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## Self Portrait – An Account of the Artist as Educator

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### Abstract

This paper is concerned primarily with the issue of the relationship between personal and professional identity with reference to the role of artist and that of teacher. In particular, the development of artistic identity and how it might inform professional identity and pedagogy is examined. This issue is considered through a self-portrait – an autobiographical, largely episodic, account of the author's formative years. Some consideration is given to exploring the value of self-portraiture (and similar approaches) as a method for eliciting data about identity, including social identity. An area identified as an issue for future research in education was the relationship between social class, art, and identity.

## **Introduction**

This paper is based on personal reflections on events in my educational and artistic life that might have contributed to my sense of identity as an educator. Whether it is labeled as 'neo-narrative' (see Stewart, 2008), (self-) portraiture (see Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 2002) or autoethnography (see Jones, 2005), the account given here is presented in good faith as an attempt to elucidate issues surrounding professional identity and the part played by creative practice when that practice informs pedagogy. As a 'self-portrait', it presents a qualitative, descriptive account made of recollected vignettes and anecdotes. While there is some degree of analysis, I am primarily sharing material with readers, who will bring their own interpretations and responses. I would hope that some of the descriptions would also resonate with readers and act as a catalyst for them to reflect on their own backgrounds and influences. In this way I am acknowledging the importance of reader response to make meanings from the text; the text does not stand alone, it is the meeting point between the author and the reader, both of whom bring many perspectives and create multiple interpretations. The personal, anecdotal narrative helps facilitate this and I anticipate that it would also help to engage the reader.

Professional identity amongst art educators has been an issue in the literature for some time (see for example Huddleston, 1981) and is revisited periodically with exhortations such as "more research is needed regarding the professional daily life and identity of art educators" (Milbrandt, 2008, p. 355). How such research is undertaken is of interest here; Alexenberg (2008) for example employs an autoethnographic approach in examining "episodes in the life of an artist/researcher/teacher that have special significance for art education" (p. 231), identifying a number of 'interweaving realms' of learning (amongst these are 'awesome immersion', 'playful exploration and 'interdisciplinary imagination'). The appropriateness of autoethnography as a research tool is discussed later in this paper.

I have, perhaps unknowingly, made it my life's work to challenge assumptions, including my own; I now find myself needing to review even more fully the ideas, notions and assumptions that I bring with me to inform both my role as an educator and my identity as an artist. Whereas in the past, with the certainty of well-informed ignorance, I could say 'I am neither an artist nor an educator - I am an art educator'; this identity was in part due to my recognising that art education has a mini-epistemological status, with its own scholarly journals, conferences and professional associations, but I was influenced by my then supervisor, the late Professor Allison who made it his business to propagate that view, eloquently summarised by Victor Lanier decades earlier (Lanier, 1959; Allison, 1997). I feel now a kind of muddled tension between the two identities. This tension can be seen to be useful in the sense that it generates creative solutions to conflicting viewpoints, but there is a limit to this.

In the present case, I attempt to unravel what Miller (2008) has termed the 'double helix' of professional and personal histories and identify incidents in my own history which might illustrate how one informs the other:

The double helix is useful to characterize the way in which the personal and professional components of my life overlap, mutually influence, mutually inform and are inextricably tied. (p. 348)

However, Miller focused on issues associated with race; race in general, was not something that I considered to be a particularly significant factor in my identity, but I have gained a developing awareness of the importance of class (and academic background) in the 'helices'.

As a so-called 'gatekeeper to the profession', I frequently interview prospective teacher-trainees who say 'I always wanted to be a teacher'. I am not one of those. In fact I have never wanted to be a teacher, nor even saw the profession as a last resort - I drifted into it as a way out of the tedium of having to save for things like soap and food. Like some addictive narcotic, I became drawn into it, and although my first few years were profoundly unpleasant, I ended up realising that teaching is worthwhile, fulfilling and rewarding - clichéd descriptions typical of civil service propaganda - but nonetheless attributes of teaching that I have found to be accurate. With a goal in mind which I hope will help clarify how and why I came to this point, I searched my memory, old journal, photographs, school reports and talk to friends and relatives. I focus on my early and adolescent years, and describe events that have been seminal (although many at the time were quite mundane).

