

Teaching ancient Greek Theatre in Secondary School

Submitted by Christina Gkatzioli to the University of Exeter
as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Philosophy

December 2009

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Abstract

Teaching ancient Greek Theatre in Secondary School

This dissertation starts by examining how ancient Greek Drama can be introduced in secondary school. A first look is taken at the history of theatre and drama as an educational subject up to the present day. Specific mention is given to the controversy between drama and theatre in the 1990s, and how it affected the progression and significance of the subjects in the curriculum. In addition, a re-examination takes place regarding theatre's significance in adolescent development. The latter possesses several aspects that bear much poignancy and importance for the investigation which follows. The main concern of the research was to raise certain questions that will allow students to engage effectively in ancient Greek Drama whilst considering the historic-political background of the art, its form and its possible relevance to our times. The idea was that through providing a wider perspective, students would be able to reflect and form a clearer view of the subject. To explore and investigate these aims, an action research project was undertaken. The enquiry was driven by three main research questions that tackled the above concerns. Three projects were implemented in the same secondary school on the study of an ancient Greek play. The first two consisted of class work on the play *Medea*, whilst the third also included the attendance of students at a performance of *Iphigenia at Aulis*, directed by Katie Mitchell at the National Theatre in London.

Analysis of the data collected revealed that the three projects allowed active participation, reflection and a first engagement for students with this historical theatre form. At the same time weaknesses are revealed and certain areas proved to be dysfunctional or impractical. The discussion, situated in the last chapter, tries to review the structure of the research and to identify the elements that could have been improved. As a result, recommendations are listed to revisit fundamental questions that were raised at the beginning of the research. A change of focus is recommended to embrace the issue of why English students should engage with the art form and in which ways they can benefit best. In the light of these results, school conditions are taken into consideration in a discussion of new research methods and further practice.

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Introduction

When Euripides wrote *Medea* he had his own agenda for telling a story about a woman who was willing to kill her own children just to inflict pain on her husband and take her revenge for his betrayal. There is no way that he would have ever imagined that his tragedy would be performed in all continents of this world two thousand three hundred years since its original performance. How can a mythical story, about the unthinkable brutal nature of a killer mother, resonate with gender and social issues of our times? Victor Hugo claims that in theatre's nature lies 'a crucible place for human communication' (Pavis 1992/2001:6). Equally important, as Richard Schechner asserts, is its ability to engage 'with the most problematic (violent, dangerous sexual, taboo) human interactions' (1977/1988:170). The Greek tragedies deal with ontological issues that question the symbiosis of human nature with the existing morality and ethics imposed by the society.

In our times globalisation and interculturalism have 'opened the borders for social and political scrutiny on multiple issues such as women's rights and political and international affairs' (Said 1993:15), and Greek tragedies are becoming the perfect playground to scrutinise these issues. It is possible that in ancient Greek Theatre students may find meaning in the continuous effort of human kind to understand its own nature and become challenged to ask the same ontological questions that intrigued Euripides' mind.

Beginning my dissertation I wondered whether it was more suitable to implement my research in Greece or England. Naturally I thought it would be more valid for the research to take place in Greece, but two main concerns affected this decision. First, I wanted to realise the project in secondary schools, as the intellectual level of the students seems more appropriate for the serious challenges that drama can offer. In Greece, theatre and drama has recently become a curriculum subject in primary schools. It is still not given the appropriate attention and therefore it is underdeveloped in comparison with the other arts subjects. Most importantly, considering that ancient Greek Drama is our national heritage, it could have been expected to play a more vital role in the educational development of young Greeks. Regretfully ancient Greek Drama is only taught as part of literature and analysed as a text instead of performance material. Therefore my study would have had to take place as an extra curricular activity with a group of students with little or no knowledge of drama

approaches or dramatic skills. The possibility of poor attendance from Greek students was also considered, as they have to attend extra educational courses in private teaching centres as part of preparation for the national exams or for learning foreign languages.

Second, it is my belief that even despite the origins of ancient Greek Drama, the art form and plays are of global interest and part of world heritage. I thought that if the projects can be implemented in England they could be variously altered to meet the needs of any different school environment as long as some contextual issues are considered such as socio-cultural conditions.

My first step was to refine my own knowledge on the subject. For this reason I spent a considerable amount of time trying to understand better the nature of the art form. For this reason I attended a course at the Classics and Ancient History Department of the University of Exeter. It was one-year tutorial module of the MA course 'Ancient Greek Drama and Society.' I also had the opportunity to present an essay on the 'self divided Medea,' which allowed me to get a better grasp of the text and its meaning. I decided to use this tragedy as my first case study. The next year I also attended a module for undergraduate students at the Drama Department taught by Graham Ley 'Performance and Space in Ancient Greece.'

The courses affected to a certain degree the setting of the first research question (see Chapter Two). I considered at that point that, for secondary students to understand the theatrical form and its context, it was vital to place ancient Greek Drama in its historical setting. However, I overlooked that this type of study and approach was more easily achievable with postgraduate students as they were already familiar with ancient Greek texts and were mentally more mature to understand and negotiate such ideas. There were also other issues that inhibited the progress of the first research question, which will be explained later.

The contexts

It is important to give a brief description of my dissertation chapters to explain the various steps I took during my action research and how the outcomes are organised into the following chapters. The beginning of **Chapter One** analyses the history of theatre in schools as it took place in England up to the present time. The purpose of this chapter is to convey an understanding of how historic-political conditions and the emergence of drama as a newly taught subject have affected the establishment of drama in, and its development within, the curriculum. Consequently such analysis can allow us to understand at a first theoretical level the present place of ancient Greek tragedy in schools. This area is approached again in Chapter Five from a more pragmatic angle by a comparison of the initial aims of the research and the restrictions the National Curriculum in England.

The same chapter examines the role of theatre in adolescent development. It identifies four categories of different teaching approaches towards the art form in helping achieve theatrical experience in schools:

- (1) Attendance at and interpretation of a performance through class work;
- (2) Class work on a theatrical play without attending a performance of it;
- (3) Producing a play in class with the intention of a school performance;
- (4) Theatre-in- Education.

Due to school circumstances, I initially believed that I would only be able to cover the second area 'Class work on a theatrical play without a performance of it.' In the end, I had the opportunity to examine the first area 'Attendance at and interpretation of a performance through class work,' which meant certain theatrical conventions met during the performance needed to be mentioned. A specific account is also given of the nature of contemporary performances of ancient Greek Drama they might experience.

The last section of the chapter concentrates on ancient Greek Drama and the difficulties and challenges secondary school students may come across during their theatrical experience. To achieve further development I raised certain questions driving the enquiry; this also allowed me to plan potential projects. These questions concentrated on the nature of the theatrical forms, how they can be taught to students in secondary schools, and whether they offer any

relevance to them.

Chapter Two focuses on three main research questions raised at the end of Chapter One. In this chapter I offer a theoretical examination on how these questions can be applied in secondary schools. The three questions are as follows:

1. *Do we need to introduce ancient Greek cultural background and if so to what extent?*
2. *In which ways do we approach the features of ancient Greek Drama?*
3. *Can ancient Greek Drama offer relevance to our contemporary world and enhance students' critical thinking?*

Every question represents a specific investigated area that is divided into further sections. Each is investigated at two levels. First, I look at the existing theatrical and historical knowledge. Furthermore, I attempt to establish a theoretical teaching approach of the subject which takes account of students' abilities. This teaching method endeavoured to offer a general approach to fifteen to sixteen year old students. This chapter was crucial for the formation of the projects.

In the beginning of **Chapter Three** the reader is provided with an analytical diagram of the three projects that were conducted at the secondary school. It gives information about the timetable, the school environment and the conditions met.

Further on I explore the chosen research methods and explain the reasons behind my decision to use action research. I focus on action research progressively to explore the chosen subject. Moreover, it allowed me to re-examine and evaluate each project to improve teaching approaches for successive ones. A further critique of the action research is offered in the last chapter.

To give a clearer picture of the conditions in which the research took place, special reference is made to the relationship between me as a facilitator and their usual teacher, and how that affected the actual teaching of the projects

Chapter Four concentrates on the analysis of the data. It is closely related to the theoretical background of the second chapter. Considerable time is taken to explain how the areas of investigation were implemented. A coherent account is given of the teaching approaches and activities and what conditions were met as a facilitator. Due to the nature of the research there is a first attempt to reflect on the work, and to identify the changes which needed to take place to ensure progress in implementing future projects.

Chapter Five reviews the results of the action research and critically guides the reader into a second reflection of the dissertation. It starts by looking and reviewing the personal journey of the researcher and how this enables her to restate the key aims while taking into consideration the school environment, her teaching abilities and methods of collecting data for further analysis. It finally brings forward a fourth research question which replaces the previous questions and conveys the progress of the investigation to introduce ancient Greek Drama, namely:

4. Why should ancient Greek Drama be introduced to secondary students and if it is, how can this be achieved to the best benefit of the adolescent in the current school conditions?

A future project is proposed which tries to implement the insights which flowed from the research. It focuses on the meaning of ancient Greek tragedy and its relevance and importance for secondary students while preserving theatrical elements of the art. At the same time the possibility of an expansion is considered as part of an extended interactive scheme.

Chapter One

Theatre status in English Education: Past and Present and the case of ancient Greek Drama

A short introduction to theatre's history in education

Theatre's role in people's communal life was always important. In medieval England, the Christian plays were extremely popular and a widespread method employed to teach values. 'The essence of the plays was the story they told and its spiritual significance.' (Harris 1991: 46) Morality and mystery plays occurred later and they were intended to educate, though not in schools. Harris mentions that:

In Tudor times, when interludes had become popular and well established, they began to be used for other purposes too: we find them being produced for 'amateur' performances at schools, universities and the Inns of Court and elsewhere as propaganda exercises for politicians like Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell. (1991:162)

The first evidence of theatre in education in England can be placed in Elizabethan times. This period saw teachers of prominent schools advocating drama's ability to cultivate morality and ethics, which seemed to be supported by philosophical and religious views of the time. Towards the second half of the nineteenth century there was a remarkable progression. Swortzel believed:

... the educational value of theatre within schools was being more confidently asserted, even though it was usually confined to after-hours leisure time and to the production of the classics. (1990:114)

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, keen devotees of theatre, seemed to encourage such efforts. Their children set an example by performing *Athalie* and other plays. Bradfield School built an open-air replica of a Greek amphitheatre and performed in 1881 an ancient Greek play in the original language (Courtney 1968). This tradition took place every three years in conjunction with Cambridge and Oxford Universities, and has continued to the present day. While theatre as an educational approach seemed to be nurtured in public schools, there is no evidence that it was widely present in all schools. It is worth considering that the power of the arts and an interest in aesthetics was still an elitist pursuit in this period and therefore heavily influenced by the upper classes.

In the nineteenth century a major figure cited different aspects of emotion and feeling. Damasio (2000) states that Charles Darwin (1872) studied the expression of emotions in different cultures and underlined their importance in human evolution. Later, Freud (1915) focused on the pathological side of disturbed emotions. Nevertheless, with the 'advent of behaviourism in the 1920s attention turned away from mental processes to phenomena that could be described purely in terms of stimulus-response' (Evans & Cruse 2004:xi). As a result the separation of reason and emotion remained a divisive issue. This continued until the early 20th century, thus undermining the role of arts in education. The radical change came with the psychological and economic impact of the Second World War on the social and political construction of the country:

The mixing of social classes in the armed forces, the growing participation of women in the workforce and the existence from mid 1940 of a coalition government with Labour ministers in senior home front positions, as well as Conservatives, contributed to a shifting social climate. (Barber 1994:3)

The new socio-political climate had also affected the pedagogical nature of the current educational structure. Barber states that it revealed 'disturbing deficiencies in the education system' (1994:4) which forced the government to take drastic measures to cause education reconstruction. In 1944, the new Labour Government implemented a new educational system with the intention to provide 'a healthier, more rounded and better quality experience for the country's children' (Somers 1994:1). In order to introduce the new conditions into the curriculum, they considered the existing psychological theories, which underlined the importance of a child-centred education, and essentially concerned a body/mind unity. Freud's psychoanalytical approaches were being popularised. Ideas based on his theory of personality, behaviour, self-concept, the importance of early experiences, and social influences seemed to be used by teachers of drama although a proper foundation of their relationship with the art was still in its early stages.

The end of the Second World War contributed to the beginning of conceptualising the context of educational drama as a means of self-expression and individualism. In 1943, the Educational Drama Association was formed. Their first drama advisor was Peter Slade who took up a post in Britain's second largest city, Birmingham. He was the first dramatist to introduce improvisation and other dramatic activities in schools. Based on his personal

experience with children he created a developmental theory of Child Drama. Bailey mentions ‘the child is no longer seen as a passive recipient of information, but much more as an active participant in problem solving’ (2000:79). His theory was influenced by Rousseau’s pedagogical beliefs. Rousseau’s book, *Emile* displayed learning methods through personal exploration, which set the foundations for child-centred education.

Slade introduced a new dramatic educational realm that influenced class teaching. ‘Self expression and creativity were now coming by many to be seen as the real point of drama in schools’ (Robinson 1980:143). The new theory appeared to have two major disadvantages. First, it undervalued the role of the teacher in the development of the student. The second was Slade’s concept of Child Drama as an individual art distinguishable from theatre, and contexts of the art such as a formal audience and performing skills. He disregarded certain truths of the clear relationship and influence of theatre in this new approach. From one point of view it is obvious why he tried to separate Child Drama from theatre by advocating for them different aims and purposes. The ‘sterile’ reproduction of a theatrical performance in front of an adult audience by a certain amount of ‘talented’ students could not have fulfilled the psychological needs of post-war pupils. On the other hand, there was no effort to include theatre while re-examining the aims and approaches of Child Drama. Avoiding the use of theatre also resulted in pupils losing the opportunity to scrutinise the impact of war and other major issues through classical and modern plays that reflected the social reality and therefore engage with the new socio-political conditions of the times through a different medium. Peter Slade organised tours of plays for children to schools from 1935 to 1938. This indicates that he appreciated the educational value of theatre but failed to integrate it as a taught subject. The new approach was the beginning of a binary perception of the educational aims of the art form, and its first separation into different subjects under the names *drama* and *theatre*.

Brian Way was considered the main disciple of Slade. Both were the creators of the progressivists’ school (Hamilton 1992). Way influenced drama teachers extensively with his book *Development through Drama* where he placed major importance on individuality. Teachers followed his methods and focused on enriching the child’s imagination through the senses and direct experience. His work encompassed all the claims of a child-centred education, and for that reason gained popularity. Hamilton characterised his drama methods

as being narrow in scope and as not offering valuable service to teachers or students (1992). In addition, Brian Way supported the distinction of drama and theatre, creating an 'elitist' view of theatre in relation to drama. He claimed that, 'Theatre is undoubtedly achievable with a few... but drama like the rest of education, is concerned with the majority.' (1967: 3) This was partly contradictory to his actions and to the meaning of theatre as a learning site for its audience. In 1953, he co-founded the Theatre Company, which aimed to perform at schools all over the country. John O'Toole maintains that one of Way's aims was to assist teachers in the new dramatic approaches (1976). The Theatre Company started touring in 1954 and together with other children's theatre companies, managed to receive government funding in 1966. The funding:

...was channeled into three main areas: touring children's theatre companies, productions and workshops for young people (often related to plays on the examination syllabus) mounted by regional theatres, and Theatre-in-Education (TIE). (Swortzel 1990:117)

Way remained the director of the company until 1975. Despite the fact that he engaged in both areas, he failed fully to associate theatre and drama and overlooked the potentials of creating a common ground of learning for students.

In the 1970s, Heathcote and Bolton introduced new approaches that focused on the relationship between individuals in a group. Heathcote placed importance on ways of exploiting important issues using drama as a 'learning medium' (Wagner 1999). Educational drama was now a '*social*' encounter. Heathcote and Bolton emphasised the importance of reflection. In addition, students would have the opportunity to discover more about themselves and 'their habitual orientation to the world' (O'Neil 1990:293). Nevertheless, Heathcote opposed the study of theatre and advised teachers to use 'theatre elements as tools' (Wagner 1976:147). This belief had an impact on teaching approaches to theatre and the chasm between drama and theatre was maintained. The dichotomy of drama and theatre, Sharon Bailin insists, served as 'the basis for excluding theatrical knowledge and performance skills from education' (1993:424). In the meantime new theories emerged and psychologists re-considered the importance of feelings in human development. The developmental psychologist, Bowlby claimed that affective development functions as a foundation where all other forms of development begin (1951). In relation to neurological researches, feelings were revealed to be vital to the processes of the limbic brain, which

provides information of what is real and important. These research outcomes on affective development should have been used and embraced by theorists and dramatists who long claimed the benefits of the art form on affective and intellectual child development. It seemed an advantageous moment for further research in the drama field. Nevertheless dramatists were losing valuable time by debating differences between Drama and Theatre. In the meantime research was held back by the lack of a unified educational line. Taylor mentions that Drama was related to emotions and play without any scientific evidence to support the subject's significance in relation to child development. For this reason the subject was:

...gradually being eviscerated from school programmes. The great expansion in the 1960s and 1970s was being usurped by a drive for accountability. (Taylor 2000:96)

The unproductive controversy created further damage in the exclusion of drama as a subject in the curriculum. The opponents of Heathcote's methods claimed that the treatment of drama as a process, as a learning medium, reinforced the subject's exclusion as an art subject in the curriculum. Malcolm Ross believed this movement was responsible for the devaluation of the art and the absence of planned aesthetic development (O'Toole 1986). The supporters of theatre also claimed it was the inability to align drama with the other arts that excluded the subject from the National Curriculum in England. The most vocal within this movement was David Hornbrook. He argued that drama as a learning medium has denied access to theatrical culture:

It was unspeakable that England with such a rich theatrical tradition had been unable to educate their students in it. (Hornbrook 1991:21)

He believed that theatre could provide emotional experience and help the students understand the history of the art and its development through time. The progression of a reflective perception in relation to the past could allow children to understand the nature of their contemporary culture. Hornbrook made a personal attack on both practitioners, Heathcote and Bolton regarding their work. Nevertheless, his own work was not immune to criticism. Britton commented on Hornbrook's inability to provide an alternative approach to teaching following his suggested syllabus. He was attacked for not focusing on the content of the subject but rather on the acquiring of skills. He also claimed that Hornbrook failed to

acknowledge the different nature of drama to other subjects and tried to align it with the rest of the arts by examining the subject by using similar assessment methods (Britton 1991). Hornbrook also failed to re-examine the teaching methods of his opponents in the light of his own theory. Furthermore, Taylor mentions that he did not try to respond to any of the criticisms pertaining to his theories:

... which focus on his emphasis on Western notions of functional literacy, cultural heritage, and his need for neo-positivistic outcomes. It's like he has lived in a time warp since 1989, failing to advance the terrain of his own praxis. (2000: 107)

TIE practitioners, in the meantime, adapted to the new drama educational changes. Their contributions would consist of play performances in combination with drama techniques, and in encouraging audience interaction with the enactment of short plays. It is believed that methods such as hot seating or teacher-in-role became established through TIE performances. Swortzel states that:

Without doubt TIE has been at the forefront of developments in children's theatre in Britain and indeed in the alternative theatre movement generally. It even can be said to have had a considerable influence on educational drama ... TIE has created significant educational and theatrical styles of its own. (1990:119)

The controversy over drama and theatre proved counterproductive. Practitioners cannot claim authority over the precise nature of Drama in Education (DIE) and Theatre in Education (TIE) [which are usually given acronyms as they are accepted terminologies]. It is only time and critical research that can explore and reveal the nature, congruence and differences of these disciplines. Consequently, the debate over the opposition between drama and theatre diminished with time. Neelands advised teachers to use a range of drama conventions depending on the purpose, thus revealing in this way the infinite potentials of drama and theatre in education. He states that:

Drama in education is, I believe in crisis. But the answer is not to replace the essentially oral and communal aesthetic of the Drama in Education tradition with the dominant middle class conception of theatre. We have to find some balance ... that does not recognise distinctions between sacred and profane, high and low. (1998:160)

Undoubtedly some teachers may have tried to transcend a dialectical situation by seeing 'drama as a continuum' (Somers 1994:8), with organised child play and formal theatre at its

extremities. Nevertheless, the educational reality remains that drama is affected by its inclusion in the school curriculum only as part of English. For this reason it is important to our investigation to try to delineate by which means theatre is explored in schools and specifically in secondary education where our interest lies. According to some drama practitioners the learning of theatre in the secondary school curriculum focuses on performing skills and mainly introducing students to the production of, and stagecraft associated with, theatrical plays.

Taylor and Warner assert that teachers usually select plays from a very narrow list that does not represent in depth great international theatrical work (2006). This reveals an inadequate research and study on this perspective of the art and its relation with educational and social reality. It is also possible that the teacher will find it easier to work on published plays. The Edexcel¹ (examination board) curriculum covers this area through the study of a complete play. The guidelines refer to the educational aims and needs of the student. It offers no specific guidance to the teacher on how to expand the choice of plays or even what parameters to take into consideration while examining plays of different cultural or historical background. Taylor and Warner warn:

If these skills are taught out of context, by lectures, worksheets and inappropriate testing, the study of the lively, interactive art of theatre may be turned into inert knowledge and become a subject as predictable and routine as many others in the school curriculum. (2006:33-34)

The skills needed to teach students drama are included to a certain extent in the teaching degrees future teachers need to obtain. During PGCE studies, prospective teachers are required to cover so many different educational areas that certain areas might not be covered extensively. It becomes more problematic for PGCE courses consisting of two subjects such as English and Drama with a proportionate time divide of 60%-40%. It might be easier for teachers whose first degree is in drama to practice theatre but what about teachers from other disciplines? It is questionable how they are to engage their students in different forms of theatre if they have not been taught them in the first place.

The curriculum may imply engagement but a lot of the research and action plan needs to be

¹ Edexcel is the exam board choice of the school in study for students' GCSE examinations.

organised by the teacher who might well be inexperienced. It is also dubious how much personal time teachers are willing to give to enhancing their drama-teaching skills. Whatever the reasons for theatre's understated position it is clear that more needs to be done to accelerate the teaching of the art.

The challenges for colleges, as for high schools, is to devise a theatre curriculum that will not merely teach students about theatre but will motivate and empower them in and through theatre, with the right balance of creation, experimentation, performance, criticism and scholarship. (Taylor & Warner 2006:34)

The purpose of this research lies within this principle; it is not to establish theatre as a distinct area, but to examine theatre within new approaches that embrace both domains (theatre and drama) in ways that are most beneficial for adolescent development. Theatre in high schools becomes more challenging for drama teachers due to the cognitive and intellectual development of adolescent students. Contrary to children, adolescents have the capacity to proceed or accept arguments, which are 'contract-to-fact situation' (Elkind 1970/1981). This means that they can argue their case whether it is based on an actual fact or hypothesis by simply defending themselves on the ground of rationality. According to Elkind this cognitive stage 'liberates the adolescent's thought so that he can now deal with many problem situations' (1970/1981:101). At the same time they also tend to perceive a social world based on ideals, but they lack the ability to conceive how these ideals can be made into realities or how they can proceed to achieve their fulfillment (Elkind 1970/1981). Vygotsky underlines that:

... intellectual development...requires an understanding of the role played by the intellectual tools, the forms of mediation, available in the culture into which a person is born. (Egan 1996: 514)

In educational terms this relies on the students' effort to acknowledge how theatre operates and understand its role as part of our culture. Theatre in this framework seems to include human experience while set in a fictional environment. Courtney explains:

The actual and the fictional are not separate cognitive categories. The two operate together as a cognitive gestalt, so to speak: they share common properties, such as the concrete reality of the actual, and many of their operations are remarkably similar. (1990:18)

Theatre therefore resembles the social world in which we live but at the same time offering a

different perspective. Brook mentions that the audience/students need to use a 'working system based on observing certain values and making value-judgements' (1968/1990:111) in order to understand and appreciate their experiences. Furthermore theatre appears to operate in multiple relationships, which, according to Perkins, are produced in a theatrical experience. He names the most representational such as 'symbol-function, part-whole, symbol-interpretation, example-generality, and so on.' He believes that understanding can be achieved when students are able to define those relationships and 'place them in a web of relationship that gives meaning' (1989:114). In order for such cognitive development to take place in the discipline, the students need to be inducted into the art form and learn how to define process and utilise the theatrical signs.

The nature of theatre allows such learning to take place when the right stimuli are offered. Grotowski supports this view when he mentions that 'theatre is a vehicle, a means for self-study, self exploration' (Brook 1968/1990:67). Whilst students practice and study theatre, they integrate ideas, emotions and concepts and transcend through negotiation of action and language into constructing a theory about the world and their relationship with it.

Decoding/reflecting on our cultural environment is a very complex process and unless we are familiar with multiple representative forms that embody these complexities we have little chance of reaching understanding. Theatre can provide a mechanism of interpreting the constructive theories through which we build our meaning of life. It is capable of offering an alternative way of reaching closer to a configurative notion of the world by getting students to think imaginatively and logically about perspectives.

Theatre as an educational experience

A theatrical experience could be realised in different ways depending on the aims of the teacher. It is fragmentally included into any kind of drama process. I can identify four different variants which do not necessarily convey completely the pedagogical realm of the subject but present theatre as an educational experience (1) attendance at and interpretation of a performance through class work, (2) class work on a theatrical play without attending a performance of it (3) producing a play in class with the intention of a school performance.

Finally, (4) TIE, which is considered as an external theatrical experience. O'Toole refers to TIE programmes as 'an abnormal interruption. It invariably takes some reorganisation of the normal schedules, and so is likely to be promoted as a special event' (1992:125). Nevertheless the teacher may wish to expand further on the TIE company's visit and offer additional sessions. All of these aspects could be included as part of the Edexcel curriculum 'the study of a complete play'.

These variants follow different procedures. The aims of each might correspond to certain stages. There are undeniably important values but their study focuses on different educational aims. The focus of my study will be restricted to the first two categories although the third one will briefly be mentioned.

(1) During attendance at a performance a student spectator would need to operate on specific 'perceptual and temporal conditions' in order to comprehend the art form (Elam 1980:89). Theatrical performance requires:

... a homogeneous audience that has learned the syntactic and semantic rules which constitute the respective code and knows how to apply these appropriately in the process of constituting meaning as receivers of the signs. (Fischer-Lichte 1983/1992:38)

Hirsch claims that by accumulating shared symbols and information human beings are able to communicate in broader terms (Hirsch 1987). Theatre's nature deals with transformation of images and can:

...define new boundaries of communications for the spectators. Visual and aural cues of the actor, and the stage machinery that go into the processes of creating a basis for communication, can stimulate the redistribution of neural maps of the mind. (Armstrong 2003:14)

Symbols and signs can be a 'powerful tool for communicating public and political meaning in those cultures in which a living theatre speaks to broad audiences' (Henry 2000:58). Therefore the acquisition of theatrical communication can enhance students' participation in the cultural environment they inhabit. However students cannot instantly possess the experience of a homogenous mature audience. On the contrary Jackson remarks that students 'enter the auditorium... with their own psychological and cultural baggage, with

expectations and a range of assumptions about theatre, about the world' (1996:166). This means that all concepts and signification taking place during a performance may not be fully understood and therefore lost. The learning procedure that takes into consideration these remarks could allow the young adolescent to comprehend the context and conventions of the dramatic world by employing, as Elam asserts 'a specific dramatic competence', (1980) whereas the student would have to become skilful enough to perceive both visual and aural signs and the 'meanings [which] are often communicated through an inter-play between what is seen and what is said' (Neelands and Goode 1990:60). Such skills can enable them to broaden their capacity to make associations and understand further the theatrical language and its symbolic forms. Students engaged in this learning 'can appreciate and criticise them on different levels' (Mc Gregor 1976:75). Nevertheless there is also the danger of getting 'overly preoccupied with the mechanics of performance at the expense of attention to meaning' (Fleming 2000:40). Students need to rely first on attending the play for the sake of the experience instead of trying to instantly apply 'a set of criteria derived from theatre semioticians' (Hornbook 1998:133).

The preparation of the students into the theatrical experience has already begun through any engagement with basic drama techniques. At the same time most students become TV viewers from an early age and therefore have awareness of several important dramatic elements, including the acceptance of make believe. Neelands and Dobson (2000) offer a list of the most regular theatrical conventions that students encounter. 'Characterisation and Speech' are elements that are usually known to students, as they are a necessity for working in any type of drama session that includes role-play or improvisations.

'Acting style' is another area that students should be looking at during a performance. It includes physical movement and vocal status and an awareness of the impact of social and gender status of the character presented. Students are also expected to be familiar with this category through exploration of role-playing from their previous years.

'Staging and design' is considered a dominant area of theatre but it is also used in the drama process. In spontaneous improvisation staging might not seem a priority but there is always a kind of designated performing space for the participants, consisting of furniture and objects or, in some cases, their symbolising through physical theatre. During polished

improvisation the different groups in the class have the chance to observe the other groups' performances creating a primal theatrical experience between performers and audience. Basic rules seem to apply to these instant performances like marking performing space that faces the rest of the sitting students. These dramatic steps are usually known to the majority of the adolescent students and therefore offer an initial knowledge for the audience of a theatrical performance. In theatre, stage and auditorium are usually (but not necessarily) separated and the students are requested to observe the scenography and the general setting of the stage in order to make meaning of its function and how it contributes to the whole theatrical experience.

When attending a performance, the 'dramatic narrative' is presented to them and they need to understand the structure and the components that consist of the performing script. Bruner mentions 'the function of the story is to find an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern' (1990:50). For this reason, to a certain extent they must be engaged with the elements and main principles that compose a story and attempt to associate it with real life. The students would need to show an ability to recall the story, identify characters and degrees of kinship, their relationship, and how they affected the plot. It is possible that students might be asked to expand on the dramatic narrative by imagining a possible extension of the end of some of the scenes. Thus they are forced to think further of the dramatic narrative and to engage in conjecture compatible with the original story.

Finally students as audience need to examine 'actor-audience interactions' as they occur during the performance. The interaction is partly dependent on the actors' abilities to engage their audience. The actor is a professional artist who should possess the expertise to deliver a character with the use of acting techniques that allow him/her to penetrate different aspects of the psychology of the role and deliver it with aural and physical skills. At the same time students will 'enter the auditorium ...with their own psychological and cultural baggage, with expectations and a range of assumptions about theatre, about the world' (Jackson 1996:166). This means that the teacher should be able to offer students the opportunity to discuss their thoughts on the play and clarify meanings with reference to theatrical signs that could pass unnoticed to a young audience.

The above theatrical conventions are encountered in almost every theatrical experience and

can allow students to start their engagement with ancient Greek Theatre. Considering that students are of secondary school age it is to be expected that they can apply previously acquired knowledge and express themselves through ‘languages (spoken and written), movement (enactment, physicalisation), and symbolisation (aesthetic artifacts)’ (Arnold 1998:123-4). The students would probably encounter two types of performances of ancient Greek Drama: those which claim to be productions of the original work, and those which claim to be adaptations. Taplin believes that to:

... rewrite rather than to translate in stage terms is to deprive the audience of its contact with the playwright’s work of art, which is, to say the least, to do it an injustice. (1978: 179)

It is difficult to argue against this kind of comment for, on one level, we would prefer the students to engage in a performance which is as close as possible to the original work. On the other hand an experienced playwright might be able to engage their interest more by adapting and recreating the script.

A theatrical performance is denoted not only by its liveliness but also its ephemerality. Counsell states that this results in audience members leaving the theatre without a ‘recallable text,’ that impacts on them during their post-theatre interpretation (1996). It is quite possible that a performance of a specific play will remain quite close to the original text. In this case the study of the performance could continue in class with close reference to the available translated text. It is accepted that some of the visual images will be lost and others considerably distorted. Students would need to re-generate the images but also work in detail on scenes that were not originally perceived in the play. In the case of an adaptation that bears few resemblances to the original text, the analysis of the performance in the class might become more complex. The teacher will have to decide whether it is possible to work on a comparative model, which may involve abandoning the detail of the original text in order to concentrate on the emerging performance.

In choosing a play to attend, teachers might also take into consideration critical reviews of the play and their educational aims. Nevertheless theatre attendance always involves a risk in relation to the quality of the performance. There is the possibility that the performance might prove to be of low quality thus creating a bad impression amongst the students. In this

case their interest might be lost and the teacher might need to approach the subject in a different way by requesting the students to critique the deficiencies of the unsuccessful performance and how it could have been improved.

(2) The examination of a play without attendance at performance concentrates on the understanding and exploration of the same categories mentioned above. The teacher's motives to proceed with the study of a play with no availability of a current performance might lie in the appreciation of the text and its importance as an artifact. There is a somewhat different procedure from the above approach. The challenge of introducing a significant play in class, which could stimulate students and give them a new perspective about the art, comes with some difficulties. There is a need to explain in more detail the dramatic narrative, the structure and the theatrical conventions. For this reason practical solutions must be found to engage students in it. The teacher must rely on a valid text translated into English, which might need further adaptation or reduction depending on the time available and level of understanding of the students.

