

**Section B I as creative writer**

*How does knowledge transformation manifest itself in my practice as a creative educator?*

**Chapter 4****Writing as finding a voice: From Finchley to Lithuania****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*

**Empathy**

*I also empathise with others, by recognising the patterns which they and I are part of historically and socially.*

This chapter continues to explore the connection between lived and created story begun in the previous chapter, and the ways in which writing reveals and engages with core values. Specifically, it describes the evolution of my novel, *Nothing I Touch Stands Still*, from concept to published novel. In the previous chapter, I recorded the ways in which, as a child, I transformed my reading and intellectual world into new and parallel ones, dealing metaphorically rather than actually with the specific community that surrounded me. I also identified my own meanings of the term *creative* as the capacity to transform knowledge (knowledge-as-experience) into something new, unpredictable and unique. This chapter explores my novel-writing process, the struggle to understand the actual life stories/histories of those I grew up with, and to honour this specificity, at the same time as transforming it symbolically into a larger, and ‘universal’ story.

**4.1 Starting places****Phase One: Poland, concrete experience and feeling first**

Strictly, phase one can be assumed to have started in the memories and experiences recounted in Chapter Three of this thesis. But for the purposes of this chapter, I am going to discuss the cycle from the moment that the concept of the novel first came into being.

**June 1995**

In June 1995, my twice yearly working visits to Poland took me to a new place called Vigry, high up by the north eastern border near Beloruss – or what was once Lithuania. I had been walking through the flat bleak fields on the north eastern border, with two colleagues who had each moved to Poland, learnt the language fluently, and dedicated their careers to Polish culture. We were walking in this bleakly remote open landscape when the heavens opened, and a torrential downfall almost blinded us. We beat our way through this shelterless terrain, the ground turning to swamp underfoot, when the scene below took place.

They all three felt it together and moved together in a line towards the place of being saved, and the person there in the threshold, another person with eyes and a nose and a face stood there watching stood still as stone but they knew she was real by the moving of the eyes and the falling of the hair under the scarf and the jumping of the hair in her breath.

As they came nearer, she stayed planted there, without moving. Her eyes and theirs focused, and narrowed. They were all human, she in the threshold newly warm from the fire inside, and they the three of them drowned into transparent ghosts of themselves, washed in and out and in by the storm.

She watched them and took in the story of them, learnt it by heart and learnt what to do. She swivelled round, like a doll on a stick. They saw the strings of her shawl spiking down her neck. She moved faster than they did, by a footstep. As they moved nearer, she moved into the door, opened it, slid behind it, and as they came into its shadow, it closed clack matt against the wall.

(from notes for *Nothing I Touch Stands Still*/diary notes)

I remember being aghast that the woman had offered us no shelter- but had established our humanity before doing so. It was not that I minded being soaked by the storm: we were not really far from home and our situation was not serious. What I felt powerfully, was that, had the situation actually been serious, her rejection would have been the same. It seemed to me a replaying of something that had happened here before. It was not my own plight I could feel in this: I could hear others, almost palpably, in this plain between Poland and Lithuania, for whom ‘not offering shelter’ was a matter of life and death.

**February 1996**

In February 1996, I visited another town in the north eastern corner of Poland, called Suwalki. While I was there, I was able to befriend an ex-patriot teacher of whom I could ask the questions I chose to avoid with the Poles themselves. Were there any Jews in this town? Do you know if there is any record or memorial to them? Yes, there was not merely a memorial, but in fact, it was still possible to visit the whole site of the former Jewish cemetery. My friend led me to this place on an exceptionally bleak slate-grey February day. Our journey took us through the back streets of Suwalki, where chickens ran across the wooden porches of long low houses, and women in black headscarves shooed them away from their doorways. The experience felt powerfully that I had become my own grandmother, and was running through the back streets of my Lithuanian *stedl* to find the small Jewish enclave where I could be safe. When we reached the place which had been the cemetery, what I saw, and later recorded in my notebook, was this:

In the middle of the field was a wall. It was impossible to ignore because the rest was so flat, a snow desert, and so far from anything standing that man had made. It had wandered in from a town, and stayed there.

I took to the field. Every footstep piped down into a tube of snow, and I loped towards the wall, the wall loped towards me, my boots picking up giant moulds of snow with each step.

Nearer to it, the stone sent out a layer of heat. I scraped the frost from the surface, and as it lifted onto my glove, images hove into view under the cobweb of snow. Each piece was covered with tight stone scribblings, Hebrew words, some Russian, names and pictures. There was half a Rachel with her last letters butted in beside an Avram, and an Eva with a wrist cut at the hand, a Jacob with a lion's paw on his head, and a Rebecca with half a holy book.

