
Stories of the three-legged stool: English, media, drama, from critique to production

Anton Franks, Institute of Education, London

James Durrant, Parkside Community College

Andrew Burn, Institute of Education, London

Abstract

The three authors have, between them, extensive experience of teaching English, Drama and Media, as well as teaching teachers in these fields. The article explores the implications of the apparently straightforward proposition that these three related domains, whose histories are so closely entangled, should enjoy parity. The proposition is explored with reference to the historical constitution of these elements of what we currently know as 'English'; and to three vignettes illustrating work in schools which productively confuses the three domains.

Key Words

English, drama, media, multimodality, literacy, computer games

Fool: Cry you mercy: I took you for a joint-stool*King Lear: Act 3, Scene 6*

We write here as Lear's Fool: we foolishly take 'English' to be a joint enterprise between Drama, Media and English. Writing from the space between these three legs (the seat of the stool, perhaps), we want here to think about the relation, overlap or contiguity of these areas. Are they separate fields that sit beside or overlap each other, or does the list represent a sedimentary layering? Do we allow the 'imperial' title of English to appropriate or subsume within it the areas of drama and media? In the first version of the National Curriculum in the UK, Brian Cox and his co-authors acknowledged both media and drama as 'subjects in their own right' as well as making substantial contributions to the study of English. Since then, in various versions, drama and media have, in attenuated form, been integrated into the mainstream of the English curriculum.

When English was established as part of the school curriculum in the later part of the nineteenth century, the study of literature was central to the subject and drama was positioned under the heading of literature (Burgess, 1996). Yet the *performance* (as opposed to the *reading*) of even works of classical drama (Shakespeare or the Greeks), was omitted alongside popular forms of drama as being unworthy, irrelevant or deleterious in its effects. The concept of 'media', 'popular', 'mass' or otherwise, however, was completely absent. Media first appears as a negative field, against which Leavis's Great Tradition (1948) is defined; attention to popular visual media is invoked at the moment of *Scrutiny* purely to banish it beyond the defensive palisade of the literary canon. Ironically, Leavis and Thompson (1933) began media education in the UK with the proposal that children should study the mass media purely to resist its facile gratifications. Our point is that we are still struggling with the 'legacy traces' of an ossified curriculum in which even the litany of English, drama and media, or English, media and drama denotes a hierarchy in the ascription of curricular (and cultural) value.

Our purpose is not to set out to create a new label for a subject. Despite the fact that the resort to the three-part list of English, media and drama is inelegant, the temptation to retain the 'imperial title' of English remains strong. The alternatives, such as naming the curriculum area as Cultural Studies (Buckingham, 1994), Media (Buckingham, 2003) or 'Communications', each have their own attached problems. Our aim is rather more pragmatic - to accept, even promote, the three-legged stool of English, Drama, Media, but to rethink the lenses, conceptual apparatuses, practices of critique and production, and cultural and textual territories of each leg. Furthermore, to explore how they connect as well

as separate; and, what should be a logical aspiration but still seems so distant as to be revolutionary, how they might achieve equal status in combination.

For us this is not a dispassionate or disinterested point, but is bound up in our own education, training and practice as teachers, researchers and academics. In the various contexts of learning and teaching, the movement between an engagement with language, texts, drama and various aspects of sound, moving image and digital media has seemed like crossing disciplinary boundaries. By contrast, for school students in contemporary classrooms the disciplinary boundaries between English, media, drama and communications technology simply do not exist in practice and, if they appear at all, they are literally and metaphorically academic. Out beyond classroom walls, in the diverse cultural locations and meeting points of social life, the domains of literature and other written texts, of dramatic performance, of the mediated world of television, film, game and digital production are experienced and participated in as fully articulated dimensions of the cultural sphere.

