy Texts - Praxis and Writing

> And I know things now, many valuable things,
> That I hadn't known before.
> Do not put your faith in a cape and a hood.
> They will not protect you the way that they should.
> And take extra care with strangers; even flowers have their dangers,
> And though scary is exciting,
> Nice is different than good.
> Now I know, don't be scared. Granny is right, just be prepared.
> Isn't it nice to know a lot?
> …And a little bit... not (Sondheim, 1987; Into the Woods).

Final Thoughts and Reflections

In the introduction to this thesis, I referred to Guillermo Gómez-Peña definition of performance as the moment when the "mirror is shattered". For Gómez-Peña, 'the act of creating and presenting a performance carries a sense of urgency and immediacy that does not exist in any other artistic field' (2000, p. 9). I have similarly worked towards a performance pedagogy that prioritises being-in the moment of significance. Even though four very different projects were undertaken over the course of the thesis, all share a common concern: to position the child in the centre of the learning experience. I have looked towards an embodied and experiential practice that provides opportunities to

explore identity, subjectivity and participation in wishful and playful contexts. In the games we have played and workshops and performances created, participants have been encouraged to blur the boundaries between actuality and imagination. The desire to imagine allows the child to realise the transformational potential of performance. In this context, understanding is located in the body: 'I don't know what has happened to my heart, but after doing things with Mrs P., I am not feeling a little bit shy … but now all my shyness has gone, I have got new feelings which makes me not get shy in front of the teachers and all of our class' (Shining Angel, 2008).

Gómez-Peña offers a phenomenological description of performance, inferring a heightened awareness of presence. He writes, '[p]erformance is a disnarrative and symbolic chronicle of the instant which focuses on the now and the here' (2000, p.9). It suggests a presence in the work, beyond that of representation. But, before it shatters, the mirror must fall: this is the "present-at-hand" where meaning(s) are made (and unmade). The mirror, falling through time and space, is illustrative of the moment(s) between action, thought and reflection. This analogy points towards process-orientated rather than outcome-driven practice. From a pedagogic perspective, emphasis shifts towards being-in the world and experience.

In the introduction, I likened the act of writing as gathering together the shards of broken glass. Writing does not mirror reality, but offers a refracted image of the world we inhabit and the experiences we undertake. With regard to ethnography, observational and participatory contexts move at a quick pace. Hirschauer (2006) shows the possibility for

writing to slow down and intensify the original encounter. From this perspective, writing can be powerful, evocative and insightful. Writing allows us to re-present experience and our understanding of others. Put simply, writing allows for communication and a sharing of meaning.

But, just as writing can help us to understand a moment in time, it can also distort and re-invent. It is not so easy to put into words tacit and lived experience. Sometimes, meaning can be understood in an expression, or in a shared glance between friends. Meaning is not simply in the words spoken (and written) but in the nuances of tone and in the silences in-between. From this perspective, meaning resides in the body and not in the word. Which is why Derrida says, 'writing is inaugural, in the fresh sense of the word' (1997, p.11). Writing does not simply extend the play of the signification but rather, constructs our understanding of the world. How best to convey in words the experience of others and embodied ways of knowing remains an on-going concern.

I am drawn to Gómez-Peña's analogy because it offers a description of my own work. The mirror, in the act of falling, characterises the articulation of praxis within a specific moment(s) of time for this thesis: the "bureaucratisation of education" in the years following New Labour's election victory (1997). Falling also suggests movement and from a phenomenological perspective, a being-in the world. Then, at the point of shattering, the analogy moves over to one of representation. What remains of the mirror is a fragmented jigsaw of many different sizes and shapes. I am prompted to include this example, because my own writing is similarly fragmented. I have aimed for a "messy

text," moving between interpretative, narrative, philosophical and critical modes of expression.

The crisis of representation is not a new argument in either the social sciences or in the performance studies community. Indeed, the emergence of practice-as-research in UK Higher Education institutions marks a shift in the academy away from traditional text-based scholarly activity, particularly for contemporary arts-based inquiry. For this final chapter though, I do not intend to privilege praxis at the expense of writing and neither do I wish to overlook concerns of representation. Instead, I am interested in drawing together praxis and writing in order to reflect upon the research inquiry. This begins with a further consideration of Michael Frayn's stage play, *Copenhagen* (2000). This has been an important text for the thesis and so it is worthwhile explaining the reasons for its inclusion.

