

**ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

**‘WHAT’S THE USE OF STORIES THAT AREN’T EVEN TRUE?’
(Rushdie, 1990)**

**A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO REFLECTIVE STORY WRITING
WITH TRAINEE TEACHERS**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

‘WHAT’S THE USE OF STORIES THAT AREN’T EVEN TRUE?’ (Rushdie, 1990)

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This story about stories sets out to examine the value of stories as a means to convey ‘truths’. It seeks to draw out the significance of reflective stories and poetry written by trainee teachers and PGCE tutors in reflective journals. The study examines perceptions of the value of keeping such journals, writing stories which may or may not be perceived as ‘true,’ and how writing in these ways can support and develop reflective practice in teaching.

The study uses a narrative inquiry approach (after Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The researcher is part of the inquiry working closely with participants, seeking to understand how and why we use stories to shape our lived experiences, personally and professionally and exploring what differences the inquiry will make, personally, practically and socially. The metaphor of travel underpins the study, standing both for the experience of the inquiry itself as a journey and in the wider sense of travelling to the worlds of others (Lugones, 1987) through storying. The text is written as a travelogue, enriched by the stories told along the way that allow the reader to participate in the experience of thinking with the stories. The nature of stories and their role in human experience and the questions of truth and fiction are also discussed.

Thinking with, rather than about, the stories and poems and thinking together with peers and others revealed themes and highlighted issues, deepening insights into how others experience the world, allowing a deeper analysis of inclusion, exclusion and identity in relation to culture, race, gender and sexuality, and leading to the retelling and reliving of the stories and, in some cases, co-composing stories to live by.

In epistemological terms the study contributes new stories and ways of seeing to the growing field of narrative inquiry and ontologically it adds to the existing conversation about why stories matter and what they contribute to our knowledge of the world.

Key words: Narrative inquiry; Reflective journals; Identity, inclusion, exclusion; Truth and fiction; Metaphor of inquiry as travel.

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Anglia Ruskin University
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Doctoral thesis

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A Narrative Inquiry into Reflective Story Writing
with Trainee Teachers

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Chapter 1

Travel plans

‘... travel writers avail themselves copiously of the devices of fiction
and have been labelled liars through the centuries’
(Bohls and Duncan, 2008, xx-xxi).

At the start of a journey it is usual for a traveller to make a plan. For some this may be meticulously detailed, with every aspect timed to the last minute. Travellers may prepare by reading relevant books to find out about the food they might eat, learn about local history, highlight the sights they hope to see, ask what the weather will be like. For a different kind of traveller the plan may be more flexible, with more openness to changes in the itinerary or the route, greater willingness to linger in an interesting place, to stop and talk with those encountered on the way. Indeed, for some travellers, it may not be clear at the start exactly what the destination will be or how long the journey will take. One thing is certain, as travellers we will return from our journey with a narrative, eager to share our travellers’ tales, whether truth or fiction, or something in-between.

In this study I explore my journey as a tutor and lecturer using narrative approaches in teacher training and continuing professional development (CPD) with a particular focus on the use of stories (fictionalised narratives) as a device to prompt deep reflection. My travelling companions are the participants in the study, trainee teachers following a one-year school-based, postgraduate course (PGCE) at Master’s level. They are required to show the ability to reflect critically on their experiences through keeping a reflective journal which maps their own journeys to becoming teachers. Other participants are serving teachers studying for a master’s degree in education which includes a unit on reflective writing. I am also a participant in my research study, keeping my own reflective travel journal. Some of my reflective narratives form the basis for Chapter 5, highlighting the ways in which they both reflect and inform my ontology and therefore my professional practice.

The participants were invited to take part in the study because they had experimented with writing reflectively in ways which included narratives of various types, and,

in some cases, poetry. There is no course requirement to use such approaches and there are no advantages in terms of grades, but trainees are encouraged to experiment with writing in different styles and from different perspectives and to reflect on the value of these approaches. Examples of the use of narratives and poetry are shared and discussed in the taught sessions on reflective writing (Chapter 6). All the participants have given permission for their stories and poems to be included in this study. Some contributed to further discussions about the experience of reflective writing and shared their continuing reflections on the effects of writing stories and poetry on their understandings of themselves and their practice. Some conversations were face-to-face, some by email; other responses took the form of extended pieces of reflective writing.

I view the methodology chosen for the study, narrative inquiry, (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) explained fully in Chapter 4, as my travel guide. Narrative inquiry is the ‘storying’ of experience through which qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Clandinin, 2013). This approach affords new insights for the writer: ‘Not until we had written this down did we quite know what we knew’ (van Manen, 1990, p.127) and for the reader, as different readers perceive different meanings, leading to new understandings of both self and practice.

I began the narrative inquiry by reading the reflective stories in the journals of the trainee teachers. The data for the inquiry are, primarily, the stories themselves, written over several years, together with the data from which the stories have been developed. These include field notes recording observations of trainee teachers, discussions with them about their teaching and their reflective writing, reflective writing about my own practice, experiences and observations in field notes and professional journal entries. Over time, I have recorded the events (action), building up the ‘story’ of what is happening, using a range of media, generating ‘living theory’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2005). All data have been collected with the agreement of the participants who have been invited to comment on and contribute to the ‘storying’ process. Reflection on the stories identifies themes, problems and questions. Readers of the stories are invited to add their own layers of response and interpretation.

Sharing the stories allows for commentary and critique and may lead to re-interpretation, re-tellings and the telling and reliving of new stories. The terms *living, telling, retelling and reliving* have been identified by Clandinin (2013) as having particular meanings in narrative inquiry:

People live out stories and *tell* stories of their living. Narrative inquirers come alongside participants ... And begin to engage in narrative inquiry into our lived and told stories. We call this process of coming alongside participants and then inquiring into the lived and told stories retelling stories. Because we see that we are changed as we retell our lived and told stories, we may begin to relive our stories (p.34).

I refer to the stories in the text as 'interim research texts'. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) described interim research texts as 'texts situated in the spaces between field texts and final published research texts' (p.133). Clandinin (2013) has explained that interim research texts are a way for researchers to 'continue to engage in relational ways with participants' (p.47) as they begin to explore and analyse field texts; such texts may be negotiated and even co-composed with participants, an approach I have used in this inquiry.

There is a self-study dimension to the inquiry (Loughran and Russell, 2002; Lassonde *et al*, 2009) an approach which may incorporate methods such as personal history, narrative inquiry and arts-based approaches. This is not my first exploration of the value and use of reflective writing for trainee teachers. In 2005 I carried out a study into how the trainees perceived the experience of keeping a reflective journal. This focused on their preferred writing places and habits and their views on the value of keeping a reflective journal, including the practice of fictionalising and writing poetry (Dyson, 2005). I was able to share and discuss my work with others engaged in narrative approaches at an international symposium in Montreal in 2007. This earlier work convinced me that there were other dimensions of reflective story-writing to be explored, particularly the nature of truth and fiction, and of fictional truth. I continued to experiment with my own reflective story-writing and to reflect on how this informed my professional practice using an artefact, a painted wooden box belonging to my grandmother, as a prompt for memories (Dyson, 2007a; 2007b). This became the stimulus for my personal story, which, in turn triggered memories in

the minds of the readers and listeners, often leading to the question, ‘But is it *true*?’ The question of what we may understand as ‘truth’ in the context of fiction is one that underpins this inquiry. Like the travel writers referred to by Bohls and Duncan (2008, xx-xxi) I have availed myself of ‘the devices of fiction’, allowing the reader to decide whether, and how, truths may be embodied in fiction.

I have included stories and poems in the text so that the reader may enter fully into the experience of the participants and make his/her own interpretations of the narratives. I have also explained in detail (Chapter 6) how I teach the methods entailed in reflective story writing and the rationale for them, and shown how I understand the ‘subtle pedagogy’ of fiction (Dillard, 1982, p.155).

For Solnit, stories and travels are inseparable. She writes: ‘... stories are travels and travels are stories’ (2002, p.72). She tells us that:

To write is to carve a new path through the terrain of the imagination, or to point out features on a familiar route. To read is to travel through that terrain with the author as guide – a guide one may not always agree with or trust, but who can at least be counted on to take us somewhere (ibid.).

As the author of this inquiry I am setting out on a journey, uncertain of where the exact destination will be. I am a reflective, reflexive traveller who is open to changes in the plan or the route, ready to follow a different path or explore a new place, hoping to extend my horizons. I am happy to linger, to stop and listen to fellow travellers, revelling in brief encounters and overheard conversations. I have a travel plan for my journey which allows for such flexibility. From the 1830s travellers embarking on the Grand Tour would not leave home without their copy of the relevant Baedeker guide. My Baedeker is the methodology of narrative inquiry and the writings of many venerable and experienced tour guides. I have travelling companions with whom I will share the journey and I am open to unexpected encounters along the way. The stories, as they unfold, will be a travelogue – travellers’ tales of a unique journey.

In keeping with the narrative approach I am writing in narrative form, sustaining a travelogue throughout the thesis, leaving the reader to traverse the liminal space

between fact and fiction, actively engaged in the journey rather than watching the travellers pass by.

Mapping the journey: an overview

The first chapter, *Travel plans: mapping the journey*, provides an overview and rationale for the journey.

In the second chapter, *Living a storied life: an autobiographical reflection*, I revisit my own narrative beginnings identifying significant events in my personal and professional narrative that have brought me to this study, following Clandinin's view that we must first inquire into who we see ourselves as being and becoming in the inquiry.

In Chapter 3 *What's in the bookcase?* I identify the key writers who have inspired the journey and become travel guides.

Chapter 4, *Something for the journey: a travel guide*, explains the methodology chosen for the inquiry. What ideas, whose thinking, will help me to interpret and understand what I see and those I meet on my journey? The title of this chapter refers to the *benedictio beatifica*, words from the Christian liturgy spoken at the end of a life, suggesting a link to the metaphorical journey of life, and also to the *viaticum*, from sixteenth century Latin, meaning travelling money or provision for a journey.

In Chapter 5, *On the road: exemplifying the journey*, I introduce some of the stories which have been prompted by my experiences when working with trainee teachers and visiting schools. The metaphor of encounters experienced while travelling along a road provides a setting for stories which explore liminality, diversity and difference.

In Chapter 6, *World travelling*, through reflective journal extracts and stories I describe my approaches to teaching and modelling reflective story-writing, showing how travelling to the worlds of others with loving perception (Lugones, 1987) can prompt the questions, 'What is it like to be you?' And 'What is it like to be me, through your eyes?'

Chapter 7, *Borderlands: complicating understandings of identity*, focuses on stories, co-composed with two trainee teachers, which have raised questions about race, culture, faith, identity and difference; questions which challenge our perceptions, making us uncomfortable.

Chapter 8, *Travelling with Evelyn: four seasons of composing stories to live by*, has been co-composed with a former MA student, now a colleague and travelling companion. Through a year of conversations we explore the nature of fictional writing, how we choose our metaphors, and how they help us create and understand our own stories, and, in turn how we support others to reflect through stories.

The final chapter, Chapter 9, is a pause in the journey, a reflective space, where I take time to consider what has been discovered on the journey that will help me answer my original question: ‘What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?’. Clandinin (2013) reminds us that as researchers we are always *in media res*, in the midst, and that ‘narrative inquiry always begins and ends in the midst of ongoing experiences’ (p.44). The journey will continue, with new travelling companions, to places, as yet, unknown.

Chapter 2

Living a storied life: an autobiographical narrative reflection

‘The writer does not know what he or she knows, and writing is a way of finding out’

(Bennett, 1998, pp.539-40).

‘ ... writing is always a story of the self in one way or another’

(Hayler, 2011, p.24).

‘In all good writing, even academic writing, there is a personal transaction between

writer and reader because what any writer actually deals with is not the subject

being written about but who he or she is’

(Badley, 2013).

‘Please, no more tigers’

(Martel, 2002, p.302).

Jean Clandinin has written, ‘This question of who I am in a narrative inquiry is one that I ask myself as a new study begins to shape itself on the horizon of my knowing ... Thinking narratively is what helps me. And I need first to think narratively about my life’ (Clandinin, 2013, p.81). So, here goes.

I begin with some rhetorical questions. Am I brave enough to take Alan Bennett at his word and simply start writing to see where it leads? Are Badley (2013) and Hayler (2011) right in their view that all writing, ‘even academic writing,’ is ultimately about oneself? Will an examination of my own memories and the narrative discourses which shape my understanding of my professional/personal self/selves bring insight into the study I am about to undertake? How will starting with my own autobiographical writing help my understanding of the professional experiences of teachers? Can I construct a self-narrative which tells a story within a story, linking my own experiences of writing and reflection with my practice as a teacher of teachers? Am I able to practise what I preach? These are some of the questions that will guide my exploration of the influences that have shaped my work and help me to understand why stories are so important to me and why the metaphor of living a storied life in storied landscapes (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) resonates so strongly for me. But which stories shall I tell? There are always choices to be made, as the narrator of Schlink’s novel, *The Reader*, reminds us:

Soon after her death, I decided to write the story of me and Hanna. Since then I've done it many times in my head, each time a little differently, each time with new images, and new strands of action and thought. Thus, there are many different stories in addition to the one I have written. The guarantee that the written one is the right one lies in the fact that I wrote it and not the other versions. The written version wanted to be written, the many others did not. (1997, p.24)

Narrative beginnings

There is always more than one story, (Adichie, 2009) something I will emphasise throughout this study. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.87), reflecting on their stories of researcher experience, emphasise, 'Other beginnings, other stories were possible.' So, to answer the questions 'Why stories?' And 'What are the stories that want to be written here?' Let's start at the beginning.

'Part of the appeal [of narrative inquiry] is, no doubt, the comfort that comes from thinking about, telling, and listening to stories' (Clandinin, Pushor and Murray-Orr, 2007, p.21). As I read these words I am taken back in time, more than sixty years. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.

The Second World War is not long over. It is 1.45 in the afternoon. A small child is sitting on a chair. It is a dining chair, straight-backed, a piece of utility furniture, plain and functional like the rest of the furniture in the room. The seat is covered with green slippery stuff, it is certainly not comfortable. The child's legs hang over the edge of the chair. Her feet do not reach the floor. But she is comfortable within herself. The chair is next to the wireless, a magical, brown bakelite box, which crackles and whistles, its little screen blinking with strange orange and green lights. The child is full of anticipation, for her this is the best time of the day. First there is the music, gentle, rippling piano chords. It is Fauré, the *Berçeuse* from his *Dolly Suite*, as she will later learn. Certainly it is music she will never forget and which will always remind her of this scene. Now here is the voice of the announcer. In clear, clipped Reithian tones she asks, 'Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.'

Chelmsford, 1989

It's a cold November evening. I'm sitting with other teachers in an unattractive classroom on the top floor of the concrete block that is the school of education at Anglia Polytechnic University, holding a polystyrene cup of cooling, foul-tasting coffee from a machine in the canteen. We are all tired, having done a long day's teaching, and some of us are wondering why on earth we signed up to do a Master's degree in Educational Research. I am hoping that my three children have got home safely from school, been fed and done their homework. I try to focus on Richard Winter, our tutor. We've been learning about dilemma analysis and now he's reading a story. It's about a university lecturer beset by dilemmas relating to the unreasonable demands of his head of department regarding admin, and the general mismatch between the rhetoric and reality of his life, both personally and professionally. I'm quickly drawn into the story, forgetting my domestic troubles. In the discussion that follows he introduces us to an approach he calls 'fictional critical writing'. He explains that a fictional text isn't to be taken as imparting knowledge about reality but as raising questions about reality through what he describes as 'the unresolved plurality of its meanings.' He talks about how story can be 'an act of theorising' and suggests that the link between storying and theorising is the process of imagination. He asks us to try out this approach and bring our stories to the next session. This gets a mixed reception from the group but I can't wait to try it out. As I drive home my story begins to tell itself – for me, at that moment, it was certainly the story that had to be told.

As I reflect, I can see how that night was a significant point in my professional life. From further study of Winter's work I learnt how stories bring out the ambiguities and contradictions of experience and how this ambiguity allows for different responses from readers with diverse perspectives. Even the author has no absolute privilege here: authors can learn more about their own stories from hearing readers' responses (Winter, 1989, p.165). I was also introduced to the idea of stories as reflexive statements, though I don't think I really understood the meaning of reflexivity in this context until many years later, through deeper readings on the nature of narrative and critical reflective writing, (Bolton, 2010, 3rd edition; Carr and Kemmis, 1986). Winter (2006) held the view that action research is transformative. He described it as 'a way of engaging with a vision of how the world might be

transformed' (p.6). The research for my master's study which focused on children's experiences of racism made me strongly receptive to this view. I truly believed that I was going to change the world.

Every writer knows that if you want to write you must read. As a reader and writer of fiction I was drawn to the way that Winter linked his work on story to literary writing. Eagleton (2012) confirms the significance of the literary connection: 'Literature is where ideas are investigated, lived out, explored in all their messy complexity ... Literature is how we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves' (p.1). Susan Sontag (2007) stressed the ethical dimension of writing fiction. She viewed literature as 'a form of responsibility – to literature itself and to society' (p.213). She emphasised the moral agency of writers of novels, plays and stories, arguing that a writer of fiction is:

.. someone who thinks about moral problems: about what is just and unjust, what is better or worse, what is repulsive and admirable, what is lamentable and what inspires joy and approbation (ibid.).

In our seminars Winter shared with us the work of writers who analyse the nature and uses of story; I took great pleasure in following up his references and in making discoveries of my own. These include Margaret Meek (1991, p.105) who identifies storytelling as a 'habit':

The habit of storytelling pervades our explanations, hopes, fears, dreams, plans and every recollection, whether we notice it or not ... each incident of every day is a possible tale for us to tell to others so as to satisfy our deep need to understand the nature of events and our part in them (1991, p.105).

He also introduced me to Barbara Hardy's work on tellers and listeners in which she shows how narrative imagination is a common human possession: 'We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and live by narrative' (1975, p.5).

As the Master's course of study progressed I discovered more writers who have reinforced this view in one way or another. I continued to learn about the nature of

narrative and that there is always more to explore and understand in response to the question, ‘why stories?’ Amongst these, Bolton’s work with narratives in the context of reflective practice, (Bolton, 2005a, 2005b, 2010) became particularly significant. She describes one function of narrative as ‘an attempt to create order and security out of a chaotic world’ (2010, p.205). The narratives/stories we tell ourselves and others are essential if we are to make sense of our existence: ‘If our lives weren’t constantly told and retold, storying each new experience, we would have no coherent notion of who we are, where we are going, what we believe, what we want, where we belong, and how to be’ (Bolton, 2010, p.206). Bolton describes how our small narratives are inevitably part of the grand social and political narratives played out around us. Her work on the use of narrative as an aspect of reflective writing encouraged me to develop my work beyond fictional critical writing and work with teachers on creating narratives as part of their writing in reflective journals.

My reading prompted further questions about stories: Where do our stories come from? Do they arise from our ontological position, our ‘theory of being’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.22), from our social, cultural, political, spiritual identities? Bruner, (in Dyson and Geneshi, 1994) quotes (without reference) Henry James: ‘Stories happen to people who know how to tell them’ (p.28). Booker (2004) suggests that our stories ‘emerge from some place in the human mind that functions autonomously, independent of any story-teller’s conscious control’ (p.24). So, human beings *need* stories? Understanding our relationship to stories and how they help us to know who we are, to construct our own meaning, is essential to our ‘growing up’. The Lost Boys in *Peter Pan* are ‘lost’ because they don’t know any stories – they will always remain boys and always be lost. That is why Peter steals Wendy away to Neverland:

You see I don’t know any stories. None of the lost boys know any stories.’
‘How perfectly awful,’ Wendy said ... ‘Oh, the stories I could tell to the boys!’ she cried, and then Peter gripped her and began to draw her toward the window. (Barrie, 1911, p.96)

The question of ‘truth’ is a significant one. Since I began to use stories pedagogically, as a means of teaching about ways of developing reflective, reflexive writing I have noticed how often people ask, ‘But is it true?’ after listening to a story. My

understanding of the nature of truth is informed by the postmodern view that truth cannot be absolute, that it exists in multiple dimensions and that it is possible to hold different views of truth for different aspects of life (Nietzsche, 1896; Rorty, 1973). My answer to the question would be that it depends what is meant by 'true' in a particular context, politics or ethics, for example, as opposed to matters of the engineering of an aircraft. Even at a time when we are living in an era which has been described as 'post truth' (D'Ancona, 2017) there is still a desire to capture truth, to pin it down. I am intrigued by the possibilities and ambiguities of truth in stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) observe, 'In narrative inquiry, the distinction between fact and fiction is muddled' (p.179). This question is discussed further as the inquiry progresses.

The protagonist in Rushdie's story about stories, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, is Haroun, the son of a professional story teller. Haroun is perplexed at the criticisms their neighbour, Mr Sengupta, directs at his father:

He's got his head stuck in the air and his feet off the ground. What are all these stories? Life is not a storybook or joke shop. All this fun will come to no good. What's the use of stories that aren't even true? (Rushdie, 1990, pp.19-20).

This gave me a chapter title in my Master's dissertation (Dyson, 1991) and has become the key question for this inquiry: 'What's the use of stories that aren't even true?' Those words have been in my mind for over twenty years, waiting for me to 'do something' with them.

1991: Drops in the ocean

I achieve my M.Ed. My dissertation, *Drops in the Ocean*, was mostly written on a corner of my kitchen table and was a study of multi-cultural/anti-racist education in all-white schools. I feel a sense of achievement, although it begins to dawn on me that my dissertation is destined to remain on the shelves, unread. Naively, I had imagined that my research conclusions highlighting that the majority of black and Asian students whom I interviewed and whose stories formed the basis of my dissertation, experienced racism in some form or another regularly, both in and out of school, would be transformative in some way. Reluctantly I accept that my findings

will probably make no difference to anyone, except myself, perhaps, – which may be something after all. Fifteen years later I was disappointed to read that Winter himself noted that action research transformed the world much less than he had expected (2006, p.1).

I am relieved that my children don't seem to have suffered too much from my years of study. However, my husband leaves me for another woman.

Time passes and I keep writing stories. I have got into the habit and it's a hard habit to break. Sometimes I think the stories save my life!

1997: *Carpe diem*

I am 50. Russell and I get married.

The University of Hertfordshire appoints me as part-time Research Assistant to Helen Burchell in the School of Education, funded through the Research Assessment Exercise.

Labour wins the General Election and the 'Education, Education, Education' agenda is launched.

There is government funding for schools in inner-city areas and Roger Luxton, Director of Education for Barking and Dagenham, appoints me to work for the Excellence in Cities programme as Co-ordinator for Gifted and Talented students.

April 2000: New Orleans

I'm sitting in a lavishly-furnished function room in the Hilton Hotel in New Orleans. It's 8.30 in the morning, though my body says it's midnight. I'm holding a take-out Starbucks' Americano, which tastes of nothing, and wearing a badge saying 'American Educational Research Association' with my name, and 'University of Hertfordshire, UK' underneath. Through the window I can see the Mississippi. At the front of the room a group of men and women are giving a presentation on the theme of reflection. After each has told their reflective story they hold up a mirror and ask: 'Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, who is the most reflective of us all?' I am amazed.

Afterwards I chat to the woman next to me, saying that I can't imagine a presentation like this taking place in the UK. She smiles and tells me she has just written her doctoral thesis as a novel. I'm amazed again.

It was a significant moment. This brief conversation with a stranger opened up so many possibilities. I had not explored narrative as a research method beyond the use of fictional critical writing. Helen (Burchell) and I developed and adapted Winter's approach in our work with supervisors in higher education, a research project which stretched over a year and resulted in a number of papers and publications. One, *Just a Little Story* (2000), drew on a rich collection of data including interview transcripts and professional stories. But, a thesis as a novel ...?

Reflections on the 'Narrative People'

Writing this and remembering that moment, I am asking myself whether, in fact this approach to academic writing is still as startling and 'alternative' as it seemed to me then, and, if not, what has changed and who were and are the key movers? Part of the answer to this question lies on my own bookshelves. The books on the first shelf are supported at one end by *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2002) and at the other, by *The Handbook of Narrative Inquiry* (2007). The second of those books certainly didn't exist in 2002 although those who were trail-blazers for narrative approaches in research: Tom Barone, Michael Connolly, Jean Clandinin, Peter Clough, Margot Ely, Maxine Greene, were certainly writing at that time. The AERA special interest groups (SIGS) on narrative, arts-based approaches and self-study were established, and many scholars who responded to and experimented with these approaches were active. They were challenging the dominance of positivist research in education, challenging the Eurocentricity of so much academic writing, finding their voices, thinking with others, presenting their conference papers, and, perhaps most importantly, creating networks. At that time I had never heard of the 'Invisible College', which convenes before the start of the AERA conference each year, and had no possible notion that, three years later, I would be presenting a paper there, alongside Jean Clandinin and her doctoral students, and inviting members of the audience to read a script representing the voices of our research partners and co-authors, later to be published (Burchell and Dyson, 2009).

In my recent readings of alternative approaches to writing and presenting dissertations and theses, the work of Don Trent Jacobs (2008), known by his First Nations name of Four Arrows, has shown me that there are now many scholars who have pushed the boundaries in their writing. Amongst these is Pauline Sameshima who wrote her (prize-winning) dissertation as an epistolary novel, *Seeing Red* (2006) in which she acknowledges what she describes as ‘other ways of knowing’, listing artistic, poetic, narrative, autobiographical, creative, emotional, imaginative approaches as ‘integral to scholarly adventures of researching and living’ (p.6). I like to imagine she may have been the woman I met that morning in New Orleans who got me thinking about the possibilities of working with stories.

Reflecting on the growing use of these ‘alternative’ approaches to educational and social research has given me confidence that I should not feel anxiety about the ‘I’ in *my* story, nor about bringing stories and poems unashamedly into the text. I want to feel that here I can write without the usual constraints (are they constraints?) of academic style, whilst maintaining a scholarly tone. Ultimately, I don’t want to stand accused of lack of rigour or quality, or have the validity of my work questioned because I have chosen an unorthodox approach to presenting my study. The work of others in the fields of narrative studies has given me confidence to believe that I have a story to tell and authority to tell it in my own way.

The rest of that week in New Orleans is spent listening to and talking with ‘the narrative people’. I browse the book stalls in the exhibition hall. *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* by Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly has just been published. I buy it and, by the time the plane touches down at Heathrow, I’ve finished it and know that I am, and always have been, living and working on a storied landscape, living a storied life – and that I am not alone. The landscape is peopled with academics and writers, the richness of whose work I have barely touched. I also know that narrative approaches are controversial in the broad field of research but that there are people prepared to fight back. I also come across the ‘self-study people’, some of whom are also narrative people but ... I was going to say ‘that’s another story’ but that isn’t true, because self-study is an integral part of the story I’m telling now.

Significant travelling companions

I returned to the University and to Barking and Dagenham full of enthusiasm and ideas for research projects. Roger Luxton read and challenged rigorously everything I wrote. He made me critique my own work and my reading, both fiction and academic works. He introduced me to reader response theory, particularly the work of Wolfgang Iser (1978; 1993), and encouraged my research with practitioners in the Borough's schools. During that time I presented papers and wrote articles on a range of educational topics, often drawing in teachers to engage in action research and present their findings at conferences in the UK and abroad. Exciting times – government funding for education can be a wonderful thing!

At the same time Helen and I were working together on a proposal for AERA which challenged the conventional view of how literature is presented in academic writing. The title was: *The Value of Moving Beyond the Text – Imagining Your Reading*. In writing it we took up the challenge set by Fairbairn (2000) that academics should break away from conventional forms of writing and 'tell good academic stories' (2000, p.31). We represented this as a gauntlet because we saw it as being thrown down in challenge, but also because I came across his article by accident lying around in a school staff room one day, seeing it as a message in a bottle, waiting to be picked up. On reflection, I think we were surprised, and a bit scared, when we received positive feedback from the reviewers and learned that our paper had been accepted for the AERA conference, in the Arts-based Approaches to Educational Research SIG, to be held in New Orleans the following Spring. The University agreed to funding.

April 2002: New Orleans

Russell and I have spent two weeks driving through the Southern States and along the Gulf Coast to meet with colleagues for the AERA Annual Conference. America is in a state of shock and disbelief at the events of 9/11 and this is reflected in our encounters with all those we meet on our trip.

It's Easter Sunday. There's a parade through the French Quarter, brass bands, horses and carriages, people dressed like characters from *Gone With the Wind*, all of them white. We push through the crowds and find Helen and Nick waiting in the lobby

of their hotel. Helen and I go off to plan our paper session, *Imagining your Reading* (Burchell and Dyson, 2002), which we will be giving the next day. I produce a box and carefully take out the objects and images that we will use to represent our reading, laying them in the centre of the table. They include a message in a bottle, some brightly coloured tesserae, a photograph of vivid yellow dandelions, (we wanted real ones but they were hard to find in downtown New Orleans), a Rubik's Cube, and a leather glove. And another photograph – a beach house, in South Carolina to represent a book – *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky *et al.* 1995). These women lived and wrote at the beach house, dogs were allowed but men and children only at weekends. Leaves, shells and feathers represent David Abram's *Spell of the Sensuous* (1996). We feel nervous but excited, adventurous, as if we are pushing the boundaries in some way.

Finding myself on the storied landscape

Over the years I have continued to write stories as a means of personal and professional exploration. Arendt, writing about the storyteller Isak Dinesen, describes the world as 'full of stories, circumstances and curious situations which are just waiting to be told' (1970, p.162). I always carry in my imagination the vivid image of myself living a storied life on a storied landscape. I read a great deal of fiction and sense that this must be a familiar idea for writers of fiction but, perhaps, less so for academic writers? Clandinin and Connelly write that, 'To enter a professional knowledge landscape is to enter a place of story,' (1991, p.1). Walker emphasises that 'good stories help us to think well and wisely about our practice,' (2007, p.295). There's another question: what makes a 'good' story?

Although I write reflective stories primarily in the spirit of self-study (Lassonde, Galman and Kosnik, eds, 2009; Loughran and Russell, 2002) many have been shared with colleagues and students, putting into practice Winter's conviction that the writer learns from the readers' responses. Mostly, the stories I write do not have endings where everything is resolved, rather, they leave an opening for reader response (Iser, 1978; Fish 1980). They are often written as 'interrogative texts' (Belsey, 1980), posing questions both implicitly and explicitly. I have found that those listening to the stories often ask, 'What happened next?' It seems that people like to have an ending. Sometimes I ask them what they think happened next, a question which

results in a plurality of responses. In this sense they could be described as ‘formative fictions’ as in Landy (2012,) who argues that ‘... formative fictions should leave *some* work for the reader to do, but not *all* the work, and they should offer rewards for progress made along the way,’ (p.15). ‘When does a story live?’ Ben Okri asks. He answers his own question: ‘It lives only when it is read or heard. A story is part telling, part hearing, part reading. It dwells in that ambiguous place between the teller and the hearer, between the writer and the reader’ (2013, p.29/30).

In my inquiry I have focused on interpreting professional stories, my own stories and those written by others, often seeking a metaphor to help me make sense of what has been written. Van Manen (1988, p.120) suggests that ‘with each re-telling we discover more of what we know.’ A re-reading of my stories suggests that an underlying interest, and often the prompt for developing a narrative, is the notion of borderlines. I am, it seems, frequently paying attention to what is happening at the edges, focusing on those people, often children, who appear to be marginalised, excluded, disenfranchised, and the landscapes they inhabit, often on the borders of towns and cities (Dyson, 2008). This was the case with the stories developed in my Master’s dissertation and is particularly true of the stories written when I worked in the schools of Barking and Dagenham and other boroughs spread along the route of the A13, see Chapter 5.

Conroy’s (2004) exploration of ‘liminality’ (from Latin *limen*: ‘threshold’) has extended my thinking: ‘Those on the border or at the threshold perceive culture, social relations and politics quite differently from those at the centre’ (op.cit.53). This is an interesting metaphor. Thresholds are the point at which people are admitted to a domain, allowed or invited in – or not. Such borders are also the places where identities change and conflicts begin. There are links too with the field of critical pedagogy, ‘pedagogy that prevents students from being hurt’ (Kincheloe, 2004, p.13). This applies to many of the situations explored in my own stories, and certainly in those of the trainees and teachers participating in my research. The extent to which the fictionalised writing and critical reflection on the stories might lead to greater social, cultural and political awareness and, in turn, to challenges and changes in practice is discussed as the thesis unfolds.

As researchers in any field, wherever we start we will always go into the middle of the story and there are no certain endings. Real life is much more messy and random. We are always in the middle of our own stories, and as narrative inquirers, those of others.

Heilbrun (1988) captures the essence of this approach to narrative inquiry:

What matters is that lives do not serve as models; only stories do that ...

We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. We live our lives through texts ... Whatever their form or medium these stories have formed us all; they are what we must use to make new fictions, new narratives' (p.37)

November 2006: Bereavement – making sense of things when they don't

In my teaching sessions about the 'uses of stories' I emphasise how stories help us to confront and cope with the hard things that life throws at us. I quote Maxine Greene: 'stories ... give shape and expression to what would otherwise be untold about our lives' (1991, p.x). Indeed, story helps us to come to terms with our life experiences – especially the bad ones, the difficult ones, the testing ones – both hearing, seeing or reading other people's stories and writing and telling our own. I refer to Cupitt (1991) who says:

Stories make it possible for us to handle painful, difficult or forbidden topics ... the orderly unfolding of a story guides and controls feelings that might otherwise be too strong to be bearable' (p.77).

In her book *The Human Condition* (1958, p.175) Hannah Arendt recalled the words of Isak Dineson in a *New York Times* interview (Mohn, 1957, n.p.): 'All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them.' In common with many others, I have found that a personal reflective journal can be a powerful means of coming to terms with and exploring the experience of loss and bereavement, fictionalising experience as a distancing device. Thus, we tell and re-tell our stories in ways that satisfy our needs. Bruner (2002, p.28) expresses powerfully and succinctly this way of using stories: 'Our narrative gift enables us to make sense of things when they don't.'

So, I knew all that to be true. I knew after Russell's sudden death that telling my stories through writing a journal was going to be essential and that when I was ready

to do it I would know. I understood that the space for writing can be significant and, finding the soft, green notebook, spiral bound, with his notes on the sessions he had attended at AERA in San Francisco a few months earlier, at the beginning and end of the book, I knew my words would sit between his. I would know when to start writing and I would know when it was time to stop and start writing something else somewhere else. And so it proved to be.

July 2007: Encountering extremism

My analysis of some of the stories composed as I drove along the A13 and written in my professional reflective journal highlighted the themes of difference and exclusion. The stories became the basis for a paper delivered at a conference on Extremism (Roehampton University, 2007) alongside colleagues from Barking and Dagenham: ‘You’re a Terrorist! How stories from schools prompted an exploration of attitudes to difference’. This paper was constructed around a series of stories, all set along a major road – the A13: *You’re a Terrorist!*; *Friday Night in the Pub with Bernstein*; *A Place of Greater Safety*; and *Doubly Vulnerable*. These stories continue to inform my teaching and thinking about the tensions and possibilities which are presented by lives lived on the boundaries, in the liminal spaces where identities and differences are challenged. The road continues to be a strong metaphor in this study. I explore the stories and their significance in Chapter 5.

June 2008: A Grand Narrative

Levi-Strauss has written: ‘We do not tell our mythic stories, they tell us’ (1978, p.67). Okri believes that stories ‘come from beyond, from some uncommon, living, ever-evolving, universal storehouse of wisdom’ (2013, p.13). Here I encounter such stories. I’m standing in the lecture theatre of the British Library preparing to give the keynote lecture to launch the exhibition of the *Ramayana*, one of Hinduism’s great stories, a ‘Grand Narrative’, a story in which God takes on human form in order to heal a breach in the order of society, and thus the world in general. Underlying the story is an attempt to re-establish a moral code for living, and the proper relationship of humanity to divinity. The audience are post-graduate teachers and lecturers, specialising in Religious Studies.

I am nervous but excited as I sort out my power point and arrange the artefacts I will use on a table at the front. I begin by talking about the significance of stories: ‘Stories are an essential part of what it means to be fully human. Story telling is as essential to human beings as eating for, while food keeps us alive, our ability to tell stories is something that makes our lives *worth* living. Stories help us to give answers to the great, unanswerable questions of existence: Who are we? Where do we come from? Where do we go to? What is the point of our existence? What can we know? Why is there anything at all, why not nothing? How should we act?’

I read a passage from Arundhati Roy’s novel, *The God of Small Things*:

The Great Stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again. The ones you can enter anywhere and inhabit comfortably. They don’t deceive you with thrills and trick endings. They don’t surprise you with the unforeseen. They are as familiar as the house you live in. Or the smell of your lover’s skin. You know how they end, yet you listen as though you don’t. In the way that, although you know that one day you will die, you live as though you won’t. In the Great Stories you know who lives, who dies, who finds love and who doesn’t. And yet you want to know again. THAT is their mystery and their magic. (p.218)

Introducing the *Ramayana* itself I ask: ‘How important can a story be?’ I go on to describe the *Ramayana* and the significance it has for Hindus:

It is a beautiful, spiritual, epic mythology which includes educative tales, edifying poems and fables, humour, encounters with deities and terrible monsters – some beautiful, some strange, some grotesque. It is a story that is so culturally and spiritually significant that when it was shown on TV in 1987 in India life in cities, towns and villages came to a standstill. It was estimated that over 80 million people watched it – in a place where most people don’t own televisions!

What is it about? It is written in 24,000 verses arranged in seven books and therefore it is difficult to do it justice here. In a nutshell, however, this ancient story, which is over 2,000 years old, interweaves the human story of Rama, the ideal man and king who became identified with Vishnu the Preserver God, incarnated on earth to restore good to the world. Thus,

the story of Rama and his wife Sita become part of the grand narrative of the eternal struggle between good and evil. This story captured the imagination of the peoples of India and South East Asia and is constantly told and re-told, reinterpreted through different media, not dependent on the written word, explored and experienced through the range of creative and expressive arts including poetry, dance, music, drama, shadow puppetry.

I end with an extract from a story written for Hindu children, *Hanuman's Adventures in the Nether World* (Mahadevan, 2005) which explores a range of ultimate questions: Who am I? Who is my father? Where did I come from? What is the purpose of my life?

‘Who am I?’ Hanuman asked. ‘When I see my own face reflected in the still waters of a pond, I see just another monkey. The same bright beady eyes, the same hairy body, the same long tail as anyone else ... So who am I? How am I different?’

The wise Jambavan tells Hanuman that he is the son of the great Vayu, Lord of the Winds. Hanuman asks: ‘If I am really his son, why does he stay away from me?’

Jambavan replies: ‘But he is always with you ... he’s the life breath of this earth, the prana. He is the sweet-scented zephyr that stirs the leaves of the trees in the forest; the cool gust that brings the first smell of rain. He is the dust devil that dances in the desert; the raging cyclone that sinks entire fleets out at sea. Vayu is everywhere. He is the breath in your lungs. That is your father, Hanuman. From him you have the power to leap over oceans. To fly. Who can stop you from going where you please?’ (2005, p.29).

The lecture ends, the audience moves into the exhibition gallery with its creative, sumptuous, colourful, multi-media interpretations of the story, to make their own sense of it, decide how it speaks to them and how they might use stories in their teaching.

September 2011: Cross Country

Extract from my reflective journal

Yesterday Helen, and I sat with our colleague Joy, in her sitting room discussing 'resonance' – a preliminary exploration of ideas for an article. We had worked on the idea of resonance several years ago and never completed anything, but, as Helen said, 'The sound does not quite die away.' As we talked I took detailed notes of our conversation. We explored different ways of writing and, in a spirit of experimentation, I offered to write up the notes as a 'found poem' (Butler-Kisber, 2010, p.84). Denzin and Lincoln (2002), in their discussion of poetics in qualitative inquiry, suggest that 'writers of poetry erase the usual distinctions between fact and fiction' (p.155). In particular, I found these words resonated for me: 'Experience is meant to speak for itself, in poetic terms. A text becomes a place where the writer carries on a dialogue with significant others' (op. cit. p.156).

Now, on the earliest train from Stansted Airport to Birmingham, en route to attend an editorial board meeting, I sit, the luxury of three hours stretching before me, pen in hand, watching the countryside slip past the window. I read through my notes and start writing. I wonder ... Is this a poem?

September,
Summer blends into autumn.
Train crossing the flat fens
Rich, black soil.
Landscape intersected by straight lines.
Dykes, roads, railway,
The even strides of pylons.
Wind turbines white against grey sky
Almost graceful.

Reflecting on yesterday
Conversation, chatter, dialogue ...

What was it?
Three sharing
Coffee, cake, fruit and
Narratives, readings, understandings

Thinking aloud
Thinking with others
Finding a voice, asking
What do we need/want to say?
Layers, sedimentedness
Of conversation
Reflecting

We had a shared sense of purpose
But unarticulated
No-one asked,
'What are we doing?'
Or 'Why?'

Ely
Cathedral rising above the flatlands,
Willows reflected in a reed-fringed river,
A single swan drifting,
Image mirrored in clear water.

Resonance
How to make the familiar unfamiliar
The unfamiliar familiar
Can poetry do that?
Resonances
Resonating

Peterborough.
Puddles on the platform.

Graceful cathedral spires
Alongside minarets and domes.
Experiencing narrative worlds.

Industrial outskirts
Matalan, Argos, B&Q.
Graffiti: "Reality Bites"

Challenging
The propositional form.

Asking:
Is something
More charged
If there's
A poetic quality
To the saying?

It's the saying
That's important.
Having an insight
You didn't know you had
Through saying,
Speaking.
A way of communicating
When we feel
Truth has shown its face.

Leicester.
Experiencing narrative worlds.
An orange sofa
Sits on wasteland
It looks comfortable.
Surprising.
The familiar made unfamiliar?

That moment when prose
Breaks into poetry
The poet speaks
On the threshold
Of being

Birmingham.
End of journey.
Confident, resonating,
Buzzing Bull Ring.
Saris and bhurkas
“Tattoo’s and Piercing’s”
Experiencing narrative worlds.

Power dimensions shifting.
Getting a sense of a different space.
It’s about what you notice,
What you pay attention to.
Creating the space.
Who? How?
You have to come into this space
With something you want to enquire into.
Open-ness
To ways of interacting with the space.

You can’t make things happen.
Can’t you?
Anything goes.
Does it?
The familiar
The unfamiliar
Working on that edge
Where you know something about the familiar

But not enough.
Dedicate the space
To bringing out the unfamiliar
To know what it is.
Shall we have something to eat now?

December 4th 2013: Loss

Today I received an email from the University of Hertfordshire with news that Helen has died suddenly. The end of a long dialogue with a significant other. A sense of unfinished business. We never managed to publish our article *Imagining your Reading* and I know there was more to be written on resonance ... the sound does not quite die away ...

September 2012

I begin my doctoral studies at Anglia Ruskin University.

Extract from my reflective journal

I've read so much and have so many ideas going round in my head about the nature of narrative/story, about the perspectives of writers/tellers and of readers/listeners. In particular I need to find a narrative voice for my study – it seems such a contradiction to be exploring the workings of narrative but to frame the study in a conventional academic form. I think I need to experiment with ways of writing and see where it takes me. I read Nona Lyons' chapter in the *Big Narrative Inquiry Book* last night and also Margot Ely – I had forgotten how much I liked her when I first read/heard/met her. She writes about writing – really resonated with the way I've been thinking. I also re-discovered the *Man with the Blue Guitar* (how could I have forgotten it?) through my reading of Iser on how fictional text is made to reproduce 'a reality beyond itself' (Iser, 1993, p.15).

My first writings will be an exploration of my autobiographical beginnings – where will I start? What will I include – and what will I leave out? Who are the significant characters in my story so far? Maftai highlights the importance of autobiographical writing: 'Creating a narrative becomes the only way we can express our own lives and get close to accessing and

trying to understand the lives of others (2013, p.127).

Reflection

Through writing this chapter I have shown that autobiographical beginnings bring to the surface factors which influence a researcher's perspectives, placing the researcher in the inquiry as well as within the wider life context. Clarke and Murphy (2015) consider that researchers have an ethical responsibility to tell their own stories: 'Attending to narrative beginnings in research demonstrates an understanding of this ethical responsibility' (p.30). Thus, as a narrative inquirer I have explored my autobiographical beginnings in order to understand myself better as I enter into research alongside my participants.

What understandings have I generated and what questions, puzzles and wonders? More questions certainly. I've written myself to a point where I have identified some of the ideas and questions and want to explore them further. I know that there will be challenges to my approach but I'm feeling adventurous. I want to play a tune that is 'beyond us, yet ourselves' (Stevens, op.cit. ibid.).

In the final scene of the magical realist story *The Life of Pi*, by Jan Martel (2002) Pi, who has been shipwrecked, is visited in hospital by men from a Japanese shipping insurance company. They have forms to fill and need to find out what happened. Pi tells them the story of how he survived, cast adrift in the Pacific, alone in an open boat with only a man-eating Bengali tiger called Richard Parker for company. They reject his story – how can they put that on an insurance claim?

Pi Patel: "So you didn't like my story?"

Mr. Okamoto: "No, we liked it very much, didn't we Atsuro? We will remember it for a long, long time."

Mr. Chiba: "We will."

[Silence]

Mr. Okamoto: "But for the purposes of our investigation we would like to know what really happened." ...

(Pi Patel): "Doesn't the telling of something always become a story?"...

... "We don't want any invention, we want the 'straight facts' as you say in English" ...

Pi Patel: "You want words that reflect reality?"

“Yes.”

“Words that do not contradict reality?”

“Exactly.”

“But tigers don’t contradict reality.”

“Oh, please, no more tigers.”

“I know what you want. You want a story that won’t surprise you. That will confirm what you already know. That won’t make you see higher or further or differently. You want a flat story. An immobile story. You want dry, yeastless factuality.” (2002, p.302).

I don’t want to tell a flat story. I want to tell a story that surprises, that extends possibilities and opens up new ways of seeing, a story with tigers.

Bold (2012, p.9) considers autobiographical self-reflection to be one of the most important forms of narrative for developing skills of critique about one’s professional practice. What have I found out from writing in this way? Has writing this chapter brought me any closer to understanding what I’m doing? It has certainly raised questions of both a personal and professional nature which have enabled me to identify the themes, the resonant threads which will inform my study. ‘... writing is, or should be, a matter of questions posed without attempts at closure or achieving mastery or coming up with the final answers’ (Winter and Badley, 2006, p.263).