This is not to represent domains of culture outside of schooling and the classroom as being uniform, homologous, uncontested and unproblematic. Rather, the view we have of the culture in which schooling and classrooms are situated is as a context of contrast, contestation and sometimes conflicting values and practices. Nor is this an argument for making English lessons 'real' by bringing home or street cultures into the classroom to serve as the sole focus of study. Rather it is to acknowledge that schooling is a particular institutional space, that classrooms are particular places in which curricular policy (set by government and its agencies) meets the present realities of learners and teachers, through the processes of teaching and learning. The curriculum has, at the very least, to meet with the social and cultural interests of learners, particularly in a contemporary context of rapid social, cultural, economic, demographic and technological change. It has to meet those interests, and offer possibilities as yet unencountered.

Cultural changes affect the materials and processes of production in classrooms and have certain effects in practice. These effects are multi-mediated, connecting different forms of text and performance, through printed page, to still and moving image, to performance in the classroom. Layers and strands of interconnection between modes, forms and texts are complex and scarcely covered by the term and concept of 'intertextuality'. It is a claim that can be given form and substance by reference to some recent work in classrooms around 'canonical' texts from the 'English literary heritage'. Reference to these brief items of practice is not designed to point to 'good' or exemplary practice, however, but to suggest how analysis of what learners and teachers do

now indicate future trajectories. They are indicative of the ways in which the learners meet with the curriculum and are given space to bring what they know to lessons about Shakespeare, for example; and moreover, to make and 'perform' texts that are not simple - not simply mimetic and iterative, not simply playfully engaging or humorous in the tendency to parody. At one level, the making of cultural artefacts such as dramas, videos or computer games, can be seen as constructive, reflective and critical when set besides other such texts that circulate in the world. These forms of cultural production, if they do not supplant the traditional critical essay, should be seen as critical activities which deserve parity of esteem.

There follow, then, three vignettes which are recognisable as examples of work in Drama, Media and English; although the boundaries are stretched, intentionally, to breaking-point at times. The first recounts moments from a participatory drama workshop on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the second explores one learner's new understandings of classical narrative through designing computer games, and the last spotlights moments from a project in which learners make and remake versions of *Romeo and Juliet* on film. Each, in different ways, illustrate something of the range of cultural resources across different media and modes that children have access to and respond, to not simply as receptors of texts, but as active makers of meaning. Each activity demands particular, but various kinds of engagement with classical texts alongside the contemporary media of cultural production, and each involve various and multiple instances in which conventional curricular and cultural borders are crossed and re-crossed with ease.

Across cultures with *Macbeth*

Early in October 2005, a group of sixty English and English with Drama beginning teachers in the third week of their training course went, with two of their tutors, to a culturally mixed girls' school in Hackney to work with eighty 15 and 16 year-olds students. With their tutors, the beginning teachers have prepared a workshop that works towards detailed examination of four key soliloquies from *Macbeth*. For the school students, the workshop is designed as an active, exploratory and participatory approach to penetrate the sense and meaning of these speeches, a mode of working that attempts to avoid perceptions of difficulty and abstraction when learners are confronted by blocks of 'dense text'. In sequence, the workshop starts with questions, answers and discussion about Shakespeare and the play, works through dramatisation of the play's opening scene and culminates in close engagement with the soliloquies through wordplay and group enactment of the selected speeches. We shall take three very brief moments from the early part of the workshop illustrating aspects of cultural and textual

interface and interplay which, given particular contexts and conditions, can arise in the study of 'canonical' texts associated with 'English literary heritage'. These moments will assist in characterising and marking out the territory where the fields of English, drama and media meet and interlock in the contemporary context of education and schooling.

- The first two moments are taken from the opening stages of the workshop in which the tutor asks the whole group of school students a sequence of three questions which are intended to elicit and share knowledge of Shakespeare as playwright, as an 'iconic' cultural figure, and particular knowledge about *Macbeth* What does Shakespeare mean to *you*?
- What images of and references to Shakespeare do we find in the world around us?
- What do we know about the 'Scottish play' (*Macbeth*)?¹

Each question provokes varied, engaged and interesting responses which demonstrate, both to the beginning teachers and the school students themselves, that these learners actually know a lot about Shakespeare, and especially in relation to diverse cultural contexts.

