

CARTOGRAPHIES OF PLACE AND IDENTITY

by

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Abstract

My thesis presents creative non-fiction and contemporary painting which investigate place and identity as lyrical mappings of language and postcolonial histories. Written language, used in conjunction with visual language, produces meaning that is read through the use of text. The mapping of location and identity provides a polyphonic site and the resulting investigations are assigned textual and visual vocabularies. My lyric essays allow the interweaving of these multiple narratives of the psycho-social aspects of identity to articulate a multi-cultural heritage within a specific location. The visual art works provide for the arrangement of place and identity as compositional components for contemplation of the multiple interpretations of these ideas. This research seeks to map visual and written language through a process that interweaves intuition and intention, reflecting the pluralistic nature of these conceptual underpinnings of place and identity.

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Dedication

To my family, Carroll Covin, Mira Sláva Čulen and Luboš Čulen.

1.Introduction

My creative thesis consists of creative writing and painting. The thesis began with creative writing in the genre of the lyric essay. The lyric essay is a form which combines poetry and prose and allows for meaning to be blocked in through suggestion, gives form to silence, articulates absence, and has the ability to compose through fragments.

My challenge was to find an original voice that presented ideas that swirl in my interior space of memory and the everyday. The lyric essay provided a format that allowed for these ideas to be written in many variations that then could be re-interpreted, and re-visioned.

I began the writing of identity through essays about myself and my family. My creative research looked to the writer Michael Ondaatje and his work “*Running in the Family*”, John Berger and his work “*Here Is Where We Meet*” and the biographers Gordon Ball and Graham Caveny – through their biographies of Allen Ginsberg.

Ondaatje's use of language creates an impressionistic gaze that allows the reader to imagine and remember the stories of his family as he himself discovers them; in doing so, reminds us all that we are driven by our ancestors for a definition of identity.

John Berger presents the mortality of his family which is explored in such a way as to remind the reader of the compassion required to live a life well.

The care with which Ball and Caveny present Ginsberg's life and journals highlight how Ginsberg intuitively understood that the everyday moments of his life and his fellow Beat writers were extraordinary. Ginsberg did not privilege this diaristic voice solely to his journals, he employed this voice throughout each genre he pursued; and, because of this, both his journals and poetry became a cultural record.

Judith Butler, in "*Giving an Account of Oneself*" engages us to become "speculative philosophers" or "fiction writers" suggesting that under these mantles we can perhaps better navigate the complexities of identity theories. She begins by suggesting that an account of oneself begins "in media res", in the middle of the narrative, "when many things have already taken place to make me and my story possible in language" (Butler 39). And to give an account of myself I can do so "only in the face of a 'you' who asks me to give an account" (page 11). Further, then, giving an account takes a narrative form (12).

With this research in mind, I wrote the five lyric essays contained in "Writing the Family" in an attempt to navigate the ordinary as extraordinary, to articulate the compassion required within a family, and to do so without any expectation of a completed portrait of the idea of family.

I also found the lyric essay uniquely suited to writing about place. I live in the North Okanagan and I live on what is the traditional territory of the Okanagan First Nations. The writer Dennis Lee, in his essay "Cadence Country and Silence" suggests that as an English Canadian to understand "place", we need to understand our country as a colonial space, and the narratives that we produce are tied to the ever

evolving postcolonial discourse. The book “Q'sapi” by Shirley Louis has re-directed my gaze to the land where I live and how historically, as two cultures together, we have come to interact and co-exist.

Gayatri Spivak insists that the ideas and concepts central to colonialism are entrenched within our English language. She suggests that English contains our false histories and sanctioned ignorances, and as one drives through the north Okanagan it is possible to observe language that once defined a segregation of the “other” from our colonialist era.

Homi Bhabha states that within the postcolonial discourse there still resides an intention of assimilation that is contrary to the pluralistic nature of our shared histories. Louis’s work speaks to the histories of Okanagan Nations, before and after contact, and contributes to the process of compiling shared histories.

Place, as landscape is an important influence in my inward and outward gaze. Again, I have found my research into the works of John Berger an incredibly rich caché of these ideas. Some compelling descriptions of place and identity occur when the air, the quality of light, the shape of a grass leaf, the cartographies of a river, or the hidden quality of a sound carried on the wind are recorded on the page that stand next to a character and the narrative arc of the story. The methodologies of braiding and intertwining are also evident in the complex narratives of his work in the trilogy “Into Their Labours”. The writing of the Westside Trilogy was, firstly a tribute to Berger, but also an attempt to present a voice, as Judith Butler suggests, “in media res”. By using the title Q’sapi, from Shirley Louis’s book, I wanted to articulate both

the love of place, and to honour the territorial lands of the Okanagan First Nations. I also wanted to acknowledge the stories before contact and also understand the postcolonial theories that begin the attempt at remediation. However, as Kelly Oliver suggests, theory and philosophy often fail to articulate an accurate reflection of the histories that bear witness to the narratives of those “othered”. One could suggest that no amount of Women’s and gender studies and/or, postcolonial histories could have helped the Late Karen Miller in navigating the choices in her life, and the lyric essay regarding her passing meant to acknowledge these collective failings that are present by imposing a segregated life on a reserve. And further “A Trip to Little Kingdom” is an examination of my acceptance and embarrassment of a cultural divide, that on a reserve I am inevitably “so white”, the colour of my skin forever linked to the colonial space, histories and sanctioned ignorances of Canada.

Michel de Certeau describes these histories as the histories of absences, and these histories can be understood as a cultural narrative that builds a societal identity, and that within our societal and cultural histories, there are unwritten narratives that are influenced by social and political settings that are in constant flux.

Our cultural and personal identities are shaped by narratives: our stories. Both Rebecca Blevin Faery and Graham Caveney explain the connection between biography and history in the shaping of the national identities of North American colonialism. Rebecca Faery discusses the shaping of a national identity through the introduction of captivity myths of the seventeenth century and explains how the captivity myth gave voice to the process of settling the New World through a

vocabulary that began to define the “other”. Graham Caveney further explains the connection between biography and history by his investigations into the early American writers, and suggests that the construction of identity is not a product of history, rather, the individual is the agent of history.

