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THE IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVE TO DRAMA EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

by Tiina Moore (Australia)

Abstract

This paper focuses on the importance of narrative in teaching and learning within a specific primary school setting. Two drama lessons, using the historical content of the broader curriculum are analysed to examine the relationship between drama and narrative in a teaching collaboration between a drama specialist and a year 4 class teacher. This paper represents the early stages of data collection within a wider research study which explores the relationship between pedagogy and art when using process drama strategies within a story based curriculum.

Keywords: Narrative, Process Drama, Primary Education

Cet essai met l'accent sur l'importance du récit dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage dans le contexte précis d'une école primaire. Deux leçons de théâtre, tirées du contenu historique de l'ensemble du curriculum, sont analysées pour examiner la relation entre le théâtre et le récit, dans une collaboration pédagogique entre un spécialiste de théâtre et un instituteur d'une classe d'enfants âgés de 9 à 10 ans. Cet essai représente les phases initiales de la collection des données, d'un projet de recherche plus large qui explore la relation entre la pédagogie et l'art, dans le contexte de l'utilisation des stratégies de théâtre de procédés d'un curriculum basé sur des histoires.

Mots clefs: récit, théâtre de procédés, enseignement primaire.

Este ensayo se concentra en la importancia de la narrativa en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje dentro del ambiente específico de una escuela primaria. Dos lecciones de drama, utilizando el contenido histórico del programa de estudio, son analizadas para examinar la relación entre drama y narrativa, y la colaboración educativa entre un profesor de drama y un maestro de Cuarto grado. Este ensayo representa los comienzos de la recolección de datos dentro de un estudio más amplio que explora la relación entre la Pedagogía y el Arte cuando se utilizan estrategias del proceso del Drama como parte de un currículo basado en una historia.

Palabras claves: Narrativa, Proceso del Drama, Educación Primaria

Author's biography

Tiina Moore is a drama specialist teacher at Eltham College of Education in Melbourne, Australia where she has settled for the last ten years after two decades of secondary teaching in Canada, Scotland and England. At Eltham, she is the co-founder of a drama based curriculum model known as The HiSTORY Centre. Her current research, undertaken through Griffith University combines her interests in process drama, alternative curricula and narrative.

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Introduction and Background

Recently, a drama educator and writer asked about my specialist drama program. "Why narrative?" was the direct challenge. I was rather taken aback by this question, since as a drama teacher working with the primary sector; I assumed the answer would have been obvious. At the very least, it made me reflect on the lessons of a quarter century of drama teaching and the range of teaching and learning approaches which have become part of the drama education repertoire.

It is the primary age range which is currently at the centre of my research and where I intend to examine narrative more closely. Nevertheless, I can easily recall circumstances whereby I made teaching decisions to play games, practice skills, simulate life's problems, or study characters in Macbeth,

where the narrative (read story framework) was not necessarily central to the drama. In any case, whether working on progression in drama skills or integrating within a broader curriculum, the picture book, the line of text, the illustration, and the historical event; i.e. THE STORY was always within arm's reach as a lifeline. For the purposes of this paper, I will use story and narrative interchangeably as befits the primary school work under examination at the time of writing.

It may be too easy to suggest that my dependence on story reflects an early teacher training experience with David Booth who lives and teaches that from a

shared literary experience, the learning can continue in a thousand ways, as children role-play incidents, storytell sections, discuss questions and problems, read sections aloud, write about personal responses, draw and point and graph all types of reactions. A good story is a complete learning package. This gives us as teachers a powerful tool for involving active minds and imaginations through the strength of story (1992:10).

Or perhaps it was this background that eased my transition from secondary teaching abroad to primary education at Eltham in Australia ten years ago. Eltham College had already adopted Kieran Egan's (1988) research and development of the Story Form Model as a framework of learning 'to provide children with a stimulating and relevant learning environment.' (Armstrong et al., 1994:v). The framework was perhaps less rigidly adhered to than Egan's view that:

The development of the narrative capacities of the mind, of its ready use of metaphor, of its integration of cognitive and affective, of its sense-making and meaning-making is of educational importance because these capacities are so central to our general capacity to make meaning out of experience. (1992:64)

Egan's structure introduced a way of planning curriculum through story and was most timely with the six compulsory subjects identified in the newly National Curriculum published in Australia at that time. Moreover, in the state of Victoria The Curriculum and Standards Framework 1 administered five arts subjects within a single Arts document (1992). Teachers were more than ready for a framework by which to manage the increased compulsory workload.