Writing this chapter has brought me to a different place, it has enabled me to find out what I know but also highlighted that there is much that I don’t know. Most significantly it has revealed who and what matters to me, exposing the critical events in my life, both personal and professional, and helping me identify the metaphors that underpin my thinking, enabling me to make sense of my experiences. I have told a story, the one that wanted to be told at this particular moment, but stories are full of uncertainties and ambiguities, and if I was to begin again now, it would be different. As Maftai writes: ‘... not the same writing, not the same self’ (2013, p.4).

The story chair is not necessarily the comfortable place it seemed to be to the child at the beginning of this story. We should not expect to be sitting comfortably if we want to engage with narrative inquiries, we must prepare to be unsettled, challenged and

made to feel uncomfortable. If you want a story without tigers this is not the place to be. It feels exciting, dangerous, risky; but, as Okri writes, risk is an essential element of storytelling:

In storytelling there is always transgression, and in all art. Without transgression, without the red boundary, there is no danger, no risk, no frisson, no experiment, no discovery, and no creativity. Without extending some hidden or visible frontier of the possible, without disturbing something of the incomplete order of things, there is no challenge, and certainly no joy (Okri, 1997, p.63).

Chapter 3

What's in the bookcase?

'This story like all stories has its beginning in a question ...
where all is known no narrative is possible'

(McCarthy, 1998, p.278/9)

'If you are going to get anywhere in life you have to read a lot of books.'

Displayed on the wall in a primary school classroom.

(Attributed to Roald Dahl)

At first glance the answer to the question 'what's in the book case?' would seem to be that there is a disordered collection of texts ranging from novels and poetry to philosophy, 'how to'/'how not to' books, books about books, stories about stories, intermingled with scholarly texts, weighty research handbooks, journals, conference papers ...

All those words. So many voices vying for attention. How to create the sense of order I'm hoping for? Categorising seems to be a good plan. I empty the shelves and pile everything on the floor. Physical contact with the books reveals another dimension: how the books look and feel, what signs of use, of wear, of being read do they show? I notice where some books fall open showing pages that have been revisited. Dog-eared pages, corners turned down, notes in margins, spines broken, passages underlined or asterisked. There are luminous pink and orange sticky notes marking key passages and bearing cryptic comments: *Use this!* and *NB we are all in the text!* Some bear the signs of travel, of being read on trains and planes. Coffee shop stains mark others and some have the squashed appearance of spending too long in a suitcase or briefcase. It seems that every book tells a story beyond the story it contains.

Jeanette Winterson (1996) writes 'When the fiction or the poem has a powerful effect likely to be lasting, the reader feels personally attached to both the work and the writer' (p.25). So it is with me. As I sort the books I hear the voices of those who have influenced my thinking most strongly. These are the books that will be placed on the top shelf. I take up Alan Bennett's *Untold Stories* and hear his Yorkshire-accented drawl reminding me that: 'The writer does not know what he or she knows

and writing is a way of finding out.’ Here’s my well-read copy of Dewey’s *Education and Experience*, bought in the bookshop of Goldsmith’s College, London in 1966, a voice that has implicitly informed my lifetime of teaching and kept alive my belief in the power of education to transform lives. My eye is caught by a volume of poetry by Wallace Stevens, bought in a Hay-on-Wye bookshop, purple cover faded, a green ‘Foyles, Charing Cross Road’ sticker on the inside cover. Stevens’ poem *The Man with the Blue Guitar* who does not ‘play things as they are,’ sings in my memory and will make a number of appearances in this text. Now I select Maxine Greene’s *Releasing the Imagination* (1995) from the pile. I recall her as a *grande dame*, worshipped from afar and then encountered in person, tiny, and frail, holding a packed ballroom in a Manhattan hotel in thrall as, in a voice that crackled like dried leaves, she exhorted her audience of educational researchers to hold on to the transformative power of imagination. I scribbled furiously in my notebook as she spoke, reminding us that we are always in the process of becoming. I noted a particular phrase that continues to intrigue me: ‘I am what I am not yet.’

Here’s my copy of *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000), read through the night on a trans-Atlantic flight. As I turn it over in my hands I hear Jean Clandinin reading stories in her soft Canadian voice. She describes how storied lives are lived on storied landscapes, a vivid visual metaphor that guides my view of myself as a researcher, joining the figures in these landscapes as a travelling companion, and then moving on. This book is a treasured and seminal text for me, initiating, informing, guiding and encouraging my own work as a narrative inquirer.

I include Winter’s *Learning from Experience: principles and practice in action-research* (1989), for its final chapter in which he introduced ‘fictional critical writing’ and exemplified it with stories, one of which, *The Magi*, written by Ann Leontovitch, acting headteacher of a school for children with moderate and severe learning difficulties (p.169/70), became a powerful influence on my developing understanding of the use of stories. I used this story many times in my own teaching until I had built up an anthology of reflective stories written by myself and by students. Winter’s work on fictional critical writing provided a strong grounding for my work in reflective writing and narrative inquiry. It was my earliest experience of reflective story-writing.

Stories told by good storytellers are memorable. They are the stories that stay with me and to which I return frequently. I open *Touching Eternity* by Tom Barone which he describes as ‘a book that is meant to disturb and puzzle’ (2001, p.3). I remember his thoughtful guidance given to students at a narrative study week which I was fortunate to attend at the University of Anchorage, a quiet, gentle, unassuming man, deeply certain of the difference inspirational teachers can make to the lives of their students. His life has been spent in the crafting of worthwhile, honest, critical stories, powerfully observed and carefully detailed, amongst them, his portrayals of teacher Don Forrister (2001) and school drop-out, Billy Charles Barnett (1993), as vivid and memorable as characters in a novel by Steinbeck or Hemingway. As my study has progressed I have become increasingly aware of Barone’s influence on my understanding of narrative and the power of stories to challenge injustice and bring about systemic change.

I add another storyteller to the shelves: Clough’s *Narratives and Fictions in Educational Research* (2002) and *Again Fathers and Sons*, a powerful story of special needs (1996). I read Clough’s work at around the same time that I discovered the writings of Clandinin and Connelly, noting particularly his recognition of the need to explore how the ‘truth(s)’ of personal and professional lives can be explored in fiction (2002, p.17). I also responded to his call for educational researchers to write more stories which reported lived experience in educational settings, bringing together exploration of life and self through fiction. I wrote more stories, some of which have formed the basis for this inquiry.

Clough’s work with fictional stories in educational settings has similarities with the approach I have taken in writing reflective stories with my students. His stories provide further examples of the power of stories to hold our attention, to help us make sense of the world. Like Barone, Clough has created stories that disturb, puzzle and prompt (re)action. He says of his stories, ‘they are stories which could be true, they derive from real events and feelings and conversations, but they are ultimately fictions: versions of the truth which are woven from an amalgam of raw data, real details and (where necessary) *symbolic equivalents*’ (2002, p.9). A distinctive feature is his inclusion of the stories in the body of the text, as I have done here, as an exemplification of his approach to narrative methodology as ‘embodied in the text

itself' (op.cit. p.3), enabling the reader to enter fully into the experience of the story, perhaps, as Rushdie suggests, a way of 'making something happen in the reader's head' (Rushdie, 2015, n.p.).

Clough's work is underpinned by his belief that the purpose of research in educational settings is to promote understanding that will lead to changes and developments in policy and practice. For Clough 'Narrative is useful only to the extent that it opens up (to its audiences) a deeper view of life in familiar contexts: it can make the familiar strange and the strange familiar' (p.8). He also draws inspiration from Stevens' (1963) poem *The Man with the Blue Guitar*, arguing that the poem embodies both 'a thesis on art and a work of art' and that, therefore, the poet's methodology is contained in the text itself (op.cit.p.3). I have a sense that, although the poems and stories in my thesis are not works of art in the same way that Stevens' poem is perceived, they have a similar effect to that described by Clough, 'blurring distinctions between data and imagination, between researcher and researched, form and content' (ibid.).

I reserve a special place on the shelves for Barbara Hardy's *Tellers and Listeners: the narrative imagination* (1975), read and re-read simply for the enjoyment of her elegant writing about literature, and now re-visited to illuminate my thinking about the use of stories. Hardy prefaces her book with these words:

Nature, not art, makes us all story-tellers. Daily and nightly we devise fictions and chronicles, calling some of them daydreams or dreams, some of them nightmares, some of them truths, records, reports, and plans. Some of them we call, or refuse to call, lies (p.vii).

Ben Okri's writing defeats attempts at classification. Poet, story-teller, dreamer, philosopher ... 'One way or another we are living the stories we planted – knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves' (1997, p.46). Okri is not a researcher, he is not writing about narrative inquiry but his words resonate strongly for me as I set out to understand how stories shape and are shaped by our lives. I place his book, *A Way of Being Free*, on the top shelf.

Here they are: scholars, writers, poets, philosophers, researchers, crammed together in an untidy multi-voiced heap, united in their accumulated wisdom and insights, their disagreements and differences, on these shelves, reflecting the multi-voiced nature of my study.

It's midnight, and I'm still surrounded by piles of books and papers. There is more to be done and more space reserved on the top shelf, but I've made a start.

As described in Chapter 2, I was prompted by my earlier work with teachers' stories, at Master's level, to seek answers to the question posed by one of the characters in Rushdie's (1990) novel, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. It is the question that has intrigued me, occupied my mind and become the over-arching question for this research: What's the use of stories that aren't even true? In response to this question I have embarked on a study of and about the power of stories to affect our lives, our ways of seeing and being. They are stories written by trainee teachers, recently qualified teachers, and stories written by myself and one of my colleagues as course tutors working with trainee teachers, in response to experiences in schools. They are written in reflective journals, often fictionalised, written as stories, letters, journalism, poetry or drama, even as a Twitter feed. The inquiry is driven by my interest in the stories people tell about their practice in education and how the experience of composing, writing, or telling those stories affects the writers and tellers, both personally and professionally.

As I bring together the writers whose work has informed my thinking and provided the theoretical framework for my study I ask, 'Why are the writings and theories of others so important in informing my thinking?' Usher (1989) believes that formal theory serves as 'a kind of sounding board for the development and refinement of informal theory' (p.88). If, as we read we find our 'privately realized insight' illuminated or confirmed 'we feel affirmed and recognized' (ibid.). We may also find our ideas and insights challenged as we read the work of others; that is part of the journey. As Solnit writes:

To read is to travel ... with the author as guide – a guide one may not always agree with or trust, but who can be counted on to take us somewhere. (2002, p.72).

As I select the books I am asking myself how my study is similar to, and how it is different from, others in the field of narrative inquiry. Where does it fit in? Working with teachers has shown me that reflective storying of experience can be a powerful support for professional development, and that such stories can affect those who write them and those who read or hear them. These are key elements of my inquiry. I have experienced the pedagogical value which stories have when they are shared in the context of teacher education (Huber, Caine, Huber and Steeves, 2013; Coulter, Michael and Poynor, 2007). I have used my own reflective stories and (with permission) those written by others, in my teaching to exemplify and promote further reflections. I aim to discover the meanings and intentions of the lived experiences of those whose lives are reflected in the stories. I see this study as a reflexive, interactive inquiry journey and anticipate that new questions will evolve during its course.

I begin to organise the shelves, identifying categories of literature in the order that they relate to the development of the study. I focus first on texts that have informed my understandings of reflective practice, reflective writing and reflective inquiry. Then I explore the nature of narrative and story and the meaning of narrative inquiry, and those writers, often literary theorists such as Eagleton (2012) and Kearney (2002), who have explored the questions of truth and fiction in writing. I include a well-worn copy of Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and Kincheloe's *Critical Pedagogy* (2008), believing that one of the 'uses' of critically reflective story writing is that it challenges assumptions, questions what is taken for granted in our education systems, and has the capacity to transform practice.

The final pile is of literary texts, fiction ranging from classics by Lewis Carroll and Charles Dickens to novels, stories and essays by Hemingway, Steinbeck, McCarthy, Arundhati Roy, Jan Martel, Salman Rushdie, Paul Auster, Mark Haddon, Ben Okri, Susan Sontag, and Ali Smith, all of whom are writers who write about writing and experiment with literary form. These writers have much to contribute to an inquiry into the use of stories. As Hardy has written: '... I have come to realise that narrative is a common theme of narrative' (1975, p.xi). In writing my own stories I have become deeply interested in the way literary texts work on their readers. Eagleton (2012) claims: 'Literature thinks. Literature is where ideas are investigated, lived out, explored in all their messy complexity. Literature is how we make ourselves

intelligible to ourselves' (p.1). He goes on to say, 'Every day we use words to express ourselves and to tell stories, to make patterns out of our reality. We are all skilled authors and weavers of narrative' (ibid.). I believe that the stories in this study justify and exemplify his view. We are all story-makers.

Eagleton writes of the attempt to define fiction: 'Despite many attempts to create one, there is no real, watertight definition of fiction. It's not simply 'made up,' it doesn't just tell a story' (op.cit. p.2). Derrida (1992) believed that fiction allows us freedom from constraints; fictional writing can go wherever the writer and the readers choose: 'The institution of fiction ... gives in principle the power to say everything, to break free of the rules' (p.44). Eagleton (1983) in his analysis of the nature of literature points out that a story can convey truths that resonate far beyond the apparent meaning of the words: 'It is a notable feature of literature that in reading it for what it says, we also take it to be intimating something else' (p.82). In danger of getting side-tracked, I place a sticky note on the cover of a collection of papers: *Fiction and Social Research: By Ice or Fire*, edited by Banks and Banks (1998): **NB use this in Ch 9 re truth and fiction!** I place another sticky note on Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1975): **Hard but worth it!** I add, as support, Lawn's (2006) *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, making a note to include Gadamer's hermeneutical insights when I discuss methodology in Chapter 4.

Writing narratively as a means of reflective practice

As the stories in this inquiry have developed as a result of conscious reflection it seems appropriate to begin with those writers and scholars who have explored the nature and purpose of reflection. My work draws and builds on the work of others in the field of reflective writing in education, health and social care (Bolton, 2006, 2010; Nias, 1988; Winter, 1991, 1999); in the fields of reflective practice and reflection through writing (Dewey, 1916, 1938; Schön, 1983, 1987, 1991; Bolton, 2006, 2010), and within the burgeoning field of narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Pinnegar and Daynes in Clandinin, Ed. 2007; Clandinin and Caine, 2012; Clandinin, 2013).

Reflecting on reflection, I begin with Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916). Dewey saw reflective thinking as central to education, defining reflective thought

as ‘active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends’ (2010, p.6). Dewey viewed reflection as a rigorous and considered form of thinking which could be practised and taught. Indeed he saw critical reflective thinking as crucial in a democratic society because it encouraged students to be sceptical and critical, empowering them to think independently, question leaders and participate fully as citizens. Such critical reflection entails thinking and reasoning, making the experience meaningful or ‘educative’.

My understanding of how critical reflective writing works is informed by Dewey’s assertion that: ‘When we do something we act upon it, we do something with it; then we suffer or undergo the consequences. We do something to the thing and then it does something to us in return: such is the peculiar combination’ (1916, p.139). I view this as a description of reflexivity, although Dewey does not use this word. His idea that the act of reflective writing is self-exploratory suggests that it is a reflexive act: when we “do something to the thing” and it does something to us in return we are learning from thoughtful reflections on our actions. This thinking is developed by Clandinin and Connelly who identify the work of Dewey as the foundational ontology for narrative inquiry. Dewey considered that, to have meaning, experience must be subjected to reflection. Clandinin and Connelly (in Schön 1991) explain: ‘... if we take the view that the storied quality of experience is both unconsciously re-storied in life and consciously re-storied and lived through the processes of reflection, then the rudiments of method are born in the phenomenon of narrative’ (p.258/9). It can be seen that both narrative inquiry and reflective inquiry have their roots in Dewey’s philosophy of experience. I recognise this as the way the reflective process has worked for those who have been prompted to write the stories and poems included in this thesis.

Dewey saw experience as grounded in continuity: ‘... every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after’ (1938, p.35). His understanding of experience also included the notions of situation and interaction: ‘An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what at the time constitutes his environment’ (p.43). These attributes form the basis for the

three commonplaces of temporality, sociality and place developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2006) whose work frames my methodological position. Thus, the connection between reflective inquiry and narrative inquiry is made more explicit. The overlaps and tensions and possibilities between these two approaches have been explored by Downey and Clandinin (in Lyons, Ed. 2010). Schön (1983) built on Dewey's thinking and developed the practice of deliberate and systematic reflection in a range of professional contexts, identifying and distinguishing between reflection *on* and reflection *in* action. Bolton (2010) viewed reflection and reflexivity as cognitive states of mind which she linked to pedagogical practices in education, health and social care. The stories in the inquiry, because of their subject matter, turn out to be not simply reflections on teaching but reflections on the social, and cultural conditions which have an impact on teaching (Van Manen, 1991; Zeichner and Liston, 1987).

There is a place on the shelves for those who have critiqued reflective practice (Fendler 2003; Hammersley, 2008; Lawrence-Wilkes and Ashmore, 2014). Fendler (op.cit.) highlights the diversity of meanings ascribed to reflection and how understanding of reflective thinking has changed over time, arguing that different historical influences, Schön, for example, have contributed to making the meanings of reflection in teacher education, research and practice more complicated. She questions claims that particular kinds of reflection are transformative, pointing out that, 'When teachers reflect in allegedly technical ways, they participate in the political agenda of liberal democracy by trying to get all students to achieve higher test scores' (p.21) thereby improving their life chances. She argues that there is no reason to claim that one type of reflection is 'more authentic or emancipatory' than any other type (ibid.). However, I would argue that encouraging teachers to reflect on the nature and purpose of reflection and to perceive the outcomes of their own reflections is empowering and likely to result in conscious developments in their practice.

The stories in this study have been written as a *means* of reflection on practice and are the *results* of reflection on practice. They represent the action of reflecting and the outcomes of that reflection. They have been explored through a narrative inquiry with attention to the three commonplaces and using the strategy of thinking *with* rather than *about* the stories (Morris, 2002; Estefan, Caine and Clandinin, 2016). The

commonplaces of time, place and sociality, and the continuity that is established as we re-live and re-tell stories over time are explained here by Clandinin and Connelly (2000):

Through stories humans create coherence through time, between the personal and the social, and across situations. Stories are not just about experience itself; we live and learn in, and through, the living, telling, retelling and reliving of our stories' (p.387).

The inquiry has features of both narrative and reflective inquiry in the theoretical frameworks that support it, and in its methodology.

I turn to Bolton's *Reflective Practice: Writing and Professional Development* (2010). Bolton is the writer whose work with reflective journal writing and the use of fictionalising as a means of reflection comes closest to my own practice in working with teachers. This book is a key text which I use in teaching about reflection and required reading for the course. Bolton considers that personal professional narratives and story exploration are effective modes of reflective practice and that all professional and personal experience is naturally storied; telling or writing stories are significant human ways of understanding, communicating and remembering. I share Bolton's view that narratives about significant areas of professional experience can be communicated and explored directly through expressive writing. Such writing also enables inquiry into implicit ethics and values. Bolton sees narrative as 'an attempt to create order and security out of a chaotic world' (p.204). She refers to Doyle (2004) when she states:

It is the exploration of experience, knowledge, values, identity that matters, rather than any attempt to arrive at a 'true' account ... Writing, exploring and discussing our essential narratives is a route to taking responsibility and control of our lives, professional and personal (op.cit. p.9).

Bolton argues that critical reflection can be transformative both for those who engage in it and in a wider professional sense. Like Hardy, (1975) Bolton underlines the ubiquity of story-telling in everyday life: 'We spend our lives storying and re-storying ourselves, and contributing to wider social stories around us. It's as natural to being a person as eating and breathing' (p.204). She sees reflective questioning of

our everyday stories as an adventure (p.211): ‘No one adventures securely in their backyard. Professionals need to face the uncertainty of not knowing what is round the corner, where they are going, how they will travel ...’ (ibid.). Such reflexive narrative exploration may challenge us to question our beliefs and actions, to find out what we didn’t know we knew.

Holding the space for reflection

David Sylvester’s book about the artist and sculptor Giacometti may seem an unusual choice in this context but I place it on the shelf alongside more conventional research texts. When Helen Burchell and I explored the challenges for lecturers in Higher Education in finding and holding reflective space (Burchell and Dyson, 2009, p.322) we found that the artist/sculptor Giacometti’s studio provided an interesting visual metaphor for the difficulties faced by those seeking to come together to share their stories. Using a photograph of the studio (Sylvester, 1994, p.73) we described how the studio floor was covered with plaster and stone; there were buckets, benches, frames and bottles, piles of papers, even a battered hat. The tall figures of Giacometti’s sculptures appeared to stride purposefully across the foreground while a large brooding head filled the background. In the middle of all this mess and apparent busy-ness, on a low table in a corner, was a group of small figures, some sitting, some standing; conveying a sense of stillness and reflection; we felt it would be easy to overlook them (photo in Appendix 1).

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) highlighted the difficulties for teachers in finding the time, space and sociality with others that would enable reflection through telling their stories: ‘What is missing in the classroom is a place for teachers to tell and retell their stories ... the possibilities for reflective awakening and transformation are limited when one is alone’ (p.13). I have found that when they write about the experience of reflective writing, thus showing their capacity for reflexivity and meta-reflection, teachers and trainee teachers frequently highlight the difficulties in finding sufficient time for written reflection. This is an important consideration for those wishing to encourage and support deep reflection on practice in educational contexts.

Dewey (1933) emphasised that, for experience to have educational value, one must extract its meaning through reflection: ‘We do not learn from experience ... we

learn from reflecting on experience' (p.78). His words still resonate. Experience of teaching reflection through reflective writing has convinced me that it can only be really understood by doing it rather than reading about it. It is experiential. But schools are busy places and, as discussed above, it is hard to find time and space to pause during a stressful day to engage in the particular kind of thinking that is 'reflective'. Ellie, a trainee teacher, commented how useful it was to be able to:

make use of other teachers' ideas ... because although I'm seeing and talking to these people every day there's often very little time to sit down and discuss simple, yet very useful things, because of how little time everyone has each day between teaching and other daily administrative tasks' (Research artefact).

I agreed with her about the difficulty in finding time, but she was thinking of the essentially practical aspects of teaching: she wanted quick answers and ideas, rather than engaging in deeper reflection. Bolton (2010) notes that:

Although practice is continually aired – over coffee with a colleague – we do not tell each other things at our cutting edge of difficulty. We often do not tell those things to ourselves (p.31).

This is a recurring dilemma in discussions of reflective practice in professional contexts.

It is hard to hold a reflective space for one's self and one's colleagues to critically reflect (Burchell and Dyson, 2009). And yet, the opportunity to think and write exploratively and expressively, to ask critical questions about personal and professional experiences and to share those reflections with others is an essential and rewarding part of professional development. Creating and holding the space for reflection is crucial to enabling practitioners to engage in the deep reflection and reflexivity needed for a deeply questioning inquiry into their actions, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values and identity in professional, cultural and political contexts that will have a lasting impact on their practice. Thus, practitioners can gain greater observational powers and a sense of authority over their work, and more of a grasp of its inherently complex political, social and cultural impact.

In giving further consideration to the value of thinking with others in order to bring about changes in practice I note the relevance of Habermas and the theory of moral discourse. Ghaye (2011, 2nd edition) refers to the view of Habermas that reflective practices are ways of ‘questioning experience and, in so doing, freeing the mind from unchallenged assumptions.’(p.27). O’Hanlon (1994) writes that ‘... Habermas did not see that knowledge generated by individual (critical) reflection was in itself sufficient for social action. He believed it was necessary to engage in discursive processes through which participants in the situation came to an authentic understanding of their situation’ (p.285). This is not something that was possible with the participants’ stories and, as has been shown, the space for critical dialogue in schools and colleges which would enable teachers to find their voice through thinking with others, is limited (Winter 1988; Burchell and Dyson, 2009; Clandinin and Caine, 2013).

In some cases it was possible to engage in email exchanges with the trainees about their stories and this, although often fragmented, enabled some dialogue to take place which led to deeper thinking and the raising of questions, as shown in Chapters 7 and 8. Clandinin *et al* (2015) argue that ‘thinking narratively needs to be continuously practised with others. This communal aspect of narrative inquiry positions us in relation with diverse people. These communities sustain us in our writing’ (p.5). I agree with them and seize every opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues and participants, collaborating and co-composing stories.

Journalist Joanna Connors, emphasises the value of stories as a means of connecting with others and as ways of sense-making: ‘We tell stories to connect with each other. We tell our own – sometimes just to ourselves – to make sense of the world and our experience in it. As a reader and writer, I believe in the power of stories to bring us together and heal’ (Connors, 2008, in Hart, 2011, p.142). Finding, making and holding spaces where we can share our stories may be, for some, a life-sustaining experience. However, where such collaboration is difficult to manage, I believe that creating and writing stories in response to our experiences is in itself likely to generate reflection that may lead to changes in the thinking and practice of individuals.

Writing as reflective inquiry

Returning to the pile of books, I select from the work of writers who write about the power and impact of writing itself. Clandinin and Caine (2013) suggest that the quality of narrative inquiry is determined by the multiple commitments we make to the process, in particular ‘an extensive commitment to writing as a way to inquire’ (quoting Richardson, 2003, reference in Clandinin and Caine, 2013, p.178). Van Manen has described reflecting through writing as ‘thinking onto paper’ (1995). He considers that, ‘To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one’s own depth’ (p.127). In reflective journal writing we are using writing processes to find out what we need to say and how to say it in ways that develop deep insights, raise questions, surprise us by revealing what we know and what we need to know – reflective writing is reflective thinking. This is evident in the reflections included below and also in Chapter 9.

Richardson (1994) affirms the value of writing as thinking: ‘... a piece of writing is always an act of self-exploration: what it ‘means’ is not known beforehand and ‘put into’ the text, rather it is discovered by being written’ (p.237). The experience of writing as a means of thinking is familiar to me. As a writer, daily writing is a natural activity, which I view as a way of developing insights, a means of understanding the world, and myself in it. My reflective journal includes stories and poems as well as academic writings. To frame research inquiries in narrative ways seems a natural step from this established practice of reflecting through writing in order to make sense of my own experiences and those of others. This is a practice I encourage when I work with teachers and trainee teachers in developing their capacity for reflective writing. I have confirmed the veracity of Bennett’s assertion that writing is a way of finding out what we know many times in my own writing. Elizabeth Adams St Pierre (2005) also affirms this view:

Writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery ... I used ... writing to think ... I trust you will ... use writing as a method of inquiry to move into your own impossibility, where anything might happen – and will! (1997, p.967).

The examples below suggest that for trainees who understand the purpose of reflective writing the professional and personal effects are clear.

Extract from my reflective journal

First snow and black ice – glad not to be driving down the A13 to Basildon at 7am – 4 weeks of illness have forced me to languish on the sofa. Time for reading, time to reflect on the reflective journals of the trainees, more time to enjoy them – I do enjoy reading them, not just for their narratives but for their reflections on reflection. Here's an entry from Rob:

Bolton wrote, 'reflective practice is only effectively undertaken and understood by becoming immersed in doing it rather than by reading about it. So then, I thought, why would a writer basically say 'stop reading my book now and just do it'?... I did it anyway!'

And Katie: 'Bolton describes reflective writing as 'a dynamic initially private process of discovery ... and a valuable mode of expressing, sharing, assessing and developing professional experience,' she goes on to say that speech or thought can be forgotten, or shift and change like a whisper game' (p.106) where writing on the other hand leaves a footprint through which professional thought can be assisted. This immediately made me think of my first day entry ... By the end of my first week I no longer had those feelings and probably would have forgotten exactly how I felt that day were it not for the entry in my Journal ... the entry brings the day back to life for me and facilitates understanding of myself and the progression I have gone through in a week from 'nervous and apprehensive' to more relaxed and confident. Bolton (p.112/113): reading writing back to yourself is significant – it is like a dialogue with the self, learning what the hand has to say and being able to respond back to it.' (Katie's underlining).

Jess describes her journal as 'a true space'. Reflecting on keeping the journal, she wrote:

Early on I decided that I would make the reflective journal work for me. Find a way that it would be a useful tool for my teaching practice. And the way I use it is to observe things I have seen. To reflect on things which have made me feel uneasy. For support. Mental support. The journal is this physical, mental space I can go to when I need to let out something wonderful which may have happened in class, or something

uncomfortable or upsetting. It is a true space. And in writing and recording I am managing (for) myself a better understanding (of) how to deal with things and manage my emotions (Jess, handwritten reflective journal extract).

Bolton (2010) suggests that writing can provide a 'safe' place where we can reflect on 'unsafe things' (p.88). Ely (2007) claims that 'We write to know, we write to learn, we write to discover' (p.570), something which is true in my experience and, for many of the trainee teachers participating in a short period of spontaneous writing which I term 'the Six Minute Splurge', based on Bolton's *Six Minute Write* (2010, p.107), this has also proved to be the case, as described in Chapter 6. Kay writes:

Through the reflective splurge I realised that I had used 'I' nineteen times. Even though it is a piece of writing in the first person I realised that I had lost sight of why I wanted to be a teacher (even if only for a brief moment), that it is not all about me ... by writing everything down I saw that I knew more than I thought I did (Kay, trainee teacher, journal extract).

Richardson (1994) writing about writing as a method of inquiry, suggests that it can move researchers away from writing descriptively and towards using fictionalising:

The problem with apparently descriptive writing is that it perpetuates the commonsense idea that writers should simply reflect reality; the fictional form, in contrast, draws attention to its inevitable reflexivity, and can thus help to make writers more aware of their own processes of understanding through writing (p.237).

Richardson raises some important ethical questions relating to 'voice', asking, 'Do researchers have the right to speak for others?' And, 'if those with privileged access speak only for themselves, the voices of those less privileged have no chance of textual enfranchisement ... we can choose to write so that the voice of those we write about is respected, strong and true' (p.38). She goes on to ask what are the consequences, and for whom? (p.65). Richardson also raises the question of validation and the limits of narrative analysis, for example, 'Can we tell a better narrative analysis from a worse one'? Richardson writes of 'trustworthiness' rather than 'truth', and strikes a cautionary note: Persuasiveness ultimately rests on the

rhetoric of writing – on literary practices – and reader response ... our texts have unstable meanings’ (p.86). These questions are explored further in the thesis, particularly in Chapter 9.

Writing well

I have given considerable thought to the nature and purpose of academic writing, particularly in the context of an inquiry that is about narrative and which aspires to be a narrative. There is a growing body of work on academic writing which seeks to encourage academics to write differently without compromising the characteristics of good scholarship. From the ‘how to/ how not to’ guides I select Helen Sword’s book, *Stylish Academic Writing* (2012). She writes that ‘intellectual creativity thrives best in an atmosphere of experimentation rather than conformity’ (p.vii), and urges academics to ‘stretch your mind by stretching your writing’ (p.175). I enjoyed *The Future of Scholarly Writing* (2015) edited by Angelika Bammer and Ruth-Ellen Boethcher, so much that having bought it, fearing that I had lost it, I bought it again. In this collection of essays scholars from a range of academic disciplines reflect not on *what* they write but on *how* they write. Billig’s *Learn to Write Badly* (2013) is included for his critique of the worst excesses of academic language, often opaque and ‘puffed up’ and his appeal for academics to write in simpler, clearer ways (p.41). Along with these texts about writing I include an article in which Winter and Badley engage in a thoughtful and thought-provoking conversation about action research and academic writing (2006). Badley notes that all writers, as Margaret Atwood has written, ‘*negotiate* with the dead (and, of course), with the living’ (p.263).

He cites Bakhtin (1984) saying that all writers enter into a dialogue with others, in what Bahktin calls ‘a conversation in progress’ (ibid.). In conclusion, Badley states his agreement with Winter ‘... you are entirely right , in my view, to want writers, including academic ones, to regard what they write as contributing to a conversation rather than as entering a competition ... it is not a bad aim ... we need, as pragmatists, to try to keep the conversation going’ (p.268). I am encouraged by Badley’s view that both action research and academic writing have the capacity to ‘increase our knowledge of ourselves, of the institutions we work in and of the social and political world around us’ (p.264).

Imagination: looking at things as if they could be otherwise

The ability to imagine is central to writing in narrative fiction and poetical forms because it enables the writer to enter into the experiences of others. Writers who have explored the nature of imagination, what it is and how it works, occupy a central place on the bookshelves. Greene (1995) argues that:

... informed engagements with literature, painting, film, drama, music, and the rest depend upon and provoke the release of the imagination. Releasing imagination, they free persons to break with the taken-for-granted, with what happens to be “normal”: they arouse persons to reach towards the possible, to look at things as if they could be otherwise (p.24).

Dewey promoted reflective thinking as a way of imagining future possibilities (1933, p.19). Bruner (1990), exploring the idea of life as narrative, writes: ‘... any story one may tell about anything is better understood by considering other possible ways in which it can be told’ (p.36/7), reinforcing the danger of the single story. And Rushdie: ‘I love the release of fiction. I love the fact that fiction gives the imagination free reign’ (Rushdie, 2015, interview with Franklin (pp.36/7)). It is interesting that both Greene and Rushdie use the word ‘release’ in relation to the imagination with its connotations of something that has been pent up, prevented in some way from being free.

‘Things as they are, are changed upon the blue guitar’

Amongst the books yet to be sorted are several volumes of poetry. I experience poetry as an aspect of narrative and a manifestation of the narrative imagination which allows us to see things differently. I have experimented with writing in poetic forms (Chapter 2) and encouraging trainee teachers to try out poetry as a means of reflection. What can poetry do that is different from other narrative forms? Theologian Don Cupitt (1991) has written that poetry ‘shows that nothing is ever seen absolutely and just as it is in itself’ (p.57). Poet Mary Oliver writes: ‘I want the poem to ask something and, at its best moments, I want the question to remain unanswered. I want it to be clear that answering the question is the reader’s part in an implicit author-reader pact’ (2004, p.63). I like the way Ruth Padel (2007) links poems to journeys, echoing my metaphoric view of narrative inquiry as a journey:

Both move. Both take a bit of time and effort. Both let you reflect on other things as you go. Both can upset and surprise you ... Both give you new windows on the world, take you out of yourself but let you more deeply into yourself at the same time. They get you to new places (p.3).

As I have explained, the poetry of Wallace Stevens has fired my imagination, particularly his poem *The Man With the Blue Guitar* (1963). Greene (2001) takes her title from this poem, emphasising the significance of imagination: 'Imagination, Stevens helps us see, is the mode of grasping, of reaching out that allows what is perceived to be transformed' (p.31/2). She continues: '... he is enabling his reader to grasp the ways in which the imagination breaks with fixed boundaries and definitions, the ways in which it opens to the unexpected. "The blue guitar surprises you", he writes, and of course it does, since what it discovers is never predictable.' The guitarist talks of throwing out 'the lights, the definitions' and challenges his listeners to 'say of what you see in the dark'. The listeners want him to 'play things as they are' because, Greene (1995, p.15) says, 'it is disruptive to look at things as if they could be otherwise. There is tension in this looking; there is a blank resistance for a while. But then resistance, imagination, open capacities, inventiveness, and surprise are shown to be joined somehow.'

I see a great deal in this poem which is relevant to my study. The poem is an imagined conversation with the guitarist in Picasso's painting, *The Old Guitarist*, which, surprisingly, Greene doesn't mention. In his portrayal of the guitar player Picasso is challenging his audience to see something familiar in new ways, as if things could be otherwise. The blue guitar is a metaphor for imagination. To imagine things as if they could be otherwise, to embrace change, is challenging.

I see a connection here to the responses of the shipping insurance agents in Martel's novel *The Life of Pi* (2001), introduced in Chapter 2. The agents demand a story that won't surprise them, one that will confirm what they already think they know, make life easy. Tigers are dangerous, especially when they turn up in unexpected places; they upset the equilibrium of the world of the insurance agents. They want a story without tigers.

Martha Nussbaum defines narrative imagination as an empathetic engagement:

... the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have' (Nussbaum, 1997, p.10/11).

This is an essential quality for narrative inquiry, described by Lugones (1987) as 'world-travelling' with 'loving perception' to the worlds of others. I make frequent references throughout the thesis to the seminal article written by Lugones published in the journal *Hypatia* and also in the anthology edited by D. Soyini Madison (1994), as her metaphor is powerful in illustrating the ability to identify with others that is required for successful reflective story-writing and telling. The philosophy of Lugones is discussed more fully in Chapters 3 and 7.

The texts written by narrative inquirers should be written in ways which will animate and engage the imagination of readers. Frank, writing in the field of medicine (2010) describes the activation of imagination as the most important capacity of stories: 'they make the unseen not only visible but compelling. Through imagination stories arouse emotions' (p.60). Kim (2016) notes the importance of leaving room for the reader's imagination in narrative writing (p.110). She also highlights ambiguity as a quality of narrative texts, saying that 'the boring nature of some qualitative research texts' is due to lack of ambiguity. She points out that, while most research texts seek to eliminate uncertainty, 'certainty is not a goal for narrative researchers' and emphasises the value of metaphors in creating ambiguity (ibid.), an idea which is explored further in Chapters 4 and 8.

Egan (1992) believes that 'The powerful stories of the world do not simply describe a range of human qualities: they make us somehow part of those qualities. They hold up for us, and draw us into, thinking and feeling what it would be like to make those qualities a part of our selves' (p.55). He goes on to describe how stories can prompt the empathetic engagement with others that I see as underlying Lugones' (1987) concept of 'world travelling'. Egan continues: 'In this way stories are the tool we have for showing others what it is like to feel like we do and for us to find out what it is like to feel as others do' (p.55). He quotes Benjamin (1969 p.83) that the story

is ‘the ability to exchange experiences’ (in Egan, p.55). Egan identifies prejudice, particularly relating to religion and race, as ‘a failure of imaginative development’ (p.55). He makes the important point that ‘By imaginatively feeling what it would be like to be other than oneself, one begins to develop a prerequisite for treating others with as much respect as one treats oneself’ (op.cit.p.55). I recall the words of Harper Lee’s Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, another book which has a place on the bookshelves: ‘You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it’ (1960, p.31). This discussion of imagination, story, poetry and metaphor underlines the strong links which exist between narrative inquiry and arts-based approaches to research

Barone (1992) describes story-tellers as artists rather than philosophers or social scientists. Barone and Eisner (2012) exhort researchers to, ‘Be brave’ (p.120), reminding us that, ‘Some works can (even if “double read”) end up disrupting the commonplace and suggesting new worlds, as only good art – as fiction – can’ (p.120). The stories written by Barone (1989, 2000, 2001) are powerful in the way they continue to work on the reader. He writes of, ‘The crafting of worthwhile stories’ (1992/2000, p.191), and considers that, ‘Like all good art, honest stories are powerfully observed, carefully detailed’ (op.cit. p.192). This could be a description of his own stories. He gives us criteria for judging a ‘good’ story; one that is ‘worthwhile’, one that is ‘grounded in honesty ... in powerful observation; disrupting the commonplace; suggesting new worlds’ (ibid.).

Hardy sees narrative imagination as ‘a common human possession’. She considers that we don’t store experience like a computer we ‘story it’. In a memorable phrase, Barthes (1970) claims that telling a story ‘lights a bonfire in the imaginations’ of listeners (p.5). Writing in a fictional form allows for greater freedom, gives opportunities to think about things differently, lets the imagination roam to explore new ways of seeing and encounter different perspectives.

Criticality and transformation

The work of writers who emphasise that the purpose of a research inquiry is to challenge and transform occupies a prominent place on the shelves. An important question for me in pursuing my inquiry is to what extent the reflective narratives,

their purposes and impact can be described as ‘critical’. In what ways can they be shown to be transformative? The criteria which the reflective journal entries written by the trainee teachers are expected to fulfill include analysis, synthesis and critical evaluation. Critical reflection is reflection that calls into question the power dynamics, the political dimension of the field. I take up my copy of Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) as a starting point. Freire considered that revealing and questioning these aspects is ‘a step toward fighting to disrupt them’ (in Lyons, Ed. 2010, p.16). For Lyons the beginning of this process is ‘The powerful exploration of assumptions’ (op.cit. p18). Kincheloe (2008) also urges teachers and researchers to question the assumptions that shape what is done in schools and classrooms: ‘I am particularly interested in the notions of an evolving criticality that listens carefully to feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonial, and indigenous voices and incorporates their insights into the critical canon’ (p.27). He exhorts critical theorists and educators to ‘become detectives of new theoretical insights, perpetually searching for new and interconnected ways of understanding power and oppression and the ways they shape everyday life and human experience’ (ibid.).

Some of the stories that are the subject of this study demonstrate these qualities, for example, *A Place of Greater Safety* and *Doubly Vulnerable* (Stories d and e) both of which raise questions about school systems which marginalise and disadvantage particular groups. My desire to challenge and change power dynamics is evident in the *Strong Language* stories (Stories f and g) in which my frustration at not having been able to do enough is articulated, albeit belatedly and discussed in Chapter 5. I wanted to be ‘transformative’ and felt that I had failed. Many of the trainees have highlighted and explored issues of inequality, difference and marginalisation in their reflective writing. Their actions of reflection and reflexivity have placed them in their own stories as people who will learn from their experiences and attempt to improve their classroom practice as a result. However, in the stories written by trainee teachers it is rare to find an example of someone reflecting overtly on the political, social and cultural assumptions that underlie the problems they have experienced, or directly questioning how the systems that sustain them might be challenged and changed. The political dimension is not recognised. I have never suggested to them that this might or should be an aim of their storytelling, although it may be an outcome for some, Saffiya and Jaz, for example, whose stories are explored in Chapter 7.

Brookfield (1995) cautions against ‘relying too heavily on the jargon of critical pedagogy’ lest we find ourselves ‘operating within a self-enclosed semantic loop’ (p.210), which I understand as saying much but doing nothing, an absence of praxis. He claims that, ‘Our passionate declarations of transformative emancipation and dialogical empowerment may serve as a pedagogic version of a masonic handshake’ (p.210). He also warns that using the frameworks of critical theory and critical pedagogy as guides to developing critical reflection can create unrealistic expectations of the outcomes. I am reassured by his view that, ‘The local fluctuations, complexities, and rhythms of critical reflection are bound to contradict any neat theoretical models of how the process should unfold’ (p.211). Indeed, the narrative inquiry process is often messy, untidy, and unpredictable. He says we can become demoralised, something I certainly understand, and that it is important, therefore, that critical pedagogies emphasise and highlight ‘the opportunities that teachers have to resist oppressive values and practices. It must provide convincing, grounded case studies that show it is possible despite the constraints’ (p.211). Doyle (2004) takes a positive view, emphasising that, ‘A critical pedagogy must find ways of empowering teachers not simply blaming them. In short, the language of possibility must precede the language of critique’ (p.9).

My concern about whether my own use of stories is sufficiently critical of assumptions and likely to be transformative is alleviated by Brookfield who also highlights an aspect of stories that echoes my experience in writing stories of reflective practice and hearing and reading those of others, those of Clandinin (2000) and Barone (2001), for example, when he writes, ‘Stories of reflective practice can become emotional touchstones for our own attempts to live the reflective life’ (p.220). A significant ‘use’ of stories.

New voices on the bookshelves

The contents of the bookshelves have changed over the period of writing this thesis. The key texts remain and have been revisited many times but the reading has continued. One thing leads to another and new voices have been added to the conversation, woven into the text.

It was through trans-Atlantic conversations with my response group colleagues in USA and Canada that I first encountered the writings of philosopher Maria Lugones, in particular her development of the metaphor of ‘world-travelling’ (1987). Lugones uses the word ‘world’ to describe a particular experience or existence. There is a reflexivity in the way the term ‘world-travelling’ can be understood – it may be a way of navigating your own identity/ies, how you live in a world that is not your own, but it has to work both ways – we must try to see ourselves in our worlds and others as they must be in their worlds. It is a significant idea in my study where the writers of stories are metaphorically travelling to another world in order to understand what it is like to be you, and what it is like to be myself in your eyes. To identify is to see yourself in others. Loving perception means that we recognise our own otherness, our prejudices and assumptions.

In my reflections on travelling I have considered those who travel from necessity rather than for pleasure, tourism or curiosity – the travel of those who have been displaced, slaves, refugees, asylum seekers – some of the children in the stories have travelled further physically, culturally, and emotionally than most of their teachers or academic researchers. They have become used to world-travelling in search of safer, more stable lives before reaching the end of their primary education. Alex (Story i) and Muhammad (Story d) have travelled across Europe to find themselves in the shifting communities that live along the A13 (Chapter 5). Saffiya too has travelled across continents, cultures and faiths and Jaz across the borderlands of race, identity and culture (Chapter 7).

As privileged travellers we may be shocked when we travel to worlds other than our own to find that we are not at the centre and to see how we are perceived through the eyes of those who inhabit those ‘worlds’. Hassan describes her realisation that her naïve belief in the myth of ‘American innocence’ was challenged when she moved to Istanbul: ‘Americans can no longer travel in foreign countries without noticing the strange weight we carry with us ... it has become difficult to gallivant across the world absorbing its wisdom and its resources for one’s own personal use’ (2017). An example of challenging arrogant perception. Drawing on Lugones, Scheman (2015, in Bammer and Boetcher Joeres, Eds.) highlights perceptively that this is a risk we take when, ‘as persons with privilege, we “playfully” travel into “worlds” other than

our own, “worlds in which we are not at the center, and importantly in which we may well recoil at the people we are seen to be in the eyes of the at-home inhabitants of that “world”” (p.43). A timely reminder.

Literary writing and the nature of stories: truth and fiction

I use the terms ‘narrative’, ‘story’ and ‘fiction/fictionalise’ interchangeably throughout my study. Bolton (2010) asserts that, ‘Any narrative is inevitably fiction, in that events are reconstructed or recreated from a perspective’ (p.93). This means that others would tell it differently, something that is exemplified in my own stories and those of my participants. Iser (1993) poses the question: ‘Are fictional texts truly fictions, and are nonfiction texts truly without fictions?’ (p.1). He describes literary texts as ‘a mixture of reality and fictions’ which bring about ‘an interaction between the given and the imagined’ (ibid.). He proposes to replace the duality of fiction and reality with a triad: ‘the real, the fictive and what we shall henceforth call the imaginary’ (ibid.). I am, perhaps, over-simplifying Iser’s complex argument here but I believe he is identifying imagination as essential for the act of fictionalising to take place. This triadic relationship is clearly shown in the kinds of stories that have been generated through the reflections of the participants in this study, where ‘real’ events and experiences have been fictionalised through the exercise of imagination.

The borders between truth and fiction are increasingly blurred. Foucault (1980) asserts:

I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to include effects of truth (p.193).

