

Introductory framing

Humberto Maturana, the Chilean biologist and systems thinker, opened a recent seminar day with these words:

'I am going to weave for you a history of my thinking'. (A day with Humberto Maturana, 6 September 2004, St Anne's College, Oxford)

For the next four hours he held me in an enchanted place, stringing a story of his many thinking years on a few seminal, perception-shifting moments. I was inspired by this great man. He caught my imagination, and he encouraged me to breathe in, to 'inspire'. He started with a story about his mother, as I shall, with mine.

At around the time when I was being bullied at school I remember my mother saying (I cannot remember where or why), "the most important thing in life is to find balance." I have always thought of my mother as embodying a kind of unspoken wisdom, and it is Maturana's history of his thinking that brings my memory of this moment to my mind. This is ironic, for as my mother has got older and developed Parkinson's disease, her physical balance has become cruelly unpredictable. What I have made of her meaning of **balance** will be revealed in these pages.

This doctorate is the product of five years of intensive reflection, conducted while working. This written document combines two areas of inquiry. One, an internal focus, what Marshall (1995, 2001, 2004) refers to as 'self-reflective inquiry' or Whitehead (2004) calls 'self-study', what can be thought of, as Winter *et al.* (1999) do, as living within the reflective practitioner paradigm initiated by Schon (1991). This involves a series of reflections on simple questions such as Who am I? What am I doing? How do I do these things? What do I know?, or a combined global question, 'What is going on here?'. Second, a work focus, a process of collaborative action research with international social change networks, looking at what criteria might be most appropriate for evaluating them and the work we do in and through them. The combined force of these two sets of questions leads me to ask myself, 'Why do I find myself in networks?'

Through a process of writing, asking myself 'what is going on here?' and writing again, I have developed a process of calling myself to account, using the standards of love, compassion, fairness and art as those most important to me to be judged by. These 'living standards' (Whitehead, 2003) are, I believe, a potential contribution to the call for establishing appropriate criteria for judging such self-study, reflective practice accounts. I start from an understanding that it is through unfolding knowing of myself that I become a knowledgeable practitioner (Kusher, 2000), thus confirming Bullough & Pinnegar's (2004) hunch that it is essential to consider the ontological when creating such living standards.

'The consideration of ontology, of one's being in and toward the world, should be a central feature of any discussion of the value of self-study research' (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004 p. 319)

In addition, the form of the text, employing my aesthetic imagination (Winter *et al.*, 1999), is a contribution to finding new forms of presentation (Marshall, 1992) and to fostering

what Winter *et al.* call a much-needed 'aesthetic competence' in order for us to understand more fully how we are living and acting in the world as reflective professionals, regardless of our work.

These two aspects of the work, one internally oriented, the other outwardly oriented, find connection with each other through a core lived experience, **bullying**, and my responses to that experience: **forming networks of connection and relation**.

The complex response I make to my **repeated experience of being bullied** is almost certainly the 'lived experience' (van Manen 1997, 2002) which has held my attention for these five years and on backwards to my childhood. Determined reflection on this experience has led me to a greater depth of understanding of how I am marked by it, how I **embody** it and how I have committed my energy in living in this world to **transform** it. I have also come to know **my own capacity for bullying** and the hard work I must put in to recognise this, hold it, reflect on it and transform it.

The themes that run through as I seek to make sense, and explain significance, have a dual set of properties. They are both internal, leading to the **inner me**, while at the same time being externally-oriented, leading to the **nature of connection with others**. They are **all threaded together**, they weave in and out of one another.

The Fabric of the Research

The immediate experience of being bullied is identified as part of the fabric, the tissue of my being.

It throws up the **embodied** nature of my response, the internal felt experience, while at the same time a sense that my capacity for a subtle **embodied connection** to the other may have played some role in threatening the comfort of that other, such that they felt moved to threaten me.

My examination of this embodied response and connection is one that through the process of inquiry I have come to see as a capacity for **shape-changing**. By this I mean two things: an ability to stretch myself to live in many different worlds of experience, to communicate with government-level policy-makers and poor rural farm labourers, with artists, development workers, evaluators, prisoners, co-researchers; and a subtle unconscious ability to **live with porous boundaries** (Rayner, 1997), of never quite holding a static identity, of being able to connect to others by a strange channel of engagement which I find extremely challenging to explain.

At a more conscious level, I have begun to appreciate that my long-acknowledged resistance to working in organisations, to joining groups or political parties finds its roots in the very nature of that experience. My incessant capacity for **asking 'difficult' questions**, even as a young child, set me apart. My resistance to the norms of group behaviour almost certainly found no favour with those seeking to impose group order in the playground. The attempt to force me to conform generated a form of shape-changing, a kind of survival strategy, and a dogged-ness in **resisting the repressive nature of conformity**, the lazy ease of **community**. I have found myself in a constant struggle to string together **networks** of relations outside standard community formations. My educational and professional trajectory seems perversely difficult on the surface. I started working as an actress when 15, and juggled performing in the theatre and filming

for T.V. with studying and revising for 'O' and 'A' levels, being a part neither of the 'adult' world of the theatre, nor the 'child' world of school. I went to university when I was 29, too old to be a 'normal' student, too young to be 'a respectable aunt' mature student. I took myself alone to El Salvador once I graduated, and decided to live in the most remote, undeveloped and difficult community I could find, one struggling to even think of itself as community. Back in England I worked briefly for an organisation, and found myself **again being bullied** for my strangeness, my reluctance to adhere to unquestioned norms, my determination to **question**.

My capacity for **forming and asking questions** has been transformed during the process of this research, as I have come to understand how my young curiosity became disfigured and distorted. **Questioning others**, and **resisting their questions** in return, became a way of not being seen, of **controlling the dangers of connection**. My capacity for bullying found expression through a kind of interrogational questioning of others. Yet at all times I have been aware that my question-forming is linked to the shape-changing quality. It is as if the question emerges for me from the subtle connections with my environment. It arises (Collingwood, 1939) or makes itself known from the implicate order (Bohm, 1987). This question-making has itself changed shape throughout this inquiry process, as my work has largely become the art of asking the kinds of questions that reveal and open up that which I and others are interested in knowing about. This work arises in **facilitation, evaluation, and inquiry**.

In 1995 I began to work as a group **facilitator** for the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). In 1997 I became the first coordinator of a small network of UK aid agencies working in Colombia, the ABColombia Group. These working experiences are outward expressions of my desire to seek a working environment that would balance **freedom and connection**. I have found myself able to be **simultaneously a participant and an outside eye** in my work as a facilitator. This allows me to be **a part of** a group while retaining my **apartness**. It allows me to be **connected and disconnected** at one and the same time. It is this I mean when I speak of **balance**.

My work as a **network coordinator** places me in a position which allows me to work at the edges of organisations, to know some of the inside of organisational life, yet to construct linkages and networks of relation that cross in and out of organisations and that are the product of **trust, shared values, and negotiated joint action**. This feels like a new way of doing business, and provides enough space and structure for the **individual and the 'community'** to mutually reinforce one another.

In 1996 I participated in a **participatory evaluation** process of AVP. We were determined that our work as volunteers should be judged on criteria that we thought reflected the values of the project, the process it offered, and the hope we were seeking to generate. I knew how much I detested the notion that we only learn lessons by examining mistakes (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001), and resisted the inspection culture tied to aims, objectives, outcomes and goals. I felt in my bones that this **disguised bullying** of professionals was not something I wanted to be part of. I became conscious through my network work that international networks would be exposed to this process, as most of them are grant-funded by donors who expect some form of 'accounting for' procedure. I wanted to see if we could, as network practitioners, come together to **define some criteria of our own**. This work had its own discrete life, informed by a variety of network and development thinkers (Castells, 2000; Karl, 1999; Chambers, 1997; Starkey, 1997), the practice of many network coordinators (Kathleen

Armstrong, Helen Gould, Priyanthi Fernando, Sally Joss), and the pragmatic evaluation mind of Mark Bitel (Partners in Evaluation). It has not only generated a 'product', in the form of a research report for those working with networks (Church *et al.*, 2003), it has also contributed to a burgeoning series of **networks of connection across the world** with those also trying to perceive more deeply what working in networks can bring.

At a more critical level, I have begun, in my practice of being a **freelance evaluator**, to craft a way of holding on to the **diversity of experience and perspective** that a project necessarily embodies (Kushner, 2000). At the same time I continue to ask how we can renew our professional practice by challenging the technologising and administrative frameworks of 'aims, objectives, targets and strategies', and reintroduce values of hope, compassion and even love into the work we do in the world (van Manen, 1997; Kushner, 2000). I have begun to see how I can **ask transforming and illuminating questions** in the service of our **knowledge and inspiration**, leading to a new language for our work (Shaw, 2002).

Throughout I have written. **Writing** is the most **profound reflective process** for me. It is an exercise in thinking, creating, reflecting, emerging, engaging with depth, playing with words, and through this process **I create**, in some senses, **my self** (van Manen, 1997, 2002). It is another form of embodiment, of meeting my self in my words. I write in response to others words, to their art (Gormley, 2000; Bourgeois, 2003), to their ideas and to their created selves. **I write to clear my mind, so that another mind can arise.** This research is in large part generated through the process of writing and rewriting, reading, conversing, writing and rewriting. It is here that I exercise my aesthetic imagination (Winter *et al.*, 1999).

Conversational partners

Over five years I feel I have danced with some deeply influential conversational partners. We have whirled about in my writing world, and each seems to have led on to another, a kind of 'may I have this dance?' hand-off that has opened my mind to ways of thinking, reflecting, tripping over myself, tripping over them, finding rhythm, and a kind of grace. They have helped me to lay this story open to the gaze of the reader without too many of my well-learned tricks of deception and disguise, but with the **aesthetic sense of an artist** who seeks to make available the mystery of lived experience through an act of transformation (van Manen, 1997; Winter *et al.*, 1999).

My investigation of **embodiment** and **subtle connection** has been enriched by repeated reading and questioning and writing sparked by David Bohm's (1987) understanding of 'implicate order' and Antony Gormley's (2000) use of his body in his search for connected experience in art. More recently I have been inspired by ideas formulated by Alan Rayner (1997, 2004) which question the nature of space, object, and **boundaries**, and Maturana & Varela's (1998) ideas about a biology of love. My regular yoga practice, and the writing of Heinz Grill (1996), have helped illuminate how the traces of bullying remain embodied within me, and have helped me to pay attention to my quest for connection and my resistance to it in a mindful, rather than thoughtful, way, through the **breath**.

In my practice as an **evaluator** I have been inspired by the encouragement of Saville Kushner's (2000) writing, as he urges us to read the nature of a project or programme through the eyes and experience of those who are touched by it. At a more philosophical

level, both Kushner and van Manen (1997) provide a sounding board for my critique of the way the military and administrative language of planning has infected our approach to making a difference in the world. In seeking to bring this to attention with those I work with, I am given courage by Patricia Shaw's (2002) practice of 'changing the conversation' in institutional settings, by listening, reflecting and asking questions of those in the thick of work.

In taking on the coordination and leadership of the action research project on International Networks and Evaluation, I found Manuel Castells (1996, 1997, 2000) to be a helpful framing reference point. I sought to broaden our understanding by reading widely across network literature, and relevant development thinkers, most notably Robert Chambers (1997), whose commitment to democracy, decentralisation, dynamism and diversity gave me a grounding sense of values within which our thinking fitted nicely. Since publication of the report, and my continuing work on network evaluation and in exchanging ideas with others in the field, I have benefited from the complexities of Fritjof Capra's (1996, 2003) work to enhance my intellectual understanding.

Woven in and around this has been the committed practice of writing and rewriting, a way of being in the world that has allowed me to see development of ideas over time, and to create, through writing, a text that entices and illuminates, explains and guides. I was inspired early in this process by Eric Booth (1997) and his examination of the artistry available in the everyday, by Winter *et al.*'s (1999) encouragement to explore through fictionalising, by Judi Marshall's (2001) attention to writing as inner process, and by van Manen's (1997, 2002) deep account of the power of writing as research. I keep in mind the poetics that haunt Anne Michaels' novel *Fugitive Pieces*, and her ability to transform the holocaust into true beauty.

Testing out the text has been a penultimate stage in the drive to 'finish' the text. I am privileged to have had energetic and energising conversations about how my sense-making translates into meaning for others, with Eleanor Lohr, Kimmett Edgar, and Sheila Blankfield. These are people who know me well, and have offered their time and considerable thoughtfulness to give me high-quality attention. Conversations with them, as with other writers, are offered as evidence of the **connected nature of my inquiry, and my inquiry into connection.**

Methodology

The way I have approached this research is as a creative, reflexive person, working with an eclectic approach to meaning-making. I proceed from a loosely held understanding that I must keep inquiring and keep noticing, if I am to understand and be able to explain to others. This means a kind of internal-external question-forming, in which I hold the subject matter close, and place it at a distance. This distancing-closeness happens through keeping myself in mind, as well as my inquiry. As such I keep an integrated sense of self-reflective research and collaborative research with others.

I follow the kind of 'improvisatory self-realisation' that Winter (1997) describes, drawing in a body of prior professional knowledge, and personal experience, as I make my way through my inquiry. I notice how my thinking 'is derived from our bodies of knowledge and values, and from the personal and cultural experiences which underlie them.' (Winter *et al.*, 1999, p.110)

Inquiry questions to myself are met with responses from my working environment, and my networks of connection, just as inquiry questions in our networks action research group are met with internal responses from me which illuminate my individual way of knowing. Engagement with the wider world through written text in the form of Working Paper 121 (Church *et al.*, 2003) shows how my influence extends and how such connection influences me. This I explain to you through a series of metaphors – nets, knots, threads, spaghetti, hyphens – which not only have explanatory power, but have a presence throughout the fabric of the research. These metaphors have life in that they not only reveal meaning, but have **emerged** as the way the research has knotted itself together. They are influenced by the webs of life and interconnection written about by Capra (1996), Castells (1996), Rayner (1997, 2004), and Shaw (2002), but have emerged as the research has progressed rather than been a methodology chosen up front.

This equates to the kind of messy human process of knowledge creation so clearly articulated by Senge & Scharmer (2001). I take heart from Marshall's (1995) conviction that researchers indeed *make* knowledge.

The simple questions that are there in the first paragraph, brought together under the 'what is going on here?' question, help me to keep track of my intention to reveal the inner workings of my life and practice, and to explain what I think I have learnt. I have been asking more detailed questions of myself and my colleagues as the work has progressed, such as:

Questions for **me**

- How do I use **questions** in my life and work?
- How do I infuse my work with **love** and **compassion**?
- How does being **a part** and **apart** give me strength?
- How do I stay **individual** in the **community**?
- Why do I **find myself** in **networks**?

Question for **us**

- How can we design criteria for evaluation which value growth and individuals and human complexity, which reveal subtlety and context, and which **inspire** us to greater things?

This is a process of understanding, and a process which always produces further inquiry. It could be likened to the hermeneutic phenomenological stance described by van Manen (1997). His six research activities help in providing a kind of anchoring to my thinking, as I seek to make sense. Not so much a methodological framework, more a network of support, something that allows me to jump.

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole

(pp. 30-31)

This is a story of evolution and definition. The last five years of working in this way, paying attention to recurring themes and ideas, tracing their connections to the life I lead and the work I do, has allowed me to see the evolution of my life. This is not a journey; it is a process of **emerging forms**, of what I call myself and the extent and limits of my work. It is like seeing a shape under water, something solid yet not clearly defined, something that is affected by the turbulence or relative calm of its environment, the angle of the light, where you sit in relation to it, perspective. Every telling of the story brings greater definition, yet where I start in the story changes the angle, the quality of perception, the depth, and the variety of connections that I make. They evolve, the shape changes, yet in each attempt to present a picture, there is greater definition. This does not necessarily make for greater clarity, but it produces more solid form, substance, even if this form is maybe more abstract, less accessible to words.

