

Prologue to Part Four

I pass, like night from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach...

July, 1996. At the end of the poem the Ancient Mariner finds himself back in his own country. All those aspects of his life which he left behind, his religious and geographical knowledge, are perceived now as precious, and he delights in his return. And now he has a tale to tell. It is the result of his own experiences which have taught him about the value of connecting with others in ways which point to the inherent order and meaningfulness of Being. It is an ethical and ontological knowledge which he now seeks to pass onto others, a knowledge derived from his experiences y own living educational theory.

I am conscious that this thesis is finishing as it began - in the classroom. I believe that this brings the thesis full-circle in a way which is aesthetically significant and educationally sound. In this final Part I show what it means to my educational development to understand the dialectic between the forms of my teacher-research and its content. In the Epilogue to Part Four I explain the significance of understanding the immanent dialectic at the heart of my practice and its connection to the development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships.

In the Epilogue, I explain in detail what I have learnt about my educational development from the point of view of my emergent 'I' (Evans, 1995) and its dialectical relationship to the form of action research I am using. I concentrate in particular on my understanding of the immanent dialectic and its relationship to my educational development within the thesis as a whole. I also evaluate Part Four and the thesis in terms of being an answer to the question: 'How can I create my own living educational theory as I offer you an account of my own educational development?'

In the account you are about to read I offer you the text of a paper I wrote for the AERA Conference in April 1996, whose title is: 'Democratising my educative relationships: creating my own living educational theory.' The first part of the paper is structured through the action research cycle of having a concern, imagining a solution, acting, observing and evaluating as I show what it means to improve the quality of learning with my pupils in the classroom. The second part of the paper, entitled, 'Creating my own living educational theory', contains extracts and commentary on the Ancient Mariner paper which provides one of the linking motifs in this thesis. This section, as in The General Prologue, is not presented in an action enquiry form and represents my own emancipation from it. Although I owe much to the action enquiry form in my own educational

development, I needed to transcend it in order to access the deepest connections between my own ontology and ethics and thus to represent my knowledge most aesthetically. In rejecting the action enquiry cycle form as the way in which I can most appositely coin my knowledge, I am taking responsibility for my own educational development and most appropriately communicating m want to play the mariner.

Part Four (written in 1996)

My own educational knowledge: Creating my own living educational theory.

‘Democratising my educative relationships: creating my own living educational theory’, paper for A.E.R.A. in New York, 1996.

Abstract:

I am a teacher-researcher in a girls comprehensive school of 700 pupils. This paper shows what it means to try to democratise the learning process in a bid to improve the quality of learning about English. Through the use of an action research methodology, involvement with learning partners and interactive journals, and making explicit the educational standards of judgement about the work we are doing, I show the links I make in my practice and theory between democratic values and an improvement in learning.

I worked with a group of Year Nine girls for six weeks at the end of the academic year, 1995, as they devised their own English-related topics, set their own criteria and then presented their work to the whole class. My own action enquiry takes the form: ‘How can I democratise the learning process with my pupils in ways which might contribute to an improvement in the quality of our learning?’ (This is within the wider enquiry, which I do not explicitly touch on in this paper: ‘How can I explain my own educational development as I make a contribution to educational knowledge and theory?’)

The educational significance of this study rests on the links made between the methodology of an action research enquiry, the values which I have been able to articulate through it and the contexts in which the practice and theory are located. This paper is an account of my own living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) as I attempt to democratise my educative relationships with my pupils.

Foreword:

Sarah: ‘It was scary at first. I thought: I can’t do this. Why can’t she just tell us what to do. I don’t really work very well without deadlines. You didn’t always tell us straight when everything had to be done, either. I think you should have done really. Don’t get me wrong, I loved it. I really loved working in that way, but it was hard. We’re used to being told, do this, do that! And you came along and told us we could do anything we liked. It was really scary for me.’

Laura: ‘You can say that again. But I learnt to be free. I learnt to express what I have inside me and to let my emotions out. I learnt that love is the most important thing in a relationship and that if the love is right then the work will come good. I learnt that it’s all right to be me. I learnt to spell better!
(laughter)

Laura: 'O.K., not much better, but better. I also learnt a bit about organisation, but not enough really. I think though that this year I am much more confident about being me. I think it's great.'

Sarah: 'Yes, you are more confident. I can vouch for that. Last week on Jeans Day you came in with a notice pinned to your front saying: 'My jeans are invisible. They look like a skirt!' You wouldn't have done that before when you weren't so confident.'

Laura: 'I learnt that I have something to say as well, and that I know whether something feels good that I've done or not. Last week when my English teacher told me that I hadn't expressed myself very carefully, I realised he was right but I still knew it was a good piece of work. It was true to me. I learnt that from you.'

Moira: 'When you look back at what you achieved, what stands out?'

Sarah: 'That piece of writing I did about 'Hard Times'. Pride, that's what I feel. It was a good piece of writing. I enjoyed it and it stretched me. But it wasn't just the writing itself, I proved something to myself. That I could do it. That I could write something that made me feel better about myself.'

Laura: 'That's exactly what I feel too. I wrote things that were true for me and I saw that other people could like them as well. That really means something to me.'

I see myself first and foremost as a teacher-researcher who aims to account for her own practice in this paper. I want to democratise the learning process between us as I try to account for my educational values in my actions and theory. You may be a teacher-researcher like myself, or perhaps you are a university academic. You may be a classroom teacher, an educational administrator or a Headteacher. Whoever you are, I think we may have something in common as educators: I believe we both have a desire to improve something. In this paper I want to account for my claim that I have improved the quality of learning with my pupils through a democratisation of my educative relationships. I want to invite you to read my paper in a spirit of true enquiry which values understandings arrived at through a genuine exploration. I am a teacher-researcher who loves teaching. Most of all I love to see what happens when children begin to take responsibility for their own learning and start to see that they are capable of speaking on their own behalf about things which concern them. I see the democratising of the learning processes I engage in with the girls in the classroom to be connected with helping them to take responsibility for their own learning within an environment in which they recognise their responsibilities to others as well as to themselves as they learn something of value. I also believe, with Dewey (1916), that fulfilling 'democratic' aims in our classroom means that the learning processes:

'must be capable of translation into a method of co-operating with the activities of those undergoing instruction. It must suggest the kind of environment needed to liberate and to organise their capacities.' (p.108)

Dewey goes on to say that such learning processes must:

'engage in something which makes the lives of others better worth living and which accordingly makes the ties which bind people together more perceptible.' (p.316)

In my own practice, as you are about to see, I infer a relationship between the democratisation of the learning process and an improvement in its quality. I find that trying to improve the processes of learning by making them more explicit within the classroom, also highlights the quality of relationship between myself and the pupils, and between the pupils themselves.

In addition I think that democratising the learning process has an influence on the kind of knowledge which can result from that process. Dewey writes:

‘Through negotiating our meanings we come closer to realising what is of generalisable value in human existence and how, by extension, we might realise that practically.’ (p.240)

In the final section of this paper I will be addressing the issue of the kind of knowledge and theory that my research promotes.

I am struck by Lomax’s (1994) description of ‘democracy’ when she writes:

‘to value others’ interpretations and recognise their right to participate in the definition of a shared reality.’ (p.21)

In the paper you are about to read, I show what it means to try to democratise the learning process with a group of 14 year old girls in our English lessons, and then through researching the process, to articulate my own ‘living educational theory’ (Whitehead, 1989) as represented through this paper for AERA. I am writing this paper bearing in mind that the categories which structure this conference have no category for educational theory. I believe that my educational research serves two functions: first to give me a vehicle through which I can improve the quality of my educational practice, and secondly, to contribute to educational knowledge and theory through the descriptions and explanations I can offer to such a forum as this. This presentation is also part of my attempt to democratise the educative relationships between school and university teachers and researchers. I am not content simply to allow others (for example Calderhead, 1987; Kincheloe, 1991; Goodson, 1992; Day, 1993) to hegemonise what constitutes educational knowledge and theory about what it means to be in teacher in the classroom. I can speak for myself. Instead of university academics writing about ‘teachers’ knowledge’, or, like Howe (1995), writing on some theoretical developments to do with democracy, justice and action research, I want to show that a classroom teacher is capable of articulating her own knowledge and theory as she tries to improve her practice.

Structure and content of this paper:

The following paper is rather long. This is because it describes and explains a process of democratisation through correspondence and dialogue in the form of action enquiry cycles (Whitehead, 1985) which examine the meaning of my own living educational theory. In the first part of the paper I will contextualise an enquiry (called ‘Contexts’) which I undertook in June and July, 1995 with a group of Year Nine girls (14 years old) as they chose their own English-related topics, wrote action plans, worked closely with

learning partners, and developed their own educational standards of judgement by which their projects could be evaluated. Finally they presented their work to the whole group in a celebration of achievement. This process will be described and explained in the second part of the paper (called Into the Classroom).

In the final part of this paper, I will be explaining the educational significance of this enquiry as I articulate more specifically my own living educational theory through the enquiry I am now undertaking at school in a bid to further democratise the learning process with the girls I am teaching this year. This section is entitled: 'Creating my own living educational theory'.

Contexts:

I work as an English teacher for half the week at a local girls' comprehensive school in Bath. I have been there for 18 months. The word 'comprehensive' refers to the enrolment policy: girls are not admitted through academic performance, but, in our particular case, through catchment area, whether sisters are already in the school and then through individual applications from parents not fulfilling either of the first two requirements.

For the other half of the week I am active at the local university. There I help to run The Bath Action Research Network. There are a number of teacher-researchers from Infant, Junior, and Secondary schools connected to this centre. We also are involved here with some in-service training. We place a lot of value on the importance of dialogue as the cornerstone of good practice (McNiff, Whitehead and Laidlaw, 1992). Work already derived from that premise is available on the World Wide Web on <http://www.actionresearch.net>

In 1990 I began an educational action research Ph.D. with Jack Whitehead at the University of Bath. In my Ph.D. I am researching what it means for my own educational development to be improving the quality of educative relationships with pupils and students in the learning process as I make a contribution to educational knowledge and theory.

I began teaching on the Initial Teacher Education programmes in the School of Education and my Ph.D. enquiry has been partially an account of those years. It was during that time that I began to understand what it meant to the educational significance of my practice to take Foucault's (1980: 41) words about 'the indignity of speaking for others', seriously. I began to realise that enabling the voices of my students to emerge through the texts which I was producing changed the balance of power within the educative relationship and the knowledge that was emerging about 'good' practice. I wrote an article (Laidlaw, 1994a) about the democratisation of the learning process with a Postgraduate Education student which was published in Educational Action Research: an International Journal. Its main focus was on the democratising potential of dialogue within an educative relationship with one of my Initial Teacher Education students. I feel that some of the important educational groundwork for my future practice in the classroom and my own living educational theory was articulated then.

Influential in my research has been the growing integration of Whitehead's (1989b) notion of a living educational theory. I understand that I, as an individual, am in the process of creating my own educational theory as a classroom teacher, when I research and becoming publicly accountable for the process at the points of implementation, modification and evaluation. Unlike a disciplines approach to educational theory in which knowledge is constituted by the philosophy, sociology, history and psychology of education (Hirst, 1983) I believe that educational theory is being created by individuals like myself trying to improve their own practice (Whitehead, 1993; Eames, 1995; Evans, 1995; Hughes, 1996).

The 'living' quality of the educational theory I am involved with consists of the developmental aspects of my research and the ways in which they connect: my research is never finished. It is concerned with living relationships which develop over time and whose meanings and significances evolve, as I evolve a way of writing about them and try to improve them on a practical level. My theory is living because it fuses my ongoing educative relationships with my theorising about them. It is praxis. My educational theory also integrates McNiff's (1993) tenet about the importance of remaining a learner as a teacher in the classroom. McNiff also writes about the way in which teachers and learners involved in action research enquiries tend to mirror each other's processes, and that making this process of mirroring explicit can become a point of reference through which improvements in the learning process can be made. Such is also my experience in the classroom with the girls. The understanding of this mirroring process has been crucial in my own educational development as I have tried to improve the quality of learning in the classroom.

In 1994 I became the chief administrator for the 3rd World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management held at the University of Bath in July of that year. During that time my Ph.D. research was about gaining a better understanding of the political implications of becoming accountable for my own practice in the name of education. After this I returned to the classroom where I was able to develop the learning that I had begun in Initial Teacher Education and within the administrative role of the Congress to do with trying to democratise my educative relationships.

Into the Classroom:

Last year from January - July 1995, I taught a group of 29 high attaining Year Nine girls. In May, like all other 14 year olds in state schools, they were required to sit their written Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) in Shakespeare and Language-related activities. The National Curriculum, of which the SATs are an integrated aspect, is heavily regulated in England and requires teachers to cover particular areas of curriculum-content, and specifies the age-range when certain topics should be taught. Shakespeare is compulsory in the syllabus for fourteen year olds. After the tests we were then free to explore something outside the prescribed syllabus. Throughout the calendar year I had been encouraging the girls to engage in the action planning process in which they keep interactive journals about issues related to English, engaged with learning partners with whom they could learn to criticise their own and each other's work, and then to evolve their own educational standards of judgement by which they could judge their own work.

They then became accountable for any claims about an improvement in the quality of their learning (see later * for the reasons for emphasis). All of these processes I was also following as part of my own ongoing research. I perceive a strong link between engaging in processes designed to account for what we do in the name of education and upholding democratic values in the classroom. This link is assumed throughout this paper.

The action planning process in our classroom took the form of Whitehead's (1985) action enquiry cycle of articulating a concern, imagining a solution, acting, observing, evaluating and modifying in the light of our findings. It is only now in the writing of this paper, however, that I am seeing the above underlined processes corresponded closely with the stages of an action enquiry, although at the time it was very much implicit rather than explicit. In other words the action planning stages could be referred to the stages which my pupils and I followed:

- a) 'Articulating a Concern' corresponds to the highlighting of the pupils' own concerns in their journals and the beginning of my understanding about what responsibilities as an educator I was incurring, and those of the girls';
- b) 'Imagining a Solution' corresponds to the stage at which the pupils began to work out ideas with learning partners and I tried to think of ways of helping each individual move forward in her enquiry through dialogue and correspondence;
- c) 'Acting' then took the form of the pupils and I writing and talking to each other about their work as they tried to produce something which related to English in the topic of their own devising;
- d) 'Observing' was the stage when the girls articulated the criteria upon which they wanted their topics to be judged and I explored the development of my own educational standards of judgement through which I wanted my work to be judged. Although this was not strictly an evaluative stage, it was characterised by the beginnings of evaluative perspectives and a greater independence in drawing conclusions;
- e) 'Evaluating' took place when the girls presented their work and then criticised it based upon the criteria which each girl had developed and I presented two articles (Laidlaw, 1995a&b) related to this present paper to my own validation group at the University of Bath.

Also significant here is the degree to which correspondence and dialogue within the educative relationship constitutes the form of our enquiries in the classroom as we tried to improve the quality of learning. In my article (Laidlaw, 1994a) I developed the theme of the democratising potential of dialogical focus in an action enquiry. In this present account I think I have taken my work one stage further as I show what it means not only in my practice to develop such values in action, but as you will see in the final section how I can then develop my own living educational theory from it as I account to you for my actions and conclusions.

In this article I will be concentrating mainly on two students, Claire and Sarah. This is - first because I have the most documentary evidence relating to these girls in a form which is accessible to this article and their responses to the processes we engaged in were markedly different; secondly, I am working to a deadline not only with this paper but also on various aspect of my schoolwork; thirdly, I have been able to follow up with two of

the girls (March, 1996) some of the outcomes to the learning they experienced with me last year which I think reflect appropriately on the degree to which I can make claims about having improved the learning through some democratic procedures to do with choice, outcome and evaluation. In my recent communications with Sarah (and also another pupil from last year, Laura) I am learning something about the educational significance of accounting to learners about what I have learnt from them.

I am also learning something of value now in the attempt to account to you, the reader, for both the process, and the significance of the process, of democratising the learning that I and the girls experienced last Summer. Because of my learning with Sarah, Claire, Laura and others, I am able not only to explain more what it means to democratise the process with learners but also to understand more of the educational significance of trying to explain to you why such learning matters. In claiming the status of academic knowledge for my teacher-research, I am also working on democratising the educative relationships between university and school teachers and researchers.

After the SATs I decided that it was time that the girls had some freedom of choice about what it was they were going to do. I recognised Dewey's sense that:

‘Until the democratic criterion of the intrinsic significance of every growing experience is recognised, we shall be intellectually confused by the demand for adaptation to external aims.’

I was concerned that such adherence to external aims as the SATs represented was not necessarily conducive to creativity in the English classroom. Experience has taught me (Laidlaw, 1994c, 1996a), that improvement in terms of curricular and personal learning are related in my classroom to the ways in which we negotiate tasks and meanings throughout the learning process.

In an article (Laidlaw, 1995a) about our classroom as we prepared for the SATs I wrote:

‘One of the things I am concerned to promote is the children's own voices. By that I mean that I want them to be able to ask questions about something to which they wish to know the answer. I want them to be able to talk about what concerns them in English, and to be able to come up (in negotiation) with their own solutions about their own concerns. In addition I want them to feel encouraged to discuss their ideas with me and others in the group and to feel that they are taken seriously as individuals. I also want them to be able to challenge my conclusions and teaching methods in a spirit of enquiry.’
(p.3)

In the same article I wrote about the reason why I wanted to put the above into practice:

‘Loving my girls, and I do love them - means for me to believe in their value as human beings, to want them to lead happy lives, independent yet connected to others in ways which enhance their existences. Loving them is not a

sentimental or possessive emotion but one which enables me to try to the best of my ability to help them to lead full and happy lives.' (p.5)

The SATs had not, to my mind, allowed a sufficient degree of negotiation. I could not live out my values fully in the classroom with a curriculum which, I believe, did not enhance the girls' potential as individual centres of consciousness, capable of making complex decisions about their own learning. I wanted to spend the last six weeks with them trying to open creative doors with them and discussing ways of improving their learning which might enable them both to learn more effectively and to enjoy the process as well. I believed that giving them the chance to work on projects related to English, but of their own devising, would give them opportunities to take more responsibility for their own learning and to deepen their understanding of the processes of their own learning. I also required them to have a learning partner who would help with drafting, editing, evaluation and accounting for any claims they were making about improving the learning aims they set themselves in their action plans.

a) Articulating Concerns:

On 14.6.95. I first put to the group the idea of devising and carrying out their own projects. This was the first step in opening up the possibility to them of taking responsibility for their own learning instead of having outcome and process wholly devised by the teacher. In this section I will show some of the girls' responses and my own to this formative stage in terms of what it began to mean to us to formulate what it was that concerned each one of us.

My suggestion that each girl come up with her own ideas was at first greeted by a silence which I interpreted as uneasy. I asked them to talk in friendship groups and then to report back on their impressions.

Laura: 'This is going to be hard, isn't it?'

Sarah: 'Yes. Are you going to judge our work at all, or do we have to do it all ourselves?'

Claire: 'I can't wait. I think it sounds great!'

Other comments included:

Antonia: 'I don't have a clue what's going to happen. It's a bit nerve wracking.'

Katherine: 'We're not used to doing it like this. We expect you to tell us what to do.'

Nathalie: 'I'm not being funny, Miss, but why don't you just tell us what to do?'

Their comments seemed to me to be understandable for pupils who were used to having parameters largely determined by someone else about their own learning. At the time I didn't have well-articulated responses to their concerns. I talked about having faith in their own ability to come up with something of value and something they could be proud of in the future, but I also said:

Moira: 'I've not done something like this before either. I'm a bit daunted too!'

Laura: 'I'll guarantee not as much as us, Miss. I'll guarantee it!'

On 4.5.95. I had written to Claire in her journal because she was experiencing problems with her creativity and she wanted to know what to do about it. (I also want to mention that I have not edited the girls' written comments in terms of spelling and punctuation as I feel that such an act would partially obscure the authenticity of the account you are about to read.) I wrote to Claire:

'What is it you want to write, Claire? And how are you trying to write it?'

She replied in writing:

'I feel that I have a lot to say but I don't know how to say it and yet I do. Sometimes I like the way I write, but it's not the way most people write, so I don't know whether I should?'

I wrote back:

'8.5.95. I think you should just do it. If you have something to say, say it!'

Claire was trying to formulate her second action plan, her first being mainly concerned with the more formal aspects of English. I was pleased to see her beginning to grasp something much more challenging and I felt, more fulfilling to her if she succeeded.

On 8.6.95. we had a conversation about our correspondence through the journals:

Claire: Sometimes when I read what you write to me it makes me cry.

Moira: Why is that, do you think?

Claire: Because you take me seriously. You encourage me. You don't keep telling me what to do.

Moira: Of course, Claire. I want to set you free. If you're in a cage, then my job is to open it and then you can fly.

Claire: No one has ever spoken to me like that. Certainly not a teacher, anyway.

Moira: I want you to feel free to explore your writing. You don't know where it's going to go, but this is a real opportunity for you. I want you to take it if that's what you want. I think it's really exciting and I know you can do something with the time. The Eliot we're doing is well suited to you exploring certain themes.

Claire: I'd like to look at some of his religious ones. I like 'Journey of the Magi'. When we were reading it in class, I really thought I understood what it was about. It's so sad and so unhappy. I want to be able to write about it.

Moira: You will, honestly, and you'll be pleased with what you write.

Claire: I really love working with you this year. I'm really excited about this.

I was consciously trying to take Claire and her learning needs seriously so that she might experience what it means to take responsibility for her own learning and to enjoy the exploration of her own talents.

Sarah had already written to me in her journal about what was blocking her progress as she perceived it:

‘13.3.95. All my ideas come from things that people have mentioned in class. I just extend them a bit. I know it’s really selfish but I really like to be the best in everything (I can’t help it) and if I’m not I think I’ve failed.’

