Education as a *way of love*: answering the *call* of the other in the time of Gestell

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged’ and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Julie Beer

28th, March, 2011
For all the Sammys and Sammis

*

And for my father, Lindsay Beer
(17-07-1923 - 29-07-2009)
who taught me all about unconditional love
With regard to the awkwardness and ‘inelegance’ of expression in the following analyses, we may remark that it is one thing to report narratively about beings and another to grasp beings in their Being. For the latter task not only most of the words are lacking but above all the ‘grammar’.

Martin Heidegger: Being & Time, p.34
I have used the following abbreviations for the works of Heidegger:

- AWP: The Age of the World Picture
- B&T: Being and Time
- BDT: Building, Dwelling, Thinking
- ET: On the Essence of Truth
- L: Language
- LOH: Letter on Humanism
- MSMM: Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics
- MWP: My Way to Phenomenology
- OWA: The Origin of the Work of Art
- PMD: Poetically Man Dwells
- QCT: The Question Concerning Technology
- T&B: Time and Being
- TT: The Thing
- WCT: What Calls for Thinking?
- WPF: What Are Poets For?
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**Summary: Education as a way of love: answering the call of the other in the time of Gestell**

In this transdisciplinary study I examine the problems and paradoxes of modern thinking and how they shape educational practice. My primary interest is ontological (in the Heideggerian sense): how do our assumptions about being shape our understanding of world and what impact does that have on those around us? Why is it that, in spite of a plethora of ideological movements in the twentieth century, persons (both human and other-than-human), plants and places are being increasingly marginalised and destroyed?

Beginning with Heidegger’s notion of Gestell, I explore what our enframing means for research, for education and for living and learning generally. I examine the entailments of the metaphysical worldview: the subject/object duality, the rise of ideology and the themes of making (constructivism), mastery, progress, praxis, and the notion of an authentic, autonomous, free individuality. I explore how these entailments comprise an underlying sameness that resonates with Thomas Berry’s concept of the millennial Dream and the modern quest for transcendence.

I then contrast Indigenous, Buddhist and more recent scientific and social scientific cosmologies that understand that we are not self-sufficient, self-constituting and self-ruling beings, but are intimately connected with others in such a way that we continuously bring one another into being. It is this assumption of an unvolitional, intimate entanglement with the face of the other with whom we are always-already implicated that Lévinas calls ‘ethics as first philosophy’ and that I call a way of love, and I explore how, with this as a natural attitude, education could have a very different appearance and a very different effect.

My non-method/ology is mainly heuristic. I attempt to examine the lens through which I, as a member of the most dominant world culture, understand being, and so my journey is one that explores the deep interior world rather than that which is
external. Throughout, the conceptual is grounded in stories, so that the thesis is a layered, recursive narrative. I take the stories told by others and critique them in the light of theory and my own experience; I draw on journal entries, contemporary education documents, newspaper articles, quotes from literature; and I tell my own ‘Sammy/Sammi Stories’ - critical incidents from my own teaching/learning that have disrupted my ideological stance and called me to expand the horizons of my possible understanding.

Taking into account the problems of language raised by poststructuralism, I tell these stories, after the Zen poet Bashō, in haibun, a prose poetry that opens a space for meaning that goes beyond the purely communicative. My stories explore the silences in modern education: pain, risk, wound, forgiveness, promise, gift, joy. I seek to uncover that which has been forgotten in learning/teaching (that which Derrida calls cinders). Considering the classroom as an ecology, I draw out the themes of feeling learning, learning as worlding, enthrallment, and teaching/learning by heart.

The notion of love is difficult in a modern culture: indeed, we have few words for it. In this thesis I make a case for love, not just in the Existentialist sense of letting the other be, but in the sense of taking up a nonvolitional commitment to universal responsibility. This requires that as teachers and learners, and just plain everyday people, we remain continuously open to the face of other – any other. I argue that we do not come into being in silence, but rather in the cacophony of an entangled engagement that disrupts our plans and blueprints for personal freedoms and utopias, and that it is together that we make worlds. It is this event of being that I explore for teaching and learning: education as a way of love.
Introduction

the emperor has no clothes

...to confront the culture with itself, along the lines it meets in me.

Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason...*, p.125
There is a widespread feeling that the promise of the modern era is slipping away from us. A movement of enlightenment and liberation that was to have freed us from superstition and tyranny has led in the twentieth century to a world in which ideological fanaticism and political oppression have reached extremes unknown in previous history. Science, which was to have unlocked the bounties of nature, has given us the power to destroy all life on earth. Progress, modernity’s master idea, seems less compelling when it appears that it may be progress into the abyss.


[Blind] Mrs O’Connor felt the rim of a cup as she guided her teapot spout forward to pour. ‘What I love,’ she added, ‘is very loud birds. We have so many in this country, filling the sky.’

After this Lucy heard loud birds singing all week. A single sentence had reorganised the presence of the world. A single sentence. Just one

Gail Jones: Sixty Lights, p.5
Introduction

It is my first day...

I couldn’t be better prepared.
I have seventeen children in my class
aged between four and nine
and a teaching assistant.
This seems overly generous.
Should be a piece of cake!

I am extraordinarily well prepared:
I have been here for the last ten days
setting up the classroom:
   I have beautiful beeswax crayons
   and paints and clay
   I have baskets of dollies and dress-ups.
I have planned this first day meticulously.
I will tell a Native American creation story:
   I have made a little tableau to help in the telling
I have small wooden animals
   and felt puppets to tell the story with.

I light the candle.
I start to tell the story using the little puppets.
I keep the attention of the students
for about fifteen seconds.

They start to play (violently) with the puppets.
They put their fingers in the melting wax.
They start throwing the cushions around the room.
Some get up and wander off.
Others start elbowing one another
and a fight ensues.

This situation is unprecedented
for me.
Valiantly, I keep going.
Having no recourse to any alternative ‘strategy’
whatevers,
I keep on mindlessly telling the story
until my assistant
takes off her shoe,
slaps it against her thigh,
and shouts,

‘If you kids don’t sit down I’m going to whack you.’

At this, they all giggle
and run out of the room.
Introduction

In the late 1990’s, after I had been teaching for some nine years or so, I went to work in a remote Indigenous community on the edge of one of Australia’s great deserts. I took with me a considerable reputation as a skilled teacher with particular expertise in working with less conventional students who may be experiencing difficulty finding ‘success’ at school. I prided myself on nourishing strong individuality within the circle of a warm and cohesive group, and for the fact that my students produced work of excellent quality. Most of all, I was proud of my storytelling ability, and I was looking forward to working in an ‘oral culture’. Setting off with great confidence, I little imagined that this experience was to change my life. After it, I would never be the same again.

In July this year, our (Australian) Federal Government released a report titled, ‘Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage’ (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision [SCRGSP], 2009) showing that in spite of billions of dollars spent and harsh intervention by the previous and current Federal Governments, Indigenous health and educational outcomes have changed little. Meanwhile, here in Victoria, Australia, we are in the grip of an eleven year ‘drought’ and are living this year with the fall-out from the horrendous bushfires of ‘Black Saturday’ (February 7th) which tore through our bush with a savagery unimaginable. Car headlights melted. I have seen one place where the earth has been seared and baked into the likeness of a brick hearth. Almost two hundred people lost their lives, and seven thousand homes were destroyed. There will continue to be speculation (largely overlooked in the pursuit of blame) about whether these fires were induced or exacerbated by climate change - an issue that will topple the Federal Opposition Leader before the year is out, and will precipitate the swift ejection of our sitting Prime Minister, who will be replaced by his (female) deputy. The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission will be appointed to ensure that disasters of this proportion will never happen again. Meanwhile, a new desalination plant situated at
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my favourite ocean beach, and a pipeline to bring water to Melbourne from a distant river in my old home-country will cut its way through pristine forest, adding credence to my argument that we humans consider ourselves to be the masters of our worlds.

It may seem that all these issues are unrelated. It is my intention to argue in this thesis that they are in fact deeply connected, and that our responses to each are symptomatic of a way of being that is complicit in their very occurrence in the first place. I want to explore why and how this is so, and whether and how it might be possible to counter this on-going state of affairs.

My story begins with my encounter, as a middle-class, white, heterosexual, female teacher (thus a member of the dominant global culture of our age) with nausea-inducing-Other. Indeed, in the beginning it was to be a collaborative study with those Others, in which I intended to point out the effects of ontological difference on perception in literacy learning. Yet as I went on my way, setting up my ‘ethical’ framework, I became increasingly aware that the issues were much more complex than ‘closing the gap’.¹ Poststructuralism has made us aware that such slogans always-already locate ‘failure’ with the marginalised. Whilst I could easily rationalise away a nagging discomfort about the ethical efficacy of my ‘project’, I began to see, with Rains (1999), that to examine Indigenous knowledge (or indeed, any knowledge that one considers to be other) is itself a perpetuation of hegemony.

My concern revolved around the object treatment of others. David Jardine (1997) tells a story about how one of his students, a chronic care nurse named Ellen, was all set to start her research interviews. ‘She was haunted by all the proper ghosts. Don’t contaminate your data/Don’t ask leading questions’ (p.162). However things very quickly went awry. As soon as they started the interview, Ellen’s interviewee broke down. Ellen said she didn’t know what to do, but, writes Jardine, ‘Of course she knew full well what to do. She knew that all the meticulous obligations that she had built up with this woman took
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precedence over the odd, hallucinogenic position into which her research agenda had placed them both’ (p.162). Ellen settled her patient and withdrew, ‘embarrassed, frustrated, angry over what she had done, or what had been done to her, or to both of them’ (p.163).

I am critical of those like Dé Ishtar (2005), who claims that the purpose for her study of Wirrimanu women is to ‘challenge the negative aspects’ of white culture. She writes, ‘I contend that Whites can best assist Indigenous peoples by studying our own culture’ (p. xxiv) and that there is ‘an urgent need for White people to take responsibility for our own society’s cultural practices’ (p. xxvi). Yet the remainder of her book describes Indigenous practices in a fairly typical anthropological fashion that one could cynically suggest will sell to a voyeuristic, liberal-minded, white middle-class like myself. I believe that Dé Ishtar, like many others, not only fails to adequately analyse or critique white culture, but that, by studying the Wirrimanu women as object, she is complicit in reinscribing the existing state of affairs.

This is to say that what I am most concerned with here is how the nausea inducing ‘limits of cultural alterity’ (Povinelli, 2002, p.68) play out in my own culture. We treat the problems of climate change, low Indigenous life-expectancy or poor Indigenous education outcomes as problems requiring a solution. As David Jardine (1997) notes, we too often start with a research agenda of trying to make things better (p.164). We study the Other (Indigenous ‘issues’/environmental damage/species loss) in an attempt to fix it rather than using it as a mirror in which to examine our own practices. In the process, we appropriate it, depriving it of its power ‘to be present to others in [its] own history and knowledge’ (Rose, 2004, p.200). It is easy enough to point the finger at difference and make suggestions as to how it might be accommodated. It is much more difficult to explore the possibilities for unmaking that which has made us (and continues to make us) the dominant and dominating culture on Earth.
Introduction

So it began to dawn on me that what I desperately needed to excavate were my own unexamined cultural assumptions: those things that continue to make me complicit in the theories and practices that are depriving people of the luminous flashes and smouldering joys of the classroom, and that will very likely deprive future generations of the possibility of ever seeing a blue whale or a Greenland glacier.

It is therefore my own stories of failure and success that I tell here. Like David Geoffrey Smith (1999) I am concerned with the question of how, as a teacher and learner, I can ‘...fulfil my responsibility to my own people – my own people whom I love yet who, as I do, live under an economic and epistemological dispensation which is a problem for most of the rest of the world’ (p.103). For it seems that every new theory/practice/dream seems destined to be consigned to the dust of a history that nips ever more insistently at our heels and that, as our performative culture becomes better and better at cataloguing ‘failure’ it simultaneously becomes more heavy-handed and persistent in demanding ‘more’ and ‘better’, so that education is swallowed up by the cyclic din of new ideas and plans fated only for the rubbish heap.²

Journal, June 2010

I sit around a cafe table with old colleagues, all of whom delight in teaching. Our conversation ranges over particular incidents and points of pedagogy and inevitably comes to rest on the discipline and control that we all feel is choking the life out of us and education. We are all discovering that, ‘The value that is lost when something is emptied depends on what was there when it was full...’ (Singer, 1999, p.90). I express my fear that the young people entering the teaching profession now may not know and may not even imagine an education that isn’t based on a premise of utilitarian and communicative performativity. And I lament that my soon to be born granddaughter may never know the wild freedoms her father experienced.
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For it isn’t only the loss of time and space for relationship and creativity in teaching that we are mourning (Norquay, 1999); nor is it only that ‘...the language of an integral alternative is not readily available’ (Jardine, 1998, p.77). There are the silences of not knowing, but there are also the silences of not being allowed to say. The loud arguments of performativity are so pervasive and persuasive that they strike us mute. Like Povinelli’s colonised, we are finding that ‘...following one law means violating another’ and that our reasoning and our affect are out of joint: ‘I should be tolerant but you make me sick; I understand your reasoning but I am deeply offended by your presence’ (2002, p.4). Thus it is that we ask not only what we can bring back out of the shadows, but, ‘How is it even possible to name the burdensome weight of this (non)thinking?’

In this study I take up Wyschogrod’s (1990), question, ‘Why have ethical theories so persistently failed to solve moral dilemmas, not only as these dilemmas assault us in life but also as they occur in theoretical reflection?’ (p.233). For it seems clear, as species slide into oblivion, that the Emperor (he whom we all thought to be so splendid in his Enlightenment robes) is not only naked and vulnerable, but that he is out and out mad, and that what we are suffering now is not only a bad case of blindness, but a spectacular failure of the imagination: a failure not just to imagine the damage we have done, but a failure to imagine how education (and life) could be otherwise.

Wyschogrod (1990) makes a plea ‘...for boldness and risk, for an effort to develop a new altruism in an age grown cynical and hardened to catastrophe...’, an age that has grown weary of both its calamities and its ecstasies (p.257), but I am proposing here that altruism is part of the problem – that it is the very assumption of the value and necessity of action (of the progress and solution-making that is praxis) that is the problem, and that the notion that we can transcend it all, which is at the root of metaphysics, is also the root of our current dilemma.
Introduction

There is an oft-quoted Indigenous adage, that 'White man got no dreaming' (Stanner, 1953/2009, p.57). This adage is generally taken to mean that white³ culture lacks the wisdom of elders, and wanders, rootless and insatiable, lost in the simulacra of the techno-industrial-commercial complex. Yet as Thomas Berry (1989, 2006) makes clear, this complex is itself a Dream, and in this thesis I will argue, with Berry, that 'White man' does, indeed, have a dreaming, but that it is so deep, powerful and pervasive that we are barely aware of it.

Berry asserts that the driving force behind our culture isn’t economics (nor, I would argue, is it driven only by other discourses of power) but a vision that continuously pulls us towards a utopian future. Swimme and Berry (1994) describe this Dream as ‘the myth of Wonderland that is coming into existence by some inevitability if only we continue on the path of Progress, meaning by Progress the ever-increasing exploitation of the Earth through our amazing technologies’ (p.218). This ‘Wonderland’ is a kind of fabricated Disney world ‘embodied in the...ideal of the human in a nontargeting world of fabricated imitations, or caricatures of the universe and all its living manifestations’ (p.219).

In the first half of this thesis I explore the qualities of this Dream and attempt to discover why this particular vision has been so taken up by my modern culture. I seek out what it casts into shadow – a shadow so deep that we have forgotten what it conceals. Like James Lovelock (1979), who realised as he set about his work on the Gaia hypothesis that he had been looking in the wrong places and asking the wrong questions (p.64),⁴ I explore the possibility that there may be something that, for all our delving and digging, we have failed to consider as problematic in our culture - both for ourselves and for those who we continue to use and destroy. I am seeking what sets this vision into motion and continues to drive it despite our best efforts to stop it. For as Berry (1989) argues, our culture is entranced, and ‘[u]ntil we have explained [this entrancement] to ourselves, we will never break the spell that has seized us’ (p.38).
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Willinsky (1997) asks ‘...why education has not done more good in the world, not done more to realize the democratic promises that continue to underwrite public education...’ (p.334). The easy response is the one given by critical pedagogues, that economic and social discourses of power are reinscribed by the socio-politico-economic orders. But there is more here. Embroiled in the discourse about power, we become blind to that which exceeds it. It is the day-to-day joys of the classroom that I wish to exhume; the human capacity to love in such a way as to exceed both individual and global plans for our utopian visions. Freya Mathews (1991) argues that ‘the right cosmology will dispose us towards a benign pattern of interaction with the environment’ (p.141). The task I have set myself in the second half of this study is to explore how it might be possible to think differently, so that an ethic of care, much in the Lévinasian sense of putting the face of the other before all else, might be normalised in the same way that putting ‘self’ first is prioritised in our contemporary world.

This is not so much solution-seeking as a response to that Age-old question, ‘But how shall I live?’ And therein lies the difficulty. In a time and culture that constantly demands blueprints, methods and solutions, even the form of this thesis is paradoxical and problematic. How do I write something that is meaningful and substantial (something that has guts) when I am refusing closure and method? This work is one of seams of meaning and reference as I attempt to demonstrate what it might mean for teaching and learning, scholarship and life in general, if we were to consider education as an act of universal responsibility – an event of love.

some notes about how the thesis is presented

The thesis is divided into four ‘parts’. The first two delineate current thinking and practice, whilst the third is, in Lévinasian terms, an interruption – a turning about that reverses the direction of thought, throwing it back on itself, and so rethinking/re-examining what has gone before. This in turn opens a way to thinking differently, which I explore in the fourth section.
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Here is a more detailed synopsis:

part I: the my inherited world: making the *millennial dream*

Part I is divided into three sections along the lines suggested by Usher and Edwards (1994, pp. 152-154). Understanding that the researcher is part of (not apart from) the researched world, I approach the research through con-text (my embodied situatedness); pre-text (the epistemological preconditions of my time and place); and sub-text (the ontological foundations of my culture). 5

In *Con-texts*, I examine the immediate social environment: What are the *idées-forces* that conjoin in me and highlight particular issues and questions and not others? I briefly explore my situatedness: how have I been shaped by my family environment and personal experiences? I raise the questions, Why are we so unsuccessful in ‘closing the gap’? and why do we continue to destroy the environment and other-than-human populations? I pose the question, How are these two matters related?

In *Pre-texts*, I examine my cultural and interpretive traditions (the epistemological view). I give a potted history of social research, asking: How does each paradigm understand the world? What does each seek to explore and how does it go about it? I ask what each paradigm (expects to) find. I conclude that research always-already seeks to make ‘paradise-on-earth’ and that we rarely ask, ‘What is the *purpose* of research?’ in any meaningful way. I begin to explore the prevalence of ideology in teaching/learning. I explore some episodes from my own teaching and that of a critical pedagogue working in New York.

In *Sub-texts*, I begin with the problems of thinking and the question and proceed to an examination of Heidegger’s *Gestell*: the idea of an object (measurable) world, for use by an autonomous self. I examine how this produces the metaphysical
Introduction

‘worldview’ and the constant march of ‘progress’. I investigate how this compels us to live/learn and I draw attention to the plight this creates for the other-than-human world.

I conclude Part I with a discussion about transcendence and the *Dream* in a secular age, and examine its role in relation to the development and impact of ideology in the twentieth century.

part II: on the [non]method/ology of the knapsack notebook: the ‘writing-story’ as genre

I take my findings from Part I and apply them to my [non]method/ology. My ‘quest’ is to examine the lens through which we as a modern culture view the world. Beginning with a short discussion about heurism and self-study, I proceed to an examination of Heidegger’s insistence on ‘the near’ and the Buddhist notions of changing the lens we look through, and studying the self to forget the self.

I then discuss writing as genre: memory and promise; the problem of language; Bashō and *haibun* – the poetic and the commonplace, imagistic writing, *utamakura*, repetition, getting lost.

I conclude that, like Bashō’s expeditions, this is a journey going nowhere – a process of love, not *praxis*; of evocation rather than production - and that this, far from being unproblematic, can be a very dangerous thing indeed.

part III: interruption: Lévinas and the *face* – self, other & the *modern* pursuit of freedom
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I examine the other pole of modernity, the Existential notion of the free individual and how it both opposes and colludes with our utopian visions. I examine the Cartesian Self and our obsession with its construction. I link this with the modern pursuit of individual freedom.

Contrasting this with other ontologies (Indigenous, Buddhist, quantum science), I then introduce Lévinas and his reminder that we are not alone – indeed that we are constantly interrupted by the Other. From here I examine the Buddhist understanding of dependent causation – a natural attitude that assumes that this is this, because that is that, and that I am, after all, my brother’s keeper.

I argue that this is what Lévinas means by ‘Love without concupiscence’, and that this opens a way to think a ‘freedom exterior to my own’ (1998/2000, p.17) or what I also refer to as an event of love.

part IV: learning as a way of love: curricula for the compassionate heart

Like Bashō, I record in my Knapsack Notebook, my own journey in teaching learning. The original knapsack notebook was a wooden, lacquered backpack carried by Japanese Zen Priests when travelling, and Bashō made it the title of one of his collections of poetry and travel observations. In this section of the thesis I explore cultural notions of love and the ‘love without concupiscence’ of Lévinas.

I then tell stories that vision learning as a way of love:

(i) feeling learning and being moved
(ii) creating worlds: the subject-centred classroom (expanding the map)
(iii) imagination, and being enthralled
(iv) falling in love: teaching and learning by heart.
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Along the way, I discuss those aspects of love that live in Gestell’s shadow: risk, wounds, forgiveness, promise and gift.

**conclusion: telling stories for our time**

Here I relate my own ethical failures in the light of my previous criticisms of Bashō, Heidegger and the Existentialists. I consider again, the problems and paradoxes of attempting to impose a participatory epistemology over an ontology of individualism and praxis. I speculate that Wolfram’s *Parzival* might be a story for our time – that silence is perhaps the greatest ethical failure – and so I consider what we need to remember, and what we need to forget.

I conclude that there is no solution here – like Bashō with his bashō trees, there are only moments, remembering that it is what I do *now* that shapes a world, and that even here lies danger.

**notes for the reader: on the format of this thesis**

There are practical choices that one makes in the actual writing and presentation of a thesis that will influence the way that it is read. This study is thick with references, which leads me to ponder Laurel Richardson’s (1997) opinion that these are ‘authority moves; disruptions; [that] invite the reader to disengage from the text, like answering the doorbell in the middle of a lively conversation’ (p.167). I’m more in agreement with Erazim Kohák (1984), however, who regards marginalia as ‘clues, opening up avenues of reflection’, ‘a testimony to the way a thinker integrates his intentions in a web of reflections’ (pp.221-223). For me, educated in a somewhat bricoleur fashion, footnotes and references are the small, bright, welcoming beacons that open new doors and light new paths for exploration. I am of the persuasion that one can always ignore the ringing doorbell. There have been times during this study when only one book has opened worlds.
Introduction

And citation isn’t only a process of gate-keeping. It acknowledges ‘lines of thought’. My own thought is guided by that of others. Delamont (2004) points out that it is good manners to acknowledge where your ideas come from. I have been awed at times, by how prescient were philosophers and educators writing half a century or more ago. It is for this reason that wherever possible I have given the date of first publication (or in the case of lectures, the year in which the lecture was given). The inclusion of these dates raises one’s awareness as to which lines of thinking have been taken up by scholarship and which have receded into shadow, a major theme of Part I.⁶

It is for this reason, too, that I write in the present, continuous tense: an acknowledgement that our cultural practices and lines of thought do not lie in the past, but are always-already happening now. This presses my claim that both I and you, my reader, are active participants in the culture about which I am writing, and that even where we resist, our resistance is subsumed by (and so reinscribes) the modern way of being in the world. Lines of thought do not stop with the writing, just as our cultural practices are continuous and do not lie in the past. They are still, always-already happening now.

The interdisciplinary nature of this study makes it somewhat problematic. Jacques Derrida (1995) points out that by crossing genres and disciplines we can seek the fissures in texts ‘that cannot be dominated by the systemic discourse’ (p.82). Taking his advice that we can ‘try to write in such a way that the language of the other does not suffer in mine...’ (1995, p.363), I cross the borders of philosophy, sociology, pedagogic and curriculum studies, post-colonial and Indigenous studies, and venture into Buddhism and deep ecology. My ‘methodology’ is neither thoroughly biography nor self-study; action research nor hermeneutics nor narrative research, but more like to the indefinable genre Richardson (1997, p.74) calls writing. And although the ‘post’ paradigms (post-modernity, -structuralism, -feminism, -colonialism) clearly inform my work, I cannot call myself ‘post’ anything. I have attempted, in the spirit of Derrida, to ‘open up’ the text, and so it is a mix of prose, prose poetry, journal extracts and quotes from a variety of sources as well as more conventional academic writing.
Introduction

Since I am not a philosopher, but a teacher, I return continuously to education. I try to write between philosophy and experience, and I do this by grounding my writing in short vignettes, the Sammy/Sammi stories. It is these stories (my own failures and successes and revelations and despairs) that occupy the liminal space between theory and practice, ideology and entanglement, and so expose and disrupt the more concealed ontological understandings of my culture.

Lastly, you the reader may already have noted my shift to the use of the word modern to describe my own culture. I have experimented widely with a number of expressions (occidental, Anglo-European, White, Eurocentric, Gestellian) but all seem to be pejorative. In the end, modern seems best to illustrate the frame of being that I describe more fully in Part I.

acknowledgements

Derrida calls Lévinas’s philosophy one of ‘radical empiricisms’ (1967/2004a, p.190) because it, ‘seeks to be understood from within a recourse to experience itself...and that which is most irreducible within experience: the passage and departure toward the other; the other itself as what is most irreducibly other within it: Others’ (p.103). I fear that my own effort to do likewise makes this a work of hubris, a mere attempt, yet it is beyond all else, a response to the call of all those Sammys and Sammis with whom I have fought and laughed and loved over nearly twenty years. I am first and foremost intensely grateful to them and their wider communities for all that I have been able to give and receive amongst them, and for a vocation that is always-already brimming over with life and love.

This thesis has been inspired as much by country as it has by people. I have been fortunate to live in some extraordinarily beautiful places, and it has been the call of country (my own and others, such as the wounded Arctic and Antarctic circles) that has motivated this study.
Introduction

When I started this thesis I spent hours discussing literacy learning (or the lack of it) with Ian Mowbray, and so I thank him too. Then there are the hours spent in discussion with friends and colleagues too many to name: I thank them all.

This study has taken eight years, during which time many colleagues have been generous in practical ways too. In particular I thank Melanie Ruchel, a school principal who not only encouraged my study, but allowed me to work an ever-changing range of flexible hours so that I could keep teaching, keep bread on the table, and get this thesis written.

It took some years before I was able to find and keep the ‘right’ supervisor for me. Robyn Barnacle has been extraordinary in her capacity to ‘read’ me – to trust me enough to know that my commitment was total but that I needed a long leash, and to buoy me with her enthusiasm for my drafts. Her responses, always offered as if in passing conversation, have been invaluable in developing my thinking. Gloria Latham, entering the scene as my second supervisor rather late in the piece, has been a boon with her sharp and generous eye for my moments of despair. As another educator, Gloria has more than once offered a glimmer of optimism far in the distance. I thank both of these women for their close and generous readings of my work.

Finally, I need to thank all those close friends and family – my own children in particular, and especially my daughter Celeste – for dragging me out of the house when I needed to regain a sense of perspective, for cooking meals when I just couldn’t be bothered, and for the odd neck and shoulder massage. Thank you all. I look forward, now, to returning the favours in triplicate.

...like most things worth doing... Hard work, infinite patience, learning from those who have gone ahead.

Lian Hearn: Heaven’s Net is Wide, p.89
Part I

can texts - pre-texts - sub-texts
She called a rose a rose. He called it an accumulation of cultural and biological constructions circulating around the mutually attracting binary poles of nature/artifice.

Zadie Smith: On Beauty, p.225

The last mass extinction happened 65 million years ago, when an asteroid probably collided with our planet, killing all the dinosaurs and about half of the marine animals. Before that was the Triassic extinction (also caused by an asteroid, or possibly volcanoes), which wiped out up to ninety-five percent of the species, and before that was the Late Devonian extinction. The current mass extinction will be the quickest in earth’s 4.5-billion-year history and, unlike those other extinctions, isn’t caused by natural events, but by the ignorance of human beings. If things go on like this, half of all species on earth will be gone in a hundred years.

For this reason, I did not put any butterflies on Misha’s card.

Nicole Krauss: The History of Love, p.139
...This is what you have given me

*Indifference and sentimentality*

*A metallic giggle, a fumbling hand,*

*A heart that leaps to a fife band...*

... 

*But I cannot deny my past to which myself is wed,*

*The woven figure cannot undo its thread.*

*Louis MacNeice: Valediction.*
con-texts: on being marked

In the night, I wake with a start.
Can you feel it?
...the vast vibration of the warming earth
...the awful majesty of glacier
    slipping into the oblivion of ocean
...species after species
    tumbling over the precipice
    of the known world?
Can you feel it?
A forest devoured in a day
    by the need for hamburger
    or 52 squares of housing for
    2 adults and their 2.16 children
    or these words on this paper
    ...a river gasping for watery breath
    ...all those languages
    falling away into nothingness?

And the question that keeps reverberating:
  why
  and why
  and why?

I am wondering, with Derrida, about the indelible ‘marking’ by our experience that gives rise to ‘a certain relation with the world’ (1995, p.205); about ‘the line of life’ (1995, p.118); how it is this and not that, that sets us on one path and not another – that sends us towards a particular destining. My first memories are of sunshine and air stirring the curtains over my cradle. I remember the texture of bark and the smell of earth...a floating feather and the gold glints in the muddy water of
Part I: Con-texts

dams...paspalum growing in irrigation ditches and the smell of cattle and sheep, milk and straw, the roundness of a warm egg in my hand.

And then, a vague and ever-growing puzzlement that I didn’t seem to fit naturally into my human community: an inkling that the world was not as it ‘should’ be; that this strange conjunction that was me was a poor fit with the experienced world. In the world I was born into, my interest in words, in ideas, in questions that opened the borders of our closed community to the perceived threats of Other, made me suspect and different...marginalised. Is this where this thesis begins - or is it somewhere long before, in the beginningless generations that I have come after?

My daughter once asked me

how
I came to end up
like I have.
She said I should have grown up:
racist and right-winged intolerant,
judgemental, hard-loving, a ‘good neighbour’
until you have a falling out –
   an eye for an eye but you’d give your left arm for
   one you loved
LOYAL...like the rest of my family.

But Derrida said (I’ve forgotten where)?

that ignorance is willed. He said that
it is not a passive state
but
exclusion:
just as you choose to be ignorant about brain
surgery
so you also choose to be ignorant about
marginalising others.
Part I: Con-texts

It is easier to tread the well-lit paths of academia (Gamelin 2005, Richardson 1997), and if I hadn’t been immersed in the immediacy of the classroom for the last twenty years, perhaps I could have approached this study as a simple action-research project or a critical ethnography. But quantum theory has brought undone any notions of autonomy in research. I can no longer even pretend that I can ‘bracket out’ my personal view of the world. Understanding that I know Other (whether human or more-than-human) relationally, and that everything that I understand is conditioned not just by my own experience, but by observation itself, I am ethically compelled to tell who I am... to reveal my intentions in order to give my readers ‘more spaces for critical engagement’ (Rodriguez, 2005, p.123).

Yet as Scheurich (1997) asserts, there has been ‘a startling lack of discussion about the unresolvable ambiguities of consciousness, language, interpretation, and communication’ (p.64) in research practice. ‘I am deeply apprehensive about the resourcefulness of the Same to reappear with new masks that only seem to be Other,’ he writes (p.90), lamenting the fact that whilst poststructuralism has given rise to new representational forms, method itself remains little changed and ‘even radical researchers, who have questioned the deep rules and assumptions in education, still audiotape, systematically code, and do pattern or thematic analysis of data’ (p.172).

For this is the problem for our times. After modernity, we understand that to rely on the theorised reductions of the so-called impartial observer, is to put the world in peril. Too often in the century just gone we have seen the wholesale genocide of human and other-than-human on the grounds of a well-reasoned theory about how the world should be. Now, we are confronted with the paradoxes and contradictions of being-in-the-world, yet at the same time we understand that theory/Reason can redeem the frightening banality of individual ignorance and the unexamined everyday.
Part I: Con-texts

the world I was born into:

I

1954 rural Australia
- northern Victoria
  is flat, dry.
I am born into a family of farmers
-my maternal grandfather drove
a horse-drawn plough
  at the age of 14
-my mother didn’t go to school
-my father, to attend secondary school
  ‘boarded’ in a tent in someone’s back yard
  50 miles from home
  (He never returned after contracting measles
  at the age of 14.)

I was brought up on
a staunch protestant work ethic:
robust opinions about Right and Wrong
  heavy-handed governance

Isolated

Silenced

Opinions and doubts
silenced,
I spent a lot of time
wondering if I would
really
go to Hell if
when I grew up
I voted for the Labour Party.

This is one version of my world.
Part I: Con-texts

II

I went to a girls’ secondary school intended to prepare secretaries and nurses.

Brotherless, it is probable I was sent there to keep me safe from boys, however there being nothing much else to do, I got interested in boys anyway.

I made a winning speech on local radio advocating the legalisation of the marihuana I only knew about through pop songs and tried bullying once to test my power.

I still feel sick about it.

I would assess a child like me as insecure, with poor social skills intelligence wasted white trash.

I imagined a different life in which people talked about interesting things and you could have an opinion without being chopped off at the knees: Just who do you think you are Miss High-and-Mighty?

What our family is known for: close ties hard work harmony

We support each other.

Today

This is a second reading.
III

When I was 17, I got pregnant
(all those boys) and
refusing the proffered abortion
I went to Auckland and started life
as a barefoot hippy chick
but went back ‘home’ to have my first son.
At 19, with a second child
I moved to the city to raise my boys
on my own,
but still went back often,
always

drawn by the country
and strong contradictory family ties
I have never been back
for good.

This is a third reading.

None of them is true.
They are all true.

Says Armado Rodriguez (2003):

I have no interest in determining what is Truth. I believe that our rigorous and religious pursuit of Truth is a futile and ultimately dangerous exercise...based on many misguided notions and assumptions, such as our ability to get Truth to fit neatly within the parameters of our methods (p.1).
Part I: Con-texts

White trash is a label I have been running from all my life. But I always wanted to be Martin Luther King (Junior of course).

These, then, are some of the ‘conditions for possibility’ in which I was raised: the crushing entropy of rural Australia; the distant (hardly real, but nevertheless tantalising) drumming of the civil rights movement; and a deeply embedded Christian ethic picked up in the middle stalls of the Wunghnu Methodist Church on Sundays.

What I am arguing here is that auto/bio/ethnography tells about a culture at the same time that it tells about a life. As Roth (2005) puts it, ‘Rather than describing attributes of a population from some neutral position outside the field of view, accounts of cultural meanings and practices are inevitably created from particular standpoints that set up the lines of comparison and contrast between the speaker/writer and the persons and practices described’ (p.14).

Gadamer (1976) says, ‘The meaning of a text surpasses its author not occasionally, but always’ (p.xxv). Carolyn Ellis (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), having written an ethnographic study of a Japanese fishing village, realised that in actual fact, ‘What I wrote told you more about how I organize my world than how they organized theirs’ (p.753). After the event, the view changes. History reveals what was too close at the time for us to see – both individually and as a culture.

Bernstein (1992) argues that the Stimmung of our time is the representation and treatment of the Other. One of my reasons for choosing self-study over a collaborative research model, is that I have been trying to hunt out and dig into what is behind this most obvious trope. I am trying to resist the compulsion to imitate my immediate research/educational environment. Like Scheurich, I am deeply suspicious that we are, continuously, churning out the same ideas in different guises.
I have been writing poetry. For the whole month of September it poured out of me. I would wake in the morning, saturated, and write until at least one in the afternoon, and still I could not settle to Chapter 2, which began to loom large in every conversation, in every sickened thought, in every 2am reverie - this chapter, which I expected to have complete by the end of February, still haunting me, and yet I am strangely unable to write it.

The chapter in question is to be a comprehensive poststructuralist critique of our current education system. Having dinner with a friend, I complained, yet again, about the heaviness of it: to date I have eight sheets of butcher’s paper covered with annotations directing me to references in my copious notes. ‘I feel,’ I said, ‘as if it’s a doctorate in itself, when really it’s only the context from which I begin...and I HATE that I construct these negative critiques with the seeming sole purpose of demolishing them later. I have far too much - it’s far too big. By the time I get to the positive bit it will all be over.’

It was then that I realised I have actually finished ‘that’ Ph.D. and it isn’t the one I want to write at all. The one I want to write is one full of light - something for the future - a book describing what learning/teaching has been for me; a book about learning/teaching as a way of love.

Like Luce-Kapler (2004), I have decided to adapt the con-text/pre-text/sub-text model of Usher and Edwards to frame my writing. The con-text of my life has changed so much in the past year. My father has been ill to the point of death; bushfires have devoured a third of Gippsland; we are in the teeth of the worst ‘drought’ on record; I finally reached the point beyond which I could no longer teach. I finally reached the point beyond which...
Ancient Chinese advice: When our ideas are at odds with the accepted way of the world, retreat into seclusion is a respected lifestyle choice. (Inaji, 1990, p.124-125)

Writes Luce-Kapler, ‘Underneath every line of research text, voices speak about what we should and should not do, who we are and are not. . .’ (p.73). She quotes Kristeva and others on repression by the symbolic order (p.72) and, whilst I know that every word is itself just one in the chain of substitution (Derrida, 1983, p.5; 1967/2004) I feel trussed up in ‘how the text arises from a tangle of voices, texts, textual strategies and interpretations all shaded with social and cultural significance’ (Luce-Kapler, 2004, p.70). I read yet another academic paper and, whilst I am impressed by its mastery of the language - the fine thread of reason that holds and sustains it - I am tired of the same tropes, the same metaphors, the same clever gymnastics.

I find myself longing for the grounding chaos of the classroom (‘Aw, come on Julie, chill.’) I don’t want to be clever any more. I long for the ‘unguarded possibilities’ of poetry. Poetry, writes Luce-Kapler (2004), ‘reopens space and has room for questions to echo.’ It threatens ‘the organization of the symbolic order and the stability of meaning in its silences, in its spaces that speak as loudly as words.’ (p.72)

Waking any morning in September, I could dwell for hours in the spaces between twenty words. And if they turned out not to be a masterpiece, at least they were living because they were my own. I have been imagining that I am writing at the edges of research practice, yet I see now that, wanting to be clever, I have been daring nothing at all. I want to write my own words, not the words of others. I read again the words of Laurel Richardson (1992): ‘The suppressed poet and the overactive sociologist have found each other...I do not know where the integrated self is heading, but the energy for writing (living) is immense’ (p.135).
Part I: Con-texts

In all these years of study, it is these words that have moved me to tears.

another con-text: putting square pegs into round holes

In 1996, 30% of non-Indigenous Australian students failed to meet identified performance standards in reading. This is a lot. But for the Indigenous population this figure was more than 80%. This is staggering. (One could ask with impunity, ‘Why bother with such education at all?’)

By 2003, after $662 million was spent on initiatives to improve literacy there was little improvement.\(^9\)

By 2009, after the introduction of National Testing the famed Northern Territory Interventions and the Reading Assistance Voucher Scheme, improvement in Indigenous children’s literacy and numeracy has been ‘negligible’. But never fear! COAG\(^11\) has set aside $46 million to improve the quality of the collection of statistics.

*
I have had ‘difficulty’ with spatiality for as long as I remember. My foremost childhood memories are of my difficulties with co-ordination and direction and the bewilderment I experienced upon attempting most gross motor activities. I am still acutely embarrassed by my poor memory for faces, failing to recognise people I may have met more than once. In the city, a Melways is indispensable and can actually ‘cover’ my spatial ‘deficiency’, but when stressed I have been known to lose any capacity for finding directions at all.

In the desert I have been made to look foolish on many occasions. The most notable of these was when I was driving a seven year old Indigenous Australian child home by ‘the back way’. This consisted of a seemingly simple dirt road, but we were bowling along merrily when there suddenly came a growl from beside me. ‘Have I missed the track?’ I asked. This question being deemed too ridiculous for serious consideration, I meekly turned the car around and headed back, keeping a good lookout for the turning. Of course I missed it again. In the end, we had to turn around three times before I discovered the track tucked in behind some bushes. My small companion’s response was scathing. Only her grandmother could have demonstrated more scornful disdain.

Clearly, we see the world in different ways. Just as Roth (2005) recognises that he and his collaborator Michael Bowen were coming to quite different understandings of what appeared to be the same data (‘…I now understand that only the material base, the ink and the sand patterns were the same, not how we saw them’, p.6), so I too understand that my experiences become a lens which give everything I see a particular shape and colour.

Yet it is not only nurture that makes the difference. One of my sisters was a child athletics champion. I am the only one in my family who votes Green. We all had the ‘same’ upbringing, yet clearly, from a very early age, I interpreted my experiences differently. How is it that of myself and my two sisters, with the same ‘material base’, the same ‘ink and sand patterns’, I came to such a radically different world-understanding from that of the remainder of my family?
Part I: Con-texts

In my 20 years of teaching,

educational ‘failure’

has been blamed, variously,

and amongst a myriad of other theories,

on:

social & economic disadvantage

race, gender, class discrimination

the irrelevance of curricula

lack of standards

tack of discipline

poor quality teachers

a deficiency in the teaching of thinking

the need for community partnerships

Which boils down to,

simply speaking:

Lack.

Yet it seems that
despite our best efforts to fill the deficits

nothing

no thing

has really changed.

So when I began this study, I was looking for the concealed foundations upon which educational failure was being inscribed and reinscribed. I began to seriously contemplate sameness and difference: what is it that, in spite of all the money spent and all the programs and paradigm shifts and all the very best intentions of many dedicated and thinking people, endures in such a way that the gaps persist?
and yet more con-texts: the my expendable world

In September 2007, 1906 species are on the verge of extinction\textsuperscript{12}

95 species of fish
452 species of amphibians
88 species of terrestrial and freshwater vertebrates
43 species of marine invertebrates
217 species of plants and algae
17 species of fungi
155 species of reptiles

478 species of birds
361 species of mammals
nearest kin.

1906 species at sunset, slipping over the horizon, slipping away and out of time while I argue with my noisy neighbours and complain about the price of bread.

One way or another, I’ve always been involved in social justice issues. I have worked with poor villagers in Timor, lobbied government on overseas aid spending and allocation, taught in remote Indigenous settings, and exerted much effort to enhance the local communities in which I have lived. But in 2006, when I had already begun doctoral research into ontological and epistemological hegemony in the teaching of literacy, I came upon an article in The Age newspaper which shocked me out of my anthropocentricity.
Part I: Con-texts

This article told how the world’s glaciers were melting twice as fast as was originally predicted. It elaborated on the consequences of this: plant and animal habitats, such as coral reefs, were disappearing; sea levels were already rising; and ‘globe-girdling currents’ were driving climate change and increasing the probability of major climatic catastrophes.

I had had a passing interest for some time in Arne Naess and deep ecology. I read Walden in the ‘70s and went back-to-the-Earth until I got bored and scurried back to the city. I have been a vegetarian for thirty years. But that melting glacier ‘moved into my interior’ so that for the first time I became vitally aware of the other-than-human world that was such a significant aspect of my own childhood and remains vital to my sense of who I am now.

Then in late 2006, ‘An Inconvenient Truth’, the film about Al Gore’s global-warming slide show, took Australia by storm. Environmental debate at last became page one news in Australia’s media. At the time, I was studying Antarctica with my year 9 class. We would sit in the blue light of the video player, in complete awe of the indescribable majesty of that great ice-sheet (the floating beauty of the ice-bergs, the enormity of the ice-shelves, the exquisite fragility of lichen that takes 100 years to grow a centimetre and a decade to recover from one human footprint) and when my students - healthy, socially engaged young people, raised by their loving parents ‘to do whatever you want to do and to be whatever you want to be’ - said, ‘I want to go there one day’, my heart cried out and I could only feel an overwhelming sense of failure. For what my students were expressing encompassed, for me, the modern view that says, “I’m all for tolerance and conservation, but only so long as it doesn’t impinge on my individual right to freely choose all I can have and be, and all that life can give me.”

And there is the quandary; there is the undecidable. Where does it stop, this wanting, this insatiable search for experience that supposedly progresses the subjective Self and yet tramples over the self of the Other? What is it in our schooling, in our well-meaning child-rearing, in the stories we tell ourselves, that in the words of the Buddhist nun, Tenzin Palmo, makes us ‘the only earthly creature that fouls its own nest’?
con-texts: setting out on a journey

Jean-Claude Couture (1997) writes about long-distance driving at night:

Anyone who knows the fear of hearing a car begin to falter knows the power of the *interruption*, the uncanny end to what was to be in our Imaginary, a very different journey. Such occasions are opportunities when we confront our contingency... (p.112).

I am trying to avoid the journey theme in this writing, but it inevitably emerges. Like Couture, I have done a lot of driving on remote roads, quite a bit of it at night. This can be a dangerous business: it isn’t only the engine that can falter. Out of the oblivious dark, a kangaroo or a big Brahmin ‘bullocky’ can suddenly burst into the bright glare of your headlights and before you know it your whole journey can be derailed – or even be over for good. The world circumscribed by the car headlights seems to be all there is, but you soon realise that there’s a whole country beyond them that can shatter the steady drone of vehicular comfort in a split second.

There’s something else, too, about driving at night. I only know what’s behind me and a very little way ahead. In this way my knowledge of what’s behind is far greater than what’s ahead, even though already so prescribed. So I tend to think about the country I’m passing through as what I’ve seen. I find it hard to even *imagine* that it could be anything else.

Here in Part I, I’m trying to get a glimpse of what’s in the dark, but already I see how I so neatly fit Revel’s (Revel & Ricard, 1999) conception of the two poles of Western thinking: the achievement of personal autonomy ‘and of will as a conscious agent and centre of decision making’; and the notion of a ‘civilization of action...with all the assurance of being able to transform it and bend it to man’s needs’ (pp.149-150). I see my own preoccupation with my escape from my upbringing (the formation of
Part I: Con-texts

my Self and its individual freedom) and at the same time I see along with it a deep grieving that the world isn’t as it should be, and an impulse to shape it differently; a cry for social justice that deeply believes in the possibility of creating a world willfully, and a yearning for a home that is more socially just, more forgiving and less problematic than my own.
pre-texts

(before)

‘I have learned so much this past year, I could not list all the things I have learned.’

Anna, in Ahdaf Soueif: The Map of Love, p.387

In the street [Cromwell] sees a priest carrying the host, no doubt to a dying Londoner; the passers-by uncover their heads and kneel, but a boy leans out of an upper window and jeers, ‘Show us your Christ-is-Risen, Show us your Jack-in-the-Box.’ He glances up; the boy’s face, before it vanishes, is vivid with rage.

He says to Cranmer, these people want a good authority, one they can properly obey. For centuries Rome has asked them to believe what only children could believe. Surely they will find it more natural to obey an English king, who will exercise his powers under Parliament and under God.

Hilary Mantel: Wolf Hall, pp.516-5
I can trace my father's lineage back to Cornish stone gatherers.
These were the poorest of the rural poor,
but in 1839, two brothers came as free settlers
to South Australia
and one, at least, made good.

Both my parents grew up
on large acreages in southern New South Wales.
When they married they settled on smaller blocks:
  dairy first,
  then sheep and wheat,
  then beef cattle.
  Now, in old age,
  my mother is a poultry-woman.

I was the first in all of my families
to leave the farm
to go to university
though my paternal grandfather wrote poetry
and there is a line of lay preachers (Methodists) on that side
that sits uncomfortably in my genes.

I have lived in many 'countrys':
Born on Yorta Yorta land
I have lived longer in Wurundjeri and Bunurong country
and been the guest of Jaru, Warlpiri, Ngarrindjeri peoples.
One of my sons is a 'hills' man
  who still lives in the home I made for my children
  and keeps the family tradition
  of making – in his case houses
and the other's a business-man who hardly leaves the city
  and thinks he can smell the sea in Bayswater
  the air is so fresh.
My daughter has done the things I only dreamed of.
  Living in Berlin
Part I – Pre-texts

making music as she goes
she knows the stars of the northern hemisphere skies.

We have our country
or we make it.

My blood still sings
when I walk across a cow paddock.

protocol

Indigenous Australians have a practice they observe upon meeting for the first time. I have heard them call this simply, ‘protocol’.

Upon meeting, a person gives her use-name, country and kinship name to the other, thereby making a space into which the two may step and relate. I have heard women introduce themselves by telling name and country, and then describing where they stand in the order of birth in their families and how many children they now have. I have also heard women tell where they stand in the lineage of Indigenous activism: to whom they owe their historical understanding and to whom they are passing it on. Thus a great panorama is opened for the other – a view that stretches back decades or centuries, and forward as much again. In this way, the Other is ‘invited’ into relationship. A firm ground is established on which to engage with difference and commonality.\(^\text{15}\)

Richard Bernstein (1992), remarks that ‘Typically, every significant philosopher situates his or her own work by telling a story about what happened before he or she came along...’ (p.31). Increasingly, sociological researchers do the same. It is not merely a mark of respect towards a tradition; it is a recognition that there are many ways to understand the world and what ‘research’ might be. For the horizons of social research have exploded during the last fifty years. Whereas a researcher in the 1950s could
Part I – Pre-texts

have rested secure in his (I use the gendered pronoun advisedly) methodological and epistemological tradition, this is no longer the case, and the very expansion of research methods has called its origins into question.

Scheurich (1997) reminds us that we are ‘constituted as researcher subjectivities by the dominant formational set’ (p.170). Hopi and Tibetan ‘arrays’ do not enact researchers; they enact medicine men or monks. ‘To be a researcher is not...to be a free, self-defining entity. It is like being an aspect of an ecology’ (p.171). The Tibetan Buddhist monk prays, meditates, chants; the modern researcher enacts the practices of reason (172).

Patti Lather (1991), pertinently illustrates how we ‘discover’ in our research what we already believe about the world. Using the same set of data collected from students from her ‘Feminist Scholarship’ class at Mankato State University in Minnesota, she analyses it according to four different methodologies, and so draws four very different conclusions or ‘sets of results’. In this way she illustrates the point made by so many in the research literature that ‘each practice makes the world visible in a different way’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.4).

This is to say that method always-already shapes not only how we say something, but what we say, and I do not, for a moment, consider that I am immune. Clearly we inherit ways of thinking and yet are hardly aware of the fact. If my research is to examine my unexamined assumptions, then it becomes imperative to investigate the provenance of research. What is it? Where has it come from? And why do we do it?
what calls us to research?

Method is not one piece of equipment of science among others but the primary component out of which is first
determined what can become object and how it becomes object.

Martin Heidegger: Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics, p.300

In his lecture series, ‘What Calls For Thinking?’ (WCT), Martin Heidegger asks four inter-related questions about thinking. The first question asks: ‘What is it to which we give the name “thinking”?’ The second question asks: ‘How does traditional doctrine conceive and define what we have named thinking?’ The third question asks: ‘What is called for on our part in order that we may each time achieve good thinking?’ The fourth question asks: ‘What is it that calls us, as it were, commands us to think? What is it that calls us to thinking?’ (p.383)

Further explicated, his question ‘What calls for thinking?’ therefore becomes, ‘What makes a call upon us that we should think and, by thinking, be who we are?’ (p.390) 17

In the following section, I propose to engage Heidegger’s questions to address my inquiry into research: ‘What is it to which we give the name “research”, and how is research conceived of by the various research traditions?’ ‘What does each tradition consider to be good research?’ and ‘What does it expect to find?’ In other words, I am asking, ‘What (in early twenty-first century Australian academia) calls us to research and so constitutes us as researchers?’ I choose Heidegger’s questions because they ‘draw me into the draft’ (WCT p.375) away from the din of the debate that has raged around research method
for the last half century. I seek that which, beneath the seemingly vast differences between methods, is that ‘Same’ that so troubles Scheurich. What is research trying to achieve, and so in the seeking has already found?

what is it to which we give the name research?

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Fowler & Fowler, 1964) defines ‘research’ as a, ‘Careful search or inquiry after or for; ...endeavour to discover new facts etc. by scientific study of a subject, course of critical investigation...’ This indicates that research is in a broad sense, always-already a seeking, a searching out, an inquiry in the sense of a search for something of which the presence is already suspected. The *Online Etymological Dictionary* (Harper, 2001) traces ‘research’ to 1577, an ‘act of searching closely,’ from the Middle French *recherche* (1539), and from the Old French *rechercher* to ‘seek out, search closely’. The meaning ‘scientific inquiry’ is first attested in 1639. In other words, for we moderns, there is already inherent in the word *research*, something of the scientific enterprise, and therefore the scientific model, which asks a question and expects to find an answer. Essentially, it is what research *expects* to find and how it goes about it that has been the subject of so much debate over the last forty or so years. What has been less often debated, however, is the motivation that underlies research *per se*.

research: the potted history

The following potted research history is unapologetically reductionist. Faced with a possible seven (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 & 2000a) or five (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) major research paradigms, I have reduced even further, to Crotty’s (1998) three: the positivist, the post-positivist, and the ‘sacred’. Debates about methodology have been raging for decades and are well documented. My descriptions here are meant to *evoke* those debates rather than to describe them in full. What I am actually seeking is the underlying *motivations* of researchers for undertaking each major type of research. For whilst it is obvious that each new paradigm arises out of the perceived defects of its predecessors, the less common inquiry is what the ‘sameness’ is
Part I – Pre-texts

that must be the underlying motivation of research itself. I am interested in how this is expressed in each paradigm; in the research intention, in the methods that reflect the researcher’s view of the world, and in what the research expects to find. At the end of each description I make a synopsis of the common critiques of the main paradigms. Finally, I draw out the ‘sameness’ that I believe underlies them all.

the positivist research paradigm: what is the call to positivist research?

Under the nocturnal shadow of the velvet drape, through the frame, and the lens, and the aperture, and the glass, that together directed her vision into this specialised seeing, Lucy discovered the machine that is a gift-boxed tribute to the eye. She looked as she never had, imagining a picture frame or a box that isolated the continuous and unceasing flux of things into clear aesthetic units, into achieved moments of observation.

Lucy, learning photography, in Gail Jones: Sixty Lights, p. 14

Michael Crotty (1998) traces the beginnings of social research from Comte, the nineteenth century Frenchman who believed that a universal scientific method could assist in the development of a stable and equitable society. Using the methods of natural science, Comte sought to bring about social order through observation and experiment, a method that has become known as positivism (pp.20-23).

Crotty tells us that positivist research proceeds on ‘the notion that truth and meaning reside in their objects independent of any consciousness’ (p.42). In this understanding, knowledge is ‘outside of’ human experience: there is a reality that can be studied, captured and understood. Crotty describes how the increasing influence of mathematics enabled the development of positivist research method and the large project.
The call to positivism can therefore be understood as the call to the European Enlightenment. It is the call of science and reason as that which will bring humanity out of the dark of ignorance and misery into a ‘civilised’ world; a call to social justice and freedom from want. It is the call to improvements of all kinds: to progress and development; the forging of modernity, the victory of ‘Man’ over nature and fate – in short, the manufacture of the millennial dream.

what is good positivist research?

