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Incorrigible and Undisciplined Lines in Visual Social Research: Ways of 'writing' and 'drawing' at the interstices

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ABSTRACT
In this paper the author traces the possibilities afforded by engaging with the aesthetic, historic and socio-political nature of *shodō* (Japanese calligraphy) as an intersectional space. *Shodō* literally translated as 'the way of writing' is an artistic practice bringing together ink, brush and paper. It is simultaneously a juncture between studied discipline and an ongoing mediation of subjectivities. The calligrapher/writer/drawer communicates to the reader through the bold or subtle brush strokes, the pressure and movement at the completion of each stroke. The calligrapher/writer/drawer draws across the boundaries of text and image to meet the reader blurring the lines between subject and object. This discussion re-examines the hierarchical binaries of writing/drawing, text/image, self/Other as they play out from vanishing lines of distinction between truth and conjecture. Crossing these binaries opens up opportunity for decentring and questioning representational practice by enabling other possible meanings and practices to emerge (Lather, 2007). I work from a stance of theoretical promiscuity in order to disrupt constitutive discourses and restore the liminal in social research. Drawing across the fragments of research projects I illustrate the generative and speculative space of visualising pedascapes in educational research.

furyū monji
ii suteshi
sono koto no ha no
hoka nareba
fude ni mo ato o
todome zari keri

No reliance on words or letters
Not limited
By language,
It is ceaselessly expressed;
So, too, the way of letters
Can display but not exhaust it.

(Heine, 1997: 103)

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Letters-Lines-Writing-Drawing

This discussion engages the devices of text and image to explore how turning from, or re- examining the 'reliance on words', letters or the written/drawn binary opens up opportunity for decentring and reimagining representational practice in research. In the social sciences, seeking to explore the relational and responsive in our social worlds requires an engagement with inherent hegemonic discourses within representation: the hierarchical binaries of what is written over what is drawn; the privilege of written text over that of image or the visual; and the objective subjective divide. For this reason representation generates considerable debate in qualitative circles (Eisenhart, 2006; Lather 1991; MacLure, 2003; MacLure et al, 2010; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000; Stronach, 2006) and is of particular concern to researchers who seek to resist completeness and rejoice in the complex (Atkinson, 2003; Kincheloe, 2003; Rhedding- Jones, 2003). How can stories of our social worlds be told in a manner that is faithful to the complexity, disarray and uncertainty that comprises reality?

For me, the semantic slippage of letters or letter*ing* is a generative and speculative space. The art of lettering, the art of *shodō*, stands as a counterpoint to what Luce Irigaray describes as the 'distanced', 'homogenous' and 'heterogeneous' nature of the printed Western graphic code (2002: 121). Those unfamiliar with Japanese, or Chinese, calligraphy are often beguiled by the apparent spontaneity and appearance of simplicity in the form. It is, however, a peerless example of the simultaneous juncture of studied discipline, embodied response to environment and self-expression. In Japanese or Chinese calligraphy there is no attempt to hide intrinsic messiness or smooth out rough edges. This lettering is incorrigible in nature: drawn as swiftly as possible, with only the absolutely necessary ones being indicated. No deliberation is allowed, no erasing, no repetition, no retouching, nor remodelling, no 'doctoring', no building up (Barett, 2006: 336). There is a rawness and spontaneity that speaks to the capture of a fleeting authentic or 'truthful' moment similar to the gem or nugget of truth found within an interview transcription. For the disciples and heirs of Plato and the Enlightenment the obsession with truth and authenticity is key to "attaining power and mastery over nature" (Guignon, 2004: 33) and the ultimate quest for growth, development or progress. This inheritance finds an easy home in research where claims of verisimilitude extol our expert skill, expert knowledge and control of our world. In such an environment social researchers look for themes, analyse discourses and triangulate method to find the truth of a matter or a moment. In contrast, the disciples of Zen philosophy and practices seek an understanding that brings full attention or mindfulness to every moment never dichotomising mind and being. In Zen art, and particularly Japanese calligraphy, the emphasis is not on skilfulness but simplicity and straightforwardness:

> Issan Dorsey was asked, "What is the essence of Zen art?"
>
> He replied, "Nothing extra" (Tanahashi & Schneider, 1994:113).