It was a wall of tombs, broken tombs that had been snapped off like teeth and crisscrossed in together. This had been the cemetery, this field: all that was left a single standing jigsaw puzzle of people and their picture descriptions.

*(from diary notes)*

I knew this scene was haunting in a way I could not resist.

I knew it was the beginning of a long story: mine, my family's, the unknown people carved on the tombs. I knew that this, and the accumulated images of loneliness and rejection, were primal ones that belonged to my ancestry, and that I had a collective responsibility to speak of it. I knew that it was the beginning of a profoundly compelling creative project, the moment described by Seamus Heaney as a "marriage between the geographical country and

the country of the mind.” (Heaney 1980: 131)

## **4.2 Writing as journey**

To take the story further, to honour the specificity of what I had seen and experienced. I knew that I needed to *know* more. There can, after all, be no knowledge transformation without knowledge, and – as Chapter Three showed – to date I had been gloriously uninterested in the stories and history of my Polish family.

### **Phase Two: Story as a voyage of the soul**

The question was: what had gone BEFORE this scene in the Suwalki field, and what led up to it? Before, in that there were people who had lived in this town, who did so no longer, whose community had disappeared, and whose names were recorded on the stones; before, in that these stones had once been brutally broken up and ripped from their burial places; before, in that these stones had been lovingly reassembled, and this story would have been an extraordinary one of resurrection and courage; before, in that there were a complexity of stories in my own life, that had led me to this place in the empty field.

Everything that interested me, happened before this moment and not after; but in order to access it, I needed another journey – and it could not be my own.

A good place to start was with my uncle, Julek Tigner, who had married into our family in 1949. The fact that he had ‘married in’, rather than being of my father or mother’s side, was significant. The maternal story had been so traumatic, that we were sworn to non-intervention, and forbidden to ask or enquire as to its details. The paternal story had been a more urban one, and had involved a retreat from Poland in 1938 to Newcastle. The main thrust of the Spiro survival was business, and the children had been mercifully saved from the bitter experiences that were recorded in the northern Polish landscape: but not so with Uncle Julek. He had escaped from Poland on foot and taken this very route into Lithuania, sheltering for many months in Vilna before continuing eastwards.

During a one year cycle I recorded my uncle telling the story of his life and flight from Cracow in 1939. This process of recording history was curiously full of obstacles. Friends who had shared the escape with him, and who arrived during our recordings to have tea or play bridge, contradicted his memories, or entered into diatribes about the uselessness

of the exercise. *Who wants to know about a life that is so insignificant?*

Some members of the family were jealous: *There's nothing interesting or clever about Julek. Why choose him?* – or the reverse: *He isn't exactly typical. His story is quite unusual, so what does it show about anything?* In other words, this process of oral history-making was, unexpectedly, turning into a collective act which everyone in the community joined in on. My first cousins, Julek's children, had different versions of their own of the same story: so the recording process became a hall of mirrors, with versions of versions of versions, each only vaguely representative of the other.

Then there was the factor of Julek himself. I knew these were the last months when such a memoir would be possible, and I wanted his own words and his own voice reflected in the story. His memory was receding, and it was true, sometimes a scene would repeat but with its edges blurred and its characters distorted. I knew what I captured would be somewhere in a half-light, but surely all history was this?

But when I shared the written transcripts, another species of problem arose. The family objected – indeed were offended- that the transcripts were *not grammatical*. Couldn't I write in grammatical English? What kind of insult was this, that I was writing in a childlike Polish-English half-language? Now the fever of celebrity was upon him, my uncle felt this language was letting the side down. He decided what he needed for his memoir was a *professional*.

This 'empasse' had a painful poignancy. For 60 years most of my family had functioned in a language that was not their own. To me, the interlanguage they operated in was a thing of beauty, redolent with the echoes of their mother tongue – its idioms, its humour, its extraordinary consonant clusters. What I wanted was to record this: but of course, how naive I was not to understand how far this was from their own aspirations. Czeslaw Milosz, the Polish poet, describes the pain of detachment from the mother tongue – even while being ashamed of the uses to which it has been applied in his own lifetime.

*Faithful mother tongue,-----  
You were my native land; I lacked any other.  
I believed that you would also be a messenger  
between me and some good people  
even if they were few, twenty, ten*

or not born, as yet.

-----

without you, who am I?