Eagleton (2012) writes: ‘Literature is where ideas are investigated, lived out, explored in all their messy complexity... Literature is how we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves’ (p.1). For Laurel Richardson (2000) the difference between fiction and non-fiction is simply ‘the claim the author makes for the text’ (p.926). King (2003) asserts boldly, ‘The truth about stories is that that’s all we are’ (p.153). Kearney (2002) tells us that, ‘Telling stories is as basic to human beings as eating. More so, in fact, for while food makes us live, stories are what makes our condition human’ (p.3). He argues that stories give us agency in our own history: ‘... (it is) only

when haphazard happenings are transformed into story, and thus made memorable over time, that we become full agents in our history' (ibid.). Kearney reminds us that when someone asks us who we are we tell our stories:

... you recount your present condition in the light of past memories and future anticipations. You interpret where you are now in terms of where you have come from and where you are going to. And so doing you give a sense of yourself as a narrative identity that perdures and coheres over a life time (p.4).

This was my experience in exploring my autobiographical beginnings in Chapter 2. Kearney provides a useful description of what makes a story. He says that every story 'regardless of differences in style, voice, plot, genre, shares the common function of *somebody telling something to somebody about something*' (p.5). Barthes (1966) claims that:

The narratives of the world are without number ... The narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies: the history of the narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives (p.14).

Barthes considered that 'narrative is simply there like life itself, international, trans-historical and trans-cultural' (1988, p.95). If we share the view that all life is story then the perspective of the narrative inquirer that we live storied lives on storied landscapes becomes a way of life, a way of understanding the world and our place in it.

I make a note that Frank's work, *Letting Stories Breathe*, (2012) has contributed significantly to my understanding of some of the uses of stories and will inform my final chapter. Reassuringly for me at this stage of reviewing my reading, he emphasises that '... no-one will ever read everything that has been written about stories and storytelling' (p.17). He goes on, less reassuringly, to suggest that no one can ever say anything new about it, however, he concedes that this does not rule out the possibility of saying 'something useful and interesting that leads people to imagine different possibilities for how their lives are formed and informed – much as story leads people to imagine different possible lives' (p.17/18). Frank considers that the study of stories is:

... less about finding themes and more about asking what stories do, which is to inform human life. Stories inform in the sense of providing information, but more significantly, stories give form – temporal and spatial orientation and coherence, meaning, intention, and especially boundaries – to lives that inherently lack form (op.cit.p.2).

In my inquiry I have explored with my participants, my colleagues and myself what stories ‘do’, what difference stories make, exploring the use of stories that aren’t even true. With Frank, I recognise that I have to let the stories ‘breathe’, give them space to speak for themselves, and pay close attention to what the writers and readers, the tellers and the listeners have to say about their experiences and responses, the impact of stories on their lives – personally and professionally. Frank says that ‘stories make life good but they also make life dangerous. They bring people together, and they keep people apart’ (p.2). He addresses the question of truth and fiction, asking, when a story has come from the author’s imagination, ‘imagination based on what lived experiences, and true to what?’ (p.5). He points out that, ‘Stories always pose that question: what kind of truth is being told?’ (ibid.). But ‘Stories never resolve that question; their work is to remind us that we have to live with complicated truths’ (ibid.). In my inquiry into the question ‘what’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?’ I am asking not just what stories are but what are the capacities of stories – what can they make possible? Frank poses a similar question: ‘... the interest is not in discovering some underlying structure of narrative; the question is, *what enables stories to have their effects?*’ (p.20). Frank underlines the sense in which stories are useful when he describes them as ‘narrative equipment’ (p.26), which recalls, for me, Landy (2012) quoting Richards’ (1959) description of fictions as ‘machines to think with’ (p.5). I am seeking to find out how this narrative equipment works. How do stories do their work for people and on people?

All the stories in this study have been prompted by something unusual happening, an unexpected turn of events, a dilemma, trouble of some kind, a complication. As Frank describes, ‘Stories are told because something out of the ordinary has happened. This out-of-the-ordinary complication may or may not be troublesome in the sense of presenting difficulties, but it requires some response’ (p.26). Burroway goes so far as to say that ‘In literature only trouble is interesting’ (1992 n.p.). It is

the out-of-the-ordinary complications that have prompted the stories included here (Chapters 5-8). No-one has ever written a story about what a nice quiet day they had in school. It is the unexpected, the troubling, sometimes shocking events that disrupt the nice quiet days that bring stories into being: a child is excluded from the team 'because you are brown'; an Albanian refugee weeps because he feels unsafe at school; a frustrated parent swears at an Ofsted inspector; a black teacher is verbally abused by her pupils.

Hart (2011) writes vividly that 'stories wring meaning out of life' (p.145). He says that writers 'start with interesting characters, disturb their tranquility with a good complication, and let 'er roll' (op.cit. p.143). For the trainee teachers writing and telling reflective stories, the world of the school is full of interesting characters and complications are never far away; they do not have to look far for a story to present itself. Bruner (1990) considers that '... when new teachers tell their stories they are engaged in 'acts of meaning' through which they are 'making sense of the work of teaching' (in La Bosky, Ed. p.191). Lyons (2010, p.192) argues that narrative can be 'a way of knowing' in teaching and that portfolio narratives (the equivalent of the reflective journals in my study) provide a structure enabling student teachers to engage in intentional reflection. She goes on to say:

This explicit performance as a self-directed reflective learner, interrogating one's own practice, and ultimately authoring one's own learning benefits the teachers in the moment and provides them with a potential model for life-long professional development (p.192.)

Narrative practices help teachers to construct and reconstruct their personal, practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1986). Through writing, reading and sharing narratives of teaching they are able to reconceptualise their practice, view things differently. I believe that as narrative inquiry practices have developed in a number of contexts and disciplines, they have gained credibility. Conle in her comprehensive analysis of the wide range of narrative practices (2003) considered that, by the time she was writing, 'Narrative curricular practices outside the field of language, arts and literature education ... are no longer marginal experiments. She noted that 'they have become established in graduate and pre-service teachers' education and professional development' (p.3).

However, beyond the community of narrative researchers, there are still sceptics. An article that particularly captured my attention and earned a special place on the bookshelf is a transcript of a conversation between Howard Gardner and Elliot Eisner in response to Eisner's 1993 AERA presidential address in which he expressed the hope that colleges of education would soon accept novels as dissertations, *Should Novels Count as Dissertations in Education?* (Saks, Ed. 1996). I consider this to be a significant event and have identified the key ideas from the conversation which have informed my thinking about my study, particularly the truth/fiction question and my consideration of the nature and 'use' of stories.

Throughout the conversation Gardner argued that although there might be agreement about the literary merits of a novel it was not an appropriate form for a dissertation. Eisner disagreed, arguing that 'the educational novel' should be viewed as 'a species of educational research' and that it functions in the same way as the literary novel by creating 'images that are in many senses larger than life' (p.407). He claimed that 'larger than life is important in helping us to become aware of aspects of the educational world that we may not have noticed before, that we may not have seen' (ibid.). He stressed that narrative form can promote empathic participation in the lives of others' (p.408), asking, 'What is going to help us understand schools better, what is going to help us understand the situations that people work and live in daily?' (ibid.).

In response to Gardner highlighting the risks in writing research in this way, Eisner replied, 'Knowledge is constructed by being able to see things in fresh ways. This requires being able to take risks' (p.412). He claimed that the structure of a work of art such as a novel 'can disclose what facts cannot reveal. Some things can only be known by feel. By innuendo, by implication, by mood. Good novels traffic in such features' (p.413). He asserted that 'if novels/stories are working well they generate new questions, fresh ideas to explore' and claimed that 'A lot of experience we have in schools reflects dimensions of educational practice that we hadn't seen until a certain story was told' (p.414). He defended robustly the academic rigour of the educational storyteller: 'What the educational novelist brings to bear is a deep background in educational scholarship. Significantly for my inquiry into the uses of stories, Eisner concluded: 'What one wants out of all these fictions ... is a deeper, and more complex, and more interesting conversation. A lot of the value is found in

what happens in the conversation, in the analysis, subsequent to having been exposed to this material' (p.415). His reminder of the power of a novel to 'tell it like it is, to make us feel uncomfortable, to give us an insight that we never had before' (p.424), resonates strongly for me as it describes the effect I have identified of some of the stories in my study.

Will Buckingham is a relatively late addition to the bookshelves. It was only as I worked on the final drafts of my thesis chapters that I encountered his work *Finding Our Sea Legs: Ethics, Experience and the Ocean of Stories* (2009). It was the phrase 'ocean of stories' that aroused my interest. I had been living with Rushdie's (1990) novel *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* for 25 years and had never met anyone else who had actually read it. I felt I had found a kindred spirit, albeit a virtual one. Buckingham, who is also a writer of fiction, combines philosophy with storytelling to highlight ethical thinking. He sees stories as a way of attending more deeply to ethical thinking, connecting with my use of stories to deepen understanding of relational responsibilities in professional practice. He sees stories not only as reflections on experience but as experiences in themselves. His statement that, 'Sometimes a story will get through where all of our philosophy, all of our analyses and proofs seem to fail us' resonates for me because this is exactly how I feel the stories in my study work. Buckingham poses a question strikingly similar to my question about the 'use' of stories: 'What are stories good for?' (p.22). His answer also echoes my experiences in working with stories: 'They can be remarkably productive of fresh knowledge ... we travel with a story, think with it – and perhaps something emerges that could not have been anticipated – I wasn't expecting that!' As trainee teacher Lottie wrote, reflecting on her story *The Train Station*: 'I was shocked!' (Story u, Chapter 8).

Buckingham argues that 'if we want to understand storytelling better we need to attend to the living, breathing complexity of the telling ... a story is something we experience *being told*' (p.27)' He refers to the sea of stories: 'stories live in the telling and the re-telling – the stories that we weave are multiple, fragmentary, interlocking, in constant motion.' He says that stories capture the 'what is it like?' of experience and that like conversations, stories 'always threaten, or promise, to deliver us to places we could not have anticipated in advance – even, or perhaps especially, when

a story is 'known to us' (p.38). I make a note to return to him in my discussion of ethics in narrative inquiries (see Chapter 4).

The role of the reader or listener

Greene in Dyson and Ganeshi (1994) emphasises the role of the reader: '... it is the readers who bring those words, those letters printed on the neutral page, alive' (p.22). She describes the consciousness of the reader being 'pierced' and how, 'The materials of the reader's experience, in consequence, cannot but be ordered on each occasion in unfamiliar ways' (p.23). She continues, 'When that happens, readers see dimensions of that experience that are ordinarily invisible, hear aspects of it ordinarily lost in silence.'

The work of Wolfgang Iser (1978, 1993, 2000) (discussed previously in this chapter in relation to truth and fiction) on the development of reader response theory which analyses the relationship between reader and text has helped me think about how the stories affect teller and listener, reader and writer. Reader response theory applies to the ways narrative representations work with readers in constructing meanings. Berleant, (1991), explains:

The link between fiction and reality lies in what literature does. Only when we examine what it does in the dynamic interaction of text and reader will we begin to discern how fiction acts in exposing reality (p.113).

He says that the text carries potentials that are realised only in the process of reading. This is demonstrated in Evelyn's stories (Chapter 8) which were created as a means of understanding, and, ultimately, finding solutions to professional problems.

Winter (1999) argues that fictional stories provide 'a specific freedom ... for readers to bring their own meanings to bear on the text' (p.15). He adds, 'the open-ness with which a story conveys its meaning anticipates and welcomes alternative readings in a way an analytical description does not' (ibid.). There is a clear role here for the exercise of creative imagination on the part of the reader. Cox (in Trent Jacobs, 2008) introduces the idea that a narrative or poem can engage both reader and writer in an internal dialogue by 'asking back'.

This is intriguing and something that I have observed and identified in my exploration of the stories and poems written by teachers included in this study. Cox writes:

When I write expressively, as a poet or as a prose writer, and I try to make sense of the world through poetry or narrative, the poetry or narrative ask back in ways that conventional academic discourse does not. It asks back with questions that touch on the emotional, the psychological, the philosophical, the spiritual, and the ethical, as well as the aesthetic (p.109).

This suggests that writers engage in dialogue with themselves, prompted by what they have written. This is exemplified in the responses of Dan, Chapter 6 and Evelyn and Lottie, Chapter 8, to re-reading their own stories. Readers likewise, find that the stories written and told by others raise ontological questions for them.

Narrative inquiry

Texts relating to narrative and narrative research approaches, particularly narrative inquiry occupy significant space on the shelves and a full discussion of how I have understood the methodology of narrative inquiry in my study is found in Chapter 4. Since I wrote my first ‘story’ for Richard Winter’s classes on fictional critical writing in 1988, and encountered the ‘narrative people’ in New Orleans in 2000, narrative research has moved from the margins to become a recognised qualitative research approach, or, rather, a range of approaches. In 1993 Reissman in her paper which mapped and critiqued the field of narrative analysis made no reference to ‘narrative inquiry’; in 1998 Clandinin and Connelly published an article, ‘Stories to live by: Narrative understandings of school reform’; and, in 2000, their book, *Narrative inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* was published. In 2002 the *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* hinted at the emergence of narrative approaches and, in 2007, *The Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, edited by Clandinin, was published. These writings provide a sturdy foundation on the book shelves. The theoretical frameworks for the methodology of narrative inquiry are discussed fully in Chapter 4.

The activity of arranging the bookshelves was both a practical reality and a metaphor which enabled me to visualise and explain the place of reading and theorising in this

inquiry. As the inquiry has progressed the shelves have been re-arranged many times. The voices of the writers introduced in the first part of this chapter remain strong, providing a foundation for the thesis, and I return frequently to these travel guides. The reading continues and as I travel I encounter new voices which are added to the shelves. I feel that I've achieved some sense of order in the bookcase identifying the texts that have inspired and informed, challenged, disturbed and provoked me. Now I remind myself of the power not only of reading but of writing as a means of finding out what I know. In Margot Ely's words: 'We write to know, we write to learn, we write to discover' (2007, p.570). And Helen Cixous (1993): 'Writing and reading are not separate, reading is a part of writing. A real reader is a writer. A real reader is already on the way to writing' (p.21). It's time to start writing.

Chapter 4

Something for the journey: a travel guide

‘Stories walk ...’ John Berger, (2000, p.170)

‘In the movement toward narrative inquiry, researchers, research communities, and research disciplines in particular forge their own idiosyncratic journey’
(Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p.7)

Metaphors help us to make meaning. The language of travel, the idea of making a journey, the terms used to describe geographical spaces proliferate in the literature relating to narrative inquiry and qualitative research in general. We speak of ‘mapping the landscape’, ‘charting the path’, ‘world travelling’, of ‘lives shaped by geographic narratives’, of ‘borderland spaces and tensions’, of roads, bridges and ‘nomadic texts’. I see methodology as the guide that maps the thinking underlying a study: the travel guide. Travel guides, if they are well-crafted, allow us to become travellers along with those who wrote them – they open our eyes, give us ways of seeing; they whet our appetite, and inspire us to see what they saw for ourselves. They are ‘something for the journey’, something to go alongside the other book that a traveller may have slipped into bag or pocket – the travel log, journal or sketch-book in which experiences, impressions, reflections and insights are recorded to be revisited. Travel writers have been there before us and blazed a trail. My bookshelves hold a range of travel guides spanning a thousand years from the stories told by the earliest recorded travellers to the psycho-geographers of the twenty-first century. I shall refer to them as signposts along the way as I map my own ‘idiosyncratic journey’ (Pinnegar & Daynes, op.cit.).

As a narrative inquirer my intention is to understand the experiences of the participants in my study as they are explored through their reflective narratives, stories and poems. I also seek to understand my own experiences as a teacher, researcher and writer. To do this I draw on a range of methodologies: narrative inquiry; writing as a method of inquiry; and poetic inquiry. These are the signposts that will guide me on this journey.

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the study of experiences as story. I identify with Clandinin and Connellys' metaphor of 'individuals as living storied lives on storied landscapes' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.24). With them, I consider narrative to be 'central to our understanding of experience' (ibid.). Through my practice as a teacher in initial teacher training and continuing professional development, and also in my research, I seek to understand how the stories told by trainee teachers and teachers inform and provide insights into their lives both professionally and personally. In common with other narrative inquirers I view narrative as both a study and a way of living: 'Understanding life, experience, narratively is our research and our life project' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.24). Thus, in narrative inquiry, narrative is both the method and the phenomenon to be studied. Narrative inquiry is grounded in experience that is expressed through lived and told stories. As Clandinin and Connelly summarise:

Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. To engage with narrative inquiry as a methodology is to adopt a particular narrative view of experience as phenomenon under study (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p.477).

Narrative inquirers engage in an open-ended exploration rather than setting out to answer specific research questions. Pinnegar (2006) refers to this as 'wondering', seeing it as a means of inviting and enabling 'readers to reimagine the story being lived, connect the story to their own lived experience in schools' and 'rethink research, schools and lives' (p.179). The practice of wondering is a unique aspect of the methodology of narrative inquiry. Through open-ended wondering 'the researcher holds the reader in a narrative space of inconclusivity' (Pinnegar, 2006, p.179). The sharing of stories is a significant aspect of my study and I have experienced the diverse ways in which teachers respond to hearing the stories shared by others, sharing their own experiences and generating further questions or 'wonders'. Clandinin (2013) highlights the way narrative inquirers have moved to redefining their research questions as "puzzles" as one of the defining features which differentiates narrative inquiry as 'markedly different from other methodologies' (Clandinin, 2013, p.43).

In narrative inquiry a change in the traditional boundaries has developed in relation to the significance of the relationship of the researcher to the researched. Clandinin, writing about her thesis work as a doctoral student explained that relationships developed as researchers became interested in what their subjects were saying (in Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p.13). This is identified as a crucial turn in narrative inquiry. The point at which ‘the researcher not only understands that there is a relationship between the humans involved in their inquiry but also *who the researcher is*’ (my italics) (Pinnegar and Daynes, p.14). ‘... narrative inquiry is people in relation studying people in relation’ (Clandinin, 2013, p.23). As a researcher I am deeply embedded and highly visible in my research, I am studying my own practice and learning alongside the participants in my study. Pinnegar and Daynes, (2007) explain that ‘The researched and the researcher are seen to exist in time and in a particular context. They bring with them a history and worldview. They are not static but dynamic, and growth and learning are part of the research process. Both researcher and researched will learn’ (p.14). This has proved to be the case in my inquiry.

There is a strong emphasis on the ontological commitment of narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Murphy, 2009; Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). Narrative inquiry is viewed as a relational methodology in which researchers are living alongside participants. Clandinin points out that ‘Narrative inquirers always enter into research relationships in the midst’ (Clandinin, 2014, p.43). She goes on to explain what this means in terms of the researcher’s ongoing personal and professional lives and of their social, political, linguistic and cultural narratives. ‘When our lives come together in an inquiry relationship we are in the midst. Their lives and ours are also shaped by attending to past, present, and future unfolding social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives’ (Clandinin, 2014, p.43). This is illustrated in the stories found as I travel, literally, along a road (Chapter 5).

Travelling companions

My understanding of the relational nature of narrative inquiry has prompted me to explore my researcher role as that of a travelling companion, a metaphor which grew out of Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) description of narrative inquiry as ‘a way of understanding experience; ... a collaboration between researcher and participants,

over time, in a place or series of places, and in social action with milieus' (p.20). This notion that the researcher comes into 'the midst' and joins with those who are already there led me to see myself as a travelling companion joining a group of travellers on a journey, observing, and possibly sharing, their experiences for a time until the ways parted again. This reflects Clandinin and Connelly's account of how the inquiry journey progresses: 'an inquirer enters the matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry, still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of experience that make up people's lives, both individual and social' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.20).

Rather than following a set pattern, Clandinin views narrative inquiry as having fluidity, seeing it as 'a relational inquiry methodology that is open to where participants' experience takes each researcher' (2013, p.33) This description opened up questions for me in relation to the ongoing conversations with the participants in my study, prompting me to ask, for example, in relation to the stories co-composed with my colleague Evelyn, in Chapter 8, Where is this shared experience taking us? Where is it taking Evelyn? How is it 'relational' in terms of my own story/ies, experiences and responses? As Evelyn and I came alongside each other to tell and explore/inquire into our stories there was the sense that in the re-tellings we were both re-living our stories. I experienced this as a deep, reflective process that prompted personal and professional insights and also 'wonders':

Janet: Thinking back to when you wrote the stories on your practice – can you remember how it felt to write in this way – how it seems in retrospect?

Evelyn: The first piece was written to help me solve a problem with an activity in school – a parent survey – I would ask parents the questions and then not like what they said when I read the responses. So the first story was an exchange of text messages between two parents. Having been a parent myself I began to wonder what it was like from the parents' point of view ... I wrote the story in a problem solving way – it was a way of venting my emotions.

As our narratives are lived, told and retold in the research process, the narratives of participant and researcher become, through the inquiry, a shared narrative construction and reconstruction. This is also exemplified in the co-composed stories

of Saffiya and Jaz in Chapter 7. The stories of lived experience have first been written as reflective pieces which are shared and then re-lived and retold through conversations. The commonality is that both the participants and I have written narratively about our experiences as teachers. The ongoing conversations are central to the inquiry, creating space for the stories of participants and researcher to be composed and heard.

Understanding the three-dimensional space

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identified a three-dimensional inquiry space in which we, as researchers, are situated with our participants. The three dimensions are temporality, place and sociality. Temporality refers to the past, present and future of events and people. Place refers to the location where the inquiry takes place. Sociality refers to the relationship between researcher and participants. These are the relational spaces. The landscape metaphor offers a vivid image to aid understanding of how time, place and sociality provide a setting for the diversity of people and experiences in different contexts and relationships as they travel through the landscape, the scene of the inquiry. Clandinin (2013), shows how the three dimensions are ‘interconnected and interwoven’ (p.50) explaining that ‘Temporality is threaded into place and into events and emotions ... we cannot understand a person’s experience of place without understanding temporality’ (p.50). The researcher is located within this space, always attending to how the three dimensions have shaped their own experiences. This may mean reflecting back on their own lives, even as far as childhood, as I have done in the autobiographical reflections in Chapter 2. Clandinin (2013) stresses that such autobiographical reflections on ‘our narrative beginnings’ are ‘crucial pieces of a relational methodology such as narrative inquiry’ (p.83).

Understanding the three dimensional inquiry space has enabled me to clarify my research puzzles, justify my study and understand my place in it. As the inquiry has progressed, moving towards a final research text, I have continued to draw on the three dimensional narrative inquiry space to enable a deeper understanding of the narratives, stories and poems and of the conversations with participants. I have reflected on my own continuing journey in terms of time, place and relationships and also on those dimensions in the journeys of the participants in the inquiry with whom

I am, in Clandinin's words, 'in relation' (2016, p.25). She refers back to her earlier work with Michael Connelly to re-emphasise that relational nature of narrative inquiry:

Narrative inquiry is the study of experience, and experience, as John Dewey taught, is a matter of people in relation contextually and temporally. Participants are in relation, and we as researchers are in relation to participants. Narrative inquiry is an experience of the experience. It is people in relation studying with people in relation (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.189).

In their critique of the design of narrative inquiries that focus on teachers' and teacher educators' own practices (Clandinin, Pushor and Murray Orr, 2007), the writers emphasise that narrative inquiry is 'much more than telling stories' (p.21). They suggest that part of the attraction of narrative inquiry may be 'the comfort that comes from thinking about and telling stories' (ibid.). They underline the importance of the researcher establishing her relationship to and interest in the inquiry and of justifying the research practically, identifying how it will lead to insights that will prompt changes in the researcher's practices or those of others. They also point out that the researcher should consider the larger social and educational issues that the study might address, and what the responses might be to the questions: 'So what?' and 'Who cares?' (p. 25). These questions which are addressed in Chapters 5-9, embrace the personal dimension of the inquiry and the practical implications: what have the stories revealed and what differences will this make to my own practice and that of my participants. The social and theoretical aspects are also addressed in terms of what this research might contribute to theoretical understanding or to making situations more socially just.

Although I see my work as being strongly grounded in the methodology of narrative inquiry I have navigated my own way in exploring the narratives in this study. These narratives differ from those that usually form the basis for the work of Clandinin and Connelly and others in that they are written as fictions or fictionalised accounts. The stories in Chapters 7 and 8 have been co-composed with participants and may be described as stories to live by, the narrative term for identity (Clandinin, 2013). Those in Chapters 5 and 6 originated in my own reflective journal and the journals of

trainee teachers and have links with the practices of reflective story writing (Bolton, 2010) and, particularly, with the approach of fictional critical writing (Winter, 1988). Winter considers the question of how a fictional narrative can be a way of exploring and understanding the meaning of one's data, (p.233). '...the writing of a fiction is a method of organizing personal experience in order to explore its possible meaning.' He suggests that as a 'method' it has certain advantages: it is able to present both the contradictions of experience and its general significance; it also suggests the reflexivity of any attempt to judge the meaning of events: all descriptions are (at some level and in some way) *self*-descriptions,' (p.167).

Building on Winter's work on fictional critical writing I have explored not so much the inherent meanings of the stories themselves but how the stories have worked for and on the writers, readers, tellers and listeners. What is their purpose, their use? What differences do the stories we tell and live by make to our lives – personally and professionally – and how do we act and think differently as a result? This way of creating and responding to stories differs from that of Clandinin and Connelly in that the stories are frequently imagined in response to a particular event that has occurred in the course of everyday practice rather than being created from data collected through conversations with participants. It has still been possible and productive to think with these stories in terms of the three dimensional inquiry space and the three commonplaces of time, sociality and place as these are qualities common to all stories.

'Wow! What must it be like to be you?'

As I have written previously, I draw a strong metaphorical relationship between being a traveller and being a researcher. The reader of a travel guide hopes for a sense that the writer has really been to the places described so that others will want to go there, or at least feel that they have had an authentic experience through reading the written account. Good writing has the power to capture the essence of experience. Early travel writing can be seen as the roots of ethnographic work. Geertz (1988) provides an historical anthropological perspective, highlighting the relationship between travel writing and ethnographic writing. Geertz considers that the ability of anthropologists to get their readers to take what they say seriously has less to do with convincing them of the factual nature of their writing and more to do with their having the ability to convince their audience that they have 'truly been there'. He

adds, ‘... persuading us that this offstage miracle has occurred, is where the writing comes in’ (1988, pp.4/5).

Geertz has prompted me to reflect on how we learn as travellers and how researchers learn in the field or research site. Both the traveller and researcher see fragments of lives, they appear in the landscape at a particular moment in the flow of time. Life has gone on before I came and will go on afterwards. I change as a result of my experiences and encounters with people and places. The traveller and the researcher try to make sense of what has happened, what has been seen, heard, experienced. There are encounters with different cultures and customs. Both the traveller and the researcher have to learn how to be in new landscapes, observing, asking questions, noticing, listening, paying attention, being receptive, interested, excited and surprised by what they see, hear, do. Geertz also emphasises the importance of the ‘author’ of an ethnographic study constructing ‘a writerly identity’ (1988, p.9). He poses a challenge for the narrative inquirer: ‘how to sound like a pilgrim and a cartographer at the same time’ (p.10). The idea of inquirer as pilgrim and the inquiry journey as pilgrimage is an intriguing addition to the travelling metaphor.

My understanding of the relationships between the inquirer and the subjects of the inquiry has been enhanced by the writing of the philosopher Maria Lugones, as discussed in Chapter 3. Lugones (1994) introduces the idea of ‘playfulness’ and ‘world-travelling’:

The reason why I think that travelling to someone’s world is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their ‘world’ we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. Only when we have travelled to each other’s ‘worlds’ are we fully subjects to each other (p.637).

This reflexive turn, putting yourself in the shoes of another and viewing yourself from their perspective, becoming the subjects of each other, is strongly evident in the stories told and written by the teachers in my inquiry. Stories enable us to capture the ‘what is it like?’ of experience. Debbie, reflecting on her story *Understanding Billy* (Story h), said: ‘I go home sometimes and think about some of my pupils, write their story in my head. And I think “Wow, what must it be like to be you?”’

(Dyson, 2005, p.14). In the stories *A Place of Greater Safety* (Story d) and *Strong Language 1* and *2* (Stories f and g), all in Chapter 5, I placed myself in the stories in my role as school inspector and how I felt I might have been perceived by a 10-year-old Albanian refugee, and by a parent, as a means of highlighting issues of power and powerlessness in the face of institutional failures and my own professional (and moral) responsibilities. In this example the stories became a form of practical reasoning, described by Wallace (2009, n.p.) as ‘the capacity for resolving, through reflection, the question of what one is to do.’

Clandinin reflects that as researchers we are not only travelling to the worlds of our participants, but to the worlds of our own ‘previous landscapes, to other times, places and relationships’ (2013, p.82). She goes on to stress the importance of taking time to engage in autobiographical inquiries:

Narrative inquirers must begin, then, with inquiring into their own stories of experience. Because narrative inquiry is an ongoing reflective and reflexive methodology, narrative inquirers need to inquire into their own experience before, during, and after each inquiry (pp. 82/3).

I have found this practice an essential aspect of my doctoral studies. As a researcher my ontology shapes my inquiry at every level. Keeping a reflective journal and storying my professional experiences has enabled me to explore my ontological and epistemological presumptions: what do I ‘know’? How and why do I know? I believe that to be a good researcher I must be aware of my own knowing and this principle of reflexivity underpins my inquiries. My ontological questions to live by, what might be called my spiritual travel guide, has for many years been a set of questions posed by the theologian, Hans Kung (1974/2008, p.184). I have adapted these questions to give them a secular rather than religious tone and to render them gender neutral. As a teacher in the context of religious studies and philosophy I continue to use them in my work with trainee teachers when exploring the spiritual dimension of human experience, in the teaching of research methods in education, and in exploring the meanings of ontology and epistemology. I think Kung has covered ultimate questions comprehensively here:

What can we know? Why is there anything at all, why not nothing? Where do we come from and where do we go to? Why is the world as it is? What

is the ultimate reason and meaning of all reality? What ought we to do? Why, and when, are we finally responsible? What do we despise and what do we value? What is the point of loyalty and friendship, but also what is the point of suffering and sin? What really matters for humanity? What may we hope? Why are we here? What is it all about? What is there left for us, death making everything pointless at the end? What will give us courage for life, and what courage for death?

One way or another we all have to recognise these questions as we come to terms with what it means to be human. We may have different answers to the questions, we may want to frame the questions differently, we may have no answers to some of the questions, or we may find that our answers change as we re-story our lives in the light of experience, but there is no escaping them. Our responses to these questions shape how we live. They inform our ontological position, our ways of knowing and understanding the world, and how to *be* in it as ourselves and in relation to others.

Metaphors: liminal spaces

Metaphors matter, they shape our understanding of the world and our actions. They are part of our everyday thought. Mostly, we do not notice them but they are central to how we think and how we express our thoughts in language. Lakoff and Johnson (1980 and 2003) identify metaphors that are ‘outside our conventional conceptual system’, that are ‘imaginative and creative’ (p139). These metaphors are ‘capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience. They can give new meaning to our pasts, our daily activity, and to what we know and believe’ (ibid.). Egan described metaphor as ‘one of our cognitive grappling tools’ – a metaphor for metaphor. We need it, he says, ‘to get over difficult landscape’ (conference presentation, 2017).

This geographical reference resonates with my travelling metaphor. Hanne refers to metaphors as allowing us to ‘make a flash of connection’ (conference presentation, 2017). Schön (1983) considered that metaphors which are used to define a problem tend to generate narratives in order to solve the problem, something Hanne describes as ‘the silent narrativity of metaphor’ (op.cit.). There is a growing awareness of the relationship between metaphor and narrative (Dyson and Smith, 2017; 2018) which will be highlighted throughout this inquiry.

The metaphor that illuminates the themes in my narrative inquiry and also speaks most powerfully of liminality is the image of a road. It is a physical as well as a metaphorical road – the A13, running from London to the East coast of England, passing through the diverse districts in which I work with teachers and schools. I have set many of my reflective stories along this road and these are discussed fully in Chapter 5. In my interpretations of professional reflective stories, my own and those written by others, I often seek a metaphor to help me make sense of what has been written. Van Manen (1988) suggests that ‘with each re-telling we discover more of what we know’ (p.120). A re-reading of these reflective stories shows that an underlying theme, and often the prompt for developing a narrative, is the notion of borders. The writers frequently pay attention to what is happening at the edges, focusing on those people, often children, who are marginalised, excluded, disenfranchised, and the landscapes they inhabit, often, literally, on the borders of towns and cities, and metaphorically in their schools (Dyson, 2008). Conroy’s (2004) exploration of ‘liminality’, has extended my thinking: ‘Those on the border or at the threshold perceive culture, social relations and politics quite differently from those at the centre’ (p.53).

The idea of thresholds has become another vivid metaphor. I see thresholds as the point at which people are admitted to a domain, allowed or invited in – or not. Such borders are also the places where identities change and conflicts begin. I wonder, can they also be inclusive, as meeting spaces where dialogue takes place, where differences can be explored, valued, shared? Or is it necessary to be invited over the threshold for this to happen? I don’t know. Aoki (2005a; 2005b) writes of opening up the space in the middle (the middle ground) where connection and understanding can begin to develop. In Chapter 5 I have explored questions raised by the stories that have emerged in my encounters along the road particularly in terms of how members of marginalised communities experience school and how teachers respond to them. In Chapter 7 through conversations with Saffiya and Jaz the issues of identity in relation to faith, culture and race are discussed.

Stories that disturb and puzzle

Ben Okri (1997) writes ‘in storytelling there is always transgression ... without transgression ... there is no risk, no *frisson*, no experiment, no discovery and no

creativity' (p.52). Barone, in the introduction to his book, *Touching Eternity* (2001), states: '... this is a book that is meant to disturb and puzzle' (p.3). In my inquiry, readers of the reflective stories, for example, *Doubly Vulnerable*, (Story e) a day at school through the eyes of a boy who lives with foster parents and has learning difficulties, and *Symmetry*, (Story i) which explores how Alex, a 5-year-old child for whom English is an additional language experiences life in an English classroom, have the opportunity to examine their beliefs about teaching and learning, to clarify their personal identities and to choose how they will respond to the new perspectives highlighted by such reflections. Readers may be troubled, puzzled, challenged, made curious or angry by what they have read. There is disruption. Questions are raised. Eagleton writing on the nature of narrative reminds us that '... stories are possible because some initial order has been disrupted' (p.104). Such stories have the power to disturb the reader into asking important questions about the nature of teaching, the role of the teacher, the meaning and purpose of education. What does it mean to be 'doubly vulnerable'? How might it feel to be 'a 14-year-old 'looked after' child with learning difficulties' or a 5-year-old second language learner? What are the challenges of inhabiting liminal spaces? What possibilities do they offer?

Writing as a method of inquiry: thinking through writing

Novelist Margaret Atwood reminds us that '... to write is to take risks, and it is only by taking risks that we know we are alive.' (2002, p.xxi). Many writers, particularly those who write fiction, reflect on the nature of the activity of writing, what it is, what it does, how it feels. Margot Ely tells us: 'There is no getting round it. We write to know. We write to learn. We write to discover' (2007 p.570). As I write I have a particular consciousness of the metaphorical space for writing, the liminal space where I 'go' to write. Heilbrun (1999), writing about the view from the 'threshold' of women's lives, has pointed out that the strength of liminality is that it is a place where 'we write our own lines' (pp. 101-102). The freedom to write our own lines is a feature of narrative inquiry and other qualitative approaches. Clandinin and Caine (2013) have written that the quality of narrative inquiry is determined by the multiple commitments we make to the process, in particular 'an extensive commitment to writing as a way to inquire' (Richardson 2003 as referenced in Clandinin and Caine 2013 p.178). The personal significance of actually handwriting in a journal was movingly captured by trainee teacher Jess, which I have presented here in poetic form:

there is something very pure about putting pen to paper
far more enticing and enjoyable than typing
these words, they are mine
formed by my hand
that in itself is very beautiful

Over time, I have come to think of myself as a writer. I am not a great novelist or poet. My writings consist of journals, short stories and poems as well as research articles, reviews and study texts. I see writing as a dynamic, creative process. My journal writings include telling and re-telling stories often in different voices and styles. This telling and re-telling of experiences uses the same methods employed in narrative inquiry methodology. I also encourage the trainee teachers I work with to experiment with reflective writing in this way. I agree with Richardson's (2000) suggestion that 'trying different modes of writing is a practical and powerful way to expand one's skills, raise one's consciousness and bring a fresh perspective to one's research' (pp.930-931). I am uncomfortable with the term 'writing up' feeling that it implies a mechanistic activity, a chore to be got through at the end of a study. For me, writing is a continuous process which will change and adapt to the different stages of the study. It is a stage in the inquiry but can only ever be the story so far ... As Solnit (2013) writes, 'There are other stories, not yet ripe, that I will see and tell in later years' (p.18). I have included two such stories in Chapter 5, stories that have taken a long time to 'ripen' but which eventually, through a process of reflection, re-reflection and conversations within the safe space of my response communities, became stories that wanted, or needed, to be told.

The most powerful stories are those that challenge assumptions and shift perceptions, inviting us to look from perspectives that are different from those we are comfortable with. I have found that when people choose to write narratively, that is, in story form, fictionalising their experiences, it is often because they have experienced a critical incident or they are faced by a dilemma. The narrative form allows distance, a change of voice, a new perspective. I have written and read many examples of these stories that needed to be told, stories that seem to tell us rather than us telling them and have experienced it in my own story-writing. The incident which provoked the story *A Place of Greater Safety* (Story d) was haunting me and I wrote it partly

to enable myself to move on but also so that I could use the story as a teaching tool with teachers dealing with issues of equality and diversity so that something positive might come from it. Laurel Richardson writes: ‘Some stories were painful ... but writing them loosened their shadowhold on me’ (2000, p.932). The *Strong Language* stories (f and g) had to gestate for longer. Poet and essayist Annie Dillard refers to the power of stories as ‘subtle pedagogy’ (1982, p.145). Here the subtle pedagogy was at work on me as the writer and also on those with whom I shared the stories in a teaching context.

I have a strong awareness of the space and place where writing happens and the ways in which we are prompted to tell the stories that need to be told, when and where we need to tell them. A personal example of finding the right time and space for stories, and how writing narratively can enable us to make sense of things when they don’t (Bruner, 2002), was my experience of writing a journal after the death of my husband. Joan Didion has written, ‘We tell ourselves stories in order to live’ (2006 p. 185) and this was how I viewed this writing. After his death I knew that I would need to write about my feelings and experiences; I knew that I would know when to begin and when to end. The space in which the words would be placed was important to me. I chose to write in his green spiral-bound notebook (Chapter 2). He had written a few pages at the beginning and at the end of the book. I was writing in the liminal space between his words. I wrote, read, re-read and re-told my stories in that space for two years. They became my stories to live by, sustaining me through my grief. As time passed the intervals between my entries became longer. One day I reached the pages at the end where he had written his notes and knew that it was time to move into a new space. ‘It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole’ (Virginia Woolf in Solnit, 2013, p, 240).

Adams St Pierre (2002) refers to Laurel Richardson’s (1994) concept of using writing as a method of inquiry: ‘Convinced that writing is thinking, I believe that my writing ... has become an ethical practice of poststructural inquiry in ways I have only begun to understand’ (p.52). Adams St Pierre also explores writing as ‘nomadic practice’: ‘It is a kind of nomadic inquiry in which I am able to deterritorialize space in which to travel in the thinking that writing produces’ (2002, p.57). I am engaged by the geographical and travelling connotations of the nomadic metaphor with its

suggestion of breaking away from conventional academic writing and removing barriers in order to free up the writing space.

Dillard likens the words on the page to tools of physical labour that will, over time, lead to knowing:

When you write, you lay out a line of words. The line of words is a miner's pick, a wood-carver's gouge, a surgeon's probe. You wield it and it digs a path for you to follow. Soon you find yourself deep in new territory. Is it a dead end, or have you located the real subject? You will know tomorrow, or this time next year ... *The writing has changed, in your hands, and in a twinkling, from an expression of your notions to an epistemological tool*' (1989, p.3).

Thinking through writing is an ongoing, integral part of the research process. I enjoy the challenge that Barthes (1986) implies in relation to the elevation of method over writing: '... everything has been put into the method, nothing remains for the writing' (p.318). Van Manen writes that 'for Barthes research does not merely involve writing, research is the work of writing – writing is its very essence' (p.125). In his essay *The Writer on Holiday* (1981) Barthes shows the difficulty in characterising ourselves as writers but I like the humour (and, maybe, irony?) with which he describes the writer as a strongly visible presence: 'To endow the writer publicly with a good fleshly body, to reveal that he likes dry white wine and underdone steak, is to make even more miraculous for me, and of a more divine essence, the products of his ... inspiration' (Barthes, 1981, p.31). I believe that, inevitably, we are always in our texts however much we try to conceal the 'I' that is the writer.

Van Manen's (1990) discussion about the relation between phenomenological reflection and the writing process resonates strongly with my own understanding of writing as methodology. He says that in the human sciences 'writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself' (p.125). He writes of how writing works in fixing and distancing and making the internal external: 'Writing fixes thought on paper. It externalizes what to some extent is internal; it distances us from our immediate involvements with the things of the world' (p.125). Van Manen (1990) also discusses Sartre's approach to the act of writing quoting him as saying, 'I would

write out what I had been thinking about beforehand, but the essential moment was that of writing itself' (p.5). Van Manen says: 'With this line Sartre has given us his most succinct definition of his methodology. Writing is the method.' (p.126). Van Manen views the act of writing as a means of deepening both epistemological and ontological understanding: 'To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one's own depth' (p.127).

In accord with Van Manen's views on the significance and power of writing and with the view of Clandinin and Connelly that 'the writing of a research text is a narrative act' (2006, p.485) I have set out to write my thesis as a narrative, employing some of the devices of literary style. And, whilst it can be argued (Badley, 2016) that all research texts are a narrative in that they have an author with a story to tell, most often the author's voice is concealed by third-person writing. As Barthes (1997) has written there is always an 'I' that is the writer. Writing narratively helped me to understand who I am and how I am located in the inquiry.

Poetic inquiry as methodology

Poet Mary Oliver writes that, 'A poem on the page speaks to the listening mind' (1994, p.29), implying that some people are particularly attuned to poetic forms of writing. Bruner (1986) links the storyteller and the poet: 'It is the question of how we come to endow experience with meaning that preoccupies the poet and the storyteller' (p.12). As a reader and a writer of poetry I encourage the trainee teachers to consider using poetry as a means of expression in their reflective journals. Some of the participants in my study have chosen to write in poetic forms. With Bruner, (2002) I see poetry as a powerful means of bringing meaning to experience. However, it is only recently that I have begun to theorise the use of poetry as a methodology. Denzin and Lincoln (2002) consider that in poetry 'the goal of lived experience is emphasized, as the writer moves outward from personal, epiphanic moment to a narrative description of that experience' (p.155). Ely notes how 'Poems spotlight particular events in ways that lift them out of the often overwhelming flood of life so that they can be understood as part of that' She goes on to describe this as a 'complex business' (In Clandinin, Ed. 2007, p.75).

Working with doctoral students from the USA and Canada as a result of taking part in a Doctoral Student Seminar, Narrative SIG, at AERA in 2014 was (and continues to be) an inspiration. It has given me an opportunity to develop ideas through thinking with others (Clarke, Dyson, Hutchinson, Paulger and Leiss, 2015), and has led to the formation of a response community (Clandinin, et al, 2016). In particular I have developed confidence in using poetic inquiry as a methodology through my reflective dialogue with poet and researcher, Cindy Clarke. I have come to see the poems as interim research texts which help to focus the researcher/poet/story-teller on the experiences explored in the poem, as in Clandinin and Connelly, (2000): ‘... field texts slide back and forth between records of experience under study and records of oneself as researcher experiencing the experience’ (p.87). As I enquire into my interim research texts, poems or stories of experience, I learn not only more about the experiences they tell but also about myself, now, as a researcher inquiring into those experiences. In this way we are always, as researchers, poets, individuals, in the middle of our stories to live by even as we pause to inquire into them. I recorded in my reflective journal my experience of reading and responding to Clarke’s poem, *The Blue Dress* (2015) (see Appendix 2)

Extract from my reflective journal:

I feel a sense of anticipation each time I open my email and find that another narrative or another reflection has been dropped into our folders. One day there’s a poem – *The Blue Dress* (Clarke, 2015). Mary Oliver has written that, ‘A poem on the page speaks to the listening mind’ (1994:29). I was definitely ‘in a listening mind’ when I read this poem and found that it spoke to me on a number of levels. I wrote back: ‘Your commentary helped me really understand how poems of experience work as interim research texts and so helped me place some of my own poems within my ongoing inquiry with more confidence – thank you!’

The poem was also evocative on a personal level. It brought back the image of my paternal grandmother who also had a ‘concrete chin’ and presented a grim face to the world. I thought for a long time that it was because she was naturally miserable but, with the distance of time and maturity, I see someone whose life must have been unbearably hard. She was ‘stuck’ in a situation she could not change. She experienced the

death of a baby girl, something that was never spoken of and which I only discovered when I found her grave a few years ago. She brought up two little boys alone after her husband's early death from tuberculosis, living in a tiny cottage without water or sanitation and working for over fifty years in a carpet factory. She lived to be ninety, the concrete chin, I now think, a sign of stoicism in the face of adversity, evidence of determination. Next to my desk I have a photograph of her as a soft-faced young woman, in a Victorian dress trimmed with flowers and lace, gazing dreamily, past the photographer, into the distance of her future. I photographed the picture and dropped it into the folder to share. Clarke's poem had brought her back to life for me. Exchanging our stories enabled a re-telling that gave me a new story to live by. (Photo, Appendix 3)

The time, place and relational aspects of the three-dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) are exemplified here. I was able to look back, forward, inwards and outwards, situating my experience in time and place. Reading and reflecting on Clarke's poem took me back, time-travelling through generations to a different place where I saw things differently. Reflexively, I was prompted to rethink my view of my grandmother, coming to a new understanding and seeing myself in a changed relationship with her. My story to live by had been changed by my encounter with the narrative in Clarke's poem. Ricoeur's (1983) exploration of the way narrative portrays temporal existence also has relevance to this experience. In his discussion of '(as yet) untold' stories (p.74), Ricoeur (1983) writes, 'We tell stories because in the last analysis human lives need and merit being narrated' (p.75). Something I realised in my re-telling of my previously untold story about my grandmother.