8.1 One More Draft

Copenhagen is a dramatization of a historic meeting between two twentieth century physicists: Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg. Both men were involved in quantum mechanics in the 1920s and, until the advent of the Second World War, were friends and collaborators, described in the play as a father and son relationship. In 1941, Heisenberg, a German, visited Bohr in occupied Denmark. There has been much speculation and debate surrounding the visit, some accounts suggesting that Heisenberg asked Bohr to help him build an atomic bomb for the Nazi party. Heisenberg subsequently failed in his attempt to build a nuclear reactor, but Bohr's work for the Allies contributed towards the

creation of the bomb, which was used on Hiroshima (1945). The play is not intended as a historical or, indeed, factual record of the event; rather, Frayn uses the play as a vehicle to explore themes of moral ambiguity and a loss of knowing.

Similarly, my interest in the play springs not so much from the storyline, or the historical account, rather I have used dialogue from the play to illuminate my own struggles to establish meaning in uncertain and changing contexts. In *Copenhagen*, the characters, unable to secure certainty in their own actions and of others, edge closer to a sense of darkness:

Bohr Before we can lay our hands on anything, our life's over.

Heisenberg Before we can glimpse who or what we are, we're gone and laid to dust.

Bohr Settled among all the dust we raised.

Margrethe And sooner or later there will come a time when all our children are laid to dust, and all our children's children.

Bohr When no more decisions, great or small, are ever made again. When there's no more uncertainty, because there's no more knowledge
(Frayn, 2000, pp.93-94).

From the perspective of Hiroshima, the atom bomb and the subsequent loss of many lives, the play is almost unbearably sad. Bohr and Heisenberg similarly fail to re-ignite their once close relationship of this the character Margrethe says, 'Already they're both flying away from each other into the darkness again' (2000, p.88). There are of course many ways to approach a text and *Copenhagen* lends itself to a number of interpretations from an historical drama to an old fashioned whodunit. For myself, I am drawn to the play

because within the confusion and uncertainty there is a desire to understand one another. Time and time again, the characters return to the beginning, to Heisenberg's motivation for visiting Bohr:

Heisenberg And once again I crunch over the familiar gravel to the Bohr's front door, and tug at the familiar bell-pull. Why have I come? I know perfectly well. Know so well that I've no need to ask myself. Until once again the heavy front door opens (Frayn, 2000, p.86).

There are many explanations given for Heisenberg's visit to Bohr, plausible and implausible. Margrethe asks, 'But why? … Why did he come to Copenhagen?' (2000, p.3). These questions are never answered, but perhaps this is not the point. Even as the play opens, Heisenberg and Bohr recognise the futility of establishing, once and for all, the reason for the visit, as Bohr says, 'Some questions have no answers to find' (2000, p.3). But, this doesn't prevent Bohr and Heisenberg from trying, and not only to ascertain their own culpability in the creation of the atom bomb. In the midst of uncertainty and questions of moral ambiguity, of life and death, we have two men reaching out towards each other in a desperate attempt to connect, analogised by Bohr with the phrase, 'One more draft, yes? One final draft!' (2000, p.86).

In addressing themes of uncertainty, Frayn shows that even in the most uncertain of contexts we have a need to share our experience of the world. The play may deal with a loss of knowing and of innocence and it raises important questions about the nature of knowledge and the appropriation of power. But it also says something about friendship

and a desire to communicate even in the face of failure. The play ends with the characters no closer to understanding either themselves or each other. Maybe, there is no certainty, but as Bohr points out, they have something else:

Bohr But in the meanwhile, in the most precious meanwhile, there it is. The trees in Faelled Park. Gammertingen and Biberach aned Mindelheim. Our children and our children's children. Preserved, just possibly, by that one short moment in Copenhagen. By some event that will never be quite located or defined. By the final core of uncertainty at the heart of things (2000, p.94).

For this thesis, *Copenhagen* is significant because communication continues: despite everything they make yet another attempt to understand. Even in the absence of certainty there is meaning to be found somewhere; for Frayn, it is in the "meanwhile". These are the moments that matter and even if circumstances and contexts change it meant something at the time. The crisis of representation suggests that we can never really understand a lived event, because the moment we try our words fail us. This does not mean, though, that we should stop writing or trying to convey a sense of the world we inhabit. There are limitations to the words we use, but writing allows us to share meaning with others, once the event has passed. Words carry forward, to new contexts and readers.

