Chapter Two   Connecting stories: from reading to beliefs

Connection

I am aware of the specificity of the individual in time and place, and the specificity of individual experience. Thus, whilst we tell the single story of the human condition, we tell a million stories and each are uniquely different and enriching.

This thesis grounds itself in a number of reading landscapes. Some of these were explored in Chapter One, but this chapter considers in more detail the way in which story has informed my practice as writer: reader/researcher, and explores the connections between stories. This **connectivity** can be explored as metaphor: a New England quilt is formed by a tesselation of fabrics, each of a different colour, pattern, texture, and derived from another place which has its own history. So, for example, one piece might come from the tablecloth of a country farmer's home, another from the first blanket of a child, another from the pawned wedding dress of a young girl , another from the coat of a favourite doll, another from the curtains of a closed down guest house. Before they are stitched together, they form a cacophony of different colours, styles, patterns, textures, like a random crowd of people caught in the snapshot of a busy city. But when stitched together, each piece paves the way in shape and form, for another: the colours begin to chime or bounce off one another. They invite the eye to make links and comparisons, to see patterns and disparities: one pattern shows off another, echoes another. Not only this, but once all the pieces are together in this way, they form a single entity which is not only beautiful and unique, but is also functional. On their own, each single piece is in danger of being just a fragment: but all together they have a role to play. They cover a bed, keep a child warm, decorate a table or wall. They are seen as a single piece with many parts.

The stories in this dissertation interlock and ask questions in the same way; how do stories accumulate in power through connection? What can stories *do* in the world – do they have a purpose beyond themselves? How do imagined and real stories connect and why is our experience enriched by the permeability between these? A diversity of reading landscapes have fed into my understanding of the lived, created and learnt. Amongst these are: story as interpreted by child and adult, narrative and authorial voice as perceived by adult reader/writer, and story universals that connect literary and lived experience. This chapter will unravel these reading landscapes and

attempt to connect them so that they 'speak' to one another in a way that transforms and generates new meanings.

2.1 Story as methodology, story as resource

I referred in earlier sections of this dissertation, to story as a methodology and story as a resource. This section will explore what I mean by this, and how this connects with the role of story in this dissertation.

The methodology of story involves the recounting of experience. It presupposes connection between events through causality, consequence or sequence. Yet a story is more than a simple chronology of events, in that it involves an emotional, moral or philosophical investment by the author. "Something genuine is at stake in a story" (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001:17), whether we are telling our own or engaging in another's. Story, too, involves a 'narrative intelligence' (Denning 2000), in that it takes account of audience and is honed to communicate and generate empathy. This concession to audience involves shared assumptions about narrative discourse; how elements of story connect or disconnect, how far logic and sequence are presupposed, how far consistency and probability are required or suspended (Genette 1980, Barthes 1996, Toolan 2001, Manfred 2005). We are able to say what is unique and specific through recognisable and shared frameworks; in other words, to form a bridge between inner voice and outer voice, between inner reader and outer reader.

Story is also a resource in that from it emerge values, beliefs, patterns and assumptions which are revealed not only to the reader, but to the storyteller too. The richness of story is that these values are often expressed symbolically, metaphorically, or notionally, so 'truths' are displaced and coded. Thus story can offer a connecting window between surface language and discourse patterns and the subliminal and unconscious. We can learn not only *from* story or personal narrative, but *through* it. This recognition of story as a learning resource is apparent in our attempts to understand social history, communities and cultures, as well as our attempts to explore the individual's inner and outer worlds. Cortazzi (2006), Kirkpatrick (2002) and Geertz (1983) are example of ethnographers who draw on story to understand social and sociolinguistic patterns. In this, there is recognition that a community is

understood through connecting the stories of those inside it. "In the course of engaging with stories, ---- we are beginning to discover the process is a social one" (Elbaz 1992: 432), because through them we can understand more fully a community's patterns, discourses, systems and its functionality or disfunctionality. Amongst these stories, are those of teachers, whose life stories offer insights into educational values and meanings and have become validated as a rich resource for educational understanding (Tripp 1993, Thomas 1995, Bruner 2002, Doecke, Homer and Nixon 2003, Aoki 2004, Johnson and Golombek 2005, Day et al 2007).   Story too, is recognised as a resource for the understanding of emotional health (Gersie and King 1990, Hunt 2000, Anderson and MacCurdy 2000, Angwin 1994) and as an agent of change in organisational settings (Shank 1990, Fisher, Rooke and Torbert 2000). We can ask: what accounts for the power of story as a resource, and its transferability into so many contexts and disciplines: education, mental health, organisational psychology, ethnography, social history?   My own belief is that story, in all its specificity, offers quintessential insights into the human condition. It is a place of "genuine meetings" in which our "own relation to truth is heightened by the other's different relation to the same truth" (Buber 1998: 59). Story is a place where we can find ourselves through others, and find others through connecting with ourselves.