The research for the written component of “Cartographies of Place and Identity” is reflected in the visual component of my thesis. The initial inspiration for the text based work was a small 24” x 6” inch drawing by the late Robert Smithson titled “A Heap of Language”; his drawings often feature written language that is used in conjunction with visual language to produce artwork.

The language I chose to feature were excerpts from the essays *The Westside Trilogy*, *Tribute* works for Allen Ginsberg and *Air and Fate*; and the texts from these narratives were used to visually present ideas surrounding identity and place. The process of layering the textual components is meant to illustrate the research of the polyphonic voice and histories of absence. As such, it is meant to be used as repetitive echoes which shape the narratives into an impressionistic language that allows the reader/viewer to compose meaning specific to their own perceptions.

I would like to say that by understanding that the histories of absence are present in both the cultural and the personal record of narratives, I have explored identity and place through a autobiographical lens. The creative research of my lyric essays, poetry, and paintings maintain an implied pact with the reader/viewer; I have adhered to the real, and made a poetic allegiance with truth through the filters of memory and imagination.

1.2. Language and Meaning

There are many theorists who examine the use of language and the manufacturing of meaning. According to Chris Weedon, language, either spoken, written or visual, is a location of our political struggles and our social codes and behaviour (Weedon 35).ⁱ Weedon suggests that an understanding of Saussure's theory of signs is fundamental to understanding the poststructuralist theories that followed, and allows an examination of the world through a diversity of meaning (34).

Ferdinand de Saussure'sⁱⁱ linguistic research combined sound with meaning, signifier with signified, *parole* as individual speech with *langue*, language as a system operating within a culture (Bhabha 189). These two components of speech, the act of individual speech and the larger cultural system, make up the sign. Saussure understood the sign as fixed in meaning, “a pre-fixed structuring language, prior to its realization in speech or writing” (Weedon 34). Poststructuralist theorists argued that Saussure's fixed sign did not acknowledge the pluralistic nature of meaning, nor did the sign allow for any changes in meaning that could result from evolving, historically specific discourses.

Jacque Derridaⁱⁱⁱ investigated these critiques of the Saussurean model. Derrida focused on concerns of writing and textuality, and replaced the concept of Saussure's fixed chain of signs with the concept of *différance*. Derrida privileged text over sound. The only way to comprehend Derrida's *différance* is to visually see it written

on the page (McCance 89 - 90). He suggested that meaning was fluid and kinetic, “located in a discursive context and the temporary fixing of meaning. What it means at any particular moment depends on the discursive relations within which it is located” (Weedon 36).

1.3.Identity and Location

Building on the statement that meaning is not fixed, but tenuously tied to historical and cultural shifts, identity joins with location. I am located in North America, which can be divided into linked but separate countries, the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico. I suggest that these countries are bound to the imperial histories of England, France, Spain, Portugal, Russia, and to the contact of these cultures with First Nations peoples. The writer Dennis Lee^{iv} suggests that to understand “place”, we English Canadians must understand our country as a colonial space, and that the narratives that we produce are tied to the ever-evolving post colonial discourse. Dennis Lee introduces the idea of writers in Canada living in a colonial condition (Lee 21) that limits our ability to speak a truth that identifies not only an ideological difference with the United States of America, but more importantly, an understanding of our own revisionist histories with regards to our narratives of contact with the First Nations peoples in Canada(19). Lee articulates these notions through an investigation of his own inability to write, a type of silence that imposed itself upon him; this silence he describes as a condition which encouraged him to look intensely at his world around him. He writes

But perhaps- and here was the breakthrough-perhaps our job was not to fake a space of our own and write it up, but rather to speak the words of our spacelessness. Perhaps that was home. This dawned on me gradually. Instead of pushing against the grain of an external, uncharged language, perhaps we should come to writing with that grain. (18)

He further defines what it is to write in a colonial space.

The inauthenticity of our public space is only one such grounding. I am certain that the silence I go into is more than civil. But to write in colonial space is to have that civil silence laid upon you. Whatever else overtakes you, the world you move in and the words you want to use are already cankered with it. When they come alive in cadence, they come alive in it. (24)

Postcolonialism is a discourse that investigates the cultural legacies of colonialism. Homi Bhabha^v defines postcolonialism as a cluster of theories that bear witness to the narratives of third world cultures. These third world narratives give voice to the disadvantaged histories of nations, races, communities, peoples (Bhabha 190). He writes,

It is from such narrative positions that the postcolonial prerogative seeks to affirm and extend a new collaborative dimension, both within the margins of the nation-space and across boundaries between nations and peoples. (193)

Bhabha's work seeks to address the ambivalences of a fixed point of view found within colonial stereotypes; these points of view he found to be fixed within the patriarchal subtexts found in European texts and theories. Bhabha cites theorists such as Gayatri Spivak^{vi} who insists that the ideas and concepts central to colonialism are entrenched within our English language. Even though there is an active compilation of postcolonial texts which examine the complex web of social and

geopolitical forces which forged the imperialistic tendencies of Western nations, an unbiased narrative is impossible to obtain.

We cannot fight imperialism by perpetrating a “new orientalism”. My argument is not a guilt and shame trip. It is a warning. Indeed, the institutional imperatives for breaching the very *imperium* of English, even with its revised canon, cannot be fully developed from within English departments, for in its highly sophisticated vocabulary for cultural descriptions, the knowledge of English can sometimes sanction a kind of global ignorance. (Spivak 186)

Michel de Certeau^{vii} postulates that these postcolonial narratives speak to histories of absences (de Certeau 8). Rebecca Blevin Faery^{viii} cites these absences of histories in these terms.

