



ISSN 2040-2228

Vol. 2 No. 1
April 2011

Drama Research: international journal of drama in education

Article 2

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Introduction

'How do I define history? It's just one fucking thing after another' (Bennett 2004: 85).

So jibes the cynical yet worldly wise Rudge in Alan Bennett's play *The History Boys* before going on to achieve a scholarship to Oxford, primarily on account of his being the son of a former college servant:

'They said I was just the kind of candidate they were looking for...evidence of how far they had come...Mind you, I did all the other stuff like Stalin was a sweetie and Wilfred Owen was a wuss. They said I was plainly someone who thought for himself' (Bennett 2004: 98).

Bennett's play is considered a modern classic in the field of dramatic literature on the strength of its structure, characterisation and discourse. The subject of the discourse is history itself, why it is studied and what its study tells us about the human desire and capacity to interpret and re-interpret the past for different purposes. The great irony in Rudge's comments is that while he secures his place at Oxford, he seems committed to neither the significance of historical events nor the morality implicit in the act of interpreting them. Whether or not he is genuinely able to think for himself is neither here nor there, his take on Stalin and Owen having simply been tutored as an effective means of obtaining entry to a college and subsequently stepping towards a financially secure and satisfying career as a builder of 'affordable homes'.

Somewhat redolent of Bennett's play, though I hope not reflecting Rudge's cynicism, this article discusses the relationship between drama as a means of both exploring and conveying history. By recognising that drama as an art form mediates the bare bones of historical facts through editing and elaborating them, it is argued that, in

doing so, it reveals why both subjects are important in the development of a critical literacy that examines facts alongside values.

Ways of knowing

My mother was born and grew up in the East End of London. She wasn't evacuated so witnessed the blitz first hand from beginning to end and was herself bombed out on one occasion. I don't recall her saying much about her experiences when I was a child. Perhaps it was still a little too fresh in her memory. Her brother was evacuated though and years later made me laugh as he re-called 'being fiddled with' by the farmer's daughter – 'one of the happiest times of my life!' he said, giving a very different perspective on such an occurrence to the often disturbing and tragic testimonies gathered in books such as Ben Wicks' *No Time to Wave Goodbye* (Wicks 1988). Though it may seem flippant, this personal example illustrates how tales of real events may be spun for effect, or not re-told at all, leaving a vacuum to be filled in other ways.

My father grew up in a provincial town that, apart from the odd lone raider, escaped the direct effects of war. Conscripted in the summer of 1945 he missed the action, a fact that perhaps he felt somewhat ambivalent about. It was he, after all, who took me to see all the latest war films when I was a child and so conjured an imagined world of daring-do and heroics which was soon fuelled by the gross stereotypes and characteristic motifs of Commando Comics. Like many children of war children who grew up in the relative safety of 1960s England, I became immersed in, and to an extent adopted, a history that seemed personal and real but which was in actuality either second hand or entirely fictional. Just such a phenomenon forms a central theme in Pete Johnson's teenage novel *The Hero Game* in which the young male narrator becomes enchanted when he learns his grandfather was a Spitfire pilot:

'You could say that my own life wasn't any good so I had borrowed Grandad's instead. But he'd had such a big life that it really didn't matter' (Johnson 2005:11).

As the novel progresses, the young protagonist uncovers less palatable dimensions of his Grandad's history such as his active affiliation to Moseley's Blackshirts. In this, the novel takes on a usefully didactic element: without selectivity, history can be messy and discomfiting. But while selective histories may meet some needs in the stabilisation and reinforcement of icons and values, it is through acknowledging the messy jumble of different perspectives and interpretations that we come to know where we stand in relation to contexts past and present.

What does it really mean though when we say we 'know' something? Certainly, there are dates and statistics we can memorise about any aspect of history, what Polanyi deems explicit knowledge (Polanyi 1959). While this may be helpful in the pub quiz or when doing a crossword it is only one sort of 'knowing'. We can 'know' about something because we have experienced it firsthand. But then again, if what

we experience firsthand is beyond our usual frames of reference then we may not be able to process and fully assimilate it; the result is that details are either forgotten or altered so that they can be understood or a sense of confusion, incomprehension, and sometimes guilt and self-alienation (Spranger 2004).