Only a scholar in a distant country,

a success, without fears and humiliations.. (Milosz in Astley 2002: 336)

While my uncle and his family began phoning ‘professionals’ who could write in decent English, I agreed to sanitise the transcripts, and turn them into the good school prose they wanted.

His story, however, reveals values which had a profound influence on the family: a passion for community, generosity, and a belief in life and its power to regenerate. Julek describes his first night of flight from Cracow:

One Jewish woman who lived in a small flat at the back of a shop, said to us: “There’s no room in the flat, but you can all sleep in the shop on the counter.” So that night, six of us slept on the shop counter. It seemed only a few hours later that she woke us up with hot milk and bread. “You must be on your way. The Germans are just an hour away.” --- When I tried to give her some zloty for the night and the food, she said, “No, no, all I want is that, if you survive and are successful, give it to someone who needs it.” After that, I never refused anyone who needed something from me.

**Julek Tigner’s story, recorded by Spiro, J. in *Etzbah Elohim*: 10**

In 1997, I followed my uncle’s story back to the places he had described: the streets, the family fur shop, synagogue, youth club and cafes where he had grown up, photographed what I saw, and collated photos, my Cracow diary and Julek’s memoir into a booklet for each member of the family. Here is my diary description of the main square in Cracow:

The main square in the Jewish quarter, Plac Nowy, has revisited its past since Spielberg’s film *Schindler’s List* made it acceptable and commercially interesting to do so. There are several kosher cafes with klesmer groups playing regularly, a Jewish bookshop which includes an inventory of all the families who had lived here before the deportations; and the Jozef synagogue which is open to the public. Inside is a museum of Jewish culture, including an ‘anniversary plaque’ from the Tigner synagogue. It is so clearly a place that was meant to be the heart of a community, its prayers, youth clubs, evening walkabouts, festivities, schools and school processions, carnivals and funerals, dating and dining, talking and discoursing, exchanging of books, trade secrets, party invitations and philosophies. But all that is left is a commercial cut-out of what there once was, and the empty spaces where they all once were.

**Cracow diary, April 1997**

The book was called *etzbah elohim: the finger of God* in honour of the determining moment

in the story, the ‘moment of reversal’ which saved Julek’s life. He was visiting his aunt in Lvov and was packed and ready to travel home to Cracow on the next train.

We were all standing in the corridor, saying goodbye. I had my rucksack on and was ready to go, when the doorbell rang. We were all terrified. No-one wanted to open the door. But the ringing just continued. It was a telegram messenger, delivering a telegram for Losia from her brother in Copenhagen. It said: “Leave everything and go immediately to Oszmiana. Find a Mr. XY and he will take you across the border to Lithuania and I will take care of you from there. Don’t delay departure.” Losia read the telegram and said to me, “Julek, you are not going back to Cracow. You are going to Oszmania. I cannot go. I can’t leave Irka and my grandson here and I think I’ll be better off staying in Lvov, but you must go and go tonight.” Had the messenger come one minute later I would already have been on my way to Cracow. This is how God decides and this was the *Etzbah Elohim* which guided me.

**Julek Tigner’s story, recorded by Spiro, J. in *Etzbah Elohim*: 14**

**Please see Audio-Visual Files 2: Poems and Stories**

**Clip 2: Hungarian Poem**

**Clip 3: Polish poem accompanied by photos and music from the journey to Krakow.**

**Text of the poems are in Volume 2 Appendix Readings 4 and 5**

In tandem with the lived story of Julek’s life and my own journeys to Poland, were the narratives of others which nourished my understanding of the world he had lived in, and its connection with the collective experience. These narratives gave me insights into home life - food, libraries, worship (Richmond 1996), daily life in Krakow (Hoffman 1997), personalities and tensions in the *stedtl* (Jacobson 1998), the lives of children able to leave on the *Kindertransport* (Childs and Wharton 1989), the rapid closing in of their lives (Scharf 1989, Sakowska 1995), their songs and prayers (Flammer, Leiser and Barreaux 1985, Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues 1995). When I turned to my own novel, I was ‘living’ within their stories through this knowledge, and their voices were ready to emerge through my narrative.

