Prologue to Part One

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill
Below the lighthouse top.'

June, 1996. When the Ancient Mariner sets off on his epic voyage, it is significant that he doesn't know where he is going. It is also symbolic that the ship leaves behind what is familiar - in the forms of religious and geographical knowledge - and sets out into the unknown. The voyage can be seen, of course, as an eloquent warning about what happens if tried and tested (i.e. valid) ways of relating to the world are rejected. I have always viewed the poem as a symbolic representation of an individual's search for meaning within a universe that has some fundamentally meaningful parameters which, in their apparent obscurity, lead to great learning. If all had been clear at the outset, the Mariner's journey would have been pointless. Paradoxically he must break the rules of Life in order to understand what they are. He sets out, supposedly, to find excitement and innovation and their connections with his own destiny, and comes eventually to value ethical relationships with others.

My research as a whole seems a bit like that. Part One of my thesis is very much like that. I had an intuition in July, 1990 that understanding more about the connections between various aspects of my educational practice, through an exploration of the aesthetic qualities in my educative relationships, would help me to improve my educational practice. I was driven by a sense of the new and exciting, little understanding the significance of the ethical and ontological learning I would assimilate until a few years after the events. It is in the evaluation of this section of the thesis and the Conclusion to Part Four

that the significance of what I am learning becomes most apparent to me and I hope to you.

Six years ago I went to the National Gallery in London. I walked in a half-hearted way around the paintings. It was a hot July day. I turned a corner and was confronted by 'The Execution of Lady Jane Grey' by Delaroche. I had to sit down. I sat and stared at the picture for probably about half an hour. I was reduced to tears and in a state of disbelief. The painting depicts a woman dressed all in white, apart from her black blindfold. Lady Jane Grey, queen for nine days after the death of Henry VIII, gropes towards the block on which she is to sacrifice her life, her arms splayed out blindly in front of her. Her ladies in waiting cry, and cannot look at her - they strain their faces and their bodies away from what is to come. A man stands in profile next to her reading from a book, presumably the Bible. And in the corner, impassive, waits the executioner with his bold axe.

I found the picture deeply disturbing. It made me angry and sad. It aroused pity and horror in me. The searing whiteness of the heroine's dress reached out of the canvas and I felt implicated in her fate. She is so helpless, surrounded by politics not of her own making. One of the ladies-in-waiting stands facing the wall, obviously in tears, unable to watch what is happening, her fists raised against the wall in impotent distress. All of the chamber is in shadow apart from Lady Jane, whose radiance shines out indomitably despite her situation. It is as if in her helplessness she triumphs over all the forces against her, through her goodness and simplicity.

As I gazed at the picture, trying to drink in every detail (and I have described it here without having seen it for four years) I felt a surge of indignation. I wanted to save her from her fate. I felt anger at the forces which used her for

their own political ends. I felt frustrated at my inability to do anything. The picture forced me to confront the reality it depicted. On the other hand, I felt cleansed by its idealism, by its portrayal of the transcendence of the human spirit in horrific circumstances. Lady Jane's dress alone was enough to evoke this reaction. At the time, however, I could not entirely work out why I was so pierced by it, but it entered my understanding and changed what it found there. It put me in touch with my own sense of justice and fairness. It confronted me with my own living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989b) and made me both sadder in the world that such things happen, and yet happier that human beings can aspire to such nobility and greatness. In addition it connected me to myself in ways I didn't understand then and which this thesis has become partly an attempt to explain. This has constituted part of my educational development because in becoming more aware of the ways in which I approach and value reality I am more capable of focusing my educational values in action in order to improve the quality of learning.

At the Gallery I observed the way the artist had used colour, tone and lighting, how he had arranged the people on the canvas, and how their body-language and their facial expressions contributed to the sense of doom. I was particularly struck by how no one looks at the heroine and that she is prevented from seeing. Within that suppression of sight, the artist seemed to be telling me something about moral blindness. I noticed the shapes of the costumes, the curves of the bodies, and contours of the arms and furniture, all leading to the central character, and yet at the same time denying her any personal warmth and recognition. Hardly anyone touches her and she can see no one to touch. Indeed she gropes only to reach the executioner's block. The levels of denial of human warmth are, for me, excruciating. I recognised instinctively that the way the painting had been designed, the forms,

structure, patterns and implications all underlined the aesthetic meanings I could derive from the picture

A few days later, as I sat and wrote about the experience in my journal, the phrase 'aesthetic morphology' popped into my head. I even had to go and look up 'morphology'! In my diary about that insightful moment, I wrote:

'So what does this mean for my Ph.D.? I think everything. I think that if I am able to bring to my educative relationships the same level of awareness that the picture evoked in me, then I will be able to improve the quality of those relationships. I haven't a clue how to do it, though. I don't even quite know what it is I need to do, but I know there is something in the awareness I was brought to with that picture that opens me up to the possibilities of goodness and truth and beauty in human existence. If I can understand those qualities more fully, then it follows that I will be able to increase their quality within my own relationships and thus increase their educational value.'

In the account you are about to read you will see me trying to find a way of representing my enquiry through an analysis of the Action Research Literature, some attempts at fictional writing and the analysis of several educative relationships. The context for this stage of the enquiry is in Initial Teacher Education. This section is also an exploration of the meaning of my educational values in action and a rationale for locating my enquiry within the individually-oriented action research paradigm. In its concentration on some of my own living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989b) it reveals my inability at times to turn my values into action with my students. I emphasise the importance to my own educational development of the concentration on the students coming to speak for themselves on issues which concern them. To this end I quote many of the letters between an initial teacher education

students, Sarah, and myself, in full in order to give you a flavour of the patterns in my educational practice which I will later be describing and explaining in this thesis. At this stage, I do not recognise the significance of drawing educational conclusions from my practice in order to improve it. I mistake quoting from Sarah in full for her speaking on her own behalf. It is only later in the thesis that I come to understand the necessity of developing a dialectic in my educational practice of power and educational knowledge within my educative relationships. I go into detail on this issue in Part Four of the thesis and in the Epilogue to that Part.

In Part One, however, I do show the beginnings of my own understanding about the ethical and aesthetic implications of a concentration on individual students and their speaking for themselves about the issues which concern them.

In the account of the growth of the action research movement in Part One I now think I didn't sufficiently show an awareness of the complexity of the movement, or of my own place within it. As a result, the educational knowledge which results seems to me now fragmented and limited. My own educational development is partly characterised by my understanding of the dialectic between my own emerging 'I' (Evans, 1995) and the action research cycle which grounds it. In each Prologue I will therefore highlight the way in which I am learning about the dialectic between my understanding of the form of action research I am using and my own place within it.

In Part One I concentrate on the development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships based upon the above revelation represented to me through my aesthetic experience of the Delaroche painting. In this thesis, Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner' deepens my understanding of my aesthetic

experiences as I explain in the Epilogue to this Part. It was discovering Delaroche's painting which first alerted me, albeit unconsciously, to the incipient educational use-value of making connections between my ethical and ontological concerns in improving the quality of learning and in the creation of my own educational knowledge. However, it took nearly six years and a process of teaching 'The Ancient Mariner' before these intuitions became conscious in ways which I can now articulate and it is only in this resubmission that I am in a position to create my own living educational theory. It is the growth towards this explanation that constitutes my own educational development.

Part One (written in 1993)

A Search for my Educational Standards of Judgement: The Aesthetic Morphology of my Educative Relationships.

The Creation of my own Living Educational Theory

How can I present the contextualisation of my own work in education in a way which enables you to understand the significance of my contribution to educational knowledge?

21.6.91.

Moira*: I feel that what I'm trying to do is something towards a new form of showing what the process of being in a dialectical process actually looks like and that has literally only become conscious through the writing. I think I have shown my educative relationship with Zac and through it my own educational development and I've done it in a dialectical form. I would say that that it's more true than any consciousness I am developing through the reading. I think that's the area I'm quite weak in...*

Jack Whitehead*:...Yes, perhaps what you need to do is engage with it. Perhaps you should ask yourself, 'How can this piece of literature help me in my educational development?'*

Introduction

The following writing is intended to offer you a way in to my own Living Educational Theory. It is in two parts:

The first (A) deals with my own educational development through an analysis of some of the key literature and ideas which have influenced my own and others' thinking and acting in education. In this part I am asking you to follow me on a journey through the beginnings of my own thinking about education as a parallel to an analysis of various educational research paradigms. This results in the purposeful location of my work within an

individually-orientated action research approach, as exemplified by the Action Research Collection in the School of Education at the University of Bath.

Another reason for writing this whole section in this way is to demonstrate my belief that within the dialectic between theory and practice my experience has become more powerful than in previous years. It is praxis which gives shape and meaning to my work.

The second part (B) deals with my work in more detail with students who are engaging in action enquiries, and in fact, constitutes my claim to being an original contribution to a Living Educational Theory. The students who I am writing about in the most detail are Sarah (PGCE English, 1992-1993), Justine (PGCE History, 1991-1992), and Zac (Biological Sciences Undergraduate, 1990-1991).

At the beginning of this section I need to state unequivocally that my understanding of the literature, my presentation of it, and my emphases, are all the result of my own experiences, limitations, insights, personality, education and values. To present this section of the thesis as if it were separate from my own educational development would be an attempt to live in different worlds simultaneously. It would also infringe upon certain tenets in this writing as I show how it is I have come to locate my emerging claims to educational knowledge in the Action Research Resources collection as specified above. My devotion to individually orientated action research is not an arbitrary one by any means. My rejection of some of the literature which is largely taken as educational, is also not without deliberation. I may have come to action research work in the School of Education by an intuitive route, but I see the whole of this thesis on one level as constituting a growing self-

revelation about why it is I have pledged an allegiance to this type of action research. My educational development could be said to be characterised through the emerging consciousness of what I value about such a way of working. I see the way I work as responsive to some deeply held educational values which have led to the adoption of personal assumptions and norms and the rejection of alternatives which could have the power to impose upon me a view of the world which, through my limitations, insights, personality, education and values I will not accept. I view these alternatives (which I will be stipulating clearly later) as antipathetic to a view of education and educative relationships in which my truth is partly constituted through the dialectic between the responsibility and the ethics of my practice. Carr and Kemmis (1983) write:

 *'It would be a mistake to believe that a correct interpretation of theory and practice can be elucidated in a way that assumes that the history of these concepts is only of secondary or incidental importance. **Understanding the meaning of these concepts is, in part, understanding the role they play in constituting the particular styles of thought in which they have been, and still are, embodied.'*** (p.8, my emphasis)

I would only add to the above quotation that my interpretations of the educational writings of myself and others are indicative of my own influences, acknowledged or not, and my consequent stance towards educational knowledge.

What I would like to do is take the reader through some avenues of the literature through which I have come to understand my own place in an educational world. It will lead, I believe, to the point at which I can say what it is I **do** want from educational literature, educational practices and my

educative relationships, and how I believe that this thesis is a small answer to some of the criticisms I will be raising. I will present my understanding through a progressive focusing on the areas of educational writing in which I am interested: action research, educative relationships, educational narratives and an aesthetic standard of judgement in my educational processes. I will then present the story of my educative relationship with Sarah (1992/93) and judge it through an aesthetic morphology.

I wish to emphasise however, that in presenting the writing in this way, I am not giving credence to the notion that practice is preceded by theory. Certainly in my own educational life, that has not been the case. I hope that you will gain some insight into the parallel nature of my learning, through simultaneous theory and practice. Read on!

A: How can I find the appropriate narrative technique?

I have decided to present this whole section of the thesis as a narrative. In this way I can retain what is to me a vital authenticity. I see aspects of this section as Morrison (1987) does, as:

> *'a kind of literary archeology: on the basis of some information and a*
> *little guesswork, you journey to a site to see what remains were left*
> *behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply.* (p.112)

But also I want to adhere to the notion of Clandinin and Connelly (1991) that:

> *'One of our questions in narrative inquiry is how to make the study of*   *a*
> *person's education theoretically interesting.'* (p.262)

In addition I want to enable the following (Clandinin, 1992) to become a natural growth within this section as I hope it is throughout the thesis:

> *'In the accounts of research, issues of representation and audience are central concerns...One purpose of narrative research is to have other readers raise questions about their practices, their ways of knowing. Narrative inquiries are shared in ways that help readers question their own stories, raise their own questions about practices and see in the narrative accounts stories of their own stories. The intent is to foster reflection, storying and restorying for readers...(to) suggest new truths especially the extent to which all living is a creative act of greater or less authenticity, hindered or helped by the fictions to which we submit ourselves.'* (pp 135 - 136)

The Crafting of Educational Narratives

I am going to start with the first fictional story that I wrote in March 1989, first because it is a convenient starting point in terms of chronology and secondly it is significant on a number of different levels. I believe that it can be read as the search for a reality which will enable the knower to find existential fulfilment. Symbolically it frames a beginning, through which an end can better be understood and interpreted.

A Child out of Time

There was once a child who was unlike others. Let me explain. As a child she had all those aspects of innocence and purity that were once considered to be precious, but had in the last Age been supposed to connote unformedness and unfinishedness. However that wasn't the area in which she was mainly considered unlike. No, she saw things that others could not see and therefore considered unreal, and she felt things that others could not feel and therefore considered unnatural.

What, then, could this child do, in a world which once would have treasured her and now was only able to regard her with fear and suspicion? This was the trauma of her life, and one that she despaired of ever being able to overcome, surrounded as she was by people who were products only of their age and not of the whole of her civilisation. Not for them was the mystical union with Nature, or a sense of connectedness with something greater than themselves. Not for them was the sense of reverence and awe about aspects of Creation which would never be definable in mere words. Not for them was a painful longing for this beauty to permeate into all areas of Life, for if this beauty ever did touch them, they would shake it off in confusion and shame, so distorted were their intuitions about the world.

The child dreamt of another life, but these dreams were fleeting and ungraspable. Whenever she felt able to define her dreams, they melted away in the words she used, and anyway, other people soon backed away in insecurity and mistrust every time she attempted it.

For many years this continued until the child felt she must indeed be unlike. And to be unlike was the worst conceivable sin. And yet, somewhere deep inside she felt that her intuitions were true, not measurable perhaps, not like the measurability which others demanded in every area of Knowledge to prove Truth, but still true in another way, a way she despaired of ever defining.

This might have continued for many more precious years, were it not for a chance meeting with someone who told her, on her broaching the usual subject, that there were others like her who lived a long way away - over the hills and far away! The child conceived a plan. She would go and search for these people whoever they were, and that if they did not want her, then she would no longer want to live. She would tell them of her life, all the loneliness, all the longing, all the heartache, and she would watch them closely for their reactions. If they showed a distaste, like everyone else, then she would take her own life, for it was a thing of little moment, and of no use to woman nor beast. If she could not be like them, then she saw no point in her existence.

Carefully, then, she made her preparations. She must not let anyone suspect her, lest they try to prevent her from going. She must act as they did, to mask her real feelings and needs, and adapt herself to the needs only of the majority.

Then one day she realised that the time was right. She could not understand why. Perhaps it was the feeling of being stifled, but then, she was always that. Perhaps it was the feeling that others regarded her with more than the usual suspicion. Perhaps it was the feeling that she had nothing to lose, although that had seemed the case for as long as she could remember. Or perhaps, quite simply, the time was right. Whatever the reason, early one morning she left with a heart as light as any she could remember, and taking only a very few items with her she began to climb the hills that insulated her valley from the rest of the world.

For many days she climbed. Whenever she reached the top of the nearest hill, she realised that there were other hills to be ascended before she would be able to see what lay ahead. At first she was enraptured by the beauty around her. Birds of exotic hues wheeled above her, and the air was fragrant with the scent of early blossom. The grass and moss beneath her feet yielded gently as she climbed, and although the way was arduous, she breathed in an air which exhilarated and refreshed her.

However when she reached the summit of a particularly steep and exhausting hill and saw a patchwork of gradients still to be ascended, she sat down, despondent and discouraged. Would she never reach the top? Was she on a fool's errand? Perhaps there was nothing more in the world after all, and all the people in the valley had been right after all. But then she remembered what she had been told. Somewhere lived people like her. Somewhere she would not be unlike...Or had the other person been lying? The child put her head in her hands and wept.

Suddenly she knew she was not alone. She did not know how she knew it. Perhaps she sensed a faint aura of encouragement around her. Perhaps she heard the quietest sound that was yet a sound. Or perhaps the presence spoke. Whatever it was, she looked up and found another child standing beside her. This child was as dark as she

was fair, was as calm as she was disquieted, and stood looking down at the forlorn, crouching figure with infinite pity in the gentle eyes.

At once the child began to tell her story, pouring into it all the anguish of her plight, moved to tears by her exhaustion and desire for acceptance. The presence listened, at no time interrupting, or even changing her expression of calm, but at the end of it all, the child knew that she had not found what she was looking for. Again she did not know why she had not found it. Perhaps she had expected a response, although she had only known responses of rejection before. Perhaps it was her tiredness. Or perhaps she had not found what she was looking for after all, and must continue her search for that elusive meaning to all her dreams.

The next few weeks were spent in climbing, in occasional encounters that were not conclusive, and with a growing sense of futility. And yet she persevered. She no longer had any clear idea at all of what she was looking for. Now she rarely noticed the ineffable beauty around her. She rarely heard the mellifluous bird-songs of joy above her head or noticed the verdant richness of the soil and the grasses beneath her feet. The way seemed to be levelling out, though, and in that she found a numb consolation.

Weeks passed. Each one like the last. There were few events that engaged her imagination now. She had almost forgotten why she was there at all, and if anyone had asked her she would have replied that she was a fool like the rest of the world's fools, going on a fool's errand, she knew not whence.

One evening she was descending a gentle incline. A hard day's walking lay behind her, as arduous as the landscape, and the child sat down upon the grass, beyond tears, beyond hopes, beyond anything. She sat.

As she sat, she became aware, although for many minutes she would not respond to it inside, of the desire to look up, and to find out what it was that called to her inside. At last she did. There in front of her spread out against the sky like a sheaf of copper corn upon a sea of gold, was a sunset, the like of which she had never seen. It was so irradiant that tears formed uncontrollably in her eyes. Perhaps it was because of her

weariness, but she had felt like that for months now. Perhaps it was because she could not believe what she saw, but she knew it was not that. It was what she had been looking for. And as she defined that inside her mind, she realised where she was. There stretched below her was her valley. She had gone so far only to come home again. She had gone full circle. It was her valley. But as she walked into it, she realised that, although it looked superficially like her valley, somehow it was not. She saw beauty where there had seemed to be none before. No one recognised her, however, and when she glanced in a mirror, she hardly recognised herself. Her face was wiser and calmer, and without the tension that she had always felt before. People listened to her with respect, or if they didn't she hardly noticed. She spent the rest of her life discovering more in the valley and telling others what was there.

And although the child was not only a child anymore, she lived happily ever after.

When I studied for my M.Ed. here at the University of Bath (1988-1989), I started writing narratives for the first time in my life. I was haunted by the idea of the above story. I recognised at the time that it represented a metaphorical answer to the questions that I was posing myself during my academic work, but that the study itself was not providing me with the answers I valued or could even recognise. And for the first two years of my M.Phil research, I was, without really consciously understanding it, trying to find a way of expressing my insights through a narrative structure that would not decrease the ontological and educational authenticity of what I was writing about (Laidlaw, 1991d). I wrote dozens of short stories of a fantasy nature (1991-1992), which I presented to Jack Whitehead, my supervisor, in the absence of more obviously educational narratives. Their creativity and subject matter, however, was not irrelevant to my own educational development, although I could not see it at the time. The stories largely dealt with people coming to terms with unusual occurrences which forced them to

reconsider their preconceptions. They were also concerned with individuals trying to preserve their dignity and sense of self in a world which did not understand or value their uniqueness. Wisely, my supervisor encouraged my writing. I look back now and the significance of this phase seems very obvious, but at the time I lived in a world in which I was just beginning to make conscious some of my most fundamental values and to understand my responsibility for them in my educational life. I did not see the direct link between my growing consciousness of personal responsibility and negotiating my meanings with others, like my students in the work I was doing with them. Instinctively, though, I did recognise the importance of finding a way of written communication that did not detract from the reality I wanted to portray. As I hope the whole of this part of the thesis will show, my learning has developed most securely through the relationships I have had with my students. It can be expressed, however, through the ways in which my fiction writing has developed in a parallel way to my understanding of the potential for narrative to be an educational form which could become a way of communicating deeply significant values. I feel that much of my fiction was a device I used in order to communicate only with myself. My narrative development can be seen to be constituted through an understanding of the significance of communicating my educational values in action with others and to others; and that narrative should be a written form of this truth. But I am leaping ahead of myself here. Let me begin at the beginning.

I read copiously on the subject of educational narratives because I was desperate to find a way of revealing my own and my students' educational development which did the complexity justice, without obscuring anything meaningful to the people involved. And I wrote story after story in an attempt to consolidate what I was understanding. Although it has to be said

that I didn't follow such a seemingly conscious course: I had ideas and intuitions which I needed to explore and I did it fictionally for about three years. The stories were spontaneous and rarely the result of careful planning. I would often write more than 5,000 words a day, sitting down in the morning with little idea of what I wanted to write. I would have one idea and a story would form around it.

At the same time I was trying to evolve a way of writing about my work with Zac which would satisfy not only a sense of narrative authenticity but an aesthetic one too. I started reading such people as Shulman (1992), Carter (1992), Clandinin (1992), Noddings and Witherell (1991), and they were a breath of fresh air. I believe such writings are of enormous benefit to the creation of a form of knowledge which can landscape and contextualize people's educational experiences in ways which have value not only for them but in their dissemination, to others who are searching as I have been, for new and appropriate ways of expressing educational and existential concerns.

During the academic year 1991-1992 my work with one student, Justine, highlighted the need for what Shulman terms, 'a landscape of cases'. In his address to the American Educational Research Association Conference in 1992, he talked about:

> *'The written cases go nowhere unless they become not only objects of reflection by the writers, the new teachers, who begin to connect their cases to other cases in the literature that share genre similarity with them. Now there's something to compare it to. '*

Furthermore he cited the need for:

'ways in which learning to teach becomes a form of enquiry and

scholarship engaged in by new teachers and leaving behind a legacy of

cases for future teachers to work with, learn from, and begin to build

into their own landscape.'

This was resolved finally into the question:

'How do we develop a strategy for developing what I am now going to   call

a syntax of cases so that as you criss-cross this landscape you have a

sense that there's a structure there?'

Rudduck (1991) is also concerned with the notion of landscape, and writes
that:

'student teachers must be helped to understand the balance of

generalisation and uniqueness that characterises the different

situations   that they encounter in schools and classrooms and to see

how and why it is important to learn not just to cope with the variety   and

to learn from it.'* (p.329).

However, she goes on to quote Hextall et al (1990):

'a reflective teacher can produce accounts of how their actions in the

classroom are coherent with their personal, professional stance.' (p.330)

In my first story cited above, the landscape depicted is an internal one,
remote and distant from others, seeking landmarks but not knowing how to
recognise them. The journey is one of spirit and psyche unrelated to action in

the world. It is interesting that there is no representation of negotiation in the narrative. People talk only to themselves. It is a search for self understanding only, but predicated upon a belief that this can be done in isolation.

Justine and I had an interesting conversation last year (21.5.92) about the reasons why a contextualisation of her own final report through the work of people like Shulman might add a necessary dimension to her work:

J. But when you sort of say, write a story, it almost seems too good to be true. To do this as your 'Special Study'. I mean, I'm actually looking forward to writing it. ...This is a bit of a luxury really. That I've actually been given the time to do it.

M. The thing is, it's a story, it's a narrative, but it's a narrative with discipline.

J. Yes.

M. It's just as complex as writing a short novel, or writing a very good short story. If you read this here, (pointing to Lee Shulman transcript) there are things here which actually refer to what we're talking about. (reads) 'How do we develop a strategy for developing what I am now going to call a syntax of case studies? You're writing a case-study...so that as you criss-cross this landscape you have a sense that there's a structure there?'

J. Right, yeah.

M. That's precisely what you're doing. But it is a story in as much as you could literally state: I am going to tell you the story of my educational development over the last nine weeks and how I have tried to promote pupil learning, using my experience with one pupil as an example. You see, you can do it and be as 'informal' as that.

J. Uh huh.

M. You don't have to use a lofty, educational-jargon style.

J. Right.

M. But we do expect the literature to be in there, because it is part of an academic course and because other people have something to say of relevance about the experiences that initial teachers go through.

I believe that in locating one's insights into the literature is not simply an academic exercise but can reveal one's own particular orientation more clearly to a reader. It also provides parameters and these are educational as long as they do not distort individual 'truth' and sacrifice it to preconceived notions for any other reasons than the pursuit of educational truth and understanding. Many of the students (1991-1992) contextualised their final reports through Shulman's ideas and this was for me, as well, a breakthrough. When Zac and his contemporaries wrote their reports, we had not discussed contextualisation through a narrative form, and indeed, I had not understood its significance. Linking case-studies into a landscape in which we *'could sense there was a structure there'*, enabled me to frame my developing understanding of the theoretical implications of case-study work with my own students for the future. In my diary I wrote about Justine's and another historian Katie's report (1992: 17):

'6.6.92. ..the way in which they have both acknowledged the significance of their writing, and contextualised it within a growing tradition. Jack's been talking to me about that for months. I only now start to see the implications of building up a collection of narratives which shows individuals coming to terms with their own emerging knowledge. How empowering that is. How powerful that is. And next year, I can show the students the basis from which they can construct their own narratives.'

In my facilitation with Sarah, I had understood the significance of contextualisation much more and presented the students right from the beginning, the text of Shulman's AERA conference address in a booklet about writing their extended essay through an action research process (Laidlaw, 1992g). What is interesting to me now as I review the conversation above, is that it represents a dialogical form of representation, which seems to me that many narrative exponents overlook. Narrative with negotiation (which in a sense constitutes dialogue) is a path I want to follow. Diary entries are all very well, but they are monologues. For example in my literature searches I have not been able to find examples of educational narratives in which the process of writing does not supercede a reality which is instantly recognisable. By this I mean, that so much thought is put into a careful presentation, that individual learners' voices seem to be subsumed under a mountain of sophistication by the controllers of the discourse, i.e. the academics. I was always supremely conscious about my responsibility not to write about others in ways which violated their own sense of the processes and their feelings and ideas about them. I did not understand at the time what this fear signified (and I write about that in the location of my work in the individually-orientated action enquiries in the action research collection at the School of Education at the University of Bath). However, I knew that there was something of vital importance in this reluctance to speak on behalf of others. At times I despaired of ever managing to create an educational narrative which was authentic in terms of all the ways in which it could be understood by those who had taken part in the processes leading up to it. I kept escaping into metaphor: it seemed comforting after what appeared to me to be the cold and arid realms of educational literature in which I could not recognise my own experience and insights. My fictional writing, which has been prolific and creative, and I believe sometimes also of a good quality, has enabled me to tell my story through metaphor. But metaphor was not enough

for me in the end. I care about honesty and authenticity. Grumet (1987, in Noddings and Witherell, 1991) writes:

> *'Crafty tellers try to avoid getting caught. They wriggle out of their*
> *stories like a snake shedding old skins, Sartre says* (1966), *celebrating*
> *negation as the foundation of human consciousness. Settling into our*
> *stories is in bad faith, he warns us; it is capitulating, forgetting that*
> *there is a face beneath the mask. The politics of narrative is not, then,*
> *merely a social struggle but an ontological one as well. We are at least*
> *partially constituted by the stories we tell to others and to ourselves*
> *about experiences.'* (p.137)

I care about telling the truth, not simply avoiding telling lies. It is in the dialectic between these two realities that my educational narrative resides,

I reflected a great deal about the moral implications of my actions in education: it seemed to me that educational narratives were also, as I have explained before in the thesis, moral undertakings, and that they should represent ways in which practitioners come to terms with moral questions. I turned to such literature as Gilligan et al, (1988), in which aspects of moral responsibility are discussed as they impact on different professional relationships, quite specifically from women's perspectives. It is written in order to counteract:

> *'the costs of detachment and dispassion in the face of what is most*
> *intensely passionate and personal.'* (p. vii).

This ostensibly 'passionate and personal' book, however, contains tables and numbers, the sort of data I associate with detachment, not engagement. There

are extracts from personal journals to do with decisions to be made, which seem to me to be approaching a form of narrative closer to a personal search for meaning. However, many of the respondents are not named. There is an anonymity about much of the presentations which defies the initial stated desire.

I could not find a way of expressing moral decisions in an academic framework either, but I carried these moral dilemmas into my fiction as seems clear now when I look back at the stories I was writing in March - May of last year. All of my stories are linked, it seems to me, by the exploration of who has the moral responsibility for actions in the world, and in the name of what. The conclusion to one of them should indicate the kinds of preoccupations which I was not yet able to translate into my writing about my work with students with anything like the degree of psychological and ontological authenticity.