2.2 Story and researching the self

Action research liberates the researcher to analyse their own story as a starting point, rather than end point; and to be explicit in how the story of other and the story of self connect (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, Witherall and Noddings 2001). McNiff describes action research as "honour(ing) the right of people to speak and act on their own behalf" (ibid: 10). It "begins in people's minds as they make choices about which values to espouse and how to live in the direction of these values" and places "the living I at the centre of our enquiries". (ibid: 22).   Yet there are typical criticisms that could be directed at the 'I' centred researcher. From the purely narrative point of view, it is clear that a single perspective on a story will be limited and skewed. A creative writer choosing the 'I' persona is well aware that in doing so, he/she closes down the inner worlds of his/her other characters and thus limits the 'roundness' of the reader's experience. Anthony Trollope writes:

> It is always dangerous to write from the point of 'I'. The reader
> is unconsciously taught to feel that the writer is glorifying himself

and rebels against the self-praise. (Trollope in Allott 1959: 260).

Henry James describes this as "the terrible fluidity of self-revelation" (James in Allott: 261). So it is with any monodimensional story. In describing multifaith dialogue between Jews, Christians and Moslems, Magonet cites Lippmann:

> The complexity of modern civilization is a daily lesson in the necessity of not pressing any claim too far, of understanding opposing points of view, of seeking to reconcile them, of conducting matters so that there is some kind of harmony in a plural society. (Magonet 2003: 16)

Understanding story, understanding history, is a recognition of multiplicity. This is a truth we can readily embrace. But where does it leave the individual and what he/she uniquely has to offer? In this dilemma of the 'storyteller' and action researcher, between self and other, the philosopher who has offered for me the most answers is Buber. Buber resolves the dilemma between finding self: finding the other, by showing that human beings are ***most essentially themselves*** through interaction with others.

> The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such. Each, considered by itself, is a mighty abstraction. The individual is a fact of existence in so far as he steps into a living relation with other individuals. The aggregate is a fact of existence in so far as it is built up of living units of relation. **That essence of man which is special to him can be directly known only in a living relation.**
> (Buber: 1988: 7)

He develops the theory further in describing "the principle of human life" as twofold: "the primal setting at a distance" and "the second entering into relation" (ibid: 50). This duality is one that lies at the heart of the story: history, story, personal narrative, action research. The roundedness in each of these accounts, will lie in the capacity to combine distance with engagement: and to make this engagement an exploration of self and self-through-others. How am I in interaction with others? How are they in interaction with me? What evidence do I have for each of these?

Herein, then, lies a broad personal definition of effective 'action research': to place "the living I at the centre of our enquiries" and yet at the same time, to show that

the living I is most essentially itself through engagement with others. How can this best be done? Bullough and Pinnegar cite Wright Mills:

> many personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues and in terms of the problems of history-making.
> (Wright Mills C. in Bullough and Pinnegar 2001:14)

So, an effective personal narrative will deconstruct 'personal troubles' as public ones; it will politicise observations to show the interaction between myself and the systems, contexts, cultural norms in which I work. How do I do this?

- by identifying my work within the institution within which it derived, and acknowledging the impact of this on my work
- by acknowledging the impact of colleagues and their attitudes to me and my work
- by revealing the "inherently unstable and problematic nature" of my work (McNiff with Whitehead 2002: 4)
- by showing how I work with the duality of distance and engagement: in institutional terms, with the role of "tempered radical" that is "simultaneously outsider and insider" (Marshall 1999: 3), seeking to change institutions while remaining inside them (often in positions of invisibility or powerlessness). This chapter will make explicit the systems I worked within, why I chose to change them, what the constraints were that limited change, and how I used these constraints themselves as change-agents.