### **Self-Portrait - Some Autobiographical Vignettes**

Part of the post World War II 'baby boom', I was born in a council house in Darlaston, in the Black Country region of England - a time of austerity, food rationing and bomb-sites. The area was labeled 'Black Country' as a result of the industrial grime that filled the air and buildings. I remember men going to work on bicycles, wearing flat caps and with waistcoats and large leather belts. There was a brook polluted bright yellow at the end of the street; it must have been reasonably life-sustaining as I saw rats there.

Like most boys of that period, I watched films of Cowboys and Indians (on a neighbour's black and white television). I sympathised with the 'Indians' and was very proud of a tomahawk that I fashioned out of a piece of wood and a roofing slate. I can't remember actually taking any scalps, but I did not get the adult approval that I expected. A year later, in my first years at infants' school, a far more serious (to adult's eyes) incident took place. Having seen Tonto, the Lone Ranger's Indian sidekick, taking some bad guys prisoner and holding a knife to their throats, I thought it would be a good idea to take my older brother's

bone-handled scout sheath knife to school and take a prisoner in the playground in a similar fashion. My prisoner did not appreciate my attempt at authentic recreation and went squealing to the teachers. My mother was summoned to the head teacher's office. The head teacher histrionically opened her desk drawer and, throwing the offending weapon on the desk-top said 'he used this!', with 'this' coinciding with a thud on the desk. After that, I felt that the teachers treated me differently, as though I needed to be kept firmly in place. I resented this greatly; it built upon a lack of respect for authority that was engendered the year before when a policeman brought me home, at the age of four, for allegedly throwing stones at cars in the street. I was actually throwing small bits of vegetation at flies in the air.

I took it for granted then that I was going to be misunderstood; this resonated with the fact that I did not really understand what was going on most of the time, especially when other children seemed to know the rules of games and words of songs. It was all rather alien to me and I settled into what would be a lifetime of observing from the sidelines.

By this time, my father's scrap metal business was doing well and we moved to a detached house in a 'better' area, ten miles east of the Black Country (and currently the site of the nation's biggest waste-disposal plant) - it was my uncle's house, apparently, his business wasn't doing well and they swapped it for our house in Darlaston. The family became part of that most unfashionable of groups - the moneyed working class with bourgeois aspirations.

I attended a Church of England nursery school, while my brother attended the attached Junior [elementary] school. In conversation with him decades later, he recalled being beaten on the hands with a cane (drawing blood) for getting four out of ten in a geography test on his first day. As a result of my experiences at the Church of England nursery school and those of my older brother, I persuaded my parents to send me to the newer school nearby - a much more liberal establishment which suited me better. I believe a bad report followed me but I enjoyed my time there and was helped to identify two areas that I later excelled in - natural history and drawing. I did however play truant if things got boring; it was far more interesting playing about on the canal on a home-made raft, looking for newts (I caught a startlingly orange-bellied great created newt once).

My experiences outside the classroom - on school trips - were particularly valuable in fostering my fascination with nature. The first praise I can remember receiving, at the age of eight, was for my collection of unusual stones. I went on to become quite knowledgeable about fossils. Where I lived was unusually rich in Palaeozoic fossils: half a mile down my road, past Jones's crisp factory lay the Ash Mounds - slag heaps and piles of rocks thrown up by now redundant and deserted, nineteenth century mining and quarrying. The rocks were carboniferous, rich with numerous ferns, cycads, and horsetails - two hundred and eighty

million years old (or thereabouts). I spent many hours there throughout my childhood; even in adolescence I amused my self and friends by 'surfing' down the mounds on an old car hood.



Figure 1: Slag-heap surfing.

I can't remember taking the '11 plus' examination - the one which determines whether you go on the academic route via grammar school or attend the secondary modern school where instead of Latin you did woodwork. I failed it of course and went to the secondary modern. This school suited me just fine - I was with friends and didn't have to try. The grammar school was deemed to be where 'posh kids go' and it was no surprise when two apparently middle class pupils (who didn't seem to fit in) were put forward to take the '13 plus' examination for two additional places ostensibly reserved for late developers. Although I was envious of my grammar school friends who studied French and Latin, I quite liked the undemanding curriculum on offer, with woodwork, metal work and rural science figuring prominently. The set text in my first year English class was Alan Paton's *Cry the beloved country* [1] - an anti-apartheid novel - and I was enthusiastic about our 'social studies' lessons which focused on, amongst other things, the American civil rights movement. By the third year, I stopped going

to Maths and PE classes and did things that were far more interesting for a boy in early adolescence. Apart from getting up to no good, I spent some of my truancy time in the local library, but was put off reading when I attempted to read Gurdjieff's *All and Everything* with a subtitle 'Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson' [2]. Unfortunately, I had a similar experience with painting when I travelled (by steam train!) to Birmingham museum and art gallery to have some fossils identified. I had to pass through the Pre-Raphaelite gallery to get to the palaeontology section and I was struck with wonderment at Holman Hunt's *Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* - such brilliance and vibrancy on the colours, such exquisite detail and verisimilitude... I could never achieve that level of skill and so decided to abandon ideas about becoming a traditional painter.