Dragons and Dreams

...The dragon looked around in confusion, saw the happy children and their friends, the winged creatures dancing sprightly around and around with something which looked like glee. She then turned and looked at the villagers beginning to stir, their grimy, unhappy faces turned towards the day with a look of hopelessness.

"Why does it have to be one or the other?" she said softly to herself. "You don't need me after all, and every dragon needs to be needed. They need me more than you do. I need to go to them."

"But they'll not accept you. They won't even see you," said Morwen.

"But I have to try, don't you see?" the dragon said, her heart heavy.

As she glided slowly up into the air, her tears dripping from her face, she looked down at the beauteous little throng of shining spirits and realised what she was leaving, and she turned her face to other areas of the village who did not then, and

might never, know what she was giving up for them. She had to try. Her long loneliness and isolation from any companionship had shown her the value of her own magic in her life. She could not deny it to others. She landed softly and turned her face towards the crowd.

For the first time in one of my stories, I am acknowledging a profound link between personal knowledge and responsibility but because it is fiction, I still control the discourse, the plot, characterisation and significance. It is in the work of people like Margot Ely et al (1991) that I have found a perspective which begins to free me from the yoke of fiction. She has been influential in putting forward the notion that:

> *'your job is to create a text in which the person or persons you learn about come to life. This means that you have a tremendous responsibility to be true to their meanings. The written presentation is* *of crucial importance: in a deep sense, what one writes* is *what happened and what was learned.'* (p.67)

She goes on to say:

> *'The point for us to remember, of course, is that the ongoing mental act* *of interpreting is here consciously harnessed in the service of presenting the context we have studied as fully and richly as possible... Although our aim is to portray natural settings and phenomena, the writing is crafted. It is a construction by an author.'*
>
> (p.68)

My stories achieved, at best, an authenticity in which I could recognise my own struggles. By using metaphor alone, however, my writing confined itself,

to rhetoric. In the recent 'Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) Critical Conversations: the Role of Self in Action Research', (1993) I take Whitehead's point in response to Margot Ely's writing: 'Write On Stories about Telling it':

'I think its rhetoric masks a dialectical truth about the stories of the

action researchers in the educational community I belong to.' (p.131)

Yes, but there is a vividness about her writing which lends her ideas a vigour which I believe to be essential for educational writers who are trying to portray dynamic worlds. I aspire towards a form of educational narrative in which rhetoric and reality achieve an aesthetically unifying wholeness. My own stories were well crafted, sometimes well written, but the values which I aspired to were in written form only. They did not manifest themselves in any way which I could use to enhance the quality of learning with my students. In other words I had also in my own way achieved a pleasing rhetoric, but had yet to bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality in my educational life. I had to try and use my literary skills and re-create for readers the worlds of myself and my students.

For me, this move from fiction to educational narrative has something to do with care, I believe. My focus was for years on the beautiful forms I could create in my imagination, and the ideas I could give voice to. They did not have to conform to others' ideas of reality. Eisner (1993) had this to say about the shift of focus dictated through care:

'Those children became more important to me than the crafting of

images, and I came to believe then as I believe now, that the process of

image-making could help them discover a part of themselves that

mostly resides in their unconsciousness. Art was a way of displaying to   the
children, I believe...the dimensions of themselves that I

desperately wanted them to discover.' (p. 5)

Until the work I could do with my students became more important to me than the work I could produce through my imagination alone, until I could receive their final reports with the same kind of heartfelt gratitude with which I received a literary idea, I would continue to write fiction and struggle to find academic expression as if they were separate. What I now recognise I needed was the sense that Maxine Greene (1986) writes about:

'struggling to connect the undertaking of education...to the making and
remaking of a public space, a space of dialogue and possibility.' (xi)

My own educational narratives could become themselves the focus for this creative energy, which was to me, for those three years, a life-giving force. In the section about my work with Sarah, I think you will see the enthusiasm with which I was engaging with her and the other students' realities. To write fiction I engaged just with my own reality. In my work this year, I am claiming to be engaged with the work and lives of my students, and that it is this quality and representation of engagement which is itself educational.

Shulman (1992) makes a plea for crafted narratives which attempt to tell the lives of educators in what is seen by the writers as an authentic manner, as he sees them constituting the next logical step in the patchwork of educational accounts. The keywords here are authenticity and verisimilitude, qualities which Kathy Carter also calls for in her address at the same conference (AERA 1992). In my own research into such narratives I am struck by their attempts to bring together the breathing of life into an educational account

with its purpose. I also, however, recognise some contradictions. Recent educational literature has given us extremes in the realm of narrative writing. Goodson's 'Studying Teachers' Lives' (1992) is a clear example of the theory/practice contradiction which permeates not only content and form, but meanings. He states that:

'we need to listen closely to their views on the relationship between

'school life' and 'whole life' for in that dialectic crucial tales about

careers and commitments will be told.' (p.16)

This book is significant because it takes the view that teachers' lives are wholly relevant to the decisions and value-systems which are taken in the educational context by the teachers themselves as they act out and create their educational careers from the raw material of their own biographies. Where I believe the book is limited is in the lack of analysis of the synthesis between the biographies and their intentional actions. This is interesting given Goodson's own stated aim to increase:

'an undeveloped literature on the personal, biographical and historical

aspects of teaching. Particularly undeveloped is a literature which

locates the teachers' lives within a wider contextual understanding.'

(p.234)

I am disappointed with what I see as a significant omission - that there is no evidence brought forward from Goodson's own life about how it has affected his own life in education. There has always seemed to me an indefensible anomaly in advocating something for others which one is not doing oneself (Henry, 1993). In my reading of Shulman for example, I was heartened to find that the narrative approach stresses the empowerment of individuals in

discovering the relationship between self and values. However, just as in my stories, it is in the area of representation that I perceive their limitations. If they do not examine the cases of their own educational development with their students then I am not sure how much I can take on trust. In his article in 1990, Whitehead also took issue with Jean Rudduck (Whitehead, 1990) for this very reason and advocates a form of educational narrative in which the voices of students are not always interpreted through the words of the academic. It is ironic that I sought answers from academics who would usually offer me largely propositional forms of representation which were, in fact, denying some of the very aspects which they advocated in educational narratives. My own stories were also operating at this level which perceived reality constructed from the insights of individuals, but in <u>all</u> the above literature I have referred to and cited, the representations do not take for granted the potential for negotiation to determine meanings: I don't want to tell others about the value of writing in a negotiated way, the educational insights I and my students have, I simply want to do it.

In presenting my fiction to my supervisor as evidence of thinking about my research, I clearly felt somewhere that these narratives had some value. I advocated collaborative enquiry and negotiated understandings of reality, and yet my narratives, fiction and academic, were largely projections of my own thinking and creativity. In my earlier writing there is little obvious assimilation of the idea of dialogue as a pivotal point of meaning, and yet, like the writers cited above, I would write **about** the importance of dialogue. Not only could this be accused of being ontologically inauthentic, but it lapses into the old schism between theory and practice which this type of educational telling is supposed to circumvent. For example, in the paper I wrote about my work with Zac (1991b), I aimed to show how I had facilitated his action enquiry, but merely ended up revealing to myself my own

educational values. This is not simply an ego problem but a lack of understanding that **to reveal another human being,** in this case Zac, **even in a written form, requires a way of thinking about the educational nature of the processes in which we were engaged which would have required greater negotiation throughout the process leading up to, and including, the writing itself.**

In the following narrative, then, I want to remain true to my perceptions through my own research and my reading, that authentic educational narratives consist of crafted stories in which all parties recognise themselves, and perceive their own educational development. Thus although I am the writer of this thesis, I must still ensure that Sarah, Justine, Zac and others, recognise those aspects which concern them, as valid within their own perceptions too.

I will look now at various aspects of educational research in order to show clearly the significance and scope of my own research. You will have to see whether the narrative form reflects the changes in perceptions and insights which I have gained over my sixteen years in education as it becomes clearer to me how I can best live out my educational values in all aspects of my educational life - narrative form, constituting one aspect of the whole spectrum along which I seek to improve the quality of learning for myself, my students and their pupils.

Why a Qualitative Approach to Educational Research?

This was never really an issue for me. I could never accept a view of reality which was predicated upon facts and values being separate. This was understood by me as the way in which, in some educational research in earlier decades, people appeared to become numbers and statistics, and the

objects of the research of others. I always perceived education as value-laden and from the beginning of my formal involvement with becoming an educator I rejected very strongly any attempts to coerce me into a view of educational validity being determined by adherence to number systems. Kitwood (1976) referred to a dilemma that I also felt keenly where I did my PGCE at Cambridge (1977-78):

'Educational research is intended to provide objective, scientific knowledge. **Why is it that so many of its findings fail to appear convincing or relevant to those who are directly involved in education?'** (p.69) (My emphasis)

His article represents a milestone for its questioning of the norms at the time of writing. These were assumptions based on empirical standards of judgements to be applied to educational settings. He alludes to educational research writing in the following way:

'The general presentation of papers follows the pattern established by   the physical and biological sciences, complete with measurements and appropriate tests of significance. The newcomer to the field and indeed   the unwary practitioner, may well gain the impression that a cumulative body of objective knowledge about education is being built up.' (p.73)

This therefore lead to a situation in which accumulated knowledge about research into education was validated through its adherence to preset criteria derived from disciplines and methodologies other than education. He was referring in particular to researchers such as Anderson who in 1951, referred

to 'the science of education' and went on to posit the following analogy and terms of reference:

'the study of education...(and) the part played by theory in the development of the natural sciences.' (p.2)

I remember at Cambridge feeling sheer indignation when presented with the type of article Kitwood describes. One of them was about learning spelling in a classroom with mixed-ability eleven year olds. In this article (I don't have the reference) no child's name was mentioned. Method and grids were the answer to the quest for 'truth'. The references went on for pages. Sentences in this writing were punctuated by long lists of names and dates in parentheses which for me subsumed any semantic or common-sense level of engagement. There were numerous tables of figures and computations. I simply felt rage that this was being presented at all. I could not articulate the affront, the indignity I felt it to be to the reality which I was experiencing in the classroom and had experienced for a year teaching in a German Gymnasium. It presented itself as truth. It was literally 'blinding with science'. The tutor did not present it as flawless, but as one attempt to present 'the truth'. I just refused to engage with it, as being beneath contempt: it was an alien landscape in which I was expected to locate my own practice. I felt impotent rage instead! This was born out of both fear and paradoxically a sense of superiority. I wish now I had engaged with it. I might have learnt earlier to articulate my own understandings; I might have learnt something along the way. My educational development might not have been such a slow, laborious process.

It is apposite that although I wrote regularly in a diary, my only entry on this particular incident was *'It was a really disgusting article. Nothing wholesome or*

natural about it. Told me nothing.' I didn't note which article, or anything else which could have substantiated in a more helpful fashion, my antipathies. I did not analyse what I meant by natural, nor what it ought to have told me. It is relevant that my understanding of the necessity for systematic note-taking comes only very much later. My understanding of the significance of this will emerge in this section. In fact the article could have told me a great deal, but I failed to understand, as so often, the ramifications of such a form of representation. I did not understand the importance of engaging with other ways of thinking. I did not see it as imperative for my own educational development.

Kitwood then went on in his 1976 article to express three propositions which would, in his view, counteract the negative effects of the imposition of an inappropriate methodology and forms of reasoning on educational research. These were:

> *'First, that research must be centrally concerned with education itself;*
> *second, that the conception of the human being implicit in research*
> *must be one in which human powers are acknowledged; third, that*
> *fresh standards of acceptability must be established, based on a more*
> *intelligent understanding of the nature, scope, and limits of scientific*
> *inquiry.'* (p.69)

At the BERA conference in 1977, Brian Simon's presidential address (Simon, 1978) was to take this up and make a plea for educational research to focus wholly on education itself. I was at Cambridge at an exciting time for research and I had no idea! I lived in a world dominated by 'instinctive' reactions to children in classrooms. I didn't have anything like a coherent educational philosophy. I lived from heart to child. Unfortunately (and I actually mean

this) I was awarded The Lowman Memorial Prize at Cambridge for being the best English student of the year. (There were about forty of us.) 'Best' was not qualified, but I felt secure in my educative relationships with pupils and perceived no need to study my own professional practice. Indeed it never even occurred to me. My academic record had never been outstanding. I had always perceived myself (and still do) as a slow learner. But here at last I was successful! Cambridge said so, so I must be! I enjoyed teaching, I enjoyed warm relationships with pupils, and we did some exciting work together. What more could there be? I felt instinctively that my response to teaching was the only necessary contradiction to a view of education promulgated by the (unnamed) article discussed above. I wasn't aware at the time that there could be a view of knowledge which derived from systematic research by practitioners into their own practice. If I had known then the meaning of the word 'epistemology' I would have laughed at the notion that as a teacher I ought to have one made conscious through systematic research.

What about the Disciplines Approach?

That educational research was not necessarily coined from education as a form of knowledge in its own right was not new when I was at Cambridge although I remember taking little notice in the lectures and seminars. In the sixties and seventies, such knowledge was defined by Paul Hirst and Richard Peters (1970) in terms of the disciplines approach, in which educational knowledge was seen as being derived from forms of knowledge outside the field of education itself, such as from the sociology, philosophy, psychology and history of education. Education was not seen as a form of knowledge in its own right but as forms of knowledge whose conceptual frameworks constituted the methods of validation. Although Peter's research and work on education made it clear he advocated a relationship between research and practice, the following shows the subordination of practical knowing to

theoretical knowing, a distinction which is described by Louis Arnaud Reid (1980) as 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. Peters (1964) wrote:

'The differentiated modes of thought about education, though

harnessed   to practical issues, must also be presented in a way that they

intimate, and are seen to intimate, problems, at a more fundamental

level in the disciplines themselves, and the forms of enquiry necessary   for

their solution.'   (p. 140)

Hirst's and Peters' views of educational knowledge and research were predicated upon a researcher's ability to analyse and break down into component parts what was happening in a practical setting whilst simultaneously relating this to the forms of knowledge as cited above. This meant that research into educational practice itself, was not seen as creating knowledge but instead as adhering or not (and thus valid or not) to principles drawn from the disciplines of education. Therefore the standards of judgement (an important term for me, to which I will come back later) were themselves mirrors of the underlying thinking which constituted the content of education as it was perceived by these academics. An empirical approach to educational research demands that validity be tested through its adherence to methodologies and conceptual frameworks used in sciences, and an applied sciences approach would validate results which gave evidence complying with the forms and construction of knowledge demanded of research into engineering or medicine.

'Ethics and Education' (Peters, 1966) was a set-text at Cambridge in 1977. I read it carefully. I couldn't make much sense of it. I wrote in my diary at the time: *'What has this book got to do with real children in real classrooms?'* I see that comment now as actually quite profound. But I had no understanding at all

why such an insight was significant. I think this comment is a precursor to a type of understanding that I was able to develop in my educational research at Bath later which has led to this thesis. But then I simply rejected the book because it seemed to have nothing to say. It was no substitute to real live children in classrooms. I see this view as erroneous now, although the ideas presented in it, however inappropriate I consider their presentation, still resonate deeply in terms of their ethical conclusions.

Conversely I also read A.S. Neill's (1968) 'Summerhill' by choice. No one recommended it. I found it by accident and read it in a kind of disbelief, that here was someone who wrote about reality in a way that put up no barriers between me and the text. For me then the text was transparently beautiful, true and good. I wrote in my diary: *'I can't put it down. It's the way he writes as well as what he writes. Someone who's in education because he loves children and not just his own ideas about them.'* This literature was considered eccentric and of little practical or theoretical value. It did have a value to me, however, and it is mentioned over the years in my diary as a benchmark of fairness in my treatment of children in the classroom. An approach to children that I sought to emulate for some years. Although it has now to be said that my understanding of Neill as well as of myself, was somewhat scant at that time. I read into it what I wanted, which in retrospect seems to have been an escape from arbitrary authority in the classroom. I did not until recently understand the practical differences which a distinction between freedom and licence called for, and that metamorphosis of understanding I will also return to later.

Towards the end of my first year of teaching I noted this in my diary:

'June 1979. I am tired of meetings where we talk about ideas of children.

It's so technical. Where is the respect for individuals? Today we talked

about these ideas and no child's name was mentioned. It seems so

beside the point.'

I believe that this way of thinking sees as special, a way of accounting for education through meanings accrued by individuals. There is, it seems to me, a glimmer of a later perception that there is something special in the nature of education which cannot simply be derived by ideas about it from other areas of knowledge. This is not to say that I could have articulated such a belief, and certainly I could not have contextualised it at the time. I do not, however, want to appear as more knowledgeable and understanding of the processes at the time than I was, or simply to reject all understandings which emerged through the disciplines approach, or to give the impression of outstanding insights. I think I had some intuitions and it has been some of those which I have held onto in my seventeen years in education and begun to understand more in my three years of research. Indeed the process of my own research has largely been one of becoming more conscious about my predispositions as well as new insights and evolving my own theory of what my educational knowledge signifies.

By 1982 Hirst was ready to start to move away from some of his far-reaching conclusions of the seventies. One of the dangers of research applied to education as opposed to arising from within it, was the technologising of the process of education itself. There had been within Peters' and Hirst's work some acknowledgement of the importance of relating thought to practice. However, the emphasis on applying external criteria to practice was beginning to be seen as problematic. Codes and principles derived from elsewhere and therefore what counted as validity both in practice and theory,

were leading to something which did not relate directly to the process of education and educational research.

It was in 1983 that a most significant acknowledgement was made by Hirst in which he stated that he was mistaken in thinking that educational knowledge and valid research into education could only be constituted through the disciplines of the sociology, philosophy, psychology and history of education. In his acknowledgement of his own previous and now perceived error he said this:

'the question then is no longer whether particular judgements or actions were the best that could be taken by this practitioner in the circumstances in which the situation arose, but whether the understanding, principles, and capacities that he could bring were themselves justifiable. It is with the critique of 'operational educational theory' in this sense that educational theory in its wider sense is concerned....Many of these concepts will be those of everyday life, developed to capture the complex situations and activities as existential wholes, while taking for granted a common recognition of their detailed characters and their context.' (p.17/18)

He goes on to say:

'Rationally defensible practical principles...must of their nature stand up to such practical tests and without that are necessarily inadequate.'

(p.18)

The significance of this admission cannot be overstated. The assumption had been that theory preceded practice. Now comes the beginning of an idea

which would validate an educational research predicated more upon education as a form of knowledge in itself, created by educationists about the processes of education with which they were themselves involved. My research is focused on revealing the nature of such 'rationally defensible practical principles' and in establishing the practical tests for judging the validity of the principles. But this is not my language. Let me step outside this linguistic style for a moment and say what **I** mean in my own language. I have attempted to engage in research and writing about research which is a true reflection of endeavours to realise in my practice, those values which I have come to realise represent the best that I can offer in education. In the section about my work with Sarah which follows, I would say that I have presented my best work to date in terms of the valid codes of conduct by which I wish to be judged in education. My 'rationally defensible practical principles' are all those which constituted the work that was necessary for me to be able to write this present work.

The late Seventies and much of the Eighties could be said to be characterised by the lack of consensus about nature of educational theory. Lincoln (1993) expresses the consequent disarray thus:

'Even when individuals understand that the arguments are much

larger than simply methods, even small groups cannot agree on what *an*

integrated metaphysic might be for guiding research efforts. Nor is *there likely*

to be a consensus in the social sciences for decades to *come...The*

absence of a canon for educational research is projected to *last until well into*

the next millennium.' (p. 4/5)

Fewer articles and books were being written from the point of view that educational research and theory were the premises of the knowledge derived

from the methodologies and epistemologies of empirical or applied sciences, or indeed now the disciplines approaches. In other words, apart from research **on** education, other viewpoints were coming to the fore. This is neatly exemplified by the work of Delamont and Hamilton (1976), whose book on systematic observation marks a turning point in the development of more classroom-based teacher knowledge. It was now being perceived as necessary for educational researchers to find other ways of coming to know and to validate such knowledge. Empirical and applied-sciences with their value-free stance appeared to negate the moral and ethical relativism implicit in many educational processes, and in the disciplines approach values were related to their epistemological basis. The search for a way forward during this troubled period manifested itself in discussions about how to relate theory to practice. This time was characterised by researchers attempting to give a new form to educational knowledge, straddling the seeming disparities within a notion of practice versus theory with an explanation of the value-laden nature of any educational activity. Carr (1980) (and Dunlop three years earlier) had also written about their concern at the hiatus between theory and practice and their belief in its consequent distorting nature.

In 1989, John Elliot, Professor of Education at the Centre for Applied Research in Education at the University of East Anglia gave the presidential address at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) conference entitled, 'Educational Research in Crisis: Performance Indicators and the Decline in Excellence'. In it he emphasises that:

> *'the present government is forcing it (Higher Education) to accept a*
>
> *model of resource management which is endangering what I shall call*
>
> *conversational research communities. In my view such communities,*   *and*

not individuals working in isolation from them, are the

repositories of excellence in research.' (p.9)

This comment is a far cry from a view of valid educational research being based upon edicts from other spheres of knowledge, and is clear about the place of communities within the generation and testing of educational validity both of research and practice. Things have come so far that Elliott can now state:

'the primary aim of educational research; namely, to promote

worthwhile change by influencing the practical judgements of teachers   and

policy-makers...what makes research **educational** *is the positive*

vision of education which conditions the inquiry. The research process   is

not dissociated from a concern to change things for the better. The

primary outcome of educational research is not propositional

knowledge but practical wisdom.' (p.11)

This exemplifies how the shift in epistemological basis is defining the validity of the outcomes of educational research. There is a desired meshing between theory and practice. Elliott attributes his understanding of the validity of educational research being defined thus from Maxwell (1984) who stated:

'the central and basic intellectual task of rational inquiry [helps us] to

imbue our personal and social lives with vividly imagined and

criticised possible actions so that we may discover, and perform, where

possible, those actions which enable us to realize what is of value in

life.' (Introduction)

There is in this assumption of Maxwell's tenet that if one is to find a valid form of educational enquiry, the emphasis needs to be placed on the acquisition of wisdom and not the lower order perspective of knowledge. I am reminded of T.S. Eliot's (1937) lines:

Where is the Life we have lost in living?
Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

It is a holistic approach which both educator and poet wish to see applied to the way in which we approach our lives. More specifically, John Elliott is writing about the processes of research and educational practice. His address is asking researchers to focus on what is of value in life. It extends Simon's call for researchers to focus on education itself rather than on using externally derived principles of validity.

The Development of Action Research

I now want to move into the paradigm of action research in order that I might help you to see why I have chosen a particular strand of action research as appropriate both for the methodology and philosophy of my enquiry. I will as well outline some of the differences between the ways in which action research as a genre has developed and diversified, for where there are divisions, a researcher must choose.

Pioneered by Kurt Lewin in the forties, action research has gained increasing credence as a form of educational research. Over the past few years this has been consolidated through an emphasis upon the possibilities of actualising emancipatory and democratic principles through what Elliott (1990a) terms

'collaborative inquiry'. He alludes to its value in reference to the problems of validating case studies written from a personal perspective. A rigorous attention to notions of triangulation, through trial and error and through the sharing of outcomes and dissemination of ideas, the action research movement has claimed adherents throughout the educational world. Emancipatory or collaborative action research assumes that education cannot be value-free, and that every act committed in the name of education has a basis in the practitioner's values. In addition there is a dialectical link between practitioner and context. Emancipatory or collaborative action research also assumes an intersubjective approach to objectivity and validates the emancipatory nature of its claims to knowledge by a systematic analysis of how principles of democracy and social justice are being realised in educational settings (Carr and Kemmis, 1983). In such an ethos, valid research centres on issues pertaining to these areas and the ways in which they have been followed through, how consistent, logical, rationalisable, defensible and illuminating they are. Issues of generalisability are not judged in the same way in emancipatory action research which would be necessary within, for example, the empirical approach to educational research. Very often action research enquiries exist in individual settings, the practitioner being responsible for taking an issue of principle and researching into ways of how it can be practically improved.

The principal differences in the various forms of Action Research

I will now look briefly at the differing types of action research and show the reader where my own research is grounded. Put simply, there are two broadly different processes which cohere under the title of action research. The first one, technical action research, emphasises the method of modifying processes in the light of investigated concerns. It adheres to the method of

systematic and cyclical enquiry without a grounding in a particular set of values. Emancipatory action research requires this method to adhere closely within every stage of the enquiry to an orientation towards realising democratic and emancipatory values in action. In other words, to merit the name emancipatory, such an enquiry must show that its motivation and processes are themselves rooted in the emancipation of all the recipients of the research and by implication the context in which the research is carried out. This will include, then, not simply the researcher, but also any co-researchers, pupils, students, etc. and the classrooms under investigation. Collaborative or participatory action research are focused heavily on the processes of working together on issues which are negotiated by all concerned within the processes. Outcomes are in all forms of action research made public because not only does this increase rigour and by extension the validity of one's claims to knowledge, but also emphasises a belief that knowledge sets the reader and the creator(s) free, and that by sharing our knowledge we devolve the power implicit in the creation of knowledge. By working collaboratively as well in such a venture, we share the responsibility and power of that knowledge-creation. One of the spin-offs of a collaborative form of action enquiry appears to be the extent to which processes are democratised, as Henry (1989) affirms.

A prime motive of working together in an educational action research context is the potential to negotiate meanings that may lead to educational improvements. As early as 1956, Shumsky (cited in (ed.) Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) wrote about the benefits of co-operation in action research, saying this:

'an action research movement is potentially a grass-roots approach to the solution of community problems.' (p. 81)

He goes further, though, and expresses what appears to be ontological aspects to such research:

'Co-operation on an action research project may fulfil many needs in

the life of modern man...it generates a feeling of relatedness...he finds

that the worst of all pains is aloneness and isolation.' (p.82)

And it is in the area of my own ontology in which I find a great motivating factor for the form of educational action research I have chosen to work in. The next section highlights the reasons for my choice.

Which Action Research?

It is true to say that the validity of individual orientation is not a universally held principle within the action research communities, represented in this country by John Elliott at the University of East Anglia, Wilf Carr at the University of Sheffield, Jean Rudduck now at Homerton College, Pam Lomax at Kingston University, and Jack Whitehead at the University of Bath together with Jean McNiff (1988, 1992), who has been a key person in the dissemination of Whitehead's ideas. In reference to the above point, Elliott (1991) writes of the danger as he perceives it, of individual action enquiries as he believes they can lead to a mere 'technical rationality'. (In other words, technical action research in which the researcher puts into operation the methodological principles without grounding the process in a set of preconceived and/or developing values.) This view of a method taking the place of what is perceived as a more dynamic and synergetic process is not far from Schön's (1983) view of a technical rationality. Elliott is of the opinion that valid educational knowledge is acquired through collaboration. He

believes that emancipatory or collaborative action research is likely to yield results which are of a more qualitatively educational kind as he and others (like Whitehead) see a necessary correlation between good educational processes and collaboration. Whitehead (1985) places emphasis on the individual's right to determine the nature and course of her/his enquiry, given the necessary parameters of collaboration and the growth towards consensus at the points of change, evaluation and accountability. Greater individual autonomy and responsibility both for action and claims to knowledge are exemplified by his work. I will write about this at length shortly, as his approach is the one I have adopted in my own praxis.

Carr and Kemmis (1983) have been leading lights in the move towards developing an emancipatory philosophy for the methodology of action research along lines of critical theorists such as Habermas (1974). They have been criticised thus by Waters-Adams (1992):

' by aligning action research with Habermas' critical social science, Carr and Kemmis appear to have been blinded by the rhetoric of enlightenment, collaboration and political action to the extent that they lose sight of this fundamental issue: to engage in action research is a personal decision, by people engaged in the pursuit of 'personal knowledge' (p. 58)

Collaborative/Participatory or Individual Action Research?

I turn now to the importance of McTaggart's and Kemmis' collaborative work at Deakin University, Australia, as a stepping stone to my own, somewhat contrary concern, about the role of individual practice as a determinant for valid educational knowledge. Within their now expanded *Action Research Reader*, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) provide an extensive overview of

some of the significant work being done around the world in the name of emancipatory action research. It is in itself a statement of how far, and in what ways action research has been gathering momentum and acceptability throughout a growing number of academic and teacher-researcher centres. (The latter category has been largely created through this form of approach to educational knowledge and can be traced back in part to the work of Stenhouse (1975) who advocated teachers becoming researchers into their own practice.)

Whitehead (1989b) says that educational theory itself can be created through the descriptions and explanations of practitioners as they attempt to find an answer to questions of the kind, 'how can I improve my practice?' This **I** is not simply a catalyst in the process of innovation and improvement but a causal agent in dialectical relationship to the context in which the improvement is enacted. Furthermore, the centrality of the I embraces 'a living contradiction' (Ilyenkov, 1977), and it is this living contradiction which determines the dialectical nature of any knowledge accruing from the processes of action enquiries. It is in the interaction between the dialectical relationship one experiences with the self, the context, one's orientation to it and the influence of others, which determine then, the unique nature of each researcher's contribution and makes inescapable, the consequence that it is through personally orientated action enquiries that one comes to know. It is with this view that I find much with which to identify, and where I feel that my own epistemological basis finds voice. I wish my own work to be grounded in the empowering values (as I perceive them) of this form of action research and would therefore perceive myself as accountable not only to academics in terms of the rigour, validity and usefulness of my work, but also to my students, colleagues and other interested parties.