. . . the early records of European encounter with the Americas are, with few exceptions examples of . . . writing that conquers, writing that has constructed the legitimacy of invading and usurping territory and enslaving people. (Faery 101)

Bhabha suggests that we need to rethink the postcolonial perspective. A sense of assimilation resides within the colonial mind set. We need a new definition that includes the pluralistic nature that is inclusive of the demographic make-up of the twenty first century; what Ella Shohat^{ix} would call polycentric (Shohat and Stam 39).

Certeau posits that we “make” history to express knowledge from one generation to another in the shape of a narrative that builds a societal identity. He writes about this as “an identity through a differentiation” (de Certeau 45).

If, in one respect, the function of history expresses the position of one generation in relation to preceding ones by stating, “I can't be that,” it always affects the statement of a no less dangerous complement, forcing a society to confess, “I am other than what I would wish to be, and I am determined by what I deny.” It attests to an autonomy and a dependence whose proportions vary according to the social settings and political situations in which they are elaborated. (de Certeau 46)

Kelly Oliver^x articulates the necessity to “restore the ability to sublimate the agency of those othered”(Oliver 154). Oliver explains the decolonization of psychic space as a territory from which to begin to transform the dominant values of the centrist to include the values of inclusion and tolerance. This can empower those who have been marginalized by allowing these individuals to regain a place of agency and empowerment. This acknowledges what has been erased and ignored and creates a new social space; this decolonized space provides a freedom from the restrictions that identify the othered and enable the othered to be seen without the values, meanings and images that foreclose their identity as meaning makers, as Oliver says “that foreclose their agency” (Oliver 161).

1.4.Cultural and Individual Identity

The postcolonial informs our cultural identity through language and nomenclature, and can be investigated within this location of culture and postcolonial theories. Judith Butler^{xi} has theorized extensively the nature of identity through her research into gender, ethical and moral philosophy, sexuality and power relations. Butler engages us to become speculative philosophers suggesting that under this mantle we can better navigate the complexities of the theories of recognition. She suggests that “..[an] account of oneself begins ‘*in media res*,’ in the middle of the

narrative, when many things have already taken place to make me and my story possible in language” (Butler 11). Butler further explains that “I exist in an important sense for you and by virtue of you. If I have lost the conditions of address, if I have no 'you' to address, then I have lost myself. Further, we are bound by what differentiates us, namely our singularity”(34). *In media res*, when combined with location and identity allows for, as Butler suggests, tolerance and compassion in the collective attempts to write the narratives of this part of our collective histories.

Rebecca Blevin Faery defines the making of a North American identity through her examination of gender and postcolonial discourse. Faery investigates the captivity myths of two women and explains how the captivity myth gave voice to the process of settling the New World through a vocabulary that began to define the “other”; this began to mark the passage from the colonial to the postcolonial (Faery 10). Our cultural histories are filtered through the lens of the patriarchy and Christianity, and Faery highlights this gaze as instrumental in the shaping of these cultural histories with regards to two women, Mary Rowlandson and Pocahontas. Mary Rowlandson, in the 17th Century, was a member of a group of 24 Puritan settlers who were taken captive by the Narragansett, a First Nations community that lived in what is now called Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Faery describes Mary Rowlandson’s situation in these terms:

She was the site and sign of the colonists' vulnerability to the “wilderness” realm of the flesh and the devil, home of those they characterized as lustful and devil-worshipping; she was a locus of the contesting and conflicting desires of two distinctly different peoples and cultures. (41)

Faery discusses the difficulties in colonizing the new world by examining the story of Pocahontas, who, in reality, was a Powhatan First Nations woman whose father was Wahunsonacock, the Chief of the Powhatan peoples living outside of Jamestown, Virginia.

First, she had to be portrayed at the start as naked, wild and savage Native girl, a stand-in for both her people and the countryside they knew as home. She had to be signified as virginal, not yet “taken” or “possessed”, and then she herself had to be taken with, or taken by, the colonists – captivated, or captured, or , as proved to be necessary, both. She next had to be dislodged from her native culture by making her exceptional rather than typical and either made white like the English or . . . allied through sympathy, allegiance, or resemblance with the English and their cause. (103)

Faery explains these histories tied to location in terms of the binary of the mythologized narrative and the unheard narrative. She insists that the many diverse stories need to be written.

Yes, really to see this place, this land, requires more than one pair of eyes, more than fifty even. And to tell the story of this prairie – of this whole *country* - would take a chorus: many voices, many stories, not always harmonious, in fact probably dissonant more often than not. That we can make room for the stories, all of them, is our last and best hope. And then we'll each of us have to learn to listen in a new way – with new ears, maybe with fifty pairs of ears, or even more – to the complex song that chorus would sing. (Faery 229)

Graham Caveney^{xii} explains the connection between biography and history in the shaping of the national identities of North American colonialism. Caveney investigates the early American writers, and suggests that the construction of identity is not a product of history; rather, the individual is the agent of history (Caveney 6). This idea is reflected in the work of the Beats, and in particular the work of the poet

Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg writes “It occurs to me that I am America. I am talking to myself again”(Caveney 17).

Reading the work of the Beat writers, one can understand how their works express the poetics of the everyday, and I suggest that in the works of the Beats, place and identity are used as aesthetic principles. Their prose and poetry reflect their own time in history and can be read as a diary and this diary form becomes a venue for an uninterrupted, unapologetic and self-referential private voice.

Caveney further suggests that the tales of con men, slave narratives and captivity memoirs as examples of a new confessional aesthetic found in autobiography. Caveney writes “Their explanations of their own experience hold up a mirror to the same society that sought to deny the reality of such reflections” (Caveney 7).

Caveney suggests that much of the canon of literature of North America is portrayed as men without women, what Caveney describes in his biography of Allen Ginsberg, as a location of homeoerotic narratives where women are identified as a “feared and forbidden other” (Caveney 15). The first waves of colonizers were groups of men without women, explorers who were perceived by First Nations peoples as unbalanced. First Nations narratives understood these societies as unbalanced, and Caveney agrees, suggesting this reveals an absence within the narratives produced.

