

WHEN THE TEACHER BECOMES A LANDLORD

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321

Experiences from museum teaching, using fiction  
as a method

In this article I shall introduce the reader to some considerations and experiences made during five years of experimental teaching at the Agricultural Museum in Denmark and ten years of publishing books dealing with historical topics for children in the primary school. I shall refer also to some of my sources of inspiration and put these into connection with the main content of the current discussions during the last fifteen years about the character of history. This discussion was deeply involved in the actual political development in Europe and therefore it tended to seek the general true character of history and the fundamental basics of history as a science referring to the practical development of the different European societies after the Second World War.

The character of history

The dominating opinion among students and a great part of the scientists at the universities and different high schools in Denmark - and in West Europe - during the 1970's was based on criticism of ideologies. The political development worldwide contributed to this critical attitude, among other things the resistance against the Vietnam War. A result of this was not only a critical attitude to the development in society in general, but it also created new claims concerning the content of science, the tasks of scientific institutions and, of course, demands for changing the structures of the educational system based on a quite different contents compared to previous times. You could consider it ironical that the critical attitude appeared to end up as an ideology itself. Nevertheless it happened and the basic ideology was marxism.

Among historians marxism developed into a great variation, and the dominating item in scientific and historical discussions was how to avoid dogmatism. The communist attitude and the bourgeois attitude therefore became the main targets for the non-dogmatic critics. While the communists were fighting in society, taking practical part in the class struggle, and the bourgeois parties were fighting to overthrow the social-democratical governments in most West European countries, the non-dogmatic marxists

tended more and more to isolate themselves and the discussions inside the institutions. The criticism lost its power to change, entered into an empty defence of values that were being ticked over by the development in the societies from the beginning of the 1980's.

All over Western Europe a right-wing movement was successful from the beginning of the 1980's. Socialist and social-democratical regimes were overthrown in one country after another. What you might have expected - that the bourgeois regimes would start ideological campaigns - did not happen. Surprisingly the new bourgeois governments proclaimed that ideology was "crap". Compared even to the social-democratical policy the new right-wing movements were extremely pragmatic. The bourgeois policy after 1980 however, lost its orientation - first of all the social orientation - at first because innovation in side the parties was not possible, thereafter because of the breakdown of communism in Eastern Europe. The non-dogmatic critical movement was more or less already lost on the threshold of the 1980's.

The discussion about the character of history during this period exposed serious problems: the non-dogmatic critical historians never succeeded to understand the sense of solidarity with the working masses as the unification of practice and scientific theory. The communists declared the lies about their societies to be the only truth and solidarity with the working masses was realized as dictatorship of the party instead of the proletariat. The bourgeois historians ended up in pragmatism that justified the social decline of society claiming that the true character of history was to be found in the successful results of the policy of the free economy. The process here described left the discussion about the character of history in a strange situation: it was as if history had disappeared. Among the more serious and negative consequences of this situation in my country was that history for about ten years was not an obligatory subject in primary schools. Still history as an ever and still going strong process existed. History was there however, but apparently as something hidden that the historians could not agree to find.

I have never believed in the attempts to reconstruct history. I do, however, believe that there are rules determining the development of history, and I do state that history as science is based on specific rules and laws - and that these laws, as far as their general value is concerned, are very much like the laws of e.g. the exact sciences. The methods however are quite different. The historian is not in the same convenient position as the physicist. He cannot use e.g. experiments to find explanations for development patterns, incidents or phenomena. As a historian you cannot have Caesar assassinated once more, to find out the reasons for the killing, not in other ways repeat elements of a process to prove, why he was killed. However - as a hidden theatre/history we know that the assassination of Caesar was not a coincidence - as little as the fact that gravitation makes material objects stick to the ground is a coincidence. The most obvious difference between the character of history and the character of nature - and between history and natural sciences as scientific disciplines - is that the historical "truth" is influenced by the fact that for every person taking part in history, there are unknown factors covering up the clearness of the act and making it difficult to reach a scientific statement - about what happened and why. Furthermore, different scientific statements will be influenced by motives of the scientists, who introduce statements about the true character of historical acts.

## Hidden theatre

Some years ago I happened to get acquainted with a South-American dramaturgist, Augusto Boal. I read about some experiments he carried through as a leader of the Arena Theatre in Sao Paolo. In the period between 1956 and 1972, when he was the leader of the theatre he developed different new kinds of theatre, and to me the so-called "hidden theatre" was especially interesting. This was among other things due to the fact that the frustration among historians gave birth to the statement that history was made up by the historians.

It occurred to me that history actually seemed to be a kind of hidden theatre, and that my task as a historian could be defined as discovering this hidden theatre, in order to bring back history to the audience by interpreting it in new ways.

To improve the understanding of this thesis, I shall introduce the principles and the defined purposes of the hidden theatre of Augusto Boal and the Arena Theatre. First of all the purpose of the hidden theatre was defined as emancipation in order to achieve action. Secondly the principles were based on using a method that made people become as well audience as actors, excluding them however from having any kind of knowledge about this.

The political circumstances in South-America in general at the time when Boal developed the hidden theatre were basically mental, political and physical exploitation and suppression of the people. The continent was suffering from military regimes based on fascist implementation in practical ruling. Because fear was the basic implement in the suppression of the population, the hidden theatre, among other things, therefore had to deal with methods and contents that could overcome fear, change it into anger, knowledge, courage and will-power to act for changes and improvement of the conditions for personal life and development of society in general.

As an example I shall mention the following:

A hidden play is planned to provoke a discussion about the phenomenon that people, after being arrested by the security police, disappear. The background for this play is, that even though everybody in Brazil knew that prisoners disappeared, because they got killed by the regime, the item still remained a taboo among people - even among the relatives of the disappeared prisoners. The reason for the taboo was that you could get killed simply by mentioning it.