Characteristically rational in character, positivist research is primarily concerned with the search for causes and effects. There is a strong emphasis on methodological rigour and mastery. Positivists gather and analyse empirical evidence – a body of data – in order to generate, prove and disprove theories. The parameters of the research are clearly marked so that it cannot be ‘contaminated’ by influences outside its own constructed reality, in particular by meta-physical elements such as the emotional, the spiritual, the aesthetic or the ethical, which are regarded as irrelevant. Because it deals with trends and averages, positivist research tends to work with large cohorts and asks specific questions that allow only a limited range of responses. In this way ‘norms’ are created against which comparisons can be made and theories can be generated that relate to the many, rather than the few. There is a strong emphasis on the validation of research results through their replication by other researchers.

what does it expect to find or achieve?

Positivist researchers expect that by naming causes and effecting solutions, the progress of humanity will be assured. It seeks and expects to find social deviations, to explain these deviations, and, since they are understood to be impediments to the well-being of all, to suggest solutions for their eradication. Because it provides portable theories and blueprints, positivist research findings are used to predict and guide the future, and so it provides powerful support for state policy and law. It
supports efforts by government and institutions to ‘improve’ the lot of the human world in measurable ways such as through the provision of visible/material services and the supply of wealth and products.

It should also be mentioned here that the emphasis is overwhelmingly on human well-being and that the other-than-human-world is considered to be a resource for human progress towards a utopian future.

positivism – the critique

‘The difficulty with celebrating modernity,’ [Mr. Sakamoto] declared, ‘is that we live with so many persistently unmodern things. Dreams, love, babies, illness. Memory. Death...Leaves, birds, oceans, animals. Think of your Australian kangaroo,’ he added. ‘The kangaroo is truly unmodern.’

Gail Jones: Dreams of Speaking, p.65

Critics of positivism argue that there is no such thing as value-free knowledge and that positivist research reduces the embodied experience of its ‘subjects’ into normed, statistical data that fails to acknowledge or understand difference. Even before the data-gathering begins, an illusory ‘inside/outside’ has been constructed, and by the time the data has been coded, quantified, reduced and analysed, its ‘truths’ have become like the mathematical axioms upon which it is founded: timeless, immutable, disembodied and transcendent. Smith (1999) comments that, grounded as it is on observation and experiment, positivist research can hardly do anything else than consolidate a relation to life based on spectatorship, rationalism, objectification and the reification of human beings and their relations (p.173).
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Further, critics of positivism argue that by reducing the particular to the general, the ‘researched’ are made powerless, not only by becoming voiceless in the research process itself but by the use of the research findings to label and marginalise them, and to increase government or institutional surveillance and control over their lives.

**NAPLAN**

*Every child in Australian schools*

- names taken from the database
- and attached to papers
- from sealed packages
- rolled out across the whole country
- gets 40 minutes or more
- for three days running
- to prove
- they can spell
- and read the 8 glossy stories
  - all neatly conforming to standard English.

*or just plain having a bad day*

- You are marked.
- You are packaged and sent back
- and graded and categorised
- along with your community

*And if you don’t meet the mark*

- LOOK OUT
- You and your incompetent teachers will be brought to order.

*...and don’t think we’ll let you get away with being*

- a drag on the future economy
- because we WON’T!
the post-positivist research paradigm: what is the call to post-positivist research?

But written down like that, with its little full stop, the possibility of doubt was erased. The meaning would never be questioned again. What had felt like science was the worst kind of guesswork, the kind that forgets it is a guess.

Lieutenant Rooke, on his attempts to write down the Cadigal language

Kate Grenville: The Lieutenant, p.232

Post-positivist researchers challenge the ‘certainty and precision of [modernity’s] science and the astounding control and manipulation of nature that its science makes possible’ (Crotty, 1998, pp184-185). They raise questions about the positivist faith in certainty and transcendent Truth, and criticise positivist research methods as setting up an artificial world that is outside of everyday life, ‘a mask for the researcher’s desire for political authority, a desire to assert power over the reader and the wider world’ (Heron, 1996, p.12). They caution that the world is not as it seems and not necessarily as it should or must be. Post-positivist researchers therefore answer a call to counter hegemonic discourse, understanding that every human view is coloured by language, gender, sexuality, social class, race, ethnicity and a multitude of other discursive influences.

Post-positivists subscribe in varying degrees to what Crotty (1998) describes as ‘...the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context’ (p.42). Rejecting the notion of the ‘realm of a non-discursive “deeper” reality’ (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p.39), post-positivism therefore takes a linguistic turn. At its edge (poststructuralism) thoughts, things, even the body itself, are discursive productions: the ‘self’ is the ever-shifting
intersection of cultural discourses, not only in the sense of words and their meanings and usage, but in the Foucaultian sense of ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, p.117).

By underscoring the failure of the positivists to recognise and value the particular, post-positivists shift the focus of research away from the broader society and towards the personal, responding to a call to transform and free the individual, and through the individual, the world at large. Post-positivist researchers are therefore called to subvert the dominant/dominating forms and discourses of modernity, whether by serious transgression, or by the use of pastiche and irony.

what is good post-positivist research?

Post-positivist research encompasses a spectrum of methodologies that range from the more pragmatic (e.g. case studies and action research methodologies that may include the use of some positivist methods), to the critical (which is characterised by a striving for social transformation through the conscientization of individuals and groups), to interpretivist methods that can extend from phenomenological and hermeneutic research at one end, to poststructuralist forms which can hardly be recognised as “research” at the other. Generally, however, it can be said that the post-positivist researcher locates rather than discovers, so that it is ‘a situated activity that locates the observer in the world’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3).

This of course means that post-positivist research appears in a plethora of forms, and this very range, fragmentation and uncertainty about what research actually is, throws doubt on the research project itself (see, for example, the work of Jipson & Paley, 1997). This in turn throws into question the understanding of the validity of research, so carefully guarded by the positivists. In a milieu in which ‘Everybody’s writing is suspect...’ (Richardson, 1997, p.165), who can claim what is and is not valid?
Part I – Pre-texts

The influence of feminist researchers in particular has ensured that post-positivist research will usually involve dialogic methods. Where all observations are understood as contingent - historically and culturally situated - then findings must be particularised. As Richardson (1997) puts it, ‘each of us sees from “somewhere”. No one can be “nowhere” or “everywhere”’ (p. 103). After Deleuze and Guattari (1983) post-positivist research will be *rhizomatic*, rejecting the grand narratives of Enlightenment thinking and refusing claims to its own authority, sprouting instead like weeds in the diasporas of more settled thought.

Focusing on the living or written text, post-positivist research is concerned as much with what the text suppresses or silences as it is with what it makes explicit. And the deconstructed text is itself subject to deconstruction (Gubrium & Holstein, 1999, p. 105). Gergen and Gergen (2000) emphasise that the literary approach ‘signals to the reader that the [given] account does not function as a map of the world...but as an interpretative activity addressed to a community of interlocutors’ (p. 1029). Post-positivist research therefore intends to expose the ‘contradiction between the closure of meaning that language always seeks to impose and the ultimate impossibility of that attempt’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 129).

**what does post-positivist research expect to find or achieve?**

Usher and Edwards (1994) argue that the question of progress is made incredulous by postmodernity: ‘thrown into doubt, rendered “incredible” by the continuation of want, disease, famine, destruction and the recognition of the ecological costs of “development”’ (pp. 9-10). Whilst moderate post-positivists find and tell small stories - ‘tiny moral tales’ - in an attempt to acknowledge individual human dignity and rights (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. xvi), poststructuralists find everywhere the disciplining and subjection of the individual to hegemonic discourses of every kind and the violent suppression of difference/Other. For post-positivists, the world is always already a place of violence and oppression which must be disclosed.
Part I – Pre-texts

And so above all else, perhaps, post-positivism wishes to achieve a new freedom, for self, Other and society, from the buried histories of repression, seeking always and ever ‘to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom’ (Foucault, 1987, p.46).

post-positivism – the critique

In the case of poverty the compilation of figures touched the imagination in a way individual cases could not. The hero of this study was Charles Booth who had interviewed everybody...and had produced, beginning in 1892, seventeen volumes of report on the nature and extent of poverty in London. He had mapped in street by street....and had come to the conclusion that a million people, over 30 per cent of the population of London, had not the wherewithal to subsist or continue living. This figure revealed an unjust society as individual descriptions alone could not. It was a prerequisite for putting forward constitutional and legal changes...

A.S.Byatt: The Children's Book,p.437

One of the major problems for post-positivist researchers is as Gergen and Gergen (2000) warn, that ‘there is no rationale by which qualitative researchers can claim that their methods are superior to quantitative research in terms of accuracy or sensitivity’. Gergen and Gergen point out that a thousand-word description may be no more valid ‘than a single score on a standardized test’ (p.1027). Silverman (2000), also warns against the ‘stubbornly persistent romantic impulse in contemporary sociology’ that tempts postpositive researchers ‘to gloss their methodology as “empathic understanding”’, and the related assumption ‘that interview responses index some external reality’ (pp.822-823).
The reader will already have noted that my own thinking inclines towards the poststructural. Hence I will now take the opportunity to critique post-structuralism more extensively.

For the poststructuralist view of the world produces many paradoxes for its own researchers. It rejects the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment, yet one of its major themes is resistance, the goal of which is surely a 'better' world; it proposes a notion of self as the intersection of competing discourses, yet at the same time it seeks the possibility of a self that goes beyond its historical limits (Foucault, 1987, p.50); it denies the existence of an objective field, as if hunger and physical abuse don’t matter or are hardly real, thereby depriving itself of the ‘thingness’ or ‘thereness’ that is nevertheless the genesis of research (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, pp. 104, 109); and it proclaims the end of the Grand Narrative and yet seeks to establish its own Epistemology of Fragmentation.

Mathews (1991) observes that postmodernism privileges system over substance (p.57), a sentiment that Jardine (1998) expresses as, ‘...the ugly truth that we can never stop talking, that all we have is the world of words that we have made’ (Jardine, 1998, p.41). This leaves us, I believe, both homeless (groundless) and free. Caught up in an endless cycle of deconstruction, we cannot settle anywhere long enough to put down roots. The loss of a centre, the loss of origin, leaves us without foundations of any kind, so that all things do indeed become simulacra. We no longer have the shelter of the great trees planted by our ancestors, but roam endlessly amongst a weedy, scrappy, rhizomic landscape of desire.

This is a wayward sort of freedom that lacks ties and responsibility and results in a pluralism that borders on tribalism (a tribalism of which we are, paradoxically, insufficiently critical.) Hamilton (2008) is quite correct, I think, in claiming that it is for this reason that postmodernism has been perceived by the wider public as being implicated in a general moral decline in our culture as a whole. At the same time he also makes the point (as has Habermas) that the lack of a concrete vision and the
refusal to take a firm political stance has also allowed conservatism to take a hold, merely because it is willing to take a *position* (p.125).

This makes poststructuralism, I believe, despite its strident aspirations to decolonisation, *white* and affluent through and through; a disembodied philosophy for those who do not have to confront the hunger and pain that it claims to go into battle against. We are left, I think, with mere cleverness and novelty; a dearth of meaning in a negative, nihilistic world that holds little joy beyond the satiation of insatiable desires, and no plans for the future. As Smith (1999) asks, ‘Where does one go...after the meaning-drivenness of the West has been critiqued?’ (p.68).

Yet I know

my upbringing tells me

text critique is essential.

We cannot for a moment stop thinking.

**the new paradigm : what is the *call* to ‘Sacred’ research?**

One of the reasons I had given up post-structuralist thought was the disagreeable amount of imposing that went on in it. You decided what you were looking for, and then duly found it – male hegemony, liberal-humanist idées reçues. etc. This was made worse by the fact that the deconstructionists and others paid lip-service to the idea that they must not impose...And yet they discovered the same structures, the same velleities, the same evasions quite routinely in the most disparate texts. I wanted most seriously not to impose that sort of a reading...

*Phineas G. Nanson, in A.S. Byatt: The Biographer’s Tale, p.144*
Kuhn (1962/1970) argues that we produce new paradigms when we can no longer keep on justifying the old ones. The 1990s witnessed the rise of a new research paradigm that Denzin and Lincoln (2000a) name ‘the seventh moment’, ‘a sacred epistemology that recognizes the essential ethical unity of mind and nature...[that] places us in a non-competitive, non-hierarchical relation to the earth, to nature, and to the larger world’ (p.1052).

New paradigm researchers are called to re-embodiment and re-connection with the earth in a movement that counters the linguistic turn of poststructuralism. This research does not confuse living encounters with symbolic constructs, and it recognises a ‘need to reach beyond merely acknowledging the existence of multiple perspectives and voices to working with them’ (Reason & Torbert, 20001, p.7, my emphasis). In this respect, it takes on and moves forward an ethic of ‘care’. Ladson-Billings (2000), in her paper about racialised discourses, writes about the importance of concrete experience in this ethic of caring: ‘What have you been through? What are you talkin’ about? How do I know you care and, by the way, who are you?’ (p.270).

New paradigm researchers answer a call to celebrate, to affirm the place of humans as participants in an existent cosmos, not as separate, but as those members of an ecological whole who have the special capacity to reflect on and celebrate self and cosmos by representing, affirming and transforming that which is. Heron (1996) calls this a ‘post-conceptual world’ in which words do not express the extralinguistic world, but are revelatory of it (p.185).

New paradigm researchers are called to heal community in its widest sense - people, plants, animals, the earth. It has strong moral and transformative goals. By restoring the individual to community and the wider world we are made whole once again. Meaning and mystery are restored to human experience, ‘so that the world is once again experienced as a sacred place’ (Heron & Reason, 1997, p.284).
what is *good* new paradigm research?

Good new paradigm research is highly participatory and often collaborative. There is a radical re-visioning of self from individual to relational. And since our experiences in the world are the ground of our knowing, it is highly experiential; action-based, yet retaining a reflexive cycling between theory and life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.41), moving back and forth in time, into the feelings of the participants and back out into the now restored objective world, across epistemological and axiological fields and back again, in a continuous effort to create understanding (p.60).

This makes new paradigm research not so much dialogic as conversational. Both the human and other-than-human worlds are storied (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.140). Participants are likely to have equal standing with the researcher and their voices will be heard clearly in the research. It is assumed that by telling our stories and listening attentively to others, our own practical knowing will be transformed, thereby opening the way to wider community transformation (Heron, 1996).

what does new paradigm research expect to find and achieve?

Heron (1996) is specific about the kinds of outcomes that can be expected from this kind of research. These are: personal transformation through participation; the presentation of insights; propositional reports that describe, imagine and comment; and the acquisition of practical skills to do with participatory knowing and collaborative action (p.37). Seventh moment research is therefore inherently political, though in a transformative rather than a transgressive sense.\(^{19}\) It is designed to facilitate mutual transformation (Heron & Reason, 1997). In this sense it takes up a movement begun in qualitative research to explore the life-world of the researcher him/herself, and extends it beyond the reflection that became *de rigueur* in poststructuralism into a much more reflexive turn.\(^{20}\)
Reason and Bradbury (2006), influenced by Freire, argue that new paradigm research matches the pedagogy of the oppressed with ‘a pedagogy of the privileged’. It liberates us from ‘the constraints of the Western worldview’ (p.10). New paradigm researchers therefore expect to produce research ‘that challenges the reader to take action in the world, to reconsider the conditions under which the moral terms of the self and community are constituted’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a, p.1054). This is an understanding that our knowing grows out of being ‘uncertainly in action rather than reflectively “at rest” analysing the data set’ (Reason & Torbert, 2001, p.3).

new paradigm research – the critique

What I thought might calm me was the reminder that, for all our concerns, we were still part of this natural dependency – for the animals that we ate grazed the plants which, like our vegetables and fruits, were nourished by the soil formed by these organisms. But even as I squatted to enrich the forest floor, I could not believe in the primary significance of these grand cycles. Just beyond the oxygen-exhaling trees stood my poison-exuding vehicle, inside which was my gun, and thirty-five miles down teeming roads was the enormous city... What, in this description, was necessary to the carbon cycle, or the fixing of nitrogen? We were no longer in the great chain. It was our own complexity that had expelled us from the Garden. We were in a mess of our own unmaking.

Ian McEwan: Enduring Love, p.207

We have probably not yet gone far enough down this road for a strong body of criticism to have consolidated, yet a clear-sighted analysis already detects the fervour with which some researchers embrace the ‘sacred’. I note with discomfort, the
clamour for *poiēsis* (without any clear definition of what this might mean) and a celebratory zeal that washes too easily over the difficulties of life. And whilst a more embodied research counters the never-ending cycles of criticism that Phineous Nanson complains about, I wonder, with Silverman (2000) whether a reliance on participant views may lack rigour. Again, my own early attempts at collaborative research proved that it is much more difficult than the rhetoric suggests. I could find no guarantee, for example, that my co-participants (who had less time, less interest and less expertise than I had) could be represented fairly in any phase of the research.

I distrust, too, the distinctly utopian flavour of new paradigm research. I have a concern that the quasi-religious/‘new-cosmology’ thinking in some of this research, which emphasises the current state of human-being as a phase in the evolution of a more conscious earth (see for example, Reason & Torbert, 2001; Swimme & Berry, 1994) is a view that seems dangerously close to the teleological path to Enlightenment. Concomitant with such a view there is, I believe, a real danger of elitism and of the marginalisation of anyone who disagrees or even wishes merely to avoid communal zeal. As Gergen and Gergen (2000) put it, ‘Each group champions a particular vision of the good, and, by implication, those not participating in the effort are less than good and possibly obstructionist’ (p.1036).

**concluding the potted history: the my epistemological cage**

...the purpose of knowledge-making is so rarely debated.

*Reason & Bradbury: Handbook of Action Research, p.2*

Concluding my potted history of research, I find that I must concur with Scheurich (1997), that the great battles that have raged in research circles over the last half century have been more about method than motivation. For after methodological
considerations have been peeled away, the unexamined narrative that remains is one of progress towards a human utopia. From the major project of modernity, which sought physical means to progress the human condition; to the paralogy and pastiche of the postmodern, which would free the marginalised by rupturing and transgressing the grand narratives of modernity; to the sacred ‘turn’ that refigures the self as relational to both the human and other-than-human worlds, the project remains one of making: of transformation...of progress towards the great Millennial Dream of a world free from want, pain, and injustice. And it seems that each new call has become more urgent, more strident, more revelatory; each proclaiming a new and better way, an ultimate method for redeeming the human condition and creating paradise on earth.

It seems, therefore, that, as our dictionary definition described it, the research enterprise – no matter of which complexion - does seek after something, and that this that it seeks is outside, in the world. It is this ‘going forth – from out of itself’ that Heidegger (AWP, p.149) argues marks our age.

I will argue in the third section of this Part I (under Sub-texts) that it is this idea of making the human condition better that is the most dominant and problematic theme of our time, however before I do that, I wish to consider one more pre-text crucial to my topic: our current understanding of education.
fully articulated critical pedagogy (e.g. Apple, McLaren). By 2004, when I had started into more specifically philosophical reading and had moved back into work with white middle-class students, I was entirely taken up with poststructuralist discourses about hegemony (e.g. Foucault, Lather). At this point I became interested in narrative and collaborative inquiry (e.g. Ellis, Heron & Reason). Then, as I have related here in Contexts, it was the ecological crisis that moved my thinking along once again.

The interesting point to make here is that I more often than not believe my thoughts to be originally my own, whereas my potted research history clearly reveals them to be the residues of the thinking of my epoche. The truth is that whilst I cannot say that I am working out of any one paradigm or another, my thought and practice emerges from resonances so deep beneath the strata of my everyday understandings that I can hardly trace or recognise them. I can see how thoroughly I have been moved by discourses of which I was not even fully conscious or cognizant - a perfect illustration of Derrida’s statement that there is nothing outside the text and so no position from which to get an ahistorical view. It is true that there is a linear development going on in my thinking and practice, but I doubt that this ‘development’ makes me a ‘better’ teacher or researcher, and I suspect sometimes that I am just going round in circles. In short, I am not at all sure that it isn’t all just more of Scheurich’s ‘Same’. Perhaps, after all, all that I can say is that I merely reflect the world around me.

Yet some persistent themes are emerging from my potted history of research: Under the pendulum swing of action and reaction from one paradigm to the next, there remain substrata of themes revolving around notions of production and progress, transformation, justice and equality that persist...ideas that lead
Part I – Pre-texts

towards the freedom and liberation that we in ‘the West’ think of as natural and unproblematic. It is these ideas that I now want to explore in my own practice and in the culture that my practice so obviously reflects.

another pre-text: discovering the stranger

There were places Lucy would travel to where her own ignorance astounded her. She entered customs and buildings she knew nothing about. People around her spoke and she understood not a single word. She considered herself a crude cipher of the West, carrying her own culture as impeding knowledge. This territory she had entered was on the whole indifferent to her presence, and might as well engulf or erase the speck of empire she accidentally represented.

Gail Jones: Sixty Lights, p.1

Kenneth Tobin (2005) describes his work at City High School (CHS) in New York. As a teacher educator (he teaches a science methods course to pre-service teachers), he was aware that most of his students ‘were struggling to enact much of anything I suggested’ (p.183). He laments the fact that ‘science education invariably falls short of its potential for social transformation’ and he wants to ‘make a difference as an urban science educator’ (p.181).

In a matter of weeks, however, he reached the

I wrote this essay about my involvement with schools on a remote island in West Timor, in 1996, two years after my first visit there; and very likely at about the same time that Tobin was working at City High School. I include it here because it is a fine counterpoint to Tobin’s account and to another of my own stories that follows. At this point, I am interested in how a certain brash naivety pervades my assurance that the world can be shaped to my satisfaction, and that I myself hold the ‘solutions’ to problems of poverty and social justice. I reproduce it here,
Part I – Pre-texts

conclusion ‘that most of what I knew about science education was mainly applicable to middle class values and settings’ (p.183). Realising he had to learn, himself, ‘how to teach science in urban schools where most students were African American, living in conditions of relative poverty’ (p.183), he committed to teaching the most challenging group of students (the Opportunity class at CHS) for at least four years, ‘so that I would not be regarded as a researcher undertaking a short-term study; leaving an unchanged system after attaining my goals’ (p.183). Understanding that ‘I could not effectively teach in this community without first knowing what it means to live here’ (p.182), he moved closer to the neighbourhood and explored his new environment with the goal of becoming ‘streetwise’.

Tobin describes the difficulty of teaching students who have poor attendance, poor basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and just plain bad attitude - a class described by one of the students as ‘the bottom of the trash can’ (p.184). He describes the kinds of incidents common in the literature of critical pedagogy: a confrontation between a teacher and a student with attitude; the high incidence of suspensions amongst Opportunity Class students (suspensions that are welcomed by the students as legitimate reasons to

unedited, as it appeared in the Nusatengarra Association (NTA) newsletter of December, 1996. 22 It is titled:

‘A WELL IS NOT A WELL, & A WALL IS NOT A WALL…’

Several years ago I met a young Ethiopian who was working for a Christian development organisation in his country. He told a story which I have never forgotten, and which has coloured all my thinking about development ever since.

This non-government organisation (NGO) had gone into a village in Ethiopia and consulted with the people regarding their needs. As we all do, of course, the NGO had a certain agenda. It was obvious that the village was sorely in need of health and education infrastructures, and so they argued for these things. The people however, had a very clear view of their greatest priority... ‘We want a football field’ they said, and wouldn’t be budged.

It is to the credit of the NGO that they listened to the people, and built the football field. And now they began to see the miracle that they had unwittingly brought about. For the community flowered...first the football field, then the school, then the hospital...and
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stay home or on the street, but which contribute further to their sense of alienation from school); interruptions to learning made for petty administrative reasons, or for disciplinary action based on such minor misdemeanors as uniform infringements (e.g. a hat worn backwards).

He introduces a stream of activities designed to interest the students by linking to their everyday lives, but he finds that the combination of poor attendance (including lateness), poor basic skills, and their negative attitudes to learning/teaching conspire against anything more than the irregular, desultory participation of a very few.

He describes the students’ disinterest in teaching/learning; his fear of taking them outside the school boundaries; their refusal to participate in hands-on activities; their refusal to comply with requests, including basic safety rules. He describes how they wanted mostly to sleep, talk, or create distractions in the classroom. ‘It did not appear as if they were able to generate open-ended questions and certainly they did not regard questions as springboards [for inquiry]...In fact, when I asked questions designed to stimulate inquiry the students answered them using as few words as possible’ (p.188). He laments the fact that the students (along with their usual teacher and for all I know, even that was only a beginning.

So the changes that I noticed this second time round, two years after my first visit to Semau, are not just physical changes, and so are difficult to put into words. This time, having a yard-stick to measure by, I noticed changes that can’t simply be measured by the completion of a well or a wall. These changes go right to the root of why I became involved in the NTA in the beginning, and why I teach. They are about the community, and the empowerment of the individual within the community. ‘What would it be like,’ I thought, ‘to be a member of a community partnered to another? What would the world be like if there was ongoing communication across mountains and deserts and sea-routes? What if the world was criss-crossed with a whole network of these “songlines” ...links of responsibility and caring and interest and friendships... to be experienced by people of all ages regardless of race and kinship ties?

For these are the true roots of development. We are not sinking wells and building walls... we are making relationships. We are not just dealing with rock and earth and cement... we are dealing with people.
Tobin is clear that his advice to prospective teachers before this experience would have been to offer small group work, keep the use of textbooks to a minimum, and, ‘enact problem-centred learning, emphasize inquiry and hands-on activities’ (pp.196-197).

He writes, ‘I would have encouraged the [pre-service teacher education] students to connect their science activities to technology and the lifeworlds of their students and I would have expected all of my suggestions to work. Failure would have been interpreted as an inability of prospective teachers to teach appropriately’ (p.197).

Yet at the time of writing, he feels that he has failed to engage these students. He blames this failure on his own low expectations, the imposed curriculum, and the fact that ‘...I could never actually connect with the students’ interests and performance capabilities... It would have been preferable if I had found out about their interests and built a science curriculum around them’ (p.197). This, he argues, would be ‘good pedagogy when we drove into Otefu Besar it was evening. Most of the village people were gathered in the school yard, the young people playing volley-ball, the children running about, the adults gathered in animated discussion. Pak Mes had arranged with them to meet with us, and they had, he said, dug the hole for their well.

What was my astonishment then, to see the well even now in the throes of completion... three men smoothing the concrete surrounds. This is the first of our completed projects in the flesh, and it is hard to describe what passed through my mind... memories of the struggles and despairs inevitably involved with fund-raising and all that goes with it... long hours on the telephone, writing mail-outs, scratching my head over lots of dead ends and a very few leads... memories of my class at Ghilgai, and their unquestioning attitude to the project... a ‘why wouldn’t you want to be involved?’ attitude.

And then, what it had taken for this community to have this well dug... the Yayasan workers to coordinate everything, the diviner to be procured, the hole to be dug, concrete to be transported and laid... a whole network of activity stretching from Melbourne to this tiny village and resulting in this twelve metre
and a demonstration of my trust in them’ (p.197). In fact, he did ask them ‘about their interests, how to improve the class, and what they wanted to get from the course’, but I was not able to discern any promising starting points from their responses’ (p.197).

He begins to elaborate on the idea of ‘an individualized program that students can access automatically when they arrive in class’. This, he argues, would be a way of dealing with their sporadic attendance. It ‘makes students responsible for their own progress’ (p.192) and ‘is also a potential way out of the relative failure of whole class lecturing’ (p.194).

Tobin wants to build a self-regulated community of learners. ‘In such a community the participants want to learn, and trust and have respect for one another. The students can develop the rules and the custom of adhering to them, not breaking them’ (p.187).

He uses several instances to elaborate on this goal. He wants the students to, ‘accept responsibility for their own actions, including their need for sleep and their use of class time. I would like to see them as autonomous, including their acceptance or responsibility for participating in deep hole now being encased in still-green concrete (interestingly, the colour of the classroom from which the funds to build it were raised!).

But there’s more. As Pak Sam (the new headmaster here) showed me the hole dug for the toilets, he spoke to me about the possibility of us providing them with funds for gates. The wall surrounding the school also encloses seventeen homes, and is in disrepair. His argument was that if the gates were fitted at the front of the school, then the residents could be persuaded to repair the walls.

And now it began to dawn on me. We’re not just digging wells and building walls. We’re building community. First a well, then a wall, then gardens, then... what? Once people become empowered, the sky’s the limit, as can be seen by the village at Otefu Kecil, a desa that two years ago to my outsider’s eyes looked about as down-trodden and without hope as a village could be, and yet now is as neat as a new pin... enterprising to say the least.

I couldn’t help but compare what I was seeing and participating in, with the dams project at Besi Pae... the product of another time and place, and another way of thinking, with fleets of white four-
class, completing assignments, and learning at acceptable levels' (p.192).

As time passes, this theme of self-regulation becomes a major refrain. Taking one student's advice to, “Back off. Only teach them what they want to be taught”, he makes the decision only to teach those who are interested. ‘As for those who are not participating? That is their decision. The door is always open if they take the initial step to get started. Of course I do not abandon them and still make invitational overtures to them to get involved... It is better to focus my energy on those who will participate and want to learn than to antagonize those who are determined to resist and disrupt the learning of others’ (p.194).

Reaching this point, he begins to advocate for ‘alternative activities’ – here meaning conventional paper and pen work. Even though he regards this as ‘sad’, he argues that it can be a starting point for greater participation. ‘Let them start from what they can do and over time, when they learn how to participate consistently, then they can learn new ways to participate’ (p.194).

He then proffers a few theoretical suggestions which he believes will be of use in teaching the Opportunity Class and those like it. He suggests wheel-drives arriving from Kupang every Monday morning and returning every Friday evening for months or years, and now a problem that the local people don’t know how to solve. How much more empowering to dig your own well and know how to repair it... how different for a community to go through the process of deciding where and how to dig that well than for outsiders to build something at great expense that the local people have no understanding of or power over.

Two weeks before our visit, the first training days were held for the 35 or so teachers from the five southernmost schools on Semau. Eighty or so people turned up and were fed and transported at our expense! At first I was shocked, and then I began to see that we are not just training teachers.

All along, we have said that our aim in the Schools’ Project is to engender the kind of community support for the schools that the Churches enjoy. This is the beginning of that kind of support! And what did they talk about at this training weekend? In my mind these teachers would have been exploring the intricacies of curriculum, but no. They discussed such elevated subjects as, ‘how to keep a tidy yard’ and (shock horror) how to plan lessons (before you enter the
that computers and the internet could be used to give students access to their individualised programs ‘from remote locations such as home, public libraries and computer laboratories’ (p.192).

He proposes setting up a portfolio system to enable the more effective running of the individual work programs by having the appropriate materials on hand in the classroom. This, he argues, will ameliorate the problems of frequent absence, lateness and the fact that the students rarely bring their equipment to class (p.195). He suggests that parent/carer participation is vital, and sees the assumption that they are disinterested in their children’s education as further evidence of negative stereotyping.

Finally, Tobin writes about his conviction that teachers must earn the right to teach students by developing first rapport, then trust. He suggests that, ‘I had failed to be a stable source of support for the learning of students who needed me most. I realized that my middle class life and value system saturated what I considered to be rational decisions’ (p.200). He acknowledges that in the beginning he had ‘...assumed I already knew how to teach science and it was just a question of adapting or applying what I knew to urban contexts’ (p.200). And he feels that it is ‘imperative that I communicate these findings to student classroom!). Once again I was humbled by my complete ignorance of the needs and culture of these people, and the absolute requirement that they design their own ways out of their poverty and isolation.

What came out of these training days was a multitude of other effects. There is not only burgeoning community support, new respect for the teachers, improved teaching in the classrooms, but the teachers discovered that they really could get their hands on the elusive curriculum outlines they were seeking two years ago (in fact, at the time of my visit, some of these books were already circulating amongst the schools), and they learnt that they have access to funds for the maintenance of their buildings. Already they are able to seek out solutions for themselves, and to move their communities to support them. Future training days will be jointly funded by us, the teachers, the Yayasan and the community, because now, their value is clear.

So a well is not a well, and a wall is not a wall. But a further mystery now entices us. At Otefu Kecil, where the community is booming, a certain reluctance surrounds the Schools’ Project. I mentioned my idea of revolving libraries. This having gone down like a
teachers because they should not feel that the research and theory they read necessarily applies in all contexts' (p.197).

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The Otefu Besar school went on to complete its toilet and wall-building projects. Gardens were planted around the school and the roof was repaired. To my knowledge, the teacher-training continues to this day. When I last visited in 1997, the topic was, ‘How to teach higher mathematics’.

I note now, however, that I left a vital piece of information out of the 1996 telling. When I first visited Otefu Besar, it was at night-time and by lamp-light. The school was in great disrepair and the teachers gloomy. They really had no suggestions as to how they could improve their school. Our strict policy was to raise funds for the raw materials for projects to be implemented by the community: it was in desperation that I suggested they might like a well, and probably in desperation that they accepted, since they could think of nothing else. But on the return visit I was amazed to discover that there was already a village well situated about fifteen metres from the school building. If I had known about this well I would never have suggested another and the whole Semau Schools story would have been entirely different.

*

Tobin’s paper resonates in me. He exposes his vulnerability by putting his own learning/teaching (not that of his students) in the spotlight. Having worked over many years with students marginalised from the mainstream, I found it immensely
courageous and engaging. I too, have lived in that yawning gap between theory and the embodied world: for as Tobin points out, teaching is always contextual. He writes, ‘The fallibility of knowledge of teaching as it is written and spoken was never more evident to me than when I tried to apply what I knew to urban settings’ and he continues that he now considers his own participation in an active classroom to be essential to his teaching of science methods to future teachers (p.200).

Yet I believe he continues to resist this ‘participation’. It seems to me that his ideology limits his listening and his response, and that he continues to think of teaching/learning as ‘adapting and applying what I knew to urban contexts’. So here is Tobin’s story again, but this time it is accompanied by a critical analysis that is informed to some degree by the findings of my research history.

Kenneth Tobin (2005) describes his work at City High School (CHS) in New York. As a teacher educator (he teaches a science methods course to preservice teachers), he was aware that most of his students ‘were struggling to enact much of anything I suggested’ (p.183).

Tobin uses the word ‘enact’ repeatedly with regard to the teacher’s actions. This seems to cast the teacher role as active whilst the students are acted upon. This line of thinking contradicts the advocacy of student-centred curriculum that appears to be a keystone of his educational philosophy.

To ‘enact’ also implies a separation of the acting subject from the object being acted upon. In this way it disembodies the ‘actor’ from the ‘action’.

And Tobin doesn’t seem to apply his ‘student-centred’ principles to his graduate students by inquiring about their lives. He doesn’t say what they are doing in their classrooms. Are they having ‘conventional’ (or any other kind of) success with traditional science teaching methods? What his students are actually doing is invisible to him. It seems he only sees through the lens of his own pedagogical preference.

He laments the fact that ‘science education invariably falls short of its potential for social transformation’ and he
wants to ‘make a difference as an urban science educator’ (p.181).

Tobin appears to work out of a critical pedagogy. He regards education as potentially transforming. He suggests that ‘mainstream’ science education is for the middle class and inaccessible to urban/poor students. He argues that science education could transform the students, education generally, and society.

In a matter of weeks, however, he reached the conclusion ‘that most of what I knew about science education was mainly applicable to middle class values and settings’ (p.183).

He seems very clear that he ‘knows’ what needs to be done to bring about transformation. He ‘knows’ he has to learn this other culture. He ‘knows’ his whiteness is ‘the invisible marker against which otherness is defined’ (McLaren, 1998, p.238). Yet he seems to believe that his whiteness can be cured by getting to know the students and their neighbourhood and then adapting his teaching to suit. His statements indicate that he views success in teaching in this community as requiring an intellectual adjustment together with a few minor practical considerations.

Realising he had to learn, himself, ‘how to teach science in urban schools where most students were African American, living in conditions of relative poverty’ (p.183), he committed to teaching the most challenging group of students (the Opportunity Class at CHS) for at least four years, ‘so that I would not be regarded as a researcher undertaking a short-term study; leaving an unchanged system after attaining my goals’ (p.183).

Again, he seems to regard teaching/learning as a set of practices that will not involve too much discomfort on his part. Tobin doesn’t entertain the possibility that his students might be fundamentally different from himself. He has yet to encounter Levinas’s L’Autre – that which completely disturbs and unsettles us to the extent that we can no longer continue to hold our old beliefs.

Understanding that ‘I could not effectively teach in this community without first knowing what it means to live here’ (p.182), he moved closer to the neighbourhood and explored the streets with the goal of becoming ‘streetwise’.
He is keen to be seen as an insider, yet seems only dimly aware (in spite of his stated awareness of the dangers of romanticising his position) that he views himself as a sort of maverick, riding in to rescue his students, education and society. He writes of ‘my goals’ - again in the sense of teaching as enactment. He has an almost naive certainty that he will achieve his goals, as if the students and their community have little part to play in how events evolve – as if he is about to produce a magical transformation and then move on. I see this as very like my work in Timor and, later, my own ‘goals’ for ‘my work’ in the Australian desert.

Tobin describes the difficulty of teaching students who have poor attendance, poor basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and just plain bad attitude; a class described by one of the students as ‘the bottom of the trash can’ (p.184).

He describes the kinds of incidents common in the literature of critical pedagogy: a confrontation between a teacher and a student with attitude, the high incidence of suspensions amongst Opportunity Class students (suspending that are welcomed by the students as legitimate reasons to stay home or on the street, but which contribute further to their sense of alienation); interruptions to learning made for petty administrative reasons, or for disciplinary action based on such minor misdemeanours as uniform infringements (e.g. a hat worn backwards).

Note that his critique is a social/economic one. He is talking at a systems level rather than at a personal one. His complaint is about education as that which is ‘in reality a “ranking” system that legitimates differences based on race, gender and social power and locks students into positions of limited opportunity’ (McLaren, 1998, p.9).

He untiringly introduces a stream of activities designed to interest the students by linking learning activities to their everyday lives, but he finds that the combination of poor attendance (including lateness), poor basic skills, and their negative attitudes to learning/teaching conspire against anything more than the irregular, desultory participation of a very few.

Tobin’s interpretation of ‘what the students are interested in’ is skin-deep. His focus seems to be exclusively on their external behaviours. Again, this is a socio-economic view. He seems not to
inquire into how his students think and feel about things. This suggests again that he regards teaching/learning as a set of practices.

And there is a kind of paternalism in the assumption that these students cannot/will not be interested in any world beyond their own, or indeed that the mainstream curriculum and practices might be of real interest to them. He blames ‘his’ lack of success on the students’ negative attitudes to learning/teaching but fails to question whether in fact the activities are appropriate and engaging.

He describes the students’ disinterest in teaching/learning; his fear of taking them outside the school boundaries; their refusal to participate in hands-on activities; their refusal to comply with requests, including basic safety rules. He describes how they wanted mostly to sleep, talk, or create distractions in the classroom.

Tobin depicts the behaviours of his CHS students, not as the actions of individuals, but as the manifestations of the power-relations of the wider society. He describes all the negative behaviours that obstruct the achievement of his goals, but, except for the one student from whom he takes ‘advice’, he doesn’t actually describe them as people. At the same time that he is describing these activities as socially constructed deviance, however, we see that as they impact on him personally, he begins to re-vision this deviance as ‘real’.

‘It did not appear as if they were able to generate open-ended questions and certainly they did not regard questions as springboards [for inquiry]... In fact, when I asked questions designed to stimulate inquiry the students answered them using as few words as possible’ (p.188).

Tobin is certain that inquiry-based learning is ‘good/right’ learning. He regards the fact that his students do not ask or respond to questions as a deficiency. He fails to examine what questions (or indeed, talk) mean to his students or how ‘the question’ is regarded in the wider culture of these students. He appears not even to imagine teaching/learning as possible in any form other than inquiry.24

He laments the fact that the students (along with their usual teacher and the school principal) ‘focused on the attainment of goals like those included in the School District’s standards’ (p.196).
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He constantly disparages what the students know and hold to be of value, even whilst promoting the value of ‘starting with what they know’. He clearly holds the school district standards as valueless. This view understands learning as more important than the qualification – it doesn’t acknowledge that for these students, the attainment of school district standards might be the difference between a job or unemployment, or that it might be symbolic of ‘success’ in the wider social environment, and therefore important to a sense of connection and dignity.

Tobin is clear that his advice to prospective teachers before this experience would have been to offer small group work, minimise the use of texts, and, ‘enact problem-centred learning, emphasize inquiry and hands-on activities and, to the extent feasible, participate in field trips’ (pp.196-197).

It is interesting to note here that even whilst he’s arguing that these sorts of activities fail to bring ‘success’, this list correlates with what he continues to promote as good teaching – this in spite of the fact that he has abandoned attempts to teach this way himself.

He writes, ‘I would have encouraged the [pre-service teacher] students to connect their science activities to technology and the lifeworlds of their students and I would have expected all of my suggestions to work. Failure would have been interpreted as an inability of prospective teachers to teach appropriately’ (p.197).

Tobin can only understand his ‘failure’ within the limited field of possibility offered by critical and current mainstream educational theory. He doesn’t question his assumption that there must be ‘reasons’ and a ‘solution’, and he does not speculate that his ‘failure’ could be one of ideology rather than method. And there are signs that he is beginning to justify this ‘failure’. He is, as Scheurich (1997) describes, ‘perilously close to a retreat into a form of certainty and closure’ (p.222) that will justify abandoning his CHS students in favour of shoring up his critical interpretation of the existing socio-economic order.

Yet at the time of writing, he feels that he has failed to engage these students. He blames this failure on his own low expectations, the imposed curriculum, and the fact that ‘…I could never actually connect with the students’ interests and performance capabilities… It would have been
preferable if I had found out about their interests and built a science curriculum around them' (p.197).

It is because he believes so strongly in this ideology that his guilt now becomes evident. Underneath the blaming of the students and the system, one senses a deepening wound that he has not been able to achieve himself, what he has required of his (pre-service teacher education) students.

This, he argues, would be ‘good pedagogy and a demonstration of my trust in them’ (p.197). In fact, he did ask them ‘about their interests, how to improve the class, and what they wanted to get from the course’, but ‘I was not able to discern any promising starting points’ from their responses’ (p.197).

In asking the CHS students for guidance, Tobin assumes that these young people - who he acknowledges as disengaged and in all ways learning-disfunctional - can know what ‘successful’ learning/teaching is. He then blames himself for not being able to draw suitable responses from them.

He begins to elaborate on the idea of ‘an individualized program that students can access automatically when they arrive in class’. This, he argues, would be a way of dealing with their sporadic attendance. It ‘makes students responsible for their own progress’ (p.192) and ‘is also a potential way out of the relative failure of whole class lecturing’ (p.194).

The idea of the individualised program is closely tied up with notions of progress and autonomous individualism. Inherent in it is the belief that no individual should be ‘held back’ by the behaviour or capacity of any other...that all individuals should be given optimal opportunities to ‘reach their potential’. Yet this view is opposed by the notion that learning/teaching occurs in community.

His blanket statement about whole class teaching as ‘lecturing’ confirms the ideological view that teaching/learning is an individual pursuit. As an unexamined assumption, it works against the idea of community and sees students as enclosed, autonomous entities who rub up alongside each other as they ‘construct’ their own particular understandings of the world.

There is now an increasing sense that he is giving ground on his original goals as he projects his theoretical learning rather than reporting on what is actually happening. (Note that at no
stage in the paper does he give any indication of actual learning.)
At the same time he begins to overtly theorise his failure, linking
it to the dominance of ‘the system’. Breuer (2005, referring to
work done by Devereux in the 1960s) refers to this as the moment
when the observing takes over from personal experience and ‘the
epistemic subject passes into a “mental phenomenon”’ (p.112-113). I note here that this is a protective behaviour. The
theorisation of his failure coincides with, and compensates for,
Tobin’s increasing sense of failure and his resultant guilt.

Tobin wants to build a self-regulated community of
learners. ‘In such a community the participants want to
learn, and trust and have respect for one another. The
students can develop the rules and the custom of adhering
to them, not breaking them’ (p.187).

Of all of his statements, this one most clearly portrays his
whiteness. Having delineated the lack of self-regulation of these
students in great detail, Tobin now declares that he will build a
community in which they can be self-regulating.

The question remains as to how he thinks they will suddenly
become self-regulating, in the manner that he describes.

He uses several instances to elaborate on this goal. He
wants the students to ‘accept responsibility for their own
actions, including their need for sleep and their use of class
time. I would like to see them as autonomous, including
their acceptance of responsibility for participating in class,
completing assignments, and learning at acceptable levels’
(p.192).

Despite his early efforts to become ‘streetwise’, Tobin fails to
acknowledge that these students already function in a self-
regulating way, with their own rules and sanctions. His
‘community of learners’ is envisaged as a group of self-contained
individuals, interacting in particular (White middle class) ways.

As time passes, this theme of self-regulation becomes a
major refrain. Taking one student’s advice to, “Back off.
Only teach them what they want to be taught”, he makes
the decision only to teach those who are interested. ‘As for
those who are not participating? That is their decision. The
door is always open if they take the initial step to get
started. Of course I do not abandon them and still make
invitational overtures to them to get involved... It is better
to focus my energy on those who will participate and want to learn than to antagonize those who are determined to resist and disrupt the learning of others’ (p.194).

The decision to teach ‘only those who are interested’ is a common response to working with difficult classes. Indeed, it is my own response whenever I feel thwarted. In such circumstances the invitation to participate is half-hearted - a bit like asking someone you don’t like to come to a party, and qualifying it with ‘Only come if you’ve got nothing better to do.’ Such ‘invitations’ divide the group, and individuals who wish to participate are now more likely to experience peer pressure not to.

Tobin’s invitation also signals to these students that he has stopped taking risks for them. He has ‘given up’ like all the teachers who have come before him and will follow after. And, by failing to persist, he robs the students of the opportunity for an authentic experience of learning/teaching.

For me, this is the real moment of failure: he has now retreated into justification and conjecture (and on a practical level he is now in damage control).

Reaching this point, he begins to advocate for ‘alternative activities’ – here meaning conventional paper and pen work. Even though he regards this as ‘sad’, he argues that it can be a starting point for greater participation. ‘Let them start from what they can do and over time, when they learn how to participate consistently, then they can learn new ways to participate’ (p.194).

Pen and paper work, previously derided, is now referred to as ‘alternative activities’, and ‘what they can do’ both devalues and patronises. There is even an inference here that “They’ll miss out until they come to their senses and acknowledge that I am right.”

Consistent with his persisting ideology, Tobin doesn’t offer anything ‘other’. His struggle is an either/or struggle, entirely centred on what he wants and thinks the students should be doing. He fails to recognise that his struggle isn’t with his students or his ‘failure’, but rather with his ideology. This makes him blind to any possibility outside his immediate ‘knowledge’ – a position not unlike that of the CHS students!

He then proffers a few theoretical suggestions which he believes will be of use in teaching the Opportunity Class and
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those like it. He suggests that computers and the internet could be used to give students access to their individualised programs ‘from remote locations such as home, public libraries and computer laboratories’ (p.192). He suggests setting up a portfolio system to enable the more effective running of the individual work programs by having the appropriate materials on hand in the classroom. This, he proposes, will ameliorate the problems of frequent absence, lateness and the fact that the students rarely bring their equipment to class (p.195).

It is difficult to accept that Tobin genuinely believes that students who are not interested in class time would be interested outside class time! Again, he applies middle class teaching strategies and methodologies, and middle class notions of responsibility and ownership. There is an ideological blindness about assuming that these students, who have a history of chaotic participation in schooling, would even be interested in independently keeping an orderly portfolio.

He argues that parent/carer participation is vital, and sees the assumption that they are disinterested in their children’s education as further evidence of negative stereotyping.

Finally, Tobin writes about his conviction that teachers must earn the right to teach students by developing first rapport, then trust. He suggests that ‘I had failed to be a stable source of support for the learning of students who needed me most. I realized that my middle class life and value system saturated what I considered to be rational decisions’ (p.200). He acknowledges that in the beginning he had ‘assumed I already knew how to teach science and it was just a question of adapting or applying what I knew to urban contexts’ (p.200). And he feels that it is ‘imperative that I communicate these findings to student teachers.
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because they should not feel that the research and theory they read necessarily applies in all contexts' (p.197).

Tobin ends in a position of powerlessness. He sees the failure of his project as one of class: the fault of the larger social system, and himself and his students as powerless to make change. His initial enthusiasm has entirely foundered, and all that remains is a catalogue of ideological and pedagogical platitudes.

Essentially, both in practice and from a theoretical standpoint, he remains in the place in which he started. He still understands learning/teaching as a theory-driven set of objective practices and his own participation in the project as an attempt to delineate these...to demonstrate that he is ‘right’. This is a disengaged sort of activism that seems to want to change society first and individuals after. It is questionable whether his involvement has benefited the Opportunity Class students at all. (In fact, they could be worse off because they have been unable to access the 'mainstream' science curriculum.) And Tobin leaves, wounded. His tightly held ideological position has prevented him from, as Palmer (1998) would put it, coming into an authentic relationship with himself.

It is not so much that such people doubt what they think and believe, but they doubt profoundly their ability to say it. The mannerism is a symptom of a cultural breakdown. It means, ‘I cannot, or I probably cannot, communicate with you.’ And that, not the social or economic, is the true under-privilege.

John Fowles: Poor Koko, p.182

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My Timor narrative tells a different story from Tobin’s: one which, if I had been aware of Tobin’s struggles at the time, I’d have thought to be exemplary in terms of economic and social development projects. Yet I too, was about to come a cropper! At about the same time as Tobin ventured into City High School, I too had my first substantial encounter with ‘the Stranger’. Like Tobin, I was completely disoriented by the ‘strangeness’ of my first remote Australian Indigenous Community. Like Tobin, I
too could ‘scarcely understand their dialects’ (p.181). And like Tobin, when first faced with ‘failure’ as a teacher, I enacted the standard ‘commonsense’ pedagogy of our times.

What I knew to ‘be’, was that my students needed to be empowered to learn, to be responsible, to be independent. Like Tobin, I knew that my students needed ‘doorways to connect what they do at school and how students live their lives’ (p.198). And above and beyond the standard, mainstream narrative of education, what I knew to be (because I had lived marginalised myself) was that my students needed ‘curricula that were emancipatory and socially transformative’ (p.198).

Here then, is my own story about: **meeting the Stranger**

*It is my first day.*

*I couldn’t be better prepared.*

*I have seventeen children in my class aged between four and nine and a teaching assistant.*

*This seems overly generous.*

*Should be a piece of cake!*

*I am extraordinarily well prepared:*

*I have been here for the last ten days setting up the classroom.*

*I have beautiful beeswax crayons*

*I have baskets of dollies and dress-ups.*

*I have made a little tableau to help in the telling:*

*I have small wooden animals and felt puppets to tell the story with.*

*I have planned this first day meticulously.*

*I will tell a Native American creation story:*

*I have made a little tableau to help in the telling:*

*I have small wooden animals and felt puppets to tell the story with.*

*I am extraordinarily well prepared:*

*I have been here for the last ten days setting up the classroom.*

*I have beautiful beeswax crayons*

*I light the candle.*

*I start to tell the story using the little puppets.*

*I keep the attention of the students for about fifteen seconds.*
Part I – Pre-texts

They start to play (violently) with the puppets.
They put their fingers in the melting wax.
They start throwing the cushions around the room.
Some get up and wander off.
Others start elbowing one another
    and a fight ensues.

This situation is unprecedented
    for me.
Valiantly, I keep going.

Having no recourse to any alternative ‘strategy’
whatsoever,
I keep on mindlessly telling the story
until my assistant
takes off her shoe,
slaps it against her thigh,
and shouts,
‘If you kids don’t sit down I’m going to whack you.’
At this, they all giggle
and run out of the room.

Actually, it was Gerald Jampolsky who saved me. I was inclined to make fun of the kind of ‘new age’ publications of which his were characteristic, however I had purchased *Teach Only Love* (1983) in a remainders store, I don’t remember where, and so this story is a little like the story of the Otefu Besar well: one could call it serendipitous, or a story about Grace.

I had been in this community on the edge of the West Australian desert for a month, and I didn’t know anything anymore. Expecting to replicate what we had been doing in Timor, I was completely overwhelmed and disconcerted by this, my first genuine encounter with the Stranger (*L’Autre*).

I remember walking to school one morning: it was 7.00am and already 30ºC – wet season, so that every movement precipitated an avalanche of sweat. I had already broken out in the first of what was to become a plague of boils. I could not cope at all with the drinking, the obvious, yet unspoken of, signs of violence and sexual abuse, worse
housing conditions than I could ever have imagined, and the appalling inertia.

But it was in the classroom that my nice, white world had been totally broken apart. I struggled to find any ground whatsoever of the kind I knew from my teaching experience or from my work in Timor. Unlike Tobin, I was working in a supportive, decentralised, friendly institution, however every day seemed to produce more evidence that we were all foundering – children, adults, brown, white together. Like Tobin, I was inclined to blame the socio-politico-economic complex. Unlike Tobin, however, my maverick adventure had lasted barely three weeks and I was flummoxed.

For the first time I came across students who had never held a pen or a book (two of my smallest students spent the first day stoning and then ripping out and throwing away, pictures of lizards from my very nice, specially purchased lizard book). Attendance fluctuated wildly – sometimes because there were funerals, or because people are constantly on the move between family members in different (wide apart) communities, but also just because some days they can’t get the kids to school or the kids don’t want to come. Students might come to school after being up all night due to violent brawls in which their houses could be smashed to pieces. They might not eat at home for days. They might not wash for weeks.

The play of these students indicated sexual and physical abuse: they ripped dolls apart and flung them around the room, moving rapidly from one area to another until there was chaos, and then walked out when they felt like it. There was constant bickering and fighting. Children defecated behind doors and on doorsteps.

I had come here with the nice middle-class idea that ‘we are all the same under the skin’, but now I began to see that difference is more than skin deep, and that my world, which I had thought to be the only one; the one common to all human beings on planet Earth, was just my world. Severely dis-rupted, dis-comfited, and dis-concerted, I began to understand how little I really knew about anything. I was not, and never had been, master of my world. I had just
been lucky enough to be born into a set of circumstances that allowed me to think I was.

I realised I had a choice: I could go home, a little unsettled, and resume life as I had heretofore known it (though, to be sure, that life would now be dogged by a kind of angst that would mark it as flimsy, a little as Tobin ends his paper, knowing that the research and theory doesn’t necessarily apply ‘in all contexts’), or I could stay and remake my knowing/being, which at this stage looked like a very risky proposition, threatening not only failure, but a sort of tsunami of the mind – the destruction of all I thought I knew, and all I knew about being.

I chose to stay.

My complaints were much like Tobin’s. The students’ experience of school seemed only to be of ‘worksheets’. They didn’t listen to stories for longer than a minute; they fought all day and could not even draw. They valued nothing produced in the classroom: indeed, they seemed to value nothing at all, except perhaps, (and not always) each other, and play seemed to invite chaos. My Aboriginal Teaching Assistant (ATA) seemed to regard me as a fool and persisted with a program of rote drilling, which, with the help of her thong (shoe), at least resulted in a semblance of order.