In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* the young Romeo chides the older, more classically educated Friar Lawrence, with the words, 'Thou canst not speak of that thou dost not feel'. This seems an inversion of Wittgenstein's famous edict that whereof one cannot speak, thereon one must remain silent (Wittgenstein 1922) and aligns with Polanyi's notion of a tacit, pre-verbal awareness upon which all other understanding depends. Romeo 'knows' that he is in love. He knows it because he feels it. Love, like hate, is a feeling that can defy logic and factual account. Both can be detected through the enlargement of the pupils and an increase in pulse rate, but recognising this does not bring us much closer to 'knowing' what love or hate is as a feeling. The word 'knowing' in this sense relates to the Scottish word *ken*, the roots of which are in the Old English term for 'make known'. The word is related to kin and kindred and so kind, type, family. Within each there is an implication of becoming profoundly familiar with, understanding, having an insight into and an affinity with. Interestingly, the suffix -ledge, as in knowledge derives from -lock, denoting action or process. Thus, to have knowledge of something may mean to have an insight into something because of the feelings associated with it and the affective actions that results from that. Alternatively, knowledge may mean having a head full of moribund facts; moribund because while they are locked in the brain they are inert and change nothing.

I am not an historian, yet, as the product of history, I am entitled to say something about what I feel I know and how I have come to know it. When Einstein was asked what we should do with our children in order that they may learn, he famously replied that we should tell them stories. History is a story and drama a way of coming to know it. Reflecting on the work of Williams, Hornbrook (1998: 115 – 116) argues that drama pervades our lives, and dramatic representations have become a principal means by which we learn about the world as it was and as it is. A good deal of children's knowledge of history develops outside the classroom as a result of the stories they hear from adults, what they read and perhaps most extensively through what they see on film and television. Indeed, history teachers regularly employ films such as *Schindler's List*, *Saving Private Ryan* and *Goodnight Mr Tom* to support their curriculum work not least because it bring history 'to life' by focusing on characters rather than events, a point noted by Somers:

'Much of the content of theatre unravels and speculates on the personalities, motives and effects of individuals and groups from the past, whilst history benefits from drama's ability to reconstruct the human detail that fleshes out the facts of past events' (1994: 124).

Hornbrook's response to the manifestations of a dramatised society is that as we watch and participate in dramatic depictions, we ask ourselves, 'What does this mean?' or, more precisely, 'What drama am I in here?'

Rich veins for mining drama

*Rich veins for mining drama
Some stories – if you try and tell them exactly,
Then somehow,
You end up telling a lie.
So it didn't happen exactly the way we tell it.
But it happened.*

These lines are taken from the play *Dr Korczak's Example* (Greig 2001: 12) which tells 'the true story' of Janusz Korczak whose beliefs became the basis for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The 'true' story? How could it be entirely true when Korczak and some 200 orphans under his care in the Warsaw ghetto were sent to their deaths in Treblinka in the late summer of 1942 and so left no first hand testimonies? According to the play, the children sang all the way to the station and one witness reported 'that the children's yellow armbands thrown down onto the black cobbles looked like a field of buttercups.' (p 68) It's a powerful, dramatic moment which exemplifies the playwright's license to select and edit evidence in order to convey meaning in an effective way.

Greig's play uses a number of stylistic devices to create a distance between the actors and audience from the storytelling. For example, at the start of the play the stage is 'peopled' by an array of dolls dressed as orphans, Nazi soldiers and Polish adults. The way the small cast of actors manipulate the figures underlines the idea that figures as noble as Korczak or as powerful as an armed guard are both a part of a larger canvas. Whilst harrowing and tragic, the ultimate gift of the play is to remind its audience that it is always possible to stay human even in the face of totalitarian oppression.

Greig's is a play written to challenge a contemporary young audience with both its form and content. As such it contrasts with plays such as *The Silver Sword* (Henson 1982). This dramatisation of Ian Serrailer's 1956 novel, follows the fortunes of a Polish family who are split up in the war. The parents eventually find their way to Switzerland. A twist of fate allows their children to realise the father is still alive and so set off to try and find him. It's a tale of adventure which captures the hope and strength that come out of extreme circumstances. This, alongside the happy ending in which the family are re-united, made it a popular school production throughout the 1980s. It's interesting to note however that although the father is arrested for not teaching the required Nazi syllabus and the mother is sent to a labour camp, there is no mention of anyone at all in the play being Jewish. Indeed, not only are the gross privations of the ghetto barely touched upon, the very existence of the holocaust goes unmentioned, making the play seem rather anodyne today. It's an instance in which a story that might once have seemed powerful, uplifting and based on historical events may become, over time, saccharine and unauthentic.