Butler-Kisber (2010) emphasises the need to share the process of poetic inquiry. This is exemplified in my work with Clarke and Hutchinson (Clarke, Dyson and Hutchinson, 2017) where we experimented with poetic form to bring our ideas together in ways that provoked our thinking in new directions. We discovered that in thinking together to create poetic form we had added a new layer as each idea became the seed for another person's thinking, creating something richer than might have been achieved when working alone. A poetic performance piece emerged in

that liminal space that would not otherwise have happened. This was a clear example of the importance of ‘finding a voice through thinking with others’ and the value of response communities (Clandinin, 2016; Winter, 1998; Burchell and Dyson, 2000). I felt that this exemplified what Butler-Kisber (2010) describes as ‘occasions for poetry’ and that the process of researchers transferring their work into poetic form can be viewed as ‘a reflexive strategy’ (p.83). The poems *Symmetry 1* and *2* (explored further in Chapter 5) were the result of this shared experience which provoked new insights into ways of thinking about the stories in my study. I view these poems as a way of presenting multiple voices, combining the voices of researcher and participants. I also experimented with writing to represent some salient ideas from theorists informing my work and continued to compose ‘found poetry’. Mary Oliver writes, ‘... the poem is not a discussion, not a lecture, but an instance of attention, of noticing something in the world’ (1994 p.74).

One of the participants in my study, Danielle, a trainee teacher of English, shared a dilemma about her perception of the simplicity of poetry. She felt that the poem she had written in her reflective journal, about a student’s perspective of teacher expectations (discussed more fully in Chapter 6) was not adequate as a reflection. In her view it had to be more complex: ‘Writing a poem is too easy for me! It takes no time at all!’ My response to reading her poem was that, implicitly, it demonstrated critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis, revealing a depth of reflection that was lacking in her accompanying essay on teacher expectations. It was ‘an instance of attention’ (Oliver, op.cit.). She had taken ‘a reflective turn,’ her poem, strongly grounded in her lived experience, showed her what she knew, that is, the importance for herself as a novice teacher, and for her students, of having sufficiently high expectations. She was also demonstrating Van Manen’s (1990) assertion that ‘Poetry means more than it explicitly says’ (p. 131) and, Richardson’s view that ‘Settling words together in new configurations lets us hear, see, and *feel* the world in new dimensions’ (2000 p.933). Richardson goes on to describe poetry as ‘a *practical* and *powerful* method for analysing social worlds’ (p.993).

Annie Dillard argues strongly that poetry has been able to function quite directly as ‘human interpretation of the raw, loose universe’ (1982, p.147). My readings of the theoretical frameworks for poetic inquiry (Prendergast, Leggo and Sameshima,

Eds. 2009; Butler-Kisber, 2010) have prompted me to further experimentations with poetic inquiry and extended my understanding of a methodology that I had been using instinctively when the ‘occasion’ seemed right. As with narrative inquiry where narrative is both the methodology and the medium for inquiry, so with poetry in this inquiry where poems written by the trainees and teachers as reflective journal entries are subjects for inquiry, and the poetry I have generated or ‘found’ has become part of my method of inquiry. Through poetic inquiry I have found ways of discovering tensions, contradictions and ambiguities. Through deep reflection on field texts I have identified strong voices and resonant threads that have led me to compose poems representing the many voices. I have made surprising connections and experienced powerful emotions. It is a refreshing approach to research which requires the researcher to expect the unexpected, to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar.

Narrative ethics: navigating the sea of stories

As world travellers we should consider how our journeys will affect others. How will we relate to our travelling companions and show respect for those we meet? As Buckingham writes: ‘... ethics concerns our relationships with otherness, with the different kinds of difference that we encounter in the world’ (2009, p.xii). Ethical decisions are about discerning good from bad, just from unjust. How can we ensure that, in telling the stories of our participants, we are doing justice to them?

As a starting point this inquiry was carried out in accordance with university requirements and attention to BERA guidelines. All participants have given informed consent in writing and have the right of withdrawal from the inquiry (see ethical permission letter and information and consent forms, Appendices 4a, b, c). I have used the approach of fictionalising (Winter, 1985; Barone, 1995) partly as a distancing device but also to protect the participants from becoming too visible or too vulnerable; fictionalising works not simply to anonymise participants but to blur times, spaces and identities. Although the inquiry complies with the legal and procedural aspects of ethics required by the university, in a narrative inquiry the ethical implications are much deeper and go beyond the expectations of a university ethics form and the requirement to ‘do no harm’. It is essential that we are mindful that in co-constructing participants’ accounts we are respectful and they feel that their stories have been appropriately and fairly represented. The relationships between

narrative inquirers and participants are central to narrative inquiry. I had to consider the possible ethical implications of the power relationship which is likely to exist between tutor and students and ensure that none of the trainees felt pressurised to participate. There is ongoing negotiation with participants as the inquiry proceeds, as the narratives develop, therefore ethical implications need to be recognised and addressed over the entire inquiry. As Barone and Eisner (2012) point out, 'Ethical and political questions ... pop up throughout, arising, often unexpectedly, from outset to end, in all forms of qualitative research' (p.133). Clandinin, Steeves and Caine (2013) remind us that ethical matters are 'never far from the heart of our inquiries, no matter where we are in the inquiry process' (p 49). I have found this to be true as the stories in my inquiry have unfolded and I have explored them further in conversations with participants.

As the telling and retelling of stories has revealed deeper and more complicated issues, it has been necessary to be aware of the duty of care that I, as the researcher, have for participants. This has been particularly evident in the situations which initiated the stories of Saffiya and Jaz (Chapter 7) where ethical issues have been highlighted through the story-telling process, including those relating to the experiences and incidents that prompted the stories in which I played a significant role. These are examples of what Guillemin and Gillam (2004) describe as 'ethically important moments' (p.276).

Clandinin (2013) stresses the importance of understanding narrative inquiry spaces as 'spaces of belonging for both researchers and participants – spaces that are marked always by ethics and attitudes of openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care' (p. 200). I have a strong awareness that I am travelling alongside the participants within the narrative inquiry space, if not by invitation, certainly with their agreement. As the inquiry has progressed I have come to understand the importance of reflexivity on the part of the researcher, asking myself: How do I know what I know? What is my own role in the research? How can I ensure that the participants are not being exploited? Barone and Eisner (2012) raise important questions about the ethical responsibilities of the researcher in creating the text:

How can we create a text in which we offer a multiplicity of perspectives, each of which is fragile, fluid and epistemologically humble? How can

we create a text which is simultaneously owned by all collaborators, one that discloses the multiple perspectives of the researcher and the various perspectives of the characters inhabiting the text? (p.133).

Making oneself vulnerable in the inquiry by posing difficult questions is a salutary experience. Such reflexivity helps to ensure ethical awareness throughout the inquiry as you constantly review your own position in the research relationships, reflecting critically on your assumptions, feelings, responses and decisions. As Kim (2016) points out, narrative research situations can be ‘complex, ambiguous and unpredictable’ (p.101). Narrative inquirers must expect the unexpected and be prepared to respond appropriately and responsibly to the effects of story-telling on themselves and their participants and to recognise and address the ‘ethically important moments’ when they arise. Examples of my experiences of such moments are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Will Buckingham (2009) combines philosophy with storytelling to illuminate ethical thinking, viewing stories as a way of attending more deeply to ethical matters:

Ethics in this view is not only a matter of reflection from the comfort of one’s armchair, but rather a living responsiveness to the demands, responsibilities and possibilities that are presented to us moment by moment as we go about our lives.

Buckingham, drawing on Aristotle, has given me the memorable metaphor of ethics as navigation to include in my travel guide: ‘Stories are like the sea and ethics like navigation, so a well-developed understanding of the ethical dilemmas and questions ... will enable the researcher to find her way through’ (op.cit. p14).

Interpreting the world

Although I have not undertaken a detailed study of hermeneutic approaches I am conscious that the methodological approaches I have adopted are focused on interpretation not only of the storied data but of the existential questions raised by the study. Hermeneutics is concerned with textual interpretation and how this informs our understanding of the world and our place in it. The philosophers who have particular relevance for the hermeneutic approaches in this inquiry are firstly, Ricoeur

who in his work *Time and Narrative* (1983) examines the capacity of narrative to represent the feeling of time, recalling the three dimensional inquiry space of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), life experienced on a continuum, understood narratively. Secondly, the writing of Gadamer who, in his work *Truth and Method* (1975) explored how our historical and cultural circumstances fundamentally influence our understanding. He argued that because we are unable to stand outside history and culture we can never reach a totally objective perspective. Gadamer challenged the view that science is the only view to truth, arguing that the truth conveyed by art is necessary for human life and that interpreting texts educates our imagination, developing our ability to imagine things differently – as if they could be otherwise, recalling Greene (1995). Zimmerman (2015) considers that the inability to imagine things differently ‘usually leads to simplistic entrenchment in received truths and to a fearful defence of what has always been’ (p.69) and that ‘lack of imagination often results in fundamentalism’ (ibid.). Gadamer argued that to achieve deeper understanding we integrate something unfamiliar into our familiar way of seeing things. In doing so our own former perspective is altered by being enlarged and deepened. As we develop our understanding of others our horizons change. Hermeneutic philosophers emphasise the power of imagination to give meaning to the world through language. Zimmerman writes: ‘In both the sciences and the humanities only a well-trained imagination can see things otherwise ...’ (p. 69).

Reading literature, poetry and philosophy deepens our understanding but also highlights our own prejudices and biases. Things begin to shift, what Gadamer calls ‘the fusion of horizons’ (Zimmerman, p.50) and we begin to understand the world at a deeper level. When we take the imaginative step required to create a story that enables us to understand another’s viewpoint, even if we disagree with it, our own point of view has changed. In relation to those scholars whose work has informed my study I believe that Badley, Clough, Greene, Lugones, Nussbaum and Stevens have taken what I will describe as a hermeneutical turn in their search for meaning about how we understand the world, imagining things differently.

Travel is life itself

I return to the travel metaphor. Solnit sees travels and stories as interchangeable: ‘stories are travels and travels are stories’ (2002, p.72), a metaphor that resonates

strongly in the context of this inquiry. Having explored the travel guide for my research inquiry represented by this chapter, I revisit the travel guides on the bookshelf. Travelling back in time some 450 years, I take from the shelf the seventeenth century travel writings of Matsuo Basho, a Japanese student of Zen Buddhism who made a series of journeys designed to free himself from the trappings of the material world and bring spiritual enlightenment. Setting off in the spring of 1689 he spent more than two and a half years on the road. His account of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* shows that for Basho travel was life itself, and he travelled through it seeking a vision of eternity in the things that are, by their very nature, destined to perish, exemplified by the falling autumn leaves:

It was early October when the sky was terribly uncertain that I decided to set out on a journey. I could not help feeling vague misgivings about the future of my journey, as I watched the fallen leaves of autumn being carried away by the wind (p.72).

Basho's writing exemplifies Mary Oliver's (1994, p.74) 'instances of attention'. He captures the moment, frequently in haiku, that most succinct form of poetic expression, noticing and noting details that enrich the reader's experience, such as what the weather was like. He ended the account of his journey to the Deep North with a *haiku* which seems also to be appropriate at this stage of my own 'idiosyncratic journey' (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007).

From this day forth
I shall be called a wanderer,
Leaving on a journey
Thus among the early showers.

Chapter 5

On the road: exemplifying the journey

‘Roads have to go somewhere.’

(Sinclair, 2004:361)

‘Roads unfold in time as one travels along them, just as a story does as one listens or reads’ (Rebecca Solnit, 2001, p.72)

In this chapter I introduce stories written by myself and some of my students as reflections on our experiences and professional practice over a period of several years. The stories have been created from a range of different types of data from a variety of sources, including observations in classrooms; extracts from reflective journals; discussions with teachers, trainee teachers and headteachers, and with my professional colleagues; questionnaires with trainee teachers; conversations with pupils and parents; my ongoing reflective writing about my practice in field notes and professional journal entries. These data have been distilled into a series of stories created as a means of exploring dilemmas which have challenged me in my everyday work with teachers and schools. The stories often relate to difference and identity and raise questions focusing on equality and diversity, particularly in terms of race, culture and religion. They explore the extent to which schools can and should take responsibility for promoting attitudes which value and respect difference, especially where this contradicts and challenges the values held by parents and local communities. The stories highlight the perspectives of teacher educators, trainee teachers, in-service teachers, and pupils. Writing and reflecting on the stories has helped me to identify, confront and examine my dilemmas. Here, I am both the practitioner and the researcher inquiring into my own practice, with narrative as both method and medium.

The approach is grounded in the work of Dewey for whom education, experience and life are inextricably linked. All the stories are situated along a road. I have used the metaphor of travelling as a means of conveying my lived experience, recognising Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) assertion that we ‘seek out personal metaphors to highlight and make coherent our own pasts, our present activities, and our dreams, hopes, and goals ... A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors to make sense of our lives’ (p.232).

As I story and re-story my experiences, these stories have become my stories to live by. They are also powerful teaching tools which have become part of my pedagogy. Clandinin and Connelly (1991) remind us that ‘... reflection and deliberation are the methods by which one’s life, and the stories of it, are re-storied for the purposes of reliving’ (p.264). Their description of the ‘temporally continuous and socially interactive’ way in which a narrative inquiry proceeds (p.265) has resonance with the way I have used reflective stories here to inquire narratively into my practice:

The central task (of a narrative inquiry) is evident when it is grasped that individuals both live their stories in an ongoing experiential text and tell their stories in words as they reflect upon life and explain themselves to others ... A person is, at once, then, engaged in living, retelling, and reliving stories (op.cit.p.265).

Drawing on Geertz (1973) Barone stresses the importance of landscape in educational story-telling (1979, reprinted in 2000): ‘This kind of picture requires ... a “thick” description that captures the mood of the place and its people and provides a backdrop for the unfolding events’ (p.39). The significance of the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry identified by Connelly and Clandinin (2006), temporality, place and sociality, provide a strong foundation for the creation of the stories and for the critical reflections which they prompt for writer or teller and readers or listeners. These dimensions are shown clearly in the following paragraph which describes the context for the stories. They are written in the temporal space of my professional life, past and present, with a strong consciousness of the history of those who have migrated to East London over centuries. The place where the stories are set, a major road, has become a metaphor for travelling, both physically, backwards and forwards over time, and metaphorically to the ‘worlds’ of others (Lugones, 1987) where I can try to understand ‘what it is to be (other) and what it is like to be (Myself) in their eyes’ (p.17). Thus, I am an integral part of my own inquiry: ‘The inquirer does not stand outside the situation like a spectator; he is in it and in transaction with it’ (Schön, 1992, p.122). The third commonplace, sociality is evident through the relationships between the people whose lives have provoked the stories; relationships between the researcher and participants in the inquiry; the relationships established in the schools – teachers and trainee teachers with children, children with children, and relationships between schools and parents.

The road at the heart of this landscape is the A13. As Sinclair (2004, p.361) points out, roads have to go somewhere and the A13 begins in the heart of the City of London, hub of capitalism, milieu of bankers and traders, and ends, some 60 miles away, overlooking the cold, grey sea on the east coast of England. The ‘differences’ traversed on this journey are immense. The road passes through some of the most ethnically and culturally diverse communities in the UK and crosses areas where some of the poorest, most socially disadvantaged people, as well as some of the most affluent, live. It is a route along which, for hundreds of years, people have travelled away from the poverty of the city to seek a better life, while others have travelled into the city to seek their fortune. In the seventeenth century Huguenots fleeing religious persecution in Catholic Europe settled in the area around Brick Lane where they built their own church. This building later became a Methodist chapel, a synagogue and most recently a mosque, as successive groups of immigrants came and went. In the 1990s artists began to arrive in the area, renting studios in the Old Truman Brewery, now priced out by more prosperous web and fashion designers, media and internet companies. Tourists now flock to Brick Lane, pushing their way through the crowds of Muslim worshippers who spill out into the street as the mosque overflows during *Jumma* prayers each Friday. Time, place and people in relation – this is where the stories in this chapter begin.

Psycho-geographer, Iain Sinclair describes the A13 as ‘... this lovely corridor of blight which feeds the imagination’ (*Guardian* interview, 2004). I see the parallel lines of the road running west-east/east-west as a metaphor for the issues of ‘difference’ highlighted through my stories, reflecting the parallel lives (Singh, 2007) of the communities they pass through, dividing rather than linking them. My work with trainee teachers in schools takes me regularly along this 60 mile stretch of road and it is here that I have collected the data from which the stories have been distilled.

Laidlaw (2010) explains that as writers ‘we not only travel between interpretive worlds, we must also travel between different selves, negotiating the unpredictable path of who might emerge on the page. Writing might take us into dangerous uncharted territory, to places found only on *mappae mundi*, or the dark woods where it seems all the maps have been lost’ (p.119/20). She quotes Sumera (1999) : ‘... the narrating of the self, whether it is done by oneself or by others, is always a kind of

travelling. One is never in the same place at the end of the story as one was at the beginning' (p.20). So, I set out along a road which is both familiar and unfamiliar, on a series of journeys for which the well-thumbed road map I carry in my car is inadequate

Story a: *You're a Terrorist!*

Observing Jackie's lesson – extract from my professional journal

I am in a primary school not far from the A13 which at this point passes through the outskirts of Basildon, a 1950s new town, built to accommodate London overspill population, many of them people whose homes had been destroyed by bombing of East London. The population is mainly white, working class people. I'm sitting, shoes off, in the corner of a Hindu shrine, cleverly created in the corner of a classroom. The space is dark. Tiny candles flicker in front of an image of Ganesha, the elephant-headed god. There is a scent of incense, music is playing, the walls are covered with richly coloured material. Many of the children gasp as they enter, from surprise, or, maybe, wonder, at the transformation of their classroom. They remove their shoes and sit, boys and girls separately, on the floor, quickly absorbed in the trainee teacher's re-telling of the story of how Ganesha got his elephant head. At the end of the lesson they are encouraged to explore the artefacts. Some are allowed to try on saris and shalwar kameez. They can't wait to dress up. They love the vibrant colours and flowing fabrics. Two of the girls arrange scarves around their heads and pose before the class. Suddenly one boy shouts, 'You're a terrorist!' Others follow his lead, miming shooting and making machine-gun noises. The trainee teacher is deeply troubled. She had not anticipated such a response. It had seemed that her Religious Education¹ lesson was going so well.

In my journal I commented, 'Later I drive further down the A13 towards London, for more observations of trainee teachers. When I arrive at the school two of the trainee teachers are upset. As part of their planning for teaching about Hinduism they have arranged a visit to a Hindu Temple. The children are excited at the prospect of

¹*Religious Education/Religious Studies forms part of the basic curriculum in schools in the UK. It is taught as a study of Christianity and the other major world faiths and their impact on human experience, and not from a confessional perspective.*

seeing first hand some of the things they have learnt about Hindu worship but today a number of parents have written to say that they do not want their children to go.'

Story b: *Friday Night in the Pub with Bernstein*

Extract from trainee teacher Jackie's reflective log

I had an observation of my Religious Education (RE) lesson this week. This highlighted how far behind the class are as they have not done very much RE and this made starting out difficult. One of the main things that troubled me was how closed-minded pupils were about different ways of life and different cultures. Pupils reacted by saying things were 'weird' and didn't really allow themselves to consider new ideas. It would be good to take my class beyond this area and let them experience the diversity which is truly in this country, only a few miles down the A13 in fact, although they seem quite unaware of it!

I met up with other trainees in the pub on Friday as usual and we compared notes! Other people have had similar experiences – Carla and Rob were very upset about the reaction of some of the parents to the planned trip to the Hindu Temple. A few of them said it was because of 'terrorism' but some just said they didn't want their children learning about 'those sort of religions.' I told them how some of the boys had made comments like 'You're a terrorist' and made machine-gunning gestures when they saw children dressed in headscarves and how upset I'd been. I'd thought my RE lesson had gone really well and then that happened! We talked about the article by Bernstein which we discussed in our lecture last week – how he says that education can't compensate for society. We've all used that quote in our assignments but the experiences we've had this week have made us think about it for real! We had quite a discussion about it. I believe he was right to a certain extent – teachers and schools can only do so much for children but education has to complement and provide a balance. Rob said that maybe our job is to educate children as a means, in some sense, of educating society, whether it's about race or other kinds of equality. Schools can't be responsible for society's actions and other influences on children but they can help children understand society better and know why things are as they are. He may be right but it's a huge responsibility to place on teachers and schools! I can't believe we spent so much time discussing this in the pub on

a Friday evening after a hard week's teaching practice! It just shows what an effect these incidents have had on us.

Extract from my professional journal

Following my observation of Jackie's lesson I drove along the A13 today to meet the head of religious education in a secondary school in an East London borough where, a few weeks earlier, eleven British National Party (BNP)² councillors were elected. He tells me that, increasingly, he is being contacted by parents asking for their children to be withdrawn from RE lessons when Sikhism and Islam are being taught. The grounds for objection seem to be that they don't want their children learning about "people like that." This echoes the experience of the trainee teachers I've seen this week. It highlights how difficult it is for schools to challenge the attitudes pupils bring with them and gives added significance to Bernstein's assertion that "Schools can't compensate for society." He wrote that in 1970! I discussed this with the trainee teachers last week – now some of them are finding out about some of the challenges that people involved in education have to face.

Thinking with Stories a and b

Jackie's experience in the RE lesson and her subsequent discussions in the pub with her peers suggest that the issues of multicultural/anti-racist education and the concepts of difference, equality and diversity are not simply theoretical, text-book, journal article/government report-based recommendations but are actually about real, lived experience in the classroom, relevant to the lives of teachers and children. Her experience highlights the need for a curriculum and a pedagogy that is commonly understood and seen as important in every school, to enable teachers to respond appropriately to such incidents. Unexpected events such as this can be critical in prompting reflection both in and on action and informing future action. When such reflective stories are used in a teaching context they can enable us, as teacher educators, to explore issues such as racism and to 'model for future teachers the possibility of a dialogue across difference' (Asher, 2007: 72). The use of reflective journals and the

²The British National Party (BNP) is a right-wing political party which expounds an openly racist ideology

opportunities for discussion with colleagues opens up the possibility for the generation of personal, practical knowledge, of ‘living theory’ (Whitehead and McNiff, 2005). The use of the stories in a pedagogical context allows others to hear and respond to them, to highlight the resonant threads and engage with the questions raised.

Story c: ‘*Because you are brown*’

Extract from trainee teacher Ali’s reflective log

Today when I was doing playground duty at lunchtime one of the Mid-day assistants brought me this note:

To Amadeep you can be on the other side because you are brown

The incident, according to common sense and what we’ve discussed in our lectures, was racist. I immediately talked about it with my mentor who spoke with both boys. It turned out that Boy A had been annoying Boy B so Boy B had said ‘You go over there because you are brown.’ He then wrote it in a note. I thought it seemed to be less because of the colour of his skin than using that as an excuse for another purpose. The school takes such incidents seriously. A report was written and the parents of both boys were spoken to. It was explained that although there had been no apparent malicious intent, any case of differentiating by skin colour was simply not acceptable. Both boys attended a special half-hour session to discuss what had happened. Fortunately the whole thing was resolved amicably, but was an interesting lesson for me.

Thinking with Story c

Ali’s brief story ‘*Because you are brown*’, prompted by a carefully hand-written note from one child to another in the playground (Appendix 5), is little more than an account of the incident from her own perspective as she found herself dealing with it. She recognised the incident as being racist and took appropriate steps to address the situation, following the school’s policy and applying what she had learnt on her PGCE course. I am left with questions and wonders. I wonder how it must have felt for seven-year-old Amadeep to receive the note, relegating him to ‘the other side’ because of his skin colour, his ‘difference’. I wonder whether he has experienced other similar incidents or whether the trainee was right and the dispute was really about something else and without ‘malicious intent’. I wonder whether there was

any follow up with the whole class – an opportunity to discuss behaviour that hurts other people’s feelings, for example. These are questions that can be explored in a teaching situation with trainee teachers in the context of discussions about equality and diversity. It is the simplest of stories – someone telling something to someone. Nevertheless, it has lingered in my consciousness and become a pedagogical story, inviting further imaginings. I repeat Walker’s words: ‘Once any story is told, ways of seeing are surely altered?’ (p.296). And Gadamer: ‘... only a well trained imagination can see things otherwise’ (in Zimmerman, 2015, p.69).

Reflecting on these stories made me go back to a story I wrote several years ago when I was working as a school inspector. I called it *A Place of Greater Safety* (Story d, below) written at a time when asylum seekers and refugees from Eastern Europe, coming into London, were seen very much as a threat by the established, but often very socially disadvantaged, population. I wrote it as a means of ‘self-study’ to explore my own professional experiences and practices. It was a kind of ‘distancing’ device to help me step back, to identify and reflect on some of the issues relating to ‘difference.’ I continue to use this story as a way of exploring questions about attitudes to difference, equality and diversity with teachers.

Story d: *A Place of Greater Safety*

A school inspector’s story

The first snow of the winter had fallen on the hills around our village the night before we left. We could hear guns firing in the distance and there was the sound of army trucks and tanks rumbling all night. It was cold. We got up very early, before it was light. We packed only what we could carry. Before we left we prayed, facing towards Makkah, asking Allah to protect us on our journey. My sisters were crying because they could not bring all their toys. I cried because we were leaving our cousins and grandparents and I was afraid we would never see them again. My uncle took us in the trailer behind his tractor to the next village where we caught a bus. It was full to bursting with people like us, families trying to get away to a safer place. My father said we would go to England.

It’s raining. Everything is grey here. Our flat is in a high block. The windows look out over a big road. The traffic never stops, even at night. We live on the

ninth floor which is a long way to carry the shopping and my little brother's push chair when the lifts don't work. There are other families living here who came to England to be safe. Some of the flats are empty and boarded up.

The school we go to is grey too. The playground is big and empty. The walls are dirty and covered with writing. Inside it is better. I like my class, I'm good at maths and I'm learning to speak English. A special teacher comes to help us on some days but I learn most from the other children in my class and from watching television. I can understand quite well now. The dinners are bad though, on some days when it's pork or sausages there's nothing that we can eat.

There have been visitors in our school this week. Men and women wearing suits, sitting in our classrooms and writing. At lunchtime I was chosen to go with some others to talk to them about our school. The lady was wearing a black suit and a big badge. She smiled and said it was a chance for the children to say what they thought about their school. One boy said that it was OK in school but not in the playground. Someone else said that some of the mothers come at lunchtime to watch their children in the playground to make sure that they don't get bullied. Then someone said, 'It's bad for the Albanian children, people call them names and beat them up.' Everyone looked at me.

It was hard for me to speak in English in front of so many people but I wanted to tell her. I thought that maybe this lady would listen and could do something to make it better for us, so I told her. It went very quiet. Everyone listened. I told her how we are afraid at playtime because we are called names and there are fights every day. We tell the dinner ladies but they don't do anything about it. I told her that after school we are afraid to go down to the shops, even with our parents, because some children and their parents shout at us and there was even a fight in the street. I couldn't say any more.

Suddenly it made me feel so sad. I could feel tears coming and my glasses steamed up. I took them off and rubbed my eyes and put my head down so that no-one would see.

It was still very quiet. Then the lady in the suit said 'Thank you for talking to us,' and sent us back to our classes. I blew my nose and put my glasses back on. Dean, the boy who sits next to me, put his arm round my shoulders and said, 'All right Muhammad?' I said 'Yes, no problem.'

The story of Muhammad became a major prompt for reflection on my role as a schools inspector. It continues to trouble me and I constantly live and re-live the story, taking a reflexive turn in order to make myself as researcher the object of my own gaze. Foley (2002) describes this as a constant ‘mirroring of the self’ (p.473). When I read the story to teachers and trainees as a pedagogical strategy to provoke discussion about creating fictionalised narratives in order to explore challenging questions, I am often asked ‘What did the woman in the black jacket, with the big badge do?’ I often ask myself, ‘Did she do enough?’

Thinking with Story d

To return to Mr Sengupta’s question, ‘What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?’ (Rushdie, 1990, p.20). In terms of the *use* of stories this is a story which I find myself returning to again and again, using it in a pedagogical context when teaching about equality and diversity. Despite the fact that it was written several years ago it continues to resonate for me and for those who hear it. Re-visiting the experience recounted in this story prompts an immediate re-connection and raises questions: Have things changed since it was written? Could it happen now? In the context of the debate about the responsibility of the UK to take refugees fleeing from war in Syria and other countries engaged in conflicts, and the arguments from some politicians and communities that this presents a threat to community cohesion, this story has taken on a new resonance. There is, once again, an emerging picture of communities which shows polarised and segregated groups living parallel lives. Again there is evidence of ignorance, fear and demonization, and mistrust of different groups, particularly those new to local communities. There is still a perception that local authorities are giving others special treatment, and a lack of spaces for meaningful interaction. These were the key issues which had prompted my writing of that story. On re-reading it I ask myself, ‘Has nothing changed?’

As I continue to use the story of Muhammad as a teaching tool I see it as working in the way that Abbott (2002) describes as ‘an instrument that promotes active thinking and helps us work through problems, even as we tell about them or hear them being told’ (p.11). An example of how this works, which I found surprising and interesting, happened on an occasion when I read this story to a group of teachers during a training session. When I had finished reading it I invited them

to ask any questions that the story had prompted. At this point the most common question posed is 'Is it true?' Sometimes people ask, 'What did the lady in the suit do?' This time the questioner asked, 'Where is Muhammad now? What happened to him?' The posing of such a question in response to a fictionalised account is itself interesting, suggesting that the listener/reader has engaged with the story in a way that has made them curious about what's going to happen next. This is an indication that the story 'rings true' and that the audience have accepted the fictional truths which it embodies. As the narrator it seemed natural to me to respond to the question by extending the story, drawing on my professional knowledge and experiences, although, of course, there are many possible stories with many possible endings. Both Muhammad and I had become characters in this fictionalised narrative and I chose the happy ending, projecting my own desire for positive outcomes for Muhammad. I continued the story:

Muhammad did well at primary school', I said, 'despite the school's failure to recognise and meet his and his family's needs. He's a resilient boy. He made good friends. He and Darren both went to a secondary school just off the A13, in sight of the block of flats where they both live. He's getting ready to take his GCSE exams this summer. He's good at maths and science and he's caught up with his English. He wants to stay on at school and go to college when he's eighteen. Darren's friendship has helped him feel he belongs, and he's a good influence on Darren who, as a white, working class boy, is likely to underachieve and have low aspirations, (Evans, 2006). Their lives are less 'parallel' than they were.

The questioner seemed satisfied with my impromptu extension of the story. Stories are ambiguous, that is one of the attractions of fiction and the reason why stories pose questions. As I use them in my teaching I continue to learn more about my own stories from the responses of readers and listeners. I know that this story is one which will continue to live with me and to pose uncomfortable questions, it won't leave me alone.

Driving further along the A13, away from East London, the densely populated urban landscape begins to change. I pass derelict factories, huge hoardings, landfill sites, endless pylons striding away into the distance. On my right the wild, bleak

beauty of Rainham Marshes stretches out to the Thames Estuary. There are scattered settlements, cut off from each other by major roads. I pass the grey town of Grays, the brightly-coloured containers of Tilbury docks. There are new towns, sprawling estates, traveller sites and, finally, the prosperous suburbs of Southend-on-Sea, the dreamed-of destination for many East Londoners over the years.

As I leave the city behind, the population, and therefore the schools, become less diverse in terms of race, religion and culture. *Doubly Vulnerable*, (Story e) is set in a school where the majority of the students were from white, working-class families. The ‘differences’ explored in this story relate not to race, religion and culture but to special educational needs coupled with challenging social circumstances, in this case one pupil who is ‘looked after’ i.e. fostered, and also has identified special educational needs, and another pupil who has been home-schooled for many years. Such children are described by Ofsted (2016) and Bright (2017) as being ‘doubly vulnerable’. My role in the school was, at the invitation of the headteacher, to follow a child identified as ‘doubly vulnerable’ for a day, tracking his progress, and to write a report on his learning experiences. I wrote field notes during my visit which were the basis for the report, but which, on reflection seemed inadequate to express what I had observed and so I wrote the story. I gave the report to the headteacher, but, on further reflection, I wish I had shared the story with him as I believe it would have been far more powerful in highlighting the issues that the school needed to address.

Story e: *Doubly Vulnerable*

I walked home with Jake today, he’s not exactly my friend but he’s in the Year 9 Extended Learning group with me and we sometimes sit together, though I think he really likes to sit on his own. I’d rather walk than go on the school bus. I get pushed and sometimes people call me names like ‘Special Needs.’ I don’t like it though I’ve got used to it. I don’t tell anyone – my foster parents would be upset if they knew. If you make a fuss it can sometimes make things worse.

Today was a bit of a funny day. As soon as I got to registration Mrs Jones from Extended Learning sent me down to reception to meet a special visitor who was going to be in all my classes today. I wasn’t very keen on this but I went. It was a lady. She seemed quite nice and asked me about which lessons I had and what I thought about school. I told her that I don’t really like school

and that I don't learn much. I don't have any favourite lessons, they're all boring. In fact I said I thought she was in for a pretty boring day! I couldn't remember what lessons there were and had to keep checking my timetable, I generally just follow the others.

It was PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) first. It was about how we make important decisions in life but we didn't get very far because some girls started kicking off, winding the teacher up and he gave up and made us copy from the board without talking. This is hard for me because I write slowly and anyway I didn't have a pen. He gave me one but by then it was the end of the lesson and we went to science.

Science was about genetics. We had to look at pictures of kittens and say whether we thought they came from the same parents. I put my hand up a few times but didn't get picked to answer so I gave up in the end. We had to do a question about which of our characteristics we thought came from our parents but I don't really know my parents so I couldn't do this. I still hadn't got a pen. Sir didn't notice so that was OK. Jake always sits at the back and never does anything – he waits until the teacher goes through the answers and then writes them quickly in his book. The teacher never seems to notice. After science the rest of the group had maths and Jake and I went to Extended Learning. I don't mind it there. It's a special room. There are six of us in the group – all boys. We made circuits and did questions on the computers, my circuit worked and I answered most of the questions. Mrs Jones was pleased with me. Jake told jokes and made us all laugh.

I don't know what the visitor thought. I don't think she can have been very impressed. But I did warn her that it was going to be boring!

Thinking with Story e

Doubly Vulnerable, was an accidental story, written, as previously discussed, because the formal report on my observations that I presented to the headteacher seemed inadequate to express my feelings about what I had observed during my visit to the school. I felt that I had not done justice to the boy who was the object of my observations. Dyson and Ganeshi (1994) have written that '... stories represent ways of taking action to create the spacious landscapes where the "different" have audible

voices and visible faces' (p.242). The child I followed was virtually invisible to the teachers whose classes he attended that day. He had an air of quiet resilience and had developed strategies for survival in the uncertain world of the school that lay outside the safe world of the Extended Learning room. None of the teachers appeared to know him and even when he put up his hand to answer a question he was not chosen. His unknown-ness was most apparent in the science lesson when he was expected to answer a question that required him to draw on knowledge of his parents, about whom, as a looked-after child, he may have known little or nothing. I don't know his back-story, I am speculating, but I am reminded of this powerful statement from Dyson and Ganeshi: 'When someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked in a mirror and saw nothing' (p.242). His friend, Jake, was not the main focus for my observation but I could not help noticing him during the hours I spent in the classroom. As a child who had never attended school Jake had been deemed by the school to have special needs requiring extended learning in order to catch up with his peers. He was a bright, sparky boy with a mischievous, slightly sardonic sense of humour. I became aware that he had also developed some survival strategies for coping in a mainstream classroom which ensured that he never drew unwanted attention to himself. He always sat alone at the back of the classrooms, never engaging actively with the lessons, whilst appearing busy. Once back in the safe haven of the Extended Learning room, shedding their cloaks of invisibility, both boys relaxed, smiling and laughing with their peers and with Mrs Jones. It was in sharp contrast to the world to which I had travelled with them that morning. Here they had audible voices and visible faces.

Making sense through thinking with the stories

Clandinin (2013) emphasises the need for narrative inquirers to attend to thinking with stories 'in multiple ways, toward our stories, toward the other's stories, toward all the narratives in which we are embedded as well as what begins to emerge in our shared and told stories' (p.30). I have found that this approach can generate new insights for the writer/researcher and for the reader/researcher, as different readers perceive different meanings. In my experience of sharing stories discussion following a reading may give insights into implicit meanings which may be new to the writer and can widen or even challenge her/his view. The value of writing from

multiple perspectives – viewing the same situation from the perspective of tutor/student, pupil/parent – can promote empathy with the character, leading to deeper understanding. It is important to recognise here that different narrators, especially those from different cultures, would see and tell a different story. The act of writing is in itself a means of reflection. Van Manen (1990) has written about writing as a way of knowing, describing this process as a way of making the internal external, a means of ‘learning what we are capable of saying’ (p.127.).

The telling of ‘truths’ which could not otherwise be told was partly the motivation for writing *A Place of Greater Safety* (Story d). Not only did it enable me as the writer to step back from my own practice and reflect, it made it possible to share the experiences with a wider audience and open up for debate some challenging questions about schools’ responses to difference.

Bolton (2006, p.213) views fiction as a vehicle for conveying ‘the ambiguities, complexities and ironic relationships that inevitably exist between multiple viewpoints.’ Her argument that fiction can also enable ‘an intelligible research summary of the huge body of data that qualitative research tends to provide,’ resonates with my experience in using stories. I share her view that ‘the creation of fiction, with the awareness that it is a creation, can help the writer to head straight for the heart of the matter ... each character is an aspect of the author, and needs full expression via the creative process ... allowing contact with previously unperceived internal voices’ (op.cit. p.213).

Researchers who employ narrative methods frequently discuss what makes a ‘good’ story (Grumet, 1988; Barone, 2000; Walker, 2007). Barone views storytellers as artists and writes: ‘Like all good art, honest stories are powerfully observed and carefully detailed’ (2000, p.192). He argues that story has to be ‘artfully persuasive’, that readers can be persuaded by a good story to reconsider the usefulness of alternative meanings presented by the characters. Barone sees such stories as enabling readers to ‘achieve solidarity’ as fellow human beings with people who previously appeared as strangers. Thus, through encountering the stories in this chapter, our view of children in foster care may be changed; our reading about Muhammad’s experiences as a refugee may offer us a counter-story to the UKIP

poster depicting a column of Syrian refugees crossing the Croatia-Slovenia border in 2015, with the slogan 'Breaking Point'. As a teacher, I believe with Walker (2007) that 'good stories help us to think well and more wisely about our practice' (p.295). In common with Barone, Walker emphasises that stories change perceptions: 'Once any story is told, ways of seeing are surely altered?' (p.296).

Barone (1995/2000) complained that (in the mid-90s) there was 'a penchant of educational narrative researchers for covering exposed stories with blankets of didactic analysis' (p.251). This is tempting in the context of a doctoral thesis but is something from which Barone's own stories are remarkably free. He has reserved analysis for his essays, which afford significant insights into educational inquiry (Barone, 2000). I believe that an understanding and deep interest in the nature and purpose of story, and in the process of constructing reflective stories informs my own work and, in general, I have not sought to interpret my stories for others, believing, with Clandinin and Connelly, that 'the narrative inquirer does not prescribe general applications and uses but rather creates texts that, when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications' (2000, p.42). I want to allow the narratives to work on myself and my readers. In other words, to let the stories speak for themselves. Once a story has been written down, once it has been told, we have let it go and it no longer belongs to the writer but to the readers and listeners. As Berger (2000, p.170) says, 'Stories walk.'

Stories that engage with equality and diversity

Most of the stories in this chapter deal with issues of difference in some form or other, in particular they focus on race, ethnicity, culture and aspects of inclusion. Maxine Greene (1995) exploring the concept of pluralism in the context of the United States, writes of there always having been 'young persons in our classrooms that most teachers did not, could not, see or hear' (p155). She makes a passionate plea for raising awareness of 'the distinctive members of the plurality ... with their own perspectives ... their own stories entering the culture's story, altering it as it moves through time.' She adds: 'We want our classrooms to be just and caring, full of various conceptions of the good' (p.167). In England these aims were echoed in an initiative to promote 'community cohesion' (DCFS, 2007) defined as:

... working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's

backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community (op.cit: p.3).

For a while the issue of community cohesion was high on the government's agenda and became a significant part of the curriculum for teacher training. The experiences of the trainee teachers in the schools, and my own experiences, which informed the stories in this chapter, highlight the clash of values we encountered. This was particularly evident in the areas where resentment at the social deprivation experienced by some of the communities triggered hostility towards those moving, or being moved into the area, especially towards those whose 'difference' was immediately apparent in terms of language, skin colour, dress and religion. Difference became extremely threatening. Parties of the far right found ready recruits and, as we have seen, some parents had no hesitation in telling teachers 'I don't want my child learning about people like that.'

Two government reports highlighted the role of schools, and religious education in particular, in addressing the issues of religious identity and difference. The Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) report (2007), *Making sense of religion: Religious Education in context: its future in the twenty first century*, devotes several pages to the question 'Education for Diversity: is religious education responding effectively to the changing social reality of religion post 9/11?' Their response is to suggest that RE has a major part to play and should be significantly strengthened: 'Recent world events, the rise of more fundamentalist forms of religion, the growth of faith schools and the debates about the relationship between religion and identity have given a new emphasis and urgency to the subject' (op.cit. p.39). The writers of the DfES (2007) curriculum review *Diversity and Citizenship* took a similar view, emphasising in their Foreword, '... we passionately believe that it is the duty of all schools to address issues of 'how we live together' and 'dealing with difference,' however controversial and difficult they may sometimes seem' (p.3). The review highlighted the importance of religion in defining identity and also the importance of RE in promoting education for diversity.

The implications for schools and teacher education of the reports referred to above are significant and increasingly the issues of equality and diversity form part of the teacher education curriculum. However, there has been a gradual change of focus from community cohesion to a more specific focus on identifying the beliefs and values which might be described as ‘British’. Part Two of the Department for Education Teachers’ Standards (2013) states that those qualifying to teach must ‘maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour within and outside school, by: not undermining British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’ (p.14). In 2014 the Government published *Guidance on promoting British values in schools* (DfES, 2014) which aimed ‘to ensure children become valuable and fully rounded members of society who treat others with respect and tolerance regardless of background.’ The report stated:

We want every school to promote the basic British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs (p.4).

Although these statements seem to be clear and apparently uncontroversial the emphasis on ‘British values’ has proved very controversial and led to continuing debates about the nature of ‘Britishness’ (Eddo-Lodge, 2017; Hirsch, 2018). Hirsch writes, ‘ ... being asked where you’re from in your own country is a daily ritual of unsettling’ (p.33). She continues:

The Question is reserved for people who look different, and, thanks to it, someone who looks like me is told that they are different, and asked for an explanation, every single day, often multiple times ... It’s a symptom of the fact that we don’t really know what it is to be British (p.33).

The government reports cited above form the basis for my teaching about equality and diversity. Alongside them I share some of the stories in this chapter and also in Chapter 7 where the experiences of two trainee teachers relating to race, culture and identity are discussed in detail. In my experience it is in sessions in which I address religion, race, culture and other aspects of diversity that the most challenging and controversial questions arise, often prompted by the trainees’ experiences in schools. It is the stories, read and told that bring these sessions to life. Phillion, He and

Connelly (2005), through their exploration of teachers' stories from the perspectives of diversity and multiculturalism, provide a link, bridging the gap between experience and inquiry:

Read the stories with an experiential eye and an imaginative eye – imagine yourselves in the settings of the characters in the stories – experiencing their lives – participate in the inquiry – see unexplored possibilities – help in the search for meaning ... (op.cit. p.3).

Thinking with the stories: searching for meaning

Bearing in mind the view of Clandinin and Connelly (1999) that the professional knowledge landscape is a place of story, I explore what these stories from schools included in this chapter might tell us about teachers, teacher education, schools and children. How far do they represent and illuminate our understanding of the 'real', lived, everyday experience of teachers, teacher educators, children, young people and parents? How might they be used to extend our professional knowledge of these matters? Some reflective engagement with the stories is required. Bruner (1996) suggests a structured approach to using stories as a means of personal and professional exploration: 'Obviously, if narrative is to be made an instrument of mind on behalf of meaning-making, it requires work on our part – reading it, making it, analyzing it, understanding its craft, sensing its uses, discussing it' (p.41). Clandinin (2013) does not use the term 'analysis' in relation to working and thinking with stories, but describes a process of 'looking across' stories or participant accounts, in order to 'discern resonant threads' (p.143) always bearing in mind the three-dimensional inquiry space and the three commonplaces. In my reflections on the stories I have highlighted resonant threads and expressed them in questions which have strong implications for my own practice and that of the trainee teachers.

Thinking across the stories

The resonant thread that runs across these stories is the dilemma of addressing 'difference' and the extent to which schools can and should take responsibility for promoting attitudes which value and respect difference, especially where this contradicts and challenges the values held by parents and members of local communities. The storied data provides a way in, both as a self-study device and, in a teaching context, as a means of allowing others to bridge the gap between experience

and inquiry, to think with the stories, inviting them to respond to, to challenge and to question the underlying assumptions, to ask ‘What happened next?’ Or, ‘What happens now?’ Or, ‘What does this mean for me, personally and professionally?’ And even, to ask, ‘Why? How could this happen? What systemic changes would be needed to address the issues raised here and how could such changes be brought about? What are the political implications?’

In particular I am posing questions about the usefulness of the stories told here, in this chapter, and those that follow. As teachers, trainee teachers and teacher educators what can we learn from the storying of everyday professional experiences? Are these ‘good’ stories which will help us to ‘think wisely’ and critically about our practice? What professional knowledge do they generate? What actions might follow? How might they be transformative? How might they empower us and others to bring about change? Reflection on experience has generated stories, further reflection, thinking *with* the stories has prompted further questions, provoking inquiry and further stories.

Clandinin (2013) frequently stresses the never-ending nature of narrative inquiry:

... for narrative inquirers, exit is never a final exit. We continue to carry long-term relational responsibilities for participants, for ourselves, and for the work we have done together ... narrative inquiry always begins and ends in the midst of ongoing experiences (p.44).

There is a sense in which writing itself is a kind of travelling, the narrator is never in the same place at the end of the story as she was at the beginning. To return to Iain Sinclair’s (2004, p.361) assertion that ‘roads have to go somewhere’ – I do not think that I have found where that somewhere is yet. I have found Solnit’s observation that ‘Roads unfold in time as one travels along them, just as stories do ...’, to be true (op. cit. p.22). Every time I drive along the parallel lines of the A13 the stories continue to unfold. There are more stories to be told and more questions to be explored.

Post Script: Story f (and g)

I had intended to end this chapter here but a conversation with my Response Group members, Clarke and Hutchinson (research conversation, February, 2017) provoked

into my consciousness a story which had been untold for a long time, consciously or subconsciously overlooked, left hanging in a liminal space waiting to be let in. It was another story set along the A13 road, prompted by my experiences as a school inspector. Suddenly it became the story that wanted, needed to be told (Schlink, 1997). It was there, waiting for me, and I wrote it down in a matter of minutes.