The research findings gathered in this thesis may only be temporary and our understanding, at best, partial and provisional. In another place and time there may well have emerged a different kind of pedagogy, or the inquiry could have taken another turn. Given the influence of poststructural analyses I cannot comment, with any certainty to the

long-term effectiveness of the study. Neither, can I say that words adequately describe the phenomenological qualities of performance. However, in the "meanwhile" I am able to reflect upon the work, because it mattered: for me, the participants and the two schools involved. The superhero Lord Kroak puts it quite simply, of the project *Heroes and Villains* he said, 'it made me feel brave about myself' (2008).

For the remainder of the chapter, I aim to revisit the work not to complicate understanding, but to pull out the strengths of the inquiry. This is not to say that there are not limitations to the study and these are addressed as the chapter unfolds. My focus is to reflect upon the distinctive qualities of the thesis, in terms of the movement between drama and live art. I then explore the methodological framework to the inquiry, with specific reference to concerns of proximity and closeness to the research field. Throughout this thesis, I have adopted a language of movement and travel to explain the shifting qualities to the study. To conclude this chapter, I return to the metaphor of a journey but rather than looking back I position the inquiry onto a forward-looking perspective.

8.2 Pedagogic Practice

> One of the first things Peter did next day was to measure Wendy and John and Michael for Hollow trees. Hook, you remember, had sneered at the boys for thinking they needed a tree apiece, but this was ignorance, for unless your tree fitted you it was quite difficult to go up and down, and no two of the boys were quite the same size (Barrie, 2007, p.78).

I entered into the inquiry intending to use live art to promote personal and emotional development, in the belief that live art invites children to engage with the world we live in from perspectives, other than dominant logo-centric modes of expression. In live art, practice flows outwards, rather than marking out a clearly defined structure and in some contexts, this can be enabling. The first project, *Misguide to Park Road*, was the closest example of live art, we worked in response to the school site and developed performance material as the project evolved and took shape. Whilst we had a structure of sorts, in terms of a guided tour, I encouraged children to work across disciplines and subject areas, depending on the kinds of stories they wanted to tell. Some children created maps and drawings, which we put up in corridors and on classroom doors. Unlike a more conventional performance, this was not publicity for the project or auxiliary to the performance, but another way in which children might participate in the event.

In the staff room, the May SATs dominated the conversation, but, beyond exams and tests, children prioritised their experience of school. Sometimes, their stories were negative, being "told-off" and having no-one to play with. Other stories were conveyed with enthusiasm and there was much laughing and giggling as participants shared their memories and anecdotes with each other. As adults, it is easy to forget what it felt like to spend playtime without friends and if we are to understand the children we teach we need to see what is important to them. Good ethical practice is an ability to see the world from the vantage-point of a child. From the perspective of praxis, I was able to enter into the lives of my participants, a privilege which more conventional methodologies do not allow.

For children, soon to be moving onto secondary school, future lives will be guided not only by academic ability and exam success, but also, their ability to connect with others. Primary and junior school years are formative stages of growth and development and creative play helps the child to understand the world around them. In a teaching culture swamped with league tables, national testing and reports, this project offered valuable time and space in which to explore where we come from and the kinds of issues and challenges to be faced. As noted in the performance extract, *The First Day of School,* the author is able to manipulate a feeling of exclusion and loneliness because she retained creative and imaginative control over her own performance material.

In the first project, the openness and fluidity of live art gave the child an unparalleled sense of freedom. But, in the project Sounds, I came to realise that openness may also inhibit creativity, particularly for children struggling to develop a positive learning experience and that dramatic structure gave participants something tangible to work towards. Moreover, drama uniquely develops and sustains lines of communication between participants. If live art begins with the personal, then drama emphasises the social and the shared experience of performance. Turner *et al* suggest that '[p]erhaps one of the most important aspects of a dramatic presentation is the way in which the mutual performance of a fiction unites all its creators' (2004, p.271). In *Misguide to Park Road* live art prioritised the individual, for the children working on *Sounds* drama encouraged a greater awareness of the group.

From *Sounds* onwards I drew together many different ways of working (and thinking about performance), adopting imaginative role play, drama games and exercises, demonstration, improvisation, story telling and drawings. This is not to say that the participants responded equally to all styles of practice, as Barrie writes, 'no two of the boys were quite the same size' (2007, p.78). To paraphrase this particular quotation, I fitted practice to the needs of the individual and also to the group. In this respect, praxis has been contextually nuanced and works in response to the child, rather than imposing an external concern. All four projects were very different and it is not so easy to find common threads. This said, there are distinctive qualities to this study, particularly in the relationship between drama and live art.