Writing as sense-making

Such sense-making is challenging to present. Knowing how to hold a story, not the story, together in order to guide the reader, with a strong enough torch, through an **evolving set of connections**, demands that I produce what Denzin (1997) would call a reflexive messy text, which threads my writerly and poetic self through pages that seek to illuminate my work. My research has been about that just as much as about substantive content. Finding a way to engage, and explain, how I come to know the things I talk about, involves allowing not just my intellectual self, but also my artistic, embodied and aesthetic self to emerge through these pages. The invitation to you is to participate in the experience of my sense-making, not just the results. This is crucial, as the results are only there because of the process, and indeed many of the results are process. This seems obvious, otherwise why would be interested in the methodological. Yet it is the most difficult to do justice to, as it is complex, and tends to defy normal 'accounting for' procedures. It is highly individual, and value-driven, and yet it is not static, formalised, or even very well understood by me, even now.

The writing process has itself been central to sense-making throughout these five years, especially the way writing myself in the third person, through anecdotes, tales, stories, and scripts, has allowed me to be simultaneously in and out of my internal inquiry, creating a kind of third eye between myself and my writing my self. Writing in response to others' artistic work, led by tentative threads and hyphens of connection, has led to enriched understanding of my influence and my receptivity to influence.

This text is intended as far as is possible to reflect the aspects I have outlined above, not just in its explanation, but in its aesthetic design. I have spent many hours working at working out how to tell you the reader about my research. The very process of working at this has been part of the research, and through it I have developed an understanding of my ways of being, the way I make sense of my life and my work, and my being-practice-making sense have evolved in the doing of it. I have sought to present my research to you in a way that reflects the evolution of it, as much as what I have come to know. This presentation incorporates creative writing, scholarly engagement with others, research reports, personal reflections, polemic, and responses to artistic endeavour by others, because these are the ways in which I understand myself and the context I am in, and how my learning happens.

Throughout the sections I highlight **in bold the threads of the story** I am telling, with the intention of drawing your attention to the meaning I am making, without needing always to 'explain', and by explaining explode what Marshall (1992), Kushner (2000) and van Manen (2002) in various guises refer to as the mystery, or mood of the research. This mood is complemented by hyphenated links into others' writing, my creative writing, poetry, and images, to create a richer, denser and more aesthetic experience. It is an organic process, one which is fragile, revealing, slow, exciting and very challenging to present. Winter *et al.* get near to a tight description of this process when they talk of:

'the development of understanding by means of an analytical process grounded in an 'aesthetic' shaping of experience; empathy, sensitivity and ironic self-awareness achieved through the imagination and embodied in fictions.' (Winter *et al.*, 1999, pp. 194-5)

Standards of judgement

As a way of living out my questions, I invite you to use the following standards as a reference point for judging the quality of this work.

First standard of judgement: I invite you to judge me on my ability to demonstrate that it is possible to hold the anger and pain generated by repeated bullying both in the tongue of an activist, a professional agitator, a defender of rights, and in the soft arms of an evaluator, net-worker, and facilitator. This means finding **a balance** between righteous anger against unfairness, and loving compassion, without losing the capacity for either.

Second standard of judgement: I invite you to judge me on my efforts to stay connected to individual energy, difference, and uniqueness, while striving to make communities that hold those individuals together lightly. This means **finding balance** between the cohesion of community and the imagination and individuality of the self, without one squashing or corrupting the other.

Third standard of judgement: I invite you to judge me on my ability to reveal and bring to life a whole version of **'who I am, what I do, and why I do it'**, using my full creative powers, through a text will inspire you, the reader, to see the unique and myriad ways individuals forge their lives. This means finding and using inspiration, the in-breath of life and connection to others, to fire my imagination and inspire you in return.

Brief introduction to sections

Firstly, there is what I call the **Back Story**. This is a term often used in **writing a script**, a form I am comfortable with through formative years in the theatre and TV, and which I employ here as a structural device. The Back Story is the stuff that the writer needs to know about character motivation, which then emerges in dramatic, episodic and subtle ways, through images, words, and physical action, through the story that is then told. The reader is supposed to pick this up, in fact there is a rule that you don't provide such exposition in a script, but here it is crucial that you know in order to find your way around.

Next comes some explanation about **the way I am and the way I make sense**, leading us into the complexity of knots, nets and threads and exposing the interwoven, messy, unresolved journey of greater knowing, and not knowing enough. This is my **triangle of**

ontology, methodology and epistemology. It shows you what I know about my capacity for forming questions, and my embodied responses to my contextual field, aspects that are essential for understanding how I act to channel my anger into forging stronger relationships and greater expansiveness.

Next up, I trace the **threads that knot together my work** as an activist, a net-worker and an evaluator. In Episode One, Part One, I recreate the experience of doing the Action Research Project, and show the way in which we worked together, in order to illuminate the meaning of **working together** in networks. It highlights not just the research 'output' but also the messy human business of doing the work. In Part Two, I sit down with Fritjof Capra (1996), and further my understanding of the power networks could and do have to create change. In Part Three I trace the influence the work has had to date, showing its capacity for unpredictable influence. You will see how I have come to understand that if I allow myself to be the subject of others questions, the connection this generates releases a creative energy which can **inspire me and others** further.

In Episode Two I interview myself about my work as an evaluator, evaluating myself and my work against a set of standards that reflect my values. This demands some reflection on what the **recurring question or questions** are for me at the moment, as I reach the end of this piece of sense-making. Central to this is an inquiry into various aspects of **accountability**. As I have come to understand the necessary inevitability, as the old exile in Gurnah's novel *By the Sea* does, of **accounting for myself** to others, I have begun to ask myself and others about to what, or to whom, we want to be held accountable. This has come about as I have gained confidence in my practice as a question-maker, and reached a greater level of understanding about how I interact with and influence the normal practice of conversation around working in and evaluating networks. Central to this concern is a questioning of the language that we use in this conversation about evaluation, and an intention to renew our work around **love**.

Throughout, there are **writing interludes**, in which I am writing about the act of writing, seeking to illuminate how **the act of writing is knowledge in the making**. You will see how the process of writing is both a creative and reflexive act, one which leads to real transformation of my understanding, and my ability to represent that understanding.

Finally, in what I would in an earlier life have called a conclusion, I ask the question, what have I learned, and what use might that be to you?, with the intention of identifying where what I have learned through this process is likely to lead us. This involves a reflection that network ways of organising have the potential to increase our capacity for love.

I hold myself to account through these pages, in relation to my own standards of art, love, justice and compassion. I work through a process of understanding what those embodied values are, and in the process I transform them from values which I live by, ontological values which inform my action and being in the world, into living standards of judgement (Whitehead, 2003; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004). They thus become epistemological standards, in that they can be accessed as criteria against which a way of knowing can be judged.

THE BACK STORY

Madeline Church – A Secret History

Bullying

The persistent damp patch on the ceiling that will not lie quietly under a new thickness of paint, this trace, this stain, repeats on me, evolving, spiralling, carrying me in its tight-jawed grasp.

"One important thought is that 'bullying' is not just a topic in the social world but is part of the structure of my being. As regards 'bullying' I am not just an observer or an analyst, but a victim and perpetrator. Bullying is part of my emotional inheritance, my political destiny, and my spiritual challenge.

Richard Winter SmallStories/Little Tales/Educational Research.

'Fear and self-pity both inhibit our compassion; so the violence of those who have come to see themselves as weak and threatened has an especially merciless character.' (Shaw, 1987, p. 126)

Madeleine...Madeleine et Suzanne...Madeleine et Suzanne sortent du cinema avec trois amies...

Once a week a French class, a language she has been learning since she was seven. Good at it too, she was, in her primary school environment, enjoyable, a new world.

She is now 11 and out of place, fearful and adrift. Madeline, the youngest Madeline in the family, known as 'little Madeline'. Little Madeline in a big new school. Her name like her aunt's and Grannie's, Madelines spelt the English way.

The girl: the one on top, the powerhouse of young excitement, the judo champ, the exciter, the mover, the challenger. She is too much. Far too much. She needs to be shortened, contained. Undone and remade. A girl in full. Too confident. Too out-there. A girl who thinks she can be, can have, can excite and confuse. She's an upside-down force,

pretending yet being, a woman in a girl, a girl in a boy, a stranger in a friend. She's 11 but 30, she's scary. Not how a girl should be.

The boy: He's afraid, toughing out his fear in the playground of the big boys. He's a broken boy, striving to hang on. A lout. A painful reminder that all is not well in this fearful world. He's small. He's skinny. He's a skin-head with big boots. He's a class below.

She's wearing white tights and talking posh in the playground, thinks everyone will love her. They always have. She's bold and brassy. **He's** afraid. **She's** afraid. **They** cannot see so they don't try. **She's** a target. **He's** desperate. Let's see what happens...

What starts it? Something mundane, boringly familiar perhaps. And anyway with someone else, not him. She rejects the friendship of another boy, a boy in full, arrogant, beautiful, another bossy boots.

This boy turns.

This boy looks for help.

This boy uses the broken boy to play his sadistic game.

The broken boy responds.

Let's have some fun...

There's a misty, cold remembrance of what happens. It's a peculiarly effective way of torturing a young mind, a mind still seeking the place of joy.

A young mind whose name is all.

The French class is perfect. Madeleine et son amies Suzanne et Philippe live in the pages of a French text book. Going to cafes, the cinema, school, chatting inconsequentially about the ordinary care-free pursuits of young fictions. They're fun, they play, not too late or too loud. They're happy and friendly, they have mamon et papa, and holidays full of carefully-planned fun. The important words for a life of order are all there. The class read out loud. The class say Madeleine et Suzanne et Philippe allaient a l'ecole or au cinema. They enter and sortient. They jouent.

Dark forces enter the classroom. Madeline starts to falter and pitch. She changes shape, becomes the enemy. The sound of her name strangles

those who say it. Led by the broken boy they look across the room and see the strange little country fire-brand, the bossy little cow from the provinces, the white tights, the oddly intelligent one who won't shut up. They see her – her name is Madeline – and they despise. So they spit. They learn to spit her name, a spitting out of all they detest, all in her name. The name becomes gob, it hits the floor. Madeleine – gob – et Suzanne et Philippe sortient..They play. But now they are poisoned, their easy fantasy corroded with acid spit. They are no longer friends because Madeleine – gob – is a gob-inducer, she inspires hawking. The teacher fails to see the subtlety of the torture. Sees only scabby little kids, doesn't smell the bitter burning. Only she sees the fire in it. The fear she inspires, such a strange fear, a weird delighting fear, a mob-handed fear. Madeline. Such a lovely name, a family name, her aunt, her grannie, they loved their names and loved her. Inferences could be drawn. Magdalen is the root. 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never ...' Oh dear.

Madeline, Madeleine, Madeline, her spells turn to a stutter, her desire to survive surfaces like a wall of fire, desperate gagging desire to get out, run, disappear, hide, be safe. The noise of spitting is carved in her nose, the smell of the words pound into her puzzled brain. The fire carves a rivulet of steel through her mind, blacksmith hot, below ground. Belly feels funny, full of wobbling, wearing, welling fear. The sound of the spit is the sound of disgust, contempt, debasement and delight at the pain of others. Involuntarily she twitches and switches, hears the name, knows the gob will come. The French teacher, himself a towering bully, sees nothing or if he does imagines this to be the way of scabby London boys who'll never learn a word of the beautiful langue. Her tongue swells up with the gaseous feel of a gas mask over her nose. She remembers the tilt of the dentist's chair, the vision of a black rubber mask coming to suffocate her, the smell of gas rubber bloating her nostrils. She feels that gassy-rubber smell now, in her tongue, choking her, swelling. She says her name quietly, moodily, an incantation of recovery, retrieval. Madeleine, Madeleine, it is all she can say, she cannot get her tongue around the 'trois amies' and their trip 'au cinema', she believes she will never again have one amie, never play again, never thrill again to the skipping, running, loose-limbed fun of excitement. Just this, a painful and solitary fear in the gut, damp from the hatred seeping from the skins around her, their look of pity, disgust, fear that they'll be next. Her safety curtain of hair is impossibly fine, so easily lifted by the swirling November winds, her pain so soft to the touch, a wound under gossamer dressing.

Madeline – she walks like a small bundle of jelly, one foot heel to toe to the other, hoping this way she'll never reach there. In her first days she

*ran all the way, her sister competing with who could walk the fastest. Now she's a trudger, she feels like a donkey dragging a plough, hoeing the earth, hoping for rain. Foot one follows foot two, she is counting, she loses count, she starts again. It is a long walk this way, a very long walk and she will miss the rush. **She'll** be late, but safer. Maybe. **He'll** be in, won't he. Usually is, doesn't need to wait for her at the gate, will get plenty of opportunity later, plenty to feed his habit. **He** will humiliate her and gorge himself on her hurrying, desperate willingness to escape, her refusal to be bowed, to bow, to scrape the shit from his eyes. **She** sees his broken face peering out of his broken home and she knows he's chained links of steel forged hard and long. **He** knows, he'll show and he'll show it to her. Humiliation is whole for him.*

***She** sees her route out of isolation – do the same and worse herself. She moulds herself into the image they have of her, a hateful, spiteful, vicious-tongued girl, licking her lips with the pleasure of giving it all back. Suddenly she is funny, awe-inspiring in her misdirected fury. She hears the tantrum in her and is powerless to prevent it. The tongue of gas licks fire.*

When I was 11, we moved to London. I was a new girl in a big London comprehensive come from a primary school just outside Stratford-on-Avon, hopelessly unfashionable and 'too bright for my own good'. A boy whose friendship I rejected decided to teach me a lesson. I underline that because it is a phrase often used by those intending to make others alter their behaviour through intimidation and violence. I certainly learned several 'lessons' during that time, but I don't believe that any one of them was the 'lesson' he wanted me to learn.

For six months I was treated like a pariah by my class. I was subject to the usual repetitive intimidating behaviour of following, tripping, threatening to get me after school....But the one that sticks with me is the way my name, Madeline, disgusted them. Our French books starred Suzanne and Philippe, and their friend, Madeleine. We had to read aloud in classes with Mr Liebrecht, himself a consummate bully. Any child who was forced to read a sentence with the name Madeleine in it would spit on the floor. I remember thinking impotently that it wasn't even spelt the same, mine only has two e-s. It was intensely painful and humiliating. It helped me to develop a keen sense of self-disgust.

Lessons learned

I learned that humiliating others seemed to generate respect

I learned that building walls around myself did nothing to put out the fire inside

I learned to be a different person because that confused them

I learned that most follow the crowd and that some do not, because they instinctively believe it's not fair

I remember very clearly thinking that I had to uproot myself, dig out the last remaining bits of me and dispense with them because they were not only hated by others but they had let me down, they had failed to cope with this new reality, they had left me stranded. I became impenetrable. I

constructed and tested elaborate ways of not being seen. Early attempts were crude - I grew my hair over my face – I then behaved as a mirror to those who were persecuting me and showed them their faces distorted in mine. I gained respect from my persecutors for my mercilessness, especially the way I lashed out at teachers and sought to undermine and destroy them. I started to smoke.

When I was 19, a young actress and doing a prestigious job which I had fought hard to get, a theatre director used me as his 'whipping boy'. He was renowned for picking on one person and deriving pleasure from humiliating them. Everyone else in the company watched, but did nothing. My confidence fell apart, so easily, and my sense of self-disgust returned.

Lessons reinforced I learned that humiliating others seemed to generate respect I learned that building walls around myself did nothing to put out the fire inside I learned that most follow the crowd
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My last experience is of someone trying to bully me at work but not succeeding. I regularly tackled her about the way she treated me, although it had little lasting effect. I had made a conscious decision that I would tolerate some of her behaviour as I knew that she was on her way out. And I was prepared to work for her to get what I wanted. But I was shocked to learn later that everyone else in the organisation thought she was bullying me. And again, no-one did anything about it.

And I vowed that I would never stand around while someone disintegrated under my watchful eye; I would never grant someone the space to publicly humiliate another; I would never respect the culture of 'teaching someone a lesson'.

Madeline Church, 2000

Dyed in the wool - Bullying as fabric

This story, with all its threads, is essential for you to know. As Winter talks about bullying being part of the structure of his being, I use the word 'fabric'. My experiences of bullying, my responses to it, my capacity for it, are all dyed into the fabric of my being. This is not a story of recovery, nor a confession of guilt. This story is essential because of the way it has immanence, almost presence, in all that I do and am. It permeates the fluids, leaves traces on the tissue, and emerges like an erased pencil drawing, a tattoo under the skin. It is where the anger against injustice has not only roots, but definition.