### **4.3 Writing as finding a voice**

#### **Phase Three The poetic leap of self into story**

I had yet to find a way of finding my own voice within this, that would transform these lived stories into a narrative that I could fully own. Up till now, I had the diary accounts of my experiences in Suwalki and Cracow and the stories of my uncle’s journey. I had the knowledge of detail such as: the home-made vodka which was both purple and powerful; the horse and droschka which took the family out into the

countryside for holidays; the safe houses that sheltered the refugees in the forest; the trains they clung to, the open ditches they hid in, and a great deal of further reading besides that expanded, confirmed, and deepened what I knew of Julek's story. But *I* still needed to make the poetic leap into the narrative, the "metaphorical confrontation" with myself that would turn this cluster of scenes into driven narrative. (Cox and Thielgard 1987: 45). :

The poetic self is willing to put itself on the line and to take risks. These risks are predicated on a simple proposition: this writer's personal experiences are worth sharing with others. Messy texts make the writer a part of the writing project. (Denzin 1997: 225)

The catalyst, or alchemic transformation, came with a what if? question. What if I had happened to be born a generation ago, in the same situation as Julek's sisters, the ones left behind? How would the *I* have felt, behaved and lived, dropped into this very different world? What if I were to compare that hypothetical girl, with this one? From this evolved the idea of a double narrative and a specific time-lapse between them: one girl living in Poland in 1939 in the wake of the Nazi occupation of Poland, and another girl living in 1989 in north London, the year the Berlin wall came down. How would their two lives compare or run parallel? What if both had potentially the same spirit and yet were shaped by such different worlds? - if, in fact, they are blood relations - say, grandmother and grand-daughter. Now, imagine the contemporary girl, as I did, ends her journey by the memorial wall in northern Poland: and the 1939 girl ends her journey as a refugee in north London, each travelling in opposite directions across Europe. What if they somehow 'cross' - spiritually, or meta/physically, on the way?

Here I had everything I needed: as Conrad said in the quotation cited in Chapter 2, "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). The issues, sensibilities, personal mythologies this plot structure offered were huge: belonging and not belonging, separation and loss, Julek's own story of regeneration and starting again (and Kassim the French Soldier from Chapter Three), the different meaning of 'escape' for the 1939 and the 1989 girls, the different options for 'finding themselves' and discovering their personal courage.



With this clear vision of the parallel women, fifty years apart, I set about planning them, being them, hearing them. The 1939 grandmother character adopted composite characteristics of all grandmothers I had known – including my own. Rosa is feisty, brave, clever, strong, and is not prepared to be left behind – as the sisters were in Julek’s story. The 1989 girl has had few opportunities to understand her own strengths, having been sheltered and cosseted by an over-loving family, so her slant on the world is freshly naïve..

To place Laura psychologically and physically in the story, I developed episodes in her childhood which were significant – even quintessential – moments for me too. The Laura stories were great opportunities for creative play. I ‘became’ her, speaking in her voice as she grew from child to adolescent to young woman in the course of the novel. Here is an extract from Laura’s childhood. She has in error joined the Christian prayers at school, not realising that she belongs to the much smaller group that meets in the classroom down the corridor.

I had never seen anything like it. There was a picture of a man in a white nightie with brown hair down to his shoulders and strange brown eyes and there was a lightbulb round his head. He seemed quite nice, but I didn't know anyone like that at all. Polly and Lisa seemed to know him quite well and even knew his name.

Eventually the mistake is realised by the teachers, and she is led away to Jewish prayers down the corridor.

the words in English made me tingle all over and made my ears go red.

*Let these words which I command you this day, be always in your heart, teach them diligently to your children and speak of them in your home*

yes and on your doorposts and foreheads I will do what you say and the words will shower down like great walls of thunder

we are from the desert all of us in the room with the baking sand and men with rolling white beards and sticks

inside us we are all wearing white sheets and veils and wash our clothes in the Dead Sea

inside our plaits and white socks we are ancient which means very very very old because Jessie beget David beget Deborah beget Susannah beget Samson beget Daniel beget Hagar beget Rebecca beget Rachel beget Sarah beget Peter beget Jonathan beget Jacob beget Laura

beget means to have a baby

if you were beget you lived in a tent and wore a veil if you were a girl and collected water in a vase from the well

In the other Sembly room they must have had different sorts of grandmas or maybe fathers who wore nighties.

(Spiro 2002: 17 – 19)

There are more epiphanies for Laura, struggling to understand her identity and place herself in the outside world. Here she describes her first experience of singing with boys in the school choir:

We began the Kyrie Elieson with Miss Doubleday on the piano and the girls came in with papery voices and floated off into little puffs of ash. Then the boys' voices rolled in and I was knocked through the back of my neck into a beanstalk world with giants rolling boulders round the edges of the world. I could feel them thumping behind me with their giant feet, and the benches were purring like cats. The sound through the floor grew trees up through my heels and washed my stomach dark like a plum.