Expectations were fairly low at my secondary school. In my second year there, aged 13, I had the obligatory career advice interview where I said that I wanted to be an artist or a palaeontologist, to which the reply was 'have you considered leather tanning?'. This job was associated with one of the local industries and featured recently on television as one of the world's worst jobs - something to do with the use of urine to condition the leather.

By late adolescence, I had decided that I was in fact already an artist and, having assimilated most of the myths associated with that calling, could behave in as obnoxious a way as time and limited resources would permit. All manner of un- or anti- social activities could be put down to either artistic temperament or challenging the accepted status quo. Along with some friends, I established an 'art club' at the local community centre - we were later banned for causing a fire hazard. This meant that we went out onto the streets (circa 1967) doing things like accosting passers-by and asking them a few mundane questions, ending with 'do you own a snorkel?', whatever response was given, we put a large cross on the clip-boarded questionnaire and terminated the interview. This particular act of puerility was meant to be an 'existential exercise in meaninglessness', surpassed only by handing out blank pieces of paper during election time and saying 'vote nasty snatch' to each recipient.

I delighted in the idea that 'anything could be art' and was especially taken by aspects of Dada, which I discovered through what I have since found to be the usual adolescent interest in surrealism. Liberated from the rigours of representational drawing, I experimented with collage, montage and 'happenings' - all good fun and suitably artistic to my mind at that time.

My father and older brother both left school at 14 and I believe I was expected to do the same; I certainly felt parental disapproval of my intention to 'stay on' at school and I moved to the more academic grammar school, persuading the Principal to allow me to take advanced level courses, despite my lack of formal qualifications. He accepted me as a student and I even represented the school in a regional general knowledge quiz. The Principal continued to be

indulgent, muttering 'the gypsies are in town' when I passed him in the school corridor - he in his academic gown and I out of school uniform. As it happens, in the manner of scrap-dealers' offspring, I was in a grey three piece suit made to measure to my own design, but finished off with a fetching tattered red neckerchief in lieu of the school tie. I joined the Young Communist Party, much to the consternation of parents and teachers, and also read whatever anarchist literature I could.

Such larks were of little consequence compared to the several weeks I missed school, hitch-hiking around Europe. I had vague ideas about Paris being a place where artists should go and hitch-hiked there as soon as I was old enough to get a passport. I wandered down to the Seine and found a suitably Bohemian group of people to engage with, but didn't do any art. It was the famous year of 1968 and the Paris riots, but I didn't see anything. The following year, I went hitch-hiking with my friend Anthony, a brilliant polyglot and somewhat eccentric son of a lorry driver. Anthony (who was also from an anti-school background) suggested on our return, when we were summoned to see the Principal to explain our absences, that we admit only to 'going as far as Zurich'. Ironically, I was suspended from school for 'unauthorised absence'.

My 'Foundation' year at art college was an eye opener in that I was taught things about art, not just encouraged to be artistic, but actually taught how to do things: photography (my report at that time says 'Richard seems to be confused by this subject'), etching, aluminum casting, and other creative processes which I didn't know about. I became more technically skilled in drawing, and also developed studio skills in other areas, such as printmaking and ceramics. But this was not enough, I felt a real need to explore my inner world and to understand my relationship with nature and my aesthetic response to it. After four years at art school, I emerged as a fully-fledged artist, allegedly. Turning against the apparently superficial nature of the work of some of my peers, I immersed myself in traditional representational drawing - of beetles, birds and flowers. Around me, novelty appeared to be the key to success and I associated conceptual art with my fairly shallow understandings as a school student of Duchamp and the manifestations of Dada. I was however, unmoved by my peers' pre-occupation with visual puns. These included, for example, broken wooden school rules fixed on a board with the caption 'Rules are Made to be Broken'; I even did my own pieces for fun: a large alarm bell which I found in a skip, attached to a board with the title *An Alarming Piece of Art*; there was also *Bulbs in Flower* - light bulbs planted in plaster in a flowerpot.