For example, when I had finished the following section about my work with Sarah, the English PGCE student with whom I did some detailed work this year, I gave it to her and asked for her opinion. More than that, I wanted to offer her the necessary opportunity to make comments on it which she trusted I would take into consideration. I wanted to take their comments seriously in my own reflections and writing-up. After all, I had written **about** her. It would not satisfy me unless it was able to convince her that what I had written was an authentic narrative in which she could recognise her own processes. This is what she wrote on 22.7.93. in reply:

'Moira, I think this is brilliant. You've encapsulated for me some/most of the learning I experienced at the time - put it into words that I could understand. It was an educational experience to read and I would like a copy! Much of what you say about your educational values I can identify with. (Funny that!)

Some observations! Do you think you should re-work the 'Hello sun!' bit? Knowing you and your rigorous approach, I know there's nothing wishy-washy, or pretentious about what you say - but it is possible to mock, misinterpret or be put off...

(In giving a draft of the next section to a colleague, Kevin Eames, he had commented on the possible danger of appearing too evangelical and full of sunshine! I had talked about that to Sarah before she read the same section. As a result of their comments I included something of what they both said.)

I like the way you've done the end (last section in which I interspersed the drafting conversation) *but have you put enough of yourself in? It*

was an intensely educational process for me and I couldn't have done it

without you. Have you allowed enough of your voice?

Obviously there were things you said which impacted in ways you

wouldn't know or expect. They can't really be included without my

collaboration.'

I would want to be judged by, amongst other things, the standards of judgement which apply to collaborative or participatory action research work which were originally outlined by Carr and Kemmis (1983) and later employed by Kemmis (1990) (and Smyth (1991)) as the basis for his article calling for an improvement in education which he sees as pivotal to an improvement in the quality of life of a society:

'If we employ the five requirements in making a critique of conventional approaches to educational research and evaluation, we discover that most can generate only limited, partial and (frequently) misleading advice about the nature and worth of particular educational activities.' (p.86)

- 'The rejection of Positivist Approaches as Partial and Misleading' (p.87)
- 'The Need to Employ the Interpretive Categories of Participants'.(p.88)
- 'Identifying Ideological Distortions on Interpretation.' (p.89)
- Identifying Aspects of the Social Order which Frustrate the Pursuit of   Rational Goals.' (p.90)
- The Relationship to Practice.' (p.91)

Henry (1989), building on Carr and Kemmis' ideas, reminds us of a danger he perceives although:

'the democratisation of research...is the best argument I know for

participatory research. (p.15)

This danger exists because:

'the state [might] recognise[s] the connection between knowledge and

control, why should it diminish its hold on people by enabling them

access to knowledge which makes it harder to keep ordinary people in

their place?' (p.15)

Individual Action Research Enquiries

Although as I said above I would want to be judged by the criteria used to validate collaborative enquiries, at this point I want to come back in detail to Whitehead's contribution to educational research. I would like you to understand why it is that his particular form of educational research is the one which I can see as having helped me to speak with my own voice and to draw conclusions which for me resonate on many different levels of my ability to perceive them. In his twenty or so years at Bath University, Whitehead has published work about his three original ideas. The first is a description of an action reflection cycle which becomes the basis for individual action in the systematic pursuit of the improvement of educational practice. The second concerns placing within this action reflection cycle the individual's 'I' as a living contradiction: an agent of change, unique to each enquiry. The third idea is the development of the first two ideas into the creation of living educational theories. I will discuss each idea in some detail, as my own educational development can be understood in terms of my developing understanding of the significance of each of these ideas. I will take them in a different order, and with different emphases for reasons which will become clear.

a) The centrality of the 'I'.

What first drew me to action research at the university was nothing to do with Theory. I could not see a way that educational theory related to any of my previous eleven years' practice. I studied for my M.Ed. in 1988/89 and had the good fortune to meet David McConnell who facilitated the Educational Development and Technology module. He was a brilliant and inspiring teacher. For the first time in my educational life, someone asked me about my reasons for being in education and challenged me to see the links between my values and my practice. Through such encouragement I rediscovered A.S. Neill (1968) and read Carl Rogers (1984) and wrote in my diary:

> *'October 1988. I feel as if I have come home. The way I want to teach in   the*
> *classroom has a philosophy and a history. Rogers believes that*
> *people can   be good and that they can become responsible for their own*
> *learning. I   knew that in my heart. To read it in a book seems nothing*
> *short of a miracle. They call it 'student-centred learning'. I think that's*
> *always what I've tried to do. Wow!'*

I attended the action research module as an observer. Colleagues told me how interesting it was. I was intrigued by the concentration on the 'I' and attracted by its democratic ethos as Whitehead practised it, but much of the significance of it passed me by. The 'I' as a living contradiction remained for some time someone else's idea! I clearly saw as correlational, student-centred learning and Whitehead's insistence on the centrality of the 'I' in discussion with him as my supervisor. When I facilitated in Zac's enquiry (1990-1991) my insistence on the centrality of the 'I' seemed to supercede every other consideration. I think it is also pertinent that there is scant evidence in Zac's

final report that any of the children in his care improved in terms of their curricular or personal learning. I had no formal standards of judgement which demanded that they consider the question I asked Sarah and her group this year:

> *'In an account of your professional development what evidence do you*
> *have that any pupil has learnt something of value and has taken some*
> *responsibility for that learning?'*

His report concentrates almost entirely on his own personal and professional development, almost as if he saw them as entirely separable from his pupils' learning. In concentrating on the 'I' without its component of the living contradiction and the dialectical relationship with a systematic enquiry to improve the quality of learning, the kind of facilitation I was able to offer the students in that year, was limited.

Who is this particular 'I'?

I am not at this point going to go into exhaustive biographical detail: I do not consider it necessary. Neither do I consist only of that which I could write in a section of a Ph.D. thesis. I, like any other individual, exceed formulated parameters. Apart from what I have already written in this thesis about my preconceptions and predispositions, for example in the section about educational narratives and fiction, there are three aspects of my biography which I believe are relevant for you to understand. These three events in my life are formative and thus impinge deeply on the values which I can live out in my practice with my students; they are instrumental (to what degree I do not comprehend) in enabling me to define what it is I do care about in this life. I perceive my self and my values as indistinguishable at the point at which meanings can be evolved into my actions. These events are, however,

without doubt, part-answers to why I persist in living out my values in the ways that I do, and are partially explanatory of the reasons why I perceive truth, beauty and goodness as in deeply complex ways related to care and healthy relationships with others.

The first of these events relates to my brother, Alastair, who is nearly eleven years younger than I. He could not talk until he was nearly six years old. Words like 'autistic' were bandied about, but no one seemed really to know what was the matter. He appeared to inhabit a world with a population of one. Very often I would come home from school and find him sitting in his room rocking back and forth in a rhythm which bore little relation to the classical music which he played from morning to night. From the age of eighteen months he worked the record player independently and would have tantrums of frightening proportions if anyone tried to dissuade him from listening all day to Bach, Vivaldi and Richard Strauss. At the ages of eleven and twelve, I perceived him as an uneasy burden, in other words as existent only within my understanding. I didn't want to spend more time with him than I had to: I wanted to go out and be with my friends. Neither was I ever expected to shoulder such a responsibility. However gradually I took to spending time in his room and he would be rocking - as always - and sometimes there would be tears on his cheeks. No sounds, just tears. These tears undid me every time. Sometimes I would still go out but my feet and heart would drag and within minutes I would return to his room, pick out one of the many story-books, and read to him. I had no idea whether he heard me, or whether he listened. I often asked him questions and then answered them myself. It became almost routine this questioning. I would sit with him on the ground mostly, and he would rock and I would read. But one day, when he was nearly six, I was reading him a fairy story, and asked him who was married to the king. Clear as a bell he answered, 'queen!' I will never

forget the elation of that moment. It seemed to me then (and still does) to be the most educative moment of my life, when communication was achieved that had more significance than any I have achieved since. There was something archetypal about it for my life: to experience that moment was to **know** that truth has some relationship to love. I really did know from that moment that I wanted to be an educator. That 'event' defined for me the parameters of what constituted 'educational'. Alastair had begun the pathway to communicating with others. He was nearly six. I was sixteen years old.

I am reminded of, and am indebted to, Chris Clark (1992) whose article revealed how his severely epileptic son was his greatest teacher, in that the child developed no animosity towards the world and was able to live in goodness and to be, for his father, an example of leading 'a life in truth'. It was after reading this article that I recognised the debt I owe Alastair in my life, and many aspects of my adult life fell into place. Directly after meeting Chris[1] and reading his article, I was able to understand about what that moment (and what had led up to it) meant to me. What I didn't find in his article were the ways in which he had taken his undoubtedly heartfelt experience and turned it into action which he was representing in an educational way for his readers. I was inspired by his article, but I felt he could have taught me so much more if he had chosen to present his ideas in a different, less propositional way.

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[1] Chris Clark visited the School of Education on his way to give his paper at an education conference in Tel Aviv in 1992.[2] See the work of **F.R. Leavis** and **Roland Barthes**, both of whom are concerned to reveal what they see as the necessary fusion between form and content, and the idea that the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. That one can, in actual fact, judge the enduring quality of a work of art through its inner symmetry.

The second of these 'events' was a brutal rape I experienced sixteen years ago at the age of twenty three. It traumatised me beyond anything I can put into words. And for fourteen years I told no one. I denied my own voice for all that time. Part of the healing process was the writing of a paper (1992d) which I presented to an M.Ed. Action Research group which I was helping to run with Jack Whitehead. I presented it as an example of my aspiration towards an ontological authenticity (Ghaye, 1992), something which had been concerning me for all the time I had been engaged in my research. One of the group had challenged me to state where my values had come from. The resultant trauma inspired some true creativity in which for the first time I voiced something of my inner self. The violation had become something through which I could understand the value of trust, cooperation, gentleness and love and perceive their meaning in leading a life which could fulfil me. The process of owning its importance in my life has been one of the most educative experiences I have ever 'endured'.

The third 'event' was not an event at all, but a consequence of the third. Because of the rape I contracted a disease which rendered me infertile. I was too ashamed to have the condition treated and by the time I sought help (about eight very painful months later) it was too late. When I was an adolescent and particularly after my experiences with Alastair, I had two aims: to become a teacher and a mother. I wanted seven children! Not being able to have children is a source of continuing sadness to me, but enables me to gain a perspective on the value of creating relationships which help others to realise themselves. I believe that it is through this sadness that I can know the joy of such creative endeavours.

I think the above might give you some idea why it is I care so much about people being enabled to speak with their own voices. I believe that people

have a right to communicate their realities as long as those communications do not impinge on the right of others to do the same. Alastair's and my voice were silent for too long. It might explain why I fight hard to realise those processes in my educative relationships in which power is not used for its own sake and for self-aggrandisement, but only in the pursuit of understanding. It might also explain why I can be easily reduced to tears of joy when a student speaks for the first time in what she recognises as her own voice. Barbara (1993) a PGCE French student, wrote this at the end of her final report:

'I had had experiences and insights which have changed me

significantly and I had expected now that it was over, to feel tired but

elated and pleased with all that I gained. Instead, well, I could only

describe the experience as being rather like 'baby-blues', when, after the

birth, you find that you are in a sort of emotional 'no man's land', a

period of transition from one state to another. I had come to

understand why I felt the report was so inadequate: until I had

understood the nature of the phase I had entered in writing the

report, i.e. that it is a transitional phase rather than a dead end, I could   not

'end' it. This area of learning will lead me further yet; it has not

finished because I do not want it to be finished. This was part of the

learning that the action research study had to bring me to understand...'

(p.16)

Perhaps you see as well why I care about negotiation and respect for individuals, and why I care passionately about the rights of individuals to come to their own conclusions, indeed why I might have been sometimes too forceful about that to the detriment of the education which I promoted. I will not attribute a purely causal relationship between the three 'events' and my

educational life, but I know that the threads weaving my values and actions into an intricate tapestry are infused with their moral colours. I believe that these 'moral colours' have taught me that 'educational truth' for me emerges through the dialectic between individual (and collaborative) responsibility and the ethics of the educative relationships I experience with my students.

b) as a Living Contradiction

When I eventually began my M.Phil. research in October 1990, I had no doubt that I wanted to pursue an action research enquiry. I was, however, skeptical about a living contradiction being first a natural human attribute and second, when conscious, a spur to learning. I took a great deal on trust and ignorance. However, with an English Elective group (1990-1991) at the University, I introduced the idea of action research to them early in the course, and I wrote about the session in my Action Research Guide:

'I believed they would be able to use the methodology to understand more fully the way forward in their early days as practitioners. I decided, with their permission, to video the session. The results were rather disturbing. All right, the results were shocking! Who <u>was</u> this person sitting at the front, all serious and evangelical, talking about Action Research with very little humour? And hadn't I always said that humour was really important in the classroom? That it brought something to life and enabled people to engage in 'the lesson' more easily, in a way that nothing else could? And if was the case, I had just done for Action Research on one level, what Attila the Hun did for social etiquette! And hadn't I usually used humour to enhance the atmosphere in a classroom? I don't know. I was quite pleased at the content of what I was doing, but seeing how I was actually engaging with the students has been for us all a sobering experience.

The result of this part of my research (which would not have been possible without using the video) is to make me question the way I approach students and is forcing me to re-assess my own efficacy as a facilitator... However I have a responsibility to try to improve my practice, as do all professionals whose actions have strong repercussions for the people who rely on us. This experience marks a stage in my own educational development and one that has been entirely the result of collecting and analysing data as an integral part of my research.' (p.28)

In fact this educational development I allude to above neatly illustrates the dialectical nature of such action enquiries. Such learning is not entirely the result of collecting and analysing data, but also its combination with my emerging understanding of my own responsibility for so doing in the name of education. It is **my** choice, derived from my own 'I'.

In 1991/92 in my facilitation of Justine's enquiry there was a crisis point. She arrived at one validation meeting and angrily threw down some sheets she had been writing. She was experiencing a frustrating impasse in her enquiry. I allude to this incident in the report (Laidlaw, 1992e) I wrote about my mixed response:

'There is a living contradiction here. I have stated many times my
belief in the valuable autonomy of the individual. I have talked to my
students about it. I have often managed to embody it in my practice.
Even more significantly, I said to Justine in our very first conversation,
that I thought it unethical for educational research to be purely research ***on***
*rather than research **with**. And this is because education is about*
individuals as much as it is about ideas.' (p.22)

I was very concerned that after all the work I had done with Justine, she might opt out of the process. Indeed in my journal (which I reproduced in the same report) I wrote very directly:

'5.5.92. Oh shit! What the hell am I going to do about Justine?'

It seems that in the above quotation but one, I have understood the centrality of my 'I' as a living contradiction but not its necessary dialectical relationship to a systematic enquiry. Although Justine's report has some evidence of pupil learning, it is not expansive, and at the time I did not recognise the epistemological significance of this weakness. Although I read about 'pupil learning', wrote on it (as above), talked about it with the students, and discussed it with my supervisor, I had not developed an understanding which could enable a change from an intellectual to a practical knowledge. For me such a process must be mediated through my emotions. This failure of understanding, then, is not unusual in terms of the way I learn. I see myself as a slow learner in the sense that until I have experienced something through my emotions and feelings, I do not manage to communicate it to others in my practice. I believe in fact, that I do not really comprehend it myself. For example, I failed my eleven-plus, achieved mediocre 'O' and 'A' Level results, a reasonably good first degree and eventually a Masters degree. It is only now, however, that through my research for the Ph.D., when I am instigating and coming to terms with my own ways of knowing, that I am at last beginning to communicate to others an understanding that can be translated into practice. I think the proof of that claim rests in the following section on my work with Sarah. Noddings (1984) characterises this way of knowing as:

'When we understand we feel that this object-other has responded to us.'

(p.169)

Similarly, Belenky et al (1986) interpret it thus:

'Connected knowing arises out of the experience of relationships; it requires intimacy and equality between self and object, not distance and impersonality; its goal is understanding, not proof.' (p.183)

My understanding, then, is largely created through relationships with others in which events translate themselves from ideas into meaning and eventually into significance. I had yet to learn the significance of systematic enquiry in combination with my own living 'I'. I had an article (Laidlaw, 1992a) published in which I argued for emotionality as a legitimate form of knowing and that action research is not a method or philosophy which silences women's voices. In the article, however, I had still not quite seen the potential for my own 'I' as a living contradiction as a limitless possibility for expression. I knew it abstractly, but had yet to experience the reality of it as I am doing within this writing (as evidenced within the part of this section which deals with my own 'I' for example). As a result the article is entirely propositional in character and tone and deals with reality as if construed externally and without collaboration. It is an intellectual exercise alone.

I will give you two linked example of where I think my deeper understanding of the educative nature of the processes in which I have been involved this year seems to have been successfully communicated to two students, Nigel and Emma. Nigel was a Physics PGCE student (1992/93) with whom I worked closely. Before Easter I prepared a paper (1993a) which I presented as Easter-reading to the PGCE Action Research Group about the work which Nigel and I had conducted together. I wrote the whole paper (about 25,000 words) in the Action Reflection Cycle form, and almost entirely

through conversations tried to communicate to the other students the power of educative conversations as a form in which learning takes place. I included these words from Nigel's journal as one of the focally important points of the whole learning process:

> *'29.3.93. Talking to Moira tonight, I contested something she had written in her words. She stated that I had not made a connection between what I was asking the pupils to do and what I was doing myself. The discussion developed and I ended up taking her point. I have not been making the assumption that the proposed improvement in the standard of work is due to my efforts...The reason I think this is strange is that last week...I was considering the problem of 'proving' that any improvement was due to my actions...This means that the parallel between me and my pupils runs deeper than either Moira...or I had first thought...I just keep peeling off layers of the significance of my actions...'*

Emma (1993), an English student, put it this way in her final report:

> *'As so often before I have drawn comparison with my own experience as a pupil of Moira's for this enquiry. I think I can again here. Moira did not set up a series of times and dates for each of us to report on what was happening in our enquiries on an individual level. The system has been that when we have needed help/guidance we could approach Moira. Bingo! It is only through the pupil identifying the need that the teacher, i.e. Moira, steps in and reacts to this need. The teacher is hearing the pupil and shaping her role dependent on the pupil. I feel that this is what I am moving towards with my action research'.* (p.13)

Why I am so gratified with those responses from the students is that they suggest that the way in which I conducted the educative relationships with them enabled them to find out some educational truths for themselves which had value for them and for their pupils. It was not my understanding that they were reproducing, but their own that they were consolidating through writing about it. My understanding seems this year to have reached the point in which I comprehend more of the effect on others of my facilitation. It is one of my cherished values that learners have the opportunity to frame some of their own learning. If through the way I have acted this year with the students they are beginning to understand in their own ways something of the educational significance of learner-directed learning for themselves and their own pupils, then I feel there is reason for me to be optimistic that I have acted consistently within my own value-parameters. It is, I believe, in the dialectical nature of the form and content of my research that such learning has been enabled to occur. Within the systematic nature of an action enquiry, I believe I can locate more fully the way in which I have been able to live out my emerging standards of judgement which are implied by the above examples.

Action Reflection Cycle as a Systematic Enquiry

I think my failure to understand the significance of linking the 'I' and the 'Living Contradiction' resulted in some missed opportunities for learning particularly during the years 1990-1992. I can characterise the significance of the linking through one example from my work this year in which for the first time I understood the term 'standards of judgement' in relation to a systematic enquiry. As I wrote before about my lack of authentic engagement with the realities of others, I think that I show in this response to their work. As a result of reading my students' final reports I set about writing a response which I wanted to fulfil two purposes. The first was on a collective

level - I was trying to say what I thought they had in common, what they had collectively contributed to educational knowledge and theory. Secondly I wrote something about their individual contributions. I reproduce here the first section:

What combines your individual enquiries?
A Personal View.
Moira Laidlaw, 27.5.93. Postgraduate Action Research Group,
School of Education, Bath University.

These thirteen studies are an impressive array of the professional practice of individual teachers who are struggling to come to terms with the manifold demands of the day-to-day job of teaching real children in real situations. The commitment that you have shown in order to produce this work is outstanding and I want to take this opportunity to say how much I appreciate your dedication and creativity. It has made my time here over the last few months some of the most educationally rewarding that I have ever spent since I first came into teaching in 1977. Thank you so much for that.

Values: I suppose what I personally and professionally find most moving about this as a collection is how it testifies to so many values which I suppose I came in the job to try and live out. As with you, I didn't know what my educational values were specifically, and for years, I regret to say, I didn't find the space in my days to articulate those values in practice as well as I might. I learnt, as you all seem to assert in your studies, the value of seeking my values, however, and one of those was that as an educator was to facilitate myself and others to speak with their own voices. I really feel that this collection is a living testament to that value and find it difficult to express in words how much that means to me. I think these studies reveal a commitment to improve the quality of learning with your pupils, be that curricular or personal learning. All your assignments show some real concern to provide evidence

of pupil learning, and you have shown, I think, how your attempts to think of ways of providing that evidence has become itself a focus of self-development and professional learning for you.

Democracy: *I think another aspect which unifies these studies is the way in which your concern to learn from your pupils what it is they need to enable them to learn better, has democratised the learning process. Your assignments suggest that there is an intimate link between learning from your pupils and democracy in action. Many of you have been able to show how and in what way you have adapted your teaching strategies in order to accommodate the individual learning needs of your pupils in a bid to improve the quality of their learning (whilst at the same time, improving your own).*

Social Justice: *All of your enquiries focused on an aspect of a situation which you felt for one reason or other, was not being lived out in the most productive way. Some of this reason can be put down to your own living contradiction, in that you are not living out one or some of your espoused values. Each of your studies is a unique response to this unease: something is not just, and your role is to understand that injustice and by understanding it and acting on that understanding, improve the situation for the benefit of others. It seems to me to highlight the altruistic dimensions to all emancipatory action enquiries.*

Systematic Reflection: *I believe as well that all of your studies show the value of systematic reflection upon your practice for your future career and for the pupils in all your classes. Most of you alluded to the idea that this way of working has raised your consciousness of what you are doing with all your pupils and not just the 'target' class for your research. This of course goes some way to justifying the time that you chose to devote to one class and in many of your cases, one pupil.*

Truth, Authenticity, Honesty, Integrity: *All your studies show a commitment to live out the above as courageously as you can. All of you have had to discover, it seems to me, what constitutes for you all those aspects of our experience in ways which can enhance your own professional insight and actions with the children. You have had to deal with issues like the ethics of your research, whilst at the same time remaining true to your own values. The ways in which you have negotiated those tricky aspects have constituted explicit chapters in your professional development.*

Standards of Judgement: *Something I have gone on about this year, but it seems that all of you now understand more about who you are as a professional and the kinds of decisions you will be making and why, and the extent to which you are justified in making such decisions. You have all asked yourselves questions of the kind, 'what are the standards of judgement which test the validity of this account?' and have done it in ways which are creative and communicable.*

A Teacher's Role: *Many of you have also raised the idea that it is in a consideration of my role in your learning that has enabled you to focus on your role in the learning of your students and pupils. This again, clearly, is a matter for celebration for me as an educator, if indeed I am trying to practice what I preach, and not to allow the living contradiction which I believe we all are in our own ways, to dominate my practice. It has seemed to become apparent to many of us as we have been through these enquiries, that a valuable way to approach teaching is as a learner oneself, about one's pupils/students, values, context, curriculum, learning needs of others and oneself.*

Collaboration: *As an integral part of your enquiries you were required to work collaboratively with others in coming to conclusions about the educational validity of your work. The professional ways in which you came to conclusions about how to conduct that aspect of your enquiry became more than simply methodological, and*

were feeding into the philosophy and knowledge which characterised and partly validated your research.

Case Studies from Previous Researchers: *All of you have made some reference to the case studies written by previous students. I think your use shows the potential for your own studies for future actions researchers, and emphasises an aspect of the educational validity of the work you have done.*

Educational Knowledge and Theory: *All of you have made certain claims to knowledge. You have had an idea and tested it in the classroom. You have modified it in the light of your new understanding and then evaluated the outcome with the insights of others. You have held yourself to public accountability and through descriptions and explanations of your professional lives your work has stood up to these tests of validity. Then surely now, those words you read in the booklet, 'Action Research and the Special Study' about the contribution you are making to educational knowledge and theory should strike some chord! Your knowledge is now tested, and evaluated. You know where you stand on certain issues and you have communicated that in a public forum. Your studies will be read by others and your insights and understanding integrated into their understanding and insights. Is that not how knowledge and theory are created and generated? You have made a scholarly as well as practical contribution to your subject, education...*

So, as you can see, each of you has contributed something unique and yet more generalisably valuable and comprehensible. I will finish with something which Joanne leaves her reader with, something which I find inspiring in its humility and hope:

'*I do not know what I may appear to the world but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the sea-shore and diverting myself now and then,*

finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me.' **(Isaac Newton)**

Jack Whitehead and I had talked extensively since 1990 about educational standards of judgement as integral to the kinds of processes in which we as educators could engage. I did not relate to it as it sounded mechanistic and anti-individualistic. This year at last, I began, through my relationships with the students, to perceive the significance to educational actions of having internalised standards of judgement as validating principles. No longer was 'standards of judgement' a concept for me, it had become a living reality in my educative relationships with my students. Together we had worked systematically, using the centrality of the 'I' as a living contradiction, and Whitehead's action reflection cycle (1989b) to produce unique contributions to educational knowledge. These standards of judgement constitute some of my 'rationally defensible practical principles' which I have come to understand over the period of my research. Other concepts which have been enabled to come alive for me through this way of working include democracy, and social justice. They do not live for me alone as ideas in my head, but in working closely and carefully with others in a self-reflective and systematically organised collaborative way, such concepts have taken on their own life and have become for me the answer to the question which my supervisor has posed me about the justification for my research: **In the name of what?**

I hope it is becoming clear to you now that the two categories, the centrality of the I as a living contradiction and its insertion into a systematic form of reflection/action cycle should not be seen as separate, but existing in a synergetic dialectical relationship. It is only this year, however, that I have really begun to reap the benefits, not of seeing it this way, but of living it this way. I am claiming that my deep comprehension through experience and

careful research, has enabled me to, for example, create with my students standards of judgement which live and develop just as their insights do. I will return to this later as I believe that this living process, a truly living art form, has an aesthetic morphology by which I can judge the educative relationships in which I have been involved and which constitute my claim to an original contribution to educational knowledge and my own Living Educational Theory.

Just for a moment I would like to return to the story which I included at the beginning of the section about narrative writing. It is only as I write this that I am realising something quite profound. The story contains, in symbolic form, a commitment to a journey of self-exploration (the 'I'). There is within it someone who wants to communicate apparently with others and yet succeeds only in communicating finally with herself ('a living contradiction'):

> *'Somewhere lived people like her. Somewhere she would not be unlike.'*

and:

> *'People listened to her with respect, or if they didn't, she hardly noticed.'*

In addition this story recognises the cyclical nature of experience and knowledge ('the action reflection cycle') and the person's place within that. What the young woman doesn't have by the end is something coherent, which she struggles to communicate ('a Living Educational Theory'.) It seems as if what she has to communicate doesn't matter to her, it's communicating at all that matters. Working through an individually-orientated action

research programme has taught me about the responsibility of owning both the communication and my place as an individual within that. I have had to work very hard intellectually, emotionally and spiritually for three years before I have something to say which really matters to me in the saying. It matters to me as well, unlike in my story, that it matters to you. Do I communicate with you? Have I given you reason to care as well? Can you relate to this 'I' that has struggled to find her own voice and its significance amongst other voices? This 'I' that has suffered to know great joy? This 'I' that presents her own living educational theory with apprehension, with delight, and most of all, with love.