The author Shirley Louis^{xiii} describes the histories of the First Nations of The North Okanagan area, by writing the unheard histories witnessed by contact with

miners, freighters and settlers. Louis chronicles the early fur trade, the gold and silver rushes, the residential school experiences, the decimation caused by small pox and influenza through the recorded stories of families of the Okanagan Indian Band, of the North Okanagan. Louis uncovers the histories of a place impacted by the colonial histories.

In 1812, the Northwest Fur Company established a trading post at Fort Kamloops and operated under a license to trade with the Indians. In their bid for economic success, the North West Company, and the succeeding Hudson's Bay Company, encouraged trade on the age-old Native trail on the west side of Okanagan Lake. Eventually, the trail became known as the Hudson's Bay Brigade Trail. The miners, freighters and settlers that followed in 1858 and 1859 in the wake of the fur trader were a very different set of people. When gold was discovered in Kamloops, the Brigade Trail was flooded once again with hordes of unruly, fevered men who pilfered and destroyed Indian food supplies, rampaged village sites, dug up the streams and murdered without conscience. (Louis 11)

By 1867, The Government of Canada had implemented the Indian Act, which gave the Federal Government exclusive authority over First Nations Individuals, authority over who was considered a First Nations Individual, and exclusive authority over the land of First Nations Peoples.

1.5. Visual and Written Language

Identity and place through explorations of the autobiographical are the creative research of my lyric essays and poetry. There are a multitude of ways to make a singular and unique narrative: the lyric essay is one choice within many. The lyric essays traverse the territory of non-fiction and must adhere to the real, and although memory and imagination are utilized, the narrative must have a feeling of truth for the writer as the essay unfolds. There is an implied pact with the reader inherent in non-fiction, the allegiance to truth. The writer becomes the lyric persona – lyric

suggesting expression through sound expressing feeling through voice. The writer Harrison Candelaria Fletcher^{xiv} describes it this way.

The lyric essay partakes of the poetic in its density, its distillation of ideas, and its musicality of language. It partakes of the essay in its weight, its desire to engage with facts, and its allegiance with the actual. The lyric essay seeks answers but seldom finds them. It speaks more to the heart than the head. It favours imagination over experience. It elucidates through the dance of its own delving, taking shape mosaically, and defining itself during its own creation and its interaction with an audience. (Fletcher 44)

My thesis investigates identity and location through the lyric essay and two dimensional visual works. Written text combines with visual art in conceptual art. Within conceptual art, the tropes of identity politics and the investigation of unwritten narratives of culture entered the art historical discourse.

Sean Lowry^{xv} suggests that our art histories predominantly use two forms of critique and analysis. The diachronic model articulates the linear innovations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century artistic “isms”. The synchronic model can be understood to articulate relationships between different artistic models at a certain location or point in time. Lowry suggests the use of the “agnostic model” as a bridge between these two systems.

The agnostic model represents an attempt to critically balance the idea of historical innovation against quality and interest in the present. In other words, the agnostic model simultaneously regards both diachronic and synchronic analysis. (Lowry 163)

Sean Lowry argues that “strategic concealment” or “subliminal appropriation” (116) is now embedded in contemporary art practice. Lowry suggests that appropriation is considered a conceptual strategy in creative methodology.

By the early 1990's, contemporary arts' frontline was full of ideas related to globalization, postcolonialism and multiculturalism, with new buzzwords (such as the “real”, the “self” and the “other”), all of which variously implied a partial re-engagement with the idea of subjectivity in art. As a consequence the cynical role of appropriation would take a back seat, unless of course when used as a means with which to reclaim identity. (117)

The visual art and creative writing of this thesis explore Sean Lowry's ideas.

The biographical element of my creative lyric writing combines with my visual art through formalist concerns. The visual work uses the creative text as compositional elements to investigate a liminal space of a sensory threshold between thought and language. My creative work seeks to reflect an identity which is tied to a specific place and location. These meanings become a cartography that reflect place and identity as a contested site of multiple narratives in the postmodern paradigm of colonial and multi-cultural heritages.

Pamela M. Lee^{xvi} suggests that the term “process” is literal and historical, and provides a location of temporality; further, that “process in art retains a certain emphasis on the mediating quality of drawing, recoded through a non-hierarchical and entropic approach to art making”(Lee 33). Specifically, with my works, the initial process was the writing, then de-constructing the writing through manual and computer manipulation, and then writing through a haptic and mechanical process.

Oliver understands how visual art and literature can uniquely mediate our experiences of identity and location. To decolonize psychic space, we collectively need to acknowledge what has been erased or ignored. The poet Don McKay's^{xvii} investigations of identity politics intersect with place poetically, and enter a Canadian post-colonial place to wonder if it is possible to be named by location, a postcolonial

Canada, in a reversal of intention. Although he concludes that this might be impossible, he imagines another answer.

Its fang bit me, left this
cherishable scar.
I left bits of paper
under rocks, lichens, burnt stumps
bearing words of eloquent
awkwardness (McKay 73)

Travelling the themes of location and identity allows for strategies for the remediation of the postcolonial place. My visual art work and creative writing articulates the individual creative act which investigates location and identity. The writer and artist Josiah McElheny^{xviii} suggests that within the arena of a political and cultural globalization, creative processes can be expressed in an infinite variety of methods and intentions to reflect an individual and unique narrative. These ideas join with the writings of Weedon and Butler, who give us permission to be speculative philosophers, to explore identity as an unfolding narrative. Within these themes, the cultural and individual aesthetic reflect place, socio-economic stratification, gender, and cultural heritage.

Oliver suggests that literature can allow for what theory and history do not. Oliver states that the descriptive power of philosophy fails to articulate an accurate representation of the historical document. She suggests that literature expresses what

theory cannot articulate. Literature provides a first person account of the tensions within and resistance to social codes and oppressive powers.