If a video performance is available it will allow students to have an audiovisual reference for the rest of the module but it would differ enormously from attending a theatrical performance. There is a partial loss of the authenticity and liveliness that only live performance can offer. If there were no video or live performance to refer to the teacher would need to use drama techniques in a more extensive manner. The scenes of a play would have to be explored and recreated by the students and the teacher unless an external theatrical group could perform parts of the play in the class. The latter is quite unlikely so we have to assume that the first option would be more realistic. In this case the meaning of the experience relies on the negotiation and perception of the students. Their response might affect the nature of the play and will require a lot of direction from the teacher.

(3) The third variant is producing a play in class with the intention of a school performance. This variant is located in traditional theatre, which focuses at the production of performances and the acquiring of performing skills (McGregor 1976). It is true that a lot of time will be devoted to memorising lines and rehearsing but there are other elements involved in this. If the exploration of drama is to reach the level of a public performance we must keep in mind Brook's statement:

In the theatre, every form once born is mortal; every form must be reconceived, and its new conception will bear the marks of all the influences that surround it. (1968/1990: 9)

Students will need to participate vividly, demonstrating levels of comprehension of the original script, its humanitarian values and its modern interpretation. The teacher is responsible to help the student re-create the characters of the play to a level that indicates that students have committed to understanding and exploring the conditions and the psychological aspects by which the characters' actions are driven. Drama techniques can be used to achieve these aims. It is difficult to suggest ways of performing ancient Greek tragedy. Peter Brook, in his book *'The Empty Space'*, offers a useful example relating to this. He mentions that in France, until the 1960s, actors were trying to perform classic tragedy with special manner and noble gestures.

Imperial gestures and royal values are fast disappearing from everyday life, so each new generation finds the grand manner more and more hollow, more and more meaningless. (1968/1990:14)

To suggest that students perform in a grandiose style of performance is likely to fail for many reasons. Students may be aware of the style of performance from TV productions but it is debatable whether they can relate to this style or, if they can, whether they possess the acting skills to employ it. The teacher will need to be actively involved in guiding students to act according to their intuitions. Conducting research into videos, or using the Internet to find information related to modern performances of ancient Greek Drama might help stimulate them. Students' performances are bound to be influenced by their own feelings and instincts. It should be 'a voyage in search of culture shock for the purpose of self-examination' (Smith 1994:86). At this point it is important for the teacher to remind them of the need to take into consideration the socio-cultural conditions of the time and information about the theatrical form. Further research into these issues might be wise. The teacher still needs to help the students in incorporating them to a level that is not distorting their capacity to perform genuinely in relation to their own feelings. A variety of well-known drama activities, such as freeze frame, or hot seating might help to raise certain questions that will give depth to the characters of the plays and their context. A school performance demands the direct involvement of the students in the production of the play.

Kempe and Ashwell state that:

Over the course of their time in school, students may experience an increasingly broad and varied number of activities and responsibilities via the production of plays, while the choice of plays may offer new challenges and areas of knowledge. (2000: 7)

There are two possibilities; either the production of the performance will consist of a timetabled class or a group of after-school volunteers. In the first case, there is no exclusion of students as different responsibilities can be awarded to each of them. A group can consist of the 'primary producers' such as directors, stage designers and lighting technicians, who can, with the assistance of the teacher, contribute to the artistic decisions for the production of the play. Another group usually contains the actors. Involving all ensures that this is a common effort. In the case of volunteers, students are more willing to participate while having in mind which role they want to take during the production. Whatever the situation, the quality of the performance depends on students' previous knowledge and dramatic skills. The learning should be divided between an understanding of the production of the performance and the importance of the aesthetic and conceptual value of the play. The first cannot be derived without examining the internal form of the theatrical presentation, whereas the second is closely related to the appropriate induction and analysis of the play. Under the above considerations, a school performance stands an equal chance of engaging students with the art form whilst enhancing their knowledge of the subject by their active learning participation.

(4) TIE is heavily dependent on the performing element and the issues that the theatrical group wants to raise. The TIE programme includes a performance element in combination with a range of pedagogic and dramatic approaches. Usually, students are asked to participate and take active roles in the process.

Engaging in the art form of ancient Greek Drama: setting the key questions for the research

As with any other art, theatre as an art form has developed through time, reflecting-socio-historical changes by adopting different styles and altered performance spaces. Its existence always sprang from the same needs: entertainment and generating meaning. Consequently it

drew its content from contemporary representations of ‘human experience and social concepts through the isolation and portrayal of specific examples’ (Neelands and Goode 1990:59). The latter accounts for the specific socio-historical period in which plays were written and performed. This can present difficulties for students in receiving the aural and physical signs of the performances and their meanings when the structure of the play is based on the conventions of a historical art form. Fischer-Lichte asserts that certain factors mediate between:

... two different discourses: that of the culture (epoch/society) within which the play was written and that of the contemporary culture. Thus, the identity of the dramatic character onstage always represents a certain kind of mediation between a former culture and this culture. (1997:302)

The effect of the actors’ mediation, in combination with the contemporary perception of an audience, might diverge from certain original aspects of the play. With that perspective, the original meaning of the theatrical play cannot be preserved identically. On the other hand, the use of modern language and the participation of the actors maintain to a certain extent the liveliness of any historical form of theatre and offer a first means of communication and interpretation to the contemporary audience. Understanding can further be enhanced when the audience takes into account the emotional and primal instincts of human beings exposed during the play. Shevtsova supports that ‘theatre springs from a universal fount of meaning’ (1993:28). Based on this assumption it is easier to recover meanings that are basic ingredients of human nature. This argument is not without controversy. Theatrical signs have different interpretations and to a certain extent they are accumulations of certain cultural backgrounds. Counsell reminds us that:

... societies are inherently pluralistic, composed of a variety of discourses, ideologies, sign systems and so on, each of which is potentially able to construe the signifier in a different way. There will therefore be great potential for contradictory interpretations for any element of a theatrical event. (1996:13)

The study of historical theatrical plays cannot be induced only by our own contemporary perceptions about the social world and how it operates. A closer look at certain aspects is necessary for a better understanding of the play and how it has been delivered today. For the purpose of establishing the effectiveness of ancient Greek Drama within secondary education certain questions must be raised. An introduction to ancient Greek Drama needs to

take into account the parameters that not only control it, but also those that implement educational aims towards enhancing adolescent development. The artistic form of ancient Greek Drama and the implications of inducting historical theatre in a modern school environment are crucial as well.

Ancient Greek Drama consists of three forms: tragedy, comedy and satyric drama. Aristotle was the first to separate tragedy and comedy based on the 'superiority' of the former. The basic pattern of the opposition is mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics* I-II. Comedy deals with people who are 'worse than us', or 'low', 'trivial'. Nevertheless, the two forms of theatre share some structural similarities. The formation of the words *tragoidia* and *komoidia*, were part of the same festival, both had a chorus, which sings, actors who mainly speak in iambic trimeters and both use masks and musical instruments, (like the *aulos*). Segal claims (1995) that these very similarities might cut both ways; they might be the basis for a polarity. Since comedy is more recent than tragedy, we could assume that it sprang from the need to present other issues through a different medium, namely intelligent humour. However, what is certain is that they had the same origins and they are autonomous forms of drama and they have as their main issues concerns of human beings. Both of them want to make their audience critical but they have chosen different ways to present significant issues, which occupy the human mind. This dissertation solely focuses on tragedy as the examination of different types of drama demands prolonged study and a more complex comparative methodology to obtain the necessary results.

Firstly I consider it appropriate to discuss the chronological gap between ancient Greek tragedies in their time and the present time, and the possible associated consequences of such an extended period. Ancient Greek tragedies are theatrical plays, which were written almost two thousand five hundred years ago. They were destined for an audience with different cultural backgrounds and aspirations. Goff mentions that each theatrical play is immersed in a particular historical period 'whose own internal fissions multiply the possible meaning of the text' (1995:8). Therefore, the complexity of ancient Greek plays is further complicated by chronological differences, which undoubtedly make their understanding more difficult to access. Easterling believes that:

... it is plain enough that human nature does change...But provided that we can rely on

the continuing existence of mechanisms for ‘reading off’ the actions of others, whether on or off stage, we have at least some hope of being able to approach ‘what it is that is going on’ in drama like that of ancient Greece. (1990: 89)

This challenges us to come up with the mechanism that can possibly allow a ‘reading’ of the ancient Greek tragedies. To this end we need to ask whether concentrating on the play itself would be enough to define its context. Aylen suggests that a study of cultural context *is* necessary in gaining a full understanding of the drama and its meaning:

If we want to find out about tragedy we must study the intellectual climate of the time when these plays were written and perform the plays, rather than ask about the nature of Tragedy in isolation (1964: 8)

It is therefore necessary to raise the right questions that will set the enquiry. My first question is:

Do we need to introduce the social, historical and cultural backgrounds of ancient Greece? If so, what do we need to take into consideration?

Ancient Greek tragedy remains a product of its time. Athens was a powerful city-state that reflected imperialism, war and social conflicts, sexism and gender issues. The plays were a reflection of their times and challenged the audience to view these subjects more critically. In regard to this, Rehm mentions that ‘we lose the radical potential of Greek tragedy by failing to deal with its rootedness in the natural environment, the public world, and the dramatic text itself’ (2003:39). The importance of understanding these issues is also highlighted in the English Curriculum. One of the aims of Edexcel (GCSE examination of a complete play) is to ‘give students the opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of drama within a social, cultural and historical context.’(Edexcel GCSE 2002:4) This approach seems to agree with other practices that attempt to cross ‘boundaries separating history, anthropology, arts, politics, literature, and economics’ (Goff 1995:8). To avoid an approach to these backgrounds can only lead to poor understanding. Scholars and theatre practitioners seem to support this view.

Stanislavski asserted that if there were no relation of the outer form with the inner content of the play, students would not be able to appreciate the artwork of the playwright (1961/1981). From a performance view, Stanislavski encouraged his trained actors not only to study the

actual text (play) but also ‘a variety of commentaries, pieces of literature, historical writings concerning the period and so forth’ (1961/1981:17). These kinds of recommendations suggest that we can achieve a better understanding of an artistic product by attaining considerable knowledge of its cultural environment. The challenge for the researcher lies not only in rediscovering means of introducing the subject to secondary pupils but also to conceive ancient Greek Drama as a by-product of all other elements that embraced, enhanced and led to its development. Deploying historical methodological approaches could prove helpful in achieving a rounded understanding of these ancient texts. Kitto believes that although the examination of socio-political and religious aspects is significant since they consist of ‘the raw material of drama’, it is not sufficient ‘to understand the art of a dramatist’ (1939:187). This could happen if considerable time is allowed to introduce and analyse factors concerned with the features of the art form. Due to its uniqueness (such as theatrical conventions, language, text and poetic form, music, masks, costumes and architecture), students may have difficulty in connecting their contemporary concept of theatre to the ways in which this art form was stylised. At the same time, some of the conventions and devices that appear in ancient Greek Drama were specific to its time and must be addressed in this manner.

In order for students to understand the art form, they at least need to be introduced to the basic features of which ancient Greek Drama consists. Lack of such an attempt could lead to inadequate understanding, which would prevent students reaching an adequate level of induction. Considering the necessity of the introduction to art features, we explore the means of examining and making students aware of them. To this end, we need to raise the question:

In what ways do we approach the features of ancient Greek Drama?

Such a question involves the:

- identification of these features;
- adaptation of teaching and dramatic approaches in order to explore them;
- consideration of the intellectual level of the adolescents and their educational needs.

We need cognitively to stimulate students in order to achieve a level of relevance and understanding of the context. This would allow enhanced comparisons with the social and universal issues of our contemporary world. Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan assert:

... young people have to be encouraged ... to see the connections among ideas as well to see how ideas relate to one another, and converge upon one another and support one another. It is only in that way that a person can begin to build a network of thoughts that he (*sic*) will find permanently serviceable and useful. (1980: 74)

The primary task is to expose students to the study of an ancient Greek play in order to encourage a level of reflection on the values of the storyline and investigate 'larger, systemic constructions of knowledge' (Wright 2000:26) and how they are embedded and organised in every cultural environment. In order to reach that level we need to be assured that this and the previous research question have been adequately covered because only the 'availability of multiple sources of information enhances knowledge construction' (Hatano 1993:157) and can allow further reflection. Consequently, a sufficient induction to ancient Greek Drama will evoke further examination. To this question we might logically add:

Can ancient Greek Drama offer relevance to our contemporary world and enhance the students' critical thinking towards it?

Whether a historical and culturally different theatre can illuminate the way we think about and offer relevance to our contemporary world may not seem feasible to some people. We need to ask ourselves what the phrase 'relevance to our contemporary world' encompasses. Do we mean that everything has to be *directly* relevant to what the adolescent perceives? The psychologist Donaldson warns us this:

... can be a trap, for it can lead to neglect of that (the fact?) fact that education is about changing lives. It is about opening up new directions in which the life may move and thus enlarging the range of relevance. (1996: 340)

By this she means that instead of trying to 'fit' everything into the adolescents' world we could try to stimulate and liberate their mind. Ancient Greek Drama, through its mythological and fictional worlds, offers possible parallels and metaphors. All it needs from our side is to provide the means for the students to discover them. Theatre is one of the few subjects that can offer students the opportunity to reflect on life as a unity of multiple factors instead of several independent aspects. Theatrical plays can operate as a window into a historical period, not only to reveal universal truths, but to encourage students to become more perceptive and objective about the implications of cultural elements for human affairs and attitudes. According to Cole, this is achievable because 'encounters with other cultures

make it easier to grasp our own as an object of thought' (1996:8). By introducing ancient Greek Theatre, students can be offered an interpretive methodological system, which could be diversely utilised in real life with the appropriate disengagement from fictional elements. It offers a wider perspective of how each individual personality is constructed by nature and nurture and how the latter determines his/her actions throughout life. 'Individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural processes constitute each other and cannot be separated' (Rogoff, Chavajav, and Matusov, 1993:533). In this context, attending and engaging in theatre, or in our case ancient Greek Drama, might offer the means to understanding human affairs in contemporary life.

Chapter Two

Research questions that drive the enquiry

Further examination of the research questions

Having established the main research questions I will now continue to the second phase of the study. A more extensive analysis of the areas of investigation will take place to determine their relevance and importance to the research subject, and how they might be implemented with secondary school students. The latter focuses on practical aspects including educational approaches and drama methods. This provisional stage should allow us to overcome several possible obstacles in ancient Greek tragedy, and assist in structuring potential projects based on an initial theoretical model.

The research questions have been presented in a specific order, but their investigation and examination was a more integrated procedure. This was implemented taking into consideration a net of relationships occurring from the general research question and main theatrical/dramatic principles. They are introduced in an order that offers coherence with the aims of the research, as well as allowing better comprehension for the reader.

Do we need to introduce the social, historical and cultural backgrounds of ancient Greece? If so, what do we need to take into consideration?

Historical information about ancient Greece

In order to evaluate the needs of English students, we need to firstly examine their previous knowledge about ancient Greek culture provided in the National Curriculum. Students are introduced to ancient Greek civilisation in year five/six through the standard subjects studied as part of history. There are two units, which are dedicated to that purpose, Units 14 and 15 QCA. Unit 14 aims to introduce them to various aspects such as the lifestyle and religion of the Greeks, their wars with the Persians, differences between Athens and Sparta (the two most important city-states of the known Greek world), and also the Olympic Games. There is also a theme about the theatre, focusing on its physical construction and other features such as the actors and the chorus, masks and costumes and the importance of the theatre in the lives of ancient Greeks. It is also suggested to structure work in the form of a theatrical

play. Unit 15 encourages students to explore the influence of Greek civilisation on the modern era in relation to language, the education system, architecture and the Olympic Games. It is notable that there is no continuation of this strand of study to cover the impact of ancient Greek Theatre on western theatre or its re-enactment in our times.

We have to remind ourselves that teachers have a limited time for each unit, and hence may not be able to cover all suggested topics. It is difficult to judge the extent of knowledge that English students will retain at the end of the two units. There is also a five-year gap to Y10. Much of this knowledge will undoubtedly have been forgotten if it has not been re-visited during the interim period. It is wise therefore not to rely on the assumption that all of the above knowledge will be available to provide the context for study of a particular play in Y10.

On the other hand students might have knowledge and experience of Greece as a holiday destination. Some of them may have the chance to go to the country and gain direct insight into the environment and possibly to visit archaeological sites. This possibility could be examined and offer direct reference to our project.

Possible implications for the students

Taking into consideration the issues raised above, discussions during sessions should be structured in order to define previous knowledge and to discover possible connections with the subject of the research. Therefore, it would be beneficial to adopt a self-reflective method in the students at the beginning of and throughout the project, as with the right stimuli, there is considerable potential to make references to their own experiences.

Nevertheless, there is a necessity to define some prior areas of introduction based on their relation with an enhanced understanding of the play. Considering that theatre is a reflection of almost every ephemeral aspect of life, there might be an expectation to introduce the main aspects that constitute human affairs in the fifth century B.C. The development of each aspect should depend on the time and relevance of the historical fact to the subject of tragedy. For example, most of the mythological storylines of tragedies take place in cities other than Athens and hence the constitution of an alternative city-state might need to be explained. During the same period, most surviving tragedies refer to contemporary issues of

the social and political life of Athens. Therefore, events such as the civil war between Athens and Sparta had both direct and indirect relevance, with considerable implications for the proper understanding of the context of a number of the tragedies. In such a case, a basic introduction to these matters might prove essential. Exceptional cases of tragedies written from more recent history also exist. For example, a reference to the Persian Wars would be considered a necessity in order to introduce the *Persians* of Aeschylus.

If the time is available, it might prove useful to inform students about the development of arts and sciences in the classic period, in particular, literature. Epic poetry shares similar mythical material with tragedy. Lyric poetry presents individual thoughts and feelings just as the main actors of tragedy also display. It is possible that students may depict a continuation and natural development of some literature elements in tragedy if they are previously engaged with lyric poetry. Potentially, we could explore this area through drama methods that had previously been used as learning tools for History as a subject. The particular nature of Drama allows students to interact and improvise on given social situations. In this way, History through Drama allows children to view the subject more ‘as a matter for interpretation and opinion than a collection of facts’ (Wilson and Woodhouse 1990: 14) advocating the cognitive aspects of the subject.

Exploiting Athenian socio-political life to develop further understanding of tragedy

Tragedy was conceived and performed in Athens. Hence it is a natural product of the Athenian cultural background and therefore served the needs and occupations of this environment. An exploration of this environment is crucial for understanding the nature of ancient Greek theatre. Wilson and Woodhouse (1990) mention that students can experience better history through drama if they have to investigate a small, proportionate area of history of a specific location. The purpose of exploring the particular cultural environment is not to reconstruct it as it was. Wilson and Woodhouse underline that this is simply not effectual (1990). It is impossible to know the exact feelings and thoughts of people of the past. History in our drama research needs to be approached in a broader sense that would allow students to acknowledge the lack of accurate evidence and create of a more philosophical

and critical estimation of the presented facts.

The aspects of social and political life we will be looking at depend, to a certain extent, on the tragedies that would occupy the research field. Anachronistically, I will refer to the two tragedies that were involved and took place in my research to depict such examples.

Euripides performed *Medea* in 431 B.C. Twenty years before Pericles had passed legislation that allowed only Athenian men to have legitimate children by marrying Athenian women. *Medea* was performed in the period where the first generation of illegitimate children occurred. Rehm notes at that date, a

...mixed son born just after the law was passed would have reached the age of 18 without political franchise, and a mixed daughter would have arrived at marriageable age with little hope of finding an Athenian husband. (2002:259)

Euripides' choice to cover this aspect seemed to be intentional. He used this well-known myth to entertain his audience and explore a contemporary issue in Athenian society. He imaginatively explored the impact of this specific law on the lives of well-known mythical heroes. Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* was performed in 405 B.C., towards the end of the Peloponnesian war between Sparta and Athens. At this time, he is not only dealing with women's rights, but also with the exploitation of human lives for political and egocentric purposes.

Possible implications for the students

Information related to the politico-social conditions of Athenian life could be offered to students through specifically designed sessions of the project that focus on this kind of historical knowledge. Engagement with the subject may be achieved through a number of dramatic methods. For example, historical information may be introduced with the active participation of students into still images or semi-structured improvisation based on it. The areas of acquired knowledge could be related to the context of the play. For example, if the subject of ancient Greek tragedy is '*Medea*', the teacher might decide to focus on marital relationships, divorce, and women's rights. Students could be engaged in activities that would allow them to get a general perspective of how Athenians lived. Specifically, what was the place of women in society and their relationship with men? Afterwards they could

be given the opportunity to study parts of the play, and re-enact and discuss the possible feelings and emotions of fictional characters based on the earlier knowledge accumulated.

In the case of *Medea*, students could be introduced to the specific legislation of Pericles. This would enable students to cross-examine how this knowledge changes their perspective about the importance of the play. In the case of Iphigenia, a similar investigation of women's position might prove essential. At the same time a historical reference to the Peloponnesian war may help them visualise the correlation with the mythical Trojan War. If we encourage the students with the appropriate material, we might achieve a more profound exploration of the story.

Religion and mythology

Religion and myths were a major part of private and civil life for ancient Greeks. Vernant emphasises that the nature, role and function of the ancient Greek religion had varied meanings according to each individual and community (1990/2000). He continues by mentioning that it is not dogmatic, and it does not entail certain truths and beliefs for its believers. For example, the ancient Greeks did not define the natural and the supernatural worlds as opposite spaces. It included genesis of the gods and their bloodline, but it also included the season of the epic heroes who were associated with the gods. Ancient Greeks did not possess a sacred book setting the ethics and moral examples of how to lead their lives. Myths were part of Greeks' education and their religion. Scholars tried to analyse Greek mythology and offer an overall theory of its meaning. Kirk rejected the theories of Levi-Strauss and Campbell, in the belief that 'myths differ enormously in their morphology and social function' (1970:7). This results from their different backgrounds as explained by Allan, when he states that ancient Greek myths:

... are more than quaint fictions, that they form a complex interlocking net work of events whose value [is] as interpretations of experience, and not just as objects of creative beauty or sources of entertainment. (2000:7)

In addition, tragedies are considered a form of mythical narrative. The playwrights used to retrieve their material from myths that belonged to the category of hero-culture. Most of the epic heroes were semi-gods (one of the two parents, usually the father, was a god) and thus

their nature was both human and divine. The storylines employed in Greek tragedies are anachronistic. They have a hero-culture mythical background and also encapsulate contemporary issues of that time.

The heroes were alive in the people's heart and were certain of their direct sympathy. Not less importantly, this material stood before poet and public at the distance necessary for the subject of all great works of art, and yet still possessed the weight of historical fact. (Lesky 1983: 21)

There are cases where writers employed historical material to create tragedies but the majority of these originated from the above category. To a certain extent it looked like a conscious choice, as the hero-culture had more potential for extensive exploration of values and ethical dilemmas through a live and active point of reference.

Possible implications for the students

The mythical storyline of the tragedies is sure to attract students' interest as they share similarities with fictional fairy tales. Whilst many classical western fairy tales carry very dark and sinister moral lessons, they are depicted in such a way that they are somewhat detached from the real world; illustrated often with the use of animals and supernatural characters. However the Greek tragedies carry a far more humanly sympathetic message. It is human nature, especially in childhood, to be sympathetic and open to fictional narratives (Baldock 2006). Students might need to be aware of the mythological background of the heroes in order to understand the storyline. Some of the religious beliefs and rituals that appear in the tragedies might also need to be clarified; otherwise they can limit students' understanding of the play. For example, the importance of an altar for supplicants or a ritual of sacrifice laments to gods would require further explanation. Without clarification, students might tend to explain the religious and ethical issues of ancient Greece from a Christian viewpoint, in which case they could create a misleading interpretation of ancient Greek life. In this perspective, students' understanding can be enhanced by cross-examination of primitive/historical and contemporary rituals.

It is doubtful that enough time will be available to dedicate a specific session to the subject of religion. Spontaneous discussions may be generated, based on the relationship of religion, with a forthcoming session such as, 'the origins of the theatre' or 'the mythical context of

the play.’ For that reason, the teacher is required to possess an adequate knowledge in order to reply to questions raised by students. Aspects of this and other contextual material could also be covered in tasks given for homework.

Theories on the origins of ancient Greek Drama

The importance of the birth of ancient Greek tragedy lies in the uniqueness of its artistic form and its acclaim as the root of western theatre. Due to the lack of evidence to sustain an accurate theory, its conception though, remains a debatable issue. The relationship between ritual and drama is one of the most predominant theories. This theory was supported by a group of classic scholars known as ‘the Cambridge Anthropologists.’ Zarilli *et al* argue that they have based their theory on a mistaken notion of social Darwinism that sees culture in a hierarchical mode. Primitive culture is viewed as being at the bottom and Greek civilisation with tragedy as an artistic achievement appearing at the top (Zarilli et al 2006). Furthermore, they based their claims on Aristotle’s theory of poetics. He claimed the true origins of drama lie in dithyramb. Dithyramb was a type of song associated with rituals and it accommodated singing, dancing, movement and the vital participation of a chorus. It was also associated with the Dionysus cult:

More important than all the external factors however is the consideration that in the ecstasy of the Dionysos cult, that mysterious process of transformation occurs which is the single most important presupposition for the origin of drama. (Lesky 1983: 19)

It is worth keeping in mind, however that Aristotle wrote about the subject over a century after its classic period. Scullion also mentions that it was quite unlikely that Aristotle had access to any texts or documents dated prior to 500 B.C. Thus:

If Aristotle’s account of relatively recent history of drama is skimpy and schematic, what he says about the remotest origins of tragedy and comedy seems likely to be more schematic still. (2005:25)

Other theories can provide insight into a different continuation of the cultural environment applied to the specific art. This aspect could explain the origins, as well as the presentation of traditional mythic story lines, which first existed as epic. Weil identifies the artistic expression of myths, which were developed through performance by rhapsodies (Miles 1986). There are though, discontinuities in this theory as tragedy does not concentrate on

myths as a historical reality, but rather ‘traces the ultimate causes in the actions of men’ (Snell 1953:106). In this particular section, pre-existing lyric poetry might have influenced the formation of tragedy; in lyric poetry ‘men discuss their own selves, just as in tragedy they express their individual feelings, thoughts and desires’ (Snell 1953:99). In this regard, lyric poetry and tragedy seem to root into philosophical and ontological occupations. Other theories on the origins of theatre attempt to embrace cultural elements and biological human features, in an overall scheme of its inception. Rojik identifies the origins of theatre:

... [It is] in the development of culture, which assumedly conjoined incipient language and imagistic thinking, probably paralleled in dream, daydream, mythmaking and children’s imaginative play and drawing that we may find the roots of the medium of theatre. (2002: 334)

Considering more general evolutionary principles, it is possible that, in every culture, an unstructured form of theatre pre-existed the art form we now regard as ‘theatre’.

Swortzel mentions that in ancient Greece children tended to enact scenes of the *Odyssey* or *Iliad*: ‘This structured performance was called *orchesis* and it was considered a combination of poetry, music, and movement’ (1990:132). This type of play shows similarities with one of the enactment forms that appear in childhood and is known as *interpretive drama*. It ‘involves inventing an interpretation of someone else’s ideas and words rather than creating new ones’ (Isenberg & Jalongo 1993:138). This form of drama in children’s play may have existed before the beginning of tragedy in a more primitive and playful form inspired by existing myths and legends. It seems to embrace a more general approach of theatre creation, which also incorporates the psychological and cognitive aspects of human development. In this way, the innovation of tragedy is displayed as an artistic religious achievement of charismatic individuals within a fostering cultural environment.

Possible implications for the students

The exploration and experimentation based on the above would require a greater period of time that might not be available. It needs to be pointed out that if enough time was available, the outcomes would not have been in any way an indication of which theory is the most objective. It would mostly be considered as a critical and hypothetical investigation on the part of the teacher and the students. What we wish to achieve is to raise questions about the origins of theatre in order to stimulate students to realise the complexity of the theatre as a

cognitive intellectual and artistic achievement. At the same time we can offer them a sense of continuation in the history of theatre and increase critical perspective on the purposes of theatre for society.

For practical reasons it is easier to begin our investigation by accepting the most dominant and traditional theory of origins which asserts religious rituals as a primal form of theatre. Ley mentions that the ‘first theaters were ceremonial centers’. He also states that the ‘transformation of space into place means to construct centers’, and ‘transformation of space into place means to construct a theater’ (1999:193). Methods can be based on this belief and create a self-interrogating atmosphere. In this environment students could try to investigate cause and reason for the creation of primal rituals in a symbolic space, for example a circle. For this preparatory activity teacher and students in a shared experience, could try to visualise the needs and means for the emergence of an archaic form of theatre. At the same time this carries the possibility of simplistic and hypothetical interpretations or inadequate connections with the historical period that interests us. This area should be considered experimental and that only actual investigation with a class can determine whether it is applicable and important to the research. Students’ possible comments might offer a guideline for improvements. Rojik’s theory also can be a useful guide to approach the subject in an innovative way, incorporating mainly psychological effects like emotions, dream and imaginative play to the process of theatre creation. The results of our projects should allow us to comment further on the subject in the later chapters.

In which ways do we approach the features of ancient Greek Drama?

Ancient Greek Theatre and theatrical conventions

The word ‘theatre’ originates from the Greek word *theatron*, which means a place where spectators watched performances. It is believed in the beginning the performing space was not distinct between the audience and the actors. Oddone mentions that:

... in the archaic period, until the end of the sixth century, tragic performances took place in Athens on an orchestra in the Agora. (1990:16)

This indicates the importance of the theatrical event as a civic one. In the beginning of the

fifth century the performances were transferred to the south slope of the Acropolis where the theatre was dedicated to *Dionysos Eleutheros*. The space and construction of theatre is directly related to the origins of the art form and its performance utility in harmonisation with the natural and the civic environment of the city of Athens. (Rehm 2003)

Recent centuries have chiefly seen theatre as representing an enclosed space that produced an artificial environment. Unless an audience is attending a summer open theatre it is unlikely that it could inspire any of the above feelings.

Possible implications for the students

The examination of the space based on the above statements might allow students to realise the historical development of the construction and the importance of the performance as a central civil-religious activity and enable them to achieve a better understanding of the role of ancient Greek Theatre in the specific historical time of its existence.

Providing them with additional information about specific conventions such as *skene*, entrances, equipment, and *skenographia*, could allow them to grasp better how the performances were executed. For example teaching *Agamemnon* would demand explanation on the use of *ekkyklema*, a wheeled low platform machine that carried the replica of dead bodies. It ‘rolled out from the suddenly opened *skene* door, usually at the end of the play. It carries outside the result of the tragic act “within” (Padel 1990:360). The information can be suited to the implication of different devices and theatrical conventions in relation to the plot of the tragedy. It can be provided to students in a form of leaflet designed for their age or stimulate conversation by encouraging them to find ways that the ancient Greek poet could have employed to overcome certain staging obstacles. They could also be encouraged to look at websites.

The text

The original texts of Greek plays are written in ancient Greek in lyric form. Aristotle divides the text into song and episodes, which are ‘distinguished partly by meter, partly by accompaniment, and partly by language (the songs being composed in a literary Doric

dialect)’ (Storey and Allan 2005:88). There is also another common division that resembles ‘a series of types of scene’ such as *prologue*, *episodes*, *stasima* and *exodus*.

Possible implications for the students

It is not expected that students of an average English secondary school will know ancient Greek. The text will have to be approached in modern English translation. To an extent some of the metaphors, the poetic form and iconicity of the original words will be lost. This happens to every translated work, and for that reason great importance should be attached to the translation chosen in order to minimise erosion of the text. In addition we need to place extra emphasis on the accessibility and simplicity of the text as the readers would be beginners to this kind of literature.

In a class a text can be utilised in two ways: as literary text and as material for performance purposes. Taking into consideration the nature of drama as a subject it would be expected that the text could be dealt with in both ways. The text of an ancient Greek tragedy is stylised. It is written in poetic language and it was performed to an audience used to verbal narration and listening to extended speeches both artistic and rhetorical. On the contrary our generation is referred to as a visual one with a short memory for verbal speech. This situation becomes more problematic when introducing monologues that are more frequent than dialogues and more difficult to follow. Also the *stasima* (songs) of the chorus tend to provide long descriptions, which initially might seem irrelevant to the rest of the play. The level of participation will depend on students’ capacity to comprehend and engage with the text. We might have to accept the possibility of making further, necessary alterations and shortcuts to arrive at a suitable script. Characters and chorus, words and actions would need further analysis, which is discussed below.

In Greek tragedy there is no information about whether the original scripts contained any directing advice. Ley and Ewans state a close examination of the original script ‘fulfils itself in very considerable detail when permitted at realization within the condition of the Greek theatre.’ (1985:82) The possibilities of investigating the text in such ways may not prove realistic for young groups. Nevertheless it does offer new perspectives for teaching if a journey to an ancient Greek Theatre is possible or if the teaching takes place with older groups of students.