I wrote the above in 2000, one of the earliest pieces of writing for this research that I did. It remains the starting point, whereas all other pieces have become less or more meaningful depending on my perspective. It is the starting point because it offers the first intimations of the elements present in this story of my research.

Let me weave the story for you again, in a way that brings to the foreground those elements.

Looking at this writing again and again, the half-glimpsed form of where my research will lead me is indeed there under the water.

In the first half, there is my **name, Madeline**, and its **links** to family, to **other languages**. This hints at my determination to maintain identity, at the same time as testing that identity out in connection with others through other forms of communication. My **embodied reaction** to the experience, the way my sense of self under attack is physically experienced, is a place I return to again and again in my efforts to understand and explain my embodied knowing. My ability to see myself as I was seen, as a bold, annoying, external force suggests the capacity I have for standing inside and outside. My choice to **change my shape**, become what I was being described as, take on another form, threads into my work as an actress, as a lobbyist, and as an evaluator. The anger and fear, the mute sense of injustice, and the urgent sense of connections breaking hooks into my activism and my **determination to create sustaining networks**.

The second half carries some clarity about what these experiences have meant and have led to. A determination **to stand up for fairness**, and a commitment **to stand alongside others**. There is an underlying **questioning**; a wanting to know why, which I know has been there all my life. There is too a resistance to the reinforcement of learning through the abuse of power, a deep knowledge that this is corrupting, and counter-productive. This brings form to my work in evaluation and the search for **learning through inspiration**.

The quotes, added last, tell you something about what has become my research agenda: repeating experiences, evolving definition, something always there, **immanent**. My own capacity for bullying behaviour, and a **route to compassion**, walking through self-pity and fear. The quote I use from Shaw, for instance, is one I wrote in my diary ten years ago and have found again. It is even more profound now. It's more than a point of reference. Not a grid reference because meeting it again doesn't take me back to the same place. A star maybe that changes its location in the sky. It is a **warning to myself** to note my own responses and seek to transform them.

. - madeline

Madeline - April 11 2002

Sometimes these days you frighten me a little;
The swift opinion and the tiger roar
Concealing who knows what involvement
With love and blood and death and maybe more.
- "who knows what"? - Not me, for sure.

But when I see the daftness of the dancing hare
Leaping and boxing under the April sky
With lolloping ears and slim-booted feet
Pounding the pavements to a salsa beat
I know that all is well in your bright care.

The big cat's coat gives bulk to the lightsome bone.
Roar on, Tiger!
And keep dancing, Hare!
Forty years is nowhere near enough
For someone on your mission with your flair.

Written by Madeline Blakeney, my aunt
For my fortieth birthday

Madeline

Hand and eyes and jaw and heart
Gesticulating realities, really gesticulating in multi lingual lines
Concentrated concentrating to mediate conversation
Bridled jaw and saddle set, she rides the pampas bare back.
Yet bit and bridle, do they fit?
Shit, what would I do if I quit?
Eat strawberries and drink champagne upon a grassy counterpane.

With love, Lucyann O'Mahoney (written 11/6/99)

■ .

I am **fired by anger, and a commitment to fairness**. This determination has found expression in almost everything that I do. My commitment to fairness did not start here however, with this bullying. This is not a story of revelations, or of personality transplant. This is what I mean about bullying and my experiences of it providing definition, shape. I recall an event in my early school life, probably aged 9. I had a fight at school with a girl called Wendy. I know it is an important memory because I am not usually good at retaining names. I can even still see her face, and remember feeling sort of absurd wrestling with her in the playground. I don't remember what the fight was about. I do remember that we were punished in very different ways. I was a bright, popular and middle-class girl, normally well-behaved if precocious and big-headed. Wendy was working class and not very good at handing in her homework, getting things right in class, and she definitely got into more trouble. I was reprimanded, and she was banned from going swimming for the next week. No-one tried to resolve what the fight was about. And my memory of this is that I complained because the punishments weren't fair.

Looking back now I was probably pretty priggish about it and I am sure some of my motivation was even then driven by a feeling of superiority, a snobbishness based on my class. And there was certainly a bit of me that wanted to be more severely punished to show what a rebel I could be. If I am honest I still have to check myself for my motives with regard to the work I do now, to be sure that I am not motivated by an out-dated do-gooding, helping-those-who-can't-help-themselves sort of mentality. The repeated cycle of bullying in my life has been a reminder that it is for me that I do these things, just as much as for others.

I joined the Anti-Nazi League young, and rocked against racism through my teens. I did benefits and collected money for the miners in 1984. I joined the Central America Human Rights Committees and made trips to Guatemala and El Salvador. I remember saying to my lecturer in a university class that I would not be party to her humiliation of a fellow student, and recall the look of astonishment on the faces of my peers. I told the Colombian Presidential Advisor for Displaced Persons that I did not think it acceptable for him to shout at his secretary as he accused her of screwing up our appointment, especially as I knew it was he who had done so. I made a commitment to read at least a book a year about the holocaust, be it the precision autobiographical work of Primo Levi or the beauty of Anne Michaels' literary poetics, lest I forget. I wrote my Masters dissertation on violence against women in Guatemala. What this means is that I have spent my life reflecting on this, it is ingrained, deep, powerful. It is also the most obvious thread in the knot. **Person bullied resolves to fight injustice.**

Questioning

When I started this research, I wrote in bold letters ***I loathe being asked questions about myself.*** I also wrote this line: ***I am a sophisticated questioner.*** In asking myself questions about what had happened to me, what meaning to make of it, I started to inquire into my self as a question-former, or rather one who responds in conscious and also embodied ways to her environment by asking questions. I have come close to understanding that my inquiry-filled response to my environment, my nosey curiosity, was probably something feared by those who bullied me. Also that being bullied led me to **resist being seen**, inspected too closely, and I began resisting others' questions about me by using questions of them as a defence. One outcome of this is that **my own**

capacity for bullying others finds easy expression in interrogation or berating, and that I have to work hard to see that my anger does not corrupt my intention to connect with others, through questioning activity. And **I have also come to see** that my commitment to asking the important questions is a way of refusing to accept the dominant accepted reality, resisting easy explanations that can make us lazy, hazy, docile and complicit.

'A person who possesses the 'art' of questioning is a person who is able to prevent the suppression of questions by the dominant opinion' (Gadamer, 1975, p. 330)

So, this is also a story of refusing to be rejected or disconnected, of a dogged determination to be a force for good through the power of human connectivity, despite my fear of exposure.

Shapechanging

Despite my best intentions to frighten and expose and be angry, there is a growing appreciation through this process of a certain ability I have to **embody** the other, in ways I don't fully understand. This embodiment is easy to talk about when I enclose it in the world of 'acting', yet it has power and presence when I am not acting, and seems to be as important in my practice as anything I can explain more wordily. I have come to understand this more and more through five years of conversation with my partner in PhD effort, Eleanor Lohr (Draft Ph D Submission, Love in Organisations), whose understanding of her own embodied sense-making has led me to begin to articulate how my openness to the core of another is a vital part of my ability to know what the important questions are. The intention I have is that you get to understand what I mean by this in through my aesthetic responses to the art and writing of others and through the art of my own **writing**.

These are the first **threads: bullying, activism, questioning, shape-changing**. You begin, I hope, to have a grip on the importance of my **values** of fairness and solidarity. They tell you much about why I do what I do.

'In my explanations for my educative influence my values constitute the reasons for why I do things. I think of my values as embodied in what I do.' (Whitehead & DeLong, 2003, p. 195)

These threads hint at my **inquiring** and angry **responses**, they give you a taste of **embodied connection** with my environment, and my search for **creative transformation**.

My intention here is that you the reader now have hold of the string. As I write I am keeping in mind my standards of judgement. My hope is that you are beginning to discern how I work to stay connected and distanced enough to work, and how **my values operate in everything I do**. I would like you to get a vision of me, as an embodied, fleshly, alive person, acting in the world and not just on this page. I am seeking to transform my world through writing and into writing that explores the edge between the lived and the relived for others.

Next there is attempted explanation about the way I am and the way I make sense, leading us into the complexity of knots, nets, threads and exposing the interwoven, messy, unresolved journey of greater knowing, and not knowing enough. It shows you what I know about my capacity for forming questions, and my embodied responses to my

contextual field, aspects that are essential for understanding how I act to channel my anger into forging stronger relationships, and greater expansiveness.

But first...

Writing interlude one

'I know what I know through the process of writing. It is in the writing down that the revelation happens. I don't write down what I know, I begin to know something as a consequence of writing. **It is in writing that clarity comes. I write myself into knowledge.**'

(Madeline Church, middle of the night, full moon, 26 August 2004)

The middle of the night is often a time when I wake with a thought whittling away at sleep, and I must get up and write it down. Writing it down is the only way it can be held. It is then available for me to work with.

In seeking a way to talk meaningfully about methodology, epistemology and ontology in this research, I keep coming back to writing.

Writing – creating a body of work

'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, p. 225)

Writing has been going on from the gun. All this writing you see here has been refined, reworked, rethought. All of it. I have been ruthless in throwing out or rewriting the bits I like best, starting again, threading it all together in a different way. It is not possible simply to edit things together, the sense changes as you start again. The knowledge and understanding emerges as I begin with an idea for the fifteenth time. Anything that is resisting being brought together needs to be left apart. Start again. Reorder.

Writing is where the methodological, the writing act, meets the epistemological. It is both how I come to know what I know, and it is a knowing act in and of itself. I begin to know more by meeting myself and my words on a page, of transforming what I sense into a language set which only exists in the written, and is qualitatively different from the spoken. I am constantly becoming myself as I write; my knowledge creates me as I create it. Thus the 'who I am', the ontological, becomes transformed in the act of knowing and coming to know that is the writing process.

'The writer produces text, and he or she produces more than text. The writer produces himself or herself. As Satre might say: the writer is the product of his own product. Writing is a kind of self-making or forming. To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as come to a sense of one's own depth.' (van Manen, 1997, pp. 126-7)

Writing is a core way through which I make sense, and make myself known to myself. I carry a notebook at all times, and they are full of reflective short paragraphs full of questions. I do not write a journal, I have never been able to bear the unformed burbling of my attempts. But I carry a notebook or two, and they are chaotically used. I tend to write as it comes, a process I recognise in Goldberg's book about writing, *Writing Down the Bones* (1986). My work notebooks are full of odd sights I see, or thoughts I need to record. Other notebooks have bits of creative writing I suddenly get moved to, slotted in

around meeting notes, or things I have to do for some job or other. I never date anything, and I often don't have the same notebook with me when I am following on a pattern of reflection. I made the decision a while back that this is just the way I work, however hard I try to shift this pattern it never seems to shift.

What I have come to know is that this piecemeal record is the way I make sense, the way I gather in all the bits of context and relationships and communication that is in some way related to what I am processing. I will ask myself and others questions that are running around my brain. I have a tendency to put things 'out there' and see what comes back. I may not reveal my self in this process, but I will ask questions that seem to 'arise' (Collingwood, 1939) and, like Marshall (1995, 2001), my writings and note taking and noticing will tend to coalesce around this or that question. In that sense ideas and puzzles come to the surface, and sort of bubble out. I seem to be good at forming questions around them, which I plant in the world outside my physical frame. Then I nudge them around, they shift and shape-change as partial responses are formed from others. In this way, I gather in, and let out, a kind of breathing exercise I think. It certainly feels similar to this description by Rayner of connection to an outer, collective self:

'Inspiration from the outer, collective aspect of our complex self enables our inner space, individual aspect to grow and thrive. Expiration to our outer aspect brings scope for renewal and transformation.' (Rayner, 2004)

And then at a certain moment I gain some certainty. This for instance is the way decisions get made in my life. An attempt to make a decision actively about something important is often fruitless. My normal way is to plant the question that the decision is a response to (Collingwood again) and as the question gets modified through the responses, the decision comes nearer to being brought into form and being. Very often, what is then 'decided' is the only way to go. There is no other way. The act of writing, often with a pen on paper, is a medium through which this sense-making happens for me.

Being a part and apart

These words, 'being a part and apart' first appear in the one diary I ever kept. I was living in El Salvador, in a tin shack in a rural community, at the extreme edge of my intention to 'be alongside' others. These were people dispossessed by war, brutalised by years of fighting.

These words have carried me along with them, and have constantly reappeared as I have written my way through this research. How can I be apart and a part simultaneously?

'Writing constantly seeks to make external what somehow is internal. We come to know what we know in this dialectic process of constructing a text (a body of knowledge) and thus learning about what we are capable of saying (our knowing body). It is the dialectic of inside and outside, of embodiment and dis embodiment, or separation and reconciliation.' (van Manen, 1997, p. 127)

This dialectic of inside and outside, which I experience most profoundly through writing, is not just about a notion of inside and outside my body and being. It is about my being

both inside, a part of, and outside, apart from the world around me. This separate connectedness is in some sense at the centre of the research. It is also the way of doing the research, through what Winter *et al.* describe as ‘artistic structuring of experience’.

‘An artistic structuring of experience is an attempt by an individual to create meaning by picking a way through the various ideological structures which always threaten to predetermine the meaning of our lives. It expresses, at the same time, commitment and detachment, freedom and constraint.’ (Winter, et al., 1999, p. 205)

Being simultaneously in and out, a part and apart, is where my sense of being, my ontology, cannot be separated from either the methodology of doing (writing, conversing, writing) or the understanding of what I know.

Writing has thus been the way of doing this research. Reflection becomes meaningful and hopefully intelligible in the act of text construction. The writing was the start, and through the writing the form has come into focus, has been gradually revealed in the written, and in my relationship to the written words.

‘As we stare at the paper, and stare at what we have written, our objectified thinking now stares back at us. Thus our writing creates the reflective, cognitive stance that generally characterises the theoretic attitude in the social sciences.’ (van Manen, 1997, p. 125)

This staring at the paper also shows me that I am more than I thought, and different from what I thought I am. I often find myself hard to find in my own words. I wonder ‘who wrote this?’ I am frequently amazed. Here I am somehow embodied, and yet not recognisable. Something meaningful has happened as my thoughts are crafted into words. And it is often when my theorising happens.

It is as if I only begin to discern what I know when I make it text. This creation of a ‘body of knowledge’ allows me to distance myself, and in that distancing process come nearer to the essence.

Writing as transformation - Writing myself in by writing myself out

The body of the Bullying story

Writing is creative. Through writing I not only make myself more than I was, but what I know becomes communicable to others, knowledge that can transcend just myself. Let me try and show you how the act of writing, the act of creative writing, reveals new depths, and simultaneously creates knowledge of myself, in a way which has transformed this research. The piece about bullying is a good example. It demonstrates rather clearly what I mean by the **creative act of writing leading to transformation**.

I have always written stories out of my experiences; it is a way of thinking my self out of the inner. As Winter *et al.* state so succinctly, ‘we don’t store experience (as though it were ‘information’ or ‘data’); we story it. Creating stories is, simply, one of the modes in which we comprehend our lives.’ (1999, p. 210) It is also a way of creating a different experience, a transformative act.

I wrote the ‘story’ early in this research process. I had written about and spoken about that experience many hundreds of times between age 11 and 39. Those retellings had never shifted anything.

This time, I stepped outside of myself in it, and by doing so transformed my relation to it. The choice to write in the third person, and in the present tense, has a curious effect being very present and very personal, in a way that writing in the first person somehow doesn't. I wanted the reader to receive the visceral impact of this experience, and in so doing it had somehow to be not me, not I, but a third person, who was at the same time Madeline. For me, the writer, the placing of Madeline out there in a peculiar way creates a new 'I'. It feels like standing inside by standing outside, and somehow enables a reader to stand inside by me standing outside.

The first person writing, the second half, is less affecting, more explanatory, and is an attempt to communicate to the outside by standing inside. It is intentionally designed to provide context and reflection, and show something of how my experience and my values have shaped the choices I have made not just about the work I choose to do, but about the way I do that work.

And lastly, the use of quotes gives the piece uncontained boundaries, as if to anchor it in to a world beyond. This represents an urge to connect with others' ideas, show you how I am influenced, in subtle ways, by linking out to the way others speak, and how what they say illuminates what I say.

