

JANE SPEEDY AND JONATHAN WYATT

20. EPILOGUE

April 2014

Jane: You are not going to be up for this, I suspect/speculate but I think our epilogue should take the form of a dialogue that brings us, and therefore the book, right up to the ‘now.’ Here’s my opening gambit ... see where it takes us? Jxx:

Is this where this book is neatly summed up, tied up in a bow with red ribbons like a barrister’s brief and sent out into the world ... or is it where everything that has gone before slowly unravels ... and all the securely hedged and bordered categories that have been set up over the last eighty thousand or so words gradually crumble into each other? It has all seemed like a coherent argument and the three sections at least—visual, written, and collaborative forms of inquiry—seem reasonably distinct and do not arbitrarily set up divisions. Why do I distrust coherence so much and why do distinct disciplines make me behave in such ill-disciplined ways, if only in my mind’s eyes? Perhaps speaking a little about the title of the book, and the arguments that we have all had about it, are the best way I have of answering my own last-minute misgivings with this project. You see, we started this book some years ago now and our thinking about much of what it contains over the decade that we have been collecting the contributions has changed/expanded over time. Yes, perhaps that is what I should be teasing out here, our relationship and thinking with theory over various kinds of time with the titles (of the book and its sections). What do you think?

Jonathan: ‘Course I’m up for it—back soon xxxx

A day or so later:

Ditto. Let’s not aspire to coherence. Coherence is over-rated, like stability. As if we can say that there is such a single thing as ‘creative practitioner inquiry,’ or that the visual, the written and the collaborative are somehow distinct. Let’s not present this disparate, messy collection of disparate, messy texts as some kind of ‘how-to,’ A-Z textbook that purports to offer clear lines of direction and advice, as one of those academic books that so dulls the senses.

Let’s also not make this dialogue between us now, in late March and early April 2014, sound like the kind of contrived device that everyone can see through, you know what I mean, those ones that seem to pop up in ‘creative’ scholarly texts too regularly.

Let’s start with where you suggest, with theory and time and the titles; so that we might “pause, look again, and see [the book anew]” as Mark Freeman (2009, p. 15) might have it.

Also, something I'm thinking of: You've lived with this book for a long time. I remember your talking about it way back—in 2005 perhaps?—and I was going to be a possible contributor at that point. But only now, as we have been getting the chapters into shape for the publishers, have I found myself immersed in its totality. For me it is a new project.

Jane: Yes in a sense this book carries with it a sort of nostalgic vapour trail of history/memory/experience. Its publication, for me, brings with it a celebration of our research centre and all the times we have spent together (not just you and me—all of us), the projects we have undertaken, and above all, despite the sneers of the established academy, the conviction that our shared endeavours as practitioner-researchers were a worthwhile, or even an important, use of our lives. Indeed, I have had the time of my life.

This book, unlike its companion (Speedy & Wyatt, 2014), really deserves the definition 'edited,' which implies not only that there has been careful selection into this volume, but that other contributions have been skilfully selected out. This text has been constructed over about a decade of engaging with this work, a process that was probably just starting when you arrived in Bristol in 2004 and so there is an underlying history of 'what ifs' and 'might have beens' that you have not been party to joining the editorial team in 2013.

I feel quite differently about this book now that I am editing it with you; not less responsible exactly, more that the project has shifted shape in some way from a burden that I have been left with to a legacy that we are engaging with and shaping together. It felt somehow stilted or skewed towards other ways of working for me to edit this text on my own and not at all a reflection of the collaborative sense of scholarship that we have all constructed together, whereas collecting the contributions from people along the way was a task that fell quite naturally in my remit as coordinator of the Narrative Inquiry Centre (NIC).

Now that all the separately constructed contributions have been gathered in one place (our Dropbox folder) we are engaged with phase two of this editing process, bringing all the disparate pieces together into a whole, without stewing out their individual flavours and making an all-purpose soup. I have used a cooking analogy there but it seems more like weaving to me, a loose weaving with differently coloured and textured yarns, definitely not a felting process.

There is another factor that has also not been mentioned about this writing we are building between us, and that is your move from Oxford to Edinburgh, which makes a difference to the you I look to as I am writing this. The front of my house faces directly north-east, and before, when I was writing to you, I was able to look up across the park and imagine you there, sitting in a café in Oxford, probably one you have taken me to for a coffee before. This writing, like all writing, is situated. I am writing in my house, sitting in a wheelchair at a table in the backroom, but it was a nicer day when I wrote the first part and I was sat in a solid metal chair, at a table on the deck outside in the sunshine. Now when I see the Jonathan I am writing to, you are somewhere much further north, with much more space and noise between us. I don't know where to look out towards you, other than vaguely

northwards, and I don't know the layout of Edinburgh so well as I know Oxford, where I once lived. In my mind's eye, you are writing somewhere 'up there' towards the end of the landmass, in a part of the United Kingdom that might yet break away from this part, come the referendum this September: a referendum that you will have a vote in and I will not.

