Chapter Six

Writing for performance: speaking out

Connection

I strongly believe in the notion of the global citizen who is not defined by nationality or religion, and who does not define others in this way.

Empathy

- *I am energised through interaction and empathy with others, and this interaction is a major source of learning.*
- *It is also my belief that this empathy only makes sense through transformation in the real and material world: and that we fulfil this, in a way that is unique and specific to our abilities, skills and beliefs.*

Chapters Four and Five looked at how I as writer transformed lived and created story into the written word, while searching for my own 'voice' and for ways of revealing core values. Chapter Five also ended with two observations arising from 'commissioned writing': the experience of writing as a process of response to constraint, and of writing as a process of developing new skills in order to adapt to the 'outer reader' rather than the inner, intuitive one - the process of professionalisation and adaptation.

This chapter continues to address the implications of 'commissioned' creativity through the medium of performance on screen/stage. The chapter describes two projects involving performance; the first, my experience as producer of Jewish and interfaith programmes for Carlton/West Country television, and the second - two plays, commissioned to accompany the Jews of Devon and Cornwall Exhibition, Plymouth Museum, February 2001. I will explore how initial concepts were translated into performance with different kinds of constraint: technical, aesthetic and physical. In so doing, I will show how core values are revealed through action and enhanced through 'lived' and living research: and how ***knowledge*** studied, heard and overheard is transformed into belief, performance and production.

6. 1 From research to quintessential moments: two minutes as essence

Between 1999 - 2001 I was asked to run my own series of 2 minute short programmes that were part of the spiritual 'slot' on Carlton/West Country TV. The invitation was to explore any aspect of the Jewish faith. Up to that moment, the religion had barely been represented on these 'slots', having focused almost exclusively on the Anglican and occasionally Catholic communities of the West Country. Occasional programmes related to Jewish issues had been presented by seniors of their communities such as vicars and priests, and the focus had been on the formal and organised manifestations of their religions: whereas I was permitted to choose any angle I wanted, and to consider 'religions' from the ground upwards, as lived by my community.

Programme 1: The Jewish Life Cycle

I chose the Jewish Life Cycle as the topic for the first series, formulating questions which explored how organised religion intersected with personal experience: what are the rituals that mark the stages of life, such as birth, marriage and death, and how have these affected the lives of members of the Jewish community? Have these rituals been a support and solace, or a straitjacket and constraint? Do men and women experience these rituals differently?

I sought answers to these questions through several different research modes:

- Conversations with members of my community in Totnes about their lives and responses to my key question: how had Judaism and spirituality offered support/solace or insight during the different stages and rites of passage in their own lives?
- Library research in order to understand the background and origins of rituals in the Jewish life cycle. This included knowledge traditionally forbidden - such as the Kabbalah (Halevi 1986); early laws such as the 11th century writer Maimonedes; parables and stories by rabbis and commentators from the first century and earlier (Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues 1995); values (Jacobs reprint 1983) festivals (Heschel 1951) and food (Roden 1999).
- Conversations with members of the Jewish community who could offer informed insights into my questions: a north London rabbi David Hulbert, a

Jewish educator, Fiona Hulbert, and a Jewish community co-ordinator Thena Kendall. For them, I formulated specific questions about birth, marriage, death and daily ritual, and was directed to both further reading and to anecdotes and insights from their own lives.

Through these routes, I developed a rich landscape of information about the different phases of life, deeply revealing of the core values at the heart of Judaic culture. The challenge of my commission was to distil this into two minute 'snapshots' in which some essential or symbolic quality could be conveyed. The section below will offer a snapshot of this process: some of the knowledge gained through the different avenues of learning, and the selections made in order to turn these into 2-minute distillations in a visual medium.

1: Birth –

Learning from life and library

Naming the child is a sacred ritual. "To know the name is to know the essence of a thing" (Genesis). In Hebrew, the word *davar* - a thing, is the same as the word *daber* - to speak. These are formed with the same three consonants: d, v/b. r. So, every Hebrew name has a meaning:

Esther: a star
Shoshana: rose
Nathan: to give
Chayim: life
Jonah: dove (Gersh 1986; Schauss 1950).