Later she wrote this:

‘9.6.95. I know we are supposed to be being more responsible for our own work, but I am finding the T.S. Eliot poem responses quite hard. I find it hard to do all the work if I am not under pressure to do it...Please could you give me a deadline for when this work has to be in.’

I replied to her:

‘10.6.95. I would like to feel that by the end of this term you feel more confidence about setting the agenda. How can I help you to take more responsibility for your own learning? That’s a genuine question. What can I do? Neither is it a critical question. Because you’re so bright it seems to me that many avenues are open to you...I also think you lack the confidence to pursue your own line of enquiry, and it is that...which I wish you to pursue in those final weeks. I see these final weeks as a real testing ground for you, Sarah, in which you make decisions about how you can more appropriately express yourself and also what constitutes for you ‘good’ work.’

Democratising the learning process does not mean that every decision is negotiable. There are certain aspects of the learning process which I was not prepared to negotiate around, but until this process had finished, I was not as sure as I am now what those areas relate to. In the final section of this article I will be picking up on that point again.

Sarah’s comments showed me that she wanted me to define parameters for what she was doing. Claire’s alternatively seemed to suggest that she was finding the thoughts of greater choice exciting.

Other comments about the prospect of choice include Rachael’s:

‘17.6.95. I really like the idea of doing what we want to, but it is quite hard to choose what we wanted to do at first. I think it will be quite hard to keep working well because when your on your own working we tend to mess around a bit so it will be quite hard. ‘

Many of the comments that I was receiving in their journals and talking to them about focused on their sense of doubt about their ability to do something so seemingly unstructured. One of the hardest aspects I found was not jumping in with solutions for them. That was part of my learning. When do I intervene? How much do I leave the process to them?

b) Imagining Solutions:

Vital to the democratising of my educative relationships, and thus the learning which can take place within those relationships, seems to me to be allowing the girls to work out what might answer their own concerns in their own ways. Just as I wanted them to begin

to work out what they really cared about in relation to their learning in English, I wanted them to formulate what their solutions might be. In my own educational research (Laidlaw, 1994a,b,c; 1995a&b; 1996a&b) I have found this stage pivotal not only to the learning I can do but to my own sense of responsibility for that learning. I find that it is also related to the degree of worthwhileness I can develop about my own learning as I seek to account for it. In this section I will be showing what it means to some of the girls to be communicating their own ideas about how their work can progress. Because of the nature of this stage, our ideas are tentative and exploratory, but full of optimism about what might be possible.

George wrote:

‘17.6.95. Do you think I could do responses to T.S. Eliot in a newspaper. With poems, articles, pictures, interviews, diarys and things like that. Also as things are coming into my mind, stories, posters, some research. What do you think?’

I replied:

19.6.95. Sounds great to me. Go for it! I’ll really look forward to what results.’

I wanted to show the girls that I valued their own insights and enthusiasms and that I trusted them to come up with something of value not simply stipulated by a teacher. I also was not going automatically to suggest ideas if a girl couldn’t come up with something straightaway. I found that difficult. Laura wrote after she had finished her project:

‘17.7.95. I think I could have done a little but more but it took me a few weeks to decide what I was going to do.’

Sarah wrote in her journal on 18.6.95.:

‘I would really love to write a story with illustrations...I want it to be a proper-length story...Is it all right if I just write the opening chapter? The first chapter of a book is one I always remember...Last term I loved doing the textual analysis of Shakespeare and I’d love to do something like this on other people’s work. I hope it’ll also help me with my own story. Thanks you loads ‘n’ loads for letting us do this...’

I replied:

‘19.6.95. I love the way you’re working at the moment. If you look back through your work you’ll see how much you’ve done in terms of taking responsibility for your own learning. I think it’s great how much you’re taking the initiative in your own processes. I am sure that this project has the potential to liberate you. Always looking to teacher/authority figures to set the parameters can be limiting in terms of your own creativity. Be free Sarah. Really enjoy it! Really make the most of this time. I believe in you so much and am so impressed with what you have achieved already.’

Claire set herself the following task in her journal:

'7.6.95. New Target The SATs are over and I have decided on a new target. Yes, I have decided what I am going to do but have absolutely no clue about how I am going to do it. I have decided to try and spend the rest of this term trying to write more freely and enjoy it. I want to express myself more freely and enjoy it. I want to express myself well, I want to be able to get my feelings across without getting long-winded...Right now my action plan is a bit bare as I have no clue about how to go about it. I was hoping for a few ideas. I think maybe reading other poems like T.S. Eliot helps, but other than that, I have no ideas.'

I wrote to her:

'You've set yourself something tremendously challenging. I'm really glad you've asked such specific questions...Try out a variety of styles and subjects and see what suits you...For my part I will try to offer you space in lessons and for homework if that is what you want...Look how far you've come in understanding your own learning, Claire...I think this could be one of the most exciting journeys of your life and I will give you all the support you need.'

I felt this stage was a learning experience for me too as the girls tried to articulate what it was they wanted to spend their time on, and I began to feel what my own responsibilities for the outcomes might be. I wrote in my own private journal:

'9.6.95. 'I feel I've turned a corner of understanding in my work with Claire today. What a marvellous girl she is! I have been worried that I have not offered sufficiently creative guidelines for the girls and that when Nathalie sits wondering whether she can do the project ahead, and Laura K. is still not settling down to her work, I am not behaving as a responsible educator. And yet I am. This is responsible education. Letting them come to their own understandings in their own time. I've read the books, heard the rhetoric, written it myself, but this time, I feel it has the potential to become truly emancipatory for us all. I've got a feeling that by probing Claire about the standards of judgement she can evolve for herself, I am setting her free from not just formal constraints in school, but the restraints she feels inside, which I perceive as destructive of her self-esteem and sense of well-being, as well as destructive of her creativity and authentic responses to English.'

c) Acting:

This stage seems to me to be vital to the practical exploration of responsibility and testing out one's worldview. It was important for me to remember to encourage these first tentative steps by the girls as they began to recognise what it meant to open their own learning horizons. In this section the girls begin to put their ideas onto paper and I respond in ways which are designed to move their enquiries forward. In other words I am responding to their learning needs rather than requiring them to respond solely to my teacher-instructions.

Claire produced the following writing on her chosen poem of exploration, 'The Burial of the Dead' by T.S. Eliot:

'The Burial of the Dead'. I have my own ideas and my own interpretation. I do not follow the same rules of literature. My understanding is in a new light and different in many ways. I could not tell you the meaning of every word as it does not mean the same to me. Marie on the sled is like a vivid memory as my mind paints pictures but actually represents a desire, 'And I was frightened.../And down we went in the mountains, there you feel free' (Claire's emphasis). The true meaning is so different. No one else could understand the depth of breaking out of the continuous circle each day with the same aim of achieving and doing well. Exam results are a fact of life to some people to me each one is either a relief or a punishment. However every time I know it will return again will it be next month, next term or next week. My life is dominated with aims to achieve. Each day is a stepping stone in my mission to take a role in teaching more children what I have learned. Sometimes I feel my life does not add up as I was to break out of a circle which is meant to slowly take me to my summit. I sometimes feel I am betraying myself but I have an aim to fulfill what I am destined to do. 'With a wicked pack of cards/ Here she said is your card'.

My life appears to be a book, a book in another language I cannot understand the text but it is as if each day I learn a new word and elucidate a new phrase. This eternal cycle leads to my already disclosed salvation.'

I wrote in response:

15.6.95. I love this writing, Claire. I love the way you're expressing yourself now and feel that you're breaking new ground in ways that really will matter to you and to others. I am most taken by your growing capacity to look at where you stand in the scheme of things. It's wonderful to see you fly, Claire... You have started to become the arbiter of your own destiny. You have started to say: 'this is how I work, this is what I mean, and this is how I'm going to do it!' I cannot directly express why this seems so amazing to me, but I wonder whether if I tell you a story it will give you an idea about how much your new-found voice means to me...'

I then told her a personal anecdote and finished with:

'I know that what is happening in our classroom will never leave us. I know that wherever I am and whatever I am doing, what you and others in the class have taught me will always be a part of me. I am proud to be a part of it, to be able to witness it, and to know what it means. Thank you.'

With Sarah I found it difficult to know quite how to help her. She did not seem to be responding to the freedom in the same way as Claire. It was difficult for me to encourage her as I had Claire, because Sarah was not so happy with putting her ideas down on paper. On 14.6.95. I wrote to her:

'How's it going, Sarah? I haven't seen your work for a while? Do you want any help with it?'

She replied:

'15.6.95. I'm having trouble getting started. I still want you to tell me what to do. I've got lots of ideas and I could write something now, but I want it to be really good. The best. I'm thinking alot, if that means anything!'

I wrote back:

15.6.95. Come and talk about your work. I really am looking forward to seeing what you do, Sarah. I know that there's something wonderful inside you waiting to come out. Let's see how we can get it out into the open where it belongs. Let's all share it, shall we?'

d) Observing:

This stage of an action enquiry seems to me to be characterised for the girls by the articulation of the standards of judgement which partly evaluate and direct the educational value of an enquiry. In my experience it is a stage characterised by doubt, particularly with pupils who are not used to exercising this degree of responsibility for their own learning. In the first two articles I wrote about this group of girls (Laidlaw, 1995a&b) I concluded that it was the most significant stage in terms of the girls coming to see what it meant to take responsibility for their own learning. As a teacher-researcher, for me this stage is characterised by stepping back to a degree until the girls' standards of judgement and the beginnings of their own written work emerge. This stage is marked by the beginnings for me of evaluating the quality of the work we are doing in the English lessons.

The educational significance of this stage of our action enquiries is revealed in the way in which the content of the subject (in the girls' case English, and in mine pedagogy) begins to develop a symbiotic relationship with the beginnings of evaluative perspectives. In other words the ways in which we are individually thinking about how to evaluate our subject is in an intimate and nurturing relationship with the development of our understanding of that subject. This is clearly demonstrated in Claire's work, less so in Sarah's because of her reluctance to put pen to paper. I believe my own synthesis between my developing understanding of my own pedagogy and its quality, is revealed in my remarks about enabling others to speak in their own voices about issues which concern them.

Shortly after our discussion, which unfortunately I did not record, Sarah set up her own educational standards of judgement by which she wanted us to judge her work:

- 1)Originality: - If my original idea was individual and creative. Also if it is something new, that I have never done before and would like to try.
- 2)Presentation: - If it is neatly presented, and you can see that a lot of care and time has been taken over it.
- 3)Spellings/punctuation: - If there are very few (one or two on each A4 sheet) or no spelling or punctuation mistakes.
- 4)Ipsative evaluation: - If I personally have improved any work I have done before.
- 5)Enjoyment: - If you can see that I have enjoyed it (an aesthetic feeling).
- 6)Your enjoyment/understanding.
- 7)Perception: - Whether I have understood what the author is doing (their 'devices')

- 8) Practicality: - Whether I have put into practice my ideas/conclusions, or if I haven't actually used them in my chapter, that I have shown that I understand how to 'use' them.
- 9) Understanding: - Do you understand what I am talking about, or could I be talking about the velocity of space for all you know or care?

It is significant that Sarah did not feel it necessary to discuss these criteria with me. This suggested to me that she was beginning to take responsibility for her own learning and was beginning to communicate to others what she felt was of value in the process. She did discuss her standards of judgement with her learning partner Amy whose evaluation on Sarah's work I will refer to later.

At this time, Claire also produced a list of criteria by which she wanted her work to be judged:

- 1) Presentation;
- 2) Understanding of the concept;
- 3) Originality;
- 4) relation - to the source;
- 5) Theme - point (putting it across);
- 6) Enjoyment;
- 7) Effort and time;
- 8) Amount of concentration;
- 9) Creativity (helps to explain the originality);
- 10) Appropriate to the occasion;
- 11) Poetic use of language.

It was, however, at this time, that a breakthrough occurred in terms of Claire's own original response to the task of articulating the standards of judgement, although I was happy with criterion 9. I believe that this suggested a connectedness which I felt was educational, and that Claire had given this criterion careful thought.

Claire spent much of her lesson time in the art room constructing a model of T.S. Eliot's world, revealing through it her own sense of what it meant to her to be free and an individual. As a result of a conversation about the standards of judgement we had whilst I was visiting her in the Art Room on 6.7.95. I went back to the classroom and wrote the following which I gave to her at the end of the lesson:

'Dear Claire, There's something enormously exciting about your work at the moment - not just the clay work itself, but in particular about the standards of judgement that you're devising. And that's what's so unusual! When was the last time you heard a pupil saying not only what her work was to be, but how it was to be judged too? And your standard of judgement is also new - a 'heartfelt' criterion! I don't want to put an added burden on you, but I do want to ask whether you would reflect - as it happens - on what it feels like to have this freedom. I know you have alluded to it - but to focus on the processes you are going through. What is 'heartfelt' about it? Why does it matter to you? How/What are you learning? Does it matter to you to set your own criteria? Why? Why not?...I would argue that your activities are educational because you are learning things of value about

areas you have chosen, in a context which can learn from you. I want you to teach us what it means to you to take such enormous responsibility for your own learning. Can we talk about this? I'm so excited about your insights. Very well done. Best wishes, Miss Laidlaw.'

Claire responded the next day with this:

'The cage door has been unlocked although I must push it open. I do not rush as I do not know what lies beyond. A whole world waiting to be explored but few will be given the chance. Others will waste their chance plucking at the bars repeating something they have done for many years, a few may not even bother to look up they have no desire to explore the unknown. However, I have found the door each day opening it a little more as the chains from around my feet slowly crumble to dust leaving me with a new opportunity to fly free! I do not know what lies ahead as I express my feelings in a new way. How I wish everyone could be given the same chance as I, however if they had never been captured they would not be grateful for their freedom. I worked hard for my freedom

setting myself targets and judging my achievements and faults. Nobody else could have done that for me, no rule could have accommodated for me as well as for everyone else. We are all different and should be treated accordingly. It would be no good telling everyone in the cage to look up at the unlocked door if some have no desire for freedom. Each person is their own person an individual and different to the next it would be wrong to treat them the same.'

I was overwhelmed by this piece of writing because it represents an authentic voice of someone arguing on her own behalf, with acknowledgement to the differences between human beings, and also compassion for those who cannot understand what she now understands as being so valuable. I am reminded here of the educational standards of judgement I set myself in the previous article which I wanted to fulfil in this action enquiry cycle and which I alluded to earlier in this article:

One of the chief things which I am concerned to promote is the pupils' own voices... I want them to be able to talk about what concerns them in English, and to be able to come up (in negotiation) with their own solutions to their own concerns. In addition I want them to feel encouraged to discuss their ideas with me and others in the group and to feel that they are taken seriously as individuals. I also wish them to be able to challenge my conclusions and teaching methods in a spirit of enquiry. In my own experience, I ask most of the questions and I want the girls to feel that there is an enquiring environment within the classroom, one which encourages them to challenge themselves, each other and me. (p.6).

And on my second action plan I posited this as an educational aim (i.e. a standard of judgement by which the educational value of my own work could be judged):

How will I know when I have improved the quality of my teaching and learning with this group?

- individuals will feel freer to voice their opinions;

In articulating something so heartfelt:

'as the chains from around my feet slowly crumble to dust leaving me with a new opportunity to fly free!... How I wish everyone could be given the same chance as I... I worked hard for my freedom setting myself targets and judging my achievements and faults. Nobody else could have done that for me, no rule could have accommodated for me as well as for everyone else.'

I feel that Claire has internalised the educational standard of judgement by which she wants her own work to be judged - the 'heartfelt' criterion. Through the way in which she has expressed herself I can infer a sense of strength from within: 'Nobody else could have done that for me, no rule could have accommodated for me as well as for everyone else.' Clearly at this point, Claire is speaking for herself about something which concerns her and is articulating it in a decisive way.

I also feel she has pointed towards a compassion towards others, a concern for the needs and realities of other people, revealing a dialectical awareness of personal responsibility and social context: 'How I wish everyone could be given the same chance as I.' and: 'If they had never been captured they would not be grateful for their freedom.' I do not wish to attribute a causality to the work I do in the classroom, but given the experience of working with Claire and the other girls in the class, I recognise in Claire's contribution a reflection of one of my own most heartfelt educational criteria by which I wish the value of my own work in education to be judged, and indeed part of the value of this article to be perceived: The value of social responsibility, the recognition of the humanity of us all: that we belong together, helping each other, caring for each other, trying to improve the lot of all, that we are not isolated egos in a vacuum, but that what we do and how we act, has an impact on others. I will write about this in more detail when I come to evaluate the work we have been doing together.

We discussed the heartfelt criterion in class (with Claire's permission) and two other girls seemed to be using it in their own educational standards of judgement.

Lisa wrote in her list:

'Does the performance come across as truly heartfelt and well-performed?'

Becky developed this more fully into a criterion which would enable her to produce what she judged as 'my best work ever!' (17.6.95.) She wrote:

'When judging my piece I want all these points to be taken into consideration. In particular I think: 'Is it important to me?' is the most important point because this project has to mean a lot to me to make it the best and put all I can into it.'

Later in her evaluation about her story about her relationship with her horse who nearly dies of illness, she wrote:

'I am going to evaluate my project using the standards of judgement I prepared. I have really enjoyed working on this project and it has really meant a lot to me because it was something which happened to me. It actually meant life and death and now I can look back and see how hard it really seemed has paid off. I tried to put all my efforts into it because Poppy is so important to me. I could not see a life without her...'

Sarah articulated early the criteria upon which she wanted her work to be judged. In her aim to consider some opening chapters of Literature, she wrote about 'Hard Times' by Dickens, amongst others, which included 'Rebecca' by du Maurier and 'Jane Eyre' by Charlotte Brontë. In her 'Introduction' she wrote this:

'Although all authors differ in their styles and quality, they all use the same kind of 'devices' to manipulate their readers into certain opinions about their characters. It is essential that we have the right opinion about a character. For instance, if the book was a tragedy in which the girl's mother died. If we felt no sympathy for the girl or her mother,

then we would not feel any hurt or pain when the mother dies. Books are to make us feel emotions in a secondary way, and if we do not feel any emotions, then we will not enjoy the book...’

This is what she wrote about ‘Hard Times’:

‘As Thomas Gradgrind wearily dictates to us the manner in which she should be learning, our minds begin to wander. Should we let this impetuously tedious man really govern our ways of thinking? And as he drones on, about the facts that we should base our lives around, our eyes are set to search the room for anything with any remote interest. But we find nothing. And we are supposed to base our lives around this man’s hypothesis, and the facts that this room holds? The absolute dismalness of our surroundings suggest the way in which we are supposed to view this man’s theory: with as much interest as this first chapter holds.’

In her conclusion she wrote this about what she has learnt about the book from its opening chapter:

‘Dickens makes sure we are bored by Thomas Gradgrind, so we are set against his ideas from the start.’

Her conclusion finishes with her own opening chapter. Clearly she is attempting to create a character consumed by evil, when, for example, she writes:

‘She seemed so pure, so true, giving you the confidence to break out of the prisons you had built around yourself. But only so she could lure you into hers. The only pure and true emotion in her was evil...Like the red sky taking the day away, she took your love, your heart - your life...’

e) Evaluating:

This is the educational heart o_

f any action enquiry for me. It seems to me that when a learner is capable of saying what constitutes the good in her own enquiry, she is implying a meaningful connection between learning and the educative relationship that values standards derived from self-knowledge and industry. This leads her to take responsibility for her learning, to say what that learning consists of, and to become publicly accountable for what she has achieved without simply relying on extrinsic criteria. In my experience, being able to evaluate the worth of what I have achieved is both empowering and motivating. It also increases the degree to which I value the learning I have done. I wanted to offer this opportunity to the girls in my care. In this section you will see some of the girls revealing how they responded to their own and others’ work, and me responding to some of their presentations and standards of judgement. Again you will see my role expressing itself as a responsive, rather than directive one.

Sarah evaluated her project as follows:

'Originality: - I think the ideas were original and it was something I wanted to try out. I think it was also individual to myself, as it involves doing things I enjoy.

Presentation: - I have taken a lot of time over this project, and I hope it has shown. It looks neat, as it was typed out on the computer, and it is easy to read.

Spelling/Punctuation: - I cannot find any spelling or punctuation mistakes in my work so far. I used a spell-check but even then there were only one or two mistakes.

Ipsative evaluation: - I think I have kept up the standards of any work I have done before, but I don't know if I've improved them. I think I have been more descriptive in my writing since before, and my writing style has been more consistent.

Enjoyment: - I don't know whether it shows if I enjoyed myself or not. I did enjoy the project, but I didn't organise my time very well. This put me under a lot of pressure, so I didn't enjoy it as much as I could.

Perception: - I think I understood well what the author was doing, and I hope it showed in my work.

Practicality: - Although I understood how other authors wrote, I found it hard to write myself. I took a lot of time trying to write a chapter, but I don't think I did it effectively. I don't think I used any of my ideas properly, but I did understand how they are used.

Understanding: - I think that the work I have done is relatively easy to understand, and others know what I am talking about.

The girls then accounted for their criteria to their learning partners and offered their own standards of judgement as ways for their projects to be understood and evaluated. This process is well expressed by Lomax's (1994) comment already alluded to in this paper about:

'valu[ing] others' interpretations and recognis[ing] their right to participate in the definition of shared reality.' (p.21)

Amy, Sarah's learning partner, responded to Sarah project, using her criteria in this way:

Originality - I definately find the idea of your project both creative and individual. I don't think anyone else could have thought of something so original.

Presentation. - Although black and white is very eye-catching, all of the pages seem to look the same. Maybe you could have used different fonts for the different 'reviews'? I'm sure it will look much better when you put some colourful pictures in. It is also very neat.