In crude terms, it could be argued that one tradition seeks to capture the moment, to explain or find answers, whilst the other is concerned with captur*ing* a moment "to go beyond words and wonder what your own mind and being are" (Dixon, 2006: xiii). This paper engages with the poetics of subjective uncertainty and representative practices in social research to unsettle and disrupt current methodological discourses and practices of mastery and certainty. The Buddhist scholar Daisetz Suzuki warns that preoccupation with facts or 'objective truths' may lead to an inflexibility of mind, "… for life is after all a traveling from one unknown to another unknown" (Suzuki, 1993: 254). However, I do not wish to be misunderstood at this point. By theorising a particular methodological approach the intent is not to fall into the very divisive binary practice that this paper seeks to problematise. Rather, as Guignon (2004) points out in his exploration of the authentic subject or experience, attending to "ideas that run against the grain of popular opinion" (106) are essential to the strength of a civil and democratic community. Likewise, even a research community forged upon the canons of Plato and Descartes are enhanced, at the very least, by troubling axiological and epistemological foundations.

Daisetz Suzuki points out an important connection between Zen philosophy and calligraphy: he states that the artist's objective "is not just to copy or imitate nature, but to give the object something living in its own right—it is to give form to what has no form" (Suzuki, 1993: 36). A creative element is present in the work that gives something of the calligrapher/writer and gives a space to the reader to participate in the interpretive process. In this space subjective and objective truth or reality is not just blurred—something new is created. Benjamin (2007) refers to this site of reproduction as an opportunity for meeting "the beholder … in his own particular situation" (221). Benjamin's thesis is located in the mechanical means of reproduction, including the use of film and I will pick up his thinking later in this paper, but for the moment I wish to refocus upon the process of giving form to that which has no form.

Brushes with the past

> Here I am protected against stupidity, vulgarity, vanity, worldliness, nationality, normality. The unknown language, of which I nonetheless grasp the respiration, the emotive aeration, in a word the pure significance, forms around me, as I move a faint vertigo, sweeping me into its artificial emptiness, which is consummated only for me: *I live in the interstice, delivered from any fulfilled meaning"* (Barthes, 1982: 9, emphasis added).

My fascination with calligraphy was awakened thirty years ago in my predominately silent *shuji* (literally, practising letters) classes where I learnt to write between letters and lines. For the majority of the twelve month student exchange in Japan I remember an unsteady feeling of not quite making sense of things around me. Rather than resisting the uncertainty or dismissing what I could not understand, I found it a productive space for unhurried deliberation especially in the case of the bi-weekly *shuji* class. I recollected assiduously copying out line upon line when I learnt cursive script at primary school in Australia; however, once we could form lines of letters to the teacher's satisfaction we never had to sit and do lines again. Unless of course, it was to be punished! Yet my *shuji* classmates had been voluntarily 'doing lines' for years: what could this mean?

Of all the teachers at the high school I attended, Shiromoto *sensei* (an honorific suffix in Japanese to denote a person's status as a teacher, artist or medical practitioner) was the least confident in speaking English. In fact I have no memory of him ever attempting to speak to me in English but neither did he speak to me in broken Japanese. He did welcome me, an absolute beginner into his (equivalent to Year 11) class, critiqued and supported my learning in the same manner as the students around me who had probably been studying the practice of lettering since primary school. Without any familiarity with Japanese calligraphy, the reader can discern the *renmentai* (cursive script) of my more proficient classmate in contrast to the *dokusoo* (literally, alone writing) or 'printed' style of my immature calligraphic efforts in Figure 1 below.

Forgoing the constraining limits of explicit or direct teaching, in Shiromoto *sensei*'s 'empty' or silent classes the practice and pedagogy resonated *mu* (nothing). The Buddhist/Zen aesthetic practice of *mu* was brought to the attention of a broad English readership in 1959 by Suzuki's (1993) *Zen and Japanese Culture*; and later, from a semiotic perspective in Barthes (1982) *Empire of Signs*. For those working in the field of education, Ted T. Aoki's 1996 lecture 'Curriculum as Narrative/Narrative as Curriculum: Lingering in the Spaces' (Pinar & Irwin, 2005) brought *mu* within a pedagogical perspective. Aoki asserts that *mu* lives at the crossings of 'between': '"There can be no-thing without thing" and "There can be no thing without nothing"' (2005: 405). The significance of Shiromoto *sensei*'s writing/ drawing classes 'formed around me' as Barthes (1982) aptly describes in the quote opening this part of the paper. For while I had yet to meet with his or Suzuki's texts, the experience of doing and being in these *shuji* classes brought the 'nothing extra' of Zen aesthetic practice into existence: no-thing but some-thing.