There are intriguing superstitions such as: "if you step over a child it will stop growing: to make it resume growing, recross it." (Feldman 1927: 196).
There is also a description in the Talmud that is startlingly akin to Platonic ideas of the reincarnation of babies from previous lives. The Talmudic story goes that, when a baby is about to be born, a light is held behind its head so that it can see all over the world. But at the instant of birth, an angel touches its mouth and it forgets everything. So all of life is spent remembering what we once knew (Birnbaum: 1964).

Two minutes as essence

For the two minutes, I chose to focus on lullaby as a coded way of describing the dangers of pogrom life and blessing the child with a safe and happy life. I invited

Amy, a singer in the Totnes community, to talk about and sing her favourite Yiddish lullaby by Mordecai Gebirtig, a Polish songwriter from Krakow whose songs inspired the Jewish resistance movement during World War 2. She sang her own translation, and showed how the words describe in coded form the fears of the mother for the future.

So sleep, my clever handsome bridegroom
and whilst you lie in your cradle by my side
you will still cost me many mother's tears
until a man grows out of you with pride.

(Gebirtig *Schlaf mein Yankele* translated by Amy Lee for Jewish Life Cycle programme, February 1998)

2: Marriage

Learning from life and library

Marriage in all the Scriptures emerges as a sacred duty, and sexual pleasure in marriage as divinely blessed.

> A Roman lady once asked the rabbi how long it took to create the universe.
> "Six days" the rabbi said.
> "And what has your God been doing since then?"
> "Arranging marriages".
> "Arranging marriages isn't so hard," the lady said, "I can arrange marriages in a moment."
> She called for 1000 female slaves and 1000 male slaves, lined them up opposite each other and said,
> "You are now married."
> The next day the slaves appeared, one with a cracked lip, another with a cracked head, a third with a broken nose.
> "What happened?" the lady said.
> "I don't want him! I can't stand her! I can't bear the sight of him! I can't live another day under the same roof as her!" they cried.
> The lady went back to the rabbi and said,
> "Truly making marriage is God's most wondrous miracle."
>
> (Talmudic story from Rabbi Yose: recounted by myself)

Early writings are clear that marriage is not sustained by airy romance, but by substantial and well-grounded attention to the details of daily living. Maimonedes, in the 11th century, listed the obligations of the husband to provide the wife:

> clothes to the amount of 50 zuz per annum, given in the rainy season so it is the dry season by the time they are worn out
> a girdle for her loins

> a cap for her head
> shoes each High Holy Day
> coloured fabrics to wind round her head
> eye-paint and rouge
> a silver coin every week for the laundry and bath-house
>
> (Maimonedes in Rabinowitz 1961)

The canopy is a traditional symbol for joining, or bringing into the family. The word 'chupa' to describe the marriage canopy, also means 'to cover with garlands'. Examples of the canopy as symbol include:

"Your time was the time of love, and I spread my mantle over you" (Ezekiel 18:8)

"Spread thy cloak over thy handmaid, for thou art a kinsman." (Ruth 3: 9) .

Two minutes as essence

The ketubah, or marriage licence, is a joyful symbol of marriage as part of nature. My two mentors, Fiona and David Hulbert, showed me their own ketubah, which Fiona had painted herself. Hers, as with other traditional ketubah, is a glorious illuminated manuscript, abundantly decorated with birds, vines, fruits, ceremonial breads, tiny sacred scrolls and striped prayer shawls. During the two minutes, I showed and talked about different decorated ketubah, and their significance in the story of marriage as a core of Jewish life.

3. Death

Learning from life and library

There are beautiful images in the scriptures helping the reader to come to terms with death as the culmination of a good life. One tells the story of two ships, one going out, the other coming in. The crowds are cheering the outgoing ship, but scarcely notice the one coming in. The wise man says:

> ` Rejoice not over the ship that is setting out to sea, for you know not what destiny awaits it, what stories it may encounter, what dangers it may have to undergo. Rejoice, rather, over the ship that has reached port safely and brought back all its passengers in peace. (Hertz: 310)

Most mystical of all is the prayer recited by the son on the death of his parent. The novelist of the Warsaw Ghetto, Leonid Kompert (1822- 1886), writes of this prayer, the kaddish:

> The Kaddish: its origin is mysterious; angels are said to have brought it down from heaven and taught it to men. About this prayer the tenderest threads of

> filial feeling and human recollection are entwined ----(Kompert cited in Hertz: 199)
> ----this prayer is a resurrection in the spirit of the perishable in man, because it does not acknowledge death, because it permits the blossom which, withered, has fallen from the tree of mankind to flower and develop again in the human heart (ibid: 100)

Two minutes as essence

For one member of the community, Alan, the experience of reciting this prayer supported him through the death of his mother, and led him (briefly) towards Judaism as a support and solace. I chose to focus on the Kaddish and his experience of it, in my two minute programme. For another member, Thena, the prohibition on women reciting the prayer turned her away from orthodox faith. Being forbidden to recite this prayer, although a committed Judaic scholar, and having to hand the task over to a male cousin, broke her connection with the orthodoxy and committed her to a more tolerant and embracing practice.