Story f: *Strong Language 1*

A school inspector's perspective

The school hall fills up quickly. I'm surprised – these evenings for parents held before the start of every school inspection don't always pull in a crowd, especially in an area like this on a cold winter evening. I stand up at the front of the hall, my admin assistant, Pat, sits at the table beside me, pen poised to note the points raised. As the meeting progresses it becomes clear that there are many concerns about the school – everything from the quality of some of the teaching to fears about the safety and well-being of the children. The space at the back of the hall has filled up, standing room only, questions and complaints coming fast. Pat writes furiously. The message coming across is: 'We're not happy with our school – what are you as a School Inspector going to do about it?'

Suddenly there's a commotion at the back of the hall – a young woman, pushing a pram in which there are two small children, with two older children beside her, forces her way through the crowd. She is looking directly at me. She raises her hand, pointing towards me. Emphasising each word with a jab of her finger she shouts, "This school is fucking crap!" Pat looks up at me, a shocked expression on her face. "What shall I write?" she asks. "Write what she said," I say, "This school is fucking crap!"

I draw the meeting to a close, thank the parents for coming, tell them that when I and my colleagues have inspected the school there will be a report. I promise them that the concerns they have raised will be investigated. Pat puts her notebook away and we leave the school. The woman's words ring in my ears. I reflect on the effort involved for her in coming to the meeting. She had no-one to leave her four children with but their education mattered enough for her to come out and make sure she got her message across. I have to keep the promise I made.

Later when I looked at Pat's notes she had written 'Strong language was used.'

Reflection – thinking with the story, thinking with others

I shared this story with fellow narrative researcher Cindy Clarke (research conversation, 2017). After listening carefully to my reading she asked: 'What about you? What about your feelings? I want to know how you felt when the woman spoke – were you shocked?' I was surprised by her questions and responded 'Yes, you're right, I've left my own feelings out of the story. Shocked? Yes. I was struggling to keep a professional façade. That was the expected role of the inspector who at this stage, before the inspection has begun, can only be neutral, listen and record and then investigate the questions and issues raised. But inside I didn't feel neutral, I was disturbed, provoked. It raised social and political questions for me and I wanted to act there and then, try to put it right for her and her children.'

Cindy observed: 'I think this is a description of a liminal space – you're about to cross the threshold into a role of responsibility but at that moment you needed to hear the questions but you can't answer them. You have to hold yourself there in that tension, knowing that you have to answer the questions but you can't answer them yet, but at the same time it's your professional responsibility.' (Research conversation, Feb. 2017)

Her response prompted me to consider why I had been hiding this story for so long. Was it because it provoked uncomfortable feelings? I answered, 'It's stayed with me for a long time, re-telling the story has made me re-live it. It has forced me to question my role as a professional and its limitations in making a difference, in interrogating the social and political contexts and following up with actions. It isn't enough to write a story and reflect on it – it has to lead to action, to making a difference in some way, to challenging the status quo. I shall always feel I didn't do that. The question of how to move from critical reflection to practice that challenges prejudice and promotes social justice is difficult – how to move from critical consciousness to action?'

This reflective research conversation prompted a return to the literature of critical pedagogy, firstly to Freire's (1970) assertion that reflective inquiry is a way of knowing in action (Lyons, 2010) where a critical examination of the social and political contexts in which we are working could (and should?) lead to actions to effect change. However, Brookfield (1995) warns that 'When we use the frameworks of critical theory and critical pedagogy as our guides to developing critical reflection, we also run the risk of creating unrealistic expectations of what should happen' (p.210). He recognises that the contexts vary and may defeat the application of rigid models: 'The local fluctuations, complexities, and rhythms of critical reflection are bound to contradict any neat theoretical models of how the process should unfold' (p.211). I'm reassured that it's messy and untidy, and unpredictable, as I have found. He quotes Giroux (1992), 'The thing about teaching is that the specificity of the context is always central. We can't get away with invoking rules and procedures that cut across contexts' (p.17). He recognises that we can become demoralised and so 'it's important that critical pedagogy emphasizes and illuminates the opportunities that teachers have to resist oppressive values and practices. It must provide convincing, grounded case studies that show it is possible despite the constraints' (p.211).

None of this is an excuse not to act. Doyle (2004) emphasises that, 'A critical pedagogy must find ways of empowering teachers not simply blaming them. In short, the language of possibility must precede the language of critique' (p.9). Brookfield suggests that 'Stories of reflective practice can become emotional touchstones for our own attempts to live the reflective life' (p.220). I am reminded of Clandinin's (2013) stories, and those of Barone (1989), stories that linger, stories that have the power to trouble and disturb. Clandinin (2013) points out that as narrative inquirers we are 'part of the present landscapes, and we acknowledge that we helped to make the world in which we find ourselves' (p.82). My response to the story *Strong Language I* (Story f) and *A Place of Greater Safety* (Story d) show my willingness to revisit and re-examine my stories to live by and face my vulnerabilities, making me examine the principles behind my practice. Clandinin writes about how stories can 'bump up against' each other (op.cit. p.76). I found that my own story bumped up against the possible stories of others (the young parent in stories f, g) in a way that made me feel uncomfortable, challenged me, created a tension. Clandinin refers to 'the educative promise these moments hold when we risk making ourselves

vulnerable by inquiring into them' (ibid.). I recognised in my own response to the story in my discussion with Cindy, Pillow's (2003) 'reflexivity of discomfort' which she describes as characterised by 'disruptions, messiness, the unfamiliar and the uncomfortable' (p.192-3). I continued to be troubled and was prompted to re-reflect on the hidden story, *Strong Language 1*, asking myself why, despite having now written it down after so long and sharing it, it still made me uncomfortable. I considered the dangers of the single narrative written from one perspective and recalled Adichie's (2009) reminder that there is always more than one story. Bruner (2002) emphasises that story is 'an instrument not so much for solving problems as for finding them' (p.15). My reflections led me to write an additional story: *Strong Language 2 (Too)* (Story g). In doing this I engaged with world-travelling, dropping the arrogance of the 'one story' and asked, with what I hope was 'loving perception' (Lugones, 1994), 'What is it like to be you?' In my metaphorical journey along the A13 this seemed to signify that I was 'going somewhere' (Sinclair, 2004) in terms of my thinking and of my critical pedagogical practice.

Story g: *Strong Language 2 (Too)*

A parent's perspective

I could really do without this tonight. I only found the letter when I went through Jo's school bag tonight to look for her reading book. Don't they know how hard it is for some of us to get to a meeting in the evening? It's almost like they hope no-one's going to turn up. It's from the inspectors, this letter, they're coming into school soon and they want to know what the parents and carers think of it – well, I could tell them! Ask me anything about schools! I've been to enough! We never stayed anywhere long enough for me to get settled, always moving on, so I never learnt nothing. By the time I was in secondary I was bunking off, hanging round the shopping centre with me mates. I fell pregnant when I was fourteen – that was Jo – she's seven now and Dale's five, then there's the twins. In a couple of years I'll have four kids at that crappy school. The thing is, I don't want them to end up like me, no education, no qualifications, I want them to do well at school, learn stuff, get a better start in life. I need to go to that meeting, tell those inspectors...

It's a drag getting four kids ready to go out at this time of night. At least the

lift was working for a change. Stinks of piss and rubbish though! I was surprised to see so many people in the school hall. I had to stand at the back because of the pram and the kids. The woman at the front, the inspector – black suit, posh voice – was asking the questions and the woman next to her was taking notes of what people said. There were lots of complaints about the school, people were getting angry, saying that the kids aren't safe in the playground, there's fights all the time and nothing ever gets sorted. I had to say something, I didn't stop to think, just shouted it out, "This school is fuckin' crap!" I was a bit shocked at how it came out, my voice so loud in the hall. People turned round and stared but lots of them nodded, agreed with what I'd said. The inspector looked a bit shocked too – she said something to the woman taking notes and then she looked across at me and said that when the inspectors come into the school they'll check out everything that the parents have said and there will be a report. I really wanted to know what difference it was going to make for my kids but I didn't say nothing else. You're up against the system aren't you?

Coda

At the beginning of this chapter I quoted Solnit's (2001, p.72) description of roads unfolding in time as one travels along them in the way that a story unfolds for the reader or listener. Her metaphor captures something of the nature of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space that I have experienced as I have inquired into my stories. They are stories written over time past, time present, and looking to the future. They are relational in the way they draw on my experiences in relation to those of the trainee teachers and the children in the schools I have visited. They are situated in the physical place that is the changing landscape of the A13 with all its diversity and history. I have experienced the way the stories can change over time and how thinking with others can develop new insights into the stories we live by – stories lived, told, re-lived and re-told.

Chapter 6

World travelling

‘It is through “world-travelling” to others’ worlds that I might learn to gaze
with “loving perception” where I can understand what it is to be (other)
and what it is like to be (myself) in their eyes’
(Lugones, 1987 p.17).

The trainee teachers participating in this study are required to keep a reflective log or journal through which they demonstrate their capacity for critical reflection on their practice at a high level, analysing, synthesising and evaluating in order to make sense of their experiences. The purpose is to avoid mechanistic, problem-solving, skills-based reflective writing and encourage a more holistic approach (Schön, 1983; Bolton, 2010) which helps the trainees to develop criticality and reflexivity. They are expected to show evidence of meta-reflection, always questioning judgements, interpretations and expectations and developing insights into their practice.

Lawrence-Wilkes and Ashmore (2014) suggest that reflective writing may operate to ‘support the long-term internalisation of insight’ (p.41). As the tutor for this aspect of the course I have developed a particular interest in how reflective writing, especially in the form of narratives, contributes to professional understandings and supports the practice of teachers. The trainees are encouraged, though not compelled, to experiment with writing from different perspectives and to reflect on how writing in these ways influences them, metaphorically passing through the mirror to make a reflective/reflexive turn.

The trainees are aware that I and other tutors keep reflective journals, experimenting with different approaches, including narrative, as a means of exploring our practice. In lectures I share examples of my reflective narratives with them as a basis for discussion and possible models, drawing on Winter’s ‘fictional critical writing’ (1988); Schön’s theories of reflective practice (1983, 1987) and Bolton’s (2010) exploration of reflection in the contexts of education, health and social care. The metaphor of ‘world-travelling’ (Lugones, 1987) as a way of identifying with difference provides a powerful means of helping the trainees to understand how they can develop empathy and self-understanding by looking at the world through the

eyes of another person: ‘... by travelling to their “world” we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes’ (p.637).

The reflective journal entries in this study have been written by the trainee teachers with the expectation that the audience will be myself as tutor, but entries may be shared selectively with mentors, and made available to external examiners and inspectors. They are read, discussed and developed, providing full interaction of storyteller or writer with listeners and readers. They are included here with full written permission.

At the beginning of each academic year I teach an introductory session on the nature and purpose of reflective writing and, specifically, on approaches to keeping a reflective journal. During the session I spend time on what Bolton (2001, 2010) describes as ‘a reflective splurge’ or ‘six-minute write’ (p.25). Everyone writes in silence for six minutes without interruption. They are not asked to share what they have written but they are given the opportunity to share their responses to the experience. As a preparation for this activity I explore with them the work of writers who have written about writing. Writing is a way of knowing and sometimes we have to start writing in order to unblock our minds, to free ourselves up and, as author and diarist Alan Bennet says, find out what we know (1998). Through reflective writing we find out what we need to say and how to say it in a way that works. Adams St Pierre in Denzin and Lincoln (2005) emphasises the power of writing as a way of knowing: ‘Writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery’ (p.967). She urges her readers to follow her practice of using writing as a means of thinking: ‘I trust you will ... use writing as a method of inquiry to move into your own impossibility, where anything might happen – and will!’ (p.973). Van Manen (1995) considers that writing deepens self-understanding: ‘To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as to come to a sense of one’s own depth’ (p.127). The trainees respond to the six-minute write in different ways. For some it is a daunting experiences, for others an interesting experiment. I believe it is important for me as tutor to experience how it feels to write under these circumstances. I also think it is important show what I’m teaching about in my own practice, so, in each session, I join in with the reflective splurge and write for six minutes.

Extract from my reflective journal

Another reflective splurge. Clock ticking. Grass cutting machine buzzing outside. Another group, another year – why am I doing this? Again? Because I enjoy it? Because it still interests me? Yes. Because I believe it makes a difference? Well, yes. I do think that writing reflectively/reflexively makes a difference – to the writer, personally, professionally and also to the reader in some cases, but I suppose the most significant difference would be in the practice of the writer – something only they would be able to define, so, who knows? Three minutes to go. Not a sound in the room, the only movement is pens moving over paper – I feel excited! I like the sense of surprise that people often express that they did actually write for 6 minutes without stopping and that they had discovered things they didn't know they knew, or thought. Writing as a way of thinking, making yourself put pen to paper and letting it go, letting it flow, seeing what comes ... Time's up!

When I first introduced the possibility of creating fictionalised narratives as an approach to reflective writing the trainees were, understandably, cautious, some expressing concerns about 'getting it wrong', others asking 'What's the point?'. At that stage I had few examples written by other trainees to share so I used models from my own reflective journal and examples of literary writing (Auster, 2004; Haddon, 2003) and from Winter's (1988) work on fictional critical writing, to show how the process might work. Only the most adventurous were prepared to take what they perceived as a risk by writing differently.

Travelling with Debbie

At this early stage in introducing this approach Debbie was one of several trainees who chose to experiment with fictionalising as a means of exploring a situation in order to understand it better. Her approach illustrates Clough's (2002) view of using stories as 'a means by which those truths which cannot be otherwise told are uncovered' (p.8), and Convery's (1993) assertion that fiction can provide 'a protective disguise for a teacher wishing to discuss problematic professional issues' (p.140). Her story *Understanding Billy* was written in the context of a reflection on the issues of managing the behaviour of challenging pupils. She found the behaviour

of one boy particularly difficult to manage and her story is a means by which she was able to come to a fuller understanding of the issues which he had to cope with in his life outside school.

Story h: Extracts from *Understanding Billy*

Me and Charlie are the first children at school most days. Mrs G says our mum ought to bring us but she doesn't. She's normally in bed still when we have to leave. There's not much else to do at home once Charlie's packed my bag. When we get to school we just sort of hang about a bit ... When the others start to come in they all go to the window and their mums wave to them. I just watch, but it makes me get angrier and angrier. When someone comes past me I poke them with my pencil. Hard. I just want them to know how angry I am. My mum has never waved at the window. She's not coming to parents' evening either. I told my teacher so. She thought my mum would come but she won't. She never comes to that sort of thing; she doesn't like school. Kelsey said her mum said that my mum started a fight last week at a meeting at school. I believe her. I don't think my mum is the sort of mum who is ever happy. Maybe she is happy when we aren't at home. I don't always think she likes us children. There are four of us. I have to share a room with my brother who's eleven and goes to the big school. Sometimes he comes and gets us from school. He doesn't always go to school; sometimes he has to stay at home to look after my little sister ...

No-one in my class likes me. I haven't had any Christmas cards. Everyone in the class says I am a bully. We wrote stories about bullies and lots of people wrote about me. I am a bully. I hurt other people when they don't deserve it but I can't stop it. I get so angry when no-one wants to play with me and it makes me angrier and angrier. I didn't enjoy playtime today. Charlie had forgotten to put a drink in my bag for playtime. I cried, and my teacher told me to get a drink from the fountain and that I should ask mummy to pack my bag so that it doesn't get forgotten but I'm not going to ask her. Jade shared her drink with me ...

At school I did something and I don't know why I did it. Miss was being really nice to me and I got star of the week for not fighting and trying hard. I started rubbing my eyes till it hurt and showed the teacher. She was nice to me but she said I had to stop rubbing it and it would stop hurting. I knew she was right but I

didn't stop, and it kept getting redder and redder. Miss said if it really hurt when mum came in to get Chloe at lunch I could show her and go home if she agreed but mum didn't come, my brother did, and he sent a message to mum, but she didn't come and get me. I didn't really want to go home anyway but I didn't stop rubbing it. I didn't care that it really hurt. At the end of the day it was all bruised and nasty – I am a bit worried now in case Mum is angry and I'll get punished – I'll say I've been bitten or something.

Debbie chose to write a story that enabled her to explore the issues which might be at the root of the challenging behaviour which she was trying so hard to manage. She is exemplifying Bruner's (2002) view that 'using our narrative gift enables us to make sense of things when they don't (p.28).' Like Pendlebury (1995) I view this willingness to fictionalise her experience in order to understand it better as an example of critical reflection: 'In reflecting critically on his or her practice the perceptive teacher has a story to tell – a story which relates to obstacles overcome or still looming large; conflicts resolved or deepened; turning points for better or worse; climaxes and culminations' (p.64). Pendlebury refers to this as 'narrative re-description' (ibid).

As the trainees began to experiment with writing in different forms and voices it became clear that the most powerful stories in terms of being memorable and posing questions that might lead to changes in practice were those where 'narrative imagination' (Nussbaum, 1995) had been exercised. Nussbaum described narrative imagination as 'the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have' (1995, p.11). This is exactly how Debbie had developed her story about Billy, something I explored further in a conversation towards the end of her first year of teaching. I asked whether she continued to build on her use of narrative in her reflections. She replied: 'I go home sometimes and think about some of my pupils, write their story in my head. And I think 'Wow, what must it be like to be you?'' Kearney (2002) has explored what he terms the 'cathartic power of stories', the idea that we may be altered by the power of 'vicarious imagination' which enables us to feel what others feel. He argues that 'catharsis affords a singular mix of pity and fear

whereby we experience the suffering of other beings as if we were them. And it is precisely this double take of difference and identity – experiencing oneself as another and the other as oneself – that provokes a reversal of our natural attitude to things and opens us to novel ways of seeing and being’ (p.140). Debbie’s response suggests that writing her story about Billy has had a cathartic effect on her, and continues to inform her responses to the children she teaches – to fire her ‘vicarious imagination’. In Chapter 6 we will see this further exemplified in Dan’s story, *Symmetry*, and his reflective/reflexive responses to it.

I caught up with Debbie towards the end of her year as a newly qualified teacher, one year after she wrote *Understanding Billy*. I was curious to know how far she had been able to sustain her reflective practice. She explained that she had maintained her habit of reflecting on her practice, although not in writing: ‘Keeping the reflective log has definitely made me a more reflective teacher. I still ask What’s going on here? Why is my teaching like that? But time is an issue, it would be good to have some non-contact time set aside for reflection in school.’ Her comments suggest that there is no ‘reflective space’ in her school, echoing Clandinin and Connelly (1995): ‘What is missing from schools is a place for teachers to tell their stories of teaching ... the possibilities for reflective awakening and transformation are limited when one is alone’ (p.13). Indeed, it is hard to hold a reflective space for one’s self and one’s colleagues to critically reflect (Burchell and Dyson, 2009). And yet the opportunity to think and write exploratively and expressively, to ask critical questions about personal and professional experiences is an essential part of professional development. But schools are busy places and it is hard to find time and space to pause during a stressful day to engage in the particular kind of thinking that is ‘reflective’.

One trainee teacher commented on how useful it was to be able to ‘make use of other teachers’ ideas... because although I’m seeing and talking to these people every day there’s often very little time to sit down and discuss simple, yet very useful things, because of how little time everyone has each day between teaching and other daily administrative tasks.’ I agreed with her about the difficulty in finding time, but she was thinking of the essentially practical aspects of teaching, she wanted quick answers and ideas, rather than engaging in deeper reflection. Bolton notes: ‘Although

practice is continually aired – over coffee with a colleague – we do not tell each other things at our cutting edge of difficulty. We often do not tell those things to ourselves’ (Bolton, 2010, p.31).

Nevertheless the story of Billy has taken on an extended life in the form of a pedagogical narrative which, with Debbie’s permission, I continue to use in my taught sessions on reflective journal writing. It has the qualities of a ‘good’ story in that it prompts an emotional response, raises questions and is memorable. Those who read or hear the story, care about Billy and what happens to him. Hearing *Understanding Billy* has prompted other trainee teachers to explore the uses of story as a reflective device to open up the worlds of others, most often, the worlds of the children they teach, in order to imagine and understand what it is like to be them. I encourage them to engage in world-travelling, as a means of identifying with others by travelling to their worlds (Lugones, 1987). Lugones explains that ‘it requires that I am able to understand the distinct experience of being different in different “worlds” and the capacity to remember other “worlds” and (myself) in them’ (op.cit. p.11). ‘It is through “world-travelling” to others’ worlds that I might learn to gaze with “loving perception” where I can understand what it is to be (other) and what it is like to be (myself) in their eyes’ (op.cit. p.17). So, all of us; teacher, child, student, immigrant, refugee, special needs, highly able, belong to multiple worlds and there is a danger of categorising, stereotyping, limiting the possibilities instead of opening up to them. In our reflective writing we must recognise that there is always more than one story. Adichie warns against the danger of being caught up in the single story:

The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story (2007)

Debbie shows her awareness of this when she asks, ‘What is it like to be you?’ Lugones (op.cit.) draws out the idea of ‘playfulness’ making us question how we can draw on our narrative imagination to allow us to see through the child’s eyes, to ask whether we can imagine what her life might be like? She pushes us to let go of our present understandings and move towards not knowing, to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty. World-travelling requires us to let go of what we think we know and to listen and observe carefully with an open mind. Stories do not tell you what to

think and feel but give you space to think and feel. Through our stories we can create pedagogical space, question our practice, our assumptions, highlight tensions, provoke reflection, prompt teachers to imagine their current and future pedagogies differently.

As Dewey (1933) emphasised, if experience is to have educational value one must draw out its meaning through reflection. Experience of teaching reflection through reflective writing has convinced me that it can only be really understood by doing it rather than reading about it. It is experiential and experimental. In the next section I explore further how the trainee teachers are introduced to writing reflectively using narratives and poetic expression.

With trainee teachers in the lecture room: travelling through the mirror

There's an image on the screen behind me in the lecture room, a photograph of the sun rising on a misty morning over a river in France, the hazy, emerging golden orb is reflected in the silvery, shimmering surface of the water, the ghostly outline of a small boat can just be discerned through the mist.

It's the first week of the academic year and in this session we're exploring the nature and purposes of reflection, in particular keeping a reflective journal. The trainees are uneasy; they feel over-loaded with information already and now here's something else they've got to do. The Monet-esque image in front of them isn't having the calming effect I'd hoped for.

I hear myself introducing the theoretical framework, 'The work of John Dewey is very significant when we think about reflection on experience' I say, changing to the slide which covers 'Big Names' in reflective practice:

John Dewey, (1859-1952)

For experience to have educational value one must extract its meaning through reflection. Inquiry begins with the specific and doubtful; with the confusing, obscure or conflictual situation (1933, p.21)

'1859?' someone asks incredulously. I can feel that this is going to be an uphill struggle. I persevere, explaining the continuing significance for teachers of Dewey's

work, particularly in terms of reflective thinking. I emphasise his (1933) view that reflection is prompted by a situation of doubt, a dilemma, a puzzle which starts off an inquiry and leads ultimately to transformation, and that his work continues to provide the foundational ideas that inform reflective practice, reflective thought and reflective inquiry. I quote from Dewey's *How We Think* (1933): 'While we cannot learn or be taught to think, we do have to learn to think well, especially how to acquire the general habits of reflecting' (p.35).

Following and building on Dewey, we consider the work of Schön (1983; 1987) on the intuitive thinking of professionals in action, his studies of how professionals in a variety of contexts think on their feet and how that contributes to how they act as professionals. We discuss his definitions of 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action'. Schön's view echoes that of Dewey (op.cit.) that reflection-in-action is not prompted by actions that go according to plan but only happens in situations where the action results in unexpected circumstances – 'Something that happens to teachers every day,' I add.

Lastly we turn to the work of Bolton (2010) on reflective writing and professional development, a key text for the course. Her metaphor that reflection can be seen as the hawk in one's mind, hovering silently, ready to swoop, is memorable. Bolton writes that, 'Reflection is an in-depth consideration of events or situations: the people involved, what they experienced and how they felt about it. This involves reviewing or re-living the experience to bring it into focus, and replaying it from diverse points of view (2010, p.xxix). I underline her emphasis on 'diverse points of view' in reflective writing and say that we will return to it later.

Before coffee break I share an extract from Lara's reflective journal, her first entry, written a year ago when she started the course:

I don't think that writing this journal will be easy, in fact, as I sit here writing it does not come naturally; as Schön (1987) states, 'In the early stages of the practicum, confusion and mystery reign' (p.20). Yet my reflective journal will form an integral role into my progression as a reflective practitioner ... a form of expressing my thoughts and concerns, my hopes and wonders ...

Lara goes on to quote from Rowling's Harry Potter, saying, 'I think it describes perfectly why reflection is so important, especially in relation to teaching:

Harry stared at the stone basin. The contents had turned to their original, silvery white state, swirling and rippling beneath his gaze.

"What is it"? Harry asked shakily

"This? It's called a Pensieve," said Dumbledore. "I sometimes find, and I'm sure you know the feeling, that I simply have too many thoughts and memories crammed into my mind."

"Err," said Harry who couldn't truthfully say that he had ever felt anything of the sort.

"At these times" said Dumbledore, indicating the stone basin, "I use the Pensieve. One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one's mind, pours them into a basin, and examines them at one's leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form."
(Rowling, 2000, p.518/9)

Lara adds, 'After my first week on the course I can empathise completely with Dumbledore.' Hearing this example from a fellow trainee lightens the mood of the group and I promise more examples of journal writing when they return from their coffee break.

We reconvene after coffee and I click to a new slide, an image of a woman gazing into a concave mirror, the reflection comes back blurred and distorted, multiple images of her face looking in different directions. We discuss mirrors as a metaphor. The mirror is an obvious metaphor for reflection but what we see when we look in a mirror is simply ourselves reflected back. Passing *through* the mirror (Bolton, 2010) enables us to 'locate ourselves in the picture' (Fook, 2002, p.43 in Bolton, op.cit. p.14). I suggest that passing through the mirror can give us a different perspective, new ways of seeing. That it can make the ordinary seem extra-ordinary, prompting questions, highlighting ambiguities and unsettling our view of the world, showing us what we do not know. I remind them of Alice passing through the looking glass to find that the looking glass world was 'as different as possible' (Carroll, 1871/2014, p.7). I use the metaphor of passing through the mirror to introduce the concept of reflexivity – finding ways of standing outside the self to critique and challenge our

own beliefs and values; understanding how they influence our professional practice, becoming aware of the limits of our knowledge.

Now the image on the screen is Tenniel's illustration from *Through the Looking Glass* (Carroll, 1871) showing Alice passing through the mirror. I read from Margaret Atwood's *Negotiating with the Dead*:

The act of writing takes place at the moment when Alice passes through the mirror. At this one instant, the glass barrier between the doubles dissolves, and Alice is neither here nor there, neither art nor life, neither the one thing nor the other, though at the same time she is all of these at once. At that moment time itself stops, and also stretches out, and both writer and reader have all the time not in the world (2002, p.57).

In discussion we consider what that liminal space of neither here nor there might be like, how passing through the mirror can give us a different perspective, challenging our ontology, making us question our view of epistemology. The ability to pass through the mirror allows us to achieve the reflexivity which is essential for critical reflection, enabling us to look at ourselves and our practice from different perspectives, challenging assumptions, examining critically how our own values inform our teaching, asking who is advantaged or disadvantaged, who is included, who excluded? Who is marginalised? It allows us to engage in a dialogue with the self, questioning our values, being curious about why, as teachers, we do what we do.

I suggest some approaches to writing from the other side of the mirror, describing how passing through the mirror to find new perspectives is to take the narrative turn. Through reflective writing we can explore critical events by writing in different voices, from diverse points of view, trying out the third rather than the first person, writing as 'he' rather than 'she', looking at a situation from the perspective of a child or parent rather than teacher or lecturer; fictionalising, creating 'stories', using literary devices. I explain that I write in these ways myself, sharing and discussing the stories with students and colleagues in order both to model approaches they may subsequently choose to use themselves but also to make myself vulnerable by allowing others to respond, providing different perspectives, questioning my certainties, prompting me to be reflexive. I introduce the trainees to the work of

Lugones (1987) and her metaphor of world-travelling, a metaphor I will refer to frequently as I engage in dialogue with them about their reflective writing during the year. The idea that by metaphorically travelling to the world of another person, with a ‘loving’ rather than an ‘arrogant’ attitude we are able to perceive the world empathetically from their perspective is evocative but straightforward to understand.

‘Show us how it works’

I sense that they are interested but unsure. It is always the case that when I discuss with the trainees how deep reflection and reflexivity can be achieved and introduce the possibility of writing narratively and poetically some are not comfortable with these modes of expression, preferring what they see as a more structured approach to keeping the journal; for others it opens up opportunities to exercise their creative imagination. ‘Give us some examples’ they say, ‘Show us how it works.’ So, I turn to stories. I now have a wide range of stories, poems and other examples of reflective writing using different forms of expression some written by trainees and teachers, others written by me, which I use as examples in my teaching. In all cases they were written as a means of reflection but in this context they have become pedagogical tools. The reflective stories and poems in the next part of this chapter have become part of my pedagogy in teaching and exemplifying how such writings may enable us to travel to the worlds of others, deepening our understandings of ourselves and our practice.

Experimenting with writing narratively and poetically

The stories and poems that follow have been written by trainee teachers in their reflective journals. With their permission I use them as pedagogical tools, to model and provoke discussion about the nature and purpose of creating stories as a way of reflecting on practice and synthesising in order to make sense of experience.

Travelling with Dan

Story i: *Symmetry*

I run into the playground, not even looking back at my Mum as she waves to me. I’m a bit late and children are already in the classroom so I bundle through the door with a big smile on my face. I’m still not quite sure of the morning routine, so I stand in the middle of the classroom with my coat,

backpack, swimming bag and book bag and watch the other boys.

The teacher shouts something to me but I only catch a few words – ‘what ... coat ... carpet.’ I know he is talking to me because I hear my name. I hear my name a lot in this class! I look around, see the children hanging their coats and run excitedly to the cloakroom. Whoops! I accidentally bump into Jack. I’m not sure how to react and before I get a chance to decide he runs over to the teacher to tell on me. Never mind! Maybe if I hang my coat up Mr P will see it was an accident.

‘Good morning!’ says Mrs Smith with a big smile on her face. I stop in my tracks and spin on the spot. I like Mrs Smith. ‘Good morning’ I reply quietly and give her a big smile back. I whirl around and tour the classroom, putting my books and bags where the other kids do. Mr P is counting ‘Five, four, three, ...’ all my classmates begin to sit on the carpet ... ‘Two’ ... I walk around a few more times to check everything is in its place. ‘One’. Mr P shouts my name again then, ‘Carpet!’ I run to the carpet and sit at the back of everybody.

Mr P starts talking to us and I recognise a few words like ‘maths’ and ‘square’. Here’s another one, ‘symmetry’ – we learnt that yesterday! ‘Symmetry’ I shout out. I always seem to remember the interesting words. Mr P must be impressed that I remember it. Except he frowns at me and puts his finger to his lips. I look over at Mrs Smith expectantly and she gives me a big thumbs up.

Aargh, what’s happening now? Mr P must have told us to work in pairs, but I realised too late, everybody else has already got a partner. I look around but my classmates avoid looking at me, they are happy with their friends. I’m not sure if I have any friends, other children always look shocked when I speak to them. So sometimes I don’t speak to them. I start to stand up but Mrs Smith³ calls me over and helps me work with Johnny.

I find maths difficult but it’s not the worst subject. At least the numbers look the same as in Lithuania. Or is it Russian? Sometimes I get so confused. We’re supposed to write the title at the top of the page but I don’t want to. It’s embarrassing when the other children look at me and my hand always hurts. Besides, I even found it difficult to write in my first language in Lithuania.

Oh, but this fun! Mr P has set me a challenge with pictures of shapes! I have to draw lines on them, in the middle. 'SYMMETRICAL!' I shout. 'Yes,' says Mr P and he smiles at me ... I stand up excitedly and run on the spot, knocking Johnny's pen to the floor. I stop and sit down quickly, still smiling, but scared at how the teacher will react. 'Sorry,' I say. Johnny doesn't look shocked, but smiles at me and says something which must be nice because Mr P seems happy and walks away. Johnny says something else and passes me a ruler. 'Symmetry,' I say again as I reach for the next shape.

Thinking with Dan's story

Dan's story, *Symmetry* was written following a meeting he had with the co-ordinator for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in his school. The meeting specifically focused on the needs of one child in his class of Year 1/2 pupils, Alex, a child whom he had viewed as exhibiting problematic behaviours in the classroom. In his journal Dan described the child's behaviour: '... he is boisterous, struggles with group and partner work, refuses to write and does not follow basic classroom rules'. He adds, 'My initial opinion of this child was that he was a rude pupil who misbehaved and sought attention.' He described how the discussion with the SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) had opened his eyes 'to the reasons behind his behaviour ... I have learned not to judge pupils' situations without digging deeper ...' (Reflective journal entry, 10/2/2014).

Dan explained that through the conversation with the SENCO he had learned that Alex had English as an additional language (EAL): 'His first language is Lithuanian, his second Russian. Neither of his parents speaks English. The current school is his third. I was fascinated by his back story, feeling that it explained so much! ... The inconsistency in his upbringing has undoubtedly affected his ability to socialise effectively and is linked with his slow progress in literacy. On reflection his refusal

³ 'Mrs Smith' is a Learning Support Assistant assigned to work on a one to one basis with Alex to support him in the classroom. Dan is a trainee teacher working alongside the class teacher. The teacher is aware of Alex's special needs but Dan, as a trainee recently placed in the school, does not have detailed knowledge of the pupils in the class but he has arranged a meeting with the SENCO to help him understand the needs of this child.

to write is linked to his lack of confidence in his ability to communicate and his disregard for class rules can be explained by his inability to understand the English language' (Reflective journal entry).

Dan's further reflections on the meeting led him to develop strategies for addressing Alex's needs: '... the meeting inspired me to think of ways to integrate him into lessons, to reduce the impact of having English as an additional language and really focus on bridging gaps in his learning to target his special educational needs.' He decided to plan lessons in which he differentiated questions, providing more visual stimuli and setting work to suit the needs of a visual learner. He ended his reflection by asking himself how it might feel to be Alex in his class: 'This reflection has led me to think about how Alex feels in a lesson, perhaps a lesson where his needs had not been differentiated for in planning. For this reason the next entry in my journal will be from Alex's point of view' (Reflective journal entry).

In his story Dan exemplifies the thinking of both Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983; 1987), that reflections are prompted by dilemmas, doubts and puzzles and those times when things do not go according to plan. He is also travelling to the world of the child (Lugones, 1987) and replaying the events from different perspectives (Bolton, 2010). In a reflection written ten days before he wrote the story he outlines the situation which led him to reflect by writing narratively – a dilemma, a sense that he had not managed the learning of 5-year-old Alex appropriately and his desire to better understand and provide for Alex's needs in the classroom. Having reflected on these questions Dan decided to write a reflection that focused on how Alex might experience a lesson where his learning needs had not been taken into account in planning. The result was the carefully observed, narrative written from the perspective of the child (Story i).

'It was tricky at first ...'

Reflecting on his story three years later Dan comments, 'Alex was, and still is, a child I held a lot of affection for. He was a bit of a loose cannon – very excitable, having English as an additional language in a predominantly white British school, sometimes lazy – he was a real challenge but he thrived on positive reinforcement. I remember watching my mentor reading the register while he was bumbling about the

room causing minor chaos, and day-dreaming about what it would be like to be in his shoes. The reflection was a direct result of that. It was tricky to write at first but the story carried itself and I felt like I was learning about Alex as I wrote.’

I asked Dan to think about whether storying his experiences, had affected his practice as a teacher and how he viewed the children. How did it seem to him now, in the light of three years’ experience? He was very sure that there had been impact on his practice: ‘Definitely. I tried to be more patient with Alex, to give him clearer instructions, to laugh with him and notice all of the little positives. I think that trying to understand a child’s behaviour (rather than simply reacting to it) gives you a real head start with managing them and ultimately helping them to learn. Three years on, seeing him as a polite, happy, fluently English-speaking child is very rewarding. In the last few years I have realised how hard it is to take a step back and see things from a child’s perspective, especially with those select children who are just different from the rest. I think re-reading this reflective journal serves as a gentle reminder to myself in this respect’ (Extract from email conversation).

Dyson and Genishi (1996) consider that ‘... stories represent ways of taking action to create the spacious landscapes where the “different” have audible voices and visible faces.’ And: ‘Stories help us construct our *selves*, who used to be one way and are now another; stories help us to make sense of, evaluate, and integrate the tensions inherent in experience: the past with the present, the fictional with the “real”, the official with the unofficial, the personal with the professional, the canonical with the different or unexpected. Stories help us transform the present and shape the future for our students and ourselves so that it will be richer and better than the past’ (p.242/3).

Advice from my younger self

I asked Dan whether he felt reflection of this kind still had a place in his practice. His response was similar to that of other teachers with whom I have discussed this question: ‘I’m a reflective person but don’t find the time to write things down.’ However, he continued, ‘Seeing the reflection after a few years has opened up its true purpose to me: to re-reflect and realise my development as a teacher and as a person, while reminding myself of a few insights I’d forgotten amongst the smog. I feel like I have just received advice from a younger version of myself! I think that the story

and the poem were pretty impactful (is that a word?) and I didn't realise it at the time – I was shocked when you asked to use them in your research. I think a good way to reflect is to open up your imagination and let it do the leg work, allowing you to stumble upon thoughts you didn't know you had, and creative approaches to writing allow this to happen more easily' (Extract from email conversation). I wondered whether there was anything else that re-reading his reflections had sparked off. Dan replied: 'Nostalgia! I smiled a lot. Also I reprimanded myself for forgetting a few simple things in the last few years. And I wish I'd written a few more.'

Poetry as a medium for story-telling

Once given the freedom to experiment with different ways of reflective writing, a number of trainees choose to write poems. These range from simple rhyming couplets to more complex poetic expression. The purpose is not to create works of literary merit, rather to allow those for whom the processes of reflection and recollection through writing led to poems, the opportunity to express their thoughts in this way. Cox with Glenn (2008) identify the capacity of such writing to 'ask back', to prompt a reflexive turn on the part of the writer:

When I write expressively as a poet or as a prose writer, and I try to make sense of the world through poetry or narrative, the poetry or narrative ask back in ways that conventional academic discourse does not. It asks back with questions that touch on the emotional, the psychological, the philosophical, the spiritual, and the ethical, as well as the aesthetic (p.109).

Critchley (2010) highlights the imaginative power that can be generated through poetry and its power to communicate: 'Poetry enlarges life with a range of observation, a depth of sentiment, a power of expression, and an attention to language that simply eclipses any other medium ... poetry is life with the ray of imagination's power shot through it.' He adds, quoting T S Eliot without reference, '... poetry can communicate before it is understood' (Critchley, p10).

Of the many poems written by trainee teachers in their reflective journals I have selected two for discussion which I feel exemplify how a poem can cut to the heart of the matter whilst often appearing deceptively simple. Clarke (2017) draws attention to the way the living, telling, retelling and reliving cycle (Clandinin 2013) which

is foundational to narrative inquiry is evident in what she describes as ‘the unique relationship between retelling narratives and poetic expression of research’ (p.56). She writes that ‘the poetic expression of narratives, is, in its very form, a re-telling of narrative. The inconclusivity inherent in poetic expression as well as the participatory nature of poetic expression invites multiple opportunities for meaning-making. It encourages movement away from the single story to multiple stories’ (op.cit. p.57). Clarke emphasises how ‘identity shifts and changes as individuals gain deeper insight through the telling and retelling of personal narratives’ (ibid.), reminding us that in engaging with our participants and their stories in the process of telling and retelling, ‘We do not seek a singular truth but rather a deeper understanding of a particular experience’ (op.cit.56/57). As educational researchers we are also interested in the educational significance suggested by particular experiences.

Travelling to the world of the classroom with Danielle

One of the participants in my study, Danielle, a trainee teacher of Secondary English, shared a dilemma about her perception of the simplicity of poetry. She felt that the poem she had written in her reflective journal, about a student’s perspective of teacher expectations was not adequate as a reflection – it had to be more complex: ‘Writing a poem is too easy for me! It takes no time at all.’ My response to reading her poem was that, implicitly, it demonstrated critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis, revealing a depth of reflection that was lacking in her accompanying essay on teacher expectations. She had taken ‘a reflective turn,’ her poem, strongly grounded in her lived experience, showed her what she knew, that is, the importance for herself as a novice teacher, and for her students, of having sufficiently high expectations. She was also demonstrating Van Manen’s (1990) assertion that ‘Poetry means more than it explicitly says’ (p.131) and, Richardson’s view that ‘Settling words together in new configurations lets us hear, see, and *feel* the world in new dimensions’ (2000 p.933). Richardson goes on to describe poetry as ‘a *practical* and *powerful* method for analysing social worlds’ (p.993) something I see demonstrated in Danielle’s poem ‘*Don’t pick on me*’ (Poem a).

Poem a: *Don't pick on me!*

Why do you always pick on me Miss Golding?
It's second period on Wednesday morning ...
I've just finished art where there's plenty of drawing,
Now you want me to learn about homophones – that's boring!

Don't you understand it's hard for me?
I'm not like the others, I need time to breathe,
Don't pick on me in front of the class
Otherwise I'll pretend that 'I can't be arsed!'

You go so quick and I can't keep up
What's a persuasive technique?
What's a rhyming cup?

Oh you meant 'rhyming couplet'
Well why didn't you say?
I'm not being rude Miss Golding,
Why do I have to stay?

You don't understand how hard it is for me
I struggle at school
I'm a level 3c

Everyone says I should be doing more
But why should I bother?
I'll never be a level 4

Oh hello Miss Golding
It's been a while,
I've been in isolation
But you've greeted me with a smile?
Recently you've been asking me how I am,

You've learnt that I play up when I'm with Sam,
You sit me near the front so I can concentrate,
You give me lots of praise – it feels great!

I'm starting to like English a little bit more,
Miss Golding believes I can reach a level 4!

Although she did not acknowledge the significance of her poem, believing that her detailed analytical reflection on the poetry lesson had greater validity, I saw it as an example of Lugones' (1987) metaphor of world-travelling, in this case to the world of the classroom. I felt that the poem cut straight to the heart of the matter, showing vividly the importance of teacher expectations in a concise and memorable way, whereas Danielle felt that the poem had been 'too easy' to write – 'I can easily dash off a poem!' It seemed to me that, in writing the poem, she had moved beyond analytical thinking to a more intuitive response to the situation she had experienced in her lesson, and to the student's response. I saw her poem as demonstrating (self-) critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis, revealing depth of reflection and providing evidence of a 'reflective turn' (Schön, 1991). It showed her what she knew, that is, the importance of teachers having high expectations of their students, and it showed her that she was successfully applying her developing understanding of pedagogy in her teaching. It showed that she has the ability to make a reflexive turn and view herself as a teacher through the eyes of her students.

Travelling (playfully) with Dan to the world of the playground

Poetry has been described as 'a place of communion between the world, each other, and ourselves' (Mandrone in Leavy, (2015) p.107). I have been using poetry as a self-study practice, to encourage reflexivity, as a means of understanding myself, to reflect on my 'lived experiences', to go deeper, explore feelings and emotions. I use it to reveal connections that I may not have noticed, to identify themes and ideas that seem to be important for me personally and in my work. Poetry also brings memories to the surface.

The second poem, *Playground Duty*, (Poem b) written by Dan, is an example which also serves a pedagogical purpose in my teaching as an example of how a poem

can convey the essence of a question, issue or puzzle in a few words, how it can, in Critchley's words 'ask back'. Arranging words and ideas from data using poetic form can bring ideas together in a way that provokes new ways of thinking.

Poem b: Playground duty!

The excitement! The buzz! The tears!
The drama! The falls! The fears!
Hub-bub! Commotion!
Laughter! Emotion!
It's a far cry from the classroom that's for sure!

The games! The food! The whistles!
Footballs landing in thistles!
Bending the rules!
Are there rules?
I wonder, "What am I doing out here?!"

"He's telling me lies Miss!"
"I'm Mister not 'Miss'!"
(It's telling me this, I must be decisive)

"I tripped accidentally, Felicity hit me!"
(Prime opportunity, use my authority!)

"Sir who are you and what do you do?!"
(It's Stu but who knew?! I must get to know you!)

"Mister watch this!" says Pip as she trips!
(Phew, I teach Pip and have a good relationship!)
"Sir, it's not funny!" she says as she stands!
(We walk to the office, wash the mud from her hands!)

Dan wrote a short reflection on the poem in his journal:

This is a poem about the events on playground duty this afternoon, which came and went in the blink of an eye but left me much to reflect on! According to Sandra Harris, 'positive relationships are at the very core of creating effective learning environments where all students achieve success' (Harris, 2013). Building good relationships with pupils throughout the school, acting as a figure of authority and taking decisive actions are all areas which I feel I need to develop to really embrace the school ethos. Writing this poem has helped me to reflect on this.

I kept the poem and, with Dan's permission used it as a pedagogical narrative in my reflective writing sessions. Three years later I visited Dan in his school and reminded him about the playground poem, and the story he had written (Story i discussed earlier in this chapter) asking him if he was willing to re-visit his reflective journal and share his thoughts with me. A short time later I received an email:

I've just re-read them and actually they had a pretty powerful impact on me 3 years on. I think nowadays reflection comes naturally to me, usually in the car on my commute home, though in the whirlwind of teaching I don't often manage to get it on to paper. Having read my own reflections I wish I had found time to write more down in these early years of my career – I feel like I've just learnt a few lessons from a younger version of me!

Dan explained how he felt about the requirement to keep a reflective journal:

Prior to teaching I spent a lot of time writing formally ... I've always enjoyed writing so it was nice to get a chance to flex my creative muscles. I was sceptical about the reflective journal and its purpose. Admittedly a few of my log entries were boring, probably because they felt a little forced as I eased my way into the process. However, both the story and poem were written as a result of 'sparks' during my training – light-bulb moments if you will.'

Reflecting on the poem he says:

I love the playground. Sometimes in teaching you get really wrapped up in the four walls of your classroom and forget that there is life outside.

Children think teachers live in their classes (I think they could be on to something). The nature of schooling means that children are hit with sensory overload in their classroom packed with bright colours, tricky new words, challenging maths, while as a teacher you focus on progress, behaviour management and ticking all sorts of other boxes – it can be a little blinding. All the while you are maintaining a professional teacher-pupil relationship to push learning forwards. In the playground, many of those barriers are lifted. I have seen the most timid child run past me in the playground, belting out my name. I've had conversations about the tooth fairy and the possibility of teleportation, argued about the rules of square ball and joined in with clapping songs, told stories of my travels and been taught how to hoola hoop.

