

2 The inquiring 'I'

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Introduction

In this chapter I present the picture and story of the 'I' who is making this journey. The material is presented as a bricolage, brought together out of intuition and pleasure in an imaginative offering to the unknown 'You' who reads this. Reflexively I am also part of this readership, in a simultaneous process of creating and experiencing, as I follow the warp and weft of what appears on the page.

In trying to bring into focus my life and the circumstances of this inquiry, I realise that I am also mirroring processes that I experience when I am relating to and working with groups. The extent of self-revelation either by me as facilitator or by participants to each other and to me is always a question of judgement; it is an expression of the trust that has grown between us. Getting to know people at Silver Street was sometimes a non-verbal process of being with or offering practical help to them. In doing so I was inevitably also expressing something of my own identity as I engaged with theirs.

Through first person inquiry in this chapter I am reflecting on the influences that make this inquiry vital for me now. I will do so using aesthetic processes which are at times poetic and playful.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) point out that many feminist researchers, (Behar, 1996, Behar and Gordon, 1995, Personal Narratives Group, 1989), who work in a reflexive ethnographic way, advocate starting research from one's own standpoint.

'Thus, to a greater or lesser extent, researchers incorporate their personal experiences and standpoints in their research by starting with a story about themselves, explaining their personal connection to the project, or by using personal knowledge to help them in the research process.' (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 741)

As the process of drafting and re-drafting of the thesis has continued, I have come to regard this chapter and the working sketches that occur throughout the rest of the writing, as playgrounds or oases where this personal voice can particularly find direct expression, although clearly not only there.

I will return at the end of this chapter to a fuller commentary on the ways in which producing this material contributes to the main inquiry themes of this thesis.

Futurist past

Before choosing to produce this chapter in this way I started by writing a prose account of my work as a group facilitator and some of the life stages that preceded this current employment. Then I realised that, as a professional autobiography, it left unrecognised whole strands of my experience, which are very relevant to this thesis.

Rather than throw it away I have decided to submit it to a process which the Italian futurist poet, F.T. Marinetti (1909), described in his Manifesto of Futurism.

He proposed a fundamental shake up of a literature which he felt had developed a pensive immobility. His solution was to subject poetry to a form of semantic violence where most familiar grammatical and poetic conventions are destroyed. He also went on to extol the virtues of the new beauty – speed, which he claimed would enrich the world's magnificence. In the headlong rush towards Futurist poetry he talks wildly about the destruction of libraries and academies.

This Italian iconoclast experimented with a form of poetry which involved creating a word string which deliberately avoided syntactical relationships. In a second 1913 manifesto entitled 'Destruction of Syntax/Imagination without Strings/Words-in-Freedom' or 'parole-in-liberta', he seeks a Futurist renewal of sensibilities, not only in poetry but all main art forms. He aspires to a level of freedom that would allow the artist to unleash 'imagination without strings.'

So in pursuit for a moment of 'imagination without strings', if not some other of Marinetti's goals, I subjected my piece of writing to a similar deconstruction. In what follows I have selected every tenth noun, then every tenth adjective from the 1500 words I originally wrote.

Another part of Marinetti's approach was to increase the use of playful imagery by connecting things which seem impossible to link together. I note in passing that the playful yoking together of difference will be explored further in my considerations of play and the poetic in an aesthetic understanding of practice. Such a bringing together might occur between the dual meanings of metaphor or the dramatic tensions within dissonance or serendipity.

Prompted by Marinetti I have included two examples of playful imagery based on moments in the text.

The Futurists strove to adhere to simple rules which defy normal linguistic conventions to produce artefacts which seek to stand outside rationality. Marinetti was also responsible for ground-breaking innovations in typographic layout of text and book design. A later publication of his was printed on metal sheets. In deference to this excursion beyond the traditional typographic conventions of theses, I therefore experiment with colour and typography.

I acknowledge that my example below works from the rational framework of my original account and may therefore not conform to the randomness that Marinetti sought. However, here it is.