Chapter One described science and social science research paradigms in which validity was mutually understood and demonstrable: but what is the standard of validity, when a distanced, objectified notion of data has been replaced by the 'central I' , and methods of expression are individually determined? Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) offer guidelines for the action researcher engaged in self-study. These are practical guidelines which are underpinned by the notion of research as a universalised story in which, as cited earlier, "something genuine is at stake" (Bullough and Pinnegar 2001:17). Here Bullough and Pinnegar echo the creative writer who, also, searches for the 'genuine', the leap of self, into his/her story. Here is Joseph Conrad, for example, describing his process of creating *The Secret Agent*:

> There must have been, however, some sort of atmosphere in the whole
> incident because all of a sudden I felt myself stimulated. And then ensued in
> my mind what a student of chemistry would best understand from the analogy
> of the tiniest little drop of the right kind, precipitating the process of
> crystallisation in a test tube containing some colourless solution.
> It was at first for me a mental challenge, disturbing a quieted-down
> imagination, in which strange forms, sharp in outline but imperfectly
> apprehended, appeared and claimed attention as crystals will do by their
> bizarre and unexpected shapes. ------ There was room enough there to place
> any story, depth enough there for any passion, variety enough there for any
> setting, darkness enough to bury five millions of life. ------- (Conrad 1920: 6)

A core reason why the researcher should engage with story, is its potential for universality. Our own engagement elicits the engagement of others, the compassionate leap mentioned in Chapter One, which enables the reader to recognise, identify and empathise.

To summarise the subtext of this section:

we can learn about generating good action research, through the strategies of good story-making: we need to be rounded and unbiased in the information we give, emotionally engaged and yet fully informed. We are ***story-makers***.

we can learn about good action research, through story itself as our resource, our data, our learning catalyst. What is remembered, selected, and why? What patterns and connections emerge and what do these teach us? We are ***story-readers***.

2.3 The story and authorial voice

Section 2.2 considered story at the level of content choices and authorial point of view. This section will look at the implications of these decisions for the writer, at the level of text, language, and surface voice. Section 2.1 mentioned story as a connector between inner voice and outer voice, but what are the refinements and complexities of this when these voices are complex, and function at multiple levels?

In symbolic terms, every writer deals with the same tension between the personal, inner voice and the 'voice' of the 'other' culture. However we experience this, we are all somehow negotiating a 'first language' in a 'second language' culture: whether

this 'second language' is another register, another community or culture, the discourse of the opposite gender, the culture of the company or academy. In other words, we all have domains in which we are 'insiders', and domains where we experience the conventions as outsiders.

What can the creative writer do with this tension, that the journalist, or literary critic, or advertising copywriter cannot do? He/she can:

- create a personally constructed 'interlanguage' that falls in between the personal, inner voice, and the dominant, outer one
- use the 'insider' voice of their community – the 'nation-language' - to reverse the power imbalance by making this voice the dominant and heard one
- juxtapose the dominant voice and the personal voice, to show the dialogue between them
- layer the personal voice and the dominant voice so, within the narrative, the reader slides between one sensibility and the other

Three examples of autobiography have formed inspirations for my own strategies in the course of this dissertation. The first is Lorna Sage's autobiography, *Bad Blood*, which won the Whitbread Prize shortly after the author's death in 2000 (Sage 2000). The autobiography gives us the forward-motion of a narrative, and interweaves personal narrative about self and family with social commentary about values, customs, habits, attitudes, life style. We see the family members not only as themselves and part of a narrative direction, but also as representatives to some extent of their time, class, social status, region. Each have a set of characteristics which are both unique, but which also tell us about the world in which they lived.   Dropped into her own narrative, is the diary of her grandfather, which we are allowed access to piece by piece, much as she herself might have read it to unravel his story. We hear his voice but also the simultaneous development of his story, parallel to her retrospective commentary on it. This is done subtly through an interweaving of 'voices'. Lorna Sage herself is storyteller, child through whose eyes adults are seen, critic, social commentator, - shuttling seamlessly between all these roles. Here she describes with irony and humour the education of rural children in the 1950's.