The first distinctive quality of this inquiry has been the travel between drama and live art. But, as noted in chapter two, it was only when I relinquished a hold over live art that I began to see the potential for traffic between the two disciplines. This is not to say that both approaches were adopted at the same time, in some instances we worked in a drama context and at others in live art. The project *Heroes and Villains* illustrates this particular point. From a drama perspective, we acted out huge and fantastic playground battles and in doing so explored conflict and danger in a secure space. Similarly, Forum Theatre enabled the participants to deal with themes of exclusion in a non-threatening and safe setting. From the perspective of postmodern performance (particularly in live art), there is a perceptible collapse between performing and the everyday self. With their secret tasks, participants performed confident versions of their own selves from the safety of imagined invisibility. The fireball demonstration, similarly, blurred the lines between performing

and doing, and from a subjective-vantage point, offered participants control and authorship of their own work.

This inquiry has offered a broad and deep approach to performance pedagogy because it recognises the value (and limitations) in both. I have not attempted to dilute the qualities of either, or homogenise drama and live art into a hybrid practice. As noted in chapter five, I initially sought a position in the borders between paradigms and critical reference points. However, I came to see that we stand in relation to practice because, to echo a point established earlier, it is not possible to look in more than one direction at once. Therefore, I have not positioned praxis in a no-man's land between drama and live art, nor have I erased the difference and tensions between the two. I have travelled between drama and live art in order, not to stand in-between, but to enter into both disciplines. I have enabled praxis to work for the child, rather than upholding a particular bias or performance style.

The second distinctive feature of this inquiry has been the relationship between subjective-orientated practice and participatory pedagogy. Common across all performances and projects I have positioned the child in the centre of the learning experience. Praxis has been subjectively driven and role play and improvisational games have developed a sense of self and identity rather than a character study. But, there has also been a focus on the participatory qualities of practice. In order to see performance as potentially transformational we need to engage with the social as well as the personal. For this reason, I have avoided virtuosic styles of performance, preferring to see the work as

demonstrative rather than acted. In these contexts, a child is not judged (by an audience) on his ability to act or sustain a character role. The performance becomes a place where participants are able to share their work in imaginative contexts.

For *Sounds*, the participatory quality of the performance also helped to re-integrate the children into their school community, once the project had completed. From an ethical perspective, it is important that participants do not feel ostracised because a research project has taken them out of the classroom. Demonstration, rather than a conventional performance, enables participants to share dialogue. Participation is crucial if we are to empower children to enact social change and realise the transformational potential for performance.

For this thesis, concerns of subjectivity and participation have been mutually inter-dependent. Subjective-orientated practice enables participants to make sense of their lives from the perspective of the personal, social and cultural self in performance. In these contexts, virtuosic styles of performance are undone and originality and experience are regarded as true achievement. In the project, *Misguide to Park Road,* subjectivity enabled participants to see their time at school as valuable and important. As noted in chapter seven, it allowed children to assert their presence at the school, to show that by being there (and spending time with others) it made a difference. But, if subjectivity foregrounds the individual, participatory pedagogies enable our experience of the world to be shared with others. Participatory pedagogies actively blur the lines between audience and spectator. Demonstration, rather than a conventional performance in *Heroes and*

Villains allowed participants to engage with potentially risky subject matter (such as bullying and exclusion) in a participatory context. Importantly, it brought together a group of children where bullying may have occurred. Freire suggests that in order to enact change, we need to bridge the subjective with the social. He writes:

> To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without peopl ... World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction (Feire, 2006, p.50).

8.3 Methodology

Methodology in this inquiry has been varied and has cut across singular ways of working. I have deliberately adopted a multi-faceted approach and the end result is a kaleidoscope of styles, insights and intentions. A "messy" approach to methodology has allowed me to navigate the study from many perspectives and vantage-points. But, whilst broad-ranging, methodologies have been selected with purpose, with the intention of opening out the research inquiry. I have not casually thrown together different methodologies, this may be eclectic in approach, but it is not thoughtless. Because this thesis cuts across educational research and performance studies I adopted research methodologies that bridged the two disciplines. For example, in chapter three I outlined how participant observation, over a four-year period, facilitated a greater awareness of the research setting and the social lives of children. Praxis, on the other hand, enabled an experiential and embodied significance

to emerge. Together, praxis and observation have illuminated the difficulty of attaching significance to research contexts that are in continual flux and change.