A play of hidden theatre is getting planned by the actors of the Arena Theatre in a way that all "possible variations of what might happen" are discussed and examined. A strategy how to achieve the goal of the theatre is worked out. The goal in this case is to make groups of passengers in trains in Brazil enter a discussion about the disappearance of prisoners. The general strategy is being built up as a discussion between two actors, each of them reading a newspaper - for the purpose to enter a discussion that would engage the passengers - make them part of the discussion, make them aware of the possibility and need for action, political struggle, a way out under the suppression by fighting it.

Later on Augusto Boal developed the hidden theatre, so that it was relevant for topics and methods in different kinds of societies, among other the bourgeois democratic system. Taking part in theatre festivals the Arena Theatre performed



Pogled v eno izmed dveh muzejskih delavnic Danskega kmetijskega muzeja, v tisto s štedilnikom, na katerem otroci med svojim "bivanjem" v preteklosti kuhajo. (Foto I. Smerdel, 1991) ♦ View of one of the two museum workshops of the Danish Agricultural Museum, showing the kitchen range on which the children prepare their meals during their "stay" in the past. (Photo by I. Smerdel, 1991)

unexpected hidden plays. In the Paris Metro the Arena actors performed a play which put the "audience" as audience and as actors in the current discussion about the liberation of women and views upon the male and female character. Through the acts of playing whore, male chauvinists, offended and deceived wives, betrayed husbands, priests etc., interacting with each other, the actors' purpose was to provoke not only a discussion but also direct engagement of the passengers. How?

A male actor starts to annoy an actress dressed very provocatively and even starts to paw her. She protest of course and doing so she starts the next incident: an actor dressed like a priest interferes, stating that the woman is dressed in a way that invites men to paw her - even a man in the service of God. Another actor shouts "All women are like that!" - Before long the whole wagon is involved in the discussion, which is getting renewed constantly by prepared acts from the actors.

What actually happens in the hidden plays of the Arena Theatre is that groups of people, without knowing it, are being pushed and forced into fictive universes of relevant conflicts.

#### The fictive universe as implementation

Reading about the experiments of the Arena Theatre, I decided that I would try to develop a kind of promotion in the educational programs of the Agricultural Museum, which could contribute to solve the problem about history being something hidden. So I defined history as a kind of hidden theatre, The task set up was - through the use of fictive universes - to make history visible, present and existing, to force the pupils into history. What I wanted to achieve was not a reconstruction of historical incidents, but rather situations of possible thinking and decision-making.

I had at this time already built up workshops at the Agricultural Museum dealing with practical work, using copies of historical implements as flails, spinning wheels, butter churns, different flax-implements etc. The practical work, making bread out of corn, butter from milk, clothes from wool etc. tended to give the pupils an understanding of the hard working life, the patience and skill needed to survive in previous times in history. Even though this was something quite new in the teaching at the museum, and even though the practical occupation of the pupils was extremely popular among teachers as well as pupils, I was not satisfied. This was due to the profound question that I constantly asked myself: What do you want to achieve in your programs? Do the pupils actually learn anything about history and about what it was like e.g. 300 years ago in the countryside? Being frank and honest to myself, I could not even be sure that the pupils learnt to use the flail in a proper way - and if they did, what could they use it for?

Therefore I decided to make the circumstances laying behind the hard life visible and still use the practical work as an entrance into history.

For this purpose I created fictive universes into which I forced pupils being educated in agricultural history. One of these fictive universes was a village 250 years ago. The fiction was there in a double sense. First of all, there were no visible farms or houses, no visible village etc. Secondly, the character of teaching changed when I did not present myself as a museologist but as a landlord.

326

Arriving at the museum the pupils were told that they were peasants, living in a village and that I was the landlord, who owned everything and who set the conditions for their life. The only task of the pupils/peasants was to work with the implements they find in their fictive homes. In these homes they also found contracts with the conditions for renting the house or the farm, descriptions of their families with name, sex and age of each member and badges they had to wear, so that everybody would know what role they played. From being children with the entire identity of primary school pupils they changed into peasants, agricultural labourers, peasant housewives, orphans etc. In the fictive homes they also found different implements and to some extent raw materials for production. Through the work they had to survive. They could sell the products of their work either to other peasants or to the landlord. They were also entitled to work either for themselves or for others and be paid for it. The implements they needed for specific kinds of work and which they did not possess, could be rented by from the landlord - against payment of course. In the same way raw materials needed for production were available from the landlord. Survival was under constant stress because of the interference of the landlord, who put up claims of historical character, e.g. claiming payment of taxes, rent, villeinage, duty in the peasant military forces etc.. At the same time different, from outside coming incidents, interfered with the play. e.g. reforms that we know were carried through in real history. Among these was the law about the vassalage of the peasantry. In the play this law meant that male persons were not allowed to leave the scene of the play without the permission of the landlord.

From the very start of the play the pupils were forced into the fictive universe. They could not contact the museologist, only the landlord. They were never treated as pupils, but only as peasants. Their task was to obey and work, and the goal put in front of them was to survive through hard work or, if they had enough skill, to climb the social system, i.e. to reach better conditions, becoming land-owning instead of renting farmers.

A similar play was made about the big changes in Danish agriculture towards the end of the 19.th century. Form the middle of the 1880's agriculture was in a deep crisis. The main production in Danish agriculture was corn. However, from around 1960 Europe was not able to produce enough corn to feed its own increasing populations, and as a result import of corn from U.S.A., Russia, Central Europe and South-America started. Denmark mainly imported corn from the U.S.A. The American corn was not only of a high quality, it was also very cheap because of the modern conditions of American agriculture. The result very quickly showed: a decrease of corn prices and a wave of bankruptcies of Danish farmers. It became obvious that a changes had to take place in Denmark's agriculture. After 1880 reforms were carried through. Agriculture was renewed and based on cattle-breeding and industrialization of agricultural production. Thousands of dairies, slaughterhouses and other kinds of manufacturing industries were founded between 1880 and 1910. Not only a profound change of production was made, but the renewal of agriculture was also based on quite new financial principles: cooperative financing and shared ownership of manufacturing industries.