> *The further up the school you went, the less you were formally taught or expected to learn.* **There was knitting, sewing and weaving for older girls, who would sit out winter playtimes gossiping round the stove, their legs marbled with red parboiled veins from the heat. The big boys did woodwork and** *were also kept busy* **taking out the ashes, filling coke buckets and digging the garden.** *None of the more substantial farmers sent their children to Hanmer school. It had been designed to produce domestic servants and farm labourers, and functional illiteracy was still part of the expectation, almost part of the curriculum.*

> *Text in italics: the social commentator*
> **Text in bold: the narrator (Sage: 19)**

At times, to illustrate more clearly the values of her environment, she embeds their voices too: the severe grandmother, the moralising nurses, the dismissive university lecturers. Without actually creating dialogue, we have a sense of the vocabulary and intonation of their messages. In the passage below, the family doctor has just examined her and established that she is pregnant.

> **I'd been caught out, I would have to pay. I was in trouble. I'd have no secrets any longer, I'd be exposed as a fraud, my fate wasn't my own, my treacherous body had somehow delivered me into other people's hands.** *Dr. Clayton asked if he should tell my mother, but he wasn't really asking. --- My mother came upstairs and opened the door, her face red and puffed up with outrage, her eyes blazing with tears.* <u>She'll tell, this time, no question, For a minute she says nothing and then it comes out in a wail. What have you done to me? Over and over again. I've spoiled everything, now this house will be a shameful place like the vicarage. I've soiled and insulted her with my promiscuity, my sly, grubby lusts ----</u> *I've done it now, I've made my mother pregnant.* (ibid: 236)

> **Bold letters: Dr. Clayton**
> *Italics: Lorna's voice*
> <u>Underlining: Mother's voice</u>

This method sets up an inner dialogue of multiple voices embedded in one text: and allows the author at the same time to participate in the text and to comment on it. It is a model of the strategy Bakhtin described as 'heteroglossia':

> an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactical) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and axiological belief systems. (Bakhtin 1934: 304-305)

A second 'story-making' strategy is represented in Joachim Appel's *Diary of a Language Teacher* (Appel 1995).   His diary is divided into chapters, each of which has two parts. The first part is an account of the 'action' in the classroom, simultaneous to its occurrence. The accounts have been selected from a daily record,

clustered together to form themes such as: classroom discipline, management, teacher decisions and resources: but apart from this thematic clustering and selection, there appears to be no other intervention into the text. Responses are recorded on the day they emerge, without attempts to connect, analyse or predict: and obviously, without the benefit of hindsight (as in Lorna Sage's case). Because of this, Appel allows us to see the raw reactiveness of the teacher's life. We enter into the apparently random clutter of the teacher's day, and the 'kneejerk' responses we are forced into, pre-reflection. The second part of the chapter then reviews this first part, and identifies from the safety of distance, what emerges from the account. For example, the first chapter records the pure torment of his encounter with the 'nightmare' class 10A. It records the battles for power, his momentary breakdown, the demolition of his own ideals when confronted with reality. The second half 'unpacks' issues of discipline, alienation, expectation, staff solidarity (or lack of it), the transition from novice to 'expert', the generation gap and communication gulfs. He salvages from his own story, not only principles, causes and connections, but a strategy for self-development.   This second method is the diametric opposite of the first, in that it involves the author in two phases of his own self-knowledge. The first is 'total immersion' in the experience: the second involves a lapse in time, a shifting in emotional distance, and an invitation to see the self as 'other'. The two phases are kept strictly separate, so the experience of each is sealed and self-contained.

A third autobiographical strategy is Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Words* (Sartre 1964). Here he has chosen to pare away all expectation of an external narrative. The autobiography is self-referential, in that it takes us not outward to Sartre's world (as Lorna Sage does), nor does it act as a record of daily life (as in Appel's diary): but it takes us inward, into the mechanism of an artist's psyche. The landscape we populate through this work is entirely that of the writer's mind. As such, it is a fascinating account of what it is to be marked from childhood as a 'genius':

> The Holy Ghost and I held secret meetings: "You'll write," he said to me. I wrung my hands: "What is there about me, Lord, that has made you choose me?" –" Nothing in particular". – "Then, why me?" – "For no reason." – "Do I at least have an aptitude for writing?" – "Not at all. Do you think that the great works are born of flowing pens?" – "Lord, since I'm such a nonentity, how could I write a book?" – "By buckling down to it."   "Does that mean anyone can write?" "Anyone. But you're the one I've chosen." (Sartre 1964: 116)