Performing Elements

Characters in ancient Greek tragedy

The characters are usually of a noble background and sometimes they belong to the category of semi-gods (one of the two parents being a god). The storyline of tragedy is mainly based on conflict between two contradictory opponents. The main character is known by the Greek term *protagonist*, and he/she is usually opposed by another character called the *antagonist*. Aristotle describes the relationship of the conflicting parties as often being based on kinship or friendship.

Possible implications for the students

Students would probably be unaware of the mythological figures portrayed by the main characters of the tragedies unless they had the chance to study them in their early school years as part of Greek mythology. If that is the case they would need to be informed about the mythological background of the hero in order to understand how the story relates to the hero's past. This is sometimes very important because the playwrights take for granted that the Athenian audience was aware of the mythological background of the hero and therefore left some things unexplained.

Another point that needs to be considered by the teacher is the careful analysis of the characters. For example, Wilmer mentions that 'some of these female characters provide considerable problems for modern interpretation, especially because of the exaggerated nature of their actions' (2007:108). The introduction of cultural background might allow the students to comprehend more how the characters act on the stage and whether they were representative of their time. For example the students might be introduced to certain ethical and social values of ancient Athens and establish a simple set of standards of the period. This of course might prove more complicated if the ethical and social standards are different from our times.

One more issue about the characters is the general ambiguity and lack of psychoanalysis of their personalities. At first this may confuse the students, although it does offer them the opportunity to visualise webs of relationships, conditions and factors that determine the action of the characters. To a certain point they 'must fill in the gaps, constructing an

account of the decision which suits our understanding of events' (Docherty 1983: 218-19). If they manage to achieve this mental activity they are certainly a step closer to realising how culture imposes itself on human actions and vice versa.

Chorus

The convention of the chorus presents particular interest, as it is not anymore a common feature of modern theatre. The chorus of the tragedies remained in the circular dancing floor, the orchestra, comprising between twelve to fifteen figures. They were speaking, sometimes declaiming, singing and dancing the choral odes. Usually they represented the people of a city and, symbolically, a collectiveness. The architectural design of the theatre allowed perceiving the auditorium as an extension of the orchestra. Although that might have allowed the audience to feel part of the play more vividly, it does not support the view that they shared the same preoccupation. If this was the case, the sex of the chorus should have been only male, as the majority of the audience was. Arnott states that the chorus serves 'as an intermediary in universalising the story and in relating the tragic action to the audience's present' (1989:34).

Calame describes the role of the chorus through three dimensions. The first is the '*ritual*' dimension 'which makes the *choros* members interact with the dramatic action and with the actors who perform the action on stage'. The interaction takes place through cult songs and ritual performance where chorus interact and react 'on the attitude of the actors in the face of events' (1999:129). In this way they inform, and sometimes comment to the audience about the events that occurred before the action took place. That immediately reveals the dynamic interrelationships between chorus and characters. Based on Gould's observation, the chorus role serves as a medium of excluding privacy and 'the discarding of privacy involves a major stylisation of reality' (1978:49).

The second dimension is the '*hermeneutic*'. The chorus, or in some cases the leader, needs to describe through narration previous events of the current action or 'about the spatial setting in which the action takes place; in their gnomic remarks they also comment on the action that occurs' (Calame 1999:129). Arnott notes that this must have been one of the

initial functions of the chorus:

If the Greek tradition of their own dramatic origins was correct, we may assume as surviving literature tends to support a body of choral song describing the lineage and adventures of the gods, and in particular their relationship with the community performing the festival. (1989:30)

This may be the case, but at the same time, in the absence of dialogue and action, information cannot be given in a way other than narration.

In the third role, which she names '*affective*', the chorus is behaving emotionally with the intention of allocating those feelings to the audience which reacts as an extension of them. Stanford describes the chorus in this case as 'an instructor telling the audience how and when to feel various emotions' (1983:46-47). In Aristotle's statement of *katharsis*, this process can be depicted where the audience feels strong emotions of pity and fear, which later allow them to be purified by the experience. Goward remarks further how the chorus participation works

... when the action of a play reaches its climax, the chorus are often left alone onstage to anticipate the coming horror. At this point their inability to intervene highlights the helplessness of humans in general, and reflects the sensations of the audience. (1999:24)

The impact is stronger considering the effect of music and of an 'audio-visual kinaesthetic' repertoire that leads to the arousal of emotions. Bouvrie believes that it could 'affect constantly the nervous system of the audience in order to render it susceptible to the hidden, symbolically conveyed message' (1990:97). The affective role of the chorus was considered the most significant.

Practically, the chorus did not make any decisions that could affect the development of the story. The reason for that passiveness lies in the fact that it would have not only changed the structure of drama but the relativity of the myth, which wanted individuals to determine the development of the plot. Additionally the audience does not only experience the story from the heroes' side but also from the side of the chorus. Every action and decision of the characters is filtered through the intermediate role of the chorus.

Possible implications for the students

The students' introduction to the chorus will remain one of the most difficult tasks for the teacher, mainly because this theatrical convention is generally unknown to the students. In the absence of attending a performance, their ability to understand the chorus will depend mainly in their engagement with the text.

Another issue is that the students will need to identify the chorus' representation of collectiveness. Hahlo and Reynolds mention that interaction with

Classical Greek drama offers those who play the Chorus an opportunity for the exploration of collective action, of what it might feel like to be truly part of something bigger than yourself. The focus of the audience is not on the individual Chorus member, but on the group which offers an enticing anonymity, and through it a heightened expressive freedom. (2000:94)

For this reason, there is a need to introduce them to practical activities that will enhance a sense of unity. Lecoq states:

A chorus is not geometric but organic. In just the same way as a collective body, it has its center of gravity, its extensions, its respiration. It is a kind of living cell, capable of taking on different forms according to the situation in which it finds itself. (1997: 130)

The students will need to experiment with physical movement and discover the relationship in the space between the actors and the events. These relationships could be spatially, aesthetically and symbolically explored. Concerning the three dimensions that were employed in the first part, it will take a lot of examination and experience for a teacher to consciously and profoundly employ them with students. I believe in the beginning they can function as a point of reference for the teacher and later as an advanced examination of the chorus' function for the students.

From a theoretical point of view we might be able to hypothesise certain aspects of the chorus' implementation to students. The role of the chorus differs from tragedy to tragedy. Stanford defines two kinds of chorus: one amicable towards the heroes and the other distant that appeared more like spectators. (1983) In every play the script itself would allow them to determine whether the chorus is amicable or distant.

The further awareness students gain of the play, the more it will allow them to identify the dimensions of the chorus role. The engagement with the songs could have multiple uses. It can help them to find a first connection with the origins of theatre. Its poetic form indicates drama's nature, which is a combination of arts. Further analysis can reveal the interaction of the chorus and its statements related to the events that are taking place.

Masks and costumes

Masks and costumes were essential parts of a performance. The mask is associated with the ritual origins of Greek tragedy. It 'was a part of the process of incarnation that took place when the priest incarnated, or assumed or acted the role of a god' (Allen 1983:26). It is important though to notice that in Greek theatrical performance, the masks were used for 'service' to the community and not to the individual that was wearing it (Eldredge 1996). Whether their initial inclusion originated from rituals, they certainly offered convenience. Except for the closer seats most of the audience would have difficulty in distinguishing characters' facial traits. The masks were probably made out of leather and therefore were soft and flexible. The stereotyped, coloured masks and costumes helped audience members to identify the characters. According to Peter Hall, another feature of them is a form of neutrality and ambiguity which represent 'the human confusion' (2000:28). The changes of masks and costumes were expedient for the actors who played more than one role. Ley also notes that the 'absence of facial expression made increased attention to voice and gesture inevitable' (1991:38). This allows us to assume that the actors had strong expressive voices and that they were virtuosi in their body movement.

Possible implications for the students

The study of the masks and costumes as theatrical conventions are important and should be highlighted during teaching. Because of the nature of the convention one would expect that the teacher would encourage students to examine masks and costumes. Nevertheless, it is my belief that the use of masks requires knowledge and experience from the part of the teacher in order to take place properly in a class. Due to my lack of this expertise I am restricted for the time being to look at masks and costumes from a theoretical perspective. Students should have the chance to see illustrations of them from ancient Greek vases and

from current Greek performances. They should also give the chance to take a close look and be able to describe them and through discussion acquire some basic knowledge of their use and representation during performances.

Music

There is little information about the music in tragedy as not many musical pieces have survived. It is known though that the ‘usual instrument for accompanying the choric songs and dances, [is] the *aulos*, a pipe played like an oboe, [which] was considered the most ‘orgiastic’ of all instruments’ (Aristotle, Politics 1341a 22-4, ‘Longinus’ 39, 2 in Stanford 1983:51). Two more instruments were used: the lyre which, according to Stanford, is associated with heroic poetry, and percussion instruments such as hand drums and tambourines. The music is believed to be ‘characterized by great rhythmic variety and complexity, being bound to the poetic meters, and that it was without harmony, with choral odes in unison’ (Johnson 1984:62). The effect of music also offers rhythm to chorus and characters’ movements, highlighting tensions and reactions, offering overall emotional impact.

Possible implications for students

The few surviving pieces could be played to the students. In this way they might experience how music was composed and even discover which instruments they can hear. Further choral improvisations of movements might take place with accompaniment of original or other music. Emphasis would be placed on their ability to observe the emotional effect of music.

Theatre as a performing space

It is necessary to look at ancient Greek Theatre also as a performing space. Its circular format was to accommodate choruses of up to fifty members, considering that the same space was used for the performance of dithyrambs. Entrances and other conventions reveal further use of the space. There is particular interest in the employment of the orchestra by the actors and the chorus. Some scholars seem to support the notion that the chorus occupied

the orchestra. Walton claims that ‘it was rare for the chorus to encroach on the actors’ space or for the actors to occupy the orchestra’ (1987:20). Other scholars oppose this belief by supporting that most of the action seemed to take place in the orchestra area. Ley and Ewans observe that, if the best acoustic place was the centre of the orchestra the ancient actor would move:

... towards the point where his voice will best be heard. If he enters from the skene, he has one direct line in particular from which to address the assembly, a radius of the orchestra from the central door to the acoustic centre of the orchestra. (1985:77).

This argument seems to be more believable, especially since the role of chorus was reduced over time, as was its dominance in the orchestra. Ley provides even more evidence of this in ‘Theatricality of Greek Tragedy’ (2007). His work seems to be more suited to tertiary education and professional performances, but it does give an insight for teachers into how to introduce elements of the text for exploration of the performing space in class and therefore provide enlightenment as to its shape and function.

Possible implications for the students

Having an awareness of the theatrical space is vital for the students if they are to reach an understanding of its architecture and functions. In an experimental form it would be interesting to examine ways of allowing them to discover on their own how the shape might have evolved in this particular configuration. At the same time they can analyse the utility and dynamic of the *skene* and *orchestra*. The possibility of visiting an ancient Greek Theatre is quite remote. If they attend any performance however they might be able to compare different theatrical spaces and how that transforms the performance of actors and chorus.

Can ancient Greek Drama offer relevance to our contemporary world and enhance students’ critical mind?

Direct relevance of the context of the play to universal values

It is possible that students might try to find relevance with our times using the play as an immediate reference. Such attempts may result in a cross-examination of certain values that are believed to remain diachronic and universal. This results in students’ association with the

psychological aspects represented in the play, driven by emotions. The latter remain basic and essential all through the history of human evolution. The first chapter mentioned by Armstrong that the entire theatrical repertoire is based on basic human instincts (2003). Ancient Greek Theatre does seem to encounter similar instincts and emotions. For example *Medea* deals with strong feelings like love, jealousy, hate and rage that are caused by betrayal. 'Since they deal with fundamental behavior they have an immediacy which can affect us as powerfully as any other works of literature' (Vickers 1973:3). These feelings can be identified and recognised by the students and, furthermore, stimulate emotional and intellectual response based on their own experiences. To avoid using this approach would seem unwise, as emotions are a powerful tool in drama. It can be of great assistance in capturing the students' interest to overcome the initial difficulty and complexity of the art form.

Understanding of the play based on the given cultural background of Athens

Scheve (1992) reminds us that drama employs a complex and important relationship between the universal and the particular. This means that the specific set of relationships and norms shaping its context cannot be ignored. The action revolves close to the socio-cultural conditions that nurture feelings and manners. The context of a play cannot be understood if the social environment is unknown to us. At this level, the historical-social information given to them should allow them, to a certain extent, to imagine better the conditions that shape the reactions, feelings and thoughts of the characters. Furthermore I will try to involve other concepts to achieve a more multi-sided approach to the subject. One way of achieving this is by practising alternative thinking about the creation and reception of the original performance.

In this perspective we need to consider two aspects relevant to the performance:

- a) the writer and his preoccupations;
- b) Athenian audience reception.

It is important to clarify that this procedure does not endeavour to discover historical 'truth'. There are no historical facts that can assert with accurate evidence those aspects. The focus remains on exploring the context of ancient Greek Drama for the benefit of better

understanding and for enhancing creative thinking.

The principal reason for studying alternatives is to foster a critical spirit that enables one to detect in alternatives what speaks for and against them and what, consequently, reinforces or contradicts one's own ideas. (Smith 1994:81)

The integration of productive thought in possible worlds that resemble social reality should allow students to make connections, use rational thought and explore assumptions that offer valid verisimilitude.

Preoccupations of the writer

In our contemporary times, people tend to have access to biographical information about any kind of famous or important person, but the historical evidence about Ancient Greek tragedies is far too abstract and inadequate and sometimes inaccurate about the personal lives of the three famous poets. Nevertheless, if they request it, students could be informed about the known factors of these poets' lives. The teacher could discuss and ask them to perceive possible preoccupations of the playwright in regard to the play. Debnar mentions that in a similar way the narratives of historians also 'reflect their authors' purposes and bias and are coloured by their historical circumstances' (2005:5). Tragedies may be biased by the playwright's psychological concerns. It is possible that extended exploration of the theatrical material may allow the students to process information by cross-examining the historical background of the period, keeping in mind that the issues raised in the play reflect the personal political views of the playwright. This might reveal that the playwright was quite progressive, or pro-democratic, or even feminist. The important thing is that students will be driven to find more connections between the factors that influence the creation of the fictional context of the play.

Athenian audience reception

One area that could be examined is how the Athenian audience experienced the performance. It is quite important to clarify that such an attempt is mainly a hypothetical one. Goldhill mentions: 'it is an intolerably naive idea to suppose that an audience for a

drama has only a uniform, homogeneous collective identity or response' (1990:115). It is difficult to examine this possibility while trying to identify the divergence of views it might have stirred. A quite realistic approach is Ley's proposal of how students can penetrate investigation of this issue. He suggests that they need to consider two levels on which the Athenian audience operated 'that of recognition (or similarity) and that of disjunction (or difference)' (Ley 1998:11). *Medea* for example is a characteristic play of this situation. The Athenians who had a legitimate marriage would probably operate on a level of disjunction, where those who married non-Athenians would probably find recognition in the play. Students might be able to discover further preoccupations of the audience that have occurred through working with the play and their introduction to its historical background.

Investigation of these issues is aimed at covering a general area of knowledge that could allow ancient Greek Drama to become more comprehensible to secondary school students. The intention is to discover whether, given the time constraints, the theoretical background presented here can be truly implemented in schools. To achieve that I need to decide which kinds of research methods can monitor progress and allow me to reflect on the proposed fieldwork.

Chapter Three

Research Methods and Data Collection

This chapter discusses the research I have undertaken with respect to the three main research questions stated in the previous chapter. According to Elliot, the improvement of practice is an elementary aim of action research. ‘The production and utilization of knowledge is subordinate to, and conditioned by, this fundamental aim’ (1991:49). Furthermore, Carr and Kemmis consider action research to be a form of ‘self -reflective inquiry’ (1986:162). As a researcher it should permit me to gain valuable insight into my practice and also allow reflection on the knowledge and understanding that may have been acquired by students.

Implementation of action research

Action research seemed a very appropriate approach. Teachers rarely teach a lesson, or series of lessons, just once. The research model of a ‘spiral’ seemed most suited to a teaching process where I expected to learn from each episode and to build that learning into the next sequence of lessons. In the previous chapter I identified the context of areas that should be included for the designation of a first project. Such a project was meant to investigate teaching methods and activities that could enhance the introduction of ancient Greek Drama in secondary school. Further examination of the first project led to the implementation of two subsequent projects. Action research provides the methods to follow a developmental procedure, while allowing the researcher to be reflective and adaptable to the impending results. Lewin (1930) is considered the instigator of this approach:

In education it has become one of the approaches used in a professional context to apply a scientific or evidence-based approach to classroom enquiry. (Wall & Higgins 2006:39)

In this perspective, the action research that I conducted follows the recommendations of Elliot (1991) who is inspired by Lewin’s model. His main principles include the notion that the general idea should be allowed to shift.

This principle was quite realistic and my initial thoughts and ideas were constantly changing during my research. ‘Reconnaissance should involve analysis as well as fact-finding and

should constantly recur in the spiral of activities, rather than occur only at the beginning'. (Elliot 1991:70) Without constant investigation on the research findings there cannot be any true development of the investigation. The results of each project led to alterations to the following projects. Part of the initial literature review became less relevant to both my practical work and the research process. My first theoretical research was concentrated on the outcome of the theatrical representation of primal artistic forms on the intellectual development of human beings. I had to re-consider the relevance of my aims and remove certain sections. To a certain extent therefore, the designation and implementation of the projects led to further modification of the initial research questions and statements. Not only is this normal in action research, but in qualitative research more generally. Maxwell reports:

The research questions in a qualitative study shouldn't be formulated in detail until the purposes and context (and sometimes general aspects of the sampling and data collection) of the design are clarified, and they should remain sensitive and adaptable to the implications of other parts of the design. (1996: 49)

Fieldwork took place in the real environment of a school and the site inevitably affected the research process. In addition, there were other aspects that influenced the process, such as the number of students and their abilities. In the subchapters below I attempt to describe and analyse the methods, stages and those aspects that were contained in the research in order to offer as clear and objective presentation as is possible.

Conditions of the research

My investigation focused on the introduction of ancient Greek Drama in English schools; therefore it was vital for the projects to be applicable in an English school environment. There were no specific conditions requiring the selection of a particular school, although, to enable the outcomes to be applied most widely, the research should ideally be undertaken in a representative school of mixed abilities. For this reason I decided to select one of the secondary schools in Exeter.

Almost from the outset of my investigation a question was raised; what would be my role during the research? Do I become an observer and a facilitator as well? Turner and Bruner

underline the importance of achieving a divided awareness of the self when acquiring both roles (1986). It is debatable whether the best research results are obtained when a researcher is divided between these two roles (Mason 1999). However, my decision to adopt this approach was based on a number of factors. My main concern was whether a school would have an appropriate person to teach my projects. It would have had to be a secondary school teacher with experience or extended knowledge of ancient Greek plays, and the chances of finding such a candidate were remote. My supervisor, John Somers, suggested I sent letters to a number of selected schools. This would allow us to discover whether there was any interest from teachers in introducing projects on ancient Greek Drama. The only criteria for selection of schools were awareness of the drama teachers' work and teaching methods, and previous experience of their ability to cooperate successfully with people from the wider community. The latter factor is important for any researcher who wishes to conduct projects in an unfamiliar environment. It is also crucial to the success of the 'preliminary discussion and negotiations among the interested parties' (Cohen et al 2000: 235), which necessarily take place. Unfortunately I received a reply from only one secondary school.

The teacher is the Head of Drama at one of colleges in Exeter. I telephoned her and we arranged to meet at her school. After introducing myself I asked her why she had replied to my letter and she answered that she never had the opportunity to engage thoroughly with ancient Greek Drama. She believed that my project could allow her to enhance her knowledge of the subject. The possibility of her being the facilitator of my first project seemed difficult although not impossible. The teacher had extensive drama teaching experience but the preparation of my project would have required a lot of her personal time and her schedule was already extremely time-consuming. Hence I decided to teach the project myself. This decision included both advantages and disadvantages. My native language is Greek, and this may have caused communication problems with the students. The teacher kindly noted that I spoke English very well and that she would be present at the sessions and would intervene if necessary. The primary advantage was my extended knowledge of ancient Greek plays and awareness of every aspect of the projects, as I designed them.

On the other hand I did not have much experience in teaching. Therefore I asked the teacher to facilitate the sessions with me. I assured her that it would be my responsibility to provide

her with all the relevant information and with the final details of the sessions in advance. At the same time she would have the right to comment on my activities and suggest alterations. My engagement as facilitator would grant me the opportunity to explore the subtleties of secondary school drama teachers' work and gain direct teaching experience.

I provided the teacher with a synoptic plan of the general context and aim of my project. This general plan indicated areas of study and dramatic techniques that could be used during the project. In this way she could form a first impression of what my project would include. Up until this point I had not designed a full-scale project as I was not certain how many hours and what group of students I would be offered. The teacher estimated that, because of the relative difficulty of the topic, it should be taught in Y10 (14-15 years old) and above. My view was the same, so we agreed to begin with Y10. She offered a certain amount of hours for each project (see diagram) based on the availability of the students.

Throughout the three projects my relationship with the teacher was valuable. As she was aware of my limited relevant experience she agreed to be present and co-facilitate the sessions. I designed the projects but there were times when the teacher intervened to bring the benefits of her greater experience. As she had no expertise in ancient Greek Drama she relied on my lesson plans. Her teaching schedule was extremely hectic, which made it difficult to co-organise and plan sessions together. Nevertheless she participated vividly and co-ordinated aspects of the sessions when she believed they required intervention. As she was more aware of school circumstances her interventions aimed at maintaining students' interest and ensuring that difficult learning areas were revised and fully explained. Her main interventions can also be identified at the tables of the projects (shown below) and the audio transcript data in Chapter Four.

First Project

One of the major difficulties that I had to deal with was the large number of students. The teacher informed me that the group was a combination of two classes due to some new timetable arrangements. Although in Greek schools this number of students is a standard condition in big cities, I was uncertain how I could rise to this challenge. I believe that a smaller number would have eased my teaching. I asked her if I could meet and observe the

class in advance, and the next week I attended for a day at the school and participated in the sessions of the particular class which I meant to facilitate. Even with several absences from the original list, thirty-five students attended, and this was also the number of students that usually attended the sessions for the duration of my project. Attending her session gave me the opportunity to form a first awareness about the kind of learning they receive and their abilities to respond and participate. Although I had some reservations about my ability to form sophisticated understandings after just one session's observations, it did give the students the chance to become familiar with my presence.

The intention of the first project was to reflect on collected data regarding the examination of the investigated areas, in relation to students' abilities, my teaching methods and the conditions of the school environment. The outcomes would inform and shape a second project. This project would mainly focus on observing and analysing the possible educational and cognitive achievement of students.

Second Project

Due to my familiarity with the college environment and the generous hospitality, co-operation and assistance of the teacher, I requested to teach my second project in one of her classes. I requested a new group as I intended to maintain the research in the same age group as in the first project and last year's group were Y11 this year. It entailed the use of activities which delivered positive results in the first project with the addition of new or modified activities to create a more advanced project. Its aims and research questions remained the same.

I was given the opportunity to choose between two student groups. The teacher had made clear to me which one was ideal for this project. The choice of the student group was finally based on the practicality of the timetable. I preferred to teach them in the morning as I had a full time evening job. The new time schedule would have allowed me, as planned, to expand and investigate more areas. However, the single hours proved less functional than I first thought. The time was very limited and did not allow the exploration of the anticipated lesson content. This was also due to the fact that the class of students was particularly weak in ability. I was forced to proceed with further adjustments based on their needs, such as rescheduling single hours for revision work on previous work covered. Finally, I prepared

coursework for them, which would enable them to revise the whole project.

Third Project

When I finished the second project I decided to analyse my data up until this point before I considered the possibility of advancing to a third project. In August 2004 the teacher asked me to teach with her on another, similar project, with the group of Y10 students which I had been unable to take in the second project because of their unavailability. Her plan was to take her students to watch *Iphigenia in Aulis* performed in London's National Theatre the next month, and then offer a module on the exploration of the play. The chance of exploring the effect of a relevant performance on the learning of ancient Greek Drama was very challenging and interrelated with my aims. Before the beginning of the second project we also tried to find a relevant performance but we were unsuccessful in this. At the same time I had the opportunity to work on another tragedy, written by the same playwright, Euripides. The performance would allow students to have a visual reference and more potential for being engaged in the following, related sessions. The third project allowed me to realise the examination of the first category of theatrical experience as written in Chapter One.

The difficulty of the third project concerned the limited time to design it. For that reason I went through my previous projects and examined how they could operate as a guide. I kept many of the activities and changed others based on the needs of the new play, *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In this way I also had the opportunity to examine the utility of the same activities in all projects and their validity in relation to my main research questions.

FIRST PROJECT`

Category of research (2) class work on a theatrical play without attending a performance of it	School of study: College of Exeter(pseudonym)	Students of study: Y10 of mixed abilities	Timeline 14 th of May until 11 th of June 2003
Play: <i>Medea</i> of Euripides	Teacher of study class: Head of Drama	Number: 35	Duration: Four weeks in succession
Located in the National Curriculum as a 'study of a complete play-Edexcel'	Facilities in use: Theatre *	Aged 14-15	One double session* each week *2 hours
Text reference Greene, D. Lattimore, R., (EDS)(1955)Euripides I, The Medea, trans. by Warner R., Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.	*The theatre is a spacious place. There are black curtains on one side indicating the stage and a whiteboard on the wall. On the opposite side there are bleacher units to provide more space for workshops. Unfortunately, the floor is plastic, hard and cold for drama activities and there is no natural light entering this space. There is also a door next to theatre's entrance leading to stairs to a small sound and lighting room where the technician operates equipment during performances. They also own a mobile console, which allows them to monitor sound and lighting from the main theatre space.	Gender: both	

First Week

<u>First session (double session)</u>	<u>Second session (double session)</u>	<u>Third session (double session)</u>	<u>Fourth session (double session)</u>
<p>Introduction Familiarising students with the subject. Try to find out their knowledge on it</p> <p>1st activity: <i>The quarrel</i> The students were given a fragment of a dialogue between the main characters. They were asked to practice the dialogue in pairs and afterwards in two groups, forming two lines opposing each other. They were asked to take a step closer to the opponents when reading each line of their character.</p> <p>Disussion over the context of the dialogue. Identifying the characters and their relationship. Identify the nature of the quarrel.</p> <p>2nd activity: <i>Social life in Athens</i> Explore social and gender issues of Athens with captions that refer to them. The themes included marriage, divorce, domestic life.</p> <p>Students were asked to display them in still images. Further reflection on the work of the students and associating with the social background of the play.</p> <p>3rd activity: <i>The chorus at the quarrel</i> ‘ Introduction to the lines of the chorus in relation with the first activity. Discussion about the part of them in the action. Reflection on how they are presented in the play in comparison with historical facts drawn from the activity ‘Social life in Athens’. Small presentation and enaction of the dialogue with the participation of the chorus this time.</p>	<p>Brief synopsis of first session Students are asked through visual material to refer briefly to the activities of the previous session.</p> <p>Preliminary activities Breathing activities for the students who are lying on a parachute which also designaties the next activity.</p> <p>1st activity: <i>The circle</i> Students are sitting in a circle. They are asked a series of questions in order to stimulate discussion over the possible origins of theatre; for example, the idea of primitive people sitting in a circle, what events could take place, who is participating, how are they motivated?</p> <p>2nd activity: <i>Chorus’ stasimon</i> A activity on chorus exploration and of the theatrical convention of stasima. Students were asked to work in six groups and discuss the context of the stasimon (verses 627-662.)in relation with the story of the play.</p> <p>Afterwards the stasimon where divided into six pieces and they are asked to give a physical and aural presentation of them.</p> <p>3rd activity: <i>Information about ancient Greek theatre</i> (Given as a homework) Students were asked to read a leaflet with information on ancient Greek theatre and try to answer a questionnaire.</p>	<p>1st activity: <i>Examination of their homework</i> Through discussion and display of visual material, students are asked to recall what they read and answer a set of questions that was given prior to them.</p> <p>*Unplanned presentation of the second activity from the previous session due to the absence of some students. (on recommendation of the teacher)</p> <p>2nd activity: <i>Introduction to the main events of the story through translated text</i> Students were divided in groups of six. Each group was given a translated episode of the play. They were asked to read it and create a summary of it.</p>	<p>1st activity: <i>Final Revision</i> A brief reflection on the work done up to this day. (On recommendation of the teacher)</p> <p>2nd activity: <i>A second attempt for introducing students to the main events of the story</i> Students were given a shorter version of the second activity from the third session. They were asked to discuss this in groups and give a small performance summarising the text they were given. At the same time the rest of the students were asked to take notes on their classmates’ presentation.</p>

SECOND PROJECT

Category of research (2) class work on a theatrical play without attending a performance of it	School of study: College of Exeter(pseudonym)	Students of study: Y10 of mixed abilities	Timeline 28 th of April 21 st of May 2004
Play: <i>Medea</i> of Euripides	Teacher of study class: Head of Drama	Number: 18	Duration: Five weeks in succession *
Located in the National Curriculum as a 'study of a complete play-Edexcel'	Facilities in use: Theatre and drama classroom *	Aged 14 -15	One double and one single* session each week *fifty five minutes
Text reference Grene, D., Lattimore,R., (eds)(1955) <i>Euripides I, The Medea</i> , trans. by Warner R., Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.	*The 'drama room', as it is called by the teacher and students, is a medium side classroom with black walls and appropriate decoration such as theatrical posters, masks, books and a wardrobe full of clothes and other accessories. One wall is covered in mirrors for practical reasons such as students observing their movements. Another side of the class has windows, which allows natural light to enter the room. There are black curtains available for creating darkness. There is also a closet with more material inside and a white board for the teacher to write notes. This room was used usually for the single hours lessons.	Gender: both	*the initial project was planned for four weeks. The extra week occurred after the teacher cancelled some of her programmed sessions.

First week

<p><u>First session</u> (Double hour)</p> <p>1st activity: 'First notion of theatre' An introduction to the first notion of theatre. Tracing the roots of the art, the primitive man in transformation and the role of the religion.</p> <p>2nd activity: The appearance of theatrical form in ancient Greece</p> <p>Reference to modern rituals initiated by the teacher.</p>
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Second week

<p><u>Second session</u> (single hour)</p> <p>1st activity: Information on ancient Greek Drama through three tragedies</p> <p>Students were given the main story of three tragedies and where asked to answer a set of questions in order to define conventions and elements of the theatrical form.</p>	<p><u>Third session</u> (double hour)</p> <p>1st activity : Social life in Athens As seen in the first project.</p>	<p><u>Fourth session</u> (Single hour)</p> <p>1st activity Information on the wall Students are divided into groups and are asked to gather information from the walls regarding the theatre as a construction, the actors, the chorus, the costumes and the masks. and the religious festival of which the tragic competitions were part.</p>
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Third Week

Fifth session
(Double hour)
1st activity: *Introducing the storyline and the different parts of tragedy*
(part of the final leaflet)
Preliminary activity: Knee boxing

2nd activity: *The quarrel*
(slightly altered)
It involved slashes in the text for students to be aware where to breath and the text was written in larger font for easy reading .

3rd activity
The chorus at the quarrel
As seen in the first project.

Fourth Week

Sixth session
(Single hour)
Revision after request of the teacher on the first and third session of the project
* (on recommendation of the teacher)

Seventh session
(Double hour)
1st activity:
The first episode of Medea

2nd activity:
TV performance of Actors of Dionysus on the second episode of Medea.

3rd activity: *Working on a contemporary version of the quarrel*
The students were asked to work on a modern version of the main story and present in pairs the upcoming quarrel of the couple Medea and Jason.

Fifth Week

Eight session
(Double hour)
1st activity: Mirror
The class is divided in pairs and they have to imitate their partner's movements.

2nd activity: Shadow
The students remain in pairs. One of them has to become the shadow of the other. Leadership of the exercise alternates between them.

3rd activity: Many shadows
One student is the leader and five students are becoming his/her shadows. Leaders can alternate.

4th activity: Chorus under the Parachute
The teacher puts one group out of the three underneath the parachute. The group is to react as one body, to sounds of the instruments.

Ninth Session
(Double hour)
1st activity: Second and third episode of Medea
To re-enact the third and fourth episode in order to have a sense of continuity of the story.

Discussion about the context of the episodes

2nd activity: Chorus' stasimon
Students were asked to work on six groups and give a physical and aural presentation on the stasimon verses.

Tenth session
(Single hour)
Overall revision of the play
The overall revision intends to prepare the students for the final test which questions will focus on the characterisation, the design of the plot and the aesthetic form of the play.