"Now boys, you need to watch the beat, not each other!" Miss Doubleday shouted. I could feel the dinosaurs snorting behind me, and the giants with troll black hair thundering through the mountains like yetis. But when I turned round to have a quick look, I was shocked to see the row of boys still there, some of them spotty and with dandruff on their blazers.

(Spiro 2002: 97) **Please see Appendix 1 Reading 6 for the complete episode, and a broadcast version in Audio-Visual Files 2: Poems and Stories. Clip 1/Choirs of Angels (BBC Radio Devon).**

Meanwhile Rosa, became a symbol for all those who had left their lives behind, by train, boat, on foot. Here is Rosa on her last journey out of Poland, lucky enough to have time to leave by train (as my uncle did), her lover left behind on the station platform. Like Losia in Julek's journey, he has chosen to stay for the sake of family – in this case, his elderly father who would not have survived the journey.

The train was moving in a tunnel of freezing darkness and there seemed never to be landscape, only the laughter of the guards in the corridor drinking vodka and playing cards, the long rattled breathing of the old woman snoring in the corner of the carriage, the chundering of her grown-up sons in their sleep. And Rosa sat upright looking out through the window at her own image, a ghostly negative in the glass. All through the journey, the rattling, the snoring, the chundering, the vodka-drinking, Jacob repeated through her as if they had turned inside out and it was she left behind and him on the train. The landscape crumbled as they passed it, broke off and hurtled out into the blackness so she wanted to stop the trees and barns flash by, shout "Let me keep that," before they passed and crumbled and were lost.

(Spiro 2002: 88)

She also came to symbolise for me all the language learners I had ever known, (including myself living in Hungary and Switzerland), whose flight forced them to

function without their mother tongue. I grew up with empathy for the second culture learner, was fascinated to know how my family and their large circle of resettled compatriots, had come to learn English. None had learnt comfortably, or even tediously, in a school class. One had learnt by reading a dictionary while in hiding between the floorboards of a Warsaw apartment block. My grandmother had learnt by reading everything she could lay hands on in English, whether she understood it or not. My uncle learnt by giving the other boys English lessons, always being three words ahead of his pupils. Chapter 3 described how my father started off with three words of English, “I bicky par” which he was told would take him anywhere: and learnt the rest within a year of arriving in England, by studying and reading so he ruined his sight. There were no kindly teachers to mediate for any of them, no communicative methods to make it palatable: and yet they learnt it anyway, to brilliant effect. Rosa represents, and is in honour, of all of them.

In the afternoons for one hour she sat in the public library and read at the no smoking table. Her favourite was the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. Each day she read ten new words, starting with A. She learnt *Aardvark*, *Aaron's beard* (a name), *abaca* and *abaciscus* on the first day, but even with the dictionary explanation she couldn't really understand them, and there didn't seem to be any opportunities to use them. So the next day she started volume 2 and learnt *marl*, *marlite* (a variety of marl), *marmalade* and *marmoset*. These seemed more useful words, because she knew for a fact that *marmalade* really existed because Mr. Gobelman had a pot with the word written on it. Anyway, with words written in front of her she had hope again, even if she couldn't understand them; and she could talk quietly into books and they quietly back to her. They were the best conversations of the day. (Spiro 2002: 52).

The Laura/Rosa roles, and the engagement with character at a symbolic level, helped me to ‘find myself’ in the narrative and drive it forward with ‘passionate conviction’. Hunt writes: “When a writer says that she has ‘found her voice’ it seems to me she is saying that she has developed a deep connection in her writing between her inner life and the words she places on the page” (Hunt 2000: 16). It is true, that through Rosa and Laura I was able to explore again the sources of my own identity and the ‘collective memory’ of my community. The opportunity to slide between inner and outer voices, child and adult, to become Rosa and Laura, was liberating and empowering. Like Heaney, when he found his voice as a young poet, “I felt that I had let down a shaft into real life”. (Heaney 1980: 41)

**Please see Appendix 1 Reading 6 for further episodes from Nothing I Touch Stands Still**

#### 4.4 Writing as communication

In Section 3.3 I explored the meanings I attach to the term *creative*. Amongst these were:

- an awareness of audience, and the continued tuning of my message for this purpose
- a dedication to the discipline of writing as craft, and to a process of perpetual self-improvement

During the incubation of the novel, I was aware of the continuous need, not only to find my own voice, but to chisel and tune it so that it could best be heard and understood by an audience. My process of ordering/crafting functioned not only at the level of plot and characterisation, but on a sentence-by-sentence level as I might continuously tune a violin. Some of the chapters and extracts were sent for scrutiny to outside readers, and their comments and criticisms then entered the crucible of my own beliefs in the project.