> I was born of writing. Before that there was only a play of mirrors. With my first novel, I knew that a child had got into the hall of mirrors. By writing I was existing. I was escaping from the grown-ups but I existed only in order to write, and if I said "I" that meant "I who write". In any case, I knew joy. The public child was making private appointments with himself   (ibid: 95)

The autobiography stays in the same place, in the same time frame, and as readers we are utterly content to remain there. Sartre does not grow up, does not get older, does not change home or school throughout the autobiography: and we do not care, because he has placed us as reader where he himself is:

> It was in books that I encountered the universe: assimilated, classified, labelled, pondered, still formidable: and I confused the disorder of my bookish experiences with the random course of real events. (ibid: 32)

In varying ways, I have drawn on the strategies modelled by these three authors in the dissertation that follows. Where my account involves retrospection- as in accounts of childhood - and where its key interest lies in the unravelling of the social environment around me, I have attempted multiple authorial roles as does Lorna Sage. This is true of Chapter 3, which describes childhood experience from the perspective of the adult I am now, the child I was then, and the adults who shared and influenced my environment. As an author I am able to shuttle between personae in the way that Lorna Sage does; and to use document as a way of unravelling an earlier story. Chapters 4 - 6 describe 'inner voyages' in the world of a writer, and in many ways, I have found Sartre to be an inspirational model of my intentions here. The movement from and to that I describe is not in place or time predominantly, but in the evolution of ideas from conception to realisation.

In contrast, Chapter Ten - the chapter about critical incidents in the academy- draws directly from simultaneous diaries and poems during this event (including a more recent novel extract). I have allowed the reader to 'totally immerse' in the nightmare, as we do with Appel's dreaded 10A. The second half of this chapter draws together themes, observations, and theoretical frameworks which helped in retrospect to illuminate the experience: and to extract from it insights and tools for self-development. In doing this, I have made clear the time lapse and emotional distance

between the first part and the second: and the necessity for this, before learning could take place.

2.4 Reading as a writer: the universal story

Reading as a writer means that text has been, for me, alive and interactive, an infinite resource from which a large number of understandings have been mined:

- I have found in story the universality of the human condition: emotions such as homesickness, alienation, loneliness, love, loss and ambition (Feinstein and Krippner 1989, Angwin 1994)

- I have found in story the poles used in psychoanalysis and pscyhotherapy: the high points, the low points, the points of revelation and discovery, the critical moments such as separation (divorce, moving home, death) and loss of self-esteem (bankruptcy, redundancy).   (Rogers 1990, Gersie and King 1990, Anderson and MacCurdy 2000, Hunt 2000)

- I have been able to identify in story the theatrical unities described by Aristotle: the fatal flaw, the moment of recognition or 'anagnorsis', the moment of reversal or ''peripataie', the moment of culmination and purgation,'catharsis' (Aristotle 1965)

- I have found in story a variety of universal structures: character types such as victim, benefactor or donor, false friend, villain, heroine: plot types, such as conflict, quest, separation, reunion; story structures such as orientation, complication, resolution (Propp 1928, Tobias 1995, Toolan 2006).

Most interesting has been the understanding that all these levels operate at the same time within a story, and that these levels speak to and echo one another. For example, the ancient Greek idea of 'harmatia' – the fatal flaw - has remarkable parallels with Jung's idea of the 'shadow', the 'dark side' of the self housed in the unconscious (Jung 1971). The idea of 'anagnorsis' or moment of recognition, parallels the therapeutic belief that primal memory will 'unlock' the unconscious. The film *Spellbound* (Hitchcock 1944), for example, tells the story of a character who is subject to wild mood swings, and cannot be liberated from this until he remembers a critical moment in his childhood.   The story structures of orientation, complication and resolution parallel our current understanding of group dynamics

and the stages of 'norming', 'storming' and 'reforming' (Heron 2000, Johnson and Johnson 1991); the 'reality' shows which are such popular viewing in the 21st century, are in fact offering the viewing public a narrative of group formation.