The Creation of Educational Knowledge and Living Educational Theories by Individual Practitioners

As in the previous two parts of this section, the notion of educational theory being constituted by the descriptions and explanations of practitioners as they seek to improve their practice (Whitehead, 1989b) does not exist in isolation. It is also in dialectical relationship to the 'I' as a living contradiction and its insertion into an action reflection cycle; indeed, aesthetically there is something wholesome in such a morphology: the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts, and its form and content can embody a symbiosis. It is through the dialectic that something profoundly educational is able to occur and I think my own educational development (in which I see the achievement of my students as partially validating principles) testifies to this. Maybe this constitutes another reason for my interest in such a form of action research, and in the emergence of my own contribution to educational knowledge and theory. Through coming to an understanding of a standard of judgement which I term an aesthetic morphology, I am claiming that I have enhanced the educative nature of my educative relationships. Part of the aesthetic is expressed through the value-judgements which I and my students have been

able to exercise in our practice and use to understand and enhance the significance of our educational development. Before I write about my work with Sarah I would like to offer you the conclusions I have come to about what it is I do want from educational literature, educative relationships and the educational processes that I engage in with my students and the reasons why I would like the present writing to become located within the action research collection here at Bath. It seems here that such writers as Hayward (1993) and Walton (1993) exemplify in their explanations of their educative relationships and search for a narrative form of expression, exactly those educational values with which I would like my own work to become associated. Here, then, is what I want:

* I want a presentation of educational ideas that does justice to my insight that there is a dialectic between knower and known that can be interpreted as creative and representative of educational meaning.

* I want a form of communication that confirms the healthily symbiotic nature of form and content.

* I want my students and I to explore our worlds in such ways that promote both autonomy for individuals and yet collaboration towards individual health and the creation of a good social order.

* I want to embrace those descriptions and explanations of emancipatory action researchers who seek to improve their practice and the quality of learning.

* I want to reveal through my work my belief in the worthwhileness of humanity through their individual and collective aspirations towards goodness, truth and beauty.

* I want to reveal through my work my respect for people's individuality and their potential to lead good and productive lives.

* I want to reveal my knowledge that individual human beings and a good society are greater than the sum of their individual parts.

I want a form of educational representation which does justice to my understanding that it is within a constant struggle to find with my students where the responsibility for the ethics, collaboration, democratic practices, social justice, goodness, truth, and beauty, etc. resides at any given moment in our discourse, that the aesthetic of such a relationship rests.

* I want to take as ontologically and epistemologically meaningful, my experience that it is through the enhancement of democratic practices in educational establishments, that valuable learning can occur and be beneficial for individuals and for the contexts in which they live and work.

* I want to reveal through my work my respect for the individuality of humans and their potential to lead good and productive lives.

* I believe that the above can help to move the world to a better place.

B: How can I reveal the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationship with Sarah?

Introduction:

I believe that my claim to be evolving an original contribution to educational theory partly rests in the following writing about my work with one of my PGCE students this year, Sarah. I recognise the possible criticism of concentrating mainly on one student. However, as the previous section has revealed, I believe that my work with Sarah is indicative of my work with the other students, as you will have seen in the examples I have given already. As always in my work with individual students, I am going to attempt to portray something of the impetus within our collaboration towards a synthesis between the student's (in this case Sarah's) values, her actions and her insights. Because my work with her does not operate within a vacuum but is, at the beginning of the process in particular, and as I have already started to show, dependent upon the learning I experienced last year with Justine and the year before that with Zac, I will structure this part of the thesis in the following way:

a) I will show the start of my work with Sarah with flashbacks from critical moments in previous years from which I have been able to develop more educational strategies in my dealings with Sarah.
b) I will show the latter part of my facilitation of Sarah's action enquiry through a concentration on the process as it unfolds.

I am now going to present my central thesis. I have intuitions and a degree of educational judgement as to how it will proceed, and at the moment my rationale for what I am going to write looks like this:

I would like to reveal to you, and to myself as well, what is the significance of drawing out an aesthetic morphology in my educative relationship with one student in particular, Sarah (1992-1993). Through an analysis and

reconstruction of our educative relationship over about four months, I also intend to show my own educational development since the formation of my original research question: 'How can I better facilitate those Initial Teacher Education students during their second teaching practice as they undertake action enquiries?' As the following narrative unfolds I hope to show how and in what ways the interconnectedness of all the aspects so far considered as constituting my own understanding of an aesthetic in an educational enquiry - the indissolubility of goodness, truth and beauty, democratic processes in action, concern for social justice, collaborative enquiry, authenticity - are present or otherwise in this particular relationship. In addition, this is further contextualised through the ways in which the ethics Sarah and I (and also her pupil Hugh) bring to our actions in the educational processes.

In addition to this focusing on one student, I am going to be concentrating on our conversations, letters, diaries - and her final report in particular - as a way of characterising our educative relationship as a whole. In the evaluation at the end of the writing-up process, the students revealed to me three clear stages of their enquiries, an insight which was universally shared. These were: the initial stage of finding the question, then the action which followed and finally an intense but short period of writing up. Because this is how they characterised their experience I shall keep to these parameters for the rest of this section. I will give some detailed analysis in order to show you the ways in which I am approaching the whole relationship from the point of view of the educational, developmental, ethical, epistemological and aesthetic issues within our research. (I use the term 'our' here intentionally.)

There is another reason for my concentration on this initial conversation which becomes an increasing focus of epistemological significance. During this dialogue we strive towards finding a question which will act in a

generative way for Sarah's practice, that will contain and yet enhance her educational values. The process of coming to an educational question, is, I will be claiming, symptomatic of all the values which underpin the ideas and the practice inherent within it. I believe its generative potential makes this process one of the most important.

I will take a largely chronological approach in terms of my work with her, analysing aspects of the first tentative steps towards collaboration as a means by which you can understand the consequences and significance of what follows I will at first interpolate comments of an evaluative nature about the work with past and contemporary students, in particular Zac (1990/91) and Justine (1991/92), in order to reveal both my own educational development and that of my students. This will be principally so at the stage of forming the question, as I am claiming within the rest of this thesis, that it is a vital and wholly permeating process within an action enquiry. It is not only that my students appear to have learnt a great deal at this stage, but that I have as well.

In a sense I am asking you to hold two ideas together at this stage: I want you to see the following as an explanation for my own educational development as well as my students'; I also want you to begin to understand the intimate relationship between my development and theirs, in the sense that the aesthetic as I perceive it, which arises out of our educative relationships, lives and has meaning at that point of fusion between my development and theirs. Just as the ethics of our practice are negotiated, so too the aesthetics of the joint process is a dialectic between values and intentions. This also accords with the argument about the necessary synthesis and symbiosis within organic processes designed to enable educational and creative growth. I believe it is only if you hold at one moment these two ideas, with the critical

openness to perceive the epistemological importance of their fusion, that much of the significance is expressed.

I will also be representing this process of my educative relationships with Sarah and others through the following spectrum. Through my research I have been struck by how much learning occurs through critical moments in the relationship and within the educative process itself. I would characterise 'critical moments' as expressions of tension, confusion and sometimes negative energy which arise seemingly 'out of the blue' (to one or both of the parties) but whose roots and ramifications lie very deep indeed within the structure of the process which is being followed. They may not however, be critical for both people. The intricacy of unthreading these lines of meaning leads in my experience and it would seem, that of my students, to some profound and lasting learning. How I and the student respond at those moments seems to me to be epistemologically relevant, and wholly indicative of the relationship. This factor is vitally important for three reasons. First I believe that it will enable you to see a development within my ability to facilitate my students' work: how I deal with the 'crises' throughout the period of my research will show a development in my ability from Zac to Sarah. It is a way of keeping tabs on my own educational development. Secondly my students have attested to how much the resolution or otherwise of their crises mattered to them in their own development of insights, professionalism and growing awareness of their own educational knowledge.

However, this method of illumination serves a further purpose. Let us take a work of art as an analogy, for example Bach's Matthew Passion. In these circumstances 'Passion' means a narrative constructed from the Gospels and set to music, and it depicts the suffering of Christ on the cross. This one is almost operatic in its dramatic intensity. At a key point, a critical moment, the

choir, representing the mob surrounding the three crosses, is asked by the Pilot whom of the fated men it will save, Christ, Barrabas or another thief. The question is sung melodiously, gently. There is little hint of what will come. A shocking incantation in three dissonant tones corresponding to the syllables in Barrabas' name suddenly hangs in the air. It is stark and unremitting in its horror. My point here, is that this moment is symbolic of the whole of the Passion. If one interprets these few bars in sufficient detail, one finds Bach's intentions in the music, its instructional purpose, his comment on the prevarication of human beings, the pathos of Christ's suffering, the appalling magnitude of what has been done to the world and our responsibility for it. In those three shouts from the choir, the abandonment of personal morality and responsibility to collective cowardice and its consequent anarchy, are prefigured in awesome isolation. Bach shows human failure, as opposed to divine courage and dedication in those moments, unequivocally and without mercy. What constitutes for me the aesthetic value of this moment in the Passion is Bach's ability to combine representations of responsibility, and human frailties in a form which trades harmony for dissonance in the same shocking way that the crowd trades goodness for expediency. It is a deeply moral debate that Bach portrays (not only for its divine connotations - and as someone who is not Christian, these do not engage me very much) but for the universally human paradoxes that he presents, engages with, and finally resolves. All of the above insights have, for me, grown out of the experience of those few musical critical moments. If what is meant by such moments can be understood in terms of the creator's intentions for the whole work of art, then these critical moments are clearly significant and have something to communicate of more than descriptive and atmospheric importance. It is the link between such moments and the whole in which an aesthetic evaluation can be helpfully made. By helpful, I mean that which enables a greater participation in, and understanding of, the work

of art as a whole. And again I allude to the moral significance of this attempt to render Truth in ways which combine intention and form within a beautiful synthesis.

In my educative relationships, critical moments have increasingly determined my view of what constitutes development both for myself and my students. Whereas once I shied from such moments, as I will show, now I am learning to embrace them as of possibly the greatest significance within the processes that we undertake together. I have also embraced them in the sense that they lend a cohesion and coherence to the purpose of the relationship. They are, it seems to me, the external manifestation of internal conflicts, and unresolved tensions, concerned very often with ethical considerations and therefore contain an enormous potential for learning. I am making the claim that an organic growth lies at the heart of a healthy educative process, and will constitute much of the aesthetic understanding and value which I can gain from it. To illustrate this I must therefore relate to you these moments with their significance, developments and ramifications. For the changing ways I deal with these critical moments become themselves an ontology of practice as well as symptomatic of educational development.

I) Finding the Question: A Question of Focus
Introduction to the Action Research Postgraduate Programme.

On 5.2.93. I gave my lecture of the year to all 160 PGCE and UG students on 'improving learning in the classroom'. On 22.2.93., their second teaching practice began. I had called two meetings before teaching practice commenced in which I answered questions from students who thought they might undertake enquiries. This compares very similarly with my practice last year. In 1990/91, Jack Whitehead gave the initial lecture which Zac characterised as:

'a useful start, but I wondered how much I would be able to do it

justice.' (18.2.91)

Justine's reaction to my lecture was:

'I don't know how much it helped me really. We'd already started to

talk by then, so I suppose I was biased early on. I already had a sense of   it.

It's difficult for me to judge.' (conversation, 28.2.92)

This year Justine and I ran the lecture together and we tried to create an atmosphere of collaboration, rather than me being some sort of expert delivering knowledge from on high. Justine's involvement showed the democratic nature of emancipatory action enquiry. At the end of the lecture, I gave out a booklet called 'Action Research and the Special Study', in which I had detailed the action enquiry cycle, ways in which it could be implemented, and attempted to contextualise it within educational knowledge and theory on an international level.

Sarah's comments about the lecture were that it was not particularly stimulating, although she could see what Justine and I were trying to do. She did not feel that we carried it off. She had already decided that action research was something she would probably want to become involved in so it was not so important that it did not inspire her too much. She wondered about the appropriateness of holding a lecture on an ostensibly negotiated and collaborative process anyway. I have to agree with her.

Students went off to their second teaching practice armed with Whitehead's action planner, and four dates for their diaries about the Validation meetings.

These were a strongly advocated part of the programme. The students were self-selecting in the sense that they could opt in to the programme entirely through their own choice; they were also free to opt out of it if they decided at a later stage it was not suiting them. However my letter to them at the beginning of their teaching practice included this:

I am hoping that you will be able to attend these validation meetings, as they are crucial in helping you to focus on the claims you are making, the data you are gathering and any new questions which are emerging. I am offering you four meetings and would hope for your attendance at at least three of them. In addition... I am around on Monday evenings, between 4.30. and 6.30 to answer any individual questions. Don't leave it too long to ask. I will be happy to do whatever I can to help you...I have arranged the meetings for Thursday evenings, as it seems that some of you at least have negotiated half-timetables on those days. I have allowed two hours so that people who are far from the University will have time to get here. (18.2.93)

With Zac and his contemporaries (eight students in all), I arranged meetings on a much more ad hoc basis, not fully understanding the necessity for validation as a way of focusing learners' development. Last year with Justine's group (ten students) I arranged four meetings at the outset, but did not plan the learning agenda within which the students could discuss their own development and the pupils' learning. I was confused about my own right to impose a curriculum of learning on students and my responsibility as an educator. My own learning journal (prolific by now) did not even contain reference to the need for a more intentional structure. I see that now as testament to my lack of insight into the necessary systematic nature of an action enquiry to improve the quality of learning, mine, the students' and of course, the pupils'. There were issues which came up, of course in this first validation last year, such questions as:

'Should I be working on issues of bias (my bias) with my sixth form, or

looking at my Year Ten History group?' (Justine, Validation I, 8.3.92.)

And we dealt with issues as they came up, rather than having a particular agenda within which students could find the time to create their own, and start to understand the processes of an action enquiry. My first letter to the 1992/93 group, however, ended as follows:

You would probably also find it helpful if you were to bring the following with you:

1) Any data you have, like taperecordings, pupils' comments, journals, lesson evaluations, observed lesson-notes, etc.
2) Any reformulated questions.
3) Any doubts!

Best wishes,

This year I clearly started with a programme of learning within which the students could discuss their own needs and development. It is significant that the first item on this agenda concerns the pupils.

This first meeting, then, took place on 11.3.93. Thirteen students attended. Two gave apologies and I wrote to them the next day to inform them what had happened.

Introducing Sarah.

Of the first meeting she wrote this:

'Thursday's Validation Meeting: This was valuable in that it
concentrated my   mind, made me feel a lot less desperate in that
it gave constructive pointers as to what to do next. It was also valuable   in
that I discovered Richard (another student) is doing work in the
same area. I came out of the meeting knowing that I need to target a
few   pupils and 'start small'. I also need to get my data collection sorted
out. But before that I need to imagine my solution more clearly and
that is what has been going on in my mind...sheaves of differentiated
worksheets is not what I want, so what is?' (Sarah, letter to Moira,

14.3.93)

In what is to become a hall-mark of Sarah's way of working, she reflects upon the process, attempts to see what it means and then poses questions. I can take no credit for her clarity of thought. She already shows a clarity about the steps of an action enquiry. I can say, however, that right from the beginning I was trying to provide a framework within which she could get the most out of the time she had. I mean this in terms of her understanding what she was doing, why she was doing it, and the effect that her way of teaching and interactions with children would have on their learning and her own.

The rest of her first letter to me contains her thoughts linked to future action. She made an appointment to see me on the 18.3.93, giving me the detailed letter to reflect upon prior to the meeting. At this stage her question is:

How can I make the English National Curriculum accessible, exciting,
challenging to?...I don't quite know how to finish.

Her letter ends with:

I want to talk to you about data collection which is worrying me. I've

already thought about my own diary, pupils' learning logs,

questionnaires, and National Curriculum levels...I'm not sure if video   and

tape-recorders in the classroom are appropriate.

The scene was set for our first tutorial meeting. And largely she had set the agenda. And I was learning that through channelling the insights of the students in a focused way in these two-hour meetings, they could also be free to express their own needs in educative ways. I am struck by the way in which Sarah says what she needs, how focused already she is on triangulating her data-collection, and showing the beginnings of a real commitment to enabling self-direction amongst her pupils:

'I am impressed by the way pupils started to set their own agenda. If I

can have the confidence to build on this, it will give the pupils more

autonomy.' (see above)

There is, it seems to me in these comments a genuine understanding of the need for the teacher to be confident to facilitate confidence in others. Neill (1968) Rogers (1984) and Holt (1982, 1983) take this further in the sense that they accord to this confidence a leading to educational benefits, in that it facilitates democratic processes with children, so that they become responsible for what they learn and how they learn and that in so doing their learning becomes a deeper process and more lasting. At this stage, Sarah's commitment to this autonomy is implicit and incipient rather than stated in her practice and its significance fully exploited. This is an area for development in terms of an emancipatory action enquiry.

Much of my future facilitation with Sarah is based upon this particular comment from her, as it resonates both within my own values and also I have seen its efficacy (the value of promoting autonomy for learning with pupils and students). Zac's concern was to straddle the dialectic between enabling autonomy and ensuring physical safety within the laboratory, a dialectic he wrote about:

> *'Contradiction, no rights, no freedom, no status, no respect. It's no wonder they switch off...I want to treat them as equals. We are all human beings, let's give each other the chance to act as such - give them the freedom to learn and develop as individuals.'*

In a paper I wrote (Laidlaw, 1991b) about the characteristics of our educative relationship, I included this from my diary:

> *'I talked to Zac about autonomy and freedom to learn and it seems that there is a hierarchy of values operating...It is all right not to nurture individual freedom at times if it is for the greater good, whatever that is. And however that is defined. I feel I am learning a great deal from my work with Zac. He wants to find out so much. I wonder what he is learning from me, or whether I am simply providing the atmosphere in which he can learn...'* (p.14)

I think I was still at this stage considering that an atmosphere for learning was comprised only of the absence of hurdles. In other words I was always available to talk with him about his concerns (a practice I still adhere to in my teaching), consistently operating an open-door policy. I wrote to him when he needed to know something or talked as the case may be. I was still not structuring his learning sufficiently. I understood in theory the value of

autonomous learning, the right for the learner to drive her/his own learning, and that the ownership of processes denoted deep learning and self-esteem. However, there was not yet in this view of learning much challenge. I have very little evidence from Zac in his final report from the pupils' learning. He writes still on their behalf. I am sure that one of the reasons for this was that I neither overtly stressed the educative significance, nor lived out the value, of challenging him to widen his perceptions in expressions which emerged as the result of his own experience and insights, and which might by extension be lived out with his pupils.

It is working with Justine that enabled me to append to Rogers' (1984) notion of unconditional positive regard the idea, 'with educational intentionality'. She developed in her action enquiry the notion of differentiation through attitude, in relationship with one student, Lee, whose anti-school stance made it impossible for her to deal with him as she would the other pupils. She set up a series of work specifically for him and gradually, although signs are scant, Lee began to determine his own learning patterns in his History lessons. He was just beginning to become an autonomous learner and in the appendices to her report, his work shows a clear progression from careless, scrappy indifference to someone who is in the position to begin to ask questions. Neither Justine nor I really recognised the potential significance of what she began to achieve with this difficult pupil either in terms of his learning, or ours as educators. I feel both Justine and I were doing then what Bassey (1992) talked about at his presidential address at (BERA):

'"I don't use research, I just play my hunches'. That is certainly one way of creating education: by playing hunches, by using intuition, without challenge, and without monitoring the consequences.' (p.3)

I had much still to do to convert Bassey's first principle of educational research (playing hunches) to his third one:

> 'Creating education through asking questions and searching for evidence. It is creating education through asking about intentions, **by determining their worth,** by appraising resources, by identifying alternative strategies, and by monitoring and evaluating outcomes. It is creating education through research.'   (p.3) (my emphasis)

It seems to me that what characterised my own educational development was centred upon the realisation of the necessity for educational challenge, of embracing the critical moments, and of perceiving the significance of so doing.

Before I go into the conversation with Sarah on 18.3.93., I want to evaluate where I had got to with her at this early stage. Or rather where I had come to in my thinking about her. (All of the comments I write about Sarah have been shown to her for her ideas and evaluation as to their fairness and appropriateness.) I also want to draw your attention to the method I will be using to analyse my conversation with her.

To an evaluation first. I wrote in my diary:

15.3.93. I am most impressed with Sarah's action planner. I like the way in which the pupils' significance is being emphasised right from this early point. She clearly works systematically already and has internalised some of the notions about accountability for her actions in terms of pupil learning. This means that I will have less to consider in terms of enabling this understanding which last year with Justine I think I was beginning to take on board. Its full understanding, explanation and development

through the course of the enquiry will largely determine the quality of what she is able to do in the name of her enquiry. I must remember this time that it is in the name of something that we act in education. We don't simply inaugurate something and let it run. It has, like freedom, many rules. Like a poem, it may appear effortless, but it is highly structured if it is saying anything worthwhile. For without the dialectic between form and content (or freedom and licence) there is no progression, no meeting point of meaning.

Before I embark on looking at my practice with Sarah, I would like to place it in the context by which I am going to be analysing and explaining it. Two recent journal entries and an excerpt from a former writing will serve to show you the filter through which I am going to understand and evaluate my practice throughout this thesis. I will be writing about the notion of Practical Criticism applied to Education. I wrote about it in my *Guide to Action Research* (Laidlaw, 1992c) in the chapter on the role of the critical friend:

The word 'critical' suffers from a bad press. To most people it has only negative connotations. 'Critical' means to pull apart and to destroy... I come from a background in which the concept of the 'practical criticism' of literature was not viewed in (a negative way)... 'Practical criticism' was the part of my English degree devoted to the analysis and explanation of difficult texts, and the aim of it was to illuminate for the reader concepts that were difficult to understand at first reading. The 'analyst's' job was not to obscure, not to rip apart, but to reconstruct and make comprehensible something that was worth reading. I view that as the principle job of the 'critical' friend. S/He has to interpret and listen, to play back what the researcher is trying to reveal, to illuminate where there is any ambiguity, and to challenge where there is any untruth. S/He has to watch and become involved in the life of the researcher's classroom and to reveal to the researcher the reality that is being played

out there. S/He has, if possible, to point out inconsistencies and draw together common strands.' (p.27)

I see this as an important insight because it frames the educational experience and consequent insights in a way which is creative, and responsive to the dynamics inherent in any living process. It also highlights the similar nature of the role of the critical friend and the literary critic who attempt to illuminate, not to obscure.

In my journal, then, I wrote the following:

'19.5.92. How Can I Learn To Tell Tales Without Lying?

I've had a sort of revelation...Educational Practical Criticism...Yet even that could become entirely conceptual and lack the interdependence necessary between form and content to achieve authenticity and verisimilitude. Problem? Well at least for me, is that the analysis takes over and becomes the dominant authorial eye. There is a value in that, but even in my last paper about Zuber-Skerritt (1992) ...I find, to my surprise that the analytical first section speaks far more to me than the later section on the transcripts of my work with Justine, (a PGCE student with whom I conducted much of my work during 1991-1992) but I have yet to learn two things. First how to integrate analysis with intuition, and thus make it all consistent, and secondly how to present such authenticity in a way which speaks its authenticity, in which such an attempt is rendered transparent to the reader... However, let's look at the quality of writing, because it seems to me that therein lies a deeper level that I have not perceived anyone coping with. Stephen Rowland (1991) and Richard Winter (1991) manage something of this inner consistency with a quality of writing which deepens the significance and meaning of what they are trying to say.'

As I struggled here to understand the nature of the significance of inner consistency, I started to realise how powerful an idea was the notion of Practical Criticism applied to my educational practice and insights.

'When Coleridge wrote The Ancient Mariner it was an attempt to tell a moral tale...He wrote a prose gloss to go alongside it, because a telling of it in a different way, increased the authenticity of what he was writing about. So he experimented with a form that has not been done before, I believe, and through the cross-referencing made possible by the two forms side by side he managed to present the reader with a sense of dislocation which is at the heart of the poem, as well as deepening the narrative exposition...I want the form of my criticism to mirror what it is trying to say and this has never been an aim of literary critics. If this form actually enhances the meanings which can be derived from it, if through a reading of a text, a reader gets closer to the original purpose of the writer then surely it is a step forward in such an approach to rendering the text (the reality) of another transparent, or at least more transparent.'

I have always been irritated by Practical Criticism which seeks to render the critic clever and the work under scrutiny flawed. The approach I advocate is not to overlook flaws, but it is to render the work comprehensible in all its manifestations and complexity. As an undergraduate I posited the idea that the critic should almost be rendered invisible, in order to further illuminate the literary value. I went on to write:

'I now know instinctively what a piece of work about my educational development with Justine as the focus will look like. A synthesis between something which tells the story with its atmosphere, reality and focus, and attempts to explain why it was so. All in one. I don't mean that I want to imprint the process with a formula, but I now

know the kind of creative process that is necessary to achieve what I feel I am capable of.'

I wanted to re-present moments of my educational practice in ways which got to the heart of the meanings which emerged from them and affected my future work. That could not mean that I simply reported verbatim what was said during, for example, a conversation with a student or a colleague. It is not simply a conversation, it is the meanings and reality which accrue from that after reflection and always when possible, negotiation with the other person/people concerned, which enable meanings and significance to be born, to be nurtured and to mature. This form of 'Educational Practical Criticism' should illuminate and not merely show the erudition of the author. It seems also fitting to me that in judging a living art form, that I should subscribe to a form of analysis which can highlight the significance of the symbiotic relationship between form and content. Beardsley (1958/1981) writes about this connection thus:

'In aesthetic experience we have experience in which <u>means and ends   are so closely interrelated that we feel no separation between them...</u>the   end is immanent in the beginning, the beginning is carried up to the

  end... (p.576) (my underlining).

Bungay (1987) expresses a related idea thus:

autonomous identity and structured development are common to art and philosophy, but philosophy gives explicit reasons for the way it is, whereas art does not go as far as to point things out explicitly.'   (p.68/9)

Although I must then be cautious about overstatement (for a work of art does not state its parameters it simply embodies them), the 'living' element of the art form in which I am engaged necessitates a process of evaluation which is also committed to Truth and Goodness as well as its expression through Beauty. Bungay's insistence upon each moment:

> *'being related to other moments so that it must be thus and not*
> *otherwise, both determining them and determined by them,'* (p. 63),

is exactly the way of relating to my practice, the experience of it, my writing about my practice, the educative relationships I am involved in, which I believe to be an integral orientation for what I am about here.

In a subsequent diary entry written as a direct response to the earlier one, I included this:

'10.12.92. I see now so much more clearly how my thinking has moved forward; not that I deny the reality or the meaningfulness of what I wrote before but simply that the moving into a practical domain now, into action, seems almost like a sacred one. No longer do I see it as somehow a corruption of an ideal but the realisation of one. My stories kept that distance between one reality and another. Now I'm saying I want both, and within education I can help to bring about a synthesis...In the explanation of this idea will emerge something I believe to be more significant than anything I have written...If there is within Practical Criticism a way of thinking which necessitates an approach which illuminates without destroying..and this way of thinking is largely determined by notions of the aesthetic... then good Practical Criticism enables us to come closer to an understanding of how the aesthetic has been realised within a bounded system (like a poem for example). Such notions applied to an analysis of an educative relationship for example, could reveal what is wholesome,

good, true and beautiful about such a process (within the context of teacher education and emancipatory action research) then I think this contribution should be coined in such a way as not to violate the reality of being in such a relationship. **If our writing...can only ever aspire to a representation, then let us make that representation work on all levels of our ability to understand it...***The criteria should not only enhance the document itself, it becomes a way of judging it.*

I believe this latter idea to be crucial in terms of my developing understanding of the importance of verisimilitude in writing about education. Inner cohesion and coherence are two of the ways in which some people (myself included) judge works of art.[2] I want as well, and this is clearly linked, to evaluate and analyse the conversations I have in my practice with colleagues and students through the criteria of inner consistency and verisimilitude. In other words, **does the way I talk and listen, the way my students and colleagues respond, mirror our avowed intentions?** Are we true to ourselves in our practice? How can I show this, or the lack of it, through a kind of Practical Criticism?

F.R. Leavis (1973) comes close, I think, to an expression of the importance of the way in which the criticism is approached. He writes:

> *'Criticism...must be in the first place (and never cease being) a matter of*
> *sensibility, of responding sensitively and with precise determination to*
> *the words on the page. But it must, of course, go on to deal with the*
> *larger effects, with the organization of the total response, what is it? We*
> *speak of form...[which is]...interesting, as functional technique may be to*
> *the mechanically-minded and to workers in the same medium on the*
> *look out for tips, <u>the organic is the province of criticism</u>.'* (p. 228/9)

I believe that it is essential that in the highly analytical process of a textural exploration, I do not forget the holistic response as both are vital. To understand an experience fully, one has to, as Socrates said, hold the one and the many together. To analyse and to experience holistically.

Within my journal entry I then went on to be more specific about how the technique of judging the quality of the analysis of an educative conversation has already impinged on my work with students, and what its significance is for future practice, in other words my present practice:

'I have already started to play around with this idea in my coining of the way in which a critical friend should approach her/his work with a researcher-colleague. In the Guide I write about the need for an approach to development which highlights the process so that the researcher can start to make professional judgements about her/his practice. I am already advocating a way of working which uses the kind of Practical Criticism techniques. And indeed when I go into schools on observations, I attempt to reveal the student's practice to her/himself so that then s/he can be instrumental in the way in which change is effected. This is only taking the sense of personal responsibility for professional action to a kind of logical extension. It also adheres (which is really important to the idea of applying aesthetic standards to educational settings) to a notion I propound all the time that collaboration is one of the cornerstones of learning and development. And this is another reason why I work actively in emancipatory action research of course.'