A Futurist poem – My working words

Every tenth noun

Reader consultant orientation tendency education world experience role
 development Sussex consultant world development messages life
 development work self-fulfilment dimensions rationale collusion training system services feast
 workload scaling client training garden Ashridge alienation level theories

Every tenth adjective

Brief interesting complex first small utilitarian powerless successful
 apprehensive early intuitive autobiographical

Image 1

I never chose to be a keyhole surgeon,
 working like a miner to perform major miracles.

Image 2

I was the Bastille,
 then the liberation,
 attacked by such a heartache,
 now letting go of balloons.



An alternative version based on every verb

To help, is necessary, have worked, worked as, account for, have always, stems from, had worked in, clearly aligned, is driven by,

privileged, is divided up into, is also, does not recognise, refers to as, sign up, were, found, was frustrating, found myself, alerted me to, had moved into, assume, found,

had worked in, was, introduced me, focused on, foreshadowed, had the possibility of, entered into has been to, has released me, no longer spend days, were worth, have been able to, grew up

relished, brought, was choosing to, was, comes with, earn and make choices, found, occurs, were, dissociated, promoted, could be objectively assessed, seemed

Became, were asking me to do, felt, captures, shows, frames, found, was often assumed to be, became clear, derives from, might be, might seek, but not find, were left, would feel,

Is, may come, became increasingly, can rarely influence, was, was, offered, to build, would not, sought out, started, invested, places, is inevitable, do not always go, are lost as well as won, should have been deemed, are judged not to be, is hard

Were buoyant, worked hard, prove myself, talked, generates, seemed more, work, were complete and invoiced for, did more, represented, found, preferred, asked you, knew you, restricts.

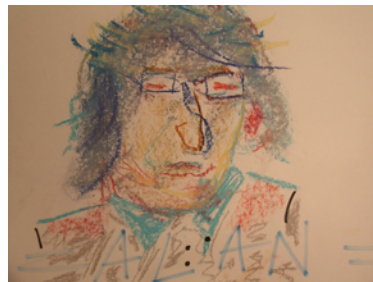
made me ill, ... I got up the next morning and had a heart attack. This changed most things in my life.

I notice how difficult it was not to cheat earlier by putting in the third more interesting noun or the second more revelatory adjective.

I admit to drifting at the end into more or less rational text. (In fact 'drifting' was the wrong metaphor; better to have said, water speeding up into a plughole or iron filings jumping around the magnet pole of this last undeniable fact.)

The poem stands for thirty years of my life.

Group portrait



A portrait of me drawn by eighteen people in nine minutes at the CARPP workshop on Visual Inquiry on 15 April 2005. Each person had 30 seconds in rotation to contribute to drawings of each other.

I find myself looking at this picture as an image which sets up remarkable resonances for me. It raises a host of questions. How do I see myself in the world and how am I seen? It is like the fleeting glance at a shop window reflection, to see today how far or near I am in accepting this image of myself. I am briefly distracted by the inaccurate shape of the glasses; whoever drew them didn't not look closely, or perhaps they did and saw what they drew. But the general 'sense' of the picture is in my view fully recognizable. Others who know me remark similarly on seeing it. So in representational terms the image has some of what Husserl would have called interpersonal validity; it conveys some shared meaning about me.

I sprayed it to protect the chalks and when it was dry rolled it carefully to get it back home. It was, and still is, an object of great value for me. It is pinned up on a beam in my study. Part of its significance is that it acts like a bridge between my experience of CARPP with its climate and space to explore different ways of inquiring, and my larger world of family and friends.

I have subsequently used this representational game from time to time with groups with whom I work. It is a powerful activity in that it gives each individual not just a picture, but a connection with all the interpretative eyes and hands that snatched the image out of the air.

Imaginary bridge

I inquire into the central place of metaphor at a number of places throughout this thesis, but particularly in Chapter 11, *Poetics in practice*. I offer below an extended metaphor which is presented in the form of a poem. As I have already remarked in Chapter 1, much writing on personal and organizational change uses the metaphor of the 'journey'. Here I am interested in the bridge, not only for how it starts and ends, although that is of course interesting, but for the imaginative possibilities of looking from the middle of a new bridge for the first time.