I was both relieved and dismayed by the enthusiasm for Egan's 'storied' paradigm at the time of my initial employment. Relieved, because the school's philosophy was compatible with my training; disheartened because it was clear that I would have to 'lift my game' if I was going to extend the knowledge of teachers and students within this rich educational context. Not only were Year 4, 5 and 6 teachers regularly putting children into role as a means of learning about money, history or space, but they were also building elaborate environments in a way that a secondary drama teacher never had the luxury of experiencing. In my first year, I watched traditional classrooms transform into space stations, South Pacific huts and underground caves. So, 'Why narrative?' Robert Fulford, author of *The Triumph of Narrative* written for the 1999 Massey Lectures Series treats the question as more basic than training or educational fashion:

A story that matters to us, whether it's ancient or modern, becomes a bundle in which we wrap truth, hope and dread. Stories are how we explain, how we teach, how we entertain ourselves and how we often do all three at once. They are the juncture where facts and feeling meet. And for those reasons, they are central to civilization (9).

I don't suppose my Year 4s really know about that juncture between facts and feelings 'at a metacognitive level that is. But I have found myself wondering as I continue to integrate their Year 4 drama program with their Australian history class content, why they so willingly spend the better part of the year as the characters on the 'First Fleet', building the pioneer settlements and trying their luck on the Victorian goldfields. The details of this collaboration are more fully described elsewhere (Moore: 2002) but there is no doubt that narrative creates the conditions which make the historical events matter.

In this paper, I will examine some contrasting Year 4 drama lessons which have been developed over several years with their class teacher, Geraldine Peters. The drama classes were audio taped, videotaped and transcribed as part of a broader research study, to better understand how drama interventions contribute to a sense of significance between the student and the curriculum content - that

intersection of facts and feelings.

THE FIELDWORK

The Methodology

This research project started as an investigation of drama interventions within an educational setting, which already valued narrative as a means of engaging children with a complex, subject-centred and outcomes-based curriculum. The features of reflective practice suit the nature of this project well:

Reflective practitioners use their own instrument, themselves, to raise questions of inquiry, to process how those questions will be investigated, and to consider how their emergent findings will impact upon their lifelong work (Taylor 1996:40).

As a teacher/researcher already collaborating with a classroom teacher/researcher, I also benefited from the insights of a student teacher who contributed as an outside observer to the understanding of the work. Similarly, Eltham's principal Dr. David Warner agreed to analyse video tapes from the point of view of his special interest, the notion of "self-directed learning". While this emphasis is beyond the scope of this paper, it will become increasingly important within the broader parameters of the research and the ways that drama interventions, within a narrative context, facilitate or impede the self-directedness of Year 4 students.

The collection of the data included:

- A field journal which included notes and transcripts of intentions for selected lessons and the debriefing of same
- Audio tapes of selected drama lessons
- Videotapes of most drama lessons with Year 4 in the year 2001
- Transcripts of interviews with the outside observer
- An analysis guideline for observation of opportunities for self-directed learning
- An interview with the principal regarding the spirit of self-directed learning in the selected lessons
- Excerpts of interviews with children in Year 4 recorded on audio tape.

Tape selection

From a year's classroom/specialist collaborative work, more than half of the Year 4 drama lessons were videotaped and or transcribed. From these tapes, three have been selected for closer scrutiny to examine the relationship between the classroom-initiated narrative and the nature of the subsequent drama classes.