Spellings/punctuation - I haven't noticed any spelling or punctuation mistakes in any of your pieces of work. I can tell you have put ALOT of effort into it.

Ipsative Evaluation - Although I haven't seen that much of your old work, it looks like you have improved. Your vocabulary especially. Sometimes we'll just be talking, and you'll come out with some kind of long and complex word, and I'll think, 'What does she mean?!'

Enjoyment - This is a difficult question! I'm not too sure whether you enjoyed this or not. Although you write enthusiastically (not sure if I spelt that right!) I'm still wondering if you enjoyed it or not.

Your enjoyment/understanding - I'm quite sure I understand what you mean when you wrote and I enjoyed reading your work, although it would have been more enjoyable if maybe it was more colourful.

Perception - I've obtained the impression that you understand what the authors are writing about.

Practicality - I cannot answer this one as I have not yet read your chapter.

Understanding - I know what you're talking about in your 'reviews' so I'm sure I will be able to understand your own chapter.

I was thrilled with what Sarah and Amy have achieved. Sarah's understanding of the parameters she has set herself and her attempt to evaluate the quality of her work fairly, show in such phrases as: 'I think I have kept up the standards of any work I have done before, but I don't know if I've improved them. I think I have been more descriptive in my writing since before, and my writing style has been more consistent. ..I don't know whether it shows if I enjoyed myself or not. I did enjoy the project, but I didn't organise my time very well. This put me under a lot of pressure, so I didn't enjoy it as much as I could.'

And Amy's response to Sarah's own tentative evaluation of her enjoyment: 'This is a difficult question! I'm not too sure whether you enjoyed this or not. Although you write enthusiastically (not sure if I spelt that right!) I'm still wondering if you enjoyed it or not,' convinced me of the authenticity of the process the girls were experiencing. In other words I find that both Amy and Sarah were truly trying to articulate something in order to communicate their understanding. The detail of both the evaluations impressed me, as did the sensitive attention to the other. Sarah did not try to impose in her evaluation the criterion of the enjoyment on the other. Amy, on the other hand, commented on her own enjoyment and did not just say positive things. Her criticism that the work was not colourful enough, not interesting enough to look at, was constructively expressed: 'Maybe you could have used different fonts for the different 'reviews'? I'm sure it will look much better when you put some colourful pictures in.'

The tone of both evaluations was, in my opinion, considered and seriously undertaken. The mature way in which both these girls handled criticism of their own and others' work

was not an isolated one within the class.

Rachael, in evaluating both Louise and her group as a whole, wrote:

‘Louise has worked really well during this project, and she was the person who managed to keep us all working without letting us mess about. You could tell that Louise was really enjoying this project - even though she may have got a bit fed up towards the end, as she always had a smile on her face. ..She also had to think pretty fast because Kirsten who was supposed to say half the lottery scene was away - which didn’t give Louise much time to sort out what she was going to say...It is a bit hard for me to judge the groupwork questions as I am part of the group - so I would be biased to how it looks and sounds etc...I think this project went really well, but myself and the group had a hard job starting off, as I/we had never had any choice like this before...If we were to do it again I think that we should work a bit more on the filming side of things because we messed it up quite alot of times...’

I was particularly impressed here with Rachael’s understanding of the notion of bias in coming to conclusions about the quality of her own group’s work: ‘It is a bit hard for me to judge the groupwork questions as I am part of the group - so I would be biased to how it looks and sounds etc...’ Even though she was tentative she still continued with the evaluation: ‘I think this project went really well, but myself and the group had a hard job starting off, as I/we had never had any choice like this before...If we were to do it again I think that we should work a bit more on the filming side of things because we messed it up quite alot of times...’

Antonia wrote this:

‘Our group had no difficulty in deciding what sort of work we wanted to do. All of us, for various reasons wanted to work on a performance - a type of cabaret. I am generally happiest when dancing, playing the violin and taking a small part in singing and we allowed each other to contribute a solo or two each so that we organized ourselves as well as each other...I am satisfied with my contribution to the cabaret as I am involved in half of the acts which means I am not dominating the (mini) show or participating too little...We should make ourselves work more quickly and learn to accept criticism in a mature and constructive way.’

Here I am impressed with the sense that Antonia seemed to have of her responsibilities to others, whilst at the same time retaining a healthy interest in her own progress: ‘we allowed each other to contribute a solo or two each so that we organized ourselves as well as each other,’ and ‘I am satisfied with my contribution to the cabaret as I am involved in half of the acts which means I am not dominating the (mini) show or participating too little.’

Lisa wrote the following about her own work:

‘My own project is on Racism. I drew a picture of a face with one side black and one side

white. In addition I wrote a piece of writing on how people are treated. On my drawing I made sure that each side was the same but different colours as I want my work to be judged on fairness. I think that I could have done a little bit more but it took me a few weeks to decide what I was going to do. However, I feel that I put a lot of effort into what I did do. I am quite pleased with what I have achieved and I would like it to be judged, not on quantity but quality. I would like people to look at the work and tell me whether they think I am racist or not, that way if they can tell I know if I have been fair or not.'

I am delighted by Lisa's insight in her latter point, as she seems to have fully understood the personal responsibility in preaching fairness to others. Her learning partner, Cally wrote this:

'She researched it well by looking at books in the Library. She also watches shows on the television which are chat shows, such as Oprah Winfrey and Rikki Lake. They talk about such things as racism. I think these programmes showed her how to balance the views and opinions of others and herself. Her picture showed a good balance so I don't think she showed an unfair argument...This topic...Lisa finds interesting. Which I think made her put a lot of determination into her work. Lisa has always found it hard to understand other people's views about them I think she has improved on her understanding. I feel that this piece of work is one of the best pieces Lisa has done in English.'

In my opinion, I feel that Lisa did not have time to develop fully her ideas, and that I did not enable her to do this sufficiently. Lisa has rarely written in her journal and did not wish, it seems, to open her ideas up for discussion. I think if I were to work in this way with a class again, I would probably be more directive with some individuals. Although I was pleased with what Lisa produced, and believe that her work shows insight, I think in places it lacked the depth which a project of this scope and time, could have benefited from if I had intervened more constructively. I think there is a balance for me to make between concern for the individual and concern for the curricular learning and in Lisa's case I didn't get this balance right. I will be commenting on this in more detail in the final section of this paper.

All the girls presented their work in some form, either through discussion, dramatising, dancing, singing, or readings. Sarah invited other girls to read what she had written and comment on it. Claire's presentation was markedly different. I have written about this in detail in the conclusion to my Ph.D. submission and I reproduce some of the text here. I have included it because it represents as closely as I am able to, an outcome of the democratisation of the educative relationship between Claire and myself. Although I cannot show you the video that I made of her final presentation, I have shown her the notes I made about that afternoon and she has confirmed that it is a fair representation. The following description also shows some of the effects that her presentation had on Sarah's learning, and it enables Claire to speak for herself about her own insights and learning processes.

It was a sultry afternoon on the day of the presentations, the girls all seated in the Hall, chatting amongst themselves. All the presentations were videoed. Claire's was the first to

be seen. In her journal she had produced a list of 'events' for the presentation which she used as a guide on the day:

'Burial of the Dead Poem'
Response (of above)
Clay explanation
Criteria for clay work
Mention of 'What the Thunder Said'.
Does it mean something to you?
Footprints
Cage writing & Poster

She started her performance with these words:

'It's this 'feel free' thing. It really meant something to me.'

She had asked me to read out the first part of Eliot's poem as it contained a few lines of German, interestingly enough about a statement of personal identification. She then displayed her claywork to us, describing its various facets and how they related to the poem and to her own sense of freedom. Then she said this:

'For my clay I was told to make some criteria to be judged on. At first I thought, well, I don't really know because I've never done this before. But I came up with some things that were different and I decided that one of the criteria it should be judged on is 'heartfelt' - what it means to me. Because to some other person who doesn't know what it means, it could mean nothing and then I don't think it would be judged so well. You have to put it in the context with the poem. Otherwise it won't mean anything really. It's also another way of expressing my self. I've never really expressed myself in clay before. I mean I've made clay. I've made a polar bear and an elephant, but I've never expressed myself before. What I feel. What my reaction is! There are other things, like the theme and the point of it and the originality that it should be judged on, but the main think is that it's different to everything else I've done.'

I have watched this part of the video many times. Claire appears to me at this point to be unselfconscious and determined. She smiles at the girls as she talks to them. And when she says how much it means to her: but I've never expressed myself before. What I feel. What my reaction is! she lays her hand on her heart. On the evening of the presentations I wrote this in my journal:

Claire: I have never witnessed something like this before in my career. Claire's aplomb was beautiful, her movements graceful and liquid; it was as if she were wholly absorbed in the performance. When she talked about the standards of judgement (and I had no idea she was going to do this as part of the performance - she made them come alive doing it this way) her face seemed lit with an inner light and when she expressed what meant the most to her in her work, the 'heartfelt' criterion, I cried, as did other girls. This is, for me, the apotheosis of what education is about - seeing a process of responsible liberation

coming to fruition. Claire enthralled me, and I guess many others, judging by the way they responded after the performance. It is not simply that she was expressing something authentic and important to her in an environment which was facilitative, but there was something about being in the room whilst she did it. that was truly educative. It was moving, sincere, informative, thrilling, and above all, heartfelt. When I return the girls' projects at the beginning of next term, having judged them on their criteria, I know that Claire's will be rated highly, because she has shown such heartfelt commitment to fulfilling her agenda.

Sarah's reaction was beautiful (she cried, overcome with wonder - see later). For those moments during Claire's performance, and particularly when she pointed to her heart - living out the value to her of what it meant for something to be heartfelt - we seemed to be a community. I watched the faces of the girls during Claire's performance. I sensed wrapt attention, admiration, respect, gentleness, enthrallment. I heard and watched her performance with tears in my eyes and at one point noticed that Sarah was also crying. I knelt by her chair.

'Are you all right?' I asked her.

'Oh, Miss, it's amazing!' she replied. Then Claire danced for us to a piece of music whose title was 'The Cage'. She said that it 'comes from my heart', and that was how we were to judge it. At the end of the performance there was a hushed silence as we watched Claire with bowed head, still and silent for many seconds, and then we began to clap. People surrounded her to congratulate her. I found it impossible to find any words at all. I gave her another hug. It seemed the only way to communicate my pride in what she had achieved.

I detail this in such a way because I find it is the next development in this educational narrative which moved me beyond anything I have yet experienced in my educative relationships with learners.

On Friday 21.7.95., the last day of term, Sarah gave me the following letter:

...I really don't know where to begin by writing to you. You've made such an impact on me, that saying thankyou would be demeaning. You've changed my whole outlook, not only to English, but to other people, and their thoughts and feelings. I used to be very resentful of others who I thought were 'beating' me, and I felt I always had to be first. But it's like trying to race a car with a rocket. They are travelling in different directions, so there is no way they can race. That's just like us. We're all travelling in different directions, and the only race we can win is our own And by trying to cheat in that race, we're only cheating ourselves. You helped me to realise that.

Instead of resenting people that seem to be better than me, I've learnt to admire them, and be proud for them of what they've achieved. Claire's presentation on Thursday made me realise that. I found myself really admiring what she had done, instead of getting jealous, and despising her.

I also began to realise how wonderful our class is. Claire had the confidence to really

show what she felt, and tell everyone her personal feelings. She wouldn't do that to an audience she didn't trust, or felt self-confident in front of. I was really touched by the way she had the confidence to perform in front of us.

And then that's when it hit me about what we were losing. We've built up so much together as a class, why do we have to give it all up? I keep telling myself that being part of a different class will give us different ideas, and views, which I am looking forward to. But I'm still going to miss you so much.

You have really got to know all personally and individually, so anything you wrote or comment on is personal. It helps me so much to know that you really care about what each of us does, and it really gives me something to work for.

I know I said thank you would be demeaning, but I really can't think of another word (a fat lot of good all those English lessons did me!). Thankyou, thankyou so much for everything. All my love, Sarah XXX

In this aspect of the learning process I believe Claire and Sarah were learning something of value to them as individuals. Dewey (1916) writes and I agree with him that:

'Education is literally and all the time its own reward [and that] means that no alleged study or discipline is educative unless it is worthwhile in its own having.' (p.109)

I believe that during this process of articulating concerns, imagining solutions, acting, observing and evaluating, Claire, Sarah and others were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to experience what it meant to do so.

On 8.3.96. I talked to Sarah and Laura about their experiences in our classroom last year. We were asked to talk about it for a newspaper article a sixth former was writing about education at our School. As a result of the interview I wrote to them:

I wanted to write to you both after our quick interview together for the newspaper competition, but I wasn't quite sure how to write it... Yes, it happens to English teachers as well! There was something that struck me very powerfully in our talk with Jess, and it was when you laughed, Laura, when I said that this year I was able to do better educational work with the girls because of what I had learnt from you both and others in the group. Your laugh was so genuine and so full of surprise that I decided I wanted to find a way of telling you both what I had learnt from you as individuals. I hope you don't find this letter presumptuous and don't mind that it is a joint letter, but there is something about what I learnt from both of you that I think bears telling in one place.

I enclose some writing (anonymised) that I have done recently about a truly wonderful teaching and learning experience I have had with one of my Year Seven groups. (Laidlaw, 1996a) I know I could not have had this experience if last year, and you two, and the rest of the group, had not taught me so much. It is a piece of writing about the

relationship for me between my love for the girls I teach, my sense of moral purpose as an educator and the poem by Coleridge 'The Ancient Mariner'. If you don't know the poem, shame on you!

I am going to try and tell you about what I learnt from you because I want you to know how seriously I meant those words in the interview a couple of weeks ago.

Laura, teaching you was always a challenge because you learn in a completely different way from me. You could spend hours seemingly staring into space and dreaming. At the beginning of our collaboration, I used to worry about that. I used to think I had to chivy you along a lot and that if I didn't put pressure on you, then nothing would happen and it would be all my fault. Wrong. It wasn't my issue and I had to learn to trust you, trust your innate wisdom that you knew best how you learn, trust you to take responsibility for your own outcomes, and then to take the credit for them too when you completed that lovely work on Romeo. In the enclosed paper you can see that I am still thinking about that experience of trusting individuals as I try to help Rose with her work. Learning to accept pupils for who they are and not the way it might be convenient for them to be for the teacher, is something I think I will be grappling with for the rest of my career. You started that particular ball rolling consciously for me. And at the end of your own unique way of learning, your work was original and interesting and informative, and I should have known that you would produce it. (And yes I still have it, and yes you can have it back as well. I'll tell you something though, you never taught me the value of getting back end-of-topic work, did you? Failed there, didn't you!!) From you I also learnt about how important a sense of humour can be in communicating what really matters in human relationships. Working with you, writing to you about various aspects of our imagination was such fun and sometimes I think I take things too seriously. You challenged me to look at that and I know that this year (although there's little evidence in the paper, except during the preparations for the presentations towards the end) I have been a little more free and lighthearted than before.

Sarah, from you I learnt something important as well. You did something really noble and brave at the end of last year when you came to me on the Friday and gave me that letter about Claire's presentation. Your candour touched my heart and I knew that your action represented what I wanted to bring more freely into the world through my teaching - a sense of pride in the achievements of others through a contentment with self. So vital I think. Never before in my career had an incident reminded me of that particular truth so forcefully. If you read the paper you will see how much that particular value becomes explicitly a focus for my enquiry about how I can improve the quality of learning with my pupils. With the problems of discontent that arose at certain times with the Year Seven class, I was able to think about the significance of what you had achieved and try to work with the girls in finding ways towards such maturity for themselves. You, like Laura, learn in a very different way from me. You are more careful than I am about committing yourself to paper and I had quite consciously to step back with you and let you be sometimes. There were times when I wanted to push you and mould you to my image of how a pupil needs to act. I think there will be times when there are certain things that need learning, but I am not always going to be in the best position to know

what and when that is. I have to remember that.

You both resisted such impositions from me and in remaining true to yourselves you helped me to remember that you are not simply pupils, vessels to be filled with my knowledge, but people in your own right whose reality is as precious and rich and meaningful as mine and from whom I was able eventually to learn a great deal. Both of you taught me the value of remaining open to the reality of the people I teach so that I might be always a learner more than a teacher.

So Laura, next time I say that I learnt something from you, I hope your laugh is with pleasure rather than disbelief.

I know that in our last lesson together on that Thursday afternoon I said that in one sense our community of learners would never cease as long as we remembered what it was of value we had learnt from each other; I still believe that. I know that I carry you both, and the others in the class, in my heart every time I teach Rose and her class. In that sense we all live on in each other.

It has felt good to write this down. Thank you once again for inspiring a sense in me that life really is great and full of lovely people.

On Friday, 8.3.96. I talked to both of them at lunchtime in order to ask them about their perspectives about what they had learnt last year and the ways in which I had set up the learning processes. We had the conversation which constitutes the opening to the foreword of this paper. What I find of educational interest in the conversation is the degree of apparent openness with which the girls were expressing their views about the learning process they had experienced. They did not appear to be seeking my approval in their constructive comments, but attesting instead to a sense of liberation as learners, as valued centres of consciousness who were capable of speaking on their own behalf about issues which concerned them. They seemed to be reflecting back to me values which constitute my own motives in the educative relationships I develop with the girls, as I wrote about at the beginning of this paper:

‘Most of all I love to see what happens when children begin to take responsibility for their own learning and start to see that they are capable of speaking on their own behalf about things which concern them. I see the democratising of the learning processes I engage in with the girls in the classroom to be connected with helping them to take responsibility for their own learning within an environment in which they recognise their responsibilities to others as well as to themselves as they learn something of value.’ (p.2)

In the final section of this paper I want to draw together some conclusions about the democratisation of my educative relationships and how I am constructing out of the descriptions and explanations of this process, my own living educational theory.

Creating my own living educational theory.

In the account you have just read you have seen how I have constructed a series of

learning processes through an action enquiry cycle. You have seen how I have connected each stage of the enquiry with particular learning processes for each of us. Although we are all individuals, there are similarities involved in terms of the values and the kinds of questions which are emerging through the learning. For me as an educator, the main question is concerned with how the extent to which we are each of us responsible for the learning processes we are engaged in affects the learning process, the educative relationships and the emergent knowledge. This is also one which Sarah highlighted in the extract quoted in the Foreword to this paper:

Sarah: 'It was scary at first. I thought: I can't do this. Why can't she just tell us what to do. I don't really work very well without deadlines. You didn't always tell us straight when everything had to be done, either. I think you should have done really. Don't get me wrong, I loved it. I really loved working in that way, but it was hard. We're used to being told, do this, do that! And you came along and told us we could do anything we liked. It was really scary for me.'

I find myself continually connecting personal responsibility with fulfilment and purpose, rather as Yamamoto (1990) suggests:

'All teaching contains an element of mentoring which brings to teaching such unique dimensions as trust, vision, and a sense of immortality...form[ing] a fundamental sense of trust in a seemingly chaotic world.' (p.183)

I want the girls in my care to be able to trust in the worthwhileness of their own lives within what is clearly sometimes a chaotic and mystifying world. In this final section I am going to address the concern I have about the relationship between personal responsibility and worthwhileness in a learning context through a learning experience which shows something of my own educational development as a learner about how to be a better teacher, and the pupils' own concerns about their sense of worthwhileness and purpose. My concern is the one which recurs most frequently in my educational practice and this description and explanation constitute the closest I have come yet to articulating my own living educational theory. When I administered the World Congress in Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management I wrote an article (Laidlaw, 1994a) about the educational significance of recognising my responsibility for accounting for my own practice to others. I wrote:

'Part of what I mean by doing good in the world is revealed through my coming to understand what it signifies to take responsibility for my actions in the world and to become accountable for them.' (p.120)

I think the concern recurs because of the way in which, when trying to resolve it in my practice, it challenges me to bring together issues to do with a love for the child, my concern to improve the quality of learning, and a sense that life is inherently meaningful and worthwhile. It challenges me to enable the girls to begin to make sense of their worlds in ways which will help them to lead full and productive lives. When I set parameters and when I don't should be issues carefully considered and related to enabling

the girls to improve the quality of their learning. I am still learning what it means to engage with the question I formulate from this concern: 'How can I and the girls negotiate power and knowledge in our classroom in ways which improve the quality of learning for each one of us?' It is a question whose beating heart is the democratic nature of the processes we engage in.

In the above letter to Laura and Sarah, I alluded to some work I have been doing with a Year Seven group (11 and 12 year olds) this year, claiming it as an improvement on what I had managed with their group last year. By improvement here, I am meaning that through creating a closer synthesis between the theory of my practice: 'Good education includes democratising the learning process', and the practice in the classroom, I am claiming that the girls are learning something of significant value to themselves and as learners of English and I am learning how I can improve the synthesis between the theory of my practice and the practice itself. The articulation of this synthesis I consider to be my own living educational theory.

I have been teaching my Year Seven group 'The Ancient Mariner', by Coleridge. In the following extracts from my paper (Laidlaw, 1996a) I explore the relationship between my love of the girls, moral values in action - to do with honesty, trust, right and wrong - and a favourite poem. I examine the ways in which a consciousness of the connectedness of my love for the girls, my responsibility to help to improve the quality of our educative relationships and the moral values exemplified in the poem, synthesise in an improvement in the quality of our curricular and personal learning. It is not coincidental that the poem I have chosen throughout my teaching career to read with young people, asks similar questions about the purpose of life. It is only recently, however, that I have come to understand why. The poem supposes a morally-biased universe in which not taking personal responsibility for one's actions - seen as evil - and taking responsibility - seen as the good in the universe - are embodied in a story with mythic proportions. The poem enables the reader safely to explore good and evil from a moral perspective which is quite clear about which is which. I believe that enabling pupils to make such explorations as they learn about what is also of curricular value, within an environment in which power is to some extent negotiated between us, is a wholly educative undertaking.