These are the beginnings of what I see now as the very body of this research, its early definition. This telling of the story of bullying in my life shows the traces of an emerging form. This moves between first person, third person, third person as first person, first person connected to third persons' writing, and I begin myself to find that the hard edged definitions of 'I', 'you', and 'we' fail me when I am trying to explain how I operate in an interconnected world.

The day I wrote the piece, and shared it with my supervision group, and a member of the group shared it with a work colleague, who then shared a piece she had written about her experiences with me, on this day my experience no longer had the power to make me grieve. I had written about this experience in confessional autobiographical mode before, I had told many people about this before. But I had never told it in this way, never attempted to bring the reader into a creative relationship with it before, by standing outside myself. Since that day I have noticed that **the process of writing is a creative and reflective act** for me. It was a powerful moment of transformation, writing as transformation.

Winter *et al.* discuss the links between the writing of fiction and professional reflection in ways that resonate with what I am seeking to do here. They see the two activities as having been artificially separated, with professional work increasingly distanced from the potential of the human imagination. Imagination, in their terms, combines 'mental agility and resourcefulness' with 'the creative faculty which shapes the raw material of experience into *artistic* form' (1999, p. 1, original emphasis).

Such imagination is crucial for the richness of 'the reflective paradigm', by which they means those ideas posited by Schon, amongst others. This paradigm

'emphasises the creativity of human subjectivity: experience is not simple a succession of 'actions' or 'behaviours' which can be directly observed, but a complex process including unconscious residues from long-forgotten events. 'Understanding' therefore requires

more than observation; it requires us to engage in a process of introspection leading to self-clarification.' (Winter et al., 1999, p. 186)

In their terms, I might be seen as attempting 'to remove the traditional cultural barrier between the activity of writing fiction and the activity of professional reflection.' (p. 182)

Through this process I am seeking to get nearer to the world of my experience, and to the world in which my experience happens. In van Manen's phenomenological terms, this is akin to 'intentionality' or an inseparable connectedness to the inquiry (1997, p. 31). He recognises that inquiry 'is always the project of someone: a real person, who..sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence,' (*ibid.*). It is my experience that writing is the central way I make sense of experience. This is how I 'turn to the nature of lived experience', and bring to it the fullness of attention that van Manen describes. It allows me to bring it into sight, and bring it to speech, 'questioningly letting that which is being talked about be seen' (*ibid.* p. 33). It allows me to create knowledge through a distanced yet connected position to the inquiry question. This means not just standing 'in the fullness of life, in the midst of the world of living relations and shared situations,' (*ibid.* p. 32) but in paying careful, thoughtful attention to what it is like.

'From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. As since to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching-questioning-theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to become the world.' (van Manen, 1997, p. 5)

WAYS OF BEING AND KNOWING: THE ONTOLOGICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL, METHODOLOGICAL TRIANGLE

Ways of knowing - finding the images

This section moves into a more detailed explanation about the way I inquire and the way I make sense. This means engaging your attention and understanding about what I experience as an interwoven, messy, unresolved journey of greater knowing, and not knowing enough. For this to be possible, I have to reach out for **images** and pictures, **knots, nets, threads, spaghetti, hyphens** and **hyperlinks**, and illustrate my sense-making by showing it in my responses to **the artistic endeavour of others**.

It shows you what I know about my capacity for **forming questions**, which is intricately bound up with my **embodied responses** to my surroundings. These aspects are essential for understanding how I act to channel my anger into forging stronger relationships, and greater expansiveness.

Lastly, the **writing** of the knowing is again a process of knowledge creation. I repeat, I don't write down what I know, I begin to know something as a consequence of writing. As I work my way through this presentation of my knowledge, as I write and rewrite, edit and add, I am **processing, reflecting, surfacing and examining what I think I know**.

While not explicitly following the hermeneutic phenomenological six activities of van Manen's referred to in the Introduction, I have sought to hold as a reference point the qualities he refers to in this quotation:

'its method requires an ability to be reflective, insightful, sensitive to language and constantly open to experience.' (van Manen, 1997, p. xi)

This demands that I reflect on essential themes, and continue to inquire into what makes this thing this and not that, revealing the obscurity, what van Manen repeatedly calls the 'ineffableness' of a thing (pp. 31-33). It feels to me about bringing together the whole and the part, of seeking essences but not reducing to essences. It means a determined relation to the thing. It is dogged, a refusal to settle for niceties or to skim. It is a commitment to penetrate, and to be penetrated by the inquiry.

k/Not knowing

Five years on and I am still sitting at my computer seeking a way to present my research. Reading more, writing again, reading, writing, looking out of the window at the garden. I hold my head in my hands, again, tired of the struggle, again. I grab a pen, one of those that irritatingly blobs ink when you stop and think, and these words appear on a piece of scrap paper.

k/not knowing is the answer. I am not striving to unknot the knot of not knowing,

I am striving to appreciate just how knotted the knowing may be.
Unknotting will not unknot the knot of not knowing.
Maybe tying myself in knots is the only way to know.

I look at it; write it in an email to Jack, my supervisor and to Eleanor, my peer Phd-er.

I go downstairs, make a cup of coffee, have a smoke.

As I sit, and contemplate the words, what originally looks to me like the most annoying kind of pretentious word-play becomes momentarily full of light. I have been working with the image of threads, knots and nets for two years now. It weaves its way through the Action Research Project on international networks and evaluation (see Episode One), and has literally held me together in my wrestling match with the form of this doctorate. I have been seeking a way to ensure that this image and ones like it, breathe life into a linear form, and hold the research together in a way that reflects the networked way I live, think, work and make sense. This is important not just for substance, or content, the 'what' of the research. It is essential for the writing and reading of it. van Manen puts it more simply:

'by "organizing one's writing" we do not merely concern ourselves with the problem of superficially ordering or rearranging the text. Rather we search for a sense of organizational form and organic wholeness of the text consistent with the methodological emphasis of the research approach.' (van Manen, 1997, p. 168)

I would again add that is about integrating my being in this world (ontology), my knowing in this world (epistemology), with my doing in this world (methodology).

k/not knowing is certainly one response to the on-going questions about what I know and how I come to know. It speaks to my epistemology of practice, my way of being in the world, and my methodology in both research and work. It combines the driving force of 'not knowing' - something which urges me on to ask questions, to inquire further, to research - with the imagery of 'knot-knowing' - of respecting and working with the complexity of knots, threads, and nets. It also indicates the kind of process I go through with any piece of work - tying myself in knots, as I wind my way round the complex structure of something I am trying to understand, working with it without unravelling it.

Not knowing

Reason and Bradbury (2001b) write a lot about knowing, and different forms of knowing, as do many others who write about doing research. Not knowing doesn't get much of a mention in general.

Yet not knowing keeps me going, keeps me inquiring, and keeps me alive. If there is one thread that has kept me going throughout this five year period of doing a doctorate, it is the underlying sense that I do not know. I started this research degree without knowing what I wanted to inquire into. Every time I have come to a state of knowing something, my not knowing some other thing has kept me moving forward. This is what it is like to be in a state of ever-shifting curiosity.

In almost the first thing I wrote for this research, I was asking myself about **questions**. Questioning seemed to me then, and continues to seem to me now, the primary way I

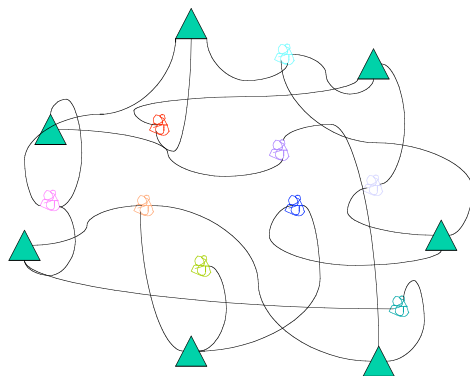
operate in the world. I question almost everything. I am often the infuriating person in any gathering who will question the question. This urge to unfold what is underneath (Bohm, 1987) to bring into the light the implicate, is as natural to me as my breath, in many ways easier. The act of **breathing in and breathing out, of making connection and releasing connection**, is for me a process of inquiring, revealing, internalising, and externalising. With every act of inquiry I find a new inquiry, something more to know, something endless. Knowing is never complete. Humberto Maturana (A day with Humberto Maturana) says that knowledge is the enemy of reflection, that when we have knowledge, we cease to inquire, cease to ask questions of what we know. While this makes me feel slightly better, the truth is that the process of coming to an end with this piece of research is almost painful. I do not know how to end. I thought my problem was that I didn't know how to present what I know. What presentational form to mould my knowing into, so that you, the reader, could make sense of what I know, and as such decide if my knowing would help your knowing. At the moment I think that really what I am resisting is the idea of claiming to know, at least something finite and finished.

This questioning and inquiring process is rigorous, it is tiring. It is always incomplete. And it is also organic; it grows in ways that cannot be foreseen.

Questions, however, the outward and inward ????, are the seen and heard aspects of how I am in the world. 'You always home in on the difficult questions,' is a way I am described by fellow professionals in whatever I am doing. I work in jobs which have questions as their underlying methodology – evaluation, mediation. I examine and question my motives, values, and interaction, to an extent that keeps me awake and that I find intolerable at times. **I am capable of extremes of interrogation**, as well as the easy joys of wooing, and my not-knowing is not always served by my questioning. Like bullying, questions are knotted into the fabric of me, and they are linked in complex ways.

Knot knowing

During the research process that culminated in Working Paper 121 and the process described in Episode One, in the third year of my doctorate, the shift in conceptual understanding happened when I met **knots**. We had been working with images of networks taken largely from computer language, of nodes linked together by connecting threads. When I began to see that individuals or institutions were only linked by the connecting threads if those threads made meaning along the way, and that meaning comes through what ties us together, the activities we undertake together, and the relationships required to do those things together, only then did I begin to see the importance of knots.



And I only now am beginning to see how they help to describe my methodology, the way in which I have sought to know what I present to you here. The way in which I have come to present it in this way, the way I have got from there to here, is in itself an example of this way of searching, and researching.

Threads and hyphens, spaghetti, knots and nets

My research is often a process of following threads, while holding some loose inquiry in mind. This wanting to know more generates huge complexity, especially when I am seeking to communicate it to others. I often end up with complicated knots that are very difficult to 'show' to others. My experience of trying to write about these knots is that if I try to unknot them and talk about them they begin to lose their meaning. Somehow, my challenge with this work is **to allow these knots to hold a web of meaning together**, a net that both catches meaning and holds meaning, sustains meaning, without it all unravelling and dropping us both on the floor. It is also true that the net goes on growing, despite the fact that I am trying to put an end to it here, in this paper.

When I first read this quote, during the Action Research Project, it was as if someone had whispered a truth into my ear. It remains one of the few images that make sense to me of how I make sense of the world.

*'The Atom is the past. The symbol of science for the next century is the **dynamical Net**. ...Whereas the Atom represents clean simplicity, the Net channels the **messy** power of **complexity**..The only organization capable of nonprejudiced growth or unguided learning is a network. All other topologies limit what can happen. A network **swarm** is all edges and therefore **open ended** any way you come at it. Indeed the network is the least structured organization that can be said to have any structure at all. ..In fact a **plurality** of truly **divergent** components can only remain coherent in a network. No other arrangement – chain, pyramid, tree, circle, hub – can contain true **diversity** working as a **whole**.'* (Kevin Kelly, cited in footnote, Castells, 1996 p. 61. Emphasis added)

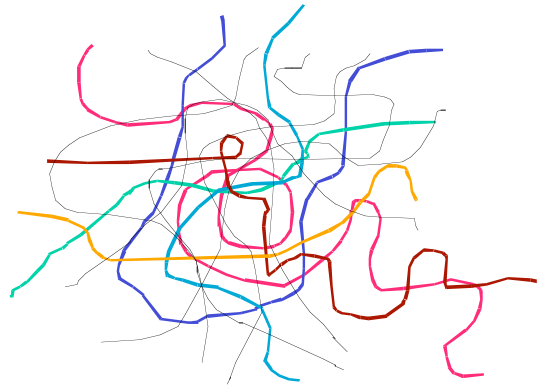
The words that leap out at me are dynamical, messy, complexity, swarm, open-ended, plurality, divergent, diversity, whole. Such words could imply lack of organisation, incoherence, a swampy mess. Yet put like this, I feel as if I have found a way to explain how it is that I put things together, and how I might explain them to others, without them falling off the page in chaos.

Each part I talk about here, in this paper, is threaded together with every other part. They knot together, make meaning together, and hold the whole, while continuing to thread and make more meaning.

Interestingly, when van Manen writes about pulling together a piece of phenomenological research into themes, he also uses the metaphor of knots:

'Metaphorically speaking [themes] are more like knots in the web of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun and thus lived through as meaningful wholes..... Rather than objects or generalisations they are 'fasteners' or 'foci' or threads around which the phenomenological description is facilitated.' (1997, pp. 90-91)

Spaghetti



Another way into this sense-making is through the metaphor of spaghetti. It is a different but sufficiently similar visual image to that of the net. Just as the net image emerged out of my asking questions of my practice, inquiring into my practice and that of others working together in networks, so this image emerged out of inquiring into my practice in Colombia.

A plate of spaghetti has many qualities. There is any number of strands of spaghetti, each separate, but intertwined. You can follow any strand from one end to the other, and en route you find it intertwined with a number of others. If you tug on one strand, everything moves and slides, together at first and then separately. However, once you remove a strand, the whole significantly alters.

I have used this image for most of the time I have been working in the highly contested arena of analysing and interpreting what happens in Colombia and what should be done, politically, in policy and practical terms, to improve things. Such contests are real, and often lead to violent death. It is easy, often essential, to find yourself in a comforting space, where you share an analysis with others, and have a ready-made political home in which you all agree. I have never been comfortable with easy answers, and tend toward the belief that there is never one truth or one story.

If I hold the spaghetti image in mind, it helps me to work with such political demands, and hold on to the personal resolve to inquire and question. It importantly prevents me from seizing up, corroding if you like, faced with the overwhelming pressure to take sides in a brutal, vicious, and corrupting conflict.

Colombia is a complex and large country. Everyone connected to it has their own route through it, and their own story to tell about it. Those working in the State institutions at the regional level will have one strand, those working to defend human rights another, those working in a business in the city another, rural poor farmers another. On the way they will meet and intersect with a variety of others, each on their route, but they will never see the whole, nor experience contact with some of their fellow Colombians. These intersections can be planned or random, they maybe the result of family ties, or linked careers in different spheres. Where these intersections occur is where the

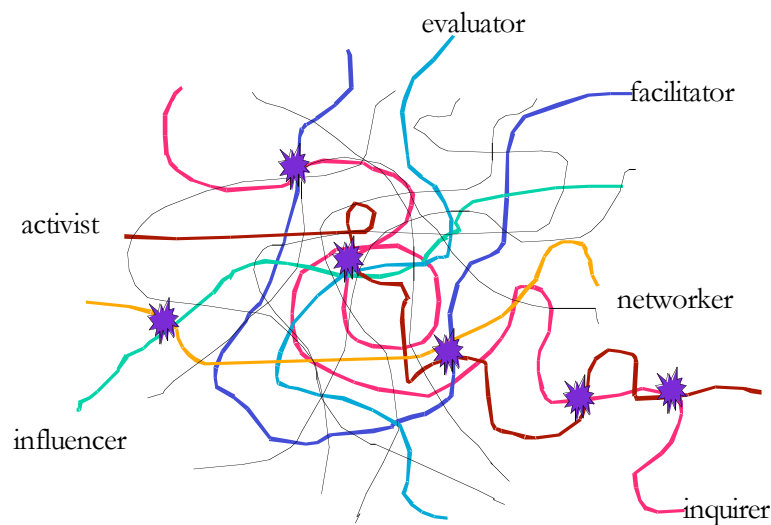
possibilities, I believe, of understanding between stories can and do happen, and where part of the knotting together of the social fabric happens. Holding this metaphor in my head helps me to grasp that the stories of my contacts and friends are both real and partial, whole and limited. It also gives me access to hope. These stories are rarely simple, and they have contacts and friends on other strands, maybe even enemy strands.

All those routes and stories are linked in other ways to people outside the country, to the dead and yet to be born, and in the imagination of each person. This spaghetti is uncontained, with each strand worming its way through the fabric of our world.