The methodological strands to this thesis have worked towards a multi-perspectival and polyphonous account of the research inquiry. I prefer to see the inconsistencies and tensions rather than a unitary vision of the study. This said however, a common feature (which perhaps ties together the different methods), has been a sense of proximity and closeness to the research field. Proximity demands a physical presence in the field, privileging lived experience above abstract theorising, or as Conquergood puts it, 'the arm chair research of more sedentary and cerebral methods' (1991, p.180). In these contexts, the researcher sits within the setting, replacing objectivity with proximity and certainty with temporality and partiality. In chapter five, I introduced proximity from the perspective of belonging and the borders between research paradigms. For this final chapter, I consider the benefits of proximity as a methodological concern.

A proximity to the school, enabled through participant observation, has enabled praxis to be seen from the vantage-point of the child. In *Misguide to Park Road*, proximity has opened out the potential for performance to engage with the magical and the oneiric dimension (Boal, 1995). It also revealed the contradictory values children and teachers give to the formal spaces they occupy. Here, I have witnessed, at first hand, children pushed into the margins, occupying the outer-edges of school life. For *Heroes and Villains*, proximity facilitated a greater awareness of the struggles that some children encounter when trying to establish friendship ties. In *Sounds* we floundered and, with an

insight that can only be gained through experience, I saw the need to shift the study into a broader application of performance pedagogy. From this, we might say that proximity has enabled my praxis to be experienced in the moment(s) of unfolding.

Above all else, proximity has enabled the thesis to emerge as a collaborative exercise. Rather than imposing an external concern or epistemological standpoint, I have developed practice from within the school setting. In this respect, performance has the potential to become truly dialogic. In the introductory pages to *The Rainbow of Desire* (1995), Boal describes an encounter with a Brazilian peasant called, Virgilio. Boal's theatre company had performed a musical agit-prop drama to an audience of peasants and Virgilio, inspired by the lyrics of the text, *Let us Spill our Blood,* called for the actors to take up arms:

> Since you think exactly like us, this is what we are going to do: we'll have lunch [it was midday] and afterwards we'll all go together, you with your guns, we with ours, and send the colonel's bullyboys packing – they've taken over a comrade's land, set fire to his house and threatened to kill his family – But first, let's eat… (Boal, 1995, p.2).

Boal describes the panic and confusion that ensued. The actors explained to the peasants that the guns were fake, the lyrics theatrical and their intentions merely artistic. Boal says, 'it was difficult to explain – both to Virgilio and ourselves' (1995, p. 2). But Virgilio, on the other hand, had certainly understood:

> So, when you true artists talk of the blood that must be spilt, this blood you sing about spilling it's our blood you mean, not yours, isn't that so? (Boal, 1995, p.3).

Of course, work in schools is hardly the same as agit-prop drama in the context of 1960s Brazil. But, there is a valuable argument to be found here. Boal recognises that, as practitioners, we need to share the "same risks" as our participants. Boal writes, '[w]ith Virgilio, I had learnt to see a human being, rather than a social class' (1995, p.7). With this inquiry, I had entered into the lives of children and teachers and in doing so I had learnt to see the child, rather than a case study. Struggles in the project *Sounds* were exemplified because of the risk we shared. I could, for example, have worked the group harder, been less forgiving, or I could have simply walked away. But I had initiated the project and, therefore, had a responsibility to ensure the emotional and social well-being for all participants. For the group to continue with *Sounds* entailed some risk. A failure to develop a meaningful response would be viewed negatively in the context of the school community and may also affect self-confidence and esteem. As noted, I was aware that changing approach may have derailed praxis – but the immediate needs of the child overrode these concerns.

I saw then the transformational potential for performance. But, to realise this fully, we need to establish dialogue between the researcher and participant. Boal found an approach in Forum Theatre, for my own part praxis became dialogic when I learnt to listen. Proximity is crucial to developing this understanding. Closeness, rather than distance, enables research to become dialogic and collaborative. Perhaps, a criticism of this kind of ethnographic methodology is that our research (and attachment to the field), becomes deeply personal. But then, as Margrethe points out to Bohr, everything is personal:

Bohr Not to criticise, Margrethe, but you have a tendency to make everything personal.

Margrethe Because everything is personal! …

I'm sorry, but you want to make everything seem heroically abstract and logical. And when you tell the story, yes, it all falls into place, it all has a beginning, middle and an end. But I was there, and when I remember what it was like I'm there still, and I look around me and what I see isn't a story! It's confusion and rage and jealousy and tears and no one knowing what things mean or which way they're going to go (Frayn, 2000, p.73).