What saves *The Evacuees* (Rosenthal 1978) from suffering such a fate is his detailing of character rather than event. Drawing on the writer's own childhood experience, it

tells story of two Jewish boys evacuated from Manchester. Their new 'mum', Mrs Graham, is childless. In order to try and make them forget their real mother so that she can adopt them, her treatment of the boys is unforgivably cruel leading to them being taken back to Manchester and the more palpable dangers of the bombing. By focusing on the boys' perspective, the play gently suggests that the evacuations had personal implications for adults which may only be grappled with in hindsight by the children involved. In a beautifully understated scene in which the boys are not present (which suggests it's source is purely Rosenthal's adult imagination rather than anything from his childhood memory) it becomes clear that Mrs Graham's misplaced distrust of the Jewish mother is more to do with the pain of her own childlessness rather than racism. At the end of the play the boys are back in Manchester and have regained their happy childhood. Mrs Graham is left with her sadness. The war is no more than a distant backdrop to personal events.

On the face of it, *Just remember two things: it's not fair and don't be late* (Frisby 1989), an autobiographical tale of two brothers sent from suburban London to Cornwall, is similar to *The Evacuees* in that it has a strong essence of happy childhood memories. Rather than facing prejudice and resentment though, the boys are looked after by the kind and caring Uncle Jack and Aunt Rose. According to Frisby he and his brother genuinely had a wonderful time exploring the land of milk and honey and were eventually accepted by the local children after the required number of fights and scrapes. Despite some tragic events (a boy being run over by an army lorry) and scandals (a local girl becoming pregnant by a black American soldier), the play is a humorous and heart-warming dramatic account which seems both convincing but, at the same time, the stuff of legend. This raises the question of whether legend is less valid than more 'authentic' testimony. Portelli (1998: 64) has argued that:

'Oral sources (of history) are credible but with a different credibility. The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and a desire emerge.'

Frisby's story is, in many respects, an archetypal, happy evacuee's story, comparable with those told in children's novels such as *Goodnight Mr Tom* (Margorian 1981) and *Carrie's War* (Bawden 1973). That such stories are told and reinforced in different locations and different media over time indicates an inevitable move from 'fact' to 'legend' which in itself suggests an underlying need to tell such stories. Such a process can be seen as serving an important purpose though. While it may obfuscate one sort of historical fact it generates another, that is, the need for people to understand the past by organising it into a narrative that both simplifies events while elaborating on details which, for whatever reason, give the storyteller and the audience a purchase on their meaning. Writing in defence of oral history, Portelli (1998: 67) notes that it:

'tells us less about events than about their meaning. This does not imply that oral history has no factual validity. Interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events.'

What is being suggested here is that in dramatised depictions of historical events such as the evacuation, it is not so much the event that is important but what the meaning is for the character in the drama and, in terms of drama education, the player who is playing that character. As interviews may reveal unknown aspects of known events, the playing out of events within the medium of drama, where the enacted world of some other time and place interfaces with the real world of here and now, provides new insights into how the events have been interpreted and what effect they might have had on those involved in their real occurrence. It is this dynamic, revealing and potentially cathartic aspect of drama which underpins much of the work of 'Age Exchange', a theatre company founded in 1983 in order to:

'improve the quality of life for participants...by valuing their reminiscences and providing them with the opportunity for wider appreciation in the form of visual and performing arts projects' (Age Exchange 2008).

A good example of their educational work is the 2006 film *In My Father's Footsteps*. Like *The Silver Sword*, the film explores the plight of a Polish family. In this case the story belongs to Helen Aronson who produced a basic script for the film which then had scenes added to it by students from diverse ethnic backgrounds who devised from her story. Helen's reminiscences direct to camera are interspersed with scenes of her childhood performed by the young, multi-cultural cast to make a powerful and deeply moving film which clearly touched those involved in the devising and acting process as much as it does its audience. David Savill of Age Exchange noted:

'The students are surprised by their achievement. We in turn have been pleased to see how they have matured intellectually and emotionally while working on the project.'