For us, Shiromoto *sensei*'s students, the reproduction of *kanji* (Chinese characters) and *kana* (Japanese syllabary) was not a process of effacing ourselves from the writing/drawing - that is, to

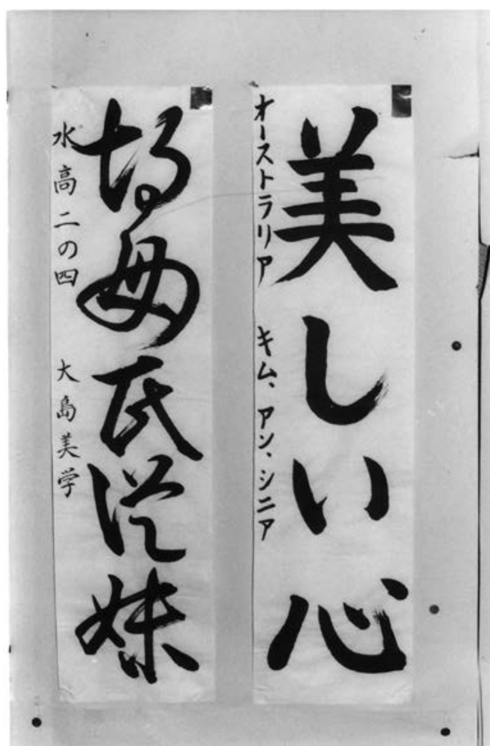

Figure 1. 'Brushed scripts' (1983, photograph by author)

conform to the precise reproduction of an ideal like the prescribed cursive script of my Australian primary school years. Rather, our task was to bring something of our own, some- thing of ourselves, through the ink unto the paper to balance the lines between artful guile and evocative disciplined form.

Crossing lines

The socio-historical links between China and Japan are deeply embedded in calligraphy and graphic art. Confucian connections, traditions and counter traditions are present even in the most contemporary work. While it is possible to categorise Japanese and Chinese calligraphy into Classical/Modernist or Neo-Classical/Avant-Garde these distinctions do not bind or restrict as "many artists delight in crossing boundaries and working in two or more styles" (Barass, 2002: 15). There is a long documented history of nonconformity and rebellion amongst calligraphers and artists against perceptions of institutional authoritarianism (Shimizu & Rosenfield, 1984) that gave rise to alternative creative expressionism. The monochromatic aesthetic of ink and brushwork that grew out of the Tang Dynasty in China rejected the "traditional criteria of representational fidelity pursued through color and line" (Bickford, 1996: 92). Instead the *pomo* (spattered ink) technique relies upon the barest of lines or hint of outline to bring to the beholder the smallest insect, solitary tree branch or awe inspiring landscape (Bickford, 1996; Kwo, 1981).

From its origins in twelfth century Japan onwards Zen artists drew upon this technique as a means of expressing and representing philosophical paradoxes or *kōan;* silence; meditative contemplation of the smallest or seemingly insignificant object or event; and (perhaps surprising to some) expressing an irreverent sense of humour. 'Smiling Frog' by the Zen monk and artist Sengai (1750-1838) is a complex work disguised in simple lines. Sengai's choice of subject is at once a reference to fellow Zen master and poet Bashō's famous haiku (*an old pond, a frog jumps, the sound of water*) and to Sengai's own observation that frogs sit in a mediative-like *zazen* posture. Central to the simple and almost naive ink and brush drawing is a smiling toad, his watery grey outline dominated by a dark ink grin. An inscription by the artist sweeps around the amused toad: "If a

human can become a Buddha through practicing *zazen* …" (Addiss, 1989: 184). Sengai's implied questions through the words of the inscription are also present through the prominent positioning of the calligraphy and by the equally prominent smirk.

> Is *zazen* alone enough to reach enlightenment?
>
> What does the smile mean – anything or nothing at all?
>
> What do frogs have to do with it all?
>
> And, does any of that really matter?