My focus at first was on the prevailing pedagogical directives. Like Tobin, I wanted to connect my students’ experience to their learning. I tried individualised programs, but the students refused to do anything that would make them stand out from the group. (This is called ‘big shame’ - the ‘reward’ stickers given out by the seniors’ teacher were shared around amongst everyone and then dropped on the ground and forgotten.) And anyway, I had always experienced individual programs as dry, lacking as they did the richness of multiple participation and perspectives.

I watched myself as I began to succumb to the need for order and a modicum of success. I, who had only ever worked on the principle of intrinsic motivation, could get all the students on the mat for the price of six sultanas each! I began to create photocopied worksheets with half-made
drawings that required completion by the students to give them full meaning.

The children (especially those in the older class) continued to taunt me. On one occasion they tortured a baby willy-wagtail in front of me. The only way I could shorten the bird’s pain was to show complete disinterest. I could see they thought I was ‘just another stupid whitefella’ and I could see that, measured by their experience, I was.

Gerald Jampolsky (who was a doctor who worked with people with terminal diseases) saved me by his insistence on embracing wholeheartedly what comes to us rather than fighting it. Reading Jampolsky, I began to refocus away from the ‘program’ and the ‘method’, to relationship. Quite consciously, I went back to ‘beginner’s mind’, and this time I questioned not only what I thought I knew, but also what the experts were writing. And I began to see that no one knew how to do this. I didn’t know, but neither did they. I could find no historical record of effective Indigenous pedagogy except for isolated incidences that were dependent on individuals. There were lots of theoretical guidelines (mostly about Aboriginal learning styles, but also a nascent literature informed by critical pedagogy) but I began to see that we were going to have to work this out together.

Then the photocopier broke down. In the desert it can take weeks or months to get such things fixed, and my first response was panic. To my delight, however, I found that my students had been quietly developing fine motor skills in the interim, and were starting to write and draw independently. I began to ‘feel’ my way towards my students, and, conversely, I noticed that they began to feel their way towards me.

Even then, this called to mind Winnicott’s (1974) ‘potential space’ - an idea I had embraced in the past with regard to teaching/learning. We meet: students, teacher, content – all, in a safe space of potentiality, and so in a sense, we co-arise as teachers/learners. But in the relative comfort of my previous white classrooms, and in the
ontologically similar Timor, I had never imagined a ‘meeting’ that actually threatened my own knowing and being. Previously, my students and I were calling on a fundamentally similar repertoire of cultural symbols and values. Now, I was required to set those symbols and values aside in order to meet these students and this community on new ground.

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Every day throughout that year remained a struggle, yet, looking back, I could see that over time we had become a more functional community. Although it seemed that there was never a day without a crisis, the children learnt to read; their understanding of the basics of mathematics was good; they kept the ‘house corner’ tidy (in fact, it became a sought-after activity for children seeking order). When my daughter returned to the city a few weeks before the end of the school year, our students were very sorry for her – they wondered whether she might be being teased at her school in the city. Surely, they said, she would be unhappy there. She really ought to return to our little haven of peace!

* 

Even now, all possible feelings do not yet exist. There are still those that lie beyond our capacity and our imagination. From time to time, when a piece of music no one has ever written, or a painting no one has ever painted, or something else impossible to predict, fathom, or yet describe takes place, a new feeling enters the world. And then, for the millionth time in the history of feeling, the heart surges, and absorbs the impact.

Nicole Krauss, The History of Love, p.107

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Part I – Pre-texts

This story has become the pivot around which my whole life turns. For it becomes clear that like Tobin, at this time I understood learning/teaching as a set of practices. I had been teaching for nine years but my teaching/learning had never been seriously challenged. Even in the success of the Timor project I had failed to acknowledge the fundamental similarities between my own protestant work ethic and small farming background and that of the people I was working alongside on the island. And I had failed to recognise a multitude of causes and effects that extended beyond the ideological framework based around notions of human capital and participative decision-making that I held to be so precious and ‘true’.

I set out for Timor, and into the Australian desert, as on an adventure. Like Teresa Strong-Wilson (2005), I saw myself in the mode of travelling white female teacher. I had both a sense of self-exile and a sense of joining in the grand Australian metanarrative of travelling into the remote unknown. Like Tobin, I set out to become ‘streetwise’ and like Tobin, I rode heroically (in this case in my one-ton yellow Toyota trayback) to create positive change, expecting to ride out again relatively unscathed.

I also set out to alleviate a problem; to effect a cure. Scheurich (1997), taking a Foucaultian perspective, posits that the very idea of working with the marginalised implies that there is a group that either has or is a problem. Even when I shift my understanding to the idea that the problem is my own culture, a duality still remains: an ‘us’ and a ‘them’. The main intention behind my work at this time was the ‘liberation’, ‘empowerment’, and ‘transformation’ of marginalised peoples. In going to Timor I had wanted to ‘fix’ the ‘problem’ of poverty. And because we had had a modicum of ‘success’ in this, I thought I could do the same in Australian Indigenous communities. Before I set off, I had read a huge amount of theory about working with Aboriginal students. I was, like Tobin, certain that I knew how to bring about the transformations I ‘knew’ (from both experience and theory) would ‘fix’ ‘their’ problems.
Like Tobin, however, I was working out of a theoretical intention to change society on a large scale and yet couldn’t even manage my own classroom. Confronted with the true Stranger, I had no ground. And like Tobin, I retreated into the commonsense advice of my contemporary educational milieu.

Like Tobin, I railed against the ‘impossibility’ of the task I had undertaken. I longed for some sort of stability – to have a consistent attendance roll; for there to be no fights for just one hour in the day; for there to be a modicum of order in the room. It seemed that the very irregularity of both attendance and attention, together with the constant stream of disruptions due to school and community crises, conspired against any teaching/learning at all. I felt obstructed and frustrated at every turn – even repulsed by what I was witnessing.

I had expected these people to be more like the Timorese: people just waiting for me to come along to give them a helping hand to get on their feet. I expected them to be ‘nice’ and to be grateful, not to be constantly ‘humbugging’ for money and food. I expected them to be enterprising. I expected a sort of genteel poverty, not the wholesale destruction of houses and the wanton waste of money spent on grog, gambling or even clothes, toys and household goods purchased because there was cash in the hand and then broken or discarded within hours or days.

In short, I expected them to be like me! Coming face to face with my own whiteness for the first time, I was beginning to understand McLaren’s (1998) contention that we don’t inhabit cultures, but that we ‘live out class or cultural relations’ (p.176). I began to understand that difference isn’t some kind of cultural ‘gap’ that can be accounted for by providing equal access to things and ideas, but that it is deeply rooted in epistemological and ontological being that lies beyond matters of mere belief. I began to question whether it is possible to change this, or whether we should even seek to do so.
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Strong-Wilson (2005) writes about how the experience of remote teaching in Canada changed her forever, exiling her from her own culture, yet paradoxically giving her a view of her culture that was previously invisible. This is not the kind of discovery of something one already knows about in a vague sort of way. This is the dis-covery of a world existing outside our known frontiers, a discovery that disrupts everything we ‘know’ about self, other, life. And, as Strong-Wilson also makes clear in her paper, such a transformation doesn’t happen only in the classroom. This sort of change occurs ‘in doorways or in streets’ (p.220). It is an embodied dis-covery: it unravels every aspect of the self because it is fully-in-the-world. More particularly, it unravels our thinking about self and being.

The point here is that an engaged encounter with L’Autre requires relinquishing what we know. The hardest thing for me to give up was my ideas about how my classroom should be. My previous teaching experiences had been rich, and I wanted so much for these children to experience that richness, yet I could see that there was a world of difference between the skills and behaviours required to achieve my ideal, and the children who entered the room every morning. Conversely, however, it was my past rich experience that prevented me from falling into conventional practices.

Madsen (2004) describes poverty as ‘the impossibility of being reliably fed’ and wealth as ‘the ability to be reliably fed, without having to compromise deeply one’s emotional life’ (p.177). What I was striving for wasn’t compliance at all costs but a way into an education that wasn’t going to starve these children of their culture or of mine. As one who primarily views education in terms of nourishment, I could see that these children (like Tobin’s Opportunity Class) were starving. What I was seeking was deep engagement, but, like Tobin, I could find no entry. So it was that we floundered about in a kind of lacuna, resisting one another and yet hardly aware that we were doing so.

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It was those photocopied worksheets and the ‘sultana bribes’, I think, that mark the beginning of my transformation as teacher/learner. They mark a breach in my ‘principles’, but not a giving in or giving up. In a sense, I was relinquishing my expertise/knowing, and by coming from a place of not-knowing, I myself was beginning to listen. I was beginning to respond to my students in their particularity rather than continuing to view our interactions through my own ideological lens. The sultanas and the worksheets represent a step towards my students into a space in which we could meet.

Of course there is no one linear cause that brought us into the teaching/learning space. As with my experience in Timor, listening to the community helped, but there was also the arrival of my sixteen-year-old daughter. Her appreciation of the Stranger was a revelation. She regarded all the classroom and community goings-on with affectionate humour, a sense of wonder, and a truly open heart that encouraged me to step away from my particular truths and into new ways of thinking about teaching/learning. (After all, it couldn’t have been any worse!)

Then again, there was the visit by an audiologist who, by asking us to block our ears and then speaking to us in French, made us understand that most of our students couldn’t hear much of what was being said.

And I watched the women and children, and saw that for these desert peoples, story resided in the land, not in the head or in words per se. A story will be highly visual, and might be just thirty seconds long, not thirty minutes, as I had misunderstood from the designation, ‘oral culture’. Feeling my way towards what I could understand of my students’ perception of the world, I began to teach much more visually, grounding my teaching always in the contexts of country and relationship.

Osborne (2005) writes of her science teaching that it is ‘...pragmatist in nature – it is driven by the children’s purposes and personal orientations’ (p.208). This is, I think, quite different from Tobin’s idea of ‘what the students were interested in’, because it is not so much about material social practices as it is about ontological understanding. I soon discovered that when I taught
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mathematics through bush tucker stories, we were no longer working from superficial, objectified ‘interests’ but from deep ontological understandings that enriched and nourished our work with number.\(^{28}\)

McGonigal (2005) tells how her encounter with a student who could not hear pitch helped her to understand for the first time that perception both constitutes and is constituted by our experience in the world. She writes of this experience, ‘I never perceived that students and teachers could hold a different meaning for a scientific concept until I had this interaction with Jenny and the bells’ (p.250). Like McGonigal, I too was beginning to understand that teaching/learning, like love, is not just giving, but also giving up. By opening a space in my own understanding of the world, I was able to make a space for wonder, a space for exploring the mystery of the Stranger.

pre-texts: on enframement, and being a child of my Age

...in fact, the better something works one time, the harder it is to let go of it. Things become particularly dangerous when we have succeeded.

Bernie Glassman: Bearing Witness..., p.90

Tobin’s is a secret story that many teachers hold close to their hearts – a story about failure, shame and the loss of idealism that I believe most of us have experienced at some time. It is a sad story too, because, in protecting his ideology, Tobin not only protects himself from the discomfort of the kind of authentic transformation he wishes for his students, but he deprives his students (all of them – CHS students and pre-service teachers) of the pain and possibility of discovering, as one of my students once explained it, ‘the worlds we didn’t know existed’.
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What I learned in the desert (that I didn’t learn in Timor) was that by giving up my ideals and meeting my students in ‘the space between’ we could begin to bridge the gap. Yet I concluded this experience very little different from Tobin, in that I now had a new banner to brandish - a new ideology that I felt even more zealous about promoting.

Deeply moved and transformed by my discovery of the Stranger, I spent the next five years developing and pursuing a pedagogy for the kind of student I called ‘the visual learner’. With a small team, I set up a program for so-called ‘at-risk’ middle years students that yielded a greater than 70% reduction in behaviour interventions in the first year and saw 79% of these students make significant improvements (advances of 1 stanine or more) in their achievement on normed mathematics tests, compared to 55% of the mainstream cohort. More significantly, 37% of our students, who started the year with significant misunderstandings and ‘behaviour and organisational problems’, advanced two stanines or more, compared with 20% of their peers in the mainstream. This is not to mention the less easy to measure improvements in engagement and retention, unless to comment anecdotally that students were coming up to school on student-free staff professional development days just to say hello, and voluntarily popping in for ‘detention’ to complete work at lunchtime.29

Fired by the certainty of our success, I lectured, I gave workshops for teachers, I kept teaching. I tried to turn what we were doing into a ‘program’ – pages and pages of instructions and explanations. I fervently believed that I had a ‘solution’ and that if people would only listen we could ‘empower’ the marginalised and ‘transform’ education (and so society). Yet the more I worked, on my own and with others, the more I began to understand that learning/teaching was more than the program. At a time when particular teaching/learning styles were being vigorously promulgated by the Victorian education authorities (there was an emphasis on team planning and delivery; collaborative learning; the explicit teaching of thinking; and integrated curriculum in the middle years of schooling) I was seeing plenty of evidence to support the research that it was not the pedagogy but the individual teacher who makes the biggest difference to student learning.30
One of the most admired teachers in our school, Neil, was a conservative, conventional maths teacher who, according to the general opinion of our students, ‘explained it good’. On the other hand, some of the teachers who enthusiastically embraced department guidelines, struggled to keep the attention of their classes and seemed to do little more than provide light entertainment and crowd control. I could see that my ‘program’ was interpreted in vastly different ways by different teachers, with vastly different results. Always in search of solutions, I began to puzzle over this paradox: did pedagogy really matter at all? If it did, then what pedagogy should teachers embrace? And if it didn’t, what is it, beyond teaching strategies and the placement of desks, that drives good teaching/learning?

Whilst I now consider this naïve, it is typical of our Age. Education departments and politicians spend a great deal of money trying to identify ways to guarantee educational ‘success’. I see, now, that I too wanted something indelible; something enduring that could rescue my students from the terrible burden that education placed on them. It seemed that, when faced with the Stranger, the professional training of the teacher had little to offer except ideological clichés. I was beginning to understand that ‘education’ might be more than a range of objective knowings and psychological strategies and that just as the various research strategies had failed to produce the Millennial Dream, so had the succession of education strategies that paralleled them. Here was my research methodology conundrum in the flesh: it finally became clear to me that method could make no guarantees in the face of context.

So then I went back to Heidegger.
Sammy,
in the midst of a tussle in the corridor
meets Neil
for the first time
(One says ‘meets’ advisedly)

Another teacher
me, for instance
might have raised her voice
made demands
LAID DOWN THE LAW.

They have a
short
quiet
conversation.

Afterwards
a quieter Sammy
asks,
‘Do you think I’ll ever
get
him for a teacher?’

One thing I have learned is
you don’t need much talk.
What seems natural to us is probably just something familiar in a long tradition that has forgotten the unfamiliar source from which it arose

*Martin Heidegger: The Origin of the Work of Art, p.150*

White man got no dreaming,
Him go 'nother way.
White man, him go different.
Him got road belong himself.

*Old man, to W. E. H. Stanner: The Dreaming..., p.57*
The Canadian academic Thomas King, who is of Cherokee and Greek lineage, began each of his five 2003 Massey Lectures with the same story, at the end of which he repeated, ‘The truth about stories is that that’s all we are.’ King then asked, ‘How do we imagine ourselves, if not through stories?’ (2003, Lecture 4). Hiles (2002), expresses it this way: ‘We are then, simply the assembled stories that we tell about ourselves, and the stories that are told about us by others’ (p.9).

King continues, however, with a warning. You have to be careful about the stories you tell, because when you tell a story, you let it loose in the world. To tell a story is therefore a great responsibility. In the Native American understanding, he tells us, stories are medicine: told one way they can cure; told another way they injure. If we want to change society, we should privilege different stories, for when we tell stories, we create worlds (Lecture 4).

King points out very specifically in the first of his lectures, the difference between what he terms ‘native’ stories, and the stories that are told in cultures that grew out of the monotheistic religions. He tells the native stories as being told in the oral storytelling voice, crafted as performance for an audience. Native stories, he contends, tell of co-operation and equality between people and animals. In native stories, there is no dominant governance or deity, and no clear distinction between or judgement of good and evil, which are tributaries of the same river. The monotheistic stories, on the other hand, are rhetorical and distant, told for knowledgeable gathering. Those stories tell of an omnipotent power, hierarchies, law and order and good governance. There is a clear distinction between good and evil, chaos and order (2003, Lectures 1 and 4).

In King’s account, there is no teleological purpose to the native stories: they are small stories meant for everyday teaching or entertainment. The monotheistic stories, on the other hand, have at their core the constant theme of paradise. They are stories about judgement and redemption and how we must behave in order to achieve eternal ease and happiness. In other words, they are stories about a utopian hereafter: the Millennial Dream.
I want to explore in this section of the thesis, the ‘…practical consequence of a certain outlook, a certain idea of what life is about’ (Revel & Ricard, 1999, p.131), and I will begin with thinking. What is it that we are failing to think?

sub-text: Heidegger, thinking, & the question

Regarding thinking (WCT), Heidegger states, ‘we are still not thinking – not even yet’ (p.370). For Heidegger, thinking is not asserting, positing, arguing. It is not the object of investigation, nor the gathering of information, nor is it struggling with an object of thought. It is not, as Schumacher (1974) points out, the kind of instrumental or communicative mental process that merely applies ‘pre-existing ideas to a given situation or set of facts’ (pp.74-75).

Heidegger’s ‘thinking’ is not the kind that dwells within specific disciplines, either. That, he says, is right and proper in its place (within the realms of the discipline), but it is only by keeping a distance from the ontic that we can make the leap necessary to bring us to thought. This leap, ‘takes us abruptly to a place where everything is different, so different that it strikes us as strange’ (p.377). There is no bridge to take us there. Thinking, says Heidegger, seeks ‘what no inventiveness can find’ (p.374).

But if, ‘What must be thought about turns away from [humankind]’, then what is to be thought is entirely unknown to us (p.375). Not only is it unknown to us, but we have no language for it. This is the crux of Heidegger’s position: that to think is to think the unthought, yet such thinking immediately raises the problem of how we can know to ask about that which we do not know that we do not know. Heidegger suggests that we are taken into the draft of the turning away, and that it is when we withdraw into what withdraws that we are thinking, even as our thought remains uncomprehended.
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Berry (1989) describes this kind of thinking as ‘like a musician who faintly hears a melody deep within the mind, but not clearly enough to play it through’ (p.47). Derrida (1995) describes it as ‘not the immediate acquittal for whatever may present itself...but the right to the experience of the disaster, to that risk at least for thought’ (p.193). Like Berry’s faintly heard melody, Derrida’s ‘thought’ is a risk, a peril and a possibility to which we must surrender; a willingness to launch out from solid ground, uncertain of where we will land.

This renders the ubiquitous research question problematic. We have already seen that ‘research’ is first and foremost a seeking, and it is common that one has a research ‘question’. One is advised to ‘stick to your question’ so as to delimit the field and thereby save time and energy ‘wasted’ on wandering in by-ways. Yet, as I have already described in the research history, the question already limits the possible field of responses. More profoundly, we could say that the question always-already prescribes a natural attitude that is founded on dualities inherent in the question itself. The problem with the question, ‘How can we be freed?’ is that it naturally assumes chains. Such a question constitutes freedom as customary and at the same time compels us to understand that not to ask it infers that we condone enslavement. In a similar fashion, the problem with questioning the idea of ‘making’ self or society is that it automatically sets up the contrary ‘not-making’ as a passive, negative pole. The question therefore has great difficulty in accommodating paradox. It assimilates all into its dualistic world, and leaves us with no other place to stand but on one side or the other, unless in that disreputable place, ‘on the fence’.

And the answer, in a sense, appropriates the question. Heidegger himself, whose work was largely based around questions (What is Being? What is thinking? What is truth? What is a thing? What is language?) wrote, ‘The beginning already contains the end latent within itself’ (OWA, p.201). In this sense the question always-already legitimates the answer. It goes in advance, to confirm that which it already suspects, and in so doing it confers ‘truth’.
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In all these ways then, the question prescribe. As Derrida (1989) illustrates, it gives authority without at any time submitting itself to examination. It assumes ground for itself as something originary. Derrida reveals how in asking one question (What is Being?) and not another (What is spirit?), Heidegger sends us down a way that covertly assumes spirit as an originary authority (p.43). Geist is made the authoritative ground out of which come the awakened. As such it is privileged as the only source of being, so subordinating historical and regional ontologies to one fundamental Being in such a way that no trace of the Other remains.

In other words, the question makes a world and the answer gives that world its authority. Yet as Derrida showed us over and over, if we are simply to ask the question without any intention of giving solutions, our asking can be subversive rather than reinscriptive. (Why else has the Right made such an all-out attack on deconstruction?) Derrida (1967/2004) calls for a ‘community of the question’ in which:

the question is not yet determined enough for the hypocrisy of an answer to have already initiated itself beneath the mask of the question, and not yet determined enough for its voice to have been already and fraudulently articulated within the very syntax of the question (p.98).

This suggests that we ought to be very wary of the worlds set up by questions, and that their ‘answers’ ought always-already to be in doubt. On a personal level, I am aware that by asking why we marginalise people and the planet, I am already prescribing a world, yet equally, I cannot deny the pain and destruction wrought by ‘my own people whom I love’ (Smith, 1999, p.103)

So this is what I bear in mind as I set out to explore the problem of ‘what turns away from us’. What is it that we are not thinking...indeed, that Heidegger himself failed to think?
a slight diversion: reading Heidegger in the dark times

What worried me about this question came from the ambiguity which Husserl's work showed at first glance.

Martin Heidegger: My Way to Phenomenology, (p.76)

Crotty (1998) asks why it is that a researcher should feel compelled to follow the methods of one or another scholar, remarking that there may well be aspects of that scholar’s work which one would wish to dismiss (p.215). Heidegger (WTP) writes that it was the glaring ambiguity he perceived in Husserl’s work that set him on his way to phenomenology.

‘At first glance’ there was much in Heidegger that threw me into confusion, too: the Eurocentric essentialism; his idiosyncratic (perhaps spurious) interpretations of the foundations of Greek philosophy and language; the claim that ‘language is the house of being’; the absence of animal ‘world’; the presumption of the possibility of ‘origin’, which must surely invest in its bearer an inordinate superiority over all others; his failure to overtly acknowledge (particularly Buddhist/Taoist) sources.

Of course, many of these ideas are inherent in the thinking of Heidegger’s German contemporaries. Working inside-and-out-of Waldorf education, I have encountered the same ideas in the work of Rudolf Steiner: the privileging of human beings and human language (the German language in particular) as the crowning glory of creation; the themes of ‘gathering’, ‘sending’ and ‘mission’; the emphasis on the subject; a certain teleology in the idea of epoche – all these I have set aside as themes common to a particular period of German history.

This is to say that in our time, and after Nazism... after Arendt, Foucault, Lévinas, Lacan, Deleuze, and Derrida, we are able to read Heidegger differently. We have taken up particular threads which have been transformed into new stories of historicity,
knowledge and power, difference and disturbance, and left others in the dark. Yet, Derrida, who was closer than most of us to the discourses that led to the holocaust, warns that reading Heidegger is indispensible for understanding Nazism (1995, p.194). This is not just because of Heidegger’s actions in supporting National Socialism: Derrida is seeking that thinking buried deep in Heidegger that leads to Nazisms of all kinds. For as we have already seen in the potted research history, what we have thought we have escaped is apt to return in ever more strident variety.

Heidegger says of the poet that ‘mastery consists precisely in this, that the poem can deny the poet’s person and name’ (L., p. 193). Indeed, it seems to be the case that we can separate the bad behaviour of artists and sportsmen from their work, but it is less easy to do so when the work purports to tell us something about how to live. Then we must examine the poem itself lest the flaws in the creator have seeped into the work. As a young man Heidegger wrote to Father Krebbs, the professor of theology at Freiburg University, ‘It is hard to live as a philosopher – inner truthfulness toward oneself and those one is supposed to teach, demands sacrifice, renunciation and struggles that remain forever foreign to the academic “tradesman”’ (Sheehan, 2006, p.72).

In the light of such comments, which make a sort of promise, we cannot ignore the unalterable fact of his despicable behaviour leading up to and during his time as rector of Freiburg University and his later failure to renounce it. And whilst I agree with Derrida (1995) that ‘The Turn’ came at the time of the failure of Heidegger’s ‘politico-pedagogical project’ (p.309), there nevertheless remains the fact that his philosophy seems, at every turn, to be an address to the German people (p.324), a ‘hymn to the freedom of the spirit’ (p.186) that subordinates and subjugates Other.

So it is this problem of certainty that, ‘at first glance’, I experienced as both lure and repulsion. Seeking firm ground, I yet felt in Heidegger the very disconnection between concept and being that he himself was arguing against. At the very beginning of ‘Time and Being’ (1962/2002) he writes, ‘We want to write something about the attempt to think Being without regard to its
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being grounded in terms of beings’ (p.2). To ‘think Being’ requires detachment from beings, he implies, and yet how can we think Being without Being-with?

Lévinas held the opinion that Heidegger’s ontology subordinates the relation with the Other to the relation with being (1998/2000, pp.205-217). Heidegger’s philosophy is one that, although filled with ‘objects’ (bridges, peasant shoes, jugs) is devoid of people, or indeed, animals. Not only does he fail to give examples of ‘how to live’, but he neglects to engage with anything that can ‘talk back’. After the failure of his rectorship, he, in the words of Derrida’s interviewer, ‘sets sail for poetry in order to find in Arcadia a safer port...’ (Derrida, 1995, p.324). He dwells in the immense beauty of the natural world, but it is a world that is unpeopled. Heidegger, says Caputo (1989), ‘leaves the thinker mute in the face of the ethicopolitical... He has isolated thinking from the agora and driven it up into the mountains’ (p.250).

We know that it is relatively easy to love humankind from a distance but much harder to deal with the day-to-day peculiarities of individuals. To know what it means to be hungry, to know what it means to be tortured or beaten, to know what it is to come up against situations in which one has no sovereignty and no hope – these are the stuff of being-in-the-world. It is Heidegger himself who writes so often that what is far is near and what is near is far, yet it seems that, apart from an affinity with an inert nature, his philosophy is at all times very far from everyday interaction with other human beings.

We in Australia have not long emerged from the ‘John Howard Years’ during which we saw poststructuralist and postcolonial views pilloried. Left-leaning academics were lampooned as ‘the chardonnay set’; child asylum seekers were imprisoned behind electrified fences; African immigrants were accused of being unable to ‘assimilate’. The Howard leaderships’ oft-cited disparagement of ‘black arm-band’ interpretations of Australian history, together with the backward steps on Aboriginal/European-Australian reconciliation, triggered an intolerance of difference that was supported by the larger
population (the Howard Government was re-elected twice and reigned for eleven and a half years) and a media that constantly put to air stories such as those of taxi drivers who cannot speak English and asylum seekers labelled as ‘queue-jumpers’.

Yet none of us is immune. There is enough in my own white, Christian, lower middle class, rural upbringing to raise questions about my own complicity in all this. We cannot all claim to be innocent regarding the perpetuation of civil rights abuses in our own times, when to stand against the tide reaped, at worst, castigation and a certain hopelessness. I wonder how I, who have been cowed by the weight of public opinion, would behave in the face of imprisonment, or torture, or death, or whether (much worse) the incremental creep of the loss of rights once considered ‘natural’ (such as a free education) itself becomes naturalised, and before I know it, I, too, am justifying actions that impinge on the liberty of others, even though it’s in the name of ‘development’ or ‘improvement’.

Caputo (1989) comments that in dark times (such as those in which Heidegger lived, and those of the Howard/Bush years), ‘those who dissent have to show that they are not against reason or the country – that they are not mad or traitorous when they are only against the ideas which currently prevail’ (p.229). This was Heidegger’s failure, but I will argue that it is the failure of an Age. For the twentieth century is riddled with ideological failure. It was not only Nazism that lead to genocide, but numerous other instances, many of which grew out of the much lauded Marxist ideologies of the Left. Clearly, Heidegger was not the only twentieth-century figure driven by a grand plan for ‘saving’ humankind.

Homi Bhabha (2008) reminds us ‘how close civilization and barbarism can be’ (para. 8). He warns that we must never become complacent to the point of believing that genocide will never occur again; that it is contingent, and inexplicable. Bhabha tells how quickly, how easily, good relations between Others can sour. He quotes a Rwandan woman, a Tutsi, ‘who said, “This massacre happened in my village. It will happen elsewhere, I know”’ (para. 9). This makes it incumbent on all of us to be
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watchful As Bhabha says, it will happen again, and it is only by understanding that it will happen again, that we can safeguard against it.

When Derrida comments that, ‘Heidegger’s thought remains nonetheless for me one of the most rigorous, provocative, and necessary of our time’ (1995, p.223), he is speaking of the necessity to un-conceal the ‘bushy taxonomy’ of the ‘forest’ (1989, p.109), to lay open the innocent imagery of the clearing, the hut, the retreat, the seminar (1995, p.195). And given that I too so often dream of the path, the hut and the forest, perhaps it may be possible to discover my own ideological roots there too...the roots of the Millennial Dream that drive even this thesis that threatens, at every moment, to topple into a didactic prescription for the transformation of education and so of the world.

I thought it was only

talk-back radio shock-jocks

and commercial TV current affairs commentators

and my Mum

who proclaimed what was right.

But now

belatedly

I see that I am no different:

I only have a more sophisticated

well-researched and verified

academic and

authoritative

version

of how to make the world

in my own image.
sub-text: Heidegger & the age of *Gestell*

*I am destined for ‘the life my culture’s words may imagine for me’*

*Stanley Cavell: The Claim of Reason..., p.125.*

Heidegger’s notion of *Seinsgeschick* (QCT), suggests that we are *enframed* in a certain time/place/culture. He contends that our *epoche* ³⁶ ‘destines’ us to a particular ‘mode of revealing’ that has us see/understand the world in a particular way, and that casts other possible ways of seeing into shadow. This is not a *considered* understanding, but the *way* that the world reveals itself to us, so that we think our view is identical with that of every other human being, across every time and place. This unexamined revealing of *being* is handed to us in our language and culture, so that we cannot even imagine that there is any other. This is an *historical* view of *being* that has become a basic tenet of poststructuralism. We now understand that we are shaped/constituted by our language and culture and cannot imagine beyond it. Indeed, Foucault (1987) contends that it is this very *limit-attitude* along with the ‘mode of reflective relation to the present’ that epitomises modernity above all else (pp.44, 45).

Heidegger’s name for our current *epoche* is *Gestell*: the Age of technological enframement. The word itself combines *ge* – totalising, *stell* – position, and *stellen* – to set upon or hunt down, to describe a certain attitude, or viewpoint, or ‘mode of revealing’ that understands the world as a resource for a relentless, unbounded progress. In ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (QCT) Heidegger attributes this root attitude to the emergence of the industrial/technological age. Heidegger is at pains to point out that the technology does not give rise to the world understanding, but quite the opposite. He describes a *mentalité* that made technology possible, and continues today in an ever-reverberating iteration and reiteration. In the words of Heidegger, ‘That which is earlier with regard to its rise into dominance becomes manifest to us men only later’ (QCT, p.327)
We see the emergence of this kind of thinking in the Renaissance. It is the kind of thinking that can imagine money (as accumulation and exchange); that can understand measurement and invent systems of commensuration; that can then envision a corresponding notion of men \(^{37}\) as equal; that can claim the victory of reason over faith and so see men as autonomous and ‘self-made’ (as opposed to ‘born to’); that can as a result put forward the idea of progress and expansion as something natural and good; and that can consequently appropriate the other-than-human world as a resource for this expansion. In the notion of Seinsgeschick, it is epistemological and ontological understanding that shapes the world, not vice versa. Moral and ethical considerations are not superimposed over pre-existing foundations, but are integral to the world-understanding.

Heidegger traces the origin of technological thinking back to Plato, who established the notion of ‘idea’ or conceptual thought, and Aristotle, who made the study of beings accessible through attributes and properties. (To Aristotle’s notion he opposes Being which is more of an event.) He argues that a shift in the understanding of truth from an act of unconcealment [alētheia] to one of correspondence, laid the ground for a mathematical/objective/calculative understanding of the world that matured in Newton and Descartes.

In ‘Modern Science, Metaphysics and Mathematics’ (MSMM), Heidegger argues that it was Newton who, in his ‘First Law’, made the movement of bodies through space theoretical. Whereas the Greeks understood motion as having its source in the inner nature of a thing (heavenly things move in circles; earthly things fall), Newton isolated bodies from their surroundings, and understood motion as contingent upon the application of external force. The Greek understanding of physica, the spontaneous arising of inner nature, was replaced by the understanding of nature as a relation of position and order. This in turn paved the way for a measured world, and a measured world must inevitably be objectified.

Moreover, measurement (extension – see B&T, pp. 83-85) by its very nature pre-supposes materiality. Heidegger argues that it was the Latin language that transposed the Greek understanding of a thingly essence into one of mere substance, thus paving
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the way not only for measurement, but for the distance/objectivity/separation required for theoretical thinking. He points out that the major flaw in Newton’s theory is that the body is actually never alone in space. Autonomy is actually a theoretical construction, but the establishment of mathematical axioms bypasses the need to go back to the ‘things themselves’ and so we have forgotten that we are ‘in-the-world’. Our thinking presupposes axiomatic truths and so knowledge has become theoretical: it has shifted from a moving, contingent ‘event’, to something that is fixed; that can be stored and measured.

This means that it can also be made to fit already existing forms. It can anticipate and predict. It is both more plastic (transferrable, generalisable etc.) and, paradoxically, more durable (thus, thingly) than the fleeting experience of being-in-the-world. Heidegger goes on to argue that this mathematical thinking grounds us in rationalism and frees us from religious law, but it demands in return a place as the ground of all knowledge (MSMM, pp. 295 – 296). It was Descartes, Heidegger argues, who pursued the mathesis universalis, and so established Reason as the ground of our being.

Heidegger interprets Descartes’ famous phrase, ego cogito sum, not as, ‘I think, therefore I am’, but as, ‘I think’. The sum is not the consequence of thinking, but its very ground (MSMM, pp. 302-305). Whereas in the past the subject was that which was at hand (interestingly we still call our school disciplinary studies ‘subjects’) it now becomes the ‘I’ and the things themselves become ‘objects’. The I is thus removed from the world of things, and so obtains a worldview, enabling the notions Self and Other to become the always-already condition of human existence. Heidegger points out that this way of viewing the world is apparent even in our sentence structure. ‘A simple propositional statement consists of the subject…and the predicate, in which the thing’s traits are stated of it’ (OWA, p. 149).

Thus the ‘I think’ becomes the ground of truth (and so paves the way for relativity in the future). The human being, as the I who reasons, takes a special place in the world, doubly because it is now thoroughly objectified (MSMM, pp. 302 – 303). As Heidegger puts it, ‘Man places before himself the world as the whole of everything objective, and he places himself before the
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world’ (WPF, p. 107). Whereas previously he was governed by an understanding of his natural place in the order of things, he now understands that he is the maker and shaper. These two great events in human development combine: man the maker is able to use his new theoretical/distanced ‘view’ of the world to advance the millennial project in a way never before possible. He no longer has to rely on God. He can create paradise on earth by his own agency.

The problem is, however, that this new, calculative, object view of the world has us think of everything (even ourselves) as ‘resources’ for this great project of making. Things are no longer beings unto themselves, but are instead the measured, ordered, priced, raw material for manufacture, if not in use then stored and at hand. Gestell reveals the world as something to be mastered and put to use, and, Heidegger argues, we are so accustomed to it that we do not know we are its prisoners. Gestell appropriates for itself even that which begins as subversion: for example, even as postmodernism rejects the modernist project of progress through manufacture, it becomes increasingly fascinated with the notion of desire, yet the pursuit of the desired (whether it be desire for power, sex, knowledge, wealth, possessions) can itself be seen as an even more insidious manifestation of Gestell, in which everything around us is standing-reserve for the manufacture of self. Plurality is subsumed into a consumerist notion of choice; ‘creativity’ is subsumed into a machine-ordered, mathematically delimited understanding called ‘design’; ‘thinking’ becomes an expression of mastery – the manipulation of concepts and the making of arguments.

Thus are we enframed in this time of Gestell; so caught up in the quest for the Millennial Dream that we barely notice the present, the here and now. This, I contend, is the root of the problem that continues to elude researchers through decades of paradigm shifting. It is here that we find the Sameness that haunts Scheurich, and it is here, I think, that we find what it is that causes us to continue to exclude, violate and use up people and place, all in the cause of our espoused ‘better world’.

So...let us take a moment to look at this madness that is living and learning in the time of Gestell.
sub-text: living in the time of *Gestell*

*We are gods of a pleasure dome of our own making.*

_Eric Wilson: Against Happiness..., p.18_

Heidegger argues that in the time of *Gestell*, we understand as natural, the idea that beings are substance, and so can be described as qualities and attributes (B&T, p.87). This makes all subjects objects, separate from the viewer, which in turn gives the viewer a _position_. Paradoxically, this enables the viewer to understand the world as represented/interpreted. ‘Man makes dependent upon himself the way in which he must take his stand in relation to whatever is as the objective’ (AWP, p.132). By understanding the world as object, we acquire the illusion of solidity, certainty and permanence in both the viewed object and the viewing self, which, by taking a position, establishes itself simultaneously as an autonomous entity.

Heidegger argues that we are lured by this solidity and certainty, and that mathematics (the certainty of the mathematical proof) assures us of ‘the secure possession of the being of the beings which it apprehends’ (B&T, p.89). This allows us to accommodate the paradox that theory, which is _insubstantial_, lasts, whereas _being_, which is _substantial_, is fleeting. Because it can be written authoritatively, as something substantial and generalisable, the axiom, (fully reasoned and mathematically legitimated) can project into the future and so makes possible the blueprints, analyses, goals and strategic plans that are so essential to the _Millennial Dream_. All these appear to provide a solid, safe and certain path to the preferred future – a guarantee that things will turn out as we have planned and that all is ‘under control’.
In the time of *Gestell*, we live in a *designed world* – a world that is designed *by* and *for*, measurement. Everything that is placed before us can be measured, quantified, calculated, ordered and assigned a value before it is stored or used. Heidegger argues that, after Newton, measurement becomes a matter only of comparison: ‘All bodies are alike. No motion is special. Every place is like every other, each moment like any other’ (MSMM, p.291). Thus we become preoccupied with systems of commensuration and equality. ‘Social justice’ becomes possible, and positivist research establishes norms and hunts out deviations, then moves to audit, re-form, case-manage, re-educate, quality-improve. Efficiency and progress become the order of the day as we move relentlessly towards a promise of completion/perfection. The technology that both generates and serves this enframedment proliferates an infinite number of improvement models, made immediately available. It makes a promise that we can describe everything complete, yet, as Heidegger (AWP) argues, we are haunted by absence – a fear of the incalculable that ‘remains the invisible shadow that is cast around all things everywhere when man has been transformed into subjectum and the world into picture’ (p.135).

Always drawn forward by the magnificence of our visions of the future, our world becomes linear – historicised. *Newness* becomes the desirable marker of progress as we are led along by promises of more and better. Rose (2004) describes how the utopian future is never achieved, but that the ‘new’ constantly supercedes the past in such a way that the ‘newness’ gains a moral dimension in which it is ‘assumed to be the good and right outcome, and the process in which the new replaces and fulfills the old is the destiny of history’ (p.60).

Such a view lends itself to a deep faith in production and the market. In a made world, we even construct our *selves*. Modern man, says Heidegger (WPF) ‘rises up as the producer who puts through, carries out, his own self’ (p.109), and in this, perhaps greatest, act of production, even our experiences are objectified: ‘Actuality becomes objectivity. Objectivity becomes lived experience’ (OWA, p.206). Parker Palmer (2000) notes how the metaphor of production has infiltrated our language: we ‘make
time, make friends, make meaning, make money, make a living, make love’ (p.97). Such language reassures us that we are the masters of our world, and we are so preoccupied with our quest for mastery that we barely notice that we ourselves have become ‘human resources’. Says Heidegger (WPF), in the designed and constructed world, all things ‘dissolve into the calculated market value of a market which…spans the whole earth’ (p.112). In such a world, that which has little to contribute to our making and mastery can barely account for itself. We easily cast aside that which has reached its ‘use-by’ date, whether this be a home, a partner, a job. Things are calculated by ‘use’ value, and that which can’t be fitted into the scheme of production slips into oblivion.

sub-text: being other-than-human in the time of Gestell

*Where nature is not satisfactory to man’s representation, he reframes or redisposes it. Man produces new things where they are lacking to him. Man transposes things that are in his way. Man interposes something between himself and things that distract him from his purpose... By multifarious producing, the world is brought to stand and into position... Over against the world as the object, man stations himself and sets himself up as the one who deliberately pushes through all this producing’*

*Martin Heidegger: What Are Poets For? pp.107-108*

Heidegger (QCT) notes that in the time of Gestell, the human being is ‘nothing but the orderer of the standing reserve’ who postures as ‘lord of the earth’ (p.332). In this sense, that which is other-than-human loses its own being and is perceived only as those particular qualities and constituents that are required for the great project of human production. It is an insidious enframing. As David Abram (1997) notes:
...our obliviousness to nonhuman nature is today held in place by ways of speaking that simply deny intelligence to other species and to nature in general, as well as by the very structures of our civilized existence... We consciously encounter nonhuman nature only as it has been circumscribed by our civilization and its technologies... (p.28).

Abram gives as an example, the large scale farming of plants and animals for human food. "'Nature,' it would seem, has become simply a stock of ‘resources’ for human civilization...’ (p.28)

Such a view sustains and is sustained by the modern conviction of the inalienable right of all humans to ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’ that was first framed by Locke and came to fruit in the American Declaration of Independence (Wilson, 2008, p.13). This view enables humans to see the forest as ‘board-feet of timber’ and the ‘wide-open plains [as] raw materials just waiting for enterprising young men to transform them into dollars and delights’ (p.14). In fact, as Bonnett (2004) points out, it is anthropocentric even to ask questions about the kind of world we want to live in, for such questions immediately prioritise human needs/wants over those of the other-than-human world (p.78) and assume the right (and indeed the responsibility) of humanity to shape the environment to its own designs.

McDonough and Braungart (2002) point out the strange logic that considers gross domestic product (GDP) as a legitimate, accurate measure of “quality of life”. They tell how the Exxon Valdez oil spill actually brought increased “prosperity” to Alaska, pointing out that:

Loss of resources, cultural depletion, negative social and environmental effects, reduction of quality of life – these ills can all be taking place, and an entire region can be in decline, yet they are negated by a simplistic economic figure that says economic life is good (p.36).
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And Heidegger notes again and again how the problem of *worldview* generates the human delusion not only that nature can be mastered, but that nature is itself only a human construction. He argues that:

...the more extensively and the more effectually the world stands at man’s disposal as conquered, and the more objectively the object appears, all the more subjectively...does the *subjectum* rise up, and all the more impetuously, too, do observation of and teaching about the world change into a doctrine of man... (AWP, p.133).

This *worldview* is so strong that it underpins the whole panoply of Western philosophical thought, from positivism (which, as Mathews, 1991, p.46, points out, regards all matter as dead until invigorated and granted meaning by humans) to poststructuralism (which understands nature as a cultural construct). Indeed, we can see in the history of modern thought, an array of metaphors for nature that always-already reveal it as a human artefact. Bonnett (2004) shows how nature has been (and still is) understood variously as enemy, mother, machine, poem, cosmic order, wilderness, the innate essence and so on (pp.27-38). Solnit (2001) shows in her history of walking, how the human understanding of a previously wild and dangerous nature changed as industrialisation spread. As roads and transport tamed the country the landscape became scenery utilised for human pleasure walking. ‘Nature’ became a human construction, no longer a harsh and unreasoning threat, but something that could be brought under the control of Reason.

Indeed, it seems that we *moderns* hardly, any more, have much truck with the other-than-human world at all. Erazim Kohák (1984) points out that if we are asked, these days, about ‘nature’ we are ‘no longer speaking about the natural environment of our lived experience’, but are more likely to refer to sophisticated constructs such as matter, causality, motion and so on (p.12). In their research with school children, Bonnett and Williams (1998) found that children were uncertain about whether or not people were in fact part of nature.
We now view nature from a distance. Wild space is ever-more colonised for public recreation: river banks and roadsides that were once the domicile of weeds and native vegetation are now ‘designed’ spaces (with art installations thrown in). Whilst the techno-industrial-commercial complex provides us with the pleasures of eating blueberries and mangos all year round, we sit in our gated communities and enjoy ‘nature’ on our TV screens. In fact Wilson (2008) points out that the distant view is often far superior to the reality. He notes that visitors to the Grand Canyon are often disappointed that the reality of being there cannot live up to the many photographs they have viewed of it over their lives (p.116). In the same manner, the ‘nature film’ reveals to us things we could never see in the flesh. As Berry (1989) argues, the twentieth century ‘has eliminated the terror of the unknown darkness of nature by devastating nature herself’ (p.50).

Meanwhile, as climate change looms, ecological problems can be reformulated as economic ones; an opportunity for green marketing in which carbon-trading is valorised as a way to ‘save’ the natural world (Bonnett, 2004, p.160) whilst at the same time we can continue to satisfy human desires unabated. Indeed, Bonnett argues that the notion of ‘sustainability’ perpetuates the impulse to growth and consumption by stimulating the replacement of nature with cheap, artificial substitutes (p.126). In this way the status quo is steadied and reinscribed. In this sense, as we have seen in other areas of modern life, the ‘problem’ is ascribed to the Other. This makes of it a problem to be solved by yet another exhibition of human mastery. We naturalise the idea that climate change is ‘nature’s’ problem, and not our own.

The term ‘sustainability’ is problematic in education too. Most sustainable education programs in schools are based around geographical and scientific studies about environmental issues, and whilst many schools are now installing solar panels, rainwater tanks and kitchen gardens (surely a hopeful beginning) it is still the case that rampant individualism, competition between individuals, schools and nations, and education for mastery continue unchecked. We continue to live duplicitously, both inside education and out, rarely really acknowledging that the loss every day of yet more species of animals and plants as
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a consequence of human pollution and environmental colonisation bears a direct relation to the packaging and contents of our lunch-boxes.

Bonnett (2004) argues (and I agree) that what is needed for environmental education is not so much curriculum content and pedagogy, as a change in the ‘frame of mind’ or ‘the general culture of the school’ (p.140), and this is what I will address in the latter parts of this thesis.

sub-text: learning/teaching and the problem of praxis in an ideological age

Back in March, 2007, I heard someone on talkback radio ask, ‘What would you think about a farmer who only ever weighed and measured his animals?’ This was in response to a discussion about NAPLAN, the national testing of all Australian school students in literacy and numeracy (the implication being that, like the hypothetical farmer, educators were neglecting to ‘feed’ their students). Preparing a conference paper at the time, I took the image of an old-fashioned, gowned school-master and portrayed him weighing a child on a set of Ancient Egyptian scales to ironically (I thought) illustrate my point that performativity had got out of hand and that national test results were beginning to assume the weight of moral justice. Everyone, it seemed, had been put on notice: pass, or you are doomed.

So I was completely flummoxed when, only months later, the then Conservative Education Minister (Julie Bishop) announced a plan to weigh and measure all grade five children in Australia as an action to ‘combat’ obesity. At the time, the State Ministers for Education rejected the idea, but it has never really gone away. We now have a Labour Government that has expanded NAPLAN and publishes the results. There’s continued talk of performance pay for teachers.
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The effects of technological enframement on education have been well documented (see especially Blake et al, 2000 and Peters, 2002) and I do not propose to go into detail here. It should suffice, I think, to reiterate how the technological mindset both determines and proliferates an obsession with capturing and cataloguing all things and experiences. This capacity to measure and record sets in motion the whole suite of effects that surround the current commodification of education, in which all of us – students, teachers, academics, parents, policy-makers, even government ministers, are ‘standing reserve’ (Bestand) – resources which lose our being and are only relevant in-so-far as we can meet the ‘needs’ of the system.

Under these conditions, education is reduced to a process of supply: measurement takes possession of the curriculum and becomes an end in itself; knowledge becomes a commodity and educational institutions present as brands that compete for ‘the education dollar’; the ‘consumers’ of education demand particular services and products as natural rights; administrators are repositioned as managers and teachers as ‘facilitators’, who ‘deliver’ courses and content. And the whole circus is watched over by the panoptic participation of the public through the ubiquitous evaluation form, not to forget talk-back radio and the tabloid newspapers.

Meanwhile learning/teaching itself, now a thoroughly objective exercise, is reduced to strategies and methods for locating, describing, analysing and then using information, a process that Heidegger (MSMM) describes as a kind of grasping or appropriating of what is already known; a ‘taking’ that ‘means in some way to take possession of a thing and have disposal over it’ (p.275). 39

As I have already stated, these are the effects of this ‘mode of revealing’ that Heidegger calls Gestell. What I am seeking to unconceal here, however, are the causes that bring about these effects and so it is here that I will examine more closely, Heidegger’s notion of ‘world view’ or ‘world picture’ (AWP). For it now seems clear to me that we do not only educate out of a worldview, but towards it, and that it is this worldview that brings forth the Millennial Dream.
Thomas Berry (2006) argues that the *Dream* is only possible because we live in a metaphysical culture (pp.25-27). He lists six ‘transcendencies’ that make the *modern* sensibility vulnerable to the myth of the techno/industrial/commercial Wonderland, all of which seemingly enable us to overcome time and place and situation. These include, on the one hand, the residues of transcendental monotheistic religions that affirm a transcendent deity; the belief in a human nature that is essentially spiritual; and the notion of a redemption that can save us out of the physical world. On the other hand there are transcendences bequeathed by the natural sciences to a secular society: the transcendent human mind; the technology this enables that frees us from the messy, problematic present; and the idea of a transcendent historical destiny.

One can see here how these seemingly opposing *worldviews* actually marry into the familiar dualism of metaphysics: on the one hand spiritual redemption and the dream of escaping earth for an eternity of bliss, and on the other, the vision of an earth transformed by humankind into a sort of paradise. At their core is the human capacity to dissociate from the present and dream a future thrown out in front of us, a capacity that has had a catastrophic effect on many of Earth’s inhabitants, and on Earth herself. This, I argue, is *ideology* – a major cause of the violation of people and the planet.

Hannah Arendt (1951/1967) describes ideology as the logic of an idea that is used ‘to explain the course of the world’ (p.469). Ideology, she argues, treats the course of events as if it followed the same ‘law’ as the logical exposition of its ‘idea’. In other words, it proceeds by its own logic, absorbing all experience into its own movement and by this means explaining away factual contradictions ‘as stages of one identical, consistent movement’ (p.469). In this way, Arendt argues, ideology doesn’t describe what *is*, but only what is *becoming*. It emancipates thought from experience; it starts from a premise and proceeds by its own logic (p.470-471).

Arendt describes how loyalty to the ideology is only possible outside of the concrete and contextual. Ideological movements, she argues, are vague on details and big on a language that appeals to experiences and desires and holds up the
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notion of ‘mission’ (p.233). As Kohák (1984) puts it, the transcendent notion of an ideal future ‘devalues the present as imperfect but itself remains forever beyond reach’. The future is a horizon that recedes as we advance upon it (p.163).

In fact, such a stance leaves us without a present. Rose (2004) asserts that the vision of a transcendent future ‘…enables us to understand ourselves in an imaginary state of future achievement…to turn our backs on current social facts of pain, damage, destruction and despair which exist in the present, but which we only acknowledge as our past’ (Rose, 2004, p.17). In this way we are absolved from responsibility. The past is ‘always already discontinuous with the present’ and the future is ‘a forever imminent tomorrow’ so that we are ‘suspended in a web of time concepts that hold us always about to be that which we would believe we truly are’ (p.18).

It is instructive here, then, to examine education from the point of view of intent, for everywhere we see the extraordinary power of the Dream that goes before and ahead of us and yet is invisible to us. The strategic plan, the objectives, the lectures on strategies and ‘best practice’ are endemic in education. In Victoria, Australia, the Blueprint for Government Schools (Department of Innovation, Industry & Regional Development (DIIRD), 2004-2007) begins with a statement that defines the ‘preferred future’, as one in which ‘all government school students are entitled to an excellent education and genuine opportunity to succeed, irrespective of the school they attend, where they live or their home background’ (p.1). It then goes on to specify the paths by which this goal is to be met.

Such a statement appears innocuous, even praiseworthy: who wouldn’t want all students to achieve in education? And why shouldn’t we set goals for a preferred future? The problem is, however, that the Blueprint assumes a sort of substantiality that seems to guarantee achievement, as if the statement itself enacts what is proposed. In Victoria, Australia, the ‘Victorian Essential Learning Standards’ (VELS) are referred to by the pronoun they, as if to suggest a host of educational deities who will ensure the success of all students (‘…they recognize the responsibilities of principals and teachers…’; ‘…they identify what is important for
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students to achieve...’ 41) This is the object-acting-upon of which I accuse Tobin. There is an overweening confidence in the
documentation that, if just this method or strategy is applied, then these standards will be met, regardless of the people
involved.

And it is here, I think, that we encounter the much more complex and difficult problem of praxis. Bernstein (1992) amongst
others, asserts that it is the absence of praxis and phronēsis – those qualities associated with practical intelligence and wise
action – that make Heidegger’s philosophy flawed (pp. 121 -123) and I, too, have been critical of his seeming inability to ground
his philosophy in a life. Yet here, I think, is the magnificent difficulty of Heidegger’s thinking: that in the time of Gestell, praxis is
appropriated at every turn by the Dream. This is obvious, I think, in my potted research history and also in Tobin’s account: that
wherever there is an ideal or vision to be pursued, all things are made Bestand.

Bonnett (2002) makes the point that much that we have inherited from Dewey and the pragmatists has been externalised
and instrumentalised. Indeed, we see over and over again how the dialogic and the pragmatic are taken up by Gestell and
assimilated into programs or methods meant to attain particular goals. Dewey’s emphasis on experience, for example, is turned
into a list of required experiences in order for the child to meet the requirements of the relevant ‘progression point’; a concern
for the social well-being of the child is turned into assessment data that grades children on their ability to get along with their
peers.

Praxis is, of course, deeply allied with constructivism. The language of education is riddled with construction metaphors:
knowledge is thingly and is stored in banks and manipulated much like money or materials; ideas, discourses, even concepts are
constructed. In the classroom, the child is assembled from more or less discrete units – we proceed on the unquestioned belief
that if we put the right things in, we’ll end up with a particular (highly desirable) product. In education, the raw materials are
skills, symbols, concepts, experiences, and the building process utilizes modules, components, tools (along with the ubiquitous
toolkit and its unpacking!), scaffolding, blueprints and so on. Of course we proceed via units and building blocks to the fully constructed product. Here in Victoria, the three broad ‘stages of learning’ are titled, ‘laying the foundations’, ‘building breadth and depth’ and ‘developing pathways’. (DIIRD, 2004-2007, p.2). The whole process, of course, requires competencies, efficiency, the collaboration and co-ordination of teams and agencies. It results in a finished product that is valued in terms of the prestige it can confer on its makers and its value to society as a whole.