I want now as an exposition of my own living educational theory to present extracts of this paper to you. This might in fact open up a dialogue between us. The series of lessons, which took place over six weeks, started like this, as I noted in my diary:

I then included the extract now in The General Prologue which is my diary account of the first lesson when I read the first four parts of the poem. You can find these extracts on pages 6 - 12. I then went on:

The most important question it seems to me which comes out of this episode is: 'What happens to power in the educative relationship when the pupils are asking their own questions?'

This is a theme which characterises my own educational development, as its increasing

consciousness within my practice enables me to open up the process of learning itself to enquiry in order to improve its quality. Because of last year's experiences with Laura, Claire, Sarah and others, I am now able to focus more specifically on the quality of power within the educative relationship. With Lisa in Year Nine, for example, I did not intervene appropriately because of my confusion about responsibility. This lack of intervention was partly the reason, I believe, for Lisa's disappointment in her final project.

I have also found that what usefully characterises my own living educational theory is the exploration in practice and accounting for that practice, of the degree to which I can myself, and help others to, make connections between ideas, values and people. In the work that I have been doing with the girls I have managed to make useful connections between my own moral values, the ideas in the poem and the girls. Through my love of the girls, my sense of moral responsibility and my love of the poem I am motivated to try to negotiate as much of the learning process as I can to help to improve it.

After reading the poem to them and organising them to enact some parts of the poem they worked on their own projects with learning partners and interactive journals in order to reveal their understanding of the poem. They also had, as did last Year's Nine group, to articulate their own standards of judgement by which we could judge their work. I will offer you one more extract from my article (Laidlaw, 1996a) in order to show you how I am trying to live out my democratic and other educational values as I account for myself to my learners and to you. The other educational values I am referring to here are to do with fairness, honesty, love and respect.

I then included an extract about my educative relationship with Zoë which you can find on pages 20 - 30. At that stage the paper did not include all the detail about Zoë's work as I had not seen the significance of representing her more fully, points I have already discussed in the Epilogues to Parts Two and Three. From the pages quoted above I concluded the following:

I want a classroom, in fact, in which children feel free to ask questions as Zoë dared to. In which my pupils and I continue to explore the boundaries of power in a bid to improve the quality of learning and relationships. And I also want a classroom in which I can account in practice for my values with my pupils and others. A practice in which this paper becomes a seamless part of my own educational development as I create my own living educational theory from the descriptions and explanations I can offer for my own practice as I seek to improve it.

Bibliography

- Calderhead, J., (1987), 'Exploring Teachers' Thinking', Cassell, London.
- Day, C., (1993), 'Reflection: a necessary but not sufficient condition for professional development', in *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 19, no.1, pp 83-94.
- Dewey, J. (1916), 'Democracy and Education', Macmillan Company, New York.
- Eames, K, (1995), 'How do I as a teacher and an educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge?' Ph.D. thesis, School of Education,

Bath University.

Eliot, T.S., (1926), 'The Wasteland and other poems', Viking Press, London.

Evans, M., (1995), 'An Action Research Enquiry into reflection as a part of my role as a deputy head teacher', Ph.D. thesis, Department of Education, Kingston University, Surrey, England.

Foucault, M., (1980), 'Power/Knowledge', in (ed.) Gordon, C., Harvester Press, London.

Goodson, I., (1992), 'Studying Teachers' Lives', Routledge, London.

Hirst, R., (1983), 'Educational Theory' in 'Educational Theory and its foundation disciplines', Routledge, London.

Kincheloe, J., (1991), 'Teachers as Researchers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment', Falmer Press, New York, London.

Laidlaw, M., (1994a), 'The democratising potential of dialogical focus in an action research enquiry', in Educational Action Research: an International Journal, Vol.2, no.2. pp 224-242.

Laidlaw, M., (1994b), 'Accountability as responsibility and point of view', in (ed.)

Laidlaw, M., Lomax P., & Whitehead, J., Congress Papers: Accounting for Ourselves', School of Education, Bath University, Bath, England, pp 120-123.

Laidlaw, M., (1994c), 'Poetry as a Path to Spiritual Development', paper unpubl., School of Education, Bath University, England.

Laidlaw, M., (1995a), 'Action Planning and Interactive Journals with a Year Nine English Group', paper, unpubl., School of Education, Bath University, Bath. England.

Part One

Laidlaw, M., (1995b), 'Action Planning and Interactive Journals with a Year Nine English Group', paper, unpubl., School of Education, Bath University, Bath. England.

Part Two.

Laidlaw, M., (1996a), 'What does it mean for my own educational development to be teaching and learning with Rebecca, members of her Year Seven Class and 'The Ancient Mariner'? preface to Ph.D. (see below)

Laidlaw, M., (1996b), 'How can I create my own living educational theory as I accnout to you for my own educational development?' Ph.D. draft.

Lomax, P., (1994), 'The Narrative of an Educational Journey: Crossing the Track', inaugural professorial address, Kingston University, School of Education, Kingston.

McNiff, J. with Whitehead, J., & Laidlaw, M., (1992), 'Creating a Good Social Order through Action Research', Hyde Publications.

McNiff, J., (1993), 'Teaching as Learning: an Action Research Approach', Routledge, London.

Whitehead, J., (1985), 'An analysis of an individual's educational development: the basis for individually-oriented action research', in (ed.) Shipman, M., 'Educational Research: Principles, Policies and Practice', Falmer Press, New York, London.

Whitehead, J., (1989), 'Creating Living Educational Theory from asking questions of the kind, 'How can I improve my practice?' in Cambridge Journal of Education, Vol. 17, no.3.

Whitehead, J., (1993), 'The Growth of Educational Knowledge', Hyde Publications, Dorset, England.

Yamamoto, K., (1990), 'To See Life Grow: The Meaning of Mentoring', in Theory Into Practice, Vol.17, no.3, pp 183-188.

In the final Epilogue, which you are now about to read, I have again written about the Ancient Mariner entirely from my own point of view. As in previous Epilogues, this is because my own views of the poem are used only to illuminate the ways in which I perceive reality. I am not asking them to be taken as the only views on the poem. They are my views, however, and I take responsibility for them.

My Educational Knowledge:
Creating my own Living Educational Theory
'Farewell, farewell! But this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.'

It is only at the end of the poem that the Mariner can tell us what he knows to be true and good in Life. He has evolved a sense of what is moral into ethical relationships with others which are characterised by the responsibility he can now take for his own life and the telling of it. His tale seeks to help others to recognise themselves so that there is an appropriate sharing of responsibility. He knows himself at last and through this self-knowledge he is now in a position to move into the world and make a difference for the better in it. His tale is told with poetic beauty, with descriptions that engage the heart and the intellect and compel the listener to attend:

'He listens like a three years child,
The Mariner hath his will.'

The Mariner's will is now focused clearly on creating purpose and meaning out of his existence through the telling and refining of his knowledge. His knowledge lives through the people who understand it. This is its purpose. He has now ethically and ontologically identified fully with the purpose of Life as he now understands it. This is how he now knows anything of value. In addition it is not enough for the Mariner to understand what he knows. He is required to communicate his knowledge so that it will live in the other:

'Forthwith this frame of mine
Was wrenched with a woeful agony,
Which forced me to tell my tale
And then it left me free.'

And this is what he knows:

'He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast...
...He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small'

I perceive prayer here to mean a direct communication with God, for Coleridge says in the next line:

'For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.'

In Buber's (1923) terms, the act of prayer characterises an I-Thou relationship in which an individual perceives existence as bounded by divine forces which are beyond the

direct influence of that individual. Paradoxically, however, through prayer one becomes part of this divinity and thus acausally, an influence on it. Coleridge says that prayer, in my terms the perpetuation of awe, is effected best through love. And not any kind of love, but one which values all equally: 'both man and bird and beast.' A disinterested love. In other words when the Mariner loves 'both man and bird and beast', he does not seek rewards for himself but is motivated to act ethically with others because he knows himself well enough now to know what it means not to do so. He can only access this love through self-knowledge and vision, through a sensitivity and respect to the world inside and outside himself and a sense of both a great personal power to do good in the world and a humility about the enormity of the task. His knowledge of love is framed in the first place by his blessing of the water-snakes, his first good act, and for which he is also, like the killing of the albatross, fully responsible. At that point, though, his love only surfaces with these particular creatures. It has not yet become a way of relating to the world as a whole, but it does act as a turning point for him. From this he can develop towards a greater capacity for awe, which manifests itself as loving actions in the world. His telling of his tale is an act of love.

In this Epilogue, which acts as a conclusion to Part Four and to the thesis as a whole, I wish to write about my educational knowledge. As a result of my own experiences in the seminar and classroom, my reflections, reading, and conversations, a period of research lasting six years, I now feel that I have something to tell. This telling, however, does not seek to be the didactic and therefore static knowledge that characterises a finished viewpoint, but as I stated in The General Prologue:

'My own educational theory lives in the values as they become explicit in practice over time. It is therefore never complete. It is much more than a snapshot and much less than the truth, but it is living. As I write these words I draw together my past, I describe and explain the present and out of that I try to craft the future. Like the Mariner at the end of the poem I try to understand what I experience and capture it in order to improve the quality of life for myself and others.' (p.25)

I wish to focus on the issues which have arisen in the course of my teacher-research in order to explain what they mean to my own educational knowledge. These are:

- the significance of an immanent dialectic within the processes of my coming to know and within the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships;
- creating my living educational theory from the account of my own educational development;
- my educational intentions in the light of my teacher-research.

Although they are all interrelated, I shall take them in turn in order to render them more comprehensible.

- The significance of an immanent dialectic within the processes of my coming to know and within the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships.

'Till noon we quietly sailed on

Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.'

At the heart of my own educational development lies my deepening understanding of the immanent dialectic. By 'immanent' in this context I am meaning an implicitness of a quality at every level within something. For example, as I will explain later, I look for the ethical in every aspect of my educative relationships with students and pupils. My educational research has taught me that I can now focus, for example, on a journal entry to a pupil in order to find within it intimations of such ethical concerns as I outlined in the Epilogue to Part Two. The quality of the ethical I find in the journal would act for me then as a way of evaluating the educational quality of that journal entry.

During this research I have increased my abilities as a dialectician. I like how Plato describes dialectics:

'The process of asking and answering questions. If we do this, after a long and difficult process of rubbing our conceptions and perceptions together, then suddenly insight and reason flash out and we know reality as it is.' (p.67)

Throughout my research I have asked and tried to answer many questions. These range from 'How can I reveal the nature of an educative relationship?' (Laidlaw, 1991b) and 'How can I write authentically about my educational experiences whilst at the same time maintaining intellectual and academic rigour?' (Laidlaw, 1991d), to 'How can I create my own living educational theory through the account of my educational development?' (this present thesis). I like the idea of rubbing my conceptions and perceptions together so that reason and insight flash out. This is how I experience my own development in terms of improving the quality of my own learning. I hold what Socrates in 'The Phaedrus' called the One and the Many together:

'To all those who are possessed of this power (of apprehending the One and the Many...) I have been in the habit of giving the name of dialecticians.' (p.46)

The One is constituted by the whole, in my case the concept of 'an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships'. The Many is comprised of its component parts, which in my educative relationships are the ethics, ontology, knowledge, and the emergent structures and forms, through which improvements are realised. In July, 1990, when I was struggling to articulate what I meant by improvement in my educative relationships, I had the idea of 'the aesthetic morphology'. I have already written about this revelation in the Prologue to Part One, but the following point is appropriate to repeat here:

'If I am able to bring to my educative relationships the same level of awareness that the picture evoked in me, then I will

be able to improve the quality of relationships...I know that there is something in the awareness I was brought to with that picture [Delaroche] that opens me up to the possibilities of goodness and truth and beauty in human existence. If I can understand those qualities more fully, then it follows that I will be able to increase their quality within my own relationships and thus increase their educational value.’ (p.100)

My perceptions consisted of how I might be able to work with the concept of ‘the aesthetic morphology’. This dialectical process which I have formalised through the action enquiry cycle (Whitehead, 1985) - If I can bring to my educative relationships the same level of awareness...and understand...then I will be able to increase the quality of relationships - has enabled me to focus on the resolution of the tensions created between my perceptions and conceptions. In other words, as I have tried to put my perceptions, based on my conceptions, into action, there have been tensions. I have experienced times when what I thought I was doing was not what was happening around me. In the General Prologue I recorded this:

‘I was certain in my own mind of my equality of regard for both of the girls and yet it seemed that my actions were allowing one girl to feel slighted.’ (p. 18)

Subsequent analysis (as represented in the Epilogues to Parts One to Three of this thesis) has shown how I have begun to perceive these tensions as aesthetic imbalances in which I have not managed to keep the appropriate balance between the ethics and ontology of my educational practice as a way of knowing what it is I am doing in the name of education.

What I am writing about here is ‘the living contradiction’ although it has recently been helpful for me to think about as an aesthetic imbalance (Epilogues One and Two). However, I wish to continue to engage with ‘the living contradiction’ because it has generative connotations which are intimately related to the aesthetic as I understand it. (I will go into more detail about this later in the next section on ‘living educational theory’.) Ilyenkov (1977) explains living contradiction in this way, as:

‘the concrete of mutually exclusive opposites in the real nucleus of dialectics, its central category...If any object exists as a living contradiction, what must be the thought (statement about the object) be that expresses it?’ (p.320)

Mutually exclusive opposites? Well, when I was teaching ‘The Ancient Mariner’ to my Year Seven girls, I thought I was treating them all fairly as Griffiths and Davies (1995) describe fairness:

‘[It] ...is made up of two strands: one deals with the empowerment of individuals and the other deals with the righting of structural injustice...’ (p.4)

But Zoë wrote to me saying she thought I preferred Rebecca and several others to her. This was the exact opposite of my perception of myself either in relationship to individual girls or as someone who was living out her values to do with creating structures through which each child could make the most of her potential. Indeed the morphological aspect of the aesthetic morphology was not being adequately attended to. I was not evolving forms and structures which would enable each child to feel of value in the classroom. I was aware of 'fairness' as a concept, yet I was treating Zoë (and I believe Rebecca too by extension) unfairly. I was thus holding both fairness and unfairness together. Two mutually exclusive opposites.

I find Comey (1972) illuminating here when he writes:

'Every thing or process contains within itself opposing elements that are mutually exclusive and therefore, conflict with one another. At the same time, these opposites form an interrelated polarity so that they presuppose and reciprocally affect each other and, consequently, form a dialectical unity. This unity and conflict of internal opposites provide the impetus for change and development; resolution of the conflict is accompanied by a progression to a new state of development of thinking.' (p.269)

To recognise these opposites is for me to deliberate dialectically: 'what is it I wanted to do?' and 'what is it I have done?' together with 'what can I now do in the light of my new understanding?' I like the way in which Winter (1987) writes about this immanently dialectical process:

'By drawing attention to the developing contradictions within the categories of experience, implicit necessities...will be transformed into explicit possibilities (as metaphors for thinkable futures). (p.152)

Constantly in my educational development I pose questions to which I need to know the answers (in Plato's terms - see above) in order to improve the quality of learning. This is the dialectical process which enables me to improve what I am doing. That process is also characterised by what Eames (1995), quoting from Collingwood (1924), calls a state:

'in which the mind in its struggle to understand, passes through the stage in which its reach exceeds its grasp and barely touches a conception as yet undetermined (p.78)'. (p.104)

In my life I am often inspired by an intimation about what the world could be like. My reach, if you like, exceeds my grasp. I want to move the world to a better place! 'Returning' is the best fictional expression of this to date - as I explained in the Epilogue to Part Three. As a work of fiction I believe it contains a degree of aesthetic balance in which its status as a commentary on the human condition is partly realised through the ways in which aspects like characterisation, symbolism, imagery, human agency and

knowledge fit together in a meaningful way. As a commentary on educational values (as I explained in Part Three) it can only go so far because it was not written as an educational document. It was not conceived of in the name of education but as a personal testament to my ontological belief in the meaningfulness of Life.

It is self-contained in a way which my educational research writing cannot be. I created a world in 'Returning' whose problems I could cause and solve. I could make that world perfect. However, it was doomed to failure as a way of 'improving' anything in the outside world. I perceive with McNiff (1993), Whitehead (1993b), Eames (1995), Lomax, Evans and Parker (1996), Hughes, (1996), improvement to be an essential dimension of any claim I can make to educational knowledge. If something claims to be educational, then I believe it must have the desire for improvement at its heart. I had to learn over time how little 'Returning' could help me to improve my educational values. Such values were only going to emerge and be enhanced in practice in the world with my students and pupils as together we tried to improve the quality of learning.

Let me bring the argument back again specifically to dialectics. One of the things which 'Returning' lacked was a dialectical form through which my insights could grow. In other words I was not developing my values through relationships with the world. I wrote about them in an elegant conceptual form. Somekh (1993) writes about dialectics as a process of:

'rational inquiry through posing alternative views: interpretation is a process of systematic searching and hermeneutic reconstruction.' (p.144)

Essentially, what was lacking in my insights about the text's validity as a way of furthering my educational enquiry, were alternative views which dialogue, for example, could have provided. Eames (1995) assumes that dialogue is:

'embodied in the very nature of the way reflective practitioners act and think. Collingwood's view that 'true knowledge' is dialectical, based on the interplay of question and answer, suggests that dialogue is fundamental to a living, developing form of knowledge.' (p.104)

In my educational development I am struck by the significance of dialogue as a way of improving the quality of my educative relationships, as a way of moving towards my ideal which views relationships with others as pivotal - ethically and in terms of the knowledge which can be developed from them.

Dialogue represents the cornerstone of all the morphological aspects of my educative relationships. Although I coined it in different ways then (not using the vocabulary of 'aesthetic morphology', for example) in my article (Laidlaw, 1994b) and its development in Part Four of this thesis, as well as in The General Prologue, I portray dialogue as a way

of enabling dialectical processes not only to grow but to flourish. By talking to the girls in the classroom and the students in our seminars about their learning, and about how they learn, I become more able to help them to improve the quality of learning. Through this dialectical process I too learn more about how I learn and thus how I might teach better. McNiff (1993), writes:

‘I believe that the best teaching is done by those who want to learn...Teaching transforms into learning and back again to teaching. I think teachers have the key to their own processes of self-improvement by acknowledging they too, are travellers and still have far to go.’ (p.10)

In other words, dialogue has the potential within my educative relationships to increase the quality of our understanding in ways which generate the dialectical nature of our educational development which in turn gives rise to improvements. And so it goes on.

In The Introduction I stated this about the importance of dialogue:

‘I believe that the quality of my educative relationships hinges upon the quality of dialogue I can encourage. As I wish this thesis to be judged as a contribution to educational knowledge, I think that the actions, writing, reflections and conclusions put forward should be deemed valid or not in terms of the extent to which I can describe and explain how I am contributing to the educational development of myself and my students and pupils through the quality of dialogue I encourage.’ (p.49)

By ‘the quality of dialogue’ here I am advocating a form through which educational meanings can be explored and improved in order to make more explicit the meaningfulness of Life and enhance the quality of learning. This implies for me such dialogues taking place within ethical relationships. I do not perceive dialogue as restricted to verbal exchanges of meaning, but including correspondence in the form of letters (as depicted in my research in Parts One, Two and Three of this thesis in particular), comments about work in a written form, journal entries etc..

From here I would like to show how a particular value of ‘trustworthiness’ is emerging during the course of my present research whose theoretical explanation is this text. In order to explain about how I am beginning to emphasise the value of ‘trustworthiness’ I will need to look at the forms of representation I am using in this thesis. This will also impinge on issues to do with authenticity and truth and the evolving of developmental standards of judgement.

Why should you believe me?
In The Introduction I wrote:

‘The aesthetic morphology - because of its relationship to development - is able to give

voice to the contradiction at the heart of a dialectical process of representation. It goes some way to bridging the dialectic between process and representation, between truth and time, and between action and significance.’ (p.88/9)

I cannot at the points of practice, evaluation and theorising about my practice, usefully distinguish my educational knowledge from the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships. This is because the educative relationships are the current, living manifestation of my educational values, and for me the living aspects of my educational concerns are focused on the aesthetic. Aesthetic experience and subsequent reflections on those experiences, as I have shown in The General Prologue, demonstrated in the use of the leit motif of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ poem and explained in these Epilogues, connect me to myself and to others in ways which are generative (McNiff, 1993) and potentially educational. In addition, my educational values become explicit and, I am claiming my actions from them more educational, through an ever-increasing concentration on how I might effect an aesthetic balance within the relationships in order to improve the quality of learning for all of us over time. As I said in the Epilogue to Part Three, I believe that we can only know ourselves and others in our actions rather than our words.

But in this thesis all you have are my words, or my reporting of the words of my students and pupils. Why should you believe me? In representing the significance as I perceive it, of an exploration of the immanent dialectic at the heart of my work in education, I am steering my tale towards issues to do with representation (Eisner, 1993), trustworthiness (Kincheloe, 1991: 135), and the evolution of educational standards of judgement (Laidlaw, 1995c) of which I perceive trustworthiness itself to be such a criterion in this thesis. In other words if I am to communicate to you the way in which I believe that my educational processes work, which after all is one of the claims I am making in this thesis, then I need to explain about the significance of my understanding of the immanent dialectic at the heart of my educational processes.

Forms of Representation:

So it is to representation I turn first. This has been a conscious focal point of interest from The Introduction onwards. Because of my emphasis on the aesthetic as a standard of judgement throughout, particularly within the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships (in which attempting a balance between form and content I claim to be an educative endeavour), my forms of representation must embody this balance and communicate its significance.