As a metaphor, with all its limits, it is more illuminating than most others for me and more useful when it comes to 'accounting for myself and my work' in this thesis.

It has resonance when I come to write, for instance, about my working practice as an evaluator. The core defining feature of that work is a commitment to ensure that I encounter all the perspectives possible, and incorporate a complex view of those many perspectives when I write up reports, and give feedback on projects I am evaluating. It is both a 'personalising' approach (Kushner, 2000) and a complexity approach.

But it also helps me to visualise what I am doing here, in seeking 'to reveal and bring to life a whole version of the 'who I am, what I do, and why I do it', using my full creative powers' (see Third standard of judgement, Introductory Framing). This involves bringing you into relation with the routes I am taking through this exercise in self-reflective inquiry.



I am weaving in and around the strands in my working life, evaluator, facilitator, networker, etc, in an attempt to show you the fullest picture I can, without losing meaning through separation.

Hyphens and Links

Thirdly in terms of making sense, I tend to work with a kind of multi-dimensional attachment or connection, a kind of 'extension' out into other disciplines, bodies of thought, and embodied senses.

Many years ago, I went to see the comedian Ken Campbell, a truly inspired and anarchic thinker, do one of his one-man shows. The image I have retained ever since is his examination of the full-stop. For Ken Campbell, a full-stop is only a full-stop in this sentence in this dimension.

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If you look horizontally along a full-stop you it becomes a hyphen and links you into another dimension altogether. If you follow it, it will lead you into another plane. It is the original hyperlink. In this sentence here, a full-stop is an end. The end. Yet if you let it operate as a hyphen, it can link you to another series of thoughts, images, metaphors, poems, memories, dreams.

This hyper-linking through hyphens is a way of describing how my researching and sense-making happens. I will often find myself linking out to another body of knowledge – art, sculpture, poetry, literature, musical lyrics, physics, - as I immerse myself in this one. And I have found that if I follow the links, interesting, inspirational and interconnecting ideas begin to flow. I have always read voraciously, never wanting to put out the light, copying out passages or quotes that speak to me. The whispering in my ear of faint connections, of half-remembered dreams, of voices that echo my own, of voices speaking back to me, these passages of texts, snippets of songs, poetry, lines in a play, these particles....these are my sub-atomic particles, my inter-connections, that lead me into and through other dimensions of thought and imagination and are what I would consider to be my mapping. My mind clearly thinks in networked, knotted, linked and hyphenated ways. Mapping not measuring, complexity not reductionism, I am a creature of the maze and labyrinth.

There's no plan to it, other than an intuitive 'this speaks to me' and a commitment not to lose hold of it. I am a natural multi-disciplinarian, and while I have often criticised myself for my pick and mix approach, it is the way I make sense of the world.

What all these images have in common is their knotted, interwoven and threaded-linked nature. I am asking you to hold these images and metaphors in mind as I guide you around the knots and threads in my research, and help you to understand the hyphenated, linked nature of the methodology I use to understand, and represent it. There will be routes through, like the strands of spaghetti, which I will endeavour to trace for you. There will be knots, in which a full comprehension of what I am talking about will involve weaving over and under and around, and may tie two or more strands together in a complex three-dimensional figure.

There will be hyphens - to other revealing pieces of writing, others' sense-making, poetry, music and art, other spaces which illuminate and extend what I am talking about. And by the 'end' of this document, there will be a net, maybe not very well-made, undoubtedly with holes, which seeks to hold us – you reader and me writer – above the

ground of incomprehension, and provide a light enough structure for further questions to be asked. As such I am interested in creating what Denzin calls a 'reflexive text':

'a model of truth that is narrative, deeply ethical, open ended, and conflictual, performance and audience based, and always personal, biographical, political, structural, and historical.' (1997, pp. 266-7)

and one which recognises the complex form that any knowing to-not-knowing-and-on..... inevitably has. I am hoping for:

'a fuller description of the structure of a lived experience.' (van Manen, 1997, p. 92)

My intention then is to reveal to you the diverse nature of the components, working as a whole, with the understanding that this is a growing body channelling the messy power of complexity, something that has structure in the most unstructured way possible.

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In Broken Images
Robert Graves

He is quick, thinking in clear images;
I am slow, thinking in broken images.

He becomes dull, trusting to his clear images;
I become sharp, mistrusting my broken images.

Trusting his images, he assumes their relevance;
Mistrusting my images, I question their relevance.

Assuming their relevance, he assumes the fact;
Questioning their relevance, I question the fact.

When the fact fails him, he questions his senses;
When the fact fails me, I approve my senses.

He continues quick and dull in his clear images;
I continue slow and sharp in my broken images.

He in a new confusion of his understanding;
I in a new understanding of my confusion.

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Ways of being - shape-changing and questioning

'Taking a personal self-reflective approach to research means valuing and working with ..various processes, appreciating the subtle interplay of inner and outer worlds, and treating all this as data...Evolving, living, sense-making of this sort cannot be hurried.'
(Marshall, 1992, p. 286)

There are two aspects of the way I am, and what I have come to understand about the way that being finds expression in my work, that this section will deal with: shape-changing, or embodied knowing, and the art of forming questions. They are intricately connected, and have begun to take a certain shape, or form, as I have sought to look critically at them, and experience them bodily, over this period of time. They are tied into the fabric of bullying, and of standing firm in the face of injustice, and they are in some opaque sense part of my search for compassion through anger and my artistry.

My intention here is to draw you deeper in to an understanding of what I know about my connections outside myself. I am trying to reveal how those connections are channelled by my inquiring body-mind, where my embodied knowledge and questioning tendency reinforce one another. This is really challenging to explain, or make known to others. I write about it in a variety of ways.

You may ask why this is important, at least for you, the reader, to know. Actually, I ask 'why is this important?' It is important because it leads us into the centre of the methodological, ontological, epistemological triangle. My hope is that we don't vanish.

Shape-changing and embodied connection

Let me start where it starts.

Cast your mind back to the Back Story, the story of bullying and transformation.

I have come to see that the profound experience that bullying was for me, had in some way to do with my sense of the **boundary to my self**, one I have always experienced as fluid and porous. My embodied reaction to that bullying was one of internal sickness; the poison of that connection literally entered me. And that porous boundary, however hard I tried to close it up, has remained porous and intermingled throughout my life, despite my best efforts.

Rayner would argue that it is a misconception to imagine that we can ever fix boundaries and stay alive:

'It is...at boundaries that all life's action occurs – the places where nature (genetic influences) and nurture (outside influences) combine and inextricably intertwine to generate the rich complexity of the living world. These boundaries can never be completely fixed, but instead define the ever-changing contexts, the local environments within and between which life processes are transacted across scales of organisation ranging from microscopic to global.' (1997, p. 4)

It is curious that osmotic and balancing feedback processes are well-known and written about in the biological sciences, in which cells and their surrounding contexts operate in delicate interdependency, and yet we somehow resist the idea of their relevance to us as thinking and embodied human beings moving in the world.

This piece of writing recreates but one of many similar experiences I have had throughout my life, and is a reasonable example of what Merleau-Ponty describes as the

'certain ways the outside has of invading us and certain ways we have of meeting the invasion.' (cited in Reason & Marshall, CD Rom).

Body in Writing

I am on the train to Bath to attend a workshop on phenomenology. My bag is on the seat next to me. A woman asks if the seat is taken. I say no, and move my bag onto my lap. This is my first act of defence. I am reading 'Researching Lived Experience' – the glossary section. I have just come to 'symbolic interactionism'. I am interested in this phrase as it is one Kimmitt, my partner, uses in his research.

The woman is moving back and forth from the seat, putting things up above, getting things down. I have not looked at her or engaged her eye. I am reading, taking notes. I do not want to be disturbed.

Yet I can feel a disturbance already. My edges are zinging. I can feel the approaching attempt at connection brewing. It is always this way.

I crunch myself into my seat. Angle my notebook and textbook toward the window. I can feel myself hugging the wall.

She makes little harrumphing noises, those kind of sighing-please-ask-me-about-my-day-and-my-journey sort of noises. I know she is looking at me as she does this.

I read more intently.

'Symbolic interactionists understand social reality as a complex network of interacting persons, who symbolically interpret their acting in the social world. The methodological rule is that social reality and society should be understood from the perspective of the actors who interpret their world through and in social interaction.' (van Manen, 1997, p. 186)

I catch myself on the word 'network' as I always do. It is always complex.

The woman is beginning to eat. She suddenly says 'would you like a dried mango?' to the man sitting opposite. He is startled; she has caught him looking at her. He laughs. She thrusts the packet at him. He takes one. She offers a mango to his neighbour. The net is closing in. He declines. Finally she asks me.

I turn to her and she locks onto my eyes, absolutely on fire. I feel like a fish, hooked through the mouth.

I say 'no thanks' and smile and turn away. Now I begin to wonder how she would interpret this exchange. I know I am holding it in my research question about how my embodied connection to others works. It is such a familiar experience, yet it is always disturbing. I can feel the urge to smoke. To cut off connection. To refuse to breathe in connection with the world. I am thinking, shall I buy some roll-ups? Take Jack to the pub so I can smoke? Or shall I bear it, carry it, can I bear it?

Breathing in, breathing out, connecting, disconnecting. This feels interminable. Of course it is, until you die.

She moves to another seat at Reading. She again moves up and down, stuffing things in, pulling things out. Every noise this woman makes is penetrating. She is eating crisps, and the crunch is extraordinarily loud. There are other sounds, people talking to colleagues, to phone companies, husbands, but they merge somehow. Just the bite into a crisp, right inside my skin.

Here I am, highly attuned to the person-ness of this woman. Part of this experience is me knowing that they can sense that I am open, porous, available for connection. It is as if I am wearing a big sign around my neck. I recall Lucy, the girl cartoon character in Peanuts, who had that sign 'The Doctor is In'. It feels a bit like that, although I am not about to cure anyone and nor do I seek anonymity. I like to talk to people on trains, and often do.

For many years I have experienced this as a continuing struggle to stay defended and connected at the same time. To be both apart and a part.

I have carried this phrase 'being apart from and a part of' around with me for ten years. It seems to hold a kind of explanatory power for what I feel I am engaged in as my life's real question – how is it that I am both connected and distanced, in and out, a part of and apart from, simultaneously, at the same time? Why do I always feel this paradox struggle every time I am in a group? Where does it come from? Why do I relentlessly seek connection, place myself in the danger zone, and then resist just as relentlessly? What does it mean, can I 'manage' and 'control' it, and is it in my power? As a phrase it has prompted me to much reflection.

An early attempt at an abstract looked like this:

My life's learning journey has been about being a part and apart. A part of the living, breathing world and apart from it at the same time. Driven by the loneliness of a bright, non-conformist individualist, **looking for an uncompromised place to belong.**

This is the simple conclusion I have come to.

Experienced at a work level I have found myself attracted to **working as a facilitator**, with groups, while simultaneously uncomfortable with any kind of group mentality. I often work on the edge of places with a so-called shared 'identity', like organisations, but know that I cannot feel at home within them. My gravitation toward **coordinating a network**, and working with networks, owes much to this paradox. While I am a **determined non-joiner, I love to work with others** in ways that liberate us to be our best selves. I delight in the joys of communication, and hate the suffocation of 'common identities' and 'corporate rules'. Networks provide sufficient social cohesion for me to feel a part, while enabling me to be dynamically myself.

Experienced at a bodily level this balancing act between connection and separation means battling with the re-emergence of that faded tattoo of bullying. The beast has many tentacles, and my anxieties about being in or out continue to grasp me round the throat. This writing is recent, after participating in a meeting/workshop about establishing a network.

We do an exercise that is intended to gauge levels of interest in different possible activities of the network. It involves moving around the room and standing in groups. The more we do it and the more ideas get generated, the more people feel anxious about being left out. And the less specific they become. More people join everything. I start to separate myself, thinking, I don't have time, I couldn't possibly commit myself to all this stuff, I have a life, but underneath it is a familiar feeling, of resistance to groups, to belongingness, to joining, to being a part.

Then people start talking about **branding**. About branding for the product of the network. The word makes my hair stand on end. Fuck, this is the real fear. Someone claims this is a neutral word. This is not a neutral word, I think. This is about marking something in fire, usually skin. This is about boxing and fixing and making up rules. It is not a simple word, it is about ownership and stamping 'mine' on things. Nothing about branding is neutral. But a good-sized group seem to be interested in working on 'branding'. My anxiety rises. I don't want to be branded. Am I in, out, teetering on the edge?

This is a terribly common experience for me. If I really pay attention, I can experience the bodily turmoil it creates in me. It is not unlike the sickness I describe in my writing about being bullied. I start to close down, the film of hair drops over my eyes, and I begin to feel mute, unable to articulate. Unable to use the instrument at the centre of my being, my voice. I somehow shrink inside my skin, and while I can see out, I can't cross the boundary. I have an image branded from this moment of the workshop, of me standing alone at one end of the room, while others cluster round each other excitedly. I cannot escape my feeling of isolation. Yet I know that this keeping myself apart is also connected to very important uncomfortable questions about what community means, and how far being 'in' implies compromise of values.

This is a sampler of my experience of being a participant in groups. It is just one experience but really it could stand for any of the many times I have been in a group setting, (doing workshops seems to have taken up a lot of my working life!). It illuminates for me very clearly that I am in a constant struggle with myself about **how to be in a community, and what being 'in community' means**. The simple fact that I continue to

put myself in such situations is an indicator that I want to stay connected, however frightful the whole thing seems to be. It is also evidence that I am dogged in my commitment to finding that 'uncompromised place to belong' while retaining every ounce of my individual flair and non-conformist appreciation of the world. I will never stop asking what others see as difficult questions. My challenge is finding ways to ask them that really allow us to respond with inquiring minds.

As Eleanor said to be on the phone today, 'the thing is you didn't want to do this PhD alone'. She's right. I resist groups **and** seek the creativity of connection. I want to be a part, to be joined, **and** want to be uncompromisingly individual.

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Yesterday in our inquiry group, S talked about the 'screen-saver' that flashes across her mind, kicking in with regularity, sometimes in big font, sometimes small, when she is about to speak in a group setting. Her screen-saver says 'So what, S, so what?', a continuing question to herself about the worth of her contribution, about whether what she has to say is of any consequence.

I started to think about what my screen-saver might be. I realised that mine has probably said 'I will not join', for years and years and years. A determined expression of resistance to groups, to controlled territory. It would likely flash up on my way to participate in some group or other, or as I am sitting squirming in a room of people waiting for the spotlight to fall on me. Highly contradictory. Now it might say, 'I won't join, but I must be joined'

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I have begun to see that this 'being apart from and a part of' is related to space, to perception, to feeling. It means being on the inside of events, and on the outside, being seen from the inside and the outside, projecting my being inwards and outwards. It means being one of many, a part, and being apart, separated from. It means playing a part, while feeling outside of the part. It means holding the one and the many. It is a way of expressing my ability to stretch myself across contexts and spaces.

One **response to the questions I ask myself** about this quality comes from Rayner:

'Rather than asking what an individual is, it ..makes more sense to ask how individual some entity is. To decide on this depends on the degree to which the entity is connected to or disconnected from others, and to what extent it can be considered to be a "part" of a larger something or a "parcel" of smaller somethings.' (Rayner, 1997, p. 6)

This response in many ways makes the questions no longer necessary. If I reframe my thoughts around the extent of individuality, or the extent of separate self-ness that really exists, then this dualism of connection – disconnection, apart and a part, can be transformed. I no longer have to imagine this as a dichotomy of in and out. In his most recent writings on inclusionality, Rayner suggests that :

'This way of understanding natural form radically affects not only the way we interpret all kinds of irreversible dynamic processes, but also the fundamental meaning of 'self' as a

complex identity comprising inner, outer and intermediary domains, rather than an independent, single-centred entity.’ (2004)

I can begin to understand imagine myself shape-changing, or stretching, with expanding and retracting boundaries, a self comprised of a number of domains.