I don't know your Edinburgh writing habits, I realise. How many Edinburgh coffees do you drink per day, for instance? Do you write in café or at home in your new flat (which I have seen pictures of) or at your workplace (which I have been to, but not when you worked there)? Writing to this free-floating Jonathan has a different quality to it. There is a misty lack of substance to you. The Jonathan I am writing to is not as visible, not as embedded in familiar spaces. All sorts has shifted, alongside your location, and I am less sure of this process, less open and trusting than once I was. Less confident, perhaps, than my former able-bodied self? Hence my initial tentative e-mail saying: 'you are not going to be up for this, I suspect/speculate/but I think our epilogue should take the form of a dialogue that brings us, and therefore the book, right up to the 'now,' Here's my opening gambit ...' and my delight at your almost immediate reply 'Course I'm up for it. Back soon xxxxx.'

Jonathan: The experience of me that you describe—"free-floating" with a "misty lack of substance"—seems apt today. I don't know where most of me is. Apparently, I'm on the train back north to Edinburgh (home, but not home), having spent a scattered few days in the south east of England. There's a drop of me in Godalming, where I was with my mother and siblings at the weekend, and a dollop in Abingdon and Oxford, where I spent a couple of nights, and now I'm here. While I've been away—Tess is in London looking after our three-year-old niece—we've had some work done on the flat (which is messier and less shiny than the pictures you've seen). I can't quite picture what I'll be going back to. I walked around Abingdon and Oxford feeling at ease but disconnected. Free-floating.

Tomorrow I shall walk up the hill from Dundas St, up past the Mound, over the Royal Mile, and five minutes further to Teviot Place; beyond it, The Meadows. It's my new scholarly home and in many ways what I feel I'm doing is continuing your work: keeping the NIC flag, with a Scottish lilt to it, flying. It's early days, but I'm hopeful.

A short walk from there, and a short walk from home, are, respectively, perfect cafés to write in while I drink my two coffees a day.

I remember the occasional mentions and rumours of this book way back then. I had only a partial sense of it. It seemed to be around and then disappear and then come back into view; and I wondered if it was one of those projects that had to be put to one side while other imperatives had to take priority. But I didn't think about it much—just occasional questions, "I wonder what's happening to that book," to myself rather than to you or others. I didn't know that there were people discussing the merits of one or another term to use in the title. When it became something real and possible, in the form of the proposal, I think it already had the title 'creative practitioner inquiry, etc.'

For me, it's the politics of 'creative practitioner inquiry' that matters: how we are putting those three words together—claiming the ground for 'creative' alongside 'inquiry,' and 'practitioner' alongside 'inquiry.' Inquiry can—has to—be creative; and it is—or can be—territory that practitioners (whoever we are and whatever we might mean by that) inhabit.

Jane: The politics of 'creative practitioner inquiry.' All inquiry, you say, is creative, Hmm, inquiry—according to OED online to inquire is to 'search for truth, information or knowledge.' Within the academy I believe it has an additional veneer as an alternative to 'research.' Some people use inquiry and research as synonyms, but for me there is a difference in that 'research' is the word taken up by scientism as both noun and verb; for myself, 'to inquire into' is to search without reaching conclusion, to inquire into the expected, to expect the unexpected and even to reinvent the world we are inquiring into—that for me is the politics of 'inquiry' as opposed to 'research,' which speaks of a scientism that finds answers rather than more questions and of the institutionalised, formalised ways of investigating, for which there are templates and rules to follow. Inquiring scholars may follow rules, but are less hidebound, less systematised, and more likely to follow unlikely trails.