First Conversation between Moira and Sarah, 18.3.93: A Search for the Question.

SD When I wrote to you imagining the solution stage... a question I had in my mind, was, what does differentiation mean in English as opposed to any other subject? How do you implement differentiation in English and it seemed to me from my limited experience that the area where it really comes into play is when the kids start writing.

ML What makes you say that?

SD I say that because everyone can respond to literature at some level...In Year Eight some of the weakest kids were the most sensitive in their responses. I felt that they responded with all of it...When it came to writing they found it difficult. It's a big subject, they write slowly, it's difficult for them. They know it is. Some of them find it very hard to do, and so (I don't know what you think about this) but I feel that the area I really need to work on is how to support them in their writing.

ML. That's very clear. I don't necessarily have to agree or disagree. It's your enquiry. But I wouldn't say that I had noticed that it necessarily manifests itself in the writing more than in other areas... I think there are subtleties which manifest themselves just as meaningfully in the way they say things. The way they listen. But...what is it in the processes that you are engaged in, Sarah that have actually moved a child from point a) to point b)?

First it is relevant to mention that this is the longest piece of our conversations that Sarah includes in her final report. It would seem, then, to be significant for her too. This is what she writes about it:

> *'Moira and I began by discussing about what I now felt about*
> *differentiation. I was becoming more focussed and sure of myself,*
> *and as a result a more focused question is emerging.'*

Let us take this first section in some real detail in order to see whether the rest of my relationship with Sarah confirms the view already put forward that the whole can be realised in its parts. What is extant here that I can then refer

back to to see whether it does speak for the relationship as a whole. I am doing this at this early stage for two reasons. First, I believe there is a tiny critical moment in this section for me. Secondly occurring as it did in our first face-to-face conversation, it might be seen to be indicative of things to come, or have within it the seeds of development.

As usual Sarah takes the initiative. She has come armed with questions to which she will either find answers or realise that her questions are inadequate. I stress that it is her enquiry and this is a point which I refer to again and again throughout our collaboration. I am determined right from the beginning to enable her to own the process for all the reasons so far stated in this thesis. So, Sarah starts the conversation. She sets the agenda straight away. She already at this early stage has a question formed and has thought about the ramifications of its implementation. She talks about her 'limited experience'. A possible insecurity or statement of fact. At this stage my understanding as to which is not fulsome. She goes on to qualify why she has settled on writing as significant in terms of her understanding about a pupil's development. She seems to be believing that it will manifest itself more clearly both for his understanding and hers, in the writing. My question, *'what makes you say that?'* is enabling. It states nothing. It merely allows her to develop. However, it is not just as 'simple' as that. I was aware at the time that I was not convinced by her argument as I show in my next utterance. My statement is an invitation for her to talk, but not simply to live out the value I hold of enabling others to speak in their own voices. She seems to be taking for granted that I am offering her a space to express herself. She has started to talk. She has said first what she wanted to say. She has set parameters and goals. I don't need to convince her, it would seem, to settle down, to feel at home. She is ready for that. All this seems to me to be apparent in her opening comments. Straight to the point. So in a sense what I do next, after

she has expanded, is still within this framework, but also accedes to my own understanding now developed since Justine and Zac, about challenging, very much in the sense that Bassey (1992) advocates.

What is the critical moment, then, which might be said to be interpretative of the whole of what I am trying to do? There is for me a tiny critical moment in this dialogue. I always experience a certain ambivalence and tension at the point of the dialectic between my perceived educative responsibility and my concern for the feelings of security and well-being of the student. As I wrote in the section about risk in an action enquiry with regards to CC, there is always for me this element of risk when challenging a student, or pointing out inconsistencies or inaccuracies. The student may not be aware of the risk. I might be wrong about it, but I perceive it in that way. My own living contradiction has sometimes failed to walk this particular dialectical tightrope sufficiently securely and purposefully enough. I have sometimes, like with Justine as I will explain later, erred on the side of care for the individual's feelings and sense of self as opposed to care for the student's educational potential. Failing to realise that nurturing the educational development of a student is actually a profound vote of confidence in that person's worthwhileness. I am aware of the importance in my educative relationships of treading this narrow pathway well. For the sake of the well-being and educational development of the student.

However, Sarah's purposeful manner and direct questioning, and also the strength of her metre when she talks: *'I say that because everyone can respond to literature on some level,'* mean that she is talking with the voice of authority. There is no tentativeness in what she says. This invites me to talk with her, equal to equal. Both of us have experience in teaching English, me obviously

far more than her, but still there is a common ground to explore as professional educators.

She then goes on to elaborate about her ideas on the study of writing being meaningful. It is on that premise that I can then tell her about my own experience. First though I say: *'That's very clear'.* Because it is, but it needs to be said. In my experience affirmation must be an intrinsic aspect of the work I do with students, for in affirming their experience I show them how much I value them, how much their opinions and ideas are of true importance. It must not be all I do, for like eating too many sweets, repeated affirmation after a while not only has no positive effect, but starts to become cloying. Two years ago one of Zac's colleagues, Carol Black (1991), wrote this to me in a letter which attempted to evaluate for me the work I had carried out with her on her enquiry. Much of what she said was positive, but she noted this too:

> *'Sometimes Moira I wonder can there be too much praise? You always*
> *were enthusiastic about what I was doing and sometimes I used to*
> *think that perhaps you were just saying it to encourage me.'* (June)[3]

This year, in the evaluation meeting that I held with the group, this point was made by Nigel:

'You were always positive, and sometimes I wondered whether you were just saying it at first, but you challenged me as well.' (29th June, 1993)

In my conversation with Sarah then, this affirmation is still here, but followed by something else which also bears detailed analysis. I say this:

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[3] Black, C., (1991), 'Letter to Moira Laidlaw', private correspondence.

'I don't necessarily have to agree or disagree. It's your enquiry'.

This has shades of the time when I wrote in my paper for BERA in 1991 about my work with Zac, that I would validate the experiences of my students if they were the result of systematic processes with their pupils. Whatever they were, by implication. I think the above comment to Sarah had a different tinge to it, however. The 'necessarily' qualifies and softens something which is about to come. I state then boldly that it is her enquiry. I could not be more clear about that. These two sentences set up that belief and make clear that in the end she is the one responsible for what happens. It is also a statement on my part of the belief I hold that a student should be aiming towards some appropriate autonomy.

So what have we so far in this conversation? The student is formulating her thinking. She is trying out ideas. She is speaking with some confidence about something she has clearly reflected upon. She has come prepared to discuss. I respond by opening up the conversation further, but in such a way as to prepare the ground for challenge. I try to express my belief, integrally, in her right to her opinions and beliefs, and the vital nature of people speaking for themselves on their own behalf. I also live out my value of enabling the other to take control where appropriate. It seems wholly appropriate to me that she sets the agenda from where she has got to. Only then can I respond in an educative way and not one which is to do with an inappropriate abuse of power. She has in a tiny way already experienced this space to define her learning for herself by the time I challenge her. Given all that, then a challenge is not only all right, it is necessary for the educative process to grow organically. This process has now the ingredients of respect for the other, of systematic enquiry, of growth and development built upon negotiation and

developing autonomy in learning, and just the seeds of democratic processes. Now comes the challenge.

As challenges go, it is a gentle one, but as this is only a couple of minutes into the discussion it is right that I should be mindful of its significance. In a way my challenge is couched in terms of a complicity between us. As English teachers we share a common concern. We want children to communicate in order to understand themselves and the world better, in order to be able to play a role in it which fulfils their potential. So I can say something like:

'I wouldn't say that I had noticed that it necessarily manifests itself in the writing more than in other areas.'

Notice again the use of the word 'necessarily'. It seems to be one of my palliative words. A softener. Having made this statement though, I must substantiate it in order for it not simply to be something which I am saying for the point of argument. Challenge for the sake of challenge. Or to assert my power. My next comment:

'...there are subtleties... in the way they say things. The way they listen,'

seems to me both in terms of curricular knowledge and its balance with facilitating someone else's education, to be sound. And then I follow this with a question which is open enough not to close down Sarah's own line of enquiry:

*'What is it in the processes that you are engaged in, Sarah, that have
actually moved a child from point a) to point b)?*

This still leaves her to set certain parameters of meaning, but I have suggested that development is the crucial educative factor. Not writing or listening, but externalising the processes by which a pupil learns. Note as well how I use Sarah's name at this point. I am aware now of doing this at key points. It is not that the key point here is so much procedural for me as to do with knowledge and that the knowledge we derive from our practice in education seems to me necessary to begin to externalise with students so that they are not simply following routines and itineries. I want to educate students into forms of understanding which will liberate their teaching from a potential technology of strategies (embodied as I see it within the thinking behind the National Curriculum for example) which is not of their own collaborative creation. As I state in a recent paper (1994b) about my work with Sarah:

'The process of focusing through dialogue early in an action enquiry is
a way of enabling her to feel the parameters of what can be done in the
name of an emancipatory action enquiry, at the same time as not
limiting her potential to grow towards her own solutions. I think there   are
particular strengths in a pathway to professional
development for the improvement of learning with the pupils,
which occurs through dialogue.' (p.1)

This dialectic should, if it is as educatively rich and generative (McNiff, 1992) as I am claiming, become more and more telling as time passes, and is already here within this section manifested in me in the form of a sense of risk and outcome and in Sarah as a tension between her recognition of her pupils' potential and her understanding of what is meaningful.

What is also symptomatic in this extract is Sarah's insight at this early stage. In her first comment to me in a taped conversation, she mentions pupils. They

are clearly at the forefront of her mind. Almost the whole of her second speech is about pupils' needs. I can only say that my lecture, informal talks with her, and invitation to the validation meeting stress pupils' learning, but I still feel that her grasp of the situation is outstanding. She does not yet appear to understand however, the interrelated nature of her own development with the pupils'. In this section she does not tell me how **she** is doing. I have never known a student not begin with herself and her insights into the way it seems to be going. Whereas in the past after a few weeks of the enquiry I have been conscious of having to shift attention from the student to the pupils, in Sarah's case the reverse might appear to be the case.

Before continuing with an analysis of that conversation and subsequent developments I want now to draw out the aesthetic morphology so far so that you can see what more needs to be done, and how it develops. You can also begin to get an idea about the way in which I am evaluating the whole process of my educative relationship with Sarah.

What is the form of this relationship so far? (Let me remind you, that I am understanding 'morphology' in both its senses, that of the form and structure of something - in this case an educative relationship - as well as the linguistic forms used to give it life and communicate its meanings.) Its concrete forms are characterised through letters written by both of us, individual contact and contact with all the other PGCE students on one occasion. As far as our linguistic communication goes, at this point in the relationship Sarah has written more than me and said about the same. She has taken control in the written form by posing questions to which I should respond. In the beginning of the conversation she dictates how we talk, but I lend that a greater complexity quite quickly: I appear to accommodate whilst actually challenging her ideas.

However, the form in which we communicate does not only consist in words but also in mood, tone, feelings and needs. It is thus difficult simply to reproduce in words. Much is lost in translation so to speak. However at this point there is a formality about the way in which we talk to each other and communicate through letters. For example she signs her first letter, *'best wishes'*. There is no humour yet in our relationship, something which it seems to me important to cultivate to inspire trust and enjoyment. No phrases appear procedurally redundant. Everything is functional and careful.

As for the aesthetic, as it can so far be understood, there seem to me only glimmers. I am understanding 'aesthetic' as both that appreciation of the beautiful and the growing concern with the ethics between us. In this instance who is taking the responsibility and why? I perceive the aesthetic in the fact that Sarah sets the agenda at the beginning of the relationship through taking the initiative with her letter-writing and her opening question in the conversation. This shows potential for an educative relationship in which the learners' needs are at the centre, in which there is openness between tutor and student and the beginnings of trust. It also suggests a professional taking of responsibility for her actions and intentions. I perceive it more strongly in her affirmation of the value I hold very firmly concerned with placing the needs of the pupils at the centre of what she is doing. I also perceive it in her allusion in her first letter with her notes about planned actions, her concern to develop autonomy in her pupils. For the aesthetic to live in all of these cases: development of autonomy, learner-driven education, taking control of the processes, issues of fairness and social justice, responsibility for her own professional development, then Sarah is going to have to live out these incipient espoused values as of course, am I. It is likely as well that these will be the areas around which critical moments with Sarah are likely to arise, if I

am right that it is in within moments that we realise the whole. At this stage then, there appears to me to be a possibility that links will develop and make coherent all the possibilities of the kind of practice that I advocate with my students and endeavour to live out myself. I am aiming for a relationship with Sarah which realises the indissolubility of goodness, truth and beauty, which sees as endemic the forces conspiring towards democratic practice, concern for others, integrity, freedom and a justice for all. (Note: I gave an earlier draft of this work to Kevin Eames, Head of English at Wootton Bassett School for his comments and he likened my enthusiasm to the fictional Fotherington-Thomas whose only expression is 'Hello clouds! Hello sun! Hello sky!' in a kind of dreamy, 'cissy' eulogy (Willans and Searle, 1958). I think I escape the extremities of this vacuousness through my commitment to realise this joy in action. You will have to make up your own mind as to how I manage this, if at all.)

For this educative relationship to achieve an aesthetic morphology I will have to see greater links between any concrete forms (like letters) and the way in which we communicate with each other and her actions to develop a notion of the good in her practice. I mean by 'realising the good' developing ways of working with others which enhance each participant's potential to lead a life which satisfies both individually, and collaboratively towards the creation of a good social order (McNiff, 1992).)

Our conversation continues thus:

...ML I am interested. When you wrote to me, you said, 'mentally I am modifying the question to something like, 'how can I make the English National Curriculum interesting, exciting and challenging to...?' It seems to me that you have refocused, and reformulated the question much more specifically than when you wrote the letter.

SD Yeah. I have been thinking about it. It's been a week. Yes it's too huge. I cannot do that in four weeks.

ML That's right, so how can you phrase a question that shows that your educational development has helped in the learning of at least one pupil in your care?

Here my agenda becomes clear. By repeating her earlier question I do two things. I show that I know what it is (that I am interested) and in addition I bring the conversation to the area which I perceive she is ready for, namely the formation of the question. This bringing her back to the formation of a question characterises the whole of this conversation.

She continues, naturally enough on her own agenda:

SD Yeah. (pause) In connection with writing, do you think?

*ML What do **you** think? That's the point. That's what you've come up with, so I suggest we look at that. And maybe now we need to phrase that into an action research question.*

SD Right.

ML Does that meet with what you want to do or am I pushing you?

The steps of the dance are now almost ritualised. I think in this section I am in danger of pushing her too fast. I have noticed that when my agenda becomes too clear to a student, then the power relationship in which we are working ensures that the student's voice is submerged.

Let me illustrate this. At a Validation meeting with my first set of students (1990-1991) the following conversation took place between myself, Jenny a Biology student, and Zac:

J. And what are they, your values?

Z. That's the point. You see, I wanted them to be able to respond to my commands if it were absolutely necessary, but without going against what I believe in: that we are equal in the classroom. And I can't do it. It's not possible. I realise now, that I had to be hard at first and then I could soften up a bit.

M. Jenny, you look as if you don't like that?

J. I don't. It's really sad.

M. But it's what he found.

J. Yes I know, but I still don't like it.

Z. Nor do I, but it's the reality for me.

M. And that's the point. For Zac. One of the purposes of this group is to come to share a reality that can be accepted by everyone here. I don't mean you have to agree with what Zac is saying for yourself, Jenny, but if Zac can show that he has been entirely consistent, that he has been through a process which he has systematically analysed and in the analysis of his experience he has been clear, unambiguous and consistent within himself, then surely we as a group have to accept his findings as well.'

And that certainly shut Jenny up! I have no misgivings about the beginning of the discussion: it seems to me a genuine exploration. I bring Jenny into the conversation, and even my disagreement with her is another one-liner, quite in keeping with the style of the dialogue. Note, however, how I suddenly launch into 'making the point.' I have since revised my opinion about valid knowledge always being the result of systematic analysis, as I have mentioned before in this section and elsewhere. It isn't that which so much disturbs me in this section. It is my abuse of power. I talk about a shared reality being a cornerstone of valid knowledge, a respect for the other in a sense, and yet the whole of that last part, denies it. It is didactic and preaching. I say we have to value Zac's knowledge, but not Jenny's in effect.

A strange contradiction. Within that error, I think you can see that my agenda becoming clear in such a way actually denies the voice of my student. I am through this experience of recognising my error is cutting off Jenny's insights, the value of collaborative ways of working in which negotiating our meanings through respect for each person's input has to be the cornerstone of good practice. For how much more rich and meaningful, might have been an exploration of Jenny's misgivings. But at the time I was certain of my right to intervene and 'correct'. I hope that had this conversation occurred now, I would have taken some time to explore with Jenny exactly why she was feeling as she did. Something perhaps indicative of my own educational development, is that when I included the above in a validation paper about my work with Zac, I saw it as a wholly positive contribution to the facilitation of the students' action enquiries. Now I can use it as a means of identifying how my greater experience with facilitating action enquiry leads me to find much to criticise in that occasion. Exercising an aesthetic standard of judgement here might have alerted me to the ethics of my relationship with Jenny and keep alive the dialectic between Truth and Care. **(N.B. June, 1996. See Introduction, section, 3.2)**

With Sarah, then, I had to try to enable her lines of enquiry to be kept fully open whilst still moving her towards formulating a way of thinking and a perspective which would enable her to encapsulate her ideas and turn them into action. Therefore I stress that it is what she thinks that matters, and that we do not reject the idea of writing. In fact I combine her concern about writing with mine in challenging her to find a question which will pivot on writing. I have to admit that at the time I was still not convinced that writing was as significant as Sarah seemed to think. If, however, I had insisted that we talk about a question without focusing on her insights, then I would have been wrong for three reasons. First, action enquiry is about the practitioner

being fully implicated in the search for improvement. If I had cut off this line of enquiry, then effectively I would have been severing Sarah's insights from her actions. It would have been doomed to failure. Secondly, my respect for her must be lived and not only voiced. I know that I have a responsibility to challenge and guide. However, I cannot teach Sarah something which only my insights tell me. Otherwise I am simply abusing my power and abusing her right to find out for herself. Gore and Zeichner (1991) comply with that belief when they state:

> *'This devalues teacher skill and the position of the teacher and*
> *increases the odds that teacher educators will neglect the very*
> *vulnerable condition of their students and aim straight at their goals*
> *over the heads of those they teach.'* (p.122)

Thirdly, my experience tells me that someone emphasises something for good reason. Sarah has mentioned writing several times. She has thought about it, written about it in her private journal, and devoted much energy into trying to understand it. When I attempt to divert her in the first part of this conversation, she sticks with it. When I ask her to formulate a question, she immediately refers back to her concern. At this stage in the conversation I do not understand her allegiance to it. I also do not know her very well. I do know though, that people often hold onto what it is they understand (or think they understand) as a matter of security and identity. Sarah is involved in many new experiences. She is a new teacher. She is in a new school. She is undergoing an enquiry, the likes of which she has never encountered before. She is entering an educative relationship with me and a whole set of people she has never met before, pupils, teachers, administrators. She has some firm idea about her world which I am loathe to dispel (and here the issue is not whether she or I am right, but about how I use my power within the

relationship at this stage and for what reasons I use it). Because I do not understand what has led to it I believe that way forward will be finding out about it. Until I can find out whether her insistence on writing is pedagogically or psychologically formulated (in other words it is an idée fixe) I am hesitant to act.

A little later we reach the following point:

ML Let's talk about your question, then. I think now the time is better. To actually get your question formed. With words that are going to release your creativity rather than restrict it...How can you form a question that is going to take into account all the elements that you are concerned about?
SD We've got writing. We've got one end or the other (high attainer or not) and I'm moved to Hugh, I think...

If I were browbeating Sarah I do not think she would reiterate the point about writing. In opening up the question into something which enables, I am also enormously challenging her as well. To formulate such a question which can do all those things, is a tall order. Look at how I do stress that it must locate and open up the pathways to her concerns.

Our conversation now takes another turn. She simply does not respond at this stage to the request to form the question. She is **not** ready. Gradually, we begin to move closer together in terms of this dance. Sarah's expression for this in her final report is this:

   *'We discussed the question **to and fro,** eventually coming up with a*

   question that was more focused, and which I actually felt I could do in   the

timescale.' (my emphasis)

Her desire to describe turns into an understanding of the necessity for explanation. We are talking about whether behaviour affects learning, or learning affects behaviour and suddenly she says:

SD You could have a question like, 'how can I help so and so develop his learning in this module, or this aspect of work?' I suppose that would do. It's quite tight, isn't it?
(writes down questions so far)
ML Yes, except learning is huge.
(laughter)

This is the first time there has been any laughter in the relationship. After all, learning is rather a large field! But it breaks the ice in a most significant way. I play back the tape at this point at her request. For a moment afterwards, she sits quietly, reflecting. She goes on:

SD So I talked about how can I develop his learning and you talked about learning being a huge area, so then you talked about writing skills.
ML Now, writing skills, how do you feel about that?
SD Both these kids, their behaviour is not good. I think getting them engaged in their work would moderate that. I am thinking about what you said about how you can recognise and monitor progress and that can change behaviour, so that would be a way of measuring success.
ML Then we could keep the question of learning rather than writing, because it would be difficult to prove that with an idea of improvement in behaviour...
SD ...So back to this question. We can either have, 'how can I help so and so to develop an understanding'...and then I've written down, ' How can I help X become engaged with this module, and thereby moderate his behaviour?', or perhaps that's actually...

ML Do you mean 'moderating'? That's quite neutral. Moderating means changing...

SD ...How can I help so and so become engaged with the Green Module?' It's sharper than 'how can I help X with his learning?'

A real turning point. Sarah alludes to the fact that I keep the notion about writing alive in the conversation, and by doing so I think I am living out my belief in respect for the other. It seems no longer pedagogically risky to do so. She is still determining the pace and the form of the conversation. She comes to her own formulation of the question, even overthrowing the notion of learning, for engagement. This very skilfully combines her concern about the pupil's behaviour with learning. I am responding but always in the back of my mind is my educative responsibility: *'do you mean 'moderating?'* and *'it would be difficult to prove that,'* and the biggest gamble, *'we could keep the question of learning rather than writing.'*

I felt that my agenda for this conversation had been achieved at this stage, except for the one which is always overarching, and that is my balancing the student's perceived needs and those needs I perceive as educative for her.

As the conversation progressed now, I posed her the following question which clearly had great significance. She refers to it time and time again in her final report:

> *'In an account of your professional development, can you show that*
> *any pupil has learnt anything of value and has taken any*
> *responsibility for that learning?'* (p.33)

In our conversation something very meaningful evolves from that point. Sarah asks:

SD The other thing is, how do we see success?

I reply quickly:

*ML How do <u>you</u> see success? How would Hugh see success?..That's a vital point. It's just come to me. I've never asked that question before. I have always said to the student, how will **you** measure success? But of course, if we're talking here about how an account of your professional development is going to reflect the learning of your pupils, then in some guise or other, in some way that's right for you, you are going to have to square that with Hugh's ideas.*

SD And that's about him having responsibility for his own learning. Wow! That's really neat. That puts him in a strong position...It's not imposed, it's his choice. It's the key, isn't it? Choice. So that's honestly it. I've got to have at least one meeting with him.

There is so much going on in this extract. I am thinking out loud. I am clearly involved in an honest exploration with Sarah. At this moment, we are both discovering new insights. There is an enthusiasm and vitality about our voices and our metre. I am perceiving in a new way, the intricate nature of our own development with that of the other learners in the situation, something I want my students also to understand. This extract attests to a desire to democratise the learning process, and actually shows it happening. Sarah and I, at this point, reach an equality in terms of our power to explore educational issues. This striving towards equality is one of the main driving forces for me in education. I am reminded of Shakespeare's final comment at the end of 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona':

'We came into this world as brother and brother.

Let us go then, together, not one before the other.'

I do not mean a forced camaraderie, or an inappropriate matiness, but a recognition of our similarity as seekers after fairness, justice for ourselves and others and the right to speak. A celebration of some of those aspects which can, I believe, render human existence meaningful and worthwhile, and ontologically satisfying. The first step perhaps towards something which Justine said she felt we had achieved towards the end of our collaboration last year:

'We seem to have moved from tutor/student to critical friends'.

There is a suggestion of an educative equality, it seems to me in my educative relationship with Sarah even at this early point. This is not something which I have consciously sought in my educative relationships, but which seems to be a side-effect of exploring ideas together systematically, becoming accountable for ways of working, and both being open to challenge.

Within this section we see Sarah's confidence in her growing understanding. She is making profound links as a result of a link I have made, which I have in turn been able to make because of our conversation and her insistence on driving the discourse. It is she who reminds me of the criteria for success which I have talked about at the original lecture and expressed in the special study guide notes (Laidlaw, 1992g). It is she who recognises the place of these criteria in our discussion. I remember at the time sitting back in awe at her grasp at such an early stage. She has had only a few weeks in which to start understanding some of the most profound educational knowledge which can emerge from individually-oriented action research. I have had years.

We conclude the conversation with this:

*SD It's this whole thing about the educational process - rather than lecturing, telling, actually finding out, letting them think for themselves. **Letting me think for myself**. (my emphasis).*

ML There is no understanding I can give you. It might be lying dormant and I can switch it on. Or perhaps I should say we can switch it on together... I think you will find an educational way of doing it all. The moment will arrive....

SD That's right. Criteria for success for both of us...I think we've got there for the time being.

ML Yes, I agree.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose! And yet not so. Sarah finishes the conversation just as she started it. She has completed what she wanted to complete. But look how she sums up. She is beginning to take the lead not only in the form (the morphology) of the process, but also in the ideas underpinning it. I would say that there was a greater expression of the aesthetic at this stage of the educative relationship than there was at the beginning of the same conversation. If a learner can sum up this would suggest control and ownership of the material. This is already the case with Sarah. In addition she is not only summing up ideas, she is living out the values of speaking for herself, of educative concern for others, of challenge and systematic enquiry, and the beginnings of notions about accountability to others for the work she does in the name of education. Some of that accountability she is now realising in an integrated way with her understanding about how to proceed, is to do with her pupils.

In her final report on this point she poses herself the question:

'Did he learn anything of value? First I needed to ask, whose value?

Unfortunately, due to my inexperience, I neglected to ask Hugh directly

if he had learnt anything of value. This is a pity because I think he

would have given me an answer.'

She now understands the value of asking Hugh, whereas before it was an ideal. That she has not done so is only in a sense mildly disappointing. She did ask him, however, about how he perceived his own improvement:

SD Where do you think you might have improved?
Hugh: In research.

And indeed Hugh writes about this in his final evaluation of his own work which Sarah quotes in her report:

'I have done my research very well when they was not enough

information but I wrote a letter to esso house asking them for some

info on cars and pollution and they sent me some.'

In our conversation she has said:

SD It's about him having responsibility for his own learning...That puts him in the strong position.

What is also significant here is that Sarah is in the conversation giving him a theoretical power over the validity of what she does. She turns this into practice within her enquiry and the final write-up. If action research is about, as Kincheloe, 1991, expresses, amongst other things a:

'necessary focus on the spoken and written words of students in order

that the teacher might understand what they know, their goals, and the

texture of their lived worlds,' (p.37)

then my and Sarah's and also Hugh's written and spoken expressions reveal our unique understanding of the world. I think that as facilitator in an action enquiry process it is with those understandings that I can help others carve their philosophy of their own lives. The process is a tentative one from the understanding of the understandings to the challenges for growth which distinguish education from any other activity. My reticence to disenable Sarah to talk about her impression that it is within writing that she will most clearly be able to inaugurate an educational form of research, is quite the right one. I believe that through giving Sarah the space to control the pace of learning, by according her respect, through the assumption that there will be a reason for her insight, through listening and suggesting, can I encourage an atmosphere in which she can begin to take responsibility for her learning, and move forward in her research. Such an environment enables me to become clearer about how I can help her to continue to do so.

As I have shown in the first part of our first conversation, however, there is both affirmation and challenge, right from the beginning, but the affirmation must go at least as deep as the challenge in which it is contained.

II) Action: a Question of Challenge.

The issue of challenge remains the leit motif at this stage of the thesis, for it is in this educative relationship by no means one-sided. With any student I am challenged to find appropriate ways to facilitate. My acceptance of open challenges from students really tests my value-base. After having concentrated so carefully on a question in our first conversation, I came to

realise how much this process of seeking a wording of one's values (which actually is what forming a question constitutes) permeates all levels of our future collaboration. In the correspondence which follows, I would like you to note how much the wording of a new question preoccupies us both. I also choose to present this part of the educative process because there is an emphasis on the emergence of a form for Sarah's action enquiry which I will later show spreads into her final report. The rest of the account of our educative relationship I have decided to present with far less direct analysis. I believe that the time has come for Sarah to speak more on her own behalf: she has a very powerful voice.