The students will be informed that in the next session they will have to take a test. First of all the students must ensure that they have all the papers that they were given through the sessions. *

*Their work were examined by the teacher in my absence. [Later their work was used for GCSE as the teacher's original choice was changed because the audiovisual recording went missing]

THIRD PROJECT

Category of research (1)attendance at and interpretation of a performance through class work	School of study: College of Exeter (pseudonym)	Students of study: Y11 of mixed abilities	Timeline 7 th of September until 1 st of October 2004
Play: <i>Iphigenia at Aulis</i> by Euripides at the National Theatre of London. Attended 2 nd of September 2004	Teacher of study class: Head of Drama	Number:35	Duration: Four weeks in succession
Located in the National Curriculum as a 'study of a complete play'-Edexcel.	Facilities in use: Theatre and drama classroom	Aged 15-16	One double and one single session each week
Text reference to the performance: Greene, D. Lattimore,R., (EDS)(1958) <i>Euripides IV, Iphigenia in Aulis</i> trans. by Walker C.R., Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press.		Gender: both	

First week

Second week

<p><u>First session</u></p> <p>Analysis of the performance</p>	<p><u>Second session</u></p> <p>Revision of previous session</p> <p>1st activity Students are divided into two groups and are asked to present the story in still six images.</p> <p>Second phase Before their final presentation they are asked to add one line for each scene. Discussion about the presentation of each group, the story of the play /theatrical conventions/scenery /costumes.</p>	<p><u>Third session</u></p> <p><u>Introduction to the notion of theatre</u></p> <p>2nd activity <u>The circle and the sacrifice</u></p>	<p><u>Fourth session</u></p> <p>1st activity: Information on ancient Greek Theatre On the structure and conventions of ancient Greek theatre. Aims: To learn about the theatre as a construction, the actors, the chorus, the costumes and the mask and the religious festival which the tragic competitions took place.</p> <p>Analysis of the activity Students are divided to three groups and are asked to gather information from the walls and try to answer questions given to them. A discussion will follow in order to examine the results of each group.</p>
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Third week

Fifth session

1st activity: *Mirror*

The class is divided in pairs and they have to imitate their partner's movements.

2nd activity: *Shadow*

The students remain in pairs. One of them has to become the shadow of the other. Leadership of the exercise alternates between them.

3rd activity: *Many shadows*

One student is the leader and five students are becoming his/her shadows. Leaders can alternate.

4th activity: *Chorus under the Parachute*

The teacher puts one group out of the three underneath the parachute. The group is to react as one body, to sounds of the instruments.

Fourth Week

Sixth session

1st activity: *The chorus' stasimon*

The students were divided in groups and given a fragment of the song. They were asked to prepare a physical presentation of their piece

Seventh session

1st activity: *Video presentation*

Students watch fragments of chorus performance from the *Oresteia* Peter Halk performed in Epidauros and *Seven Against Thebes* directed by Kostas Varnavas performed in Epidauros. Further discussion on their performance.

2nd activity

Students are given an appendix with the summary of the play and fragments. The purpose of it is to initiate further discussion on the play, its characters and its relevance with our time.

Eighth session

Final revision and discussion on the leaflet.

The students went through the questions and parts of the leaflet.

The ethics of action research

During any kind of research it is appropriate to consider the ethical implications of the work. Kelly mentions that ‘many social scientists would now accept that there is no such thing as value-free, objective or neutral research’ (1989:102). In this respect, for every researcher it is an obligation to take into consideration the ethics and values that might be encountered during his/her research. Cassell and Jacobs underline the importance of improving ‘ethical adequacy’ by considering: ‘everyday decisions, and reflect not only upon the conduct of others but also upon our own actions’ (1987:1). Considering this perspective, the areas could be categorised in four sets of responsibilities:

(a) to science; (b) to society; (c) to students, apprentices, or trainees in research; and (d) to the participants in the research. (Sales&Folkman 2000:5)

I believe my research takes into account all of the above, with special focus on *(d) to the participants in the research*, mainly due to the fact that they are adolescents. It has been suggested that it is in the best interest of the participants to have been adequately informed of the researcher and the purpose of his/her research (Gillham 2005). For this reason, I introduced myself and the purpose of my teaching from the very beginning of my projects to all students who took part in them. I also agreed to certain key points in order to reduce certain type of risks that:

... may arise in conjunction with three factors (a) aspects of the research process, (b) particular vulnerabilities of the research participants and (c) failure of the researcher to use appropriate risk-reduction strategies. (Sieber 2000:16)

For the above reason, I did not publicise any confidential information given by the students or the teacher. I kept certain anonymity and maintained confidentiality. I also took measures to prevent the disclosure of students’ and the teacher’s identity. In no part of my paper work are the students named. Initially I have agreed with the teacher to accompany my thesis with partial visual material in the form of photographs. Facial recognition of the students was quite ambiguous due to the non-professional quality of the recording. However I did not obtain permission from all parents of students and therefore decided not to display them.

I did not pass any of the data to anyone else and did not use the research material in any way other than the one initially agreed. At all levels of my projects participants were informed

about the process and were given ‘ample opportunity throughout the research process to withdraw’ (Sieber 2000:16) if for any reason they felt uncomfortable or distressed.

The validity of the research

The validity of the investigation lies with the appropriate use of research methods, and the gathering and analysis of data. After further discussions with my supervisor, I decided to use the technique of methodological triangulation (Denzin 1970) where different methods endeavour to offer data for the same object of study. I believed this technique could examine and validate all of my research questions. Based on Cohen *et al* this ‘is the one used most frequently and the one that possibly has the most to offer’ (Cohen *et al* 2000:115). Nevertheless careful gathering, organisation and use of this material should follow to avoid selection aimed at supporting the desired results of the researcher. For this reason I took precautions that are explained later in this chapter. The research methods that were used are the following:

- Observation with the help of audiovisual material;
- Interviews;
- Students’ coursework.

The choice of the specific data is analysed later. To a certain degree the selected methods complement and contrast with each other. For example, the audiovisual recording tends to give data enabling analysis of group and facilitator behaviour, whereas interviews capture individual perspectives. Tiereny and Dilley state:

Observation can certainly lead to insights about, say, interactional styles of teachers with students or patterns of behavior in a classroom, but without interview data gathered directly from the participants/actors, observation is akin to watching silent movies. (2001:454)

At the same time the students’ work allows us to decide whether our other selective data correspond to the cognitive ability of the student to reflect on projects in written form. The written material is an assessment process for school and academic work.

Observation with the help of audiovisual recording material

Audiovisual recording material is an invaluable contemporary research medium. The use of a camera provides evidence of the school conditions, verification of the practical utility of the project, the teaching methods of the facilitator and also students' responses to the activities. It enabled me to gather data on four aspects of the work supported by Morrison, namely '...the physical, human, interactional and programme setting...' (1993). The students were familiar with video recording material as it is used as audiovisual reference in their exam papers and for other purposes.

I videotaped the sessions with a digital camera provided by my department. Most of the time, it was placed on a tripod, which I positioned in one of the corners of the theatre or the drama classroom. Sometimes when the teacher was teaching I carried the video camera in order to come closer to the students and obtain better audiovisual results. Most of the time, the camera was substituting for me as an observer and allowed me the flexibility to become participator and facilitator. Via these data, I managed to transcribe notes on how the lessons were developed. This research method also provides objectivity in data collection as it can be examined at any time. As a researcher I had the opportunity repeatedly to observe these data and supplement new evidence in the process. Cohen, Manion and Morrison believe that:

Audio-visual data collection has the capacity for the completeness of analysis and comprehensiveness of material. (2000:313)

Nonetheless I do not believe that this method can sustain enough evidence to support the research by itself. The purpose of the audiovisual recording system is to provide data. Under no circumstances was the project designed and orientated purely for video recording purposes. A camera may capture the overall action in a large class but it does not give a detailed account of each individual student activity or of the atmosphere of the sessions as they took place. Most of the facial expressions were lost because of the distance and low resolution of the camera. Voices did not have the same power; sometimes the sound was not clear since a lot of the activities were physical and external noises drowned it out (during the third project the school buildings were in the process of being reconstructed and extended). Consequently in some cases there is no indication of which student is talking or what the substance of group's talks was. As a result it is difficult to assess the level of participation of

each student. When the transcript was produced, it was largely impossible to clarify which student spoke and the only distinction made was between male and female. Results could have been better with the use of more than one camera and with the help of professionals thereby attaining maximum vision and sound quality. Another solution would have been to work with a smaller number of students. For different reasons, neither of the two would have been efficacious. Recording equipment and technicians are in great demand in the department, and hiring professionals would have required an unrealistic financial budget. For the second option, the students would have to take this project as an extracurricular activity. The consistency of their participation might have varied. Also the number of the students might not have been representative of an average class. Therefore the project would not resemble standard class conditions.

Another impediment to the research was the loss of data; we accidentally misplaced the last two tapes from the third project and so some evidence was lost. After discovering what had happened, I tried to write some notes of those sessions based on my personal observation. Unfortunately this was several weeks later and I could not give a detailed and accurate account.

Interviews

Interviews have been conducted for several reasons as they not only complement the results of the audiovisual data, but also add new light and depth of understanding to the investigation. Therefore, with the appropriate interaction and questions, the participants' experiences, interpretations and opinions could enhance our knowledge of the field:

There is an implicit, or explicit sharing and/or negotiation of understanding in the interview situation which is not so central and often not present, in other research procedures. (Brenner et al 1985:3)

This direct contact and communication permits both parties to avoid misunderstanding and to reach further conclusions and reflection.

a. Type of interview

I chose to use a semi-structured method, with a skeleton of open-ended questions. Gillham

supports the view that this type of interview is:

... the most important way of conducting a research interview because of its flexibility balanced by structure, and the quality of the data obtained. (2005:71)

In this way, as an interviewer, I could adjust my questions to the responses of the interviewees, thus offering them more chances of receiving insight and interpretation. It could also allow me to take advantage of their answers and explore issues that initially were not included. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison they can also:

... clear up any misunderstanding; they enable the interviewer to test the limits of the respondent's knowledge; they encourage co-operation and help establish rapport; and they allow the interviewer to make a truer assessment of what the respondent really believes. (2000: 275)

This also gives the impression of a discussion rather than an interrogation and builds up interviewee confidence, as the conversation is adaptable to his/her answers. I also found this type of interview technique a learning process for me, as an interviewer. Semi-structured interviews are quite interactive and for that reason they demand that the interviewer remain active, responsive and creative.

b. Interview conditions

I had to take into consideration various factors before the execution of the interviews. Special conditions had to be observed mostly when concerning the adolescent interviewees. Eder and Fingerson (2001) claim that it needs to be acknowledged that children do not share the same power or status with adults in Western societies. The main benefit from interviewing students is:

... to allow them to give voice to their own interpretations and thoughts rather than rely solely on our adult interpretations of their lives. (Eder &Fingerson 2001:181)

It is important to create a natural interview context in a non-threatening environment, avoiding resemblance to classroom lessons. At the same time the content of the interview must be representative of their age. Cohen, Manion and Morrison mention that:

... there is the need to address the cognitive aspect of the interview, ensuring that the interviewer is sufficiently knowledgeable about the subject matter that she or he can conduct the interview in an informed manner, and that the interviewee does not feel

threatened by lack of knowledge. (2000: 279)

For that reason I was very explicit about the procedure and the fact that the interviewee is not being tested but supplies me with knowledge and understanding of my research. It was made clear to them that at any point they could ask me to stop the recording if they felt uncomfortable or wanted to ask me something off the record. They also had the right to change a previous statement. All the students' interviews took place in the theatre, which is a quite isolated place with minimum noise levels. The teacher's interviews happened in the support learning room. I used audio recording equipment that is commonly employed for interviews. Nevertheless it is believed that 'an audiotape is selective, it filters out important contextual factors, neglecting the visual and nonverbal aspects of the interview' (Mishler 1986, in Cohen et al 2000: 281). I had thought of using video recording equipment but decided against it. I sensed that the students would have felt intimidated by the camera. During the lessons they tended to forget that it existed and they were aware that it did not particularly focus on them. I wanted to avoid any stressful conditions and decided to use a tape recorder. In addition at the end of the interviews I wrote notes on their physical behaviour during the interview.

c. Interviews with students

In all projects I conducted interviews with a small number of students. I tried to consider different levels of abilities in order for the group of interviewees to be more representative of their class. There were two reasons for selecting only a restricted number of students: I did not wish to generate more data than I could process and the majority of students were not keen to be interviewed. They were quite intimidated by the procedure and I had to respect their decision. I then decided to maintain a certain amount of interviews throughout the projects. In the first project, which I considered as the pilot, I interviewed two students to obtain quicker data for the implementation of the second project. In the second and third I interviewed four students each time. In selecting interviewees, I aimed at gender balance to capture possible different gender perceptions. All students' interviews were conducted at the end of each project.

The first two projects consisted of two-part interviews. For the third project I included three parts. In all projects the first part referred to questions on general theatre and drama

knowledge and their personal development in the subject. In the first one I tried to learn more about their previous knowledge of theatre and drama and whether it occurred through their education or other factors like personal interest. This information allowed me to ascertain to what extent the English educational system encourages this kind of knowledge and specifically that related to historical theatre. To a certain degree students will be aware of British theatrical tradition, especially focusing on Shakespeare. In relation to this I wanted to examine what they might know of other historical periods and especially if they had any awareness about ancient Greek Theatre. The questions on this theme were the same for each project.

The second part for the two first projects and equivalent third part for the last project focused on the project those students undertook. The questions encouraged them to define their personal reflection and understanding of the project's activities and its overall impact. I tried to raise questions that would help me clarify how the project was received and what were the main difficulties that students encountered. I also decided to expand on issues that were not mentioned such as the playwright's perception of the play. I believed this could allow me to estimate their future potential in investigating profound issues and their current consequences. In the first project I asked students' opinion on how to expand and improve the project in case they suggested ideas from a different perspective. Some of the questions in this part differed between projects. For example the second project included more questions than in the first. It included questions for the chorus' activities and its contextual purpose in the story. Another question in the second project referred to the questionnaire that they were given.

The third project interviews did not bear too many similarities with the others. The performance had a catalytic effect not only to the structure of the project but on the structure of the interview. The second part of the interview concentrated on the students' reflections on the performance. Evidently the third part, which referred to the project, had a lot of reference to the performance, as it was a catalytic factor in their overall perception of the project.

d. Interviews with the class teacher

I have conducted two interviews with the teacher throughout the projects. The first interview

with the teacher took place in October 2003. It was mentioned that the teacher decided to videotape the session for her own reasons. She intended to use the recordings for the exam board. At the end of the term she had to observe the videotapes and assess students' levels and quality of participation. She also wanted to assess their written work. Therefore I delayed the interview until this period, in order to give her more time to reach her own conclusions about the project. This condition also allowed me more time to reconsider the topics on which her interview would focus. I thought that an interview with the teacher would be helpful as she could give an informed opinion on her students' participation. She knew in advance their potential so she was able to note whether their responses were below or above her expectations. In addition she raised issues wherever she thought that further explanation would help the students comprehend better.

I had divided my questionnaire into three parts:

In the first part I try to focus on the teacher's teaching career and her views on theatre and drama. I think it is necessary in an introductory interview to inquire about the teacher's background, especially how the interviewee perceives her teaching vocation and why she took this career path. In this part of the interview the teacher will also get an identity instead of being only a name mentioned in my research. She will be given the opportunity to narrate part of her life, connecting past with present. In this personal journey you could always identify the main problems and the gaps in the education system, specifically to do with drama, and how individuals like her try to overcome obstacles and adjust to the problems.

In the second part of the interview I tried to direct the conversation to the project. I wanted her first to comment on the project as an overall activity. Her remarks could be vital in clarifying the difficulties that occurred and how they could have been avoided. Also, her feedback provides an insight into her views of her students' abilities during the project.

In the third part I endeavoured to get some information on how she perceived my teaching ability. I also included questions such as whether an experienced observer could be used as a method of collecting research data. These kinds of questions tend mostly to examine possible ways of future cooperation.

The second interview took place after the end of the third project. The short time between

the second and the third project did not allow me to prepare a separate interview for the second project. For this reason I tried to include in this interview questions regarding the last two projects plus a comparative evaluation of, mainly, the last two in respect to the performing element. The questionnaire for the interview consisted of three parts:

The first part focused on questions regarding the second project, specifically what was the teacher's opinion of the project, the group's abilities and the students' response to it. These two questions were considered quite important as I regarded this group as less cooperative than the others.

The second part concentrated on the third project and on the performance element, which was an additional ingredient in comparison to the previous projects. It specifically endeavoured to define the educational and cognitive effect of the performance on its own and in relation to the project within which it sat. It also looked at the decision of the teacher to include the project in the students' GCSE examinations papers.

In the third part I tried to achieve a closure with an overall estimation of the three projects and mainly, the last two. Some of the questions were related to the main three research questions. I also asked her to define my role and hers in the teaching process. My final question was to delineate the projects as an educational realisation.

Students' coursework

I collected coursework from the students to assess their understanding of the project. This would also have given me a different perspective of how they felt during sessions, as well as evaluate more objectively the efficiency of the project. I did not manage to collect students' work after the first project as they had already other coursework to complete and the teacher did not want to impose extra work. The coursework that I have gathered was from the last two projects.

During the second project I collected group work material and final coursework based on a notebook I created. The latter consisted of twelve pages. They consisted of translated,

summarised texts with some of the most important fragments of the story-line. Questions accompanied most of the texts, their nature depending on the context of the text. Most of them attempted to ensure that students were familiar with the storyline and gave them the chance to record their opinions on gender and social issues that were embedded in the play. Other questions focused on theatrical conventions that were present in the tragedy. The last task in the questionnaire was to write a brief, contemporary adaptation of the play *Medea*.

The last session of the second project was dedicated to revision. During this session information was given to them regarding the questions. The students took notes but did not spend additional time to work further and process their thoughts. This resulted in standard answers that deliver a poor outcome regarding their personal reflection. The students were given two weeks to finish them and deliver them back to me. Nevertheless I had to return several times to collect them because most of them did not bring them at the requested time. I photocopied their coursework and returned the originals to the students. Some of the students had torn up a couple of the last pages to avoid further work. Out of eighteen students I managed to gather thirteen notebooks. I suspect that the ones that I did not receive were probably the weakest. This is an arbitrary supposition but it is based on my judgement that those students were unwilling to present their homework. Regardless of the loss of five of them, the notebooks offered considerable insight into the students' standards and to what extent they managed or not to raise these standards. There are also some few exceptions where students produced good material, which allows further interpretations concerning their abilities.

The third project was used as the material for GCSE exam submission as part of the written work on a complete play. The teacher designed the preparation of the examination paper and I had no part in it except in providing audiovisual data related to the project. The latter needed to be sent with the students' exam papers to the external examiner as evidence. The exam paper consisted of two parts: in the first part students described and commented on the performance, the storyline, stage and costumes, whilst in the second part they described some of the activities and their evaluation. All questionnaires included images from the third project that were captured by my recorded material.

The written exam papers proved very difficult to get hold of since they were sent to an

external examiner. I managed to receive only six due to some difficulties on the part of the teacher in retrieving them. The school was under reconstruction and much of the paper work was lost. Students who did not attend the performance wrote two of these scripts and their coursework lacked understanding of and relevance to the activities. Using just four papers it was difficult to reach any conclusions about the group's abilities. However the marks of those exam papers were from medium to high and the teacher mentioned that, with a few exceptions, the whole class achieved very good marks. That means it could be regarded as representative of the overall standards.

To summarise, the data comprised:

1. Interviews with ten students in total;
2. Videotapes and photographs of students working in lessons;
3. Material recorded in student notebooks;
4. Examination papers;
5. Two interviews with the teacher.

Chapter Four

Analysis of the data - first reflection

The last stage of my research focuses on the analysis of data. Considering the large amount of gathered data, I knew I had to reduce the material to what was particularly relevant to seeking insight into my research questions. I was aware that this data reduction might lead to a selective presentation of data. Bell underlines the danger by recommending:

... not to include too many deliberate sources and take care not to select documents merely on the basis of how they support your own views or hypotheses. (1999:111)

To avoid this pitfall I tried to view the data in a 'literal', and also in a 'reflexive sense' (Mason 1996:77) meaning that activities that proved dysfunctional should not be deselected but put under scrutiny in order to understand the factors and conditions that led to them being so. Subsequently this approach could allow me to improve, supplement or substitute other activities in the initial projects for future applications.

During the interpretation of the data I used a comparative model of examination that took into consideration the three main research questions and their sub-categories, in relation to the three projects undertaken and how the activities of each one was processed in the class and finally the impact of my personal teaching in the application of the projects. My concerns focused on the practicality of the chosen methods and activities, and whether their aims were accomplished. To some extent certain activities of the projects appear in more than one research question. This is because their context offers information that could be scrutinised from different perspectives. There were also some preliminary activities designed to give the students a basic introduction or to build up the atmosphere of the class for the main activities. For this reason, no specific emphasis is given to them in this chapter unless otherwise required.

Further steps towards re-organisation took place to simplify and improve the presentation of the chapter. The original categorisation of the general design proved dysfunctional in certain sections. Therefore, I have created a new section '*Performance and adaptations of the text*' regarding the first two categories of theatrical experience in school. For similar reasons I

have included in one section the following three elements: ‘**Ancient Greek Theatre, the theatrical conventions and theatre as a performing space.**’ In the third research question it proved easier to analyse ‘**Direct relevance with the context of the play on universal values**’ in conjunction with ‘**Understanding of the play based on the given cultural background of Athens**’. Other than these alterations, the structure of this chapter remains similar to that of Chapter Two, allowing a direct cross-examination and subsequently a reflective discussion of the research’s initial preoccupations and results.

Do we need to introduce the social, historical and cultural backgrounds of ancient Greece? If so, what do we need to take into consideration?

The first area of investigation **Introduction to the historical-cultural environment of ancient Greek Drama** begins with:

Self-interrogation of the students on ancient Greek culture

As mentioned in the previous chapter we need to discover the extent of students’ personal and educational knowledge of the subject. In this way we can determine, to some degree, which elements of ancient Greek culture need to be introduced. The students’ interviews show that the majority of them had some kind of recollection of previous school knowledge from Y5, mainly about myths, gods and some knowledge of the arts such as pottery. Most of the information received was quite vague and general. A minority of the interviewees had no recollection of the subject. One male student mentioned that he was never taught about ancient Greece at school, although he remembered his learning experience with ancient Egypt. If he was really not taught about ancient Greece it may be possible that some primary teachers choose not to teach this unit at all.

Some students seemed to have knowledge about the use of masks in ancient Greek Theatre from a previous seminar in which they participated in the school. The teacher informed me later that she had invited a specialist to introduce the topic of masks in theatre. As part of this module the students had constructed plaster masks, which were displayed in the classroom. It seemed that they were given some information about their use in ancient Greek Theatre. On the other hand they had no previous knowledge of this theatrical form and did not manage to memorise any detail. This kind of reference also appeared during the

sessions; particularly in the first and the second project, where the knowledge was more relevant to the content of the sessions. It is important to underline that this knowledge is subject to the teacher's personal interest in engaging the students in such study. Therefore it cannot be seen as standard knowledge of this age group.

Self-interrogation of the students was also achieved during the sessions through conversation with the teacher and me. To a certain extent some of the key features presented for the historical period are relevant to our times. For example the students were not unfamiliar with the use of rituals. In the two first projects they manage to depict rituals that people perform today. References to the religious rituals remained few. Most of them referred to rituals that depict the growing development of human beings, especially those related to rituals closer to their age group. We cannot reject the possibility that their knowledge might have been more extensive than was revealed during my research. Relevant knowledge cannot emerge instantly. Some of it may appear through their engagement with the project or even afterwards. Nevertheless it would be inappropriate to assume that their existing knowledge constitutes an adequate picture of ancient Greek Theatre. For example, even if students had holidayed in Greece they had no significant recollection of ancient Greek places that could foster further discussion. Their relevant knowledge concentrated mostly on topics such as arts and myths. This knowledge was gained in primary school and it is insufficient to allow them to shape a rounded perception of the historical and cultural background of ancient Greece.

Historical information about ancient Greece

The results of the **first project** in conjunction with the subsequent interviews of students and teacher were catalytic for the development of this section. It convinced me that it was essential to provide enough background information about ancient Greece. In particular, the first project did not introduce any historical-geographical elements of ancient Greece due to time constraints and selective information. At the end of the project I could not help wondering about certain issues. How did the students visualise this country? Did they really know where Greece was? How could I offer them a more basic and introductory approach to the subject?

Based on these assumptions the **second project** introduced more visual material. I designed a map of ancient Greece that allowed students to have a visual reference of the country. The map was provided for each student and also displayed on an overhead projector. It displayed the most important cities, in order for students briefly to be informed about the economic and governmental status of city-states. Both students and the teacher were interested to learn about the distance of several cities from Athens, what they used to cultivate, and the climate. Further discussion should have taken place to encourage students to learn more on how these cities interacted with Athens and the ways certain tragedies illustrated these relationships.

Due to the subject of tragedy, the **third project** included a map with reference to the city of Troy. During the discussion it was made clear that the city was not mythological but real. I explained that a possible war could have occurred between Troy and Greek cities, due to its strategic position at around 1200 B.C. Archaeological excavations lead us to believe that the city was destroyed at least three times by crusades. It is possible then that Homer based his Iliad on facts that took the form of legends and myths over a period of four centuries. Students expressed an interest in the conversation, and led me to believe it allowed them to construct the origins of the tragedy's storyline.

Exploiting Athenian socio-political life to promote further understanding of tragedy

This area was examined in the first two projects. In the second session of the **first project**, the students were introduced to the activity '*Social life in Athens*', which was intended to engage them in a consideration of the social and gender conditions. In this activity, students were divided into groups. They were provided with cards containing information regarding certain topics. They were asked to read and discuss the topics and then try to create still images to present in class. The main subjects covered were marriage, adultery, divorce, daily life etc. Each group was asked to present one image. Their still images showed good understanding of the text. In addition I asked the students to guess what their fellow students might be presenting. This activity proved easy for the students to comprehend. I believe that the main reason was the use of still images. This technique is very popular and one of the first things to be taught in drama sessions. They are also quite effective as it takes minimum

time to create and provides opportunity to expand physically and vocally.

Students' comprehension of the above activity and its aims were revealed instantly in the next activity, particularly when the chorus was intervening in the couple's quarrel, with verses from *Medea*:

It is a strange form of anger, difficult to cure, 574
When two friends turn upon each other in hatred.

Jason though you have made this speech of yours look well, 576
Still I think, even though others do not agree,
You have betrayed your wife and are acting badly. 578

I asked whether they thought the group consisted of women or men. One male student noticed that it could not have been women because they were not allowed to leave the house. Although he gave the wrong answer, (the chorus of *Medea* was female) his observation was well thought out and it showed an ability to employ the new information that he was given from the previous activity. I found it necessary to explain about the theatrical license displayed in the ancient Greek Theatre. The female characters appear to follow less stereotypical roles and norms than their current social structure might have permitted. In this way women appeared to be allowed to engage in theatre in a less conventional manner, for example, being allowed to appear outside the house.

The **second project** allowed me to explore other issues such as the political situation in Athens at the historical time that the play was performed. In the third session there was a brief discussion on Pericles and the legislation related to citizenship. When Pericles' name was mentioned some of the students pointed out that they heard this name before. The following dialogue followed:

... So he proposed a law which was voted in by the people of Athens that did not allow any Athenian man to get married with a non-Athenian woman. Which means that if you were to get married it had to be with a woman from Corinth or from Argos...
(Christina)

They kill him? (interrupted by male student)

No, his children would not be able to become legitimate Athenian citizens. This law was introduced twenty years before the performance of *Medea*. So when we're coming to the period of the performance you have the first generation of illegitimate children of marriages between Athenians and non-Athenians. So the children were unable to

become. (*I pause and wait for them to answer*)

Athenians. (*male student*)

Athenians. (*repeat for emphasis*) Do you see anything closely related to the story?
(*Christina*)

Yes. (*some students' answer without further explanation*)

Bear in mind that Jason decided to get married to a Corinthian woman who was Greek. Medea actually wasn't from Greece but further away, the Black Sea from Colchis. So we have from one side Athenian and non-Athenian weddings and a reflection of this law in the play by a Greek and not Greek, Barbarian wedding. (*Christina*)

The sixth session consisted of a conversation allowing students to discuss the issues touching on the 'Social life in Athens' activity. They were asked a hypothetical question: 'if a chorus was present during their quarrel what would have been their attitude and what gender would the chorus be?' Again students managed to depict the impossibility of the chorus consisting of women because of their sex. They argued that women should not have been outside their homes, so the chorus must have been men. As a result the political position of Athenian men was mentioned.

The results of the students' interviews from both projects were not very encouraging. Out of six students, four answered correctly regarding the lifestyle of Athenian families. The same amount managed to identify the difference between Medea as a model of woman with the stereotypical one.

This activity was not incorporated in the **third project** as a result of the performance, which was set in the Second World War. I believed the coverage of three different historical periods would confuse the students. In addition we needed more time to analyse the performance. Another part, which was not developed further due to time constraints, was reflecting on a possible relationship of Pericles' legislation with the context of the tragedy. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that Pericles' legislation recognised legitimate offspring only amongst marriages between Athenian citizens. If this has been discussed it would have allowed a more clear understanding when introducing relevant activities. Furthermore, it could allow us to link their political condition to a contemporary situation and allow students to comment on their knowledge and experience.

Religion and mythology

As mentioned in Chapter Three, tragedy competitions were part of the Dionysus festival. This information was brought up in all projects: some more than others. The theoretical debate revolving around the association of the Dionysus cult with the dramatic form was not approached. Such analysis would have needed ample time and information in order to be explained to and understood by the students.

The activity, '*The circle*', was designed to engage students with rituals such as sacrifice. It took place in **all projects** with slight variations. It offered supplementary information about the religious participation and acts of honour to the gods but not particularly to Greece. In order to raise this issue more effectively with the students, it might have been useful to give some references regarding the practice of rituals and sacrifices in ancient Greece. Looking back on this now, I could have referred to them more specifically in my **third project**. The story of Iphigenia offered the opportunity to discuss the symbolic meaning of sacrifice. Students found references to human sacrifices during the war period, especially in relation to current affairs. Mythology was also discussed further due to the mythological background of the tragedies' storylines. The students, as mentioned in '*self-interrogation*', had some basic information about some mythological characters.

Another point of mythical reference for the second and third projects was the release in the cinemas of the Hollywood film '*Troy*'. Especially in the third project the students asked whether '*Troy*' resembled the book '*Iliad*.' Their questions generated a discussion and further explanations were given about the diversions from the original poem. In addition, I had the chance to discuss the role of characters that were also presented in *Iphigenia in Aulis* such as *Agamemnon*, *Menelaus*, and *Achilles*. Students showed an enormous interest in the Trojan War, specifically its cause, and how it was directly related to the sacrifice of *Iphigenia*. For this reason they were also told about the storyline of the *Atrides* family along with the family history of *Paris* and his relation with the beauty competition between the goddesses of *Olympus* that took place at the marriage of *Peleus*. Some of the problems the students confronted were their difficulty to absorb or even pronounce the Greek names and to commit to memory the bloodline relationships between the characters. As a result the teacher wrote on the whiteboard the names and how they were connected with each other.

It would have been practical if they were also provided with a leaflet or if this information was projected for them on the whiteboard. Such action would allow a constant visual reference. Another option would have been to provide in advance a leaflet with the names of the characters and request from students to write the relationships between them while returning to Exeter from London after the performance of Iphigenia at the National Theatre. In this way they would have been able to transfer into writing their vivid memories from the performance. The lack of preparation before the project was due to the fact that we did not know what to expect from the theatrical performance. It is reasonable to expect the teacher to attend the performance in advance but this is time consuming and not always practical, especially when the performance takes place in another, distant city.

Theories on the origins of ancient Greek Theatre

In the **first project** I designed a main activity called, '*The circle*'. The aims of this activity were to help students to discover the roots of theatre in primitive action, and to associate the exercise with some of the features of ancient Greek Theatre, (i.e. religious features, masks, songs, chorus etc). This activity included student self-interrogation. Following some preliminary breathing activities the students were asked to sit around a flattened parachute. They were asked a series of questions about primitive people and their community behaviour when gathered together. This is a part of the discussion:

What will happen if you put one person in the circle? (*Christina*) (*I asked for a volunteer and put him in the centre of the circle.*)

He can dance. (*student's reply*)(*The boy's natural reaction to that was to start dancing. The rest of the students laughed.*)

Do you think that if he were dancing that the shape of the circle will be kept the same?' (*Christina*) (*Students answered that it would look more like a semi-circle. I gave the boy a white mask to wear and a tunic on his back. A student commented that he looked like the "Phantom of the Opera".*)

How would a person look if he was dressed differently from us? What can he do in relation to us? (*Christina*)

Talking to us. (*male student*)

What if he says something and we respond? (*Christina*) (*The student was encouraged to say something. He stood in silence. I suggested that he welcomed us.*)

Welcome. (*male student in the centre of the circle*) (*The students around the circle repeated the same line. I put in the middle of the circle a box covered with a cloth and I suggested that the class clap their hands, while the boy walked towards the box holding a basket with objects inside.*)

What did he look as if he was doing? What was he carrying? (*Christina*)

Offering, presents. (*a student's reply*)

To who? (*Christina*)

To Gods. (*female student*)

Why? (*Christina*)

To please them ... to ask something from them.' (*male student*)
(*I suggested that he might be offering gifts to ensure the gods' blessing for the fertility of the earth, which was an important issue for their survival.*)

What if the people around the chorus were singing a song? (*Christina*) (*The teacher of the class picked up a nursery song. They all sang the verses and the boy in the circle responded by beating a drum.*)

What if you were dancing? (*They held hands and sang a simple rhythm while the boy in the middle was beating the drum*). What does it look to you? (*Christina*)

Like we are celebrating something. (*female student*)

What will happen if you put two people in the circle? (*Christina*) (*I asked them to say one sentence to each other; and went closer to them to help them*).