See Audio-Visual files 3. TV programmes Clip 1: Kaddish

Programme 2: 4 Jewish dishes: filmed in local kitchens

A second programme focused on another 'grounded' aspect of Jewish life which to me, shows how deeply the practical and the spiritual are intertwined in Judaism: food - its preparation, role in ritual and celebration, and role in family life. To facilitate this programme, I visited and talked to members of the community with different relationships to their mother's traditional cooking: some had melded it with new spiritualities connected with the earth, Buddhism or planetary influences ; others had long forgotten the connection between the traditional recipes and the ceremonies they fitted into, yet retained a primal connection with the food itself.

See Audio-Visual files 3. TV programmes
Clip 2 Chicken soup
Clip 3: Chula

Programme 3: The Purim Story: filmed with children in the Totnes community

Another example of the 'grounded' quality of the Jewish life cycle is the importance of children at all sacred times in the calendar. The central Jewish festival, Passover, reserves the opening sequences for the youngest children in the group. Traditionally, the children ask their parents a sequence of questions about the Passover service; and the entire ceremony that follows is an elaborate answer to these questions.
For the third programme, I selected the festival most dedicated to children, Purim, in which children traditionally dress up as the characters of the Purim story. For this programme, I worked alongside a team of puppet-makers, to run a one-day puppet making workshop leading to a full puppet performance of the Purim story open to parents in the community. I talked to the children about what the story characters meant to them, how they had visually realised them in their puppets, and how they had internalised and interpreted the story in their own lives.

See Audio-Visual files 3. TV programmes
Clip 10: Purim story
Clip 11: Esther and Vashti
Clip 12: Mordecai and Haman
Clip 13: Puppet performance

It was not until the fourth series that West Country television (now Carlton) allowed me to pursue my real goal: to bring together different religions and show how the same questions are answered by each of them. In order to do this, it was an important aspect that others be empowered to share their core spiritual experiences. Those in the West Country community whom I felt had most to offer in terms of a unique and deep experience of spiritual reality, were also those most mistrustful of the television medium. It was thus part of my challenge, to impart to them the respectful and 'allowing' environment these programmes would offer; and also to convey the vision of a cross-cultural sharing, which could be facilitated by their participation. .

Programme 4: Days of Rest: Quaker, Jewish, Moslem and Buddhist days of rest

To set up this programme, I invited friends in the community from a range of different faiths, who I felt could talk to this with conviction. To reassure each of them that the

discussions would be respectful and empowering, I shared with them in detail the kind of questions we could ask, and the kind of issues that might be interesting. These were meant as a stimulus and support, rather than a constraint on anything they may wish to say: but the notes dealt with their predominant fear, that they would 'run out of things to say' or 'dry up'. It also provided negotiation time to deselect those questions they were not happy to answer.

Letter to participants in the Days of Rest programmes

Each programme is 2 minutes 20 seconds long (but takes about 2 hours to shoot). The format would be something like this:
-A short introduction from me, linking the programme with the theme of the week
-A conversation between us, bringing out the key themes you would like to talk about + your own personal experiences and perspectives on special days/times for rest. Some suggested questions and topics are below. There will be others I have missed – so let me know which angles you would like brought out in the conversation.
-If you like, a short prayer, song or saying relevant to your time of rest
-A short closure from me, preparing for the next day's programme or summing up.