The play that was made about this process pushed the pupils into the fictive universe of threatened farms, each of them based on different products well

known from the period. By confronting the pupils/farmers with economical facts and demands, they were forced to find solutions to solve the crisis of their own farm. Planned incidents, similar to the changes and cooperative activities of real history, took place during the play. New agricultural farms were founded, diaries, slaughterhouses were founded and their boards elected, industries established, migration from the countryside to the city to find work took place and emigration to America started etc. Finally, all of them organized in political parties in order to secure the benefits, influence, power etc. they had achieved during the process of playing.

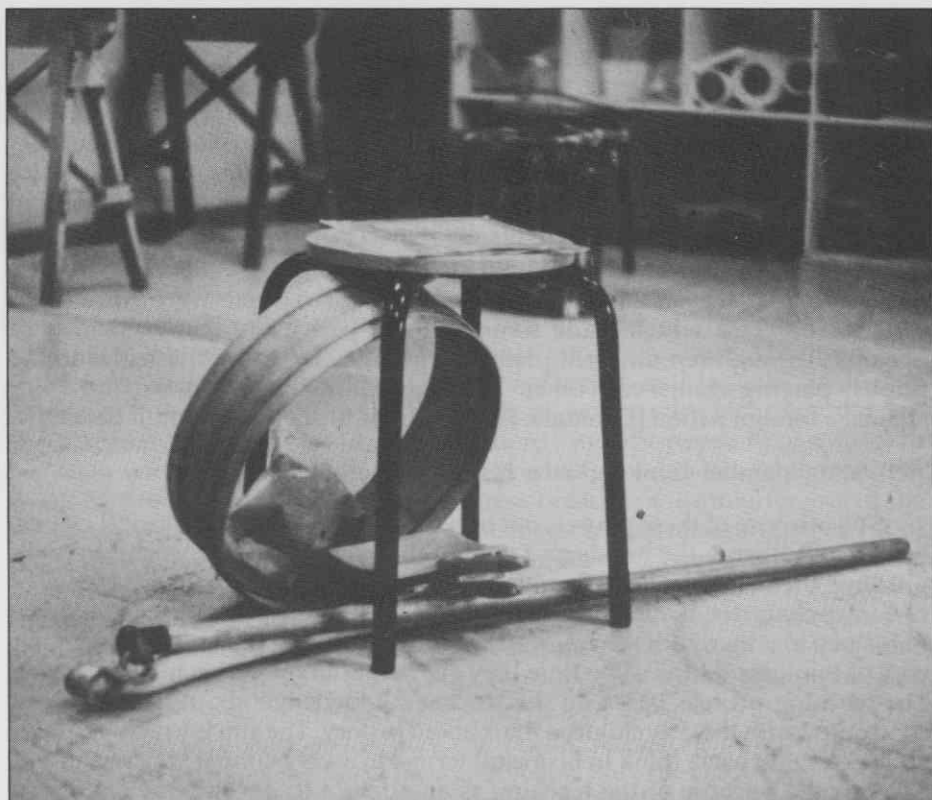
A third play was about the peasant riot in 1534. The pupils were pushed into a fictive universe which made some of them peasants, other noblemen or bishops. Through ten different planned incidents, based on the real riot, the pupils - playing against each other - experienced the riot, a civil war and a war against a foreign nation (Denmark-Lübeck) from the beginning until the end.

### Activating parallel thinking as a historical method

The purpose of these plays is not to reconstruct history or historical events, but to get to know the minds and way of thinking of nowadays children. By pushing them into a fictive universe, confronting them with problems of historical character, they are forced to engage themselves in the play, to take part in history together with others. And when they are engaged, they show their way of thinking. At the same time they are taught to think in a historical way. The teaching process bases on the teacher's knowledge about history being confronted with the way children think about history. The aim is to activate their ability to think back, think in historical terms. In a very simple way one might describe the purpose of the teaching as an attempt to develop the children's ability to think historically. We use history to make them realize that present history has its roots in the past, in history. This becomes obvious in the plays when the decisions they make have consequences affecting the space and possibilities they have in the fictive universe. If the suppressed peasant/pupil does not pay taxes in the fictive universe of the 18.th century, he will inevitably make his conditions of living worse. Or, if you as a nobleman in the fictive universe of the 1530's happens to support the wrong general, you will be on the losing side in the war or be forced to change your decision whom to support in the course of the play.

This brings us to the very important question, how we can offer the pupils the possibility to choose and at the same time prevent them from leaving the frame-work of real history? How can we prevent them from creating a history quite different from the real one? The solution to this problem is, first of all, to compose plays based on the real and possible choices of known history. Secondly, there has to be some manipulation: historical problems are presented in such manner that the fictive choices reflect the real ones of real history.

The analysis of the experiences gathered from the plays showed some very interesting results. The fictive universe creates a distance between teacher (landlord) and children (peasants), which can be used in different ways. First of all, we can increase the demands put to the children, so that they have to intensify their efforts to learn. Secondly, the fictive universe enables the teacher to get closer to the children than usually. E.g.: the peasants of the 18.th century village are right at the beginning told that their living conditions depend on them



Malega "tlačana" čakata pod stolom repliki orodij (v tem primeru cepca in rešeta), ki ju bo moral uporabljati pri delu, v katero se bo poskušal vživeti. (Foto I. Smerdel, 1991) ♦ Under the little "serf's" chair there are copies of historical implements (here a flail and a sieve) which he will have to use at his work when trying to "relive" the past. (Photo by I. Smerdel, 1991)

being able to sell their goods to the landlord. Moreover, they depend on the quality of these products. They are told that the quality of their goods will be tested before they are bought. The landlord will, for e.g., test spun yarn by pulling at it. If it breaks, he will not buy it.