Through acts of imagination we are able to see and experience things through different lenses and from different vantage points. Rumi captures this, in his evocative image of 'falling towards the glassblower's breath' in his poem which forms the preface to this thesis.

My writing records the tidal drift to and fro that makes for adoption of different perspectives on practice. I had written the following poem in 1999 and it now presents itself as a metaphor for the aesthetic process of my inquiry.

This theme of change and transformation through acts of imagination underpins much of this thesis. For example, I can find myself starting from a position of anxiety as I replay a conversation in my head. At the next iteration of dialogue with the same person a completely fresh and liberating understanding may emerge. I take this to be part of a creative and mutual process of imagining difference. Conversely I may find no such inspiration in the moment and be left with the fixity of anxiety I started with.

Imagination in this sense is applied to the most vital and close relations that we have. We can *imagine* them 'good' or 'bad'. Practice seems to me to be about helping people imagine and enact good differences and the pathway to doing this has strong aesthetic qualities. The externalization of inner thoughts and feelings that occurs in representation offers scope for transformation, where people have the will for this to happen.

The concept of a new Millennium bridge intrigued me before the structure was complete and prompted me to write about it. In a sense it therefore at that stage still partly existed in the imaginative minds of Anthony Caro, sculptor, Norman Foster, architect, and Arup, its engineers. But it was also already alive and shared in my imagination.

Mid-air, mid-stream



*The taut footbridge skims the brown Thames,
landing one footfall by
the Tate's blockish finger in the sky
and leaps back to wear
Wren's double crown.*



*My feet, groundlings from the Southwark Bank,
now stand mid-air, mid-stream
in an ethereal place from which
before I never could have seen.*

Now the dream bridge is a reality, I can stand at this formerly inaccessible point in the air above the Thames; it gives me a similar sense of pleasure as when in my early teens I became able to climb halfway up the poplar trees at the bottom of the garden.

I was surprised by the brutal strength of this recent digital image, which I took, straight into the sun. It creates some strong resonance with my aspirations and energies in the writing of this thesis. At an ontological level, it also features a recurrent theme for me, of structure and fluidity, of the interaction of the natural and the human world, which I will explore further in Chapter 3, *A theoretical framework*.



This is about being in places from which before I never could have seen.

On re-reading my poem I also notice, for the first time, that it links the secular and sacred. At a deeper level too I have become aware of a metaphor for mystical sexual union in the architectural shapes of the Tate's sword and St Paul's inverted grail; no wonder the bridge vibrated with energy when first used!

The boy who thought he was Jesus

Another way of positioning my practice as I write, is to draw on some of the first person inquiry completed earlier in the CARPP process.

This piece features the source of the early groundedness of my life and the tensions and excitement of breaking away from this profound security.

At the last trumpet every knee shall bow. In my early years, say till twelve, a question shadowed me, 'Would I and the rest of the startled world be bowing to Him, (very definitely a 'Him' in the 1940's), or would the world be bowing to Me?'

Three times and sometimes four I walked to and fro across North Watford on Sundays to the Baptist church that gave me my main experience of anything approaching 'society', that larger world that lay beyond home. Home was fatherless, a warm nest of women, mother, sister, aunts, neighbours, a coterie in which I grew up. The men were away at war, or those who weren't were regarded as token men, old or excused boots in one way or another.

When my father returned after demob from five years on a naval destroyer, he fitted apparently effortlessly back into the insurance office in Cornhill in the City for the rest of his working life. He also took up again the mantle of deacon at the church, later becoming Church Secretary, a role which commanded almost as much respect as that of minister.

And so I grew up knowing that Jesus died on the cross in his thirty-second year, just as I also knew that Adam started the whole process off with Eve 4000 years prior to that.