Fiction can *show* tensions between subjectivity and subject position, between singularity and social codes, that philosophy can only attempt to describe. The metaphors of literature and the imagined dialogues and dialogic relationships between people engaged in power struggles or intimacy brings us closer to the semiotic and unconscious dimension of signification.(Oliver 166) .

I agree with Oliver on this point. Neither feminist theories or postcolonial discourses were able to make a difference in the life of the late Karen Miller, or the life of Donald Falkner, her common law husband. Her life and death are remembered in the lyric essay “A (My) Story about Karen Miller”.

There are many examples of contemporary literatures which explore these ideas. The author Patrick Lane^{xix}, in his novel “*Red Dog Red Dog*” navigates both the post colonial and the concept of place by using the Okanagan Valley as setting and character. And he further uses characters whose voices are from the grave to give a fictional voice for the absent narratives that are situated in our real histories.

Historical fiction provides an opportunity to examine the histories of absences. Fred Stenson^{xx} describes his approach to historical fiction as an investigation of invented spaces where a narrative can cohabit with the recorded histories. In the novel “*The Trade*” Stenson tells the hard story of colonialism through an understated examination of our insatiable appetite for the pelts of animals and the desire for and conquest of “the other”. Both Lane and Stenson encourage a post-colonial redress of political and economic inequities within Canadian culture.

Narratives, both fiction and non-fiction offer the promise and possibility of constructing an identity that is inclusive and polyphonic. I have written in the genres of the lyric essay and poetry to express feelings about my identity and feelings about the location in which I live.

2. Writing Place

2.1 Westside Trilogy

2.1.1. Q'sapi

Q'sapi (long time ago)

t



Nashwito is named for one of two creeks that lie between Siwash Creek and Whiteman Creek. This is place; my home on traditional lands of the Okanagan People.

I remember the first time I drove down westside, turning off highway 97 to encounter a raven resting on the billboard, a type of welcome. I did not realize at the time that I would live here and have a story to add to the story that was here before the story of history.

Q'sapi



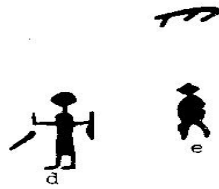
Siwash as a word declares a Eurocentric racism. Whiteman as a word is obvious, the actual demarcation between these two cultures migrates up and down this stretch of land between these two creeks the cultural divide is there, is maintained and nurtured.

These creeks, in the spring carry brown water to the blue of the lake, and in the wind this brown water mixes together and trails in the blue like a tail of a comet, year after year, a type of eternity.



Long AgoOur English language contains our false histories and as I drive through this language and meaning, I look for the portal of a middle place that stands between the winners' histories and the losers' histories of the postcolonial.

These creeks , in the winter, house crystal clear water protected by a dome of ice, and this white water mixes together with the blue of the lake, unseen, year after year, a type of eternity.



Q'sapi

Siwash Creek is Nas-queetak, cedar trees, hence, Cedar Creek. Whiteman Creek was N-kee-nem, birch trees; hence, Birch Creek meaning born from the observation of the land and the lake an intersection where one lived.

Every winter the swans swim at the mouths of these creeks, white tails up as they feed in the water, heads tucked in wings as they nap in the waves, year after year, a type of eternity.

Time Ago

Of this northern desert bounded by lakes and rivers and creeks, Nas-queetak and N-klee-nem meet the lake as an intersection that contained another intersection, that of two cultures. This intersection, this location became place which brought the familiar story of contact, disease and subjugation. Gold was discovered, the Indian Act was written, then came TB, small pox, and finally influenza.

All year long, the deer walk on the land, on the soil, on the snow. Their hoof prints leave the imprints of small hearts in a line, a type of written word embossed in a northern desert, year after year, a type of eternity.

Q'sapi

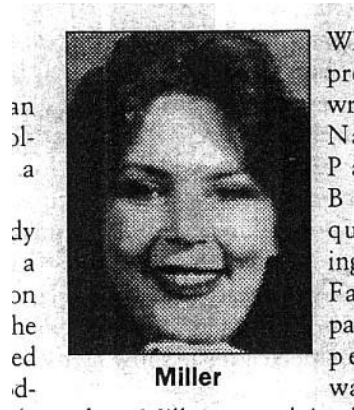


Sources:

Q'sapi. Shirley Louis. *A History of the Okanagan Peoples*. Theytus Books. 1999

Pictographs of the Interior of British Columbia. John Corner. Vernon, BC 1968

2.1.2A (My) Story About Karen Miller



A (My) Story about Karen Miller

I

I did not know her or her family. I have never known a life like hers, I have never been afraid in my own home, nor have I ever been hit or had any kind of physical violence inflicted on my person. I have never lived on a reserve nor been a member of an oppressed class or people. I have always had choice. Yet somehow, her story reached out to me, out through the landscape of the Westside of the lake, a road as a type of neighborhood, a place we both shared as home.

I or anyone else driving north on Westside Road will take the gentle corner in the road near Coyote Creek Crossing. It is on this corner that Karen Miller lived with her daughter in a modest trailer. After the drama of her death and the trial of Donald

Faulkner was over, the trailer was quietly removed. This gentle corner, the place of her passing holds no memorial but memory, and her story has become one more in the canon of narratives that describe violence against women. Donald Falkner becomes one more skewed statistic of First Nations men that are over represented in our prison system; emblematic of the failures of a reserve system entwined with racism and poverty.

I remember that during the unfolding of events surrounding her death, I found myself agreeing with the ultraconservative former MP Randy White and his ideas about the policies of Corrections Canada. While it was unbelievable to me that I would ever agree about anything with MP Randy White, he raised several issues of importance that spotlight the repetitious nature of these sad stories.

Many things in life repeat and leave an echo for us to hear. Echo is what these stories do in the lives of those family members left behind.