Representation as authenticity:

My consideration of the immanent dialectic here is not something I can measure, but is a channel through which I can authentically express my educational values. By ‘authenticity’ here, I am thinking of Whitehead’s (1993b) notion of it in the sense that one accepts the certainty of one’s own death as a way of framing the meaningfulness and hence representational power of one’s own life. In other words, as I face the certainty of my own death I can then see my own existence in some kind of perspective which gives a morphology to my life that I can develop as I try to understand and refine its purposes. Paskow (1988) writes on this theme:

‘the authentic person embraces the fact of his or her own inevitable death with anticipation and is thereby able to hearken to and respond in accordance with the call of conscience.’ (p.153)

I will come back to this again at the end of this Epilogue in the section entitled: ‘My living educational theory is an act of love and personal responsibility.’ For now, though, I wish my sense of authenticity, as I stated in The Introduction to be seen as fulfilling:

‘that quality which I bring to education which ensures that I reveal in action and representation those processes which encourage a developing synthesis between the ethics, ontology and aesthetics of my educational practice and a commitment to enabling the search for mutual and educational truths for all concerned within the learning process and the context.’ (p.85)

The perspective I am inferring as ‘authentic’ in my practice is to do with a sense of the finiteness of my own life and the need to give it a form which breathes meaning into my actions.

The Ancient Mariner understands this in his own way, as he finally accepts what it is he has to do with the rest of his life. His experiences bring him face-to-face with his own mortality. The morphology of his life is ultimately developing through his understanding of the necessity of telling his tale. His rendering of it as a way of creating educative relationships with others is a sign of his own authenticity. He has been forced in an awesome way to consider the certainty of his own mortality and that of his human companions and in the full realisation of death, he makes a decision to concentrate as fully as he can upon making the best use of the time he has left. My desire to comprehend what the immanent dialectic signifies for my own educational development is a similar sign, I believe, of my own authenticity. This authenticity is also symbolised through the experimental forms of representation within this text. In other words as I seek to tell more of the ‘truth’ (see below) within my own educational development - a cornerstone of authenticity (Paskow, 1988; Kincheloe, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) - I aim to develop forms of representation which more closely dissolve the tensions between structure and content.

My deliberations about representation (and evolving developmental standards of judgement - including trustworthiness - see later) are connected in my educational research with a concern to live out my values more fully. I want you to believe this account. I want you to identify with what I do, and one of the aims of this final section of the thesis is to show whether the values which I have been distilling in my practice have emerged onto the page in a communicable form. I believe that this thesis is now in an appropriate form to communicate its values because I think that the form and content fit each other well, and are worthy of serious attention (Foshay, 1995). One of the reasons this is so is due, I believe, to the forms of representation through which I have described and explained my educational knowledge and development.

Representation as truth

As I mentioned in The Introduction: 'I want to pursue the truth, not give it up.' (p.81)
Truth is similar to many of the values I aspire to in my practice - in itself I believe it is unobtainable and does not exist entirely in isolation from other values. In order to explain it linguistically for the purposes of communicating my meanings in this thesis, however, I perceive the truth to be that which approximates in its representation most nearly to the reality I perceive that I live in. Paskow (1988), writes about tellers of the truth, that they reveal:

'better definitions of what is real than does the inauthentic person.'
(p.152)

Wittgenstein (1974) wrote:

'Human agreement decides what is true and what is false...They agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in a form of life.' (p.88)

As I said above, I want you to believe in this account, but I only have my own words with which to convince you. If you are to believe in my truth, then I think it will only occur in the contemplation of the form of life I am representing within this account which claims to know my own educational development. My truth can take different forms and in this thesis I have relied heavily on a metaphorical form of truth in my use of 'The Ancient Mariner' as a device through which my own truth can emerge more fully. Winter (1987) writes this about representing truth:

'The form of representation accomplished by narrative allows truth to be dialectical: the narrative of action can show action's own semantic transformations.' (p.142)

When I had written the General Prologue I was convinced that it was a distinct improvement in terms of representation in comparison with anything I had written before in the name of education. I believe this was because of the integrated nature of description and explanation in a style which both reflects the content and the meaning. I am claiming that I integrate a description and explanation of the educational processes as I write about the significance to my educational development of an understanding of the 'Ancient Mariner' poem. For example I write:

'And carefully, so carefully, as if I were nurturing the spirit myself, I kept the tears from my voice as the Mariner took aim with his crossbow and fired. I felt the dislocation as if it were happening for the first time; ... as if it were happening to me, to the girls, and as if we were all responsible at the same time. I felt as if the art of the poem were becoming a living truth... Together we seemed to be creating the poem and somewhere in the scheme of things, we were all responsible for the horror which was to follow, as all of us are capable of evil as well as good.' (p.4/5)

My level of identification with the poem enables me to fuse event (reading the part of the poem about the shooting of the albatross) with a description of my perception of the atmosphere in the classroom, and a sense of the growth towards individual responsibility which characterises my own living educational theory. And in the following extract I reflect on my concern for the moral dimension within our present and future classrooms through a series of insights as they turn into intentions:

I see the murder representing the destruction of good by evil. Thus it needed very careful, sensitive handling. If that process were coming alive in our classroom then I had to become an anchor of goodness in these potentially stormy waters. Our very humanity seemed to be being called into question. As the adult in this situation, I must steer these young, possibly vulnerable people through this experience, and achieve educationally what the poet achieves poetically. He explores evil and good from the safety of hindsight and goodness. I must enable the children to explore such profound meanings from a safe haven of kindness, interest in their personal responses, attention to the beauty of the poem, a savouring of the language, and a sense of anticipation of the surreal descriptions to follow. (p.5)

Within any truthful representation of my own educational development I now understand that I must explain the connections between the moral aspects within the classroom and the ways of improving the quality of learning (see Epilogue Two for more details on this area). Bungay (1987), writing about the connections between Truth and Beauty says:

‘each moment being related to other moments so that it must be thus and not otherwise, both determining them and determined by them,’ (p. 63)

This also expresses well how I understand what characterises an immanent dialectic within my own educational processes. For example in the above extracts from The General Prologue, my understanding of the morality of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ is intimately linked to my understanding of the morality in the classroom and to the actions which I need to take in order to bring these qualities more fully into our lives. In the classroom I would like to develop processes with the girls in which what is conducive to improving the quality of learning about something worthwhile in the assumption that Life is meaningful, is immanent within every moment. I would like as well to reflect that desire in the very way I represent such processes. This, I would term a personally truthful form of representation. I believe that The General Prologue maintains this form of truth at a high level of integrity.

I believe that the way in which I present the morphology of my own educational processes through the General Prologue and the thesis as a whole could be a decisive factor in your belief in my truth. I believe this is particularly so in its commitment to developmental standards of judgement through an explanation of the immanent dialectic. I think such forms of representation will also contribute to your acceptance of this text’s educational validity. I believe that my ‘truth’ is not only contained within, but in my

relationship to the world as I come to an understanding of what my perspective on the world means to me, and what this means to others around me. I don't believe I can ever fully represent the truth, but the aspiration increases the knowledge I have about my subject, education, as I try to improve the quality of learning. Furthermore the desire to tell the truth increases the likelihood that I will live out my educational values more fully - one of the fundamental reasons for my teacher-research.

Pursuing the truth is also a choice I am making about the kinds of dialectical relationships which I wish to be active in my educational practice and in the theorising about my knowledge which I do over time. I wish truth to be in dialectical relationship to the knowledge I am developing from my practice. In this sense too, I can see parallels between my own conscious adoption of a pursuit of truth (however unobtainable), and the Mariner's insistence on telling his tale with as much verisimilitude as he can in order to communicate the values that he now cares so much about. I am making explicit attempts to render this text internally consistent in such a way that I am hoping you can then trust its main conclusions in the form of original claims to knowledge. At least I hope you may trust that it contains my truths represented as authentically as possible in the name of education. It seems to me (and others - Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Kincheloe, 1991) that issues to do with truth and authenticity are intimately related to trustworthiness. Therefore an open pursuit of the truth in as authentic a way I know, in which over time I can help the reader to trust these representations of my educational practice and knowledge, seems to be called for.

Evolving developmental standards of judgement:

From here I want to look at the evolving of developmental educational standards of judgement as a manifestation of the immanent dialectic in my work. I am going to examine 'trustworthiness' here, because this criterion is newly emerging out of my research. Rather than simply writing about 'trustworthiness' as a discrete value within this text, I would like to posit it as a criterion by which you might now wish to be engaging with this writing as you are reading these words. In that way, the writing may express more directly the immanent dialectic within this text. I am also presenting trustworthiness here as a criterion which has emerged directly out of Part Four of the thesis. In other words it can constitute some evidence that I am indeed developing my own educational standards of judgement as my work goes along. The value of 'trustworthiness' has emerged in the course of my practice over time and here it is represented for the first time within this theoretical explanation of my educational practice.

Trustworthiness:

I believe that the value of trustworthiness in my educational practice and theorising about that practice can be usefully understood through the four dimensions of my educational practice: the ethical, the ontological, the aesthetic and the resultant knowledge.

Trustworthiness: a question of my ethics

"Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look",

The Pilot made reply.

‘I am a-feared.’ ‘Push on, push on!’
Said the Hermit cheerily.’

As I have already stated in the Epilogue to Part Two:

‘[Trustworthiness] is ethical for me because becoming trustworthy is a matter of articulating my own concerns and worldview in ways which enable others to identify with them as having value.’ (p.349)

I have chosen to resubmit this thesis through my understanding of ‘The Ancient Mariner’ because an analysis of the poem enables me to access my own ethical concerns in ways with which I hope you will be able to identify. For me the narrator has to be believable. If I cannot believe in him as a real person, then what he has to say will not touch me profoundly. I will not care about him enough, or worry why he does what he does, or whether it has anything to say to me about my own life. I will write more about this later in this section about the connections I make between the parts and the whole in judging either a work of Art or my own educational research. Similarly, I am hoping that you will be able to identify with me as a trustworthy narrator of my own tale because then you might be able to identify with the values I am describing and explaining in this thesis.

Trustworthiness: a question of my ontology

‘That moment that his face I see
I know the man who must hear me.’

In addition, trustworthiness becomes ontological for me at the point at which I, you and others believe that I am worthwhile as a human being because of the values I try to give voice to in my educational practice and in my life. This means that I feel partly affirmed by others in the act of being taken as a trustworthy narrator of my own tale. This is in keeping with the relational form of knowing (Belenky et al, 1986) that I wrote about in Part One, a form of knowing with which I can strongly identify. This ontological interpretation of trustworthiness as a criterion by which to judge the educational validity of this text and my practice, is an orientation which also sees as helpful in the creation of knowledge, negotiation about what is of value in human experience.

Trustworthiness: a question of my educational knowledge

‘To him my tale I teach.’

Trustworthiness becomes intimately connected to my educational knowledge as I articulate my educational values in my practice and in my writings in such a way that my students and pupils are able to trust the meanings that I evolve with them, and that where appropriate I modify my conclusions in the light of our findings. This is also a basic precept of individually-oriented action research as shown in its enquiry-cycle form. Trustworthiness has a value at the level of theory within this text, in that I am asking you to accept this thesis as the creation of my own living educational theory through an account of my educational development which takes into account negotiation about

knowledge. It becomes crucial as well at the point of legitimation as a thesis claiming to be an original contribution to educational knowledge.

Trustworthiness: a question of my aesthetics

‘O happy living things! no tongue

Their beauty might declare:

A spring of love gushes from my heart

And I blessed them unaware.’

Trustworthiness can also represent for me an ‘aesthetic’ judgement, a criterion which requires you to have a perspective on the whole. Its positioning in this thesis as well is implicitly asking you to make a judgement based upon what you have already seen of my work. I doubt, for example, that you will be able to divorce what you are reading now from what you have read in the previous four Parts. Do you, in fact, find this text trustworthy?

Trustworthiness: a question of immanence

‘He prayeth best who loveth best

All things both great and small

For the dear God who loveth us

He made and loveth all.’

As I said before, I cite this criterion of ‘trustworthiness’ as an example of the ways in which in this thesis I am trying to evolve developing educational standards of judgement. I stated in The Introduction:

‘If I advocate a developmental approach to educational research...it seems fitting to encourage an understanding of the standards of judgement I will apply to a developmental process in itself a developmental way’ (p.88).

I have only now come to an understanding of the way in which ‘trustworthiness’, for example, gives me a meaningful criterion through which some of the educational significance of my practice can be understood over time. It is only through the work itself, through the reflections, the writing, the teaching, and the reading that I have come to understand the educational significance to my practice of this particular criterion, and by implication the validity for my practice of my original intuition - that evolving developmental educational standards of judgement would itself be an educational process. As I articulate this educational standard of judgement now I perceive more clearly what it is I have achieved in this thesis. This criterion also points towards the future as a developing standard by which I can judge future improvements in my practice. This is what happens: when I focus on the immanent dialectic I come to understand with greater clarity what matters in my own educational development. It enables a perspective conducive to educational improvement.

The immanent dialectic remains a metaphor of my educational journey and like most journeys, it throws up events and places, people and relationships and a new view of reality. This thesis, as I keep saying, is much more than a snapshot and much less than the truth. Tackling the immanent dialectic enables me to point towards those values which are significant in the creation of the educational knowledge I am laying claim to as valid in this thesis. I will not be able to explain fully what the immanent dialectic is through any purely linguistic form of representation, but I can tell you what it means to engage with it critically in the name of education.

Inferring the immanent dialectic from 'The Ancient Mariner' as a way of articulating its significance in the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships:

'Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down
T'was sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea.'

In order to explain the significance of the immanent dialectic in the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships I want to raise value-issues through some detailed comments about 'The Ancient Mariner'. In this part of the thesis more than previous Epilogues I need the aid of its poetic truths in order to help me to articulate my own educational knowledge. The purpose of this exploration is to highlight the way in which the values within the poem emerge explicitly into meanings towards the end:

'He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small.
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all.'

These values can be seen to be implicit within the imagery and authorial voice from the outset of the poem. For example:

As if it had been a Christian soul
We hailed it in God's name.' (my present emphasis)

I will use an analysis of the implicit and subsequently explicit values in order to illuminate those educational values in my own practice which time and my research are forming into my educational knowledge. In a private conversation in 1992 Jean McNiff referred to this as 'my best thinking to date'.

Questions concerning the character of the Ancient Mariner in my Undergraduate Romantics course were always to do with his possible motives for killing the albatross. He does not feature in his retelling of the tale until the moment when:

'With my crossbow I shot the albatross.'

Why did he do it? What did it mean, both poetically and existentially? I remember we had heated debates in seminars and tutorials. Lectures were given over to this question as a way (I now think quite a brilliant one) through which we might understand the concerns of the Romantic movement in Literature. It was one of the most exciting times in my Undergraduate studies. I wrote an essay - which I was quite proud of at the time because my tutor said it was clever - in which I put forward the view that shooting the albatross gave the Mariner a sense of being alive. Through the killing, he made a difference, he knew he existed, but in my diary of the time I wrote this:

‘March, 1974. It fascinates me why the Mariner killed the albatross. ...I’ve heard all the stuff about Christian symbolism, the crucifixion, Original Sin, but I don’t understand why he did it. The poem strikes me as being so perfect in its imagery, so powerful in its tone and voice, and yet it doesn’t make sense. And if it doesn’t make sense then it’s a flawed poem, isn’t it? It has to make sense within its own parameters. That’s what poetry does. Make absolute sense. Maybe I’m looking for the wrong kind of meaning and sense....Is the killing just a device like the handkerchief in ‘Othello’? A dramatic device without truth. A weakness in the artistry.’

In my own Romantics essay I did not fulfil any requirements about the pursuit of truth through the attainment of valid insights about the poem. I was merely concerned with putting forward arguments which would convince my tutor that I was clever and would assure me of a high grade. I was not, I remember, much concerned with the truth for its own sake in that essay. This represents a weakness in my own artistry, but I have not recognised the significance of that until recently. I was not then aware of the connections that could usefully be made between each aspect of what I wrote and my motivations for writing it, with any value within the work itself. I judged Art in one way, and my own writing in another (see below for greater clarification of that point). I can now only find in the essay a list of others’ viewpoints, the motives for writing clearly centring on the appearance of cleverness rather than a pursuit of truth or authenticity. I had certainly read the ‘right’ authors in preparation for constructing an answer to the question: ‘Why does the Mariner kill the albatross?’, but I wrote about the morality of the poem as if it had nothing to do with me:

‘Twentieth century interpretations certainly favour an explanation without moral absolutes of any kind. They suggest that it doesn’t matter one way or the other. That is simply the way life is. At the time Coleridge was writing it is likely that the poem would have been seen as a Christian parable - no more or less – whereas Victorian fathers had been known to use it as a salutary tale for wayward sons.’

Although this description isn’t untrue in the sense that it lies about different kinds of interpretations, there is nowhere in the essay where I take responsibility for my own viewpoint, or show any awareness of the importance of doing so. This now suggests to

me that I had learnt very little from the poem. I feel that now, in this thesis, I am showing what it means to take responsibility for my own viewpoint through an increasing emphasis on the connections to be made between how I do something and what happens. I now take the view that focusing on what is immanent within each aspect of my teacher-research is a very useful way of determining my ability to appropriate responsibility wisely as I help to improve the quality of learning with the girls.

Let me return for a while to consideration of the meaningful connections I am making between Art and my own educational research. In some ways my feelings about what constitutes 'good' Art have not changed much since my Undergraduate days. I still believe that the bad luck of Iago's finding Desdemona's handkerchief, (as I cited a few pages ago) as the pivotal point upon which to hang the whole plot of 'Othello', is an artistic flaw. As a result, instead of the tragedy depending on human weakness and vacillation to create the 'pity and fear' in the audience, (which Aristotle required from great tragedy - and I agree) the result is frustrating and the scale of the tragedy is therefore diminished. If the tragedy relies on coincidence and not human failure, then its moral impact seems to be lessened. Thus I found 'The Ancient Mariner' puzzling. Although I believe the tragedy of the other mariners' deaths remains intact in terms of its moral insight and symbolism - I perceive it as truly shocking - there was still for me the problem of why the Mariner murdered the albatross. If the act was an arbitrary one, simply so that the poet could manipulate events to make a point, then why should I care so much about the Mariner himself? If the Mariner is a mere puppet of his author, then what vested interest, or form of identification with him as another human being, could I have? The intense identification I could have with a flawed human being who does evil in a moral universe which would not accept that evil, a human being furthermore I could genuinely believe in, was not going to happen for me. If that identification didn't happen then I cared less about his subsequent struggles. And if I cared less about his subsequent struggles then I was less in a position to learn from them. He could have nothing to teach me about what matters in life.

Intuition told me that each aspect of the poem should be connected to each of the other aspects in order for its structure and meaning to combine in a way which strengthened the poem's claim to longevity. I wanted that sense of: 'every time I read this I find more in it.' I didn't want to read the poem and find less. I wanted, I suppose, to look into the characterisation and find a way of understanding the value that the author put on life. I wanted to be able to look at the imagery or the symbolism, the outcomes or the beginning, and find the value that the author put on life. And in each way of focusing, I expected to find an orientation to the value the author put on life which deepened and enriched my understanding both of that valuing and the value I put on my own life. I expected to find this, I should say, if I were to judge the poem as a great poem. I looked to the poem to teach me something.

In a similar way, as an educator I would like to be able to look at any conversation with one of my girls in the classroom and find there somewhere an implicit or explicit concern for her welfare through my emphasis on furthering the assumption of the meaningfulness of life as together we learn something of value. I would like to be able to mark her

homework and find my implicit or explicit concern for her welfare through such an emphasis. And I would, for example, like to be able to video our classroom and find my concern for the welfare of individuals in the ways highlighted above.

As a device, having the Mariner kill the albatross as a symbol of his fall from grace is certainly clever, but has not always for me seemed to reach beyond symbol into a more universal human meaning. If the murder is a device, then it only works on the level of symbolism, but what about the levels of truth, meaning, metaphor, human agency, aesthetic balance and knowledge? Somewhere, however, the immense power of the poem's language and symbolism prevented me from finding fault with the poem and seemed to challenge me for failing to understand it sufficiently. I have been haunted by this poem all my adult life, for I have always known intuitively that it can tell me something about the value I might put on my own life and Life in general. The representation in this resubmission is evidence of my concern to find something meaningful for my life that works on the levels of my truth, meaning, metaphor, human agency, and an aesthetic balance in my educational knowledge. I believe now that I have some genuine understanding of the motives behind the killing because I have matured in my ability to perceive the world and what it means for me to have made the choice to perceive my life as meaningful. I have, in other words, been able to connect the killing to the implied values of the author in such a way that the poem maintains for me its essential inner integrity as a work of great Art. I have in part perceived the quality of what I value through my deepening understanding of the poem. In a dialectical sense 'The Ancient Mariner' and I have grown together.

I believe that what differentiates good, from mediocre and bad Art is the degree to which, in Beardsley's (1958/1981) terms, it can give rise to an aesthetic experience in which:

'means and ends are so closely interrelated that we feel no separation between them...the end is immanent in the beginning, the beginning is carried up to the end... Such experience holds before us a clue to what life can be like in its greatest richness and joy.' (p.576)

In other words, each aspect of the Art should be present in each other aspect. That is how I understand the concept of 'immanent' within my own educational processes. If I were to apply Beardsley's comment to my teacher-research I would, for example, infer and imply the 'aims' of my teaching as necessarily inherent within each aspect of the process with each girl in the classroom. If I want to create ethical relationships with my pupils and students, then I believe that each aspect of every moment with them has to bear in mind what it means to relate ethically with each individual. It has been helpful in improving the quality of my work with Zoë and Rebecca for me to regard what has happened with them not only to be educationally flawed at times, but aesthetically flawed: each aspect was not connected to every other aspect in educational ways - in other words ways in which the assumption of the meaningfulness of life was promoted through improving the quality of learning about something of value. I find it easier to analyse the quality of something aesthetically than educationally. Having such a perspective has enabled me at best to perceive weaknesses in the educative relationships

and to try therefore, to improve their educative quality.