Some suggested questions

1. It is clear that human beings need a time to recover from the stresses of everyday life, maybe reflect on them and gather strength: or just, perhaps, to reassert their faiths and beliefs. How is this done in your tradition? In your experience?
2. In your tradition, is there a time or day designated as 'special'? How do you mark this special time?(for Richard and Moh Moh) If you designate your own times, how do you this? When, and where?
3. Is this time for reflection practised individually or communally – or both? What is the value and importance of each, for you? In the communal context is there, for example, the need for an intermediary or authority, such as a leader, a minister or an imam? How do you think the presence – or absence – of such a leader influences your way of praying?
4. In what ways is a 'special' time important for you personally? Does it help you on the other days/times of the week? If so, in what ways? (Glen –eg. How is physical rest and wellbeing connected with spiritual wellbeing? How can short periods of time devoted to 'not-doing' help us the rest of the time?)

Some ideas for discussion: points to include in linking passages

1. A time or day of rest is not about absence of work, but about the creation of something else positive. In Hebrew this is 'menuha' – tranquillity and rest.
2. The state of tranquillity/rest/holiness is not brought about through places, rituals, symbols or objects but through our own state of mind: ' the Sabbath lies within us.' Ie. It is not about the things around us, but how we 'sanctify' those things with our awareness of them. (in Hebrew 'lekadesh' – first used in Genesis to describe the Sabbath). Buddhist belief is 'they who are aware do not die.'

3. This means the 'Sabbath', rest, meditation or tranquillity, can happen anywhere. 'In every place where I cause my name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee'. It is not about creating a sacred place, but about creating sacred ***time*** **–** 'hi le-olam' a token of eternity**.**
4. The practice of a special day or Sabbath, is also an obligation in some traditions: in the Old Testament it is the 4th commandment ' Thou shalt honour the Sabbath day' + *salat* is an obligation in the Five Pillars of Islam, and in particular, on Friday.
5. In some cases, too, the Sabbath is about congregation. Whilst it is indeed an individual experience, it may also need to be a communal one. In Judaism Shabbath prayers take place both in the family and in the congregation with a minimum of 10 men over 13: in the Islamic tradition with over 40 congregants.
6. A state of calm/rest/awareness is also about receiving. In Jewish tradition, the day is when symbolically each family welcomes the Shabbath bride, and decks the table in white for her.
7. All traditions make clear that this special time should not be separate from the other times, but have an influence over the way one lives on the other days too. 'All the 6 days are a pilgrimage towards the 7th'.

See Audio-Visual files 3. TV programmes
Clip 4: Buddhist Sabbath
Clip 5: Moslem Sabbath

Programme 5: The experience of conversion: from Western religions to Bah'ai, Buddhism and Taoism

The idea of conversion arose in the production of programme 4, and the realisation that many West Country friends had moved into religions that were very far from those they were born into. I was interested to explore the impulses that led to these spiritual choices. As with programme 4, I prepared in advance an account of the kind of questions we could ask, and the kind of issues that might arise, as a guide and stimulus.

Letter to participants in the Conversion programmes

The general theme of the programme, is finding a new/another spiritual path. The final version will be 2 little programmes, of 2 minutes interview time each (+ a short intro. and round-up from me into camera).

I thought some of the questions that could be asked are these:

1) Were you brought up with any specific spiritual path or direction?
2) Were you actively looking for something more, or different? If so, why?

3) How did you first meet Buddhism? Did you have a sense from the beginning that this would be something important?
4) How did its influence on you develop? Was there a specific teacher? Were there particular texts which influenced you? (we might read these).
5) How are these beliefs now integrated into your daily life?
6) How do these beliefs influence your work? any specific examples of how your musical ideas have drawn on Buddhism?

If these are the wrong questions, let me know which ones would work best in terms of giving you the scope to talk about your experiences, your music etc.

See Audio-Visual files 3. TV programmes
Clip 6: Buddhism into Music
Clip 7: Taoism into Tai Chi

6.2 Television presenting as knowledge transformation

Much of the information gathered from background reading was not explicitly used in the two minute distillations. Chapter Four described the process of knowledge transforming itself into empathy and connection and forming a bridge between I;Thou which was in itself a third landscape. This was strongly so in the preparation of these programmes. What I gradually came to understand, was that the patterns and rituals designed for daily life connected, for its practitioners, with a sense of divine order. Although grounded, realistic and life-enhancing, these systems seemed to reflect nature's cycles, such as seasonal renewal, the imperative of coupling, death as precursor of life. I could see that, in its ideal and unthreatened form, the systems offered a sustainability and capacity for renewal that nature's own cycle of pollination/seed/bud/blossom/fruit/fall also did. Whilst I did not in any way see this as a *religious* journey, I did feel it offered me an insight into the very anatomy of what it was to be *spiritual*.