The first videotape was selected from Term 2 at the time that the children were in role as Australian settlers and were embarking on building (literally) a pioneer community in their classroom. The work enabled English, Technology, SOSE and Maths outcomes to be met through the act of building, establishing businesses, trading and interacting with various government institutions of the day. The drama lesson extended the concerns that had arisen in the classroom over the course of the previous week and employed strategies that might highlight the feelings associated with the busy settlement tasks. It was chosen as a "typical integration lesson" with all the strengths and weaknesses which evolve in such a tightly interwoven collaboration. Drama teachers will recognise the lesson as one which follows a fairly tightly structured "conventions" approach (Neelands 1993). The tape will be referred to as the Pioneers tape.

The second and third tapes are selected from Term 4 and ideally would have been conducted as one continuous lesson. In the less than perfect world of schools, they take place over two weeks. The lessons focus on a community "hearing" following the murder of a man called Scobie in the Victorian goldfields. This was one of the incidents that contributed to the anger of the miners leading up to the Eureka Stockade in Ballarat in 1854. The background information (as read text and re-enactment) was for the most part handled by the classroom teacher.

The drama classes following this incident spotlighted relevant information, witnesses, overheard conversations and flashbacks which contributed knowledge about Scobie's enemies. The Hearing segments used "Teacher in Role" and "Mantle of the Expert" strategies (Heathcote & Bolton 1995). The lessons were selected as a means of contrasting teacher functions when working from

outside the narrative and from within the narrative. The lessons represent some of the ways that the drama teacher sets up lessons, manages classes, employs strategies and reflects on work. They represent neither best nor worst practice.

TWO NARRATIVES: A SPOTLIGHT ON HISTORY

Pioneers

The *Pioneers* lesson spotlights the frustrations and concerns that the students were encountering as new settlers or as freemen following completion of their convict sentences. The work in their classroom was filled with the excitement of physically "building" the pioneer settlement, choosing businesses and watching the growth of a community. It was particularly conducive for teaching the maths curriculum in a context where buying, selling, and trade were natural elements of daily life and where political systems had to be worked out. The "real" and the "role" investments that the students researched, recorded, illustrated and voiced before coming to drama obviated any further need to "build belief" in Dorothy Heathcote's memorable phrase. Wagner elaborates:

Everyone involved must at least try to accept "the one Big Lie; that we are at this moment living at life rate in an agreed upon place, time and circumstance and are together facing the same problem (Wagner 1976:67).

On the day the Year 4s came to drama, they arrived frustrated with builders, banks, soldiers and government agents. Geraldine and I came to think of the class work as the "floodlight" casting a diffuse wide light over the settlement. I would need to focus the metaphoric spotlight with its sharper intensity, to highlight the inner tensions of these characters. In this case the narrative was already functioning as a frame before students entered the drama space; that is, they entered with roles, a sense of time and place, and with personal and political issues that had already occurred in the "built up" settlement.

I decided to continue the previous week's scenario of offering a forum for their numerous private frustrations in a public sphere. I was hoping to achieve a visual imagery that was more than "talking heads". I was struggling to find the common ground in problems which already mattered more than I would have expected from seemingly "dry" content:

So I'm going to set a few things up but it's going to be a little bit more like theatre so that you can ALL get a chance! [because] it's not going to be very exciting for us to just sit here and watch other people just make a whole series of complaints... (Transcript: Tape One).

In order to sharpen their language and get to the heart of their concerns, I set up the political hierarchy physically and asked the complainants (most of whom wanted to voice their anger against the hapless local builder) to express their frustrations with a single statement and gesture.

Visual messages of power became as important as content, as the representatives of the government (Governor Collins) took their places and organised stools and rostra:

Look at the layers of government we're starting to get! No wonder it's a bit scary. We have to go through all these people to get anything done for ourselves. We're just sorting out the tiers [spells t-i-e-r-s] of government here (Transcript: Tape One).

For the next ten to fifteen minutes, the "pioneers" express reasons for their anger to the local builder, using a single statement and a gesture. The builder responds with a defence prepared for publication in the newspaper and reads it formally to the angry mob. Surprisingly, most of the class are not reassured by the builder's dignified defence of his construction problems. They are enjoying too much the excitement inherent in portraying the angry mob. I am conscious of time and again surprised that they have wanted to spend so much time (carried over from the previous lesson) on building problems in the new settlement. I am keen to "give voice" to other students and divert the class from their anger with the builder:

"! This is not an issue that went away easily did it? We need to give the people a

chance who haven't had a chance to speak. They also have a voice in this community (Transcript: Tape One).