I hinted at an example of this with Lisa in Part Four of this thesis:

‘Although I was pleased with what Lisa produced, and believe that her work shows insight, I think in places it lacked the depth which a project of this scope and time, could have benefited from if I had intervened more constructively. I think there is a balance for me to make between concern for the individual and concern for the curricular learning and in Lisa’s case I didn’t get this balance right.’ (p.500, my present emphasis)

Apart from the allusion to the necessity for balance which I write about in detail in the Epilogue to Part One, I allude to the likelihood of the unhappy outcome of Lisa’s research as a flaw in the way in which I had helped her to structure her own learning. I am inferring from the highlighted comment above a sense of the importance of maintaining an aesthetic balance through an awareness of what happens when this balance is disturbed, or pursued without sufficient understanding. My aesthetic failure in the above process was not to have each aspect of the educational processes immanent within each other aspect. This was largely, I now believe, due to a lack of understanding. What is helping the understanding is an analysis of the process in the light of its perceptible outcomes. As I reflect on what happened I can begin to understand what should have been immanent in the processes and wasn’t. Just as I look at ‘The Ancient Mariner’ and tried to infer literary value through the ways in which its connectivity enhances its ability to promote something of value about the human condition, so I look to my own educative relationships and try to infer educational value through their ability to promote something of value about the human condition through an improvement in the quality of learning.

Let me for the moment return to the development of my insights about the connections I can make between great Art and the improvement of my educational research. I believe with Tolstoy that great Art:

‘in its widest and most practical application, is the consciousness that our well-being, both material and spiritual, individual and collective, temporal and eternal, lies in the growth of brotherhood among men [sic] - in their loving harmony with one another.’

(p. 234/5)

I believe too that great Art worthy of its name should recommend our evolution as a species and not the entropy of destructive and evil forces. By ‘evolution’ here I am taken by Peck’s (1990) description of it as a force within an individual’s, and humanity’s, development as a whole:

‘Each of us has his or her own urge to grow, and each of us, in exercising that urge, must single-handedly fight against his or her resistance...Those who achieve growth not only enjoy the fruits of growth but give those same fruits to the world. Evolving

as individuals, we carry humanity on our backs. And so humanity evolves.’ (p.285)

I believe that Literature in which the authorial voice does not take issue with the evil in some way that reaches beyond rhetoric and into the very structure of the Art itself, is part of the evil it depicts. I would go further. I believe that such Art does not simply reflect the evil, it helps to create it. Thus it follows if I am to apply this reasoning further that ‘good’ Art helps to create and sustain the goodness around it.

In my own educational research writing I use some of the same standards of judgement when I am seeking to evaluate it as I would a work of Art. What constitutes for me the ‘good’ in my educational research writing is its concern, depicted over time, with those values which strengthen my and my students’ and pupils’ abilities to find ways to perceive the meaningfulness of Life through moral considerations as we try to improve the quality of learning. (See the Epilogue to Part Two for a fuller explanation of this aim.) I believe that becoming accountable for such an aim may add to my ability to act towards this aim in my educational practice. In a similar way the Mariner hones the educational value of his insights by becoming accountable for his claim to be improving his life - by making his tale public - by teaching it to others.

After the Mariner has murdered the albatross, forces come into play that enable him to recreate his orientation to reality. Instead of existing in, and thus creating around him, a nihilistic universe which perpetuates the meaninglessness he believes to be a constant, he begins to unlearn his past in order to create his future in the image of God instead. In other words he is responsible for what he does in this life, for good or evil. He cannot either opt out of interacting with the world altogether or create mayhem without paying the price. Once he realises that, he is then free to make his life purposeful for the good: he can lead a consciously meaningful existence. This becomes possible only at the moment when he overcomes his ‘fiends’:

‘I looked to Heaven and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.’

Immanent in the above quotation, if he were to follow this through, is a perpetuation of his evil. A state of stasis. Only the reality behind the words:

‘Oh happy living things,
No tongue their beauty might declare,’

is able to break through the evil and become the blueprint for all the events that he creates subsequently. It is only by the reality of the contradictions within him (see later in this section for a fuller explanation of the term ‘contradiction’) that he begins to learn how to lead a life in which he is capable of maintaining ethical relationships with others. Through the aesthetic experience of perceiving the creatures’ beauty, he recognises the

significance of happiness. In Beardsley's terms, he can now appreciate what life can be like in its greatest richness and joy. Before this moment he does not experience happiness, richness or joy, just as he does not seem to see them around him at any point in the first part of his tale. After Death has touched him intimately he becomes aware of the wonder of being alive. The juxtaposition of 'happy' with 'living' ('Oh happy, living things') associates the two states for the rest of the poem. It prefigures the purpose as well as the process of his future life. It can also, I believe, be perceived as a message for all of us, what Tolstoy might have called his 'growth of brotherhood'. It describes both a preferred state of being and the deep connections between an awareness of what it means to be alive (existentially, psychologically emotionally and morally) and to be happy.

The happy living is associated in the poem with the beautiful and the good. I know it has something profound for me to understand as an educator. Recognising the different ways in which the phrase 'happy living' in the context of the beautiful and the good can be interpreted, gives me hints about the potential purposes and processes within my own educational life in the ways I and the girls can relate to each other as we try to improve the quality of learning about something worthwhile.

At the end the Mariner is focused on developing the dialectic between happiness and leading an ethical life. For him this means developing responsible relationships in the name of God. I am focused on developing the dialectic between the promotion of the meaningfulness of life and improving the quality of learning in the classroom with the girls. For me this means taking the responsibility for developing an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships in the name of education. The Mariner evolves his tale responsibly in the name of God. I am moved to tell my tale responsibly in the name of education.

In my research into the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships I have learnt over time how significant it is for me to focus on a balance between the dimensions within those relationships. Balancing the ethical, ontological, aesthetic and knowledge-aspects of my practice I am claiming, enhances their educational use-value. I believed that at the beginning of this research. In Part One I wrote:

'Through coming to an understanding of a standard of judgement which I term an aesthetic morphology, I am claiming that I have enhanced the educative nature of my educative relationships.'

(p.168)

As I understood it then, I believe that I did improve the quality of learning - my own and Sarah's - through an analysis of the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships. For example, I helped her to speak more in her own voice about issues which concerned her than I had managed in previous years with Zac and Justine, and with Jenny as I explained in the Epilogue to Part One. However, as this resubmission shows, my better understanding of the aesthetic as well as the morphological, and then my conscious relating of them to the immanent dialectic within my practice, have enhanced my comprehension.

The Ancient Mariner must try again and again to understand what the murder means. At first he merely thinks he has to say sorry, and that only seems to be so that he can forego his punishment:

‘Oh let me be awake, my God,
Or let me sleep away.’

To become truly sorry for the murder he must connect his deed with its consequences. He must understand how implicated he is in everything that happens to him - implied by the weather, the conditions which occur on board ship after he has killed the albatross, and his internal monologues - and begin the immense effort of changing his inner turmoil into outer harmony. He must see the relationships between his own ethics and ontology as a way of taking responsibility for his future life and a way of creating around him the insights he has now come to.

I now understand the aesthetic as requiring an appropriate balance of the ethical, the ontological and the knowledge in my practice in order to render the practice as educational as possible. (See Epilogue One for an explanation of this insight). Part of the reason I have come to understand the value of the aesthetic as a developmental standard of judgement within my educative relationships is to do with the insights I have had through the poetic truths in ‘The Ancient Mariner’. These poetic truths have had the effect of illuminating my understanding of my own educative relationships through which I have tried to improve the quality of learning. I believe as well that my educational practice has benefited from my greater understanding. As I state in The General Prologue:

‘Questions of personal responsibility seem to be so crucial to the learning process, but I need constant reminding about how such questions can most educationally manifest themselves in living relationships with others. I think this is to do with the forms of my educative relationships, what I am calling elsewhere their morphology, for example, the interactive journals, the learning partners, the educational standards of judgement, their presentations of their understanding. I seem to be searching for a form in which educational questions can be opened up to the learners in order to improve the quality of learning for us all.’ (p.24)

Searching for that form has been one of the most creative aspects of my educational research because it has channelled my insights through issues to do with authenticity, truth, responsibility and trustworthiness to the extent that in its present form, my thesis represents the fullest expression to date of an immanent dialectic at the heart of my own educational processes.

Between the immanent dialectic and the creation of my own living educational theory In the light of the above quotation, I wish to build a bridge between my discussion of the immanent dialectic and the second issue raised at the beginning of this Epilogue:
‘Creating my living educational theory from the account of my own educational

development.’ Much of my previous research seems to have been concerned with a complex major issue. It first surfaced consciously in my work with Sarah which appeared in Part One of the thesis and was included in Whitehead (1993b) in an adapted form. This became the basis of a published article (Laidlaw, 1994b) in which I discussed my attempts to democratise the learning relationship through dialogue. Early in 1996 I wrote the first draft of The General Prologue and within it I posed the question: ‘What happens to power and knowledge in my educative relationships when the learners are asking their own questions?’ I had not at that time formulated it as an action research question which would have enabled me to tackle it practically. It had arisen, however, as a genuine concern out of my research. I did build on that for the paper which constitutes Part Four of this thesis and which I presented at AERA (Laidlaw, 1996).

I ended that text with this:

‘I am still learning what it means to engage with the question I formulate from this concern: ‘How can I and the girls negotiate power and knowledge in our classroom in ways which improve the quality of learning for each one of us?’ ...I want a classroom in which children feel free to ask questions as Zoë dared to. In which my pupils and I continue to explore the boundaries of power in a bid to improve the quality of learning and relationships.’ (p.512/3)

In my search for a form in which educational questions can be opened up to the learners in order to improve the quality of learning for us all, I am recognising that out of my research, a growing emphasis on questions to do with power and knowledge in my educative relationships is emerging.

Answers to this question are outside the scope of this thesis, however. This text is a transition structure between my past, present and future research. In order to explain the significance of trying to find an appropriate morphology in which questions like the above can be addressed, it is, however, fitting for me to alert you to the dimensions which are emerging during its course. A concentration on an immanent dialectic enables me to clarify those areas of my values which my practice and resultant knowledge are finding problematic. The relationship between power and knowledge in my educative relationships I am experiencing as tensions due to, I suspect, aesthetic imbalances in my dealing with them. I will look in more detail at this in the final section of this section when I am discussing my intentions after the completion of this thesis.

In this final section of my present claim to educational knowledge I am seeking to explain, in other words to synthesise, my educational values into a communicable form. Issues to do with power and knowledge in my educative relationships constitute a present synthesis of my educational research. These are developing the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships, an explanation of the immanent dialectic at the heart of my practice and the creation of my own living educational theory. I believe that my educational development can most appropriately be discussed through these issues. I realise that the above claim needs some substantial explanation. I aim to do that in the rest of this conclusion to my thesis. I would now like to discuss the second issue I

mentioned at the beginning of this Epilogue:

- creating my living educational theory from the account of my own educational development.

‘The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.’

In this section I would like to continue the discussion of the above claim as I explain how this thesis represents my own living educational theory through the account of my educational development. I will also be bearing in mind that the whole of this Epilogue seeks to conclude the thesis with an explanation of my educational knowledge. In addition I will put forward the argument that a claim to original educational knowledge can be made through the account of an individual’s educational development in the form of her own living educational theory.

I would like to explain my choice to create my own living educational theory through a brief description of some of the educational research background over the last twenty years. I am doing this because I believe that the notion of living educational theory has not emerged spontaneously, but can be seen to be a creative and original response to some of the recent developments in educational research. I believe, with Hughes, 1996, that understanding the antecedents to an educational process can help an individual to communicate how improvements are made in her present practice. In particular I want to develop here a focus on the history of the values, and forms through which the values were focused, as I feel that this will give you a better understanding of the choices I have made which have led me to the creation of my own living educational theory. I will do this by drawing out as I go along the similarities and differences to my own approach.

As I mentioned just prior to this present section, I am concerned about the distribution of power and knowledge within my educative relationships. I believe this to be a helpful way of focusing on why I am committed to creating my own living educational theory. It seems to me that issues surrounding who has the power and knowledge within my educative relationships are paralleled by the ways in which the knowledge itself emerges. In this section I want to draw your attention to the ways in which I perceive power and knowledge to have been distributed in earlier forms of educational research as a way of helping me explain why the creation of my own living educational theory is an authentic response to my understanding.

Significant points of historical reference in the creation of my own living educational theory:

My living educational theory approach can, I believe, be seen as having its roots in the idea of single cases as valid forms of educational research, just as Action Research can be seen to have its origins in the work of Kurt Lewin (Kemmis, 1988), for example, or alternatively with Jacob Moreno (Gunz, 1996). The purpose of this present argument, however, is not to determine where something came from but to explore present emphases through an understanding of past ones in order to understand something more of their value-systems and the forms in which the values are expressed.

Case Study

In 1975 MacDonald and Walker asserted that:

‘Case-study is the way of the artist who achieves greatness when, through the portrayal of a single instance, locked in time and circumstance, he [sic] communicates enduring truths about the human condition. For both scientist and artist, content and intent emerge in form.’ (p.3)

I like the emphasis in MacDonald and Walker’s quotation above on the individual’s capacity to communicate something of real value about human beings. That is the starting point for me in my own research: if I sufficiently explain myself, the contexts I am in and the ways in which my values emerge over time in their complex dialectical relationships, and in a form in which the content is sufficiently in a symbiotic relationship to it all, then I will have something of enduring worth to communicate to others. This too, is what the Ancient Mariner does, by setting the scene for his story, by relating events, and then by connecting the aftermath to the motives and responsibilities he incurs for the future. And all in a form which compels the listener to attend, which captivates the imagination, the heart and the mind in a powerful synthesis:

‘He listens like a three years child.
The Mariner hath his will.’

His tale has enduring truths which he manages to communicate to the Wedding Guest:

‘A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.’

I believe in the value of what I have to say in the name of education. It matters to me that, as MacDonald and Walker say above, ‘content and intent emerge in form’. It is for me one of the hallmarks of the truth and authenticity of this account that the values shine through in the representation. (See The Introduction and previous section of this Epilogue for a fuller explanation of the terms ‘truth’ and ‘authenticity’.)

As early as 1978, Stenhouse produced his rationale for case-study as a humanistic methodology for enhancing the educational nature of the teaching profession. He perceived research as ‘systematic enquiry made public’, developed through techniques such as interviews and observation, creating documents which then were to become public records. He claimed that such a form of research increased the democratic potential of the educational processes and emphasised the importance of values in

shaping meaning and knowledge (Stenhouse, 1980). He recognised the significance of practitioners having the power at least partly to be creating their own educational knowledge.

In 1981 Elbaz supported the idea that detailed studies of single teachers make a contribution to our general knowledge of the profession. In 1983, Skilbeck summed up Stenhouse's stance towards teachers as researchers:

'Central to Stenhouse's view of education is the teacher, not the pupil, the school, the providing authorities or the policy makers. It is the teacher, purposive and free, informed by knowledge and understanding, with clearly articulated values and a repertoire of practical skills that he saw as the central agent in the educational enterprise and the ultimate focus of his views on research.' (p.12)

Stenhouse focused attention on teachers as agents in their own development. This was new. Rudduck and Hopkins (1985) quote him as saying:

'Researchers should justify themselves to practitioners, not practitioners to researchers.' (p.19)

In 1986, Maxine Greene wrote that case-study research could not be done:

'by people who see themselves as detached, neutral observers.'
(p.69)

In my own form of educational research, it is the lack of neutrality that gives me and other individually-oriented action researchers the parameters of my educational research. Popper (1963) in his study of the growth of scientific knowledge, 'Conjectures and Refutations', writes that in any assertion of truth:

'there should be some...criterion...of well-foundedness' [in which]
'truth is what we are justified in believing'. (p.225)

He also asserts that:

'We want more than mere truth: what we look for is interesting truth...which is hard to come by and which...has a high explanatory power.' (p.229)

In 1988 I conducted my own case-study research (Laidlaw, 1988) as part of my M.Ed. studies here at the University of Bath. It focused on individuals' educational development as they designed their own self-evaluation profiling system, and the process of this research convinced me of the efficacy of studying, in MacDonald and Walker's (1975) terms: 'an instance in action' (p.4). I finished my dissertation with these words:

‘I have been discovering my own fundamental values which of course, always lose something in the telling. I am coming away from the experience believing that I have learnt something and that the writing of this dissertation marks a significant stage in my own educational development.’ (p.88)

Case-study enabled me to begin the journey which you see ending here (in its present form). Through deliberation on ‘a single instance locked in time and circumstance’, (op. cit, p.3) I was able to use the case-study form to communicate my emerging knowledge. I did not wish to conform to the constraints as I perceived them, of issues to do with generalisability which would require me to infer meanings for others through my own and my pupils’ experiences. In answer to a possible criticism of the lack of generalisability in my dissertation, however, I wrote this:

‘The case study may not be able to isolate a causative agent in Nature, such as can be required as a proof in Physics, for example, but it may be able to capture a moment in human activity which will reverberate in the minds and hearts of others in a way that will extend their understanding.’ (p.11)

Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis (1980) call this perspective on generalisability ‘the shock of recognition’ (p.52), Stake’s (1975) ‘naturalistic’ form. He wrote :

‘what becomes useful understanding is a full and thorough knowledge of the particular, recognizing it in new and foreign contexts.’ (p.69)

Conducting a case-study convinced me that if I were to continue to a Ph.D. I would need to find a form of research which would enable me to my own satisfaction, to explain my own educational development as I tried to improve the quality of learning with myself and others. In my journal of the time I wrote this:

‘April, 1989. I wonder whether I could do a Ph.D.. I don’t want to do someone else’s research, though. I want to do my own. I used to be a bloody good teacher at times. I ought to have something to say. I really got a lot out of my dissertation.’

Research on Teachers

In the mid-eighties, the shape of educational knowledge was essentially moving away from people like Peters and Hirst (1970) with their recommendations of the disciplines approach, which, simply put, expressed the idea that teachers were not on their own in a position to create improvements in their practice. These would come through the applications of theories coined from the sociology, history, psychology and philosophy of education. (See Part One for a detailed analysis of the history of educational action research over the last twenty years and the breakaway from the disciplines approach in

the eighties exemplified by Whitehead's work). Rhodes (1986), however, writes that in Stenhouse's work (as exemplified in the Schools Council Humanities Curriculum Project), and in the work of John Elliott (in the Ford Teaching Project):

'the informing values and norms of educational practice were identified and analysed by 'outsiders' (the researcher as researcher model). They could not therefore be construed as the 'pure' model of teacher as researcher argued for in the writings of Stenhouse (1980, 1983, 1984).' (p. 28)

In terms of values I perceive a similarity in the approaches to educational research described above which stipulate that individual teachers are not wholly competent to create knowledge from their own practice as they try to improve it. In Stenhouse's case, the 'outsiders' were from education but they believed themselves to be in a position to tell the teachers what the knowledge was. In the disciplines approach, the improvements through research were not based on the individual teacher's experiences in their own classroom but on knowledge gleaned from outside it and then applied within it with no practical links made explicit between understanding and application. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) take issue with research on teachers and their practice, as opposed to the teachers themselves organising and carrying out their own research into their practice in order to improve it. They write about research on teachers:

'Teachers are expected to be the eventual recipients of the knowledge generated by professional researchers. That is, they are expected to acknowledge the value of researchers' work for their own professional practice and to accept its validity for their day-to-day decisions.' (p.1)

The view of teachers and researchers as separate is one to which Calderhead (1993) seems to subscribe:

'Work on narratives and journal writing has been used to justify reflective practices in some programs and also to provide a methodology, but the use of such approaches...raises many questions that are important to explore in order to extend our understanding of professional development. For instance how does journal writing contribute to ...professional development? Is it inspiring confidence through valuing the person.'

(p.17, my emphasis)

In the above view of knowledge, such phrases as 'professional development', 'journal-writing' and 'inspiring confidence' appear to be without specific contexts or people in mind other than a theoretical pre-service education and a theoretical group of students who undergo these processes. The 'our' of the above comment is a rhetorical one and not, therefore in a dialectical relationship to the particular processes alluded to. I agree that I, for example, might need to understand more about the ways in which journal writing with

my Year Seven group works. Or doesn't work. Why, for example, did some of the girls cease to write in their journals after only a few months into this year? Were they bored? Did it no longer serve a purpose for them? Did they feel secure, or did they not trust me enough to continue doing so? Did they perhaps perceive that I would not give them the quality of attention that they required? Reading about the experiences of other teachers as they have tried to work with journals (de Cet, 1991) has helped me to focus on issues I may not have thought of myself. Let me give you an example from my Ph.D. journal where I deliberate about this very issue:

'March, 1996. I wonder whether I'm getting the balance with some journals wrong. I read Daniela's [de Cet, 1991] account about her use of journal writing with her mixed GCSE English group. She focuses very clearly on the curricular with her pupils and the tone of their entries is very different from my girls'. I wonder perhaps whether I need to steer their self-absorption into more curricular channels, and yet in ways which continue to reveal my respect for their individuality and their needs as people. I wonder whether my journals have become rather too concerned about the personal and not enough about the curricular. It's a question, as always, of balance.'

I want to make it clear that I do not reject the research and ideas of others in the formation of my own educational knowledge. I also accept the criticism of my external examiners in the previous submission of this thesis that:

'The problem about meanings is also a problem for the relation of your work to other theorists...