Awareness of these overlaps has informed my understanding of story, both as writer and as educator. In 1994 I wrote an article which explored the parallels between story and 'life', using the interpretations suggested above. In that article, I firstly showed how an appreciation of character types can offer an educational and linguistic resource for the teacher and writer:

- they form part of our expectations about story. Thus they shape the way we construct and interpret story. Propp's classification helps us to make these expectations conscious.
- they represent 'types' in our own personal worlds and cultures. Thus, they help us to classify and reflect on our own experience of other human beings
- the categories themselves are non-culture specific, but the way they are realised and interpreted is culture-specific. The classification, therefore, can form a rich resource for comparison and contrast between cultures and contexts.
- they can form the building blocks for creating story, as well as interpreting and appreciating story
- the way we interpret and respond to each character can highlight our values, beliefs, memories and dreams. (Spiro 1994: 163. See Appendix Reading 17).

I then show the overlaps between the critical life moments suggested above and made prominent in therapeutic literature: and plot archetypes that recur in folktale and myth.

Key moments	Propp's archetypal plot types
Major separations	Family member leaves home
Failures	A rule/prohibition is broken
Moments of hurt/fear	Villain harms a family member
Major decisions	Hero plans action against the villain
Major conflicts/struggles	Hero and villain join in combat
Major victories/triumphs	Villain is defeated

Major reunions	Hero returns home
Major defeats/disappointments	False hero usurps the hero's place
Moments of joy	The hero is married and crowned

Table 1: Spheres of action in life and story   Spiro 1994: 166

The article ends with a message to the teacher:

> The discussion in this paper has mapped out a territory that makes story a universal, equally applicable to 'reality' as to 'fiction'. The classifications discussed equally offer ways of describing our own lives, as describing the lives of 'story' characters. As such, we have at our fingertips a rich resource, not only for appreciation of what we read, but also for understanding and describing the way we live.   (Spiro 1994: 167).

See Appendix Reading 18 for the full text of this article.

How I take up this opportunity in my own practice is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. I also illustrate it in the next section, through stories that shaped my world view as a child.

2.5   Your story is mine: the yellowbrick road

In Section 2.1 I posited the view that it is possible to learn both through story, as well as from it: the story itself effects a process of change, - in empathy, understanding, belief. As a child, reading was one of my most dynamic learning environments. I fully embraced the story of others as an expansion of my own, as the reading world and my own became permeable. The section that follows analyses specific examples of this interweaving of story worlds – fictional/actual.

These scenes and characters in particular haunted me:
- Paddington Bear, a foreigner from Peru, left at Paddington Station with a label round his neck (Michael Bond).
- Just William with his socks always round his ankles, collecting money for the war effort (Richmal Crompton)
- Heidi, wearing her whole wardrobe of clothes on her back and walking across the mountains to her new home (Joanna Spyri)

- Chalet School stories, about a school in the Swiss Alps with multilingual children, who spoke a different language each day of the week (Elinor Brent-Dyer).
- The Narnia stories, the moment of walking though a wardrobe into another parallel universe (C.S. Lewis)
- *Five Children and It*, about five children who are befriended by a strange extra-terrestrial magic creature hidden to adults (E. Nesbit).
- *Redcap Runs Away*, a medieval child with soft shoes and a tall red cap, running through the streets of London (Rhoda Power).

The stories, and these scenes in particular, were clear precursors of what life may – or could- hold, and its complexity of darkness and light. I remember sobbing all night when Heidi's grandfather died: a precursor to the death of my own grandfather. I remember discovering the existence of the Holocaust through a children's story called *I am David* (Ann Holm) and shaking all night with terror. I remember being haunted by the death of Helen Burns in *Jane Eyre* and also, through Jane Eyre, understanding that the cosy circles of clean marriages in which my parents mixed, was only one story amongst many.

What was clear, was that story was extending my sense of humanity. It was my research into the act of living, and it connected me with that act. Through story, I joined a far larger family than the one I was born into. Through story, too, I had teachers whose messages were, or became, exactly what I wanted to learn. Amongst these stories, my earliest favourite was *The Wizard of Oz*; the colour picture book was one of the beloved objects of childhood, revisited many times through the text, the pictures, and the film.

The Wizard of Oz   Frank Baum

Dorothy, the tin man and the lion were amongst my early childhood role models.
Dorothy: Dorothy, like so many story heroines, experienced the trauma of separation before her story could start. Very like growing up itself, the cyclone is both dramatic and traumatic, the forces of nature roaring in like a storm and taking over. Dorothy has no choice, and no capacity to resist. But once the storm has done its work, and carried her far from home, the changed and new world is intoxicating, and she hardly

gives the old one another thought. Her capacity for learning accelerates, her sense of time slows down, her capacity for observation is highlighted. The world appears in a series of glorious colours; the Emerald kingdom, the Munchkins and the yellow brick road are all experienced as sequences of rainbow colours. Most important, are the new friends she meets on the way: the lion, the tin man without a heart. Each shed new light on what is possible in the human (animal-as-human) psyche.