The constraint of the two-minute timescale was itself a stimulus to search for the essential; there was a need for absolute clarity as to which questions were key, which information was central. It also emerged, that the participants who shared the programmes with me, felt empowered by information: clear questions and focus. The planning beforehand helped them to identify what they wished to say (and did not), and reassured them that they would not 'dry up', and would have a very real contribution to make. They were also reassured from my notes, that their own voice

would be embedded within a sympathetic broader dialogue, which connected meaningfully with the other programmes and participants.

At a more surface level, new television-specific skills were acquired and internalised. Technical as these seemed, they were the ***telling*** part of the story; without these, the stories would have simply remained in my own mind and failed to move out towards communication:

- talking off-centre rather than straight into the lens: in order to give the effect of directly looking
- generating a spontaneous/rehearsed conversation that fits exactly into a time frame
- repeating as exactly as is feasible, a conversation that was generated spontaneously
- 'acting' the role of listener, for the camera – (what is known in the trade as 'noddies')
- memorising a script and producing it as if it is for the first time and spontaneous
- talking, looking into a camera, and walking down a spiral staircase to an exact stair and within a set time frame – all at the same time
- confining one's message to a set number of words, no matter how much or how passionately one wants to speak
- working with these kinds of constraints, but creating for my interlocutors a setting which is entirely non-threatening and natural
- bringing the best out of my interlocutors within the strange and unnatural context of lights, cameras, and microphone cords hidden down one's shirt

6.3 Living research: making stories walk and talk

In February 2001, an exhibition of the Jews of Devon and Cornwall came to Plymouth, and I was invited to give two talks in the exhibition to celebrate this.

On my first visit to the exhibition to plan my talks, I was struck by the way a deeply absorbing subject matter had been made dull and prosaic; how the quirky and illuminating stories of families and individuals had sunk into a miasma of worthy

slogans and tedious artefacts in glass cases; how the unpleasant facts – such as the expulsion of Jews from the Cornish tin mines in the 13th century, had 'disappeared' almost as if they might offend the locals. By any standards, the story of Devon and Cornwall Jews was intriguing. Stars of David had been found carved on the stonework in the old Quaker meeting houses on the Cornish coasts. An artefact that looked like a carving of a rabbi, had been found on Dartmoor in the tin mines. Lists of clockmakers living in Devon in the 18th century reveal a community with first names like Isaac, Jeremiah, Ezra (Simmons, Pearce and Fry 1999; Hidden Legacy 2000). Somehow the story-like qualities, and the immediacy of lives that had been lived viscerally and physically, did not emerge through the glass cases with their well-placed artefacts and photographs.

My decision was to ignore the exhibition itself, and to tell these stories in the best way I knew: to make these people speak for themselves, through a sequence of dramas. The first drama, *Five West Country Scenes*, told five local history stories as short sketches. The venue was designed for a talk and not for a staging of any kind. There would simply be space at the front of an empty hall, with no option for props or stage effects. Thus I designed the sketches as dramatised readings, to be performed with minimalist staging and props, by a group of 5: in this case, myself, two friends with experience in professional theatre, a poet/performer (my husband), and a drama teacher. The sketches were performed with props to mark our roles: a soft cap for the workers, a shawl for the rabbi, sacks and bags over the shoulders of the travellers. A scroll held up by the rabbi was rolled between each scene to show the period of time now represented; and at the end of Story 1, the five of us walked off the stage and round the audience with the scroll held up high at the front, in a parallel of the Sabbath ceremonies in synagogue, and the emptying of our space. These staging decisions were made by the five of us in discussion and in workshop during our brief rehearsal periods. The plays were written, rehearsed and staged in one month from first concept to final performance.

Local story 1: The expulsion of the tin mine workers

The first known signs of a Jewish community in the West Country are the remains of an alloy figure inscribed with four Hebrew letters, dug up on Bodmin Moor near Helmen Tor. It was most probably left behind by the Jews who developed the tin

mining industry during the reign of Henry II. Legend has it, that when the boats landed with the Jewish tinmine workers, they called the place Ketzei HaEretz, or Lands End. Under Henry II, many concessions were granted to Jews: they were allowed their own consecrated burial grounds outside the city walls, and they were allowed to work in any trade of their choice alongside Christians. The years 1160 - 1287 were a brief safe haven in England for Jews, before the Synod of Exeter brought in new laws of constraint that led, finally, to expulsion or death. Known places in which Jews were drowned and suffocated to death, were the rocks by the Secret Gardens of Halagon, and the bridge over the River Bovey.