Coming to know through drama

A good deal of drama as it is commonly taught in the English speaking world has the dual aim of developing the students' knowledge and understanding of drama as an art form while simultaneously exploring a content of some social, interpersonal or cultural significance. The starting point for the work may well be an existing playscript such as one of those discussed above. Alternatively the stimulus for an exploration through drama may be a photograph, an object, a costume, a newspaper clipping or extract from a diary. In this methodology, the students are invited to be an audience to their own work as playwrights and actors: responding to what has been made and performed in the work being a crucial part of a learning process that involves both emotional and intellectual engagement.

Bolton (1984) argues that, in the first instance, the teacher's role is to help the students make drama happen so that it can happen to them. However, in order to achieve its full learning potential, the drama lesson must move beyond the purely experiential and induce reflection and analysis. In this way neither the dramatic or didactic experience is vicarious or transmissional. Rather, it becomes dialogic,

enactive, creative and critical. Exploring historical events such as the evacuation of children in WW2 requires the participants to project their existing knowledge and experience into a fictionalised world and so develop new knowledge and experience as that world is reflected back at them. Both Aristotle and Brecht acknowledged in their different ways that drama, of necessity, requires engaging with emotions: dramas that fail to engage the emotions in any way are quite simply not very good dramas!

Because of this, the worlds created and explored in drama can be dangerous places to visit. However, there always remains some safety in that fact that the world of drama is a fictional world. It can explore real things and generate real feelings, but at the end of a participatory workshop, as at the end of a play, those involved can step back, regard the artifice and critically assess how it has affected them. The greatest power of drama as an educational medium lies in its potential to develop critical thinking as students interpret both what the content means to them, and how the art form may best be employed to communicate that to others.

Historical dramas from Shakespeare's *Richard III* to Joan Littlewood's *Oh What a Lovely War* or M6 Theatre Company's *No Pasaran* are fictionalised accounts, but are perhaps no more fictional than any filmed documentary in which some events are selected for representation while others are not with the aim of helping an audience 'know' the subject a little better. Thinking critically about such a view raises a number of questions. For example, in whose interests is such mediation taking place? How is the evidence being mediated and communicated? To what extent is the audience aware of this? How might different audiences respond to what is being communicated? Teachers may strategically pose questions such as these in order to encourage students to reassess and act upon their position with regard to the world as it was, as it is, and as it might be. In asking such questions, though, an awareness is needed that interpretation results not only from emotional and intellectual responses, but also to moral values.

Moral dilemmas

Although Hamlet declared that, 'The purpose of playing...was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature', O'Toole, issues the counter claim that this is just a half truth and that drama is,

'a prism rather than a mirror, that refracts the truth obliquely, sometimes even backwards' (O'Toole 2003).

suggesting that sometimes, through the medium of drama, what may be all too readily accepted as 'the realities of the real world' are exposed as being no more than constructs whose actual meanings are at odds with, perhaps even diametrically opposed to, initial and superficial interpretations of their existence. The playwright Edward Bond uses Coventry cathedral as an example of just such a shift between a common yet essentially mythologised public perception, and a more brutally honest

reality. While many would hold Coventry cathedral up as a symbol of regeneration, forgiveness and hope for the future, Bond proclaims that it is 'a moral icon, not a moral reality' in that for all the symbolism attached to it, its actual concrete existence does nothing to prevent war and violence. Drama on the other hand, says Bond:

'does the only moral – and practically useful – thing that can be done with bewilderment and violence. It turns it into creativity. It does not stop at helping the disaffected to understand themselves and others, vital though that is. It gives them the reward that only creativity can give – the ability to change. That is something that cure and punishment can never do' (Bond 1996: 77).

Though drama teachers may take strength from Bond's standpoint on morality and creativity as it is expressed here, in the pragmatic situation of the classroom, standing behind his words doesn't necessarily make dealing with sensitive issues unproblematic. For example, while exploring historical, social or cultural issues, teachers can find themselves having to negotiate circumstances in which what is purely academic and theoretical for some is highly personal to others:

Dakin But when we talk about putting them (the death camps) in context it's only the same as the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

After all, monasteries had been dissolved before Henry VIII, dozens of them.