I also knew that some day when we would all least expect it – particularly the sinners who drank beer in the Stag, on which I spied from the top deck of the 321 bus, but not just for them, – He would return and there would be an enormous unravelling, the day of reckoning.

The story of Christ's birth and upbringing became a luminous exemplar of how things could turn out for a lad growing up.

At seven I changed gear from one to two services per Sunday, plus Sunday school. The evening service was less well attended but had the same fervour of extemporised prayer, plus the close warmth of cuddling up to my mother during the interminable sermons. All the while I heard about Jesus, sometimes too about the Old Testament heroes and prophets, but mostly about Jesus. I wondered at precisely what age He knew that He would leave His mother and go about His father's business.

He modelled for me the righteous anger of this closed sacred world in its raging against the larger community, the money lenders and traders who polluted the temple. Were these the equivalent of the fast lads who came to our door peddling brushes and polish, no doubt beer on their breath from the Stag or the Clarendon Arms. This dilemma in spotting the boundary between the sacred and the profane persisted for me throughout these years.

Then there was the Jesus of the miracles, pulling up fish on the other side, turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana, not just any old wine but high quality stuff. Did it bear any resemblance to the sugary non-alcoholic contents of the Baptist communion thimble-sized individual glasses which were consumed once a month in silent reverence by the converted?

Jesus and His miracles seemed just right to me, exactly what I would have done if I'd had the Holy Ghost at my right hand.

Then there were the forty days and forty nights, the betrayal, the humiliation and crucifixion? How could the wicked world have taken this calm, majestic, blond haired paragon, whose portrait hung in the Church minor hall and have done these things to Him? Should I too be prepared to suffer at the hands of the ungodly?

Jesus seemed to me to have been a clever boy, who could quote the Old Testament with great authority. Jesus would certainly have passed His 11+ like me.

Jesus as a team leader also caught my imagination. He had this talent for spotting disciples up trees or on a beach. He 'called' and they came to a different life with Him, forsaking their fathers and mothers. There was a lot of talk about 'calling' as I grew

older. My parents never pressured me, but there was a distinct ecclesiastical career path mapped out for any one at the church who had the aptitude.

Lingering still in my mind at the age of nine was this awareness that Jesus must have had an 'Ah Ha' experience around this time when He discovered that He was not just another lad with a carpenter for a Dad, but the Messiah. What responsibility, but what power? Was there some amazing opportunity for me here, so nurtured in the scriptures and now with the glow of sanctity that settled on me when I talked to my father about being converted at 12? Perhaps with hindsight this was already getting a bit late to have received the ultimate calling.



This sketch of me was drawn by a fellow guest at a farm house b.& b. that I went to with my parents and sister. I had just passed the 11+ and was therefore on the brink of a lot of new discoveries.

The trauma of total immersion in the public baptism that followed at 14 might have held these aspirations in focus a little longer.

But other forces were at work within me. Education can be a terrible thing. I began to discover the sides of me that were not satisfied by extemporary prayer and sugary communion wine. I caught vistas of a world where alcohol was consumed by intelligent and good people as a natural lubricant to fine company.

I also discovered nature for myself in long expeditions across boggy land over which the M1 was to be built four years later. I set off snipe which went weaving over the reeds,

long since compacted under a slip road at Junction 5. I found a dead swan with blood on it, wracked and rigid in the wet grass.

Slowly it became clear to me that probably I was not going to be Jesus after all. But the period in waiting, listening for the call, left its mark. I abandoned at the same time the idea of being a minister, particularly a Baptist one and embraced a new and far more exciting ministry, still with many values about staying with the best, but reaching out to discover the rest of the world which till then I had seen as enemy territory or at least no-man's land. Ahead lay learning, teaching, training, working with groups but still threaded through it the irrepressible query, 'If I wasn't going to be Jesus, who was I going to be?'

What's in a story?

(In fact I shall address this question again later in Chapter 8, 'The expressive aesthetic in practice', when I consider how story telling featured as part of an exploration of the expressive aesthetic in my practice.)