I am going to concentrate on the results of a challenge which Sarah presented to me at the end of our second validation meeting (25.3.93). As it came to a close and people left to go, I switched off the tape, and Sarah said:

'I don't think that was a very student-centred session'.

Neither of us had time to discuss her point and I left feeling really dispirited, but not fully understanding why. I did ask her to write to me if she felt she wanted to communicate her reasons for her comment. I wrote to her the next day:

26.3.93.
I am enclosing Katie Norwood's (1992) enquiry … I think what strikes me about it is the way in which Katie integrates her own practice, her developing understanding of her student's learning, with the wider context of the value of case-studies to educational knowledge. I think her work can stand equally side by side with published authors, as I believe that the work from this group will also have the potential to do.

I am at this stage particularly impressed with the depth of your thinking. I have thought a great deal about what you said last night about the session being student centred or not, for example. You may be right. I certainly talked a lot. It is always a very difficult line to tread between leading and pushing, being open and being directive, being structured and being restrictive. What I must try to ensure next time is being more open to your individual enquiries. I wonder whether it might be a good idea to ask all the students to let me know in advance what they want to do in the next Thursday session. I am writing to them all today as well to suggest that they see me on Mondays for individual or perhaps small group attention, or get in touch and make arrangements to see me on other occasions alone.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if there is anything I can do to help you in your enquiry. I take seriously the comments you made about the brevity of time to write up and if I can be of any help as you structure your final write-up, or in the thinking processes as you decide when to stop, then you know where I am...

On 1.4.93. she wrote to me:

...You asked me to note down what thoughts led to my comment about our last validation meeting. My feelings were that the agenda for the meeting was valuable and thought-provoking, but that I would have liked more opportunity for us, as students, to discuss some of the issues that came up My feeling was that it might have been more valuable for us to sort out some of the answers to our own questions in a discussion - I felt that every time a question came up, you answered it. I appreciate that time is very short and that you have masses of experience on what does and doesn't work, but I left feeling bombarded with information without having worked it out for myself. You said in the letter that you talked a lot and that was my impression too.

I feel that I'm sailing a bit close to the wind here, but I am sure that you will take my comments in the way they are intended - constructive rather than destructive. I am enjoying my Action Research and I think you are doing a great job. I feel that you are helpful, supportive and extremely approachable, which is why I am writing this. Doing this study has been a way of concentrating my mind on my educational values - and that has been incredibly worthwhile - but also I feel it has given me a much more deeply reflective approach. The Action Research has added another dimension to the PGCE course. You have been responsible for that in the questions you have asked and the areas you have offered for consideration. So I'd like to say 'thank you'!

Because of the Easter holidays I did not receive this letter until the 15th April. I then wrote straight back on 15.4.93.:

Dear Sarah.

Thanks for your letter. I've only just read it because I had to go away for a while. My father has not been well and the family (all of them, uncles, aunts, sister, brother, nephew, etc.) live in one village in Yorkshire - what a collection! Anyway I got back this morning to your letter. I am so glad you wrote. I am most pleased to think that you felt you could. I have thought a great deal about that last meeting. I knew there was something wrong with it straight afterwards. It bugged me. If you have read the paper I wrote (Laidlaw, 1993a) then I think in there it comes close to saying why. You are not sailing close to the wind by your comments (that's what you said in your letter at one point). I think you are right in what you say. I forgot again. It happens. There is so much to do, so much to be accomplished, that I forget the people themselves, as individuals, with individual needs. Thanks for reminding me. I needed to hear it.

I think there is something really important in this and I wonder whether it will be useful for both of us if I write about it at some length. I mentioned it in the paper. It's

this thing about power. There is something going on in the educative process which is to do with power norms. We have, I believe, in our heads, a fully formed expectation of the roles we play in these circumstances. We've been through the schooling system ourselves. We have an attitude ingrained to authority. It takes nerve to do what you did, basically because institutionally I hold more power than you. As I say in the paper, for the 'teacher' to be shown to be open to error, publicly, to be a learner in actual fact, is risky. For the 'learner' to become the 'teacher' and say, 'no, this isn't what was right for me and perhaps the others', is more than a superficial challenge. It cuts away the foundation of the kinds of power relationships we expect from the learning situation and which actually, I believe, create the whole of the learning environment. And if it really does do that, and I've not just gone into the stratosphere in terms of academic overkill!, then what happens? What comes in its place? And is it something which helps the learning process, this authority-web? Is it a natural phenomenon which we tamper with at our peril? Or is it something which can be outgrown? I tend to believe the latter. I hope that it can be the latter. I hope so because I would like to think that as humans we have the capacity to grow beyond the realms of force and coercion - to grow into our potential through loving and productive relationships of all kinds. I also am beginning to believe, and I don't think I've really formulated this before, that true education (leading to deep learning and not superficial retention, say, of facts for example) occurs at the points at which some genuine negotiation about context, content and process is occurring. My only evidence (although it would not stand up to the action research validation exercise because the children's voices are not being brought forward) that I have ever helped to create such an equal relation in my own teaching career in the classroom is concerned with a group of first years. I enclose it here, not because I want to say at all, 'I've done it, aren't I clever?' but because I believe that at the heart of all emancipatory action research lies the desire to democratise the teaching in and around classrooms everywhere. I enclose it because it gives you an idea of what I aspire to with students, and what I mean by student-centred. It also shows how much I have been a living

contradiction. Whitehead's term. Here I am going on about student-centredness and appropriating all the time and space at the meeting. Not actually enabling the students to at least partly drive the process. It is a shame that after all these insights in the enclosed paper, I can still do what I did at the meeting. Whitehead maintains that we do it all the time - espouse certain values and then live out other ones - and that it is from such incidents when they are pointed out to us, that we learn. I wonder whether you find that in your own experience of being in the classroom.

This business of power is a really important one to anyone who is in teaching of any kind. I believe now that when I make such a mistake, that it is not from ignorance as much as a lack of trust, probably in myself. We exert pressure on others when we do not think that they will be able to manage something. But if we have done the right things, been truly facilitative, then the trust we are not showing them is actually a mistrust of our own ability to conduct something correctly ourselves.

I am really delighted that you have found the questioning approach helpful. This seeking of one's values (which is at the heart of all emancipatory action research) does seem to be immensely valuable to individuals in their own ways. I know that I still am, in Nigel's words, 'peeling away layers of the significance of what I'm doing', and hope that this process will long continue. With people like you around, Sarah, I can have no doubt that I will ever become complacent! This letter is a genuine vote of thanks. I know from my experience at the University that I will learn from my students every year. The exciting and slightly disconcerting side to this is that I am never quite sure when or from where the learning is going to happen.

And if I aspire to facilitate students in speaking for themselves, if that is one of the highest values I aspire to in my teaching career, then how can I possibly be anything but delighted with the letter you wrote? Do enjoy the rest of your holiday, and I look

forward to seeing you at the validation meetings next term. Do come and see me to talk about your enquiry separately if you would like to. I know I'd find it interesting.

I enclosed my account of the Ancient Mariner teaching episode (Laidlaw, 1990) which I prefaced with these comments:

The following writing I have included as part of my Ph.D. which I am this term attempting to progress with. This extract deals with an incident with Year Seven group to whom I taught English and Drama. There are a few comment afterwards which did not appear in the original article but do constitute some of my thinking since. I am trying to show the reader where I am coming from. I think that anyone undertaking an action enquiry has to ask themselves where they stand on the spectrum from autocracy to democracy and that the discovery of that is a developmental one and truly educational.

Our letters crossed. The following day I received this written on 14.4.93.:

...It's amazing how much reading one can do when someone else is doing the cooking - and I've been doing a lot of thinking too - would Thursday 22.4.93. be O.K.? I could come at lunchtime and meet you in your office at about 1.00 pm if you would like. Would you let me know one way or the other?

I'll fill you in on what has been going on since we last talked. As you will remember from our discussions, the question we arrived at was 'How can I help X become engaged with this module?' 'This module' being based on library research and the production of a leaflet/pamphlet on a green issue of the pupil's choice. One of the ways of helping my research was to interview the child I would be working with. I did this, and in doing so, our relationship has changed and he is working better in class. Looking back, I see a reasonable amount of progress during the library research part

of the module. Next term we will be moving on to drafting the leaflets from notes the class have made. This will be a new phase of the module.

During the holidays I was thinking a lot about my research and especially after reading other Action Research reports and after reading Donna Brandes and Paul Ginnis on student-centred learning, I reached a new question. Or at least I think it's a new and more educational question - you may not agree. Anyway, the old question was 'How can I help X become engaged with this module?' and the new question is 'How can I create the atmosphere in which X can engage with this module?' This is what I wrote:

'Am I coming up with a new question out of all this? Not 'how can I help X to engage with this module?' but 'How can I create the right atmosphere in which X can engage with this module?' and that is a big one in my professional development. That's the key question that everything comes down to.

Unfortunately it's a much bigger question - and shouldn't I deal with the old one first? I think I need to ask Moira about this.

Strangely, but perhaps not so strangely, this is the question I wanted to address when I started thinking about Action Research. Is it appropriate though? Is it too personal, too navel-inspecting? Can I incorporate it in some way?

The difference between the two questions, or so it seems to me - and I could be wrong here, is that one focuses more on Hugh. 'How can I help this learner become engaged with this module?' i.e. what strategies can I employ, what techniques can I develop? I the teacher. This is actually teacher-centred.

The other question, 'How can I create the atmosphere for this learner to become engaged?' seems to set me in the role of the facilitator. It's student- centred - it's perverse, really.

...So in the first question, we focus more on the student, but it's more teacher-centred because I decide on the strategies (for that student). In the second, we focus more on me, but it's more student-centred because he will be able to decide on strategies.'

In addition, the second question allows more students to become involved because the atmosphere which allows one child more student-centred learning will inevitably allow others. I've also been thinking about interviewing at least one other child...

I call the second question the 'big' one because I am concerned about the way that despite my enthusiasm for an active student-centred approach, in practice it often doesn't work that way, especially when I'm tired. To be brutal, I can be aggressive rather than assertive and have a tendency to impose my will because it seems easier (subconsciously - intellectually I know it's the opposite) than motivation. This is a simplification and there are other factors too, but for me, this is where I'm a 'living contradiction', it's where, one way or another, my educational values are negated. Anyway, what I want to ask you is, what do I do next?! Is this all part of the same cycle, a side-shoot or a new thing altogether?

I wrote to you at the end of term about our last validation meeting. I've just noticed that I wrote this in my diary after the validation meeting:

'Another validation meeting - lots of focus on pupils taking more responsibility. I don't think I'm doing this with 8C. I suppose this session was for us, really - what are my educational values? If nothing else, Action Research has made me focus on them.'

As a result of that session, I've been thinking about my educational values and about pupil-centred learning. I think it was more valuable than I thought at the time(!) because it led me firmly in a direction I hadn't been considering enough.

This is a long letter, but writing has helped me to get more of an overview - even if it hasn't given you one!

I wrote back as soon as I received her letter, on 16.4.93.:

Thanks for your letter (again). It's a real treat to come in and find correspondence from you all this year. I am really pleased the way that people are writing to me and involving me in their research. It's great! I'm glad that you have managed a real break. Nice to be waited on, isn't it?

Yes of course, Thursday at one o'clock will be fine. I'll look forward to seeing you. I thought I would write now however, so that you could have a chance to think about what I say before we meet. Time is obviously at a premium for you now. Don't feel that you have to take on what I say or the implications of what I say. I cannot know exactly what your practice is like with all its unique permutations so some of what I say may be inappropriate. But you know that already!!

First I am impressed by the way in which your enquiry appears to be focusing now on a more 'educational' question, as you term it. I believe that this is one of the central aspects of any good educational action enquiry. What it seems to me you need to do first is to become quite clear in your own mind what you mean by 'more educational' in your question. If everything you seem to be learning at the moment resolves itself into a question of an educational atmosphere, then you must consider how, in your report, you can show us what that means to you in ways which we as your validation group can sanction. What are the standards of judgement which you are bringing to

bear on your practice? It is not simply that a report will require such clarity. Action researchers should be clear about it in their daily practice too. When you say that it is a much bigger question, the way you have changed it, I do not see that clearly from your letter. It has a different emphasis, certainly. Instead of tinkering around one child do you see the breadth of your question evolving through the fact that an atmosphere is not simply created around one individual but pervades the whole classroom environment? If that is so then yes, it implies enormous ramifications. I am not sure that the question is necessarily much bigger. I have found in fact that in my own enquiries and those of colleagues (people like yourselves) that complexity is the natural outcome of change and the perception of change.

You ask whether you should deal with one question first. I think, if you don't mind me saying, that you must have dealt with it to the limit of its capacity to be dealt with by you in this way. Has it not, like the chrysalis in my report, turned into a butterfly? A natural process of evolution. If you try to stay its progress you are likely to do damage to it in my opinion. Go with your reflective flow! I don't believe that your question is too navel- gazing. Are you not trying to improve the quality of one pupil's learning (specifically I mean; I know you are trying to do that with all your pupils)? I believe as well that your question as it appears now to stand, has the potential to become more student-centred, as you clearly hope. What I would like to see now is some evidence emerging, first, that Hugh did respond better in the library research and a clear pathway towards how your question, in other words your understanding, has evolved. And this hopefully in the report and in your practice can then be shown to be systematic and intentional (to an extent. Luck, motivation, outside influences all impact on the situation as well of course!).

What you say about student-centredness failing sometimes in your practice, well I think I know all about that! Don't be so hard on yourself, but do try to learn from those times when you fail. Action Research is built on failure and for obvious reasons

I don't make much of this truth at the beginning of my facilitation with students. Your own living contradiction will fuel your learning and ultimately your pupils' learning. I think you have a fair example of your own tutor's living contradiction becoming a possible point of learning for both of us. Whitehead says we should embrace failure. It is the action researcher's biggest asset. I'm not sure that I 'embrace failure' with quite such glee, but I know what he means. I enclose an article which Whitehead wrote in 1989 and which was published in the Cambridge Journal of Education. I'm not sure that all of it is relevant but the first few pages might be of interest.

I remain firmly convinced in this world of shifting values and insights, that this process of seeking one's own values as a kind of benchmark of good practice always in collaboration with others who also seek to democratise their practice, is enormously valuable. This is especially so if one also tries to act on these often hard-won values with integrity, honesty and trust in the world, that eventually good will prevail.

I hope the beginning of your new term will not be too pressurised and I look forward to seeing you next Thursday 22nd April, at one...

The critical moment which Sarah evoked in me by her challenge seems to have led to a greater openness and creativity between us, a greater frequency of correspondence and a clearer focus on her part into structuring her emergent understandings. These seem to me to be focusing on student-centredness, standards of judgement and future actions.

We had two conversations on 22.4.93. and 28.4.93. in which we started to consolidate the concerns of student-centredness, standards of judgement and future actions in our talk about Hugh's learning.

ML Did you get my letter then?

SD Yeah. I read it again before I came to see you just now. I've had the chance to think again over the holidays. As I said in my letter, I do have to come to that point. To that next question. I meant the first one was, 'how can I help him engage in the module?' and it seemed to me that the answer to that question was, after reading Brandes and Ginnis...'how can I create an atmosphere in which he can help himself much more'? Rather than me saying, 'Hugh, this is the sort of thing you need to read'...Rather than me putting in loads of stuff, me actually creating an atmosphere for him and hopefully others, will be able to do that. And I think in a way I haven't actually been addressing that enough. One child. That's what it often is about, isn't it? Focusing on one child...On the Hugh front, it seems very basic to me, what I've achieved, it's not, 'well I want to do that now.' I think it's quite low-level, really. I haven't got all my evidence together yet but his behaviour has certainly improved. I've got a completely different relationship with him just by having a conversation with him on a taped conversation...I haven't got his completed leaflet yet, but he has written quite a lot and he's working in a garage in his spare time, and he's writing a letter and various other things. Things have happened.

ML What's low-key about that? Sounds pretty good to me.

SD Does it? I think it sounds very mundane...

ML Oh no! Maybe another good thing about action research is it enables you, the teacher, to deal more consciously with Hugh, and the result of that good teaching is surely to enable pupils like Hugh to lead better lives. That seems pretty miraculous to me. Isn't that what you're doing? Enabling Hugh to lead a better life?...

SD O.K. then, I see what you mean. So it comes down again to 'how can I create this better atmosphere for him to lead this better life?'

ML Exactly... Where's the ordinariness in that? And you have been surely, in your role as a teacher, as a human being, warmed by the interactions between you and Hugh?

SD Oh yes, of course.

Then on 28.4.93. we deepened our ideas about the values we were holding into the beginnings of an understanding about what such values look like in action for others, as we try to educate them.:

SD (showing me some of Hugh's work) Although this is not top-class work, I think you can see that there is a bit of a difference. Quite vague really. What can be done about it? Here he has stipulated stuff. So there is a better feel to it. He has also written to an oil company off his own bat.. and he went to a couple of garages. And this was my suggestion.

ML And writing the letter...?

SD Was his own idea.

ML Has he a copy of that?

SD I doubt it. So that's really worked. There will be an evaluation of the work.

ML When you say an evaluation, by whom?

SD By him.

ML Oh good!

SD He also did a learning log which he hasn't filled in for a while, which is here, which is about answering a question on the worksheet.

ML When he says, 'I need to work on my writing,' I like that.

SD Yes, he does seem to know what he needs to do.

ML It's an evaluation with an intention, which is good.

SD Mm. 'I like working in pairs,' isn't the same. Then I asked him to work on his green stuff. He said he wanted to work 'at his own pace'. Good evaluation came out of that. The sixth former wrote something about how he did as well.

ML Oh that's lovely. You are beginning to get some evidence of pupil learning, I think, Sarah...So you're going to have an evaluation from him, have you had any taped conversation with him?

SD I hoped to do another yesterday but there wasn't time. I have had one in which I asked him some questions. From that discussion on the 30th, or whenever, from that point he changed his behaviour.

ML That's really lovely because there is a qualitative difference between those comments there and the later ones.

SD I was thinking that this 'at his own pace' is the really important point.

ML Yes it is.

SD Constructive.

ML That is much better than what he had before, isn't it? I like this, I like that. I think there is a difference.

SD Not enormous, but it's there.

ML You need to bring that out. The question I need to ask really, is, what do you think that Hugh has learnt? What claim are you going to be making about his learning? If you are bringing this as evidence, what is it evidence of?

SD Um, I think one of the things, a symptom perhaps. His behaviour has improved certainly.

ML O.K. Can other people corroborate that?

SD Yes, the sixth former, the librarian and so on. John will comment as well. So certainly that. Looking at his work here, I think that it's by no means wonderful work...

ML But he's not to be compared to other children, but only to himself. Has he improved? Learnt something?

SD Compared with himself I think this work is better, more focussed, I think he's learnt a little bit about how to get on with things. He was on his feet a lot of the time before and now last lesson I noted down that he sat down and worked... As I go through my lesson-evaluations, there're gradually no comments about him at all. Comments on other children. Interesting really.

ML That is an interesting way of doing it... I would like to see, if you have another conversation with him that somehow you ask him what he thinks he's learnt. About the significance of what he's learnt. To get round to that kind of idea with him.

SD Yes. When he did this, he brought this back, and he wrote: 'this book is about...' He thought he had finished. It has a contents page, and that was it. This really had to go back to him and he had to be more structured. I wouldn't let him away with that. He had to learn to give it more structure. I hope that there would be something more about the meaning of what he was doing. That he would go back and redraft. He's in a group that hates redrafting. He has to see that you have to go into things a bit deeper.

ML ...I think you can also see evidence in [a child's] understanding of the learning itself and of the learning process.

SD Yeah, I agree with that.

ML And the way that Hugh has done here, where a pupil actually starts to suggest alternatives. You have a pupil there who is not fitting completely into your parameters but is actually trying to create his own. However in a tiny way. It is still more than he appeared to be doing at the beginning. He was always reacting in your parameters. Now he is making a constructive suggestion about what should happen. If you take that as a statement of empowerment, then empowerment itself is one of the key-factors in learning...

SD Yes, that's true. You're saying that if he is actually feeling that he is a bit responsible for it, then he has some idea of what he's doing.

ML That's very important and the evidence you've got here works on lots of different layers. It is not just that you can show a thematic better understanding, but I think you have hints here of Hugh, of a kind of learning that Hugh has to have before the other kind can really take place...

SD Yes, I think so. There is a need to strengthen this and perhaps we need to think of questions to ask him. To think about the detail.

ML Yes, I agree.

SD It is difficult to know what to ask him. Difficult to pitch it right.

ML Absolutely crucial. Do you want to thrash out some things here?

SD Well I've thought of some things...

III) The Writing-Up: a Question of Synthesis.

After our conversations and letters, it was now clear that the time had come for Sarah to start sorting out for herself what it was she understood and to weave the threads into her own account. She wrote:

...I've started work on writing up my report but, as usual, I haven't proceeded as fast as I would have hoped. I've got a good idea now of what I want to say and I think it would be useful if I spent Thursday afternoon working on a first draft...

I was writing to the group in an attempt to bring together some of the points that were occurring in tutoring sessions with individual students. It is significant, in terms of the general themes that were emerging with most of the students, that I could write to all of them in a way which was also wholly relevant to the conversations and correspondence that Sarah and I had experienced:

5.5.93.

...I thought I would write to you to clarify some of the things that we were talking about at the Validation meeting last Thursday. I have listened to the tape, and have to say that I really feel that there is a spirit of understanding about what constitutes valid action research work going on now... It seems to me, from listening to the tape, however, that there is still some uncertainty and insecurity about what constitutes validity in terms of the evidence of pupil learning. I thought I would write a little

about that, and then if there's anything you don't understand, you can get back to me when you need to.

What does evidence of pupil learning look like? First read my Guide on that section. (It saves me repeating it!) To answer that you need to think carefully about how you can see pupil learning in the first place let alone prove it's happened. So what do you look for? Well, documentary evidence for a start, of course. Homework, coursework, notes, journal entries etc. Over time. You can't do it in isolated pockets, little vacuums with no relationship to the whole development. That's going to be curricular learning, and after all you have been put into your schools to assist with learning in a particular curricular area...

All right.., what else can you do? ..What other type of learning can you show has probably happened? This brings us to the whole area of the pupils learning about **how** *they learn. Can you show that you have started to inaugurate with the pupils, processes which have helped them to understand anything about how they learn? Have you started journals? Are you holding yourself accountable to your pupils in any way for the work that you are doing with them? Do they have any power of evaluation, in other words? Or do you hold all the power? Learning is something as well to do with power. Who has the right to say what is learning and what is not in your classrooms? If you asking yourself this question in any form, and trying to act on this way of thinking and it appears to be having an effect on your pupils, then you are doing something about showing how learning is taking place. If issues of autonomy and responsibility for learning are themselves informing the way that you are acting in the classroom, then you will somewhere in your notes, your tape-recordings, lesson evaluations, pupil comments, journals etc., have some proof of the development of thinking amongst you and your pupils.*

*And now I want to talk a little about the significance of pupils speaking for themselves...Much of the work in emancipatory action research is to do with finding ways to enable those with less power to become their own spokespeople. Instead of being talked about, written about, spoken for (however laudable the motives may appear), the processes which we have to go through in order to enable that to be minimised, effect enormous learning...Isn't it the case, that when you understand what is happening to the extent that you can say, 'but this is different for me. I don't learn in that way,' or 'yes, that's how I want to do it because...' that you can truly say as well that you understand what is happening in a very valuable way? Think of your own learning. How do you learn? How do you know that? What does answering questions like that enable you to **do** in the future? I will cite something which was said in the second validation meeting: 'I don't think this was a student-centred session.'After the initial gulp I was really encouraged that notions about student-centredness were being formed in order to be able to make such a statement. If you can subsequently be held publicly accountable for your own notions (if this is what you are trying to do in the first place) about what student-centredness is all about for example, then you are building your own learning and becoming responsible for that learning. You are therefore speaking in your own voice. Not mine. The voice of experience as it makes sense of experience!*

*A couple of you have come to me recently and said, "I think I know this now," (whatever it may be, a recognition of the significance of something, or that people really do learn when they are motivated, for example) "but it seems so little after all this effort." My response was, if I remember correctly, that it not a little thing at all. It is **your** learning. So deeply significant for the ways in which you can teach from now on. And that in your report such comments, when substantiated by triangulation of one sort or another, are evidence of you speaking for yourself, 'owning' your own learning, becoming accountable for that learning as well.*

To give you some tips on that area of speaking for oneself. What does it look like? Well, it has something to do with the pupils being able to say 'no'. Not for the sake of it, but being able to contradict because they have been enabled to understand how it is that they learn. So if you were able to show that you had taken their comments on board and had changed your own agenda because of theirs, then you really have cracked it. Your pupils are speaking for themselves because you and they have entered the cycle of a) you setting up atmosphere in which they can ask questions, trying to find out, etc. (about whatever it is), b) they asking questions about you and the situations, of each other and themselves, c) you setting up with them, new situations. That is a learning cycle. If you can show us any of this happening, even in larval form, then you're really getting there and you do not need to fear that your accounts will not be judged as of a pass standard.

...Think about what you have done with your pupils, what situations you and they have set up, what has come out of it all. You should now be doing more than thinking about writing up. As you start the difficult process of trying to sift through all the material that you are bound to have at this stage and writing about it selectively but informatively, try to answer the following questions:

a) How can I shape this account of my educational development in a way that is true to the processes through which I perceive that my learning has occurred?
b) How can I ensure that in some significant ways, my pupils (or a single pupil) are speaking for themselves in my report? (see above)
c) What are the standards of judgement you are using to validate your account? Apart from these two?

...I would like to leave you with this quotation from Zac's Special Study (1991) in which the title is so apposite for an action enquiry report, and in which I believe he is

truly speaking for himself. Not for me. Not for accreditation, but for his own sense of the worthwhileness and reality to him and others of what he has learnt:

'In adopting the role of teacher I am contradicting my values...therefore if it were not for the concept of 'teacher' in the question I could ensure my values in education as stated in this same question. The role of facilitator offers me the only chance I have to uphold my educational values in practice.' (p.28)

The Final Report.

I will now reveal substantial extracts from Sarah's final report. I have tried to ensure that I do not prevent her voice coming through authentically in a way she would recognise as a fair representation of her own struggle throughout her enquiry to evolve and enhance her own meanings and to enable Hugh (her pupil) to do the same for himself. I have interspersed the text with short extracts (**in bold**) of a conversation Sarah and I had on 17.5.93. specifically to help her in the drafting process. I had this one major opportunity to be influential in her writing up period. The comments **in bold** refer to aspects of the draft as it was on 17.5.93. and my attempts to help Sarah realise the epistemological potential of her own educational narrative: there appeared to me to be gaps in her text as it then stood and these centred on Hugh's voice coming through clearly and her realisation of the significance of what she had achieved. The rest of the text in this section is taken directly from Sarah's final draft, the one she handed in to me as her assessor, and the one which, in her Viva with an external examiner, was classed as being of 'astonishingly high quality.'

SD I've got all these threads, flashing backwards and forwards...I keep getting muddled up with my tenses. You're looking back and then you

suddenly think something now as you're writing it. It's a constant moving across the time-scale about what you're knowing. You think, 'What did I know then?' I had that insight then and I've refined it to this now... **('Drafting' conversation 17.5.93.)**

How can I help Hugh engage with the Green Issues part of the Green Module? by Sarah Darlington, Bath University, Spring - Summer, 1993.

Introduction.

During the course of this action research report, I want to record two strands of the action research process which run together. The first describes my own development as a teacher and my growing understanding of differentiation - what it means and how I can implement it in my classroom. I hope that it will encompass my growing awareness of treating students as individuals, identifying their individual needs and then trying to meet them. Part of the action research cycle which was very important to me was my own professional development and a growing awareness and understanding of my educational values.

The other strand describes Hugh's progress and the ways in which I think I was able to help him to develop his learning. This will include how I got to know him better, how his behaviour changed and how he began to work more seriously in class resulting in higher levels of attainment. It will also show how Hugh began to take more responsibility for his own learning. It takes into account the observations of Hugh himself and other people involved in this aspect of my teaching practice...

Why Differentiation?

I had already considered differentiation as a possible area in which to conduct my research. Teaching mixed ability classes was part of my learning

agenda for the first TP (teaching practice), but I never really got there. I was too busy dealing with my new role, with classroom management and with all the other slings and arrows of a first teaching practice. Differentiation - for which a good definition is *'ensuring that all pupils, regardless of ability, can achieve to the maximum of their potential in all areas of the formal and informal curriculum.'* (Hucker, 1990) - is part of good teaching. Every class one encounters, even at S Level, is a mixed ability group. And not just mixed ability. As Justine Hocking observes in her report, there is:

'also a case for differentiating according to attitude. Or...differentiating according to personality.' (Hocking, 1992)

The platitude that we - and our students - are all individuals has become increasingly evident to me over the last ten weeks. So, as I see it, differentiation is about helping individuals to achieve their own potential. A pretty tall order.