The children always forgive the landlord for this act of trying to undo the results of their work, but they would never forgive the teacher for doing so. Distance creates closeness. And the efforts of the children are strengthened, because they either understand the conditions from the very beginning of the play or from their own experiences later on. They themselves have to decide whether the quality of the goods they want to sell, is sufficient enough. This increases their self-discipline. Whether they are successful in the play also depends on their ability to co-operate, their patience and sense of historical thinking in terms of reflection and creativity: the sooner they learn form history, the more space they will have in the fictive universe.



Teaching in not entertainment, still it must be funny.

It would, of course, be naive to deny that the amusing character of the plays is an important factor in "selling the product". Though amusement is not the purpose, it must be funny to learn history. What we actually did was to play history, but for real, not for fun or entertainment. All the programs were based on the general activities of the museum, i.e. the exhibitions, the collections and the scientific work. It was most interesting to learn that scientific research proved to be extremely important. The reason for this is that the plays function by presenting difficult problems as simple ones. However, the danger to simplify history is obvious. Scientific efforts are required to define the character of the landlord, to mention only one example. The landlord is the peasants' opponent in real history as well as in the play. In order to have objective acting, serious scientific research of known landlords in real history have to be carried out. The type of landlord chosen to act in the play should reflect the average historical landlord in behaviour and the general social conditions and laws of the time etc.

329

Historical consciousness - important also concerning the future

I created these plays in order to develop an adequate didactic method, combining the consciousness of present history with a possible and needed consciousness of the past. The plays do not depend on the present consciousness of history of the children - but you must be aware of the changing and various levels of consciousness among them. In that sense there is in principle hardly any difference between the methods and purposes of the hidden theatre and my plays. Of course, my pupils always knew that we were playing, but they also knew that we were playing for real. The reason for this is that the actual historical consciousness of the pupils plays a role in the plays - sometimes to their advantage, sometimes to their disadvantage. The reality of the plays lies in the fact that the fictive universe is consistent. It prevents the pupils from escaping from their own actual knowledge and consciousness of history - no matter the level or amount of knowledge.

The experiences from the plays were in so many ways positive and opened up so many new aspects, that I decided to create and develop plays dealing with the future. Two subjects were chosen:

"Create your own agricultural museum A.D. 2010" and "Agriculture in Denmark A.D. 2010". The methods used were the following: first the children were introduced to the actual activities and tasks of the present agricultural museum, and to the present condition of Danish agriculture. Sending them on a fictive journey into the future, they had to make their own museums, or formulate the future demands and expectations of agriculture. To prevent pure science-fiction schemes 30 peasant families and their farms were asked to participate as educating hosts for around 90 pupils. For two days the pupils stayed at the farms, took part in the work, were taught about agriculture by the farmers, told about the peasants' expectations for the future etc. This knowledge was the base for the teaching in the "workshops of the future" at the museum.

## Conclusion

The results of the above mentioned experimental didactic work at the Danish Agricultural Museum were followed up and analyzed by the Danish University of Pedagogics. I quote from the final report:

"All in all, the project has given new life and excitement to the process of teaching of subjects generally considered as difficult and has shown new didactic dimensions and possibilities ... and it seems quite decisive that scientists are engaged in the teaching process at the museums ... The use of fictive universes is a method which ... made it possible to integrate solid historical dimensions."

Of course, it is always nice to read positive conclusions about your own work. As a general conclusion, however, I would like to say that using the above mentioned methods and concrete plays is as demanding as it is exciting and amusing. Therefore I would like to add the following to the conclusion: Fiction normally is based on a specific idea about reality. However, reality is controversial and different ideas about reality lead to different ideas of fiction. And, all in all, things have not become more simple by the fact the modernism claims that reality itself is a fiction.

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## KO UČITELJ POSTANE VELEPOSESTNIK

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331

### Pouk v muzeju s pomočjo fikcije

V tem članku bom bralcem predstavil nekaj razmišljanj in izkušenj, ki sem si jih nabral med petletnim eksperimentalnim poučevanjem v Danskem kmetijskem muzeju in desetletnim pisanjem knjig z zgodovinskimi temami za osnovnošolske otroke.

Omenil bom tudi nekaj virov za svoje ideje in jih povezal z že petnajst let trajajočimi razpravami o naravi zgodovine. Te razprave so bile močno pod vplivom sočasnega političnega razvoja v Evropi. V njih so iskali neko splošno veljavno naravo in temelje zgodovine kot znanosti v povezavi z dejanskim razvojem različnih evropskih družb po drugi svetovni vojni.

#### Narava zgodovine

Prevladujoče stališče študentov in večjega dela znanstvenikov na univerzah in visokih šolah na Danskem - in v Zahodni Evropi - v sedemdesetih letih je temeljilo na kritiki ideologij. Politični razvoj po svetu, med drugim odpor proti vojni v Vietnamu, je še poostril to kritiko. Posledica tega ni bil samo kritičen odnos do družbenega razvoja na splošno, ampak tudi zahteve po novih vsebinah znanosti, novih nalogah znanstvenih ustanov in, seveda, zahteve po strukturnih spremembah v izobraževalnem sistemu na temelju povsem drugačnih vsebin. Morda je ironično, da se je ta kritični odnos sam spremenil v ideologijo, a se je vendar zgodilo in temeljna ideologija je postal marksizem.

Med zgodovinarji se je razvila vrsta marksističnih smeri. Prevladujoča tema v znanstvenih in zgodovinskih razpravah pa je bila kako se izogniti dogmatizmu. Komunistična in meščanska metoda sta zato postali glavni tarči nedogmatičnih kritikov. Komunisti so se v družbi borili, ker so sodelovali v razrednem boju. Meščanske stranke so si prizadevale vreči socialdemokratske vlade, ki so bile na oblasti v večini zahodno-evropskih držav. Nedogmatični marksisti pa so medtem bolj težili k izolaciji in razpravam znotraj ustanov. Kritika je izgubila vpliv pri spreminjanju stvari in se prepustila prazni obrambi vrednot, ki jih je družbeni razvoj od začetka osemdesetih let dalje vedno bolj diskreditiral.