Two examples will serve here. In answer to the question about the references to and images of Shakespeare to be found in contemporary cultural life (alongside the names of pubs, streets and housing estates) one girl answers 'Demi and Leo'. At this, silent question marks are displayed with expressions on the faces of some beginning teachers-what can the girl mean? Fortunately, the tutor is a regular viewer of the popular soap opera *Eastenders* and immediately responds positively to this offering. The Demi and Leo scenario was a direct reference to Romeo and Juliet's death scene. As a BBC documentary some years ago showed, the scriptwriting team overtly labels some of its storylines with the title of Shakespeare plays and scenes. Whether or not she knows this, the student is clearly quite aware that the script closely follows Shakespeare's plotline and gives a new context and makes new meaning of Romeo and Juliet's death. As a 14 year-old, this student would have studied *Romeo and Juliet* for national standardised tests (SATs), yet sensitivity to and recognition of cultural reverberations across periods of history and through various media - printed text, drama in live performance and televised soap opera - take her beyond the requirements of such tests.

¹These questions are taken from the work of Jane Coles, from whose practice as a teacher and MA dissertation on *Teaching 'Shakespeare' (Language and Literature in Education, 1991)*. Jane is currently Lecturer in English in Education at Goldsmith's College University of London.

A second instance in this question and answer session enforces the idea of cultural travel. In answer to the question of knowledge about *Macbeth*, another student offers the answer that it was 'a tribute play'. The tutor asks her to say more and she says that Shakespeare's theatre company at the time of writing *Macbeth* was the King's Company - the writing and performance of *Macbeth* clearly played to King James's obsession with witchcraft and magic. The point here is in the choice of the term 'tribute play' and the sense, the complex and developed sense, of cultural contexts that it indicates. In modern popular music there are 'tribute' bands that play the music and present themselves in the style of some of the great names in pop (The Beatles, Abba, or Queen are examples of groups who have spawned such tribute bands). Across genres and periods (in traditional ballads and folk songs, in the praise songs of West African griôts, as well as in modern rock, reggae and hiphop music) there are songs written in tribute to prominent figures. These cultural phenomena go beyond reference for the sake of reference, they involve recognition and celebration of cultural complexes which involve belief systems, rituals of recognition and particular themes within lifestyles that manifest in actions large and small, even to include styles of clothing and modes of address.

A production and representation of the opening scene of *Macbeth* is the third example taken from this workshop and it leads on from the idea of it being a 'tribute play'. The task was, with limited resources, to make the opening of the play seem dramatic and engaging and, as a focus, to think that its first performance was likely to be in front of the king who believed in witches. One notable and strong image produced was made by three girls, all in white hijabs (Moslem headscarves) and long-sleeved robes (in school uniform colours), who performed the scene, strongly emphasising the rhythm of the text and accompanying it with hand-gesture and body-swing with feet planted that was strongly reminiscent of a Bollywood sequence, or (more in line with the tutor's age and cultural experience) the hand-jive routine of a Tamla Motown vocal group. It was a fluid and fluent performance and, although they were not completely focused and serious (there was some giggling), there was enjoyment and more than a hint of parody about their performance. Their sense of audience was clearly strong as, even though they may have lost the focus of 'performing for the King', they were performing for the pleasure of their peers and the visiting teachers. What made it more intriguing is that the workshop took place in the early days of the holy month of Ramadan and, judging from the garb of these girls, it was likely that the three girls were fasting. There are intricacies of detail here that we are not qualified to interpret - the status of drama as a representational art form and the depiction of witchcraft in Islam, and in the holy month, for example - yet, clearly, these students were doing more than depicting a simple meaning derived from the text. Matching

appearances in headscarves and robes are likely to have played some part in the selection of these particular students for the roles of witches. While it would take a detailed ethnography to penetrate the depth and breadth of layers in understanding the full significance of such acts, this small enactment is evidence that these learners are able to make references across styles and media cultures, as well as across domains ostensibly marked out by belief systems, distinctive cultural practices and 'heritage' cultures.