I think the gods will be on our side. (*male student*)

I do not think so, not after what we did. (*female student*)

What could we say to them?' (*No answer*) What if we all say? The Gods will punish us. (*Christina*)

The pair in the centre of the circle repeated their words and the rest of the students read aloud the suggested lines. Additional information on the religious festival of Dionysus and the genesis of tragedy was also discussed. The conversation generated a simplistic view of the creation of performing space and it did not explore the reasons for such development except in terms of causality. The results of this activity were not the expected ones. It was more difficult than I thought to find a thread of quick and sequential activities that would help them recognise the first forms of tragedy without the danger of directing the activities. It left little space for active intervention and participation by the students.

In the **second project** I tried to focus more on specific areas of primitive life and their relation with theatre's origins. I mainly focused on the use of the circle, as a point of reference for the community, and in association with basic survival needs such as hunting. Special focus was given to the transformation role of prime individuals of the tribe and their role in a first notion of theatre. I used illustrations of primitive paintings found in caves as well as physical and narrative ritualistic activities. The students had the chance to create still images on the given audio material and proceed into creating short storylines. In this session a further discussion was designed which was intended to focus on the importance of religion and the creation of myths in the establishment of social structure. The topics focused on were:

The creation of personified gods and myths;
The development of agriculture and how it affects the social structure of communities;
The creation in Greece of city-states;
The development of religion in the new social order (city-states).

The participation of the students in the previous section did not leave much time for such discussion. The decision not to touch these aspects was closely related to whether their relevance to the project's context was important enough. What became more obvious was the whole activity showed an inability to connect this area of learning with the storyline of *Medea*. This became more obvious in the last project.

The theme of tragedy in the **third project** was different. Iphigenia's story had an obvious relevance to rituals via her sacrifice. At that point I thought of keeping the session so I could possibly relate it later with the final act of the play. I altered the activity and focus on sacrificial rituals. This resulted in a partial alienation of the theory of rituals in the birth of theatre but had more relevance with the storyline of the project. The activity starts with projected images of primitive paintings. The main image illustrates the famous 'sorcerer'. The group was very engaged and the discussion was extremely fluent compared to the other projects. In the first practical activity the students were asked to create three hunting stories. One of the groups of students had the sorcerer killed by accident after being mistaken for an animal. I decided to take advantage of this creative student version. I asked them to find a way of punishing the hunter for killing the sorcerer, because his death would bring pollution to the tribe. They decided to sacrifice him and they created a stylised ritual.

Some of the students were the performers of the ritual and the rest of the class represented the tribe in a group manner that resembled a chorus. Later I realised that I could have used the same material to generate thoughts about the army reacting as a mob in the effort to catch Iphigenia, as they thought she might escape the sacrifice. It would have stimulated discussion about the psychological effects not only from the point of view of the unseen army but of the characters themselves. The students could also have visualised the pressure and fear of the characters in the specific scene, and how intense the barricade of the door was, in the characters' attempt to prevent Iphigenia's sacrifice.

The audio-visual recording data of all three projects proved that students found this session particularly interesting and enjoyable. The ritualistic approach that was adopted proved simplistic but functional for comprehension. There was a good participation in both the discussion and practical part of the session. I believe that happened because the students were partially aware of the primitive period, and the majority found it easy to understand. It was also indicated by the written work of the students in the third project. All the samples of the GSCE examinations papers described one of this session's activities as their favourite one.

The choice of alienating the session from the initial aim from the subcategory 'Theories on the origins of ancient Greek theatre' was a result of students' participation and outcome in the class. What became more obvious in the last project is the lack on my part directly to engage the sacrificial rituals with the text of *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In this way students could explore the fears of mother and daughter, the selfish and unlawful motivation of the leaders and the irrational behaviour of the militants. They could draw direct conclusions and similarities from contemporary news such as the Russian school deaths, which were mentioned several times. Conclusively, this area had its own value but in comparison to the actual understanding of this tragedy and the way it was presented in the class it did not prove vitally important.

In which way do we approach the features of ancient Greek Drama?

Ancient Greek Theatre: theatrical conventions and performing space

Throughout the three projects, with a few exceptions, the students seemed to be unable to describe theatre constructions of any historical period. This was made quite obvious during the interviews. One of two students who were interviewed in the first project displayed some knowledge of Shakespearean theatre. I am certain that with visual information they might have been able to identify theatrical constructions. They might have also lacked verbal efficiency or the appropriate vocabulary to describe any of them. Some of the interviewees mentioned ancient Greek Theatre but their knowledge derived from the project in which they had previously participated.

The first information about ancient Greek Theatre was given in the first session. A projector was used to display selected photos. It was an informative and self-interrogated procedure. Students were asked to describe ancient Greek Theatre according to the illustrations. They described the size, shape and the lack of a roof. They were also asked to estimate the period the performances took place. It was a basic and simple introduction to the theme, and mainly intended to stimulate and prepare them for what would follow.

For homework the students were given a six-page leaflet, which was obtained from the Internet and slightly adapted to the needs of the project. The leaflet provided information about the construction of the theatre, its devices and performing elements. It was accompanied by a set of questions based on the leaflet. They were asked to study the coursework carefully and write down their answers. I had assumed the students would have completed the assignments given. It was a shock for me to realise that only one of them had bothered to come prepared. During the session, precious time was lost in explaining the context of the questions and to stimulate answers. The fact that I was not their teacher made me reluctant to demand further homework. At that point I did not question the context of the work handed to them; I simply accepted their lack of commitment without question.

In the **second project**, I re-introduced elements of ancient Greek Theatre in an activity called '*Wall information*'. I devised a questionnaire based on five categories:

theatre as a construction;
actors, costumes and masks;
chorus;
music;
paintings inspired by tragedies and myths.

Each category consisted of selected illustrations that were placed on different walls. The students were split into groups and given the same questions. They had to visit each wall and try to retrieve information by observation and discussion. This could have a more positive effect for absorbing the given information. I also decided to add a sense of competition and introduced a system of points for every correct answer. Altering this activity proved a practical strategy. Difficulties in answering the questions were considered. For example, the students were given the three main areas of the theatre and asked to identify each area represented. They got confused because some terms have different meanings in our time and they did not try first to discover the utility of each space. For example the word *theatron*, which referred to the auditorium, describes in our time the whole construction. Nevertheless, overall, the results of this activity were very encouraging.

The activity '*Wall information*' was also introduced in the **third project** with minor improvements. I structured differently the question regarding where the theatres were built by specifying the geographical position of the building. In the second project the students replied in a completely different context referring to the specific city instead of the geographical setting of a hill. The last category was removed because the activity '*On ancient Greek Drama through three tragedies*' was not introduced. The only problem I came across during the third project was a delay in starting the session. Another drama teacher replaced the teacher that day, and she had to speak to the students on a particular issue. As a result, we ran out of time. We had to complete the activity in the next session but I think the students felt a discontinuation. I also decided that it was not necessary to have a competitive atmosphere and did not include the game points between the groups.

During the same activity, the students were asked to identify the structure of the theatre and to find where chorus and actors performed. Upon examining my data, I realised that the way I asked this question implied an initial separation of actors and chorus in the performing

space. As mentioned in the chapter: *Research questions that drive the enquiry*, there are different opinions about the performing area. I tend to agree with Graham Ley's view that the actors moved in both spaces (skene and orchestra). I do not mean that I had to impose this view on the students, but I could have tried to encourage some feedback from them without directing their answers. It would also have been wise to clarify for the students which questions were hypothetical to stimulate their thoughts. Clarifying issues where historical evidence contained ambiguous or contradictory views adopted by theorists would also have been beneficial.

In relation to the performance.

Additional information was generated throughout the project based on students' criticism of the performance. Students of the third project responded in a different and more advanced level. Students' comments in the first session focused on the scenery of the performance. The following conversation ensued:

The only problem I had with the play, it was getting, like tired, like the same setting; they should have changed it. *(male student)*

That is interesting. I think it is a picture of a Greek, a Greek convention. It is good thing that you have pointed out. *(teacher)*

It must have been just a stage flat. *(female student)*

It was a flat. *(male student)*

The flat looked so heavy. *(female student)*

Solid. *(female student)*

I think it was all right that they used the same background they didn't really need to change it. *(male student)* *(Students are arguing together. Teacher intervenes).*

I know you are used to seeing drama where a change of setting takes place. *(Christina)*

.....

That is a good thing to write down - that you noticed that there was only one setting. And I think, isn't that so in all Greek drama, that they only use one setting? *(teacher)*

There are some standard things happening in the Greek theatre. *(Christina)*

That we will talk about. *(teacher)*

.....

I like the fact that whenever a character will leave he will not always go through the main front door. Sometimes they would... *(student)*

Different entrances and exits. Write that down. (*teacher*)

How many entrances and exits did you see? (*Christina*)

Three. (*male student*)

Would you consider all three as entrances? Think about it we have... (*pausing for the students to continue*) (*Christina*).

Well one of them was not exactly an exit it was like upstairs. (*male student*)

Like a balcony or something. (*male student*)

In summary the students noticed two things: there was only one setting, and the number of entrances in the play. The visual feedback proved to be powerful. The director of the play might have changed the time setting, but she tried to remain faithful to some of the theatrical conventions of ancient Greek Theatre. The students also proved to have recollected supplementary information that was given during the class, more specifically; one female student (second examination paper for GCSE) wrote the following:

...It was effective because there was only one set throughout the whole performance, and like a lot of Greek plays it all happens within one day and place. This makes it less confusing to follow and understand because your focus is always on the actors, not the set changes.

The necessity of describing and discussing the scenery of the performance is also an educational realm. Both teacher and the students put much emphasis on analysing scenery. They demonstrated not only descriptive skills but also criticism regarding the importance of the scenery to the general effect of the play. This aspect was also discussed in the **second interview with the teacher**, where she states her opinion:

... and particularly at the end when there was a siege, and there was the sound of the army trying to break in, it was a helicopter that's right, and I think that brought home to them, that made it even more modern that move from the second world war to the present day, and it was at the same time during the beginning of the Iraq crisis, and the whole business of the helicopter and the search lights, actually brought it home to them that in fact it's timeless, it actually has a message for all humanity at any time, and they really...well I was moved by that, and several of them were as well I think.

The text

Engaging students with the texts had been more challenging than any other aspect of ancient Greek Theatre. In all cases I tried to introduce translated parts of episodes as well as one

‘stasimon’ (song). The texts of *Medea* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* were introduced both as reading and performed material.

Performance and adaptations of the text

In the **first project** there was a sense of experimentation regarding the introduction of the text. I started by using a dialogue-confrontation between Medea and Jason named ‘*The quarrel*’. I believe that it could raise their interest if a confrontation between the two characters could be re-enacted. This piece was an edited dialogue between Medea and Jason. I tried to keep the poetic language but I reduced the extended parts of the translated text. The physical presentation of the activity resulted in a form of chorus-characters’ disposition (see more in ‘performance elements’, below). The students were separated into two groups, and in each group played the same character whilst their movements and vocal unity represented a chorus. It was very practical as it allowed the students to understand the reason of the conflict and subsequently engage them with the beginning of the story. It was also a quick introduction to the language of the text.

The second session saw students being introduced to the first *kommos* of the play (verses 628-662). The song referred to love affairs and had relevance to the previous episodes introduced to the students. The students performed the poem in groups (see chorus below) and in free style. They were given small texts to work with, and achieved the aims of the activity, which was to create as a group a physical presentation of this section of the poem. Their overall performance demonstrated understanding of the context. I asked the students a few questions. One asked them to comment on the technical structure of the dialogue, since I did not initially reveal to them any information about the text. They thought that it was difficult and it reminded them of old literary form. One student mentioned that it looked like Shakespeare’s language. When asked which particular literature form it reminded them of, one student replied ‘poetry’. Further information was given about tragedy written in rhythm.

In the following session I tried to introduce the entire play. I followed the technical separation of the ancient Greek play to ‘parodos, episodes, stasima and exodus’ and distributed the fragments to five groups of students. Although this separation did not really occur in the historical period that we were studying it was quite convenient to introduce it in

schools. It allows students to connect with the play by dividing it into small parts that follow a structural line. The text was given to them along with a summary of other episodes. The idea was to work and adapt their episode, as well as, and preferably, perform their scene in front of the class. In this way we would have each group performing every episode in sequence. Unfortunately, this proved time consuming and a difficult task for some students with reading difficulties. I believe I overestimated the abilities of the students; with few exceptions they were unable to absorb the information. They found the text quite difficult and their attention span proved poor. To this I have to add my inappropriate estimation of the limited time offered to them. The session ended with poor results, which demanded the alteration of the initial activity. Subsequently in the next session I reduced the original text and summarised the rest of it.

The results of the students' interviews in the **first project** were contradictory. The male student (see appendix p.164) proved to have participated quite productively in the project. He found the poetic language challenging and acknowledged the difficulty of his classmates to cope. He also proposed that it might have been easier if the text was translated in a more modern way. At the same time when asked whether the aesthetic value was different with the initial translation he said:

I think you do because the poem style made it much more, had a rhythm to it, had more depth to it, and it felt a lot more meaningful.

The response of the second female interviewee was less fruitful. Sometimes she was not even able to give any answers despite the fact that she was present in all sessions. (see appendix p.159) This might indicate that the context of the sessions has been understood differently by students, in relation to their abilities, their levels of concentration and participation during the project. Nevertheless, it might have been worth emphasising certain fragments of the play in order to give less able students more time to study. In my first interview with the teacher I considered it important to hear her opinion on the matter. I asked her whether it is preferable to work with only some scenes instead of the whole play.

Her response was as follows:

The advantages I guess are they got the whole story so they can understand whether,

when they were working in a scene or two, they understand how the scene fits into the whole story. The disadvantages have to be the fact that it was very difficult to absorb in the time available; the whole story was very complex and they need, they probably would have needed, to cover that ground a couple of times to be secure with the story ... But we are constrained again because we've got to cover, we've got to cover everything in the syllabus and things like study of a complete play they only expect you to do it once, while in my experience you can't just do that once you have to study more than one play, otherwise they don't grasp the skills that they are involved with and picking the plot and the character development etc. They can't manage all that if they only ever do it once; they have to do it two, maybe even three times over the course of the two years, to really become at all competent with the skills ...

In the **second project** I had to alter the text more than I wished because of the poorer students' standards. At the same time I did not really have a choice of providing some of the text as homework to save some time. If, for example, I had given them some episodes to study at home, the majority would have come without even reading the episodes. Even if some students had completed the assignments, I still would have had to go through the episodes in order to ensure that the rest of the class knew them.

'The quarrel' activity was introduced again, as it proved quite effective for reasons that were explained in the first project. This time it was introduced after a series of physical activities designed to encourage them to become feistier. The dialogue was altered slightly. I had enclosed slashes between the words to help the students control their breath and reduce the longer sentences so they would not lose rhythm and coherence. The students became quite excited when the teacher picked a rather notorious male student to improvise. She performed her part of the dialogue with powerful physical and vocal status and carried into it the male student who responded accordingly.

The third week saw the introduction of particular sections of the play starting with the prologue. The teacher gave further explanation by referring to something similar that they had experienced:

Let me add that this is usually the beginning of a play that is why I use the name 'prologue'. There is always one person or god coming out and setting the situation so the audience will always know what is happening. (how the story starts) (*Christina*)

Yes. (*respond some of students*)

Many of you might do Romeo and Juliet in GCSE. There is a prologue in the beginning setting ... what's happening. In fact it's telling you what's happening in the end, which

is not usual in a prologue. (*teacher*)

Then we have the entrance of the chorus with probably an explanation of their appearance and this is called Parodos. (*Christina*).

Parodos. (*repeats one of the female students*)

Yes. (*Christina*)

Parodos. That's right. Don't be afraid of these words. (*adds the teacher*)

Each student in this session was given pages containing small fragments along with the summary of the episodes. They were asked to put them in sequence and produce the story introduced in previous sessions. In addition, they were given two decorated A4 black pieces of cardboard to work as a cover and back pages for binding all the assignments they would receive during the project. It offered them a source of reference when needed, and could be kept as a souvenir at the end of the project.

In the next sessions students were presented with some of the episodes (all in a summary form of no more than two pages). The second episode was also shown to them in a video performed by *Actors of Dionysus*. The teacher found the performance by the two actors very powerful. The students had mixed reactions. The text was translated but it remained quite close to the original. They thought it was difficult to concentrate on twenty minutes dialogue that had, according to them, no action.

In the fifth week of the project the students received passages with a summary of the 'stasima' (songs). Based on the context of the songs they were asked to imagine their sequence and connection to each episode. The 'stasimon' that was presented to the students had an immediate connection to the episodes in comparison with the *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Therefore it should have been an easy task for students. The majority managed to match them properly but it took more time than expected. This indicated that they were not so familiar with the context of the episodes and needed time to make the connotations. Towards the end of the activity they were given a series of questions to answer. In this way they had the chance to summarise the play and answer questions on the context and conventions of ancient Greek Theatre. For example, the students were asked why the deaths of the royal family were narrated instead of taking place in front of the audience. One student answered:

When you only hear or read about an event, then you can build your own mental image and it can be more dramatised, but when you watch it you are only watching someone else's interpretation. In my opinion I think that it would be much better to hear a narrated version for those reasons.

The last week focused on the presentation of all episodes. The students were divided into groups and each of them had to present one episode. Some of them used elements that were introduced to them in previous sessions such as chorus' coordination and poetic language. During their first presentation, the majority of the students achieved a good aesthetic result. The level of deployment from group to group indicated individual aesthetic development on the issue. Considering that the class had proved somewhat difficult, the final results were quite satisfying and indicated that further rehearsal could have achieved even better results.

This project might have attained better results if the students had attended a performance of the play. During the interviews the students stated that watching a performance would have helped them to understand more about the play. Ancient Greek tragedies did not provide enough evidence of how they were performed. Current performances are based on the element of adaptation. Attending a performance or watching a videotaped performance would have allowed the students to gain a visual representation of how the features of ancient Greek drama are presented, and therefore enable them to improve on their practical work.

In the **third project** the text analysis was structured differently. The first session was dedicated to summarising the story of *Iphigenia in Aulis* for purposes of revision and for explaining it to those students who did not attend the performance. The students showed awareness of the context, which gave more time to scrutinise the text on a literary and intellectual level. A discussion regarding the dialogue of Iphigenia and her father took place, and I wanted to bring to their attention how Agamemnon's answers to Iphigenia implied something different from what she perceived:

Before she knew that she would be sacrificed there was a dialogue with her father ...But do you think he was referring to the marriage? (*Christina*)

He was implying to the marriage but did not mean that. (*male student*)

So we kind of have two meanings. (*teacher*)

Didn't he say that 'Can I hug you a last time as my daughter' because if she is gone to

Achilles she would have been, like, his possession? (*female student*)

I think he kind of said that as an accident Oh hug like the last time not actually naming the sacrifice ... That's irony. (*male student*)

Yeah that's right, good. Double meaning and she said, "Oh you are going to send me somewhere else. Am I going to travel with mother?" and Agamemnon replies "No you are going to travel alone". (*Christina*)

Yeah. (*female student*)

She means marriage by travelling to her husband's land; he means death by being sacrificed and travelling alone to the underworld. (*Christina*)

The discussion was not lengthy but students had an opportunity to view the performance dialogues on a literary level. The conventional division of the play was mentioned to the students in the second session. This was an easier task compared to the second project because of the students' awareness of the plot. After, students were asked to work in groups and present five still images of the plot. They really got involved with this activity and one of the groups added one extra still image that was not part of, but only narrated in the performance. They presented the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Students were informed that murder scenes were avoided in ancient Greek Drama, and they were usually narrated by the messenger. This was considered an important part of the story. In their second attempt they were asked to add speech to their images' presentation that could not exceed two sentences. Some of them preferred narration whilst one group used the characters' direct speech. This structure was progressive and it could be the beginning of introducing larger parts of the text.

In the students' interviews (see appendix p.164) I asked them whether they thought they could have performed our own version of *Iphigenia in Aulis*. The majority of the students tended to agree with the first interviewee:

No. If we had more time, I think we could, a lot of people that watched, they said they find it easy to understand but I didn't understand a lot of the time but I think if we spent more time with the text and the characters we would have been able to play it.

The fourth interviewee said (see appendix p.171):

I think we could if we did it over a lot of time cause it took me a lot of time to get into it and really feel how they were feeling and towards the end I didn't actually want to stop

... the workshops to finish, I wanted to carry on. I think if we did it now it would work.

In relation to the performance

The students did ask me whether the text of the performance was close to the original. I replied that the translation was quite accurate. In order to remind them of the original form of the text I should have emphasised that the poetic form was lost due to the translation. Students did find it quite difficult to follow the plot in major parts of the performance because the characters were narrating previous events. They did show in many cases the ability to recall sections of the text.

There is a certain progression in the approaches of text throughout the three projects. The one I found quite appealing was used in the second project's leaflet where I applied a mixture of summary and fragments of the play to construct a storyline. On the other hand, in an effort to capture all episodes of the tragedy, this technique was rather synoptic. Aston and Savona mention that the play must be read on its own terms instead of transposing the text into a linear narrative with all the conventions that come with it (1991). Considering the techniques that are usually used in the introduction of Shakespeare's plays, I could have tried to apply similar methods to overcome obstacles.

Characters in ancient Greek tragedy

In the **first project** there was not enough development of any particular section, let alone the characters' actions. During the sessions the students were puzzled about the attitude of Jason and Creon but mostly by the cruelty of Medea.

Both the teacher and I elaborated reference to the performance terms. For example in the **second project** (fifth session) the following discussion took place:

The main character in the story is called the protagonist. Is Medea the protagonist in the story? (*Christina*)

Yes. (*replied the majority of the students*)

Yes, so Medea is the protagonist. You need to remember that word. Because it's the name ... we still use that name in English studies that you will find as you start to look at the plot, and often in various films. Mr C., or whoever is teaching English studies,

will be talking about the main character, the protagonist. And the man who works in opposition to that character is the antagonist (*teacher*).

Antagonist. (*a male student repeats the name*).

That's right. The antagonist exactly. (*teacher*)

Most of the students had a problem in creating an accurate description of the tragedy's characters, although the appalling act of Medea killing her children did shock the students.

The particular interest of the **third project** derives from the way Euripides approaches each character. I knew these elements would be difficult for the students to dissect on their own. Their feedback derived from the performance they had attended and the pieces of the text they were given throughout the project. During the sessions I did try to give them additional information that I had obtained from various articles. The following discussion gives an idea:

I just want to mention something. There is one point during the performance that he agreed immediately to sacrifice his daughter. And then we have Agamemnon's version that he kind of, say, that he didn't know what to do but he finally accepted it. (*Christina*).

Yeah. (*students*)

So we kind of have a twisted truth. What really happened we don't know. We have different versions from different characters. (*Christina*)

Was certainly... (*teacher mentions something*)

In the beginning he says "Oh, I did not know what to do" and he accepted it eventually but then Menelaus comes in and he gives us the information that he accepted it immediately without thinking twice. Because the brother was married to Helen he was even more keen to go to Troy. When they had the big argument Menelaus was talking with Agamemnon, he did say that he did not want to kill his niece. (*Christina*)

He did say that. (*female student*)

There are a lot of cases where the characters are saying one thing, and they mean... (*Christina*)

They seem to be a bit two faced... (*male student*)

But then collapsed and called him a coward saying that he was in to get power. (*male student*)

Yeah. (*students*)

Power and popularity. (*teacher*)

Can I get you a bit back, do you remember when the scene started; do you remember what he said himself about the leadership of the army? (*Christina*)

I remember the leaders said ruthlessly that if anything goes wrong it would be because they have not sacrificed his daughter. (*female student*)

Yeah he said that he actually was given the leadership. (*Christina*)

It's all lies. (*teacher*)

So we kind of have here another, you know ... (*being interrupted*) (*Christina*)

He kind of took it himself. (*male student*)

He was given the leadership that he never asked for it but then we get the information from Menelaus his brother "No you asked for it you wanted to become the leader." (*Christina*)

If he was given it surely he would have felt that he has to sacrifice his daughter for his country because the fact that he was doing it for his country. (*male student*)

Menelaus says he asked, begged? (*teacher*)

Bringing everyone in his door something like that, welcoming everyone as long as he gets the leadership. (*Christina*)

...

So there two different views there. Then after that, what happened? (*teacher*)

Then Menelaus sort of crumpled and starting to say oh I don't know you are right, my niece should not be killed. (*interruption*) (*female student*)

He did say that. (*Christina*)

And then he switched around. (*male student*)

Agamemnon. (*Christina*)

And then Agamemnon sort of reversed and said that, oh no you are right and then Agamemnon agreed it would be better doing it. (*male student*)

Agamemnon was resolved (writing and speaking loud clear and slowly). But Agamemnon was resolved to kill his daughter. (*teacher*)

What did you say? (*Female student*)

Menelaus crumpled but Agamemnon was resolved to kill his daughter. (*Teacher repeats what she wrote on the white board*)...

Does anybody remember what was the main argument of Achilles when he learnt that he was used? (*Christina*)

Ahh to pretend? (*female student*)

He said “if I knew the truth” what would he have done? (*Christina*)

He would have come would he? (*male student*)

I would have accepted to pretend if I knew the truth. (*Christina*)

So he was more interested in the truth? (*teacher*)

He would have accepted his name to be used even if it was not reflecting the truth. But now he thought he was involved. (*Christina*)

During the project’s last session a discussion emerged as to who might be the tragic figure in the play. The students mentioned Clytemnestra, Iphigenia, Agamemnon and also Achilles. I tried to reiterate the points that were made in the first sessions regarding these characters. The students did mention that they had difficulty in forming an opinion about the characters. First examination paper for GCSE (male student)

In this play I found it most easy to bond with Clytemnestra the mother of Iphigenia. This I feel was because she came across as being a woman who felt a lot for her children and did not respect her husband much. I also found it easy to bond with her because she was the easiest to tell what she was thinking and feeling; this makes a huge difference in understanding the character...

Second examination paper for GCSE (female student)

As I said before it really reminded me of the Russian school hostages, Clytemnestra would have felt the same as the parent of those school children’s parents. I also felt for Achilles as he jumped in to a situation to save a girl he didn’t know. He didn’t want her to die, and by the end I think he truly does want Iphigenia as he says “I envy Greece because you are hers not mine”.

In this scene he frantically blocks the doors in a desperate attempt to save her, she refuses him, and keeps saying that she has to, but he is distraught because he is about to break a promise, and someone’s life is about to be taken, he truly feels for her by the end.

Third Examination paper for GCSE (male student)

I think that watching the film Troy prior to watching the play Iphigenia at Aulis confused me a bit as the same characters were portrayed so differently. The actors were exceptional and they were all cast very well. Agamemnon was portrayed very differently in the film than the play. In the film he was basically this really power crazed leader and in the play although some of his actions were wrong you could sympathise with and understand why he made them.

It is also revealed from their writing that they did not refer to my comments about some of the characters. For example, the second female student sympathised with Achilles, while inferring from his words that he was mainly interested in the honour of his name. It seems that the student focused more on an overall view of Achilles and disregarded some of the

character's comments. An extended analysis of different parts of the text would certainly have revealed more of the character's actions and words. The third male student also remarked that Agamemnon was more sympathetic than in the film *Troy*. In the film Agamemnon plays "the bad guy". In the performance of the tragedy students were presented with circumstances where bad and good intentions are not as clearly defined as in a Hollywood film. I think that I should have offered them part of the text in written form to study more extensively in class and allow further interpretation of the characters. It is doubtful that Hollywood action films can be used extensively to analyse Greek tragedies. Nevertheless, it allowed me to have an audiovisual reference with which they were familiar. For example I could have looked on comparative modes based on similarities or differences with the historical or mythical background of the main storyline. Costumes, geographical details, architecture elements, music and religion are some of the aspects that could have been brought up. The important thing is whatever the differences in genres and performing styles, it can generate a fruitful discussion and any commonalities could be exploited.

Chorus

The first information about the chorus was received by the students at the beginning of the first project, together with an illustration of a chorus from the performance of Peter Hall's *Oresteia*. It was a brief introduction that was intended to offer an initial stimulus for the group and the opportunity to identify some elements such as similarity of clothes and masks.

In the activity '*The quarrel*', in the **first project** students were asked to adopt a group attitude and to coordinate both physically and vocally their performing of the dialogue. The students were divided into two groups to represent Medea and Jason. With every line they had to take one step closer to the opposite group. The coordination proved difficult but the students seemed to enjoy the tension that was generated by the constant reduction of space between the opposing groups. This was confirmed in a first interview response (see appendix p.143) when a male student, when asked why he liked this activity, said:

It was the way we were kind of set up, it was not so much the lines it was the way we've been set up. Every line we set up we marched towards each other, kind of getting angrier and angrier. (*male student*).

Do you think that the fact that you were in the group shouting these lines had made a difference as well as from shouting individually? (*interviewer*)

I think it does because you feel, yeah, if everyone's saying it and you said it very (*stops*) loudly you feel more passionate about it and it and it is certainly better. (*male student*).

After that they were introduced to the activity '*Social life in Athens*', and were informed about the city's cultural background. The last part of the session returned to the dialogue of the couple but with an additional intervention of the chorus:

It is a strange form of anger, difficult to cure, 520
When two friends turn upon each other in hatred.
Jason though you have made this speech of yours look well, 576
Still I think, even though others do not agree,
You have betrayed your wife and are acting badly. 578

A discussion followed and the students were requested to identify the crowd. The main questions involved whom they might be representing, what sex they were and whether they were supporting Medea or Jason. A further explanation about the role of the chorus was given. The session finished with a quick final performance of the text. Two students read the dialogue while the rest of the class read aloud the chorus lines, whilst standing around the couple in a semicircle. The performance took place twice as the coordination of the chorus proved difficult. In the second session they were presented to the first song of the tragedy (fragment):

Neither city nor friend 655
Pitied you when you suffered
The worst of sufferings.
O let him die ungraced whose heart
Will not reward his friends, 660
Who cannot open an honest mind
No friend will he be of mine.

There was no time to analyse the song as literature. Instead they were asked to perform in groups, one strophe. The students devised physical movement with symbolic meanings and added a lot of feeling to their performance. Most importantly they kept it serious and

aesthetically elegant.

I had initially planned to dedicate more time to the physical development of the chorus. The re-arrangement in one of the sessions due to students' unprepared homework reduced my time and left me unable to achieve this. The last session had closure with the exodus of the play. The participation of the chorus was only vocal. The importance of the chorus as a theatrical convention was mentioned quite frequently. The teacher was also asked about it in the first interview in an effort to establish its importance to the project:

It seems to be the idea that the chorus is fundamental to Greek theatre and I just wanted them to experience ... I am still very tentative about what I would do with Greek theatre because of my personal lack of training in that field. So that is it really. The way, for example, you introduced mask work and the whole idea of being in a circle, they all remembered that when they did their written work: that was something they experienced they really understood and they really remembered it and I think that's it really, if you do it you remember it.

The male student stated in his first interview, that he did not think he had learned enough to understand the chorus' role, and that it would have been helpful to extend the teaching in this area. I took into account the results and comments of the interviewees in the **second project**. The teacher offered additional time and as a result I decided to devote one extra double session for further development of this theatrical convention. The relevant activities practised in the first project also took place. Before the activity, *'The quarrel'*, students were given the opportunity to engage in a series of physical games and activities that prepared them gradually for the demanding feisty and argumentative quality of the dialogue. The teacher also volunteered to perform the fight scene with one of the "notorious" students. (This particular male student caused many disruptions with his behaviour.) This was an effective method as she forced the main disruptor to interact with her, leaving students' undivided attention to the scene that was taking place in front of them. They seemed amused by the unlikely pairing and therefore became interested in their performance. Towards the end the male student started taking his action a bit further but the teacher cleverly discontinued the act. The students were divided in two groups to perform the dialogue. Their coordination was not very successful, as some of the students did not seriously engage in the activity, so we had to repeat it a couple of times. It did allow them though to feel the dynamic physical and vocal status of a group.

In the fifth week the students were given the opportunity to explore physical activities for the chorus. Original musical fragments accompanied them or other musical pieces inspired by ancient Greek music. In the first activity '*Mirror*', students were asked to work in pairs facing each other and using coordinated movements. The activity then changed into '*Shadow*', where instead of facing each other one had to become the shadow of the other and follow movement. Finally it turned into '*Many shadows*'. The students were divided into groups of four with a leader whom they had to follow. These activities allowed the students progressively to create improvisational, stylised movements in groups. Some individuals managed to follow instructions and achieve the main aims. The last song to follow this activity was carefully chosen for its slow rhythm, allowing more time for co-ordination of the group.