In other words, the Dream depends for its sustenance on the notions of construction and production. Not only does it therefore generate the technology to bring about a productive culture, but its technology exponentially proliferates this production. Moreover, the notion of construction is so deeply embedded in the modern psyche, that we fail to understand it as problematic in and of itself. In fact, constructivism provides the epistemological underpinning of post-positivist thought (i.e. the notion of the constituted self) and it is clear from its emphasis on the world as represented and interpreted, that this in turn springs from worldview.

so why does education fail people and the planet?

*We were the sane, the rational, the dreamless people, the chosen people of destiny. We had found the opening to a more just society, a more reasoning intellectual life. Above all we had the power to re-engineer the planet…*

*The human condition could be overcome by our entrepreneurial skills. Nuclear energy would give us limitless power. Through genetic engineering we could turn chickens into ever more effective egg-laying machines, cows into milk-making machines…all according to human preference, not according to the inner spontaneities of these living beings…*

*Thomas Berry: The Dream of the Earth, p.203*
Part I – Sub-texts

What I am arguing here is that ours is a culture dogged by transcendence, and that education is deeply implicated in it. Tobin’s dream, the dream we see in all those research paradigms, the dream of the Victorian Government, Heidegger’s dream for philosophy and the university, my own dreams: all are driven by a transcendent Dream of the future. Yet, as Jacques Derrida never failed to take the opportunity to point out (e.g. 1995, pp.89-108), such dreams are a sort of fascism: a certainty that the solution to the new world order has been found at last if only all will follow along. And that, as I hope I have made clear, is the problem: that the Dream has little regard for anything outside of its own requirements. It disregards and tramples those in its way as it rolls relentlessly towards its ever-receding goal, swallowing up whatever it can use in the process and casting off anything that stands in its way. It is the transcendence of this Dream, together with its utter certainty, that make it so very ruthless in relegating all to standing-reserve.

Freya Mathews (1991) observes that to be ignored/unnoticed is a fate worse than hate, for it is ‘indifference which truly negates our identity and undermines our agency’ (p.46). To be excess to the requirements of progress is, in the time of Gestell, not only to be powerless, but to be entirely manipulable and expendable. We become ‘mere material’ where the danger is that we will ‘lose...selfhood to unconditional production’ (Heidegger, WPF, p.113). In the time of Gestell, when we remove the quality of usefulness from person or creature or thing, ‘It remains doubtful whether the thingly character comes to view at all...’ (OWA, p.156).

The explanation, according to Heidegger, is that we are still not thinking. In the time of Gestell, we regard both thinking and praxis as measurable actions in the external world, causing effects which are valued according to their utility. In this sense, all our thinking and doing remains enframed; ‘a process of reflection in service to doing and making’ (LOH, pp.217-218). Being is frozen into concept/object, to be utilised for the project at hand. Whether that is the ‘thinking child’ or GDP is immaterial in the
end, for praxis implies shaping the world to order: that is, after all, what the pragmatic philosophers were endeavouring to bring about. (Indeed, it is what we value them for.) The problem, as Heidegger points out, is that objectification ‘blocks us off against the Open’ (WPF, p.11); it limits our view and closes possibilities. In the realm of research, or of education, praxis wraps us up in plans, rules, explanations, experiments, all of which are controlled in advance by method. As we scamper about fulfilling its requirements, peoples and places disappear before our eyes.

This is a profoundly problematic predicament that has us clinging desperately to the wildly swinging pendulum of dualism. It disturbs me deeply. Even as I suspect that I am pulling away the mask that has obscured the Same for decades, I feel the earth shift like quicksand around my ontological roots. I realise that all our heated pedagogical and methodological argument has really only been about systems of commensuration – the terms by which we might measure and produce the requirements for our respective visions – and that we have failed to consider that the notion of the vision itself could be in any way problematic. Yet I am deeply afraid, too, that behind the mask there is only inchoate nothingness; the formless, unthinking irrationality of my childhood, or the fundamentalist strictures of the worst cages of Reason.

And this creates a massive problem for research, and for this thesis. If research has always-already been the search for something that will improve the lot of humanity, then what are the implications for my own project here? Is it even possible to write a research thesis that isn’t caught at either end of the spectrum: groundless theory or praxis appropriated by method? This is the issue I will now address in Part II.

And then there is that other looming problem: the problem that is another paradox, and that is the problem of the autonomous self and the modern quest for that self’s freedom, which interposes itself at every turn in the making of the Dream. I believe that it is a shift in how we understand this outward looking self (that both makes and is made by the Dream) that is a
possible means to undoing worldview. How we understand the self and its relation to Others, in particular, the Stranger, is what I shall discuss in Part III.

In my youth I craved of manifestos
the certainty of Mao: and final solutions.
I wanted a manifesto.

But How then,
people die to
under the jack-boots live?

*

I said to him...only make no laws, no fine theories, no judgements, and the people may love, but give them one theory, let them invent one slogan, and the game begins again.

Elsa Ferman, in John Le Carre: Call for the Dead, p.101
post-script to part I: Stafford Beer & the brave new world of the seventies, or: "oh how we dreamed!"

The person who recommended that I read Stafford Beer’s, Platform for Change, (1975/1978), thought that I might find him to be on the same wavelength, so to speak.

At that stage I was working with a variety of text boxes and fonts for the different voices that were in my thesis, so when I opened his book and discovered that he had used different coloured papers for:

- his personal narrative – yellow
- metalanguage – gold
- his ‘thesis’ – blue
- and papers which had been delivered in various contexts – white,

I experienced a warm rush of encouragement.

Perhaps I was onto something – I just needed to simplify it.

I was even more encouraged that he was using a ‘kind of’ poetry

He writes of it (p.2)

No, it isn’t meant to be poetry

I do write poetry

and this isn’t it.

He continues that,
It is the business of words to communicate
but the more is not the merrier

and adds that his aim is to cut down on

verbiage
punctuation
parenthesis
circumlocution

and he wants to pinpoint ideas. (p.2)

I think he is saying he wants to open up spaces of uncertainty.

I am delighted to find one who not only bears my name,
(a rare find,
since, since the times of the stone-gatherers
all my known ancestors and living relatives
were and are farmers)
but promises to be a kindred spirit.
Even his dialogic writing style

a conversational voice interjecting from the indent

is akin to my own.

And then, I was further encouraged by the fact that Stafford
(note that by now we are on first-name terms)
writes about the undecidability of language.

He makes a point dear to my heart:

Any Argument of Change is put forward
in a specific context...  (meaning a particular world-view)
in a limited way...  (meaning from a particular position)
in a particular language  (meaning that meanings are undecidable)(pp. 9-10)

and note that he calls it an argument: of,
not for,
change.    (p.4)

All this leads me to believe that he is giving a critique of Gestell.

On page 39 he describes the illogical nature of our obsession with commensurability, by positing that the worth of:
teachers, policemen, nurses
...is strictly undecidable within the language/of the stereotype.

He argues that the notion that the work done by teachers, police and nurses can have a measurable money value
...remains a pretence
...That is why none of them is properly paid.    (p.39)

And he makes entertaining fun of inoperable institutions.
This is his Euston Station example:

- the procedure for discovering that the taxi queue is too long, and you go by train instead:
  - pick up several heavy cases
  - carry them eighty yards including seventeen steps down
  - and back eighty yards including eighteen steps up (p. 81)

This is an example that can readily be laid over our current education system. We could say that the number of meetings teachers have to attend is equivalent to waiting for a taxi at Euston Station – that the system has become so centralised that it no longer has any bodily experience of what it’s like to ‘be on the ground’.

And, as with our current education system,

- ... proposals for improvement
  - are wrongly heard.

He asks (of railway stations, but for me the educational world resounds)

- what argument for their total redesign would count? (p. 81)

His claim is that we don’t have the language for, or the capacity to understand assertions that venture beyond the established order of things

- (think here, Heidegger’s ‘leap’).

He continues:
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to abolish capital punishment
first change the public language
that contains the expression
execution-isn’t-murder (p.121)

It is at this stage, however, that we should acquaint ourselves with Stafford Beer, the man. Stafford’s field of expertise is (the cybernetics based) Operational Research, the purpose of which he describes as, to solve management problems by the knowledge and methods of science (p.87). Stafford firmly believes that:

the brain is a machine
man as maker is outmoded
complexity is the very stuff of today’s world
the tool for handling complexity is

ORGANIZATION (p.15)

As the inaugural president of the Operational Research Society, his opening address, given in 1970, was titled, ‘Operational Research as Revelation’ (p.50).

This is where my disappointment sets in. I can feel another millennial solution is immanent.

And yes,

Beer’s solution to the kind of nonsense presented by waiting for a taxi at Euston Station is to
...devise a metalanguage/ in which questions of value can be set and answered/ in quantified but not monetary terms. (p.39)

He proposes eudemony (well-being) as the system of exchange, which, in our culture, would be converted into money (p.170). He argues that such a system would inevitably shift the emphasis from exploitation of the earth to its conservation, a changeover partly accomplished/through the operation of a/metalanguage of conscience (p.250)

Homo Faber (man the maker) is a thing of the past. The seventies heralds the brave new age of Homo Gubernator (man the organiser). Arguing that traditional science reinscribes the status quo through the norm, (p.58) he proposes a metasystem that operates through the medium of the computer.

In a world of ever-escalating complexity (the 70’s subtext reads 'a world-out-of-control'); a metalanguage is competent to discuss undecidability in the language (p.8)

and his proposed metasystem, as a self-knowing organisation, would:

  - prescribe for homeostasis (p.108)
  - manage variability (...damp down oscillations...regardless of their cause) (p.109)
  - reduce variety (only variety can absorb variety) (p.110)
  - feed-back in such a way as to increase output (thus the associated idea that we learn from feedback, which thus reduces the requirement for managerial presence) (pp. 106-107)
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I can already feel the breath of Foucault.

The purpose of the metasystem would thus be to manage and regulate the flow of eudemony. The result is a series of (what I read as ludicrously complicated) flow charts and system designs that attempt to quantify (by the use of arrows of varying thickness) the value of social and industrial input and output systems. Education, for example, is drawn as a chain of three esoteric boxes (school, university, and the employer). Formal education passes a human individual through each of these esoteric boxes, and within each an operation is performed on that individual. (p. 139).

Now, it is to be hoped
dear reader,

that you do not now regard Stafford Beer as a crackpot
and this discussion as a waste of time
because
believe it or not,
Stafford Beer was invited to put his proposals not only to various health, education and legal arms of government in his home country, Britain, but he was also invited to address:
UNESCO (1969),
The Committee on Science and Astronautics of the House of Representatives of the USA (1970),
the American Association for the Advancement of Science (1971)
and then, to actually begin to put his ideas into action in Allende’s Chile,
until the coup brought the project to an abrupt end.
I tell this story to point out how we are all enframed.

Stafford Beer was certain that he could create the brave new millennial world:

(At last the tables are turned/ on undecidability ...Now we seek to create a language/ in which the current political slogans/ cannot be expressed (p.374))

And yet, as a ‘product’ of the 70’s (one of the very products he seeks to exceed), he fails to see in the very foundations of his thought:

- the possibility of a utopia
- the ‘naturalness’ of production
- the indispensability of management, control, homeostasis,
- the necessity of the metric (p.243)

Here is the perennial problem:

- to act or not to act
- to dream or not to dream.

By the time I reach the end of Stafford’s Dream,

I find myself returning to page two,

where I had stumbled over what I understood (recall here Heidegger and Husserl)

as the first fatal flaw

in his argument,
which went like this:

The barber in this town shaves everyone
who does not shave himself.

Who shaves the barber? (p. 7)

His argument for the undecidability of language is that such an argument decreates the barber,
And yet surely the barber gets up in the morning and shaves himself!
As long as we live in the everyday,
we don’t need a Venn diagram to know that he is both.
It is only when we live in a world of theory
that the problem is a problem at all.

I can see my farmer forefathers shaking their heads in disgust

“We seem to have set up a problem we don’t need to have.”

Yet the problem remains concealed in the always-already of the taxi queue,
and we don’t all want to stay on the farm either!

* 

So I end now with one last, sad and brave strain from Stafford’s anthem of hope:
There is no need for alarm
that science has provided the tool
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in the shape of the computer

to promote information handling

as the predominant human skill

of our age –

and as the machine

for changing data into information

provided that

we understand what we are doing

and legislate:

not only for protection

but for the advancement of man

in time. (pp. 243-244)

RIP the total solution and the millennial *Dream*!
Part II

on the [non-]method/ology of the knapsack notebook:

the ‘writing-story’ as genre\textsuperscript{42}
Among these hundred bones and nine orifices there is something. For now let’s call it “gauze in the wind.”

Surely we can say it’s thin, torn easily by a breeze. It grew fond of mad poetry long ago and eventually this became its life work. At times, it has wearied of the venture and thought of quitting; at times it has pressed forward, boasting of its victories. Battling thus back and forth, it has never been at rest. For a while it yearned for worldly success, but poetry thwarted that; for a while it thought of enlightening its foolishness, but poetry broke that off. Finally, without talent or skill, it simply follows along this one line.

Matsuo Bashō: Knapsack Notebook, p.29
Part II

changing the lens: the journey that goes nowhere

I set out on a journey of a thousand leagues, packing no provisions. I leaned on the staff of an ancient who, it is said, entered into nothingness under the midnight moon. It was the first year of Jōkyō, autumn, the eighth moon. As I left my ramshackle hut by the river, the sound of the wind was strangely cold.

bleached bones

on my mind, the wind pierces

my body to the heart

Matsuo Bashō, Nozarashi Kikō, p. 13

In 1684, the Japanese poet and Zen practitioner Bashō, set out for his home village, where his mother had died the year before. It seems that this was planned to be a simple journey of pilgrimage, yet it changed the course of Bashō’s life. He became a Wayfarer, one who sought to wrest the eternal from the phenomenal world (Stryk, 1985, p.17); to discern and describe the country in such a way as to dis-cover the sacred that lies beneath the external appearance of things.

This study began as a pilgrimage too. I too had been grieving. I had lost several students – to death, to prison, to the no-man’s land of the marginalised. Like Bashō, I too, set out on this particular journey with a fairly simple goal in mind. I wanted to describe for others, the possibility that there could be an-other education for these students. I wanted to have some cause in the matter of making education (which I had experienced as tedious) something children could delight in, not as entertainment, but as a rich, embodied, intellectual and feeling engagement with what they study and the people they study alongside.
Initially I wanted to do this by making a book like Sibyl Marshall’s, *An Experiment In Education*, or Seonaid Robertson’s, *Rosegarden and Labyrinth*, for these are the books that inspired me as a beginning teacher: books that contain anecdotes and descriptions of the embodied life of the classroom; that depict the struggle of teaching/learning. I was not so interested, any longer, in the accounts of the power relations of the classroom that we tend to find in the later ethnographic works (e.g. McLaren, 1998), or the “lesson-recipe” books that appeared in the 80’s, or even the philosophical works of John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Rudolf Steiner and the ‘alternative education’ writers (John Holt, A.S.Neil, Ivan Illich, Paolo Freire) of the 70’s.

What I was most interested in (and what I wanted to dis-cover for myself) was what the teacher actually does to bridge the rift between her initial intentions (what she is attempting to teach/learn) and what happens to it once it is freed into the classroom space; how supple it becomes when it is taken up by the whole group and grown into something that has its own life. I wanted to write about learning/teaching difficulties not as deficit, but as a matter of changing ‘the view’. Yet every attempt I made became fraught with a deep and unacknowledged desire to produce an answer, a solution – another theory or pedagogy, the very things with which I was becoming increasingly frustrated in my teaching life.

So it is that, like Bashō, what I in fact dis-covered was that a journey that in the beginning promised to be a straight-forward description of the external forms of classroom practice became instead a complex exploration of the inner life of teaching/learning. And whilst it was to Heidegger that I first turned, it has been the intense engagement with the problems generated by his philosophy, together with other problems emerging from my developing interest in Buddhism, and the further provocations of Lévinas and his notion of ‘ethics as first philosophy’ that have brought me, like Bashō, to this particular [non]method/ology...this particular representation...this particular way.

We live in a world, a time, a place, in which great emphasis is placed on the external, idealised goal, yet as Bashō reminds us, such goals blind us to the present moment (p.155). ‘[E]ach day is a journey, the journey itself home’, he writes in the
Part II

introduction to *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (2005, p.49). In this sense it is not the outer, ever-changing world that he examines, but his own inner world (*Oku*, the little-explored Northern backcountry that is also the deep interior of the individual) that is the actual country for exploration.

Poststructuralists and Buddhists are alike in arguing my major point in Part I, that it is the lens through which we view our world that shapes that world. In the words of Chögyam Trungpa (1973/2002):

...when we look at an object, we do not allow ourselves to see it properly. Automatically we see our version of the object instead of actually seeing that object as it is. Then we are quite satisfied, because we have manufactured our own version of the thing within ourselves (p.172).

It is therefore the lens, or the inner self that must be examined. In Buddhist practice, in a move not unlike poststructuralist deconstruction, one displaces the urge to change both the internal and external forms of things in favour of developing a heightened awareness of how one views the world. In this way, the aspirant gives up aspiration: ‘...one...realizes that in order to go further one must give up altogether the idea of going’ (p.180). Says Trungpa, ‘It is very paradoxical’ (p.184).

My life in education has been like Bashō’s life in poetry. (I refer here to the epigraph to this section.) My own ‘wind-swept spirit’ has been seized by the mad poetry of teaching/learning, and like Bashō, I have experienced times of weariness and despair, and times too, when victory swelled the ego. For a while, like Bashō, I thought that I had some special secret to be shared with the world, but just as poetry thwarted Bashō’s narcissism, so learning/teaching thwarts mine. The ideological lens is challenged by the moment: I know that it is only in the classroom that my teaching lives; only in the classroom that I am safe from the worst dangers of ideological zeal; and only in the classroom that I am ‘in my skin’.
Part II

why self-study?

*Can research ever be anything more than a subtle form of writing the self?*

*Robin Usher & Richard Edwards: Postmodernism and Education, p.148*

Peter Willis (2004) tells the story of John Howard Griffin, who made himself into a black man in order to research what it was like to be a black American in the 1950s. Griffin (1961) wrote, ‘I write not because I understand anything and want to expose, but because I understand nothing’ (p.113). Willis continues that Griffin researched, not from ‘a judicial sense of fair play but from a compassionate feeling of connectedness...by compassionate image rather than logical argument’ (pp.117-118).

When I began this study, I wanted to ‘see into’ the Other. I wanted to advocate for Other. Yet I soon came to see that what I was actually advocating was a ‘solution’ and that my solution did not reap quite the same effect in the hands of others. I wanted to tell stories that offered a counter-hegemonic vocabulary, yet when I told those stories I could see that I was yielding to the temptation to expose my co-participants to a sort of voyeuristic desire for spectacle and taboo (Hammet, 2004; Fine, Weiss, Weseen, & Wong, 2000) that seemed to ‘consolidate rather than subvert existing discourses and power arrangements’ (Hammet, 2004, p.252). And whilst I could see that there was an easy niche for me amongst the critical pedagogues, I could feel the creep of ‘a blustery ego’ (Richardson, 1997, p. 76) as I raised my strident voice in support of the resistance narrative.

*But I did not talk about*
*the time I bailed up*
*a young Indigenous high flyer*
*at a conference*
*and said to him*

*(more or less),
‘Of course you, (brought up with a white parent and sent to good private schools)*
don’t have

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I began to understand that the qualities that engendered my ‘success’ in working with marginalised students, were in fact the effects of a transformation in me – the turning upside down of my world and the realisation that Others see the world differently – not in a superficial way, as in the practice of particular cultural rites, but in the deepest experience of their being.

Van Jones says the test of racial equality is whether or not you want to change places.

Show me a black, he says, who isn’t tired of being black

I suspect the forests and the seas feel much the same.

To put it bluntly, I began to see that it was ‘me’ that needed studying, not ‘them’. Schwandt (2004) argues that ‘An alternative model of understanding for the human sciences places questions of the way we are in the world (being our ontology) rather than questions of what constitutes warranted knowledge claims (knowing or epistemology) at centre stage’ (p.35). This shifts the argument away from questions about method/ology. As I pointed out in Part I of this thesis, the starting point for a method/ology is already a long way down the path of certain assumed understandings. As Taylor (2002) argues, our presuppositions are the result ‘not...so much of the theses that we formulate, but of the whole context of understanding that we unwittingly carry over unchallenged’ (p.131). Our methodologies are always-already riddled with epistemological and ontological presumptions of which we are hardly aware.
Part II

And this is my point of departure from the majority who choose self-study. It is not that I don’t agree that the particular offers insights into the wider culture (Roth, 2005), or that the personal story can touch the reader in ways that statistics cannot (Derry, 2005), or that self-study gives voice to that which the dominant discourses have forgotten (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It is not that I don’t agree that self-study as a method reminds us (as both research writers and readers) that ‘we are part of rather than apart from the world constructed through research’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 148, my emphasis). All these have been significant to my decision, but the larger issue is the one I raised in my conclusion to Part I of this thesis, and that is the problem of praxis.

Hattam (2004) argues that in our culture, ethico-political action is directed outward, at the external/object world: ‘...the decision is always framed in terms of working on socially transformative projects.’ (p.187). He argues that the critical movement ‘abandons the self and only looks at what we could change outside of ourselves’ (p.187). We can see in the history of research a persistent motivation to change the lot of humanity for ‘the better’, which latterly extends to the researcher him/herself. Thus writers such as Kincheloe (2005) assert the benefit of self-study as a counter-hegemonic praxis for transforming self and society. Yet as we have seen, this outward-looking notion of social transformation fails to challenge its own assumed supposition (posed by Gottlieb, 1992) that ‘...given enough bread and justice we will be satisfied and not want more’ (p.199). We seem unable to acknowledge that so far in the history of humankind we do not seem to have reached the point at which we can say that we have ‘enough’.

Hattam suggests that,

A Buddhist reworking of the idea that the personal is political involves unsettling the identity altogether in favour of a new form of subjectivity, one that privileges the development of an expansive type of altruism as a precursor to realising our radical interdependence (p.203).
Part II

Yet such a view is problematic. A superficial reading brings to mind the therapeutic notion that ‘transformation’ is primarily personal and simply a matter of will/volition. I will argue later in this study that we cannot just transform our ontological understanding by saying so, and that authentic change can be both painful and shocking. It is this confronting of ‘the culture with itself, along the lines it meets in me’ (Cavell, 1979, p.125) that is the primary motivation behind this study, for it is only in my own struggle that I can say that I am not just proposing another figment of the Dream.

What I remember most about John Howard Griffin’s account:

There was nowhere to sit down.
You could walk clean through one of those 1950’s Southern American towns
without finding a place
where you were
allowed
to sit down.

And nowhere to get a drink of water.

the knapsack notebook

...the scenes of so many places linger in the heart, and the aching sorrow of a mountain shelter or a hut in a moor
become seeds for words and a way to become intimate with wind and clouds. So I’ve thrown together jottings of
places unforgotten. Think of them as the delirium of a drunk or the rambling of one asleep, and listen recklessly.

Matsuo Bashô, Knapsack Notebook, p.30
Part II

The *Knapsack Notebook (oi no kobumi)* is a wooden, lacquered backpack worn by Japanese Zen priests when travelling (Barnhill, 2005, p.2). As a teacher, figuratively speaking, I carry my knapsack notebook wherever I go. In real-time, I scribble all over my lesson plans, which are hand-written in big scrap books, with factual notes and prompts written all over the pages in any available spaces, and ‘after-thoughts’ overwritten in different colours that can be markers for the next lesson, or comments for the next time I teach something similar (if I ever do). And then there’s also the conversation about teaching/learning that is my constant internal ‘dialogue’. Every lesson is ‘research’ the fruit of which is a note hastily scribbled and stuffed in with the lesson plans, or an out-loud conversation with colleagues or friends, or (when I am particularly challenged) a monologue in my personal journal.

The *Knapsack Notebook* is therefore a document of/for contingency, a topology both internal and external that exceeds the ordered regulation of the conventional lesson plan with its statements of objectives and the means to achieving them. As a teacher, my conversations with colleagues about learning/teaching usually begin, ‘What did you do when...?’ and are responded to with, ‘Well, what I did was...’ Rarely proffering solutions, we instead try out different ‘readings’ of the given situation/circumstances. Our conversations are intensely personal, often exposing the vulnerability of one or more of the participants. They may or may not include pedagogical theory; they may or may not call for ‘advice’. But invariably they open a space for the meeting of many different stories...stories that are tinged with emotions: frustration, joy, anger, tenderness, compassion, guilt.

We tell our teaching/learning experiences as *narratives* because they are complex and embodied. Mary Lyn Hamilton (2005) writes that educators ‘are not yet...expert at portraying [our work] to others, since it seems to require new ways of doing so...’ (pp.60-61). Patrick Diamond and Christine van Halen-Faber, 2005, suggest that narrative ‘shows’ in a way that ‘non-
metaphorical, disembodied, literal' traditional educational research does not (p. 83). It is because teaching/learning is an embodied, contextual, and profoundly interpretative event that it is so very difficult to describe. This makes anything that I say outside of the teaching/learning instant, theoretical. Bashô wrote disparagingly of a poet who made a poem about a place he had not visited. One of his students recorded the event:

The master said, “Learn about a pine tree from a pine tree, and about a bamboo stalk from a bamboo stalk.”...Descriptions of the object are not enough: unless a poem contains the feelings which have come from the object, the object and the poet’s self will be separate things (Stryk, 1985, p.14).

In my Knapsack Notebook I write about the event of teaching/learning, or (more often) of its failure. I write my uncertainty. Was I too harsh with Sammi when she refused to read (but needs to)? Did I let Sammy off too lightly for those words just short of bullying? How can I find a way to help Sammi understand division? Like Bashô, I write my moments of desolation as well as my moments of illumination. The vignette recognises that it is our bodies that are the ‘sites of experience and knowledge’ and that, far from living in disembodied certainty, we ‘shift from “knower” to novice and back again’ (Kirk, 2005, p.239). For it is only in the uncertainty of each moment, as I write the body and the heart, that I can record the inclinations and aversions, the inattentions, the physical and emotional discomforts that mark the liminality of theory and practice that I seek to illuminate.

Dalby (2007) tells how the Japanese ‘year’s journal’ (sajiki), entwined ‘personal experience, natural phenomena, and seasonal categories’ and explains that the Japanese term for short writings on miscellaneous topics, is zuihitsu, which means literally, ‘following [the dictate of] the brush’ (p.xvi). The conceit here, is that the ‘brush’ opens a way and that, ‘rather than plotting out a path in advance, you let yourself be open to following a meander in which one subject calls to mind another, and that in turn may lead to something unexpected’ (p.xvii). In many senses, this is how I write. Much as Bashô also writes the thoughts that
arise along with his journey, so I write my own interweaving of the internal and the external, always seeking what lies under the ordinary, everyday surface of the things that we so rarely confront.

(As a small postscript, it is interesting to note here that the earliest Japanese journals were written by women of the court. Barnhill (2005) tells how travel journals became more common during the medieval period and as this literature moved away from the court and into the sphere of Buddhism, it was taken up by monks and so became a male pursuit (p.10). There is a poetic resonance in this story: that I, a white, middle aged, female teacher (and so one who has both the education and the leisure to write) and one who tentatively treads the Buddhist path, should chart the geography of my (largely female) vocation, which is one particularly suited to the evocation of the heart.)

memory and promise: heurism and research

\textit{It is of course one thing to voice ideals, another to attain them.}

Lucien Stryk, \textit{Introduction to On Love and Barley...}, p.16

This study is therefore heuristic in nature. Moustakas (1990) writes that a heuristic approach ‘requires a return to the self, a recognition of self-awareness, and a valuing of one’s own experiences.’ It ‘challenges me to rely on my own resources, to gather within myself the full scope of my observations, thoughts, feelings, senses, and intuitions’ (p.13). In this respect it is far more challenging than to gather the observations of others. It throws into question everything that I think I know; it has me cast a critical eye over every cherished opinion (and indeed, reveals opinions as only opinions and not facts); it undermines all certainty and seeps into every life transaction, every thought, every engagement.
As I have shown in Part I, in the time of Gestell, we have come to understand knowing as substantial – as if it is a matter merely of acquisition and transaction - yet to know is to feel in every possible sense of the word; intellectually, emotionally, physically. Knowing does not exist independently of me. Moustakas (1990), recognising ‘the contribution that subjectivity and immediacy make to knowledge’ (p.103), stresses that, ‘Our most significant awarences are developed from our own internal searches and from our attunement and empathic understandings of others’ (p.26). Thus we come to understand that much of our knowing is tacit, requiring time and reflection before it can break out ‘into the open as a revolution of thought or feeling – a new idea, a startling revelation, a perspective, or an illumination’ (p.110).

The writer Amanda Lohrey (1997), referring to the work of Alfred Tomatis, describes learning to sing as ‘pre-eminently learning to listen, to hear the notes in your own voice, to hear them in others and then to bring them into the relationship...that you desire’ (p.256). This evokes Heidegger and the call. The heuristic process is one of deep listening - to self, other, world; an iterative process that involves periods of immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and narrative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990, pp.27-32), with large muddy periods in between! [Note here that we can say the same about teaching and learning, so that in this study, content and method are inseparable and iterative of each other.]

It is important here to understand the heuristic turn as intrinsically different from phenomenology.47 Whereas the phenomenologist seeks to detach from self in order to enter the phenomenon, the heurist seeks connectedness and relationship. Whereas the phenomenologist strives to give a definitive description of an object or experience, the heurist seeks to describe the range of possible meanings that arise out of her own, fully recognised, interdependence with the ‘researched’. Whilst the phenomenologist presents a distilled understanding of object/experience, and thus loses sight of the particular in the process, the heurist keeps the particular visible, but always (explicitly) ‘from the frame of reference of the experiencing person’ (Moustakas, 1990, pp. 38-39).
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The heuristic process is therefore not unlike the Buddhist practice of studying the self to forget the self. It is the understanding that there is a great difference between being \textit{self-conscious}, and being \textit{conscious of self}. Stryk (1985) writes of \textit{muga}, the Zen principle of creating ‘so close an identity with the things one writes of that the self is forgotten’ (p.16). Lohrey too (1997), writes about this paradox in relation to singing. She quotes a singer, Caroline, who says, ‘All I know is that you don’t have a sense of anything but the moment. There’s no past, there’s no present...’ (p.198).

Yet as Yuasa (1966), writes, even the great master Bashō had difficulty walking such a path. Yuasa maintains that in the \textit{Knapsack Notebook}, Bashō wrote too much about what he was attempting to do and not enough about actually doing it. Just as the singer knows that sometimes there will be too much self-awareness and at others not enough, so we encounter the same difficulty in writing about self. Trungpa (1973/2002) argues eloquently that as soon as we attempt to forget the self we are already affirming a dualistic view of the world. It is the attempt that makes the action self-aware. He argues that we set up a sort of central headquarters from which we watch the object world and so solidify self and Other (p.144). In such instances ‘it is dubious that one can even speak of “experiencing”...since this would imply a separation between the experiencer and the experience’ (p.191). For me, this ‘writing genre’ has been the most difficult I could have chosen, for there is always a fine line between, on the one hand, objectifying the Other, and on the other, describing personal experience in a manner that is out and out narcissism.

Yet the very difficulty of this task makes it worth the journey, for in choosing a research non-method/ology that is so obviously problematic, one not only dis-covers the researcher hiding under the shelter of the more conventional research methods (Kincheloe, 2005, p.156), but acknowledges that every research method is problematic, and that there is really no research that is not ‘a subtle form of writing the self’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.148). As Ellis & Bochner (2000) comment, ‘...a story isn’t a neutral attempt to mirror the facts of one’s life; it does not seek to recover already constituted meanings’ (p.745).
Self-study/auto/biography offers a golden opportunity to remember that autobiographical experiences are themselves no more ‘true’ or unmediated than other kinds of data, that knowing is embodied and partial, and that in the end, every perspective is just that – a view from a situated and historical position conditioned by the experience of the knower.

derrida’s book and auto/biography: the récit as promise

I dream of managing one day, not to recount this legacy, this past experience, this history, but at least to give a narration of it among other possible narrations. But, in order to get there, I would have to undertake a kind of work, I would have to set out on an adventure that up until now I have not been capable of. To invent, to invent a language, to invent modes of anamnesis....For me, it is this adventure that interests me the most in a certain way, but which still today seems to me practically inaccessible.

Jacques Derrida, Points... p.203

My engagement in this study has been a little like what I think of as Derrida’s book. I am besieged by his description of the book that is everything, ‘that guides, attracts, seduces everything I read. Everything I read is either forgotten or else stored up in view of this book’. Derrida continues that this book would take ‘a form that would not be a genre and that would permit me to accumulate and to mobilize a very large number of styles, genres, languages, levels... That’s why it is not getting written’ (Derrida, 1995, p.142).

Like Derrida, I seek to write between and across genres, for it seems to me that stories about being-in-the-world cannot be confined by type. And whilst it may be that it is our epiphenal moments that come to constitute the narratives of our lives and that these memories, told and retold, constitute the changing story of my learning/teaching self (Hiles, 2002), there is
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something more deeply intimate that compels my writing – something that is deeper than intention or purpose, that is driven not by telos, but by my own heart and its need to take memory and extend it into promise.

The récit, says Derrida, ‘is not simply a memory reconstituting a past; a récit is also a promise, it is also something that makes a commitment toward the future’ (1995, p.206). The stories that I tell in this thesis I tell over and over again, not just because they are a sort of trauma that reverberates through my personal and professional lives, but because they are a promise. My writing is a vow to keep telling the ‘mad poetry’ that is buried under the bland facade of teaching/learning - a promise to tell the forgotten, unvoiced, suppressed stories that Couture (1997) describes as ‘almost unbearable but absolutely necessary’ (p.117).

We know that one aspect of cultural genocide is the loss of language. For Indigenous Australian peoples, language is intimately connected to country, so that not to sing the songs that maintain country results in the simultaneous loss of land and culture. We call this soul-loss; the loss of ‘heart’. I am writing to dredge back the lost language of education. I am writing to remember...to ‘sing up’ the lost country of teaching and learning.

Journal, November, 2008

As performativity creeps into every corner of the school-yard, I too, have ‘lost heart’. In 2008, the Victorian State Government tightened the regulation of curriculum to make strict adherence to the content and sequence of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) mandatory. This meant that the many Victorian State Government schools that run ‘Steiner streams’ could no longer do so with real integrity. Although I had worked with marginalised people and had myself been in positions in which I felt unheard, and even though I do not identify explicitly as a ‘Steiner teacher’, I fell into mourning.
Suddenly the deep well of inner resources from which I worked dried up. No longer able to translate what I experienced as the dry, dead matter of the VELS into my own living language, I, along with many of my colleagues, fell into profound depression. All those things we accuse our Indigenous brothers and sisters of, we experienced too. Illness prospered. I (who had always arrived at school at least an hour before the official start) found myself arriving ten minutes before the first bell. Some days it was as much as I could do to get myself to the train station in the morning. Working part-time so that I could write this thesis, I found my days swamped by lethargy. Suddenly I no longer had anything to say. Nothing seemed any longer worthwhile. My language had been lost and I could not speak the empty words of the coloniser.

Scheurich (1997) writes that scholars of colour have had to be bicultural; that ‘they must learn to become accomplished in epistemologies that arise out of a social history that has been profoundly hostile to their race...’ (p.143). Those whose discourse is that of the minority have to ‘double up’. They have to ‘speak both languages’ whereas those in the majority do not. For five years I have been going to two sets of meetings and attending to two sets of curricula. At the same time, I have been caught in the nasty ethical trap of being identified with the minority in such a way as to make it impossible to critique my own discourse. And when I am continually being forced to defend my own position, and therefore obliged to constantly critique the majority, where are the spaces for going forward in my own theory and practice?

My grandfather used to tell how, as a boy, he’d ask his mother what kind of fish she’d like him to catch for dinner. These days a fish of any description would be unlikely. The point is that I don’t miss those fish; for me they are an imaginary past – cinders. But the ‘world’ misses them. Aldo Leopold (1947/1987) in his ode to the wolf (‘Thinking Like A Mountain’) writes about how the mountain misses the wolves. Without the wolves,
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deer population grows to a point at which it threatens to destroy the ecosystem (pp.129-132). As Harvey (2006) elaborates, ‘Leopold’s mountain is one that knows the value of wolves and fears the absence of predators more than their hunger’ (p.181). It isn’t only the language that is lost that is a consideration here: it’s the fact of the language that remains. If King’s native stories disappear, then all that is left is the language of Gestell - a language that limits how and what is possible for how we live, and how and what is possible for Earth.

We must speak. Rose (2004), writes of the ‘urgency for stories’; one set for expressivity, connection and recuperation, and another set for the awareness of loss and the avoidance of complacency (p.184). The land must be sung or it will, as Derrida describes, become cinders. ‘The experience of cinders is the experience not only of forgetting, but of the forgetting of forgetting, of the forgetting of which nothing remains’ (1995, p.207). Derrida dreams of writing not only the forgotten, but ‘a narration that would also be a future, that would determine a future’ (pp.206-207). And so it is that in this speaking, it is not the self-conscious ‘I’ that speaks, but the speaking itself that speaks out into the world - a speaking that by its speaking alone replenishes the lost landscape of learning/teaching that is no longer visible; that replenishes the lost heart and resonates into some past/present/future that is in need of remembrance.

[Someone] recently told me he’d like to work as a geriatric counsellor in an old-age home. I told him that was fine but if he wished to bear witness, he might look into signing himself in as a patient.

Bernie Glassman: Bearing Witness..., p.79
the problem of language

One feature of the medium is that it mediates and anything that mediates changes what it conveys; the map is not the territory and the text is not the event.

Elliot Eisner: Enlightened Eye..., p.27

Koháč (1984) comments that, ‘The word, in our time, appears not as a gift but as a burden, concealing rather than revealing’ (p.48), but he acknowledges, too, that language does have a certain autonomy that evokes connotations of its own (p.69). I know that, even as I write in the attempt to have the event happen again, I ‘incorporate, interiorize, introject, subjectivize the other in me’ (Derrida, 1995, p.321) so that, in ‘interiorizing the other ideally in me’ the moment/he/she is ‘no longer radically other’ (pp. 321 – 322). In this sense, I objectify. I appropriate for theory, my past experience. I make the uncomfortable comfortable.

This is the impossibility of language, that:

...as soon as there is a mark, that is, the possibility of a repetition, as soon as there is language, generality has entered the scene... Every discourse, even a poetic or oracular sentence, carries with it a system of rules for producing analogous things and thus an outline of methodology’ (Derrida, 1995, p.200).

The Zen monk and peace activist, Thich Nhat Hanh (1988b) says that concepts are like bottles and thoughts like water. He argues that we pour our thinking into already-existing shapes (p.46). In this analogy, the bottles are like cages that not only contain and limit our thinking, but prescribe it. More important however, is the implication inherent here that we fail to recognise such prescription and in fact understand that thinking is the pouring and that the bottles are the way things are.
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This is to say that we still fail to consider, by and large, that the language we speak circulates around fundamental concepts that are historically and contextually rooted. There is always—already a contradiction between what a text wants to say and what language and textual form constrain it to mean. Far from the sort of disembodied, mathematical neutrality that is often attributed in particular to disciplinary languages, all language, and therefore all thinking, is of necessity culturally (and therefore nationally) bound. (As I have already pointed out, there is perhaps no better example of this than Heidegger himself, whose work, despite his best efforts, reflected so much of the German Neo-Romanticism of his time.)

The idea that meaning is fixed is both persuasive and comforting, yet as Povinelli (2002) delightfully declares, ‘meaning rocks’ (p.91). Usher and Edwards (1994), elaborating on Derrida’s ‘metaphysics of presence’, explain that, ‘at the root of the modern scientific attitude is a dream of presence, a desire to know the world through a language which represents the world transparently and thus truly’ (p. 56). Yet ‘All attempts to know the real through “getting behind” the system of significations that is language are attempts to totalise, to en-close and “master” it, and are therefore forms of violent imposition’ (p.139).

A metaphysics of presence makes our use of language instrumental and merely communicative and leads us to the belief that we can manipulate language for our own purposes. Says Heidegger (PMD), ‘Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man’ (p.213). Even though I choose the words I will write and even though I place them carefully, I know that the very words and their placement will already have subverted what I want to say. When I write the word ‘engagement’ it will mean entirely different things to different readers. When I speak of ‘discipline’, it is heard according to the cultures, experiences and temperaments of my listeners. Even the new words that are made (e.g. words such as ‘deconstruction’) are doomed to be reappropriated by the unexamined aspects of the dominant discourse.50

And it is questionable, too, how much control I have over the forms my writing takes. We might refer again here to King’s (2003) distinctions between native and monotheistic stories (see p. 96 of this thesis). The forms of the stories colour how they...
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are received and suggest values that may be neither intended nor warranted, yet which are seen as ‘natural’ by the participating culture. Gee (1999) tells how the stories of an African-American child ‘have deep meanings when she tells them in her own community’ but even African-American teachers may not ‘recognise’ them in the context of ‘school language’ (pp.116-120). And research texts have their own particular forms too. Usher and Edwards (1994) argue that research writing is particularly slippery, concealing its own being as writing and pointing away from the writer/writing/method, to a purported world ‘out there’ (p.151) in an effort to confer authority.

Yet this (poststructuralist) problem with language is itself problematic. Poets have always understood that language cannot say everything. In 1684, Bashô wrote of Mt Fuji, ‘Even poets can’t exhaust this scene and verse; those with great talent and men of letters give up their words; painters too abandon their brushes and flee’ (p.90). And in the summer of 1693 he wrote, ‘writing is as inexhaustible as the sands on the beach’ (2005, pp.137-138).

As Kohák (1984) puts it, ‘The word is not philosophy’s handicap. It, too, is a gift’ (p.48). Language need not be a cage unless we regard it as such. Indeed, it is the poststructuralists who tell us that language does not only mirror the world but also constructs it. Words have power, yes, but they have a power for possibility as well as a power for prison bars.

As I write, I think of a dear friend who mourns, always, that her words are forever doomed to be misunderstood, yet when she expresses her love and concern, her husband and children hear it every time, unless they choose instead to walk away. As Wyschogrod (1985) observes, the utterance reaches across to others: ‘The bearer of language does not, as it were, disappear into the meaning of what is said but remains a silent presence alongside the utterance itself’. Wyschogrod continues that a name signifies ‘...not a content but its bearer. The name answers for itself by presencing the self that is called forth by it’ (p.207).
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Our problem is not that words cannot say everything we want them to, but rather that we think they can, and even that we think our experiences and knowings are simplistic enough to be described in the first place. Whatever we want to say is always-already caught up in language. To obsess over the endless chain of signification can be a greater narcissism. A mother speaks her love to her child; Bashō, ‘without talent or skill...simply follows along this one line’; I teach and tell the stories I cannot let be forgotten, and you, the reader, interpret them as you will.

Bashō and the haibun: poetry as the open space

...one thread runs through the artistic Ways, and this aesthetic spirit is to follow the Creative, to be a companion to the turning of the four seasons. Nothing one sees is not a flower, nothing one imagines is not the moon...

“wayfarer”
will be my name;
first winter showers.

*Matsuo Bashō: Knapsack Notebook, p.29*

Nevertheless, the use of poetry can open spaces that prose keeps closed, and it is in this spirit that I attempt to tell my Sammy/Sammi stories as a kind of prose-poetry in which the language of *Gestell* is pared back to make space for other meaning. ‘[C]ertain literary or poetic simulacra,’ says Derrida (1995) ‘sometimes allow us to think what the philosophical theory of writing misapprehends, what it sometimes violently prohibits’ (p.79).

Laurel Richardson (1997), who pioneered the use of poetry in research, states that her first experiences of writing research as poetry revealed ‘the deep, unchallenged constructedness of sociological truth claims’ (p. 155). Lyn Butler-Kisber (2005) concurs,
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telling how in her own practice ‘it became very clear that poignant memories and moments are best suited to this form of representation’ (p.98). In this kind of telling, the feeling world, long suborned to the rational, is allowed free access. Butler-Kisber maintains that poetry as research evokes ‘an embodied response and a different kind of interpretation and understanding’ (p.96) that is better able to represent ‘feelings and essences’ (p.97).

For Heidegger, *poiēsis* (i.e. the sensibility that gives rise to poetry rather than poetry itself) is a particular mode of knowing or of apprehending presence.\(^{51}\) It is a bringing forth out of concealment. Like *technē*, to which Heidegger relates it, *poiēsis* involves skill and artistry, but it is a ‘self-showing’; *craft* rather than production or manufacture. Poetry isn’t ‘made’ by the artist, but it arises with her, in the same way that Bashō’s *creative* is companion to the turning seasons. Heidegger relates this to the Ancient Greek *physis* – a springing or unfolding of which humans are but a part. In this sense then, poetry ‘arises together with’ its content and form. Kohák (1984), referring to such a simultaneous arising, explains that we don’t first live and then speak, but do both simultaneously. In this sense, words, understood poetically, are *evocative* (pp.52-54) rather than productive.

It is in this spirit that I adopt a poetic stance. My writing arises with my knowing. It ‘teaches [me] what [I] know and how [I] know it’ (van Manen, 1990, p.127). And this co-arising of memory and thought unconceals my tacit knowing so that I am able to open new paths of thought that dis-close ever-new country and hopefully (if I can keep a light and open hand) lay bare the ‘more unruly, disarmed, naive desire’ that lives below the surface of cultural constraints (Derrida, 1995, p.353).\(^{52}\)

I am therefore fascinated by, and try to emulate, Bashō’s use of *haibun*, the prose poem form characterised by a ‘terse, imagistic style’ (Barnhill, 2005, p.10) that features the interweaving of *hokku*.\(^{53}\) There is an illusory simplicity in the *haibun*: a simple tracing of the external world that includes the use of colloquial language. ‘[T]he poet presents an observation of a natural, often commonplace event, in plainest diction, without verbal trickery’ (Stryk, 1985, p.12) and yet each word, each phrase, is carefully chosen to open a door into the inner world, not only of the individual, but of the culture.
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This is often achieved through the evocation of *utamakura*, ‘famous places’, which evoke specific historic and cultural associations (Barnhill, 2005, p.184) that reference not just external events, but the internal life of the reader. For example, the mention of a particular plant will reference not only one or more poems from other poets, but also a season, a frame of mind, a cultural aesthetic, an emotional state – but all these in the sense that they are interrelated. No reference stands separate from the others. In the *haibun*, each word, each phrase, contains whole worlds of signification that are read in a cultural context.

In this way the writer/reader is freed somewhat from the stranglehold of the metaphysics of presence. The writing/reading of *utamakura* does not attempt precise definitions or complete descriptions, but instead leaves spaces for wider interpretations; places into which the experience of Other may find expression. It is just such a layering that I seek to emulate in this thesis, a palimpsest in which each seam is understood to be deeply related to those which precede and which follow it.

...the ice, long, long ago. The way the fickle, flickering progress of the plant’s seasons are recorded in it, not just in pollen or dust, but in the ancient cold of the glaciers themselves, an imprisoned presence as palpable as the ice... in their memory lies time deeper than we can imagine.

*James Bradley: The Deep Field, p.167*
memory and repetition: truth and lies in the self-study

Language shows clearly that memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its theatre. It is the medium of past experience, as the ground is the medium in which dead cities lie interred...

For the matter itself is only a deposit, a stratum, which yields only to the most meticulous examination what constitutes the real treasure hidden within the earth...


Derrida (1995), returning from imprisonment in Czechoslovakia on trumped-up drugs charges and besieged by journalists, recounts his inability to really describe his experiences. There were many stories that could explain the incident: the solidarity story; stories about the state, the subject, the human rights discourse; a story about the betrayal of those left behind. Yet none could adequately, alone, tell the ‘truth’ of his experience. What was required, he suggests, was ‘...a completely different form of narration, another poetics than that of the evening news’ (p.129). He questions Heidegger’s notion of gathering – of one ontology – ‘a presumption of unity, which still excludes or reduces to silence’ (p.131).

In Bashō’s notebooks, we often find the same experiences retold. The retellings may include whole sentences or paragraphs that are identical, yet in the very next moment the scene can be redrawn from an entirely different perspective, as in approaching a mountaintop by different routes. Here we can also catch a glimmer of Pereira’s ‘fictive imagining’ (Pereira, Settelmaier & Taylor, 2005) – a hint that there are many ways not only to see the same scene (Richardson’s (1997) crystallization is another example), but that we actually imagine/tell it differently each time, as our experience (the paths we have already trod and the trials and joys of the journey past, as well as the mood of the day, the season, that day’s weather, our always-already
Part II

costitution) together with the rhythm of our body at a particular moment, the qualities of our companions, all colour the way we tell what we see.

So also in this thesis I find myself returning again and again to the same stories, the same themes, yet each time I come along a different path and so see the scene which from the logical perspective ought to be the same, as something completely other. It is also true that in writing this thesis I have been surprised to discover that certain autobiographical experiences that I have told many times as foundational to my understanding of my place in the world are in fact partly fictive. It is here, I think, that we come to an important feature of self-study.

Benjamin (1970/1978) remarks that ‘Reminiscences...do not always amount to an autobiography... Here, I am talking of a space, of moments and discontinuities’ (p.25), and Yuasa (1966) notes that Bashō’s diaries are not always literal historical descriptions of his travels. My Sammys/Sammis are different children. My stories about them could be untrue from another point of view, or even at a different point in time from that at which they are told. It is the intention in the telling that is important here: I am not attempting to reduce or generalise or create a poetic unity. I am telling more than an external event, for I am telling my own interior too. More, I am telling and retelling my story of learning/teaching each time.

Roth (2005a, p.83) comments that our days (and so our memories) are shaped as much by the plumbing in our houses, what time we get up in the morning, or what we eat for dinner, as they are by the ideologies that drive our governments. Memory is evoked by feeling and the senses – a particular smell, an old song, an emotion, will recall another place and time. Memories do not arrive chronologically and they are not willed – they spring out of the past, emerging as bodily sensation – the racing pulse of love or fear, the lump of yearning or pain, the fierce flood of anger or jealousy. As Gadamer points out (1975/1982) we do not make sense of our worlds separately from our ‘prejudices’; we always bring ourselves along.
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Bhabha (2008) reminds us that in memory, the individual and the global come together. Memory is a ‘temporal disarray’ that ‘allows us to live in time in very different ways’ and yet enables action too – it shapes ethical decisions (para. 29). And whilst we know that over time, our understanding of stories changes, it is what the memory tells us in this moment that is most relevant.

The reader will note that I have highlighted part of the haibun on page 24 of this thesis and may wish to compare this with the ‘mirror’ phrase on page 161. I cite the phrase about ignorance often in conversation yet remain obstinately forgetful about whether it was Lacan or Derrida who actually wrote it. Does this make me an unreliable witness or the phrase unworthy of citation? For me, it is the idea that rings true, and I do make due acknowledgement of some sort. But here is the problem of subjectivity: to write one’s own memories is unreliable if we are seeking ‘truth’. As in the classical quantum wave/particle duality experiment, it is only in the moment of observation that an interpretation (one of a range of possibilities) is cemented.

And as the potted research history reveals, even the examination of a deluded memory discloses much, and after all, isn’t it my delusions that I am seeking here to expose?

...I clambered up the peak behind and built a platform in the pines, complete with a round straw mat. “Monkey’s Perch,” I call it. But I’m not a Xu Juan who built a nest in a crab apple, or an Old Wang who patched together a hermitage atop Jupu Peak. I’m just an indolent mountain dweller who stretches out his legs from steep cliffs, crushing lice in the empty mountains.

Matsuo Bashô: An Account of the Unreal Dwelling, p.124

...I clambered up the peak behind and built a platform in the pines, complete with a round straw mat. “Monkey’s Perch,” I call it. Xu Juan built a nest in a crab apple where he drank with friends, but that was in a city, and I have
no reason to covet the hermitage Old Wang patched together atop Jupu Peak. My eyes opened to emptiness, I just sit on this steep mountain crushing lice.

_Matsuo Bashô: Prose Poem of the Unreal Dwelling, 2005, p.126_

**reprise: the journey going nowhere**

Visible across the sea was Mount Kinka...with hundreds of cargo boats thronging the inlet and houses vying for land, smoke from hearth fires rising. “I sure never intended to end up in a place like this,” I thought, and when we sought lodging, no one would lend us a room.

_Matsuo Bashô, Knapsack Notebook, pp.61-62_

Writing about Heidegger’s *Holzwege* (*Pathmarks* or *Woodpaths*), Krell (2002) tells us that, ‘To be “on a woodpath” is a popular German expression that means to be on the wrong track or in a _cul de sac_...’ (p.34). Yet, although a woodpath winds along until it ends quite suddenly in a thicket, woodcutters and foresters are quite familiar with these paths. Krell points out that it isn’t quite correct to say that the woodpath leads nowhere: ‘...woodpaths always lead somewhere – but where they lead cannot be predicted or controlled. They force us to plunge into unknown territory and often to retrace our steps’ (p.34).

Bashô’s journey was somewhat akin to travelling the woodpaths. There were days of sustained plodding and days of relative ease. Some days, getting lost was an adventure and other days it was cause for depression or disillusion. Sometimes the path was downright dangerous, as when the guide remarked after a particularly perilous journey through towering mountains and deep, dark, thickly vegetated woods, “There’s always trouble along this trail. To have made it okay – we sure were lucky” (2005, p.63). And yet there were landscapes, heard of, that must be explored, (p.64) and moments when a scene was so beautiful that:
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...I could feel my heart turning pure.

stillness –

penetrating the rocks,

cicadas' cry'  (p.65)

‘Bashō’ is a pen-name, the actual bashō being a small banana or plantain tree which rarely bears fruit in Japan, where the climate is too cold. Thus it is both ‘useless’ and ‘foreign’. The leaves of the bashō tear easily in wind and rain: ‘...they rip halfway to midrib in the wind, as painful as a phoenix’s broken tail, as poignant as a torn green fan’ (Bashō, 2005, p.135). The tree thus symbolises fragility, vulnerability and impermanence. Yet at the same time, Bashō describes how his one solitary tree proliferated into many, which, like his poems, were carried away by friends and disciples. He tells, too, how five bashō trees were planted by his hut ‘to enhance the beauty of the moon’ (p.135). Thus the bashō symbolises the poet himself; ‘useless’ in the ordinary terms of the everyday, but rich in that which underlies the conditioned world.

Of course Bashō is a monk-poet and so in a sense this is all conceit. His quest, being a seeming examination of the simple/natural form of things, is actually the deep plumbing of his own being-in-the-world. Bashō is undergoing a pilgrimage, the point of which, as Cynthia Chambers (2003a) describes, is to travel outside our own familiar surroundings so as to see differently upon our return.

Such a journey has no external goal, and nor does mine. I seek only to unconceal the lens through which I understand the world and so to see differently. Abjuring praxis, I cannot therefore offer a solution or a method or a package to put the world right, since to do so seems only to reinscribe. As Chambers writes elsewhere (2003, p.228), ‘...the solution may be in
understanding the difficulty rather than trying to find a way to make it go away.’ I am not, after all, seeking to transcend the moment so much as to enter into it – to fully engage in an event that I will describe later in this thesis as one of love.

Yet, even here, there is a danger made all too clear in Heidegger’s own quest for Being; a danger that I will discuss in the next section of this thesis. And, yes, reader, I confess that, like Thomas King (2003), I secretly harbour a hopeful pessimism. He speaks, he says, knowing that none of the stories he tells will change the world, but hoping that they will anyway (Lecture 4). I suppose that in the end, when I ask myself what use any of this has been, I have to say, with Lather (1991), that I have discovered above all that ‘my knowing is in my actions’ (p.xv), and plod along like Bashō,

*With a bit of madness in me...