Posner Yes, but the difference is, I didn't lose any relatives in the Dissolution of the Monasteries (Bennett 2004: 74).

An example from my personal experience of this dilemma comes from my work with primary age children on the island of Guernsey.

Some 14,000 children were evacuated on one day alone in June 1940, just days before the Germans took control of the island. The occupation inevitably generated a plethora of stories worthy of exploration through drama - the bookshop at Guernsey airport is a rich source of often privately published accounts and memoirs! Among these may be found the sort of humorous tales that could be tailor-made to hook children into creative drama work. For example, the time when the Germans realised a British commando raid had taken place because they found a haversack containing not only a shaving kit and ammunition, but a bag from a Plymouth bakery with two fancy cakes inside! (Bell 2002: 79). Conversely, there are tragic stories as well such as that of Marie Ozanne, a Salvation Army major who defied the Germans by wearing her uniform when the wearing of such had been banned. She did so largely because she was haunted by the screams of slave workers in a camp near her home being tortured. She was sent to prison for this and although she was released just six weeks later, the experience proved too much for her and she died soon after (Bell 2002: 229).

May 9th is a public holiday on Guernsey when the liberation of the island is celebrated. The occupation holds an important place in the curriculum for all of

Guernsey's children. The dilemma I faced (and felt acutely as an outsider) concerned what stories to focus on in a drama lesson I had been asked to teach as a part of the May celebrations. In addition to the adventurous, the heroic and the comic, I had discovered other stories of darker shades. It is recorded, for example, that within hours of the evacuation in 1940 houses were being looted by locals. There were deaths by malnutrition on the island, and in 1942 Hitler himself dictated that English born islanders were to be deported to labour camps on mainland Europe. In all, 827 were deported though others committed suicide rather than being taken (Bell 2002: 226). In contrast, as the occupations proceeded, a number of individuals and businesses made a good deal by trading with the Germans and by the time of the liberation some 200 babies had been fathered by German soldiers. These are the stories of the children's grandparents. How can the contradictions of the past be opened up for children in a way that respects the right of their community to construct, communicate and celebrate that past in its own way? What follows illustrates how drama can be used to answer such a question.

Daisy's diary

Molly Bihet's privately published memoirs *A Child's War* (1985) recounts a number of incidents when, as a child, she discovered how the most innocent or fleeting look could be misinterpreted by German soldiers. This memory was appropriated into a warm up game in which making direct eye contact led to players being 'out'. It's a fun game that raised the question, 'what would it be like to live in a time or place where even catching someone's eye accidentally could lead to you being stopped and questioned about why you are looking?' From this starter, the children's attention was drawn to an installation consisting of a travel bag, a bush jacket, an airline ticket, a passport, an old diary and a tourist map of Guernsey. The installation is an intriguing hook that promotes visual literacy, that is, the ability to interpret what they see and ascribe meaning to it. It suggests a character who is a stranger to the island. Who is he? What is he looking for? What's in the diary? After sharing a few ideas I put on the jacket, pick up the map and look confused. I tell them that I am an Australian man visiting Guernsey for the first time. The intention is to present the children with an adult character who is vulnerable because he is so far away from home that he must rely on them to help him. The character tells them his name is Bert Hedges and he's searching for his mother's grave. She was born on the island and grew up there before emigrating to Australia with her husband (a soldier who was among the first to arrive on Guernsey on Liberation Day) After his father's death, his mum returned to Guernsey and died just last year. This is the first chance he has had to visit the island himself.

Bert recounts how his mother told him stories about her life on the island during the war and that he feels he almost knows the place even though he's never been there before. However, he says, when he was clearing out his mother's home in Australia he came across an old diary with her name, Daisy, on it. It has been locked and the lock broken so that it can not be opened without force. Did she do this deliberately?

Why did she leave the diary behind when she returned to Guernsey? Should he force it open, or would it be better to leave her secrets secret?