In the following activity the students were asked to get beneath the '*Parachute*' and react first to rhythmical sounds of a tambourine and later to music. The student in the third project below explains this activity. The students reacted moderately well, although they lacked the gravity and feeling that were required. For example, in the final part, they were encouraged freely to alternate their movement. One of the male students came out of the parachute and started running around. I believe his decision to come out was creative and something I intended to try later to advance this activity. The negative aspect of his action is that when he came out from the parachute, he started laughing and assuming a grotesque physical body. He came out of the required character and the rest of the group followed him rather amused and losing the level of concentration and mood that the activity required. In view of this behaviour the rest of the students who were watching started laughing which encouraged even more the continuation of the group's attitude. The teacher, quite annoyed, ended the activity and commented on the student's behaviour.

They were also given the opportunity to implement what they had learned previously by performing one song. The class was divided into three groups. Each of them had to work with one strophe.

Now there is no hope left for the children's lives.

976

Now there is none. They are walking already to murder.

The bride, poor bride, will accept the curse of the gold,

*Will accept the bright diadem.
Around her yellow hair she will set that dress
Of death with her own hands.*

*The grace and the perfume and glow of the golden robe
Will charm her to put them upon her and wear the wreath,
And now her wedding will be with the dead below,
Into such a trap she will fall,
Poor thing, into such a fate of death and never
Escape from under that curse.*

*In your grief, too, I weep, mother of little children,
You who will murder your own.
In vengeance for the loss of married love
Which Jason has betrayed
As he lives with another wife.*

1001

I chose a different song from the previous project. I believe this one is more comprehensible, as it narrates a part of the storyline that is never shown in front of the audience, the death of the king's daughter. The groups proved to have absorbed a lot of elements from the previous session. Two of the groups kept the triangle shape of the '*Many shadows*' activity. Although this was not requested, I believe they found a continuity and practicality in re-using this model. Perhaps time constraints also resulted in this choice as they only had a single hour to achieve the aims of the activity. I believe their work was quite satisfactory as they managed to co-ordinate their movements, the use of narration and symbolic style.

In the final questionnaire, the chorus in theoretical terms was developed further. The students were asked how the choice of the chorus' sex could affect the emotional result of the play. Of all the students who answered based on the discussion and instruction in class, one female student actually expanded further:

The gender defines the role that they play because if a man was to be in the chorus they would back up the men, in this case Jason, but women may have experienced her husband cheating so they will be feeling for Medea.

The student explained her argument by placing the women of the chorus in the position of Medea. A further expansion on the subject might have allowed her and the rest of the students to reflect on the sex of the chorus in terms of drama and tension as well as the 'affective dimension' of the convention.

The data from the **third project** gave me the chance to have a more inside view of the students' understanding. This resulted from looking at their written examination papers where they were asked by the teacher to describe and reflect on the chorus as theatrical convention. Most of the activities were thoroughly described by one of the students (third examination paper for GCSE), which made me decide to present them through his writing:

Acting as a Chorus

.... We performed in groups of about six or seven and had two main character playing Iphigenia and Agamemnon and everybody else was the chorus. It worked really well because after trial and error we ended up with a chorus that showed a great deal of emotion and reference to the text.

.... The reason that our chorus was so effective was partly to do without simultaneous movement and we gained this skill from the shadowing workshop which saw us getting in groups of two and following each other's movements. Because I am a martial artist I found this particularly easy. Many of my movements were very martial arty and also very enchanting.

.... It was also effective because we were using sounds such as drumbeats to add to the effect. The reason the drumbeats worked was because they built up the scene that the actors were performing. The chorus work made me feel very involved with Greek theatre and I believe that getting into role was quite easy simply because we had so much background information.

Acting as a chorus part two (The parachute)

In this workshop we used a parachute to help us understand how the chorus works as one body. This workshop was very spooky and mystifying. When I watched the other groups I felt like I was watching some kind of mystical creature. When we were actually under the parachute we communicated to one another using hand signals, as any conversation would spoil the illusion. We started off on the deck and slowly rose as one group. The variation of heights worked very well. We then circled around and around once again as one body before hitting the floor in one sharp movement. When I was inside the parachute I felt like what we were doing wasn't very good, but everybody outside it said how effective it was. This workshop's main intention was to help us understand why the chorus moved as one in Iphigenia at Aulis. My thoughts aren't that it was only to create effect but also to help the chorus' role as the women of Chalcus. It's important to remember that the chorus worked as one because they were all representing one role and not individual roles. In my opinion this workshop also served the purpose of a team building activity.

After the parachute activity, the students were asked to read one of the *kommos* of the tragedy and perform it in three parts in group-choruses. The teacher led this single session. For health reasons I was absent from the school. One male student (first examination paper for GCSE) writes:

After we had finished this task the whole group separated into three groups. Each group had a leader and the others mimic his/her movements and at some point had to read part of the chorus' stasimon three. My group's performance was different than the others because we performed the stasimon as a song and dance. Ours was upbeat and lively and I enjoyed this a lot.

The last remarks of the student regarding their piece warrant further comment. It is important they added music and dance to their performance because they showed integrated elements in their work. It also indicated they took into account references from both the teacher and me that the *stasima* were actually songs. The interview with the teacher took place after they undertook the examination paper concerning the outcome of the chorus activity. Specifically the teacher said:

Yes, that right, the video from chorus... they said that they grasped the idea of the chorus...and the practical work they did in the chorus, it was very much more developed and they really enjoyed it and they really seemed to understand this whole group response. I think that because the chorus was so relevant to them even that it was like a second war chorus, girls from the village as groupies...ehh, almost, they sort of understood that because it is part of their culture, the following of an idol. They understood that element of the chorus.

What is peculiar was that their working piece was kind of cheerful and did not seem to fit the serious atmosphere of a tragedy. In the chorus activities the music was toned appropriately, so they were aware of the mood. At that point they had not watched the video performances to allow them more feedback. I believe they have created this specific performance without considering the effect of cheerful music in the context of a tragic storyline. At the same time it was much easier to produce this mood than a serious one. Maybe if the students were instructed to retain the appropriate serious tone they would have avoided this style.

In relation to the performance

In the **third project** the students achieved an understanding of the chorus' role more than in

the other projects. This is clearly related to their attendance at the performance. At the same time this group of students had the chance to identify on their own what their purpose was and the composition of the chorus. I underestimated their intellectual capacity based on my experience with the previous group.

I bet nobody noticed what the chorus said when they came in. I find it very difficult myself and I already knew the context of their speech. (*Christina*)

They said they were coming from a harbour. (*male student*)

...

They mention what they have done and where they were coming from. (*female student*)

They were talking about the men and they were going like about the men. (*male student*)

...

They brought it very authentic to refer to the second war. The chorus with the black dresses was sort of like people following soldiers around ...What are these women doing there? But I believe they had a reason for being there. I actually thought their mannerism and their gestures and so on; they were very much a part of it. They were ordinary silly women really, very really silly women. (*teacher*)

Weren't there supposed to be blond women? (*male student*)

What was the role of the chorus during the play because when you were briefing the story you did not mention them. (*Christina*)

Like orchestra? (*male student*)

So we have to think what was their purpose? (*female student*)

Was to tell the actual story? Like to point out any parts. (*male student*)

That's what I thought. (*another male student*)

Who are they? We know that ... groupie women ... Who do they represent? We know that in this particular juncture they are groupie women. Who are in the main role? (*teacher*)

The royal family. (*female student*)

They were public - every man every woman. (*male student*)

You have to think what they were doing in every scene, which part they were taking? (*Christina*)

They were kind of bossed around 'cause it was kind to help us bring the bags. (*male student*)

In their examination paper work their writing about the chorus was even more structured. In the first examination paper for GCSE, the male student wrote:

When the women or the chorus first arrived on set I was a bit confused but later in the play you start to tell that they are the chorus because they told you the story out loud like narrators. A chorus in a Greek play is mainly commenting on the events as they happen.

Considering that the chorus of this particular tragedy is regarded as problematic because of their role and relevance of the stasima to the main story, the students managed to a certain extent to reach an understanding of its role throughout the tragedy. The chorus and the characters that were key elements for the understanding of the play were never analysed to the extent I wanted. An exploration of the relationship between chorus and characters occurred only transiently. The students were never given the chance to experience in class the dynamic physical and vocal interaction of the chorus/characters' relationship, and how such a disproportionate arrangement can be balanced in a performance space. In the students' interviews it was acknowledged as one of the areas about which they would have liked to have learned more. There was a reluctance on my part to acknowledge that the 'written dramatic script is provisional, unfinished and open to physical interpretation.' (Margets 2000) Such a notion would have allowed me to look at the context and story of the play in relation with the students' reality to discover what it might mean to them.

Masks and costumes

As mentioned in Chapter Two, lack of time was a limiting factor when introducing the use of masks and costumes to the students. If the main intention of the projects was the production of a school performance, it would have proved more essential to deal with these conventions.

The study of masks was reduced mostly to a theoretical level. In the first project an attempt to include them in the activity, '*The circle*', proved tempting. One of the male students wore a mask and stood at the middle of the circle. This action gained their attention, and it was interesting to note the body language of the person who wore it. The student had difficulty speaking through the mask and most of the time stood silent. Implicating all students in such action might have proved far more difficult and time consuming.

The first stimuli concerning masks occurred in the first session of the **first project**. I showed

a photo from a Peter Hall production of *Oresteia* in Epidauros. It showed a chorus dressed like ‘the furies’ wearing costumes and white masks. I mentioned that this photo was from a modern production and asked them to tell me what they thought of it. The purpose was to create a self-reflective atmosphere where students would observe and discuss the effect of masks and costumes.

In the first project some additional information was given in the form of a leaflet which I provided to the students. The aspect of masks and costumes in ancient Greek Theatre was also covered in class after the students failed to complete their homework. A more structured study of the masks and costumes was covered in the activity, ‘*Information on the wall*’, that took place in the second and third projects. Students were asked to describe from vase paintings the structure of the masks and the clothes worn by the actors. Certain alterations of this activity did take place in the next project after the analysis of the data from the **first**. In the second category I changed the first question regarding the masks. I noticed in the **second project** that the information they obtained from the images did not warrant an extended investigation. None of the students noticed that the eyes were hollow and could not distinguish that the physical stature of the actor playing the female role was that of a man.

In the **third project** the results were better. The students watched some video scenes of performances of ancient Greek tragedies. One was Peter Hall’s *Oresteia*, and the other was under the direction of Varnavas, *Seven against Thebes*. (Both were presented in the annual festival in Epidauros in different years, therefore the performance space was the same). In the discussion that followed the students commented on the costumes and masks of both performances. In the first video the masks covered the whole face of actors and chorus and in the second, half the face. The important thing is that they remarked how the masks and costumes increased the aesthetic presentation of the tragedy. One of the students mentioned that the half-masks proved quite practical as the voices could be heard more clearly.

In relation to the performance

In the last project students had the chance to comment on the costumes of the performance. The costumes represented the Second World War period. One male student commented in his examination paper (third examination paper for GCSE):

The costumes had little importance in the play. The only real analysis I could make would be about the way the chorus were dressed very differently than the main characters which underlined the fact that pretty much the whole cast were of a very high class and that the chorus represent the view of the average woman in Calcus. All of the costumes are not based either when the play was set or not even in the present day but for some reason around world war two. I think that the reason that the director has done this is so that the viewer of the play can make comparison between certain characters in the play and real people in the present day. For example the power crazed Agamemnon can easily be compared to Hitler and this could be part of the reason why the play's costume is from world war two.

One male student mentioned that the sensation that they caused was powerful. I think the feelings were mixed about the aesthetic result of the performance, leaving us to assume that modernising it deterred students from perceiving it as an ancient theatre presentation.

Music

The first interaction with ancient Greek music took place in the second session of the first project. I used a compact disc called '*Music of Greek Antiquity*' and I played two compositions: the original fragment from the tragedy *Aias* and the fragment from the comedy *Birds* of Aristophanes (composition based on ancient Greek musical system.) I asked them to describe the differences between the two musical pieces. They observed how one was melancholic while the other was more cheerful. They mentioned that one was a female voice and that the other was sung by two men. They also added that one was mainly instrumental while the other was vocal.

Leaflets containing further information about ancient Greek music were given to them in the first project. In the second and third project I included the information in the activity '**Wall information**'. In this activity students were asked to identify the musical instruments from the surviving vases. In the **third project** one of the students asked where the musician was positioned in the orchestra. Admittedly I had no answer. I asked the students what they thought was the case. We assumed that he entered with the chorus and probably placed himself close to it. In the activities designed to introduce the chorus, I purposely used original and adapted ancient Greek music pieces to enrich their musical awareness. This way they had a first impression of the music, second, they could identify the instruments. In the chorus subchapter we mentioned that students were also asked to create their own

choreographic pieces when improvising for the performance of the stasimon. One group decided to add music based on the information they received. Although they picked a cheerful tune, they showed ability to integrate those elements.

In relation to the performance

The director chose to use music. The students found it difficult to comment on the effect of music they heard; what they wrote in their examination papers was more of a descriptive account. It is clear they remembered that on the left side of the stage there was a piano and how the daughter played a lullaby when she was left alone on the stage although they did not try to analyse the reason behind her action. They also commented that a few pieces of music were clearly from the Second World War period.

The element of music and dancing of the chorus was even more confusing. They seemed to dance with an invisible partner and the students could not interpret the reason for this. All the examination papers that were given to me had no comment, which demonstrates that students were puzzled and maybe uninterested in commenting on it.

Can ancient Greek Drama offer relevance to our contemporary world and enhance students' critical mind?

Direct relevance with the context of the play on universal values

& Understanding of the play based on the given cultural background of Athens

Their method of approaching *Medea* in the **first project** was through the emotional situation between a married couple. Marital quarrels are familiar to students whether from a possible personal environment or from the media such as television, and the cinema. In the category '*Exploiting tragedy in its historical context*' we mentioned the activity '*The quarrel*' and how it relates to the couple's arguments. Part of Jason's argument was the following:

You women have got into such a state of mind

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That, if your life at night is good, you think you have

Everything; but, if in that quarter things go wrong,

*You will consider your best and truest interests
Most hateful. It would have been better far for men
To have got their children in some other way, and women
Not to have existed. Then life would have been good.* 575

When the students were exposed to the general dialogue as well as this specific fragment, they did not understand Jason's argument and could not find any relationship between his words and modern times. Being unfaithful was not inconceivable to them but reducing women's position to this level seemed unrealistic. At this point the students were not familiar with the social background of the historical period, so they could only comment on the emotional aspect along with their own contemporary views and beliefs.

In the activity which followed, '*Social aspects of Athens*', students had the opportunity to learn more about the gender aspects of ancient Athens. Their first response was to spot clear differences with the past by comparing it with their own lifestyles. This indicates that an extension of this activity could include a comparison with our times, between values and the relationship of the couple.

In the seventh session (**second project**) the students had more opportunity to work on an activity called '*Working on a contemporary version of the quarrel*'. The students were divided into couples. One of the best improvisations was the following:

I gave up my job for you just...for your stupid car, and you, you pay me like this?
(female student)

I didn't mean it to be like this. I left you for this younger, younger woman because for funding, for the children. (male student)

She is half your age. You are old enough to be her father. (female student)

I want the children to go to university. You know our children. I will fund them from her father who owns Burger King. He will pay them to go to university. It is all about university - I've been nice to the kids not for me (male student). (Showing himself to be a bit nervous, like he is not sure if he has convinced her. The teacher and the students are laughing with his physical reaction)

It's not about the children, yeah its all about you, you never see the children. (female student)

I came every Thursday – Friday. (male student)

You don't even pay half of ... (*stumbles*) you don't look after the children; you don't pay anything. (*female student*)

But now I have this Burger King guy I can fund the children for university. (*male student*)

You have known the Burger King guy for five years and you have paid nothing for the children so far. (*female student*)

I am leaving; this isn't fair. (*male student*)

This specific couple matched more elements of the original storyline in comparison to the other couples who tended to focus on his adultery. They not only revealed the obvious affair of the husband but also the argument over his intention to help the children. Future expansion could have allowed the initial pairs to increase into groups of five in order to include participants in the quarrel in the role of the chorus. The ability of all students to transfer the story to our time showed evidence of understanding. Towards the end of the project the students were given a leaflet with a summary of the text and fragments of it. It also contained questions asking students to write a brief contemporary adaptation of '*Medea*'. Only a few students completed this exercise. The following are two samples:

First questionnaire

Medea burst into the room shouting over her shoulder at Jason. He was useless and had started going out with another woman. On top of that she had been betrayed and Creon was evicting her from the country and for that that she was going to injure him or his family. Medea spoke to Creon and begged him to let her stay at least for just one day. He agreed, and when he'd gone, Medea planned her revenge. She constructed a timed Dirty-bomb and hid it amongst some special garments. When the bomb exploded, it would set off Napalm pockets all over the clothes and spray nails everywhere.

She passed the garments to her children and got them to deliver them to Creon's daughter. The princess put them on, and not long after the bomb explodes she ran about screaming trying in vain to pull out the nails at the same time as put the fire out. Creon saw the princess a few moments later, dead on the floor. He ran over and held her and as he did, a second explosion dismembered his weeping body.

When Medea's children got home, she pulled out a 9mm handgun and put a bullet through each child's skull. Jason was left to mourn over the dead children, whilst Medea went to live with Aegeas.

Fourth questionnaire

Medea is betrayed by her husband, Jason who went off with another woman. The chorus, her friends and family come to her house to comfort and support her. The father of the woman that Jason had an affair with comes to see Medea. He tells her to leave her husband because he thinks he might hurt his daughter. Jason goes to Medea to tell her about his affair and how he wants to split up but he will give her and the children money to help them in their new life. Medea will not accept it; instead she plans to kill Jason's

lover. She buys a scarf for Jason's lover and puts poison on it. She sends her children to give it to her. She puts it on and is poisoned and dies. Jason then arrives trying to take the children away from Medea because he is afraid of what his dead lover's family will do. Jason dies from an accident and when he is dying he sees Medea looking down on him in a vision.

In the **third project** the attendance at the performance had a theatrical impact on the students. They were able to comment on what they had seen immediately after the performance and during the journey back to Exeter. A formal analysis of the performance took place in the first session where some of the female students shared their emotional experience. They expressed how they were directly affected by what was happening to Iphigenia and they could not help but cry during the last scene of the performance. The teacher shared her own emotional reaction with the students:

Yeah it was very shocking. (*teacher*)

I was crying. (*female student*)

I had tears come down my face that moment when they barricaded themselves. I just made that connection with that school in Russia where they were barricaded in. I just went. I couldn't hear very much cause I was crying I was crying my eyes out. Cause I just felt it was like in that school in Russia with the barricaded and all that with the loud speakers and the helicopter. So actually that was very real connection with a political war situation today. It's the same sort of story sacrifice. Those children have been sacrificed by Chechnyans and terrorists to get their own way. You think this Greek story is brutal and grotesque and unrealistic and impossible, but if you compare it to what happened to that school in Russia and what the Chechnyan terrorists were doing to try to get their own way it is not so very different. (*teacher*)

They just cut down children. (*male student*)

That's right. And it's ... ok the reasons and the people are different and the relationships between people are different, but it's the same. Basically it is the same story, sort of story. (*teacher*)

During this project there was much reference to a recent event, the blockade and abduction of a Russian school by Chechnyan nationalists. The pupils were held as hostages and the siege ended with the killing of a huge amount of the children. The students are at an age when they are probably becoming more politically aware. This awareness depends not only on the educational system to enhance awareness, but of the family and its social and political background. I cannot be certain whether the students would have been able to identify themselves with this particular incident. Nevertheless they seemed to agree with their teacher's point of view.

The historical information outlined in the second session was presented in an informal manner, and the students showed a keen interest in learning about the original performing period. As mentioned before, the particular time-setting of the play made it difficult to explain the tragedy in three different chronological settings. At the same time it revealed a continuation from a discussion which took place in the second session:

When was it written? (*male student*)

It was written at the end of a war, a civil war, 405 BC. (*Christina*)

The director decided to set it at the time of the Second World War. But it was relevant to us. It was written in 405 BC, it was set in the Second World War towards the end. It had sounds that made it relevant to our days. I think the director did that intentionally to make us realise that there is a message that it is still relevant. There are social issues in it that are still relevant. (*teacher*)

I bet in our times the chorus would have been viewers of TV, probably. (*Christina*)

Where was it originally set? (*male student*)

In Athens. (*Christina*)

When? (*teacher*)

It was performed in Athens and at that period they were almost in the thirty years war with Sparta. So there is political corruption. (*Christina*)

I think it was intended to be helicopters and that's why I thought it was. I thought that the costumes brought it to the Second World War and then I thought that the sound effects like the helicopters and the ... (interrupted by a student). And suddenly arrived at the present day I thought ... I felt I was in that school in Russia and the helicopters were trying to stop the insurgents. (*teacher*)

The similarities with the Russian school incident were discussed several times in the class. The political situation provoking it was not analysed but the incident bore obvious similarities with the barricade in the last scene of *Iphigenia* with her mother. It was to be expected the students would refer to it in their examination papers.

One female student wrote (second examination paper for CGSE):

The play was not like anything that I had expected, as I was expecting a typical Greek play that I would find hard to understand. However this play was quite easy to understand, although it was in the original dialogue it was the actors' expression and movement which made it easy for me to understand.

For me this play was highly emotional as it reminded me of the Russian school children that were held hostage at the time we saw the play, innocent lives being held for power and money, which is kind of shown in Iphigenia. By the way her father Agamemnon wants to sacrifice her for the winds to blow, and the emotions for the people close to her, like her mother when she finds out. It reminded me of the way the families of the young children must have been feeling at the time.

The final interview with the teacher was also focused on this issue. Specifically the teacher was asked if the students succeeded in associating the ancient Greek play with modern times:

Oh yes, definitely, very definitely. That was helped by the fact that it was set in the Second World War, eh-h-h and they could then even see how it could be brought more up to date, or they could have played around with the ideas and they saw the relevance. *(teacher)*

Would you agree that theatre is a point of reference about human affairs and, if yes, what is the main impact of introducing it to children? *(Christina)*

I think there is something they almost absorb without vocalising it. They sort of understand and it's almost like a drip-feed, they watch it and they wouldn't immediately say "ohh this is relevant" they would not vocalise. After a period of time, after talking about it, little elements drip through and they were very moved by the play. And several of them said that they were scared about going to see a Greek theatre because they were not sure it would relate to them; but after they had seen it they felt quite different about it. *(teacher)*

Possible preoccupations of the writer and Athenian audience

It was mentioned in the chapter '*Research questions that drive the enquiry*' that another way of reflecting on the play is to discuss the possible preoccupations of the playwright. During the projects there were no structured activities introducing those areas. Their exclusion from all projects did not result only from time restrictions, as I first let myself believe, but of my personal conflict regarding their real purpose. Nevertheless, I had the chance to mention the possible preoccupations of the writer spontaneously during a discussion in the **first project**:

Why might a writer present thing different from life? *(Christina)*

They need to make it entertaining. They need to present something different. *(male student)*

Is it only about entertaining? It is for entertainment but what else? *(Christina)*

To show others people's minds. (*male student*)

Maybe they're trying to put another point (of view). (*another male student*)

Yeah. To put another point, yeah. (*Christina*)

And maybe they hope, maybe they hope to change things. You had that suggestion in the beginning didn't you? (*teacher*)

I decided to include this area in students' interviews. The less capable students found it difficult to answer. The question was set like this:

The story of Medea is a myth; that means it existed a long time before the writer used this material. But there are some scholars that believe that Euripides was the first to present Medea killing her children to avenge her husband. Why, if the Athenian women were restricted and had no control of their lives would he present something unlikely to happen? What do you think were his motives?

Students found this question difficult but most tried to recall what was said during the sessions and come up with some answers. Two students replied as follows:

It kind of shocked everybody because it was a way to draw the attention to it everyone to see because it was not normal life. Maybe he thought something is wrong with the society and so he, perhaps he was questioning by saying 'maybe if you lock up women and you keep them in the house this might happen'.

He might have wanted to change the way that people looked at women.

The most common explanation by the students was that the playwright created such a situation in order to reveal the unfair social situation of his time. While this does not represent a completely accurate explanation it remains a positive, partial account that brings students closer to a critical reflection. It also does not indicate that they tried to get in the mind of the ancient Greek writer or fully understand the cultural background of Athens. It seems they gained their conclusions through a comparison with their contemporary times. Never were they given any information about Euripides other than he was the playwright and the date when he wrote the play. Students tried to understand the playwright's thoughts based on their twenty-first century cultural perceptions.

Chapter Five

Discussion

A further reflection on the research areas

Few researchers can look back at their work and admit it epitomised perfection. Improvement is a natural process in any research field. The last chapter signifies that belief. Any kind of development that occurred throughout can only result in looking at ancient Greek Drama with a fresh mind. The choice of following action research is directly related with this idea. In Chapter Three I stated that Carr and Kemmis considered action research a form of *self-reflective* inquiry. Up to this point I can only describe it as a *self-involved* research. The dissertation cannot be analysed without exposing the direct effect of the practitioner in the research and without revealing personal impact in any decision made. The process of the dissertation ‘Teaching ancient Greek Theatre in Secondary School’ was entirely related to how I vision ancient Greek Drama in schools, and how I think it should have been researched. It is for the same reason that I chose to implement certain research methods or drama techniques. Now that the time has come profoundly to reflect on the work I need to disengage myself from it. It was at this point I realised how strong this relationship was.

I chose to use action research because I believed it would allow me to improve practice throughout the research. I established that I would use certain methods to achieve this, using the triangulation method as my base:

Observation with the help of audiovisual material

Interviews

Students’ coursework

To a certain degree the collected data proved that my thinking and subsequent teaching approaches changed during the practice which informs this dissertation. However, it is debatable whether my insights are sufficient to draw strong conclusions on how to accelerate the introduction of ancient Greek Drama in secondary schools. For this I need to identify the elements that might hinder further development. Elliot mentions that action research should

‘constantly recur in the spiral of activities, rather than occur only at the beginning’. (1991:70) To achieve this I needed a research method of daily and direct reflection on the projects. Observation, achieved with the help of audiovisual approaches, proved a less efficient measure than I first thought. The transcription process was time consuming. I had to record the sessions and later convert them to VCR format with the help of the IT department. I then spent a considerable amount of time transcribing the video speech to text. Considering the fact I also had a full time job this procedure was quite difficult to sustain.

I now believe it would have been extremely important to have taken notes after each session. The thoughts captured in a daily journal could have had a general benefit. For example, for each session I could have commented on the form and amount of student participation. I could even have included the teacher’s comments on the session by using an audio recorder and spending five minutes with her after each class. I mentioned a couple of times in Chapter Four that I gave up on students’ homework because they did not complete it at home. If I was to take more notice of that and try to reflect further I might have been more critical about the way the homework was introduced, the length of it and the difficulty of the context. The teacher could have informed me about the standards of homework and the abilities of the students. If this procedure had taken place I could have tried to introduce other methods of approaching homework. The journal would have allowed me to have a direct and conscious reflection on the daily work. I use the word conscious because I believe every teacher makes some decisions on how to improve sessions based on the results of the most recent lessons. Taking into consideration my limited teaching experience, keeping a diary could have delivered an even bigger advantage as I would have been able to re-synthesize the choice of activities, their time length, and their level of appropriateness for the students and the project. Consequently, more drastic changes in methods and activities would have taken place from one project to another showing a more progressive development throughout the projects.

Following that train of thought I can see now why other research methods did not follow a more obvious and positive progression. When I studied again the interviews with a more critical sense of the research questions, I noticed that the interviews offered more evidence than I initially thought.

In the first and the second project the students were asked about the activity of the social background in Athens and whether Medea's lifestyle suited it. Most of the interviewees did not reply and those that did said that Medea did not blend well with that lifestyle but they were unable to fully explain the reason or remember the social background which might have helped them clarify their thoughts. This was already revealed in the first project's interviews and similar attitudes emerged in the second project. I did not really try to investigate why I got such poor results since the activity was a success in the class. The weakness was actually in the process of connecting the Athenian social background with the play. The activity should have been introduced in such way that it supplemented and contextualised the exploration of gender issues in the play. Bringing students to a fuller understanding of and exploiting the inequality of the sexes should have been outlined as one of the aims of the project. This would have provided a clearer line not only for the next project but for reviewing the area that this activity represented.

Moreover, I could have evaluated further the role of certain areas of investigation by asking students whether knowing about the historical background or certain contextual issues had significantly helped their understanding of the play or whether those sessions could be sacrificed to offer more concentration on the actual play.

If such steps had been taken earlier they could have affected not only the course of the projects but also the structure of this dissertation. Looking generally at the latter it followed a specific line of thought. It is based on three research questions that drive the enquiry, which are theoretically argued in Chapter Two. Projects were designed to include most if not all areas of investigation proposed by the three research questions. The ambition of sustaining those areas of enquiry resulted in overloaded projects, which did not give the sense of integral teaching modules with a main core and focus. Chapter Four was introduced with a similar structure, maintaining the focus on the questions and their subcategories. However, the projects were analysed in a dissected form; my examination of the activities is based on the investigated area to which they belong. This structure diverted the focus of the research. Instead of analysing the research questions and their impact throughout the dissertation, Chapter Four focused on the validity of the activities and how they could have been improved or altered.

Effectively, this chapter could have promoted further practice based on these results but, beyond the outcome of the projects, there is evidence that the research questions themselves need to be re-examined. Even during this late stage of my research I needed to look at my motives for selecting those questions and their real implication in the formation of the dissertation.

In the introduction it was mentioned that the first year of my research I attended courses that motivated my research. The courses affected to a certain degree the setting of the research questions. I considered at that point that it was vital for secondary students to place ancient Greek Drama in its historical background to understand the theatrical form and its context. While my knowledge of ancient Greek Drama seemed adequate it was not in line with the English school requirements and pragmatic conditions to be found there. Moreover, the focus of the modules that I have attended was not the tragedy *per se*, meaning the storyline and its context, but other areas such as the social background that infused the stories of tragedies or the cultural background and the spatial development of the art. This was a perfectly reasonable content for postgraduate students who were already familiar with ancient Greek texts and their contexts and were more mature in understanding and negotiating such ideas. Even if there was a provision in Chapter Two to acknowledge the intellectual level of secondary students, and to adjust the introduced subject, the focus of the research had already been divided into too many segments without prior identification of the *need* for introducing ancient Greek Theatre to secondary students.

The focus of the initial research was on the art form, a decision taken by me in the absence of sufficient pedagogic knowledge about the teaching of theatre in schools. Instead I relied on books to form my opinion on issues such as: How was theatre taught in a class? What was the teacher's focus? What did they consider important when teaching historical theatre? When I started teaching the projects the gap between the theoretical scheduling and the conditions and orientation of the subject was disproportional. Achieving grounded knowledge on the actual teaching of theatre would have probably helped alter how the research questions were shaped and investigated.

1. ***Do we need to introduce ancient Greek cultural background and if so to what extent?***

2. *In which ways do we approach the features of ancient Greek Drama?*
3. *Can ancient Greek Drama offer relevance to our contemporary world and enhance students' critical thinking?*

The three research questions set out to investigate students' holistic view of the art form. I am not disputing that knowing about the cultural background or introducing the specific theatrical elements of the form is not important. Students achieved insights in both areas, but without establishing the play's narrative at the centre of each project all other areas of study are in danger of losing their meaning. Their quality and importance can only be established and evaluated when a substantial effort has taken place to introduce the storyline and create opportunities for students to find personal and collective meaning in it. The story and the meaning of tragedies that were so poignantly mentioned in the first chapters were wrapped in the subcategory 'text', in the second research question and mainly in the third question under the category 'Direct relevance of the context of the play to universal values'. Although the text was examined in all projects it was introduced as a narrative and a performance script, with no further plans for expanding on the ontological questions or moral issues embedded in it. Aspects of gender issues, for example, were only examined as Athenian cultural background and parallels were not drawn with the contemporary society as lived by the students.

The third research question in Chapter Two was divided into two categories 'Understanding of the play based in the given cultural background of Athens' and 'The direct relevance of the play to universal values'. There is a very brief mention in this section suggesting how directing emotions and feelings would help the students gain insight into the storyline of the plays but mainly it was left incomplete. The plays that were introduced in the projects were never analysed on a pedagogical concept. This section was overshadowed by my beliefs that their 'real' educational benefits would mainly derive when students discover the affect of cultural background and view the play through that time and consequently gain more insight to their lives. The significance of plays was overpowered by the division of the research question.

Once more the results of the research showed that their interest in ancient Greek tragedy lay somewhere else. Segal mentions that Greek tragedy is viewed anthropologically and psychologically 'as the battleground for conflicting value systems and latent tensions within society' (Segal 1986:22). The concrete human actions that take place concentrate on the

suffering of individuals and their struggle against injustice and fate. The human drama that takes place in the plays offered a first chance for students to reflect on the relevance of these ancient texts.

Throughout the projects it was noticeable that the students were intrigued by the stories. The story of Medea has obvious echoes in contemporary characters that seek revenge against their husbands' infidelity. Similar crimes of infanticide have appeared in contemporary news and contemporary society is still intrigued by what motivates such actions. When given opportunities to respond to the quarrel between Medea and Jason in a modern context, by writing a contemporary version or interpreting scenes of the play performance they attended, they displayed creativity and the sound abilities to respond to such challenges.