*Among the wails of the wind*

*My daughter once asked me

how

I came to end up

like I have:

she said I should have grown up:

racist and right-winged intolerant,
judgemental, hard-loving, a ‘good neighbour’

an eye for an eye but you’d give your right arm

for one you loved

LOYAL...

like the rest of my family.

But Lacan said

that ignorance is willed: he said that*
just as you choose to be ignorant about brain surgery 
so you also choose to be ignorant about 
marginalising Others.

*I had my first child when I was 17.
This makes me one of those ‘unfortunate’ statistics 
that must be fixed:

the teenage mother 
upon whom many studies have been done 
(I wonder how many studies have been done 
- and in what particular light –
on women who aborted their teenage 
pregnancies 
and so are not visible as teenage mothers? 
And the fathers?
- are they also a problem that has to be dealt with?)

My own experience of being one of the people 
‘on whom research is done’ 
means that I can’t, ethically, do research on anyone 
else.

For a while I thought I could work with a group of 
co-researchers 
people I knew to be interested in what I am doing 
but the problem was that 
they have their own lives 
they are not doing a Ph.D. 
so in the end I just couldn’t bring myself to 
use what they said 
as if it was me that was the expert.

*(A child said to me:
‘You have no idea what it is like (not to read)
You have no IDEA!)

I realised then, 
that I can only do authentically ethical research 
on me.
The story of my journey is no more or less important than anyone else’s. It is simply the best source of data I have on a subject where generalizations often fail but truth may be found in the details.

Parker Palmer: Let Your Life Speak, p.19
Part III

interruption: Lévinas and the face

- self, other and the modern pursuit of freedom
All that we are arises with our thoughts.  
With our thoughts we make the world.  
Speak or act with an impure mind  
And trouble will follow you  
As the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart...  
Speak or act with a pure mind  
And happiness will follow you  
As your shadow, unshakable.  

Shakyamuni Buddha, the Dhammapada

Does not the ethical begin only at the point where the I becomes conscious of the Thou as beyond itself?  
Emmanuel Lévinas, Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge, 1989/2002, p.72
A particular being can take itself for a totality only if it is unthinking.


One morning he comes in quietly...

Late as usual,
but extraordinarily quietly.

(This is after he writes the piece
about Osiris and the chest:
the piece he walked all over the community
and read to anyone who would listen.)
(I realise he must
so rarely
be at peace with himself.)

He sits down in his usual place

(It actually looks like he’s going to do some work!)

He looks up at me
quite attentively.

‘What’s wrong with him?’
asks the Top-Dog of the class.

That’s it! That’s all it takes!
The table flies
and out he storms.

So hard to be who he is.
Sammy has a problem, and it’s his self. Sammy’s problem is that there is an enormous gulf between the Sammy he would like to be and the Sammy he and his community knows he is. This is what he has been telling me every time I demand something different of him: that I am the fool, for imagining that he could be anything else. Amongst all the things Sammy knows about himself (not the least being that he’s ‘bad at schoolwork’), the biggest and best is that he plays up in class better than anyone else in the whole-wide-world. That’s his place in the sun. Everything about his behaviour tells me so and everyone in this community except me seems to know it. Sammy can’t understand that I can’t understand that a person can’t just come along and tell someone they’re something different and they’ll change overnight. (and why would they want to anyway when that would mean un-being?37)

Remarking on how the socially dominant paradigm unconsciously defines our reality, Suzi Gablik (1991) notes how, ‘Many of the difficulties and conflicts we experience as personal...are related to the framework of beliefs and standards of behaviour provided by our culture to serve as guidelines for individual lives...’ Thus, she argues, ‘...if our model of culture is faulty or disordered, then we ourselves are disordered in precisely the same way’ (pp.2-3). Here is the crux of Sammy’s problem. For Sammy lives in a culture in which the idea of a self is self-evident; a culture in which the construction of an autonomous self is considered both natural and essential.

Individualism is itself a relatively modern idea,58 absorbed from the world to which we are attuned. As Scheurich (1997) notes, ‘The culture constantly, not just in childhood but continually, teaches us and reinforces what an “I” is and how to properly have one’ (p.164). And whilst poststructuralism has long argued for an ‘I’ that is, ‘more diffused, less coterminous with the body, more intermeshed within its context, more interdependent’ (p.165), it seems that every aspect of our society - from psychologists and educators, who constantly harp on individuals being their ‘best’, to popular culture, which markets individualism even as it mass-produces - reinscribes the notion that a confident and fully formed sense of the autonomous self
is necessary for life in the modern world. In the technological age, ‘I’ language is ubiquitous. We say (always self-referencing), ‘I have a problem’ and ‘I have feelings for you’. We live in the age of I-pods, myspace and facebook, personal blogs and tweeting, all of which give expression, as Foucault (1987) points out, to the modern human being as ‘the man who tries to invent himself’ (p.42).

Greene (1988) describes our expectations of this autonomous self: it should be self-directed, responsible, act on internalised norms and principles, and understand its own impulses, motives and influences. In other words, it should be possessed of a free, rational will (p.118). In this sense it is a thinking entity; that which Bruno Latour (1999) describes as the ‘mind-in-a-vat’ (p.10). And, of course, inherent in the mind-in-the-vat metaphor we find the now familiar Gestellian themes of making and mastery. I make myself through what I put into the vat; through mastery of my body and my environment. With my worldview I experience myself as solid and autonomous. Little wonder then, that constructionism is the dominant paradigm in the modern world.59

the constructed self and the dream of freedom: self as first priority

My place in the sun. There is the beginning and the prototype of the usurpation of the whole world.


Inherent in the idea of construction is the atomistic belief that all things are the aggregates of smaller units. In this paradigm, earth, plants, animals and humans are all ‘...aggregates of atoms coming from atoms and bound to return to them’ (Mathews, 1991, p.46).61 Whilst this has traditionally been understood as a positivist (materialist) concept, it is also important to see that post-positivism also holds that we are constituted, albeit somewhat differently. In modern societies we add, take away
or try to change our selves. This perception of *making* falls over into all of our relations. We think in terms of acquisition, either of *things* or of *knowledge* or *experiences* that will constitute us according to a plan or design (greatly aided, now, by the advertising messages so expertly delivered by technology) which make the self an always-already priority. In education, the constructionist outlook leads to the notion of schooling as being for self-design: we educate for worldly success, physical comfort, pleasure and even celebrity. We promise our students that they can be ‘kings’, and we hold up as examples those who have come from poverty and disadvantage to positions of wealth and fame, regardless of their personal happiness or their effect on the world around them.

In this sense, the self may be regarded as a product. A product is entire: it is designed, made, completed and used. It has a beginning and an end. It has a life separate from its components and apart from its environment. More significantly, it has an inner and an outer life. It begins to imagine that it is free, not only to make itself, but to master all with which it is surrounded. Such an understanding appears to free it from the strictures of society, but this freedom comes at a cost.

Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton (1985), exploring Alexis de Toqueville’s warning that individualism might undermine the conditions of freedom on which America was founded, argue that the impulse toward freedom is so tightly interwoven with the concept of individualism that, ‘Anything that would violate our right to think of ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious’ (p.142). Clive Hamilton (2008) argues (and we can see a similar line of argument in Taylor, 1989) that the liberal movements ‘identified the structures and attitudes that held people back and prevented them from flourishing and being treated with dignity’ but that this emphasis on the individual ‘gave rise to an increasing preoccupation with the self; a legitimate demand for equality and liberty morphed into a demand to put one’s own interests first’ (p.129).
Part III

Bellah et al (1985, pp.19-23) note that for most Americans during the 1980s, ‘justice’ was about individual rights and the good life was dependent on the freedom to make personal choices without undue influence or interference by individuals or government. In short, freedom meant ‘being left alone by others, not having other people’s values, ideas, or styles of life forced upon one, being free of arbitrary authority in work, family, and political life’ (p.23). Furthermore, Hamilton (2008) points out that this view of freedom has been equated in modern society with happiness and, conversely, that ‘unfreedom’ is equal to ‘unhappiness’ (p.15).

I agree with Maxine Greene (1988), that this concern for freedom ‘is a leitmotiv of our time’ (p.24). Certainly, much of my own life has been devoted to the possibility that we humans can invent our lives and our culture and thus ‘direct the course of future evolution’ (p.42). Yet over the past thirty years it has become increasingly obvious that learning to know the self has led to self-gratification. As Edith Cobb (1977) foresaw, ‘the search comes to a dead end with a mirror image of selfhood and insatiable appetites’ (p.109).

Mathews (1991) argues that such individualism is rampant egoism; ‘the province of the free-rider, the one who takes, accumulates, consumes without returning, who abdicates roles of responsibility to family and society, and whose actions spring from the belief that his interests are defined in opposition to those of others and should prevail over them’ (p.157). As Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor point out (2009), freedom erodes the very things that nurture it. Free markets erode the values that sustain them (p.106); competitive society erodes kindness (p.107). Phillips and Taylor describe how, having entrenched competitive individualism, ‘free’ societies go to ridiculous lengths to try to ‘educate in’ values essential to, yet incompatible with, its continuance. They describe a British government instruction to National Health Services nurses to ‘smile more’, and Wal-mart employees being trained in ‘warmth’ (pp. 104-105). When Phillips and Taylor comment on the speciousness of Richard Dawkins’s claim that we ought to teach altruism as an antidote to our ‘selfish gene’, I am uncomfortably reminded of our own
Part III

neo-liberal Howard government, which imprisoned child asylum seekers whilst doling out cash hand-outs to the middle classes, at the same time promoting the teaching of ‘values’ such as ‘tolerance’ and ‘a fair go’ in our schools (I discuss this issue further in Part IV).

Not for a moment, however, do I forget ‘that the small town and the doctrinaire church, which did offer more coherent narratives [than the disconnected discourse of modern freedom], were often narrow and oppressive’ (Bellah et al, 1985, p.83). As Gablik (1991) makes clear, the struggle and achievement of modernism has been to delineate the self from other. And we have been freed. I, myself, must be an example. Whenever I visit my small town environs I come home feeling blessed that I have been given the opportunity to think other thoughts. I feel blessed to be able to walk the streets alone, and, within the limits of my individual capacities, to choose a life.  

For this is the paradox: think again of Sammy, who is indelibly marked by his community; who seemingly cannot shed his skin without losing his community with it. Indeed, it seems that the ultimate freedom of the individual is in her detachment from all that might chain her. Noel Pearson (2009), arguing as an Indigenous Australian, contends that our modern freedom is a two-edged sword that ‘includes the freedom to lose one’s identity and to assimilate into a dominant culture’. Yet Pearson emphasises that ‘those who resist assimilation have no protection against its inexorable advance if they have lost the things that made them a serious people’ (p.9).  

Hannah Arendt (1958) argues that it is alienation from the world that marks the modern human, not alienation from the self as is commonly conjectured (p.254).

Elaborating on her view that democracy valorises the individual, Mathews (1996) argues that the function of the liberal democratic society ‘is merely to facilitate the unfettered self-realisation of...individuals...’ (p.67). Such an understanding limits the field of possible relations between people to one that is primarily contractual; founded on:
Part III

a principle of disinterested respect for the autonomy of all – without in fact requiring any moral or altruistic commitment from its members [and] justified purely in terms of the interest of each individual in ruling themselves, and of their fitness to do so (pp. 68-69).

This emphasis on the individual has resulted in a system of consensual relations: we follow rules mainly for the rational reason that we would wish others to treat us reciprocally. Yet we often find ourselves at the mercy of our own or others’ desires; desires that are bound up in an interpretation of the self as always-already on the way to wholeness and thus always and already incomplete.

Such ideas abound in modern education, where ‘catering for the individual’ is regarded as primary. This is especially the case in progressive education, where an emphasis on personal reflection, empathy, and dialectic sits alongside individualised learning, thus locating the individual first and foremost, but at the same time touting the cause of the greater good, which is the great democracy to come (see, e.g. Doll, 2002a).

Paradoxically however, Bellah et al (1985) note in their study that even as Americans extol the virtues of autonomy: ‘Those we interviewed would almost all agree that connectedness to others in work, love, and community is essential to happiness, self-esteem, and moral worth’ (p.83). In fact, they argue, our behaviour exceeds our rationalism. Thus the problem of self-expression and individual freedom in opposition to the ever-troublesome other has become something of a modern quest (p.92). How can the individual exercise her freedom and integrity without being overwhelmed by society?

‘Obey thyself’: the philosopher, freedom, and the existential
Part III

I am standing at the end of this classroom
which today seems particularly long.
I have been teaching for less than a year.
In this school
which follows a Waldorf pedagogy
I have the WILDEST class:
a posse of errant knights
a bevy of wilful princesses
a couple of buffoons
and a spitfire or two.
There is even one who undresses
and dances in the gutter when it rains.

* I am trying so hard to be good –
to smile
to be KIND.
The model here
(inferred in Waldorf tradition)
is for unruffle-able teaching,
but I am not unruffle-able!
Every morning when my spitfire rounds the corner
dressed (once again)
in her cat-suit,
my jaw clicks shut.
I gird myself.
My smile becomes a grimace.

My heart pounds and my gut contracts.
I don’t know if I’m cut out for this!

* On this particular day,
  (the weather is stormy both inside and out)
I am watching things sail past my ear.
I am smiling through clenched teeth.
When I say the correct words
my voice is a little higher pitched than usual,
and as I turn around to face them
one of the princesses says:
  Uh-oh, Julie’s getting angry,
  Her hair’s standing on end.

The pent-up storm breaks.
She has given me permission to clamber out of
my ideological cocoon.
This stifled, phony whisperer isn’t me!
I was raised in country big enough to shout in!
They can throw me out if they don’t like my style,
but these monster children must be dealt with!

For the first time, there I stand,
naked as the day:
I am born!
The story of Julie’s hair standing on end can be interpreted in a number of ways. Here I tell it both as a story about disrupting ideology, but also as a story of self-discovery. The notion of uncovering or disclosing self is an Existential story.

The Existential story claims that we live in an ‘everyday’, ‘average’ state of existing that Heidegger (B&T, pp.118-122) calls ‘fallen’ or ‘falling prey’ (Verfallen). This is the easy, unexamined life, in which we simply go along with the everyday interpretation of things that Heidegger calls ‘the They’. The They ‘maintains itself factically in the averageness of what is proper, what is allowed, and what is not. Of what is granted success and what is not’ (B&T, p.119). In this ‘averageness’, there is a levelling down of the possibilities of being: ‘Publicness obscures everything, and then claims that what has been thus covered over is what is familiar and accessible to everybody’ (p.119). In other words, the ‘fallen’ life can be comfortable and successful. It accommodates the tendency ‘to take things easily and make them easy’ (p.120) but it has a cost in the loss of the meaning and vitality that Heidegger identifies as marking the ‘authentic self, the self which has explicitly grasped itself’ (p.121).

Heidegger argues that the They-self is dispersed and distanced and attuned to its world in such a way that its behaviour is ‘thrown’ or habituated by its environment. In this respect, its choices are limited unless it awakens to its own sense of possibility: ‘Da-sein is always what it can be and how it is its possibility’ (B&T, p.143). Unless we delve into the everyday, we throw our habitual understanding of the world (our past) into the future, so that, in a very real sense, we walk backwards into life and so we are unfree, always condemned to the cage of our own culture and history.

We fill our levelled, everyday, average worlds with a habitual busyness. Idle talk ‘divests us from the task of genuine understanding’; we merely accept what is passed to us (B&T, p.158). We distract ourselves with shallow, restless curiosity which keeps us continually on the move (p.161) and we disperse ourselves in such an agreeable way that we very soon have an opinion about everything, but have no genuinely held understanding at all: ‘Everybody has always already guessed and felt beforehand what others also guess and feel’ (p.162). We are ‘tranquillized’. We spend our days in a foggy sort of oblivion that
keeps us perpetually caught up in the daily round of work, relationships, family obligations and the ever-present lure of the entertainment industry in its myriad guises.

Such a view is reflected in all I have described about education in the time of Gestell, which is always-already directed towards the success of the individual in the world of the They. As Gur-Ze’ev (2002) puts it, ‘Normalizing education guarantees efficient orientation in the given order of things, perfects competence in its classification and representation, and allows communication and functional behaviour, success, security, pleasure, and social progress’ (p.65). Heidegger argues that in this, we move away from ourselves: ‘Entangled being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquillizing, it is at the same time alienating’ (B & T, p.166).

And this arouses a gnawing uncertainty that nibbles away under the surface of the everyday – the unsettling suspicion that all is not as it should be, and that all might at any moment implode. This, Heidegger calls Angst. It is Angst, he writes, that calls us to Being. Angst is not a thing; it is not here, nor is it not here. ‘It is so near that it is oppressive and stifles one’s breath – and yet it is nowhere’ (B&T, p.174). Heidegger argues that, in fact, Angst is ‘the world as such’: ‘What oppresses us is not this or that, nor is it everything objectively present together as a sum, but the possibility of things at hand in general, that is, the world itself’ (p.175). This is why Angst fetches us back out of our entangled being-in-the-world. It is a fleeing into being; to authenticity.

Thus we have to remember, in every moment, to stay awake, else we are left in the forgottenness that is the everyday. Blake and his colleagues (2000) writing from a Nietzschean perspective, argue that it is by remembering who and what he is that Odysseus eventually finds his way home (p.26). The crucial point here is that it is not by particular material or causal means that he escapes his fate, but by an inward turning or awakening. As Heidegger puts it, ‘Toward where does in-turning bring itself to pass? Toward nowhere except into Being itself, which is as yet coming to presence out of the oblivion of its truth’ (The Thing, p.44).
Blake et al (2000) maintain that there are two stages leading to ‘authentic freedom’. The first involves, ‘liberating ourselves from the external layers imposed on us by institutional conditionings…’ whilst in the second the subject freely adapts and assimilates moral norms (p.84) out of a mature choice that understands their essential worth. Thus we see that the existential stance is one of the struggle to distinguish the difference between striving to do what you think is best, and conforming to what you think are the best standards. The day my hair stood on end was one of those struggles: I realised I could either keep on conforming to the standards of the They or I could look into my own heart, behave in accordance with what I found there, and accept the consequences. This was the first turning in my teaching career. I found there a jewel – that which I might call my *freely chosen and explicitly grasped, authentic-self*.

Or at least, inwardly focused as I was at the time, this was how I thought of it then. In retrospect I can see here how the spectre of the ‘therapeutic self’ of Bellah et al (1985) looms large: the ‘relentless insistence on consciousness and the endless scanning of one’s own and others’ feelings’; the rejection of ‘oughts’ and ‘shoulds’ ‘as an intrusion of external and coercive authoritarianism’ (p.139); and the forging of the contract with a purportedly authentic, artistically chosen self (whichever that may chance to be at the time!)

So there I was at last, revealed: artist teacher; prophet of the poetic! Any doubts about my late-elected career fled in the face of my sense of chosenness and vocation. So long as I ‘chose’ every day, I was home and hosed and a fully-fledged authentic educator and person.

**authentic freedom: cool detachment and the artist self**

*Let her be to be to be to be let her be to be to be let her to be let her to be let her to be to be…*

*Gertrude Stein, Patriarchal Poetry*
Bellah et al (1985) portray the modern movie hero as the autonomous individual who stands against the They (p.146). Like Benjamin’s (1970/1978) flâneur, this hero lives just a stride away from nihilism in a world-weary state of hopelessness, where authenticity can only be attained by stepping away from the crowd. Wilson (2008) engages the image of the ironic poseur, whose mocking, satirical gaze is completely disconnected: ‘No matter how potentially moving an experience is, I can stand outside it and mock it...I stand aside and comment, but I don’t participate’ (p.133).

This is a stance commonly attributed to the modern artist and intellectual. Marar (2003) emphasises how, ‘A focus on the freedom pole enables one to imagine oneself above the fray’ (p.183). In our modern world the artist is often upheld as he/she who overcomes the everyday and internally remakes the world (Taylor, 1989, p.453-454); the cool, detached observer who comments on the They from the certainty of his/her explicitly grasped self. In art, the ordinary undergoes a transfiguration, even if the meaning we ascribe to it is its essential meaninglessness (Taylor, 1989, p.467). Gablik (1991) points out, too, that modern art has always been an observer culture that evokes aesthetic, not real emotions: ‘Lived reality is repressed by the disembodied eye and transformed into spectacle’ (p.99).

It is interesting to pause here for a moment to briefly examine the created self more closely. When Zimmerman (1994) describes Michel Foucault’s work as, ‘a typically masculinist, neo-Stoic retreat into an atomistic aesthetic of self-construction, characterised by emotional detachment and lack of significant relationship with others’ (p.257), he is not so much making a personal attack as criticising a certain (poststructuralist) sensibility (perhaps inherited from the Existentialists) that would remake the self out of an antipathy to the They. The Julie whose hair was standing on end was another such, striving as she was to design her self above and beyond all else; holding up the mirror of cool detachment and striving for an artistic interpretation of teaching/learning which assimilated self and students into an aesthetic blueprint in what amounted to that which Zimmerman describes as ‘aesthetic fascism’ (p.342). In such a schema, others, as we have seen, become mere accessories. Wherever one
looks, one sees only another version of the design, and so Gestell triumphs once again. The move to escape Bestand is revealed as, itself, Bestand: the design becomes the transcendent, and all is devoured in our progress towards it.

The problem, as Lévinas points out, is that in Eigentlichkeit, (the original/unalterable condition of authenticity) genuineness of being always-already gives primacy to the self (2000, pp.211-212). Ontology as first philosophy prioritises the relationship of self to being: ‘In Heidegger, the ethical relation...is only one moment of our presence in the world. It does not have the central place...it is not in the first instance the Face...’ (p.116). In fact, the whole notion of Verfallen is always-already dualistic, posing the self against all the others. As Lévinas reiterates again and again, this self-absorption is a violence that can only be averted by irreversibly altering the relation between self and other.

**being** as transcendence and the problem of the mystical

*Now God’s own natural place is unity and purity, and that comes from detachment. Therefore God must of necessity give himself to a heart that has detachment. Second, I praise detachment above love because love compels me to suffer all things for God’s love, yet detachment leads me to where I am receptive to nothing except God.*

*Meister Eckhart, On Detachment, p.105*

*I was walking along the Fuji River when I saw an abandoned child...weeping pitifully... I tossed him some food from my sleeve and said in passing,*

*those who listen for the monkeys:* 64

*what of this child*

*in the autumn wind?*
Heidegger was influenced by the 13th century Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart, who writes, ‘all sorrow comes from love and from holding dear. Therefore, if I feel sorrow because of perishable things, my heart and I will still love and hold dear perishable things’ (2005, p.122). Eckhart makes the point repeatedly in his writings that the heart cannot hold both the everyday and God. Like a cask it cannot hold both water and wine; it must be emptied in order to admit the eternal. It is to this place, I think, that we can trace the seeds of Heidegger’s notion of an ever-present movement away from a feeling involvement in the messy predicaments of human interactions in favour of a purity of being that transcends entanglement.

Until recently I subscribed wholly to Heidegger’s notion of ‘the temporal linguistic clearing, the opening, the absencing in which things can present themselves and thus “be”’ (Zimmerman, 1993/2006, pp.295-296). It is in this clearing, Heidegger argues, that human being arises, and so ‘to be’, is an event of self-disclosure, or self-presencing [Anwesen]. In exploring this concept of the clearing, which I equated with Winnicott’s (1974) ‘potential space’ and the ‘spaciousness’ of Buddhism, my primary interest was in Gelassenheit, the ‘allowing’ of the being of the other. Yet there is a problem here, I think, in a lack of true reflexivity: a sense of essence that fortifies the idea of a purity of being that remains untouched by the encounter. This is perhaps why writers such as Irigaray propose a ‘third’ entity that is between the two, ‘as work in common and space-time to be shared’ (Irigaray, 2002, p.10), yet even here we see again the linear thread of cause and effect so inescapable in modern thinking.

Stendstad (2006) points out that the dualistic predisposition of modernity has us think of being as Abgrund, a nothingness. This predisposition, she argues, ‘is so powerful that it effectively captures and imprisons our thinking’ (p. 160). Such a view still
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thinks *being* as something that exists apart from us so that it can fall out of existence and must be dis-closed. We think of *being* as something 'beyond' the self – a promise of escape from contamination by the common complications of everyday worldly interactions.

Bashō, finding a small child on the bank of the Fuji River, ‘crying pitifully...obviously abandoned by his parents’, speculates on what may have happened to bring this situation about: perhaps its parents could no longer bear the storms of life and so abandoned their child, or the child itself was not strong enough to survive. After this speculation, Bashō then tells how, ‘I tossed him some food from my sleeve’ (2005, p.14). He made a poem before passing on his way, noting that the child must raise its voice to heaven, whilst he, Bashō, ‘must pass on, leaving you behind’ (1996, p. 52). There is an implication here (and I do not know whether Bashō is being ironic or not) that nothing should get in the way of his quest for *being* – a quest that involves both art and emptiness, but certainly doesn’t include entanglement with a small, orphaned child.

For me, the baby left on the riverbank equates all too easily with my Sammys/Sammis and Tobin’s determination to, “Back off. Only teach them what they want to be taught.” For whilst to meet in the clearing means that beings are not subject to endless and conclusive prejudgement and categorisation, it also implies that entities are things in themselves and that it is possible to exist without interference from anything external, much as Newton’s objects floating unimpeded through space. Like Bashō, we pass by, as if our detached observations will have no impact on beings who are doomed to live out a place ordained by heaven. The problem is, however, (and there is no better example than Heidegger) that we are quite simply never autonomous. Everything we do affects the world around us. As Zimmerman (1994) points out, our bodies disturb and reshape everything around them; our thoughts likewise (p.137). Just as we ourselves are disturbed and shaped by all around us, so we shape the world.
the other without a face: Lévinas and the violence of the object view

Sammy has started to speak English. He reads me a book this diminutive desert child  
He reads:  
“What is this? Dog”  
“What is this? Bird.” He reads all the way through the book.  
“This is one dog. ‘This is two birds.’”  
For the rest of the day, he circumambulates the classroom, asking anyone & everyone plaintively,  
“But what is one?”

Sammy knows what a dog is, and he knows what a bird is. Dog is real to him. Bird is real. But what is one? I had listened well to the Old Women’s stories (see p. 88). The students in my care were beginning to understand basic mathematical concepts, yet even as we continued to illustrate our ‘maths stories’ (‘Draw this: “You go fishing. You catch 5 fish. You give 3 to Jaja. How many do you have left?”’) I would still hold up a block for one...a block for ten...five blocks for fifty.

Educated to teach maths from a foundation of manipulables, I now realised that I had not thought, as Heidegger would put it, ‘more primally’ about what is ‘nearest’ to us. Sammy, wandering the room for the whole afternoon asking that plaintive question, ‘What is one?’ made me realise that for these children, a block was just a bit of wood, and a bundle of sticks was just a
bundle of sticks. The block of wood or the bundle of sticks had no relationship to these children. They didn’t understand it as a symbol for something else. I had thought that I was thinking ‘more primally’, but actually I was still using method. I hadn’t even suspected that there were metaphors embedded in my every-day practice. I had not thought back to the fact that numerical statements decontextualise.67

Jardine (1998) gives an account of a student-teacher who, asked about a seeming ‘disconnectedness’ between her and her students, asks, ‘You mean you want me to smile more?’ and, ‘Maybe I should have used more eye contact or something?’ (p.5). Clearly, hers is an understanding of teaching as an objectively applied method. Yet was I really any different, smiling through my clenched jaws as my hair stood on end? What is it that could cause such a disconnection? And how, with our view of world as object, can we understand teaching as other than its external entailments? As Jardine continues:

...it is much easier to pass on to students the latest research which documents correlations between frequencies of eye contact and measures of teacher effectiveness, than it is to reflect and converse with them on the interweaving meanings and experiences involved in facing someone in a genuine, pedagogic way (p.6).

William Doll (2002) argues that method has become ubiquitous in education: ‘...it dominates our school procedures from kindergarten through doctoral degrees’ (p.137). Method ‘shapes our textbooks, our curriculum plans, our ways of teaching, our ways of teaching teachers how to teach’ (pp.128-129). In other words, we are groomed to understand education as always-already objective. When I understand education as method, I am, like Tobin, ‘enacting’ education: there is a whole system of thought and action that I am unfolding.

So there are two stories here: the first is the story of me and Tobin and the encounter with the alien Other – that which Lévinas names the ‘absolutely other’, L’Autrui (1989/2002, p.245) or the Stranger, who challenges everything I know to Be.
there is also the simple story in which all that I think I am, is disrupted by that which would appear to be essentially the same (white, middle class, pedagogically aligned). The point, I think (and therefore the reason that I have now abandoned the poststructuralist capitalised 'Other' for simply other) is that the Stimmung of marginalisation has led us, as so many have warned (see, e.g. Fine et al, 2000), into a study of the exotic and away from the effects of the Dream.

For Lévinas, 'The Other is not a particular care, a species of otherness, but the original exception to order' (my emphasis). This is an ‘absolute difference’ that ‘cannot itself delineate the plane common to those that are different’ (1989/2002, p.245). In this sense, it is not only the Stranger that genuinely disturbs and disrupts my being at home with myself, but every other. For this every other is everything that I am not: ‘all the others [autres] are present in the face of the other [autrui]’ (1998/2000, p.106). And, in a turn that throws ethics into chaos, it is this face of the other that addresses me prior to my giving my consent. Sammi, at the end of that rainy-day room, and Sammy with his plaintive question, interrupt me: they don’t just interrupt method, they interrupt my designing self. They stop me in my flight towards achieving my own goals and pull me back into a now that is one in which the relation with the face is primary.

In this way the Sammis/Sammys name my self-deception. They point out the yawning gap between my ideals and the actual and so interrupt the progress of my world. James Hatley (2000), elaborating on the work of Emmanuel Lévinas, tells how in cases of violence, ‘the victimizer wilfully creates a delusional scene in which the other’s discourse loses its face’ (p.58). His point is that in such instances the other is looked upon as object only, in a relationship that is no relationship, and in which a passive other has no call on the actor. Hatley continues that it is precisely because the call of the other is so strong that the other must be rendered faceless, or nameless (p.78). By so doing, he argues, the perpetrator is able to persuade him/her-self that he/she is innocent of any complicity in the violence (p.88). In the cases of Sammy/Sammi, I can render him/her faceless by blaming ‘the system’, their parents, the children themselves, and shelter under the cover of my ideology or ‘evidence-based’ methods or
strategies, or I can risk disruption and rupture and find that, amidst my discomfort, something else comes into being. For the response to the call of the other calls me out of my Dream and into relationship with face – a relationship that I now think of as a way of love.

‘this is like this because that is like that’: self and causation in a co-arising world

How we think metaphorically matters. It can determine questions of war or peace, economic policy, and legal decisions, as well as mundane choices of everyday life. Is a military attack a “rape,” a “threat to our society,” or “the defence of a population against terrorism”? ...Is your marriage a partnership, a journey through life together, a haven from the outside world, a means for growth, or a union of two people into a third entity? The choice among such common ways of conceptualising marriage can determine what your marriage becomes.

George Lakoff & Mark Johnson: Metaphors We Live By, p.243.

It is well, at this point, to heed the words of Gur-Ze’ev (2002), who warns against any interpretation that would see Gestell as unique in enframing. For Heidegger, Gur Ze’ev reminds us, ‘framing has deeper roots and is not to be reduced to a specific historical situation. It springs from the very fact of situatedness of human life, of always living enframed’ (p.75, my emphasis). In this sense, continues Gur Ze’ev, ‘there is not much truth in the rhetoric of emancipation and the promises of all positive utopias’ (p.75).
Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) point out that metaphor, far from being mere linguistic flourish, is the basis for all our thought and action: ‘Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature’ (p.3). They maintain that, ‘You don’t have a choice as to whether to think metaphorically. Because metaphorical maps are part of our brains, we will think and speak metaphorically whether we want to or not...whether we know it or not’ (p.257). In this sense our metaphors provide the bars for the cages of our enframement: we barely question our metaphors for self as entity, object, container, substance or confluence of events or actions (pp.28-30). And as a teacher/learner, I fail to notice the metaphors for construction that shape my understanding of education.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) describe how metaphors both hide and highlight our everyday understandings. ‘Each one gives a certain comprehension of one aspect and hides others’ (p.10). The metaphor highlights those aspects of our experience with which it is consistent. And the system is iterative: defining its own terms and conditions, it constantly reinscribes the existing order of things. I see this clearly in my own thought and practice. Having been for so long absorbed in discourse about education and power, I suddenly find myself wholly complicit in the very structures I sought to disrupt. I realise that the nub of my own story is my persistent compulsion to make and to transform that which I believe to be wrong about education. I too, feel compelled to make the Millennial Dream. So it is that this thesis (always-already enframed by a discourse of resistance) must become a story about resisting resistance, else it becomes just more of the same.

The physicist David Bohm (1987) claims that, ‘Any fundamental change in meaning is a change in being for us. Therefore any transformation of consciousness must be a transformation of meaning’ (p.93). This has extraordinary implications. We do not, says Bohm, see a new meaning and then act: ‘the perception and realization of the new meaning in our intention is already the change’ (p.95). This is to say that ‘...if meaning itself is a key part of reality, then, once society, the individual and their
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relationships are seen to mean something different from what they did before, a fundamental change has already taken place’ (pp.95-96). In other words, change isn’t prior to action – it comes along with our actions.

Wheatley (1994) points out that when we sally forth into strategic planning we behave as though the environment is something we can manipulate or to which we must adapt. Yet such an understanding fails to take into account the fact that, ‘The environment remains uncreated until we engage with it. Abstract planning divorced from action becomes a cerebral activity of conjuring up a world that does not exist’ (p.37). In this sense, we may say that the environment of the organisation is the environment that put it there, and it is this thought that gives us entry into the thinking of the Buddha, quoted in the epigraph to this Part; that everything we see that has been made or modified by humans is the manifestation of our thoughts; and that these thoughts are manifest in the stories of our culture. As Hartmann (1999) notes, ‘every time a culture has been transformed...it’s been because of an idea, an insight, a new understanding of how things are, and of what is possible’ (p.101). Writing about climate change and ecological disaster, Hartmann continues that:

It is not humankind that is killing Earth. It’s the consequences of the stories of a now-dominant group of humankind. These stories, which dance through our lives from our earliest childhood and become the lens through which we view other people, other living things, and, indeed, everything in creation including all ideas, are collectively what we call our culture, and what may destroy us if we don’t change them soon (p.131).

It is worthwhile, therefore, to consider some other stories: other ontologies that shape the world differently.
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thinking differently: three cosmologies of other

_The slightest alteration between man and the signifier...changes the whole course of history by modifying the moorings that anchor his being._


**Ngurra: self and other in Indigenous cosmologies**

Our word ‘home’, warm and suggestive though it be, does not match the Aboriginal word that may mean ‘camp’, ‘hearth’, ‘country’, ‘everlasting home’, ‘totem place’, ‘life source’, ‘spirit centre’ and much else all in one. Our word ‘land’ is too spare and meagre. We can now scarce use it except with economic overtones unless we happen to be poets. The Aboriginal would speak of ‘earth’ and use it in a richly symbolic way... To put our words ‘home’ and ‘land’ together into ‘homeland’ is a little better but not much. A different tradition leaves us tongueless and earless towards this other world of meaning and significance.


_It’s not a dreamtime story Miss, it’s the Dreaming...it’s the Dreaming._

_A child, as I introduced a story_

In Part I of this thesis, I have already referred to the term Ngurra, which is the word that is used for country by many Indigenous peoples who live West of Alice Springs and into the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Ngurra is not just
country or camp but it is the place, in the largest possible sense of the word, that nourishes the people in a relationship of exchange/reciprocity that is so strong that the loss of one part would bring about the loss of the entirety. Robyn Davidson (2006), writes that in this understanding, country is ‘...saturated with consciousness. It recognises and responds to people. It depends on people. And just as people torn from their country are lost in non-meaning, country without its people is “orphaned” and in peril’ (p.15).

In these cosmologies humans are not conceived of as separate from and surrounded by ‘nature’, but more (as Mathews, 2007, describes it) as being ‘inside’ a world: ‘If one stepped inside the world, in this sense, the trees and grass and rivers would no longer appear as external to oneself. They – along with oneself – would be experienced as internal to the psyche of the world’ (p.4). Mathews continues that such an understanding is concordant with the Kimberley peoples’ notion of liyan or le-an; ‘the spirit or feeling within a person that connects them to the inside of country’ (p.5). Essential to note here is that this connection is a feeling association that unites human subjectivity with country in a relationship that recognises country as having agency/subjectivity.

Rose (2004) describes how the Victoria River people of Australia’s Northern Territory understand themselves as consubstantial not only with each other but with their country. For example, a mother’s flesh cuts across species, so that ‘mother’ could be catfish, sugarbag, or emu (p.156). Humans are not separate from ecosystems but co-exist in a ‘subject-subject reciprocity’. ‘People are immanent in those portions of the world which are theirs, and those portions of their world are immanent in them...’ (p.173). Such a relationship infers that human action in the land is necessary for its flourishing, just as country is essential to the well-being of the people. Ceremonies give back to the Earth and promote respect for all life forms. Even the return of the dead body to country is an act of reciprocity (pp. 174-175), and spirits of people, animals and places must
be constantly assuaged. In such an ontology, there is no individual originality of person or place. Cowan (1994) describes how people in such cultures are not so much individual Selves as archetypes of ancestral *dreaming* heroes.

Harvey (2006) puts forward the animist concept of ‘personalism’ in which places, plants and animals may be regarded as subjects. Such a view renders the objective obsolete and advances a claim for an intersubjective world in which, ‘Places are active participants in everything that happens on or in them. Indeed, most of what happens at particular places is because those places are acting’ (p.73). For example, in a ceremony involving *dreaming* ancestral relations, the hill does not symbolise the *dreaming* ancestor and the ceremony is not *about* the hill, nor does it *evoke* the *dreaming* event: ‘The ceremony is the hill...’ (p.71). The *dreaming* is not an idea *about* or a symbolic representation of. In fact, the whole country is a narrative; the locus of life and death, past and present, thinking and feeling and acting (Watson, 2003, p.62).

Experiencing the world ‘from the inside’ advances a perspective in which one is intimately entangled and compulsorily implicated in the world and in this sense responsible for every event which occurs in it. Rose (1992) notes how such an understanding immediately dissolves dualities, and *balance* becomes the prevailing obligation of humans. ‘Moral actions are those which sustain balance, immoral ones are those which violently threaten it. Human intention is considered in moral evaluations, but usually it is the act and its results which determine the context’ (p.103). This is an understanding very different from our own, in which individual intentions and actions have first priority and it is incumbent on individuals to bring their ‘unique’ potentiality to fruition and to impose one’s will on place and people with the express intention of creating a better world according to one’s particular situation.

It is this compulsory nature of our being that Elizabeth Povinelli (2002) describes so well in the following incident. Telling the work of early anthropologists in Indigenous Australian communities, Povinelli portrays the extreme corporeal stress imposed on initiates on the Arrendte *engwura* (final initiation) grounds. She tells how early anthropologists described the extreme
violence of ‘totemic substances being forced into human bodies, human substances into totemic bodies, and human substances into other human bodies’ (p.100-101), and how these same anthropologists then struggled to assimilate their perception of such rituals as trauma, into an account that could be acceptable to conventional European cultural mores. Povinelli critiques the modern fantasy ‘that cultural translation occurs without loss or violence’ and the idea ‘that we can think our way out’ (p.107). She describes how anthropology went on to produce Australian Indigenous culture as ‘a sanitized, sex-free culture conversant with a tourist economy’ (p.121), a cultural rendering that ‘would not challenge, threaten, or set into crisis the basic values of Australians...’ (p.171).

Yet things are rarely so simple, and Povinelli points to the enormous costs of this cognitive dissonance, not only for its passive ‘objects’, but for its agents as well. Against the anthropological account she juxtaposes an incident in which one of her colleagues (a lawyer working on Native Title claims) witnesses an episode of ‘payback’ that involves the bloody beating of a man that is accepted by his community without protest. She describes how both she and her colleague, who witnessed this beating, are shaken to the core:

Something nagged at his and my conscience: an ought, a should, an obligatory attitude toward certain types of actors and actions that he and I could not dismiss no matter that neither of us could fully justify its rightfulness in all possible social and cultural contexts (pp.264-265).

Such a description helps us to understand Indigenous being as a world apart from our own. We begin to see the possibility of an entirely other way of being-in-the-world. In such an ontology we can understand all as de-individualised yet all as personalised. We begin to grasp the compulsory nature of a relationship with country that might throw some light on Lévinas’s claim that the good to which the responsibility for the other person is directed is privileged over the Truth that the self freely chooses to seek (Hutchens, 2004, p.8).
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Buddhist cosmology: other notions of self and causation


grievous junctures –
the human fate of becoming

a bamboo shoot

(uki fushi ya/ take no ko to naru/ hito no hate)

Matsuo Bashō: Saga Diary, p.80

Here lays
a small dead sqerl
ready to become
a Rose

Mobi Ho’s son, in Ho: Animal Dharma, p. 131

Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama (Gyatso, 1999), tells how the concept of beings as solid leads to the human tendency to relate to others ‘as if their characteristics were immutable’ (p.94). In his plea for a new ethics, the Dalai Lama (1999) calls for ‘a radical reorientation away from our habitual preoccupation with self’ (p.25). He explains that in Buddhist philosophy, whilst the notion of self is ‘perfectly adequate as a convention...’ it must also be regarded, ‘as with all other phenomena’ as existing ‘in dependence on the labels and concepts we apply to the term’ (p.43).
The Dalai Lama explains that in the Buddhist understanding, ‘all phenomena – our experiences, things, events – come into being as a result merely of the aggregation of causes and conditions’ (Gyatso, 2005, p.29) and it is therefore ‘only on the basis of the physical and mental aggregates of the individual that one can speak of the continuity of the person’ (p.90). Trungpa, too, (1973/2002) emphasises that the ego-self isn’t a thing: rather it is a stream of actions and thoughts: ‘...actually a transitory, discontinuous event, which in our confusion seems to be quite solid and continuous’. Trungpa argues that our lives are taken up by the struggle to maintain and enhance this solid self, since ‘Experience continually threatens to reveal our transitoriness to us, so we continually struggle to cover up any possibility of discovering our real condition’ (p.5). ‘The ego’s ambition,’ Trungpa argues, is ‘to secure and entertain itself, trying to avoid all irritation’ (p.6).⁷⁰

As Hattam (2004) describes it, the ego comes into being with the express purpose of providing stability, to quell the unsettled Cartesian queasiness that ‘I am not’ (p. 138). This is not so much the existential fear of death and nothingness, as a fear of groundlessness or lack of existence that accentuates the sense that only that which is unconditioned, autonomous and complete is real (p.251). And it is this ‘me’ that sets up ‘other’ and in doing so sets into motion the whole panoply of metaphysical oppositions that comprise modern epistemologies.

Buddhists do not reject the notion of a relative self. Clearly, we all have a body and thoughts and perceptions that are to some degree separate from those of other beings. What Buddhism rejects, however, is the notion of ‘the self that is...grasped as intrinsically real’ (Gyatso, 2005, p.37). For the difference in the way Buddhists understand causation as dependent on multiple causes and conditions makes it possible, as the Dalai Lama argues, ‘to imagine becoming habituated to an extended conception of self wherein the individual situates his or her interests within that of others’ interests’ (p.46).

This is the notion of dependent causation – the idea that cause encompasses much more than the linear cause and effect of reductionist modern thinking. In The Question Concerning Technology, Heidegger argues that whilst we conventionally
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understand an event such as the making of a silver chalice as the direct result of the actions of the silversmith on the silver (*causa efficiens*), there are other ‘causes’ also. The vessel, he argues, is indebted to the silver for the possibilities into which it can be formed (*causa materialis*). It is indebted too, to the idea (*eidos*) of chaliceness, with all its cultural affiliations and implications (*causa formalis*). And its purpose - the use to which the chalice will be put (*causa finalis*) - also has complex origins that impact on its final shape (pp.313-316).

For Heidegger, therefore, all four causes are *co-responsible* in the making of the chalice. In his later thinking, (e.g., *The Thing*) Heidegger elaborates a theory of the *fourfold*, in which things come into being through the co-responsibility of ‘Earth and sky, divinities and mortals... Each of the four mirrors in its own way the presence of the others’ (TT, p.177). Heidegger continues that ‘This appropriating mirror-play of the simple onefold of earth and sky, divinities and mortals, we call the world. The world presences by worlding.’ And this is a worlding that cannot be explained by linear causes and grounds (p.177).

More complex than Heidegger’s delineations, the Buddhist understanding of dependent causation appreciates that everything is always-already mutually implicated with everything else. Things are in a state of constant flux: no entity is fixed, and one cannot rightly say where it has a beginning, or where it ends. Last year my father died and yet I cannot rightly say that he has ceased to be, since he is in his absence more present than he was in his life; my son has recently produced my first grandchild, but where can we say this child had her beginnings – in me? in my father? in my grandmother? 71

Thich Nhat Hanh (1988a) calls this interpenetration of phenomena, *interbeing*. In a proper understanding of *interbeing*, ‘If you are a good organic gardener... looking at a rose you can see the garbage, and looking at the garbage you can see a rose’ (p.31). Analogously, in a sheet of paper you will see the forest and its creatures, the sun, the sky, and the earth as well as all those humans who have contributed in the past and the present to its creation.
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For me however, the most profound entailment of dependent causation is the understanding not only that who I am, by the very fact of my existence, affects others, everywhere, but that we come into being together, in every moment. In the Buddhist text the Majjhima Nikaya, this is stated as: ‘This is, because that is. This is not, because that is not. This is like this, because that is like that’ (Hanh, 1988a, p.32).

This is a profoundly moral metaphor for living, because it means not only that all things have an effect, but that everything ‘gives cause’. Hanh (1988a) gives the example of the teenage prostitute who is the way she is only because her community (us) is the way it is. ‘No one among us has clean hands. No one of us can claim it is not our responsibility’ (p.33). In the story that begins this Part III, Sammy is ‘this’ because his community is ‘that’. It is as if there is a physical shape made in that room (much as a painter simultaneously paints both a figure and its surroundings) into which Sammy ‘fits’, and he cannot change until the space around alters to allow it. At the same time, however, Sammy shapes his environment too. He has been an active agent in constructing his prison: just as surely as his environment shapes him, so he shapes himself. Writes Hanh (1988a), ‘The truth is that everything is everything else. We can only inter-be, we cannot just be’ (p.34).

modern others: science, ecology and the notion of interdependence

Clearly, a civilisation based on rationalism and individualism cannot take on an Indigenous cosmology any more than it can convert wholesale to Buddhism. Indeed, it is extremely difficult for we in modern societies even to conceive of living as if from ‘inside’ the world. On the other hand however, certain events during our times, and advances in science, are opening the possibility of understanding being differently. In particular, the concept of interdependence is becoming commonplace amongst ecologists and quantum scientists.
David Bohm (1985/1987) describes the three main ideas that overturn Newtonian science as: action in the form of discrete quanta – ‘an interconnecting network of quanta weaving the whole universe into one...’; the dual nature of all matter and energy (e.g. particle as both wave and field) dependent upon the context of the environment in which it finds itself; and the non-locality of connection (in which particles at a great distance from one another are shown to be connected) (pp.6-7).

Bohm presents the metaphor of an implicate or enfolded order; ‘a universal movement of enfoldment and unfoldment’ in which both mind and matter continuously come into (explicate) and out of (implicate) existence’ (p.12). This is very like the Buddhist notion of flux. Similarly, the theory of nonlocality, which sees effects on one side of the planet (modern affluence) playing out on the other (the child prostitute in Asia, or rising seas over the Carteret Islands) demonstrates interbeing. Meanwhile Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, in which he proved that position (particle) and momentum (wave) cannot be measured simultaneously and that ‘observation causes the potentiality of the wave packet to “collapse” into one aspect...’ so that one potential is enacted, and the others disappear (Wheatley, 1994, pp. 35-36), is a modern take on dependent causation. We do not originate independently of anything. As the Dalai Lama (1999) puts it, ‘we cannot finally separate out any phenomena from the context of other phenomena. We can only speak of relationships’ p.36).

This is not to deny individual agency, and I am certainly not proposing that we give up the idea of making or design either. I agree with Anne-Marie Willis (1999), who asserts that making/designing is fundamental to being human (p.1). The problem is that we do not design over a tabula rasa. Just as we design our world, so it acts back on us, and vice versa. In the logic of causa efficiens the traffic is all one way, whereas in a dependently originating world, events, thoughts, and words, together with beings animate and inanimate, resound again and again in a myriad of configurations. This returns us to the Indigenous understanding of an intersubjective world rather than one of subject and object. As Berry (2006) describes it, our world is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects (p.96).
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Such understandings are now also emerging in social-scientific epistemologies such as actor-network theory (ANT), complexity theory and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). Fenwick, (2010) describes the shift away from human-centred epistemologies towards the notion of material as continuous with and intricately implicated in human activities and vice versa. Such theories reclaim and rethink material practices, unsettling dualistic categories of things and relations: ‘The assumption that entities are anterior to their representation is refuted, to focus on the material and discursive practices through which entities and their interactions are enacted into being’ (p.107). Latour (1999) is lucid on this point:

Our philosophical tradition has been mistaken in wanting to make phenomena the meeting point between things-in-themselves and categories of human understanding... Phenomena, however, are not found at the meeting point between things and the forms of the human mind; phenomena are what circulates all along the reversible chain of transformations, at each step losing some properties to gain others that render them compatible with already-established centres of calculation (pp.71-72).

These theories all understand that all entities are mutually constituted. An alteration in any one component shifts the shape and direction of the whole entity (Latour, 1999, p.108). Latour renews and replaces the notion of ‘society’ with the term ‘collective’ (p.193) thus acknowledging that, ‘Now that nonhumans are no longer confused with objects, it may be possible to imagine the collective in which humans are entangled with them’ (pp.174-175).

Such an understanding means that we can no longer dissociate intentions from actions and their consequences. Latour (1999) draws our attention to the myth of the neutral tool. Who, he asks, is responsible for the act of killing? Is it the gun, or the one who pulls the trigger? Is it the gun maker, or the gun designer, or the gun seller? Is it the parents or the educators or the peer group of the person who pulled the trigger? In a cognitively dissonant world, Latour points out, the myth of the neutral tool is in a symmetrical relation with the myth of the ‘autonomous destiny’ of humans. There is a failure to recognise that both
the agency of the tool and the porousness of the human actor can translate into something else altogether: ‘You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it’ (pp.178 – 179).

The Dalai Lama (1999) notes how the Auschwitz ovens ‘had been built with the care and attention of talented workmen.’ He continues:

No doubt they took pride in their work, as good craftsmen do. Then it occurred to me that this is precisely what modern-day weapons designers and manufacturers are about. They, too, are devising means to destroy thousands if not millions of their fellow human beings. (p.209).

It is the object/subject duality that produces our ideological contrivances and engenders this insidious and all-pervading cognitive dissonance. As Nel Noddings (2005) notes, ‘We can, with spurious good conscience permit acts against those distanced that would appal us within our chosen moral community’ (p.112). Acting from a distance, whether this be physical or psychological, we control and manipulate, putting our plans into action with little regard for those who may come to harm as a consequence. In the classroom, we can cut up mice with abandon in biology and pen angst-ridden letters of protest against the laboratory abuses of animals in English; we rail against racial injustices in remote Indigenous Australian communities and throw up our hands in despair over the injustices occurring in our own classrooms.

For Sammy, caught like a spider in the web of community consensus about his identity, an understanding of dependent causation is a solvent that might loosen his bonds. His (and his community’s) conception of knowledge and agency as concrete and unidirectional might be freed by such an understanding to shift and morph into concepts of emergence, interaction and encounter (Latour, 1999, p.114). Yet it seems that, as yet, these ideas have little currency in educational practice. Here in Victoria,
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Australia, I am noticing as the regime of testing and grading continues to grow exponentially, an upsurge in the number of ‘alternative’ schools for students who are considered too disruptive for the majority.

It is here, therefore, that I think we must return to the thought of Emmanuel Lévinas.

**my brothers’ keeper: universal consciousness and the co-arising, co-responsible society**

*Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper? And the Lord said, ‘What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground.*

*The Holy Bible: Genesis 4. 9-10*

*What scares me a little is also the development of a discourse in which the human becomes an articulation of an anonymous or neutral intelligibility…’*


In 2008, the Mackenzie River in the Arctic Circle froze over on January the 31st instead of in late October/early November as it has for time immemorial. Four years ago, a raccoon was sighted in Dene territory: they have no word for it. Eagles stay there
all year now. All the birds are moving north. There is a Dene prophecy that there will be a time of huge, destructive change. That time, the Elders say, is drawing near.  

As I write, Pakistan is recovering from a giant flood that displaced millions of people, and all down the eastern sea-board of Australia our own eleven-year drought has been broken by a series of ‘once-in-a-hundred-years’ floods. Whilst this is a ‘weather’ event, the record-breaking warmth of the sea waters around our country have contributed to the disaster, yet Australians continue to deny the evidence of climate change and, it seems, prefer to pay billions of dollars in flood and other disaster relief both here and overseas, rather than alter our behaviour by such minor increments as turning down air conditioners and walking to the local shops. In fact, our Labour Government recently announced that it will fund flood relief by cutting sustainability projects. Meanwhile, in education, the government continues to provide generous funding to elite private schools even as its own NAPLAN results demonstrate over and over that socio-economic disadvantage leads to up to a three year gap in school achievement compared with advantage.

It seems that, like Bashô, we toss our scraps towards whatever would unsettle us in an effort to salve the conscience, and continue on our individual ways. Is this mere blindness/ignorance? Is it self-preservation? If we can accept a degree of interdependence, why the silence? Are we not more than a little like Cain, when he asks, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’

These days, we commonly look to government or the courts for social justice, yet for Lévinas (1998/2000), the desire for justice is already theoretical: it already takes away my responsibility, distances me, removes me from the scene (p.204). For a theoretical ethics is already volitional, and a volitional ethics, as Somerville (2006) makes clear, makes it possible to easily disengage my moral standards in order to buffer myself from my own conscience (p.224). Should I interfere, here? Wouldn’t it be easier to let the authorities/the experts/his friends/his family deal with this? Should I put myself at risk for this other whom I barely know? Surely that would be irresponsible? A volitional ethics is, first and foremost, self-centred: a matter for considered
personal response. And as Hutchens (2004) notes in his commentary on Lévinas, moral self-interest responds to the law, not to the face of the other (p.27).

For Lévinas, ethics as first philosophy is a call beyond volition. He is vociferous in refuting the commonplace notion of ethical acts as self-overcoming: ‘The ethics of sacrifice does not succeed in shaking the rigor of being and the ontology of the authentic’ (1998/2000, p.216). Any act of empathy or altruism, any quasi-religious act of self-sacrifice, any neo-Kantian gesture issuing out of an empathic, ‘expanded self’ issues from a notion of self as first priority and so is nothing more than an ethics of chosenness that consolidates and reinvigorates the self.