Desničarska gibanja so takrat dosegala uspehe po vsej Zahodni Evropi. Socialistične in socialdemokratske vlade so padale ena za drugo. Morda bi pričakovali, da bodo meščanski režimi začeli ideološke kampanje, a to se ni zgodilo. Na splošno presenečenje so ideologijo razglasili za "čvek". Nova desničarska gibanja, tudi če jih primerjamo s socialdemokratskimi politiki, so bila izredno pragmatična. Meščanska politika po letu 1980 pa je vendar izgubila svojo orientacijo - najprej na socialnem področju. Komunistična gibanja so bila eno za drugim poražena, sprva ker prenova znotraj strank ni bila mogoča, pozneje pa zaradi zloma komunizma v Vzhodni Evropi. Nedogmatično kritično gibanje je bilo bolj ali manj izgubljeno že na pragu osemdesetih let.

Razprava o naravi zgodovine je v tem času zašla v hude težave. Nedogmatično kritični zgodovinarji nikakor niso mogli uvideti, da pomeni solidarnost z delovnimi množicami združitev prakse z znanstveno teorijo. Komunisti so laži o svoji družbeni ureditvi povzdignili v tako sveto resnico, da se je solidarnost z delovnimi množicami sprevrgla v diktaturo partije namesto proletariata. Meščanski zgodovinarji pa so ostali pri pragmatizmu in opravičevali socialno nazadovanje družbe s trditvijo, da se prava narava zgodovine kaže v uspešni politiki svobodne ekonomije.

Zaradi procesa, ki sem ga tu opisal, se je znašla razprava o naravi zgodovine v čudnem položaju: zdelo se je, da zgodovine ni več. Ena izmed resnih in zelo negativnih posledic tega položaja je bilo dejstvo, da je zgodovina kot obvezen predmet za kakih deset let izginila iz danskih osnovnih šol. A vendar je zgodovina bila in ostala, le da nekako skrita, ker se zgodovinarji niso mogli zediniti, kje naj jo iščejo.

Nikoli nisem verjel v poskuse rekonstrukcije zgodovine. Verjamam pa, da obstajajo pravila, ki določajo zgodovinski razvoj. Trdim, da zgodovina kot znanost temelji na specifičnih pravilih in zakonitostih. Trdim tudi, da je splošna veljavnost teh zakonitosti zelo podobna, če že ne enaka veljavnosti zakonitosti v eksaktnih znanostih. Le metode so povsem drugačne. Zgodovinar nima možnosti, ki jih ima npr. fizik. Ne more s poskusi iskati razlage za razvojne procese, dogodke ali pojave. Zgodovinar ne more ponoviti umora Cezarja, da bi ugotovil razloge zanj. Tudi ne more na kakšen drug način ponoviti elementov zgodovinskega razvoja, da bi dokazal, zakaj je bil ubit. Na podlagi skrite zgodovinske igre pa zvemo, da umor Cezarja ni bil naključje - tako kot ni naključno, da gravitacija vleče predmete k zemlji. Izrazita razlika med naravo zgodovine in naravo naravoslovja - in med zgodovino in naravoslovnimi vedami kot znanstvenimi disciplinami - je v tem, da na zgodovinsko "resnico" vpliva vrsta neznanih dejavnikov pri vsaki osebi, ki je sodelovala v njej. Zato je resničnost dogodkov nekako zastrita in je toliko težje postaviti znanstveno trditev o tem, kaj se je zgodilo in zakaj. Poleg tega je vsaka znanstvena trditev pod vplivom motiva znanstvenika, ki vanjo vnaša svoje poglede na pravo naravo zgodovinskih dogodkov.

Ker po letu 1970 s političnim programiranjem ali delovanjem ni bilo mogoče priti do rešitve o pravi naravi zgodovine, se je zgoraj omenjena razprava končala s čudnim sklepom: zgodovina bo še naprej obstajala in se razvijala, tudi če zgodovinarjev ne bo. Tako je vendar vedno bilo.

Zgodovina je tako za zgodovinarje dejansko izginila.

## Skrito gledališče

Pred nekaj leti sem se seznanil z delom južnoameriškega dramaturga Augusta Boala. Bral sem o poskusih, ki jih je izpeljal kot vodja gledališča Arena Theatre v Sao Paulu. V letih od 1956 do 1972 je razvil razne nove oblike gledališča. Posebej me je zanimalo tako imenovano skrito gledališče. Razlog za to je bil med drugim v frustraciji zgodovinarjev, ki je rodila trditev, da zgodovino ustvarjajo zgodovinarji.

Na misel mi je prišlo, da je zgodovina pravzaprav podobna nekakšnemu skritemu gledališču in da bi lahko definiral svojo nalogo zgodovinarja tako, da razkrijem to skrito gledališče in zgodovino znova približam gledalcem s tem, da jo interpretiram na razne nove načine.

Da bi bolje razumeli to tezo, bom opisal načela in namene skritega gledališča Augusta Boala in Arene Theatra. Prvič, namen skritega gledališča je emancipacija za akcijo. Drugič, metode, s katerimi bi to dosegli, so takšne, da ljudje postanejo hkrati gledalci in igralci, ne da bi se tega zavedali. 333

Splošna politična situacija v Južni Ameriki v času, ko je Augusto Boal razvijal skrito gledališče, je bila duševno, politično in fizično izkoriščanje in zatiranje prebivalstva. Ves kontinent je trpel zaradi vojaških režimov, ki so izvajali fašistično oblast. Ker je bil strah poglavitno orodje pri zatiranju ljudi, se je skrito gledališče med drugim moralo ukvarjati z metodami in vsebinami, ki bi ta strah lahko premagale, ga preobrazile v jezo, znanje, pogum in voljo za aktivno spreminjanje osebnih življenjskih razmer in razvoja družbe na splošno.