Let me try to put this another way, or show another route. A seminal book for me was Eva Hoffman’s ‘Lost in Translation’, her autobiographical account of being a child émigré from Poland living in Canada, and experiencing herself as being lost in the translation of herself from one world, one culture, to another. I had felt myself to be ‘lost in translation’ all my life, of being between worlds, of having no roots, lacking what Kushner (2000) calls a foundationalist sense of having an authoritative reference point, whether that be nationality, profession or role (p.144). What I now call stretching, shape-changing, or belonging in many worlds rather than none, was a source of existential anguish for me for many years, faced with the norm of ‘being identified’, or even branded, that our culture espouses.

If, as Kushner says, that, ‘[I]f at the boundary, moments of transition as we pass from one context to another, tend to be moments when people are in self-reflective mode, rehearsing analyses of who they are and where they come from’ (2000, p. 144), then I have been deep in this question for years.

I see this framing of myself as congruent with Rayner’s logic of ‘space and boundaries as connective, reflective and co-creative, rather than severing’ (2004). All the work I have done, and continue to do, can in some way be examined through tracing the threads of this shape-changing. Not just the way I work, but the work I choose, or which chooses me, is in some core way connected to my only partially understood capacity to hold others in myself, while simultaneously remaining uniquely me. My life as an actress is a relatively easy route into the many expressions of this shape-changing quality.

Acting

I grew up in the theatre. When I was five I remember being rewarded with squares of dairy milk chocolate that would melt in the mouth if I helped pick up the pins on the floor of the theatre wardrobe department. Our house was alive with actors, drinking too much at parties and falling into the put-up swimming pool we had erected in the back garden. We would watch from the landing window. My mother made melon filled with brandy and raspberries. My father smoked then, and my mother puffed on Hamlet cigars. I said my first line on stage when I was eight.

In the very constructed environment of live theatre, there is a real boundary, that of audience to stage, although as actors we are always running the edge to find the ways across. The boundary of actor to character is not so real, the melding of ‘who we know as Madeline’ and who we ‘see’ is weird and often disturbing. I grew up watching my father have his eyes put out as Gloucester in King Lear, executed as Thomas More, and violently abused as Wesley. There were times when we rushed back-stage in tears to make sure he was still alive. Some actors are transformed when they work, they drape themselves and become other, almost unrecognisable. Others shift at the edges, but you can hear the core of them through every spoken and gestured act. Others morph and expand, a kind of half-formed image of them remains, almost available yet somehow distorted. I think I was one of the latter.

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Antony Gormley – **QUANTUM CLOUD XV** 2000
Stainless steel bar, 4.76 mm x 4.76mm 258 x 170 x 160 cm



This feels like an extraordinary energy field. It is a figure that indeed sits at the centre of a field of energy. The figure changes in definition as you sail past it on a boat, move around it, the energy shifting and patterning and revealing the man, but there is always some kind of a solid core of the earth of the man in the subtle energy of the piece, visible, almost visible, a trace, a back view, here, gone, reformed.

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If I put myself back there, and hold on to a feeling of what acting was like, from the inner place it felt like shape-changing. Shape-changing inside an unbroken but porous boundary. No growing extra arms or bigger ears, but a kind of remoulding. For me the only way I could find the character would be if I could stretch and shape what I had

already, while allowing myself to be stretched and shaped by the communicative context around me.

There is a peculiar thing with learning lines. My approach was never to learn them, they learned themselves. As the character grew around me, the words made themselves known. They emerged as the obvious thing to say in the conversation. Or at least most of them did. There would always be glitches: always forgetting what came next at the same point in the scene; reworking it to find a different spatial relationship to the other actors and characters, to find a different emotional timbre, to build to a different conclusion. And sometimes they were just words that couldn't be said. Rewrite or cut. In this place with these two actors, and this reality, these words just can't be said.

This growing 'character', this new layer of 'I', would emerge and take its place in the intensity of an enclosed, experimental, rehearsal environment. What interests me now is that I appear to have felt safe enough to connect where shape-changing was expected, and in some senses controlled by the artifice or boundaries of the script. I could connect without having to be entirely me. I could participate in remoulded form. If I bring my attention to the experience of connection when outside the confines of this artifice, then I realise I found refuge here from an unmanageable openness to my context, that experience of being, in Merleau-Ponty's language, 'invaded'.

I left the business of being an actor (when I was 29) for two connected reasons. I left partly because the 'who's who?' question was becoming dominant. By the time I reached 29 I really needed some grounding in 'Who is Madeline, who is she?'. Let me try that a different way. I am not saying that I took the part home with me, and became another, so therefore lost myself. I think what was happening was that I was accustomed to shape-changing; it was a way of being in the world. I somehow sensed that I was losing myself. I was excessively affected by my environment, open to its influence; a level of influencing that was unmanageable. I would find myself connecting in the moment, losing myself, overwhelmed by the intensity of the presence of others, something that went beyond anything I could control. Although of course I only know this now, as I begin to see what Rayner calls 'communicating through intermediary domains' (2004) or 'reciprocally breathing relationship of inner with outer through intermediary space' (*ibid.*). I have this glimpse, through a dogged and repeated inquiring into why? what is going on here?, and writing, writing, writing,

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MS LONDON

I am singing. Gurgling in a sing-songy kind of way. Swinging down the street with a couple of pints in me. Cosy and cheery. Content. The smile of a silly evening with nice people chatting inconsequentially about the world swings with me, and I laugh out loud. Everything around me starts up in weird and interesting relief. I am heading for Leicester Square, the last tube home on the Piccadilly. I am zinging. Not surprising then, really.

I skirt the distress of the prone human form on the pavement, struck by the stuffed plastic bag used to comfort his sleeping or stupefied head. *Sainsbury's* recycle bags in more ways

that they ever imagined. I suddenly feel cold. It's December and my hands, as always, are like ice. I search for my gloves.

There's a wrapped up sort of feeling on the platform, people still slightly shocked by the winter, closed in against the perils of late night underground transport, zipped up and shut off. A single train door stops in front of me. I step up to enter and obstructing the doorway is a man in a wide-brimmed black hat and radiant blue eyes. Whirlpools. Electric. Irresistible. I smile with unconcealed, unforced pleasure, delighted, thoroughly delighted. Still zinging. I step in and he steps out.

SKATE seems to have left her mark on the carriage. On the advert for MS LONDON's Lifestyle Show, 'The Show for Women'. On the sign saying DO NOT OBSTRUCT THE DOORWAY. A plain, black, rounded hand, simple and direct. The mascara-topped wide eye in the ad is suitably make-over lifeless, now decorated with a SKATE scar, prominent and black. I instinctively feel that SKATE would give MS LONDON the finger and smear her lipstick with full-tongued relish and prance delightedly through any doorway, obstructed or not. The woman on my left, an altogether different MS LONDON, comfortable and vaguely languid, starts to read a Thesaurus, starting on page 1. Looking for connections.

I look up and there, standing, in long black coat and black, black hat is the man with the bluest eyes. A Hassid. He winks at me.

A violence happens within me. A wrenching that twists my guts. The scene morphs in front of me, everything distorts. How did he get there, he got off the train, he's following me, I am a woman travelling late at night alone, I am in danger....In seconds I am no longer in love with the world, gurgling and singing. Urban paranoia sears through me. I look away, completely shaken. The woman with her thesaurus is still on Attenuate.

After the next stop I dare to look up again. He is no longer there. I stand up and obstruct the doorway, checking the next carriage for signs.

The rest of the journey passes in swiftesses and halts, my mind racing with the rush or paralysed by the extreme strangeness I feel. I periodically double-check. I am convinced that I was seeing things. I experienced him leave the train at Leicester Square with all my senses. I know we left him behind on the platform. He moved aside for me and I for him. We slid effortlessly past one another, touched by a brief instance of pure connection.

The thesaurus gets off at Russell Square, the woman too, captivated and enthralled. A mature student perhaps, rediscovering the glories of meanings, of words, their taste and shape and perfect syllabic form. They cavort before her up the empty platform, exploding with energy like children in the snow.

The ricocheting within me begins to slow. I am alert. Two young Export drinkers are heading north, trapped in a fug of misunderstanding, flailing with the task of explaining to one another why they can't go to his or hers.

I get off at Manor House. I no longer feel at ease enough to walk the 10 minutes home past the strange quiet of Finsbury Park, closed to all but the swans on the New River, and those who squeeze through her fences. As I step down on to the platform my head swivels as if yanked by a lead and at the end of the platform stands my man in black. Present. Visible. All human.

The escalator at Manor House is a long one and moves at escalator pace. The exit to the escalator is at the front of the platform where I am now. Instead of running I step on to the escalator and stand, as instructed, to the right, bewildered.

In a flash he is by my side.

What are you doing here? Do I know you? You got off at Leicester Square. You smiled at me
Why are you following me?

We are tripping over one another, I realise I am almost screaming.

You smiled at me. I thought I knew you.
You got off at Leicester Square
I went to another carriage, with a friend. I thought I knew you. You smiled at me.
No, I say, No. What are you doing here?
I live here, he says simply, I live here.

We pass through the barrier in silence. He turns to me and asks quietly,

Do you believe in God?

No, I answer, truthfully,but I believe in....I struggle for the words... I believe in....connections....something bigger....

He reaches for my hand. Take off your glove, he instructs.

His hands are warm, hairy, homely. He clasps my still chilly hand in his and looks deep into my eyes.

Shalom, he says.

And in a flash he is gone, up the stairs with his black coat flapping behind him.

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I only began to understand about this edge of me-connection to outside stuff when the art-therapist I had been seeing did an experiment. I regularly came to her with stories of unsolicited contact with strangers, people in the street, on trains, anywhere really. When

with my friend Sheila, she would comment that she only ever engaged with strangers when with me.

My art-therapist asked me to stand in the middle of the room and to tell her when I could sense her as she walked around me. I was aware of her as she passed behind me, but when she stepped in front, it was as if she had walked right through me. She asked me where I felt I ended, where my edge was, and I could not see or sense it, it was so far in the distance and outside the room. I suddenly felt myself as I do when I stand at the sea's edge, as if I stretch into infinity, scary and watery and mortally afraid. I was suddenly and physically conscious of how others sense me, as if we are bodily in the same space. So they talk to me. Rayner might recognise this as a lived manifestation of us all as 'local expressions of everywhere.....coherent through the connectivity of our common space.' (2004). Simply knowing that has taken the fear away. Since that time I have concentrated on being able to control my circumference, shrink or expand my boundary. Sometimes my skin is too thin, sometimes too thick, but I know it changes. I now have a choice about with whom and where I engage. In my work, as an evaluator and as a human rights activist, this shifting boundary translates into something akin to what Kushner calls 'reconciling critical distance with real personal engagement' (2000, p.125) or finding critical distance out of the soup of personal engagement.

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Working for Colombia - Bearing the hearing of so many stories of cruelty and pain

I am sitting on an uncomfortable chair in a back room of a building. The plan is to meet and talk to a large number of people from different groups in the social movement in this area. I feel a bit like a doctor in her surgery, with an overfull caseload for the day. I have a small cup of *tinto*, black coffee water that tastes sweet but not much like coffee. I know that this is just one of many I will drink today.

The first woman and her daughter tell me in quiet voices how their husband and father was taken from the house at midnight by armed men, and a hooded person who pointed him out. These were men they knew to be members of the Armed Forces, dressed in paramilitary uniforms, [a kind of moonlighting violence, I think, as if they don't get enough of it during the day-job]. When the body is found the next day, they know about it through a tip-off. He has signs of torture, his hands are tied behind his back, he has been shot through the head but only after immense suffering. They are too scared to go and collect his body. No one will have collected any evidence, and the body will probably end up in the river, and swell as it death-floats on the current. The two women are currently in hiding.

The next woman tells me a highly complicated story, but the thrust is the same. Her husband was killed in front of her and two of her kids, while she watched in silent horror, praying they wouldn't find her son hiding in the cupboard.

As the day goes on, the door swings open and shut, and more people, mainly women, with more stories of degradation and abuse tell me about their pain as they stare bleakly at the floor, or flail angry impotent arms, or talk about justice in distant voices, while resisting the urge for revenge. I nod, ask questions, feel ashamed and impotent myself, and know that

the next is waiting outside. This is all supposed to tell me something about what is happening in this region, where I have never been before. It is all, however, almost unbearably the same as in every other region.

A man tells me a terribly familiar story, of being forced from his land and home at gunpoint by state-aided paramilitaries, of arriving in a strange town, seeking help, terrified of reprisals, knowing that these men are following people round the country. This is the story of upwards of a million people, yet each one is a person, a family, a community.

Another intimates he will be joining the guerrilla, largely for revenge I think, although disguised as political belief. It doesn't surprise me, just depresses me.

As I sit and listen, I have to hold on to myself. My deal with myself is that I never allow myself the luxury of numbers and categorisation, of thinking 'oh this is another one of these'. At the same time, I have to be careful not to drown in the tears, and become so angry and touched that I cannot separate me from them. To some extent the language helps me to stay sufficiently in-touch and touched, without being overcome. **I am almost always a different shape in Spanish**, and the difference gives me breathing space.

At the end of every story, the question is a variation of the same. What are *you* going to do for us? Most people are not entirely clear why I am here, they think I am a lawyer, or a member of Amnesty International, or an aid worker with humanitarian assistance to offer. As a political lobbyist, my job is to be able to communicate their stories and their demands in a far away place, where politicians and policy-makers in the European Union are making decisions about aid budgets and political support for the Colombian political regime. It is irrelevant to their immediate concerns, and I know it. I try to explain, but I know that if you are a poor rural worker who has never really left your immediate town centre, the European Union may as well be another planet. They nod uncomfortably and I feel wholly inadequate.

In another place in Colombia on another visit, a nun who was helping a local group who had arrived in town forced to flee for their lives said to us with great force and integrity: '¿Qué van a hacer para esa gente? Vienen aquí a especular, pero no se hace nada.' What are you going to do for these people? You come here and gawp and then don't do anything. She was sick of delegations of people coming to view the situation, who then left and were never heard of again. What the people we talked to asked us was not to send them any more packets of lentils, they don't like lentils or eat them. We went and gave the local mayor a hard time for not fulfilling his responsibilities, and we got a fax machine for them from the UK Embassy so that they could tell the world when they were about to be killed. But it felt horribly like gawping.

Each visit made me think hard, not just about them, about myself, the world they live in and have made, the world we live in and have made. But in the end I knew and know that an awful lot of this was not 'my stuff'. My capacity for influence is limited, and I can do what I can do. But I can't heal their country. Only they can do that.

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It is difficult for me to know how far others can understand this inside knowledge that I have about the extent of my individual-ness. What does all of this look like in my work? What does shape-changing mean here? In some ways with acting a role it is easy-ish to explain. In recent years I have worked a lot in Spanish, and the realities of working in another language have other insights to offer.

Speaking Spanish

I probably spend over 50% of my working time speaking Spanish. I learned to speak Spanish when I was 25, during one of my last acting jobs. I had always wanted to speak another language fluently, and at that precise moment I wanted to be able to read the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca in the original. I took myself to Southern Spain and was dreaming in Spanish within three days.

The appropriation, internalisation of another language, is a bit like semi-becoming another person, like taking on a role. First there is the incomprehension, the struggling with form and structure, the woodenness, the searching for words. Then you get the words and the form but they have no inner life. They are translated words, words still coming from the original 'I' you started out with, but they feel contextually wrong. Then you get a glimmer, a kind of rush of words and ideas which have a liveliness to them, that feel whole, together, like a moving phrase in music perhaps. Then almost like stepping through into another dimension, you have become another side of yourself. Gestures and facial expressions, loudness of voice, fluency of movement alters, and your whole being has taken on a subtly different shape. You speak in and through the language; you don't just speak the language. You can even be funny.

When you come and go to a country, like I do to Colombia, rather than live in it, this process of feeling 'in' the language takes a few days. The structure and form of English has to recede, the listening is intense, and there are certain gateway phrases and words that help me to attune to the Colombian mind. Through these I rediscover my flow, my fluency, my being there.

There is often a moment in my trips to Colombia when I have been in exceptionally tiring runs of meetings, talking, listening, probing and thinking in Spanish for days. This moment is like experiencing a state of no language, what I call the abyss. No words reveal themselves, not Spanish, not English. It is as if my wiring has shorted out. I start in a Spanish construction and hit a hole, where the word I want has dropped in and through and in trying to retrieve it I bump up against the possibility of an English word. But this English word cannot be made to work; I am in my Spanish self. This English word wrecks the shape. And then there is no language. No words work. An emptiness that I have never sensed at any other time occurs, the same as when lines are forgotten in a play. It is a peculiar, almost out-of-body experience. A place where the shape has temporarily lost its definition and you can barely sense that strange Gormley figure at the centre of the quantum cloud field.