The ability to admit a diversity of interpretation whilst maintaining learning about culture as a collective endeavour, to allow differences between learners but to see learning as being generative of a common stock of resources might appear at first glance to be paradoxical. Is it possible to derive commonality out of diversity as part of a learning process in school? It is not simply a matter of openness and sensitivity to cultural difference that might allow cultures of learning and classrooms to develop in this way, it relies also on willingness to range across the media and resources of representation, to wonder about provenance, circulation and transformation of these resources as part of classroom practice, even and especially when exploring canonical texts. The bodily and social participation and immersion in textual production that drama demands is but one potential aspect of engagement in contemporary classrooms. The nature of engagement in the dramatic narratives of computer games raises other different (but perhaps related) aspects to view.

Shakespeare, Homer, and computer games

The linking of Shakespeare with computer games is deliberately provocative. But it's an idea already out there. Henry Jenkins of MIT and the Royal Shakespeare Company joined forces a couple of years ago to develop a computer game based on *The Tempest*. Our intention here is not to investigate this project, simply to use the idea of it as a point of departure.

To approach Shakespeare from a media education direction is, as our third vignette will also demonstrate, to open up new questions for students, not only about the interpretation of texts, but about the relationship between making texts and reading them, about the nature of cross-media concepts like narrative, and about the technologies - the media themselves - which make meaning possible in different ways. *The Tempest* raises, in respect of narrative text, two very interesting questions which are not typically asked in English.

The first is, what kind of story makes a good game, a question asked by Marie-Laure Ryan in the inaugural issue of the premier academic game

studies journal (Ryan, 2001). She answers her own question by suggesting that games are 'a matter of exploring a world, solving problems, performing actions, competing against enemies, and above all dealing with interesting objects in a concrete environment' (*ibid*). The kind of characters she suggests are at home in this kind of narrative are Alice, Sherlock Holmes, Harry Potter and the heroes of fairytale rather than Emma Bovary, Oedipus or Hamlet. However, the question is an interesting way to approach Shakespeare. Plays which fit Ryan's game-like criteria are clearly plays like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, where exploration, puzzle-solving, navigation, magic, role-play and action are at a premium. Furthermore, the issue here is not only about narrative, but about the very idea of play, something not often raised or theorised in English (perhaps play and poetry come closest together in the work of the Opies). But serious, dark, adult forms of play are at work in both these 'plays': Prospero and Oberon's Olympian play with the humans caught in their net; the tragicomic game of love; the play of identity; the adult play of intoxication, whether by love-flower or shipwrecked wine-bottles. These adult forms of play, traceable back to the rites of Dionysus, come under what Brian Sutton-Smith (1997) calls the rhetoric of Fate: constructions of play which recognise its dark, adult, chaotic side.

The other question is about grammar; or, more strictly, about the system of person in language and the function of address in a text; a part of the interpersonal metafunction in functional linguistics. Game narratives are, effectively, second-person narratives, addressing the player as protagonist, and are this quite unlike most literary or filmic narratives. However, there are some notable exceptions, one being Prospero's final speech, in which the audience are offered the power to fill the magician's sails with wind, and thus to decide whether he will or will not return to Milan. This form of address, together with the hint of a branching narrative beyond the end of a play, feels like Shakespeare on the brink of a game; and the implications for classroom approaches which hybridise traditions of literary and media study are obvious.