The important point I wish to make here is that Sengai's work relies upon the written, the drawn and the unwritten or inferred to communicate to the beholder. Like most Zen art, the graphic artist or calligrapher trusts an intuitive instinct within the beholder to contemplate at a deeper plane while never seeking to disguise that:

> A painting, of course, is always as illusion. It represents its subject matter, be it human figure, landscape, or whatever, yet it is always remains paint on paper, wood, canvas or silk. Zen artworks never go too far in trying to fool the viewer, in trying to complete the scene represented. One may always see that they are no more than two-dimensional brushwork, most often merely ink rapidly brushed on paper (Addiss & Wong, 1978: ii).

Vanishing lines

In turning away from representational fidelity, much emphasis in early and contemporary Zen aesthetic is to draw upon *ma* "space, room; interval; pause; time; a while" (Nelson, 1974: 922). The work of *ma* is to resist the ego-centric tendency for explicitness and elaborate detail, to colour in or make plain that which is not plain. *Ma* draws the reader or beholder into an awareness of the shadowed void of negative space where transitory phases between some-thing and no-thing are visceral. It is a connection to the ephemeral moments *between* knowing and known that the writer/drawer wishes to reveal or refer. Not immediately graspable, it requires and demands our patience and time. As Cixous (1998) describes in her contemplation of what the reader seeks in gazing upon Leonardo da Vinci's *Virgin and Child* it is not the essence of each 'character', but:

> … what is between them in the very moment, linking them—a secret, that which mysteriously renders those two unforgettable … It is not a question of drawing the contours, *but of what escapes the contour,* the secret movement, the breaking, the torment, the unexpected (1998: 30, emphasis in original).

Perhaps this is a moment that the artist also seeks *between* themselves, their characters and their readers?

Billeter (1990) in *The Chinese Art of Writing* draws upon Pierre Bonnard's sketch 'School Children' to illustrate the way in which contours and escaping contours may be "all the more striking because they dispense with literal representation" (41). Bonnard's drawing depicts a roughly outlined figure in a gown overseeing a group of uniformed children. One child is clearly separated from the group, stepping behind the adult figure. Bonnard's characters are faceless and lack specificity, yet they are unmistakeable. I can imagine each recalcitrant step of the child tracing behind the teacher's skirt. I can picture the whirling playfulness of the group in front as the teacher, flicking between the two, tries to look out for her charges. Similarly, the character in Figure 2, *to* (variously translatable as party, gang, companions, aimless, or on foot) assembles for the Japanese or Chinese reader the contours of people and movement. The assemblage is created by the radicals[1] that make up each individual *kanji* (Chinese character) as well as the way in which the *kanji* is written/drawn through each stroke[2]. Even without a specialist's eye, it is possible for those unfamiliar with calligraphy or written Japanese to imagine the lines of the written/drawn character as quick steps, deliberate strides and movement of a 'party' or 'gang' or a group. I contend that in either case, by dwelling in unfulfilled meaning, a

Figure 2. 'to' (Shiromoto, 1983, original artwork owned by author)

novice's eye is invited to draw upon their own imagination or experiences to read between the lines: to read the spaces or the nothing between the lines.

Rushkin (cited in Ingold, 2007) describes lines by their purpose that they are to lead the reader. He suggests that the lines of a drawing are to "embody in their very formation the past history, present action and future potential of a thing" (129-30). Rushkin called these "awful lines" and I can only wonder that what he intended was to draw attention away from the lines of exact precision or perfect and precise symmetry to the generative lines of the unexpected, unpredictable or uncertain. That these unreliable (un-rule-able?) lines are the ones that give raise to our imagination and capacity to take an active role in the interpretation of what has taken place, what is taking place or what may take place.

(Mis)taking lines

The interpretative space between calligrapher and reader can be seen in the same light as the researcher and research audience. And while there is begrudging admission that both qualitative and quantitative data are neither "transparent nor value-neutral" (Eisenhart, 2006: 567), there continues to be considerable divergent opinion about the legitimacy of certain ways to write a research story. In some areas of the academy it is easier to see a lack of objectivity associated with the creative than to acknowledge that tables, charts and diagrams are just as much a sophisticated element of representational discourse. Rather than stray into this debate I draw upon sketches and fragments of research data to illustrate other ways to think about social research and generate research. I position this consideration of the representational from within the visual turn (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Moss, 2008; Pink, 2001; Stanczack, 2007; Thomson, 2008). Visuality is generative in social research as it is not bounded. It offers the crisis in representation in qualitative social research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) a way of opening up Derridean binary structures: a way to refocus upon the interconnected, entangled and complex. In so doing, visuality moves beyond the delusion of innocent imitation or simplistic replication. Schirato and Webb (2004) point out: "Visual works may not easily tell stories, but they have huge narrative potential and great expressive power: the ability to convey emotions, ideas and attitudes; and to direct the reader to particular narratives" (104).