With the slight change of direction, there is a reorganisation of 'the tiers of government' previously established. These characters for the most part have been acting as witnesses to the complaints. They included the Governor's representative, the Permanent Secretary, two sergeants, a guard and a civil servant. There is an incredible concern with the visual 'rightness' of status in this drama. The children are quibbling and reorganising rostra, stools and layers, having picked up on more casual placement established at the outset of the class:

LAURA: I'm higher than Steven

VOICES FROM AUDIENCE: Steven's higher!.. They are very low down!.. Steven should be higher than Laura!

HELEN: Those 2 are about the same and I'm higher than Shana (other sergeant) so!

TEACHER: Right, Steve, I'm letting you tell me because you know and I don't. I'm not going to solve this problem. (Everyone moves to new positions) Are you happy with that, guard?

WALTER: I'm just a guard so I should be pretty much on the lowest level!

TEACHER: Right could you come down the steps? (Walter does so and resumes his soldier stance very seriously).

TEACHER as narrator: And who would have guessed that while all this was going on and people were haranguing the builder, that these people over here [the previously unobtrusive government representatives] were worried about who was higher than who!
(Transcript: Tape One).

This conversation is interesting because it represents a prevailing concern with artistic 'rightness' in an otherwise chaotic lesson. The teacher is controlling the pace and the structure for most of this lesson to advance the story and get beyond the naturalistic style that the content seems to impose.

While the circumstances of the class/drama relationship have led to my 'following' a pre-existing story, rather than initiating one; nonetheless I seem to be:

- determined to give shape to the narrative facts and feelings
- limiting the language of complaints to get to the heart of the issues
- asking for an accompanying gesture or posture to reinforce the statement
- formalising the builder's response by way of a written proclamation
- suggesting a set design which reminds us of the governing powers which dominate our lives.

The mastery of the art has been introduced in tightly controlled, progressive stages to enable the students to retain freedom over the content of the story and to experiment with the voices and the body language of their characters.

If the narrative is the means by which historical facts meet the personal (role) frustrations, then drama is the protected place where young people can explore what that might look like. Helen Nicholson's 'languages of drama' (2000) can assist us in such an endeavour. I will return to her 'languages' later.

In term four, the same students experience a narrative, framed into the context of a 'Hearing' at the time of the Victorian gold rush. As with *Pioneers*, the detail of the content, and therefore most of the building of belief, evolves in the classroom. Almost a decade after Kieran Egan's last visit to Eltham, his story-framed approach continues to be honoured through the creation of elaborate physical environments.

THE HEARING

The set-up

The many events leading up to the battle known as the Eureka Stockade during the gold rush in Ballarat, Victoria included exorbitant miners' licences, a mistrusted hotel owner, the murder of a miner named Scobie and a suspicious fire at the Eureka hotel. The Australian gold rush certainly made for heartier tensions in drama than the Pioneers unit of work.

The lesson which introduced the structure of *The Hearing* was initially more teacher-centred than I would have liked. It was important to distinguish between a hearing and a trial in order to accommodate a greater diversity of stories, gossip, vested interest and distorted memory. Students were asked to speculate about the differences. Even more traditionally I used the white board to draw up a chart of the FACTS and the HYPOTHESES known about the events so that we could share our collective knowledge and begin our scenes from shared experience. This was in anticipation of the contradictions which would undoubtedly appear later within the scenes. Every character needed to feel a connection to this significant piece of history without the burden of absolute truth. John O'Toole elaborates on the nature of fictional contexts like that experienced through *The Hearing*:

Narrative is also the expression of cause and effect through time. The dramatist takes a focussed event and characters, and moves forward through its consequences, backward through its causes, or backwards and forwards to show the causal network (1992: 32).