I eventually drifted into art teaching. An activity which came naturally to me and proved to be fruitful in terms of generating a positive learning atmosphere, was painting alongside pupils; I discussed a topic with the class and we all responded to it 'artistically', usually through the medium of paint. I found this to be fulfilling as well as pedagogically useful, in that a suitable

studio atmosphere was created and solutions to technical problems could be shared and explained with direct reference to my art work. I later had the good fortune (due largely to a very supportive Principal) to be seconded from my teaching job to do a Master's degree in art education. This was a turning point and I realised that I needed more intellectual stimuli and a professional identity, and so I eschewed the identity of 'artist who happens to teach' in favour of 'the professional art educator'.

I worked for several years with, apparently, a secure professional identity. My first appointment in Higher Education was a 'joint appointment' between a University and the Local Education Authority. I taught in a local school for half of the week and taught trainee teachers at University for the other half; this was the University's response to the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education's (CATE) new requirement - for education lecturers to have substantial, recent and relevant school experience.

I took up a Teacher Education position in Singapore; this had a great impact upon my art-work, both in terms of productivity and content. I produced large paintings every week and after three years, I had an exhibition at the British Council of nearly forty paintings. The stimulus of a new, vibrant and colourful environment was a real catalyst, especially the relatively accessible primary jungle. Another factor that sharpened my perception and for that matter my sense of self was that of being an ethnic minority, an 'other'.

The following twenty years are still too close to reflect upon in the same way, with regard to my identity as an educator, but in considering that later period, I came to a realisation... In the Spring of 2005, I planned for an exhibition of my paintings at Kings College, Cambridge which was primarily to show my latest work - about twenty dark paintings from the previous two years. Feeling that twenty was a small number for an exhibition, I decided to exhibit work from previous years. As I collected it together, I realised that there were several distinct styles that had emerged over the previous decades - they were very distinct and very diverse - as if they had been done by different people, so I exhibited them as if they *were* done by different artists, each 'genre' with a different name: my dark and sinister ones are by Richard De'Ath; my hard edge ones are by R.D. Edge; R. Davis produces detailed illustrations, while Ricky Mavro goes for all-black paintings. The work produced by Dick Barker (the most prolific) is based on another alter-ego, a kind of manic dog, which in itself has different doggy characters. The realisation, as I was musing upon this in the context of my identity as an art educator, is obvious - I had multiple identities which sometimes merged together, occasionally disappeared (sometimes for good) and metamorphosed into new identities.

I have often felt a slight unease with much of what has been written about art and art education in that I have not been able to relate it to my own personal experiences of art and art



making. I had often seen my own practice, as a student of art and as a producer of art, as being parallel with, but separate from, my work as an art educator. The feeling of being an artist is for me a more fundamental feeling than that of being an academic, teacher, husband, brother, father, consumer or ne'er-do-well; perhaps this is as a result of cultural conditioning in a time when individuality matters and when art remains cloaked in Romantic mythology.

Nevertheless, there is something very strong about one's identity as an artist. It is almost as strong as one's ethnicity or religious affiliation, except that a group of artists gathered together in one place would not result in a harmonious coming together of like minds. Is showing one's art work to others, particularly critical others, an essential part of art making? For me, it has been important, in terms of my identity as an artist, to place my art work into the public domain. However, the really important thing is the desire to draw and paint in response to what I see and feel and imagine, exhibiting is a side issue, and so I can empathise with people who work on the periphery of the art world (such as art teachers) and consider themselves to be artists: it is a question of essential identity; art is not only a way of knowing, but also a way of being. In considering the relationship between my identity as an artist and the art works I produce, I ask: Would it matter if my art works were destroyed? I recall a commonly used phrase from art school days – 'the statement has been made', meaning something like 'now that I have expressed my ideas through my work, no more needs to be said and the work is of no value beyond the ideas expressed', with the implication the idea behind the art work is far more important than the art work itself. I still subscribe to that notion to some extent, but feel that the art work, as the vehicle for carrying ideas, is of value.

Now in my fifth decade of producing art-work, I feel liberated from the constraints of pleasing teachers, parents and gallery owners. I do not have to make a living from selling my paintings and can simply do as I wish with regard to art. To me, my work has become richer and more complex than in earlier years (although others might see it as cruder and simpler); I have more concern for meaning than technique.