I now see even more clearly a continuing and creative tension between the security of home and the wild wonderful possibilities of the world at large. The attraction offered by an actual or metaphorical home is in tension with the urge to adventure. Home is an essential and supporting framing for experience as well as a limiting boundary. The markers of this boundary have varied at different times in my life. There have sometimes been steps too far into the unknown. Probably my biggest adventure was to leave the security of a salaried post and set up and run my own business twenty five years ago. This though is only one parameter of the 'home and away' theme and I wonder if at this early stage in representing my inquiry I have found a deep source of both pleasures of reflective isolation and the wish and need to participate. This might be another way of describing first and second person inquiry. Learning about these inner and outer arcs of attention and action involved me in moving to and fro and testing out what energies might be released whilst sensing what risks I was ready to take.

The potency of *home* and counterpull of *away* is a theme to which I return in considering Bachelard's (1958) poetics of space. (See Chapter 11, *Poetics in practice*.)

The story marks in its closing paragraphs the consciousness of an aesthetic life that has stayed with me in varying forms, with greater or lesser active participation as a performer, a listener, writer, a reader and now picture taker.

The ground had been well prepared in my childhood. Music was always there in my home. My mother played the piano and sang soprano at church with a tremulo which warbled delightfully a half tone below and above the target note. My father took up painting in his retirement and I have a small gallery of his landscapes on a wall at home.

There was also drama implicit in the charged ritual of the Baptist services. Emotions washed up and down the aisles as the hymn singing reached ecstatic proportions. Adult, or in my case, teenage public baptism by total immersion formed the pinnacle of this religious ecstasy. This symbolic enactment of confession, death of the old self through immersion, followed by salvation expressed in a new life, made an enormous impact on me. I cannot explicitly trace all the resonances it set off, but there was something similar to a sexual frisson in it for a teenage boy.

The minister swung you into the water and back blinking into the light to a chorus of 'Follow, follow I will follow Jesus.' The girls' long white robes had lead weights sown into their hems for propriety but this didn't stop the wet cotton vestments clinging to their breasts as they were pulled up, blinking into the dazzling light of the Kingdom of God.

The church community also offered a readymade captive audience for various performances. There was therefore from an early age both drama and music in my blood.

The story foreshadows some of the aesthetic territory that I now explore in working with groups and in particular in the Learning Disability Service where the main story of my work will be told. I will describe the fascination for this different world in Silver Street which bit by bit has become more of a familiar place, if not a home.

What's in a poem?

(This is another question to which I will return in the thesis and in particular in Chapter 11, 'Poetics in practice'.)

In this small collection of my poems I start with two, which relate to Bath, one written whilst staying there, the other whilst returning home on the train. Writing of this sort has been my way from time to time of standing back from the intensity of some stages in the CARPP process, and reflecting. The trigger for this reflection is always a moment of immediate

sensuous perception, for example, of light on a landscape or the turn of the land in a valley or hill. Such reflections illustrate a recurrent theme in this thesis, of the rootedness of metaphor in sensuous perception.

Above Bath

A reinforcement legion found it to be
just another day,
as they first broached this brow above Aquae Sulis
seeing among the wooded slopes
this same May evening sun,
flecking off different roofs.

How many days' march through Italy and Gaul
To settle in this fold of land,
Until it was all their children ever knew?

And now my dream eye settles upon the city.
The terraces wrap up into the valleys,
Distant dinners made, consumed,
Stories told or censored.

Jackdaws scatter live shadows
across chrome walls
over the slates
into the painful perfection of the sky.

I sit at the window
unravelling my silent song
For this second, I too conquer time,
build colonies of the spirit,
prepare to live more joyfully off the land.

The train from Bath

The landscape is my servant,
smooth as a train window.
Distant Dorset copses
hold the evening air
between Edwardian branches
etched on innocent sky,
before the world grew up.

I give the sweep of land
my langorous wishes,
doing little,
leaving it to hold
what I want,
but you will never know.

The supine breast of a hill
dreams by,
paler than
an Allen Jones,
and is gone.
Philip Glass is writing
the music to this movie window.