Dan is lovingly and playfully (Lugones, 1987) considering his journey to the world of the children's playground and how his experience prompted the poem. He continues: 'While enabling me to re-enact my childhood, it also helps to remind me of my main reason for entering teaching – for the children. I think it is really important to see them interacting naturally, expressing themselves and getting to know them as the people that they are.' He portrays the playground as the children's world where he has been enabled to gain a perspective on his vocation as a teacher and his motivation for being there – 'for the children.'

He recalls the moment of writing the poem:

The reflective log entry was the moment I realised this after emerging from my classroom from one particularly stressful lesson. The poem just kind of happened. The first line was intended as a bog-standard journal entry. The second happened to rhyme with the first – and I went with the flow. (Research conversation)

Reflecting on the poem three years later Dan wrote:

When I was first training I was very shy. Trying to find a balance between professionalism, meeting the teaching standards and developing good relationships in the school was difficult. I erred towards appropriate rather than enthusiastic, thus my interactions with the children were dimmed

down. Now I socialise with the kids at every opportunity, chatting with them over lunch, getting involved in playground games and just having fun. In hindsight the Playground poem was based on the first time I overcame my initial nerves and impacts upon my teaching every single day. Those relationships developed on the playground have reaped rewards in the classroom over the last few years. The camaraderie makes behaviour management a doddle and allows me to teach all kinds of exciting lessons which I hope has a big impact on children's learning (Extract from email conversation).

Dan is showing that stories have the power to transform and that we can be changed by our stories. Kearney (2002) writes about the cathartic power of stories – ‘stories alter us by transporting us to other times and places where we can experience things otherwise’ (p.137). Alice found that the looking-glass world was ‘as different as possible’. Shakespeare, through the voice of Lear, describes the power to ‘feel what wretches feel.’ Kearney describes such experiences as showing the ability to exercise ‘vicarious imagination’ (p.137): ‘To know what it is like to be in someone’s head, shoes or skin. The power, in short, of vicarious imagination’ (p.137). I am reminded of the work of Greene on the power and necessity of imagination as an integral aspect of education; of Nussbaum’s (1996) description of narrative imagination, and of the empathy prompted by Lugones’ concept of ‘world-travelling’ (op.cit.).

Travelling with Ben: stories of shadowing

In the stories that follow, Ben has experimented with narrative form in his reflective journal writing. He has used his field notes written during his close observation of two secondary school students, Kya and Jed, as the basis for what he describes as a ‘factional account’ and I would describe as a story. The stories highlight issues relating to exclusion, image, belonging and teacher expectations. He writes: This is a ‘factional’ account of two pupil shadows; the first is Kya, a low-achieving Year 9 girl (aged 14) with a disciplinary record and behaviour issues. The second is Jed, a high-achieving Year 8 boy (aged 13). Names of teachers and other students are all fictional, and some lessons have been changed, but the events that took place are true. Some of the comments below are comments overheard, others are fiction.

Story j: *Shadowing Kya*

Good rep, bad rep

Are you having a laugh Miss? Like seriously, are you having a laugh? FFS. I hadn't even sat down before she was having a go at me. I don't even like Spanish, what's the point of it? So I walk in and she says to me "You sit there. I don't want any trouble from you." Seriously? I hadn't even sat down and she is mugging me off.

I was just in music period before. Miss said I'd done well. She said I was one of the strongest in our group. Our group nailed our song. I like music because you can do your own thing. In music Miss lets me go in the classroom first, before the others do. I don't have to queue up. I get stressed sometimes. Noise does my head in. I need to get away sometimes.

I know what people think of me. I know what teachers say about me. In this school once you get a bad rep, that's it. They are always having a go at you. Why was my card signed for not wearing a blazer, but Sir was talking to Josh and he wasn't wearing his? No way would I have got away with that.

Alright I know I do mess about in lessons sometimes. But most of them are boring. Who cares about sine waves? When am I going to need a sine wave? It's stupid ... maths is poxy. Spanish is poxy. I was banned from science for like a week when it wasn't even my fault, Sir was picking on me. Josh was in that lesson too. He was dicking about, but Sir never said nothing to him. Why me? Why do they pick on me?

Ben writes from the perspective of the teacher of Spanish:

Maybe I was harsh on Kya, but you don't know what she can be like. Science have banned her from lessons for a week; she has to do it in internal isolation. Sometimes I wish we could ban her too, it would make my life easier. But then sometimes Kya can be lovely. Sometimes she comes in and is happy and she does great work. I know she can when she tries.

But sometimes, oh she is terrible. The previous lesson she was, well there's no other word for it, evil. She destroyed my lesson. She wouldn't do what she was asked, she was totally disruptive, stopping others from working. It was a

disaster. I had to get the Duty Call Out, but that looks bad and if you rely on the Duty, well people start to think you can't do your job. The kids think you can't do it.

You can't let one student ruin an entire lesson.

Story k: *Shadowing Jed*

I like school. I am in the top set for maths, English and science. I play football for Year 8. Sometimes my dad comes and watches us play, if he can. I have a lot of mates in school, it's alright. Owen is like my best mate. We sit next to each other in science. That's great. We have a right laugh. The other day, we were supposed to be doing circuits or something, but the kit didn't work so Miss was trying to get that sorted. Me and Owen were having a great time. I think Miss might have seen us but when she asked me a question I knew the answer so she didn't bother us. I always know the answers, most of it is easy. Owen didn't know the answer so I think Miss was a bit annoyed with him.

For a laugh Owen nicked my calculator in maths, we were having a right bant about it. I think Sir was okay with it. He likes a bit of bant in his class so he doesn't mind if I mess about a bit. That was top. Some of my mates joined in. That was when Sir got a bit annoyed, but I said I had finished the work and he just gave me some more. He had a right go at Owen though. I am better at maths than Owen.

It was in history that we got in a bit of trouble. Not a lot like, but I think Sir was annoyed. Freja's bag was on the floor and me and Owen took this book of hers. We didn't nick it proper like. I just took it out. I think Sir must have seen us. He got well angry. We had to stay behind and he gave us a right going over. But it's okay. I know he likes me because I am good at history. He didn't sign my card or anything, and I didn't get a detention. I haven't had a detention all term.

Ben writes from the perspective of the History teacher

They are a good class, mostly they behave well. I know Jed can get a bit boisterous and I don't really know what was going on with Freja's book, but he

is a good lad. He plays football for the school. Sometimes I think him and Owen aren't really concentrating. But Jed always seems to be on the ball when I ask him questions and his work is good, he does his homework on time. And let's be fair, he is only a Year 8 so he has a bit of growing up to do. I am sure whatever silliness there is, he will grow out of it.

I asked Ben to reflect on the stories and his experience of writing them:

In my observation, what was clear from following two students (they didn't know they were being followed) for a day each, was that teachers held very different attitudes to the two, and this resulted in very different experiences. Care has to be taken here over cause and effect. Kya had a significant reputation (that was why she was chosen). She has an aggressive demeanour and is physically large, at least a head taller than most of her classmates, which makes her intimidating. I noticed that a lot of other students get out of her way in corridors etc. She was known to be disruptive and challenging. Her academic record is poor, and she does not achieve well in lessons. She is in bottom, or near bottom, sets in most subjects. Because of her reputation, teachers did take a defensive posture with her in class. In my observation she was given a lot less latitude than other students, and was treated more harshly for infringements. This is not a criticism. This may very well be effective behaviour management, effectively nipping problems in the bud. Although Kya did respond to questions, she often got questions wrong, causing frustration and at times mildly disruptive (calling out) behaviour.

By contrast, student Jed, a good-looking and personable year 8 boy, while not exhibiting challenging behaviour, was certainly a lot worse behaved during my observations. He was persistently off-task and seemed to enjoy mucking about, yet his behaviour was tolerated and he was typically only mildly censured. When challenged, Jed was usually able to give an answer to a problem and thus did not attract the ire of teachers. His friend (referred to as Owen in the text) was not as quick as Jed and often bore the brunt of Jed's misbehaviour.

Travelling with Sam

Part of my responsibility as a tutor for the PGCE course includes teaching sessions on equality and diversity which cover how to recognise and deal with racist and homophobic incidents and discrimination against anyone on grounds of race, gender, sexuality or disability. Challenging the use of abusive language is a strong focus in these sessions. Sam's story, *The 'Gay' Word*, exemplifies how some of the issues explored in the taught sessions on equality and diversity, are experienced in practice. The story was written in her reflective journal. She prefaced it with reference to Standard 9 in the UK Qualifying to Teach Standards (2011) which refers to the high standards of personal and professional conduct required for all teachers.

When I first read Sam's story I questioned whether it was actually a story because Sam has not attempted to fictionalise it in the way most of the other story-writers have done. However, further reflection led me to revisit the work of Ricoeur (1986; 1991) who viewed stories as the way in which human experience as it is lived can be expressed and that it is in stories that events and actions are brought together into an organised whole by means of a plot. Sam has told a story of something that happened in school. It is written in her voice, as she might, perhaps, have told it to a friend, a colleague, a family member, when she got home and related the story of her day at school – 'this is what happened today' (Hardy, 1975). It is the story that wanted to be told. Of all the things that happened on that day this was the one Sam felt had to be recorded in her journal. She did not fictionalise it or try to tell it from a different perspective, that of one of the boys involved, for example, but, within the broad definitions of story as something which describes a series of actions and experiences made by a number of characters whether real or imaginary, who are represented either in situations that change, or as they relate to changes to which they can then react Sam's story clearly fits this view of story. Ricoeur (1986) has written that these changes in turn reveal hidden aspects of the situation and of the characters and engender a new dilemma that requires thinking about, or action, or both. He concludes, 'The answer to this predicament advances the story to its conclusion' (p.40). Polkinghorne (in Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995) also affirms that such everyday tellings can be described as 'stories': 'The subject-matter of stories is human action. Stories are concerned with human attempts to progress to a solution, clarification, or unravelling of an incomplete situation' (p.7).

Story 1: *The 'Gay' Word*

This week, I was approached by two Year 5 boys (aged 10) who claimed that they had been called 'gay' by another Year 5 boy (who I shall call Tom) whilst putting their coats away in the cloakroom after lunch. They also claimed that Tom had called the hand-dryer 'gay' too. I approached Tom and asked if this was true. He nodded and confirmed it was. When asked if he knew what the word 'gay' meant, he replied that 'It's when a man loves another man'. I explained it also meant when a woman loves another woman too. One of the other boys joined in the conversation, stating that the word 'gay' also meant 'happy'. 'Well done!' I replied. 'So it's a homonym too!' Turning to Tom I then asked, 'So, why is the hand-dryer gay?' Tom shrugged his shoulders. I continued, 'Why did you call the other boys gay?' Tom shrugged his shoulders again. 'How do you think they felt when you called them gay?' I asked.

'Bad,' Tom replied. 'Yes,' I said. 'Is that how you wanted them to feel?' Tom nodded again. 'How would you feel if someone called you gay?' I asked. Tom looked at his shoes. 'I'm cross and upset because you used the word 'gay' as a word to hurt somebody else.' I explained.

Later, after speaking to Tom to discover why he was angry in the first place (there's usually an antecedent), he apologised to the two boys and I reported the incident to their teacher. According to the school's policy, the incident would not be classed as bullying as this would have to be 'persistent'; perhaps the class teacher would have more knowledge if this had happened before. However, could it be classed as homophobic?

Sam reflects on her story

Sam continued to reflect on the incident and the implications for her practice:

Unfortunately, the word 'gay' is commonly used by children, incorrectly, as a synonym for something they don't like or something they feel is useless (the hand-dryer and the boys in this instance). Similarly, the word 'sick' is used by children (incorrectly) to describe something good. The difference is, the word 'sick' does not pertain to the sexuality of other human beings, and it is being used in a positive way not a negative one. The modelling

of negative behaviours is a constant battleground for teachers – how can we persuade children that this behaviour is disrespectful and intolerant if it is being reinforced elsewhere? What if the child's microsystem upholds a religious belief or culture that does not mirror fundamental British values and morals?

On reflection, I think my weapon of choice will be empathy; trying to put yourself in somebody else's shoes. Living in a multi-cultural and diverse society, British teachers are the first external line of defence against prejudice, injustice and intolerance, for we are teaching the next generation, who will eventually rule our country. (Journal extract)

Thinking with the stories

In her critical reflection Sam explores the incident by storying it and theorising it. She concludes that empathy, 'trying to put yourself in somebody else's shoes,' and using strategies such as Circle Time to enable the children to explore their feelings will be her ways of dealing with such incidents. In this way she is following Lugones (1987) 'world-travelling' to the worlds of the children in order to understand their ways of thinking and to work with them 'lovingly,' challenging them to consider each other's feelings. Finally she makes a link between the incident in school and the responsibility of teachers to prepare children for life in a multi-cultural society and for their role as future leaders in a democracy. In this she shows her ability to critically reflect, analysing and synthesising to make sense of a situation. Such thinking is described by Dewey (1916) as 'sophisticated' (p.342). He defines a sophisticated thinker in relation to 'the degree in which he or she sees an event not as something isolated but in its connection to the experiences of mankind' (p.342/3). Sam is also, like Dan and Ben, myself, and other writers included in this study, showing some of the qualities which Kincheloe (2004; 2005) defines as features of critical pedagogy:

Critical pedagogy is interested in the margins of society, the experiences and needs of individuals faced with oppression and marginalisation ... Thus, critical teachers seek out individuals, voices, texts, and perspectives that had previously been excluded. Critical pedagogy, thus, amplifies the voices of those who have to struggle to be heard (p.22).

Bringing theory, including a consideration of moral and ethical aspects, to bear on practice leading to informed action, is praxis. Praxis is defined by Kincheloe (2004, 2005) as involving ‘a process of action-reflection-action that is central to the development of a consciousness of power and how it operates’ (p.110). ‘It is the unity of an educational theory with an educational practice’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.208). Both Sam and Ben demonstrate praxis, showing that they are able to reflect on their practice through the lens of theoretical frameworks and re-reflect on how this process might inform their future actions. Sam is able to explain how she will ensure that her future practice enables children to consider thoughtfully the impact of their behaviour on others.

For Ben, there is less certainty that the assumptions affecting the expectations of the teachers he observed can be challenged. However, his informed consciousness revealed through the reflective stories and his theorising and questioning will, in my view, be likely to have impact on his own developing practice as a teacher. He highlights the importance of what he has observed and the sense he has made of it through critical reflective thinking, drawing on relevant theory:

This is significant. If our perceptions of students actually affects their intelligence, then we are morally bound to work very hard on those relationships, even if the effect is small. We cannot allow our negative perceptions of students to deleteriously affect their education, however challenging their behaviour is (Ben’s reflective commentary, research artefact).

Ben’s story and subsequent reflection show that he is aware of the power dynamics at play and also of the pragmatic approach for teachers in just getting through the day. This is strongly evident in the responses of the teacher of the Spanish lesson in conversation with Ben as he highlights here:

At first the teacher is defensive and justifying the approach: ‘Maybe I was harsh on Kya, but you don’t know what she can be like. Science have banned her from lessons for a week; she has to do it in internal isolation. Sometimes I wish we could ban her too, it would make my life easier.’ The teacher’s focus is all on herself here, there is nothing about what she might be able to do to make her lessons more effective for this

student. The language is predominantly negative: 'But sometimes, oh she is terrible. The previous lesson she was, well there's no other word for it, evil. She destroyed my lesson. She wouldn't do what she was asked, she was totally disruptive, stopping others from working. It was a disaster. I had to get the Duty Call Out, but that looks bad and if you rely on the Duty, well people start to think you can't do your job. The kids think you can't do it.' And, 'You can't let one student ruin an entire lesson.' These are strong words. For a teacher to describe a child as 'evil' has a shocking impact. It is clear that the teacher feels very vulnerable, fearing that s/he is not living up to the school's expectations. This 'evil' girl is seen as a real threat. (Research artefact)

I asked Ben what prompted him to write about these observations as stories. He explained: 'I thought it was the best way of telling the story – putting it into their voice. You have to try and view it from their point of view. Of course you're only guessing, but you're trying to think what life is like for them. You don't know their back-stories when you observe. I felt sorry for the girl.'

In response to my question as to whether he thought this sort of writing can deepen reflection. He replied: 'In order to tell somebody else's story you have to attempt, however imperfectly, to view the world the way they see it, attempting a higher level of empathy, and then bring to bear any background information you have on your telling of the story.' He added: 'Writing in this way is a valid exercise because it forces you to listen to what they say more closely, wondering do they provide any justification for their behaviour? You use your imagination.'

I wondered if Ben had considered the part played by power relations between teacher and student in the educational process and how stories from the perspective of students may 'bump up against' (Clandinin, 2013) stories from the perspectives of teachers and the wider social and cultural implications this might signal. Ben pointed out that teachers have to balance the demands of the class, the needs of individual students and their requirement to teach – three sometimes mutually opposing demands. He commented, 'With a student such as Kya whose behaviour causes significant disruption to the other students in the class, the needs of one do not

outweigh the needs of the many. So I have a great deal of sympathy with the class teacher. She was acting in the interests of the whole class.’

Ben also pointed out that such students ‘challenge our perceptions of ourselves and our self-belief’ – something that was evident in the responses of the teacher in the conversation with Ben following the Spanish lesson. Ben described vividly his perception of the teacher’s dilemma: ‘How can it be that a “mere teenager” can exert such control over us, the adult in the room? We fear letting Kya “get away with it” which will, like latter-day French admirals, encourage the others.’ He asks, ‘Was the class teacher’s response based on the challenge that Kya made to her personally, or to her ability to deliver lessons?’ And he answers: ‘Almost certainly both.’

His final reflective comment reinforces the value of exercising “loving” rather than “arrogant” perception when we travel to the worlds of others (Lugones, 1987): ‘You are not going to understand someone like Kya, or indeed Jed, without listening to them and without understanding their experiences of school life. It isn’t a panacea. It may be that Kya’s issues are too ingrained, too complex, to be met. But unless we hear Kya’s voice, how will we know?’ (extract from research conversation and email exchanges, 3/2017).

The sense of ‘world-travelling’ (Lugones, 1987) in order to achieve empathy that is evident in Sam’s reflection is also clear here. In both Ben’s and Sam’s stories there is a clear intention for the writer to deepen her or his understanding of the children they teach and the systems within which they are working. They demonstrate reflexivity in that they are seeking to understand their own position in the action they are describing, and what Bolton (2010, p.14)) describes as ‘critically informed curiosity’ – a desire to understand how others perceive things. They are also aware of the underlying personal and institutional values and assumptions in the situations they are exploring. Lugones (op.cit.) reminds us that we are ‘fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood and without this understanding we are not intelligible, we do not make sense, we are not solid, visible, integrated, we are lacking’ (p.8).

All the writers whose work has been shared in this chapter are demonstrating deep reflection and the ability to synthesise in order to make sense of their experiences. They are also showing a strong propensity for empathy – for ‘world-travelling’. They demonstrate Bolton’s assertion that effective reflective practice is ‘critically active and dynamic in a wide sphere. Practitioners question and problematise themselves, their roles and those in authority over them, their political, social and professional situations’ (2010, p.56). She emphasises the lasting impact of this deep reflective engagement: ‘They cannot again uncritically accept a situation nor just moan about it. Reflective practice encourages action ...’ (ibid.).

I agree with Bolton in her identification of the impact of this type of reflection, even implicitly, on the reflectors. From my reading of reflective journals and discussion with trainee teachers I would argue that operating at the higher levels of critical reflection may help to raise trainee teachers’ awareness about the situations of their students and prompt them to meet their learning needs more successfully. However, I am doubtful about how far this could lead individuals to engage in further social actions that might be transformative in a wider sense, at institutional level, for example. I return to my observation (chapter 2) that the transformative effect may be mainly on the reflective practitioner herself. I am reminded of Winter’s (2006) view that teachers’ engagement in action research had transformed the world much less than he had expected (p.1). But this is a pessimistic view. The pedagogical use of stories which has become an integral part of my practice serves to bring them to a wider audience in a forum that generates questioning and discussion and enables participants to relate the situations and actors in the stories to their own experiences and dilemmas of practice. And, for the trainee teachers, it seems likely that what has been learned through critical reflection on action, through the storying and re-storying of experience, will lead to deeper self-understanding, greater self-confidence and more effective teaching which, in turn, will transform the experiences of children and young people. This is not inconsiderable and perhaps it is as much as we may hope for?

Reflecting on multiple voices in the school landscape

My further thinking with the stories resulted in two ‘found poems’ (Dillard, 1995; Butler-Kisber, 2001; Richardson, 2002)) in which I highlighted the voices that

resonated for me – voices of students, trainee teachers, parents and theorists. Using this arts-based form of representation I wove together fragments of stories and poems from my participants and myself. The field notes and stories are already interpretive texts and by working with them within the three dimensional narrative inquiry space of temporality, place and sociality (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) to create the found poems I have added another layer of interpretation.

The multi-vocal piece, *Symmetry 1*, (Poem c) had the effect of drawing together a number of the story-lines in my inquiry. I have added key ideas which have informed my thinking, showing, in a double layer of interpretation, the questions and dilemmas which have been evoked for me as a researcher as the lives behind the stories are represented in the chosen lines. I also tried to evoke the sense of moral responsibility that is implicit in the roles of teachers and writers of fiction (Sontag, 2007).

Poem c: *Symmetry 1*

“Why are you always picking on me?”
“Don’t you understand it’s hard for me?”
“This school is fucking crap!”
“He’s telling me lies Miss!”
“I know what teachers think of me.”
“She destroyed my lesson!”
I wonder, what must it be like to be you?
To be ‘different’ ...
Other?
Travelling to the worlds of others.
Trying to put yourself in somebody else’s shoes.
“Sir, who are you? What do you do?”
Good questions – who am I?
What *should* I do?
What’s it like to be myself – in their eyes?
Dilemmas, doubts and puzzles
Through stories we construct our selves
Who used to be one way

And are now another.
The story carried itself
Symmetry!

In Poem d, *Symmetry 2 (too)*, I reflected on and explored some definitions of symmetry as a means of deepening my understanding of this concept as a metaphor. These definitions seemed to link with the stories in this chapter where the children are seeking to find learning spaces where they fit, where they belong, feel comfortable, are appropriately visible. The perceived non-conformity of Alex, for example, in the strange new world of an English classroom; the students in Danielle's poem and Ben's story who feel unfairly 'picked on' because they fail to conform in various ways and who fail to meet expectations of how things should be.

Poem d: *Symmetry 2 (too)*

What is Symmetry?
It's when one shape becomes like another
if you flip it or turn it.
It's the quality of being made up of exactly similar parts
facing each other around an axis,
the similarity or exact correspondence
between different things.
It's agreement, conformity,
equality, uniformity,
equilibrium, harmoniousness.
It's a sense of beautiful proportion
and balance.
The simplest type of symmetry is
Reflection

Coda

Back in the lecture room, the session draws to a close. We have explored some examples of reflective writing. Some of the trainees leave buzzing with ideas for writing the first entries in their journals. Others are anxious, unsure of how to begin

and a few are sceptical – surely this is all a waste of time? Haven't we got enough to do this year? I say, 'Just try it and see – start writing and see where it takes you, you may surprise yourselves'. I leave them with the words of Adams St Pierre:

Thought happened in the writing. As I wrote, I watched word after word appear on the computer screen – ideas, theories, I had not thought before I wrote them. Sometimes I wrote something so marvellous it startled me. I doubt if I could have thought such a thought by thinking alone (2005, p.970)

Chapter 7

Borderlands: complicating understandings of identity

‘What is the role of an academic, no matter what they’re teaching, within political debate? It has to be that they make issues more complicated. The role of the academic is to make everything less simple.’ (Mary Beard, 2016)

‘The strength of liminality is that it is a place where we write our own lines’
(Heilbrun, 1999, p.101/2)

In this chapter I have engaged with the experiences of two trainee teachers, Saffiya and Jaz, who have composed stories to live by that are dissonant with grand narratives of identity. Both curriculum making and identity making are narrative terms for understanding curriculum and identity as always ‘in process’ and ‘in relationship’. Curriculum in this context is understood as a ‘course of life’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) and therefore, curriculum-making refers to the dynamic and ongoing process of making meaning through experience. Here identity-making is viewed as a similarly ongoing process of composing stories to live by, a narrative term that focusses on the relationship between ‘knowledge, context, and identity’ (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999, p.4). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) emphasise that identity-making and curriculum-making are complex and ongoing. As we think with and co-compose our stories, Saffiya, Jaz, and I highlight the importance of noticing difference and reflect on the nature of identity, belonging and exclusion.

I am inquiring into the curriculum-making and identity-making of Saffiya and Jaz across their life experiences, with a view to complicating my thinking around understandings of gender, sexuality, faith and culture. As Mary Beard (op.cit) suggests, it is necessary to ‘complicate’ the issues in order to understand them more deeply. This has been done through storying the experiences and reflecting together on their narrative meanings (Kim 2016). Kim emphasises that narrative inquiry is ‘a way of understanding human experience through stories that, in turn, help us better understand the human phenomena and human existence’ (p.190).

Using a narrative approach I explore dilemmas posed by professional encounters in the course of teaching about diversity and equality. In the first example, *Coming to*

know *Saffiya: a narrative of identity* (Story m), I consider my professional handling of a particular situation which arose in a class of postgraduate trainee teachers. This happened following a visit to a Hindu place of worship (a *mandir* or temple) which was part of their curriculum, aiming to develop the trainees' understanding of diversity of faith, culture, gender, sexuality and other identity and equality issues. World-travelling (Lugones, 1987) allows me to understand the issues raised from different perspectives, and create a narrative bridge (Stone-Mediatore, 2003):

'Narrative bridges ... offer discursive resources for readers' own further imaginative work ... a story is not an endpoint but a point of departure from which readers can discover the lived significance of strange affairs and can consider how their own lives might be situated within the web of actions and reactions that make up those affairs' (p.63).

Stone-Mediatore argues that stories encourage critical and inclusive political discussion and that this is enabled because stories that present themselves as stories 'make a claim about the world without ending the debate' (p.62). A story teller is not replacing one explanation of the world with another but inviting listeners or readers to try to understand a particular perspective which her/his way of perceiving and describing events makes possible. Such a perspective can only be partial and always only one way of telling the story. However, so long as this inherent partiality is acknowledged, it is not a weakness but a strength, stimulating reconsideration, retelling, and development from other perspectives.

Stone-Mediatore stresses the importance of storytelling for the way it engages its audience (readers and listeners) in the interpretive process, 'because its task of understanding a strange phenomenon is never complete but must be endlessly pursued by each one of us' (p.63). And, 'A story contributes to this lifelong task when it articulates images and a narrative matrix that relates a distant phenomenon to a more familiar world' (p.63). She believes that, viewed in this way, story has the capacity to create 'narrative bridges to strange phenomena' (ibid.). She argues that it is not necessary for us to imagine their experiences or share a common consciousness with the characters but to take the imaginative step necessary for us to make sense of their story and reflect on how it might resonate with, or challenge, 'the familiar

narratives of our world' (ibid.). She emphasises the need for open-mindedness, humility, and hermeneutic skills in engaging with stories in this way.

This is a view of story-telling as a means of cultivating appreciation for others' perspectives. Such an approach allows us to share our own views without pre-empting discussion but presenting a challenge to those who identify and judge people according to predetermined categories. Whether these are racial, gendered, or cultural categories, such stereotyping prevents us from responding to people as individuals and may lead to the exclusion of whole groups from basic rights and respect. Stone-Mediatore makes a strong case for stories and her thinking has particular relevance in relation to the stories of Saffiya and Jaz which follow: 'When we exchange stories we also learn how we both resemble and differ from one another. We thereby resist ideologies that absolutize and demonize human differences' (p.64).

Bruner (2002) throws light on how narratives work to problematise, to complicate and unsettle readers and listeners. He reminds us that narratives from life are both unsettled and unsettling – as in the narratives told here. He sees story as an instrument not so much for solving problems as for finding them (p.15). Bruner stresses that for there to be a story 'something unforeseen' must happen:

A story begins with a breach in the expected state of things. Something goes awry otherwise there's nothing to tell. The story concerns efforts to come to terms with the breach and its consequences. And finally there is an outcome, some sort of resolution' (p.17).

This is an apt description of the stories told here. Bruner's discussion of the dialectic between what was expected and what came to pass resonates with the following story relating to the experiences of Saffiya.

This story was co-composed with Saffiya, drawing on a range of field texts including reflective journal entries written by trainee teachers and myself, notes of conversations and emails, and forms an interim research text.

Story m: Coming to know Saffiya: a narrative of identity

'I wanted to speak from the inside of my own faith'

It's a big decision to make a career change later in life – there are quite a few of us on this Post Graduate Teacher Training course – men and women – who have taken on the challenge of training to be a teacher, balancing the demands of the course with family responsibilities and financial challenges. We're noticeably different from the younger students who are mostly straight from university. There's another way that I'm noticeably different from my peers – as a Muslim woman I dress modestly and wear a *hijab*, a scarf that covers my hair – I stand out.

Today has to be one of my favourite days on this course, a visit to a Hindu *mandir* as part of our preparation for teaching religious studies. I've always been interested in religions but my knowledge is limited to my personal experience. I am by no means an expert and my knowledge is limited to my personal experience of growing up in a multicultural society and being exposed to different cultures by my parents, who thought it valuable for our upbringing to have an understanding of all faiths.

The architecture of the temple was stunning. I felt it was a very spiritual space, quiet and open – vast spaces can make you feel tiny, aware that you're literally a drop in a huge ocean of existence. Inside, the marble pillars carved with individual deities, were beautiful to see. The statues of the deities looked familiar and reminded me of my past, bringing back memories of images I have been exposed to as a child. Coming from an Indian home and being brought up watching Indian Bollywood movies with my parents, I was familiar with images of Hindu culture. Today I learnt something that for the first time made sense to me about the Hindu faith. As a Muslim, I had always assumed that Hinduism was a faith whose followers worshipped idols who represented different Gods. I had never known that God is classed as one and only one but is represented through many images. This was new to me and I felt I could, for the first time, relate to the concept of the faith. The smell of the incense added to the spirituality. The ceremony included several Asian languages and I was able to recognise my mother tongue of Gujarati.

Back at the university this afternoon Janet, our tutor, gave us time to reflect on the visit, asking us what was the most interesting aspect, what made us curious and what questions we had. Some shared their feelings of awe and wonder at the beauty of the building itself. Others commented that seeing people praying, so totally physically involved in an act of worship, made them feel moved by their passion but also uncomfortable to be there as outsiders observing such private moments. And then someone asked, 'But why separate men and women?' There was a murmur of agreement and other voices joined in: How dare they seat the women behind the men, don't they know that this is the twenty-first century?' A storm of protest erupted and, once she had calmed us down, Janet explained some of the reasons why in some religions, it is practice for men and women to sit separately. She said that sometimes, as in Islam and some branches of Judaism, the women are out of sight altogether, screened from view. This seemed to add to the storm of protest and there were lots of questions and comments. Janet said teachers must always prepare properly for visits to places of worship and make sure that there's a male member of staff or a parent with the group. She pointed out that it's really important to try and see things from the perspectives of members of the faith communities, to travel to their worlds, to understand that things may not be as they seem to those looking in from the outside.

I was sitting in the front row. At first I remained silent but as I listened I became desperate to speak, I wanted to speak from the inside of my own faith. I am passionate about my faith and very passionate about dispelling assumptions and misconceptions. When I heard one student say, "Well they are here now, so they should follow this culture," I felt disappointed and defensive. I turned to face the students behind me and heard my own voice, very calm and firm: "I have to say something. As a Muslim woman I prefer to be hidden from view, watching, unseen. Actually I find it empowering!" There was an audible gasp when I said that but I went on: "Quite honestly I don't want to be praying in the same space as the men, I don't want them looking at my bottom from behind!" There were comments, questions and interruptions from all around the room which Janet tried to manage, telling people to settle down, to listen to and respect each other's views. We were running out of time – the next class was already queuing outside the door. I had lots more to say but Janet drew the session to a close,

reminding us to write our own reflections on the day. I left the room quickly trying to avoid speaking to anyone. Later, at home, I worried that I had said too much and that Janet might be upset. That night I had a supportive email from a fellow student. The following day, however, I was challenged by another student who felt I shouldn't have been allowed to dominate the discussion with my views. I was worried that Janet might feel the same so I emailed her:

Subject: Re: Swami Narayan Mandir Visit

Dear Janet, I hope you do not mind me emailing you but I really wanted to apologise regarding the conversation that took place during the plenary after the *mandir* visit. The conversation developed controversially and my apologies if you felt I took over the topic and the questions that were posed. I had a student email me yesterday evening thanking me for clarifying some points she had always been curious about. However, today I had a conversation with a fellow student/friend who thought it rather unfair that I took the platform for so long to discuss the issues that were raised. She felt very strongly about it and said it really upset her that I was given the opportunity to talk for that length of time.

My intention would never be to offend any person – whether they are believers of any faith or have no faith at all. People are entitled to their opinions and I respect that. I have always been an advocate of peace and mutual respect and understanding and I generally enjoy a conversation that stems from curiosity about religion. In my defence, I just wanted everyone to try and understand that the *mandir* may have religious or cultural reasoning that explains the segregation in a similar way to how people of the Muslim faith do. I was trying to provide an explanation (from my own understanding) in the hope that understanding may take place but I may have spoken more than was necessary and for that I wanted to say I am very sorry. I shall restrain myself in the future as the last thing I wish to do is to offend you or my peers. I hope you have a lovely evening.

Kind regards, Saffiya

Janet responded to my email quickly:

Oh Saffiya, I've been thinking about it too – I was worried that you might have felt that I put you in a position where you were expected to explain and justify an aspect of your faith – something I would always want to avoid doing

as a teacher, especially where pupils or trainee teachers are in a minority in the group. I don't think you should feel you have to remain silent about anything – other people were quite vociferous in expressing their views! I'm glad you emailed me. Remember there's never only one story-it's complicated! I'm happy to discuss it further.

Best wishes, Janet

Thinking with the story

As I constructed the story, reading the emails and looking at the situation from Saffiya's perspective, I realised that I had misunderstood her 'story to live by'. My concerns that I might have made Saffiya uncomfortable by allowing her to share her personal faith experiences so publicly were unfounded, though I still believe that a teacher should never put a student in a position where they feel exposed or compromised by expecting them to share something personal. However, it seemed she felt that by allowing her to speak for an extended period, though it was probably only a few minutes, I had somehow caused her to upset some members of the group and they had conveyed this to her: 'they thought it was *not fair* that you allowed me to continue to speak.' It underlined my feeling that I had mismanaged the situation – I would never want to be seen as being 'not fair'. Saffiya felt that she had upset her friend and feared that I might also be upset. The story reveals the complexities in terms of the relationships within the group and the relationships between myself as tutor and the students. There is also the underlying sense that, for Saffiya, it was important that the other students understood something about her and her faith and that this was an opportunity to correct what she saw as misconceptions about practices regarding the position of men and women in some religions, and in Islam in particular – to tell her own story from the perspective of her Muslim faith.

As I listened to Saffiya's story, thinking with the stories (Morris, 2002), and as I retold her experiences while constructing final research texts I considered the significance of this idea. What does it mean for the two of us to think with our stories rather than *about* them?

Ben Okri sees stories as 'dreams that keep changing, fluid texts which rewrite themselves when the reader isn't looking, texts which are dreams that change you as

you read them' (1997, p.57). Clandinin, Steeves and Caine (2013) describe stories to live by as, 'fluid, as evolving over time, as relational, as both personal, social, and as grounded in places' (p.225). As I thought with the stories, inquiring into the experience of Saffiya, I noted how in her story identity is shaped in communities, communities located in time, place and in relationship with others. Identity-making places are also curriculum-making spaces. An identity-making community is always nested in other identity-making communities. Each one held in the space of the other, simultaneously and over time, as in Nelson's (1995) description of nested communities in which the individual is at the centre and various communities, both found and chosen, are nested around her. In some of those nested communities the individual has a deep-rooted sense of belonging, in others their sense of belonging is less prominent. As I explored and inquired further into the field texts it became clear that Saffiya's identity was fluid in response to new experiences shaped by old experiences, and in her recognition of who she might be in her future. As she noted in her email to me, (p.5):

I am by no means an expert and my knowledge is limited to my personal experience of growing up in a multicultural society and being exposed to different cultures by my parents, who thought it valuable for our upbringing to have an understanding of all faiths (Research artefact, Saffiya 1/16).

Saffiya helped me understand that her identity was contextual and located in her experience over time. Her fluidity was contingent on the groups where she found her-self and where she had been positioned by her-self and her family, and within her Muslim faith. Ben Okri reminds us that storytelling can be dangerous, a subversive and transformative activity: 'The subversive in storytelling is an important part of the transformation of human beings' (1997, p.36). Saffiya's statement 'I wanted to speak from the inside of my own faith' is particularly powerful and resonant. She indicated that she had no problem discussing who she was as a Muslim woman, particularly in reaction to other students in the context of the classroom, and no hesitation in challenging their narratives with her own story to live by. I recognised that Saffiya's willingness to do this did not match the story I previously had of her. I also reflected on my concern to enable her to find a space where she could be who she decided she was, in the classroom and wider society, as an aspect of my own story of myself as a teacher. For both of us Maxine Greene's words 'I am what I am not yet' resonate

(2008, n.p.). In the final sentence of my email to Saffiya I make it clear that there is no conclusion to this story and underline the complexity that we were engaged in: 'Remember, there's always more than one story, it's complicated!' Like Adichie (2009) and Beard (2016), I wanted to identify the need to understand the necessity for scholarship to hear and tell (retell, relive) multiple stories instead of one, single story and how the 'complicating' process can lead to deeper understandings, uncover hidden and challenging questions which we might prefer to have avoided. Storytelling, according to Okri, is 'one of the most dangerous and liberating of all human activities', (1997, p.51). And, King, 'Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous' (2003, p.9).

Story n: '*You walked in and you have this scarf on your head ...*'

Faith, culture, gender, identity

The PGCE year moved on swiftly. Six months passed, the time filled, for me, with teaching practice observations and end-of-course assessments. I visited Saffiya in her school to observe her teaching a maths lesson. Afterwards we had time to chat briefly over a cup of coffee in the staff room and agreed to meet up to reflect together on the *mandir* story to see where we had travelled to in the light of our experiences.

It's early morning, autumn, the first day of the half-term holiday. I'm carrying a bright pink cyclamen in a pot, a present for Saffiya. She picks me up from the bus stop and we fall quickly into conversation about her first term as a newly-qualified teacher. Once in her house she removes her *hijab* and I see her differently. She is no longer identifiable as a Muslim and I realise how much that part of her identity had impressed itself on me and influenced my attitude towards her during the year I had been teaching her. Over coffee and cake in her kitchen we talk about the narrative threads that stand out for each of us in our co-constructed story: faith, culture, gender and identity. Saffiya comments that it was interesting for her to see how people perceived her since the event following the *mandir* visit. 'One fellow trainee said "I see you as a completely different person since that day."'

She explains the significance of wearing *hijab* and the duty of praying, pointing out that, on the course 'we've never had the opportunity to explore

it. Discussing it is one thing – seeing and hearing it is another.’ I recognise an implicit criticism when I hear this and feel that this is something I should have considered in my role as tutor.

Saffiya says that one trainee commented after the *mandir* visit, ‘Now I see you in a completely different light. At the start of the year you walked in and you have this scarf on your head, now I see that you worry about your life and family – I see you differently now.’ She saw this as a positive outcome of the experience but there were also negative aspects. She explains that she had parted with one of her friends (L) because of the incident – ‘I was getting annoyed, it was the way her questions were coming out – more critical than inquiry? The next morning two trainees came up to me and gave me big hugs – then ‘L’ digs into me.’

She explained why the visit to the *mandir* was such a positive one for her, how her view of Hinduism had been challenged and changed: ‘It’s what I know, who I am; it doesn’t matter where I go, which place of worship I visit. I used to see the Hindu faith, all my life, as worshipping many idols. I found it fascinating to learn that the deities are all representing aspects of one God. I try to understand it in relation to my own faith. It’s about understanding. In the seminar after the *mandir* visit I felt they weren’t trying to understand – if you can’t step out of your own misconceptions how can you teach children?’ I share her view about the prejudices displayed by some members of the group and wonder again how I could have pre-empted this situation or challenged them more robustly to think critically about the experience and their perceptions.

I ask her about the impact of the incident for her personally and how she was perceived by her fellow trainees. She replies, ‘There were people there who saw me in a different light – not just as a covered woman, a Muslim woman who they knew nothing about – I think the scarf does do that, it has a separating effect, but it’s my choice, about me and my faith and my God. I try to dispel the myth that the woman who wears *hijab* is oppressed.’ She adds, ‘I’m glad they all spoke up that day otherwise I might not have had the courage to speak myself.’ Saffiya also shared some examples of her artwork and talked about their significance in terms of her identity as a Muslim woman: ‘I created an artwork with a prayer mat on the floor and scarves, twisted and hanging from the ceiling, and London bricks. I saw it as my foundation, facing *Makkah*; the twisted scarves

looked like ropes. People often say the scarf round my neck looks restricting – but it's actually unrestricting – when people came close and felt, the scarves were soft. There was a picture of me praying on the bricks – I'm feeling the strength and solidity it gives me.'

She tells me that she feels confident that as a Muslim she will be comfortable in the school where she will be teaching next year. 'It's a Christian school, Church of England, they have a space for reflection, the Blue Room, I will be able to have a space for prayer.'

Later, as we chatted over coffee and more cake (Saffiya had bought special gluten-free cake to cater for my dietary needs – travelling to my world) I reflected that I had been world-travelling that morning, privileged to enter into and share something of another person's experiences and way of life which had given me much to think about both personally and professionally.

Thinking with the story

I had planned and led the visit to the Hindu temple many times before and had anticipated the question about the separation of men and women that was posed in the seminar but had never experienced discussing it with a Muslim student in the group – it is easy to talk about people when they are not there. There is no doubt that something unforeseen happened in this situation, but what of the resolution? Perhaps I don't know at this stage what sort of resolution there has been/might be for the various actors in the narrative – for Saffiya, for her friends, for any of the other trainees in the group, and for myself as teacher. I feel confident that all those who were there will remember that afternoon and I am also confident that everyone would tell a different story (Adichie, 2009).

As I think with the story and write my thoughts, I am conscious that I am learning more about myself as a teacher. Through reflective writing I find myself in a space where some of my presuppositions about the attitudes of the trainees I teach have been questioned, it is a liminal space. Laidlaw (2010) writes, 'the space between the text and its interpretation is an interesting generative location – these interstices have been described as 'liminal space' (p.98). For Heilbrun this liminality in writing is like 'leaving one condition of self and entering upon another – it is a place of transition, unsteadiness ... the place where we write our own lines' (p.101/102).

Gadamar saw the interpretive space between writer and reader as a liminal space, neither here nor there: ‘the true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between’ (1975 quoted in Charon and Montello, 2002, p.171). He also wrote of the building of a bridge between once and now, a metaphor I link with the three dimensional inquiry space and with Ricoeur’s (1985) writings on time and narrative.

I feel that I learnt much from teaching and working with Saffiya, from the incident that prompted the stories and from our subsequent conversations. In a conversation with Cindy Clarke about the purposes and possible outcomes of narrative inquiry Cindy suggested that the greatest potential of such inquiries lies in the ways in which seeing ourselves more clearly helps us to connect with the experiences of others – something she describes as ‘living and learning on the edges of community’ (Clarke, research conversation, 2016). I recognise that my experience of learning from my encounters with Saffiya reflects King’s view that ‘The really powerful stories are those that shift our perceptions and invite us to look in different directions from the directions and perspectives we are comfortable with’ (2003, p.153). Our thinking together *with* the stories had helped both Saffiya and myself understand the lives being lived and highlighted the importance of noticing difference, prompting us to explore the nature of belonging and exclusion. We allowed the narratives to work on us. As we engaged in reflection we considered how it might be possible to think differently, to think beyond our personal limits, instead of accepting the confines of what we already thought we knew.

Conversations with Jaz: ‘I’m black, in case you haven’t noticed!’

Despite my ongoing reflections on Saffiya’s story and my view, expressed above, that I had learned from the experience I found, only a few months later, that when I teach about issues of faith, culture and identity I should always expect the unexpected. On this occasion the unexpected came in the form of a story told by Jaz, in response to hearing my story *A Place of Greater Safety* (Story d, Chapter 6). Stories generate stories and the immediacy of oral storytelling is powerful. Hearing the story prompted the group to discuss the experiences of children from different cultures and ethnic groups in schools, highlighting the everyday racism they may face. We talked about the significance of language and how we describe those whom we perceive as ‘different’; how the labels we use to define people can be unhelpful. In the discussion

Jaz, always lively and forthcoming, created a stir when she spoke up saying: 'Hey, I'm black in case you haven't noticed!' There was a short silence and then the whole group exploded into laughter, visibly relaxing. It was a kind of ice-breaker, permission to speak openly. When the laughter died down Jaz told us a story:

Last year, before I started on this course, I worked in a school with mainly white students. In the classroom one day I overheard a conversation between a group of students where someone used the word 'nigger'. One of the girls said 'Here, you can't say that, look, there's two in the room'.

This was unexpected. There was an audible gasp in response to the story. It had the immediacy of a told story, a 'this happened to me' story, and its impact in the classroom was electrifying. In Bruner's words something had 'gone awry' (2002, p.15). I looked at Jaz, trying to judge her feelings having shared the experience. I asked her, 'Jaz, have you told anyone that story before?' 'No', she said.

Yet again, it was the end of the session and difficult to follow up. I think hearing Jaz's story may have had a more powerful effect on the students' thinking about equality and diversity issues than anything else in the session. I believe none of us will forget that story, it was something that we actually experienced being told. Jaz was capturing the essence of 'what is it like to be you?' It left some unanswered questions for me. I wanted to hear more from Jaz about why she had felt she could share that particular experience with a group of relative strangers and why she hadn't told it before. I wondered how she felt having told it. And I wondered what it feels like to be discussing racism in a room full of white people where nobody seems prepared to recognise that you are black, and how I might have anticipated and addressed this in my teaching. I wanted the chance to think together with Jaz about the stories here, hers and mine. There is never one single story.

Of course, we had noticed that Jaz is black. Indeed we were discussing language and how to describe and address people in relation to their race and ethnicity whilst (unconsciously?) avoiding drawing attention to her (hooks, 1998). Like Saffiya she had spoken out, drawn our attention and forced us to view the world from a different perspective.