At this early stage a question that was forming in my mind was 'How can I differentiate in my mixed ability year Eight class?' I was really unsure about this. At the mention of the word 'differentiation' my mind filled up with endless worksheets, matrices and other forms of methodology. The question lacked clarity and focus and the answer to it was too enormous to contemplate in the context of a ten week teaching practice.

When I discussed my timetable with the Head of Department, it became clear that the Year Eight group I was to be teaching would indeed be a suitable group with which to work. He described the group as a 'difficult Year Eight, a suitable challenge for a second teaching practice'. The class is not popular with staff. The mixed ability group of 26 children includes six with special

needs, some bright disruptive boys and a group of intelligent hard-working girls. The range of ability is wide and the first thing that I did was to make a chart of the NC levels achieved so far and the results of the CATs tests...

From observing lessons I gradually moved into getting more involved with the class who were finishing a module on the history of the language. They didn't seem to be enjoying this much and were noisy and easily distracted, despite the firm line taken by the Head of Department...I had been given a short play to do with 8C and some library research designed to help implement NC programmes of study. The module we were to work with was called the Green Module...I started off with the play with the intention of working in the Library after Easter. I began the play and the Green Module in general with a press conference. I decided on this as a beginning because I sensed the class was easily bored and that a fresh way of approaching a book might appeal to them. I also wanted them to be aware of the green theme early on so they would be prepared when they started their library research...

<u>Section Two: Getting started.</u>

...Moira came to watch me teach on 12.3.93., the day after the first action research validation meeting. She came in to watch a small Year 12 GCSE research group which I was coaching for the resit of their oral. Afterwards she pointed out to me that communicating to individuals as individuals, and trying to find out their individual needs, is differentiation. At the time I wrote:

'This was an important revelation to me - I hadn't thought of this as

differentiation before. (my diary, 14.3.93)

During the de-brief, we talked about individuals and their needs. In my journal I wrote:

Classes are made of individuals - develop good relationships with
individuals and you will have a good relationship with the class.
(Moira, my journal, 12.3.93.)

The reason why this was so important to me was because this was something I was already doing. I *was* differentiating after all! and something to which I personally attach a lot of importance...

Section Three: A move towards a more educational question.

I was beginning to feel that I needed to make a more formal and definite commitment to action research. I was working within a loose framework, but the process was still woolly in my mind. I was worrying about concepts like formulating a question, a critical friend, imagining solutions. It all seemed a bit daunting and I was worried that I wasn't doing it right. What I needed, in actual fact, was the helping hand of an educator to lead me along the pathway. I wouldn't have put it in those terms at the time. Part of my learning process has been to recognise the role of the educator - I won't say I've learned to put it into practice, but I'm working on it. I know this seems to be a digression, but it's all part of my learning about differentiation. It stemmed from that discussion I had with Moira on 12.3.93. Very gently she put it to me that although I had helped the students to build their confidence in oral work, I needed to develop their learning too. I remember her saying that we have a role as educators; not as counsellors, youth workers, or childminders, but as educators. It is our responsibility to educate the students in our care. Again it's one of those glaring platitudes, but I was only just beginning to see it, only just beginning to draw that particular thread out of

this huge closely-woven web which is teaching and look at it on its own. There is a strong link with differentiation. Differentiation is helping individuals to achieve their potential and to do this, we have to educate them.

To return to the quest for the question, I went to our first validation meeting on 11.3.93. Listening to the talk in progress I realised that it was not necessary or even appropriate to focus my research on the whole of 8C. I could pick out one or two individuals...During a meeting with Moira (18.3.93) we said:

S Yes, that's too huge. How could I do that in four weeks?
M Yes, so how could you phrase a question that is going to show that your educational development has improved the learning of at least one pupil?

We discussed the question to and fro eventually coming up with a question which was much more focused and which I felt I could actually do in the timescale. The question now looked like this:

'How can I help X become engaged with the part of the Green module outlined in the Green Issues study guide?'

It seemed important to focus on a specific English issue rather than a classroom management one...With Moira's help I had really narrowed down my research to focus on to a tiny area of the mosaic of my teaching practice. On the one hand I felt a feeling of relief that the question was one that I could actually tackle in the context of the teaching practice. On the other hand, looking back, I see that this narrow focusing on a tiny area is part of the way action research works. Jean McNiff advises us to:

'Start small. Even though the project itself may not be small. The study

itself should focus in the initial stages on aspects rather then the

whole...Action Research is sequential and cumulative. Each step will   *act*

as a springboard to the next.' (McNiff, 1988)

SD I suppose I am playing it down a bit, what I've learnt. It seems so basic

really. I mean I think it's just my job what I do, and how I develop.

ML But there are certain things you know now, Sarah. Through working on

your enquiry you have started to evolve your own knowledge. You are taking

charge of your own development. (Conversation, 17.5.93)

...I had been thinking about how can *I* differentiate? so much that I was beginning to think that I would never get the real action research on the road. I could only see half of the action research whole. It was quite a surprise when it dawned on me that my development was relevant to the research too. Moira talked about action research involving student learning and professional development. It wasn't just Hugh and 8C, it was what was happening to me, and I was changing fast. It seemed quite a self-indulgent luxury to be able to include my own development in a piece of university-based course work, but as Moira pointed out, *my* learning from this action research enquiry was what I would be taking into my career.

At this meeting Moira also posed a question which was to be one of her criteria in assessing action research reports. The question was:

'In an account of your own professional development, can you show

that any pupil has learned anything of value and has taken any

responsibility for that learning?'

To be honest, I was a bit gobsmacked - the word 'value' was the one which worried me. Whose value? To what end? I swept the question under the carpet for the time being and went back to school. But although I put the question away, it wouldn't stay there and it kept appearing like something out of a fairy story. It asked itself when I was teaching Year Ten and Year Twelve as well as when I was teaching Year Eight and I will address it in more depth when I am closer to the end of this paper...

A closer look at Hugh

In July 1992, David, who had been teaching 7C as they were then, compiled a brief description of the class...Of Hugh he commented, *'weak and emotional, cannot sustain concentration. Poor on instructions. Level 2.* By the time I had taken over 8C, Hugh's attainment levels were: AT 1 - 2/3, AT 2 - 1/2. AT 3 - 2/3, AT 4/5 - 3...

M.L There's nowhere yet in this draft where you actually are using Hugh's spoken words. You allude to a conversation you've had with him, but where are his words? Where is he speaking for himself? Where are we seeing him talking in your text as a way of learning? (Conversation, 17.5.93)

Taped conversation with Hugh 29.3.93.

The purpose of the taped interview was to ascertain from Hugh how he felt about learning, what he enjoyed doing and how he felt I could help him. Interestingly, the very act of interviewing him for my research seemed to change his behaviour in the classroom. I listened to the tape again a couple of days ago. Hugh's voice, normally loud and easily heard across the classroom, was almost inaudible. In response, my own voice gets quieter and quieter and more and more gentle. It was an interesting contrast to the interviews I

had with Moira, during which my voice is quite loud and business-like, and, I think, shows how hard I was trying to reach Hugh.

I started by asking Hugh what he liked doing best in English, which turned out to be writing. This is how the conversation continued:

SD What have you been enjoying about what we've been doing lately?
HL. The play.
SD...What parts have you enjoyed best? Talking about it? Writing about it? Reading aloud?
HL All of it.
SD All of it. You liked the play? What about the Green Issues research?
HL I found it hard.
SD What are you finding hard about it?
HL The research.
SD Because you can't think of anything?
HL No, it's hard to find.
SD So how do you think we should sort that out?
Do you think you should change or do you think there might be a way of finding more information? Do you need some help?
HL I need some help to make it better.

In this extract, Hugh pinpoints the weakness in his words very quickly - it's the research which is the problem, specifically the lack of materials. A couple of minutes later I asked him:

SD Once you've got the information, do you think it's going to be easy to do the leaflet or not?
HL It depends on the information....

...Part Two

The Evidence

I would like to claim that during my second teaching practice, I helped Hugh to become engaged in his Library research and the making of his leaflet. I need to summarise first what I did with the class and with Hugh; I will then attempt to show why I feel I helped Hugh to become more engaged with the project.

Section One

What I did in a general way.

I had to support the whole class, bearing in mind the large number of weaker members. I researched differentiation and as a result introduced a number of techniques into the classroom from which the whole class benefited...

What I did for Hugh in particular:

* I took an interest in him particularly - this in itself was the key, I think...He is a child who demands attention, even adverse attention. I think by recognising him as a person, a special person I had asked to help me with my research, Hugh grew an inch or two in his own eyes. On a couple of occasions he asked me about the research in front of other members of the class, so that they would know I had picked him to work with.

* I responded to his cry for individual attention and made sure that I knew at all times how he was getting on, and making sure he knew that I knew. Hilary also spent some time with him working on setting out a leaflet.

* I found some material at home on unleaded petrol (his research was into cars and pollution) and gave it to him. This material included an address to write to for more information.

* I gave praise and encouragement wherever I could.

* I conducted two taped interviews with Hugh, one at the beginning of the research 29.3.93. and one towards the end 6.5.93.

<u>Section Two - The results</u>

<u>Criteria for Success</u>

When I had formulated my question the criteria for success which I had imagined were some sort of noticeable improvement in Hugh's English and a change in behaviour. In my diary I had also written *'I think the criteria for success are going to be in an improvement in effort and in him actually finding something to research.' (1.4.93)*

During our first taped conversation, I had asked Hugh what he felt was required to make his leaflet really good. He thought that he needed to work on the research side of it and he needed to find enough material.

<u>Hugh's work</u>

M.L You've got Hugh writing his introduction here...and he writes about different grades of petrol etc. It's quite factual, it's what you might expect from Year Eight...You've got the word engage in your question...You've got the evidence here, but you're just not bringing it out. Where is your analysis of his progress? It's all here, I think. Look at the way his vocabulary changes when he writes about something he seems to care about. As an English graduate you must be well aware of the practical criticism techniques for

analysing poetry. I think you can apply the same techniques to Hugh's work and come up with some very firm claims that he has improved. **(Conversation, 17.5.93)**

The First Draft

The first draft shows no sign of any research at all. The tone is conversational:

> *'Introduction*
>
> *We all know cars destroy the air and we all know what we can do to*
>
> *provent this happening at all. This Book tells you what car fumes can   do*
> *to us older ones and young ones more I hope you enjoy this Book.*
>
> <div align="right">(19.3.93)</div>

As can be seen by this introduction, Hugh is not relaying any information at all, just filling space. I had asked them to prepare questions before starting their library research. Hugh used my example questions and answered them in a very shallow way. For example in the section, 'what is the problem?' Hugh had answered with one sentence:

> *'The problem is that car are destroying the air and peoples lives are*
>
> *built around the car and it's not good for us and the ozon layer and*
>
> *petrol has   got iron in it and the petrol stations are putting the   price   of*
> *petrol up.'*

The sentence is jumbled, his thinking skims the surface of an enormous topic and his information is anecdotal and irrelevant (for example the cost of petrol). The sort of language Hugh uses, particularly in the introduction, suggests role-play rather than his own voice. He says: 'This Book tells you',

and 'I hope you enjoy this Book' as though he were playing at being a publisher or blurb writer. It shows that he is not taking the work seriously.

The Second Draft

The next draft was completed over a couple more Library lessons and the Easter holidays. We had one taped conversation which I talked about in detail earlier. In the new draft I would like to claim that Hugh was much more engaged with what he was doing....For example, compare his section on the ozone layer with the passage quoted above on the 'problem'.

> *Ozone Layer*
>
> *If we do not do anything about the car fumes we will destroy the ozone*
> *layer and then we will have the green house effects and we don't*
> *whant that do we. and when we lie in the sun and we didn't have the*
> *ozone layer we would burn and the earth would get hot and the air*
> *would be not good for us to breath in so we could or we might die so*
> *we better do somthing   about this before it's to late so use unleaded*
> *petrol or do the following (a list of alternatives to driving). (1.4.93.)*

In the earlier draft, Hugh had recommended a list of alternatives to the car but without either the fervour or the facts which he employs here. Twice he refers to the need for us to do something about the depletion of the ozone layer; he gives two warnings of the consequences if we don't. The passage shows evidence of research which the first piece did not. For example, he explains the 'greenhouse' effect and that it can have two results, burning and impurity in the air. The language he uses is more emotive: 'we might die' and 'we better do something about this before it's to late'. I feel this passage shows great signs of greater engagement with the research - he now has some

facts - and greater engagement with the issues. He does seem to care more and is less distracted by playing at writing a book...

M.L. It's almost as if you're saying, 'well, I've got all this evidence, I can stick it in the Appendices and the reader can do the rest...
S.D. So all I really need to do is use this evidence more effectively. **(17.5.93)**

The final draft

...[This] is divided into eight sections which include: 'what is the problem? What can be done about it? What can it do to us? Lead; Ozone layer; Electric cars; Oil and a bibliography. It is longer than the earlier drafts...The quality of the work is less easy to define and I think it lies in two areas - the content and the language used to describe it. The content reflects Hugh's wider research. For example the section on lead, which I mentioned above, contains figures as well as facts...In the final draft, Hugh still includes his comments and opinions and to a certain extent he is still role-playing the author. He is, however, much more aware of a wider body of opinion and shows a greater degree of commitment to the issue...

Throughout the final draft the language generally has a more formal feel to it and displays a wider vocabulary. For example, in the section on the ozone layer which appeared in the second draft, Hugh uses the word 'breath' (breathe); in the final draft he uses inhalle (inhale). This sort of detail shows a growing ability to redraft by himself and the commitment to do it. By using more formal style for the final draft, Hugh also shows a move towards knowledge of the difference between written and spoken language. Both these things, which are incidentally, strands of AT3 (writing) in the English National Curriculum, show a greatly increased degree of engagement as well as an improved quality of work...

ML So where is Hugh speaking with his own voice?

SD Come off it!...I've quoted from him.

ML Is quoting from someone the same as having them speak with their own voice?

SD But I show what use I've made of that as well.

ML Yes, to a certain extent. But I wonder whether the significance of what you've done comes out in the writing so far. And what use has Hugh made of it all? **(Conversation, 17.5.93)**

<u>Section Four - Hugh's views.</u>

<u>Taped conversations</u>

During our taped conversations, Hugh seemed a bit overawed and spoke very quietly. Unfortunately this leads to me leading the conversation and him replying briefly to my questions...During our second taped interview I was...concerned with ascertaining what had helped...I started off by asking Hugh how he felt he had improved:

SD I know where I think you've improved, what about you? Where do you think you have improved?

HL In my research.

SD In your research...that was the area you were worried about...you were worried you weren't going to get enough books. Did you feel you did that in the end?

HL Yes.

SD What did you do for your research? I remember you said you were going to try a couple of garages.

HL I tried to, but they never had any leaflets.

For Hugh, the important area of improvement was in the research. Later in the conversation he mentioned writing to Esso which also seemed to have been important. He also commented that I had given him the address for Esso which had slipped my mind...Hugh also agreed that the taped conversation had altered his perception of me - but he didn't want to say how. He also agreed with my suggestion that he felt different because I had picked him to be interviewed, but again he was reluctant to elaborate. I think that his reluctance was due to the difficulty of expressing himself fluently in response to such direct questions...

ML But it seems to me that you have got evidence of someone who is beginning to speak for himself and say where he wants his learning to go. (*I am referring here to the transcript material that Sarah had elicited from her time with Hugh but had not yet integrated into the text in a way that would do her insights and Hugh's emergent autonomy justice.*) **And I don't feel that you've highlighted that anywhere near sufficiently. (17.5.93)**

His written evaluations

I set up a learning log for the whole class on 19.3.93. This is a transcript of Hugh's comments:

19.3.93. I have learnt how to plan something properly and what makes   a good leaflet.
23.3.93. I have learnt nothing except how to read the script properly.
I enjoyed answering questions. I need to work on my writing and my
speaking. I like working in pairs and in a group...
30.3.93. I feel the teacher could help me by taking a few people out of
the class and go with hillery do da (sic) in L12 and work at our own pace
and she explains it more clearly....

<u>...His evaluation of his final draft of his green issues leaflet</u>

Hugh's evaluation of his final draft is in response to the evaluation section of the Green Issues study guide...

Hugh comments on the lack of material in the Library and mentions the letter he wrote to Esso:

'I have done my research very well when they was not enough

information but I wrote to esso house asking for some info on cars and

pollution and they sent me some leaflet I think that was good of them   to

send me some. I used my own words in some parts but not all. I

made it look good by cutting out pictures and sticking them on.' (11.5.93)

S.D. It wasn't until I re-read his final evaluation that I realised that he was saying something really important <u>for him</u>. He was using his own words and I suddenly realised what that meant. It was a really great moment! (17.5.93)

I have included Hugh's concern about his research in my 'criteria for success'. Until writing this report I had not really given much thought to Hugh's criteria for success but it was evidently important to him because he spontaneously included it in his evaluation. I think that the fact that Hugh wrote to Esso at all, and that he mentions it in his evaluation shows that he was taking some responsibility for his own learning.

He makes an honest answer to the second question saying that he used his own words in 'some parts but not all' and he says he made 'the leaflet look good by cutting out pictures and sticking them in.'

In this evaluation...he uses his own words which I think is significant - it shows a sense of ownership. He was obviously proud of his work because he asked me about it three times if he could take it home to ask his mum!

Section Five - Summing up

Conclusion

...A return to the question: *'In an account of your own educational development, can you show that any pupil has learned something of value and has taken any responsibility for that learning?'*

I feel that I have demonstrated fully in the preceding pages that Hugh did take responsibility for his own learning. But did he learn anything of *value* ? First I needed to ask, whose value? Unfortunately, due to my inexperience, I neglected to ask Hugh directly if he had learnt anything of value. That was a pity because I think he might have given me an answer...I did ask him where he saw improvement.

HL In research.

...I think it is quite possible that if I had asked Hugh what he had learnt of value, he might well have said that he learnt more about researching. If we consider my values then I think Hugh learned several things of value. He learned more about using English. In his final draft he shows that he is learning to revise and redraft, he is learning the difference between written language and speech and he is learning to write in appropriate language for the form. He also displays research skills and a greater commitment to the issue he chose to work on.

He became more responsible for his own learning my writing to Esso and in the way he worked on his final leaflet. He became more autonomous and independent; he made the decision to write to Esso and to choose the material he did for his final draft. His behaviour also improved *(evidence was earlier provided from the Head of Department, a sixth former and the Librarian)* which could be taken as an indication of greater autonomy and self-control. He became more self-confident and I think this is shown in the improved quality of his work...Perhaps more importantly, he learned that he could be successful...

Finally in asking the question 'whose value?' I feel I should include the implied value of the National Curriculum Council...

ML I just feel that if you give me in the account now, it's not living up to its potential. Where's the overview? **(17.5.93)**

<u>A final summing up of my action research enquiry</u>

I started off this report by saying that I wanted to write about how my views on differentiation have evolved over the last ten weeks and how I have become aware of my own professional development. I feel that I have developed a rationale now which underpins my teaching and I hope I have explored some of that in the preceding pages. Through action research I have had the opportunity to focus on and explore my values in a way which I would not otherwise have done and I feel that I will be entering the teaching profession as a more fully developed individual than might have otherwise been the case...Working on differentiation has led to my professional development, which in turn has led to better differentiation in the classroom...

'Every line of your paper speaks its values but not explicitly. I think one

of the things you are trying to do is make the explicit from the implicit -   of

all the things you've left out, that [my educational values] to me

seems to be the greatest shame...because it would lend so much more

validity...and it would enable the reader to understand your values.'

(conversation with Moira, 17.5.93)

This was true. During the past ten weeks I have given great consideration to my own professional development and I have referred to it in this report but I haven't really spelled out what my values are as an educator are. So here, for what they're worth, are my educational values...The following are not in any particular order and, inevitably, there is a fair amount of crossover. Returning to the subject of accountability, these are the areas in which I would be prepared to be held to account in my future career - my 'standards of judgement' as Moira puts it:

1) I want to provide a learning environment which allows the student to take the risk required to learn. Learning is a risky business and as a teacher I want my learners to feel confident that they will not be exposed. Guy Claxton (1988) says:

'Every moment is fraught with the danger of being exposed, yet again as

incompetent. And this in its turn threatens to bring the public

humiliation that we would do almost anything to avoid.'

2) I want to make the curriculum available to all 'ensuring that all pupils, regardless of ability can achieve to the maximum of their potential in all areas of the formal and informal curriculum'. (Hucker, 1990)

3) I believe each student is an individual and to teach that individual first I need to 'reach' her. *(Before I can teach you I must first reach you* - poem quoted by Justine Hocking, 1992). Peter Bell and Trevor Kerry say - 'make good relationships with children individually.' I was particularly struck by the way Moira put it:

'Classes are made of individuals. Develop good relationships with
individuals and you will have a good relationship with the class.'

(12.3.93)

I commented in my diary (7.4.93):

'How can I differentiate? Is it by acknowledging everyone's
individuality?'

4) I believe that part of my duty as an educator is to develop the autonomy of the individual; in Guy Claxton's words: 'teaching is an activity in which the goal is to make the teacher redundant' (Claxton, 1988). The progress to this goal is gradual. I commented in my diary, of Laura:

'She needs to pick up the reins of responsibility gradually.'

I try to develop autonomy by involving students in the planning of their work, in giving them responsibility and allowing them varying degrees of control.

'One of the goals of student-centred education is to enable people to
make their own choices...Change does not happen overnight.' (Brandes
and Ginnis)

153

5) I want to be myself and to be honest. Donna Brandes says:

'Teachers who are confident enough to be themselves in the classroom,   and not pretend to be anything else, who treat students like fellow

human beings, who are clear, precise and honest in sharing their

perception of the truth at any given moment, these teachers are likely   to achieve warm and trusting relationships in their school life.'

(Brandes and Ginnis, 1980).

6) I recognise that first and foremost I am an educator; it is my responsibility to develop the learning of individuals. I am not a counsellor or a child minder! This was pointed out to me by Moira...

'I know you are trying to encourage, but you also have to educate them.   The question is, how can you encourage pupils lacking in self-

confidence whilst at the same time challenging them educationally?'

(12.3.93)

Looking back over this list, I realise that I have given myself a lot to live up to...Earlier in this report I described teaching as a mosaic and a web. Lee Shulman (1992) refers to a landscape that has its own syntax. The word that comes into my mind now is 'pattern' and I would include learning as well as teaching. I really do feel that for me now, the pattern has some sense. It has an underlying meaning. I know now, at this moment, why I want this colour here and that texture there; I know why and how I want to teach - I have a framework. I have lived out this framework of values to varying degrees during my teaching practice, I know it to be good as far as it goes. But in my ending to return to my beginning, I realise that the detail of the pattern is

movement. Things change and develop, and so, I hope, will I. As Jean McNiff says...'There is no such thing as action research, only action researchers'.

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25.5.93. Dear Moira,

You asked me to write an evaluation of my action research report. As you no doubt sensed when you asked me, I was quite reluctant to do this. Why? Well to start with, it is a very personal piece of writing and my instincts told me to give it to you to mark and then shove it in a drawer and never look at it again. You are the only person to have read it; not even Mansur, who usually edits my work, has read it. It's a personal piece of work in two senses: first it describes my development and second

it's probably the longest piece of writing I've ever done and it's my creation. When I wrote stories at school, I never wanted anyone else to read them...I think I'm worried about it not being good enough, that people might read it had think, 'God. this is awful!' Until this weekend, I was seriously worried about having my case-study in the AR collection; going public was a very real concern, perhaps the most difficult part of the whole process. When I realised that by the time it gets into the Resources room, I won't be at the University any more, I felt slightly less worried. At least people won't know it's me!

When you asked me to evaluate my report, I felt that the evidence for showing that I had made any impact on Hugh's learning was quite weak and it did seem that all those words were rather self-indulgent. Over the weekend, however, I analysed Hugh's final draft and I found that there were some quite important improvements. I began to feel that I really had helped him engage with the module and that there was clear evidence there to prove it. I also answered your question, 'In an account of your professional development, can you show that a learner has learnt something of value...?' After analysing that last draft and writing the answer to the question, I really felt I could show that a learner had learned something of value and I can tell you, I grew about two inches! I now feel quite proud of my action research report and because I think it's good enough, I'm not bothered about who reads it. I think it stands up on its own now, it doesn't need protecting from the big, wide world.

I also started to feel better about it when I thought about the work that went into it. I looked at it when it was finished and I thought, 'How did I do that?' It really is a mammoth achievement, especially given the context. (N.B. Sarah, like the other students, had precisely five days after coming off teaching practice and a primary school week which followed, in which to complete the assignment.) I worked hard on it and I think it's a good piece of work. It is also now a much more balanced piece of writing. My first draft was all about me 'interacting with myself' as you put it. The

final draft is more equally weighted between the two learners, Hugh and myself, which is as it should be.

That is not to say, however, that there is no room for improvement. If I had had more time, I would have liked to have made the link between the thinking and writing process (Chomsky and all that). There just wasn't time to do that properly. I feel I analysed Hugh's final draft adequately, but I could have done a more thorough job - included more examples. I think there is some clumsy use of language - I still don't like that introduction, it isn't really me - and I think the cover's a bit gross, but other than that - it's O.K..

I really would like to thank you properly for all your support and enthusiasm and your questions. You've helped me produce a much better piece of work than I would have done on my own. The validation meetings were really good, but it was the personal contact that made all the difference. You really made all the difference. Throughout the process, you've asked me to questions: you've shown me doors which I've made the decision to open or not and that has been crucial in my work and for me. To give you an example, having to focus specifically on the question that I mentioned above (I can't be bothered to write it out again!) made, I think, all the difference to my report and to the way I feel about it. So thank you!...

Epilogue to Part One.

My Aesthetics: A Question of Balance

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing -
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?'

The Epilogues in this thesis are new. I want to render my text more comprehensible. I want to communicate the links to be made between the four Parts which are unified in their concern to create my own living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989b; Evans, 1995; Hughes, 1996) from the description and explanation of my own educational development. I will use The General Prologue to the thesis as an analytical and evaluatory tool for the claims I am making.

In this Epilogue I would like to unpick the strands of Part One in a more explanatory way than I achieved in the original thesis. The aesthetic nature of my enquiry is the most problematic as I outlined in the Introduction. Aesthetic experience has been variously described as involving a matter of taste (Kivy, 1988), concerning itself with beauty, perception and the artistic (Diffey, 1986) and perceiving a meaningful congruity between form and content whose substance is worthy of serious engagement (Foshay, 1995). I see all the above as telling in my own educational enquiry but not exact enough as descriptors of my own aesthetic experiences. In addition, in terms

of an explanation which I am required to do in a thesis which makes claims to knowledge, I am confronted not only with many different ways of looking at the aesthetic realm of experience - with a history of explanation that goes back to Kant and Shaftesbury - but that attempts I make at explaining the aesthetic are in danger of destroying precisely the quality I am valuing. Explanation demands reasons and justification. Aesthetic experience and perception do not lend themselves easily to such formulations. However, Sibley (1965) says, and I agree with him, that seeking explanations for aesthetic experience may lead to a state in which:

'our appreciation is deepened and enriched...in being articulate.'

(p.146)

My first claim to educational knowledge - the development of an 'aesthetic morphology' of my educative relationships has educational use-value in judging the quality of my educational practice - relies for its vindication on the appreciation I have of those relationships, becoming deeper and enriched in being articulate. This claim assumes a use-value through just such a process of seeking explanations. Sibley's premise expresses the essence of my own initial intuition, that if I were able to access areas of my own understanding, then I would be capable of improving the quality of my educational practice. In the Introduction to this thesis I state that some of the educational validity of this text:

'is predicated upon the belief that bringing the power of reflection   to my intuitions and actions will improve the educational quality   of   those actions.' (p. 23)

As an educator, this is the form of rationality to which I subscribe, and in the Epilogues I will be judging the ways in which I was able to improve my educative relationships using this form of rationality.

When I have an aesthetic experience, say with Bach's Matthew Passion, I am conscious of understanding something of the unity of purpose within each aspect of what it is I am listening to - the instrumentation, the voices, the words, the musical form of the section, the harmony and counterpoint - in a way which I find beautiful and moving, and which convinces me of the significance of the synthesis and the parts, both in themselves and to me. I also feel drawn into what I apprehend as if I am a part of its creation, and on a deeper level, if I am particularly receptive, simultaneously experiencing the 'objective' truth that I am a part of humanity as a whole, and the 'subjective' truth that humanity is beautiful and good. Making such connections is for me the key to any aesthetic experience, and gives rise to an awareness of my own human spirit. As Wood (1990) writes:

> *'the human being through its awareness of itself...transcends the*
> *merely natural to the level of the spiritual. 'Spirit' embraces not*
> *only 'subjective spirit' (individual psychology), but also 'objective*
> *spirit' (society or culture)'* (p. 4).