Then jump cuts, through Reading,
Slough,
And a slow fade into town.

I have involved two artists in this poem. Allen Jones RA, born in Southampton one year before me, frequently paints the female form in tonally pure pastiches of pin-ups from the fifties/sixties. He breaks out of the image to leave a flare of colour at an incomplete leg or arm. Philip Glass, born in Illinois one year before me, developed a unique style of musical composition based on minimalist techniques. He has written a lot of film music and opera as well as symphonic work. His hallmark – repetitive rhythmic units of sound, suggested him to

me as the musician who might have written the accompaniment to the sound of the train in this summer evening idyll. In noting these references, I am aware of how a work can acquire a complex leverage by tapping into other creative media; but in so doing it may become exclusive. I am particularly aware of this risk in using artworks with groups.

Noting that these two artists were both born in 1937 had the effect momentarily of causing me to wonder what art I have made and make in my life. This writing is my way of slowing down the passage of time, a theme that is explicit or implicit in the remaining three poems in this chapter.

Let sleeping cracks lie

Every other week my mind prepares to mix
a spot of lime mortar to fill up
the crack in the wall,
just a cosmetic job
to deny spiders some territory
– just a way of showing propriety
at the corner of the window frame.

If then one day my hands were to repair the hole,
how long would it be before the living strain in the wall
slowly, politely restored its balance
and handed me back
the natural crack
I'd taken away?

Change is, to quote Beisser's 'paradoxical theory of change',

'.... when a person becomes what he or she is, not when he or she tries to become what
(s)he is not.' (Beisser, 1970)

I wrote this poem to say something similar. A colleague of mine chose to take it to a session with some social service senior managers. She later told me how her reading of it had aroused some interesting discussion. "This is what you should be doing more of", she said.

At the time I was pleased, but partly suppressed any further thought of doing this. Like the crack, though, it has resurfaced in a persistent way. (I return to this interest in doing more writing, at the end of the thesis in the coda to Chapter 14, *Conclusion*.)

The lifebelt

This exercise started with a photo that I took over Blackfriars Bridge. I wrote down my immediate thoughts as a prose account on the spot and then worked them into a more poetically structured text. I did this to see what engaged my imagination in making these different representations of the same moment. Below is the photo and overleaf the poem that was prompted by it.



Total immersion

The stairs into water drown my eyes.
I am walking down wet steps beneath the pulpit
into the baptismal pool,
total immersion,
teenage fearful conversion,
then blinking into the lights of watery passion.

Other stairs into the French *citerne*,
used to heave up water for the cows,
bring me to the spot where by repute
a woman drowned.

The photo lies still in my hand
And again my floating eyes feel
the pull of the tide,
the smell of the river,
as I lie tethered to it
by a rope of words.

15/2/06

Since writing this item I was intrigued to discover that Taylor (2002) includes a photo in a paper entitled, 'Art and Logic in First Person Inquiry: The Synergy of "Both And" '. In it his photo depicts a door leading into a building, which has subsequently been bricked up with breeze blocks. Over the door is a formal notice which announces, 'Receiving'. Taylor invites the reader to consider the felt experience of viewing the picture and compare this with the propositional knowledge might be elicited by answering the question, 'What is this photo about?'.

In this exercise I am very aware of the different aesthetic that springs from these two media. The picture is consumed at a glance. There seems very little gap between what Strati (1999) might call its ontological significance – a life saving device inappropriately left in the water – and its metaphorical and narrative significance responding to the why, how, when of the moment depicted.

The poem uses this imaginative lacuna and begins to fill it with personal associations. It also expresses some of my pleasure in pattern as I found myself fusing with the image in the last stanza. This intuitive and extra-logical connection took me by surprise as I wrote.