Visuality provides access to an 'awful' or perhaps awkward expanse with/in which it is possible to hold multiple and contradictory positions of troubled and unfulfilled witnessing. Like Barthes' experience in Japan, it is with/in this vast expanse of darkness that "a slender thread of light search[es] out not other symbols but the very fissure of the symbolic" (1982: 4). This fracture grants an opportunity for the writer to create some-thing from no-thing.

Figure 3. post-it-note 76mm X 76mm (Tam, student teacher)

In an earlier research project described in this journal, a colleague and I observed that while words often failed our student teachers as they struggled to articulate the experience of embodied pedagogy, they could visually represent palpable or disturbing moments (Senior & Dixon, 2009: 27). Visual data collected from the consenting participants of the project included photographs, artwork, class drawings and notes (such as the Tam's post-it-note above). In that particular project, visual data was analysed independently *and* alongside field notes, diary entries and other written data. Left on our office door, Tam's note was an intriguing piece of data:

> Was she pulling her hair out, crying her eyes out, or, both? What is the difference between those feelings?
>
> Did it have anything to do with 'us', with her peers, or her work? And did any of that really matter considering her distress?
>
> And, did it really mean anything at all?

Whether we were creating something from nothing, as far as generating theorising about embodied pedagogy, it certainly gave rise to some-thing. Our academically accomplished and generally articulate postgraduate students were failed by words alone. Tam's 'awful' drawn lines provoked me more than a written note because they led my conjecture to many possibilities.

The symbolic visual heritage of Japanese characters also leads readers; readers are engaged in a complex process that can include not just reading but decoding written text. LaMarre (2000) examines the linguistic use, or perhaps more accurately, letter-ing devices such as *kumiawasemoji* (assembled characters) and *mitate* (mis-reading or double reading) whereby characters are deliberately switched or 'visually conflated' to demonstrate the rebus (44) or montage quality of Japanese writing:

> Rather than see the pictorial operations of characters as subordinate to the linguistic message or to grammatical signification, we could see them as parallel processes or operations. In other words, secondary revision never subsumes or exhausts the rebus but runs parallel to it (LaMarre, 2000: 19).

As I illustrated earlier with Sengai's toad as an example, this rebus tradition in Japanese zen art deliberately uses literary flourishes such as *mitate* and visually mistakeable lines to provoke something within the reader. Contemporary disciplines and scholars are uncomfortable with the secondary reading of pictographic script and assemblies (LaMarre, 2000; Ingold, 2007). According to LaMarre (2000) these poetic flourishes or gestures are discarded by modern scholars in favour of a coherent or a more rational interpretation. The 'awful' or leading lines are too extravagant, too playful and too much for those that seek the safety and security of absolute certainty.

In much the same way, wary of charges of self-indulgent sophism, the qualitative social researcher tends to rely upon the more conventional or traditional devices to tell a research story.

Researchers forgo the possibility of writing/reading from the chinks and fissures of distinct and indistinct lines. And, like many qualitative researchers I am easily seduced by the familiarity and comfort of the conventional tools of words, such as quotes or narratives from interviews, to tell the research story. Ian Prosser (1998) laments that image-based research is "undervalued and under applied" (97) precisely because qualitative researchers in social research cling tightly to the orthodoxy that words give their research within the academy. Not quite a decade later, Barone and Eisner (2006) note that to date even most arts-based research in education has been "primarily literary in character" (95). Ironically though, it is within the literary that I find one of the most compelling arguments for the place of image in research:

> Literature's power to strengthen one's sense of selfhood and individuality … depends, to a large extent, on this capacity to cultivate and enfranchise the reader's private, individual imagining. The reader creates, and feels a creator's possessiveness. But how can a text, which comes fully formed to the reader's eye, leave space for the reader to create? … a vital element in all literature is *indistinctness* … (Carey, 2005: 213-214, emphasis added).