A close relationship to the research setting has revealed what children find important: having a friend to sit next to at lunch time, someone to play football with, the courage to speak up in class or to initiate friendship. When the participants created their superheroes in *Heroes and Villains* one of the girls selected the identity Ninja Angel, which prompted another girl to choose the name, Shining Angel. For this group in particular, friendship was a prevailing concern. For their first mission, I asked the superheroes to interview each other and to record the questions and answers in their notebooks:

Shining Angel Are you happy when you play with me?
Am I your best friend?
If I tell you a secret will you tell other people?

Lord Kroak Do you like being my friend?
Are you my best friend?
Are you kind, sensible and clever?
Are you a bully?

Super Spartacus Are you my best friend?

Do you like playing with me?
Are you sensible in school?
Do you bully people sometimes?

The interviews were conducted after the participants had created their superhero identities and their questions could have focused on their new (imaginative) superpowers. But, instead the children focused on friendship and security. In chapter two, on research ethics, I raised Farrell's (2007) question over who benefits from the research inquiry. In 2005, I began the study with the intention of empowering children to take ownership of their own learning and in the words of Greene, 'to enable those we teach to rebel' (1978; cited in Taylor, 1996, p.2). Rather naively, I projected my own intentions onto the needs of the research participants. But, this inquiry has shown that to be transformational we need to begin with the child and her needs may be more simple and straightforward than we think. For children participating in *Heroes and Villains*, friendship was more important than rebellion. In *Sounds*, communication was more significant than openness and freedom. Proximity then, as a methodological strategy, has enabled praxis to shift from an outsider perspective to a nuanced and meaningful engagement with the field.

8.4 The Limitations of the Journey

Ideas of journey and travel have been frequently employed in the thesis. In many respects, this submission attends to the process of moving through PhD study as well as an examination of pedagogic practice. Or rather, I am equally interested with the journey as its destination. The route itself has not been straightforward and can be described as a series of turns and crossroads and many paths have been followed (and others

abandoned). I adopted metaphors of travel to describe the movement in-between praxis and writing, the ebb and flow between critical theories and philosophies, and the borders between research paradigms and disciplines. As a metaphor, travel infers a cutting across authoritative standpoints and fixed hegemonies. Conquergood, for example, evokes images of movement and travel to describe the 'transgressive travel between two different domains of knowledge: one official, objective, and abstract – the map; the other one practical, embodied and popular - the story' (2004, p.311).

Clifford suggests, 'the ethnographic trope [replaced with a travel metaphor is] similarly a source of insight and blindness' (2000, p.p.54-59). I have also moved between periods of knowing and unknowing. As noted, the crisis of representation infers a tension between lived experience and the written word. But, in some instances, writing has supported praxis. In chapter seven, narrative stories and performance texts show the significance children attach to the formal spaces they occupy. In chapter four, I adopt a more critical stance to language in order to question the relationship between words and lived experience and, in doing so, critique my own writing (and accounts of others). This is not to say that one approach is better than another, because this, in itself, alludes to a notion of an essential meaning. Within a poststructural frame, I cannot prevent the thesis from being inferred and interpreted unintentionally, or otherwise. But, electing to foreground the journey, to show the shifts and turns, allows the reader to engage with the thesis as it unfolds, thereby, enabling key concerns and tensions to be put into play.

In the introductory chapter, I used the idea of a journey to outline the difficulty of finding a sequential historicity for the thesis. To reiterate a point made earlier, Lawler (2008) says that memory is reconstructive, suggesting that when we look forward we are also looking back to the past and re-interpreting the past from the vantage-point of the present. I began with this argument because it positioned the inquiry as one of flow and change. For a final chapter this idea becomes even more problematic, because, from a Derridean perspective, it is not possible turn back into the maze. In looking back, we do not see the inquiry as it was, neither are we able to re-trace our steps back to the beginning.

This argument is illustrated in chapter one of the thesis. As noted, I set out to examine the emergence of the creative agenda, in the years following New Labour's election victory. I explained that I drafted the chapter midway into the study and I struggled to account for creative activity because of the audit culture. From the perspective of participant observation, I could see that teachers were torn between ostensibly contradictory values: for example, creative practice continued, but within, rather than against, the audit culture. I adopted a dialogic understanding of creative discourse because at the time, it seemed to mobilise creativity, which top-down perspectives of control and audit tended to freeze. I came to see that in presenting creativity in this way, I had smoothed away tension and conflict: *a sleight of hand* to smother difference. I had, unwittingly, tethered creativity to teacher and practitioner accounts, rather than revealing the tensions between accounts of practice. I did not see this at the time, because, I was in the midst of developing my own praxis and, as such, was unable to see ahead of my own journey:

> One fine winter's day when Piglet was brushing away the snow in front of his house, he happened to look up, and there was Winnie-the Pooh. Pooh was walking round and round in a circle, thinking of something else, and when Piglet called to him, he just went on walking.
> "Hallo!" said Piglet, "what are you doing?"
> "Hunting", said Pooh.
> "Hunting what?"
> "Tracking something", said Winnie-the-Pooh very mysteriously.
> "Tracking what?" said Piglet coming closer.
> "That's just what I ask myself. I ask myself, What?"
> (Milne, 1998, pp.44-45).

In my analysis of Creative Partnerships I thought that I was examining creativity from the perspective of teachers, practitioners and conference organisers. At the time, not realising I interpreted the discourse of others from my own research agenda. Rather than an objective account of the conference, perhaps, like Pooh, I was following my own tracks in the snow. I needed, therefore, to re-think this chapter, but it was not so easy to position myself back into the argument. I had two options: first, to re-examine the creative agenda, taking into account my own praxis which matured over time. But, when I turned to look back, I was no longer there. As Margrethe puts it to Heisenberg, '[y]ou look back and make a guess, just like the rest of us. Only a worse guess, because you didn't see yourself doing it' (Frayn, 2000, p.72). Or else, I could write a historical and objective account of creative education, post 1997. This was also problematic, as I was unable to extricate myself from this period of time and therefore did not have a sense of objectivity. It was for this reason that I selected to insert a postscript rather than a concluding statement. I have purposefully reminded the reader of this, because I intend to end the

thesis with a statement that looks towards the future rather than a concluding summary. This will, I hope, propel the research findings from its current historical context to a forward looking trajectory.

8.5 The Creativity Agenda Post New Labour.

At the point of completing this thesis, education was, once again, in the spotlight of media attention. The riots, which occurred in August 2011, were viewed, by some, as indicative of a "moral collapse" in English society. In a speech made shortly after the riots, David Cameron apportioned blame on absent fathers, the "moral hazard" of the welfare system and the failure of the school system to instil a sense of moral responsibility and community cohesion. Cameron paints a picture of English schooling without discipline and 'indifferent to right and wrong' (2011, n.p). He goes on to say, 'Why are we putting up with the complete scandal of schools being allowed to fail, year after year' (2011, n.p). For the presiding government, there is more than a casual link between ineffective schooling and the growth of gang culture: we have "thugs" on English streets because children leave school without learning to read and write. From this perspective, it seems that, despite every good intention, schools are failing children.

The belief that the school system acts as a kind of social barometer for the health of society is not a new idea. New Labour's decision to move Citizenship Education to a statutory core subject was, in part, influenced by high profile media cases, such as the James Bulger murder (1993). When society goes wrong (as with the recent riots) we look

towards our schools and teachers for blame.[59] For teachers, who already experienced an unprecedented level of bureaucracy under New Labour, it is too soon to see if the new revised National Curriculum (2013) will ease public scrutiny into their everyday working lives.

Under New Labour, creativity was articulated in an economic rhetoric, as noted by Neelands and Choe, 'New Labour's creativity discourse has been directly and indirectly influenced by both pro-market and pro-social positions' (2010, p. 291). Post New Labour the future of creativity is less certain, particularly given the funding cuts for Creative Partnerships in 2010. For the new coalition government, educational discourse seems to have shifted towards community responsibility, academic rigour and high standards. The response to the August riots similarly points towards a changing discourse, which has more to do with authority and discipline than creative enterprise.

In its historical context, this inquiry was a response to the emergence of creativity as part of the "cultural turn." Now that the educational agenda has turned, the findings here are just as relevant and perhaps even more so, because I have demonstrated that creativity has the potential to be transformational, if we listen to the needs of the child and take a leap into imagination. For Sir Ken Robinson, imagination is a unique gift that we have, as humans, to make a difference in our lives. He writes the power of imagination, 'we take it totally for granted. This capacity to bring into mind things that aren't present and, on that

[59] This also happened in 1976 at James Callaghan's Ruskin Speech which in part blamed schools for the decline of the UK economy in the global market – The argument for greater "relevance" followed along with a raft of vocational programmes. Another example of education as a panacea for the ills of society and the economy.

basis, to hypothesise about things that have never been, but could be' (Robinson, 2008, p.4). Imaginative pedagogy may help children to find their own aspiration for learning in a way that exams and tests fail to recognise.