Quite an ordinary thing

Death has a place in this contextual account. Baudrillard (1976) describes labour as 'death deferred',

**'Labour is slow death. This is generally understood in the sense of physical exhaustion. But it must be understood in another sense. Labour is not opposed, like a sort of death, to the 'fulfilment of life', which is an idealist view; labour is opposed as a slow death to a violent death Labour is opposed as deferred death to the immediate death of sacrifice.
(Emphasis in original) (Baudrillard, 1976, translated by I. Grant, 1993, p. 39)**

I certainly have a sense of spending the time that I have through labour, as a slow and irreversible expenditure, which has one inevitable terminus.

Dying is also a metaphor in Elizabethan poetry for the consummation of love, perhaps more like Baudrillard's violent death of momentary sacrifice.

I have recently (2005) lived with the protracted decline towards death of an elderly neighbour, Dennis. I was invited to speak at his funeral. His appreciation of what people strive to be, is still in my voice on occasions as I participate in groups. His reflective pause, the rush from judgement, echo sometimes in my words, – for which I am grateful.

Age and death constitute an occasional theme in my reflection, although not morbidly so. Rather on a good day I see them both as a spur to live as well as I may in the moment.

The poem overleaf strives to defuse the mystery of my own death, although I know of course in that respect it fails!

Quite an ordinary thing

Death's quite an ordinary thing;
it's happening all the while,
sometimes faster,
sometimes slower than birth.

I may just have bought a coat or booked a trip;
others will make a familiar toast
to the unknown days
without me.

When it happens,
I want to be caught in the act,
flagrantly grasping paradox,
dazzled by the darkness of my end,
boundlessly loving
in the confines of a little room,
an awkward one to bury.

Since first drafting this page I was shocked on Monday 29 May, 2006 to receive a phone call from Brussels from the wife of my oldest friend from Cambridge. His name was Paul Bates. Two hours before her call he had just sat up in bed and died with no warning at the age of 66. Paul's memory has followed me around this summer – too young to die, too much left to do. This is my tribute to him. We were young students together and it never crossed my mind that he suddenly would not be there. No other words to add.

Final comments on this chapter

Barthes (1980) captures very well the dilemma of writing commentaries on words and images that should be sufficient in themselves.

'Then I decided that this disorder and this dilemma, revealed by my desire to write on Photography, corresponded to a discomfort I have always suffered from: the uneasiness of being a subject torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical: and at the

heart of this critical language, between several discourses, those of sociology, of semiology, and of psychoanalysis – but that, by ultimate dissatisfaction with all of them, I was bearing witness to the only sure thing that was in me (however naïve it might be): a desperate resistance to any reductive system.’ (Barthes, 1980, p.8)

Hopefully I may avoid this reductive trap, as I briefly reflect below on what I have learnt, in poetically and playfully producing this chapter, about the field in which this inquiry is set.

In bringing together these words and images, I know there is no way to ‘capture’ experience; accounts of experience spark off new experiences, (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Representation is a selective and imaginative construct that we offer to others in search of some sense of a community of meaning.

In this way the fragmented text, inspired by Marinetti, chopped up so that any propositional meaning falls out of it by chance, may itself be a useful metaphor to hold in mind when working on inquiries. It is not that we perversely aim to confuse in efforts to communicate; but we cannot however claim the label of the one truth for what we recount, draw, photograph, film. The creative choice of the focus, exposure, angle, tracking, zooming, – to stay with the metaphor of film for a moment, – is infinite; and each choice will differently affect the perceiving eye and ear of each individual, to generate new emotions, new ideas.

It is only through a mutual effort to exchange words and images that I construct shared meaning and in the process inevitably create further meanings. It is with such processes of creative learning together that this thesis concerns itself. How can I see more clearly the aesthetic that is already in our practice and how does behaving more consciously within this vision enhance the collaborative knowing that action research aspires to?

In compiling this chapter I am even more aware of the sensuous origin of the bundles of ideas and emotions, which are represented in stories, poems and other dialogues and artworks. The aesthetic forms an essential strand of experiential and presentational knowing in action research. A marker for me in developing this inquiry, is to notice the primacy of this sensory and affective participation with people and places and attend to how this influences the way I work in my practice.