Without Daniela's insights about her own research, for example, I might not have been able to imagine solutions to my own classroom problems. Without the writings of people I have drawn on in this thesis I would be in less of a position to understand what it is about the creation of my own knowledge that I need to focus on in order to improve the quality of learning in the classroom. In the end, though, I claim that I need to be in the position to take responsibility for my own viewpoint because the focus of all my educational research is to improve the quality of learning for myself and others for whom I am responsible.

Teachers-as-Researchers or Teacher-Researchers?

Elliott and Sarland (1995) write that:

'The teachers as researchers movement is now 25 years old in the U.K.. It has proved remarkably resilient over a period of considerable educational change and its leaders have played a key role in the spread of the movement internationally.' (p.373)

I have been consciously influenced by the teacher-as-researcher movement in my own educational development as I began to explain above in terms of my own case-study work. At this point I want to look at the terms 'teacher-as-researcher' and 'teacher-researcher'. I am a teacher-researcher. This is what I tell my girls at school and the point of view that this thesis takes. This is how I have represented myself in the public arena (Laidlaw & Whitehead, 1995; Laidlaw, 1996). I see the term 'teacher-as-researcher' to suggest an emphasis with which I do not wish to identify. It connotes for me teachers acting as if they are researchers. Being a teacher-researcher for me means that both the teacher and the researcher are equal and in fact in a symbiotic relationship. Such an emphasis shows you something about my own understanding about the creation of my educational knowledge. What I am writing about in this thesis is the creation of my own educational knowledge and its relationship to the people and the contexts I am in - as a teacher-researcher in a school, in the academic community at the University at Bath, as a teacher-researcher in such communities as AERA and in my publications (McNiff, Whitehead, & Laidlaw, 1992; Laidlaw, 1994b, Laidlaw & Whitehead, 1995; and Laidlaw, 1996). I am not writing about the creation of educational knowledge, but taking the viewpoint, that I can create my own educational knowledge as I help to improve the quality of learning, a view which is the foundation of all of Whitehead's work (Whitehead, 1993a&b).

The teacher-as-researcher or teacher-researcher movement has had its detractors. In order to make more clear the position I am taking in this thesis as an individual exercising her right, I believe, as well as her capacity, to create her own living educational theory, I want to look briefly at Hammersley's (1993a) critique of the movement. He comes from a quasi-positivist viewpoint (Hammersley, 1993b) and thus his arguments constitute an opposed stance to my own. He makes the point, when referring to the way in which qualitative research requires a closeness between researcher and researched, that:

'In my view...the epistemological assumption that seems to underlie this argument - that knowledge comes from contact with reality - is unsound. This is because all knowledge is a construction: we have no direct knowledge of the world.' (p.432)

I disagree with this viewpoint to the extent that I am resubmitting a thesis which puts forward my own knowledge! Putting aside my unease at anyone's certainty about all knowledge: 'all knowledge is construction' and the absolute of: 'we have no direct knowledge of the world', I still cannot put aside my own experience of being in this world. Hammersley claims to be writing about everyone: 'we have no direct knowledge of the world'. But I do not find myself in Hammersley's ascription of 'we'. What of my and other people's aesthetic experiences, for example? If what he writes above is a Truth, then this whole thesis must be a Lie! When I sat on the bench in Zarrentin I know - I know - that somehow I had some direct knowledge of the world, but not in a way that I can prove through measurements or facts. I cannot even adequately in words explain what that knowledge was. I can only comment on the effect that it had on me then, and surmise how it may be influencing me as I try to improve the quality of learning with the girls in the classroom. I account for this experience in Part Three of the thesis and its Epilogue. I am also surmising the influence of my experience now as I create my own living

educational theory. My experience in Zarrentin is similar, it seems to me, to the one the Mariner has when he blesses the watersnakes, and the other when he sees his homeland:

‘Oh dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?’

He is moved at once to understandings which, before the experiences, were beyond him. He has come back to the same place, but he knows it anew and in ways which will alter his view of reality for always. If he had not gone away, he could not have come to know the value of what he already had. This affects the way he can behave in the future. Direct-knowing (Reid, 1980) is beyond the scope of a form of knowledge which seeks proof and absolute separation between the knower and the known as Hammersley seems to be suggesting it ought. Reid writes about musical knowledge, for example:

‘Real musical intuitive knowledge is direct as the arrow. Many insightful things, in forms of knowledge-that or knowledge-how can be said by musicians: but musical knowledge, qua musical, does not reach its musically cognitive consummation finally from knowledge-that or knowledge-how. Rather, knowledge-that or knowledge-about, music, in itself derives from direct musical gnosis, musical intuition.’ (p. 48)

I can recognise myself in the way of knowing which Reid outlines above. Much of my research has been a process of uncovering ways of articulating and explaining what my direct knowing actually means in terms of my own educational development.

Hammersley concludes his article with this:

‘My aim has been to counter the proposal that the roles of teacher and educational researcher should be integrated... In my view this is undesirable from the point of view of both research and teaching.’ (p.441)

This thesis wishes to claim that in my own educational development (as I show increasingly through the various parts of the text), my perception of my roles of teacher and educational researcher as integrated, has led to an enhancement in my ability to help to improve the quality of learning. Although I am not advocating what other teachers should do, I am asserting my right to be a teacher-researcher, for I have found the immanent dialectic within that confluence to be the greatest aid to my own educational development I have yet discovered.

Let me return to the discussion of other forms of educational research in the creation of knowledge. In 1988 McNiff openly advocated teachers creating their own knowledge as they asked questions of the kind, ‘How can I improve my practice?’ This followed the Whitehead approach to action research, although it described and explained the other

forms too. In it she includes three practitioners speaking for themselves on issues which concern them as they try to improve the quality of learning. In that sense the book is ground breaking because it describes and explains and shows the values underpinning individually-oriented action research through a focus on individuals taking responsibility for their own viewpoints within the contexts in which they work.

Teachers as Learners

So far then, I have shown the growth in the literature of a focus on teachers researching their own practice. In the nineties, this begins to include the switch from teachers thinking about themselves as teachers and becoming learners in their own research. In 1993, Cochran-Smith and Lytle, for example, wrote in order to:

‘question the common assumption that knowledge for teaching should be primarily outside-in - generated at the university and then used in schools - a position that suggests the unproblematic transmission of knowledge from a source to a destination.’ (p.xi)

McNiff (1993) bases her whole book on the educational advantages, as she perceives them (and I agree with her) of teachers perceiving themselves as learners. In the same year Somekh writes about this switch of emphasis in the following way:

‘A peculiarity of current research into teachers’ thinking seems to be its concentration on teachers’ thinking about teaching rather than on the way in which teachers learn.’ (p.142)

I particularly like her focus on learning rather than teaching, which is specifically what I am exploring in Part Four of this thesis in a bid to improve their quality. In Part Four I claim that my ability to perceive myself as a learner in the classroom has educational advantages as I help others to improve the quality of their learning. I would also contend that it impinges on ethical issues to do with fairness and respect for others in my educative relationships. I am claiming in this thesis that it is partially the ways in which I develop the ethics in my practice which render my emerging knowledge from it educational.

What is my living educational theory like?

From here I would like to focus on what my living educational theory is like, because in this way I can draw on the above as I explore issues which characterise it, whilst at the same time representing my account in an authentic and truthful way (see discussion on ‘the immanent dialectic’ in the previous section).

My living educational theory makes its own claims about validity:

Let me turn to issues to do with validity in educational research, which is largely what this historical description has so far been about in this section of the thesis. (See again The Introduction and Part One for a description of the issues surrounding validity in educational research.) There have been great debates about the valid representation of

educational and teacher-knowledge (Eisner, 1993; Lincoln, 1993; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe, 1991; Laidlaw, Lomax and Whitehead, 1994) and what constitutes that knowledge (ed. Day, Calderhead & Denicolo, 1993; ed. Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). I am claiming that one of the validating principles of the individually-oriented action research paradigm in its incarnation as living educational theory, is that it has enabled an individual to speak for herself on issues which concern her as she helps to improve the quality of learning with others (Laidlaw and Whitehead, 1995).

This is not a widely held tenet. However, it is now gaining ground in public accounts (Eames, 1990, 1995; Evans, 1995; (ed.) Jones, 1995; Laidlaw, 1994b, 1996; Laidlaw and Whitehead, 1995; McNiff, 1988, 1993; Lomax, 1994a; Lomax, McNiff, Whitehead, 1996; McNiff, Whitehead and Laidlaw, 1992; Whitehead, 1985, 1989, 1993b). The assumption I and the above researchers are making, is that such a stance is of itself educational and can make an original contribution to educational knowledge. I realise, however, that I cannot simply rest my case on the past achievements of other people. Indeed, it is crucial that I both make my own case and place it within an identifiable context. I agree that I need to contextualise any knowledge that I am making in order to communicate its value.

One way in which 'living educational theory' has been taken up in an academic community was in the summer of 1995, when the whole of an edition of *Teachers Education Quarterly*, published in California, was devoted to looking at the educationally-useful links to be made between 'Self-Study' and living educational theory. In the introduction to the first conference on Self-Study, Richards (1996) characterises the new movement as: 'research on the professional self in teacher education.' (p.vi)

In the sense that characters are not 'in' a narrative, but constitute it (Winter, 1975: 34), I perceive self-study researchers to be both the subject and object of their own research. This bears obvious comparison to my own context as I create my living educational theory. In this form I am the protagonist writing the narrative about me as one of the characters. I would suggest that this dialectic enables me to bridge a gap between theory and narrative (which Winter rightly, I believe, perceives as problematic) in a unique and interesting way. I believe what at the moment differentiates self-study research from creating one's own living educational theory, is the extent to which researchers account for their own educational development. I cannot at this stage of my own educational development conceive of parameters more useful for me than accounting for that development when it is characterised by the ways in which I try to improve the quality of learning. At the moment this constitutes my own living educational theory, and it is the dialectic between improving the quality of learning and my own educational development which constitutes it.

Although the five writers in the quarterly journal do not give detailed accounts of their own educational development, they raise interesting issues to do with their perceptions of the professional development of other teacher-educators and the problems that they are facing professionally in their own roles as teacher-educators. After each account Whitehead comments from his perspective as a teacher-educator promoting the living

educational theory approach. The self-study writers' representations are diverse, drawing on myth, story, dialogue and retrospective analysis. In commenting on the significance of creating a bridge between living educational theory and self-study, Korthagen (1995) says:

'I think the critical issues developed by the practitioners can serve as the foundations of that bridge. It is a difficult task, but an essential one. I would say that our journey has only just begun.' (p.104)

My living educational theory evolves developmental educational standards of judgement in the account of my own educational development:

Creating my own living educational theory rests ultimately on its holding as central my ability as an individual to create something original in the name of education. It cannot therefore, wholly rely on perceptible antecedents. My living educational theory has in common with others of its genre, a belief in the educational validity of originality as a standard of judgement by which partially to evaluate accounts which claim to answer questions of the kind, how can I improve my practice? There is also an integration of one's own educational development (Whitehead, 1993b) in which values are problematicised (Lomax, 1994a) and conclusions tentative and open-ended (Laidlaw, 1996). Most appositely to this discussion here, such accounts are increasingly characterised by the development of educational standards of judgement by which the accounts can be illuminated and evaluated (Lomax, 1994b). Whitehead (1993b) says about this area:

'The standards of judgement are...more difficult to communicate [than what is being judged]...I use both personal and social standards in justifying my own claims to know my own educational development.' (p.54)

The whole of The Introduction to this thesis is a testament to my application of explicit standards of judgements as a morphological device through which my knowledge can be developed and communicated. In this thesis, for example, I am seeking to encourage its judgement through, amongst others, a developing aesthetic criterion, because I believe it holds the essential key to my educational development. Winter (1987) writes about using the aesthetic as a way of guiding evaluations of an educational research account:

'the logic of...aesthetic form creates a set of possibilities made available by the ambiguities, metaphors, contradictions, reversals...embodied in the narrative itself.' (p.141)

In this text I have developed an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships as a way of improving the quality of those relationships. This aesthetic is not a static standard of judgement, but, like the other values that this thesis seeks to explain in action (such as my truth, authenticity, ethics and ontology) it is evolving as I do with its ambiguities, metaphors, contradictions and reversals.

The aesthetic dimension of my claim to original educational knowledge is intimately connected, in terms of its explanation, to the immanent dialectic and creating my living educational theory. I want to explain this, because I feel it is crucial if I am to going to make my thesis comprehensible. The quality of the aesthetic, both for me and the Ancient Mariner, is such that insights are gained again and again through an awakening of a facility within us that makes us more able to act in the world. Through the aesthetic we perceive anew the purposes of our lives in such a way that we are both motivated to be life-affirming in our actions, rather than destructive. Aesthetic experience doesn't simply motivate us blindly, but leads us to understand how we might better access our own sense of what matters in the world and to see how we might put this new understanding into action. The effects of our actions we can only judge over time as we try to live our values more fully in our daily lives as a result of our aesthetic insights. What links our aesthetic experiences with our living educational theory is the immanent dialectic which enables us to understand over time the significance of our emergent values.

In addition, the creation of my own living educational theory is developing from my growing understanding of the authority of my own experience (Russell, 1993), and the authority of my emerging knowledge (see my Epilogue to Part Two) which is based on personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1958) as I try to improve the quality of learning. My living educational theory looks, feels and gives voice to different forms of representation and knowledge in its creation than anyone else's living educational theory. At least I believe that to be the case. For example, my living educational theory attempts to describe and explain in part my commitment to an aesthetic balance for example, that Evans (1995) does not share in her doctoral thesis. However, like me, she can say:

‘I draw my explanations - my theories - of my practice not from propositional knowledge directly - from the writings of others, but from my actual experiences in my [practical] role?’ (p. 232)

She is creating her living educational theory from the narrative of her own development as a Deputy Head in charge of Staff Development in a comprehensive school using story with colleagues to help them share difficult value-issues as they try to improve the quality of learning. Her educational knowledge is drawn from her teacher-research into the dialectical relationship between her own emerging ‘I’ and the contexts in which she works.

My living educational theory creates a new form of educational research account: Whitehead's (1989b) tenet about individuals creating their own educational theory through descriptions and explanations of their own practice as they ask the question, ‘How can I improve my practice?’ seems to me to have been a creative response to what Lincoln (1993) described as the crisis created through the lack of consensus as to what constituted valid educational research. As she states:

‘With this crisis comes a proliferation of new forms.’ (p.2)

I believe that I have created a new form of representation (Eisner, 1993) in this thesis in the creation of my own living educational theory. As an individually-oriented action researcher I have taken the decision to be responsible for the creation of my own educational knowledge. I have done this through a description and explanation of my own educational development which does not directly look like yours, or like anyone else's. It is metaphorically like the Ancient Mariner's, however, which is why I have chosen to represent my resubmission in this form. 'The Ancient Mariner' enables me to access those aspects of myself which understand the significance of the links I can make between my ethics, ontology and emergent knowledge, and then hints at how I might articulate them into an aesthetic form whose meanings are worthy of serious consideration (Foshay, 1995).

In preparation for the article which constitutes Part Four of this thesis, I wrote the first part through the action research cycle itself. It was a helpful and authentic way for me to be writing that particular description and explanation of my own practice. It assisted me in the construction of the article, up to the end of my work depicting the Year Nine group, and also, I hoped, in communicating the nature of the process to the reader. For the second part of my article, whose full exposition is The General Prologue, I needed to break away from that form. I could no longer authentically represent my knowledge in the creation of my own living educational theory, through that standard form. Without in any way denying the value which the action enquiry cycle form has had in assisting in my own educational development, I felt that a break was crucial here. I had something new to say which I could not contain within that form. I recognise, however, that the form of enquiry is still immanent within the descriptions and explanations I offer in that account. For example:

I must recognise the power of the destructiveness represented by Zoë, Chloë and Lisa's actions and find a way to turn their perspectives to a more educational route (my concern)...I believe the way forward here is to do with a loving integrity on my part in which I genuinely value each one of them (my imagined solution).' (p.23)

The break from the form of Whitehead's (1985) cycle, however, enabled me to bridge the gap between my creativity and the truth of my account in a way which strikes me now as authentic. The General Prologue represents my favourite part of this thesis. In fact it is my favourite piece of educational research writing. I am really proud of having written it because I perceive that truly to represent an individual speaking in her own voice about issues which concern her, is one of the main criteria by which I judge my own educational research. In addition, I believe that in The General Prologue, in MacDonald and Walker's words: 'content and intent emerge in form.'

I also perceive this break from the action enquiry form as significant as a representation of my taking of power in the creation of my own knowledge. By appropriating my own form of representation I am also creating, in Eisner's (1993) terms, my own meanings. I am not yet sure where this new form is taking me, but I shall write about the possibilities in more detail in the final section of this thesis.

My living educational theory is dialectical

In 1982, Whitehead wrote:

‘Ilyenkov failed to write a dialectical logic which transcended the limitation of the propositional form of his presentation because he did not show his own life in action as he struggled in a dialectical way to resolve the living contradiction which he experienced himself to be.’ (p.108)

And this is precisely what I believe I have done in this thesis. I have transcended the limitation of the propositional form by describing and explaining my own educational development as I have struggled to resolve the living contradictions - aesthetic imbalances - which I perceive inside myself. My resultant educational knowledge arises from those different dialectical relationships which I have discussed throughout the thesis, all in various states of tension and need for resolution, (as I explained in particular in the previous section on the immanent dialectic). Similarly, my educational knowledge is not really communicable in a form like ‘Returning’, for example, because improvement of something in the world is not in an immanently dialectical relationship within the form of representation. My educational knowledge is only communicable in a form which seeks to explain the need to encourage learners - I, and my pupils and students in my case - to ask questions. I ask questions. The pupils and students ask questions out of the contexts which are emerging. Through this dialectic, my educational knowledge emerges.

The ‘I’ in an individually-oriented research question, as in ‘How can I improve the quality of learning?’, is not in a theoretical relationship to the creation of my educational knowledge, but its pivotal point of reference and development as I take the appropriate responsibility for improving the quality of learning. The girls in my class are real people, with their own centres of consciousness and I aspire to develop with them a quality of relationship which Buber (1923) would call an I-You relationship. I believe that it is partly in my ability to relate to them as unique centres of consciousness that indicates the extent to which the dialectic between the ‘I’ of the action research question and the context in which the research is being carried out in a bid to improve the quality of learning, can be deemed to be educational.

I believe that the quality of my educative relationships is enhanced through my ability to research them. Within the dialectic between myself, the people I work with and the contexts within which I work, I come to know better how to improve the quality of learning. What I come to know (represented here as my thesis) is a direct result of my attempts to improve the quality of learning by enhancing my understanding of the aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships. In Dewey’s (1916) terms I have learned to be:

‘adequately moved by [my] own ideas and intelligence.’ (p.16)

In addition I have also learned to be adequately moved by the girls’ ideas and

intelligence. As well as their uniqueness as human beings. And this is the crucial step for me. Let me explain. I perceive 'adequately' here to suggest that if I am to take the responsibility for my own ideas and intelligence, then I have to act on what I understand. This then suggests forcefully for me that I should regard others with the same respect that I am showing myself. I am respecting myself by the belief I have in my own right and capacity to generate my own living educational theory as I account to you for my own educational development. I am still learning what it means to respect my pupils in the name of education.

Like the Mariner, the recognition of the value of others is not a finite revelation but is an immanent way of becoming in the world and being in relationship with it. When he recognises the beauty of the water snakes, he is on a pathway which leads to his actions becoming more and more fused with his ontological and ethical knowledge. When he killed the albatross, he was disconnected from the relationship between responsibility and the world. At the end of the poem his knowledge of the world is indistinguishable from his actions within it:

'He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small.'

This is not simply a description of the meaningfulness of life, it is now his own moral imperative. It is not simply that someone who loves everyone is engaging in the best form of life, but that he must now do that if he is to be true to his understanding. His telling of his tale, as I have mentioned before is an act of love in the world as well as his description of his love. I wish my own living educational theory, as represented within this thesis, not only to be a description and explanation of my own educational knowledge but the act of its creation as well. I wish it, just like the Mariner's tale, to be my own act of love. I will discuss this at greater length towards the end of this section.

Recognising his relationship to others enables the Mariner to develop through a dialectic between himself and the rest of the world which is characterised by responsibility. Being a teacher-researcher in the individually-oriented action research paradigm means for me to take responsibility for the dialectical nature of my own knowing, as I try to improve the quality of learning. It also means for me that I must find ways for girls like Zoë and Rebecca in Year Seven, or Claire, Laura and Sarah in Year Ten to understand how and when they can take responsibility for their own learning in a bid to improve it. Achieving this level of dialectical integrity is the focus of much of my research.

My living educational theory is concerned with balancing appropriate issues to do with power and knowledge in my educative relationships:

In the chapter on teachers generating their own knowledge which I cited from before in this section, Somekh (1993) does not seem to take seriously the dialectic she voices in her chapter because she does not seem to be personally implicated within her form of representation. She is not explaining her own parameters. She is didactic in the sense that she seems to be telling without showing. I want to be able to tell what I know (not in a

way to suggest a stasis), but also to show within clear parameters of the dialectical nature of my own claim to know my own educational development, what it means to try to improve the quality of learning.

Part of what constitutes for me improving learning is exploring the layers of power in my practice and in the creation of my own educational knowledge. In other words, I seek through my research to disavow an inappropriate power within my educative relationships. I would perceive an appropriate power in my educative relationships to concentrate on how I can help all the learners, including myself, to accept an appropriate share of responsibility for our own learning about something of value, and to understand what it means to do so. An inappropriate use of power was evidenced by my over-emphasis on one pupil, Rebecca, at the expense of another (Zoë).