### **Identity**

I can now see that questions of identity are more important than I had realised. The paintings and drawings and prints which I have produced over the past forty years certainly look as if they have been done by several different people, reflecting different self-images and a range of influences and concerns. Moreover, they had some parallels with my artistic identity. Of course, just as my art work is multi-faceted, so is my identity as an educator; the types of art teacher suggested by Smith (1980) (such as 'the mystic', 'the high priest' and 'the social worker') are rarely found as 'pristine' examples, most of us are a mixture of many different 'types'; moreover, this can change from day to day or even within a day.

Identity is a complex and multifarious phenomenon, with each of its constituent aspects linked to another. The individual person is always associated with a group or groups and a variety of roles. In arguing for a merging of what is known as social identity theory (associated with self-categorisation within a *group* having similar attitudes) with what we might term straightforward identity theory (associated with having a particular *role* and its attendant values), Stets and Burke (2000) put forward the idea that analysing the relationship between the person, the group and the role will help inform our understanding of what motivates us to adopt certain identities. For example, Stets and Burke (2000) suggest that people tend to feel good about themselves when they are associated with particular groups (such as art educators) while confidence is associated with specific roles (e.g. the classroom teacher); authenticity however - when individuals feel 'real' or true to themselves (perhaps as an artist) is when "person identities are verified" (p. 234).

Motivation is an important concept here - whether it is a teacher's motivation to teach, an artist's motivation to make art or a student's motivation to learn - and is strongly associated with both self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-esteem is regarded within social identity theory as a person's overall evaluation of themselves in comparison with the group. Self-efficacy is regarded in identity theory as a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation: the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce a given attainment (Bandura, 1997). With regard to students' (and for that matter teachers') motivation and subsequent performance however, Bandura's claim that self-efficacy is a powerful indicator has been criticised. Criticism appearing in the literature include the following: self-efficacy is a cause of behaviour, not merely a predictor (Hawkins, 1995); interest theory indicates that it is interest in a subject, that predicts achievement (Dweck, 1999), while attribution theory predicts that those who believe that success or failure depends on effort will work harder than with those who believe that success or failure depends on ability (Mayer, 2003). One's identity (as an artist, a teacher, or whatever) therefore can be seen to be dependent on a number of interrelated factors; I am in agreement with Stets and Burke (2002) who see group identity, role identity and personal identity as overlapping. Ellemers, Spears and Doosje (2002) make the additional point that social identity involves not only a commitment to the group but is a "crucial determinant of central identity concerns" (p. 161).

### **Reflecting upon the Method: Autoethnography, Autobiography and Self-Portraiture**

Autobiography and self-portraiture have a long established history amongst creative practitioners, but social scientists have drawn upon such approaches relatively recently. In her edited book, *Auto/Ethnography*, Reed-Danahay (1997) maintains that the term has two senses, one refers to the ethnography of one's own social group, the second to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest; she remarks that "either a self (auto)ethnography or an autobiographical (auto)ethnography can be signaled by 'autoethnography'" (p. 2). Russell

(1999) emphasises the importance of relating autobiographical material to the larger social and cultural context:

personal history [needs] to be implicated in larger social formations and historical processes. Identity is no longer a transcendental or essential self that is revealed, but a "staging of subjectivity" – a representation of the self as a performance. In the politicization of the personal, identities are frequently played out among several cultural discourses, be they ethnic, national, sexual, racial, and/or class based. (para. 4)

Of particular interest here is the importance attached to the alignment of identity with cultural discourse. In writing this piece, I realised that I was gaining insights and new understandings - that I was 'writing myself into understanding' in the same way as pupils in class 'talk themselves into understanding' through discussion. I realised early in my endeavours that the elephant in the room that I was ignoring was the part played by social class and its fundamental role in (my) education. This opens up a whole new area for examination and analysis that is beyond the scope of this paper. It is however an area that continues to be the subject of much debate in the literature, particularly in the UK. For example Preston (2009), using ethnographical and biographical research, examines race - specifically 'whiteness' - with reference to education and class in Britain; an impressive systematic analysis of the relationship between the individual, culture and class was undertaken by Bennet, Savage, Silva, Warde Gayo-Cal and Wright (2009) and revealed, amongst other things, that class remains an important factor in determining identity. A further realisation was the complex nature of identity, in particular, the way identities change, evolve, merge and divide. However, at this point, I should reiterate that this paper is not a full-blown autoethnographic account; I have in general eschewed references to social and cultural context and focused on personal episodes that I consider relevant to the issue under scrutiny - the development of artistic identity and how it might inform pedagogy and professional identity.