The lion: The lion is working hard to be a stereotype lion. He is practising lion-behaviour, but this does not help: first he recognises that behaving stereotypically makes people react to him too in a stereotypical way. They back away, they are afraid, they perceive him as hostile and aggressive. His second realisation, is that the behaviour does not match his true feelings. No amount of roaring gives him courage: and in fact, the more the roaring, the wider the gulf between what he is and what he seems to be.

The tin man: The tin man perceives that others in the world have something he does not have – a heart. Although these others might take for granted this precious possession, or even abuse it, still he sees them as better off than he is. The tin man, most of all, wants to be the same as others. Because he lacks what others have, he does not value or notice any of the qualities he does already have: loyalty, kindness, compassion.

The wizard: The mystery and excitement of the wizard lies in his absence, and in his public media-controlled image. Whilst all the other mysteries of the kingdom of Oz are to be seen, the wizard himself is not to be seen. The complicated journey to reach him, his unavailability, his preoccupation with more important things, increases his desirability. Combined with this, is the publicity machinery that protects and promotes him. It pumps the reader with anticipation and hype. Yet, in my picture book, when Dorothy actually meets the wizard, he is tiny and balding, with much less charisma than the friends she has already found. He is the embodiment of delusion and self-delusion.

Coming home: When Dorothy comes home, it has translated itself from a comforting childhood zone, to somewhere that has become too small and too dull. There is a real danger that the experiences she has had will become invisible here, at least to all those around her. They will become transformed into a secret knowledge, which will separate her from others. The friends she made, for example, challenge everything that is normal in this world. The only way to keep the secret alive, is to use it as a

new framework for interpreting the ordinary world. The lion can help her to see what is behind people's behaviour: and will stop her judging people from appearance only. The tin man can help her to evaluate people by who they are, and not what they own. The wizard can help her to cut through the images people create of themselves, and find the actual person behind.

Thus, through this compassionate encounter with others' stories, core values of right and wrong, empowerment and disempowerment, were formulated. Similarly, narrative principles became translated into life understanding: how events connect through cause and effect, the links between memory and present, between the fictional/metaphorical and the actual.   These formed the grounding for my own appetite to read and write story, and to interpret life as lived story with complex layers of metaphorical and coded meaning.

This chapter has explored how my own reader:writer/educator roles have been shaped by reading, reflecting and connecting with others within a broad 'literature'. It has attempted to do the following:

- Explore the ways in which core beliefs are both formulated through reading and expressed in reading choices and interpretation
- Explore the ways in which story connects with both personal and universal experience
- Explore the ways in which empathy with a text can lead to understanding of writer strategy, linguistic and story components
- Explore the ways in which this detailed analysis can be 'transformed' into actual practice both by the writer and by the educator, thereby allowing reader, writer and 'appreciator' to expand their capacity for finding a voice, and to transform the reading experience into deep learning and new knowledge.

This chapter also lays the foundation for my own study in the following specific ways:

- It explains why, how, and in what ways, the 'I' persona is being used in this thesis; and with what literary and researcher precedents
- It explains my rationale for using 'story' as a framework

- It illustrates the nature of my relationship with 'literature' in the field, as a foundation and grounding for my own voice

In so doing, it also uncovers answers to some of the core questions of this dissertation: ***How is 'transformation' demonstrated in this chapter***?   by revealing the ways in which apparently disparate areas of knowledge and understanding, can inform and 'speak' to one another, to create a new and third 'understanding' that comprises but is more than its parts; specifically – ways in which I might write my own 'autobiography', ways in which I might interpret and connect story with research, psychological understanding and literary understanding; and ways in which I might make sense of that connection for learners.   This is the act of collation and integration of any researcher: but also suggests the potential value for the researcher, in achieving eclecticism as a route towards focus. The chapter also aims to illustrate the many ways of learning from the stories of others and the permeability between understanding self: understanding other.

The next chapter, ***Weaving Stories*** will demonstrate through practice the ways in which reading history forms a ground for creativity and is transformed through it.