Kot primer bom navedel tole: Vzpostavi se skrita igra, ki naj bi načela razpravo o pojavu, da ljudje potem, ko jih aretira varnostna služba, izginejo. V Braziliji je, kljub temu da je vsakdo vedel, da zaporniki izginjajo - ker jih je režim pobil - vsa zadeva ostala tabu celo med sorodniki izginulih zapornikov. Tabu je izvirjal iz dejstva, da je lahko vsakdo, ki je spregovoril o tem, tudi sam izgubil življenje.

Skrito igra načrtujejo igralci Arene Theatra tako, da najprej obravnavajo in analizirajo "vse možne različice tega, kar se lahko zgodi". Izdelajo strategijo kako doseči cilj - v tem primeru je cilj pripraviti skupine potnikov na vlaku do tega, da se začnejo pogovarjati o izginjanju zapornikov. Osnovna strategija je razprava med dvema igralcema, ki na vlaku bereta časopis, njen namen pa je, seveda, druge potnike pritegniti v razpravo, da bi se zavedali možnosti in potrebe po akciji, političnem boju in da je rešitev pred zatiranjem v boju.

Pozneje je Augusto Boal skrito gledališče razvil dalje tako, da je bilo primerno za teme in metode v drugačnih družbah, tudi v meščanskem demokratičnem sistemu. Kjerkoli so se igralci Arene Theatra udeležili kakega gledališkega festivala, so sprožili skrite igre. Tako so v pariškem metroju izvedli igro, ki je potnike spremenila v gledalce in igralce v razpravo o emancipaciji žensk in o pogledih na moški in ženski značaj. Člani gledališča so igrali vlogo prostitutke, moškega šovinista, prevarane in užaljene soproge, prevaranega moškega, duhovnika itd. Tako so hoteli sprožiti ne samo razprave med potniki, ampak tudi njihovo neposredno poseganje v igro. Kako so to izvedli?

Moški igralec začne nadlegovati kolegico, ki je zelo izzivalno oblečena, in gre pri tem tako daleč, da jo začne otipavati. Ona seveda protestira in tako sproži naslednji incident: igralec duhovnik poseže vmes, rekoč, da je ženska tako

izzivalno oblečena, da celo njega, človeka v božji službi, mami k otipavanju. Neki drugi igralec vpije: "Vse ženske so take!" Kmalu nato je ves oddelek vpleten v razpravo, ki jo vedno znova poživljajo pripravljene nastopi drugih igralcev.

V skritih igrah Arene Theatra se dejansko dogaja to, da so skupine ljudi potisnjene v fiktivni svet pomembnih konfliktov, ne da bi se tega zavedali.

Fiktivni svetovi kot učni pripomoček?

Potem ko sem bral o eksperimentih Arene Theatra, sem jih hotel vključiti v učni program Kmetijskega muzeja tako, da bi prispevali k reševanju problema skrite zgodovine. Zato sem zgodovino opredelil kot nekakšno skrito gledališče in naloga, ki sem si jo zastavil, je bila narediti zgodovino vidno, navzočo in obstoječo z uporabo fiktivnih svetov. Učence bi nekako prisilil vstopiti v zgodovino. Kar sem hotel doseči, ni bila rekonstrukcija zgodovinskih dogodkov, ampak situacije, ki omogočajo razmišljanje in odločanje.

V tistem času sem v Kmetijskem muzeju že postavil delavnice za praktično delo s kopijami zgodovinskih orodij - cepcev, kolovratov, pinj in raznih orodij za delo z lanom itd. Praktično delo pri peki kruha, delanju masla iz smetane, šivanju oblačil iz volne itd. je učencem dajalo občutek, koliko trdega dela, potrpljenja in spretnosti je človek potreboval nekoč, da se je preživiljal. Čeprav je bilo to pri pouku v muzeju nekaj povsem novega in je bilo delo zelo priljubljeno tako pri učencih kot pri učiteljih, nisem bil zadovoljen. Razlog je bil v vprašanju, ki sem si ga nenehno zastavljal: Kaj hočeš doseči s temi programi? Ali se učenci res kaj naučijo o zgodovini in o tem, kakšno je bilo življenje na deželi pred npr. 300 leti? Če sem odkrit, si nisem bil povsem na jasnem, ali se učenci naučijo pravilno uporabljati cepce. Pa tudi če jim je to uspelo - čemu?

Zato sem se odločil, da jim bom razkril razloge za trdo življenje in pri tem še naprej uporabljal praktično delo kot uvod v zgodovino. V ta namen sem ustvaril fiktivne svetove, v katere sem potisnil učence, ki so se učili zgodovine kmetijstva. Eden izmed teh svetov je bila vas izpred 250 let. Fikcija je bila dvojna. Najprej seveda ni bilo vidnih kmetij, ne hiš, ne vasi itd. Pouk pa smo začeli tako, da se nisem predstavil kot muzeolog, ampak kot veleposestnik. Ko so učenci prišli v muzej, smo jim rekli, da so kmetje, ki živijo na vasi, in da sem jaz veleposestnik. Njihova usoda je v mojih rokah, ker jim jaz določam življenjske pogoje. Edina naloga učencev kmetov je bila delati z orodjem, ki ga najdejo v svojih domnevni hišah. Tam so jih čakale tudi pogodbe s pogoji, pod katerimi so najeli hišo ali kmetijo, opisi njihovih družin z imenom, spolom in starostjo vsakega člana in pritenke, ki so jih morali nositi, da bi jih vsak lahko prepoznal. Iz učencev z identiteto osnovnošolskih otrok so se prelevili v kmete, poljedelce, kmečke gospodinje, sirote itd. V svojih fiktivnih hišah so našli tudi orodje in do neke mere gradivo, ki so ga morali predelati. Preživljati so se morali z delom. Svoje pridelke ali izdelke so lahko prodali bodisi drugim kmetom ali veleposestniku. Imeli pa so tudi pravico delati zase ali za druge proti plačilu. Del orodja, ki so ga potrebovali za svoje delo, so si morali pogodbeno in proti plačilu izposoditi pri veleposestniku. Na enak način so lahko prišli do surovin za proizvodnjo. Njihovo preživetje je bilo pod stalnim pritiskom zaradi vmešavanja veleposestnika, ki se je skliceval na razne zgodovinske pravice v zvezi s plačilom davščin, najemnine, zakupnine za kmetijo, s službovanjem v kmečkih vojskah itd. Hkrati so vplivali na igro dogodki od zunaj, npr. reforme, o katerih vemo, da so se v resnici zgodile. Med temi dogodki je bila uveljavitev

zakona o pripadnosti kmeta zemlji. V igri je to pomenilo, da "moški" niso smeli zapustiti prizorišča brez dovoljenja veleposestnika.