The children are invited to ask Bert some questions in order to find out just how much he does know about his mother's experiences. This is quite challenging. Not only must they think of a question, but ask it of an adult they don't know. If they're to get a good answer they'll need to ask it in a polite and sensitive way: Bert has revealed, after all, that he is looking for his mother's grave and is feeling bad about not having been able to attend her funeral. Through this 'hot-seating' the children learn some of the stories Bert remember his mum telling him but have actually come from my own research as a teacher. I emphasise stories which I think they will find funny but intersperse these with others that have more serious, and potentially dramatic, overtones, for example, the bombing raid on St Peter Port shortly before the invasion. The idea that a number of tomato lorries were destroyed amused the children when they imagined the mess; the fact that 34 men were killed wasn't so funny for them though when, in role as Bert, I imagined the redness of the tomatoes mixed with the spilt blood. One exciting story concerned the daring escape from the island by two fishermen intent on alerting the Allied forces across the water in France that the islanders, along with the entire German garrison, were starving. Their action eventually led to the arrival of the Red Cross ship the SS Vega which brought food parcels two days after Christmas 1945. The class imagine what other sort of things might be contained in the diary. They were asked to try and think of something that might have been frightening, exciting, worrying, funny, upsetting or perhaps a huge relief to a child of their own age. The adjectives were written up on a flip chart for reference then, working in small groups, the children made tableaux of their chosen moment and guided towards animating this basic image into a short scene. After sharing the scenes the children worked on their own to jot down how the incident they had depicted may have been translated into a diary entry. The locked diary was placed reverentially in the middle of the room. One by one, the children moved towards the diary, read their piece, and placed it by the book:

Dear Diary

It was so exciting today. Mummy let me use my first sweet ration! I bought a sherbert pop. It was delicious. I can't wait until I'm allowed to use another one.

My house got searched today. It was awful. Everything was thrown all over the place. I was really scared. The worst thing of all was that the soldiers all had guns.

I was really upset today because I saw some fur on the road and then I smelt a smell. It was coming from Mrs Brown's kitchen and it smelt delicious but then I realised that Mrs Brown was cooking my cat.

Today I opened the cupboard and discovered that there was no soap. So I went outside anyway but the people on the street nearly fainted because I

was so stinky then I smelt myself and I nearly fainted! It's not my fault though. Because of the water shortage everyone stinks.

In role again as Bert, I thanked the children for giving me some ideas about what might be in the diary and showed them a cardboard representation of my mother's grave. Having found it, Bert again wonders aloud what he should do with Daisy's diary. Diaries are, after all, private things. On the other hand, he says, you can learn a lot from them. This one however is locked. Should he break the lock? What if he finds something inside his mother wouldn't want him to read? The children were asked to make an alleyway between Bert and the gravestone. As he walked slowly in between the two columns each child expressed their opinion about what he should do. Finally Bert arrives at the gravestone. He looks at the diary and..... Back as myself, I tell them that it's the end of the lesson. It's a bit of a cheap theatrical trick which leaves the class demanding to know what happens next which is precisely what I wanted: they must make the rest of the story up for themselves and consider further what they would do in Bert's situation and why. Better still, perhaps they could talk to their own grandparents or older neighbours about their stories. After all, such stories are as much their inheritance as the concrete scabs of occupation that litter the landscape. They seemed excited and moved by Bert's own story and stories he has told them about their island's history. I hoped they would be inspired to learn more about the history but also consider people's right to reveal or retain their personal stories.

After the lesson the class's teacher, who had been born just at the end of the war, told me that her elder sister had been left behind on the day of the evacuation. Her father was a bus driver. He had spent the day collecting children from all of the other schools but had left his own child's school until last. When he finally picked up her class and got them to the harbour the last boat was just beyond the harbour wall. It struck me as a good story that might just find its way into Bert's repertoire next time I lead the workshop but also led me to share my concerns with the teacher about what I considered a moral dilemma in dealing with material that could impinge upon existing sensibilities:

'Is it more delicate and sensitive here? I'm not sure it is. You just don't address some issues with children not because of the local context but because you just wouldn't do it with children of the same age anywhere. They need a certain emotional maturity in order to respect the cultural context as well as to deal with the emotional element. What's important for them is to understand that the Germans were here and they were starving alongside the local people. There were things that went on that weren't nice but equally there is a lot they can gain by hearing about how strong people were.'