We will finish this section with a game-related example of classroom work, stepping away from Shakespeare for a moment, but retaining the idea of a media education approach to classic texts. Two of the authors have recently been developing, with Immersive Education Ltd, a computer games authoring software, for use in schools. This project was developed in partnership with two UK schools, one in London, one in Cambridge. The curricular frame was media education: we were exploring, with Year 8 classes, how this software would make possible the creative production of games by students, and how such work would help them develop an understanding of the grammar of games, the principles of game design, the nature of game narratives, some aspects of

game genres, and aspects of game audiences and their expectations and criteria for judging a 'good' game.

After the students in the Cambridge school had made their own games, they were asked to write a pitch for a more extended game of their own. One boy, David, chose to make a game based on *The Odyssey*. As he developed his pitch, it became apparent that the work on game design had given him a very different understanding of narrative from those which usually obtain in the English (or indeed, the Media Studies) classroom. An abbreviated version of his pitch follows:

The Odyssey

My idea is for a game following the story of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus travels back to Greece after a long war to capture Troy. He is blown about in a storm, and must face several challenges to return to Greece. I think that this will work as a game because although it has discrete levels, each consisting of a single challenge, the levels relate to each other somewhat, such as Circe warning Odysseus about the Sirens, and about Scylla and Charybdis. ...

This game will be aimed at boys aged 10-14 who may (or may not) have some interest in the Greek myths. This target audience should be interested in role-playing games, as the player would be expected to negotiate information and assistance out of the other characters, as well as a certain amount of puzzle-solving, as these also will be included to some extent. ...

The player characters are Odysseus and his men, who are desperately trying to get back to their homeland, the difficulty of which is a cruel twist of fate after their glorious victory in Troy. There are various NPCs (non-player characters) who help or hinder the PCs (Player characters) or do both. An example of an ambiguous NPC is Circe, who attempts to lure the Argives to their doom, but after they have resisted her temptations, she gives Odysseus some advice as to the nature of the challenges he will have to face. In addition to these NPCs, the narrative contains monsters (who do not talk to the PCs, but merely attack), such as the one-eyed Cyclops, who although they cannot be convinced not to attack, tend to be rather stupid and (relatively) easy to outwit.

I think that the game will be enjoyable to play because of the pleasures it offers to its users. The game offers a strong aim for the player - to get Odysseus back to Greece. I think that this aim will be powerful because it is easy for the player to identify with - how many of us haven't experienced that feeling of being lost and unable to get back to the ones we love. I think that the narrative could act as a metaphor for a child's experience of a previously pleasurable trip which goes horribly wrong when the child loses their parents, each

challenge in the story representing the child's fight to maintain a spirit of confidence and optimism despite the disappointment of turning a corner and finding that their parents are not waiting around it. Odysseus's wife, of course, represents the child's mother. ...

The game will involve skill in three respects: Role-playing and diplomacy; problem-solving, and dexterity. The player will be expected to navigate his way through tricky interactions, to gather information, and to pacify (or not) NPCs. In addition, he will be expected to come up with ways to bypass the seemingly impossible challenges he is presented with. Lastly, he will have to be fairly handy with the mouse, and good at simulated combat. ...

My game, being largely concerned with narrative, will not contain exceptionally large amounts of rules and economies. One example of a rule, however, is involved in Odysseus's encounter with Scylla (an huge, six-headed monster) and Charybdis (a deadly whirlpool). A rule used in this section states that if the ship enters a special trigger volume by getting too close to Scylla's cave, she flies out and carries away six of Odysseus's men (one for each head), reducing the crew economy by six. This economy is a fairly close equivalent of the standard health economy, in that the game is ended if it gets reduced to zero, although it varies in that the player is hampered when its value is reduced to close to zero, as the ship becomes more difficult to manoeuvre. In this respect, then, it is closer to a strength economy.

...

I have, briefly, presented my game, and it would, I hope, do Homer proud, although, of course, whether it would be possible to sell it to the manufacturers is quite another (and, arguably, a far more important) question!