The publication of the novel in 2002 constituted the end of opportunity for further improvement and the beginning of its accountability as a free agent. Here, I awaited the judgement of my audience, as to whether or not I had fulfilled my own claims to be *creative*. Below are a small sample of the many messages I received via the publisher or email, in response to the novel. Amongst the messages are included:

- Friends reappearing from the past who recognised ‘coded’ references from the past embedded in my story
- Friends and family who were expecting direct synergy with shared knowledge about ‘real life’ and did not find it there
- Readers who found surprising parallels with stories of their own
- Readers for whom it triggered ideas for projects of their own

You show lifes true reality with all its mysteries beautifully. Like a cobweb - you hardly see it at all, unless its a rainy day and you pay close attention to it. Once you do find out its all there, you realise there is even more you had no idea of. (Carina)

You've captured so many things, from the psychology of being a member of the minority, to the suffocating feeling one gets of being TOO jewish, the jewish woman, the young girl who wants to throw off her shaCKLES, my God it's just so great. (Karen)

I am full of admiration for how beautifully it is written and the wealth of information you have included. It has also prompted me to get in touch with my family to ask them to write what they can remember of our family history. I think that their memories have been too painful for them to tell us much, but you have reminded me now important it is to have a record, for future generations. (Adrienne)

very moving how you moved (Rosa) back in time so the awareness of tragic and irretrievable loss is deepened very delicately. I made notes on my Easyjet tissue: I am only a Genital but I too have been a slave in Egypt. I have also wanted to escape to MacGillicuddy's Reeks. There is a fresh look at everything as seen through a child's eyes. Or is it? There is also a sense of growing wisdom which is light-hearted and deep-rooted. Many thanks for enchanting me! (Martin)

Some of the characters and stories you tell I can relate to people I know and to real life experiences. The story of Michael and Mary standing outside in the rain reminds me so much of Philip and his non-Jewish girlfriend sheltering in the garage from the rain that I wondered if I had once told you that story. (Molly)

by page 20 or 30 I was completely hooked, couldn't put it down. I was reading it in the bath, on the train, in bed, between clients and meetings, in snatched 3 minutes while I was waiting for the water to heat so I could put the potatoes in etc. I finished it last night and feel quite lost. It must feel very odd to create something so alive and then send it out into the world to get inside other people. I think it is something to be extremely proud of. I hope and trust that you are. and I know it probably sounds corny but I feel quite grateful to have had the luck to have come across it and been able to read it. Thank you. (Laura)

I'm still reading and am at Chapter 6. I read it at night before bed to clear my mind and prepare for Dreamland. I loved your rules on page 39--so very funny to read. Leo is just horrible. (Christian)

It is really quite intense stuff but also very funny in places. Yes, I have tried to match characters with real people but you have mixed them up a bit I think. Another thing, Laura can't be you because you would never kick someone? Also someone has a birthday of 17th August which you have probably forgotten is mine. I wonder if that is significant? (Paul)

#### **4.5 Writing as a reader**

What emerges for me as researcher, reviewing this account of the writing process, are the ways in which knowledge is transformed into connection and empathy; the lived story blends with recounted story, and the connections formed a third, different, and richer narrative.

These narratives of 'others' generated a bridge between I;Thou which was the place where

the creative process took place. Writing was the process of bringing to the surface this third, new narrative, this new ‘landscape of the mind’ created by the textures, patina, diversity of the stories I had entered. In this creative crucible, my own experience in Poland was not privileged above the others of Uncle Julek, Hoffman, Jacobson, Sharf or others; in the alchemic process, all became as one. Chapter Six explores further this process of transforming knowledge into empathy, connection and new story.

I was also aware of being my own ideal reader. This ‘inner reader’ sat inside the writer throughout the process, reacting harshly, scornfully, sympathetically or ecstatically, but never silent. She honed the final version into shape, proofread it for me, and checked that it told a story well.

The novel writing process gave me complete freedom to find and develop the voice I wanted and explore my own landscapes. My audience was ‘ideal’, my ‘reader’ and ‘writer’ selves responded to one another as we went along. In contrast, Chapter Five considers what happens to this narrative voice when audience is NOT self - where there is a distinct ‘other’ reader during the writing process: editors, house styles, word counts and plot restrictions.