The remainder of the first lesson was allotted to the planning and refining of their accounts and the style in which they would be delivered to the circuit judge (the teacher in role). The students were of course in 'now' time, recalling historically based fictions for a future 'hearing'.

The Transition / The Classroom

The day of The Hearing arrives. The class teacher, Geraldine, describes the buzz in her 'goldfields' room:

Groups gather in our township to discuss the day's news. Individuals write journals, make lists and set up spaces for trading. There is much to talk about. The Eureka Hotel has burnt down and a miner named Scobie has been murdered. The troopers relentlessly check miners' rights. The unrest in Goldfire Hill is tangible. It is time for our weekly Drama lesson. The citizens of the town walk out of the door in single file. There is a sense that anything might happen in this space. The citizens state their name clearly, produce their miner's right and take a seat in the classroom where Tiina seated at a table with quill and ink is ready to begin as the circuit judge presiding over a hearing. The background information gained in the classroom is used by the (citizens) in the replay of the evidence in the Drama room (Moore & Peters 2002).

The Interventions

In a paper submitted to the NADIE Journal in 1996 Julie Dunn quotes David Best, stating: 'To refuse to intervene is to refuse to educate.' In the analysis of the drama lesson based on a Goldfields Hearing, several different kinds of teacher interventions can be observed. As the circuit judge, most of the interventions were carried out by the teacher 'in role' and all were made spontaneously in response to the actual and fictional circumstances of the moment. They remain as a contrast to the struggles to find the art form within the Pioneers content and to the teacher-centeredness in the setting up of this lesson:

A: TEACHER IN TWILIGHT ROLE: (appropriate to both teacher or the judge)

TEACHER: Now tell us what you know!

The teacher is building the bridge to the fiction and is answered by the character giving testimony who says:

STUDENT: The last time I saw Scobie was the 11th of October, 1854!

The student in turn has built a bridge into the flashback which describes a scene in the pub.

B: TEACHER AS CHALLENGER: (questioning a testimony of dubious sobriety)

TEACHER: Why should I believe you? You have no reason to want to protect [Bentley's - the hotel owner & suspect] reputation?

STUDENT Why should I?

The student returns the challenge as an adult equal:

C: TEACHER AS CLASS MANAGER:

TEACHER: There will be no further interruptions of this nature, or you will be removed from the court (sic).

D: TEACHER AS DIRECTOR: (coming out of role and referring to an abandoned costume and a subsequent role change)

TEACHER: How wonderful to have the symbols of the [dead] man on the stage.

As Sharon goes off to be someone else:

Do you see what they have just done here? Not only have they given us information about the story but also information about creating theatre, which is useful for everybody. (Field notes 2002).

The lessons described are different in their emphases and in their teaching styles, although they are all lessons which I would own as typical of my style for different purposes. If asked last year what in the historical context was created by what I was teaching in the drama, I would have referred to the group skills and the feelings and attitudes related to moments of history. I would have acknowledged drama skills as useful ways of gaining a range of perspectives on the curriculum content; a kind of jewellers' lens to look at different facets of a gem. It is interesting to find, in the intervening months, that the nature of the interventions is less about the content and more about 'form' than I would have imagined.

Data analysis and relevant literature

A frustration with much of the collaborative work in Year 4 has been the feeling of playing 'catch up' with pioneer and goldfields stories for the better part of the year. While I had been fully prepared to share control and be guided by 'where they were' in the class story 'confident that I would find the drama structures to slow down time and examine issues and feelings' I began to worry that drama was potentially becoming a 'handmaiden' to the SOSE curriculum. In 'What Knowledge is of Most Worth in the Arts?' Reimer derides the 'functional claims' that have been made for the arts in education. 'The more of such functions [i.e. social, moral, conceptual, knowledge of history and cultural mores] the arts can be shown to serve, and the more pertinent they can be shown to be to favoured values, the more important they might become as an integral part of education.' (1992: 23)

While acknowledging that arts for personal, and social skills are often an overt and laudable teaching aim (albeit functional), at Eltham I have been fortunate to have been able to take these aspects of drama teaching, for granted. On closer examination of the videotapes therefore, I was heartened by the consistent attempts to bring the students' attention back to the 'shaping' of their stories, to the 'development of aesthetic literacy' (Reimer). I do not claim that they were aware of historical content and drama forms in equal measure in every lesson but the efforts to involve young people in 'languages of drama' were evident even in the brief examples extracted for this paper:

Unlike many traditional education practices which are dominated by the written work, drama is a 'multi-modal' art form, and necessarily requires students to use visual images, movement and sound as well as words. This means in practice, that participants in drama use its visual, kinaesthetic, aural and verbal qualities to shape symbolize and represent thoughts and feelings into dramatic

structures, genres and forms which are recognizable to others (Nicholson, 2000:3).

The style of presentation also caught the student/observer's eye when Ann Hedenig was deconstructing a *Pioneers* lesson:

They looked at the builders' problem from a completely different angle. They chose to present this performance like pieces of a puzzle, in abstract form, removed from the emotion of the situation in order to get the clear message that they wanted to the audience. How could a group of nine year olds make such an improvement in their performance in only 3 weeks ? (Hedenig 2001)

Ann's question is asked from the point of view of the increased confidence and energy she observed during her first visits as student intern and observer to the Year 4 collaboration. The answer to her question has something to do with the balance between risk-taking and protection that children experience in learning to handle the 'languages' of drama. It has to do with what Heathcote called 'protecting into the drama'. The narratives into which these nine year olds so willingly enter offer the protection that releases them to examine the emotional content of the fiction and a variety of story telling styles. Bolton and many other drama educators have acknowledged this crucial element in drama and play:

Paradoxically it provides this sense of freedom to choose, but the process of play activity is about 'limiting' the choices. In a game the rules are socially constructed beforehand; in creative drama they are negotiated, but this negotiation is often constrained by whatever the 'rules' happen to be in the slice of life the creative drama is reflecting (Bolton 1984: 81).

In the case of *Pioneers* and *The Hearing*, the narrative offers the story boundaries which in turn liberates the students into exploration of the drama 'languages'. In planning lessons within the context of an integrated curriculum the stories of explorers, convicts, settlers, aborigines and goldminers are 'the givens'. Narrative is the train that these Year 4 students ride in order to learn about history and about drama.

Michael Fleming has skilfully and thoroughly acknowledged that success in drama assumes that an understanding of drama skills and subject matter has been reached. In fact

an ability in drama should not mean a focus on narrowly defined skills devoid of any recognition of the importance of content and context. Any significant understanding of what being 'good at drama' entails, must include reference to content (1994: 52,53).

The drama lessons examined in *Pioneers* and *The Hearing* benefited from the significant investment of the class teacher. Drama provided a public forum and therefore a cohesion where personal and private events were laid out in a public sphere for further discussion. Fleming discusses the ways that language places certain matters in the 'public domain' by making implicit ideas, explicit. 'In successful drama the same process of bringing about explicit awareness and making discriminations which are fundamental to human concerns is happening but far more intensely because the art form serves to select, focus and heighten the feeling content' (43). Imagining the source of that 'feeling content' without the strength of the narrative would be difficult.

EMERGENT THEMES

Self-directed Learning

The extent to which my teaching interventions into class narratives 'line up' with the school's vision - to create an environment of 'self-directed learning' - is an area worthy of further investigation. There have always been issues related to the degrees of freedom and control in drama education especially with the use of teacher-in-role strategies. From the time of my teacher training, these notions have been variously called: self-actualisation, autonomy, agency and empowerment - to name a few. The teacher's roles and functions evolve as an important variable in the degree of self-directedness of student participants and would need analysis and interpretation over an extended period of time.

Risk and Protection

I continue to be interested in what Christine Sinclair has called 'a safe place for drama' (2002). Does content matter? How do we make the 'juncture between facts and feelings' safe for children? What guidelines might be offered for finding an appropriate balance between risk-taking and protection?

Though he is less familiar with drama pedagogy these same concerns are evident in Dr. Warner's reflective comments about the selected videotapes:

Disposition is an interesting thing that you teach. It is about creating motivation, excitement or at least, willingness to participate. Therefore the teacher manner, that includes friendliness, warmth, creating the non-threatening environment at the same time a getting kids to accept high expectations becomes a very important attribute. [Teachers] need to be taught how to create the non-threatening but challenging environment (Warner 2002).