This piece of work contains some real challenges to English teachers. It presents a complex understanding of narrative, but ones that are based on game concepts and textual structures. The episodic nature of the *Odyssey* is understood in terms of game levels; the various monsters become NPCs (non-player characters); while Odysseus and his crew become PCs, or player-characters - in a role-playing game, the player can typically either choose which character to play, or can play groups of characters as a team. The skills David identifies as those the player will need - role-playing, diplomacy, problem-solving and dexterity - are indeed typical of role-playing games, but are also exactly the skills that distinguish Odysseus from other characters in the Homeric narratives.

Finally, the narrative is understood as determined by rules and economies. These are constructed in the game software as systems of conditionality - *if this, then that* - and as numerically-quantified resources - health, strength, vulnerability, and so on.

This understanding of narrative, as rule-governed, formulaic events and characters in a series of designed environments is in stark contrast to the versions of narrative which English has derived from the tradition of the modern novel, with its emphasis on psychology and internal action, and its troubled but insistent relationship with forms of realism closely bound up with the survival instinct of the Enlightenment subject. However, it equally challenges notions of narrative current in media education: as Lev Manovich points out, media people have not yet become accustomed to the idea of their cherished texts becoming computable (Manovich, 2001).

David's version of narrative suggests how we might begin to think in the way Manovich proposes; and is not as irreverent as it may appear to some readers. Janet Murray, in her provocative book on computer narrative, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (1998) - another shotgun wedding between Shakespeare and popular media - argues that computer game characters are very similar in some ways to the characters of oral narratives: both are formulaic, and both are better at action than psychology. David's pitch for the Odyssey-game makes us realise that the analogy goes further than character - the episodic structure, the economies of health and magic, the strategic skills required of protagonist and player alike, the function of narrative and ludic rules: all of these suggest strong affinities between game and oral narrative, which demand new thinking from both English and media teachers.

The re-making of *Romeo + Juliet*

Our third vignette comes from a study of Baz Luhrmann's film version of *Romeo and Juliet* with Year 8 students, who explore a thirteen-second sequence, made up of twelve camera shots, and the following lines:

Tybalt: Turn and draw!

Romeo: I do protest, I never injured thee
But love thee better than thou can'st devise.

They are then given the camera shots as still images on small laminated cards, a visual equivalent of familiar DART sequencing activities in English (Lunzer & Gardner, 1979). Through the talk prompted by this activity, students start to evolve principles of film narrative, the teacher feeding in technical terms when needed. These include: reverse angle shots; clues in the eye-lines of characters; continuity of action; point-of-view shots, juxtaposed with shots which identify the character looking; the avoidance of jump-cuts; and reaction shots.

Students then rehearse and consolidate these understandings in an editing exercise, using Adobe *Premiere* editing software. They are

provided with disaggregated shots from a one minute sequence, when Romeo is being pursued across Verona as he tries to reach the 'dead' Juliet. These have been arrayed in the 'bin' and are ready to insert on the timeline. However, as with sequencing and group cloze activities in English, this is not about discovering the 'correct' version in Lührmann's original film: as well as the individual camera shots from this sequence, they have a number of shots from other parts of the film, which they can use as 'flashbacks'. They also have the original soundtrack for the sequence, along with romantic music from the lovers' first meeting, and 'tragic' music from the finale in the 'tomb'. These resources are sufficient to make dramatically new versions of the sequence, creating different moods, and making references to other parts of the narrative.

It is clear from interviews that students appreciate the learning that comes from the anatomising of film that this activity allows. To Guthrie, the activity was like the 'opening of a portal':

...the use of being able to cut from shot to shot, instead of being, like, in a theatre and watching the whole thing on one screen constantly...how you can create emotions using particular techniques.

Lottie identifies the importance - as a learner - of being able to design, rather than just analyse, a sequence:

When you did it yourself, you could see so many things that you could with it, that you wouldn't have thought of doing... ...if you'd seen a picture of a clock, you wouldn't have put it maybe with, like, the police car, but when you can see it, and you can dissolve it into each other... and you can see it and how it changes it, how it makes it more interesting or do different things...