II

In the first month of the new millennium, she erred, although she probably didn't mean to. Karen Miller called the parole officer of her common-law husband Donald Joseph Falkner. She was nine months pregnant and had been frightened by some violent behaviour that Falkner had exhibited towards her--frightened enough for her to leave her house, frightened enough to call the police, and frightened enough to call the parole officer.

In her moment of fear, she would not have understood that Women's Studies were not a part of the curriculum taught Corrections Canada employees. Neither was Sociology. Both disciplines could reveal that because a variety of factors, such as socio-economic placement, or cultural differences, or gender, choice isn't always a part of everyone's life. If the parole officer was male, then perhaps he had never been afraid of anybody and did not know what it was like to be afraid in one's own home. If the parole officer was female, then perhaps she believed in the healing powers of words and trust and openness. Or perhaps parole officers are understaffed and overworked, and numbed with the realization that they cannot save everyone.

I appreciate that it is somehow simplistic to think classes in Gender Studies and Sociology could have saved Karen, yet those of us who heard this much later were speechless that Donald Falkner had been told of Karen's phone call and we understood at once that Karen would be punished for this revelation. So was Donald, who had his parole revoked and it wasn't until March 14th, that he was allowed to have the privilege of day passes once again.

LOCAL NEWS

Concerns surface over parole

BY DAN EBENAL

Morning Star Writer

A Reform MP is calling for an overhaul of the parole system following the disappearance of a Vernon woman.

Langley-Abbotsford MP Randy White had expressed concern in a letter to the parole board over Don Falkner two months before the convicted murderer disappeared with his girlfriend from her blood-splattered home on Westside Road.

Karen Miller, 31, was last seen May 21 at her Coyote Creek mobile home on Westside Road. Miller was seen with Falkner, 34, who dropped the couple's five-month-old daughter off with a



Miller

after Miller complained to his parole supervisor Jan. 17 that Falkner had tried to kill her.

"Regardless of the fact that both Karen and Mr. Falkner are downplaying the events of Jan. 17, it is a fact that something happened that day, which was enough

White had previously written the National Parole Board questioning why Falkner's parole suspension was lifted

caution," said White, who is calling for an external review of the parole board.

This isn't the first time the parole board has come under fire as a result of a Vernon incident.

An internal review was conducted after Raymond Russell murdered Darlene Turnbull in her Okanagan Landing home in June 1996, less than two months after



Falkner

had admitted his relationship with Miller was turbulent but felt that he could handle the relationship.

"I doubt this is the case, as he has very limited experience with relationships, and the majority of his relationship experience has been overwhelmingly negative," according to an August 1999 psychological report.

Falkner is serving a life sentence for a 1990 conviction on charges of second-degree murder, forcible confinement and assault with a weapon.

In October 1988, Falkner broke into the home of his estranged common-law wife and stabbed her mother to death.

"Earlier you had stabbed your

Karen Miller was 31 years old. On Sunday, May 21st she disappeared. It was the familiar story of domestic violence: a woman alone trusting the system while living outside of the system; maybe that is why the system let her down.

May 21st is the 141st day of the year 2000. Karen Miller and her boyfriend Donald Falkner dropped off their five month old daughter Kayla at the babysitters. Or maybe the babysitter came to Coyote Creek Trailer Park on Westside Road and knocked on Karen's door to pick up the baby. Karen and Don were to pick up the baby the next morning.

May 21st was a Sunday, and a colourful time of spring flowers on the hills surrounding Lake Okanagan. I call it the Time of the Yellow as Okanagan Balsa Root and Oregon Grape are in flower, but the Saskatoons are also flowering in May, and their flowers are white.



Looking back eight years on that Sunday evening, I was probably making lunches for two, two sandwiches each, apples and juice boxes plus a litre of water each, as we were tree planting the last of the lower elevations and it was starting to get warmer. We had one more week in Falkland, and then we would be moving to the top of Bouleau Main. I was looking forward to Bouleau, as it was close to our property and I loved planting in our backyard.

I first heard that Karen Miller was missing on May 28th, the following Sunday on the local TV news and again in the Sunday Morning*Star*, Vernon's local newspaper. The problem seemed to be that after dropping off their daughter with the babysitter, Karen and Don did not return to pick her up. The babysitter reported them as missing persons. The news also explained that Donald Joseph Falkner was actually on parole in the Vernon area, at a local halfway house, and had failed to return on the 21st. The news reported that Falkner was on parole for a 1990 conviction of second degree murder for violating a restraining order that his first wife had obtained against him. He returned to his wife's residence, and in an ensuing

argument, murdered his mother-in-law. A murder conviction that , as more details came forth, held many similarities to the present situation.

It being Sunday evening, a week later, I again made lunches. We each packed some warmer clothes for the higher elevations of Boulevard Main, where we would have a back view of Terrace Mountain, and where a forester, using the science of his profession had logged a swamp. Because of the elevation and the swamp, the new seedlings were having a hard time of it; I know because we had planted there twice before. Finally, they had sent in a tracked hoe, which made mounds, and we were to plant two spruce seedlings to a mound, in the hope that one of them could grow. Spruce trees don't like to have wet feet. It wasn't too bad planting, the seedlings were heavy, ten to a bundle, but it was for the most part flat, and if you paid attention and didn't slip off the mounds with a splash, all could go well.

I remember that on that Monday, a gentle morning, we allowed ourselves to sleep in a little longer as we didn't have to drive as far to meet the crew and the dirty white double cab Ford called "the crummy." Usually there were the same six of us in the double cab, sometimes seven. The tallest of us always sat in the driver side back seat, and it was he who saw a red Chevrolet Turbo Sprint at the bottom of a gully that articulated a steep set of three switch backs. We all voted to stop and check to see if there was still someone in the car. Three of us went down to check, and although we touched the windows of the car to gaze in, we didn't see anyone. As a precaution it was decided to record the license plate number, so we yelled the licenses number up to someone by the truck.