This interpretative space between writer/drawer and reader is an opening in which the usual hegemonic relationships may not necessarily apply. Although creator, the writer/drawer lets go of any ownership of the representational form and tempts the reader's imagination forth. In image-based research the audience may suspend themselves in and amongst visual representations while maintaining a "double consciousness" (Mitchell, 2005: 7). Philosophical and theoretical frameworks may be used by various groups in the research community for their own ends whether it is "to discipline and control the field" (St. Pierre, 2004: 285) or pick, unpick and pick over each other as iconoclastic practice is prone to engender. However, radical researchers "committed to making a difference and not repeating the Sacred image of the Same" (Haraway, 1997: 273) must look beyond the usual frameworks or disciplining philosophy "to free life from where it is trapped, to trace lines of flight" (Deleuze, 1995: 141).

Calligraphy and calligraphic practice allows me to visualise my research in new ways as an embodied creative endeavour. The incorrigible yet disciplined lines with which the calligrapher resolves to manoeuvre across the page are a proportional response to the tensions between the 'tools of the trade'. Ted T. Aoki (cited in Pinar & Irwin, 2005) describes this process as "brush sculpting". Observing the way in which a calligrapher writes and rewrites the same lines or letters, he comments: "she appears not so much concerned with what is being written, but rather, seems enraptured in a world of sculpturing in space" (415). In moments of mesmeric enchantment or meditation we can see our world differently—we can glimpse our world as "one interdependent Whole and that each separate one of us is that Whole" (Kapleau, 1980: 70). The flicking, dragging, splattering and bleeding of the letters or lines upon the page materialise the interstices of human existence and experience.

Earlier in this paper I drew upon Bonnard's sketch of school children to illustrate the capacity of the reader to use the vanishing lines of represented characters and imagined characters to create something between the indistinct lines. In that instance my experience as a teacher was central to that capacity. However, direct experience is not necessary 'to draw out' from indirect or indistinct lines. Published in 1931, István Szüts' only graphic novel *My War* (cited in Beronä, 2002) used bold and minimal brush and ink lines to tell a strikingly intimate and disquieting story of war. In one sketch, kneeling women and a child raise their arms and faces in supplication and despair, and in another a group of four soldiers stand staring over the semi- naked lower body of a raped woman. Beronä (2002) suggests that "what is truly remarkable about this work is the powerful emotions that Szüts exhibits with only a few lines, as well as his use of white space to accentuate this sentiment" (177). What I think is powerful about this work is its capacity to live beyond the temporal location of the particular story, there is a universality of sentiment that connects the contemporary reader to the exasperated cries of Szüt's women and children: the silenced, unheeded and erasable.

Hard lines

The distinct and sustained lines of educational public policy nationally and internationally for the past few decades have been colonised by the uncompromising political discourses of managerial accountability. We are told that the hallmarks of a quality education are 'good' schools, 'effective' teachers and 'successful' student outcomes and that these subjective qualities can be measured and represented through large scale testing, benchmarking and league tables. Such data tells us one part or perspective of an education story, but it fails to make visible the complex nature or social world of those actually implicated in the process of teaching and learning. Pedagogy, the complex and porous relationships *between* teachers, students and learning, remains largely hidden in educational research.

In this climate I came to educational research determined to write relational pedagogy into social research through various projects in teacher education (Senior, 2008a, 2009; Dixon & Senior 2009). Serendipitous to these projects has been the generative way in which de- centring writing, letters (Senior, 2008b) and lines (Senior, 2010) has opened up the opportunity for visualising and re-imagining social research. In playing with the work of image in the age of *digital* reproduction, it is possible to regenerate the speculative life of representation and interpretation in research.

The cleave from tradition that Benjamin (2007) describes between works of art and film is replicated in the mass cultural movement from film-photography to digital-photography. Suddenly the hierarchical binaries of photographer and subject are disrupted and disreputable. In much the same way that the split from art and film "emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual" and purity (2007: 224), the constitutive forces of a subject/ object and self/Other divide are fractured by digital technology. Is Figure 4 a photograph or drawing? When I reproduce the photograph with an editing tool, is it still a photograph? If I crop and erase lines in the reformatted image, is it still a photograph or does it become a drawing? Is it still 'real' or has it become some-thing else? And how is this process any different from editing an interview transcript or selecting quotes from a text?