In our market economy, as Plumwood (1996) argues, self-maximising is natural: ‘egoism emerges as the normal and rational mode, altruism (like the Other) a problem to be explained or reduced to some version of egoism/self’ (p.149). In such a milieu, the natural attitude of the individual is as ‘struggling to maximise self-shares in order to make provision for herself as best she can in an isolated battle against a hostile world’ (p.151). In a culture in which (as Maslow’s famous hierarchy of needs shows) our first responsibility is to ourselves, we understand the ethical as surplus; an ‘add-on’ – something extra to the essential business of developing the self.

And this, of course, is where Lévinas strikes the mark. This is what makes his ethics so radically different from any other. Here is an ethics that deprives me of volition. As Hatley (2000) points out, it is a ‘movement of responsibility’ that dissolves any dilemma regarding action because it is ‘prior to either conflict or cooperation’ (p.82). This is an encounter that pre-empts intentional consciousness. It displaces my individual rights as first priority and responsibility and makes my response to the face of the other – as any other – compulsory. This face of the other is irreducible and prior to any personal priority of my own, even and especially, my own freedom. As subject I am always-already-thrown-under the other, who in this sense therefore ‘interrupts the progress of the world’ (Lévinas, 1998/2000, p.110).
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For Lévinas ‘this command of the other brings the subject into a singular responsibility for which no other can take one’s place’ (Hatley, 2000, p.82): ‘I am responsible for the other even when he bothers me, even when he persecutes me’ (Lévinas, 1998/2000, p.106). In this sense, all relations exist inside of this one primary call, so that it is no longer truly valid to speak of ‘compassion’ or ‘suffering because the other suffers’ (Lévinas, 1998/2000, pp. 106-107) because there is no choice or volition. ‘The only absolute value is the human possibility of giving the other priority over oneself’ (p.109).

Clearly this is not the priority of a deontological nor of a utilitarian ethics. I cannot assimilate this other into my own scheme of things. Since she is so completely the Stranger, I cannot take her suffering as my own without doing her the violence of assimilating her into me. As Lévinas points out (1989/2002), ‘If one could possess, grasp, and know the other, it would not be other’ (p.51). The relation with the other isn’t a fusion, but an absence. As Inga Clendinnen (2006), writing about the difficult relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians stresses, ‘However we may deceive ourselves in moments of intimacy, “the other” begins at the skin’ (p.216); the ‘sentimental notion abroad that we humans, skin-colour and costume aside, are all the same under the skin’ isn’t true. ‘We are different. That is our burden, and our glory’ (p.133).

‘In the prophetic articulation of affect,’ writes Hatley (2000), ‘what one must feel as one’s own is how one does not feel the suffering of the other, even as one is moved to some representation of it’ (p.129). Sammy’s struggles with his sense of self are painful to witness. Even as he strikes out to wound me, I must remember his wounds – wounds that I myself cannot really feel but must imagine. Yet I cannot, either, not respond, for to ignore Sammy is to perpetuate that incremental creep that we now call ‘the Gap’. As Hatley puts it, ‘The scene remains figurative...its reality transcends what can be said about it...’ It is betrayed by anything I can say (p.144).

Yet I cannot not bear witness, either. As Povinelli (2002) describes how she and her colleague experience the compulsory nature of their ‘moral sense and obligation, even as [we] struggle to maintain [our] liberal ideal of cultural “tolerance” and
“rationality” (p.108), one senses a damage done. Like me in my first Indigenous community, or Tobin at City High School in New York, and even in my small tale about my hidden anger in that stormy classroom, there is a small lie told; a tiny secret; a tiny silence; a suppression; a step away from the abyss; an anything that will deny the dreadfully unsettling suspicion that we are not all the same.

It is in this way, therefore, that as I respond to the face of the other, any sense of self or continuity in the world is disrupted. I am left in a state of uneasiness and can only feel ‘the impossibility of feeling the other’s feelings’ (Hatley, 2000, p.131). As Derrida (1978/2004) points out, the thought of Lévinas dislocates both logos and identity. In striving towards an ‘unforeseeably other’, Sammy and I are both broken (p.118). And yet there is an excruciating intimacy in this moment, too, that carries each of us beyond our contained and autonomous selves. And whilst Lévinas describes this movement as transcendence, I interpret it as a moment of intense presence – an event of love.

dependent causation and the myth of freedom

*Man is born free and everywhere is in chainstores.*

*Graffiti*

Taken together, then, science, Buddhism, Indigenous cosmologies and the ‘ethics as first philosophy’ of Lévinas all give the possibility of an ontology far different from that of metaphysics. If I was to live out a fully realised understanding of dependent causation, I would be unlikely to be violent, for I would understand that this brings violence to the whole world. If I fully understood that everything arises co-dependently, then I would be naturally responsible for my actions. I would not be forced against my will to adhere to a set of rules that I believed inhibited my own freedom if I understood that what I do directly
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affects all others (though I would still have the choice to do so). Nor could I regard my actions as altruistic or sacrificial, for my giving and receiving would be as natural as water flowing down a hillside.\(^{76}\)

Such an understanding casts the twentieth century freedom mantra as just another grand narrative rooted in the Enlightenment notion of the autonomous individual. As Lévinas puts it, (1989/2002):

> Why does the other concern me?... Am I my brother’s keeper? These questions have meaning only if one has already supposed that the ego is concerned only with itself, is only a concern for itself. In this hypothesis it indeed remains incomprehensible that the absolute outside-of-me, the other, would concern me (p.107).

Living out of a premise of dependent causation, it is natural to understand that I am my brother’s keeper, for I am cause in his creation, just as he is cause in mine. And it is here that we find the kind of freedom of which Iris Murdoch (1997) writes, ‘If I attend properly I will have no choices and this is the ultimate condition to be aimed at’ (p.331). Facing Sammy/Sammi, stripped of the fortified self, I also find myself stripped of volition. I only (!) have to ‘articulate a relation’ (Lévinas, 1989/2002, pp.65-66); a relation that is nevertheless hardest, because nearest; a relation that unsettles rather than seeks the shelter of categories, methods or strategies; a relation that makes a gesture towards the intimacy that I call love.

The Dalai Lama (1999) calls this way of understanding the world an ethics of chi sem or universal responsibility.\(^{77}\) This is an ethics that carries with it, ‘the inability to bear the sight of another’s suffering’ [\textit{shen dug ngal wa la mi sö pa}] (p.64), It is an ethics based on an ontology of dependent causation that translates (I use the term here in the sense it is used by Latour) the notion of responsibility from individual and volitional, to compulsory.
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In a way of love, our long-sought freedom is not from others, but towards them. Our relations with others cause us to choose differently than if we could choose autonomously. As Hutchens (2004) puts it, ‘The other person has suggested to the self what the self itself is in unchosen terms’ (p.23). We are shaped not so much by our autonomous Dreams, as by ‘the many ways of being “responsible” to others. (p.23). How we behave and what we do in the world is not always primarily our own choice. If it seems so, then likely we have cut ourselves off and condemned ourselves to the ‘empty lonely freedom’ that comes from attempting to solve the problem of self and other without really facing it (Murdoch, 1997, pp.320-321).

As Hatley (2000) explains, ‘one finds that one is real only because of one’s responsibility for the other’ (p.119). After all our hunting and seeking-out in the external world, we find that our humanity lies not in the power to make a world, but in our responsibility for the one we have. For it is not possible to separate being from becoming (Hanh, 1988b, p.56); we cannot separate it from its own disclosedness (Lévinas, 1998/2000, p.2). As Lévinas points out, we do not arise alone and originally. There is no there of being. In fact, the face of the other actually shatters the being-there (2000, p.216) so that, at every turn we are confounded in our plans for the future – our future. All I have in the end, is my original openness, which is my exposure to the alterity in the face of the other (1989/2002, p.88).

no utopian vision

David Tacey (1995) notes that Indigenous Australians do not care for the land out of moral constraints, but out of love and connection (pp.151-152). This is no utopian vision; no globalising, universalising, religious discourse (Harvey, 2006, p.185), but a simple and inescapable fact of life. It is not volitional; not an issue for choice or discussion, but merely is.

It is my contention that such an understanding, supported by the growing realisation of interconnectedness that comes with the realities of climate change, could be the ‘slightest alteration between man and the signifier’ that Lacan suggests changes the course of history (1977, p.127). Hartmann (1999) describes cultures in which teams played football until the scores were equal
and relates that Iroquois law was decided by women, who planned for the future of their children (p.242). It seems that the cognitive dissonance that allows our culture to make and watch endless war movies whilst agitating for peace is only one way of understanding the world – a consequence of *worldview* - a demonstration of our preoccupation with self-construction and designing the world as we want it to be, without any thought as to the consequences of our actions on both human and other-than-human *others*. Such a ‘view’ would see us as separate from the world we act upon.

Yet the problem remains that we cannot just change our understanding of *being* by just saying so. Clearly we lack the language and imagination for such a radical alteration. In the time of *Gestell*, our overwhelming propensity for designing the future leads to the formulation of an endless stream of ever-changing strategic plans and blueprints for the new world (see, for example, Sterling, 2001, on designing education for sustainability). Indeed, it is difficult in the time of *Gestell*, to imagine any other way of being; any other way for education at all. How we might avoid this will to mastery and making and, as Bonnett (2004) entreats, change the ‘frame of mind’ (p.140), is explored in the next section of this thesis, not as a list of strategies and methods, but rather as glimpses of what it might mean to live inside the world, rather than looking out at it.

*There is much in being that man cannot master. There is but little that comes to be known. What is known remains inexact, what is mastered insecure. Beings are never of our making, or even merely our representations, as it might all too easily seem. When we contemplate this whole as one, then we apprehend, so it appears, all that is – though we grasp it cruelly enough.*

*Martin Heidegger: The Origin of the Work of Art, p.178*
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learning as a way of love:

curricula for the compassionate heart
Just this contamination, and this crossroads, this accident here. This turn, the turning around of this catastrophe.

Jacques Derrida, Points, p.297

Love must always watch over justice.

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of love

‘Hub’ is love, ‘ishq’ is love that entwines two people together, ‘shaghaf’ is love that nests in the chambers of the heart, ‘hayam’ is love that wanders the earth, ‘teeh’ is love in which you lose yourself, ‘walah’ is love that carries sorrow within it, ‘sababah’ is love that exudes from your pores, ‘hawa’ is love that shares its name with ‘air’ and with ‘falling’. ‘gharam’ is love that is willing to pay the price.’

Ahdaf Soueif: The Map of Love, pp.386-387

...I myself don’t use it much, the word love, it is a worn-out and ambiguous word. And then, too, there is something severe in this love; this love is commanded.

learning as a *way of love*: love in the *modern* world

Robert Johnson (1993) tells that the Sanskrit language has ninety-six words for love and that ancient Persian has eighty. By contrast, the Greek language has three, and English perhaps only the one. Whilst such numbers and definitions are disputable, Johnson illustrates how an insufficiency of words points to a cultural poverty, in this case in the realm of recognising and articulating the feeling life. He writes, ‘An Eskimo would probably die of clumsiness if he had only one word for snow; we are close to dying of loneliness because we only have one word for love’ (p.6). He continues:

Imagine what richness would be expressed if one had a specific vocabulary for the love of one’s father, another word for love of one’s mother, yet another for one’s camel (the Persians have this luxury), still another for one’s lover, and another exclusively for the sunset! (p.7).

No doubt there are words in Farsi or Sanskrit for the love of a student for a teacher and vice versa, for the love of one’s subject or discipline, and for the impassioned discourse with one’s peers that issues from such loves, but Johnson does not mention them here. He does, however, note that ‘If we had the expanded and exact vocabulary for feeling that we have for science and technology, we would be well on our way to warmth of relatedness and generosity of feeling’ (p.8).

Popular modern culture places a great emphasis on romantic love, yet as Armstrong (2003, pp.4-5) points out, even this is limited to *falling in love*, with little emphasis on what comes after the initial phase. This is the conception of love as fusion; the coming together of two yearning, essential souls who find completion in one another (pp.32-41). There is a sense, too, of the beloved as *Bestand* - an object for our *use*, for mastery and completion. In this sense, the loved other enhances the self. Like much else in the time of *Gestell*, love is acquisitive, and happiness is to be found *out there* in the external world. Bellah et al
(1985) show how the modern psychological/therapeutic model of love revolves around the self-satisfaction of the subject, who ‘must find and assert his or her true self because this self is the only source of genuine relationships to other people...’ (p.98).

Borrowing from the Greek, we also find in modern culture the concept of *philia* (or Platonic love), the love of friendship, in which one has the best interests of one’s friend at heart. In Australia, we see this embodied in the concept of mateship. Sometimes *philia* degenerates into ‘sticking up for one’s mates’; at other times we call it ‘tough love’, when plain-speaking calls the friend back ‘to her senses’ from the edge of disaster. *Philia* is the theme of many films and of particular interest in adolescent literature. Again, we can see how, in an age in which individualism reigns, the emphasis is on the independent subject, the hero who stands against the *They* to protect or rescue his/her friend. *Philia*, however, rarely extends to those beyond one’s immediate circle: indeed, those outside the circle of friends and family may be regarded as Others/Strangers and even as enemies. Thus, again, we see how the individual ego is fortified by that which we would call love: friends and one’s actions towards them actually endow the individual with identity.

The third interpretation of love that I wish to mention here is *agapē*, that Greek ideal taken up by Christian thinking as a self-sacrificial love for the other that Ogilvie (1994) describes as motivated by ‘a sense of spiritual affinity; ‘...from each, freely, according to personal talent and to each, freely, according to the need that is subjectively perceived and expressed by the other’ (p.14). This is that to which Lévinas points as ultimately self-interested by the very fact of its own self-overcoming.78 Taylor (1989) warns that *agapē* can be the sort of negative affirmation of charity as obligation only, or as guilt, or as a morally corrupt self-satisfaction (p.517). A more common perspective is expressed by Berry (1989), who argues that whilst the modern proclivity is to confer salvation, we have more often taken up the saving of others as a burden that in fact destroys them. And too often, note Blake et al (2002), *agapē* in its modern form comes in the guise of miserable commiseration and self-indulgent whining (p.128).
In modern philosophy, too, love is self-interested in the sense that it must make way for being. Wyschogrod (1985) argues of Heidegger, that Dasein may be ‘anguished, guilty, resolute, fearful, domineering, or solicitous – but never in love’ (p.196). In ‘What Is Metaphysics?’, Heidegger writes of, ‘our joy in the presence of the Dasein – and not simply of the person – of a human being whom we love’ (p.99) as if the personal must be transcended if we are to love at all. Such a view (and Lévinas is adamant on this point) prioritises ontology over relationship. In the search for existential ‘authenticity’, love of an other is displaced by love of being.

It seems then, that however we choose to interpret it, for we moderns, snared so tightly in the object/subject duality, love is always-already understood as self-oriented. We can also, however, read it as a move towards transcendence, for love must by default, always have at its centre the self that transcends the They and is made authentic by the experience. In this way, such a move shores up and solidifies the ego – we say that in love (of human, or god, or any other) we find the ‘real’ self, as if an enduring being/being has at last been unconcealed by this external other who is always-already the resource for its fulfillment.

learning as a way of love: love in the east

Thomas Berry (1989) tells us that the Chinese word jen, can be translated as love, benevolence, or affection, but it is also a cosmic force in which ‘we find a pervasive intimacy and compassionate quality in the very structure of the universe and of the earth itself’ (p.20). This is a love less personal and emotional than the modern conception. It is a ‘quality of mind’ always open to the other (Hattam, 2004, pp.150-151), something that we moderns might regard as more akin to compassion.

The Dalai Lama (1999) defines the Tibetan word nying je (usually translated into English as ‘compassion’) as an innate capacity for empathy. This term, he explains, also connotes ‘love, affection, kindness, gentleness, generosity of spirit, and warm-heartedness’ but not ‘pity’ (p.73). There is no sense of condescension involved in nying je: ‘On the contrary, nying je denotes a
feeling of connection with others, reflecting its origins in empathy’ (p.74). In fact, Trungpa (1973/2002) speaks of how genuine compassion is fearless, courageous and generous (p.208). In its commitment, it can even be ruthless, ‘like a grandmother’s love’ (p.210). For Tibetan Buddhists, love is not therefore emotional, but rather a deep feeling or empathy that is quite apart from emotional expression.79

The Dalai Lama (2003) speaks of love as a special kind of responsibility: ‘A strong sense of care and concern for the happiness of the other’ that doesn’t rely in any way on their attitude to us (p.23). Like a mother with a newborn baby, he says, love exceeds religious or philosophical or ideological rule (p.25). Shastri (2003), after Lao-tzu, writes that when love is married to a plan it is useless, but when aimless and purposeless, it exalts the soul. It is, he writes, like the cherry blossoms, which bloom ‘uselessly’ and yet are a blessing to we who view them; and which in turn receive the blessings of wind and weather and our appreciation (p.134). Whilst passion narrows the scope of the heart, writes Shastri, love opens it.

What I am pointing out here is that our notions of love/care are encultured. But whilst love has been marginalised in official versions of modern culture, researchers and philosophers such as Bellah et al (1985) and Phillips and Taylor (2009) note that love continues to exert a powerful influence underneath our conscious everyday lives. As Deborah Bird Rose (2004) reminds us, the poststructuralist preoccupation with violence isn’t the whole story: ‘What lies between us, or between some of us some of the time, is love, respect, sympathy, and the determination to act together’ (p.22).

So it is this shadow-world of love that I want to explore in the final section of this thesis. What might education look like if we were to open in it, more consciously, a way of love?
learning as a way of love: love without concupiscence

How can one reconcile the demands of freedom and discipline in education? Countless mothers and teachers, in fact, do it, but no one can write down a solution. They do it by bringing into the situation a force that belongs to a higher level where opposites are transcended – the power of love.

E. F. Schumacher: Small is beautiful..., pp.87-88

Love gives what it does not have

Jacques Lacan: Ecrits, p.618

It is my first day.
I have beautiful beeswax crayons
   and paints and clay.
   I have baskets of dollies and dress-ups.
   I have planned this first day meticulously:

I light the candle.
and start to tell a story using little puppets.
I keep the attention of the students

for about fifteen seconds.
Some get up and wander off.

Others start elbowing one another
and a fight ensues.
Valiantly, I keep going.
I keep on mindlessly telling the story

until my assistant
takes off her shoe,
slaps it against her thigh,
and shouts.

Realising I don’t know anything about teaching,
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I listen to the women.
I hear their stories
- short, visual -
I teach the children
to draw their worlds.
I bribe them with sultanas
(six to come onto the mat with the group).

I open my heart
and give up all that I know.
I see their faces.

We begin again.

When I write that Gerald Jampolsky saved me, I am saying that in my desert classroom I was finally able to give words to a condition or event that I had long experienced but to which I had given little conscious focus or expression. Think of my first ambitions for this thesis: to write a book like Marshall’s, *An Experiment In Education* – a book that would give expression to how love is articulated in the classroom. Gerald Jampolsky saved me by gifting me that one word, ‘love’, that shifted my focus away from theories, strategies and models, and into relationships not only with my students, but with the subjects/disciplines I was teaching.

Too often, love in the classroom is interpreted as a soft, sentimental excuse for laxity (“I can’t teach them so I’ll love them.”) On the other hand, some of my colleagues translate it as passion for one’s topic. This position however, excludes the reflexivity that characterises love. Think again of the compromises I had to make in my first classroom: passion alone would not have countenanced them, but love has more humility.

Iris Murdoch (1959/1997) writes of love as ‘the extremely difficult realisation that something other than oneself is real’ (p.215). It was the other reality of my students that pierced my heart. Murdoch describes how love requires the clear perception and moral effort of seeing someone as they are, rather than as we wish them to be. ‘When M. is just and loving she sees D. as
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she really is’ (p.329). ‘Love’ is understanding of the individual (p.321); a full participation that exceeds mental concepts and theoretical judgements. And this, Murdoch argues, is intensely intimate: ‘...the movement of understanding is onward into increasing privacy...and not back towards a genesis in the rulings of an impersonal public language’ (p.322). It is the recognition of the being of the other, without judgement or comment, and with open generosity and goodwill, a love that Irigaray (2002) describes as love without seizure (p.150); a love that not only recognises difference, but understands that difference, for love to survive at all, is a necessity (p.101).

Joanna Macy (1996) tells of her encounter with a ‘cooly’ in Northern India. This was a low-caste man struggling up the mountain with a load of long cedar logs on his back. Recounting how she was wont to look away from these people in a futile attempt to avoid her own sense of guilt, she describes how, this day, ‘Whether out of respect or embarrassment...I simply stood five feet away and drank in every feature of that form...’ Macy then tells how as she did so, ‘The customary comments of my internal social scientist evaporated. What appeared now before me was not an oppressed class or an indictment of an economic system, so much as a distinct, irreplaceable, and incomparably precious being’ (paras. 29 - 35).

In this encounter, the coolie, freed of Macy’s conceptualisations, appears to her exquisitely, we might say, and she finds herself in a space of love. Bonnett (2004) makes a similar point when he describes a flower growing through the crack of a concrete pavement in an urban wasteland. If it is catalogued and put into a database of some kind it is made an object, ‘turned into a mere instance of some broader classification’, however appreciated for itself, it stands forth in its ‘self-authored otherness and its epistemological mystery’ (p.68). So too, for me and my ‘difficult’ students. When I go past the labels and methods – the delusions of the Dream – I find that we are together in a space in which there is only the face. (How well I remember how, when I knew that I would soon be leaving my desert school, I sat drinking in the smells of my students: a mix of unwashed skin and clothing, urine, faeces and wood-smoke that I had previously found distasteful.)
This is what Buddhists call ‘suchness’ or ‘thusness’ (Hanh, 1988b, p.94). We bring presence to those we love. We are there for them. Indeed, if we are not present for him/her/it, then we are not really there at all. Zimmerman (1993/2006) relates this to that state of being present that Heidegger calls care: when we care, we are authentically in the world, present and allowing the presence of others (p.309). Recognising and celebrating the otherness of the other is to see it in a relationship that is, ‘unobstructed mind and unobstructed object’ (Hanh, 1988b, p.103).

This is the care that Schumacher (in the quote above) equates with mothering and teaching. The loving eye, writes Noddings (1992/2005) sees past my current behaviour to the better me; it sees my ‘better self’ (p.25). Ruddick (1989/2002) calls this ‘the patient eye of love’ (p.121), a maternal love that ‘lets difference emerge without searching for comforting commonalities, dwells upon the other, and lets otherness be’ (p.122). Simone Weil (1949/2002) also dwells on this aspect of love. Compassion, she argues, ‘keeps both eyes open on both the good and the bad and finds each sufficient reasons for loving’. Even crime, she argues, isn’t sufficient reason in itself for withdrawing our love, but rather, ‘crime itself provides a reason...for approaching’ (p.171). As a mother, as a teacher, I meet my child/pupil in the understanding that this is all there is, here, now, and that whatever we make of this moment will reverberate out into the future.

What I learnt in my desert school, was that thus far in my teaching life I had only really been playing out a role in a game called school, in which enough of the players knew the rules to make those who didn’t, marginal. Now I realised that my control of events and situations had really only been the method by which the game operated. Without the full participation of everyone in the game, with no one to inscribe the rules, I was forced, at last, to give up my self-concerns; to give up the *Dream* and respond to the bare vulnerability of the *face* of the other.

Lévinas calls this *love without concupiscence*, a love in which subject/object dualism breaks down in the face of the encounter with the *other*. In this understanding love is not so much self-transcending as self-forgetful. The axis of awareness
shifts out of the self and into world. Lévinas himself writes (1989/2002), ‘that the departure from the self is the approach to the neighbour; that transcendence is proximity, that proximity is responsibility for the Other, substitution for the Other...’ (p.246). And such love is not subject to rules, methods, strategies or quantification: it is a love that has no measure.

learning as a way of love: on feeling learning & being moved

“I often wonder what thinking is, what understanding is. Do we really understand the universe better than animals do? Understanding a thing often looks to me like playing with one of those Rubik cubes. Once you have made all the little bricks snap into place, hey presto, you understand. It makes sense if you live inside a Rubik cube, but if you don’t...”

J. M. Coetzee’s, Elizabeth Costello in: The Lives of the Animals, p.45

I am explosive!
What is WRONG with this child?
I have been up on my chair,
prancing about,

demonstrating the relative

advantages and disadvantages

of fighting (at Troy) from a chariot

- the heftier sword swing

and the quick getaway
and then this child
(who after all, is twelve years old)

writes, ‘Hector advanced towards me,
his golden chariot shining on his head.’

I explode:

‘WHAT is a chariot?’
He is timorous.
   ‘Something you ride on,’ he says,
   more confused than shamed.
I snort hot horse breath.
   ‘And WHAT does a warrior wear on his head?’
He is still confused:
   ‘A helmet.’

(I can see he wonders what all the fuss is about.)
   ‘Then WHY, have you written
   that he has a CHARIOT on his head?’
(Suppressed laughter from the stalls.)
   ‘Because, Miss, that’s what you put on the board.’

I look. There it is, plain as day:
   On the left
   the list of a warrior’s attire and weaponry;
   on the right,
   drawings of some of the items we’ve discussed, and,
   yes,
   quite accidentally,
   beside the word ‘chariot’,
   a drawing of a helmet
   in red.
   Instead of reading in columns,
   he is reading in rows.

I sag.
   Like one of Lorca’s puppets,
   all the angry air rushes out of me.
   He has popped me with his innocent pin.

What have we done to this child,
   - all in the name of education
   who believes what the teacher [seemingly] writes on the
   board
   before his own knowing?

If we are to seriously consider education as a way of love, then it is necessary to reconsider the notion of learning. Sammy, I believe, thinks of learning as acquisition. When he doesn’t understand something, he says, ‘I just don’t get it’ as if it is something
that has failed to stick as it passes by. Clearly he subscribes to the ‘knowledge as object’ metaphor that is so prevalent in the time of Gestell. Lakoff and Johnson (1999, pp.236-240) catalogue common thinking metaphors: thinking is moving; thinking is seeing; thinking is object manipulation. Where the mind is conceived of as a machine, thinking is part of production and ideas are its products; where it is a container, thought is motion, object manipulation (pp.247-249).

Huebner (1975/2000a) argues that learning is a ‘postulated concept’: ‘There is no such “thing” as “learning.” Learning is a theory postulated as an explanation of how certain aspects of behavior are changed’ (p.240). In this sense, Huebner argues, we come to understand learning as something that happens inside an individual and thus, ‘Education is conceived as doing something to an individual’ (p.242). Certainly this is what Sammy seems to expect. It is as if he has no responsibility here. He is passive. Doll (2002a) makes the distinction ‘between knowledge transmitted/received and knowledge emergent/created’ (p.23). Sammy is waiting for knowledge to adhere to him. He has little inkling that learning is an active process associated with meaning.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) argue that ‘meaning is always meaning to someone. There is no such thing as a meaning of a sentence in itself, independent of any people’ (p.184). Abram too (1997), reminds us that meaning is animate and active. ‘Things disclose themselves to our immediate perception...not as finished chunks of matter given once and for all, but as dynamic ways of engaging the senses and modulating the body’ (p.81). Thich Nhat Hanh (1988b) writes that understanding is like water: if we want to understand something we cannot just stand outside and observe it, but we must enter into it. Using this metaphor, we can visualise Sammy standing on the river bank watching the water flowing past and only occasionally managing to pull out a fish for his dinner. He understands the purpose of his education as for the acquisition of whatever he needs to succeed in the They world: a car, a house, a job, a Saturday night social life. He cannot imagine that it could mean more.
The idea of ‘curricula for the heart’ is not new. Willis (2004), writes that such curricula ‘must be concerned to foster love and resist hatred, to appreciate and treasure beauty and avoid ugliness, embrace goodness and resist evil’ (p.104). Willis asserts that such curricula make use of ‘compassionate image rather than logical argument’ (p.118) and so are, ‘powerful, dangerous, non-rational’ (p.104). Such a view, I believe, is firmly rooted in dualism. It opposes the rational with the irrational in a move that confuses rationality and reason, and casts into shadow the feeling life that Robert Johnson (1993) argues is so lacking in modern culture. Johnson maintains that the meaning of life is located in feeling, not in reason: ‘No one ever succeeded in finding a reason for living by the reasoning process’ (p.31). And it is this loss of the language and habit of connecting with our feeling selves that he argues creates the barren realm (p.94).

Yet by feeling, Johnson does not mean emotionalism. In fact, he argues that our very woundedness puts us in peril of swinging into the irrationalism that threatens in Willis’s vision. ‘Life is precarious when its deepest meaning is in the hands of so unpredictable and undisciplined a faculty as our collectively inferior feeling’, writes Johnson (1993, p.31). Our feeling function is wounded and the danger is all the greater because we no longer perceive that we are wounded at all (p.3).

What Johnson is arguing for is the feeling life in its broadest interpretation. André Brink (1989) remarks on how the English language doesn’t discriminate between sense as ‘meaning’, sense as ‘feeling, intimation or awareness’, or sense as ‘perception’ (p.47). His appeal is for the resurrection of feeling as perception in all its forms. In the mid-twentieth-century, arts educators such as Herbert Read (1943) and Rudolf Arnheim (1969) put a great deal of emphasis on perception in the developing child. ‘Perceiving achieves, at the sensory level, what in the realm of reasoning is known as understanding’ (Arnheim, 1969, p.9). These educators noted the haptic nature of child consciousness and the importance of perception as the foundation for reason. They also noted how education isolates the sensory/perceptual from what is to be learned.
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William Pinar (1975/2002) argues that ‘the cognitive stress of schooling tends to make children think rather than feel. Often the child becomes more and more cerebral at the expense of his feeling...’ (p.372). He contends that this creates a split or divide that produces the ‘observer-player’ (p.376). This I gloss as cognitive dissonance, that modern condition that begins with Sammy watching from the river bank, and ends with Bernard Schlink’s (1997) Nazi soldier nonchalantly smoking a cigarette and swinging his legs over the same pit into which a long row of naked Jews will fall as each is shot in the neck (p.151).

For Edith Cobb (1997), the growth of the child is ‘a sensed experience of movement in time. Rhythm for the child is experienced in the dancing blood, the dancing heart, the beating pulse’ (p.43). The child is a perceptive being, open to all around her, and it is this ‘primordial perceptual activity’ that forms the basis for conceptual thought (p.41). Cobb argues that this primordial perceptual experience ‘is the dynamic experience of self and world as a temporal and spatial continuum’ (p.48). Thus the experience of the world is a generative one, ‘a sensory integration of self and environment, awaiting verbal expression’ (p.89).

This is what Bonnett (2004) reminds us we have been forgetting in education. The young child learns through perception and interaction with the environment, not through reason or logic alone. Even as adults, he argues, we forget that, ‘we engage with the world less through an ordering cognition and more though a responsive sensing...’ (p.98). Enamoured with theories about how we represent the world, we forget that even Piaget argued that thinking starts in the perceptual. Perhaps this is the problem, though. Witkin (1989) points out that in Piagetian theory, the sensuous life has a strong beginning but no future. ‘By the time one reaches adolescence one has forsaken the consciousness of the sensuous artist for that of the scientist’ (p.32).

These images bring us back to the fully embodied human; that which Stenstad (2006) calls the heart-mind-body, or the thanc (p.122). David Abram (1997) describes how it is the senses that evidence the openness of human being. My senses ensure
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‘that I am being destined for relationship: it is primarily through my engagement with what is not me that I...experience my own unity and coherence’ (p.125). When I encounter the world:

...my body...responds to the mute solicitations of another being, that being responds in turn, disclosing to my senses some new aspect or dimension that in turn invites further exploration. By this process my sensing body gradually attunes itself to the style of this other presence – the way of this stone, or tree, or table... In this manner the simplest thing may become a world for me, as, conversely, the thing or being comes to take its place more deeply in my world (p.52).

Malcolm Margolin (2005) tells how when he asked a native American friend to tell him what the words of a song meant, his friend told him that, yes, he could give a translation, however ‘What gave the song its meaning was not just the words but who had taught it to him, when it could be sung, who could sing it, all the other times it had been sung, to whom he had or would be teaching it’ (p.73). His friend is describing the reflexivity of knowledge, and how it is different in different hands and on different tongues; how it morphs as it moves into and between beings and places. Margolin continues that this understanding is quite different from the notion that knowledge can be learned independently from the way it is transmitted, as if something learned from a parent, or a computer, or a teacher, will be the same no matter what its context (p.73); as if it is purely object in nature, and has no affective effect.

The reader will note that throughout this thesis I have rarely referred to learning or teaching as separate from one another. This is because they are co-dependent. Says Heidegger (MSMM), ‘Teaching...does not mean anything else than to let the others learn, that is, to bring one another to learning’ (pp.275-276). It is not possible to be a teacher without having students, or vice versa. Deborah Britzman (1999/2003) makes a plea to shift the notion of teaching to the understanding of ‘teachers as being shaped by their work as well as shaping their work’ (p.25). Britzman emphasises that in the process of teaching ‘practice makes practice and...the shape of content is determined during the pedagogical encounter’ (p.186).
My point here is that teaching/learning are co-dependent not just on each other, but on a co-arising world that extends far beyond the objective and the abstract. In learning/teaching lovingly, we evoke the feeling life and so embrace the world. All become subjects, participating in subject-subject relations entirely different from that of a subject operating on an object. And in every area of the curriculum, the sensory world is awakened, as, for example, when Sammy learns to read:

He was SO pleased to be working with me
at the start.
He kept tapping on the window
and waving in the corridor
and dancing at my door, saying,
   Me now? Me?
And the first lesson
was full of the fine fellowship of starting out:
   new books
   and jokes
   and sharpened coloured pencils.

So it was a surprise
   just a few days later
to get a surly, ‘I forgot it’
when I asked for his homework,
and
   ‘Don’t you KNOW I was sick’
(subtext: ‘My GOD these teachers are morons!’)
and he seems to have forgotten my name
and says he never knew it anyway.

Now he sits beside me and says
How could he do it?!
   he was sick
   he has a tutor
   he’s moving house (next year)
   his grandma’s busy
   he thinks it might be in his bag after all
   it isn’t
   not in his desk either
and as the pitch rises
   he never said he wanted to do this
   I’m making him
   he’s telling his mum he’s not doing it any more
   he’s telling his teacher
   he’s telling the assistant principal
   he’s got a tutor
   he can do it anyway
   if he wants to
   it’s too easy
   it’s too hard
   and
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YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HARD THIS IS
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW HARD IT IS
YOU CAN’T POSSIBLY IMAGINE HOW HARD IT IS.

All this
after ten minutes
of lies and prevarication and performance.

I say, ‘I do. I do know.’
I tell him I know he sometimes thinks he’s
dumb or stupid.

He says, I AM! I AM STUPID!

I say, ‘No. It’s just that you see differently
and don’t realise
...no one realises.’

He says, WELL HOW COME EVERYONE ELSE SAYS IT?
He says, EVERYONE SAYS I’M DUMB, SO I MUST BE!

When the tears really start to flow.
I tell him that I can teach him to read –
if he does the work I can teach him to read.
But he has to understand that it won’t ever be easy
for him:
He’ll always have to stop and think

he’ll always struggle with it.
I can though…I can teach him,
if he’s willing to struggle with me.

I take a deep breath
and make the promise.

He cries some more.
He wipes his eyes and nose.
He takes a steadying breath.
He says,
‘OK, I’m ready to start now.’

* Weeks later, he opens Frog and Toad.
He starts to plod through
and stops.
‘Wait!’

He starts again.
He looks at the words.
He reads with the punctuation.
He feels what he’s reading.
He gets to the end of a page and looks up.
We both have tears in our eyes.

Sammy has learnt to read.
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Roland Barthes (1976) describes the sensory delight of ‘vocal writing’: ‘an aesthetic of textual pleasure’ that is carried ‘by the grain of the voice’:

the language lined with flesh, a text where we can hear the grain of the throat, the patina of consonants, the voluptuousness of vowels, a whole carnal stereophany: the articulation of the body, of the tongue, not that of meaning, of language’ (pp.66-67).

For Sammy, reading only really starts when he begins to feel it in this way; when he feels reading for the first time as something sensual - in his mouth, on his tongue, in the tremor of his voice, in the quiver of his heart and in the stirring of his mind.

This alters altogether, his understanding of reading, which until now has been as something purely instrumental. Blake et al (2000) tell how, ‘A thoroughgoing and unashamedly utilitarian conception of literacy would justify reading and writing in terms of their usefulness to the individual in filling in forms and acquiring and keeping employment, and their usefulness through this to the nation’s economy’. They argue that our ‘absorption in technique has become total...’ (p.91) and that this is why we learn literacy as a composite of skills rather than as something that inspires us (p.92). We could argue that Sammy is exemplary in absorbing this message and that he also demonstrates its shortfalls.

Christopher Maurer, writing about duende in the preface to a series of lectures by that master of the feeling word, Frederico Garcia Lorca (1998), writes that duende is ‘an inexplicable power of attraction, the ability, on rare occasions, to send waves of emotion through those watching and listening to them’ (p.ix). Duende, he writes, ‘needs the trembling of the moment and then a long silence’ (p.viii). Lorca’s writing is deeply poetic, irretrievably entangled with earth and water, air and blood. Elsewhere, (1992/2001) Maurer writes of the ‘poetic imagery...finely rooted in the senses’ in Lorca’s writing (p.xx); ‘...the overwhelming presence of the moon, as giver and taker of life; the deeply felt images of blood and water; the ritual veneration of the knife’
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(p.xxii). Sammy, reading something as innocuous as Arnold Lobel's *Days With Frog and Toad* (1979), nevertheless *feels* this for the first time. His senses rise up in him and give meaning and connection where before there were only dry and empty words.

This is the capacity to *move* and *be moved*. Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003) argue that the problem of motivation in education ought to be replaced with the notion of what *moves* us as teachers/learners: 'We are finding that *this movement is what defines for us the idea of what is “basic” to any discipline with which we have been entrusted’* (p.220). Hélène Cixous (1997) expresses this *being moved* when she tells how, as a student, she discovered ‘that being-of-a-thousand-beings called Shakespeare. I lived all the characters of his worlds’ (p.171).

As teacher or as learner, I want what I teach/learn to be meaningful, and it is primarily meaningful if it connects to my feeling life. Hargreaves et al (2001) noted that in their research they found that for ‘leading-edge teachers’, ‘curriculum planning engaged their emotions. It flowed. It was attentive to general goals and ends but not dominated by them’ (p.155). There is a passion here that doesn’t deny the daily plod of objectives but subsumes them into a larger and more joyous field. I have always argued that the Year 8 student who can perform Shakespeare with meaning and joy will have no trouble reading the cereal packet or filling out the form, but the opposite is rarely the case.

**learning as a way of love: pain, brokenness and risk in learning/teaching**

*You don’t find wholeness till you’re ready to be broken. Evening after evening we found new ways to express our brokenness. Each time we did this, a healing arose.*

*Bernie Glassman, on bearing witness at Auschwitz: Bearing Witness..., p.34.*
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Sammy then, has been *moved*. He has begun to understand that learning is something in which he is an active participant, and, more, that this participation involves personal risk. For there is risk in all learning that is not pure acquisition. Taylor (2002) describes it (after Gadamer) as an experience ‘wherein our previous sense of reality is undone, refuted, and shows itself as needing to be reconstituted’ (p.128). Bernstein too (1992), gives an apt description à la Gadamer:

The basic condition for all understanding requires one to test and risk one’s convictions and prejudices in and through an encounter with what is radically “other” and alien... Only by seeking to learn from the “other”, only by fully grasping its claims upon one can it be critically encountered (p.4).

We can say, therefore, that we hazard what we are, for what we might become (Ross, 1978, p.12), however this is more easily said than done. Clearly, for Sammy, learning to read will be painful, and will require enormous courage. Each of us has a deep investment in the image we hold of self and its relation to the world. Any disturbance severely unbalances us. Yet, says Heidegger (WCT), ‘We moderns can learn only if we always unlearn at the same time...’ (p.374).

An important consideration here however, is not to expect to be the blank sheet of *being* – the *tabula rasa* that is, I think, implied in Heidegger’s statement. Hogan (2002) makes the point that our preconceptions ‘are what make understanding itself possible. They constitute an active context, or significant background, within which anything newly encountered gets understood and interpreted, or for that matter, misunderstood and misinterpreted’. As Schwandt (2000) emphasises, the point isn’t to *rid* ourselves of our prejudices, but to *risk* them in the encounter. We must, he reminds us, always understand that understanding is produced, not revealed. In this way, to understand is to understand differently every time. And it is to understand that learning involves recognising and exposing our vulnerability and, sometimes, our pain.
Williams and Bendelow (1998) write that, ‘Pain...lies at the intersection of minds, bodies and cultures...’ (p.209). Teaching is sometimes like picking at a scab and finding, underneath, not clean new skin, but a core of pus and inflammation – an unknown but long-suspected infection that renders all my previous interpretations null. So much pain comes into a classroom: my own, my students’, the pain of families, the pain of colleagues, the pain of communities. Yet pain is rarely mentioned in education. We glance away from it in embarrassed silence and relegate it to the ‘professional’ and the ‘confidential’. In so doing, we render its victims faceless. The wounded conceal their hurts beneath a veneer of anger or professionalism if they are teachers. If they are students they learn to put up smokescreens like Sammy’s, or they simply move on.

For Sammy isn’t the only one who must risk himself in this event of learning that I call love: I must too. Parker Palmer (1998) describes teaching as ‘a daily exercise in vulnerability’ because it is ‘always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life’ (p.17). He writes, ‘I am a teacher at heart and there are moments in the classroom when I can hardly hold the joy’ (p.1). Yet there are also moments, Palmer tells us, of pain and confusion, when he feels like a fraud. The more one loves teaching, he writes, ‘the more heartbreaking it can be. The courage to teach is the courage to keep one’s heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able’ (p.11).

Pain, says Heidegger (L) is the rift which tears asunder but ‘draws everything to itself... Pain is the dif-ference itself’ (p.202), the ‘seam’ that binds the dif-ferent (p.203). This is to say that pain is the natural outcome of difference – the insurmountable need we feel for unity or agreement. In ‘What Are Poets For?’, that long lament for his lost dreams composed shortly after the end of World War II, Heidegger writes of the pain of our separation from Being as pain veiled and love not yet learned. He is speaking of love for ‘the gods’ or Being. Our time is destitute, he writes, ‘...because it lacks the unconcealedness of the nature of pain, death, and love...’ (pp. 94-95).
Yet couldn’t we argue that Heidegger’s own pain came from a loss of connection with his fellow human beings? It seems that, despite his forewarnings, he too was a victim of his *Gestell*, in which we expect the culture of professionalism to protect us from personal vulnerability. Couture (1997) tracks his responses to the pain of a colleague wrongly accused of sexual misconduct with a student. He doesn’t stand up for her. ‘I...lay under a rock called “professional conduct” – waiting for the wheels of justice to turn’ (p.110). He steers a *reasonable* course, afraid at every moment of the interruption that a full engagement with this incident would entail. In a Lévinasian move he evokes the terrors of the interruption and the uncomfortable chasms that are opened by our silences. It is these moments of interruption and betrayal, he argues, that should be spoken; that should be the subject of research in education.

Kohák (1984) maintains that, whilst it is essential not to *consent to* a surplus of pain, we should recognise that it *opens* us - to humility, to wonder, to empathy, and ultimately to love (pp.40-46) and that there is a power in absorbing pain that gives ‘the precious gift of a changing perspective’ (p.43). For Kohák there is something unbearable about looking on pain that is akin to looking on eternity. This is an opportunity, he argues, that is lost if we retreat into professionalism or the impersonal formality of justice: ‘...any response which does not explain away eternity...also demands a willingness to bear an immense pain, the very pain that the Stoics sought to avoid even at the cost of love itself’ (p.198). Writes Siri Hustvedt (2006): ‘Only the unprotected self can feel joy’ (p.218).

In other words, to *care* is to risk hurt. Blake et al (2000) counsel that when we teach with our ‘personal qualities, as opposed to our skills’, then we risk being wounded. ‘When a teacher shows that the subject she is teaching, or the novel or the poem, really means something to her...then she stands to be more hurt than usual by her pupils’ lack of interest or scepticism’ (p.19). Wounded himself, Sammy wounds me. He ignores me in the corridor, refuses to use my name, pushes to the very edges of what can be considered as acceptable or respectful behaviour. And I *must* give him room. Palmer (1998) declares that students
are well-served by their teachers when they can walk away angry (p.94). There must be room for dissent if we are to expose and heal our hurts. There will be no healing for Sammy until he concedes that he is wounded; therefore there is an obligation on me to provide for the expression, acknowledgement and repair of that hurt. Yet in this process I open myself to my own wounding: not only can I be emotionally hurt, but I can be hurt professionally too.

For such an understanding to gain traction, it is necessary to entertain an other definition of self than that of ego: a definition more akin to that described in Part III of this thesis. Wyschogrod (1990), in her study of saints, writes that such a ‘denuding of the self’s form, such stripping it of empowerment...by no means precludes that defenselessness will not be met by aggression. To the contrary, violence is a frequent response to vulnerability...’ (p.98). Evoking Lévinas, Wyschogrod declares that ‘the face exhibits the possibility of its own negation’ (p.229). This is not to argue that we should all be saints, nor yet that we ought to allow rampant bad behaviour or abuse. Clifford, Friesen and Jardine (2003) note how a community can only stand so much disruption before it falls apart (p.51) and the Dalai Lama (1999) argues that it is useful to have ‘a set of basic ethical precepts to guide us in our daily lives’ (p.50). Such rules help us form good habits and curb our negative tendencies, however the Dalai Lama argues that we should think of them ‘less in terms of moral legislation than as reminders always to keep others’ interests at heart...’ (p.150). These comments help, I think, to counter a dualistic tendency to oppose classroom rules with a catalogue of rights, and remind me of a particularly toxic classroom I once encountered in which students constantly hurled abuse at their teachers and each other, whilst surrounded by typed extracts from ‘The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child’.

Nevertheless, an ethic of universal responsibility understands that turning a blind eye on pain or suppressing wounds, has its consequences for all of us. Jardine (1998) observes that the monster child wounds and works to keep the wound open. Instead
of responding violently by closing the boundaries, he argues, we in his community are called upon to remain open and in so doing we face our own renewal (p.132).

In Schlink’s *The Reader* (1997), Hanna chooses to go to prison rather than expose her illiteracy: ‘Her sense of self was worth more than the years in prison to her’ (p.137). I suspect that so many of us teachers choose the prison of ‘reasonableness’ in preference to acknowledging our failure to teach. As Palmer argues (1998), our professionalism separates us from our *selves*. Certainly, in *The Reader*, the protagonist Michael is a man divided, unable to read or *feel* his feelings. ‘Could I deprive her of her lifelong lie,’ he asks, ‘without opening some vision of a future to her?’ (p.142). Like so many of us, he leaves Hanna to what we might term her *human rights*. Much like Tobin as he relinquishes his responsibilities to his students, Michael lets Hanna make her own mistakes. He is the reader, watching over her from a distance, making his judgements and assessments, and keeping his hands clean from the mess of participation.

*It is only later
   much later,*
   *that I see the beauty in the writing.*
   ‘Hector advanced towards me,*
   *his golden helmet shining on his head.*’
I can see Hector in all his shimmering glory
coming at me across the plain before the Trojan wall,
and I think how marvellous this is
   *so much more than,*
   ‘Yesterday I went to the plaza after school.’
And I am so glad...
so privileged to have witnessed this.

*Years later
   (three years)*
   *a knock on the staff-room door*
   - He’s in Year 11 already.
   I am surprised to see he’s grown into a man.

‘Miss,’ he says.
‘Do you remember that story we had,*
about that shining fella in the chariot
who got killed by that great warrior?
I have an assignment to do.
Can you tell me where I can find it?
Part IV

That’s the one I want to do.’

And my pleasure spills over at his own enlivened response:

how you can write beyond communication

how you can dance with words.

Journal Entry, January, 2008

Here in Australia, we have hot, hot summers. As I write this we have had four successive days of 38-40 degree heat and I am in my caravan by the veggie patch at my parents’ farm. It is still early summer and already Mum has caught six tiger snakes close by the house. The snakes come for the frogs in the pond and the mice in the fowl-houses - Mum is a proud gardener and poultry-breeder extraordinaire - but I was brought up to be afraid of snakes, and I tread carefully and look twice before I put my hand into the nesting boxes to collect the eggs or check under a setting hen.

As snakes grow, they shed their skins. When I was a child, to find a snake-skin was a magical thing. It filled we children with both wonder and terror: here was evidence of the actuality of the snake - that it was indisputably in this particular place...that it may still be in the vicinity...that it was still growing and probably part of a family - along with the fearsome paradox that the skin was sheerly beautiful and fragile. There was also an inverted sort of magic in that the snake shed its skin as it got older/bigger, whereas an onion, for instance, gets smaller as its layers are shed. The snake, as it sheds its layers, is always becoming, but the onion disappears!

Gamelin (2005) writes of the becoming of the artist not as growing towards some achieved state or finished product, but as ‘a continuous process. It is lived daily. It is akin to feeling, loving, breathing.’
Like the snake, in order to become, I do not accumulate or acquire, but I actually divest myself of the too-tight skin that must be shed if growth is to occur.

I don’t know if this process is painful for snakes, but it certainly seems to be so for people. Clifford and Friesen (1997) write of their turbulent middle years’ students that, ‘We asked them to lose themselves so that they could find themselves transformed by the experience of reading’, adding, ‘And we did that with a particular kind of mindfulness, we think, because what we asked of the students we also demanded of ourselves’ (p.104). They continue that their students offered them no gratitude at all; that ‘Even if we left the classroom broken, they would not thank us for our coming’ (p.99). It was, they argue, ‘...an ugly battle of wills, waged without the least assurance that we were even doing the right thing...’ (p.100).

Noddings (1992/2005) highlights the fact that in learning/teaching, as in a genuine dialogue, neither participant knows what the outcome will be. (And of course, in all this, there is no final guarantee of any decent outcome.) Lévinas (1998/2000) interprets ‘understanding’ as, ‘This fact of being launched, this event to which I am committed, bound as I am to what was to be my object with bonds that cannot be reduced to thoughts...’ (p.4). In the clearing that is the classroom, our encounter is an event, and the richer it is, the harder it is to forecast its effect. In the time of Gestell, such uncertainty is intolerable, and yet it is only when I, with all my own vulnerability, face Sammy, raging with his own weeping wounds, that we can, together and unprotected, approach understanding.
learning as a *way of love*: on teaching/learning and forgiveness

_Love is whatever you can still betray, he thought. Betrayal can only happen if you love._

*John Le Carré: The Perfect Spy.*

Journal Entry, July 2008

_I have been reading Jacques Derrida’s (2002) essay on forgiveness, and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela’s (2003) book about her encounters with the notorious Eugene de Kock, who was in charge of the ‘counter-insurgency’ action of the apartheid government in South Africa. I have been obsessed with these stories for weeks._

_These accounts are both personal and political. Derrida’s essay is inspired by the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings, but alludes to the French occupation of his native Algeria. Gobodo-Madikizela actually worked for the TRC as a counsellor, but was also deeply affected by apartheid as a black South African child living under its regime. In fact, one of the main threads of Gobodo-Madikizela’s book is how ‘the narratives that people construct about what happened to them, the stories of their suffering, reflect the continuities between their personal and their political lives’ (p.102). For me, this raises the trace of all my Sammys/Sammis. Where there are wounds, there must also be forgiveness, and yet what I have seen of the woundedness of children and their communities by education seems to me at times unforgivable._

_Derrida (2002) writes that forgiveness is an impossibility: ‘...pure and unconditional forgiveness, in order to have its own meaning, must have no “meaning”, no finality, even no intelligibility’ (p.45). The only_
possible act of forgiveness is to forgive the unforgivable. ‘If one is only prepared to forgive what appears forgivable...then the very idea of forgiveness would disappear’ (p.32). Forgiveness is not excuse, regret, amnesty, prescription; it is not exchange, as if the punishment could fit the crime. It is not given on condition that the culpable one will change. Indeed, if I forgive the one who repents, is he even still the one who committed the crime? What or who is forgiven, and of whom do we ask forgiveness? And what do we actually ask be forgiven? (pp.34-39). If these are motive, Derrida argues, then they are not forgiveness. There is nothing normal or normative about forgiveness; indeed, the wound is hardly any longer relevant. Forgiveness is always-already, extraordinary (p.32).

For Gobodo-Madikizela, too, the extraordinary act of forgiveness is one that co-arises with victim and perpetrator. Interviewing the ‘evil’ de Kock for the first time, Gobodo-Madikizela reaches out in sympathy and touches his hand after he expresses remorse for his actions. It is only later that he tells her that the hand she touched was his trigger hand, yet even in the instant she fears that, ‘In touching de Kock’s hand I had touched his leprosy...’ (p.40). She recoils from her own sympathy: ‘...I felt guilty for having expressed even momentary sympathy and wondered if my heart had actually crossed the moral line from compassion, which allows one to maintain a measure of distance, to actually identifying with de Kock’ (pp.32-33). Yet as her story progresses, she begins to appreciate more and more that the fear and shame she feels in identifying with de Kock are necessary to healing, not just on a personal level, but politically too (p.103).

Gobodo-Madikizela realises that what frightens her most about her encounter with de Kock is her realisation ‘that good and evil exist in our lives, and that evil, like good, is always a possibility’ (p.34). The same society that created de Kock, ‘the beneficiaries of apartheid privilege - the polite churchgoers, the
cultured suburbanites, the voters’ (p.110) now ostracized and judged him. Gobodo-Madikizela becomes painfully aware that De Kock, whilst ultimately having some free will in the matter, was created by his environment, his violence encouraged and sanctioned by family, church and state. He was given a role by his world and he played it well: (“As I said, the crucial thing was to get the job done”, p.74.) Yet this same society also created the Black necklace murderers who killed informers by placing burning tyres over their heads. Gobodo-Madikizela quotes a Black woman saying, “We failed to protect [our children], not just those who were burnt by the necklace, but those who did this terrible thing... We sat here hoping somebody will do something to break this cycle of insanity” (p.75).

Gobodo-Madikizela’s account describes exquisitely the Buddhist concept of ‘this is this, because that is that’. She writes, ‘We are induced to empathy because there is something in the other that is felt to be part of the self, and something in the self that is felt to belong to the other.’ In empathy with the perpetrator, she claims, ‘I can feel the pain you feel for having caused me pain’ (p.127).

In the classroom, forgiveness of one kind or another is often requested, and as often it is the sort of public display of which Derrida (2002) is so suspicious: an ‘I forgive you’ that affirms the sovereignty of the nation, or the nobility of the individual (pp.58-59). Arendt (1958) writes that forgiveness opens ‘The possible redemption from the predicament of irreversibility - of being unable to undo what one has done though one did not, and could not, have known what he was doing...’ (p.237). I cannot really know Sammy’s experience, so why does he so move me? Why am I overwhelmed by guilt? Our ex-Prime Minister, John Howard, was fond of noting that Indigenous children were ‘stolen’ in the past, not in the present, and so we should not
apologise for things for which we are not responsible. I am not responsible for Sammy’s illiteracy, so why should it be my concern?