The body at work

Let's loop back to Gormley (2000), through Bohm (1987) and even to Scharmer (2004). This is primarily an embodied experience, one that is something words are poor at bringing to life. As a woman who writes and speaks, this word failure is something I find frustrating, although I am mollified by Gombrich, who in his interview with Gormley, muses that:

'Language is in statements, art is not. Language can lie. I would say that the majority of experiences are inaccessible to language, but it is astounding that some are.' (Gormley, 2000, p. 29)

Gormley always works from the body. He has mostly used himself, his own body, as the model for his work. He casts himself, creates through his body a moment in time and form. He does this because it is the only instrument he has. He believes that what his body holds in that moment is only a part of the whole field of experience, and that those who 'see' this artwork experience it bodily and as part of themselves and the whole. He says it a great deal better. What's marvellous about Gormley is that he has found a way to explain his work in words, and capture just what it is about his work that meets this embodied experience I am trying to talk about:

'Our appearance belongs to others, we live in the darkness of the body – part of all darkness but felt. The skin, on which light falls and which it renders visible, is useless for definition – but perhaps all definition is provisional; a necessary charting in our journey through uncertainty.My proposition is that we are part of a world constructed from the earth, in which everything is interchangeable. My hope is that the old formula of a 'subject who looks' at an object which is 'looked at' can be transmuted into us looking at ourselves. The place of my body is offered as yours and the space and actions of your body are reflected in the works, what they are made of and how they are made. Nothing is revealed that is not already there – including you.' (2000 p. 152)

This threads into my understanding of Bohm's (1987) 'implicate order', a field of enfoldment out of which all that we are and experience unfolds. A continuous field, in which all matter and energy have both particle and field, or wave properties. This is an interconnected network of quanta, in which connection can happen at great distances, or as Rayner puts it, 'natural dynamic organisation in which all local contents or features are wave-form expressions of their wider context.' (2004). It's as if Gormley's work emerges moulded out of the whole field of which I am a part.

'I think of sculpture as something coming up from under the earth, becoming as we all are earth above ground, but retaining a feeling of having been hidden and then revealed, a revealed energy still embedded in matter, and it brings that earthiness with it right back into the middle of the constructed world.' (Gormley, *Learning to Think*)

The connection that happens between me and a Gormley sculpture is often akin to that energy field, a kind of knowing that indeed this is part of me and I am part of it.

Gormley I want to start where language ends

Gombrich But you want in a sense to make me feel what you feel

Gormley But I also want you to feel what you feel I want the works to be reflexive. So it isn't simply an embodiment of a feeling I once had ...

Gombrich It's not the communication.

Gormley I think it is a communication, but it is a meeting of two lives. It's a meeting of the expressiveness of me, the artist, and the expressiveness of you, the viewer. And for me the charge comes from that confrontation.

(Gormley, 2000, p. 12)

When I look at his work, my felt experience is that of a concentration in matter as a way of re-establishing connection, a use of the physicality of the body as connective tissue, the threaded connection with the world and the viewer. Gormley talks of his body as earth above ground. He feels his body as a connecting force, which he uses not to be self-referential or aggrandizing, but because it is where he lives.

'I can't be inside anyone else's body so it's very important I use my own.' (p.18)

'My job in a broken world but self-conscious world is to reaffirm connection. The world and my body I must identify as one.' (p. 120)

His is a search for intense experience made form, made sculpture, but carrying that trace embodied.

This is something I get closer to when I am in a yoga class.

I am in a yoga class. Caroline the teacher is speaking. I am in the pose. She is speaking about the spiritual level of the pose, placing words in the air that have no instant meaning for me. I hold my body in the pose and I hold her in my body. It is as if I am connected to her by tissue, by sinew, she is another manifestation of the body, and her words make sense bodily. I hold the words in my attention, but they do not take my attention. I am inside my body and I am outside my body. My body gives up its tension.

I have seen a number of Gormley's works, and am always astonished at the powerful intensity I feel, as if the collected energy that went into the work is shimmering there.

'I am interested in something that one could call the collective subjective. I really like the idea that if something is intensely felt by one individual that intensity can be felt even if the precise cause of the intensity is not recognised.'(*ibid.*, 2000, pp. 18-19)

I tend to feel the **urge to write** about my responses to Gormley's and other sculptors' work in the moment, and have begun to touch what Gormley means by this 'collective subjective' through my writing of these experiences.

'The subject of sculpture has to be being: what does it feel like to be alive? Set aside all ideas of representation and replace them with reflexivity. We have to allow for a heightening of awareness that links the act of perception with being itself. The perception of art is similar to that of nature. When you stand beneath a mature oak, or looking at a glacial lake, or at a mountain, there is a sense of being held in the presence of something that is greater in terms of time and more resilient in terms of space, rooted, present, and the present-ness of that perception enters into your being. I think works of art aspire to this condition of present-ness and so can endow the viewer with this heightened sense of self.' (Gormley, *Learning to Think*)

I find I understand what Gormley means here when I begin indeed to be reflexive in the moment of meeting his work.

FIELD FOR THE BRITISH ISLES 1993

Terracotta Variable size: approx. 40 000 figures, each 8-26 cm tall



I saw 'Field for the British Isles' at the British Museum, before I had heard Gormley talk about this piece. The large gallery room is full of 40,000 small figures made of clay, with two hollow eyes, looking up. As the viewer you must stand at the narrow opening and look down and across them.

As stand here and look, this is how my inside reacts. I feel peculiarly disturbed. I am being seen, by thousands of eyes. I am being looked at, by thousands of eyes, in thousands of bodies, and those bodies are mute. No words can be spoken by these little thousands, as they have no mouths. I am being questioned by these thousands of individuals who all look as much the same as you and I do. All noticeably human clay, all body-shaped, all as simply formed as a child's drawing, but each one completely different. I feel I am being asked for leadership as I stand here in front of these mute hoards, in expectation. The huge multitude nature of them is as unnerving as being

surrounded by bees or an invasion of ants. They are ridiculously small, yet they provoke a kind of unspeakable fear.

When I read the accompanying information about this work, there are pictures and a description of the process of the work, of how the people of St Helen's made the figures to a simple brief, each person taking a handful of clay, making two eyeholes, and filling in space in front of them with little figures. There are photos of these figures being fired in kilns. The image of these little figures packed into kilns powerfully calls back pictures of bodies in pits in German concentration camps, of the hollow eyes of pain, and I suddenly feel myself to be a dictator, to be standing at Nuremberg, standing tall over this expectant multitude, and I feel this creepy sensation of having to do something, having to be in charge, having to be right. I feel the abdication of responsibility of each of these individuals, the offering of that responsibility to me, the tragedy of that desperation for answers, for knowing, for certainty. I smell the hideous odour of unquestioning patriotism.

There is also a surge of joy, of the knowledge that Gormley made this work with others, and that there is an emergence in that Field out there of all that expression of individual hands who moulded the figures, people who would not normally have anything to do with 'art', but who come from a historical community of glass-blowers, artisans. There is something electrifying about this collective body of experience.

Some months later, I tape and watch ArtNow, a Channel 5 documentary dedicated to Gormley. I also read his book on the work. This is what he says about Field, in conversation with the interviewer:

'Field while being an image of the globalised, multi-cultural democracy – it's utopian at one level, but with a twist, it presents the unborn on a parallel plane, but evidently anxious, looking for something, they're looking for us, looking for bodies to haunt, consciences to infect.'

'Field expresses an anxiety about what kind of world are we bequeathing – it puts each of us in a position of God, we are the makers of the world, we are the people that are in charge while we are alive, of our own lives and in some way of everyone's. It takes a certain anxiety about what kind of world we are making and makes it into a collective experience, and interestingly enough a collective experience in the making, that's important, that it was generated by a lot of people coming together and being aware of what they were doing, in a new way perhaps.' (ArtNow)

'Civilised' suggests urban culture; this is an invasion of urban culture by something to do with the remote, the marginal, the dispossessed, the unacknowledged, the fear lurking in the subconscious, the degree to which we try to live with the unknown but in a time of greater and greater mediation – we expect everything to be explained – this work refuses to be explained. It just goes on quietly asking, looking, waiting...' (Gormley, 1994, p. 72)

This experience knots up many things. As a seriously committed activist, this work asks me to question any claim I have to rightness. It asks me to re-examine, and to regain my humility. It places me in the place of those who choose to be leaders, those whom I choose to challenge with my stories of pain. It shocks me because it is mute, and I am so determined always to speak out. It reminds me of the dangers of disconnection. It reminds me that the more you strip away the things that make them look like us, the clothes, the trappings of the human, the easier it is to make others small, mute and

dependent. I see the faces of kids living on the streets of Bogotá and think, they were once someone's best beloved, and now they are 'animals'. Except for their eyes.

The work brings forth a world, something immanent, collective, something extraordinary. What Gormley wants and what I receive are intimately connected. The meaning unfolds, from the implicate order, from the field; it carries the traces of multiple meanings within it. My body / mind is connected to these meanings, they emerge within me. This work contains the hands of all those who moulded these forms, bodies that merge in the field with other bodies of experience, yet each has its own relatively independent structure. My shape changes in this meeting, my edges expand to absorb and reinvent the meaning.

It is this quality that is immanent in all that I am and do. It is a feature of my being, and has presence in all that I do. Methodologically speaking, what I find in my connection with art, with my environment, and with others, is embodied in such a way that it demands that I pay attention to what it means, and reflect upon it through writing. It informs the way that I work, and the way I know what I know. It is a lived experience for me, and I hold it in my gaze in the way that van Manen (1997) describes when he writes about phenomenological attention.

Forming questions

In what way, how does this connect to my external way of acting through inquiring, through forming and asking questions? To return again to the early attempt at an abstract:

My way of practising, my method, is through questions. Questions hold me apart, and give the impression that I am a part. The struggle has been to ask questions that really connect me, make me a part, and don't just hold off inquiry, keep me apart. **I loathe being asked questions about myself. This is a resistance to connection. But I am fascinated by and in awe of the lives of others. I love to inquire.**

My starting point can again be traced back to responses to my violated self and environment. I started my inquiry process with a subtle awareness that I had developed the art of questioning as a form of self-defence.

This is one of the first pieces of reflection I wrote:

It is thought by some peculiar that I, who spent years working as an actress, would hate being in the spotlight. **I loathe being asked questions about myself.** For me, taking on another character was a way for me of not being seen. Of disguising myself. I was never invisible, always a person people noticed and remembered. But it was only OK if I had some kind of control over it. And allowing others to question me, to probe, to uncover me for themselves, was not OK.

I am a sophisticated questioner. I encourage others to unfold themselves, I know when to press further and when to pull back, I know when to offer a scrap from my experience which fosters trust in the other that I understand, allowing them to allow me to enter further.

It is an intimate process, a wooing, a courtship, mostly driven by care and love, but mainly driven by me.

I am highly sensitised to this process and the wheel spikes and armour-plating are flipped instantly into operation if I sense a person with similar urges is trying to do the same to me. I am adept at answering questions with questions, at refocusing the attention, at diverting and diverging. Many a time I will leave an encounter with the other saying 'but I still don't quite understand what it is you do/believe/want.....' and I will smile enigmatically and know that I have avoided exposure yet again.

And I began to realise how my questioning, and much of the questioning that goes on in our society, so often takes the form of bullying.

Who are the questioners? What company do I keep? Journalists, barristers, magistrates, examiners, GPs, analysts, researchers, market researchers, detectives, interrogators, loss adjusters, benefit agencies, and many others. Including me.

Questions have a remarkable assumed power. It is assumed that the question will reveal the truth. The question is the tool of justice, of science, of objective assessment, of social engineering. It is not acceptable in the media not to answer the question. John Humphries, the controversial Today Programme presenter is famous for his bullying response to those who try. If you do not wish to answer, or you do not consider the question to be acceptable or valid, you are considered to be hiding something. So techniques are developed to avoid answering the question or to counter with another question. Techniques I am very familiar with. And these are then exposed as mere trickery or fakery to avoid 'being accountable'. (Deborah Tannen in her book, *The Argument Culture*, argues that we are ill served by this culture of adversarial question and answer.) Examinations of all kinds are often tests in answering-techniques, rather than tests of our knowledge.

Silence is no longer acceptable defence in the courts of law – again you must be hiding something. Yet if you must answer the question as put to you, silence is often times the only answer. The power lies squarely with the questioner, who can manipulate the question to sow doubt about the integrity or truthfulness of the respondent. If I must only answer yes or no to a question I profoundly disagree with, where do I go? – to silence. I answer only to my God was Thomas More's response, one of the more famous who wouldn't answer the question.

I recently had a drink with Joan McGregor, of Responding to Conflict, a Birmingham-based NGO. We had never met before. In the course of our conversation, she said she had a rule for herself. She doesn't ask questions to which she already knows the answer. She decided this when working with lawyers. Barristers are trained to ask only questions to which they already know the answers, as only in this way can they control the case. Others must be made to say out loud what you already know, for the record. This is also relevant to journalists. Doubt or contradiction or paradox or simple not-knowing is seen in some way as obscuring of the truth. On the other hand, those of us interested in the way human relations operate, and human connection is made, must allow ourselves and others to walk into the unknown.

I know this because I have a complicated relationship with questions, the ones I form and the ones others ask me. I have learned how to stay invisible inside my questioner's skin, to prevent access by those who would question me, at the same time as encouraging revelations, trust, intimacies. I see in the above the way questioning becomes an exercise in closing down real inquiry, and in shaping a territory of control.

Let me tell you the story of bullying in my life in a different way.

I have found my own capacity for bullying in my developed skill of questioning others and refusing others' questions. This insistence can be like interrogation. This insistence says, 'Only I have the right to ask, you must keep your questions to yourself and you must answer mine.' It is I think quite frightening for others, and has led others to be wary of me. I know that bullying is part of my self, my fabric, and my response when I was bullied young was to internalise a practice of bullying as an act of self-defence. That practice has been expressed through my questions.

While this is certainly a behavioural technique that I learned to avoid being vulnerable, another very powerful impetus has always been to know others, to understand how they tick and what drives them, to explore their lives. I am fascinated by and in awe of the lives of others. Yet as a consummate questioner I sometimes feel a sense of loss when the line of questioning dries up, a kind of emptiness because I have let the thrill of designing the questions divert me from the true purpose of witnessing, appreciating and learning from the unfolding. I have retreated behind my questioner's cloak. Increasingly I know that I have missed out, missed an opportunity to explore and exchange at a deep level, to enter the flow of dialogue or meaning-making. Increasingly I am pausing before taking evasive action, and making the decision to open myself to scrutiny.

Returning to shape-changing, this quality is often what allows me to sense the important questions to ask. It is something that is not seen, not heard, but felt. I experience it bodily. I sometimes see it as a tuning in to the field around me. The image that Gormley uses of his body being earth above ground, or that Bohm (1987) explains as a continuous field, helps me to hold a picture of immanence. Scharmer (2004) speaks of 'presencing', or 'co-presencing', a bringing of the future into being.

'Co-presencing: opening up to what wants to emerge and accessing a capacity of stillness that no longer separates what wants to emerge from who we are' (p. 9)

It may be something like that too. It tends to bring questions that are immanent to the surface.

It is an embodied and unnerving way of being, for me and for others, and it is related to what I voice, what I say and am heard to say in my interaction with others. It is a capacity to mould myself to meet the essence of another, and it is not something I consciously do, or can do. It is something that simply is. It is experienced by others in distinct ways. They may say 'you have an unerring ability to put your finger right on it' (Eleanor Lohr). It can be like an arrow hitting the bull's-eye, painful or revealing. The only way I can describe it that makes sense to me is that my boundaries of self shift outwards and inwards, and I literally take on something of the other. The most obvious sign of this is how I absorb the

accents of those I talk to within seconds of meeting them, and find I have to exercise enormous strength not to talk in their voice.