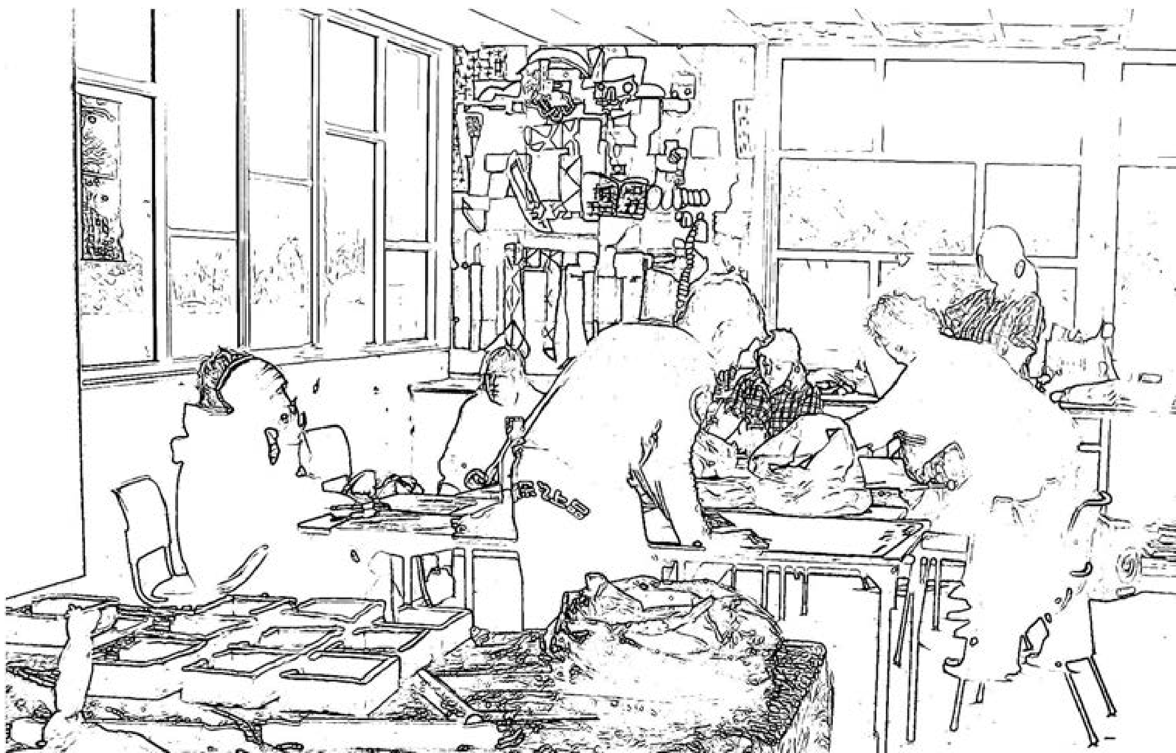

Figure 4. 'Lines of flight' within an art classroom (2008, digital image by author)

My use of digital images in educational research does not set out ‘to map’ the visual discourse (Clarke, 2005) or focus upon compositional interpretation. I resist the subordination of the images for words; I do not want to translate the images for the reader. I deliberately make no effort to track, or record, who took what image or when, so that during my analysis I do not group images according to who took or made them in order to extrapolate meaning. I do not want to set up an alternative hierarchical structure within the analysis whereby I translate images for the reader. I do not wish to set up a hierarchical structure of the researcher as sole or only knower. Instead, I seek out ways of assembling images and lines that invite readers to vacillate between possible readings inviting the reader to take up an active role while interpreting the data or a research story. The intertextual data set below asks the reader to move between written and ‘drawn’ lines to imagine a pedagogical story. This fragment of research took place in a classroom where teacher educators (Mary Dixon and I), a student teacher (Keith) and a group of year 8 students worked together on an art project:

Brushed up against the hard lines of political rhetoric and current educational discourses the ‘awful lines’ of these pedagogical assemblages grant us a moment to pause and question; to question and “to believe in the Truth as tension, as movement …” (Calle-Gruber, 1997: 5) for within these unreliable lines and beyond any fixed meaning some-thing else is created. What conjecture or questions concerning teachers, students and learning arise for you in this pedagogical fragment?