Over the next few weeks I was only able to catch a few minutes with Jaz. Since the session when she told the story I had read the reflective journals and had been surprised and, to be truthful, a little disappointed, that she hadn't chosen to reflect on that experience. On a visit to her school I asked her if she was willing to discuss her thoughts further and sent her a draft of this chapter which included my response to what had happened that day. Jaz said that she had taken time to reflect and had some stories which, so far, she hadn't felt ready to put into writing. 'They're going round in my head,' she said.

My experience of stories that go round and round in your head is that, eventually, they become the stories that have to be told, or written. When I next read her journal she had written two stories both of which were linked to her own experiences of race and identity. The first, *Titilayo*, was prefaced by a sketch of the layout of a primary classroom with a photograph of a smiling child sitting in one of the table groups. (Appendix 6)

Story o: *Titilayo*

My name is Titi, I go to Sunnydale Primary School. Can you see the picture? That's where I sit. On my table I have Thomas, Benedict, Emma and Alexander. I know what you're probably thinking, the same question as all the other Year 3 teachers asked me, 'Do you call yourself Titi because it's easier?' (of course, with a smile). I always answer exactly the same, 'No.' What I want to say is, 'I call myself Titi because it is easier for YOU to pronounce.'

When I started this school I couldn't believe how big it was. My school in London was tiny. Here there are so many children and teachers, it's great. When I sit down for lunch I notice that there is always English food; in my old school we used to have the choice of Caribbean and Indian some days – not the fake stuff either.

I am doing really well in maths, I'm in Set 1. As much as I love taking home merits and certificates for my hard work, I hate it when the teacher, who is not from my year group, makes an attempt to call my name out. I'm sure she doesn't even try. I then get the 'You know who you are!' and I have to jump up with a smile.

I'm sure you've never had questions like, 'How do you do your hair like that?' 'Do they do each plait separately?' 'How long does it take?' 'Does your Mum have hair like that?' But the famous one, 'Can I touch your hair Titi?' I feel like an animal at the zoo, have you never seen a black person before? Some of the children probably haven't.

It's not difficult to spot my Mum at the gate after school, as she is one of only two black parents. In a way I feel special, as I don't have to stand for minutes searching the crowd to find my owner. That's a plus.

20 years later ...

My name is Titi, I am hopefully soon to be working at Sunnydale Primary School.

As I arrive for my interview I can't help but look at the photos of the staff on the board in the entrance hall and think – 'Not one black face!'

In the interview the Headteacher asks if I prefer to be called 'Fifi'. I smile and say 'Yes.' In my head I'm shouting 'Not really, but I bet you're glad I said 'yes.' 'Congratulations, you have the job as the new Year 3 teacher'. I smile and shake their hands.

I say to myself, 'Titilayo Adebola, well done, you did it!'

Story p: *Name-changing*

Extract from my professional journal

Reading Jaz's story Titilayo in her Reflective Log today prompted a whole range of emotions in me from anger to sadness. It reminded me of a story I had written and included in my Master's dissertation (Dyson, 1991) in which two pupils, siblings, a boy and a girl, Rajesh aged 13 and Sarayan, 14, recently arrived from Bangladesh, were told by a senior teacher on their first day at school that their names would be changed, 'We'll call you Ray and Sara because it's easier for us to say'. They were never called by their real names during their time at secondary school. In his first week at school, wearing shoes for the first time and inadequately dressed for an English winter, Rajesh collapsed while playing football and was taken to hospital suffering from hypothermia. That was nearly thirty years ago but Jaz's stories suggest that little has changed. The child in her

story has shown resilience and persevered in the face of what I would call ‘unconscious racism’, unconscious but pernicious, insidious, perpetuating an attitude where a white adult assumes the right to change the name of a black or Asian child, an exercise of power reminiscent of slave owners re-naming ‘their’ slaves, thus stealing their identity as well as their freedom.

At the same time as I read Jaz’s stories I was reading Reni Eddo-Lodge’s book *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People about Race*, (2018). Eddo-Lodge uses the term ‘structural racism’ (p.64) rather than the generally accepted term ‘institutional racism’. She explains, ‘The covert nature of structural racism is difficult to hold to account. It slips out of your hands easily, like a water-snake toy. You can’t spot it as easily as a St George’s flag or a bare belly at an English Defence League march. It’s much more respectable than that’ (ibid.).

In reflecting on the tensions revealed in Jaz’s story about Titi I found her discussion of the interest aroused by the hair of the one black child in the class raised some questions. Could it be understood as simply the natural curiosity of young children in something or someone perceived as different, even exotic? Would that view make it acceptable? I was prompted to re-read bell hook’s story *Black is a Woman’s Colour* (in D. Soyini Madison, 1997). My reading revealed the deeper levels of awareness that need to be explored if we are to understand why Titi’s hair is such a significant part of Jaz’s story. hooks describes the children in her family doing each other’s hair:

Good hair – that’s the expression. We all know it, begin to hear it when we are small children ... Good hair is hair that is not kinky, hair that does not feel like balls of steel wool, hair that does not take hours to comb ... Real good hair is straight hair, hair like white folks’ hair’ (p.206).

Names and hair are signifiers of identity. My name tells you who I am, my identity. My hair is a significant aspect of my appearance and gives messages in terms of culture, ethnicity. Titi stands out because she looks different and because her name sounds different. The black girls in hooks’ story want ‘white hair’ – not in terms of colour but of style, straight with no kinks. In this sense they want to be like ‘white folks’.

Afua Hirsch (2018) adds her experience to this discussion as she describes her teenage experiences of growing up in Wimbledon realising that all beauty products ‘assumed European hair’ (p.105) and hairdressers told her ‘I’m sorry we can’t do hair like yours here’ (ibid.). She writes how, after many visits to Boots,

... anticipating some kind of healing from the disease of being black ... I cried each time the truth revealed itself under the harsh light of a bathroom mirror. They did nothing for me. They were never designed with me in mind. People with hair like mine were so invisible that the manufacturers didn’t even acknowledge us in their acts of exclusion (p.104).

The stories told by Jaz raise the question of ‘whiteness,’ how it is understood, what it means and what it does, and why it has to be explored in the context of what happens in schools. Knowles and Lander refer to the view of Marx (2006) that whiteness is ‘a notion which is embedded in the “normal” everyday fabric of society, and in this way whiteness has become normalized’ (p.59). Eddo-Lodge sees ‘whiteness’ manifested in views that deny racism – ‘I don’t see race’ (op.cit. p.168). As Knowles and Lander put it, ‘Everyone is the same. I don’t see colour. You are an individual to me’ (p.58). Eddo-Lodge points out that white people do not feel the need to explore what it means to be white: ‘Whiteness sees itself as the norm. It refuses to recognise itself for what it is. Its so-called ‘objectivity’ and ‘reason’ is its most potent and insidious tool for maintaining power’ (p.169). Knowles and Lander describe this view of ‘whiteness’ as a negative discourse of neutrality, colour-blindness and racism ‘which has become established through the process of oppression and domination’ (p. 59). Such a view is exemplified in the name-changing stories of Titi, Rajesh and Sarayan – ‘because it’s easier for us to say’.

I had carried the name-changing story of Sarayan and Rajesh with me for a long time and it had surfaced as a result of reading Jaz’s story. It had troubled me, not least because I had not done anything about it, I had not even tried to put things right. As a relatively new member of staff I had been reluctant to challenge the senior leaders in the school. I was cowardly. Later in my career, as I worked my way along the A13, see Chapter 5, I met Liz, a headteacher in a Tower Hamlets primary school where the majority of the children were from the Bangladeshi and Sylhet communities. Liz and her staff knew and pronounced correctly the name of every child in the school.

The school had a special unit for deaf children and all staff and children learned to sign each other's names. The impact of this practice was evident in the way people treated each other in all aspects of school life, but it was most apparent when the whole school was gathered together for morning assembly. I saw it as an example of Freire's model of building learning communities where everyone is valued, where all voices are respected, put into practice in a socially deprived corner of East London. This did not come about by accident, it was an example of praxis, defined by Freire as '...action and reflection' the day-to-day living out of what we affirm. And of Dewey's (1916) ideal of education as democracy – the belief that democracy was not just a mode of government but rather 'a mode of associated living, a conjoint, communicated experience' (p.101).

The second story in Jaz's journal was *The 'N' Word*, an extended version of the embryonic story she had shared in the seminar. It was prefaced by the blurb on an imagined book cover.

Story q: *The 'N' Word*

We visit the witty, creative young black woman who ventures into the wild zone that lies beyond the M25. White, middle class parents with white middle class children, what's the worst that can happen? Everyone has seen a black person in their life, right? Everyone understands that black people are no longer called 'coloured', right? Continue reading and find out why this teacher decided to stay in these wild regions to make a change and become a role model to many white middle class children.

Based on a true story ...

As I sit at my desk the children burst into the classroom. They've just had break so they're loud and excitable. Year 7, chatting, shouting, but what catches my attention is some singing: 'She want a Nigga that hold the door for her'. At this point I recognised the song Daniel was singing as I was singing it this morning. To be very honest, to hear Daniel, a white child sing those words didn't phase me too much as I am fully aware it happens.

But then I hear Sandra yell 'Daniel!' He replies 'What?!'

Sandra then yells something that completely stops me in my tracks and almost takes my breath away!

'Daniel you can't say that word.'

I assume Sandra is referring to the 'N' word.

Daniel says, 'What word?'

He clearly doesn't even realise the word is that bad a word.

Sandra shouts 'The N Word! Especially when there are two of them in the room!'

Daniel just stopped and smiled, and they both moved on.

At this point words could not express what I felt.

As I searched – embarrassment? No. Shame? No. Angry? No.

Sad. That was it. I felt so sad about what I'd heard and even more sad for the lack of education of these children.

It felt even worse when I noticed the other black child did not question what she had just heard.

I knew it was my duty to make some sort of impact. I started with a conversation with the students.

I have been put on this earth and, more importantly, ended up in this particular place, for a reason. I need to make some changes!

When we share our stories we make ourselves vulnerable and never more so than when those stories highlight issues of race, culture and identity. I see Jaz's stories as counterstories. Lindeman Nelson (1995) describes a counterstory as a narrative told within a chosen community that allows the teller the ability to re-enter and reclaim full citizenship within the found community of place in which the teller lives. She further argues that a chosen community offers moral space for self-reflection, as well as offering space for reflection on the dominant community in which the teller finds herself/himself participating (in Huber, Caine, Huber and Steeves, 2013). Noddings (1990) affirms that 'stories have the power to direct and change our lives' (p.157). Like Jaz, when I wrote *Drops in the Ocean* (1991) I believed that, as a teacher, I would be able to change the world – or at least transform attitudes to race and cultural differences in the schools where I was working. It is depressing, therefore, to read Jaz's stories but inspiring to see her determination to transform, 'I have been put on this earth for a reason ... I need to make some changes.' Her reflections have

led to stories and the stories have made her determined to act – praxis again, action and reflection on the world in order to change it. And Freire, a guide to Jaz as she becomes a teacher:

Men and women are human beings because they are historically constituted as beings of praxis, and in the process they have become capable of transforming the world – of giving it meaning (1970).

Opportunities for further conversations with Jaz were limited by the demands of the PGCE course. I decided to send her my reflections on her stories (above) in an email message:

Email: Janet to Jaz

Subject: Thanks for sharing your stories – my reflections are attached.

I know that for the foreseeable future you're going to be very busy, completing the course and then starting your career as a newly qualified teacher and won't have time to think much about the questions and issues raised in your stories. But I do hope that, sometime in the future, you'll find time to re-read them and reflect again on yourself when you wrote them and your future self. I know you don't have much time for reading anything except stuff relating to your assignments but when you do I have a few suggestions. I think you'd really enjoy the novels and short stories of the Nigerian writer, Chimamanda Adichie – I really enjoyed *Americanah*, the story of a young Nigerian woman who emigrates to the USA to go to university, also *The Thing Around Your Neck* – short stories – great if you don't have much time to read! She's excellent on the clash between cultures. You can listen to her talking about 'the danger of a single story' <https://www.ted.com> – she warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country we risk a critical misunderstanding.

Thinking about your stories prompted me to read two recent books which deal with the issues of identity, stereotyping and colour-blindness – strong, heart-felt writing by black women – *Why I'm no Longer Talking to White People about Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge and *Brit(ish)* by Afua Hirsch. Both very current and thought-provoking.

Better still, keep writing your own stories, and keep in touch, best wishes, Janet

Teaching practice and assignments intervened and I resigned myself to the idea that I would be leaving this particular travelling companion, Jaz, ‘in the midst’ – although, of course, her journey would continue. I was pleased, therefore, to receive an email in which she responded to my reflections:

Email: Jaz to Janet

Subject: A reflective response

Sorry for taking so long to get back to you!

I really enjoyed reading our chapter. Ever since the first session on being reflective I have learned so much. I’ve taken notice of so much more of the fine print. I think back to when I first starting working in education and how I always called myself Miss Low. I have only recently understood why – I just cannot bear the embarrassment of having to repeat the pronunciation of my surname more than once in a room full of white people. It has made me ask whether I should stand proud and say my name with pride three or four times? As I begin my first post in September, I ask myself what name will I go by? I’m getting married in August and will have a new African surname which is just as ‘difficult’ to pronounce. I will keep you posted!

I’ve read the book *Why I’m no Longer Talking to White People about Race* and absolutely loved it. It confirmed my thoughts and feelings – I’d been wondering ‘Is it just me? Am I over-thinking it?’ In our English lecture last week we were asked if anyone had read anything lately that was not connected with reading for the course. I proudly answered ‘Yes! It’s a book called *Why I’m no Longer Talking to White People about Race*, followed by, ‘This is awkward!’ Of course everyone in the room laughed. But then someone said ‘That’s so unfair!’ I couldn’t help but think that if they read the book and experienced some of the things I’ve experienced they would see why. Interesting, very interesting.

I can’t thank you enough for showing me the way to be a reflective practitioner. Best wishes, Jaz

I felt pleased that Jaz felt a sense of ownership of our co-composed story. But most of all the email made me reflect on the ethical responsibilities that those who engage in narrative inquiry have towards their participants. Clandinin (2013) emphasises:

It is important to understand narrative inquiry spaces as spaces of belonging for both researchers and participants – spaces that are marked always by ethics and attitudes of openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care (p.200).

I was conscious that it was in one of my lectures that Jaz had been provoked to tell her first story and that I had encouraged her to write reflectively about her experiences which had led to further stories. Through reflective story writing she explored her identity, from her childhood to the present, articulating the challenges that, as a black teacher, she is likely to encounter during her career, and her determination to face up to them. It is a feature of narrative inquiry that neither researcher nor participant can possibly imagine what may emerge in the course of the inquiry. We must expect the unexpected and be responsive to the moral and ethical questions that are raised. Reading that one of the trainees had responded to hearing the title of Eddo-Lodge's book, 'That's so unfair!' I noted that, for me as a teacher, there are also challenges. How will Jaz's story influence the way I plan and teach about race and diversity in the future?

Lives are always in the making (Greene, 1995) and uncertainty and unexpectedness are inevitable. I refer back to Stone-Mediatore's assertion: 'A story is not an endpoint but a point of departure' (op.cit.p.63). As I reflect on Jaz, on her 'becoming,' as she begins her teaching career, once more Greene's words, scribbled hastily in my notebook in a Manhattan ballroom, resonate: 'I am what I am not yet' (2008, n.p.). Saffiya, Jaz and I will go our separate ways, continuing to live, tell, relive and retell our stories. I feel that for all three of us our stories to live by have been changed by the experiences we have shared through co-composing the stories in this chapter. Complicating the issues raised (Beard, 2016) has enabled us to recognise the political implications of our experiences, enabling a deeper, more critical questioning of identity, belonging and exclusion.

Chapter 8

Travelling with Evelyn: four seasons of co-composing stories to live by

‘If we change the stories we live by, quite possibly we change our lives.’

Ben Okri, (1997, p.37)

This chapter has been co-composed with Evelyn, a former Master’s student who is now a colleague and travelling companion, demonstrating the potential relational power of shared storying of experiences. Through a year of conversations we explore the nature of fictional writing, how we choose our metaphors, and how they help us create and understand our own stories, and, in turn, how we support others to reflect through stories. Evelyn and I work together but have different roles in teaching, mentoring, supporting and assessing the trainee teachers. Here, we invite the reader to follow us for a year as we share our experiences of writing stories, and discuss examples of our work with trainee teachers, showing how both narrative and metaphor can work as tools for developing reflective and reflexive practice. Using examples we explain our approaches to teaching and supporting trainees in creating narratives that generate deep, critical insights into their developing practice, often helping them to explore dilemmas and puzzles. Kessler affirms the importance of modelling in this way for teacher educators: ‘I saw the need to explicitly model being a reflective practitioner so that my student teachers could see into this process and think about how to change and develop the way they might teach’ (in Russell and Loughran, 2007, p.135).

Over a year of reflective conversations we have explored our narratives, leading to further storying of experience and highlighting larger social and cultural narratives relating to curriculum, pedagogy, school leadership, inclusion, identity and equality. As has been the case in previous chapters we engage in what Morris describes as thinking narratively with stories rather than thinking *about* stories. Clandinin reminds narrative inquirers to attend to thinking with stories ‘in multiple ways, toward our stories, towards the other’s stories, toward all the narratives in which we are embedded as well as what begins to emerge in our shared and lived and told stories’ (2013, p.30). We show how thinking *with* rather than *about* stories allows narratives to work on us in ways that may be transformative.

Working with trainee teachers has shown us that reflective writing comes easily for some while others find it difficult. Some doubt its value and others are what Halquist and Novinger (2009, p.200) call ‘reflection resisters’. Some do not view themselves as creative authors and are nervous about playing around, conjuring with words, while others have genuine difficulties in writing from a different perspective. Those toe-dippers may need more support following the introductory session, which is where we, as mentor and tutor, write with and alongside them. Kessler affirms the importance of modelling in this way for teacher educators:

I saw the need to explicitly model being a reflective practitioner so that my student teachers could see into this process and think about how to change and develop the way they might teach (in Russell and Loughran, 2007, p.135).

We have experienced how sympathetic support, mentoring and modelling can help develop reflective writing including fictionalising and telling stories, challenging resistance and releasing the narrative imagination, giving teachers the ability to draw on stories as the need arises, making their actions better informed, adding to the repertoire of teacher knowledge to be accessed in future.

Winter: world travelling

It’s a bright, cold winter morning. I walk briskly through the suburban streets to the school, glad to stretch my legs after a long bus journey. This is an affluent area, expensive houses with neatly-kept gardens.

As I walk I join a procession of parents pushing buggies, holding little, well-dressed children by the hand, chatting animatedly as they walk; some older children run ahead with their friends, eager to get to school. I’m looking forward to my day in school too – observations of two trainee teachers doing their first teaching practice, discussing their lessons and their reflective writing, and time to talk to their mentors about their progress. I feel a twinge of guilt about my relaxed sense of enjoyment when I know that the trainees may be nervous and apprehensive about their observations.

At the end of the morning I've arranged to spend time talking with Evelyn, the Deputy Headteacher in this infant school. Evelyn and I work together, teaching and supporting the trainees in developing their critical reflections. We both write narratively as a means of professional and personal reflection and this morning we've set aside some time to share our stories and explore some of the purposes of writing in this way.

At the school gates I thread my way through the bottleneck of buggies, children and adults, and head for reception where I'm greeted warmly, a familiar visitor. Before going to find the trainees I look in on Evelyn. She's in her office in conversation with Headteacher, Sian, the door open, both of them ready to see anyone who needs them before school starts. We agree on a time to meet later. I know she will have found it hard to hold onto that space in her busy day and appreciate her willingness to make time for our reflections.

When we meet she makes coffee and we settle into conversation. We are in this together, Evelyn and I. We are characters in each other's stories – in *this* story. I ask her to think back to the first story she shared with me when she was a student studying for a Master's degree in education. The story was memorable, I felt, written through a series of text messages with a nod towards the story *The Three Bears*, lively and conversational in style, with touches of humour. When she read the story to the group there was a shift in the atmosphere in the room, body language changed, people relaxed, shoulders dropped and there was a sense of attentive listening. The story was amusing but prompted some serious discussion.

Story r: Extract from Evelyn's story, *The Three Bears*

January 5th

Mummy Bear: Baby's pack of information arrived from the school – will read at my break time.

Daddy Bear: V exciting! Can't believe how quickly it's come round! Let me know details so I can sort things with Big Al for time to see Baby into first day at school.

Mummy Bear: Baby starting at 9.45 on 15th.

Daddy Bear: OK will square it with Big Al and charge up camcorder batteries!

Mummy Bear: Reading on – starts at 9.45 and out by 11.30 – hardly time to make it home?

Daddy Bear: Well they said take things slowly on the first day – “ease them in” they said.

Mummy Bear: Starts at 9.15 on 16th and finishes 11.45.

Daddy Bear: OK – will move a meeting to pm but should be fine.

Mummy Bear: Just about time to take that conference call in between!

Daddy Bear: That's lucky!

Mummy Bear: Starting time changed to 8.50 on 17th.

Daddy Bear: Will miss 8.30 train – joy of having to get the 5 past that stops at every station!

Mummy Bear: Finishes at 12.00 on 17th – will try to get my appointment moved to later then Baby can go to Kids Club.

Mummy Bear: Says 8.50 to 12.00 all that week – not so bad if I tinker with the Johnson account before I go in.

Daddy Bear: Good idea Sweetie – what's for supper?

Mummy Bear: 1.15 on 20th!

Daddy Bear: ?

Mummy Bear: Baby finishes at 1.15 on 20th and there's a talk from a 'Mid-day Assistant' at 11.45.

Daddy Bear: Will check if Al needs me for the second presentation – have done the ground work so may be able to 'work at home' a.m.

Mummy Bear: Haddock mornay and mangetout!

Daddy Bear: What time on 18th? Yum!

Daddy Bear: Al needs me on 20th so non-negotiable!

Mummy Bear: Bugger! Will see if Granny is free!

January 16th

Daddy Bear: Showed Al my film of Baby going into class – so proud – what time tomorrow?

Mummy Bear: Can't find letter – will search my pile. Remember dry cleaning tonight.

Daddy Bear: Black or grey suit?

Mummy Bear: Letter has vanished!

January 18th

Daddy Bear: 11.35: Incident on line – train stuck!

Mummy Bear: Delicate stage with sauce for tonight! Let me know when you get moving.

Daddy Bear: 11.45 – still stuck!

Mummy Bear: Damn! Will leave sauce to get Bear

Daddy Bear: Thanks Mummy!

Mummy Bear: OK. Got there 5 mins late. Bear sobbing. Teacher nice but frazzled!

I ask Evelyn, ‘Can you remember how it felt to write in this way, how it seems in retrospect?’ She explains: ‘It was written to help me solve a problem with an activity in school, a parent survey. I would ask parents the questions and then not like what they said when I read the responses. So the first story was an exchange of text messages between two parents. As a parent myself I began to wonder what it was like from the parents’ point of view. A mother and father were trying to organise their lives, only as I was writing it I began to realise how complicated the arrangements for parents’ evening were and the messages we, the school, were giving. It made me look again at the responses to the parent survey questions and I realised we were creating problems for them.’

Evelyn sees story writing as a problem-solving strategy, a means of clarifying thinking, an example of narrative promoting reflective thinking (Bold 2012). She explains, ‘I wrote the story in a problem-solving way. It was a way of venting my emotions. I read it to one of the teachers and we said, ‘It’s obvious it’s really confusing for them, we think they know what we mean, and they think they know what we mean. It wasn’t clear, so we changed the way we communicated the information to parents, tried to make it more consistent.’ I was interested that she had shared her story with another teacher, an example of how stories can work not just for the writer or teller but for the reader or listener, and how it led to organisational change in the school.

Evelyn emphasises that writing and thinking with the story has brought about personal as well as professional changes: ‘Through the story I’d unpicked and got

to some really deep-seated emotions. Now I don't respond in the same way, I have a completely different perspective – now we look forward to the annual parent survey – before I would dread it, it was very much of a threat.'

She compares her response to the parent survey the following year: 'The feedback was much more positive. There were still some responses that created an emotional response in me, but now, rather than being annoyed, I was amused. I put myself in that parent's head and now I could respond not in a haughty "how ridiculous" way but just by explaining how things work. The story was triggered by me looking at text messages with my real-life partner I thought, "that's how parents are, they have those conversations." Also running through was the everyday stuff, like collecting the dry cleaning and making a sauce, and train problems. For parents now life is very difficult and complicated, they're working, we need to stop and think as a school what it's like for them.'

This is a significant change. The unpicking of the story revealing underlying emotions has been transformative not only of the school's communication with parents but of Evelyn's responses to issues raised by parents. Seemingly trivial and annoying issues which had been perceived as threatening before she wrote the story have now become easy to deal with (and even slightly amusing). Her 'world-travelling' (Lugones, 1987) has become more 'loving' and more 'playful' now that she sees herself in the world of parents, as a parent herself, rather than the 'other' world she occupies in her professional role. For Lugones 'world-travelling' is travelling in multiple directions across multiple worlds, a powerful metaphor. Clandinin (2013) writes:

When we travel we keep memories, construct images of who we are and what we're about as well as images of others – who they are and what they are about, gaining understanding of ourselves and others and the contexts we live in (p.59).

I'm curious to know how strongly embedded the practice of creating stories has become for Evelyn and ask, 'So, after that did you write more stories?' She responds, 'I wrote a poem about whether I should stick to being a deputy or go for a headteacher post, a bit of a Hamlet, "To be or not to be?" It was a kind of 'what

might have been'. It's a good question to ask yourself. I wrote it very quickly and went back and analysed it after a few weeks and tried to see why I'd picked certain words, and what frame of mind I was in, metaphors I'd used, like "muddy" – why did I pick that? I'm not sure. I'm stuck in a quagmire? Or I'm in a quagmire but I've got my wellies on so I'm OK, because it doesn't matter. Now when the job advertisements come into school, the image of Hamlet standing on stage with the skull in his hand comes back to me!'

We laugh, but I'm struck once more by the diverse ways in which Evelyn uses stories. Here she uses a poetic form to question herself in order to clarify her thinking about her professional future and then analyses the language and the metaphors she has chosen in order to deepen her self-understanding. She is thinking with the story, re-storying her story to live by. We discuss the significance of metaphors in helping us to make meaning through narrative (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), and the value of metaphor in helping us to see things differently as 'a tool that can move us away from predictable lines of seeing' (Ely *et al*, 1997, p.112). Both Evelyn and I are intrigued by the metaphors that have emerged through our fictionalising and reflective conversations; they are different for each of us. My thinking draws on the language of travel, the idea of making a journey, mapping the landscape, conversations with travelling companions, the issues of borderland spaces and tensions, roads and bridges that both link and separate. It has become an over-arching metaphor for my work in narrative inquiry, what Ely *et al* call a 'metatheme' (1997, p.121). As a researcher I see my role as travelling companion, spending time with participants and then moving on. They define a metatheme as 'going beyond the personal, time-limited metaphor into the realm of the timeless, the essential, the universal' (ibid.).

For Evelyn it is the metaphoric language of traditional fairy tales that feeds her narrative imagination: dark, impenetrable woods; the struggle between good and evil; the hero's journey, fighting against monsters, dragons and wolves (Bettelheim, 1976; Eco, 1994; Langrish, 2016). Metaphors are also a strong feature of the trainees' journal writing. Evelyn talks about the significance of metaphor in her writing, explaining: 'Writing doesn't make sense without metaphor, there's no emotion in there. Playing around with words is an important aspect of writing things out

in my head, I'm constantly referring back to stories and poems I've read, so it's intellectually satisfying but also helps me to see things differently, sometimes it's just a word I've used, an unexpected word perhaps, and that leads me in a different direction, makes me ask, "Why have I used that word?"

Egan (1997) has described metaphor as 'one of our cognitive grappling tools; we need it to get over difficult landscape' (p.30). Ely *et al* (1997) also view metaphor as a tool, one that can extend our thinking, moving us away from predictable lines of seeing. They also note that, 'Sometimes we find a metaphor that just tickles us. It seems just right' (op.cit. p.120). Hanne (2017, n.p.) reminds us that metaphor can help us make 'a flash of connection', something strongly evident in Evelyn's writing. He argues that metaphor is an integral part of narrative and that the two should be studied together rather than separately, a view supported by McCloskey (1994) who suggested that, in the physical and social sciences, the relationship between narrative and metaphor may be seen as complementary, arguing that, 'metaphorical and ... narrative explanations answer to each other' (p.5). This interactive and mutually enriching relationship between narrative and metaphor has been explored by Hanne through the study of a novel by Milan Kundera (Hanne, 1994). The narratives explored here are also rich with metaphors, often unexpected, that make us feel and think differently about something.

Evelyn recalls, 'The most powerful story I've written was from the perspective of a pupil I'd taught several years ago ... I wrote about a child I came into conflict with, and how she saw me ... What came from writing the story was that I really wished I'd understood about writing in that way when I was in the situation, not several years later because I always felt I'd let her down, not been able to find a way ... I'd have liked to know what happened. The story is about something that's difficult that you need to work your way through.'

There is always the story that needs to be told, waiting in the wings to make its entry. Writing or telling it can provide some kind of resolution, closure, or, as Evelyn has shown, highlighting the value of writing as a means of finding out what you know. I share Richardson's words, 'I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it' (2000, p.924). I too

have stories that lie somewhere at the back of my mind waiting for the right moment to be told, as Okri says, ‘Stories are very patient things. They drift about quietly in your soul’ (1997, p.35). Winter (1988) asserts that writing is ‘never simply about an external world, but always (implicitly at least) about the writer, and about the writer’s attempt to write. The act of writing is always *self*-exploratory, i.e. ‘reflexive’” (p.237), and ‘... a piece of writing is always an act of self-exploration: what it ‘means’ is not known beforehand and ‘put into’ the text, rather it is discovered by being written’ (ibid).

We break for more coffee. I’m conscious that Evelyn’s time is precious but ask her one more question before I go: How does she feel writing stories affects her view of herself as a professional? She pauses for a moment then says: ‘It’s made me listen to people more and ask questions to encourage them to tell their stories. I stop, reflect, and then go back and ask another question.’ She gives examples of her support for the trainee teachers in the school: ‘I can support their reflective writing, ask more difficult questions, try to get them to think in a narrative way, to put themselves in the story. I try to listen more to what they’ve said and suggest they reflect on something they’ve raised in the discussion.’

On the way home on the bus I read through my notes of our conversation, annotating them as I go. Later I type them up and add my reflections sending them to Evelyn for her comments. Christmas over, the next school visits are planned, Evelyn and I set a date for our next meeting and she sends me a new story prompted by a professional dilemma, which gives me much to reflect on.

Spring: into the woods

It’s Spring. I walk from the bus stop past gardens now glowing golden with daffodils. It’s lunch time and I hear the playground sounds in the distance. Evelyn is busy when I arrive. I make the coffee and, as the children return to their classrooms and the school afternoon begins, we settle down to talk.

We start with her new story prompted by an instance of bullying of one member of staff, ‘Caitlin’, by another, ‘Jasmine’. She explains that fictionalising was a way of exploring how to handle a difficult situation: ‘Fictionalising was more powerful than

if I'd written about it in a different way. I think it's about the word choices you can make, using words in an odd way made the emotions become clearer to me and I felt I was almost in a Grimm's fairy tale ... and there was going to be a moral. I stopped writing because I felt there wasn't going to be a happy ending. I was on a dark path. I was writing it because it could help me solve problems as a school leader. The word choice really helped me, swords and mortal danger. Perhaps I'd over-dramatised but it made me see that, for this bullied member of staff, it could have felt like that. She started off as a victim and then, through the events of the narrative she was a heroine, able to stand up to the bully'. Evelyn described how she saw the bully as a monster, '... a dragon, a she-wolf. There was an area of the classroom that was her domain. She was holding court in the staff room. I imagined the victim in the story in a wood, like Hansel and Gretel or Red Riding Hood, unsure what's going to attack her. You shouldn't feel like that going to work.'

In this extract Evelyn describes, in fairy-tale style, how the bullying in the staffroom began to be challenged:

Story s: *Battling with a monster*

The pathway towards Caitlin's stronger steps was built on foundations from an unexpected source, an unpredicted scenario. During a staff meeting where Caitlin listened attentively and made edifying notes to remind herself of possible improvements to her practice, Jasmine momentarily let down her guard, allowing her mask to slip briefly ... she snatched a paper which Caitlin was helpfully passing round, commenting tartly about the slow pace of distribution, feeling herself almost safe as the Important People were out of earshot. However, an unlikely ally emerged. Kate, noticing the snappiness and snideness, planned to report back on her observations to the Important People. Katie knew that Caitlin could be wearing in her earnestness, yet she also recognised that it was often an asset to the rest of the group. On reporting her concerns to an Important Person a weight lifted from her shoulders. It also stimulated a chain reaction, prompting other allies to emerge, supporting and complimenting Caitlin, saying how well she contributed to the group, and what a positive

outcome her unique style had all those around her. The stronger those messages were, the more rapidly Jasmine's powers seemed to diminish. No matter how sharply Jasmine clicked her fingers or cascaded her barbed comments, it was almost as if an insubstantial shield of protection now surrounding Caitlin took on a more solid form, cushioning and cotton-woolling her, protecting her from any slings and arrows, until one day a vicious comment rebounded from Caitlin's shield and struck Jasmine sharply between the eyes.

Evelyn explained: 'Writing the story had a real impact on how I dealt with the situation. I stopped and looked differently, becoming aware that other staff had noticed similar aspects in the bully's behaviour. Drawing on the support of these "extras" in the story I adopted a team approach, shielding the victim by ensuring she was not left alone with the bully, and publicly celebrating her worth. The victim began to assert herself more and, supported by my coaching, was enabled to tackle the issues herself. The story also caused Sian and I to examine what kind of leadership roles we were modelling to our colleagues. We felt we needed to take on this person with the very domineering personality, even though we're not like that ourselves'.

Evelyn's writing prompts me to recall the work of Bruno Bettelheim (1976) on the nature of fairy stories. They are completely fictionalised, they ensure distance and they create another world which can only be entered through the narrative imagination. She agrees, 'Yes, I read him years ago, and yes, the image I'd got wasn't a realistic image, it was as if I was stepping into a black and white drawing, a story book illustration, that was how I could see that I wasn't really there. It looked like a picture, not a real place, but the bully's finger nails were coloured red and sparkly, the rest was a pen and ink drawing.'

The hubbub of 'home time' brings our conversation to an end. I leave with a copy of the new story and much to think about. An hour's bus journey provides a perfect reflective space. As I was trying to make sense of our conversation I highlighted a number of themes, ideas, questions and theories that would help me to understand the stories for further reflection. Evelyn saw the story as ongoing; she added to it in

reflective narrative form. It was clear that writing the story helped her to address a problem. It also gave her a different view and allowed her the freedom to use words differently, for example, in what she described as ‘in a very odd way’ but which are in fact a series of interesting metaphors which help to illustrate meaning.

Evelyn had found evocative and unusual metaphors including the idea of walking in the woods. Eco (1994) chose the metaphor of walking in the woods to explore how fiction works, using the idea as a flexible image for narrative texts, for stories. In this explanation of the metaphor he highlights its versatility:

Woods are a metaphor for the narrative text, not only for the text of fairy tales but for any narrative text ... There are two ways of walking through a wood. The first is to try one of several routes (so as to get out of the wood as fast as possible, say, or to reach the house of grandmother, Tom Thumb or Hansel and Gretel); the second is to walk so as to discover what the wood is like and find out why some paths are accessible and others not (pp.6 and 27).

Here, Eco refers to reading a text as a walk in the woods but, in the context of viewing writing as a means of finding out what we know, the metaphor also works. Evelyn experienced the feeling that she, the writer, was ‘in the middle of a Grimm’s fairy tale’ and felt that ‘there was going to be a moral’. At one point she stopped writing because she was ‘afraid there wasn’t going to be a happy ending: I was on a dark path.’ I found this statement particularly interesting; it was as if she was afraid that, by writing the ending she would affect or possibly determine the outcome in some way so she chose to pause the action, to stop the clock. Perhaps she fears the unhappy ending and how this might reveal what she might perceive as an error in her leadership? Or something else? It certainly locates her, almost physically in her own story.

Evelyn’s comment that, ‘On the way I stopped and looked differently’ suggests that she is also on some kind of journey. But, just as she is the storyteller who has the power to change the ending she is the leader and has the power and insight to deal with the situation. She can influence the outcomes, manipulate the ending.

The image of stepping into the book illustration which was black and white except for the red nails of the bully and recognising that this was a picture and that was how she knew she ‘wasn’t really there’ fascinates me. It reminds me of Alice passing through the looking glass and also of the reflexivity that deeply reflective writers and thinkers achieve. Evelyn put herself into the story even though she ‘wasn’t really there’.

I thought about the colour of the red sparkly fingernails in the otherwise monochrome picture. Langrish (2016), identifying the significance of colour in fairy tales, writes that ‘black, white and red are meaningful colours because they are rare in nature and therefore noticeable’ (p.94). She considers that red is the most meaningful of all colours ‘because it is the most emotionally charged’ (p.94). ‘Red is the colour that accompanies childbirth, wounds, war, accidents. Red is the stuff of life and death’ (ibid.).

I email my notes to Evelyn and suggest that next time we could focus on how we’ve supported trainees who have resisted reflection.

Summer: releasing the narrative imagination

The final teaching practice is underway. I have observed two lessons this morning and enjoyed conversations with the trainees about their teaching and future plans. In September they will start on their careers as newly-qualified teachers: exciting and daunting.

Evelyn and I find a quiet space outside where we can talk undisturbed. We concentrate on the stories of two trainees who have had difficulties with reflective writing. Evelyn shares some recent experiences of working with Ava, a trainee who is confident to tell peers and tutors on the course that she has Asperger’s Syndrome and finds social communication baffling. From her first day she has dominated staffroom conversations and talked over people to give her views about a wide range of subjects. She says that on her previous placement she was told that she was ‘rude’. Her mentor is sensitive to her difficulties and advises her to talk less and listen more in the staffroom. Evelyn stresses that ‘Ava is not intentionally rude, but no one has ever explained how she appears to others. Her behaviour in the staffroom is gradually transformed as we deliberately model how to take turns in a conversation and explain that this is what we are doing. Bolstered by this success, I decided to help her tackle

her reflective writing difficulties. Ava possesses an encyclopaedic knowledge of a range of subjects and thoroughly investigates academic research underlying her writing, but lacks insight into the emotions of others; hence her entries are dry, dull and metaphor-free.’

We recognise and discuss the difficulties experienced by people on the autism spectrum in taking the imaginative steps required to think narratively and metaphorically, referring to the research of Rundblad and Annaz (2010) which suggests that the understanding of metaphors and metonyms are severely affected in children on the autism spectrum. Evelyn explains how she has worked with Ava to help her develop her narrative imagination, referring to a tutorial discussion with Ava in which they explored an incident in the classroom where a 7-year-old pupil has been crying in a class test situation. ‘I suggested that she could try to write from the perspective of the child. A stolid piece threaded with apt academic references is presented to me, but there is no sign that Ava has developed any insight into that child’s feelings and so does not know how to support her, potentially a significant gap for her to bridge in her early teaching career. I offer her an alternative angle by penning a diary entry as if written by the child in the first person, setting the scene in the context of life in an academically high-achieving family. Faced with a perplexing question in the test, the child’s concentration drifts away’:

I have to focus and not daydream. Daddy says daydreamers will not get to the best university and will not get a prestigious job... my brother is sure he will go to Oxford to study maths because it is the best in the world. Daddy says he will get there if he puts enough effort in; it’s not enough to be smart, because there are plenty of smart people ready to jump ahead of you in the queue – by working the hardest you show you want it more.

My narrative ends with the child:

... worried that I am going to let my family down if I don’t do well in this test. I just can’t stop the tears from spilling down my cheeks. My teacher spots me and quietly gives me a tissue. She tells me I am going to be fine if I do my best but I don’t think my best is good enough today.

Evelyn says, ‘The academic references woven into my reflection are identical to Ava’s, but the contrast in approaches is stark. Ava reads my narrative in unusual silence and I sense a lightbulb moment when she realises the impact of stepping into another’s shoes, recognising the insight gained. Ava moves out of the comfort zone of her world of factual information and correct answers to explore, hesitantly at first, new possibilities and perhaps, encouraged to experiment with words and metaphors, without knowing exactly what the outcome will be.’ Evelyn’s modelling of how fictionalising can develop professional insights has helped Ava to find and release her narrative imagination (Greene, 1997).

I tell Evelyn that when I read Ava’s recent journal entries I noted the change in structure, tone and emotional content as she began, implicitly, to ask of her pupils, ‘What is it like to be you? What is it to travel to your world with loving perception?’

We turned to Jake who was similarly struggling to, as Evelyn described, ‘get hooked’ by reflective writing. She noted how his sterile, passionless advocacy of the value of teaching physical education in his reflective journal immediately pushed her to model for him how his writing could be: ‘I wrote from my perspective as a child who found any organised physical education activity tortuous, describing my primary school experience with Mr McGraw, my poor, patient teacher who tried to coach me in athletics over one long, hot summer afternoon. I remember how he smiled, shaking his head as my attempt at throwing a ball somehow results in the ball falling forlornly behind me, commenting “I’ve never seen a negative measurement for ball throwing before!”’

Evelyn continues, ‘I share my feelings with Jake, telling him, “I hate to disappoint Mr McGraw, I’m his go-to girl for rhyming words in poetry and rapid recall of multiplication table facts, but in sports I have special needs.” I wanted to convey to Jake the emotional consequences, still lingering 37 years later, of my abject failure to make my beloved teacher proud on that day. I conclude with a ‘fairy tale ending’ through a supplementary meta-reflection, a happy-ever-after view which explains why I have always used my own teacher as my mental picture of the ideal: ‘Mr McGraw ultimately conceded that I would never participate with any enthusiasm or aptitude in sports, so he had clearly been reflecting himself on this dilemma, making

me class team captain. I received a clipboard and with it the responsibility for organising my class team on sports day. I manipulated competitors for races, made sure the dozy non-listeners who could run like the wind made it to the start line on time. I was a sensational organiser, giving inspirational, motivational speeches and his decision was vindicated when our class team won the trophy for two consecutive years. His confidence in my logistical skills elicited a sense of self-worth that all his encouragement to promote my performance never could.'

As with Ava I was able to say to Evelyn that I had noticed a significant change in Jake's journal writing. Recent entries begin with a story written from a child's perspective, leading to a critical reflection drawing on insights developed through crafting the story. Now he starts with the stories, drawing on his narrative imagination. His story, *Dreading PE*, gave him a way into deeper critical reflections about himself and his practice:

Story t: *Dreading PE*

That sinking feeling of dread has arrived again, as my favourite lesson, History, comes to an end. I am loving learning about Florence Nightingale, her amazing contribution to nursing and all the people she helped save. However, I am starting to lose focus as the clock continues to tick away and I glance down at my PE bag. It sounds so harmless just two simple letters that have come to torture my life. At primary school it is bad, what's it going to be like at secondary school? I'm flooded with thoughts of anxiety already. I think the teacher realises it just isn't my thing. I appreciate all the encouragement my teacher gives me and the motivation to become star of the week, winning that medal. I spent a cold and damp afternoon running around in an effort to be the star of the week. But Smith strolled to star of the week as usual, with his robust approach, as if he was a real life athlete. If only my body worked as effortlessly as his, then maybe I would be able to compete. At home I sit in awe, as I watch Ronaldo, thinking how does he do it? Day-dreaming over, back to reality and disillusionment. The football boys are team captains, so their friends and the popular kids are picked first. I sit waiting, feeling increasingly rejected along with the usual suspects. Despite that, I begin the match with great enthusiasm, charging about but to

no avail. I concede that my involvement is of no help to my team and think to myself, “What’s the point?”

In the subsequent written reflection on his narrative Jake explained how by recalling his own feelings of dread and insecurity before the music lecture he was able to empathise with pupils in his class who experienced similar feelings at the prospect of PE lessons.

I shared with Evelyn how I had responded after reading Jake’s story: ‘I asked Jake to reflect on his experience of developing his reflective writing. He emailed me saying ‘It seems to be quite a fluid process. I write the story in my mind and whilst I’m writing it all these questions pop into my head, which I use for the reflection part, then I relate it to myself or my teaching.’ Jake exemplifies Wallace’s view that the crafting of stories is a form of ‘practical reasoning – the general human capacity for resolving, through reflection, the question of what one is to do’ (Wallace, 2009, n.p.), quoted in Freeman, 2017, p.35). He also shows the experience of thinking through writing, (Van Manen, 1990; Richardson, 2000). He has shown an ability to travel to the world of a child who dreads a particular lesson drawing on his own experience of dreading something, prompted by his discussions with Evelyn and her modelling a story from her own experience.

Time runs out but we have the summer break to reflect on the implications of our seasons of sharing stories. I check my emails before I go to bed. There’s one from Lottie (trainee) with some further reflections on a story she wrote in her journal, *The Train Station*. I send it to Evelyn for her thoughts.

Autumn: reflections on stories to live by

All the leaves are brown, and the sky is grey. Evelyn and I have ensconced ourselves in a corner of the university coffee shop, a rare treat. Our year of thinking together with stories has come to an end. As we reflect backwards and then forwards looking at some of the ways in which the reflective stories written by the trainee teachers have changed and developed over time we have unconsciously placed ourselves in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of time past, present and future; of place and sociality – our literal and metaphorical locations, and our relationship as

travelling companions. What can we say about the ongoing storying? In most cases the issues and dilemmas that prompt story-writing are familiar and occur regularly: themes relating to difference, inclusion, dealing with incidents in the classroom and playground, bullying, relationships with parents. But, as society changes, the curriculum develops to keep up, striving to ensure that children are prepared for life in the twenty-first century and the curriculum for trainee teachers must change too. We considered the question: What are the new stories to live by? We have noticed an increased emphasis on issues relating to personal development and well-being, mental health, child protection, British values, and the challenges presented by advances in technology and, particularly, social media. In response to these changes we are seeing changes of emphasis in the topics that prompt stories. One such story, *The Train Station*, was written by Lottie in response to a seminar on e-safety. It intrigued and unnerved me. I sent it to Evelyn, asking her for her thoughts. In a seminar on reflective writing with the trainees I had shared McCann's advice to a young writer: 'Don't write what you know, write toward what *you want to know*. A writer is an explorer. She knows she needs to get somewhere but she doesn't know if the somewhere exists yet' (McCann, 2017, p.11). I wondered if Lottie's story was an example of writing towards what she wanted to know. I emailed her asking her to reflect on the experience of writing it. In her reply Lottie wrote: 'Writing the story was eye-opening for me as a professional. I shocked myself with the story. I re-wrote the ending several times to give the right message.'