Od vsega začetka igre so bili učenci potisnjeni v fiktiven svet. Niso imeli stika z muzeologom, ampak izključno z veleposestnikom. Poleg tega jih nihče ni obravnaval kot učence, ampak zgolj kot kmete. Njihova naloga je bila ubogati in delati. Njihov edini cilj: preživljati se s trdim delom. Če pa so bili dovolj spretni, so lahko napredovali na družbeni lestvici, tako da so postali lastniki namesto najemniki zemlje.

Podobno igro smo naredili o velikih spremembah v danskem kmetijstvu proti koncu 19. stoletja. Od srede osemdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja je bilo kmetijstvo v globoki krizi. Glavni pridelek na Danskem je bilo žito. Od leta 1880 dalje (Zahodna) Evropa ni bila sposobna pridelati dovolj žita za hitro naraščajoče prebivalstvo, zato ga je začela uvažati iz ZDA, Rusije, Srednje Evrope in Južne Amerike. Ameriško žito ni bilo samo zelo kakovostno, ampak tudi zelo poceni zaradi sodobnih pridelovalnih postopkov. Posledica tega je bila nagel padec cen in val stečajev med danskimi kmeti. Postalo je očitno, da se mora v danskem kmetijstvu nekaj spremeniti. Po letu 1880 so izvedli reforme: kmetijstvo je bilo prenovljeno in je po novem temeljilo na živinoreji in industrializaciji kmetijske proizvodnje. V letih 1880 do 1910 je bilo ustanovljenih na tisoče mlekarn, klavnice in drugih predelovalnih obratov. Ni šlo samo za korenito spremembo proizvodnje, prenova je temeljila tudi na novih finančnih načelih: kooperativnem finansiranju in skupnem lastništvu predelovalne industrije.

Igra o teh procesih je učence postavila v fiktivni svet ogroženih kmetij, ki so živele od različnih pridelkov, znanih iz tistega obdobja. Učenci kmetije so bili soočeni z gospodarskimi dejstvi in zahtevami. Bili so prisiljeni iskati rešitev, vsak za svojo kmetijo. Med igro so bili inscenirani dogodki, podobni spremembam in združnim aktivnostim iz resnične zgodovine. Ustanovili so nove kmetije, mlekarne, klavnice, izvolili njihove upravne odbore, postavili predelovalne obrate, se selili z dežele v mesto, da bi našli delo, in začelo se je izseljevanje v Ameriko. Na koncu so se organizirali v politične stranke, da bi tako zavarovali koristi, vpliv, moč itd., ki so jih dosegli med igro.

Tretja igra je bila o kmečkem uporu iz leta 1534. Tu so nekateri učenci postali kmetje, drugi plemiči ali škofi. V desetih različnih insceniranih dogodkih iz dejanskega upora so učenci doživeli upor, državljansko vojno in vojno proti drugi državi (Danska-Lübeck).

### Paralelno razmišljanje kot zgodovinska metoda

Namen teh iger ni bil rekonstruirati zgodovino ali zgodovinske dogodke, ampak ugotoviti, kako razmišljajo današnji otroci. V fiktivnem svetu in soočeni s problemi zgodovinske narave so bili prisiljeni vključiti se v razne dele igre, sodelovati v "ustvarjanju" zgodovine z drugimi. To sodelovanje je razvijalo njihovo sposobnost razmišljanja na sploh in na zgodovinski način. Učenje je temeljilo na konfrontaciji učiteljevega znanja o zgodovini z odnosom otrok do sodobne zgodovine. Smisel postopka je v tem, da sprožimo v otrocih sposobnost razmišljanja o preteklosti in v zgodovinskih okvirih. Poenostavljeno bi lahko rekli, da je bil namen pouka poskus razvijati otrokove sposobnosti za zgodovinsko razmišljanje. Prek zgodovine naj bi dojeli, da ima sedanost korenine v preteklosti. To dejstvo jim je postalo jasno v igrah, ko so njihove

odločitve imele tudi "konkretne" posledice zanje. Kdor kot zatiran kmet v fiktivnem svetu 18. stoletja ni plačal davka, si je neizogibno poslabšal življenjske razmere. Kdor je kot plemič v tridesetih letih 16. stoletja podpiral napačnega generala, je izgubil vojno ali pa se je moral med igro odločiti da bo podpiral drugega.

To nas pripelje do zelo pomembnega vprašanja, kako lahko damo učencem možnost izbire, ne da bi jim hkrati omogočali, da bi zapustili okvire dejanskega zgodovinskega razvoja. Kako jim lahko preprečimo odločitve, ki so popolnoma drugačne od zgodovinsko potrjenih? Rešitev tega problema je v prvi vrsti v tem, da mora igra temeljiti na dejanskih in možnih izbirah iz resnične zgodovine. Drugič, potrebna je manipulacija v tem smislu, da se zgodovinski problemi prikažejo tako, da v fiktivnih izbirah odsevajo dejanske zgodovinske odločitve.