Winston has argued that *katharsis* in itself is non-ideological and amoral. Moral responsibility, he argues, lies with those dramatists and teachers who harness its energy to explore or explain or create in a dramatic context. What matters is the wisdom and appropriateness of what is learned through *katharsis* (1996: 194).

The teacher quoted above went on to say that:

'You don't have to convince me about the value of drama as a means of teaching history. Things don't become sanitised simply because some things aren't mentioned. The history is there to be found out about for those who want to find it out. I don't think things get forgotten because it's all been written about and is there to be found when you want to dig deeper.'

Towards a critical and emotional literacy

While the term 'literacy' is commonly taken to mean the ability to read and write, simply mastering the mechanics of reading does not guarantee comprehension and access to the biggest library in the world may not guarantee that you will find out what is worth knowing. It's a problem that lies at the heart of Diane Samuels' play *Kindertransport*. The central narrative of the play concerns a Jewish family living in Nazi Germany who choose to send their daughter away to escape persecution. She is taken in and raised by an English woman. Torn between her German heritage and her desire to wipe the Kindertransport experience from her memory, she tries to become English herself but has to confront her demons when her own child discovers a letter in the attic which reveals her German Jewish roots:

Evelyn I don't want you getting involved with all that...

Faith It has got something to do with me.

Evelyn It has got nothing to do with you at all.

Faith I just want to know about you.

Evelyn You do know about me.

...

Evelyn You know, Faith, there are hundreds of books on the subject. Read some of those if you must have a morbid interest in past events (Samuels 1995: 73).

These few lines of dialogue mirror both what my colleague on Guernsey has said about the availability of 'facts' as well as the sub-text of the lesson I taught with her, that is, a recognition that while first hand oral testimony can be hugely revealing we must accept that it is also both selective and capricious. In the introduction to the National Curriculum for History in England, Christine Carpenter is quoted as saying:

'History is an unusual discipline. Its core is hard fact that you cannot get away from and have to learn to master. At the same time you have to be deductive, perceptive and imaginative in the use of that fact' (DfEE 1999: 15).

I propose that drama has a parallel dynamic: it seeks to inform, enlighten and enrich. But of necessity, because it must also entertain in order to achieve these aims, it gives a form to facts that can invest them with greater meaning than they possess in their raw state. What this observation implies is that in both the study of history and

drama young people need to develop the ability to interpret and interrogate what they read, see and hear. Mirroring Wittgenstein's edict that it is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use, Hornbrook argues that it is not a case of things being either simply true or false but of accounts being judged in their context. Explanations can only be regarded as coherent when attention is paid to who is offering the explanation, the audience to whom it is offered, and why (1998: 121 – 122).

History may well be, in some sense, '*one fucking thing after another*' but teaching it as such contributes nothing to the development of humanity. Nurturing imagination and a critical awareness of the means by which we come to know things however is fundamental to such a project, a message forcefully relayed in Edward Bond's play for young people, *At The Inland Sea*. The play opens with a student preparing to sit an exam but as he does so a woman carrying a baby appears from the very history that he has been studying – the holocaust. The boy is presented with a seemingly impossible dilemma: he must tell a story which is good enough to stop the horrific events from taking place. Bond explains the rationale behind the play's conceit thus:

'We are not made human by our reason or cleverness. Reason ran the train schedules to Aushwitz and its builders were clever. We are made human by our imagination. It is the source of our values, the faculty through which we create ourself by gaining self-autonomy and responsible social affiliation. It is not fantasy as most people think, it is the most logical of all our faculties. Because when the imagination is not creative it must be destructive...The imagination cannot be taught – but it can be made creative' (1997: 76).

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Teaching English Through Story and Drama. Part One. Teaching English Through. Short Stories. 1. Activity 1: Completing a diary. The character of the narrator gradually changes as the story goes. He has written a diary to show his feelings after each event. How did the narrator feel after each of the following events? Through responding to characters, events, issues and themes in dramatic texts, students can interact with each other to give expression to imaginative texts from their own experience. Besides, drama provides a rich experience that engages body, emotions, and senses in dynamic learning, thus, it can promote the development of the students' multi-intelligence so that every student is valued, and all students receive a more well-rounded and complete education.