But the pleasure is also in being creative - of becoming a producer rather than just a reader of text. Richard writes:

I found it quite fun because it was like making your own movie ... [to] inject ourselves into the film.

At the same time, students are learning important things about the Shakespearean text: about its emotional qualities, about the representation of conflict in it, and about power, as in this comment in Danielle's written work, that shows how her understanding of the relationship between Tybalt and Romeo in this sequence is articulated with her understanding of the grammar of camera angle and movement:

The camera tilts upwards on Tybalt, this is because the last shot was Romeo and he is on the floor and the camera was going upwards

from the floor focusing on Tybalt's reaction of what Romeo has just said. This tells the audience that Tybalt is the one in control and gives you the sense of power.

Another student, Siyao, describes the grammar of the sequence in a confidently precise way, explaining the dramatic quality of the scene through the metalanguage of film:

The first frame of the sequence is a close-up from front of Tybalt's angry and aggressive face, which is very frightening and involving. The next frame is a cut to reverse angle, over the shoulder medium shot, which allows the audience to share Mercutio's view of what is happening and also, this rapid cutting to Mercutio's point of view adds to the sense of danger.

This level of response is evidence of the potential of this kind of work with moving images to accelerate students' analytic thinking and writing, prompting sophisticated, precise and imaginative articulations of the relationships between form and meaning and effect. Reflection on the nature of the dramatic text involves attention to the function of characters and the work of actors, again articulated with precise and subtle readings of the language of camera and editing, as in this analysis by Joe:

Also, at that point when the camera tracks up, it is the first time there has been any significant movement in it. the camera has stayed still to reflect the movement of the most important character in the sequence: like Mercutio, the camera has witnessed everything, but has done nothing about it...

The final shot is of a new character to the sequence: Samson. the camera is placed at an oblique angle to him. He is not an important character, he is at the side of the action. His emotion, his expression of fear and anxiety, needs to be acknowledged - not felt - by the audience. He simply watches - he does not act.

The question we have been asking throughout this article is acutely felt here: is this English, Drama or Media work? Clearly it is all three. In this case, it is not even obvious which disciplinary 'lens' provides the starting point, or frames the analytical language the students are using: is it the Shakespeare text (or script); or the popular (in both senses) Luhrmann film; or the impact of actor and director; or the semiotics and editing technology of the moving image?

Endpiece: towards the three-legged stool

Another three-legged stool appears in a Tarot card design of the art historian Luigi Scapini. The card, called The Magician, shows Shakespeare pulling the strings of Romeo and Juliet, but also resting his

foot on a three-legged stool beneath which a tiny audience are about to enter the Globe, which nestles under the Magician's other foot. This image implies text as performance, it productively confuses fictional characters and real audiences, it suggests forms of puppetry, play and popular spectacle in which theatre, literature and game come very close together. These are themes raised by the vignettes we have set out in this paper, which provoke, for us, profound questions about categories central to English, Drama and Media: literacy, signification, text, performance. The literacy metaphor is notoriously stretched, and we dislike it in its vague, metaphorical sense. Yet these examples prompt more specific instances: the question of how something like the system of 'person' in language operates in computer games; how the rules of a narrative might relate to the structures of a computer game and those of oral narrative; how the signifying properties of camera angle and frame are in a way grammatical. Also, literacy is, more broadly, to do with an understanding of how meaning derives from cultural contexts and the relations between them - in this case, between Shakespeare as canonical literature and as soap opera; as privileged theatre but as popular rhythm and gesture; as schoolbook and as audience tribute. These are polarities we should explore and embrace, not choose between.