This doesn't happen only if I am directly 'in touch' with another. On many occasions I feel the field of people across a room, or sense the underlying question that is around in any gathering. This often leads me to 'hear' a question that requires formation. My capacity for hearing the important questions, often difficult ones, and to speak them, is one of the reasons people employ me in their reflection and evaluation processes.

Collingwood, in his autobiography, muses on the importance of the 'questioning activity' (1939, p. 30). He is motivated by a desire to reinstate the importance of questions, rather than attending simply to the answers.

'A logic in which the answers are attended to and the questions neglected is a false logic.'
(*ibid.*, pp. 30-1).

Indeed his position is that unless you know the question, you cannot decide if the answer is right. This may seem obvious, yet in a world in which the propositional form seems to have the greater validity, questioning the attention to answers, and paying attention to questions, is a way of working that feels uncommon.

Questions are at the very centre of all my professional practice. As an evaluator I see my strength in my almost intuitive ability to ask the difficult questions that are at the heart. Questions are intrinsic to the 'work of evaluation'. They are the ones to perfect. As a mediator, the questions that move the parties on are the ones to nurture. They are inviting, opening, refreshing questions. They incorporate a challenge to see things from another perspective.

Collingwood suggests that giving the questioning activity primacy is to wake up 'the Socrates within us'. (*ibid.*, p.35). In his logic of question and answer, the question must arise, ie be one that in some way makes itself known, and each answer must be right for the question.

'By 'right' I do not mean 'true'. The 'right' answer to a question is the answer which enables us to get on with the process of questioning and answering.' (*ibid.*, p.37)

This kind of question-forming allows the possibility that there is no 'one' answer to a question, indeed there may be several 'right' answers, if the question is posed in such a way to be inquiring, not simply self-affirming.

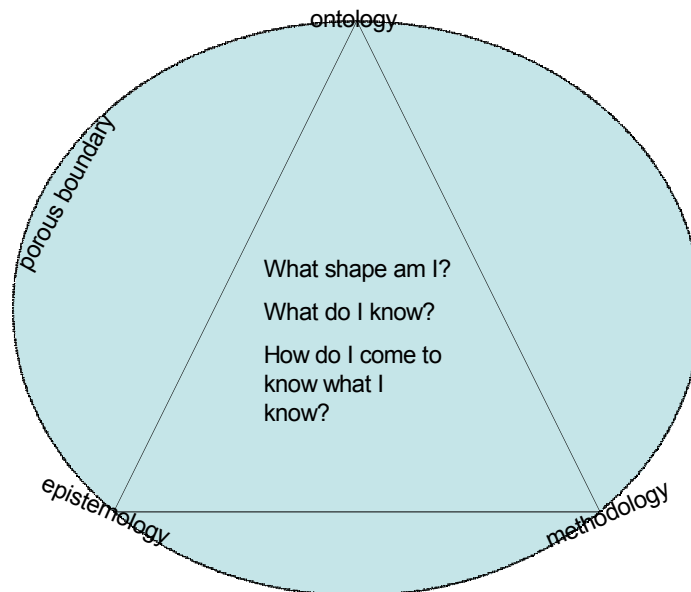
This sits right at the heart of the reflective paradigm, as I understand it. It has an underlying assumption of asking questions rather than seeking firm answers, and of the kind of messy complexity that Kelly captured so beautifully in the quote I use on p. 29. Winter *et al.* suggest that:

'to renew and invigorate our thinking, we need to recollect our sense of uncertainty, of unresolved and complex dilemmas. Although our questions can be answered, these answers are always only provisional and temporary. Our current answers are themselves open to new questions.' (Winter *et al.*, 1999, p. 110)

This sense of questions arising, and of being giving due prominence, is there in Bohm's (1987) notion that a question emerges from a field. For me a question's worth, and indeed its power, is in its ability to unfold that which is enfolded, to draw out the explicate from the implicate. I have this sense that a question is tempted into being by something implicate, a rubbing or a friction that forces the question to be asked, the question already holding something within it that leads to further explication. A question like this generates further inquiry, where responses made allow us indeed to 'get on with' asking and responding to further questions.

What does it mean?

I have spent a long time thinking about and writing myself into a place where I can sensibly talk about ontology, epistemology and methodology. For me they interrelate in ways that make it difficult to separate them out. As is becoming clearer I hope as we move along, I have a way of seeing that integrates, rather than separates. This doesn't mean that I cannot be analytical. It just means that the process of analysis eventually leads to disintegration for me, rather than integration



I consider this inquiring 'I' to be connected in mind and body ways to the contextual fabric, and am helped by Rayner's understanding that the extent of individuality and connectedness changes depending on that context. My intention is that you have grasped a sense of 'the dynamic relation between inner and outer space, figure and ground, how each reciprocally breathes space into and out from and so relates to the other.' (Rayner, 2004)

This self-inquiry process, a process of inquiring into the extent of that self, has enabled me to write reflectively on the embodied nature of that connection, and revealed to me how my love of questions seems to frighten and appeal in equal measure. This reflective stance hopefully carries in it

‘..[t]he voice which presents the thinking of a writer who is exploring, questioning, and thus – above all – learning. It emphasises, above all, drawing upon the resources for thinking which we have acquired from our prior experience, over a period of time.’ (Winter et al., 1999, p. 110)

My early experiences I think were born to some extent out of that fear of my inquiring, my ability to penetrate the other. I think, in some way, that my innate ability to know something of another has produced a fear in those I have come across, and most especially frightened the kids who led the charge to close me down. These fearful responses from others have led me to adapt my curious mind into a defence mechanism against others attack. I have resisted, prevented even, the very connection I have been seeking, by using questions to avert the gaze of others. I have tended to steer clear of those who want to know more, have more knowledge, of me. As such my own accounting for myself has been largely to myself. My questions have been used on me, just as they have on others. I realise that this is a self-defeating practice; it serves me ill in my search for connection.

Yet my shape-changing allows me to expand myself to meet others. It is this ability to shape-change, to in some way embody the other, that despite all allows me to maintain an open heart, to be an attractant to others, and in some way to know the essence of another. It is this that is expressed through the kinds of encounters I have with strangers. I also know that those attracted to me enjoy the attention I give them through my questions. My inquiries are one way I ‘get in’ to another’s world.

Finally I am esteemed professionally because of my courage to ask the questions that tend not to get asked. I will tend to search out the question to which what we construct is a response. I am with Collingwood (1939). My belief is that we must pay more attention to the nature of our questions.

Given that I work in professional contexts in which questions are essential, my inquiry has taken me deep into my professional practice. Episode One, the story of the Action Research Project on international networks and evaluation, will give hopefully give you some idea of how that practice has developed and what I have learned.

But first...

Writing Interlude Two

'Human science research as writing is an original activity.' (van Manen, 1997, p. 173)

'New forms of presentation need to be explored. I hope that they will be both more playful and more rigorous than established academic models, weaving between related aspects of inquiry lightly, giving the personal and political equal weight alongside the intellectual and public-world faces of research.' (Marshall, 1992, pp. 288-9)

I feel like I have spent a lot of time over the last year searching for a form of representation for this research that does the job. In the early days I played around with the possibility of a web-page format, allowing the story to unfold through hyperlinks. Yet the text based requirements of a doctoral thesis make this an impossibility. As you will see I was deeply immersed in reading Fritjof Capra's (1996) 'The Web of Life' during that time. He tries to get over the limitations of the textual book by extensive use of linked footnotes, determined not to be bound by the demands of the linear form. Yet as a reader this strategy didn't really work for me.

I was looking for a way to unfold a story of the Action Research Project on Evaluation in International Networks which gave you, the reader, access into the dirtier, more difficult and opaque world of actually doing a piece of collaborative research. The project already has a number of outputs, the most obvious being Church *et al.* (2003), but I know that the report is largely devoid of the personal, the self-reflective, and the humans who made it happen.

I want to fill in that gap. One reason is because I chose to do an action research doctorate, and I agree with Marshall (1992, 1995, 2001) in that any action research degree must acknowledge and pay attention to the way the individual doing the research acts on and influences the process. The other is because I, like Kushner (2000), wish to put the personal back into evaluation. He advocates doing evaluation of publicly-funded programmes through the lens of those who are touched by such programmes. This means stepping away from programme logic, a logic that requires us to hold people to account for the success of public policy. It means holding public policy to account for its ability to realise the potential and meet the aspirations of those who are affected by it.

I was also looking for a way of bringing myself and my work to life. I want the reader to get inside the process, to feel the energy of people working to work things out. I want to bring the lived experience closer. Yet curiously I find that the ever-present 'I' in many of the self-inquiry research accounts leave me further away from vicariously living that experience. I find myself more detached from than engaged with. My reflection on the story about my bullying experiences had given me a certain kind of insight into how writing about my self, in the third person, somehow brought the experience more vividly to light.

It was again while writing one day that I started to play around with the form of a shooting script for a film. I was interviewing myself, asking myself questions, and in writing it up it became transformed into one of those slightly self-important, slightly pompous South Bank show profiles. Since then, I have found a lightness creep into the writing inquiring process, something that feels like it responds to Marshall's invitation to create a form of presentation that is both 'more playful and more rigorous than established academic

models, weaving between related aspects of inquiry lightly, giving the personal and political equal weight alongside the intellectual and public-world faces of research,' (1992, pp. 288-9). It is not so odd for me to choose to work with the idea of a script, as it is a textual form I understand, that I know how to read and work with, given my years as an actress. It also, in an important way, connects me back into an artistic world that had great influence on me in my younger years, and has shaped so much of who I am.

So, before we plunge into Episode One, let me outline a few of the important reasons why I have found the script form creative and liberating.

A script enables me as a writer and performer to bring people more completely to life within the confines of text, and allows me to stand outside of myself, to present myself, and to illuminate what my own learning process has been in these five years.

The fictionalised form of a script has several different layers. It works on a significantly different level to the kind of cognitive engagement demanded of scholarly work. Yet it retains the emphasis on the word, in a way that is necessary in a doctoral thesis. It is a way of constructing many layers of a story that may shift across time-frames and places. The shifting between locations, and between past, present, future, allow a writer to play with notions of linearity, circularity, and develop connections between seemingly unconnected events, without reams of wordage. A script-writer can play with visual images, turn posters into video screens, import faces, and choose to provide information through visual metaphors, stage directions, information in capitals, and sound effects, to give the reader texture, affect other senses, and provide vision through words. Yet it remains resolutely linear in its presentation, and as such becomes a useful device to bring life and colour into this determinedly fixed medium of starting reading at the beginning and ending at the end.

People come to life on the page. You can hear the way they talk, the way they explain or fudge what they know; you gain a sense of the themes that run through their lives, their blindness and perceptiveness, their subtle repeating patterns. Most of all you begin to connect to them.

In her classes in script development for the Script Factory, my friend Marilyn Milgrom highlights the importance of character:

Successful and favourite films are governed by our investment in a character within them. That character has become a person to us and we care about what happens to them. In making them a person, the writer has made characters believable, meaning that there is a consistency of action, speech and re-action that we recognise. In order to achieve this the writer must invest an enormous amount of thought in every character, most of which will not actually be written into the script. But the thinking must still be done.

The key way in which we do this is by examining motivation. We instinctively want to know why someone behaves or acts or speaks in a certain way. We are not comfortable with not knowing why people do things. (personal communication, 2004)

A script reveals sub-text without needing to be 'explanatory'. It is a way of helping you the reader to 'enter' (be a part of) and yet see at a distance (be apart from) the person. In my struggle to bring my research process to you in living, rather than dissected form, I found again and again that 'writing myself' works when I write myself in by standing apart

from it, it allows me to circumvent the kind of confessional reflexiveness that I have found so easily comes when writing from the 'I'.

This 'recognisable character', who the reader 'understands' and even empathises with, is what I think is needed in order to develop the essential communicative space between me and you. That doesn't mean I cannot be surprising, just that at some point you need to know something about the motivation, the 'why?' of it all, in order for it to be comprehensible to you, and for you to decide for yourself on its integrity and authenticity.

It is in itself a reflective act. In scripting myself here, I am also making sense of the why of it all for my self, the process of writing in itself is an authentic act of sense-making. This is an autobiographical script to a large extent. The way I tell you the story is the product of an act of reflection on, and absorption of, the important images and themes, and the instances that 'show' those themes and images. The very writing of the script is an act of reflection. Moments of insight happen during the writing, learning moments, moments of perceptive clarity.

In the seeking of form I have sought to place myself in the text, to be seen in the text as a voice, a body, a person, a character. And the very form of a script creates distance, moves the 'I' of me into a third person, a 'someone' with whom to engage. It is a shape-changing, stretching exercise, where I am liberated from the confines of what I think I know of myself, and allowed to be another, a textual and created me.

I begin to 'characterise' myself for the reader, to 'account' for myself through a creative act of 'fictionalising' myself. The intention is for me to be able to 'see' me at a greater distance, be both a part of me and apart from me, and for you the reader from your position of being apart from me, to enter me, to in some sense to become a part of me, as you would with a character in a film or a book.

It is an act of creation, of transformation. In writing the script, I attempt to recreate experiences for you and for me, and in the act they are creatively transformed and reveal something new. So in my scripting of this, I am recreating something, and that very act of re-creating is reflective and communicative. In my writing in this form I ask myself 'How do I tell you (present to), the reader, the story of what I think I know, (the experiential made conscious), in a way that shows you the experiential, and contextualises it, with an intention for you to experience and know it in a different way?' And in asking that question I find my processes reveal themselves to me. Accounting for my self here generates creative knowledge.

Creative writing has power in the act of accounting for my self. I am beginning to see that if I **choose to account for myself**, to tell others about me, creative power is released. The very act of taking that step, to respond and not evade, releases creative energy. It was in the writing of this account that I found myself beginning to understand that the key moments in this research, the ones that advanced our thinking considerably, happened when I chose to respond to others' questions. **It was in choosing to make meaning with others, that creative power was released.** This may be some of what I mean when I talk of connection. Connection exists when something is running through, energy, potency.

As such I believe I indeed *make* knowledge (Marshall, 1995, p. 25), given that knowledge is 'not a thing, nor reducible to things' (Senge & Scharmer, 2001, p. 247). I experience it as described by Senge & Scharmer:

'an intensely human, messy process of imagination, invention and learning from mistakes, embedded in a web of human relationships.' (p. 247).

The act of writing, committing to paper, to text, has been an act of faith in the power of writing to reveal in some mysterious way a question, then a response, a further question and response, and through that process create space for a more detailed, nuanced, and complex picture of myself in practice to emerge. This is not writing up knowledge, this is knowledge created by writing, and one which allows possibility to emerge.

'The realm of art is above all the realm of freedom and exploration, and it is the very elusiveness and ambiguity of art which means that even in a society where most of us experience alienation and oppression of one sort or another, where freedom for direct action is severely constrained, and where limiting ideologies are endlessly thrust upon us, the work of art can continue to express the spirit of independent critical inquiry, through the aesthetic shaping of the possibilities of our lives.' (Winter et al., 1999, p. 220)

So, Episode One tells you how three people, friends first and colleagues second, took advantage of an opportunity for a small grant to allow us to research something we had a hunch about, and which was inspiring. It is a story about evolving practice, out of a dissatisfaction leading to a question. It's about collective and individual meaning making, using practice and mind and reading and thinking and conversing and writing. It is also a story about **my influence and work, and how being connected to the influence and work of others is creative and energising** for us all.

Part One is a story of the small revelations, the processes, the relationships and the conversations that emerged and coalesced and were reflected upon which came to make Church, M. et al. (2003) *Participation, Relationships and Dynamic Change: New thinking on evaluating the work of international networks Working Paper 121 DPU*, UCL.

Part Two shows just how much we have still to do to understand how completely networks alter the paradigm we have been working in. This shows me engaging with the ideas of Capra (1996; 2003) and Maturana & Varela (1998) and wrestling with the significance of network-organising for our evaluation practice. This raises lots of further questions to inquire into.

Part Three is in some sense a validation of the guiding idea of the project, which was to do something useful that can be used by those working with the complexity of networks and networking. It is also a validation of my own more personal ambition: to inspire others to think more creatively about networks and evaluation. It brings into this document the influence this work has had across what appears to be a random selection of areas and parts of the world. It shows how the work continues to link outwards and inwards, to others in wider fields of action and practice and back to me, showing how it has organic life beyond its short formal time in the making.