

Story breaking and story making: how can dramatherapy and phenomenology facilitate our developing autobiography?

Alanah Garrard

Do we create a narrative in order to gain some kind of coherence in our lives and what is the purpose of our memories existentially? What does it mean to find the correct memory, if such a thing exists, and how does this change the way we relate to being-in-the-world with others? By accepting the facticity of the past can we change our future? Those working and writing about human development are mostly writing from a position of looking back at their childhood and ahead at their old age with life being broken down into three stages, childhood, adulthood and old age (Adams, M. 2020). So how does the perception of our memories change as we travel through our lives and what can that teach us?

As therapists, are we there to help decipher the client's autobiography and how can this be done with the client at the forefront of this discovery?

This paper will explore the role of memory in our autobiographies, our perception of these as we develop throughout our lives and how dramatherapy as a phenomenological practice can facilitate story breaking and story making. It will consider how the Sesame method of dramatherapy can be envisioned as a phenomenological practice influenced by the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty in terms of embodiment, language and perception and how its practice can aid in the existentials of being-in-the-world and being-with-others (Heidegger 1962).

Biography

Alanah Garrard is a UKCP registered existential psychotherapist and supervisor and has a private practice in West London. She trained in 2000 as a drama and movement therapist, and later went onto an MA in Integrative Therapy and an Advanced Diploma in Existential Therapy. Alongside her private practice she teaches developmental psychology and performing research on the MA Drama and Movement Therapy course at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in addition to clinically supervising the students in their second year of training. Her areas of research include the unspoken communication within the therapeutic relationship and what that can offer, in particular, the role of imagery, as well as a love for the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and its application within therapeutic practice.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Garrard, A. (2017) The Gaze. In Hougham, R. & Jones, B. (eds) *Dramatherapy: Reflections and Praxis*. England: Palgrave.