Story u: The Train Station

It's 4:30pm. There's a chill in the air and I'm nervous. Nervous because I'm about to go on my first ever journey alone. It's raining and my glasses are steaming up, no turning back now. It was my 10th birthday yesterday and this trip was one of the presents from my mum and stepdad, they thought it would do me good and make me more independent but I am alone and I don't know where I'm going and neither do they. They don't seem worried, so should I be? My mum was quite happy to see me off after school, I asked her if she could come with me but she said she was too busy. My stepdad is at work tonight so no chance there either.

There are others here, all around me. The streets are busy with people, some even try to talk to me. Are they talking to me? I don't know, I don't reply. I'm going to the train station, that's where I have been told to go. I don't know where from there yet but I'm sure I will figure it out, maybe someone my age will be there and help me, but I don't know, the world feels foreign to me. I don't like being alone.

Eventually I arrive at the station with no memory of how I got here, but I am here, safe. I can see a girl smiling at me on the platform, she's sitting down on a metal bench and is wearing a yellow polka-dot dress. She looks around my age, maybe a bit older. I walk over to her and sit down on the opposite end of the bench; my palms are sweating. The girl looks at me, still smiling and says 'Hello', tells me her name and that she is 11 years old. Her voice sounds a bit weird but I don't know why. I tell her my name then get up to walk away when she starts asking me lots of questions like where I live, and what school I go to. In school I remember my teacher, Miss Smith telling us not to tell strangers personal information about us or our families, so I begin to run. I run because I don't know what else to do, I don't want to talk to this strange girl anymore.

I'm away now, still on the platform. The train approaches the station and I feel like I can hear my mum, is she here, did she change her mind? Is she coming with me? The noise stops and nobody is here. The train doors open and I get on, hoping that I go somewhere nice and hoping that the strange girl doesn't get on the train. The train leaves the station and I am off to an unknown place, alone and afraid. The noise starts again...

"JOSHUA FOR THE 100TH TIME, YOUR DINNER IS READY! GET DOWN HERE NOW PLEASE!"

I take off my headset, turn off the games console and head downstairs for dinner. Maybe I will continue this adventure another day.

In her journal Lottie explains how she was prompted to write the story:

I wrote this reflective piece a few days after a child development session on e-safety that really made me think. A child going online to an unknown place unsupervised was compared to a child getting on a train to an unknown place unsupervised, highlighting the importance of online safety and for parents to understand the importance of supervising their children

whilst online. The story sees Joshua, a 10-year-old boy playing on a Virtual Reality (VR) game that simulates the online world. Although the story does not go into detail regarding the dangers, it certainly brings to attention the message that even though a child is innocently sitting in the safety of their own home playing these games online, they are travelling to a different world where the dangers are not so obvious and I believe that some parents may not realise this.

Evelyn comments that she finds the story ‘unsettling – it makes me nervous.’ She points out that ‘Lottie has put herself in the story, seeing herself as the teacher who she portrays as having a responsibility for keeping children safe, even when, in the story, it is the child’s parents who are failing to protect them from online dangers.’ I ask ‘Perhaps this is showing us how heavily the responsibilities of her role are weighing on this trainee teacher?’

The story is rich in metaphors: the journey to an unknown destination, the concept of strangers and the setting of the train station itself. The issue of e-safety is disturbing and prompts a deeply emotional response. The idea of parents abandoning a 10-year-old boy at a railway station, leaving him alone and prey for strangers is quite chilling, sends shivers down my spine. By writing from the perspective of the child Lottie has heightened his innocence and vulnerability, achieving a powerful effect on the reader. Evelyn and I agree that this is a story that is memorable. It is an example of ongoing storying and how, in curriculum terms, priorities may change as new topics emerge.

Reflecting on the year

Before we part we take some time to reflect on what we have learned from our four seasons of shared reflections and writing? Have we fulfilled our aim to show how thinking *with* rather than *about* stories allows narratives to work on us in ways that may be transformative? Novelist, poet and essayist Ben Okri makes great claims for the power of story, describing them as ‘potent things, never innocent’ (Personal conversation, 2017). He says that ‘stories affect reality, people become the stories that are being told’ (2017). Through our co-created narrative we have come to learn something about each other and also about ourselves. We have added to our professional knowledge and demonstrated that reflective narrative writing can be taught.

The stories chosen show that, consciously or unconsciously, the writers draw extensively on metaphors, metaphors that are often surprising, sometimes shocking, and which add to the richness of the narrative and therefore to the vividness and memorability of the story. The richness of language in the stories has shown a metaphorical connection with aspects of our own lives in response to the narratives we hear or read. It resonates or connects with some aspects of the life of the listener or reader, what Conle calls ‘narrative moments of encounter’, or “‘me too’ reactions’ (2003, p.11).

Stories can pull us up, change our viewpoint. Evelyn says of writing a story, ‘On the way I stopped and looked differently.’ Lottie demonstrated what can happen when we are prepared to give ourselves over to writing the story that has to be told. She is an explorer, recognising that writing is a way of finding out what we didn’t know we knew. She demonstrates that we can be shocked by our own stories, and that we have the power to change the endings.

Jake found, to his surprise, that stories come easily to him and raise unexpected questions, leading him to understand things differently. For Ava releasing her narrative imagination has enabled her to fictionalise, to view her classroom from the perspective of a child. She opened up the possibility for a deeper understanding of her pupils and, therefore, the potential to better respond to their needs. Sharing stories, re-telling them, reflecting on them may lead us to understand them differently, to move on to new stories. Both Jake and Ava have found new stories to live by.

Conle (1997a) points out that narrative processes of change are diverse and difficult to detect, often only becoming evident with time and hindsight. As Evelyn and I reflect back on her stories and the story we have constructed together over the year we explore the way she has used her stories as a means of solving challenging problems in her role as a senior leader in her school – ‘I was looking how to handle a difficult situation.’ The vivid metaphors she has chosen have enabled her to see things differently. By sharing her stories with her headteacher and other staff, whom she describes as ‘extras – incidental bit-part players in the story’, she has drawn them into the plot in a way that has an impact on their professional actions. By modelling

her reflective narrative processes with the trainee teachers Evelyn has encouraged them to experiment with creating narratives of their own which allow them to enter into the worlds of their pupils. As Jake noted in his journal: ‘ Now I am able to empathise because it’s what I felt myself ... the fear of being judged and feeling inadequate ...’

As we finish our coffee I remind Evelyn of a metaphor she used in one of our early conversations about the power of writing reflective stories and how she saw herself as an observer whilst at the same time being involved in the story, the idea of ‘watching the dance’. Evelyn responded, ‘Yes, I remember thinking that this was an ongoing story, I added to it as events unfolded, thought about Schön’s reflection in and on action and imagined a dance. When you’re in a dance you see only one part of the dance whereas if you’re observing, watching the dance, you get a different view. I really like that analogy.’ I really like it too. It reminds me of Anthony Powell’s cycle of novels *A Dance to the Music of Time*, (1951-1975) and the Poussin painting (c.1636) that inspired his title. In the painting the dancers, representing the four seasons, are moving, hand in hand, in a circle, facing outwards, observing the world around them as they move to the music of a lyre, telling an ongoing story.

Chapter 9

Breaking the journey

‘No-one leaves a narrative inquiry unchanged’ (Clandinin, 2013, p.201)

Every traveller on French motorways is familiar with the frequent signs for *les aires de repos* – literally ‘areas for rest’. Often these are well designed service areas, landscaped with trees and grassy spaces where travellers can pull off the busy *autoroute* and take some time away from the noise and busy-ness to relax before rejoining the traffic and continuing the journey refreshed. Here the traveller is in a liminal space, betwixt and between, neither here nor there. I return to the metaphor of the researcher as travelling companion, one who travels alongside the participants within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space of time, place and relationship. I have shared such a journey and now it is time to turn off the route into an *aire* not of repose but reflection; a space where I can take time to make sense of what has been experienced and learned on the journey, the liminal space, the ‘inbetween’ which Gadamer (1975) describes as the true location of hermeneutics.

The matrix across the carriageway reminds me:

VOYAGER – mais aussi s’arreter

In this reflective space I address the ‘So what?’ and ‘Who cares?’ questions relating to this inquiry. What difference has it made to me and to the participants, personally and professionally? What implications might it have for others working with stories as a means of developing greater depth in reflective writing and practice? In Clandinin’s view, ‘There is no final telling, no final story and no one singular story we can tell’ (2013, p.205). She continues: ‘... this is not going to be satisfying for those who want to see the truth, or accuracy, or verifiability of data’ (ibid).

This is the time for reflection and reflexivity. Reflexivity is a key element of reflection. I teach the trainee teachers to engage in meta-reflection, returning to examine their assumptions and expectations and re-examine them in the light of experience. Such critical re-reflections may prompt them to question previously held ideas and beliefs not only about others but also about themselves and their

identities, asking, not only ‘What is it like to be you?’ but ‘What does it mean to be me, here and now?’ I am conscious of my own historical and geographical position in the inquiry, establishing my ‘voice’ and recognising and accepting my influence as a teacher on the reflective writings of my students. I have written myself into the research, I and my stories are also subjects in this inquiry. I am here because of all those who have been my travelling companions, the story tellers, writers and readers, and those who have unwittingly become fictionalised characters in those stories. Mishler points out that, as researchers, ‘If we wish to hear respondents’ stories then we must invite them into our work as collaborators, sharing control with them, so that together we try to understand what their stories are about’ (In Kim, 2015, p.216). I am here also because of the words of those who have travelled the road before (Solnit, op.cit.).

The study is multi-vocal, there is richness and diversity in the stories and poems, and I hope that it does justice not only to the creators of the narratives but to the often, otherwise voiceless children, young people and adults who are the subjects of their fictions. I chose to experiment with writing in different literary styles, voices and genres, including approaches used by professional writers. Such approaches add to the richness of the text and demonstrate that writing this study has been an interpretive activity.

It is important to show criticality and the extent to which the study is, or might be, transformative in terms of practice in teaching, or in wider social justice terms. I have found evidence of the impact of reflecting in depth, and drawn on the metaphor of ‘world-travelling’ (Lugones, 1987) to inform my exploration of that dimension of creating stories which provokes empathy in writer and reader, teller and listener. The focus on the question ‘What might it be like to be you?’ and the awareness of the need to travel lovingly rather than arrogantly to the worlds of others are significant aspects of the ‘use’ of stories here. This is strongly evident in the stories written by participants, particularly those in Chapters 6 and 7.

What is the use of stories for me as writer? I believe that the move to empathy, deep, reflective identification with the subjects of the stories, generates insights, promotes criticality, raises questions and has the capacity to transform thinking and therefore

action. The stories inform my pedagogy relating to reflective/reflexive writing and thinking. The stories of Saffiya, Jaz and Evelyn are interwoven with my own; we are characters in each other's stories. My own stories, *A Place of Greater Safety* (Story e) and *Strong Language*, (Story g) for example, have prompted me to reflect critically on how I teach about issues of equality and diversity in relation to race, culture, gender and sexuality and to develop or change my approaches. It has also drawn attention to the ethical responsibilities of the researcher in relation to the participants in their inquiry. This is clearly evident in my relationship with Jaz discussed in Chapter 7.

Clough (2002) highlights the power that narrative methods may have for 'bringing to life the experience of people traditionally conceived of as "inarticulate"' (p.5). This is exemplified in several of the stories written from the perspectives of children (Stories e; f; i; j; k; l; u) where identifying imaginatively with others has enabled the writers of the stories to consider how their own perceptions and actions may affect the experiences of the children in their classrooms. As reflective story writing brings the experiences of the children to life it is likely to make a difference to future practice. When they are shared, such stories are what Barone (1995) describes as 'artfully persuasive' (p.250), having 'the potential for luring readers into reconstructing the selves of schoolpeople or into rethinking their own selves and situations as educators' (ibid.).

'But is it 'true'?

Reflection on the question of 'truth' in relation to stories has been ongoing during my journey. Here I draw together some of the writings that have helped me to understand the use of stories that aren't even true and apply this understanding to the fictional and poetic writings that have been shared in this study. All the writers whether trainee teachers, teachers, theorists or professional writers of fiction and poetry demonstrate how they have used fiction to convey what they perceive as 'truths'; often truths that are difficult and challenging to accept. The writers are sense-makers, crafting stories and poems to enable sense to be made from situations which seem to make no sense. There is no expectation that the trainee teachers should aspire to write great literature but in all cases they are telling the story that wanted to be told. Other writers would tell it differently. As Bolton (2010) argues, 'Any narrative is inevitably fiction, in that events are reconstructed or recreated from a perspective' (p.93).

Salman Rushdie who gave me the title and underlying question for this inquiry already knew the answer to that question and has consistently demonstrated it in his fictions. In a discussion about his novel *Two Years Eight Months* (2015), a story about the act of storytelling, he says, 'It's a story that's crowded with stories on purpose ... it has stories nested inside of stories, stories breaking off in order to tell other stories – a crowd of stories' (n.p.). He describes the impact of writing it and what fiction does:

It renewed my faith in the power of fiction to intensify our perceptions and perhaps our understanding of the world – not in the way journalism does, not in the way the news does but by creating parables and metaphors and images and phrases that hopefully make something happen in the reader's head – which is another way of getting at the truth. The way in which stories can tell the truth and also make it different, so that even the darkest truths can acquire a kind of beauty (op.cit.).

Later in the discussion Rushdie highlights the link with the power of imagination: 'I love the release of fiction. I love the fact that fiction gives the imagination free reign' (op.cit, n.p.).

The best stories are memorable, they make a powerful impression, they may prompt an emotional response, they stay with you and inform your view of the world. Emihovich (1995) writes: 'Stories do not pretend to be objective because they deal with emotions the irrational part of behaviour, they tap into the qualities of imagination and fantasy' (p.39/40). For Kim (2015) fidelity is one of the characteristics that distinguishes a story as research from a story that is read for leisure because the term fidelity implies 'something to be trusted' (p.111). I interpret fidelity as 'faithfulness', indicating that the reader may regard the storyteller as trustworthy. Grumet (1988) in her analysis of stories of women and teaching states that 'Fidelity rather than truth is the meaning of these tales' (p.66). Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) discussing the idea of fidelity, suggests that the 'believability' of the story is a key factor, and that the story should resonate with the audience's experiences (p.33, in Hatch and Wisniewski, Eds.), something I have heard described by readers and listeners as 'ringing true'. Barone (1995/2000) who has elegantly addressed the issue of trust and mistrust in educational storytelling, emphasises the significance

of intention. He considers that it depends on what is being attempted by the writer and what claims are being made about the truth of those attempts. For Gadamer, the truthfulness of a text lies in its 'power to throw light on fundamental matters at issue' (Lawn, 2006, p.50), a reasonable claim for the stories shared through this inquiry.

Becoming part of the reflecting subject

The writings of John Berger contain much that is relevant to a discussion on the nature of stories. He has prompted me to consider who each story is about and who it is for. In his essay, *Another Way of Telling* (1982, in Mcquillan, Ed. 2000) Berger reminds us that it is the characters in the story who are at its centre, they are the reason for the story being told in the first place:

Neither teller nor listener is at the centre of the story: they are at its periphery. Those whom the story is about are at the centre. It is between their actions and attributes and reactions that the unstated connections are being made' (p.172).

Berger (op.cit) also underlines the significance of what is not said in a story. He animates stories: 'Stories walk, like animals or men. And their steps are not only between narrated events but between each word. Every step is a stride over something not said' (op.cit. ibid.). Berger says all stories are discontinuous. He considers that when the tacit agreement about what is not said is acceptable to the listener, and when a story makes sense of its discontinuities, it acquires authority as a story. I observe this in practice as I watch 3-year-old Eva listening to the story *I Want my Hat Back* (Klassen, 2017) a picture book with minimal text and little character development which, through simple dialogue and images, poses an ethical question. Eva is sure she knows who stole the hat and is indignant on behalf of the hat's owner, entering into the tacit agreement that stealing the hat is wrong, understanding implicitly what is not said. Berger argues that what makes a story worthy of being told is the extent to which it 'invests with authority its characters, its listeners' past experience and its teller's words' (ibid.). He calls this fusing of teller, listener and protagonists 'the story's reflecting voice,' going on to explain that, 'The story narrates on behalf of the subject, appeals to it and speaks in its voice. What fuses these three categories within the process are the discontinuities, the silent connections, agreed upon in common – it is the agreement about the discontinuities

which allows the listener to enter the narration and become part of its reflecting subject' (ibid.). Eva was able to show this implicit understanding at the age of three. Following Berger's argument, the 'truth' of stories is not as relevant as their impact. Eva has demonstrated the magical experience of being told a story. As she listened she was able to put herself into the story, to understand what was not said, to respond on behalf of the characters and to raise ethical questions. The issue of 'truth' was not in question.

'A subtle pedagogy'

The stories included in this inquiry and many other stories collected over time have become an integral part of my pedagogy in teaching about reflective story writing. In *Living by Fiction* (1982) Annie Dillard explores the question 'Can fiction interpret the world?' (p.145). She suggests that, by its very nature, fiction lends itself to the interpretive process: 'Fiction elicits an interpretation of the world by being itself a world-like object for interpretation. It is a subtle pedagogy' (p.155). This is an idea which I have carried into my teaching. The idea of fiction as a means of teaching readers subtly about the world is pertinent to my inquiry question about the 'use' of stories that aren't even true, and particularly the value of the teachers' stories as learning tools for themselves and for others. As examples I recall Saffiya's passionate statement, 'I wanted to speak from inside my own faith' and her friend's comment 'You would come in and you have this scarf on your head' (Chapter 7). Their responses showed feelings and emotions that emerged in the telling of the stories, surprising the writers/tellers and memorable for the listeners/readers. I think too of Evelyn's comment as she reflected on the power of her stories to bring about personal learning: 'On the way I stopped and looked differently' (Chapter 8).

The power of stories

Stories are never neutral. They may be viewed as subversive, as threatening, or as agents of moral teaching, depending on their nature and on how they are perceived and used (Rushdie, 2008; Squire *et al*, 2014). King tells us: 'Stories are wondrous things. And they are dangerous' (2005, p.9). Novelist Amanda Craig asserted that 'People are much more frightened of novelists than they are of journalists or researchers' (*Guardian* Masterclass, November 2013). Craig is echoing Plato's much earlier belief in the power of stories to influence for good or ill. He saw them as

soul shapers, to be treated with caution, allowing only certain types of stories and promoting censorship of others: an example of stories as a means of social control:

Then we must first of all, it seems, supervise the storytellers. We'll select their stories whenever they are fine or beautiful and reject them when they aren't. And we'll persuade nurses and mothers to tell their children the ones we have selected, since they will shape their children's souls with stories much more than they shape their bodies by handling them. Many of the stories they tell, however, must be thrown out (*Republic* 3776).

Charles Dickens used fictional writing as a means of critiquing Victorian values and exposing social injustices. In his novel *Hard Times* (1854) he created a character, Mr Thomas Gradgrind, to represent Victorian utilitarianism in its most intransigent forms. Gradgrind is deeply threatened by stories and expresses horror at what he terms 'fancy', that is the power of imagination, embodied in what he calls 'idle story books'. Above all he fears the ability to see one thing in terms of another, the imaginative power to create metaphors, to see a thing 'beyond us, yet ourselves' (Stevens, 1965). 'In this life, we want nothing but Facts sir, nothing but Facts' (op. cit. p.9). He is determined to protect his children from the threat posed by what he calls 'idle storybooks' (ibid.) seeing them as a risk to the political economy, which could result in different ways of seeing the world. How threatening it is for him that the world should be imagined in a new way, and possibly changed as a result of the power of fiction to promote imagination.

In their different ways and at different points in history, Plato, Dickens and Craig have all shown that fiction poses a threat for some, a view shared by Nussbaum who describes literature and the literary imagination as 'subversive' (1995, p.2). Nussbaum argues that it is novels rather than histories and biographies which 'engender the ability to imagine what it is like to live the life of another person who might, given changes in circumstances, be oneself or one of one's loved ones' (p.5). She suggests that literature has the power to prompt its readers to 'wonder about themselves' (p.5) and that it is disturbing because it 'summons powerful emotions, it disturbs and puzzles' (ibid.). I see those qualities in the stories which have been explored in this inquiry. They raise questions about self and others, promote identification and sympathy in the reader and they unsettle, prompting questioning

of the status quo. Nussbaum suggests that good literature ‘inspires distrust of conventional pieties and exacts a frequently painful confrontation with one’s own thoughts and intentions’ (ibid). The disparate trio of Plato, Dickens, through his character Thomas Gradgrind, and Amanda Craig are right in their assertions – literature and the literary imagination are subversive. I consider that the examples of reflective story-telling explored here can be seen as a critical pedagogical practice in that they confront both writers and readers with questions, provoke curriculum, highlight social and cultural issues at individual and institutional level and may contribute to change, allowing us to see the world in new ways. Nussbaum (1995) does not claim that reading fiction *per se* will solve all social justice problems but that it ‘can be a bridge both to a vision of justice and to the social enactment of that vision’ (p.12). Lindeman Nelson (1995) has written of the power of counter-stories to act subversively against dominant stories and thus provide access to the benefits of the dominant society to those who are marginalised. Clandinin, Murphy *et al* (2009) also explore the notion of counter-stories in their narrative inquiry work.

Fictional truth

I have drawn significantly on the writing and ideas of writers of fiction to inform my reflections on the use of stories that are ‘not even true’ (Rushdie, 1991). In a recent personal conversation with author Ali Smith about the extent that writers of fiction see their writing as a means of telling truths that are difficult to accept, unpopular, unpalatable, she said, ‘Truth will always out and fiction will always be a way in.’ (Conversation with Ali Smith, April 2017, research artefact). Below I identify some writers who have used fiction as ‘a way in’ and who exemplify Gadamer’s view of truthfulness in text as being ‘to highlight fundamental matters at issue’ (Lawn, 2006, p.50).

As we have seen, some writers of fiction (Dickens, for example) have a clear social purpose in mind, using their writing as a means of raising awareness of social, cultural or political issues. Other classic examples include Harriet Beecher-Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852); Mary Gaskell’s *North and South* (1855) and Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Such writings offer what Barone (1992) calls ‘experience-based critiques that challenge conventional, politically comfortable descriptions of social phenomena’ (p.172). Ralph Ellison highlights some interesting

perceptions of the workings of truth and fiction when he reflects, at a distance of 30 years, on the writing of his novel *Invisible Man*, first published in the USA in 1952. Ellison writes that he saw his task as a novelist as ‘revealing the human universals hidden within the plight of one who was both black and American:

Most of all, I would have to approach racial stereotypes as a given fact of the social process and proceed, while gambling with the reader’s capacity for fictional truth, to reveal the human complexity which stereotypes are intended to conceal (p.xl).

He goes on to say that despite the seriousness of the subject matter there was enjoyment in writing it: ‘a great deal of fun along the way’ and ‘I knew that I was composing a work of fiction that would allow me to tell the truth while actually telling a “lie” which is the Afro-American term for an improvised story’ (p.xl).

This thesis has been written during a period when the post-modern rise of relativism and reluctance to challenge the validity of any asserted truth has reached the public consciousness. There is a growing culture of ‘fake news’, conspiracy and denial (D’Ancona, 2017). Is it true that there is no absolute truth? There is a danger in accepting all truths as equally valid without question – but isn’t that a role for fiction, for ‘stories that aren’t even true’ (Rushdie, op.cit), to pose questions about the meaning of truth? White (1994) argues that whilst narrative never represents objective truth it can still support ‘understanding’ of ‘specifically human truth’ (p.25 and p.33). I understand ‘human truths’ to be the moral and ethical dimensions of the human condition, the shared values by which we live; our essential understandings of what it means to be human. White describes narrative as ‘an imaginary discourse about real events that may not be less true for being imaginary’ (op.cit. p.33). That would seem to be an appropriate description of the reflective stories in this study.

The writers of the reflective stories have demonstrated that reflexivity is a crucial element of reflection. Meta-reflection requires that we return to our assumptions and expectations and question them in the light of experience, engaging in critical reflection. Our critical reflections may lead us to question previously held beliefs and ideas, not least about ourselves and our identity. Such reflection can lead to discomfort. We are provoking, disturbing ourselves who used to be one way and are

now another (Dyson and Genishi, 1994); prompted to see things otherwise (Greene, 1995) and to explore the implications of our new perceptions both professionally and personally, exemplified in the stories in Chapter 8 (Evelyn and Janet). In acting in these ways we are using our narrative imagination (Nussbaum, 1995; Greene, 1995), to play a tune beyond us, yet ourselves, finding that ‘things as they are, are changed upon the blue guitar’ (Stevens, 1965). Perhaps something totally unexpected emerges from a story – something we didn’t know before, something we hadn’t thought about, something that gives us a different way of seeing, a new perspective, a different point of view, seeing something in a new light. Lottie’s story *The Train Station* (Story u, Chapter 8) and my own story *Strong Language* (Story f, Chapter 5) had exactly this effect.

Ben, trainee teacher and a former journalist used to reporting ‘facts’, identified the significance of imagination in writing fictionalised accounts from the perspectives of pupils:

It comes back to empathy because if you’re striving to understand someone and then simply reporting – you’re making no attempt, so you write ‘this happened, then this happened’ you’re just simply reporting. Using your imagination means you’re at least making an attempt, not merely to observe, but to understand (Research conversation).

Walker (2007) considers that, ‘Above all good stories help us to think well about practice ... Once any story is told, ways of seeing are surely altered?’ (p.296). Barone (1995) asserts that, ‘the aim of storytellers is not to prompt a single, closed, convergent reading but to persuade readers to provide answers to the dilemmas they pose’ (p.66). He sees this as a feature of the ‘storysharing contract between reader and writer’ (p.250). And Iser (1974): ‘Such story form invites the reader to join in, solve the problem – the reader fills the gaps, the blanks’ (p.113). As Okri (1997) says, ‘it is readers who make the book. A book unread is a story unlived’ (p.34). This brief discussion of the role of readers highlights that stories can be used well but also badly. In stories used as a means of control, to promote a particular view of history, for example, or to embed political or religious ideologies there is no thinking ‘with’, no asking back, no expectation that the reader will have an interpretive role. Okri (1997) makes this clear: ‘Writers are dangerous when they tell the truth. Writers are

dangerous when they tell lies' (p.49). I am wary of attempting to impose an analysis of the 'meaning' of the stories in this study, preferring to share my reflections that are the result of thinking with the stories, whilst leaving an interpretive space (Gadamer, 1975) where the stories can speak for themselves and the reader can fill the gaps.

Reflection and reflective practice

As has been shown, reflective writing is at the heart of this study. Some trainees hate reflective writing, some fear it, others grow into it and some love it. Jess found that the very act of writing in her journal enhanced her ability to engage in deep reflection:

I am someone who learns from writing, the actual process of doing it. It somehow reinforces and contributes to my learning. Therefore, if I can write in my journal I can offer to something the time to be considered, to be pondered, to be questioned, thought about and, perhaps, resolved ... To reflect is to give time to think more about what we do and to shape who we are and how we can better shape young minds by being open, seeing differently, and by being critical (Jess, extract from Reflective Journal).

At the start of the course Jon was ambivalent towards keeping a journal. Reflecting on his experience a year after completing the course he wrote:

I freely confess that, at first, I was not greatly enthused by the idea of keeping a reflective journal. In fact, keeping this journal has been one of the most interesting and thought-provoking aspects of my journey on the road to becoming a teacher ... The process of writing my journal entries has enhanced my reflections, forcing me to confront issues, reimagine situations, consider other possibilities and think again about obvious solutions. It is revealing and rewarding - much more so than I had imagined when I set out on this journey (Jon, Email communication).

For trainee teacher Stephi the journal became a place where she could find her voice:

This journal is giving me time to focus in the space full of mess and chaos that is any primary school ... After looking back at my reflections I need to decide what is important to me, where I want to develop further, or search harder ... I need to remember that, as with anything in life, I am doing it for myself. I am finding my own voice (Stephi, Reflective Journal extract).

A strength of this approach to reflective writing is that the trainees may choose to share extracts from their journals, including stories and poems, in tutorials with mentors and their peers. In this way they are open to the views of others who might challenge or validate them, allowing their perspectives to be transformed through discussion. Such critical external reflective dialogue is important because it can prompt re-reflection, challenge long-held assumptions and promote dialogue as others pose questions and reflect back what they can see. Bolton (2010) considers that reflection on practice ‘needs to be taken alongside open discussion with peers on the issues raised, an examination of texts from the larger field of politics, and discussions with colleagues from outside the practitioners’ own milieu’ (p.3). She views this dialogic reflection as ‘becoming politically, socially, as well as psychologically useful, rather than a mere quietist navel-gazing exercise’ (ibid.). This is clear in my experience of thinking with the stories. It is evident in the discussions which have taken place around the stories between myself and Sam, Saffiya and Jaz, with Dan and with Ben, and the social, cultural and pedagogical issues and questions raised.

Opening up conversations

What is the pedagogical, theoretical and transformative potential and significance of my inquiry? I feel that, as a teacher, by modelling reflective writing as a means of self-study, and as an aspect of pedagogy, by developing awareness of occasions for story, by encouraging my students to make connections, to be comfortable with uncertainties, and to experiment with their own writing, I have opened up conversations. I refer back to Eisner’s view (quoted in Chapter 3) that fictional writing can promote a deeper, more complex and more interesting conversation and have no doubt that thinking together with others and with our stories has generated dialogue. Gadamer wrote ‘Being that can be understood is language’ (1975, p.474). Enigmatic perhaps but I understand it to mean that we can only understand each other and the nature of being through language, both written and spoken, and language is essentially dialogue – conversation. I consider this to be, perhaps, the strongest and most significant outcome of my inquiry. By sharing stories, challenging taken-for-granted views, highlighting the dangers of the single story and encouraging critical reflection others have been drawn into this dialogue: my colleagues, teachers, trainee teachers, and in a wider sense through publications and presentations, the broader community of educators. I have found working collaboratively to co-

compose stories with trainees and colleagues and valuing the interactions with readers and the writers of the stories, to have been essential aspects in creating the over-arching narrative presented in the thesis.

For those who have written critical personal narratives, counter-narratives, stories and accounts that disrupt and disturb discourse by exposing the complexities and contradictions that exist in systems, whether in schools or in wider society, there have been impacts on their personal and professional perspectives. Sometimes, as with Debbie, Dan, and Jon, this has only become apparent after a gap of several years. For Jake, Jess, Saffiya and Jaz, the personal and professional changes were more quickly identified. I believe with Denzin (2005) that ‘the critical democratic storytelling imagination is pedagogical’ (p.946). He argues that:

... as a form of instruction, it helps persons think critically, historically and sociologically. It exposes the pedagogies of oppression (Freire, 2001, p.54). It contributes to a reflective, ethical self-consciousness. It gives people a language and a set of pedagogical practices that turn oppression into freedom, despair into hope, hatred into love, doubt into trust (in Denzin and Lincoln, eds. pp.946-948).

In my role as a teacher of teachers I have tried to open up a reflective/reflexive space where we can write and share honest, critical stories. Barone describes the role of the teacher educator as a ‘critical co-investigator’ who leads ‘a discursive community of professionals in which each member shares responsibility for critical reflection and discussion’ (1990, 2000, p.153).

Sameshima has written:

I believe all quests for identity and belonging are longings to know we fit into the mainstream, the main storyline we have been acculturated to believe. In telling our stories we enlarge that storyline to incorporate and accept diversity and multiplicity without dilution and conformity ... When all stories can be heard, then we can be truly democratic, overcome privileging, and develop in ourselves and in our schools lives of peace, happiness and joy’ (2007, p.288).

It is the stories that endure. If they are honest and ring true for readers and listeners they are memorable. As researchers we have a responsibility to interpret well and to leave openings for other interpretations and questions, keeping the conversation going. I believe that this inquiry contributes to what Gadamer (1975, p.386) describes as ‘the conversation that we are.’ He sees humanity as stepping into ‘an existing conversation, often one that stretches across millennia’ (Zimmerman, 2015, p.42). The stories told here are a part of that conversation. In epistemological terms the study contributes new stories and ways of seeing to the growing field of narrative inquiry and ontologically it adds to the existing conversation (Gadamer, 1975).

So, what is the ‘use’ of stories that aren’t even true?

I have confirmed and exemplified my understanding of narrative approaches as a significant way of writing and thinking about human experience in educational contexts. Through opening up the conversation, I have shown that making professionals aware of how a different kind of knowledge, the knowledge of the ways in which stories work, can enhance their practice. I have come to understand the subtle pedagogy of stories and their value as models for teaching in reflective practice in a range of professional contexts. My use of stories in teaching prompts trainees and teachers to question what is taken for granted about schooling and education, promoting critical engagement and consciousness of the issues around difference and inequality in relation to the ‘purposes’ of education and how these are understood and demonstrated in their schools.

The stories have become new ways of knowing, of meaning-making, new ways of seeing – making the familiar strange, the strange familiar. They have opened up new perspectives; engendering empathy through “world- travelling” without arrogance; giving voice to others, making the invisible visible. The writers have shown ethical awareness through their concern for those who are the subjects of their stories, and the stories are often prompted by such concern. As Dan (Chapter 6) says about his experience of writing his story, *Symmetry* (Story i): ‘... I felt like I was learning about Alex as I wrote’ and ‘I have learned not to judge a pupil’s situation without digging deeper’ (Research conversation). Danielle’s poem (poem a, Chapter 6) showed her what she knew – successfully applying her understanding of pedagogy to her teaching; it showed her she had the ability to make a reflexive turn and view

herself as a teacher through the eyes of her pupils. Both Sam and Ben demonstrate praxis: morally informed action leading to reflection, translating theory into practice. (All discussed in Chapter 6).

Banks claims that ‘what fiction can do that no other sort of expression does is evoke the emotion of felt experience and portray the values, pathos, grandeur, and spirituality of the human condition’ (1998, p.17). The stories that have been shared in this thesis have an immediacy and accessibility that no other form of writing or telling can match. They are memorable, staying with the listener or reader long after they have been read or heard. They are vivid, evoking real life; they are surprising – sometimes shocking; they challenge readers and listeners to see things in a new light and can promote emotional engagement. The stories provoke a response, showing rather than telling. They demonstrate playfulness, showing that the writers are open to surprise. Although literary and aesthetic merit are not expected I believe these qualities are evident in some of the writing, although this is clearly a subjective judgement. Bochner and Ellis (1998, in Banks and Banks, Eds.) invite us to contemplate ‘new possibilities for social research where the prose is poetically crafted, where the author is construed primarily as a writer rather than exclusively as a researcher’ (n.p). And, we must remember, story-writing can be a pleasurable experience. Despite Mr Sengupta’s warning (Rushdie, 1990) I have found, like Ellison (1952) and Dan (Chapter 6) that there has been fun along the way.

These stories and poems are ways of bringing issues to light and providing a focus for further critical reflection and possibly leading to action. *Doubly Vulnerable* (Story e), *The ‘Gay’ Word*, (Story l) Saffiya’s and Ben’s stories all demonstrate that pedagogy and classroom learning are not neutral, they provoke a response from practitioners. The stories often prove to be a means of ‘making sense of things when they don’t’ (Bruner, 2003 p.28) and discovering that it is possible to bear anything if you can tell a story about it (Dinesen, 1957, in Arendt, 1958). The stories prompt the readers to ask questions about themselves, their own actions, responses and place in the world. ‘Stories convey a view of the world – the writer’s view – and in that sense they are “true”. They are ways of seeing and ways of saying what you see’ (Burchell and Dyson, 2000). Stories are numberless and multi-faceted. There is never one single story (Adichie, 2007). When she refers to the danger of the single story

Adichie emphasises that it is not that single stories, or stereotypes are necessarily untrue, rather that they are incomplete. Providing access to storytelling allows trainee teachers to imagine stories beyond the single story they may have been composing in a particular context. As Okri says, ‘A good story keeps on growing. A good story never dies’ (1997, p.96).

Coda

This is only a break in the journey. The journey continues. There is never a final story. Each story leads into new stories which are part of the cycle of living, telling and re-living and re-telling (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). As all narrative inquirers do, I began in the midst. I came into this study in the course of my everyday work as a teacher, joining with my travelling companions as they started on their journeys. The stories have been generated over the course not only of their journeys but during my own lifelong journey. Together we have travelled through time, place and in relation with one another.

Clandinin reminds us that, ‘No-one leaves a narrative inquiry unchanged’ (2013, p.201). So, as I pull out of the reflective space of the *aire* to rejoin the stream of traffic on the *autoroute*, I ask, ‘How has this inquiry changed me? Where will I travel next?’ ‘What lies over the horizon?’ And, ‘What will the weather be like?’

I end my thesis with the words of Ernest Hemingway, great storyteller and traveller, noted (although not in this case) for his short sentences, his disciplined approach to writing and his close observation of people and places:

All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you’ve finished reading one you will feel that it all happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you; the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places, and how the weather was (1984, p.184).

List of stories and poems

Story a: *'You're a Terrorist!'*

Story b: *Friday Night in the Pub with Bernstein*

Story c: *Because you are brown*

Story d: *A Place of Greater Safety*

Story e: *Doubly Vulnerable*

Story f: *Strong Language 1*

Story g: *Strong Language 2 (Too)*

Story h: Extracts from *Understanding Billy*

Story i: *Symmetry*

Story j: *Shadowing Kya*

Story k: *Shadowing Jed*

Story l: *The 'Gay' word*

Story m: *Coming to know Saffiya: a narrative of identity*

Story n: *'You walked in and you had this scarf on your head'*

Story o: *Titilayo*

Story p: *Name-changing*

Story q: *'Because you are brown'*

Story r: Extract from *The Three Bears*

Story s: *Battling with a bully*

Story t: *Dreading PE*

Story u: *The Train Station*

Poem a: *'Don't pick on me!'*

Poem b: *Playground Duty*

Poem c: *Symmetry*

Poem d: *Symmetry 2 (Too)*

Appendix 1: Photograph of Giacometti's studio



Appendix 2: Poem by Cindy Clarke

The Blue Dress

I remember the details
preserved like dried beans in a mason jar
one hundred and forty-five dollars a month
for the bachelor suite at Nesbit Apartments
half of what I made a month in my job
working the desk at the YWCA –
one room no bigger than a bedroom
kitchen in a closet and a bathroom
with a claw-foot tub
circa 1912 hardwood
three tall windows
facing West.

In the way back
before language
every thought is an image
sealed in cellophane.
I am visiting my dad's mom
in an apartment with the same floors.
She wears a blue dress and sips Red Rose tea
beside the same three windows.
Something in her frown
and concrete chin
frightens me
so I never wear a blue dress –
only blue jeans and loose peasant blouses.

My bed is under the windows
to catch the scraps of breeze
lifting from burning asphalt –
downtown Prince Albert in summer,
as big to me then as Los Angeles
or New York; big enough
to hide from change
two floors above
the street.

Appendix 3: Photograph of Edith May Foster (1887-1976)



Appendix 4a: Confirmation of ethical approval

Redacted in this version

Appendix 4a: Confirmation of ethical approval (continued)

Redacted in this version

Appendix 4b: Participant information sheet

(printed on ARU headed note paper)

Dear

I am inviting you to take part in a research project on the impact of using reflective strategies such as narrative, fictionalising and story-telling, on the personal and professional understandings of trainee and qualified teachers and on their practice. The title of the research is:

“What’s the use of stories that aren’t even true?” (Rushdie: 1990)

An examination of the impact of creating stories as a reflective practice strategy in teacher education.

The purpose and value of the study

The purpose of the study is to identify how and why reflective writing of narratives in a variety of styles and forms may contribute to professional understanding and practice. It is hoped that the findings of the study will be of interest and value both to practising teachers and other professionals involved in teacher education.

The research is being organised as part of my studies for a Ph.D. The results of the study will be published as part of a doctoral dissertation and as conference papers, journal articles and book chapters.

The research is mainly self-funded with a contribution from the Billericay Educational Consortium, School Centred Initial Teacher Training provider. You are under no obligation to take part and you may withdraw from the project at any time.

For further information about any aspects of this project please contact Janet Dyson email address:

Further information about your participation in the Research Project

Why you have been invited to take part

You have been invited to take part in the project because, as part of your recent course of study (QTS, PGCE or MA) you have experience of writing a professional reflective log or journal and may have used a range of approaches to reflective writing, including narratives.

The data to be collected from the participants

Participants will be invited to share examples of their reflective writing for analysis, particularly where they have used narrative approaches.

Participants will also be asked to reflect on and discuss with me as the researcher and other participants how such approaches work for them, and to identify how reflecting in these ways affects their practice. The participants will work with me to analyse and interpret the narratives. It is possible that some participants may choose to write and share further reflective professional narratives as a result of their participation in the study.

Appendix 4b: Participant information sheet (p.2)

The time required to participate in the project

Initially you will be asked to share any stories or other reflective pieces you have already written. Following this you will be invited to meet informally with me and other participants at a mutually convenient time, to share and discuss your writing and reflective practices. You will be able to dictate how much time you spend but I anticipate that the time required will be less than 2 hours.

If you are unable to attend such a meeting I will welcome written contributions and/or one to one discussions. You will be shown any transcripts of the discussions and my commentaries on these as the study progresses.

Anonymised quotes from participants will be included in the dissertation. Notes will be taken during discussions and transcripts made available to participants. It is possible that audio recordings may also be used and this is made clear on the consent form. Even if you do not wish to be recorded it would still be possible for you to be involved in the study through a one to one discussion with me.

Access to the data

As the researcher, I will be the only person who has access to the data, which will be securely stored and password protected.

Anonymity of participants and others

Every effort will be made to remove all identifying information prior to dissemination. All participants will be anonymous and all names will be changed. Any details of schools which would allow them to be identified will also be changed. All references to individuals in the research report or any subsequent publications will be anonymised.

All personal information shared will be confidential except in the case of a disclosure which has legal implications, including criminal offences and safe-guarding issues.

Risks in participating in this study

There are no physical risks involved in participating in the study beyond travelling to one meeting with the researcher. However, although it is unlikely, it is possible that reflecting on some professional experiences or hearing about those of others may be challenging or disturbing. To ensure your well-being you will be given access to appropriate counselling services.

Withdrawal from the study

You may withdraw from the study at any time. Simply email me if you feel you do not want to continue your involvement.

You also have the option to withdraw from the study but to agree not to have your data withdrawn. However, it will not be possible to withdraw one person's data from the data gained in the group discussions because that would affect the responses from others. The last date when it will be possible to withdraw your data will be....? (not yet agreed)

Appendix 4b: Participant information sheet (p.3)

Benefits of taking part in this research

I anticipate that participating in the research will give opportunities for you to reflect on aspects of your professional practice and the chance to share your professional experiences with other professionals.

Additional information

This study has ethical approval from Anglia Ruskin University.

Agreement to take part in this research should not compromise your legal rights should something go wrong.

In the event of a complaint you should contact my supervisor Dr. Hazel Wright in the first instance, email:

If you have any questions or require further details of this research study contact Janet Dyson,

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP, TOGETHER WITH YOUR
CONSENT FORM.

Appendix 4c: Participant consent form

(printed on Anglia Ruskin University headed notepaper)

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: _____

Title of the project:

"What's the use of stories that aren't even true?" (Rushdie, 1990)

A narrative inquiry into reflective story writing with trainee teachers. Main

investigator and contact details: Janet Dyson

Members of the research team: Janet Dyson

1. I agree to take part in the above research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
3. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
4. I have been informed that discussions with the researcher may be audio recorded.
5. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study.
6. I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participant Information Sheet.

Data Protection: I agree to the University¹ processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me.

I agree to publication of the findings of the study including data supplied by me.

Name of participant (print) Signed Date

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.

Title of Project: _____

I WISH TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY

Signed: _____ Date: _____

¹The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its partner colleges

Appendix 5: Page from Ali's reflective log: 'Because you are brown'

'Because you are brown'

This week a midday lady brought me the following note:

Respect Anandeeep.

~~message to~~ you can be
on the other side
because you
are brown

The incident according to a) common sense and our lectures, was racist. I immediately discussed it with my mentor who spoke with both boys. It turned out that boy 'a' had been bullying boy 'b', so boy 'b' had said - 'you go over there because you are brown'. It was ^{less} because of the colour of his skin than using it as an ^{excuse} for another purpose.

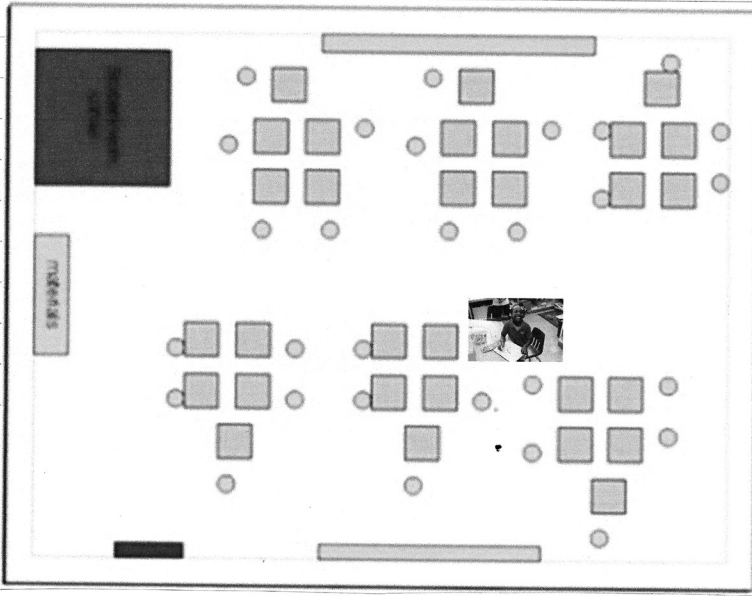
The school takes such incidents extremely seriously. A report was written and ^{both} sets of parents were spoken to. It was explained that, as there had been no malicious intent, that any ^{case} of differentiation in skin colour, is simply ^{not} acceptable.

Both boys are part of a broader 'SEAC' programme and attended a special half hour ^{session} to address and discuss the issue. Finally the whole thing was resolved amicably, but was an interesting lesson for me.

Appendix 6: Page from reflective log: Titilayo in the classroom

27.11.17

Titilayo



My name is Titi, I go to Sunnydale primary School in Billericay.

Can you see the picture? that's where I sit. On my table, I have Thomas, Benedict, Emma and Alexander. I know what you're probably thinking, the same question all the other year 3 teachers asked me. 'Do you call yourself Titi because it's easier?' (Of course with a smile) I answer exactly the same. 'No'. What I want to say is 'I call myself Titi as it is easier for YOU to pronounce.'

→

Glossary

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
AERA	The American Educational Research Association
DCFS	Department of Children, Families and Schools
DfES	Department for Education and Schools
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate of Education
RE	Religious Education
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
SIG	Special Interest Group
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party

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