'Getting it right' in drama means walking the tightrope of several opposing tensions. Narrative provides an obvious framework for the teacher's precarious balancing acts but I would also like to investigate some of the subtler contributions of working in narrative. The advantages of the class/drama cross fertilisation are coming into relief at this early stage of the research study but require a sharper focus on the way that the narrative functions differently in drama from its function as a curriculum framework.

The Dual Affect

At the end of 2001, during informal interviews with small groups of students, all year four students expressed unanimous enthusiasm, with the sentiment represented by the simple statement,

When you feel it in role, you feel it in your heart; if you get it out of a book, it's just in your head. (Transcripts, 2001)

While confident that many of the expressive skills 'practised' in drama are transferable to a range of contexts and life skills, this is not where the enthusiasm is centred in the taped interviews at the end of the year. The struggle for the students is in trying to find the right words to convey the 'feelings' they have experienced by participating as characters in historical narratives. It is the dual affect of the emotion of an event (eg. frustration with a builder), accompanied by the satisfaction in creating the drama (Bolton 1985:138) which makes the learning qualitatively different from many other learning experiences.

I will continue to look closely at the kinds of interventions which enable narrative events to be bracketed off and explored in role, while allowing reflection on those events as artists.

STAGE TWO: THE HISTORY CENTRE

At the time of writing, the drama/Year 4 collaboration has proven successful enough in the eyes of Eltham's administration that it has been extended across two grades, four classes and five teachers. The new teaching/learning environment has been branded 'The History Centre'. It has been granted a dedicated space, with state of the art technology which acknowledges the importance of drama at the centre of children's learning. One of the issues that I intend to pursue is that of 'aesthetic literacy' within this new framework for drama. After little more than a term's experience in this expanded vision, I feel confident to say that narrative is the engine which drives historical content and generates enthusiasm. Narrative, however, is not in itself 'drama' and it will take more time and reflection to understand the gains and the losses accrued in learning the 'languages of drama' within this new teaching context.

Adapting Methodology

While qualitative research practices continue to suit the aims of the broader research, the action-research model now requires adaptation. The collaboration of class teachers and the drama specialist still exists within the parameters of the History Centre but the context of the teaching of a weekly drama

lesson in a drama space with a specialist teacher no longer exists.

Whether the expanded collaboration in this new framework is beneficial to the creation of Reimer's "aesthetic literacy" and self-directed learning is yet to be determined.

As a practitioner and a researcher at the centre of these significant changes I envision a hybridisation of research methods which potentially include reflective practice, narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly 2000) and case study (Carroll in Taylor 1996):

Case study fits because drama, by its very nature as a negotiated group art form, is a non-reproducible experience. The participants within a drama in education session or series of sessions create a unique set of social relationships that becomes a single unit of experience capable of analysis and study (Carroll: 77)

CONCLUSIONS

It is appropriate to return to the original question of "Why narrative?" Some reasons spring to mind quite effortlessly:

- Narrative is a mode of meaning-making
- Narrative releases participants into feelings and form
- Narrative provides the detail necessary to build belief
- Narrative determines the nature of interventions
- Narrative provides a frame for the interpretation of events
- Narrative provides the means to explore the "languages" of drama
- NARRATIVE MAKES IT MATTER

Praising the virtues of cohesion in narrative is an unfashionable stance in light of current suspicion of grand narratives. Paradoxically, the episodic nature of drama resists simplistic, linear approaches. Similarly the respect for diverse points of view within single contexts like *The Hearing* is evident in the multiple endings and contrasting attitudes towards morality, history or justice. Robert Fulford has called his text, *The Triumph of Narrative*.

And yet humanity clings to narrative. We may mistrust large-scale narratives that attempt to shape society, but our narrative drive persists. we cannot do without it.
(61)

As a drama teacher embarking on an exciting primary school teaching adventure, I don't intend to try.

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