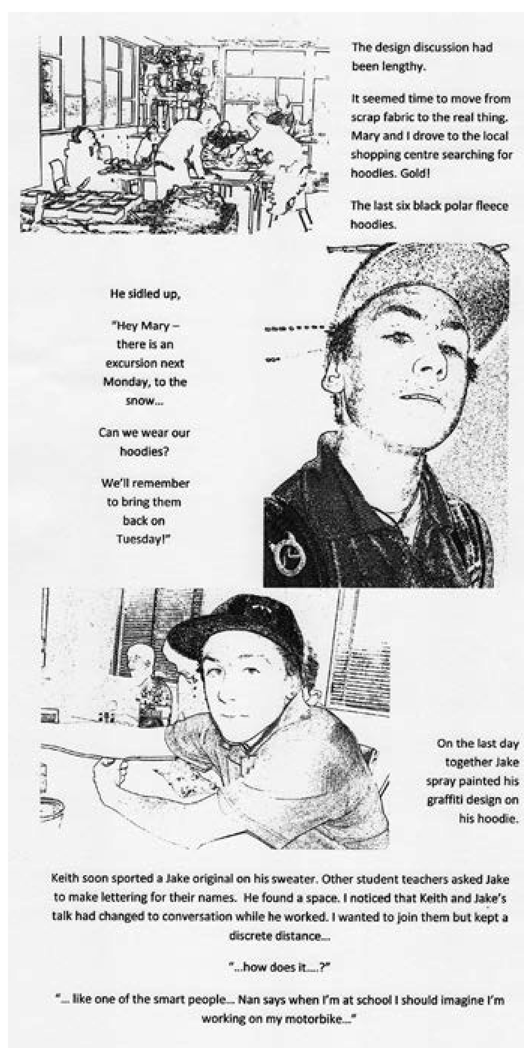

Figure 5. Amongst the year 8s (original artwork by author)

A final flourish

Mass or global cultural movements are theorised as "imaginary landscapes" in the work of Appadurai (1996). His ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes are ways of describing, naming and analysing flows across boundaries. They give shape to the undercurrents of globalisation in the same way that Zen aesthetic practices seek to draw out the ephemeral and the interdependent nature of being. In a recent classroom based research project a colleague and I have theorised an ethological reading of matter energy between bodies (Dixon & Senior, in press 2011) as a way of describing and naming pedagogical flows. Further drawing out of these pedagogical landscapes has revealed the social world of relational pedagogy as *pedascapes*. Such an approach to the representational practices of social research gives shape to the uncertain, unknowable and unexpected. Some-thing between is created by focusing upon "what escapes the contour" (Cixous, 1998: 30), or what is beyond the boundaries of conventional methodological practice or the hard lines of political and academic discourses. This some-thing does not rarefy subjective and objective existence or experience. The reader is not excluded as a co-participant in constructing meaning of the data; this some-thing does not require the writer to be sole master of the data. Flows between researcher, researched and research audience become less distinct and yet at the same time more provocative not unlike the experience of globalisation. My purpose in undertaking research is to tell stories of our social worlds in a manner that is faithful to the complexity, disarray and uncertainty that is reality and as such these sketchy *pedascapes* are very purpose-ful. After all complexity, disarray and uncertainty *are* provocative.

In the opening of this paper, Dōgen's poem 'No reliance on words or letters' (cited in Heine, 1997) used letters to remind us that words or letters are inherently limiting. But like much of Zen philosophy, things are never that simple. Dōgen *uses* words in the shape of poetry to communicate that which is beyond language. The paradox is not lost on my thinking and theorising about these intersectional spaces. As you will have noted the data I have used here draws upon images *and* words as I endeavour to think differently, divergently and communicate beyond usual limits. In this paper I have endeavoured to illustrate how moving from letters as text to dwell between letters as image and letters as representations allow possibilities beyond hard and empty lines; as I try to give form to that which has none.

Notes

1. Chinese characters can include up to eight 'radicals' or elements. Often the main radical or element to a character gives an indication as to the origin or the meaning of the word that it depicts. For example, the three strokes that appear on the left hand side of *to* (Figure 2) are called *gyō* (the going radical) in Japanese. Characters that are 'spelt' with *gyō* include words such as *samayou* (wander or loiter) and *inasu* (let go or chase away).
2. Billeter (1990) explains this aspect of brush technique comprehensively in his book (see 65-72) and Kwo (1981) gives an account of both brush and ink techniques such as side-ink and wash (see 169-178).

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