The reality is that when I look at Sammy with the eyes of a self more raw and feeling than my professional/social self, I see his face; and I see in it how, ‘The lived experience of traumatic memory becomes a touchstone for reality...’ (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003, p.86). When I look at Sammy’s face; I see that whether or not I am personally responsible for Sammy’s condition is irrelevant. In the discourse of human rights, Sammy is responsible for his own behaviour, but in an ontology in which this is like this because that is like that, “we are all responsible – and I more than all the others”.

By accepting the role of perpetrator; by expressing remorse for his trauma and by validating his hurts, I restore Sammy’s integrity to him (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003, p.128). This remorse that I express recognises his face, so that I perceive him no longer as ‘monster’ but as a human being in pain. And by this act I open out his future and mine. For Sammy, learning to read is his own way of forgiving. He is ‘reconstituted’ by this act (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003, p.63), and I am reconstituted too, as by this act I revalidate my own vocation, negating in some small way the violence done by my profession.

And, too, Sammy and I are extended by dissolving the boundaries between us. Palmer (1998) writes that suffering ‘is neither to be avoided nor merely to be survived but must be actively embraced for the way it expands our own hearts’ (p.85). For Sammy and for me, this is an event for which there is no manual: Sammy doesn’t know what to do any more than I do, and every day is a different day, for both of us. But it is an event that alters us as individuals, and it creates something altogether new, something that is given shape by our relation of love.
learning as a way of love: on the subject-centred classroom and creating worlds

The subject-centred classroom doesn’t ignore students, but ‘honors one of the most vital needs our students have: to be introduced to a world larger than their own experiences and egos, a world that expands their personal boundaries and enlarges their sense of community. This is why students often describe great teachers as people who “bring to life” things that students had never heard of, offering them an encounter with otherness that brings the students to life as well.

Parker Palmer: The Courage To Teach..., p.120

I think there may have been five altogether.
Usually, I made him five copies because I knew at least three would get screwed into a ball and thrown at the end wall.
The task was to write about the book launch -the politicians came and we made a big welcome for them; -we’ll get it published in the local rag.

‘F--- you!’

he says again, as number five hits the wall.
When he starts smashing pencils and hurling them too, I know I’ve lost this battle.
After class I retrieve the ‘best copy’ and uncrumple it.
Under ‘Who?’ he has written ‘plepole’ and scrubbed it out.
Under ‘What?’ he has written nothing at all.
Under ‘When?’ is the incorrect date.
Under ‘Where?’ he has written the place.
Under ‘Why?’ he has written, ‘I dnt’e FUCK no’.

( I notice that at least he can spell ‘fuck’ correctly.)
At home, I reflect that the task was manipulative, vacuous, the sort of specious task that I actually loathe (a ‘teacherly’ task of the type we do in order to tick off ‘is able to write a report’ on the curriculum checklist.)
I reflect that every time I ask my students to do one of these sorts of activities I feel hollow and fraudulent.

Next time, I ask him to write as the wonderful chest in the ancient story of Isis and Osiris.

First paragraph: Describe yourself. (We’ve discussed how beautiful we are and looked at photos of ancient Egyptian chests carved and painted and encrusted with jewels.)
Second paragraph: Tell what you have inside you and how you feel about it.

(We know through and through by now, the story of the dead God-King Osiris, tricked by his brother into getting into the chest, and now unable to escape; already dead or dying, plummeting down the flooding Nile.)

Third paragraph: What do you see as you rush towards the sea? (We’ve drawn this and studied the ancient drawings: the fishermen and hunters amongst the papyrus, the women washing clothes, the scribes in their schools...) And so forth And so on.

He ends up with a page. He carries it round for days. He takes it down to the community centre. He reads it out to any willing listener.

He will never ever be the same again.
Months later, at the museum,
I have a moment of sheer horror
when I come upon him in the Egyptian room,
deep in contemplation,
gently rocking the replica of the Rosetta Stone
back and forth
back and forth
on its hanger
in a state of transfixed wonder.

These days, under the influence of Vygotsky, people ask why on earth one would study an ancient Egyptian story with children in a remote Indigenous community. My response is, ‘Because it opens worlds for them, as it has opened worlds for me.’ These children, for whom education has been a dry exercise of skills, suddenly discover that there exists a world they never suspected existed; a world that they in fact co-create. As this long story unfolded day by day over three weeks or so, retold, embroidered, filled in and made our own, I even discovered that Sammy was going out at night, retelling it to the teenagers in the community, and tracing, as we had done in class, its astronomical connections.

Heidegger (TT) writes of worlding as a mirroring of earth and sky, divinities and mortals:

Mirroring in this appropriating-lightening way, each of the four plays to each of the others. The appropriate mirroring sets each of the four free into its own, but it binds these free ones into the simplicity of their essential being toward one another (p.177).

This mirror play Heidegger calls ‘the world’, and ‘The world presences by worlding’, a worlding that cannot be explained by causes and grounds for it is beyond human cognition (p.177). This worlding, Heidegger continues, is like a round dance or a ringing (p.178). I gloss this as a simultaneous singing up of, and singing out into, world - a dependent co-arising. In this evocation of worlds/worlding a space is opened for something more than what we have designed or envisioned; something
more than what each of us has to offer individually. And this is where the subject (and here I mean the discipline or topic) provides the space or ground for that world.

Parker Palmer (1998) writes of the subject-centred classroom, in which ‘the connective core of all our relations is the significant subject itself – not intimacy, not civility, not accountability, not the experts, but the power of the living subject’ (p.103). In the subject-centred classroom, ‘the many are made one by the fact that they gather around a common subject and are guided by shared rules of observation and interpretation’ (p.102). Palmer is careful to distinguish this relationship from one with an object-focus: ‘a subject is available for relationship; an object is not’ (p.102). For a subject has a life of its own: ‘Every geologist knows that even the rocks speak, telling tales across gaps of time far wider than recorded history…’ (p.110).

The subject ‘holds’ us, not as a prison fence, but in the Japanese sense of a space within which one dwells and works (Hall, 1959, p.203). Heidegger takes up this idea (OWA) and relates it to the Ancient Greek Peras: ‘The boundary in the Greek sense does not block off; rather, being itself brought forth, it first brings to radiance what is present. Boundary sets free into the unconcealed…’ (p.208). In this sense, Peras is that which actually frees us. As Jardine, LaGrange and Everest (2003) note, when we take up and work within such a space in the classroom, ‘What starts to come forward is not a bluster of activities…but a way of taking up the world that breaks the spell of the consumptivism, exhaustion, and the panic of activities into which so much of our lives is inscribed’ (p.203). And Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003) stress that this taking up of a world isn’t just ‘a great idea’, but rather ‘...a serious, immediate, ecological obligation’ (p.203).

For Palmer (1998) the learning space is physical, conceptual, emotional, all operating in a paradoxical play of opposites. Thus there is a tension between being bounded and open; the space is both hospitable and ‘charged’; it invites both individual and group voices, ‘little’ and ‘big’ stories, silence and speech, solitude and community (pp73-74). Thus it is more than the physical environs; more than the input of any one person or topic. Taken up by the community of learners, the subject leads us into
world. It has a tremendous energy and mystery, ‘a presence so real, so vivid, so vocal, that it can hold teacher and students alike accountable for what they say and do’ (Palmer, 1998, p.117).

Freya Mathews (2005), describing the growth of her friend Julia’s farm, opposes fertility to production. Julia’s farm is a place of wild profusion where nothing is discarded and everything is artfully re-made, not merely as ‘recycling’, but as an act of reverence for what it once was, a process that follows along its own way. In manufacturing, raw materials are imported in order to produce the ‘new’, but in fertile growth, as on Julia’s farm, things grow out of what they were before: ‘...everything, artefactual as well as natural, retains its own story, its unique place in the poetic unfolding of the world, and all things are in conversation, “in story,” with the things around them’ (p.98). Another way of saying this would be to say that in a way of love, everything remains in play. It is not knowledge, or solutions, or conclusions, Palmer argues, that make a world, but ‘our commitment to the conversation itself’ (1998, p.104) that keeps that world generative.

For Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003) this is ‘thinking the world together’ – not ‘woozy, holistic generalities, but an invitation to take up particular things with care and love and generosity...’ (p.xv). Thus is opened a ‘community of relations’ in which children and adults alike meet to ‘do real work together’ (Friesen, Clifford & Jardine, 2003, p.117). Meaning is constructed together and a common history is continuously created and drawn upon that fully embraces its cultural milieu and bioregion. For Latour (1999) it is this loading into the discourse of human and non-human elements which then begin to circulate, that mobilises worlds. ‘It is a matter of moving toward the world, making it mobile, bringing it to the site of controversy, keeping it engaged, and making it available for arguments’ (p.101).

This is the world we create in the classroom as we discuss the awful mystery and majesty of the tale of Isis and Osiris. This story, in which one brother betrays another in ways unimaginable to the dominant discourse. This story in which a wife triumphs by wit and wisdom and steadfast love, and a son grows up to avenge his father’s death, reaches across cultures to the deepest
feeling life of students from a multiplicity of ages and experiences. Taken up by the class and told and retold until it becomes our own, we bring to it all that we can find of objective history, together with all of our own experiences of pain and betrayal and loyalty and love, and as we converse and argue and wonder and write and draw and make our plays, a world begins to emerge that is both local and global, individual and collective.

Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003) use the term *topica* to describe the subject-centred curriculum; the ‘imaginal topographies that involve issues of what is worthy of the imagination and involvement of teachers and children alike...’ (pp.218-219). The Latin *topicus* means, of course, pertaining to place. We are taken up by the sense of place so that our moorings shift: we find ourselves in the fertile space in which we are created by those around us. Bonnett (2004) beautifully describes how the design of a boat demonstrates the interdependence between humans and the sea. ‘Its hull and sails are shaped by human purposes, but equally by the non-human elements in which it is to perform’. The boat, however, is also ‘the embodiment of a wealth of cultural motifs and personal associations – emotions, aspirations and fantasies’ (p.132).

Alasdair MacIntyre (1981) argues that we shape ourselves against the stories of our culture; that it is stories that educate us into the virtues. ‘Deprive children of stories and you leave them unscripted, anxious stutterers in their actions as in their words...’ (p.201). This is to say that we *grow together*, all the more richly when we are rooted in *place*. Rooted in community, we are entangled in a relation of reciprocal responsibility very different from that in the commodified *modern* world. Kohák illustrates this point by referring to the home. We can sell a home, but buy only a house (p.203). A home is *cared for*; it is more than a shelter, more than an economic investment: it has a cultural history of grief and joy, companionship and antagonisms; a story that intertwines the lives of many as well as the changing of seasons, the political machinations of its nation, the news that enters via the television or the radio. Such are the stories that bind us in the classroom.
Clifford and Friesen (2003a) write about ‘the supposed oppression of studying a single text with an entire class’ (p.105) that is a sticky accoutrement to the individualism of ‘child-centred’ pedagogy. Elsewhere (1997), they note that the identities revealed by their students through the reading of a class novel are not the revelation of ‘true’ or hidden selves, but rather are ‘selves constituted and known in the particularity of our situation, studying this book, at this time...’ (pp.101-102). The topic – in this case the story - provides the fertile ground for the growth of world. Sumara and Davis (1997), too, refer to how the sharing of a novel studied not only by their class but by their parent group as well, became a community event that revealed aspects of persons that polite conversation or surveys could not.

Out of such participation, and especially if we can extend it over a period of time, we develop a shared history - that which Bellah et al (1985) refer to as ‘communities of memory’:

People growing up in communities of memory not only hear the stories that tell how the community came to be, what its hopes and fears are, and how its ideals are exemplified in outstanding men and women; they also participate in the practices – ritual, aesthetic, ethical – that define the community as a way of life’ (p.154).

Along with our worlds come the values by which we live together – the evil deeds of the wicked Ancient Egyptian God, Set, become a reference point for our future lives together. The language of feeling that we have taken up to describe the distress and yearning of Isis is used to express our own pains and disappointments.

And we understand, too, that our ‘community of memory’ is constantly evolving. Instead of seeking ‘common values’ or ‘interests’ as if for objects to ‘fit’ a static, already prescribed community, we understand that it is always-already in formation. As Sumara and Davis (1997) put it, ‘We are never merely interruptions in the ongoing events of [our students’] lives. We are always and already participating in [their] unfolding...’ (p.304).
In the modern, post-Vygotskian classroom, the Great stories that found modern culture (the grand narratives) are spurned in favour of social/communicative language, yet in a sense, without these stories we are homeless. We've rejected these stories because they reinscribe unjust power relations (it is difficult, for example, to find ‘great’ stories for and about girls/women), yet the repudiation of stories such as the Iliad, with its complex debates about trust, loyalty and pride, has left us with the banality of the TV sitcom and the shopping centre. (I shudder when I think of all those banal daily journal entries written by children thirsting for something of which they yet have no inkling.) David Geoffrey Smith (1999) argues that our challenge, rather than abandoning these stories, ‘is to reinterpret the grand narratives from within the space of our postcolonial understanding of the modern world system...’ (p.74).

Palmer (1998) weighs individual stories against the great stories of a culture: ‘...when my little story, or yours, is our only point of reference, we easily become lost in narcissism’ (p.76). The big stories, however, ‘frame our personal tales and help us understand what they mean’ (p.76). When Sammy writes about Osiris, betrayed by his brother and dying inside the chest, he expresses his own pain – both as a victim and as a bully and oppressor himself. He does this in such a way that he is no longer alienated, but part of the pain of the world. His focus shifts away from his own small isolated self and he becomes part of a larger community in which he is an active participant – on all levels: physical, emotional, psychological, academic. The great stories address personal issues in ways that psychological counselling and direct discussion cannot. This is partly because, as Palmer argues, a good text has enough gaps and ambiguities to demand our engagement and expand our thinking, and partly because private issues, distanced from the personal and taken up by the whole community, give the individual a wider perspective.

It is not only narrative that opens world, however, but the languages of the disciplines themselves. For those who enter the education system with cultural discourses at vast variance from the one dominant in their classrooms, the result is often the kind
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of alienation experienced by the thief in John Fowles’ story, ‘Poor Coco’ (1974), who wantonly destroys the historian’s manuscript when he comes to understand that he cannot participate in the discourse (and thus the social class) to which the historian belongs. Greene (1995) notes how such students will be made to feel ‘distrustful of their own voices, their own ways of making sense, yet they are not provided alternatives that allow them to tell their stories or shape their narratives or ground new learning in what they already know’ (pp.110-111).

Noel Pearson (2009) also takes this position, arguing that ‘socially relevant’ education shuts children out of the dominant discourse: ‘It would be hard to imagine a more stunning instrument for enforcing lower-class confinement than the notion of socially relevant education’ (pp.58-60). Malcolm Ross (1978) writes that, ‘The expressive impulse is blind. It seeks itself in the medium...’ (p.90). It is the language of the disciplines that awakens world. As Huebner (1975/2000b) points out, ‘Introducing the child to the language or symbols and methods of geography or chemistry or music or sculpture isn’t just about teaching culture, but increases ‘his ability to respond to the world...his response-ability in the world...’ and thus the ability to create and re-/create worlds (p.231). Heubner argues that:

the existing disciplines are language systems linking men to each other via a vocabulary, a syntax, a semantic, and a way of making a new language. The botanist is not simply a man who is interested in plants; he is a man who talks botany with other men (p.231).

In other words, as Greene (1995) expresses it, ‘we ought to enable students to enter into the needed languages responsibly and reflectively so they can name themselves and name their worlds’. It is important to note here too, Greene’s point that this is a naming ‘that can never be complete’ (p.183).
The opening of a *world* can have many interpretations. The environmental educator David Orr (2004) describes how we can study a river objectively (through books, online etc.) or we can ‘require students to live on the river for a time, swim in it, canoe it, watch it in its various seasons, study its wildlife and aquatic animals, listen to it, and talk to people who live along it’ (p.96). The river is a *world*, and by living with it, we enter it and live along-with-it.

This ‘real-world’ view of education has gained much currency since Dewey, and has led to the notion that the classroom world is false or fraudulent. Perhaps this is because the classroom world has been false – a mere representation of the exterior world that bears little relation to the inner worlds of its participants. Yet I argue, with Huebner (1975/2000b), that the creation of an aesthetic world in the classroom is ‘the possibility of life, captured and heightened and standing apart from the world of production, consumption and intent’, that has a wholeness precisely because it stands outside the functional world, and that can be valued for its wholeness, balance, design, integrity and the sense of peace and contentment that it can give (pp.226-227). As Malcolm Ross (1978) puts it, ‘The curriculum is an artificial and a temporary learning environment, true and valid in its own terms, created with care and skill – eventually outmoded and discarded but leaving its mark upon the individuals who participated in it’ (p.29). This is to say that the value of education is in the encounter itself – the thinking, the creating, the feeling lives that are engendered and nurtured in the entanglement with other that is *worlding*. As worlds are opened to us, we hear, see, feel in ways previously unimagined. The subject calls to us and we follow after it in the mysterious and wonderful dance that is *worlding*, passing, as we go, from the known world into one that is strange and new and entirely invigorating.
learning as a way of love: expanding the map

...the un-Platonic subjection of geometry to algebraic treatment, which discloses the modern ideal of reducing terrestrial sense data and movements to mathematical symbols...opened the way for an altogether novel mode of meeting and approaching nature...

*Hannah Arendt: The Human Condition, p.265*

Well he can’t wash out, that map. He’s on the ground, map. You know, map in the paper, he just wash out, he got to make another one.

*Indigenous Australian elder, Jack Jangarri, in Rose: Dingo Makes Us Human..., p.56*

We have a very good student-teacher in our Year 7 class.

We are studying Jean Craighead George’s, ‘Julie of the Wolves’

but in these post-colonial times

we’re calling it ‘Miyax of the Wolves’.

‘Can you do a map of Alaska with them?’ I ask.

‘We want them to visualise her journey over the permafrost tundra...’

She teaches it well, from a traditional point of view.

She teaches mapping conventions.

They end up with an outline of the country, its relative position on the planet,

the main places mentioned in the novel marked in.

But the work is dead, soulless.

We give it some thought.
Next day we return and we start the dance: the ringing out. We draw in the richness of the story: we draw the ice pushing into the land, threatening to crush it; we draw the immense, unchanging landscape on which Miyax wanders, small and afraid (and like many of us, lost). We draw the places where the wolves run, and love, and battle. ...all these places where Miyax is fighting for her culture and identity. And as we talk, and draw, and recollect the story, we also remember our own isolation, our own struggles, our own connections. World blooms into being.

Castellano (2000) relates a story about a young Cree man who comes home from a residential school asking his father to teach him about the country. ‘He arrived in the bush with a topographical map of the territory they were about to explore...’ but his father tells him that the map is useless and that the country must be sensed (p.29).

A story such as this is crucial to a narrative about teaching/learning and love, for if love is about connection and responsibility and dependent causation, then the map is the symbol of modernity that demonstrates par excellence, not only the break that separates the individual from ‘world’, but the positive aspects of modernity as well. As Arendt observes, the map is a product of modern thought, potently illustrating the mobility and autonomy characteristic of our time. Yet for the Cree Elder (as for Jack Jangarri in the epigraph above) this same map, impermanent and disposable as it is, is fraudulent.
Bruno Latour (1999) describes this paradox beautifully. In an extended essay accompanied by photographs, he documents the work of a small team of scientists as they try to discover what is happening in part of the Amazonian rainforest in Brazil. As researchers, their question is, “Is the forest advancing like Birnam Wood toward Dunsinane, or is it retreating?” (p.27). The task Latour has set himself, however, is to chart the shift from the physical to the theoretical, or what he calls the gap between words and world, language and nature (p.24).

Latour records the steps by which the physical actions and evidence collected by the scientists becomes theory. Beginning with maps of the forest (‘the tens of thousands of hours invested in Radambrasil’s atlas’ p.29) the scientists then travel to the site, set up grid co-ordinates, and gather samples of both plants and earth that are gradually replaced by words. Plant specimens are preserved and stored; earth samples are laid out on a table in a configuration that corresponds with the grid the scientists have imposed on the forest. Latour asks, standing in the lab, ‘Are we far from or near to the forest?’ (p.36). As the ‘forest on the table’ is gradually transferred to paper, he notes that, ‘In losing the forest, we win knowledge of it’ (p.38). In this ‘practical task of abstraction’ in which a state of affairs is loaded into a statement (p.49) matter and form continuously cross the gap that separates them (p.56) until finally, ‘when I read the field report, I am holding the forest’ (p.61).

The finished report is portable, and by its use of agreed symbols it ‘crosses instantaneously the threshold between local and global’ (p.60). Latour notes how, with its diagrams and mathematical formulae, it is constructed by successive interactions between people and earth: ‘It is not realistic; it does not resemble anything. It does more than resemble. It takes the place of the original situation, which we can retrace...’ (p.67). Latour is pointing out that we have confused the map with what it represents. ‘It replaces without replacing anything. It summarizes without being able to substitute completely for what it has gathered.’ The crucial thing about a map, he notes, is that it is ‘truthful only on condition that it allow for passage between what precedes and what follows it’ (p.67).
This confusion between map and territory is symptomatic of a time in which we are apt to understand the world as mere representation. As Zimmerman (1994) points out, ‘The conceptual structures with which we interpret the world...are not the phenomena’ (p.126). Solnit (2001) tells how we are inclined, these days, to consider that clicking and dragging on the internet is being-in-the-world (p.10). The young Cree man, coming home to learn his country, or my students, trying to enter the world of Miyax, must distinguish between the conceptual and the perceptible worlds, and understand the difference. Mathews (2005) comments also on how the map ‘...imposes a conceptual grid of straight lines on land...’ that is parcelled into blocks, levelled out, ‘...or otherwise physically modified to constitute the blank sheet that can then accommodate to designs of its subsequent “owners”’ (p.199). This is how we tend to regard curricula in the time of Gestell, and it is the disrupting Sammis/Sammys who remind us that our students are not blank sheets. In a poststructuralist world, where everything is understood to be representation, only flood and fire and heartbreak forcefully remind us that there is a physical world that can’t be redesigned, torn up, thrown away or deleted.

Good map-reading involves living the map in an internal way; a way that reveals a world. If we can read the map, and live it through the imagination, then our own worlds are opened too. Indeed, the map is a world, if only we have the knowledge required to decipher it. Greene (1975/2000), drawing a parallel between the curriculum and the map, notes that the map serves many purposes for the newcomer: it gives orientation in her unstable world; it allows her to bring certain objects into visibility that otherwise merge into the general blur of the unfamiliar (pp.306-307). As Pinar (1975/2002a) puts it, for newcomers to a town, maps are useful for ‘...when they can no longer proceed by “rule of thumb”’ (p.404).

Thus the map can give us access to a wider world than our own, though Pinar (1975/2002a) makes the point that the map tells us much more than we require to know and so can be coercive. Bradshaw (2004) describes how maps ‘sketch imaginative space, delineating political and moral territories’ (p.311). Many maps can be made of the one place, and each represents a
different worldview: a political map from 1930 will vary vastly from one from 2010; a map of landforms will be significantly different from a socio-political map that shows infant mortality rates, or languages spoken, or literacy levels. A tourist map of Australia’s Northern Territory will be different from an Indigenous map of the same country. Likewise, as I have already made clear, curriculum ‘maps’ reveal different aspects of learning and teaching.

Maps, therefore, direct and narrow our thinking, so that we run the risk of understanding that the particular map to which we have access is the only view. This is perhaps especially the case in the modern world, where we are inclined to understand representation as concrete. Better, then, to take Pinar’s (1975/2002a) advice, and to ask, before we pick up the map in the first place, what it is important to know, and where we want to go. Better to ask, What does this place feel and smell like? What is it like to really experience the disorientation of being other? (p.399).

Smith (1999) decries the simulations carried out in classrooms around the world to educate students about global poverty. He complains that the teacher invariably begins the class by saying the likes of, “Today we are going to show you the real world. This game represents what the real world is like. Let’s start with Africa...” Smith argues that the lesson then invariably proceeds swiftly through Asia and so on to a neat conclusion, so that ‘global perspectives’ can be ticked off and the class can move on to physical education, science and so on (p.55). This kind of pedagogy, argues Smith, ‘speaks...of the depth of the depthlessness in the contemporary classroom, the settlement into a way of proceeding which is content to be forgetful of the deep questions of its own sustenance’ (p.55).

What is required for good map-reading, I believe, is the understanding that the map both represents and creates how we interpret the world. In many senses, the farm on which I was raised is different from that on which my sisters grew up. More significantly, it is different from the country my father cultivated, and poles apart from that of its original Bangerang inhabitants – all this even though, on a modern map there may only be the addition of an irrigation channel or two. In this sense, as
Bradshaw makes clear, we need to problematise maps (here I allude specifically to curriculum maps) and to understand that, ‘if our society is to be inclusive and just, maps of the same ground need to be constantly redrawn in endlessly different ways, and each of the diverse views given prominence’ (p.315). The point here is, as Cobb (1997) so succinctly puts it, to understand place as ‘a living, ecological relationship between an observer and an environment, a person and a place’ (p.46). In Castellano’s story, the Cree father tears up the map. “He said I was committing the white man’s mistake, making plans for the land without ever setting foot in it…” (2000, p.29).

And, oh! how often we do this with our students! My ‘book launch’ report is a case in point – a sketchy and disengaging exercise in drawing the outlines of an event seen from the outside. In map-making, Latour reminds us, there is at every step of the way, ‘a gap as wide as the distance between that which counts as words and that which counts as things’ (p.74). In my classroom, my task is surely not to impose the map as template over my students but rather to step into that openness between us; to read the signs deeply and to track the connections; trace and retrace our steps with new senses every time.

Muecke, (Benterrak, Muecke and Roe, 1984/1996) tells how the project he and his colleagues undertake, of ‘reading’ the Western Australian Roebuck Plains, co-arises gradually out of Paddy’s speaking, his own writing and Kim’s paintings: “…the country then becomes the book, the traveller in turn becomes a reader’ (p.19). In a similar manner, Kohák (1984), writes about time. Time is not the clock and the calendar (though so often we teach it this way):

Primordially, human experience simply is not a sequence of discrete events which need to be ordered by a clock and a calendar… It is, rather, set within the matrix of nature’s rhythm which establishes personal yet nonarbitrary reference points: when I have rested, when I grow weary, when the shadows lengthen, when life draws to a close. Though we may speak that way, it is simply not the case that at “six of the clock” certain events will occur – the shadows will lengthen, my axe will grow heavy in my hands. Stopping the clock does not stop the event’ (p.16).
Yet we continue to teach time as if clock time is *substantial*.\(^1\) I remember the relief on the faces of my struggling Year 8 students when I told them that geometry was something ‘made up’ by humans: it seemed to make all the difference to them to understand the obtuse angle or the isosceles triangle as ideas invented by mathematicians. Such an understanding gave them entrée to a world previously alien; that world Greene and Palmer argue for, where ‘geologists are people who hear rocks speak...writers are people who hear the music of words...’ (Palmer, 1998, p.108). As Palmer puts it, ‘the subject calls us out of ourselves and into its own selfhood’ (p.108). I began to understand that discourses that I myself had been thinking of as real, were *worlds* that we could enter together if only we could see them as such, and that what my students had been struggling with was their resistance to a ‘reality’ different from their own.

The idea of curriculum as map is as old as curriculum itself (Hamilton and Weiner, 2003) and I am not suggesting here that we tear our maps up. Rather, it is the attitude to the map that I wish to contest here. If the (curriculum) map is merely regarded as technical and conceptual, then the curriculum will remain dry, flat and abstract. If, on the other hand, we can find our way into the landscape of the map, then *world* is open to us, with all its vivid possibility.

*Journal Entry, November 2005*

We recently engaged in a unit of work on the European Renaissance that grew into something extraordinary. For a presentation to other teachers I have been thinking through the planning process: how to plan for teaching as a conversation...how to plan for world-making. Of course, planning is never linear, so even this little synopsis is inaccurate, but the process went something like this:

My students are in Year 8, but I taught them in Year 7, so I know a bit about them. I start by remembering back to what we studied in Year 7 (and further back to what I know of their history from past teachers). Last
year we studied Celtic Britain and its colonisation by the Romans; other cultures (Walmajarri; Inuit; wolves); we studied the preciousness of life and the environment.

This year we have studied bodies (human anatomy but also the body of the earth; chemical and industrial processes; hydraulics). We have taken a long look at Islam and the flowering of Arabic culture in the 12th and 13th centuries. After this, we’ll study the life and culture of Shakespeare - we’ve already started rehearsing ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’. What I want them to understand about the Renaissance is how this was perhaps the first time in history that humans felt free enough to make themselves and to stand up as individuals. In this sense, it is a time that accords with where these students are in their own development. They have an emergent sense of social justice and a corresponding desire to make the world a better place. There is an emerging intellectualism and a propensity for judging those around them! They are beginning to seek life’s meaning and purpose, questioning, reaching beyond the immediate environment out into the world. At the same time as this developing idealism blooms, they are very preoccupied with their own places in the world: their physical appearance, who their friends are, how the rest of the world perceives them.

I consider their learning needs. It is winter. We need to do something really solid, but we’ve just finished an intensive and structured study of anatomy and after this comes a maths block that will require them to work as a whole group. Next term I want them to do some small-group presentations. I consider that they need to do more oral work - clear speaking. They also need to develop research skills. As a group, there are quite a few with lingering literacy difficulties and attendant ‘unconventional’ behaviours. There are a couple who are new and still settling, and a couple with disgruntled parents. Two are spending a lot of time wandering the streets and one is unsettled after the reappearance of an estranged father. One has a mother in recovery from cancer. Eight are strong academically and looking for a challenge, all strong young
women - leaders who are looked up to by the unruly rabble of pubescent boys completely under their thrall! All are mono-lingual English speakers like me; all of European descent - no cases of overt trauma. Most are indulged at home and like to be the centre of attention. This means that they are not willing listeners. So all-in-all, I want to work some more on developing an ethic of care, responsibility, love, acceptance.

I consider all the practicalities: the curriculum requirements, timetabling (one public holiday in the next three weeks), the available resources (I consider excursions, visitors, books, internet, DVDs). I decide that we'll stay at school in the classroom and work on individual assignments.

Now I start really researching the Renaissance. In the art world, we see the emergence of the foundations of realism: shadow and light, perspective, human characteristics in those portrayed. In the economic world, banks are coming into being, and exploration is opening new worlds that are a source of wealth to the ordinary man, who can buy and trade and lend. Religion begins to recede and physical science is born, but not without a fight, and the Inquisition is savage in holding tight to the past. The new materialism emerging in art and medicine is indicative of a new understanding of human being as physically constituted rather than God-made. Architecture blooms under a new mathematics and a new vision of the splendour of man. Family dynasties are founded on wealth and fame rather than on inheritance alone. For the first time we come to the idea of the self-made man.

I make a list of people and events that ranges all across Europe, from Ferdinand and Isabella, to Elizabeth I, to Masaccio and Brunelleschi, to Martin Luther, to Byrd and Pallestrina, to the Medicis and the Borgias, to Magellan and Columbus, to Galileo and Copernicus. They choose their 'topic' and I let them loose, each armed with some starting notes (extensive for those I know will have difficulty with independent research). They are to keep a log that records their progress, and will present an 800-2000 word essay and a
ten-minute talk – spoken, and using visual support. In addition, we make a huge map of the world for the back wall. On it, they are to mark the places to which their research takes them.

I am astounded by what eventuates. There are students plodding along with basic books and students reading university papers. People are using internet chat-rooms to source information. Personal relationships bud between researchers (“I have some information about that!”) and between the researched (“Did you know that Isabella and Ferdinand were related to the Borgias?”) Parents appear in the class-room exclaiming, “I never connected Elizabeth with the Renaissance!” There are daily revelations and cries of wonder, shock, disgust, sympathy. (“Oh Julie, that poor Lucrezia! She seems so bad, but she was really just a pawn of the men in her family. Just imagine if we had to live like that!”) Our conversation stretches from flourishing Europe to the rout of the Americas and across centuries. We compare ourselves with the young artists and musicians, the privileged and the poor, the ‘witches’ burned in the inquisition, Magellan’s sailors reluctantly rounding Cape Horn, fearful of what awaited them, or Luther nailing his manifesto to the church door in a fit of self-righteous anger about the hypocrisy of institutions and elders not unlike our own!

Our presentations go on for days, all merging into one massive, sprawling conversation, until finally we are washed up on the shores of ‘what comes next’. As we begin to immerse ourselves in our new world, I am busy noting who got organised, who slipped through the net (again), who needs extra care. I note that their essays were good and editing improving, but they need to practise summarising, so we’ll do some basic exercises as one-off lessons. I’ll also emphasise the visual aids when they do their group presentations next term (and examine my own under-use of the visual – I always talk with pen in hand, but I don’t often find good visuals from elsewhere).
For the moment, we’ve done with this world, but it keeps resonating through us. We are different now – as individuals, as a group, as a wider community. We have been to this place together and we have returned, and, yes, we can map that world in a superficial sort of way, but the experience has been much more than we could ever put into symbols/words.

learning as a way of love: the spying heart – *worlding*, the imagination and being *entralled*

*We have gills for dream-life in our head, we must keep them wet.*

Les Murray: *The Dialectic of Dreams* (Collected Poems, pp.216-218)

*I have tried, in various talks and lectures, to set out something of what the poet thinks the poem is, as opposed to what the teacher thinks it is. I have pointed out that poetry is an art, which educationists teach not as an art at all, but as a subject – like linguistics or semantics’*


*World* cannot come into being unless imagined. Katherine Paterson (1985/1991) describes how the Chinese characters for ‘idea’ and ‘imagination’ evoke the impression of a ‘spying of the heart’ that connects the images buried deep inside us with those in the world outside ourselves. These images, she argues, are nurtured deep in us from our earliest experiences. Paterson argues that they require the assistance of art and literature and music for their emergence (p.205), and that this is a process that
requires some structure or boundedness: ‘...there is no such thing as unlimited creativity. It is within limits, often very narrow limits, that a creative work comes into being’ (p.42).

This recalls for us, again, Heidegger’s notion of Peras, or Palmer’s idea of the discipline as clearing, but it also raises the issue of the role of the imagination in education. In the time of Gestell, I believe much lip-service is paid to imagination, with very little substance. In fact, writers such as Berry (1989), argue that we have trivialised creativity (p.199). Clifford and Friesen (2003b) argue that schools have co-opted ‘terms like critical thinking, creative thinking, and independence without offering many genuine opportunities for students to exercise any of those faculties’ (p.172).

Herbert Read, as long ago as 1943, was arguing that “Creation” should imply the calling into existence of what previously had no form or feature’ (p.113). I agree, yet as Smith (1999) argues, ‘...increasingly people are living not from within the matrix of their own thought and action but vicariously, living through representations of life constructed by others’ (p.53). To my mind, the influx of technology has compounded the problem: I cannot see, for example, how manipulating images from someone else and naming it ‘art’ can be called an imaginative act, compared with drawing one’s own, regardless of how ‘amateurish’ one’s own creations may appear. By the same token, we persist in showing our students film versions of great literary texts which rob them of their own images of the characters and settings. All of this, it seems to me, impoverishes the imagination, so that we become less and less able to imagine other.

Many thinkers link the capacity for imagination with empathy and ethical behaviour. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) stress the importance of this ‘empathic projection’ or ‘being in the other’ as important in the development of children. They argue that such a way of being gives children insight into the other-than-human world too – that it is possible through empathic projection, to come to an understanding of our environment as, ‘not inanimate and less than human, but animated and more than human’ (p.566). Indeed, David Tacey (1995) postulates that the ‘place’ in which difference meets, is this imaginal world
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(p.176). Maxine Greene (1995) too, argues that it is imagination that makes empathy possible at all: ‘It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called “other” over the years’ (p.3).

On the other hand however, there seems to be a good deal of confusion, especially in early years education, between fantasy and imagination. Iris Murdoch (1997) argues that the chief enemy of morality is fantasy, whereas imagination is essential to it. Murdoch contends that we use fantasy to escape the world, but imagination to join it (p.374): ‘Imagination as opposed to fantasy, is the ability to see the other thing, what one might call, to use those old-fashioned words, nature, reality, the world’ (p.255). Thus, it is possible to see how love, as that which admits the other in all its alterity, co-arises with the imagination. Indeed, for Murdoch, love is an expression of imagination (p.216). The danger is, however, that when education has become a mode only for the analysis and critique of object knowledge, we are barely cognizant of the realm of imagination that is revealed to us by world. As the ethicist Margaret Somerville (2006) argues, ‘We need a language of moral imagination and moral intuition because it is primarily through imagination and intuition that we can deepen the understanding we require to make decisions on ethical matters’ (p.71).

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Actually, imaginative work, as opposed to fantasy, is hard work. Clifford and Friesen (2003a) describe a children’s LEGO camp at which a child responds to one of those adults who seem to think that everything to do with childhood should be ‘fun’, “Yes, it is fun, but it’s hard fun” (p.103). Clifford and Friesen assert that children like to work hard if that work is ‘meaningful, engaging, and powerful’ (p.103). When we love what we do, we work hard at it, just as we work hard at the relationships we love. Kohák (1984) writes about how we have divorced love and labour, ‘leaving love an empty sentimentality and labor a drudgery’ (p.191), yet ‘it is precisely in investing life, love, and labor that we constitute the world as personal, as the place of intimate dwelling’ (p.212). Greene, too, (1988) argues for hard work, maintaining that young people need to be challenged; to feel that they are
‘onto something’. Quoting Dewey, she argues that if we are intellectually timid, then we cut the wings of the imagination (pp.124-125).

Learning is hard work that requires the imaginative faculty. Margolin (2005), writing about teaching and learning in Native American cultures, notes how those peoples speak of *modern* teaching as potentially robbing the person of the experience. The too-easy question and answer are gratuitous. They rob the learner of *work*. They reduce thought to simplistic linear thinking unrelated to the context of the issue at hand. They turn ‘learning’ into a commodified process of acquisition.

Hard work involves *flow*, too. Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (1996) defines *flow* as deep absorption and enjoyment in which there is a loss of self-consciousness. Time is distorted; distraction unthinkable; the activity itself autotelic (pp.110-113). Csikszentmihaly argues that ‘Teachers rarely spend time trying to reveal the beauty and the fun of doing math or science; students learn that these subjects are ruled by grim determinism instead of the freedom and adventure that the experts experience’ (p.342). Elaborating on this notion, Goleman (1995/2005) describes this spontaneous joy as ‘...emotional intelligence at its best...’, (p.90); ‘...a state in which people become utterly absorbed in what they are doing, paying undivided attention to the task, their awareness merged with their actions’ (p.91).

Muecke (Benterrak, Muecke, Roe, 1984/1996) describes Krim Benterrak’s absorption in his own painting as he teaches prisoners to paint. ‘Suddenly he became aware of a silence – one that had perhaps been going on for a long time, since his painting was nearly finished – he looked up and all eyes were *turned towards him*’ (p.212). Krim had been *enthralled* in his work, and in turn, his enthrallment had lured his students. Muecke continues that Krim had ‘become the sun...the figure which enlightens the students’ (pp.212-213), and that, ‘He was able to do this because of the way he was *eclipsed by his own task*’ (p.213, my italics). Muecke postulates that it is Krim’s *absence* that draws the students, a position that brings to mind Heidegger and the *call*. Indeed, Muecke suggests that the goal of painting is not to ‘pin down’ the essence of what is painted, but ‘to trace
a path which the eye can follow into the space which is tomorrow’s painting’ (p.214). I see here the trajectory of world-creating: the passion of the teacher for the subject is a sun too bright for students to resist; my own love for the subject is thrown out in front of me, and we all follow after it.

This is then to see the teacher as herself enthralled by her subject, a joyous example rather than merely an instructor or facilitator. Katherine Paterson (1981/1995) argues that it is our passion for language that engages students in the world of literature. ‘We cannot give them what we do not have. We cannot share what we do not care for deeply ourselves’ (p.27). In this sense, we are teachers or writers, not in order ‘to do something to a child, but to be someone for a child’ (p.134). It is the subject that enraptures us and calls us on. Our wonderful Australian poet Judith Wright (1992) argues of poetry that, ‘the poem is not a tool in education nor a subject for study, it is a creation, a self-subsistent construction of art, with no purpose beyond its own existence and no attachment to social purposes’ (p.10). In this sense the poem is a world that we enter. Wright argues that the question ‘What is the poet trying to say...?’ is unanswerable, ‘...because it assumes that the poem is a veiled statement, a concealed message or signal’. Limited by the communicative model, we are blinded to ‘the reality of the poem itself as an imaginative creation’ (p.16).

The passion for the subject is the call of amor mundi – love of world (Arendt, 1958, though the educational context here comes by a circuitous route from Chambers, 2003, p.232), a love that opens generously to an absorption in the world that is fully participative. One day my Grade 2 class was interrupted by a knock at the door. It was a photographer who had come as arranged, to take our photo for the local paper. Rapt in our work, we all looked up like startled rabbits. Words didn’t come easily to any of us, and the photographer made a rather derogatory remark about the students being locked up in prison. At the time I thought this was insulting, yet on reflection I can see how he could have conceived such a notion. We were, indeed, enthralled,
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but what he failed to see was that our enthrallment was of our own making – we ourselves had spun the web that held us fast. We were spurred on by a deep joy in the subject alone, not by the thought of any reward at the end.

learning as a way of love: the promise and the gift

_The remedy for [human] unpredictability...is contained in the faculty to make and keep promises_

_Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, p.237_

_Sammi and I have been learning_
_the three-times-tables._

Good, I say to her.

(she’s in Year 8.)

_I think you understand it now._

Go home tonight and study
so you know them by heart.

_She looks at me,_
_a bit unsettled._

Miss, she says.

What do you mean by ‘study’?
What does that mean...’study’?

At first I think she’s provoking me.
‘Study,’ I say.

‘You don’t mean to say that...’
I see her face
and look aghast.

Here is something else I had blithely assumed.

Deep, slow breath.
Part IV

OK, what study means is...

* 

Next morning I see her ambling across the oval
- happy.

She’s actually glowing
as she steps into the classroom.

‘Miss,’ she says,
beaming,
I know my threes.
Can we do the fours today?

Sammi, who has never experienced enthrallment in the classroom, must trust me in order to risk the loss of self that is learning. When I promise the grieving Sammy that I will teach him to read, my promise is grave indeed. In fact, in making my promise, I feel as if about to dive over the edge of a cliff. I am aware of the great dangers of the undertaking: that there will be days when he won’t be able to face it; days when his small failures will be onslaughts on his integrity and mine; days when his illnesses and absences and detentions will erode our confidence; and, most difficult of all, days when his entrenched disbelief and distrust will sour every small victory. It would be far easier and safer for both of us to go through the motions – give Sammi a calculator and tell her she’s doing just fine - but we both know, deep down, that she isn’t. Palmer (2000) cautions against attempting the ‘quick fix’ for wounds. He argues that solutions are like ‘trying to fill the potholes in our souls’ instead of honouring the weaknesses and strengths that have landed us where we are (p.52). As Palmer points out, we should heal from within, not by plastering our wounds from the outside. I know that for Sammy, healing will be slow, and I also know that after all the false promises and flattery of the past, a failure on my part might be more than he can bear.
I know too, that like Clifford and Friesen’s students already cited (1997; see pp. 242-243 of this thesis), Sammy won’t thank me for my promise. No doubt there will be more grief than gratitude, for he must protect himself against the likelihood of more failure. Until I can elicit success for/from him – pride in some achievement that he never thought possible; absorption that opens world for the first time – I will be fighting his certainty that ‘nothing is going to work’. I know that there are days when I won’t be able to face his lies, his ‘victim’ behaviour, his belligerence – the behaviours that are a consequence of years of being pandered and lied to, ignored, betrayed.

Blake et al (2000) write, ‘To give one’s word (as the sovereign individual has the right to do) is to incur an obligation to let oneself be understood, an obligation to overcome one’s unwillingness to do so, to renounce one’s desire to remain opaque’ (p.83). In making my promise I declare a commitment and so expose myself to the risk of professional failure, eschewing the protection of jargon and diagnoses. For Sammy, the acceptance of my promise calls forth one of his own; a promise that reclaims his vulnerability and his integrity. And this is my gift. In opening worlds to my students, I offer them a gift which is a gift of love: love for them, for our subject, and for teaching/learning itself. My gift, freely given, opens a way of love that, generously accepted by the student, interrupts calculating design and reverberates across time and space.

Émile Benveniste (1997) shows how, across history and cultures, the word ‘gift’ entails an interdependence between giving and taking (p.34). This implies that the notion of gift always-already involves reciprocity/exchange. Derrida (1997) however, argues that the gift, properly speaking, is that which ‘in suspending economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange...’ In this respect we could liken gift to Lévinas’s other in that it interrupts. As in the act of forgiveness, it defies reciprocity and symmetry (p.124). In fact, to perceive the gift as a gift, argues Derrida, destroys it as gift. Rather, the gift, to be really a gift, should not be apprehended as such, but should be a ‘radical forgetting’, not as repression, but as a failure to register having received (pp.130-132).
Commentators such as Bernasconi (1997) criticize Derrida as thinking from within the Greek/Western philosophical purview. Bourdieu (1997) also notes that the very notion of gift rests on the presumption of an egoistic individual who must overcome self-interest in order to cooperate with others of the same nature (p.236). My own description of Indigenous ontology marks out cultures in which the notion of gift is not so much absent, as a condition in which free exchange is the *natural attitude*. 

Sahlins (1997), elaborating on the work of Marcel Mauss, explains how, in the Maori ceremony of *whangai hau*, gifts *circulate*. The circulating *hau* is not so much the gift as the spirit of giving, which cements relations between people. Harvey (2006) clarifies how these acts of reciprocal exchange ensure ongoing abundance for a people: the Maori woodcarver returns his woodshavings to the forest, which continues to provide his living. (p.13). This intimate, interdependent reciprocity is essential for the well-being of all: ‘...a forest might give birds to hunters and trees might give their wood to lumberjacks’ (p.13). Any interruption in the exchange creates imbalance and dis-ease. In the same vein, Deborah Bird Rose (1992) shows how the Indigenous Australian elders at Yarralin strive to keep this balance by tending to the reciprocal tasks of ceremony as well as the more physical aspects of land care. She writes that the elders, ‘understand that life is a gift, and that respect for life’s manifestations is the only form of reciprocity worthy of such a gift’ (p.41).

Such understandings open us to aspects of gift that are, I think, neglected by Derrida’s economic/ego based critique. The Dalai Lama often talks about the naturalness of the mother’s gift of milk to her baby. ‘Her affection here is totally genuine and uncalculating: she expects nothing in return. As for the baby, it is drawn naturally to its mother’s breast’ (1999, p.67). Hyde (1983/2006) compares gift with commodity. Like love, he argues, *gift* can never be exhausted, whereas a commodity ‘is truly “used up” when it is sold because nothing about the exchange assures its return’ (p.23).

Hyde (1983/2006) contends that *modern* societies actually rely on the generosity of the gift for their effective function. Academic communities, for example, rely on the free circulation of ideas in order to flourish, whereas a ‘job-of-work’, a service
sold and rendered, breaks the cycle of exchange so that interactions become linear, two-way dealings between individuals that exclude and fragment community. Hyde continues that when academics work for financial gain or fame alone, ‘one finds specious and trivial research, not contributions to knowledge’ (p.85). The spirit of the gift, then, is one that nourishes the whole community. In fact, a community only becomes one to the degree that ideas move as gifts (p.82). When we profit from that which ought to be gifted, we cultivate the separate self and strengthen clannishness and individualism.

Hyde (1983/2006) reasons that gifts must be cultivated in order to keep them in circulation: ‘The gift will continue to discharge its energy so long as we attend to it in return’ (p.50). Hyde tells how in Indigenous cultures one’s standing in the community is raised by giving freely, and lowered by accumulating wealth for oneself: it is, he writes, ‘...when part of the self is given away, that community appears’ (pp.50-52). And writing about personal gifts (e.g., a gift for music or poetry, though in our case we could allude to the gift of/for teaching) Hyde emphasises the importance of gratitude for the gift’s circulation, a gratitude that ‘moves a person to labor in the service of his daemon’ (p.54). Indeed, in some senses, this almost compulsory (and certainly compulsive) labour is what alerts me to my gift in the first place – a willingness to set other ‘gifts’ aside for a particular, compelling preference – in my case, this life of service to the idea of, as well as the practice of, teaching and learning.

This is to reiterate that as a teacher, the gift I bestow on my students is doubled by the fact that it is not only my passion for my subject that I gift, but the gift of the teaching/learning relationship itself. As Katherine Paterson (1981/1995) declares, it is our love for what we do that we give to our students, ‘And we don’t give out love in little pieces, we give it full and running over’ (p.280). Yet Clifford, Friesen and Jardine (2003) also warn against the romantic idea that we can keep on endlessly giving without any sort of reward. A community can only stand so much disruption (p.51) and to give without return is the vocation of saints; it drains we ordinary humans dry. When too little of my gift continues in circulation there may be a breakdown in the relations in my class.
Part IV

This state of affairs Hyde (1983/2006) refers to as an ecology (p.19) and indeed, my classroom is like the forest: the more return there is from my students and their community, the more nourishment we receive. Conversely, the less I get back from my students, the harder it becomes to give. And again, the more the market forces of demand and return intrude, the more what we do feels like hard work and mere survival and the less we feel of delight and vitality.

Kohák (1984) asserts that this gift-giving results in a joyousness and a sense of fulfillment that ‘breaks out of the entire instrumental chain as a moment of encounter between a human and an Other....’(p.200) Sammy, knocking on the staff-room door years after the ‘chariot’ event in search of the gift of the story, or Sammi wandering across the school oval rejoicing in the gift of the three-times-table, are overcome by the sheer surprise and delight of the unexpected. Bernasconi (1997) notes that Derrida’s way of accepting the gift of the work of Lévinas was not to take it as given, but in fact to engage with it. When Sammy recognises this gift, takes it up, and gives it back to the world, its increase is manifold. As David Geoffrey Smith remarks, (1999), ‘...the mark of a true gift is its power to bring forth the question of others’ gifts, that is, to bring others into the question of their gifts’ (p.147).

Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003) argue that without the freedom and unselfconsciousness of the gift, education loses its abundance and love (p.214). In an interdependent and co-arising world, persons (and I use this term here in the widest possible context) are always-already ‘...relationally constituted and present to others as gift exchangers’ (Harvey, 2006, p.14). Gifting and giftedness therefore bring us to both our own regeneration and to community. Just as my gift increases exponentially through my practice, so it also blooms as it passes into and through my students, and in turn, Sammi’s worlding returns my gift to me, a gift in which I both find and lose myself.

This, I argue, is the way of love, a way that penetrates world far more deeply than in the exchange that marks the time of Gestell – a way that implicates the whole being, not least of all the heart.
falling in love: teaching and learning by heart

The ‘by heart’ ‘...erases the borders, slips through the hands, you can barely hear it, but it teaches the heart’

Jacques Derrida, Che Cos’è La Poesià, 1995, p.29

In every attitude toward the human being there is a greeting – even if it is the refusal of a greeting.


Which is to say: if your son begins suddenly to fall at a headlong rate, you must through the agency of your love and greater age throw him a line and haul him back.

Richard Ford: Independence Day, p.15

Even in a class full of odd-bods he stands out.

The one who writes like an 8 year old (he’s 13) and can’t get on with his peers.

‘I hate working with people,’ he maintains but all the same he’s terribly lonely.
We’ve been studying medieval England (mainly the Arthurian legends) and he’s already alienated his group. We’re making a model village and they’re assigning themselves roles: there are the lords and ladies the milk and hen wives a truly disreputable bunch of knights and squires but no one will have him any more - his complaints and niggles have closed all offers.

“Well,” I say, “if no one will have you, be the outcast! Be what you are complaining so loudly about!”

He is stopped in his tracks, but there’s a spark in his eye, nevertheless. ‘I’m not being a beggar,’ he says. ‘You can’t make me be a beggar.’

“No,”
I make my voice mild and disinterested

but already I’m stirring at his excitement. 'What about a cottar?'
'They were pretty poor and outcast 'always under the thumb of the land-owners
'and usually lived on the village edge.'

Done!

When the time comes for their oral presentations, it is Tim the Cottar who brings the house down. He has researched thoroughly: Tim not only lives in a shack on the edge of the village has numerous children and a disenchanted wife (all starving) but he makes sly grog in the forest and is a drunk to boot.

We adore him, instantly!

Not just Tim
Part IV

but the boy who portrays him becomes a class champion. The perfect outcast, he is embraced by our whole village for being just who he is!

Years later, we still remember Tim as we trawl through our collective history, and the boy who created him is still beloved of us all.

In fact, you might like to know

that he went on to play Tom Snout (the Wall) in ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ and a political activist in our version of ‘The House That Was Eureka’.

He studied year 12 politics and was lauded by his teacher and is currently playing in one of those grungy, dissenting bands.

Still preaching revolution he seems to have quite a few friends.

* (A cottar or cotter was a tenured labourer.)

As education slides more and more into objectivity, we find the teaching of values in English-speaking countries becoming de rigueur. This has a number of implications. In a system expected to cure all ills by turning out ideal ‘products’, educators are given the task of solving problems thrown up by the general body social, and, consistent with the general subject/object duality, ‘education’ is seen as the primary solution. This also gives us a quick-fix attitude to values, an attitude that both accelerates and is accelerated by, technology. Smith (1999) notes how a life on film is reduced to two hours and tied up neatly: terrible problems can be solved in thirty minutes; ‘A life that took eighty years to live can be reduced to an hour; a problem that took a year to solve can be shown as solved in a matter of minutes; a journey of months is related in seconds’ (p.53).
Inga Clendinnen (2006, pp.158-176) tells two stories of Treblinka. The first is the story of Chaim Sztajer, an inmate who, once resettled in Australia, set about making a model of the death camp. Clendinnen writes that, by observing the model, ‘It is possible to grasp the terrible simplicity of its informing concept; to feel the presence of minds that could so sleekly analyse the “problem” of effecting mass human death at maximum speed with minimum fuss...’ (p.165). Contrasted against this, Clendinnen tells the story of the camp Commandant, Stangl, who was also a sort of model-maker, tireless in his pursuit of ‘improvements’ that he could make to the camp. Clendinnen tells us that these improvements included covering the barbed wire that lined the race to the gas chambers with pine boughs, a fake clock and fake ticket boxes at the station, flower beds, and a Tyrolean style guard-house. Throughout the camp, as more and more people were incinerated, cinder paths were laid. Another former inmate tells that Stangl was forever smiling: indeed, Clendinnen tells how decades later he boasted of the fine workmanship of the carpenters under his governance. For Stangl, Treblinka was his model world, and his mission in life was to ignore the stench of death and make his small ‘village’ as pretty as a picture.

When the implicit cultural message is about self-interest and world mastery, compensatory behaviours must be introduced, thus we see television and school education campaigns aimed at teaching social and democratic values and a push by government to encourage altruistic behaviour. Yet the objectivity of the system immediately subverts the very values it sets out to teach: values education is increasingly viewed as separate and additional to the essential business of education, and when it is taught objectively and in isolation, it begins to look a bit like Stangl’s Treblinka – neat, sterile, and hypocritical. 85

Noddings (1992/2005) notes how we proceed in education on the supposition ‘that moral knowledge is sufficient for moral behavior’ and that, ‘From this perspective, wrongdoing is always equated with ignorance’ (p.22). This reinforces our always-already understanding that education is about acquiring knowledge, a notion that, considered logically, gives no guarantees at all about how we behave. The Dalai Lama too (1999), warns that telling about values doesn’t in any way educate us about them:
Part IV

‘Merely being told that envy...is negative cannot provide a strong defence against it’ (p.82). Shaireen Rasheed (2007) makes pertinent points about the endemic teaching of tolerance, arguing that intrinsic to the notion of tolerance is a pathologising of difference. ‘It exists and is expressed within the very language that makes it essential and that it must oppose’ (p.346). Rasheed argues that education should be redefined as relational, and that, ‘To give priority to the ethical relation is to value discourse above comprehension’ (p.347).