Later that day I changed areas and had a short run to the tree line. I remember staring at the tree line and realized that I had heard the story of a missing West side woman on the local news and how her common law husband was also missing. I had a physical moment of fear, thinking that perhaps he was watching me now and he knew what I was thinking.





IV

All week long I watched the local news, and saw Karen Miller's mother and best friend and small daughter Kayla pleading for news of Karen's whereabouts. It is hard to admit that it wasn't until Friday, June 2 when we finally connected the recorded license we had written down on the score book to a newspaper article I had brought from home. The foreman phoned in the information. By now, the police had been looking for Karen and her car for thirteen days. By now, it was beginning to be suggested that the amount of blood found in her trailer indicated that she couldn't possibly have survived what had happened to her. The news still wasn't clear on exactly what had happened to her.

Back in my home at the end of the working day the first thing I did was once again turn on the local news. And there it was: the recovery of the car was the leading story. There was an inset map of Bouleau Lake, an X locating where the car was discovered 50 kilometers from Vernon. The newscaster was explaining that a tree planter had spotted the red car at kilometer 21 up Bouleau Main. The car was 20 kilometers from Miller's blood soaked trailer. Police were now looking at Bouleau Lake for clues, and there was a massive grid being explored by search and rescue.

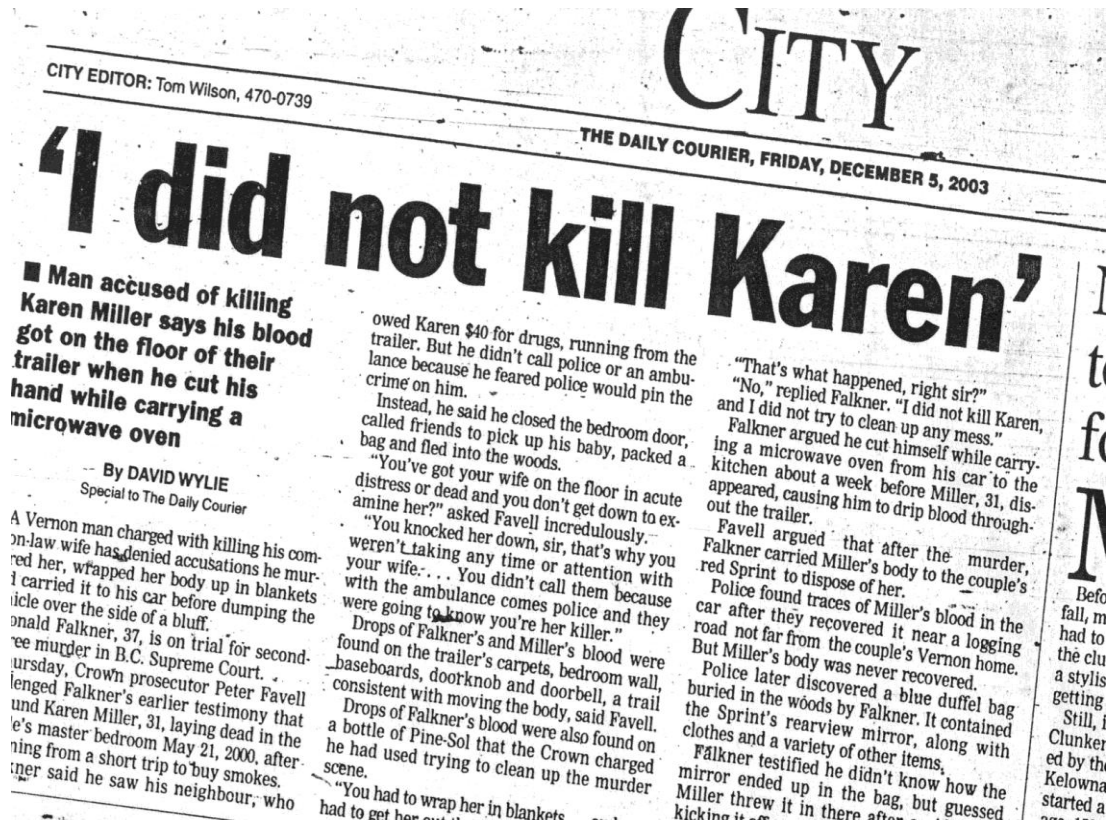


V

Donald Joseph Falkner was arrested three days after the car had been officially found. My foreman was suddenly keen to remind me that the police also had my name and phone number, as it was now obvious that he would have to testify at Donald Falkner's trial, and that he would have to travel to wherever the trial venue was held.

The trial was held three years later, in Kelowna. By then, I had stopped planting and was earning minimum wage working retail in a downtown art supply store in Kelowna close to the Kelowna law courts. In the serendipity of coincidence, my old foreman came in to look around the store while he was waiting to testify, and once again he reminded me that the police also had my name and phone number. We

really weren't friends anymore, this trial and other moments had eroded whatever camaraderie we once had. Even so, however, I showed him around the store and then he left to go wait his turn to testify.



The Kelowna newspapers covered the two week trial. Details of Donald, Karen, and Kayla's lives were discussed during the various testimonies. It was suggested that Karen earned her living selling drugs to help with her increasing debts, and had been a drug user on and off during her adult life. Falkner said that he had not approved of this activity and told her to stop, and he further complained that Karen was moody and demanding during her pregnancy. Falkner admitted that their

relationship was full of arguments. When Karen had phoned the parole officer in January 2000, she claimed that Falkner had hit her and choked her, which had left bruises on her neck. He claimed that these marks were not bruises, but hickeys, evidence of love and passion.

Falkner claimed that he was innocent. He claimed that he had left the trailer momentarily to drive down the road to the store to buy a package of cigarettes. When he returned, a neighbour was running from the trailer, a neighbour who owed Karen \$40 for drugs he had bought from her. Donald Falkner entered the trailer, and there was Karen, prone in the bedroom and bleeding from the head. He says he checked for a pulse, and not finding one realized that she was dead. He did not call for an ambulance, because he feared the police would charge him with the crime. Instead, he called some friends to come for the baby Kayla. Then he packed a bag and headed for the hills.