Narrator 1:

July 18th 1290: by order of the king Edward 1: to the sheriff of all counties in England. All Jews are ordered, on pain of death, to leave the realm before 1st November 1290.

2 travellers (overlapping)

Do not ask for us on the rocks
At Halagon the bridge at Bovey
Where once we passed
On pain of death we pass no more
And you will not hear us
You will not hear us
No, now we are quiet
You will not hear us.

(Spiro 2001a)

Local story 2: Johanna of Dartmouth

Johanna is believed to have been a Jewish woman who, through bad luck, sailed into Dartmouth in 1290 seeking work, and saved her own life by agreeing to convert to Christianity. I imagined her, clever and brave, focused on survival at all costs, able to fight for life with dignity and wit, not as a saint or martyr but simply as a courageous working woman passionate in defence of her own rights and those of her children.

Prosecutor: Is it the case that you entered the port of Dartmouth and did so without reference to the royal edict of our sovereign king Edward 1?
Johanna: It is not true.
Prosecutor: I am given to understand it is true.
Johanna: We entered the port of Dartmouth to earn an honest living.

Prosecutor: It is not your right to earn an honest living.
Johanna: Not a right, to earn an honest living? Then is it a right to earn a dishonest one? (*background laughter*)
Prosecutor: You jest, madam. You understand well my meaning. You are a Jewess.
Johanna: Must I then earn a dishonest living?
Prosecutor: It is of no concern to me, nor to the kingdom of England or to our sovereign Lord. Our concern is that you take yourself elsewhere and absent yourself from this place immediately and as from this moment on pain of death.
Johanna: How am I to live by the laws of this realm?
Prosecutor: Be other than who you are.
Johanna: Who I am is a mother. Am I not to be a mother? Are mothers not allowed in this realm? Is this realm to breed a regiment of monsters without mothers? Then I pity it.
Prosecutor: You are perverse, madam. Mothers we have in plenty. You are a Jewess.
Secretary: (whispered) I understand there is a principle of conversion, sir. They can be admitted as converts to the Christian faith. I've heard it done, sir. They done it, the vicar of Buckfastleigh, he done it sir.
Prosecutor: By royal edict is this done?
Secretary: By royal command to the Keeper of the Domus Conversorum: read sir, here, this bit, sir.
Prosecutor: I decree that the converts who intimate in good faith conversion to the Christian faith be admitted for the term of their lives to the sovereignty of England, and grant them the wages of converts, 1d a day. Are you able to satisfy us in this matter madam?
Johanna: To convert?
Prosecutor: To convert.
Johanna: And for this you will have mercy on my life?
Prosecutor: Yes.
Johanna: This act will give me the freedom to be a mother and earn an honest living in the port of Dartmouth?
Prosecutor: It will. Provided that you act in good faith as one of us.
Johanna: My God has no doubt in this. He says, you are the one that must act in good faith.
Prosecutor: Your God? Your God is now our God.
Johanna: Exactly so. This was always the case.
Prosecutor: You are droll, madam. Have you accepted our conditions?
Johanna: Indeed, my change was so swift you hardly saw it. My God has become yours with such alacrity, you did not see Him change.
Prosecutor: Indeed I did not. (to the Secretary). Take her to church. In faith, she worships our God.
Johanna: And you worship mine.

(Spiro 2001a).

Local story 3: The Lamb and Flag

In 1715 the mine owner Sir Francis Bassett of Tehidy needed engineers to improve the smelthouse between Hayle and Penzance. He invited to Cornwall a team of

experts from Frankfurt and Wuppertal in Germany, reputed to be experts in smelting and underground work. He was a good and compassionate man, and it came to his notice that the engineers appeared to have different customs to his own. We know that he built for this community one of the first known synagogues in Penzance. So how did this process of mutual understanding come about? I imagine this as a dialogue between the mine owner and his foreman, Brown.