In respect of the riots of August 2011 we witnessed widespread opportunist looting, burning and destruction. People were incredulous that youth could destroy its own environment and thus, I return to the issue of subjectivity and participation. That a child rejects, or destroys or simply does not respond is not an overtly political act. It is a resistance to a sense of being *Othered* and a disbelief in his/her ability to achieve. However, if a child can see that his/her own story is important, useful and worth sharing it helps him/her to recognise the value and achievement of others. For the participants working on this study, concerns of friendship, belonging and inclusion were a far more crucial reality than the strategies of learning that they were experiencing. Policy makers, teachers and practitioners may have loftier intentions, but if we wish our children to take control and enter their adult lives with a sense of purpose and accomplishment, we need to concern ourselves with their story rather than the one we would give them. In four years of fieldwork I did not encounter the youth portrayed in Cameron's speech and did not witness gang culture. Neither do I believe that my research setting was failing its children despite low test scores and SATs results. I have seen, though, a need for a pedagogy that encourages a greater awareness of the personal and social life of children. Earlier, I referred to a quotation by Lord Kroak, who said that the project *Heroes and Villains* had made him feel brave. Perhaps, the best place to start thinking about children is to help them to feel brave about themselves and their relationship with others.

Appendices

1. Photograph of Park Road Junior School
2. *Misguide to Park Road:* The Haunted Bell Tower
3. *Misguide to Park Road*: The Dumping Bench
4. *Robin and the Pirate Letters*
5. *Robin and the Pirate Letters*: Letter One
6. *Robin and the Pirate Letters*: Pirate Ship
7. *Robin and the Pirate Letters*: Captain Black Jack
8. *Robin and the Pirate Letters*: Lighthouse

Park Road Junior School,
Stoke-on-Trent.

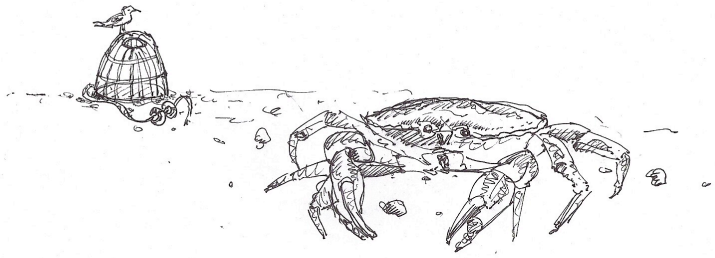

Misguide to Park Road:
The Haunted Belltower.

The Dumping Bench where hearts are broken and dreams are shattered.

Robin and the Pirate Letters.

Sample letter

One: My Home

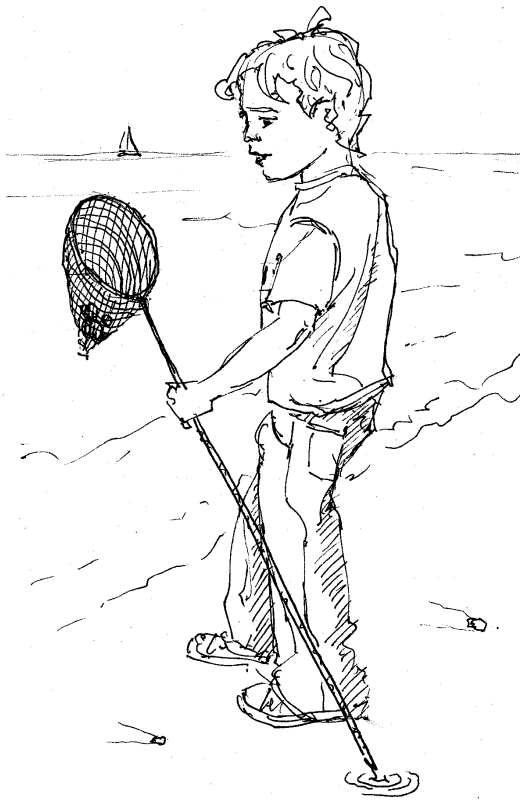


My name is Robin and I live with my Grandfather. We live in a small house and I can see the sea from my bedroom window.

My Grandfather said I must look out for a pirate flag. He said that if I see a pirate ship I must run away and hide.

But what does a pirate ship look like? Draw a pirate ship for me.

Robin x



Robin and the Pirate Letters - sample response.

Robin and the Pirate Letters - sample stamp.

Robin and the Pirate Letters - sample response.

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