In what I term as an aesthetic experience I connect with my own creativity, with my desire for unity and beauty within, and with a sense of not being alone in the universe. In an aesthetic moment I appear to myself as neither an individual nor as emergent into the whole, but both simultaneously. In Tillich's (1952) words I: *'transcend objectivity as well as subjectivity.'* (p. 34)

Tillich goes on to write about what it means to explain ontology (but I feel his comments work equally well for aesthetics here):

> *'In order to approach it cognitively one must use both [subjectivity and objectivity]. And one can do so because both are rooted in that which transcends them, in being-itself. It is in the light of this consideration that the ontological concepts must be referred to must be interpreted. They must be understood not literally but analogously.'* (p.34/5)

I prefer to understand ontology as something which bridges the dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity, rather than Kearney's (1984) description of ontology as:

> *'the idealizing subjectivity...which reduces everything to itself.'*
>
> (p.31)

Touching my own ontology is always for me the result of an aesthetic experience. I am enabled momentarily to make a connection between myself as one human being and humanity as a whole. I have found this experience meaningful particularly as I have tried to describe and explain the significance of my own educational development. It is the working out in practice of the meaningful connections between myself and others which, in the name of education, has given rise to my own educational development and eventually to this thesis which is its theoretical explanation.

Recently, as The General Prologue shows, I have recognised the power of 'The Ancient Mariner' to help me in my educational practice by connecting

me to what I find of value in my life. In a recent article about Action Research in the nineties, Foshay (1996) says this:

> *'Moira Laidlaw...has found that her profound concern with the*
> *development of moral sensitivity among her 11 year old girls*
> *can be met through her approach to Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner'.*
> *Her records are most vivid in a diary she has kept.'* (p.4)

When the Mariner explains:

> *'Oh happy living things! no tongue*
> *Their beauty might declare.*
> *A spring of love gushed from my heart,*
> *And I blessed them unaware,'*

he expands his consciousness. Their beauty enables him to reach beyond himself and access his capacity for love. Collinson (1992) writing about Diffey (1986) says this:

> *'There is a case for looking beyond art and beauty for the meaning   of*
> *the aesthetic. For it speaks of an <u>awakening</u> and of that*
> *awakening as the source from which love arises.'* (p. 174)

He goes on to say that in aesthetic experience:

> *'A new vision...and a deeper and finer feeling are involved.'*
>
> (p. 174)

163

It is largely through aesthetic experiences that I rediscover the motivation to try harder in the name of education because I sense simultaneously the 'objective' truth that I am one of many, and the 'subjective' truth that we are all potentially good and the potential I have to realise something of value through that understanding. When I read the poem I am reminded of the meaningfulness of my own and others' existence in such a way that I feel more committed to enabling others to perceive something of the worthwhileness I feel about Life. I access my own capacity to love others and myself.

In this awakening that Collinson (1992) alludes to, perceptions are heightened and become more significant to the person awakened. Collinson argues that not only is the person awakened to new and special feelings of connectedness to what is being perceived, but what or who is being perceived seems also to be enhanced. This too, is my experience. In the General Prologue I wrote:

'The poem came alive and during the reading I was reminded, as is the Mariner, about the reality of others. The girls seemed to become more real to me. The poem enabled me to recognise them afresh as individuals. Because of the power of this poem, I could recognise, as if for the first time, the beauty and loveliness of the girls as they responded.' (p. 9)

In this sense, I find Kivy's (1990) comment relating to aesthetic perception illuminating, that we: *'tend to animate what we perceive'* (p.57). When I touch my own ontology through an aesthetic experience, say, through the reading of 'The Ancient Mariner', my perceptions expand in ways which make me more optimistic, and more concerned to reach others with this optimism.

This brings me to the ethical dimension of my aesthetic experiences. I do not wish at this juncture to go into theoretical explanations about the ethics of my practice but in order to be able to explain the educational significance of Part One, I need to point towards the ethical dimension for me of an aesthetic experience. (See the Epilogue to Part Two for a more detailed explanation of the ethical dimension to my educational practice.)

When the Ancient Mariner is awakened to love through perceiving beauty, he is motivated to act for the good. He blesses the water-snakes which he sees now not as 'slimy things' but as sublime aspects of the wholeness of Creation of which he too is a part. Instead of experiencing himself at the centre of the universe, through his awakening to love he wants to seek connections to others and he can at last perceive their reality and significance. He is also able to experience his responsibility to himself and others. When I say I love the girls I teach and 'The Ancient Mariner' poem, it is because both awaken me to seeking connections with others, as I perceive their reality and significance. In addition I too am able to experience my responsibility to myself and others. I do not perceive the love I feel for the poem and for the girls as qualitatively different. Both are awakened through aesthetic experience. In the General Prologue I wrote:

Each time I engage with the poem in this living way - in other words when it becomes part of the way I externalise my relationships with others as I did in the classroom this morning (and never so powerfully in my opinion) - then I find more and more in the poem and more and more in the children. I was really overcome by my love for them this morning and there doesn't seem such a distinction between my love for them and my love for the poem. They both derive from the same root. It is something to do with my own ontology and has something too of my own ethics. That is how they

are linked - in my practice with the girls as I try to help them improve the quality of learning. (p.9/10)

Through aesthetic experience - in the Mariner's case through the perception of the beauty of the water-snakes, and in mine through a profound identification with his development, and teaching the girls in the classroom - the emergent love we feel is not founded upon selfish interest, but motivates good actions for others through a greater understanding of our life's purposes and meaningfulness.

The aesthetic experience of seeing the beauty in the water snakes leads the Mariner to access his own ontology and through that movement within to discover the power to do good. He perceives, reaches in, discovers in himself good potential and moves out again to bring what he has understood into what he can do in the world. This process can happen to me too, either when I am reading the poem, for example, or teaching in the classroom. When I have an aesthetic experience and I am awakened in my perceptions, I not only touch my own ontology, perceiving myself as a part of the wholeness of Creation, but I am also motivated to do good. When I love the children I teach, it is both ontological and ethical. It is ontological because the love I feel enables me to perceive their individuality and their connections with others including myself. It is ethical because the love I feel for them inspires me to do my best for them, to help them in their learning both about the curricular subject, English, and about themselves and their place in the world so that we might all lead happier lives.

Aesthetic experience does not just open me to my own ontology and ethics, but enables me as well to develop my own knowledge. This knowledge is one I value highly because it helps me to understand the world around me and to

act towards the good in it. Thus for me to derive an explanation of an **aesthetic** morphology of my educative relationships seemed to be a sound premise upon which I could seek to improve the learning process with my students and pupils.

In addition to strive towards an explanation of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships, parallels what I understand to be part of the way in which the action planning process works (Whitehead, 1985). In Part One of the thesis I show what it meant to have a concern which was to improve the quality of my educative relationships. I had an imagined solution - developing an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships - in which I could focus on the dimensions within the relationships in order to understand them and improve their quality. I then began to help my students, in particular Sarah, to improve the quality of their learning and kept data on the process in order to see the way in which our eductive relationships were developing. Then I observed what was happening, and with the help of the students, and action research collegues, I evaluated and modified in the light of my findings.

Part One of the thesis was more ambitious than the explanation of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships, however. Written in the Summer of 1993, I attempted to reveal the links as I perceived them then, between the creation of my living educational theory and the use of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships to improve learning. It began to include an analysis of my own educational development through the creation of my own educational standards of judgement. Although the premise of using the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships in a bid to improving them was a sound one, I did not understand the living nature of the connections between the various dimensions of my educational

practice. Although I was concerned about the ethics and ontology of my practice and the resultant knowledge, I did not realise how important is the relationship between them. In this thesis I am creating my own living educational theory as I explained in The General Prologue:

'[It] lives in the values as they become explicit in my practice over time. It is therefore never complete. It is much more than a snapshot and much less than the truth, but it is living. As I draw together these words I draw together my past, I describe and explain the present and out of that I try to craft the future.' (p.25)

My own living educational theory emphasises the developmental nature of values (Laidlaw, 1996) in much the same way that others have also remarked upon (Whitehead, 1993b; Evans, 1995; Laidlaw and Whitehead, 1995; Mellett, Laidlaw & Whitehead, 1995). In these Epilogues I seek to capture something of the immanent dialectic of my educational practice through an emphasis on the connections to be made between the dimensions which constitute my own aesthetic experiences. I will go into detail in the Epilogue to Part Four about the connections to be made between the immanent dialectic at the heart of my educational practice and the creation of my own living educational theory.

Having looked at some of the attributes of my own aesthetic experiences, how do these relate to evolving an aesthetic standard of judgement by which to judge this thesis, and more particularly, an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships? The most compelling aspect of an aesthetic experience for me when I apply it to my educative relationships, is the way in which it illuminates various aspects of my understanding and unifies them in a pleasing way. When I listen to Bach's 'Matthew Passion', or read 'The Ancient Mariner' with a group of children, I tap into the unity of purpose within my own life and educational processes. My aesthetic perceptions open

me up to my ontology, ethics, and knowledge. Therefore evolving a dialectic between the aesthetics of my educative relationships and the emerging forms and structures (the morphology - see below for a more detailed explanation of the term 'morphology') enables me to focus on those aspects of the processes that are generative (McNiff, 1993). Reflecting on the ways in which the different aspects of my own aesthetic qualities interact and develop enables me to be alert to my own educational development, which I understand to be partially valid in the extent to which I am able to improve the quality of learning with my students and pupils.

In my original Ph.D. submission I do not believe I ever come close to a helpful definition of what I mean by 'morphology'. Suzanne Langer (1957) seems to use the term interchangeably with 'form'. For example she writes of music articulating:

> *'forms which which language cannot set forth'.* (p.233)

but shortly after writes:

> *'what music can actually reflect is only the morphology of*
> *feeling; and it may be that some sad and some happy conditions*
> *may have a similar morphology...music at its highest, though*
> *clearly a symbolic form, is an unconsummated symbol.'* (p.238)

In commenting on Langer's theorising about the structure of music, Wilkinson (1992) writes that it has:

> *'a logical form or morphology or pattern,'* (p.205)

as if there is no perceptible difference. In my original Ph.D. submission I assumed that not only were the forms which my educative relationships took self-explanatory, but that the terms used to describe them did not matter very much. Like many other aspects within my original thesis I did not see the communication of my insights to be as significant as the insights themselves and was not perceiving in my practice and its representation the link between form and meaning even though I stressed it in the original Introduction. However I will still defend the use of the term 'morphology' in my first claim to knowledge:

'1) The development of an aesthetic <u>morphology</u> of my educative relationships has educational use-value in judging the quality of my educational practice.'

Morphology means more to me than mere form or structure. It has connotations of both. For example the forms in which my educative relationships manifest themselves are through formal and informal conversations and written correspondences. Sometimes the more formal conversations are audio or videotaped. Many of my educative relationships, particularly in the more recent stages of my educational development, have been structured through the negotiated development of educational standards of judgement through which we can judge the quality of our work together. The word 'morphology' also has linguistic connotations in terms of the words used to structure ideas. Furthermore, the concept of 'morphology' is used in the biological sciences to denote the emergent form and structure of living organisms. This thesis wishes to stress the living aspects of my practice, hence my concern with such concepts as 'immanent dialectic' and 'living' dialectics' (see Introduction and Epilogue to Part Four), my own living educational theory (the whole thesis), and educational development. What I am also stressing in my first claim to knowledge is the dialectical nature of

the interrelationship between the aesthetic areas of my educative relationships and their forms, structures, and living aspects.

I do not wish to accentuate the concept of 'morphology' in isolation from the notions of aesthetic which I bring to my educative relationships and this thesis. I bear in mind all the above as my understanding of what I am meaning in this thesis by 'morphology'. However, the following by Collinson (1992) is helpful here when considering the dialectical relationship between content and form:

> *'To perceive the aesthetic form of things is to   experience the deeper reality of the world.'* (p.148)

In other words, the dialectic between 'aesthetic' and 'form' can generate a more profound insight about the nature of reality. What I partly strive for in this thesis is a description and explanation of how I can best marry the aesthetic dimensions of my educative relationships and their forms, structures and developmental aspects in a bid to improve the quality of learning and in the creation of my own educational knowledge. Indeed Carroll (1996) makes a point which I will take up specifically in the Epilogue to Part Two on the ethics of my practice:

> *'Failure to elicit the right moral response...is a failure in the design of the work, and, therefore, is an aesthetic failure.'* (p.233)

In The General Prologue I am most concerned about how to promote moral learning with the girls I teach and my proposal to the 1997 American Educational Research Association in Chicago is entitled: 'Improving The Quality Of Our Moral Learning Through The Reading Of Poetry With A

Group Of Year Seven Pupils' which will be based, if accepted, on the Ancient Mariner paper. I do believe that there is a dialectic between form and content which understanding can enhance. This, of course, is the basis of my claim that the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships has educational use-value in improving the quality of learning.

In the rest of this Epilogue to Part One of the thesis I am going to look at the quality of the dialectic between the forms, structures and developmental aspects of my educative relationships and their aesthetic dimensions. It is within the connections to be made between the dialectic that I judge the nature of improvements in my practice.

This brings me to why I should be concerned with an aesthetic standard of judgement in qualifying my educative relationships - in other words aesthetic judgements brought to bear on human relationships as opposed to the more orthodox realms of art. I have always been motivated to find the beautiful, the worthwhile, the ethical and ontological in my educational life. I assume that my reaction to the first sighting of the Delaroche painting, which I described in the Prologue to Part One, was to do with the instant connections I was making between the values depicted within it and the personal experiences and values which I had always struggled with in my own life. The effort to rise above my own past by learning from it is something explicitly denied to Lady Jane Grey in the painting. However, the picture is for me so poignant because despite all the powers against her, she is still portrayed as beautiful, powerful, noble and good. Although she is in one sense defeated, her spirit shines out undaunted. Although she is in distress, frightened and abandoned, she is depicted as central, as sublime in her beauty.

I do not wish to subscribe to a causal view of my life, but I suspect that a desire to find the beautiful in my life derives, in part anyway, from its negation in my own formative years. My inclusion of certain aspects of my own autobiography in Part One was an attempt to show some of my own touchstones as I try to lead a full and productive life now. The experience of the rape, its resultant childlessness, and my brother's own inability to communicate with the world for many years, have all contributed consciously to my own sense of what it is worthwhile for me to pursue in my lifetime. Because I have lived through violations associated with the abuse of power and the ontological denial of having children, because I struggled over years with Alastair trying to reach him, and that awesome moment when I did, many of my concerns as an educator are bound up with helping individuals to express what is of value to them as they try to improve the quality of what they are doing. My sense of the ontological and ethical dimensions of my life become real for me most significantly through human relationships. The significance of such insights is most readily comprehensible and emphasised for me through aesthetic experience. Therefore, in order to improve the quality of my educative relationships with my students and pupils, I need to be able to access my own aesthetic ways of knowing. Through aesthetic experiences I am alerted to the importance of making connections between my ethical and ontological concerns. It is also how I access my own potential as a loving, productive and significant human being.

When the Ancient Mariner is moved to bless the water snakes he has what I would term an aesthetic experience because he expands his own consciousness to include the reality of others in a way which motivates him to do good for them. It is that inspiration too I seek in my teaching, in my research, in this thesis and in my communication with you. That feeling of reaching out to another in ways which enhance both of our experience of life

is for me the reason I am in education. It is the reason I wish to struggle to improve what I do as an educator and as a human being, because the rewards of so doing are generative. The more I understand about how to reach myself and others in order to improve the quality of our learning, the more I wish to do it. I reach this level of insight only through aesthetic experience. I cannot simply experience this form of truth once and know it for all time. I need to find it within relationships and experience it anew time after time. Aesthetic experience helps me to perceive the quality of what it is I am doing in the name of education. It helps to locate my practice, my reflections on my practice and my theorising about that practice. This is because it contains the living values I use to give meaning and form to my educational life. Thus developing an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships is a rational extension of this search for a working dialectic between the forms and the values upon which I ground that practice in order to render it educational. This is because it focuses me on the living dialectic between the emergent forms and structures of my educative relationships and the values which give them purpose and meaning. I will write about the connections to be made between the aesthetics of my educational practice and my own living educational theory in the Epilogue to Part Four of this thesis.

I would now like to review some of the aspects of Part One in the light of my new understanding as represented by The General Prologue, and some of the comments from my external examiners. This review will not be exhaustive because the purpose of these Epilogues is to offer evidence of my own educational development in the creation of my own living educational theory which needed some explanatory contexts for the conclusions drawn in the original submission. The purpose of the Epilogues is not to 'prove' each point. My choice of incident for evaluation, together with reference to the

development of this thesis, are themselves part of my claim to know my own educational development.

In Part One I sought to render transparent the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships with my Initial Teacher Education students - principally Sarah, but also Jenny, Justine and Zac. I attempted this through the representation of conversations, correspondence, taped meetings, and written reports - in other words through the emergent structures and forms - the morphology - of our educative relationships. I showed with Sarah the pains I took to enable her to grow towards her own action research question and how I challenged her at the drafting stage of her final report to delve more deeply into the parallells between her own processes and those of Hugh, her pupil. I also noted, for example, how Emma, another student, recognised the parallells between her own practice as a teacher in the classroom and herself as a learner with me at the University.

It is here that I want to concentrate my present evaluation of Part One. In the external examiners' report was the following comment:

> '...There is an aesthetic morphology with Jenny...But then, how do
> aesthetic standards of judgement help? Why is it that a dance that
> ends with one partner dominant (i.e. your exchange with Jenny)
> is less pleasing than the 'follow my leader with variations' that
> Sarah and you do?.. Or, if you had agreed, explicitly with Jenny
> to have different dances? Would that have been a more or less
> beautiful dance? Why?'

I would like to deal in detail with the aesthetic morphology first and then I will come to the point about standards of judgement.

I believe there is indeed an aesthetic morphology within every one of the educative relationships I develop with students or pupils. I believe this aesthetic morphology has to do with balancing - balancing the ethics, ontology and knowledge within the relationship. This in turn implies developing forms and structures through which such balancing can be best achieved. This is a highly complex activity because within the aesthetic for me is an expansion of consciousness to include the reality, meanings, and experiences of others. This means that I cannot simply decide what is ethical and then enact it, using my position of power as, in this case, a university academic, to push forward my own insights. (I will write more about this in the Epilogue to Part Two.) The balancing is also about making my own expansion of consciousness active in the world with others in ways which improve the quality of our learning. In my educative relationship with Jenny I still suspect that I did not achieve the appropriate balance. In apparently silencing her, I did not give her an opportunity to explain her own values. Working with learners to articulate their world-view is one of the basic touchstones of individually-oriented action research (Evans, 1995; Laidlaw, 1994b; Whitehead, 1985, 1989b) and I value this emphasis. As I discuss in Part One it is a tricky balance to achieve between respecting the views and values of an individual and enacting one's own deeply held educational values if the two sets of values are in conflict. Where I still believe I did not succeed in living out my own educational values was in my failure at any time to help Jenny to articulate what her values were.

Developing an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships incurs for me a heavy ethical responsibility in which I may not assume might is right. Because of the highly subjective areas within my own aesthetic experiences from which in my educative relationships I am deriving meaning and

purpose, I have to be careful, however, that I do not confuse my own agendas with those of the other learners. At this point in my own reflections, the ontological dimension of my aesthetic knowing becomes important because through that I am alerted to the reality of the other. In The General Prologue I show a greater awareness of the necessity of balancing within my educative relationships. At one point I write:

Just as the Mariner has to open to that living truth and allow its meanings to become part of his abilities to act in the world (look what happens when he doesn't) I had to let go of ideas about my own world-view and see what it might mean to be Zoë in that situation. The implications of that I now find salutary: it is not for me to confuse particular abilities with human value. This was becoming a new, living, insight for me as opposed to being the rhetoric of my educational theory. I was certain in my own mind of my equality of regard for both of the girls and yet it seemed that my actions were allowing one girl to feel slighted...[Understanding that I was] acting against my own espoused values spurs me to try harder, to sacrifice ego for the common good.(p.18/19)

This opening up to others the right to explore their values touches on Buber's (1923) view of the educative relation in which the educator subordinates his or her own structured view of the world to the particular being of the student. What I had not balanced in my educative relationship with Jenny was a sufficient understanding of the learning which can be promoted through an exploration of personal values within a supportive and yet challenging environment, with my concern for the knowledge-base I was eager to communicate.

I did not follow up Jenny's concern with any of the forms of communication I had established with other students - like letters, or conversations. Had I been

truly concerned about Jenny's values and her educational development I would have had data now to draw on in order to make claims about having helped her to improve the quality of learning with her pupils. I have none.

In The General Prologue I was concerned that my account of our Year Seven classroom did not just draw on data from the two girls whose educational development I concentrated on. This is why I included data on Hannah, Lisa, Katie, Julia, Vikki and others. Originally I had decided to write solely about Rebecca, but this did not satisfy me as again it was unbalanced in terms of the focus. Rebecca is highly academically able especially in English. She challenged me in a curricular way, but not so much in terms of my approach to teaching her. Zoë's inclusion in the text was necessary if I were to be true to my own value of being a learner in the process of teaching (McNiff, 1993). This time I had plenty of data to draw on, because I have learnt the ethical significance of concentrating equally on the children in my class and that collecting data on and with each child enables me to form a more individual educative relationship with that child. The balance I seek in my educative relationships must also be reflected in the quality and breadth of my information about each relationship. It is an ethical question because it is concerned with respecting individuals in action. I will return to this point in more depth in the Epilogue to Part Two.

My educative relationship with Jenny was unbalanced in the aesthetic sense because I denied her what I was advocating, which was the freedom to explore her values. Jack Whitehead (1989b) calls this process of denial a living contradiction. I perceive this state of affairs now as an aesthetic imbalance. However, I like the implied dialectic within the phrase 'living contradiction' (similar to the generativity of 'living educational theory') which is why I continue to use it. I now recognise that I was first attracted to the idea because

it gave me the space to create processes of education and forms of representation around it, just as the Delaroche painting in July, 1990, inspired me to connect particular values in an illuminating way. Similarly, negotiating educational standards of judgement can structure and enhance the learning process as I demonstrated in The General Prologue, and it is to the standards of judgement as an emergent structure within my own and others' learning that I now want to turn in a bid to clarify one of the most significant aspects of my own educational development.

In this resubmission I am struck by the apparent contradiction of my advocating developmental standards of judgement throughout the text, (particularly towards the end of the research) and laying out in my Introduction a series of categories by which I am asking you to judge this text. As Eisner (1993) says:

> *'experience can never be displayed in the form in which it initially*
> *appeared,'* (p.7)

and thus in a text which describes and **explains** my own educational development I can only point towards that development. I cannot show you the thing itself. In a recent article, MacLure (1996) writes this:

> *'If we abandoned the search for singularity and explanation it is*
> *not clear how we could address some of the concerns that*
> *motivated the inclusion of a life-history component in the*
> *Teachers as Researchers movement.'* (p.284)

This thesis is my explanation for my own educational development. In order to enhance its educational validity I can only point towards the weaknesses of

its representation and show a consistent motivation to seek appropriate forms of representation. I will not necessarily be able to solve all the challenges. It is in the nature of explanation that development can only be revealed by outcome. This is why I believe description is so vitally important to any claims to educational knowledge I can make. Description and explanation can act in a dialectical relationship such that at a particular point of sophistication they are blended into each other and lend the text a multi-dimensional richness and verisimilitude. I think I have achieved this in The General Prologue. For example I wrote this:

*I know that I tend to ask most of the questions, to which I already have a fair idea of the answers. They seemed to be asking questions to which they wished to know the answers for themselves. They were not my questions, but their own. I need to build on this. This is not a simple process, not merely a simple way to get them to ask questions but an exploration of what values underlie such processes. **What happens to power and knowledge in the educative relationship when the learners are asking their own questions?** When they are motivated to find out because it seems genuinely worthwhile to them to do so? If the worthwhileness to them is also an aspect of what seems worthwhile to me as the educator and the responsible adult, then it seems a wholly educative undertaking. Perhaps this is the value of the poem for me as a teacher-researcher: it leads to an exploration of such moral questions in an educative way for all concerned. Perhaps that is why time and time again I come back to it.* (p.9)

As I describe the situation in the classroom I explain its significance in terms of educational intentions, development and knowledge.

The standards of judgement contained within The Introduction represent a static profile of my development to date. The description of the standards

was not achieved in isolation, however. Indeed some of them, like 'ontology', and 'aesthetic', were pointed out as being inadequately explained in the previous submission of this thesis. This has enabled me to develop them more clearly, not only in terms of their descriptive power, but within my educational practice as represented by The General Prologue. The criteria in The Introduction can perhaps now act as a starting point for dialogue between us. I aspire towards forms within my educational processes which encourage the negotiation of educational standards of judgement and yet sometimes the limitations of representational forms may constrain this value. This is one of the reasons I have given you the opening to my thesis in its present form - a description and explanation of my core values which show a process of educational development over time (The General Prologue) - together with a more formal, analytical and explanatory text (The Introduction).

I want now to turn back to Part One for a final look at what it represents in terms of my own educational development. The title of this part of my narrative is:

'A Search for my Educational Standards of Judgement: The Aesthetic Morphology of my Educative Relationships. The Creation of my own Living Educational Theory.'

In the section entitled 'Action Reflection Cycle as a Systematic Enquiry' (beginning on p. 103) I write the following:

> *'I am claiming that my deep comprehension through experience   and careful research, has enabled me to, for example, create with*
>
> *my students standards of judgement which live and develop just   as their insights do...I believe that this living process...has an*

aesthetic morphology by which I can judge the educative

relationships in which I have been involved and which constitute

my claim to be creating my own living educational theory'. (p.122)

This is a huge claim - that I am developing standards of judgement with my students which develop as their insights do. I did not have evidence for that assertion. Furthermore, I had read through the Special Studies which the Initial Teacher Education students had written and extrapolated from them the values which I felt they contained. I did not negotiate these with the students and check back with them even about whether my judgements were correct. I do not think this emanated from a desire to wield power - I still remember the euphoria I felt on reading their accounts as they seemed so full of all the values which I was myself in education to promote. At that stage, however, I did not understand the value of first, making individuals' values explicit and then structuring their development as I feel I have subsequently done in my work with my Year Seven pupils. For example I wrote in The General Prologue:

On 5.1.96. we got together as a group to discuss what would be the criteria we could use as a class in judging the quality of the work being produced in preparation for the final presentations.

Zoë: *'We've got to understand it, haven't we? I mean, whatever anyone does, we have to understand it..'*

Moira: *'Brilliant, yes. Can we think of a way of describing that - what Zoë said?*

Rebecca: *'Understandability, Miss!'*

(general laughter)

Moira: *'Any advance on that? 'Understandability' sounds a bit clumsy, but you're right, Rebecca, you've got the idea.'*

Jo: *'Is it comprehensible or something?'*

Moira: *'Comprehensibility, yes. O.K., then, are we agreed? What you produce has to be comprehensible. We have to understand it. Well done Zoë, Rebecca and Jo on that one.'*

We went on to discuss several more ways of judging the work. Here's what we came up with:

1) Comprehensibility: the work has to be understandable. It has to make sense.

2) Carefulness: it has to be the result of hard work and attention to detail.

3) Collaboration: it has to show evidence of working with (an) other(s) in some way, however small. (Learning partners can help here.) (p.30)

This discussion with the girls seems to me to work on many educational fronts. I believe it enables many of us to develop together a sense of what we mean by certain terms so that we can communicate more effectively with each other. It reinforces the value I am placing on individual as well as group points of view in coming to solutions. It shows in action the value of co-operation. The negotiation is also appropriate in a curricular sense as the girls are extending their own vocabularies in the pursuit of knowledge. In this process the girls always worked with a learning partner in order to develop their own educational standards of judgement. Such collaboration was not one of the structures I set up with my Initial Teacher Education students.

What I have learnt from my recent educational research is how much of the educational value of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships resides within the meanings behind 'morphology'. The emergent structures and forms of my educative relationships can focus the values inherent within the aesthetic. I come back again to the notion of balance with which this

Epilogue is concerned. Another helpful way of expressing this balance is through terms such as 'living dialectics' (see The Introduction), 'educational development' and 'living educational theory'. It is within the immanent dialectic, however, that the most significant aspects of my own educational development can be expressed. Within each of the subsequent Parts of the thesis with their new Epilogues, I will be exploring the significance of trying to represent an immanent dialectic of my own educational development. This is as I develop the use-value of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships in the creation and testing of my own living educational theory.

<center>***</center>

> *''God save thee, Ancient Mariner!*
> *From the fiends that plague thee thus! -*
> *Why look'st thou so?"* **With my cross-bow**
> **I shot the Albatross.'**

The Ancient Mariner has to learn how to balance his ontological and ethical responsibilities, just as I seek to represent my own search for an aesthetic balance in the creation of my own living educational theory.