Atkinson (2006), in referring to art objects, asserts that the viewer is not an ahistorical 'disembodied spectator' and that the relationship between the artist, the art object and the spectator is affected by, for example, class, race and gender (p. 108). In the same way, autobiographical vignettes, such as those presented here will provoke a range of responses and interpretations from different readers; each might be valid. In addition to the myriad interpretations associated with 'reader response', there are at least three provided by the author: the unconscious informal, the conscious informal and the conscious formal. The unconscious informal is inherent in the selection, omission and tacit interpretation of the narrative. The conscious informal is revealed in the narrative itself, in the form of asides and comments that are part of the textual flow. The conscious formal interpretations are those that

appear outside the narrative and form part of the reflexive element.

Self-portraiture, as with autoethnography and autobiography should be engaging and scholarly. In attempting to produce an 'academic' self-portrait, I would suggest three areas that should be addressed: veracity, utility and ethicality. Veracity refers to the 'truth' of what is reported. Without wishing to engage in philosophical debates as to what constitutes truth, it is incumbent upon researchers to ensure that the motivation for doing the research is transparent and the account is honest; this can to some extent be verifiable by reference to photographic evidence and others' accounts, but triangulation in the usual social science sense is difficult. Duncan (2004) also refers to the importance of making explicit "the relationship between personal experience and broader theoretical concepts" (p. 36). This leads into a consideration of the second desirable aspect of an account based on the self - that of utility. The researcher needs to take a pragmatic stance on this, and should consider the value of any enterprise of this nature, ensuring that it rises above being a confessional, with the 'self-indulgence' (see Mykhalovskiy, 1996) associated with it. This entails the subject matter being appropriate to the research issue in hand, that it should inform others' understanding of it, and can seem to be both topical and informative. Mykhalovskiy (1996) asserts that "to write individual experience, is at the same time, to write social experience" (p. 141); the corollary of this assertion is that if one is writing about oneself, one is also writing about the social context in which the self is placed, and therein lies its utility.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In writing this paper, I have attempted to navigate between concepts of the self as artist and the self as teacher and in so doing have realised and articulated the complexity of both. An unexpected outcome has been my greater awareness of social class as an issue. Learners' responses to authority, to institutions and to activities such as visiting an art gallery may be influenced by class background to a greater extent than I, at least, imagined. The value of self-portraiture was revealed to some extent by the fact that social class and its relation to art and identity was identified as an area for future research in education.

What has become clear is that identity is a multi-faceted, fluid and organic phenomenon, and education can play a crucial part in identity forming and transforming. Martin (2007) in an interesting and readable series of accounts reflecting on identity and culture, draws attention to the power of education (in its broadest sense) to transform identities, drawing upon life histories to illustrate education's transforming potential. In writing this particular bit of life history, I have become more aware of the pedagogical implications of acknowledging the multifaceted identity of the teacher-practitioner: artistic thinking and knowing can inform teaching; this is not a new concept but it is a notion that I feel needs to be personally realised.

Hetland et al (2007) referred to an artistic way of thinking about teaching, calling it 'studio thinking'. Teaching has also been seen as an aesthetic activity; Davis (2005) refers to 'artful teaching'. 'Artful' teachers manoeuvre and operate within the classroom, manipulating different techniques and materials, in a way that parallels the artist's manipulation of visual elements. This might involve for example, adjusting the rationales and philosophical approach one adopts in teaching, in a way that is analogous to the organic re-working of an art-work by an artist. The diversity of artistic practice and ways of solving problems is suited to the complexity of teaching - from spontaneous and intuitive ways of teaching to organised and considered pedagogical approaches. Subject areas themselves can be seen as organic; the blurring of subject boundaries echoes the blurring between the subject practitioner and subject teacher. Reflexivity and personal awareness, which are crucial aspects of self-portraiture, can inform professional reflective practice and ultimately can help one become a better teacher.

### Notes

[1] Paton, A. (1948). *Cry the beloved country*. London: Jonathon Cape.

[2] Gurdjieff, G. (1950) *All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

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