Is all inquiry creative? I suppose it is, although not always artful. To inquire requires creative, imaginative and innovative ways of thinking and doing to be devised. As to the relationship between this (always already) creative inquiry and practitioners, that is trickier and more contested territory. Traditionally, in human services such as health, welfare and education, there has been a much-heralded divide between 'practice' and 'research' and, therefore, a parallel divide between practitioners (located in the field) and researchers (located in the academy). Recent shifts in thinking about the nature, efficacy or even possibility of objectivity in social (and other) sciences have led to serious questions being asked about the hallowed 'god trick' position of the outsider/scholar in research projects (Haraway, 1988, p. 581). This has all led to greater valuing of insider/scholar positions and insider/service user knowledge and to recognition of the situatedness, contingency and partiality of all inquiries. Thus 'creative practitioner inquiry' is a highly political title, suggesting, as it does, that scholars who have not spent their whole lives inside universities, might have something particular and unique to add to the ways we investigate our worlds and might even, inquire into, discern and disseminate this knowledge differently. Is this akin to your thoughts? Jxx

Jonathan: I stopped being a counsellor in 2012, back in Abingdon, ground down by the NHS. I paused rather than stopped, as it turns out, because in the first few months of being in Edinburgh I've resumed practice again, volunteering at the Hope Park Centre, the counselling service that our department runs. I see two clients a week on Friday mornings. I'm a practitioner again, a practitioner inquirer. I'm inquiring as I practice, when I'm in the room with a client, and not only when I'm here, in a different café ('Coffee Angel'), writing. The client and I are

inquiring together, in the sense that you describe inquiry. Neither of us knows where it's going to lead.

When I'm with students and colleagues and we're talking about research, the kind of critical, radical, embodied research you refer to, I have often found myself saying how I prefer the term 'inquiry' to 'research,' because research, I say, carries with it so much baggage about what it should look like. Inquiry, on the other hand, is more open, less weighed down by establishment expectation. I can see people breathe easier when we talk like this. Like there's room created by this re-framing.

There are 'Professional Doctorate' programmes here, where counselling 'practitioners' build up their practice hours alongside continuing counselling 'training' and, in the final stage, work on a research (*sic*) dissertation. These students, practitioner inquirers, are deemed by the institution to be 'Taught' rather than 'Research' students, which carries with it both intimations of status as well as less access to funding.

There's a politics here, as you say.

This is why this book feels so important. It asserts a place for practice-and-inquiry, proposing that these two can, are, should be seen as, intertwined; and a place for creativity/creation-and-practice-and-inquiry that radically challenges established, sedimented assumptions.

Somewhere in the title we could have had 'collaborative.' There is a feel throughout the contributions in the book, and not just in the section on collaboration, of inquiry as collaborative (always, as you've written about—Speedy, 2012). Not just as collaborative with the human, but also with the material and the more-than-human.

There was a bit of a pause here in our writing and a piece of writing that got stuck at Jane's end and not sent, about getting up our own arses and not knowing how to get back again, about the contradictory relationship between collaborations and accessibilities. The Daily Mirror has a reading age of eight. This text is 13+.

Jane: Now you are touching on the way our 'thinking with theory' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012) has evolved over time and over the time of making this book in our group. I disagree, I'm unsure that there's a feeling 'throughout' this book that is collaborative with the material and more-than-human. We did not all start out ten years ago thinking with post-human theories. Donna Haraway (2003) was informing my work way before this book was a twinkle in our eyes, but most of Barad's (2007) work on the agency of the material world, which informs us now, was not even published when we started this. Your writing with Ken (2009) was informed by Deleuze and Guattari of course, but the sort of collaborative text this centre produces now, like *Inquiring into Red/Red Inquiry* (Gale et al., 2014) for instance, does not appear in this book. This text moves in and out of Foucauldian situated, partial knowledges (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2012), but it is still the humans that are situated, not the landscapes and other environments they inhabit, and takes up embodied positions or "an embodied aesthetic" as Sameshima (2007, p. 562) would describe it. Yet it does not move very much into a post-human-

centred position. I think you are letting the present Kodochrome seep into and colour the sepia prints of the past!! Can residual traces, spectral traces, even, of not-yet-quite-imagined futures, seep into and colour our pasts?

Jane: Reading this, I am reading my way back to the future as I read extracts from the twenty-ninth century field blog written by Gregorius Corbilsohn in chapter one. Corbilsohn, originally an archaeologist and anthropologist, was author of “Foresight” (2962) the companion volume and (eight centuries later) update to Mark Freeman’s (2009) ‘Hindsight.’ Corbilsohn’s text focuses on events in the stories of predicted futures as a moral barometer and pointer to life’s promises.

Corbilsohn posits the present openings to (im)possible futures as the crevices through which we and our lives slip back and forth towards a greater sense of ‘thisness’ or haecceity.

Our two chapters, chapter one and this epilogue, both use thinking with and between theories and dimensions of time, space, place and materiality, from different worlds and time zones. The future of our research centre, in 2014, was already colouring and shaping its development in 2004, when we started to write this book (although, of course, we did not start it where it begins but somewhere nearer the middle with the dancing Dzo). Such foresight, with hindsight, would have been very useful at the time, don’t you think?

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EPILOGUE

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