In the third project students' experience differed because of the performance they attended. Much re-creation took place in the class and students performed their scenes based on the emotions the performance evoked in them. One student in his examination papers wrote:

This play was quite easy to understand, although it was in the original dialogue, it was the actors' expression and movement which made it easy for me to understand.

The student's comment reinforces Fischer-Lichte's statement on performance mediating between 'two different discourses: that of the culture (epoch/society) within which the play was written and that of the contemporary culture' (1997:302). The students found it possible to relate their theatrical experience with contemporary affairs such as the War in Iraq or the Beslan school incident in Russia. Iphigenia was a victim of political circumstances and her death was the result. Students, to a certain extent achieved an understanding of the nature of the conflicts occurring in the plays and how vivid these human affairs remain in contemporary society. Best states that:

... theatre can bring crucial truths home to us, truths from which we can learn significantly. This of course is why drama can be so powerful educationally. (2001:11)

Their response and participation as performers and as audience were the key elements in discovering the power of the story and the meaning, which resides in ancient Greek tragedies. The students understanding of the tragedies drew on how they perceived morals and ethics in their world. Beyond the obvious relationship to universal values, tragedies create compelling

circumstances in which ‘good and bad guys’ are sometimes difficult to differentiate, where heroes can be weak and selfish and gods are cruel beyond human understanding. These are the elements that make tragedy interesting and captivating. A school journey with fifteen year old students was all I needed to remind me what made tragedy so unique beyond the obvious cultural references. Tragedy possesses the beauty of negotiating in the most poetic way some of the most fundamental aspects of human life. The plays that I introduced in the school should have been analysed from two specific perspectives. First as a teacher, I would have been obliged to study and identify the particular themes that each tragedy dealt with by initial questioning of their pedagogical value. Secondly, when I decided on using them, I would be obliged to maintain the focus of the project on exposing those themes and negotiating their meaning with the students.

The results of the research and their reflexive criticism should allow us to set a new research question that would continue to drive the enquiry. It should question the importance of ancient Greek Drama for students thereby signifying a constant need to argue such a case.

Why should ancient Greek Drama be introduced to secondary students?

It would be important this time to acknowledge the potentials and limitations of the educational environment in a more pragmatic manner in order to implement a more effective research enquiry. The new question should be expanded further including such notions as:

Why should ancient Greek Drama be introduced to secondary students and if it is, how can this be achieved to the best benefit of the adolescent in the current school conditions?

The investigation would require a closer examination of factors such as the National Curriculum, the previous drama and other relevant curriculum elements of the students’ experience, the age and ability of the students and the school environment.

The projects that generated the data for this research were promoted during the study of an Edexcel examination module. While the Edexcel syllabus encourages teachers to engage with ‘the study of a complete play’ and the contemplation of its historical background, the recommended timescale does not leave realistic space for such effort. This means specifically that Edexcel for example, in GCSE Drama recommends:

Each student must participate in a drama exploration workshop lasting a total of approximately six hours and produce a portfolio of documentary evidence consisting of a maximum of six sheets of A4 paper. (Edexcel GCSE in Drama 2002:11)

Further clarification allows the teacher to expand the workshop since the above represents only the *practical* work. Thus, attending a performance, watching or reading the play are considered additional time. Except for the first project all other projects greatly exceeded the recommended hours. This might mean that the teacher would doubt whether it is realistic to cover ancient Greek Drama in such a limited module. Given that the students' work is assessed, even within the potential rigidity of the examination board syllabus, it is possible that a teacher who sees the potential in such study and wishes their students to achieve good results would therefore allow more time for the students to enhance their knowledge and abilities in relation to the Edexcel criteria.

At the same time the second part of the research question allows us to adapt the context of any future projects to include elements of the art form that can help students understand more the context of ancient Greek Drama. The initial first and second research questions consist of all the areas that could potentially be introduced with an ancient Greek play. What needs to be taken into consideration is that, for maximum efficiency, such study should closely relate to the context of the play.

A future project

Mindful that action research is seen as a cyclical process with the practitioner building what they have learned from completed work into new episodes of practice, I attempt here to learn from my practice and reflection on it and to build that learning and insight into planning a further project – as yet unrealised.

In considering a future project as an element in the Edexcel syllabus, it would be expected that the time available would remain similar to that spent on the previous projects (approximately three hours each week for four sequential weeks). This time we would be able to directly reflect on the implementation of the last projects, and avoid errors of the past, in particular time limitations. Hence a possible scheme that I would like to suggest would comprise a main

project with potential expansions. The project would run in four sequential weeks but it would also offer multiple chances to expand on specific and relevant areas providing the circumstances allowed. This idea can be based on a combination of extra-curricular activities and the voluntary involvement of other school subjects. In this way we would be able to offer to all students a basic study of the play and its themes, whilst trying to engage them in further participation and enrich their experience of ancient Greek Drama. In a similar manner, in the teaching of Shakespeare, the Secondary Heads Association comment that:

There was massive evidence for the view that there is an essential positive interrelationship. Curriculum drama, often through staff commitment and excellent teaching, generates and maintains enthusiasm. Extra-curricular drama raises the profile and status of drama, provides a focus to develop work beyond the classroom and extends student perception of drama. Quality in either enhances and complements the other; they cannot be separated. (Secondary Heads Association 1998:21)

To achieve this we need to offer students a range of research and vibrant drama activities that will encourage them to become more active learners, performers and audience members, combining a blend of activities which capture their interest.

I would like to describe my new guidelines, using as reference a specific play, *Hecuba* by Euripides. Although there are certain generic approaches which might be applicable to the study of ancient Greek Drama, final decisions would depend on the play selected. The following suggestions do not preclude adaptation and experimentation may occur during or after a project. Gibson mentions ‘there simply is not one interpretation, one definitive production, one way into the plays, one method.’ (1990: 2) The focus is to maintain interest and to ensure that students are able actively to participate and learn from the project if the evidence gathered suggests alternative approaches should be taken.

In the literature review I discussed three types of theatrical experience. This project will focus on the second category ‘Class work on a theatrical play without attending a performance of it.’ This decision is made on the grounds that the first category requires students’ attendance at a performance; the outcome of this theatrical experience cannot be predicted. A module based on the first category, therefore, would be influenced by students’ response to the play, and could shape the content and organisation of the sessions. The advantage is that the students have an audiovisual reference of the play helping them to remember the storyline.

In the third project after the first session, which was dedicated to the clarification of all stages of the storyline (due to absence of some students from the performance), the script was approached in a minimalist way by presenting each episode through a freeze frame. In the second approach students were encouraged to add some audio signs, and extend their speech each time by incorporating additional parts of the text. Professional actors also know this method; Edris Cooper, who played Medea, said ‘my simpler goal was to reduce every speech into three sentences or less’. (Wilmer 2007:113) This means that less time could be spent introducing the text and more time dedicated to identifying the themes of the play and their relation with current affairs. It is also easier to negotiate the areas of interest by drawing conclusions on the comments of the students after the performance and during the first sessions. Keeping a journal as suggested earlier would help to maintain focus on the research aims. It is quite possible that depending on the difficulty of the text the module might also begin before the performance in order to introduce the story in advance. The third category could be included as an alternative extension of the project and it will be discussed later on.

The project

The intention of the project is to enable students to derive meaning from and understanding of ancient Greek tragedy. For this reason each play in the study needs to be analysed to define the ethical and moral issues that it negotiates and how students can benefit by a consideration of them. One thing that we need to keep in mind from the results of the data is to avoid the potential pitfall of covering the whole play. Gibson highlights ‘Focused, detailed work on short vividly dramatic and poetic extracts can produce memorable pupil work.’(1990: 6) In this way we do not have to sacrifice quality over quantity, while giving the students the opportunity to work in depth and detail on some fragments of the play. The text is presented through different drama approaches and in relation to the issues that we wish to raise in the class. Much of the time is dedicated to students discovering the meaning of each fragment and its relation with contemporary issues. Students are encouraged to explore and express the relevance of the text to their own cultural context through drama techniques, other reflective approaches and the presentation of their work. The intensive work is mainly conducted in the double hour sessions, whereas the single hours are used for extending and reflecting on the topic. I offer below a summary and analysis of the play I contemplate using: *Hecuba* by Euripides.

Summary of *Hecuba*

Hecuba is the queen of Troy that has been enslaved by the Greeks after the destruction of the city. She has to endure the news that her daughter Cassandra is to become Agamemnon's (leader of the Greek army) concubine and the sacrifice of her daughter Polyxena on the tomb of Achilles. In this part, we learn that she begs Odysseus to spare her daughter's life. She has once saved him when he entered Troy as a spy, but he is unwilling to do the same for her. Her suffering does not end there; she learns that his host Polymestor, king of Thrace, to steal his gold, kills her hidden son Polydorous. Hecuba decides to take revenge for her son's death. She approaches Agamemnon and, with his passive approval, seduces Polymestor, killing his children and blinding him. A false trial takes place for the attack on Polymestor and his family with Agamemnon acting as the judge. He finds no fault in Hecuba's actions. In the end blind Polymestor foresees the doomed future of Agamemnon and Hecuba.

Analysis

Hecuba deals with a variety of issues taking place in the aftermath of a devastating war that endured for ten years. Structurally it falls into two halves. In the first part we learn that the Greeks have won the war against the Trojans and that the city has been destroyed. The images that follow could allow students to reflect on war and its consequences such as civilian deaths. Comparison could be made with any similar current affair that students are aware of or brought to their attention through research. Gangi and Taylor state that:

Scenes can also come equally well from the students' daily lives, as from classical and contemporary drama, mediated in any form. Indeed, using improvisation to compare published text and contemporary experience is valuable. (2000:106)

The sacrifice of Polyxena is a story on its own. She epitomises the innocent victims of war such as those who are bombed or killed, and reported as collateral damage. Hecuba begs Odysseus to save her daughter from sacrifice. Odysseus has his own agenda and goals to serve. He is not willing to lose the favour of the army by committing an act of good will and repaying his debt to Hecuba. Odysseus resembles those politicians of our time who pretend to serve their countrymen whilst acting for personal gain. Polyxena takes control of her own destiny and refuses to be killed by the Greeks. A young teenager who chooses to die with the values that she has previously lived by.

In the second half Hecuba is transformed after news of her son's death. She is initially revealed as a compassionate and noble woman but the suffering and loss of her children alters her. Unable to maintain her previous character traits, she seeks revenge. Kitto mentions 'The pitiful victim of oppression herself turns oppressor.' (1939: 220) Her revenge is monstrous. She not only blinds Polymestor but also kills both his sons.

Two dead boys for one. It is a spectacle not of a justice carried out, of what we might reasonably and fairly have hoped for, but of human atrocity. (Reckford 1991:13)

Students could have the chance to discuss and reflect on people's personality. On the one hand we had Hecuba with her character changes triggered by the different circumstances she is experiencing. On the other we have Odysseus, Agamemnon and Polymestor who also show changes of character, but for different reasons. It will be interesting to discover to what extent students agree or differ on the wisdom of the choices made by characters and what justifications they see for the actions of each.

Another theme, which figures largely in the play, is revenge. It is possible that they might have similar experiences to share or reflect on from their own cultural background and from the media. Suffering and revenge in human affairs is so commonplace that it is even encountered in children's stories and fables. Reckford bases his argument in this logic when he claims:

... that any schoolchild can understand [Hecuba]. Yet it also speaks to the complexities of human character and destiny, as these were captured in a moment in time no less confusing and dangerous than our own.' (1991: 4)

The students could also identify with the issues of suffering and revenge, not only from the contemporary world of adults. Students are often subject to bullying, which can create a culture of violence and may lead to knife crime. Neil Puffett mentions that a recent study has found that 'More than one in six young people in England and a third of those in London believe knife crime is a problem in their area' (2009). It is not a coincidence that in the London borough of Islington a play was performed about the effects of knife crime. The play shared an obvious similarity with *Hecuba*. The opening scene started with the funeral of a teenager who was stabbed to death near his home. Both plays describe human beings devising their own brand of justice with tragic consequences, but also reveal the power of drama in exploring the meanings and encouraging awareness of such events.

In the curriculum time available, it is quite impossible to negotiate *all* meanings that have been displayed above. The project will primarily introduce the second part of the play, which focuses on Hecuba's revenge for her son's murder. I believe this part can raise vital questions relating to knife-crime and revenge. Each session would consider one aspect of the play and include a variety of activities such as warm up, individual, pair and group work. Follow up work concentrates on extracts from the text by including oral and written work and their relevance with the contemporary issue of teenage knife crime. (see appendix p.174)

Further possible expansions

Extra curricular activities

There are other possibilities of expanding on the project by offering to students extra curricular activities. As the projects are taught within the Edexcel syllabus, we should decide when the extra curricular sessions would take place. This is important as, if the sessions occur during the project and students' attendance is voluntary, not all of them may decide to participate. In this case students who do take part might seem to gain an advantage in comparison to the others and this could be reflected in their examinations papers and subsequent results. If however the project happens *after* their submission, it would not affect students' grades. Another way of dealing with that is to infuse the learning of the extracurricular sessions into the project by encouraging the extra-curricular participants to organise information and 'teach' the rest of the class what they have already learned.

The group should be committed to attend all sessions. We will consider two hours a week on a three to six weeks basis depending on interest. The hours could be extended even further if the students agree, with the assistance of the teacher, to make a production of an abridged version of the play or devise their own contemporary version. Considering the observations on and results of the previous projects, the students emphasised that, if there were time for further expansions, they would have liked to learn more about the chorus. The aim would be to cover theatrical conventions that are excluded or covered in a limited manner in the main scheme due to time limitations. The work needs to supplement the main project and its intentions. Therefore, looking at, for example, the chorus means exploring the physical and vocal presentation of it, but in relation to the storyline and its characters. 'How is the chorus reacting

to the events? How does it interact with the main characters? Does it help us better understand what is happening?' These areas are not set in stone; it is possible that the students may show interest in different aspects, and thus the focus should alter accordingly. (see appendix p.185)

Sessions including other school subjects

The involvement of other subjects depends entirely on the willingness of other teachers to offer some sessions for further engagement in relation to their taught subject. We cannot predict the methods that they may apply in their sessions but the aims and basic planning of them should be in agreement with the needs of the project. The following subjects are suggested:

1. History and ancient Greece/Athens and the art of tragedy: dedicated to ancient Greece and specifically Athens with reference on its constitution, law, social and gender issues, and finally ancient Greek theatre as an extension of Athenian culture.

2. English Literature and ancient Greek tragedy: dedicated to the poetic form of ancient Greek tragedy and the analysis of one of the songs (stasimon). (see appendix p.187)

3. Music and ancient Greek tragedy: Looking at contemporary music for ancient Greek performances. Compose or select and perform music for the tragedy being studied. Co-operation with the music teacher could prove valuable. He/she might be willing to plan some of the extracurricular sessions or help in a production of the play.

4. Visual arts and ancient Greek tragedy: The teacher could look at resources on how ancient Greeks developed visual arts and how these were used in ancient Greek theatre in, for example, scenography and masks. If the project was to be expanded to include a production, the role of the visual arts teacher might become more vital and important. He/she could get involved with designing and painting the staging for the play with the help of the students.

5. Philosophy and Aristotle's poetics: The teacher of philosophy could examine some basic theories on the poetics of Aristotle in relation to the play being studied, and contemporary theatre.

Theatre as an educational experience

(3) producing a play in class with the intention of a school performance

As mentioned previously, after the project, the students and teacher might decide to continue the work by producing a play. The possibilities of how this production will develop are unlimited. The class might decide to create a version of the play based on one of the scripts the students have written. The script will need to be expanded and divided. On the other hand, they may work on the original script; and the extra curricular sessions will prove useful, as an initial preparation of fragments of the text would have taken place as well as an exploration of the physical interaction of chorus and actors. Alternatively the students and teacher could decide to work on a modern version, while using elements that they were introduced to in the Greek tragedy.

In order to enhance their knowledge, students may attend a performance of the play if there is one available at the time or watch videos/DVDs to gain experience on visual stimuli. Further sessions could enable students to learn more about general theatrical conventions and implement previous knowledge in the light of contemporary productions of ancient Greek tragedies.

The research showed there is an educational benefit to introducing ancient Greek Drama in secondary schools. The quality of the theatrical experience and learning process can differ according to the way in which students are introduced to tragedies. It is important for the teacher to understand first where the significance of ancient Greek Drama lies. The vicissitudes of human life are portrayed in tragedy in such a manner that is impossible, when the text and embedded narrative are introduced in an engaging way, not to capture the interest of the students. The stories are compelling and always focus on the suffering of human beings resulting from their choices or actions that contradict the established law and morality of the time. In our times we are overexposed to similar stories but the amount of information we receive every day allows little time to reflect on their impact on society and their implications for us as civilians. Ancient Greek tragedy can operate as a magnifier of these issues. Hall mentions that, because the plays portray ‘a universe run by a multitude of pagan gods in whom nobody now believes, Greek tragedy can offer an important site, free from contemporary cultural specificity.’ (2004:44) At the same time the tragedy will be a reminder of the past: not principally with an antiquarian importance but as an interplay between that time and the

present, underlining that the human soul through time is in a quest to understand its nature. The teacher needs to expose students to dramatic situations which have the power and potentials of the tragedy to generate insight. She also must recognise when that dramatic experience generates for the students moments of genuine enlightenment.

The last book I studied prior to submitting my dissertation was *Theatre and Education* by Helen Nicholson. I was surprised to read her reference to a script from Edward Bond called *The Children*, which was based on the concept of how the children of Medea would have reacted. Nicholson writes:

When I interviewed Bond in 2000, he expressed the hope that the process of improvisation would enable the young people to relate to the dramatic situation, thereby making it 'real to the imagination'... When I interviewed Karmen Fowell, a girl who played one of the Friends, she made clear connection between the imaginary world of the play, the character she played and the wider social world. (2009:55)

I recalled what a female student from the second project wrote in her contemporary version of *Medea*:

...She buys a scarf for Jason's lover and puts poison on it. She sends her children to give it to her. She puts it on and is poisoned and dies. Jason then arrives trying to take the children away from Medea because he is afraid of what his dead lover's family will do. Jason dies from an accident and when he is dying he sees Medea looking down on him in a vision.

The student used imagination, as Edward Bond hoped during his workshop, to capture the inability of Jason to react to the terrible deeds of his wife, and how such acts followed his thoughts to the day he died. Most important her imagination captured our modern fears and anxieties. Jason's guilt and his involvement in the death of his children were portrayed as a constant torture up to his death. Greig supports the notion that imagination can have a 'disruptive function' that will 'help us to re-think the nature of our social life'. (Nicholson 2009:49-50) When students are provided with the right motivation and guidance they will be able to imagine how the story can resonate with our times and offer them a better understanding of their world.

This action research project has extended over a considerable period of time, giving me opportunity to engage in several episodes of teaching, which have been informed by careful and productive reflection on my planning and teaching processes. It also taught me that in

addition to my beliefs in tragedy's potential to give insights into a long-ago world, what really matters is what students can gain from this theatrical experience. Their reactions and responses need to be closely observed and opportunities generated to deepen and explore their experience further. It is only they who can achieve the imaginative leap of reconnecting the story with their social world. When it happens it will be a natural and enlightening experience that derives from their intellectual and affective achievement in discovering the rewarding parallels that tragedy offers to contemporary living.

It has been a long haul but I believe I have gained much from this work, in relation to the effective teaching of ancient Greek Theatre in secondary schools, the processes of action research and, more generally, in connection with my insights and skills as a teacher. I am grateful to the students and the teacher who trusted me to lead the sessions in their college. I hope that the experience may leave a lasting impression on them as it has on me.

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Appendix A

FIRST PROJECT

Transcript of the interview with male student

Second part questions based on the project

9. How did you feel about the project? (*Christina*)

I like doing the project because it was very different from what we normally do we just have being doing things on domestic abuse between husbands and wives, we never ...actually do anything about things for the past, drama for the past we never learned anything so this was good to do. (*male student*)

10. Which activities did you like most and why? (*Christina*)

(Hesitation). (*male student*)

I can help you by reminding you of the activities. (*Christina*)

No no, I remember what we did. (*male student*)

Okay. (*Christina*)

One of the things I liked the most, although we did it very early on, was we worked as a group when we had the conversation between Jason and Medea. And it would be all the Jasons and all the Medea stepping into each other and kind of shouting, and also liked it when you had from each group formed a scene from the play. Yes, I certainly like that. (*male student*)

What was in the first activity that you like when you were in rows, what you kept more in your mind? (*Christina*)

It was the way were kind of set up, it was not so much the lines it was the way we've been set up. Every line we set up we marched towards each other, kind of getting angrier and

angrier. (*male student*)

Do you think the fact that you were group shouting these lines had made a difference from shouting the lines individually? (*Christina*)

I think it does because you feel, yeah, if everyone saying it and you said it very loudly you feel more passionate about it and it and is certainly better. (*male student*)

Does this group activity bare some similarities with the function of the chorus that you were introduced to later? (*Christina*)

I do think it was similar to chorus. I think that why were suppose to do it I think its choruses like. (*male student*)

11. Did you think you had difficulty in coping with some activities? (*Christina*)

I do not think really no because some people struggle to cope with the dialogue because it was kind written as a poem, but I think I like that, I like that aspect of it. I like how it was written as a poem instead of normal writing. (*male student*)

Do you think it would have been simpler for some of your classmates if it were written in modern language? (*Christina*)

I think it probably would have been because they find it easier to read and some people don't. I guess because they are not so familiar to them so some people would certainly have find it easier if it was modern. (*male student*)

If it were based on modern language, then does the aesthetic value - the quality - remain the same? (*Christina*)

I don't think so because the poem style made it much... more rhythm to it, had more depth to it, and it felt a lot more meaningful. (*male student*)

12. I had an activity where you were divided in groups and you had to present the historical information in still images. Did that activity help you to get a first grasp of how the Athenians were living? *(Christina)*

I think it did, yeah, because it taught all of us uh. It taught about marriage, civil rights and so on in Greece and that helped. *(male student)*

How did you think they lived? I mean, if you had to recall what was mentioned in the session. *(Christina)*

I think women were very much the second class. Men dominated a lot, it was dominated by men and then sex was a very big thing so if you strayed from your husband and cheated it was considered a terrible thing. *(male student)*

Could you remember if that style of life agreed with the plot of the play? *(Christina)*

I do not think it did because Medea tried to be kind of loud and she did bad things that women weren't really supposed to do. *(male student)*

The story of Medea is a myth. That means it existed a long time before the writer uses this material. But there are some scholars who believe that Euripides was the first to present Medea killing her children to avenge her husband. Why, if the Athenian women were restricted and had no control of their lives, would he present something unlikely to happen? What do you think were his motives? *(Christina)*

I think it kind shocked everybody because it was a way to draw their attention to it, because it wasn't something that anybody did and so it was such an amazing thing for everyone to see because it was not normal life. It was so different that I do not think anyone could not notice this play they have to stand and take notice. *(male student)*

Why do you think a play writer would like to shock the society that he is living in? *(Christina)*

I think probably because maybe he thought something is wrong with the society and so he perhaps he was questioning it by saying maybe if you lock up women and you keep them in the house this might happen. They have to try finding a way to escape and perhaps he was questioning the way things are. *(male student)*

13 Would you think it would have been helpful if we had more time to watch a performance on the video, or attend one? *(Christina)*

I think it would because we were having to take our own interpretation of the play, where if we have seen professionals do it we probably would have understood the play a little bit more because we just got given the script before ever seeing the play. We had to try to understand it ourselves. *(male student)*

14. I constantly felt that I was running out of time, and I have to exclude a lot of activities. Nevertheless, what would you prefer to have learned if I had two more sessions to teach? Or expand on? *(Christina)*

I think probably the way things were in Greece and the relationships between men and women would have certainly been very helpful because then you would have an understanding of how everyone in the play was feeling. *(male student)*

And probably, as you mentioned, a performance or video would have helped as well. *(Christina)*

A performance would have really helped because you'd see a professional opinion on it, and you'd see someone who knows more about the play than we do. Obviously you know it, but if we'd seen the play, than we could have understood the plot more and it would have really helped. *(male student)*

What about the chorus? How do you feel about it because this element is not such a familiar form of conventional theatre. *(Christina)*

Yes, the chorus certainly because it is not really used in the plays we seen in theatres, or on

T.V. I do not think anyone quite understood it. I do not think you really have the chance to learn about it. So I think it would have helped if we have seen enough about was the chorus about. (*male student*)

Thank you very much you have been a great help (*Christina*)

You're welcome.

Transcript of the interview with female student

Second part - questions based on the project

9. How did you feel about the project? (*Christina*)

I do not know, I did not really understand it but when you were doing it more you got it then. (*female student*)

What things did you not understand? (*Christina*)

(No answer) (*female student*)

What did you think about the language? (*Christina*)

(No answer). (*female student*)

Did you find it easy or difficult? (*Christina*)

The language was quite hard. (*female student*)

10. Which activities did you like most and why? (*Christina*)

When we did the little play, when you gave us the pieces to translate them and play them. (*female student*)

Was that the activity where you had to play one scene from the play as the group? (*Christina*)

No, it was the activity [where] you gave us the cards, like information [on] divorce and marriage, and we chose that ...where men went around the pub and women stayed home and looked after the children. (*female student*)

Did that activity help to understand how the Athenians , the ancient Greeks, were living? (*Christina*)

(No answer). *(female student)*

Other groups dealt with different information like divorce and marriage. *(Christina)*

Yeah. *(female student)*

How do you think the women and men were living then? *(Christina)*

Differently, like the women would stay at home and clean and look after the children while the men would go out. *(female student)*

Could you remember if that lifestyle would agree with the play? *(Christina)*

(No answer). *(female student)*

Do you think if Medea was an Athenian woman she would have acted like that? *(Christina)*

Medea would not have done that because they had to stay inside the house and she had to respect her husband. *(female student)*

The story of Medea is a myth that means it existed a long time before the writer uses this material. But there are some scholars that believe that Euripides was the first to present Medea killing her children to avenge her husband. Why if the Athenian women were restricted and had no control of their lives would he present something unlikely to happen to his audience? What do you think was his motives? *(Christina)*

Maybe to shock. *(female student)*

Why would a writer, even in our times, like to shock his audience? *(Christina)*

Maybe to write something different than anyone else. *(female student)*

Do you think if you present something unlikely to happen than you agree with the situation at the time? Do you think he agreed with how women were living in his time? (*Christina*)

I don't think he agreed. I think he thought the women should do what they want and not have to stay at home. (*female student*)

Would you think it would have been helpful if we had more time to watch a performance on the video or attend one? (*Christina*)

Yes, maybe... Get more ideas. (*female student*)

14. I constantly felt that I was running out of time and I had to exclude a lot of activities. Nevertheless, what would you prefer to have learned? (*Christina*)

I think that the story was quite interesting and i think we could be doing more about that. (*female student*)

What about the chorus? Did you think we learn a lot of how the group of people where acting.? (*Christina*)

Not really, you could have done more. (*female student*)

Thank you. (*Christina*)

You're welcome. (*female student*)

Appendix B

SECOND PROJECT

Transcript of the first interview with male student

8. How did you feel about the project? (*Christina*)

It was interesting, it was good, but the attitude of the class sometimes does ruin it but it was nice to learn about another culture. (*male student*)

9. So if I asked you which specific activities did you like most, could you recall any? (*Christina*)

I like the first lesson because it was the introduction; it was just something new to learn. (*male student*)

Can you remember it more easily or something? (*Christina*)

Yes and I like it interacted a bit more. I remember you were given quite a good feedback on that one, because you were the one that mentioned about that, you know the guy, was like a kind like a ritual. (*male student*)

10. Did you think you had difficulty in coping with some activities? (*Christina*)

Sometimes I do get confused on Jason and Medea, but at the end I did understand. (*male student*)

You mean with the story...(*Christina*)

Yes. (*male student*)

Does it have to do with the fact we didn't go in sequence with the story but we had different episodes? Or was it the story as it was? (*Christina*)

The story I can outline it but I guess it was just a bit confusing sometimes. (*male student*)

But you're clear now about it. (*Christina*)

Yes. (*male student*)

11. I had included some activities for the chorus, how did you feel about them?

That there meant to be the people of Corin?? Isn't it? (*Christina*)

We started co-ordinating the shadow, the mirror, and all those things...Sorry what was the question again? (*male student*)

How did you feel about these activities? Did it help you understand about the chorus, how it was probably performing? (*Christina*)

Well what I can remember yes, I think. I can't remember...(*male student*)

(12). What do you think I had in mind to teach you when I introduce them do you? (*Christina*)

The chorus. (*male student*)

You have to remember the structure a bit, like how I started with the activities. I started with the person behind you, no, the person opposite, then behind you, then we put more people, then we tried the parachute where you converge. Could you think why I teach them this way? (*Christina*)

Just to get the feeling of the actual chorus? because I guess the chorus could represent the audience and what they're thinking, like just to put it into context. I guess we just get a feeling...(*male student*)

13. Because of the lack of time they were left incomplete? Because in the second session we did a small part of a song which each group completed. What do you think was further

needed to be done to have a final view of the chorus? (*Christina*)

Have more text with the chorus in them, like another story or something, I don't...(*male student*)

So combine it more with the story? (*Christina*)

Yes, I mean I suppose if I had included it more in the play it would be more obvious what they're doing. (*male student*)

14. What do you think was the role of the chorus in the play? (*Christina*)

Just like I said to say how you feel at the time. So if you're reading it or something and then you feel like why is she doing it then the chorus would say 'don't do it' Medea type thing. (*male student*)

So they were supporting Medea in a kind of way. But do you think they had an active role in the development of the story? (*Christina*)

I don't really know. (*male student*)

You're not sure about it? (*Christina*)

I'm not. (*male student*)

Actually we didn't show them in a performance to get an overview; we just had bits of that. How did you find the last notebook, which also consisted of the questionnaire? (*Christina*)

It was ok, because it had the text in it that the questions were on, and then we just had to remember from the lessons what our notes had said. (*male student*)

16. Which questions did you find difficult to analyse and why? (*Christina*)

I think when she becomes the goddess, that question. (*male student*)

The last one? (*Christina*)

I'm not a hundred percent sure...how she would have felt and how it was shown and stuff.
(*male student*)

I don't know what you wrote about it. (*Christina*)

I don't think it was very much to be honest. (*male student*)

(looking at his leaflet) "...what is the impact on her revenge on herself, and in the end takes the form of a goddess. Because of what she did to her children she has become a goddess who has lost her humanity and feelings. This isn't good because she will feel no love or happiness anymore. This is her punishment". That's quite a good answer actually. "She took pity on theirs life and she has been given eternal life but without emotions so it isn't really a life...(*Christina*)

I didn't know how to put that. (*male student*)

Yea but I know what you mean. Ok, you didn't write that one...(*Christina*)

No, I kind of missed that one. I didn't realize that. (*male student*)

I'll let you finish it because it's really interesting to see...but yes it was really quite an interesting comment so you didn't really have a problem... 17. I had another activity in the beginning where you were divided in groups and you had to present the historical information in still images. We did it very quickly - where you had to say about the judge and the lifestyles of the Athenians? Do you remember that? With three still images?
(*Christina*)

I don't remember that. (*male student*)

And the bride? I don't remember which one; I think you were in that corner actually. It was how the men and women were living, and we did it very quickly. But in the other project it took more time so they had more ability to understand it. Did that activity help you to get a first grasp of how the Athenians were living? *(Christina)*

I think it did and also because what if I'd seen any Greek or Athenian on TV or read about it before would also help me as well. So I put that into that and it made me get the feeling. *(male student)*

Could you remember if that lifestyle fitted in with the plot of the play? Because we said that women are staying home. Do you think it fits with the social context of the story? *(Christina)*

A little bit, but then Medea she goes to the extreme...*(male student)*

What about the chorus? *(Christina)*

They were all women. *(male student)*

And were they supposed to be out of their houses? *(Christina)*

No. *(male student)*

I'm asking that because I have a question later. Euripides, who is the playwright, decided to show that Medea is killing her children to avenge her husband. Why if the Athenian women were restricted and had no control of their lives? Would he present something unlikely to happen? What do you think was his motives? *(Christina)*

(No answer). *(male student)*

That is more a hypothetical question. Why would somebody show something that is not happening in real life? *(Christina)*

Just the fact that it is a story, to make like more interested. *(male student)*

That would be one factor to make it more interesting. *(Christina)*

I don't know. *(male student)*

19. If you had to define role of the theatre in our lives from only this play, then what would it be its purpose? *(Christina)*

Sorry can you say that again? *(male student)*

What was the theatre's purpose? *(Christina)*

Yes, to tell this story. I don't know what is the theatre's purpose. *(male student)*

I have to remind you that he was showing something very provocative for its time, like how women living. *(Christina)*

Things that should be changed. To get some views across. *(male student)*

20. What was your opinion about the video that you watched? *(Christina)*

I enjoyed it but I don't think many other people did but I thought it was good. *(male student)*