Literacy is a familiar apparatus for English and Media teachers, but an uncomfortable idea for Drama teachers. However, the collaboration between Media and Drama teachers necessarily involves some rethinking; and the effort to overcome divergent pedagogic traditions seems worthwhile in the light of so much shared territory. Media people have been less accustomed to think about the expressive function of bodies in space, the language of physical action, and even the framing devices of theatre, in spite of their common ancestry with those of film. Ryan points out that, in order to find a model of narrative adequate for games, we need to add a phenomenological dimension borrowed from drama to the familiar categories of diegesis and mimesis (*ibid*). At the same time, however, Drama teachers have been less used to thinking of dramatic representations as mediated by screen technologies. Though the cultural history and representational practices of cinema and television have changed drama as well as borrowing from it, classroom drama has not always exploited or explored this relationship as deeply as it might. Again, computer games offer new possibilities here for the way in which play and roleplay intersect with the expressive preoccupations of children.

Literacy is also, by common consensus, about critical practices; and all the practices illustrated in these vignettes encourage criticality. They range from a critical capacity to undo a text and put it back together to a critical awareness that a soap romance replays a Shakespearean trope in a fictional imagining of London's East End. They exemplify expertise in

the metalinguistic terminology of narrative in games, films and dramatic texts. But they are more than critique; or beyond critique. Rather than the cold analytic practices many of us were brought up with, divorced from physical or cultural context, all these activities are making and remaking activities. They produce new texts which ride on the back of an emergent critical understanding. They exemplify a move from critique to production - territory with which drama has always been easy, media less so.

Somewhere in this pulling-together of English, Media and Drama which we are imagining is a view of meaning-making, understanding, the use of tools, bodies, signs and spaces, and the engagement with technologies of representation, that refuses to fit happily within any of these three sub-disciplines or their pedagogies. In part, this is a realisation of the inadequacy of a dominant linguistic model, and the need, as Gunther Kress (2005) has argued in the recent national conversation about English in the UK, *English 21*, to move from a linguistic to a semiotic framework. This suggests, in respect of our vignettes, an ability to deal with images, meanings and stories that stray and mutate across media, migrating from literature to stage to film to game, conceptualising this within a model of multimodal semiotics. It also throws up a number of difficulties, however, of which perhaps the main one is how to produce such a model amenable to explicit use by students. We are relatively relaxed about the practical implications of this, however. The key thing is the intention of the profession to move in this direction; the students, as we have seen, seem willing and able to find the words.

The coming together of what have been for a long time, separate subject knowledges will never be a tidy business. But the development of English-Drama-Media as a proper three-legged stool will involve the intellectual effort to grow the theory, the practical imagination to build on the kind of border-raiding we have illustrated here, and the political will to level the playing field in future mandatory curricula.

References

- Buckingham, D. (2003) *Media education: literacy, learning and contemporary culture*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Buckingham, D. & Sefton-Green, J. (1994) *Cultural studies goes to school: reading and teaching popular media*, London: Taylor and Francis
- Burgess, T. (1996) 'A Different Angle: English teaching and its narratives' in *Changing English* 3/1, pp. 57-77, London & Abingdon: Institute of Education & Carfax
- Cox, C. B. & the National Curriculum English Working Group, (1989) *English for ages 5 to 16: proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales*, London: DES/HM Stationery Office

- Kress, G. (2005) 'Communication Now and in the Future', QCA,
<http://www.qca.org.uk/12292.html>
- Leavis, F. R. (1948) *The Great Tradition*, London: Chatto and Windus
- Leavis, F. R. & Thompson, D. (1933) *Culture and Environment: the Training of Critical Awareness*, London: Chatto and Windus
- Lunzer, E. & Gardner, K. (1979) *The Effective Use of Reading*, London: Heinemann
- Manovich, L. (2001) *The Language of New Media*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Murray, J. (1998) *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press
- Ryan, M. L. (2001) 'Beyond Myth and Metaphor -The Case of Narrative in Digital Media', *Game Studies*, vol. 1, issue 1 (**www.gamestudies.org**)
- Sutton-Smith, B. (1997) *The Ambiguity of Play* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press