336

Zelo zanimiva je bila analiza izkušenj iz iger. Fiktivni svet ustvarja distanco do otrok, ki nam lahko koristi na več načinov. Prvič, lahko povečamo zahtevnost dela, ki ga morajo opraviti učenci, in spodbujamo njihov trud pri učenju. Drugič, fiktivni svet učitelju omogoča, da se otrokom bolj približa kot sicer. Npr. "kmetje" iz vasi 18. stoletja izvedo že na začetku, da se morajo preživljati s prodajanjem svojih izdelkov ali pridelkov. Glavni kupec je učitelj veleposestnik, prodaja pa je odvisna od kakovosti blaga, ki se ugotavlja na vnaprej dogovorjen način. Tako, recimo, pri sukancu veleposestnik preizkusi nit, preden se odloči za nakup. In če se nit srga, blaga ne odkupi.

Veleposestniku otroci vedno oprostijo ta preskus, s katerim lahko izniči sadove njihovega dela, nikoli pa tega ne bi oprostili učitelju. Tako distanca ustvarja bližino. Otroci se pri delu bolj potrudijo, razumejo pogoje od vsega začetka ali jih dojamejo na podlagi izkušenj v igri. Sami se morajo odločiti, ali je kakovost njihovega dela, blaga, ki ga želijo prodati, dovoljšnja ali ne. Tako pride do večje samodiscipline. Uspešnost v igri temelji na sodelovanju, potrpežljivosti in občutku za zgodovino na ravni premišljanja in ustvarjalnosti. Čim hitreje se otroci učijo od zgodovine, tem več prostora in možnosti imajo v igri.

Pouk ni zabava, mora pa biti zabaven

Seveda ne morem zanikati, da je zabavna narava iger pomembna za njihov uspeh pri otrocih. Kljub temu da zabava ni cilj, naj bi bil pouk zgodovine zabaven. V bistvu se z otroki igram zgodovino, vendar igramo zares. Vsi programi so temeljili na splošnih dejavnostih muzeja, razstavah, zbirkah in znanstvenih dejavnostih. Zelo zanimivo je dejstvo, da so bile znanstvene raziskave ključnega pomena. Ne smemo pozabiti, da igre potekajo tako, da so težavni problemi prikazani kot preprosti. V tem je seveda nevarnost, da zgodovino preveč poenostavimo. Potreben je znanstven napor, da ugotovimo značaj veleposestnika, če naj navedem samo en primer. Veleposestnik je nasprotnik kmetov v resnični zgodovini in v igri. Da ga ne bi prikazali preveč črno-belo, so bile potrebne resne znanstvene raziskave o znanih veleposestnikih iz zgodovine. Veleposestnik v igri naj bi posebej (povprečnega) zgodovinskega in tedanje stanje v družbi.

Zavest o preteklosti je pomembna tudi za prihodnost

Igre, ki sem jih tu omenil, sem ustvaril zato, da bi razvil didaktično metodo, ki bi ustrezno združevala zavest o sedanjosti z možno in potrebno



zavestjo o preteklosti. Igre sicer niso odvisne od zgodovinske zavesti otrok, a vendar se moramo zavedati spreminjajočih se in različnih stopenj zavesti med njimi. V tem smislu je načeloma komaj kaka razlika med metodami in smotri skritega gledališča in mojimi igrami. Seveda so učenci vseskozi vedeli za igro, vendar so tudi vedeli, da igramo zares. V igrah smo izhajali iz dejanske zgodovinske zavesti otrok - tako v njihovo škodo kot v njihovo korist. Igra je resna, ker fiktivni svet učencem dosledno onemogoča, da bi pobegnili od svojega dejanskega zgodovinskega znanja in zavesti - ne glede na stopnjo ali količino tega znanja.

Izkušnje iz iger so bile tako mnogostransko pozitivne in so odpirale tako številne vidike, da sem sklenil ustvarjati in razvijati igre o prihodnosti. Izbral sem dve temi: "Naredite kmetijski muzej iz leta 2010 po svoji zamisli" in "Kmetijstvo na Danskem leta 2010". Postopek v teh igrah je bil takšen, da smo otrokom najprej prikazali dejavnosti in naloge sedanjega kmetijskega muzeja in stanje v današnjem kmetijstvu na Danskem. Ko smo otroke poslali na domišljjsko potovanje v prihodnost, so eni morali ustvariti muzej po svoji zamisli, drugi pa oblikovati lastne zahteve, predloge in pričakovanja od kmetijstva prihodnosti. Da bi se izognili čisto znanstvenofantastičnim projektom, smo k sodelovanju povabili 30 kmečkih družin kot gostiteljic za okrog 90 učencev. Učenci so dva dni bivali na teh kmetijah, sodelovali pri delu, se od kmetov učili o kmetijstvu, izvedeli, kaj kmetje pričakujejo od prihodnosti itd. Tako so dobili podlago za pouk o teh temah v muzejskih "delavnicah prihodnosti."

### Sklep

Rezultate tu omenjenega eksperimentalnega didaktičnega dela v Danskem kmetijskem muzeju je zbrala in analizirala Danska pedagoška univerza. Iz sklepnega poročila navajam :

"Na splošno rečeno je projekt poživil in spodbudil učne postopke pri predmetih, ki veljajo za zahtevne in nakazal nove didaktične razsežnosti in možnosti ... ključnega pomena je sodelovanje znanstvenikov pri poučevanju v muzeju ... Uporaba fiktivnih svetov je metoda, ki je omogočala integracijo obsežnih zgodovinskih dimenzij."

Vedno je prijetno brati pozitivne ocene svojega dela. Za splošen sklep pa bi rekel, da vem, kako je delo s tu omenjenimi metodami in konkretnimi igrami vsaj enako težavno in zahtevno, kot je vzpodbudno in zabavno. Zato bi sklepu rad dodal še tole misel: fikcija ponavadi temelji na specifični predstavi o resničnosti. Resničnost pa je kontraverzna in različne zamisli o njej vodijo k različnim idejam o fikciji. Stvari pa niso postale nič bolj preproste, odkar modernizem trdi, da je resničnost sama ... fikcija.

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### BESEDA O AVTORJU

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