Bassett: Brown, why is it you have not already made it your business to know these people?
Brown: They are very close, they seem quite content together sir.
Bassett: If you do not speak to them, how do you know?
Brown: I do speak to them sir, but not on private matters. At work, I speak to no-one about private matters. At work, I speak about work sir.
Bassett: You are dutiful to a fault, Brown. ----------

Later:

Bassett: Well Brown, did you speak to them?
Brown: I did.
Bassett: And did you find out about private matters, this time?
Brown: No sir, not private matters. But I found the answers to your questions, and what the strangeness is on account of.
Bassett: And what is it on account of?
Brown: Their religion, sir.
Bassett: (Silence for a moment). Can you expand, Brown?
Brown: On the Saturday when they do no work, that is the Sabbath: and on the Sunday when they work, that is not the Sabbath. On that account, they do not work on the Saturday, being a holy day.
Bassett: Very good. And the food?
Brown: In this religion which they have, the food from the pig is forbidden. Also, the food that is meat must be specially slaughtered, in a special way. If it is not, then it is forbidden. Fish with a hard back like lobsters or oysters are forbidden. But fish with a soft back is not forbidden, you see, sir.
Bassett: I see you have learnt their language very well, Brown.
Brown: Oh no, sir, They have learnt our language very well.
Bassett: And the Friday night candles?
Brown: The Friday night candles light up the beginning of their Sabbath day. Their day begins at night, so to speak sir: their Sabbath day begins at night on Friday and ends at night on Saturday, which is the end of the day which is the holy day for them, sir, if you see my meaning.

Narrator:
Francis Bassett's family papers show that he had a small synagogue built for the tinminers' community, somewhere between Camborne and Hayle. The symbol of the Pascal lamb, centre of the table during the Jewish Passover service, became the trademark for the smelthouse. The symbol of the lamb was smelted onto every block

of tin. A hostelry built for the workers was called The Lamb and Flag, and the inn, which still bears that name, uses the smelthouse symbol as its sign.

(ibid)

Local stories 4 and 5: Travellers to and from the East End of London

Clip 8: Work in the East End
Clip 9: East End synagogues

The second play, *The Seed and the Tree*, focused on a single point in time and a single community: the wave of immigration to the East End of London from Russia and Poland in the late 19th century. I chose this in order to unravel the 20th century community in the West Country that had travelled from the East End, and then on to Devon and Cornwall, becoming highly established and successful families on arrival. Here my research was largely library based, as many of the families (described in the Devon and Cornwall Exhibition) had since moved on, and time constrained me from tracing them. I thus chose to tell the 'archetypal' story of their arrival, and to unravel some of the variety, complexity, pressures and tensions of the community.
My resource was, as before, documents, diary records, prayerbooks, journals, poems, Yiddish songs and lullabies, and library resources at the Leo Baeck Centre. (Roden 1999, Amichai 1978, Flammer et al 1985, Lichtenstein and Sinclair 1999, Mendelsohn 1996).

I planned the play as six short 'acts', moving from arrival, through work, marriage, education, women's role and rights, the synagogue. To mark progression, the play starts with the morning arrival of the immigrants at St. Katherine's Wharf, and ends at dusk with the evening prayer and lullabies over the children's cradle. The sections each explore a social tension: the pressure to work on the Sabbath, the attraction of the suffragette movement for the young women émigrés, the dilemma as to choice of school - a faith school or not?. Emerging from these cameos are individuals too; rivalry between two sisters; their mother who tries to rebuild the Russian kitchen in the East End. As with the first play, the design was for our group of readers to 'perform' as a dramatised reading, with the inclusion this time of Yiddish songs to highlight key parts of the story: the song of the naughty schoolboy accusing his father of having been naughty once too; the song of the young girl begging her mother for a

match; the song of the synagogue usher hushing the chattering women in the women's gallery.

The opening sequence dramatises the arrival of the Russians at St. Katherine's Wharf, juxtaposing voices derived from the Metropolitan Police Report of 1887, with the confusion and bewilderment of the arrivees themselves.