The precondition for ethical flourishing is therefore recognition of the full extent of reflexivity in how we come to be and how we shape the world around us. Goleman (1995/2005) describes how it is ‘countlessly repeated moments of attunement or misattunement between parent and child’ that shape how we, as adults, will experience and express our own feelings and those of others (p.100), and this surely applies as much to the six hours of every day spent in relations at school as it does to the home-life of the child. Writing of love, John Armstrong (2003) notes that, ‘A relationship does not start the day two people meet; it starts in the childhood of each partner’ (p.91). It would be well for us to consider this in the context of the classroom, remembering that every moment shapes a world.

Freya Mathews (1996) argues that community, not liberal democracy, is the primary political prerequisite for the flourishing of a society (p.81). Mathews argues that ‘it is in small, face-to-face communities that people can achieve genuine interconnectedness through sustained experiences of mutuality and reciprocity’ (p.76). But this is not some Romantic Dream of peace everlasting. Bonnett (2004) warns against the reactionary idea that we can be a collective without tensions. We cannot expect that the classroom will always be a haven of tranquility. If we accept that the relational self is constituted intersubjectively, then we must be prepared to accept the messiness of the day-to-day grind, understanding that, ‘A person alone, locked into the solitude of his reflection, cannot even guarantee his own reality. He must open himself out into the world...’ (Kohák, 1984, p.125). It is through this mysterious interplay of inner and outer that we create ourselves and our worlds.
Part IV

That Sammy can’t and won’t ‘fit’ into our class is wonderfully illustrated by his resistance to fitting into our class village. He resists all forms of assimilation, for assimilation requires him to be something that he is not. Yet when we allow him to be who he is, he becomes an essential and loved member of our community, which is strengthened in every way by his difference. Arendt (1958) contends that the newcomer brings new life to the populace, adding her story to the stories of those already there (p.184). Later, Sammy becomes our class authority on colonialism, African and South American politics, and McCarthyism.

As Fenwick (2010) points out, the modern impulse is to ‘manage’ diversity in such a way as to bring about greater homogeneity, whereas in actuality, we ought to be working at making it more visible (p.112). An ethical environment, as Fine et al (2000) note, provides ‘safe space’, fissures in the public discourse that offer places for recuperation and a sense of ‘home’ (p.122). Offering respite for difference benefits both Sammy and our community. Not only are our horizons (and his) opened, but he also opens our hearts.

Too often, we make the mistake, as Reg Allen (2006) points out, of assuming that, ‘we develop the curriculum and then it automatically happens…’ (p.5), yet as I hope I have illustrated, it is in relationship that teaching and learning occur. Like Tobin, Kanu (1997) resists the resistance of teachers in India, Pakistan and Africa to the inquiry teaching that she clearly considers to be superior. Yet over time she comes to understand that, ‘My friendship with the teachers turned out to be more pedagogically useful than my initial morally superior approach’ (p.182). She concludes that this experience taught her ‘the need to unpack and unlearn received approaches to emancipator and development education in order to understand more fully their applicability to my contextual situations’ (p.183).

When we read education as a discourse of power, we leave in the shadows the human capacity for imagination, love, moral action/ethics, generosity, responsibility, care. When Pamela Michael (2005) writes about how she and U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Haas initiated ‘River of Words’, an arts-based ecological movement for children, ‘Our strategy was to create rich sensory
experiences for students, encouraging them to explore their communities and imaginations’ p.113). The intention was not so much to tell children about the degradation of the environment, as to ‘help children fall in love with the Earth’, because ‘people protect what they love’ (p.116).

To approach life out of an ontology of love as opposed to one of self-preservation and self-promotion, alters radically how we behave in the world. The environmental designers William McDonough and Richard Braungart (2002) argue that, ‘Even today, most cutting-edge environmental approaches are still based on the idea that human beings are inevitably destructive toward nature and must be curbed and contained’ (p.150). Against the traditional design criteria of cost, aesthetics and performance, McDonough and Braungart ask what the consequences of a particular product will be (pp.150 – 154). They ask questions such as, ‘...what kind of soap does the river want?’ (p.145). They ask whether it might be possible to design a car to be a ‘nutrivehicle’ that nourishes the environment rather than damages it (p.179), or a building that might perform the functions of a tree, providing habitat and food for humans and other-than-humans, sequestering carbon, cleaning the air and water and ultimately nourishing the soil; (pp.78–79). And extrapolating from these ideas they ask whether we could actually design a city to be like a forest (p.139).

Deborah Bird Rose (2004) tells how the elders of Yarralin describe as ‘wild country’, that which is untended by human responsibilities for ceremony and ritual. The Elder Daly Pulkara tells her that the colonisers are ‘wild people’ because they leave country unsung and uncared for (p.4). This is contrasted with ‘quiet’ country, ‘the country in which all the care of generations of people is evident to those who know how to see it’ (p.173). This ‘quiet’ country is flourishing or punya. Punya can be understood as fully alive, healthy, happy, knowledgeable, socially responsible, clean, and safe both in the sense of being within the Law and being cared for (Rose, 1992, p.65). Thus ngurra punya is country that flourishes in broadest terms: healthy, Lawful, beautiful country that is a matrix of mutual life-giving (2004, p.168).
What I am proposing here, is that education as a *way of love*, is much like love for country: it places one into an intricate, codependent entanglement with all of its participants (human and other-than-human, including ‘knowledge’ and ‘things’) and opens a relation of responsibility to them all. On a micro level, this means that we read our classroom much as we read country. When we understand that we co-create learning/teaching with our students and all the other (human and other-than-human) participants in that creation, we are *responsive* to our classroom as something living and vital rather than as something inert. Our classroom community is our country: dwelling there, rather than merely passing through, we read it and care for it in the way that the Indigenous person or the long-standing land-holder reads and cares for her land.

Orr (2004) argues that, ‘we cannot say that we know something until we understand the effects of this knowledge on real people and their communities’ (p.13). Education is dangerous when it is uprooted from its community and imposed as concepts and projects alone. Orr points out that making lots of money and wearing a suit (a common mark of educational ‘success’) doesn’t necessarily benefit self or community (p.17). On the other hand, Freya Mathews (1991) postulates that *love* directed outward, ‘...bursts the bars of the personal heart, and vastly expands our sense of self’ (p.150). Such an experience is one of pure joy which emanates from the self and is absorbed by all in its sphere of influence, opening *worlds* such as cannot exist from our ego-centred, anthropocentric blindness. As Aidan Davison and Martin Mulligan point out (2004), such a *way of being* opens up a whole new insight into what it means to be human (p.85).

What *love* teaches us is that the self isn’t obliterated in the other, but rather is brought into focus through its relationship with him/her/it. The Dalai Lama (1999) constantly emphasises that actions for the wellbeing of others make our own lives meaningful: ‘In our concern for others, we worry less about ourselves. When we worry less about ourselves, the experience of our own suffering is less intense’. In this way, the Dalai Lama explains, ‘our every action has a universal dimension, a potential impact on others’ happiness’ (p.62). The Dalai Lama also constantly points out that it’s no good just talking about values,
children must practise them, and that it is a teacher’s own behaviour that makes the deepest impression on students: ‘If [their] behaviour is principled, disciplined, and compassionate, their values will be readily impressed on the child’s mind.’ For it is the positive motivation (kun long) of the teacher that he argues has the greatest effect (p.183). In this sense, then, we must cultivate those qualities that we consider will benefit the future of the earth: in Buddhist terms, loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity.

Journal Entry, January, 2011

As I near the end of my thesis I find myself thinking often of the presentation given by Sammy on Christopher Columbus. Sammy lived under the dual custody of his estranged parents, who split every last minute of the week and every last cent spent on their children down the middle. He carried many of his belongings with him everywhere for fear of leaving something at one house and not being able to retrieve it until the following week. When it came to issues of extra money being needed for school excursions or such, he preferred to miss out rather than to approach either parent for the funds, already anticipating the stand-up wars over who would pay what and when.

So Sammy’s presentation was rather different from what I was expecting. What I learnt about Columbus was his family life – his wife and children. His ‘discovery’ of America didn’t get a mention.

Sammy is a kindly boy who doesn’t do anyone any harm and once wept because his new baby brother is being raised in such a volatile environment (‘He’s just a little baby!’). When the previously mentioned Sammy (the one of Tim the Cottar fame) made his presentation about the havoc wreaked on South America by the consequences of Columbus’s ‘discovery’, I began to question who we choose to be our heroes and why, and what we uphold as laudable before our students. I don’t remember how I graded Sammy’s presentation, but I
have thought often about Columbus, and wondered whether perhaps his family relations might be more cause for celebration than his explorations.

This reminds me of Sulak Sivaraksa’s (1992) work in development and his teaching that, in Buddhist psychology:

…it is taught that each of us carries inside us many different seeds, which can be likened to potentialities, and they manifest from time to time as actions and feelings: love, anger, compassion, greed, and so on. Depending on how we live our lives, different seeds are watered’ (p.xv).

I am wondering once again about the seeds that I am planting and nourishing. Have I not, as Clive Hamilton (2008, pp.120-121) claims, traded away ‘the most precious quality of being human – love’ for an heroic individualism that has turned out to be not such a wonderful bargain after all?

In his exquisite little essay ‘Che Cos’è La Poesia’ (1995), Derrida writes of ‘learning by heart’, ‘Thus the dream of learning by heart arises in you. Of letting your heart be traversed by the dictated dictation’ (p.293). Derrida continues that the ‘memory of the “by heart” is confided like a prayer’ (p.295). As I think of all the Sammys and Sammis who have touched my life and honed my gift over these years, I feel my heart traversed by their dictation and I know why it is such a privilege to teach, and that my teaching/learning is a prayer, not so much for ‘a better future’ or even to ‘make a difference’, as for the beauty of the thing itself – this full entanglement with the other that gives me my life.

We have been preoccupied, in the time of Gestell, with a pursuit of individual rights and freedoms that has necessarily pushed responsibilities into the shadows, yet this has left our culture hollow. Iris Murdoch (1969/1997) argues that we now need ‘a moral philosophy, in which the concept of love, so rarely mentioned now by philosophers, can once again be made central’ (p.336). Murdoch is not proposing another utopian plan, but a ‘small piecemeal business which goes on all the time and not a
grandiose leaping about unimpeded at important moments' (p.329). This is, I think, something more akin to John Armstrong’s (2003) revisioned notion of the Greek *katabasis*; something more akin to simple kindness, and so perhaps less dangerous in the epistemology of *we moderns*. In *katabasis*, we find small acts of generosity that manifest a *care* that is both kind and humble. ‘In the moment of *katabasis* we...recognize the dark background of existence – its loneliness, disappointment, fragility – and from here we see clearly just how much we really need...the hesitant tenderness of another person’ (p.143).

*Katabasis* isn’t reserved just for those closest to us, but is a *way of being*. Lévinas tells how in Jewish burial rites, the responsibility for the burial of the dead comes before any knowledge of the dead person whatsoever, or of any other, even mightier responsibility, because the immediate burial of the dead man is imperative for his salvation (in Hand, 1989/2002, p.248), It is just this *disinterestedness* that Lévinas proposes we promulgate as goodness; a goodness ‘for the first one who happens to come along, a right of man’ (1998/2000, p.158). Thus, goodness is both disinterested *and* intimately entangled with the other. Not planned or designed, it simply co-arises *with* the *other*, an action that gives no cause for pride or bombast because in its compulsoriness it is quite unremarkable. It is merely a *way of being* that we could call love. As Derrida (1995) puts it, ‘The gift of the poem cites nothing, it has no title, its histrionics are over, it comes along without your expecting it, cutting short the breath, cutting all ties with discursive and especially literary poetry’ (p.297). Is this not also the gift of teaching/learning? And would this not also comprise a gift for all the world?

For Robert Johnson (1993), as for the Dalai Lama, ‘The meaning of life is not in the quest for one’s own power or advancement but lies in the service of that which is greater than one’s self’ (p.46). Such a shift in thinking, notes Johnson, requires ‘a Copernican revolution to relocate the centre of the universe away from the ego...’ (p.47). It seems to me that, for all my own life, I have been running towards something in the far distance, and yet now I understand that all this while it has been in, before, around me. I have been expecting to *find* my happiness or to *make* my future as if I am entirely independent of any
other, and yet, mysteriously, it has nevertheless been blooming in the shadows of my own heart. After all my plotting and planning, I find simply this: my life has co-arisen with my relationships with friends, family, work, learning, all those I read about in the news or pass on the street.

Perhaps, after all, life is a poem: nothing grandiose or self-important, but merely a deep penetration into life in the same way the poem penetrates language. Armstrong concludes his book (2003) with the statement that, ‘love is an achievement, it is something we create...not something which we just find...’ (p.158).

The freedom we moderns have so long sought is here in every moment – in our capacity and willingness to love
Sammi is reading to me.

She reads one word after another
as if they have no connection at all.

Did you understand what you were reading there? I ask.

‘Well, not really,’ she replies.

I ask her to try it again:

Feel the words on your tongue.
Feel the rhythm of the language
Follow the punctuation
– come to rest where a sentence ends;
- pause at a comma.

She reads again.

Her voice becomes melodious:

she caresses the words

with eye, and lip, and tongue.

I feel the hairs rise on the back of my neck
and a lump grows in my throat.

Was that better? I ask.

She beams at me.

‘God, Julie,’ she exclaims.

‘You’re a genius!’

It is not simply in wonder but in love that philosophy begins.

Erazim Kohák: The Embers and the Stars..., p.46
Conclusion

telling stories for our time
Conclusion

*Uncle, what is it that troubles you?*

*Parzival, in Wolfram von Eschenbach: Parzival, p.415*

*If you go to Japan and visit Eiheiji monastery, just before you enter you will see a small bridge called Hanshaku-kyo, which means ‘half-dipper bridge’. Whenever Dogen-zenji dipped water from the river, he used only half a dipperful, returning the rest to the river again, without throwing it away. That is why we call the bridge Hanshaku-kyo, ‘Half-Dipper Bridge’. At Eiheiji when we wash our face, we fill the basin to just seventy percent of its capacity. And after we wash, we empty the water towards, rather than away from, our body. This expresses respect for the water. This practice is not based on any idea of being economical. It may be difficult to understand why Dogen returned half of the water he dipped to the river. This kind of practice is beyond our thinking. When we feel the beauty of the river, when we are one with the water, we intuitively do it in Dogen’s way. It is our true nature to do so, but if your true nature is covered by ideas of economy or efficiency, Dogen’s way makes no sense.*

*Shunryu Suzuki: Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind, pp.92-93*
I am having ‘one of those days’:
  One of those days when
  all I want to do is
  withdraw into myself
  - stay under the doona with a book.

Actually, I have borrowed the Dalai Lama’s Ethics for the New Millennium
  for the second time
from the library
  and it’s due back tomorrow
  no extension possible
and I have an appointment in the city.

So I am reading it in every spare moment
and when I sit down on a seat on the station platform
I smile vaguely at the nice young woman
who’s already there
and keep on reading.

Then I smell it
  - something vaguely unsettling.
I look around
  a bit abstracted and disgruntled
read on.
The smell persists.

Quite suddenly
I realise it’s
the smell of faeces.

I wrinkle my nose and look about,
turning to my neighbor to comment about sewage overflow
and fight a tide of panic when I see
a stream of shit that runs from under her skirt
down her bare leg
and into her shoe.

I look away quickly.
Then
  - just like Bashō did when confronted with the baby -
I get up and walk away casually,
  my head still in my book.
I don’t look back until the train comes into the station.
But she’s gone.
Months or years later,
I have my own ‘episode’.
My son has driven me from my mother’s farm to the city,
a three-hour drive
and I’ve been too lazy to request a toilet break.
He drops me at a tram terminus north of the city
just as my tram pulls out to begin its journey
and we leap out of the car in a rush.

My son loads me with bags and baskets.
He’s calling out, ‘Will you be OK? You’re going to miss it.’
‘Not me,’ I shout in reply.
I am laughing and running
but after the long drive my legs are sluggish.
I round the corner and the tram is just pulling into the first stop.
The pedestrian walk lights are flashing red
I can make it! I can! I can!
But as I lurch over the curb with all my bags
I lose my footing and almost go down.
I right myself, lurch and roll, right myself again,
sprawl forward onto the hard bitumen.
My bags go flying
I am lying full length on the road.
and cry out in panic
but the oncoming cars have seen me and are waiting.

Safe.
I now register that I have wet myself –
a great burst of warm, wet urine
is on the road
and soaking my stockings.
Thank goodness I’m wearing a dark patterned skirt.

People come to help.
‘I’m OK; thankyou, thankyou,’
beating a hasty retreat to the tram stop.
My tram has long since departed; my son too.
Two men who look Mongolian approach
and ask in thick accents, ‘What religion are you?’
‘Well,’ I mutter, trying to edge away from them
(Surely they can smell it?
I can’t, but then I’m still all awash with adrenaline)
‘I’m a sort of a Buddhist if I’m anything.’

They nod sagely at one another and pierce me with
benevolent
if admonishing
regard.
‘Should be more patient,’ they counsel.
Conclusion

about silence

Since then, a knight did come... He would better have stayed away. Only shame did he win there, for he saw the real sorrow and yet did not say to his host, “Sir, why is it you suffer so?” Since his stupidity bade him not to ask, he lost, being slow, great happiness.

Wolfram von Eschenbach, Parzival, p.259

Like Fricker (2009, p.5) I have been listening for silences; the unspoken and the unthought in education. In the first story told above, my silence haunts me; I am reproached continuously by my lack of action: by my refusal to exceed the comfort of my own skin; the extraordinary coincidence between what I was reading (a call to universal responsibility) and my own refusal to be stirred. I am deeply shamed, the more because I am writing a thesis on the very topic in which I have now failed miserably!

Hutchens (2004) comments of Lévinas that there is ‘nothing consoling about his exhortative ethical vision...’ (p.2). Whilst philosophers are wont to call for silence in the face of the Babel of the conflicting demands and multitudinous voices of modern living, I yet agree with Fricker and her notion of epistemic insult, and those like Muecke (Benterrak, Muecke & Roe, 1984/1996) who insists that ‘silence is not the condition of the social relations which form us as subjects, it is noise, it is the clash of incompatible discourses’ (p.209). What Lévinas calls for (and that which I failed to heed) is the spatio-temporal interruption that calls me out of my Dreaming self and into an engagement with the world. It is this moment that calls me into being: not my methodological framework or moral blueprint, but the actions in which I engage.

Lévinas (1989/2002) calls this interruption a sobering up ‘from the ecstasy of intentionality’ (p.178). My failure, in that moment on the station platform was to dream big and to fall short in the small moment. The truth is, my Dream comes to nothing in the world if I do not act on it. It has no expression beyond the form my actions give it. I am comfortable with my...
Conclusion

theories about education and love, my critique of Tobin, all the evidence I can muster in support of Heidegger’s claims for *Gestell*, but it is the woman with shit running down her leg who disrupts and tests my theories and finds them insufficient.

Lévinas (1998/2000) reminds us that ‘small goodness’ is lost when it is universalised; ‘as soon as it adopts a doctrine, a treatise of politics and theology, a party, a state, and even a church’ (p.230). Like Armstrong’s *katabasis*, the ‘small goodness’ of Lévinas goes from one person to another: ‘A little kindness going only from man to man, not crossing distances to get to the places where events and forces unfold! A remarkable utopia of the good or the secret of its beyond’ (p.230).

In the first half of this thesis I have exposed, I hope, the nakedness of the emperor, and our silence about it. Silence has many guises: it reveals itself as complicity, as shame, but most of all it lets us slumber, if uneasily. In Wolfram’s *Parzival* (C13th /1961) the King (and so his whole country) has been mortally wounded as a consequence of his own immoderate behaviour, but Parzival, who has been raised in happy ignorance by his mother to think of no thing beyond his self, blunders through the world, hardly aware that he is wreaking havoc wherever he goes. Even after he learns knightly manners, he exhibits astounding obtuseness by continuing his quest for individual mastery in war and competition, whilst trampling the sensibilities of those around him. Stumbling upon the ailing king, his great failure (a failure which shakes the whole country and all its inhabitants) is both ludicrously miniscule and yet vast in magnitude. It is simply not to ask the king what is wrong with him. And it is only after he is cast out into the wilderness of his own suffering that Parzival is able to understand the interrelatedness of all things and so return to ask the question that will heal King and country.

*Parzival*, I believe, is a story for our time. With the same kind of rampant enthusiasm to experience life and conquer the world that we see in the brash young knight, we *moderns* also fail to respond to our wounded land, which, like the king, lies suffering and silent under us. Stenstad (2006) observes that it is the nature of earth to be silent, but that its very silence is a saying to which we need to listen with more than our ears. This silent saying of the earth calls on us to pay attention with our
Conclusion

full embodiment and to let what it says enter our heart’s core...’ (p.202). As the human species extends its domination over earth, we would do well to listen for the silences, not for any reason of Might or Right, but merely because ‘a little kindness, going from man to man’ opens the heart of the world.

For Thich Nhat Hanh (1988a), as for the young Parzival, we find our authenticity by looking into the face of pain and giving it due care. It is easy enough to remain oblivious as species slip silently into oblivion under the onslaught of the modern Dream: we just have to look away. It is far more difficult to ask the question, the answer to which would certainly disrupt our passage towards whichever paradise it is that we have nominated.

When I began this thesis eight years ago, the notion of a participative paradigm was still new. These days it is common. However a major problem remains that I do not believe has been addressed, and this is that underneath the new paradigm, the individualistic object worldview remains essentially untouched. We moderns still see ourselves as individuals for whom the world exists as resource; we still understand change as brought about by linear cause and effect, by human will or intention. If we think of ourselves as responsible for others on the planet we assume that this calls for another blueprint. We still move the other-than-human world about as pawns for our own advancement. For we are still always-already progressing towards the millennial Dream, regarding the other as mere obstacles that must be adjusted to fit it.

The problem is that in our rush to ‘make’ the world, we fail to understand that we cannot simply impose one theorised change over another. We cannot overlay a participative epistemology or methodology over an ontological understanding that still has us looking out at the world. By doing so, we set up irresistible tensions that pit democracy against individualism, spirit against matter, and all the other oppositions that are entailments of the metaphysical worldview. As Latour (1999) illustrates beautifully, change is more a matter of translation than of imposition. It proceeds through drift, displacement, invention,
Conclusion

mediation (p.179; see endnote 72 this thesis) in a process that understands that transformation is not a simple cause and effect relation of force, as in the Newtonian understanding, but one of dependent co-arising.

With such an understanding, Latour argues, it becomes possible to imagine a different relation that both encompasses and extends beyond relations of power:

Why always replace one commander with another? Why not recognize...that action is slightly overtaken by what it acts upon; that it drifts through translation...that chains of mediations are not the same thing as an effortless passage from cause to effect...that there is no such thing as the imposition of categories upon a formless matter; and that, in the realm of techniques...truly, no one, and nothing at all, is in command, not even an anonymous field or force... (1999, p.298).

In our current bureaucratic climate this seems a tall order, and whilst Latour explains his theories beautifully from a scientific viewpoint, they lack, for me, the social dimension required for everyday living. It seems to me that, rather than avoiding or surpassing (as even Lévinas proposes) we must enter the relation, digging down into it so that we are inextricably entangled in such a way that we must respond. It is only by embracing the other in this relation of love, I believe, that we are able, not to exceed the relation of power, but to penetrate it. And it is here, I think, that we find the post-metaphysics that has been proclaimed for so long and yet has remained unrealised - unrealised because it is far from grandiose. This is a philosophy and an ethics that doesn’t lend itself to the celebrity of theory and the certainty of publication; it is just a matter of hard thinking and being awake – of remembering, and forgetting, and of always remaining humble.
Conclusion

forgetting to remember; remembering to forget

An argument can lead to a conclusion; an evening does not. The evening becomes the night. Yet the night is not a conclusion drawn from the evening, as death is not a conclusion drawn from a life, neither is the night the fruition of the evening, as death is not the fruition of life. There is evening, and there is night, each of them eternal in its own right and mode.

Erazim Kohák: The Embers and the Stars..., pp. 179-180

For Erazim Kohák, to be human is to have the capacity to see the eternal in the temporal. ‘It is as time that eternity is present. Love becomes actual only as the process of a life shared; life becomes actual only as the series of acts which, individually, seem mundane; a melody becomes actual only as a sequence of notes...’ (p.202). So there is nothing at all in this thesis that should or can be translated into a program or method or blueprint. In a way of love, we proceed one step at a time, which can be something of a disappointment if compared with the grandiose possibilities of the Dream.

For there’s only one very simple conclusion here; one very simple piece of advice if one is to follow a way of love in education, and that is to remember. And it would be well to remember that there are some things that we would do well to remember, and some that we would do well to forget. It would be well to remember to be awake, to give time to care, to ‘dwell’, ‘to prolong the sensuous richness of things, or the sonorous richness of words and melodies, to let the resonances ring out fully’ (Jardine, 1998, p.97). And it would be well to forget the Dream and its magical promises. ‘This school, this classroom, this moment with this child – these are the resonant moments that are full of our indebtedness and fully worthy of our attention’
Conclusion

(Jardine, 1998, p.101). After all these words, this is all that I'm offering here: no solution, but only the long process of staying-with, being-aware, being-aware – a way of love.

Remembering is a great theme of modern life. We build memorials; we commemorate acts of valour or horror. Yet forgetfulness has been a major weapon of we moderns, too, who are so obsessed with the ‘new’. Rose (2004) notes that when genocide is perpetrated across generations, ‘it obliterates the community of memory’ (p.27). Amnesia is a kind of violence. When I write (p.148) that the world misses the fish my grandfather went out to catch for his mother, I remember his story as the loss of fish. My newly born granddaughter, however, will be hard-put to even imagine that the river might ever have been so full of choice. This is to say that we can know the past in the present as absence (Rose, 2004, p.36), but there is also the oblivion that Derrida calls cinders; the devastation that Wyschogrod (1985) names as the expulsion of memory itself (Derrida writes that ‘the experience of cinders is the experience not only of forgetting, but of forgetting of forgetting, of the forgetting of which nothing remains’ (1995, p.207).

Stanner (1968/2009) writing about Indigenous Australia, contends that:

What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned into habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale. We have been able for so long to disremember the Aborigines that we are now hard put to keep them in mind even when we most want to do so (p189).

Stanner continues that a tracing of ‘the moral, intellectual and social transitions in Aboriginal affairs from the 1930s to the 1960s’ might go some way towards breaking this ‘cult of disremembering’ (p.189) and it is my hope that what I have written here will go some way towards breaking the cult of disremembering that is so rife in education today – the cult that interprets education as object acquisition and self-advancement and leaves the question of universal responsibility in dark shadow.
I write to remember. Rose (2004), argues that, ‘To be claimed [by memory] is to be called into connection; to respond is to start to actualise that connection’ (p.31). And what I remember best are the moments when my response to the face of the other – answering its call – interrupted the Dream and for a moment that stretches into eternity, opened my heart.

*What my students tell me they remember*

*and miss*

*most about our classes:*

*The laughter*

- *nothing inane or jokey,*
  
  *but the good belly laughs*

*that come from confronting who we are*

*and what we do*

*with love.*

(‘Remember when...’ we reminisce.

‘Remember when Sammi...’)

Conclusion
Dans Ma Peu

Journal Entry, 8th January, 2011

Last weekend, yearning to do something with my hands (yearning to craft something) I took myself off to learn book-making. One is never quite certain, with these short-courses, about what one will get. Over the years I have attended quite a number in which the instructor was clearly a practitioner trying to make a few extra dollars by explaining his/her craft, and did so inexpertly and without much enthusiasm, so that I sat pinned to my chair in grudging participation and then rushed out quickly at the end, disappointed once again.

Then occasionally, I am lucky to end up in a course taught by one who not only teaches me the craft, but much about the craft of teaching, too. This kind of teaching is in the body. There is something about the way the hands, the body move; a sort of intensity that is also joy...an absorbed delight conveyed by the whole being of this person I will call a teacher, as opposed to that Gestellian notion of facilitation.

It was my lucky day. As soon as this particular teacher started speaking, I knew I was going to be drawn into that marvellous web of words, skills, and that aura of passion that characterise not just expertise, but love for absolutely everything with which one is engaged. Words flow effortlessly in a smooth interplay with bodily actions. Mixed up with the proper ‘technical’ terms (‘kettle knots’ and ‘signatures’ and ‘stations’ - which mean little at this stage, and yet afterwards might herald my own beginning expertise in book-making) and the uncompromising precision of the tasks at hand (‘Perhaps this piece should be just short of a millimeter or so’) there is yet an enormous space into which I step as the novice - a space into which I am wholeheartedly invited - a space of love.
Conclusion

Afterwards, as I meander home along the beach, I am struck by how much this teacher reminds me of my friend Lynda, who also teaches craft - how Lynda, whose body is slow, becomes lithe as she talks about her teaching; how I am enlivened by each conversation with her, not so much about ‘what happens’ in her classes, as how she teaches...so hard to describe, and yet I can envisage, as she speaks, the turning of the trouser legs inside out, together with the response of the child standing at her elbow, puzzling out how it will look when the right side is turned out again. Or I think of my friend Marg., who uses her plum-painted nails to accent the finer points of her students’ physics texts, or Chris, whose voice takes on a mellow richness as she launches into a description of how she teaches trigonometry to her Year 9s.

This is learning/teaching. It isn’t the objective topic (measure this, cut a template, stitch here). It isn’t the relationship with the student (tell me about your interests so I can tailor my topic to fit what you know). It is the dance of delight around the subject at hand. At one stage during my book-making workshop, having stretched the spine and glued it down with great precision, I found myself absolutely bursting with pleasure and satisfaction, so that I exclaimed with spontaneous delight, ‘I LOVE this workshop!’ (And this in turn calls to mind a Year 8 Sammi who spontaneously burst out one day, ‘I so LOVE you and I love everyone in our class and we all love each other so much!’)

These are the (rare) experiences I carry with me through my whole life. If I am lucky as a teacher/learner, this is what I am gifted and gift others; these are the promises I make and the wounds I tend. If I am lucky I am able to surround myself with others who ‘think’ teaching/learning in this way, beings who are willing to keep the clearing open for so much love.
Conclusion

This morning I accepted a new job in remote Australia. I know that in a few weeks I’ll be crying for my family, crying for a moment of quiet contemplation in front of the computer, crying for certainty of one kind or another. Any kind of certainty will do, because certainty is the stuff of the Dream. But I also know that the source of my practice as a teacher – the source of life – is my response to the face. Tired of silence, I want to speak what we do, not out of memories or theories, but out of my practice as it unfolds.

Contemplating my return to the classroom, I feel my ‘teacher-body’ stir and leap out. I feel a lightening as I fill up with joy. I feel at home:

In my skin.

*

One day, some time near the end of his life, Bashō set about making himself a hat. He borrowed a sword, cut bamboo, shaped it, and covered it with paper dyed with the juice of persimmon and hardened with lacquer. It took him twenty days, and he grew tired of his task, not least of all because his hat did not meet his expectation.

My thesis is a lot like Bashō’s hat, though it has taken a lot longer to create. Like the hat, it falls rather short of my expectations. Like Bashō, my desire has exceeded my skill, and all that I have told are ‘the movements of the heart’ (2005, pp.101-102). Yet like Bashō, I too have grown fond of my eccentric creation:

The rim of the hat slants inward and then outward, just like a half-opened leaf of a lotus. This peculiar shape is more appealing than one that is perfectly crafted... Hurrying through hail or waiting for winter showers, I cherish this hat that gives me such delight. (2005, pp.142-143).
Conclusion

Then Bashō, suddenly overwhelmed to be drenched by rain, picks up his brush and jots down inside his hat,

\[
\text{in a world of rain} \\
\text{life is like Sagi's} \\
\text{temporary shelter.}
\]

(2005, p.143)

‘What now?’ I wonder in my own turn. Like Bashō, I take off my own strange and misshapen hat and hang it on the wall – there – and stepping out into the drenching rain that is already carving rivers across the red dust, I make my own (final and appropriately banal) poem.

\[
\text{There is no ending here} \\
\text{Every moment} \\
\text{is a starting point.}
\]

*
Love - A Post-script

Journal Entry, 23rd August, 2008

My father, who is eighty-five years old, frail and hard-of-hearing, nevertheless hears every word my mother says. In the middle of a robust family dinner, unable to distinguish my words over the uproarious laughter and jibing of my siblings and our families, he will nevertheless hear every word my mother speaks from the other end of the table.

The family doctor calls him a miracle man - he has had numerous serious illnesses over the last eight years and yet he recovers every time. I think there are two reasons for this: his love for the land, and his love for my mother. When I drove him into town recently, his whole being caressed the country. He lives in constant participation with it; it is indeed ‘in his blood’. He is a man of few words, but I believe he must be finding it difficult to contemplate the loss of country that will come with death.

Then there is my mother. She has never shown him undue affection. I have rarely heard her speak well of him or to him. Generally dissatisfied and disappointed with life and all those around her, she hurts him frequently and often makes him feel unwanted and a burden. Yet I have never heard him make a single criticism about her. He is entirely steadfast in his love.

I have always known this to be so, but there was an episode a couple of years ago that made this extraordinarily apparent. I had just arrived at the farm to stay for a day or two, and for no obvious reason except perhaps that she was tired, my mother turned on me and said words more hurtful than any in a long lifetime of hurtful comments. Devastated, I rushed out in a flood of tears, absolutely determined that this time, I would never forgive her.
Conclusion

My father came after me. It took considerable effort. He had recently come home from hospital and was still in recuperation. I said to him all the things I had been wondering for so long: ‘How can you keep on loving her when she is so demanding and so hurtful? Why do we all put up with it?’

I know that he understood me completely: I could see in his eyes the deepest understanding and compassion. He was silent for some time, searching for words, and then he simply replied, ‘She doesn’t mean it, Love.’

My father knows that my mother loves us all in the only way that she knows. Completely accepting, he loves her unconditionally, allowing her to love in her own way, seeing her just as she is, and loving her just the same, never for a moment shrinking away from the pain she continuously causes him. Of all of my teachers, he is the first and best.

Lindsay Beer, 17-07-1923 – 29-07-2009

RIP
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Indigenous Australians have a life expectancy approximately 10 years lower than non-Indigenous Australians, are 13.3 times more likely to be imprisoned, and are 30% more likely to be abused or neglected as children than non-Indigenous. The ‘Closing the Gap’ campaign aims to, amongst other things, close the life expectancy gap within a generation; halve the under 5 mortality rate within a decade; halve the reading, writing, numeracy gap within a decade. These benchmarks were set by the Council of Australian Governments in December 2007. (These statistics taken from The Age, 2009, July 3, p.4; The Weekend Australian, 2009, July 4-5, p.18).

By ‘performativity’ I mean that notion which Jean-François Lyotard (1979) framed as production which itself produces the referent. Lyotard argues that, ‘In matters of social justice and of scientific truth alike, the legitimacy of that power is based on its optimizing the system’s performance-efficiency’ (p.xxiv). Lyotard points out (see especially his chap. 5) that in a performative culture, knowledge is commodified and efficiency becomes the order of the day. Furthermore, the system is totalising. This is the major theme of Part II – Sub-texts, of this thesis.

I use this term (one of many possible) after McLaren (1998), to encompass concepts inherent in terms such as ‘Western’, ‘colonial’, ‘Eurocentric’, ‘Enlightenment’. I choose it because, as McLaren points out, ‘Whiteness’ is still largely invisible: we do not describe ourselves as white, whereas ‘non-whites’ still largely form their identities in opposition to the dominant cultural mores of our time, which originated in Anglo/European cultures. McLaren argues that whiteness is a ‘sociohistorical form of consciousness’ that ‘constructs and demarcates ideas, feelings, knowledges, social practices, cultural formations, and systems of intelligibility…that have …become the substance and limit of our common sense articulated as cultural consensus’ (p.282).

James Lovelock (1979) tells how ‘I expected to discover somewhere in the scientific literature a comprehensive definition of life as a physical process…but I was surprised to find how little had been written about the nature of life itself’ (p.3). He continues that this may have been due to ‘the separation of science into separate disciplines’ (pp.3-4) and that this made his holistic approach all the more radical.

Whilst Usher & Edwards (1994) interpret pre-text as one’s writing & textual strategies, cultural & interpretative traditions, language & signification, and sub-text as the prevailing professional paradigms & discourses & power-knowledge foundations (pp.152-153), my own adaptation is slightly different. I have interpreted con-text as - my situatedness, my embodied experiences in the world (with); pre-text as – my writing & textual influences, what I know about social research paradigms, and the dominant attitudes to & understandings of education (before); and sub-text as the unexamined assumptions I & my culture live by, my everyday understanding of ‘how things are’(under).

Spelling is also becoming an increasing problem in the age of technology. Early on in my study I was advised by a practising editor to retain American English spelling in quotes using that system. Since it is becoming increasingly rare to find publications that use Australian spelling, I have found that most quotes require U.S. English, yet a major theme of this thesis is the loss of identity imposed by dominant forms of thinking. The combination of two spelling systems is confusing for the computer spell-checker and may confuse the reader! I have tried to maintain Australian spellings wherever I am not quoting.

The citation is actually from Lacan, 1977, p.174. See p. 164 for further discussion about this.
Endnotes

8 Bernstein (1992) describes Stimmung as ‘a mood – one which is amorphous, protean, and shifting but which nevertheless exerts a powerful influence on the ways in which we think, act and experience.’ (p.11).


10 The Age, Thursday 16th October, 2003, p.7.


13 I use here the words of Laurel Richardson (1992) who, writing about her famous ‘Louisa May’ poem/research, describes how Louisa May ‘moved into my psychic interior in a way that no interviewee of mine ever had. She moved in the way poetry does. She’s not yet moved out’ (p.133).

14 Public Talk, May 1, 2008, Camberwell Town Hall, Melbourne.

15 I am indebted to Mary Graham for her lucid description of Indigenous protocol during a Cross-Cultural Awareness Workshop I attended as part of a training session provided for Indigenous Community Volunteers, in Brisbane, March 15, 2006.

16 She tells a realist, a critical, a deconstructivist, and a reflexive tale (p.87).

17 Heidegger’s lectures dwell for some time on the nature of the word ‘call’. It is and yet isn’t the seeking for the simple correspondence between name and thing (though a post-modern interpretation of naming is anything but simple). It is and isn’t a ‘summoning’ or an ‘anticipatory reaching out’. It is all of these things, and an inviting, and a ‘getting under way’ (WCT, p.386).

18 The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was introduced across Australia in 2008. It currently involves 4 days of testing of numeracy, reading, writing, spelling & grammar.


20 Etherington (2002, pp.28-32) describes the difference between reflexivity and reflection. Reflection assumes a more individualistic self that can be discovered or actualised through a mainly cognitive process of examining our personal thoughts and practices. Reflexivity, on the other hand, is integral to action in the world, and thus implies a constantly changing, responding self.

21 I take this much-used aphorism to mean that there is no origin outside language/culture. (See Derrida, 1974/1997, pp.220-223).
Endnotes

22 I started the ‘Semau Schools Project’ in 1993, with the intention of linking my white, middle-class primary school students with poverty. My work in Semau was undertaken under the auspices of the Nusatengarra Association (NTA), a small, non-government organisation (NGO) comprised of Australians & Indonesians working in partnership. Whilst I ceased working with the Semau Schools Project in 1998, the project continues. For more information about the activities of the NTA go to: www.nta.org.au

23 At the time of writing, the walls of these dams were badly eroded and in danger of breaking, with the consequence that they could no longer be used. People were walking up to six kilometers to get water for stock and domestic use.

24 Dé Ishtar (2005) describes how she learned during her time with Indigenous women that ‘Learning through asking questions is not the Indigenous way... I learnt by oblique reference, waiting for hidden clues in general conversations’ (p.44).

25 Early schooling at Ernabella in remote South Australia stands out as an example of exemplary Indigenous education. The teacher, Ron Trudinger, spoke the Pitjan tjara language and his classes were conducted outside, where students and teacher drew in the sand rather than on paper, thus reinforcing the existent symbols and schemata of this culture. Trudinger’s methods stand in stark contrast to those used at Hermanssburg, where Aranda (Arrendte) language and culture was suppressed and the early introduction of European art influenced the reordering of child art schemata, with the well-known result being the now famous Hermannsburg landscape tradition. For a full account, see Fontannaz, 1995.

26 This was the basis of my unpublished B.Ed. contract learning thesis, titled, Inside the magic circle: ritual drama in the primary school.

27 Here is an example: ‘See those hills over there? They are the babies made when our two tribes got together after fighting a long, long time.’

28 I tell more about this teaching in Part IV of this thesis. Lakoff & Núñez (1997) inspired my work on maths and metaphor, and Magowan (2001) has been an inspiration regarding the links between sound, vision and country in Indigenous ontology.

29 For a comprehensive description of this program, see Beer, 1999. The data was presented in a separate, unpublished conference address (Smith & Beer, 1999).

30 See for example, Fogarty, 2001, p.1. More recently the Grattan Institute report (2010) states that ‘Past investments to improve school education have not yielded results’ and that, ‘Improving teacher effectiveness would have a greater impact on economic growth than any other reform before Australian governments’ (p.4).

31 In Victoria (Australia) for the last decade, the ‘Principles of Learning and Teaching’ (PoLTs) have been a driving force in teacher education and teacher professional development. The PoLTs have been vigorously promoted by the Victorian Department of Education. Focusing on the ‘professional learning’ of teachers, the emphasis is on creating a supportive learning environment by linking students’ interests and backgrounds to the curriculum. My criticism of the PoLTs has always been that by making an inventory of ‘what makes a good teacher’ teaching/learning is reduced to a series of strategies, whilst at the same time anything not on the list is marginalised.
Heidegger used the capitalised ‘Being’ extensively. Although I do not use it for my own thinking, it will appear in this thesis from time to time where it relates directly to Heidegger’s work.

I am conscious that I have not referenced Steiner at all in this thesis. Two of his works relevant to this particular issue that also relate to education generally are: Steiner, R. (1924/1982). The kingdom of childhood: introductory talks on Waldorf education and Steiner, R. (1914/2005). Occult science: an outline. Both published by Rudolf Steiner Press.

The best account of Heidegger’s collusion with Nazism that I have read is in Collins, 2000.

See also, Being and Time, p.100: ‘Bringing near is not oriented toward the I-thing encumbered with a body…’

Heidegger does not simply mean an era or span of time, but rather ‘the fundamental characteristic of sending…’ (See ‘On Time & Being’, p. 9).

I retain the male gender referent, mindful that the unexamined assumption at the time was that it was in fact males, and not females, being referred to.

Berry (1989) points out how ‘...exploitation itself was and still is experienced by the commercial enterprise not as deterioration of the planet, but as a creative process leading to a wonderworld existence’ (p.74).

In my analysis of the VELS Interdisciplinary Based Learning Level 5 outcomes (approximately 1 page, excluding ICT), I found thirty verbs oriented towards the use/change of information, eighteen verbs oriented to describing/communicating, eleven verbs oriented to finding/sorting/choosing, and eleven verbs oriented to judging/justifying. There was only one word related to each of the following: visualise, contextualise, think, understand. I note nowhere the mention of care, creation, relationship.

The 20th century was an age of genocide. The major genocides perpetrated in/by Nazi Germany, Stalin’s USSR, Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Armenian Turkey alone, claimed approximately 18 000 000 lives. See http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/index.html


Richardson, 1997, p.74.

Yuasa (1966, p. 71) translates this phrase as ‘wind-swept spirit’.

Unless otherwise stated, I use the Barnhill (2005) translation for these citations.


This is conventionally translated as The Records of a Travel-Worn Satchel.
I refer here to phenomenological method as particularised by Moustakas (1994) and Crotty (1998), who advise going ‘to the things themselves’. This phenomenological method brackets out researcher experience, reduces data and synthesises it into a singular meaning. Van Manen (1990) on the other hand, proposes a hermeneutic phenomenology, which to my way of thinking, is too focused in the perceptions of the individual. I am proposing something between the two.

In Waldorf education, the formal teaching of reading and writing is held over till the first class, so that strong foundations in oral/aural literacy, together with social and physical development, can be laid in the preparatory year. The use of ICT is also delayed, with an early emphasis on physical and sensory experience. The VELS mandates the formal teaching of reading and writing as well as the use of computers for all students in the Prep classroom.


Derrida commented many times that ‘deconstruction’, far from being regarded as something negative, is an act of love: ‘For me, [deconstruction] always accompanies an affirmative exigency, I would say that it never proceeds without love…’ (1995, p.83). Yet by and large, deconstruction has been interpreted as a destructive dismantling and undermining of meaning.

This is perhaps best defined in ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, pp.339, where the link with technē is made explicit.

I leave aside for the moment the problem of transcendence – the ‘higher univocality’ – until Part III of this thesis.

Hokku is like in form to the more familiar Haiku: a 5-7-5 syllabic rhythm and the inclusion of a seasonal word, but whereas Haiku stands alone, hokku has had a long association with renga, the linked-verse form (usually written by a group) with multiple alternating stanzas. Whilst the hokku was initially the first stanza of renga, it has since become a semi-independent form, or accompanies haibun, as in Bashō’s travel journals (see Barnhill, 2005).

For example, during my work on this study I discovered to my great surprise that some of my ancestors (who I’ve always claimed were all farmers) were actually gold-diggers and shop-keepers.

Trans. Yuasa, 1966, p.59. I note here, too, Derrida’s claim that ‘...madness, a certain madness, must keep a lookout over every step, and watch over thinking, as reason does also’ (1995, p.363), and also Wilson’s (2008) quote from Virginia Woolf that, ‘As an experience, madness is terrific... in its lava I still find most of the things I write about’ (p.144).

1977, p.174

This term is used by Stanner (2009) who in his 1968 Boyer lectures said of Australia’s Indigenous peoples that ‘We are asking them to become a new people but this means in human terms that we are asking them to un-be what they now are’ (p.217).

Kincheloe, for example (2005), argues that it is difficult to find ‘i’ language in Ancient Greek literature, because in Ancient Greece the individual was considered unable to function independently of the body social (p.166).
Crotty (1998) makes a useful distinction between constructionism and constructivism. Constructivism is a more individual affair, ‘the meaning-making activity of the individual mind’ as compared to ‘the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning that is constructionism. In this view, constructivism refers to the unique experience of individuals in taking up and making sense of the world, whereas constructionism ‘emphasises the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things…and gives us a definite view of the world’ (p.58).

Lévinas here is referring to the quote by Pascal which he uses as an epigraph to Otherwise than being or beyond essence. The quote is: ‘That is my place in the sun.’ This, Lévinas claims, is ontology as first philosophy, which he contends is ‘…how the usurpation of the world began’ (1989/2002, p.4).

Ng (2000) explains how in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the term ‘organ’ refers not to discrete physical structures but to functions and energy flows: likewise, opposites are not mutually exclusive or independent of one another but are mutually dependent.

Solnit (2001) observes that the solitary urban walker is the prototypical free person: free from connection or responsibility, an ‘…uncharted identity with its illimitable possibilities’ (p.186) that is yet in a sort of limbo, leading a life that is essentially restless and meaningless (p.194).

By ‘serious’, Pearson means committed and striving (p.10).

‘Monkey mind’, in Buddhism, is a reference to ‘mind-chatter’ or idle thoughts.

Caputo (1987) elaborates on Eckhart’s influence on Heidegger and on the meaning of Gelassenheit. This is an ethics of letting be – of ‘living without why’. Caputo explains that for Eckhart, Gelassenheit means a welling-up of God within one, whereas for Heidegger, it is ‘openness to the mystery’ (see pp.264-267).

Heidegger describes ‘originary thinking’ as ‘…that from which and by which something is what it is as it is’ (OWA, p.143). Chögyam Trungpa (1975/2002) tells a story about an arhat who finds a piece of bone. Speculating on where the bone has come from, he follows a chain of cause and effect that leads him ‘back, back, back’ through death, to birth, to conception and the sexual act, to touch, to attraction and so on, through countless generations (p.94). The point of Trungpa’s story (and Heidegger’s point, too) is that we rarely explore beyond the most immediate causes, and that when we do so, new understandings become available to us.

Heidegger points out that ‘three’ isn’t a thing in itself. It only exists in relation to other things (MSMM, pp. 276-277). Ascher (1991) describes how many Indigenous languages do not have stand-alone numerals, but rather, numeral classifiers. These are qualitative terms attached to number words so that the number is embedded in the physicality it represents. An example given by Ascher is that in the Maori language one wouldn’t say, ‘five women’, but rather, ‘five humans women’. Another example would be ‘two long-things bananas’ (pp. 10-14).

Harvey (2006) cites examples of Indigenous cultures that believe they would cease to exist if they lost animals or plants considered essential to their identity and continuance. He quotes, for example, from the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission’s website, 2002: ‘Without salmon returning to our rivers and streams, we would cease to be Indian people’ (p.103).
For the Lakota, such an understanding is expressed by the phrase, ‘All my relations’ or, ‘We are all related’ (*mitakuye oyasin*). The Xhosa proverb *umntu ngumntu ngabantu* means, ‘I am we; I am because we are; we are because I am; I am in you – you are in me; therefore we are one life’ (Goduko, quoted in Pandey and Moorad, 2003, p.166). Palmer (2000) gives a modern interpretation: ‘If I hoard, others will have too little. If I have power, others will be defeated and I’ll never be secure. If I am jealous, I drive my lover away’ (p.107). A community is ‘...an incredibly complex ecology in which each part functions on behalf of the whole, and in return, is sustained by the whole’ (p.108).

At first glance this makes the Buddhist idea of self quite like the self of post-structuralism. There are, however, substantial differences. Firstly, post-structuralists generally lend something of ‘reality’ to the discourses of power and knowledge of which they claim we are constructed. Secondly, the postmodern self is ‘...an unending disaggregation and re-aggregation of forces without purpose or goal’ (Thompson, 2002, p.129, my emphasis) that lacks the Buddhist notion of dependent causation that gives existence meaning.

Gee (intro to Lankshear, 1997) tells a story too good to omit here. He begins by citing the work of Roger Lewontin (1991), who argues that tuberculosis might as well be regarded as caused by unregulated capitalism as by physiological causes. Lewontin maintains that tuberculosis thrived in the sweatshops and factories of the nineteenth century and that as the century progressed and conditions improved, deaths from infectious diseases decreased with no medical cause (chemical treatment for TB was introduced in the early twentieth century). Lewontin therefore deduces that tuberculosis was more likely the outcome of a low income than biological in origin. For Gee, Lewontin’s work illustrates how one discourse (‘the tubercule bacillus causes tuberculosis’) renders other interpretations (‘tuberculosis is a disease caused by poverty’) invisible or fanciful by “cut[ting] off context” ... (p.xvii). From a Buddhist point of view, it illustrates how phenomena arise out of multiple interrelated causes.

Latour uses this term in the sense of ‘...displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies the original two’ (p.179).

These prophecies and stories told by Dene elder Francois Paulette at the *Parliament of World Religions*, Melbourne, December 2009.

See, for example, Ferrari, J. (2010, May 1–2). On the honour roll. *The Weekend Australian, Inquirer* – a four page supplement analysing the then new, Australian Federal Government ‘MySchool’ website. Ferrari notes that the data clearly illustrates ‘that money, not brains, is the most important factor when it comes to getting a good education’ (p.1).

I refer here to the ‘beautiful acts’ proposed by Arne Naess and other deep ecologists (see Naess, 1988, p.28).


The Dalai Lama explains that there is no direct translation for the Tibetan *chi sem*. *Chi* means universal, and *sem* means consciousness, but the notion of responsibility is *implied in the Tibetan* (1999, p.162).

Lévinas says that he has ‘...a grave view of Agape in terms of responsibility for the other’ (1998/2000, p.113).
See, for example, Lama Yeshe (2008) who says, ‘Actually, love has nothing to do with emotional expression’ (p.32).

I am not attempting here to down-play the role of the emotional life in education. Educators such as Otero (2000) and Joseph (2002) argue that the emotions are the primary influence on learning. I am concerned, however, to avoid the dualistic interpretation of feeling as irrational and uncontrolled emotion.

Clifford and Friesen (2003) describe a wonderful block of work done with their Grade 2 class, in which the class ranges well beyond the conventional teaching/learning of time (pp.30-34).

I still regret succumbing to Friday night lethargy and watching the film ‘Troy’ on television. Rather taken by Brad Pitt’s portrayal of Achilles, I find my own imagining of this great hero has now been entirely supplanted by Brad Pitt’s cheeky, muscular interpretation.

Elizabeth Young-Breuhl (1982) tells that for Arendt, Amor Mundi was ‘the love she had come to understand as the one that unites self and others’. Young-Breuhl tells how Arendt considered this term for the title of what became The human condition (p.327).

Hyde is referring here to the idios daemon or idea of genius put forward by Apuleius – a personal spirit that can be cultivated and developed. ‘An abiding sense of gratitude moves a person to labor in the service of his daemon’ (p.54) whilst ‘An age in which no one sacrifices to his genius or daemon is an age of narcissism’ (p.55).

Tero Autio (2003, p.323) postulates that this teaching of ‘values’ has been appropriated by the neo-liberal, English speaking commercial complex for its own benefit. He tells how in the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher promulgated the values of discipline, industriousness, prudence, reliability, fidelity, conscientiousness, and saving for investment – all ‘values’ that clearly support conforming to the techno-industrial-commercial complex. Peter Roberts (in the same collection of essays) relates how in New Zealand in 1993 the ‘common values’ of education were held to be ‘honesty, reliability, respect for others, respect for the law, tolerance, fairness, caring or compassion, non-sexism and non-racism’ (p.499). Again, Roberts points out how these values serve the market. An interesting component here is that some of them are also framed in the Maori language – clearly an inducement for the other to conform! In Australia, John Howard’s Federal Government initiative, the ‘National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools’ (DEEWR, 2005) presented a similar list of values superimposed over the image of Simpson and his donkey, the iconic, nationalistic story of a World War I hero told to school children in the 1950s and 1960s, and sporting the George Eliot quote, ‘Character is destiny’.

For a lucid description of these four brahma-viharas, (basic principles for living a good and happy life) see Salzberg, 1995/2002.

Fricker (2009) refers to these silences as epistemic insult: injustice inflicted on people (and we could extend the notion to the other-than-human world) ‘...because their word received deflated credibility owing to prejudice...’ She continues that by this she means ‘that they are insulted or undermined specifically in their capacity as a knower...’ who is also prevented from passing on his/her knowledge (pp. 2-3). Fricker continues that our status as a rational being is implicated in our capacity for passing on knowledge. ‘So when I’m insulted in my capacity as a knower, I’m seen as lesser as a rational being’ (sic) (p.3).