I believe that my power as an educator manifests itself in different ways, depending on the circumstances. I would like to describe how my relationship to power within my educative relationships manifests itself. In describing these instances I am not necessarily suggesting that I wish to remove some of them entirely, as if they have no value. What is important is that I understand how to move appropriately between the different manifestations of my own power in order to improve the quality of learning. I am still very much learning how to do this.

One of the manifestations of power is as the didactic teacher. I go into the classroom with the knowledge: 'We are going to read 'The Ancient Mariner' because it is good for us.' This is indeed how I started with my Year Seven group in the Autumn term, 1995. I make a decision based on the authority of my experience (Russell, 1993) and my own emerging knowledge (Laidlaw, 1996) and as someone paid to teach English under The National Curriculum, that we would read and study 'The Ancient Mariner' because it is 'a great work of art'. And great works of Art are good for us! Apart from its stipulation within The National Curriculum I hold the view that 'The Ancient Mariner' is good for us because I believe that it can help us to understand ourselves and our position in the world better as we engage with poetic forms of meaning that are worthwhile in themselves. I agree with the SCAA document (1996) which says:

'The arts and humanities explore the human spirit, including the dark side of nature. The arts can contribute to forming individual and collective values by providing heroes, heroines, villains and cautionary tales, as well as complex situations which challenge our moral judgement.' (p.14)

So, when I make my choice of literature, I am appropriating a high level of power in terms of what is going to happen in the classroom and why. However, I believe that the authority of my own experience (Russell, 1993) justifies my use of power in this way.

Another way I respond to power as an educator within my educative relationships can be seen when I listen and take into consideration the voices of my pupils and others, but ultimately I still say what is true or false. Last November, Julia and I had a conversation about the poem:

Julia: I don't understand that Life-in-Death bit.

Moira: What do you mean?

Julia: Who is she?

Moira: She travels around with Death.

Julia: So..Oh, I don't understand.

Moira: She's his mate. His wife, if you like.

Julia: And what does she do?

Moira: She plays games of dice with Death to see who wins whose lives. Life in Death, you see. The Mariner is alive but amongst all the dead other mariners. In your story now, I think you have to describe that so that your reader can understand it. Do you see?

Julia: Yes, I think so. Shall I show it to you when I've written it down?

Moira: Of course, love!

I take responsibility here for the knowledge which is emerging as a direct response to Julia. I am the teacher and she has a legitimate question which I have an obligation to answer.

Another illustration of the way in which I recognise the way power operates within my educative relationships, is the point at which I help the pupils to voice their right, as I perceive it, not only to differ from my point of view, but to explore it and to learn what it means to take responsibility for their own point of view. When Esther wrote in her diary to me in December:

'I want to be able to play the Mariner part sometimes, i know I get to play parts in the drama but I want to play the mariner. Do you think it might happen next week?'

And my reply:

'Come and talk to me about it, Esther. I'm not sure that it is really a good idea at this stage to have class-performances when people are getting ready for their presentations at the end of term. Come and see me on Thursday.'

Esther then wrote back after our talk on the Thursday:

'I don't really want to do the mariner agan now becaus I need to work on the play with Poppy and shes worrid if we dont get enough time to practise.'

It seems to me here that I am open to Esther's concern as an individual, but that I am also stressing the importance of bearing others in mind and the plans we have made about what we are going to do at the end of term. I stress here the curricular whilst still taking her seriously. Her mentioning of Poppy's needs here seems to me to represent a widening of Esther's perceptions about what is and what is not appropriate at this stage in her learning about 'The Ancient Mariner'. My entry suggested that I was not going to allow

her to take over in an inappropriate way.

Another manifestation of the power I hold in my educative relationships with learners, sees me becoming more of a learner myself and asking the children to help me to learn how I can teach them better. I throw open process as well as knowledge for legitimate criticism. In this scenario we work through issues to do with the Mariner poem which comprise their responses to the poem and to the values underpinning it. Early in our Ancient Mariner project we had the following conversation:

Moira: How are we going to do this then? If we've got Jo as the Mariner in the drama, how can she do the narration?

Emily: I could do it.

Rosemary: But you're supposed to be helping us...

Vikki: Perhaps Jo could write the script, the things she wants to say about what it's like being the mariner and everything, you know, and then someone else could read it, like a voice-over. I saw...

Jo: I'm not sure I want to do the part anymore.

Moira: The script or the main part, Jo?

Jo: Either really.

Laura: But you're really good and we all voted you for it, so you have to do it now.

(Chorus of assent)

Jo: O.K., I'll do the main part. Do you think Kelly could do the voice-over?

Kelly: Yeah, O.K.. What do I have to do?

In the above extract I do not intervene in the same way at all that I did with Esther before. This is because I believe that enabling the girls to negotiate the processes they are working with, will help to improve their curricular and moral learning. The learning needs of the children truly began to shape the classroom processes in such a way that the educational knowledge which emerged was recognisable to many members of the class. When Zoë started to talk to me about Bosnia and Northern Ireland (see the end of The General Prologue) she reflected back to me that she had engaged with some of the issues which came out of the classroom through the year in a way which appeared to be significant to her and in ways which I also believe are of value in her curricular and moral learning.

Of course, as you have seen, I do not always exercise my power appropriately in my educative relationships and I want my living educational theory, in its present form, to reflect this. This is why, for example, I have gone into great length about my educative relationship with Zoë and others in this thesis (particularly in the Epilogues). I am still learning how to exercise my power appropriately within my educative relationships.

With the Year Seven class and the year Nine from the previous year, I have begun to open the learning process more through the evolving of developmental standards of judgement in the work we did together as they presented their understandings in their own forms and then evaluated the outcomes. However, I have not yet reached where I want to be, because in the knowledge which I am developing through such experiences

(as represented in this thesis) I have not yet learnt how to represent this process with the learners themselves. I feel that this is the next step. Our representation of the processes and our understandings about them, exist at the present time only in fragmented class-journal form. I believe, but I may be mistaken, that I could help to improve the quality of learning about something worthwhile through a greater degree of negotiation about what it is I write about in my educational research. My concern is to turn my educational research into a more authentic form - perhaps our educational research. This of course, would depend on the pupils' full willingness to be co-participants in such an endeavour. (Please see the final section of the thesis for more comments on my intentions.)

Creating my own living educational theory is an act of love and personal responsibility:
'He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small...'

In 1808, the Romantic essayist, William Hazlitt, wrote:

'The love of power is the love of self. The love of liberty is the love of others.' (p.34)

Throughout my educational research I have sought ways of diminishing the love of power in my practice and releasing the power of love for, as Peck (1990) writes:

'If I truly love another, I will obviously order my behaviour in such a way as to contribute the utmost to his or her...growth.'

(p. 167)

Resubmitting this thesis has been an enormous task. At times it has been a burden. Often I have wanted to give up. Teaching much of the week does not sit comfortably with the rigour needed to submit a text of this complexity. I enjoy writing papers (Laidlaw, 1996, for example) and most especially, The General Prologue, but I find the exacting nature of resubmitting a thesis draining and enervating. Why bother, then?

I bother because I care passionately about education as I said in The General Prologue, and I care passionately about education because I want to make the world a better place! I cannot do it alone, of course, and I have chosen education because it is a structured medium through which, in negotiation with others, I believe I can do the most good in this world. As I have said elsewhere in this thesis, particularly in the Epilogue to Part Two, I take with Sockett (1989):

'education to be a moral business. [Teachers'] acts and actions in classrooms and the implemented policies of an educational institution or a system are at least open to judgement on moral criteria...' (p.33)

He goes on to say:

‘If...we are committed to moral purposes in education and if we expect our actions to be judged by professional standards (themselves moral), then we need to continue to build up an account of our moral base. On this account it would be primarily moral.’ (p.38/39)

Elliott (1989) commenting on Sockett’s article above, says about the moral values Sockett alludes to:

‘such values characterise a desirable relationship between teachers and learners, within the activity of learning itself.’ (p.92)

This thesis is my attempt to build up an account of my own moral base in the name of education through a description and explanation of my own educational development. This is partly characterised by the evolving of what I perceive as desirable educative relationships between myself and other learners in order to improve the quality of learning. I have done this mostly through the development of an aesthetic morphology of my educative relationships and from the evolving of developmental standards of judgement, particularly the aesthetic, in evaluating the educational value of the processes themselves and my research writing. It is from the moral base of my educational research that I am moved to produce this account of my own educational development.

Although I do not attribute a causal reality to the processes of my life, I believe that my former experiences have taught me a great deal about why I should bother. Not bothering seems to me to create only unhappiness, to perpetuate despair and meaninglessness and emptiness. Like the Ancient Mariner, like countless millions of other people, I have learnt the hard way. So now I want to do something worthwhile with that learning. I have learnt that however arduous it is, I must believe in the meaningfulness of my life and the lives of all other people. Not to do so is to give in to that unhappiness, despair, meaninglessness and emptiness. Discovering how to improve my practice through action research has turned my sense of vocation into something I can develop and grow with as I try to improve the quality of learning with students and pupils. In my own educational development I have sought a generative balance between my own human needs as an individual wishing to take responsibility for her own life and the needs of others in my care, as I have tried - with them - to improve the quality of learning for all of us.

But why don’t I simply continue with my classroom research in a more informal way and save myself the trouble of public accountability on this scale? Well, given what my life-experiences and educational research have taught me, if I did that I would feel I was ignoring something I hear echoing throughout my teacher-research. It is still difficult for me to articulate what I have learnt in my research, but the echoes are something to do with love and something to do with responsibility. I feel now that if I understand something about my educational practice, then I need to follow it through as far as I can because I may learn something of value which can help me to improve the quality of learning with my pupils in the classroom. Improving the quality of learning seems to me

like a responsibility which I can only fulfil through love. I have learnt that there are links to be made in my educational knowledge between love and responsibility. Creating my own living educational theory is, I believe, a responsible way to channel the love which motivates me - and which I hope shines throughout the thesis - into improving what I do in the classroom for the possible benefit of all of us in the learning process.

Peck (1983), puts this sense of responsibility as a result of one's own insights in this way:

‘simply because I know [what my responsibility meant] I have grown strong enough to do the learning and attempt the work. And it is our task to work the fields that we know.’ (p.76)

This strongly echoes Paskow (1988) whom I quoted and discussed in Part Three of the thesis:

‘The world is goal-directed; each of the creatures of this world...is not only complex matter responding solely to mechanical forces; each is also being attracted by something that lures it to its own self-development...Our task as humans is to abet this ontological principle.’ (p. 153)

The field I have chosen to know is education and Action Research has enabled me to channel what it is that lures me to my own self-development within it. Creating my own living educational theory is, it seems to me, a completely rational response to my own sense of making meaning and purpose in my life as I try to improve what I am doing in the name of education. It enables me to engage in dialogues with others which increase my understanding of my subject, education, in such a way that can help me to improve my practice. Popper (1963) writes about engaging with others in rational processes thus:

‘Rational criticism may develop [from the opinions of others] and standards of rationality...And this criticism may in time develop into systematic attempts to discover what is weak and untrue in other people's theories and beliefs and also in one's own.’ (p.384)

For me part of the rational process has been learning to listen to the echoes I alluded to earlier. These resonate somewhere within and seem to reconcile the dialectic between responsibility and love so that I experience what it is for me to be whole. Elliott, (1989), partly in response to Whitehead's (1989) article in the same journal, writes that in engaging in educational research from the position of an individual who experiences herself as a living contradiction:

‘in realising such values the teacher also realises him/herself... Such theorising is the reflexive or dialogical...activity of the teacher who is consciously striving to realise him/herself as an educator in practice by overcoming the experience of negation. Educational theorising for Whitehead, is a form of

reflexive enquiry aimed at realising the 'self in action'. This is why Whitehead argues that an educational theory is the basis of a teacher's claim to know his or her own professional development.'
(p.92)

Although I subscribe to Whitehead's view that creating my own living educational theory can be achieved through, for example, this description and explanation of my own educational development, the description and explanation of the values I come to are my own, not Whitehead's. And although I fully concur with Elliott (1989) writing about Whitehead's work that:

'moral values cannot be understood by simply examining the meanings of the terms we use to express them in language... Moral values are fundamentally defined in and through the actions we undertake to realise them,' (p.93)

the moral values themselves that motivate me are not anyone's but my own. They may be informed by others (and clearly as this thesis shows they are and should be) but, as Kok (1991) comments at the end of her Masters dissertation in relation to her action research conducted in the School of Education:

'The values I bring back - [are] not your values, but the values I have come to on my own.' (p.121)

My moral values are concerned with appropriating responsibility wisely and with love in the name of education (as I explain in the Epilogues to Parts One and Two). Creating my own living educational theory encourages me to find out what my own values are in order to improve the quality of learning. As I reflect on past actions and look at my present practice, the echoes I hear move me to further action:

'Like a meadow-gale of spring -
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming...
Swiftly swiftly flew the ship.'

I am motivated to take responsibility for my actions in the name of education through accounting to you for my own educational development as the expression of my own living educational theory. If I am to take full responsibility for creating my own living educational theory as an act of love and personal responsibility, then I have to learn to listen to what my research appears to be telling me as I engage with others in the processes of improving learning and becoming accountable for them. I am increasingly learning the value to my own educational development of what it means to become accountable in the name of education (a process which began when I administered the World Congress on Action Research here at the University of Bath (Laidlaw, 1994d)). I still, however, feel that I need to integrate more within my future accounts, the understandings of my pupils and colleagues and other writers in educational research in

order to improve the quality of my own learning and writing about that learning.

Macbeth, in Shakespeare's tragedy, says pessimistically that Life:

'is but a walking shadow. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.'

I disagree fundamentally with this philosophy. Macbeth has the tragic flaw of ambition and realises at the end of the play that all his machinations have gained him nothing. I believe his life means nothing to him because he has made it mean nothing. I don't want the tale of my life to be told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. I want it to reflect my concern to live meaningfully in the name of education, to be a tale which signifies something, not only to me, but to others, as we try to make the world a better place than reflecting the despair of Macbeth's self-fulfilling prophecy. I think he sees nothing in front of him that matters because he has not managed to integrate within his own view of life the necessity of planning for the future in ways which make the present purposeful. He seems to have no coherent view of the past, present and future which excites him. I believe this to be his tragedy. Ultimately, the Mariner and I are luckier than Macbeth. We are capable of evolving a way of living from our experiences which projects meaningfully from the past into the present and through to the future. In order to place this thesis in the context of a purposeful projection into the future, I now want to pass to the final section of this thesis as I outlined at the beginning of this Epilogue:

My educational intentions in the light of my teacher-research

- I would like to write a book about my own approach to the teaching of poetry as a moral endeavour in the light of my teacher-research as represented in 'The General Prologue'. In this text, as well as discussing my approach to 'The Ancient Mariner' I would also want to consider Robert Frost's poem, 'The Road Less Travelled' in the way I taught it with a Year Seven group. I believe this book would be not only a contribution to methodology but also educational knowledge in the sense that it would stem entirely from my own classroom-based practice. I also see it as a rational development of my own living educational theory as represented in this thesis.
- I also wish to collaborate with Jack Whitehead on a book about an epistemology of teacher-education research. I would be collaborating from my point of view as a teacher-researcher in the classroom who is trying to improve the quality of learning with her pupils. The volume would be submitted to the Teachers College Press at Columbia University in America, where some of the instigators of the educational action research movement were active in the forties and fifties. I see the purposes of this book being first to describe and explain the ways in which the educational values of individually-oriented action-researchers based at Bath are emerging in their practice over time as they try to improve the quality of learning. Secondly I see it developing the educational knowledge which is emerging from such reflections. Thirdly I believe the book will further illuminate

the educational significance of the dialectic between educational values and educational development.

- I wish to continue working with the Action Research Masters degree group in the School of Education here at Bath University. In this context I can, with university colleagues and students, continue to develop the knowledge-base of an individually-oriented approach to educational action research as we try to improve the quality of learning.

This thesis has been concerned with explaining how improving the quality of learning in the classroom is linked in my practice with a concern to improve the educative quality of my relationships with students and pupils. I have always been more overtly concerned with individuals than knowledge and yet as you can see my intentions above are almost all concerned with improving the quality of educational knowledge. In addition I have worked tremendously hard on this thesis as my own contribution to educational knowledge, so I do care about it. Like Trapedo-Dworsky & Cole (1996) I believe that the kind of research I have undertaken is academic research and that the knowledge I represent here is academic knowledge. I also believe that submitting this thesis for legitimation within the Academy is important in terms of what can be perceived as educational knowledge. As the writers alluded to above argue cogently:

‘Research that is both personal and practical in its orientation not only endangers the reputation of the academy but also is part of a political agenda to challenge traditional conceptions of what counts as knowledge and research.’ (p.22)

I also identify very strongly with their question at the end of their article:

‘How do we as a community of researchers...create a legitimate space for ourselves and our work within...the broader educational and academic community?’ (p.22)

The Ancient Mariner’s tale is not his alone because others can hear it and learn from it. It explains him to himself but it also communicates to others. It is one of my aims through this thesis to further the legitimation of my own space as an individual asserting her right to make original contributions to educational knowledge. I believe that what I have to say will make some sense to some others and I offer this resubmission to you in that spirit.

Like the Ancient Mariner, I now understand that such an endeavour also enables me to improve the quality of my educative relationships as together we learn something of value.

- September, 1996. And most of all I wish to continue my teacher-research in the classroom as I help the girls to learn more about English. This year I have a Year Seven, a Year Eight and a Year Ten class. I wish to continue to negotiate with them issues to do with power and knowledge as I help them to learn more about English. I hope to do this through action planning (which I wrote about in Part

Four), interactive journals and learning partners as we evolve together developmental educational standards of judgement by which our work can partly be evaluated. I have already started these processes with all my English Groups. Here, for example, is the action plan and letter that I have written in response to my Year Seven girls. I reproduce it here in order to give you a sense of my continuing attempts to live out my educational values more fully in my practice:

Penn House,
Monday, 9.9.96.

Hello again!

Well, you've survived the first week. Was it as difficult as you thought it might be? I really enjoyed meeting you all and starting our work together. I also enjoyed your sense of humour, your eagerness, your smiles and laughter, and your concern to try your best. I am really impressed by your attitude to everything. Well done! I spoke to your tutor, Mr. J., and told him how much I was looking forward to working with you, now that I had met you. He agreed that you've made a terrific start.

How do you think things are going? I hope you feel free to let me know what's happening from your point of view. I meant what I said last week, that you're the expert on how you learn. If you tell me what helps you, then I will be able to teach you better, won't I? If you keep quiet about it, I'll have to guess, and I might guess wrong.

This week I thought we might finish our action plans. I've done one too which is enclosed on the back of this letter. Please keep it in your folder so you can see whether I am doing what I set for myself too! I would also like to carry on with 'The Ancient Mariner'. I thought your reactions last week were exciting. It's my favourite poem and it feels like a privilege to be reading it with such a lively, interesting group. I gather that some of you took the booklet away to read. How did you get on? The language is a bit difficult in places, but the story is weird and wonderful, isn't it? I love the bit when the dead men rise from the deck of the ship and start working the sails even though they're dead. The poor Ancient Mariner doesn't know what's happening to him or why, but he'll find out, and it's rather scary when he does, I can promise you.

I thought that soon, we might do some drama about the Mariner, about what's happening to him on board ship. What do you think? How might we do it? Why don't you spend some time with your learning partner thinking of ideas and then we can discuss it?

Here's to another great week together! Love from Miss L. XXX

- Action Plan with my Year Seven Group

Name: Miss Laidlaw Date: 7/9/96

1) What do I want to improve with the Year Seven Group?

Your understanding and enjoyment of English. Your sense of being welcome here at School. Your ability to ask questions that you care about. Your self-confidence as valued people. Your increasing ability to take responsibility for your own learning. Your ability to take some responsibility for your learning partner's progress.

2) How do I think I might do that?

Keep copies of your regular action plans. Listen carefully to what you have to say. Mark your homework promptly. Prepare carefully. Be prepared to do what I ask you to do when appropriate. Treat each individual fairly. Keep asking your opinions about what is happening. Respond to your learning needs as carefully and kindly as possible. Respond carefully and quickly to your diaries. By trying to see the world from your point of view as well as my own. By taking responsibility for my own learning about how to teach you.

3) Who could help me?

You can. You can tell me how to teach better. You can give me your honest opinions about what is happening in the classroom. You can try hard with the work I set. You can work with your learning partner in order to make the most use of your time in the lessons.

4) How would I know I had improved?

You would tell me in class, and in your diaries. I would see you improving the quality of your understanding and enjoyment about English and an increase in your self-confidence as valued people. I would see you taking more responsibility for your own learning. We would all be enjoying the classes more. I would hear you asking more questions that you care about having answers to. Your written work would become more accurate and careful, and I would see you taking a pride in everything you do. I would see you paying close attention to your own progress on your action plans. I would also see you taking an important interest in how your learning partner is doing too. You would feel relaxed in our English classes and look forward to us all learning together.

-
- I am also for the first time in my life considering becoming a Head of Faculty because I would like to have the opportunity to promote a sense of staff-development through an action research approach to the improvement of learning.

Endpiece:

Now I think it's about time I gave the Ancient Mariner a rest, don't you? Brought out of retirement to tell his tale yet again he is weary and in need of peace and quiet. So am I, but the writing of this thesis has been more than worthwhile for me. It has given me enormous insights into the person I am and who I want to be, and also what I want to do in the name of education. Writing this thesis has, as I wrote in my Masters dissertation, 'marked a significant stage in my own educational development'. I am pleased with what I have written because it denotes the conscious beginnings of the rest of my life in education, trying to improve the quality of learning, enjoying the processes and delighting in the human warmth and meanings that evolve out of such relationships:

'Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?'