Bureaucrat 1
Those arriving by the London General Steam Navigation Company's vessels are in the majority of cases disembarked at St. Katherine's Wharf where a limited number of very decent English porters assist the Immigrants from the ship with their luggage at a very reasonable charge (Metropolitan Police Report 1887)
(**thin Yiddish melody heard in the background during the cacophony of arrivals at the wharf) MUSIC 2)**
Older sister: (overlap last few words)
none of the porters can speak Yiddish
Bureaucrat 1: they are unable to direct the Immigrants to the addresses which they usually bring with them to their friends
Younger sister: Polish?!
Bureaucrat 2: they are unable to explain to them that their safest and cheapest mode of reaching their destination is by taking a cab
Bureaucrat 1: Occupations of new arrivals - Amber turners Bakers Barbers Bookbinders
Older sister: German?! Does anyone speak German?
Bureaucrat 2. (overlap) bootmakers brassfinishers bristlesorters butchers
Younger sister: Russian? Any Russian?
Bureaucrat 1:
comb makers confectioners coopers coppersmiths coral worker
Bureaucrat 2: furriers galvanizer glover gruel makers hawkers

(Spiro 2001b)

The characters are representative of their types: there are 2 bureaucrats who 'speak' the variety of documents that reported the immigrants' arrival, two immigrant sisters, and their parents. The sequence takes the family through the cycle of a single day, from dawn to dusk. I 'transformed' into dialogue detail about their lives - for example, the young girls trying out the new London fashions, the technicalities of the hat-making trade, the wide number of skills and trades brought into the East End by the immigrants.

Sister 1: I can make hats
Sister 2: (overlap) felt hats
Sister 1: measuring caps, pasting tickets, stretching furs, nailing furs,
Sister 2: making fur rims, pasting buckram, hanging pieces, drying pieces
Sister 1. pressing pieces, moulding pieces, turning on gas jets,
Sister 2: heating the press, trimming the edges, sewing the edges
Sister 1: by hand
Sister 2: all by hand
Factory owner. : The girls employed are very quiet in the factory but a wild lot outside, especially the girls who sew caps
Gossip: Most of the Jewish girls are tailoresses or dressmakers so they learn the latest and most outrageous fashions
Factory owner: they wear paint and powder altering their features until they are quite unnatural
Gossip: they tend to go quite to extremes
Factory owner.: personally I have an abhorrence of cosmetics
Registrar 1: jewellers ladies' tailors mineral water makers pipe makers pouch makers pressers potters printers rabbis
Registrar 2: rope makers saddlers seamen, ritual slaughterers, soap-boilers scribes stick makers surgeons

The two plays, *Five West Country Cameos* and *The Seed and the Tree* were performed in two consecutive weeks at the Plymouth Museum. The first performance was well attended and the response enthusiastic. When the doors opened to the second performance, however, we were astonished to see the complete Sixth Form of a nearby school file in, accompanied by their teacher. The second play was received rapturously by the schoolchildren, with a standing ovation and a roar of delight when I was asked to take a bow as author, director and performer.

6.4 Performance as transformation

How is ***knowledge*** studied, heard and overheard, transformed into belief, performance and production? Through the medium of dramatised story, I felt able to 'realise' and transform a number of different 'knowledges'. If one's relationship with the present means 'the past is a foreign country' (Hartley 1958: 1) then this process brought the 'other country' nearer and into focus. It also involved a close questioning of how historical evidence informs and enlightens our current sensibilities. Engaging with the past through evidence became as significant a process as engaging with any 'other' culture, and expanding one's receptivity to its complexity.

As with all the projects described in this chapter and the previous one, constraint proved to be a great stimulus for creativity. Working with a group of five friends, who combined singing and acting skills offered opportunity, but limits in terms of staging and timing. Each of us played multiple characters, so each had to be quickly and clearly delineated - through visual attributes (such as the hat, the shawl), and through powerful characterisation.

Both the projects described in this chapter started with a request to 'represent' Judaism in some way; yet in both cases, my efforts were to combine both specificity and its capacity to be universal. *The Seed and the Tree*, for example, was intended as a larger story of migration; and I had hoped the audience might connect it with current debates about asylum-seekers. It was a matter of great importance, that my own 'empathy' with the 'other country' might '*make sense through transformation in the real and material world'*; so the acclaim of the schoolchildren studying Judaism as part of their curriculum, was important. My interpretation of this, was that some of my own 'empathy for the other' had been communicated to them; and a 'school subject' had, in the process, become a 'living issue' for them.

I have thus far explored the nature of a creative 'voice', and its gradual adaptation to constraints, other audiences and other readers. This section has also shown the transformation of knowledge/information into empathy and stimulus for creative production. In the process, the chapter has also suggested the importance of information in the empowerment of others. The next section will focus on this empowerment of the other within educational contexts, and the ways in which such an empowerment can be accountable and measurable within the higher academy.