Why don't you think other people enjoyed it? *(Christina)*

Because they're used to big action films and stuff aren't they? *(male student)*

Do you think it helped you understand more how the play is delivered in our times or at that time? *(Christina)*

It's always, well, when you're reading it text, you can use your imagination, but it's always easier to understand when you're saying it because of their tone of voice and actions. (*male student*)

Do you think it was partly different from what we were trying to perform? (*Christina*)

Like when you and the teacher did it well you just done it haven't you when they probably practice and they got to know the characters. (*male student*)

Any comments about the visual images?... Costumes, lighting? (*Christina*)

Music, it makes a difference. (*male student*)

21. Do you think a live performance would enhance your understanding about the play? Like if you went to a theatre. (*Christina*)

Yes I think it would. (*male student*)

What would be the effect if we had more time to perform the play ourselves? (*Christina*)

Yes, you would get a better understanding and you will be able to learn more about the characters. (*male student*)

Do you think it would worth doing it with your class? (*Christina*)

Yes, I would have like to have done if the whole class felt like they wanted to do it...if they had the right attitude. (*male student*)

So you think that if your class were better involved we could have better results. (*Christina*)

Yes. (*male student*)

22. If the project was to be expanded for two more session, what would you like to learn

more about? (*Christina*)

How it's portrayed in modern times, like how they would adapt in like Jason and Medea in Northcote now, and about Greek history I guess and more mythology. (*male student*)

That's it. Thank you (*Christina*)

Transcript of the fourth interview with female student

8. How did you feel about the project? (*Christina*)

I thought it was really good. (*female student*)

Did you find it difficult? (*Christina*)

Yes, sometimes it was confusing with the names and the stories. (*female student*)

9. Which activities did you like most and why? (*Christina*)

The things with the parachute. (*female student*)

Was it the one that you went underneath? (*Christina*)

No, it was the one before that...(*female student*)

When you had a leader in the middle? (*Christina*)

When we had to worship the leader. (*female student*)

11. I had included some activities for the chorus. How did you find them? (*Christina*)

I thought it was really good. (*female student*)

Do you remember them? (*Christina*)

It was those that we went underneath the parachute. (*female student*)

12. What do you think I had in mind to teach you when I introduced them do you?
(*Christina*)

I don't know. (*female student*)

13. Because of the lack of time they were left incomplete. What do you think was needed to have a final view of the chorus? (*Christina*)

I think we should have done more with the play so we could learn the part that the chorus played in the play. (*female student*)

14. What do you think was the role of the chorus in the play? (*Christina*)

To support Medea. (*female student*)

15. How did you find the last notebook, which also consisted of the questionnaire? (*Christina*)

It was quite hard but I did it and it was alright. (*female student*)

16. Which questions did you find difficult to analyze? (*Christina*)

I can't remember any of the questions. (*female student*)

17. What about the last two ones because they were the most demanding? (*Christina*)

The one that we had to modernize because it was quite hard. (*female student*)

What did you write? (*Christina*)

What did I write? I wrote about Medea. She was a woman and her husband betrayed and went with another women. He wanted to split up with her and give her some money to look after the children, and she didn't want that and she killed him and his lover and when he dies he sees her as a premonition. (*female student*)

Very interesting, that's a very interesting way of adapting it as a premonition, very nice. Why did you choose to write this version of the story? (*Christina*)

Because it involved everything from the old story and at the same time the characters were modernized. (*female student*)

18. I had an activity where you were divided in groups and you had to present in still images the historical information? Did that activity help you to get a first grasp of how the Athenians were living? (*Christina*)

Yes. (*female student*)

Can you recall how women were living in comparison with men? (*Christina*)

Men only could go out and the women had to stay behind and look after the house and the children. (*female student*)

b. Could you remember if that lifestyle agreed with the plot of the play? And I'm talking about the role of women in comparison with the chorus and Medea. (*Christina*)

Not really because the chorus was all women and they were all out when in real life they had to stay in. (*female student*)

What about Medea? Did she feed the stereotype model of the time? (*Christina*)

She wasn't sort of realist. (*female student*)

c. The story of Medea is a myth. That means it existed a long time before the writer used this material. But there are some scholars that believe that Euripides was the first to present Medea killing her children to avenge her husband. Why, if the Athenian women were restricted and had no control of their lives, would he present something unlikely to happen? What do you think were his motives? (*Christina*)

He might wanted to change the way that people looked at women. (*female student*)

19. If you had to define the role of the theatre in our lives from only this play, then what would its purpose be? (*Christina*)

To change the role of people in their life and ...(*female student*)

20. What was your opinion about the video that you watched? (*Christina*)

I kind of find it boring. (*female student*)

Why was it boring? (*Christina*)

Because they did not do much. They just stood there and talked to each other. (*female student*)

Do you think it helped you understand more about how the play is delivered in our times or at their time? (*Christina*)

Yes, because you could sort of see people and it made it more realistic. (*female student*)

What about the visual images that you had with the video? (*Christina*)

The clothes and the way they moved. (*female student*)

21. Do you think a live performance would enhance your understanding about the play? (*Christina*)

Yes, because you would have people to look at and it would have been live instead of reading it. (*female student*)

Do you think your class was up for the challenge? (*Christina*)

I think some of them would find it quite hard and they wouldn't want to do it. (*female*)

student)

22. What would you like to learn more about if the project was expanded for two more sessions? (*Christina*)

The chorus role and the play. (*female student*)

What would you like to learn more about the chorus? (*Christina*)

We could understand their role and how they helped Medea. (*female student*)

Ok thank you. (*Christina*)

Appendix C

THIRD PROJECT

Transcript of the first interview with male student

Questions for the performance

Hello B. (*Christina*)

Hello. (*male student*)

1. I am going to ask you some questions about the project and the performance that we watched at the National Theatre in London. What did you think of the performance?

(*Christina*)

I thought it was good. I thought there were bits that at the time appeared a little bit irrelevant. You could miss part of the play and that would not matter for the storyline. (*male student*)

Can you be specific about which parts? (*Christina*)

I thought the chorus worked well, but one or two of the pieces were a little bit over the top. I thought they were used little bit too often. (*male student*)

2. What did you think about the time the play was set in? (*Christina*)

I think it was a little bit of strange. I thought the costumes were almost out with the time it was set, if that makes sense (*male student*)

What time did you think it was set in? (*Christina*)

I can't remember. (*male student*)

Was it the second world war? Because we discussed that with the teacher. (*Christina*)

Yes. *(male student)*

In regards to ancient Greek Drama being performed around 400BC, did the play make it easier for you to understand? *(Christina)*

I kind of think it did but I did not understand why they felt they needed to do it in that period rather than when it was written. I didn't understand how, I don't think it helped. *(male student)*

Do you think for an audience older than you it might have helped them? *(Christina)*

Yes, it is quite a good point because my grandmother went through the Second World War, and it might help her to understand and bring back some memories. *(male student)*

4. We did mention that some parts of the chorus were irrelevant. How would you characterize their attitude through the course of the play? I am not talking so much about the long segments, but more how they were implicated in the story. *(Christina)*

So do you mean the role they had throughout the story? *(male student)*

Yes. *(Christina)*

Well, I felt basically that they were some parts that they were quite important. I think they were used well in certain pieces. I thought when was it there was a bit that when they were dancing that was quite important because it was like trying to understand the symbolism. *(male student)*

Do you think they were creating an emotional effect with their behaviour? *(Christina)*

I think I've seen choruses in the past... In this one I don't think there was a great deal of emotions. *(male student)*

What kind of choruses have you seen? *(Christina)*

I saw them when we watched the one with the TV. *(male student)*

In the class when you thought that those were stronger? *(Christina)*

Yes, it was slightly stronger. They moved together as we did. And it looked with the firebrat like one creature. That I think was an important thing. *(male student)*

5. Which part did you enjoy more and why? *(Christina)*

I enjoyed the finale of the play. It was very powerful. I think the reason the story was very clear, and only now I got it, was because when I was watching it the first twenty-five thirty minutes I wasn't exactly hundred percent sure what was going on. Towards in the end of the play, I picked up the story and I kind of began, be able to get more involved myself. *(male student)*

I will go back and ask you something about the chorus. Do you think it would make a difference for the play if the chorus did not play in it? *(Christina)*

I think it would have an impact but not a major one. Maybe if they were more involved in the dialogue so. *(male student)*

You said that you liked end mostly. Did you feel any empathy? *(Christina)*

Yes, definitely. I think Iphigenia shows she had to make a decision. It is one of these decisions that you do something you don't want to do it but you kind of know. At the same time, you don't have to do it but you know if you don't the consequences could be worse. *(male student)*

Did you see her as a scapegoat in the play? That she didn't want to do it but in the end she did it? *(Christina)*

Not really. I think she changed. She is a young girl.

How old did you think she was? *(Christina)*

Fourteen. So she obviously might have changed her mind, but she looked like an intelligent girl. *(male student)*

Do you think her age had something to do with her decision? Are the morals of a fourteen years girl the same with a thirty year old? *(Christina)*

I think girls mature earlier. I think with the way she acted she behaved prematurely although I would say when she changed her mind she changed it very quickly. She didn't think about it and it was obviously a huge decision to make so maybe she should have thought about it a bit more. But now I think she would have made the same decision. *(male student)*

9. Do you find any relevance of the play with our times? *(Christina)*

I did definitely. The thing obviously that is going on in Russia at the moment. You can kind of link it to people making sacrifices, people like the American armies sacrificing men. It is not very clear after that point. *(male student)*

Question for the project in relation with the performance

1. What did you think about the project? *(Christina)*

I really enjoyed the course work. It gave me a clear understanding of the play. I think if I have left the theatre and went home and never look at it again I would not necessary got any near the experience because some keys points would have never been answered. The course gave a chance to do that. *(male student)*

2. What does the term 'tragic hero' mean to you? *(Christina)*

I think Iphigenia was the hero because she got the winds to start so they could sail over to Troy. She was the tragic hero. Tragic obviously because she died, so I think she was the tragic hero. *(male student)*

5. If somebody were to ask you, based on your recent personal knowledge, how the ancient Greek play differed from the modern theatre, what would you say? (*Christina*)

I mean obviously characters in ancient Greek Theatre the lines are obviously are obviously in Ancient Greek. But I think the characters, in relation with modern theatre, are presented possibly more clearly, and you find about them more quickly than in Iphigenei in Aulis. I did not know the characters fairly in the very end. (*male student*)

Did you think they were changing attitudes, like you couldn't tell who they were? (*Christina*)

Yes. I mean I think Agamemnon didn't have like a very clear sort of opinion.

What about the chorus? (*Christina*)

I think the chorus did help us in some areas, but as I said they were a little bit unnecessary. (*male student*)

Is that in comparison with modern theatre? (*Christina*)

Yes. In modern theatre I think we get the information possible in a different way... The chorus often represents what we think. The chorus in Iphigeneia in Aulis was representing the average women, which is important because we did not know anything about people's opinions, what they thought about. (*male student*)

What did you think about the music in the play? (*Christina*)

I think music adds to any performance and to any kind of drama, I think the reason that music always helps is because it is very defining. (*male student*)

The chorus usually has their own fragments in Ancient Greek plays; they sing them, which did not happen in this play. Do you think that could have a different emotional impact on the

audience? (*Christina*)

It could have. It depends how the director would have done because it's not easy to accomplish a lot of work. (*male student*)

How do you think he used the music? (*Christina*)

He was using like a tunnel. I think it was quite nice to break up the text because it was really long speeches and it was quite a good way for the audience to think of what happened because as I said early you missed some parts. (*male student*)

What did you think about the dancing? How did they look when they were dancing? Do you remember? (*Christina*)

They were just staring at each other and one by one they left the stage. (*male student*)

Why do you think they did that? (*Christina*)

I think they were kind of the servants and they were trying to impress. (*male student*)

In relation to the text, would you have kept the text close to the original? (*Christina*)

If you choose a play you should change as much as possible. Euripides wrote it this way ... but they should have done it a bit more clearly. (*male student*)

10. We have discussed two endings of the play. Which one was more realistic to you?
(*Christina*)

When it comes to realism obviously the strict death is more. The most imaginative is the old man the old man came back to Clytemnestra and told her that she was saved by the gods.
(*male student*)

11. If you had more time what would you like to explore more? (*Christina*)

I think I would have liked it to a scene like they did it in the play. (*male student*)

Do you think we could have performed our own version of Iphigenia in Aulis? (*Christina*)

Definitely. I think we did quite a good work actually. I think we could have played enough but I don't think we could have necessarily perform it well enough on a stage. We didn't understand it enough. I think it would have been hard to accomplish. (*male student*)

Thank you B. (*Christina*)

Thank you. (*male student*)

Transcript of the fourth interview with female student

Questions for the performance

1. What did you think of the performance? (*Christina*)

I thought it was very good, but I didn't enjoy all of it because I couldn't really get involved in the beginning. I didn't really understand the story. (*female student*)

So you think that the dialogue was a bit difficult to understand? (*Christina*)

I think it was a bit complex. (*female student*)

3. What did you think of the time that the play was set in? (*Christina*)

I think the second war theme was really good because it was updated with the clothing because it was a little bit easier to understand because you could say people's role was by the costumes. (*female student*)

Which parts do you consider the most difficult to understand in the play? (*Christina*)

I thought the chorus was difficult to understand because they were doing different things all the time. (*female student*)

Which part did you enjoy more and why? (*Christina*)

Overall, I don't think I really enjoyed the play but I think I only enjoyed the end. (*female student*)

Why was that? (*Christina*)

I didn't really understand what was happening until the end of the story.

Do you think if you had a pre-session explaining the story before the performance would have helped? *(Christina)*

Yes. If I knew the background of what was going to happen, I think that would help me understand more. *(female student)*

Do you find any relevance of the play with our times? *(Christina)*

Yes, the kidnapping is something that happens around the world. *(female student)*

Question for the project in relation with the performance

What did you think about the project? *(Christina)*

I thought the project was very interesting because it gave us a chance to explore different ways of interacting and learning about something I didn't know before. *(female student)*

Do you think it helped you understand better the performance? If yes, in which ways?
(Christina)

Yes, because I really didn't understand it when I came away, but after the workshop it was easier. Knowing all the background knowledge really helps to understand why they were feeling different ways and why they were saying different things. *(female student)*

What does the term 'tragic hero' mean to you? *(Christina)*

It means a hero that died. *(female student)*

Who do you think the tragic hero was in the play? *(Christina)*

Iphigeneia. *(female student)*

If somebody were to ask you, based on your recent personal knowledge, how the Ancient Greek play differ from the modern theatre what would you say? *(Christina)*

It's all different really, things like in chorus. (*female student*)

Who do you think would replace the chorus in theatre? (*Christina*)

Maybe a narrator. (*female student*)

We have discussed the two endings of the play. Which one was more realistic to you?
(*Christina*)

The one that Iphigenia was killed towards the end. (*female student*)

Do you think this end was more adaptable to our times? (*Christina*)

Yes. (*female student*)

If you had more time what would you like to explore more? (*Christina*)

I would like to get more information about the characters before and after the story. (*female student*)

Do you think we could have performed our own version of Iphigenia in Aulis? (*Christina*)

I think we could if we did it over a lot of time because it took me a lot of time to get into it and really feel how they were feeling. Towards the end I didn't actually want the workshops to finish, I wanted to carry on. I think if we did it now it would work. (*female student*)

Thank you. (*Christina*)

Appendix D

FUTURE PROJECT

First week –double hour

First activity: *The ghost's presence*

Students are asked to find a partner. One is a ghost and the other is a friend of the ghost before he/she died. Each friend pretends to walk, or somehow look occupied. The ghost needs to follow them without making his/her appearance obvious. At this stage all 'ghosts' are told to follow instructions that are not known to the friend whilst the friends are requested to respond only to sounds but ignore the presence of their partner.

1. The 'ghosts' make their friends realize their presence with the most minimum of effort and while maintaining the concept of a ghost.
2. The 'ghosts' whisper to their friend the following keywords (Laminated paper is given to them with one of the following five phrases from the text of Hecuba):

I come out of the pit that hides the dead.

My father saw danger.

He killed me and threw my body in the sea

I lie ashore, Unwept, unburied.

My mother dreamed my ghost.

Music and lights are utilized to complete the atmosphere in the theatre. At the end of the activity students are asked to sit in a circle and take notes.

Possible questions for discussion

How did you feel?

(technical question: what was the influence of the music and lights in giving rise to these emotions?)

What did you hear?

(After students reply to the above questions the phrases from the text might be displayed or

given to them. They are then asked to imagine what happened. Further questions could be asked to cover certain aspects, which can be related later with the script)

How do you think the ghost might have been killed?

What do you think the friend might do next?

Who else do you think the ghost might have approached?

Students will be asked to contribute their comments and further questions.

Second activity *Still images on the story of a teenage 'ghost' that was murdered.*

Class is divided into groups of five, with one of the researchers in each group possibly providing more information. Each of them is given one article of approximately two hundred words describing the murder of a teenager with a knife (photos of the victims or the incident are given if they are considered suitable and appropriate). They are asked to create four still images showing when the murder took place and if applicable why. Each group presents their images and there is a subsequent discussion.

a. Reflection on the improvisations.

The teacher encourages the students to comment on what they liked about their classmates images and what improvements they could make. Students are then asked to work further by adding a few sentences to each of them.

b. Reflection on murders of teenagers.

Possible questions:

Why do you think these teenagers were murdered?

Why some teenagers get aggressive and could endanger their classmates?

What type of harassment are you aware of?

Have you ever been or know someone that has been harmed?

How can these issues be resolved?

(Throughout the session students are given considerable time to write down brief description of the activities, their impression of them and their thoughts over the subject of teenagers' knife murder.)

Wall information

The articles and photos from newspapers can be displayed on one wall in the drama room.

The teacher might decide later to display photos of the still images taken during this session.

First week –single hour

Briefing on the previous session. The focus is on the phrases of the warm up activity.

First activity: *The secret of the Ghost (Parodos)*

First Part

The students are asked to sit in a circle. They are given a photocopied page with numbered lines equal to the number of students in the class. The teacher numbers the students so each of them knows which line he/she needs to speak out. They are asked to read the line a few times to become confident. Students are also encouraged to ask the teacher how to pronounce unfamiliar words. Students can walk around and read the lines in different ways:

- a. Giving sports commentary
- b. Telling a joke.

In random pairs

- c. Telling someone off. Their partner replies by saying their line in an apologetic manner.
- d. Telling a secret: whisper their line in someone's ear.

PARODOS

1. *I come out of the pit that hides the dead,*
2. *Out of the gate-guarded darkness*
3. *Where [the god of underworld] lives separate from other gods.*
4. *My father saw danger-*
5. *Our city Troy falling under Greek spears.*
6. *Fearful, he smuggled me from Trojan soil*
7. *To Polymestor, his friend in Thrace.*
8. *And my father sent me with much secret gold.*
9. *Then, if the walls of Troy should fall,*
10. *His children –those who lived- would not be poor.*

11. *As long as our boundaries held*
12. *And Troy's towers stood unbroken*
13. *And chance blessed my brother Hector's spear,*
14. *How quickly, cared for by my father's friend,*

15. *I grew, like a young tree reaching tall, to be cut.*
16. *For, Troy met ruin. My father's friend killed me as I grieved. For gold*
17. *He killed me and threw my body in the sea*
18. *So he could keep that gold within his house.*

19. *I lie ashore, I lie in the breaking sea*
20. *Sucked back, tossed up by waves that surge and lapse.*
21. *Unwept, unburied.*
22. *Three days I have hovered.*
23. *Ever since my helpless mother [Hecuba] was landed here*
24. *Far from Troy on this Thracian soil.*
25. *There comes Hecuba, grey, old- I must draw back.*
26. *She walks from Agamemnon's tent*
27. *Frightened. She dreamed my ghost.*

The class is divided into three groups. Each group is given one section of the parodos (1-10, 11-18 and 15-26). They are asked to work in different places on text, both vocally and physically, while encouraging the idea of the group to use a kind of tempo/rhythm. Musical instruments are distributed to the students. When they are ready the teacher asks them to perform their fragments in sequence.

Discussion/Reflection

First Part

After the presentation they are asked to remain in their groups and write down their thoughts on the activity presentation of the parodos. Questions should start with the physical and vocal presentation of the text.

Second Part

Students are then asked about the context of the parodos. It is possible that the teacher might want to take them to the IT room for the last fifteen minutes in order to do research on several key words like Troy, Greece, Thrace, Trojan War, Hecuba and Agamemnon. They can work in groups of two or three.

Wall information

Certain information could be printed and displayed on the walls of the drama class. Students might be asked to continue their search as homework. The teacher could provide additional visual material that could include a European map to identify Greece in relation with Great Britain. Secondly, an ancient Greek map with the location of Troy and the rest of the Greece with few famous cities of that time. Enlarged names and illustrations of the characters can be also displayed on the walls of the class. Underneath each name and illustration students should be encouraged to add relevant information occurring during the module. This method allows constant feedback for refreshing their memory, and perhaps altering their initial opinions on characters' motives and actions.

Second Week –double hour

Warm up activity

First activity: *The news of Hecuba's son's death*

The students are asked to sit down in a circle. The teacher takes the role of a narrator and tells the students what happens after the appearance of the ghost. A Trojan slave woman runs to Hecuba. She has discovered her son's body and arrives with some other servants who carry the body to deliver the bad news. Hecuba is devastated.

Students are divided into groups of four or five and are then asked to re-create the scene of Hecuba receiving the news. They need to imagine her reaction and how her friends/other slave women respond to that. Each group is requested to perform to the rest of the class their improvisation.

Discussion

- a. Reflection on the improvisations. Teachers ask students to comment on their classmates' performance, what did they like and why. How can they be improved?
- b. Reflection on the death of youngsters. How natural is it for a mother to mourn her children? Is it happening often in our society? On which occasions? What comparisons does it bring with the still images of the newspapers' stories?
- c. Reflection on theatrical conventions of tragedies. Why did the author decide to bring the

body to Hecuba? Why did she not discover it herself? What would have been the differences between these two possibilities?

(We are trying to stimulate students to look at two perspectives: the different emotional reaction that it could be generated and the practical reasons behind staging it in this way. At the same time, we are able to inform them on the theatrical convention of maintaining one scenography during ancient Greek Drama)

Second activity: *Hot seating Hecuba.*

(In the case of ancient Greek tragedy it might be problematic to make use of this technique because of the limited psychological background the characters might offer. Also, it is doubtful the students will be able to retrieve much information if the person who is hot-seated is not fully aware of the text and character he/she personifies. It might be more appropriate for the teacher or an experienced person to personify Hecuba's character.)

First part

The students are sitting in a semi-circle facing a chair. They are told that someone is going to personify Hecuba, the mother of the murdered teenager. What do they think they could learn from her? The purpose of this discussion is to stimulate students to raise questions and to learn more details of the story. Expected questions should focus on her reaction and emotions regarding the loss of her son.

Personal questions such as age and health.

Relation to the story

Who does she think is responsible for her son's murder?

What is she thinking of doing now?

Second Part

The teacher may ask a student or two to take the role of a friend or family member of Hecuba in order to see how students will present them in relation to Hecuba's circumstances.

Discussion

Comparing Hecuba's unfortunate condition with contemporary times.

How does a crime like this affect family and friends? What kind of resolution do they seek

after the death of a loved one?

Do they see any similarities with the five cases of knife crime in the first week's sessions?

How would the story develop if it were happening in modern times?

Concentrate on the consequences of the loss, the suffering of the family and issues of revenge.

Second Week –single hour

Brief discussion: *What do they think Hecuba will do now?*

The teacher allows students to come up with their own theories. She then performs the following scene with the help of another adult (teacher/professional-amateur actor) or a capable student:

HECUBA (aside) *Agamemnon, I beg your help.*

AGAMEMNON *What do you crave? Freedom?*

HECUBA *No, no! Revenge on criminals.*

AGAMEMNON *But why call for our help?*

HECUBA *Do you see this body and the tears I shed?*

AGAMEMNON *Of course. But I can't see what come next.*

HECUBA *I gave him birth. I carried him in my womb.
His father sent him away so he would not die.*

AGAMEMNON *Where did he go, this one you singled out?*

HECUBA *To this country where we found him dead.*

AGAMEMNON *To the ruler of this land? Polymestor?*

HECUBA *Yes sent here to guard the most bitter gold.*

AGAMEMNON *How did it happen? Who killed him?*

HECUBA *Who indeed but the Thracian, our friend.*

AGAMEMNON *You've suffered more than anyone can measure.*

HECUBA *I am destroyed. No further suffering is left.
Please hear me. Lend your hand to an old woman, a hand
For vengeance, though it come to nothing. Be fair.*

AGAMEMNON *But if things work out for you, the army
Must not take the notion that I
plot the murder of Thrace's king*

HECUBA *I see that no one alive, no one, is free.
You're frightened, you bend to the crowd's beliefs.
Be my accomplice, only in the knowing, not the doing.
But if the Greeks should give our cry or start to help
Polymestor when he gets what he deserves,
Hold them off. Don't seem to act for me.
The rest? Be confident. I shall manage it- beautifully.*

The students are asked to describe what happened, reminding them on the role of Agamemnon from the students' previous research.

Role information on the wall.

The students are encouraged to add new comments and information to the wall regarding the two main characters, Hecuba and Agamemnon.

Third Week –double hour

Warm up activity: *Kill your partner*

Each student is given a card asking them to kill their partner in particular way. For example, they might be asked to kill their partner with a poisoned drink or by convincing them to sit in a chair that will instantly electrocute him. The teacher asks them to get in groups of four and pick up a partner. Each pair that decides to play first shows their cards (without revealing it to their partner) to the other pair. Using spontaneous improvisation, they try and lure the partner to fall into their trap and get killed. When one of the two managed to kill the other, the next pair continues.

First activity: *The scene of the murder*

Students are informed that Hecuba has sent an invitation to Polymestor. He comes to see her in the Greek camp where she is kept as a slave. A fragmented text is introduced following one of the activities proposed by Kempe and Ashwell where ‘students are given a short section of text, which has been cut up into individual lines. The task is to re-assemble the scene.’ The interest should be first ‘on narrative sequences and later on language style of different characters or the action implied in the lines.’ (2000:31). When students compose the text, they are asked to remain in groups and work in different ways on presenting it. For example, they could use still images, pantomime, performance with a narrator or with dialogue.

Second activity: *Forum theatre -How does the play ends?*

The students were introduced to the text up to the point where Polymestor’s is blinded and his children are killed. One group is asked to stay in the performing space while the rest need to sit in a semi-circle. They take the following roles: Hecuba, enslaved Trojan women who helped her take revenge, Greek soldiers, Agamemnon and blinded Polymestor. We start the story by saying that the Greek soldiers have heard the cries of the children and the desperate calls of Polymestor and arrive at the scene. This time we ask the students in character to spontaneously improvise in order to continue the story. The remaining students are asked to watch and, at any time, stop the action and take over any character they want. Different endings are discussed along with students’ decision to follow any specific action. The teacher informs the students of the end of the tragedy. Do they find the end satisfying? She discusses possible endings with the students.

Third Week –single hour

First activity: *Knife crime and justice.*

The teacher takes students to the IT room to search about justice and law over knife- crime. A brief discussion takes place on their opinion on the subject.

Second activity: *Write a contemporary script of the play*

Students are then asked to design a small plan for a contemporary version of the play. This is given as homework. However, it would be ideal if they can create an initial stage in class. This way the teacher can offer them ideas of how they can present the script and comment on their early work. Wilmer notes that in Helen Edmundson’s 2006 version of *Orestes*, directed by Nancy Meckler, the male roles were cut to focus on the character of Electra (2007). This means that if the students wish to emphasize specific situations and characters to serve their needs, then they could alter the storyline for that purpose.

Homework

The students are asked to complete two-page scripts for a contemporary version of the play.

Fourth Week -double hour

Warm up activity

First activity: *Performance of their own scripts*

Students are divided into groups and are asked to work on one of the scripts they have prepared. The teacher has read and chosen them in advance. If there is more time available, then each group might decide which script to work on. After the presentation of each script, the students are then asked to sit down and take notes while they reflect on them.

- a. Reflection on the vocal, physical and artistic presentation of each script
- b. Reflection on the ethical issues each story negotiate.

How did friends and family deal with the knife crime in each scenario? What similarities did they have with the play *Hecuba*?

Fourth Week - single hour

The students are given a last chance to polish their performances and show them to the rest of the class.

The rest of the time students go through their dramalogues to complete them for their work on the module.

Extra curricular hours

Chorus and Characters

Several sessions could be dedicated to explore the theatrical convention of chorus. The suggested dimensions of Calame could offer more substantial guidelines regarding the areas of emotional and psychological exploration of each tragedy's chorus. A variety of new activities could have experimented with emotional expression of the chorus. The latter could be looking at fragments of the script that had been introduced at the project and now are expanding on the role of the chorus that was not emphasised in the first place. Hall gives an example of how to express moods:

Moods are expressed by the sudden body reactions of the group as the impulse to move is passed from one to another. The chorus behaves like a shoal of fish or a flock of starlings. A movement develops from an individual and is passed through the group. It may grow into a rush of panic, or simply subsides, concentrating our attention. It not only allows extremes of emotion; it allows the moods of a group to change like lightning. (Hall 2000:33)

Such course of action offers multiple choices for further exploration and enhancement of the ground knowledge for the chorus. Vocally, they could also work on different levels by responding to words that represent feelings, and progress towards working with lyrics from the tragedy on study. Hall (2000) not only suggests uniformity but also representation of the chorus by a single voice. Instead of committing hours to aural coordination, this provides a solution to the drama classroom whereby a single person can vocalize the complex arguments, and the rest of the group focuses on the physical presentation. These kinds of activities will allow more immediate connection with the text, whilst simultaneously permitting the students to explore best way to convey the meaning of the line.

This relationship could be explored by following Lecoq's suggestions about the physical dynamic of the chorus-characters. It involves using different numbers of actors who are asked to offer an improvised physical status reflecting on the relationship of chorus and protagonist/antagonist. At the same time, the number of actors consisting of the chorus increases whilst maintaining a space-balance. The dynamics can differ according to the context of the tragedy. Considering the amicable side of the chorus towards Hecuba, it will move and interact in parallel moods with her and in defying the antagonist. The game starts with two players (1=1) (one is the protagonist, Hecuba, the other the antagonist Agamemnon

or Polymestor; depending on the scene). It follows (1 = 1 + 1) with Hecuba having an additional member on her side. This pattern could continue with larger numbers up to the full amount of the chorus.

Concerning space, it might be easier to employ different schemata that can be used by dividing the chorus into smaller groups of four or six members, or having them represented by the *korifaios* (leader) of the chorus. Students could use this pattern even in contemporary versions of Hecuba by changing the identity of the chorus. Masks can also be used to offer an anonymity and unity to the chorus' members. Students will have to experiment and work harder on physical presentation and vocal challenges. Vervain suggests that the study of the mask can 'be undertaken individually, or with an unmasked partner, or in a small group' (2004:246). Once the students had become familiar with the mask we can try to include them in the introduction of ancient Greek tragedy following a progressive model. A whole mask can be used initially through the chorus' physical activities. The students can initially focus on their physical status. Later they can experiment with voices. If students find it difficult to achieve this then they can alternatively try half masks which allow movement of the mouth without constraint. Group activities could also help them strengthen their chorus identity, and the use of masks could empower them to achieve a unified body and voice.

Music

A few sessions can be devoted to music, since it is a very important element of the Greek tragedy. Musical instruments accompanied songs of the chorus and other fragments of the tragedy. Aspects that could be explored are the original and contemporary music used in tragedies' performances. A range of activities could allow students to discover the sounds and musical instruments accompanying the plays. Students and teachers could also experiment with music and discuss their experiences along with the emotional effects it can induce. Further music experimentation can take place during the introduced activities of the chorus and characters or improvisations with the masks. Finally, they can choose to compose their own music for those sessions or even for the production of a play with the help of the music teacher.

A sample session on other subject

English literature and ancient Greek tragedy

The teacher could briefly explain the poetic form of tragedies and focus on introducing one stasimon (song) of the tragedy. The chorus performs the stasima. This would give the students the opportunity to analyze one of them. Such preparation could also prove useful for the extra curricular sessions. In this way the specific song could be used to explore different ways of physical and vocal presentation of the chorus.

Second Stasimon

*My fate gave me to disaster,
My fate gave me over to sorrow,*

*The moment the pines on Mt. Ida
Were cut down by Paris*

670

*To build the ship he would steer through high waves
To the bed of Helen
Most beautiful woman on whom
The gold-shining Sun casts light.*

*My grief and a force far stronger-
Constraint – come circling around me.*

*Out of one man's mad folly,
For all who lived by Troy's river*

*Ruin burst forth, seaborne disaster swept in,
And discord flows rapid
When Paris, a herdsman on Ida,
Judges three daughters of gods.*

680

*The outcome, spears and murder
And my home dishonored.
And laments also rise
By the banks of a sunlit Greek river
Where a Spartan girl cries alone in her room*

*And a mother mourning dead children
Lifts hands to her head
And tears out grey hair
And rakes down her cheeks
With nails gone
Bloody from her sacrifice.*

690