His defense lawyer suggested that the fleeing neighbour was the killer of Karen. Yet there was other evidence that was entered that indicated that Falkner had been friendly towards this neighbour in the past by finding him a job and had also given him a lawnmower. No blood of the neighbour was found in the trailer, but both Falkner's and Karen's blood were found on the trailer's carpet, bedroom wall, baseboards, doorknob and doorbell, a trail of blood that the Crown suggested was consistent with that of moving a body. There was also some blood of Donald Falkner and Karen Miller on a Pine Sol bottle found in the kitchen. Someone had tried to clean up.



VI

On Friday, December 12th, 2003, the jury was charged with weighing the evidence and determining the fate of Donald Joseph Falkner. They were also told to ignore the fact that Falkner did not make direct eye contact when he was testifying. In aboriginal upbringing, direct eye contact means a challenge. There were no aboriginal peers on the jury to reflect Donald's heritage. There had been an error made when the Sheriff Department compiled lists of the polling stations used for the jury selection. The majority of the Okanagan First Nations people lived on the Westside, and yet only four of these polling stations were included in the random computer selection of potential jurors. Falkner's lawyer challenged this omission, threatening a constitutional challenge. The first jury was then dismissed, and a second set of jurors were chosen, again with no First Nations person chosen to sit on the jury.

On the following Monday, Donald Joseph Falkner was found guilty of second degree murder of his common law wife Karen Miller. Falkner sat in the courtroom, looking at the Miller family and shook his head repeatedly. Justice Mary Humphries asked Falkner if there was anything he would like to say, and he laughed out loud.

It is now 2009, and Karen Miller's body has never been found. At the time, police were convinced that she lay in a shallow grave somewhere between her house and where the car was found. Westside has its own urban myth regarding Karen's body, that late that night of the 21st of May or maybe in the early morning hours of May 22nd, a loud table saw was heard being run. The myth continued that Donald knew a man who worked at the local rendering plant on Otter Lake Cross Road, who had a key to the gated fence and that is where they took her body.

VII

I hear an echo.

Convicted killer's wedding plans alarm

MORNING STAR STAFF

inmate's parole foster officer confidentially told

MORNING STAR STAFF

A Conservative MP is issuing a warning to the potential bride of a man convicted of murdering his wife at her Westside Road home.

Randy White says a young Fraser Valley woman plans to marry Donald Falkner next month in prison.

Falkner is serving a life sentence after being convicted in December for the May 21, 2000 murder of his common-law wife Karen Miller. Miller's body has never been found. At the time of Miller's death, Falkner was on parole for the October 1988 murder of his then mother-in-law.

The Langley-Abbotsford MP is profiling the case of Miller and two other women seriously assaulted by offenders in warning Falkner's prospective bride.

"The victims and families have a dire warning for this new bride - don't be victim number three," said White.

White also pointed to the cases of Misty Franklin and Jennifer Lutz, who were both repeatedly stabbed within four days of each other last December by federal offenders.

"These victims and their families have told me that they were not advised by Corrections Canada about the danger they were getting themselves into while establishing relationships with these offenders, who were in the custody of Corrections Canada," said White.

He said the families feel they must speak out as they are concerned Falkner's girlfriend may not know everything she should about her fiancé. White said he was informed by Corrections Canada that Falkner's fiancé has been properly advised.

"That attitude has directly resulted in these three tragic cases, and there have been many more before these," said White, who had voiced concerns with Falkner's parole before Miller's murder.

He said Corrections Canada must accept some responsibility to protect these women, and need to be pro-active in dealing with these types of situations.

"Any woman visiting an inmate who has been incarcerated for a crime of violence should be counselled by the

2.1.3A Trip To Little Kingdom

A Trip to Little Kingdom

Anyway, I said I would come along to Little Kingdom. It was suggested that I was exhibiting signs of cabin fever. I did not believe this (I had only been home twelve days in a row); however, rather than dispute anything (which would have been a sign of the fever) I said I would come along. I was due to update my visual wildlife count, and I wasn't disappointed, for immediately out of the driveway two coyotes loped along, their winter coats full and variegated. And then at the lake two swans stood in the low pool of the lake watching a blue heron fly off to the south. Further along there were eight swans in a grouping. (I am ecstatic by this point, which I know is a sign of the fever.) In craning my neck looking backwards and forwards looking for more white birds I discovered the raccoons in a tree, four of them balancing on the branches of trembling aspens by the shoreline. They looked too heavy to be in a tree safely.

Facing forward again, settling into my road trip down Westside, I remembered when Robert first opened up Little Kingdom. It was the first gas station on the res, yet it changed everyone's lifestyle. We no longer needed to drive to Vernon just to fill up with gas, we could be more casual with the gas gauge, allow it to tilt towards empty; a quick stop at Little Kingdom and life's schedules relaxed somewhat. Over the years Little Kindgom prospered and expanded.

One time stopping for gas on the way home, things shifted. It was the time when Robert looked in our car and was offended (angry?) (perplexed?) that we drove

to town to get our groceries; perhaps was offended that we chose to support (perpetuate?) white male hierarchies such as the Western Family Group. The question was so challenging and left me confused and embarrassed. The reality was that it had never occurred to me to buy my groceries at Little Kingdom Food and Gas Bar in the rush to get the town day list accomplished, circling through Vernon, turning right at the intersections to finally get home again.

The reality was that because of that one oddly charged conversation, I felt so white and I was honestly surprised by that, and I stopped filling up with gas at Little Kingdom.

*

We were going to Little Kingdom because we needed something for the tractor; it was a tractor run of gas and a bent piece of metal, like a carabiner, perhaps made from an alloy. Something strong looking but with a hole in it, like a Henry Moore sculpture where you can look through to the other side.

The parking lot was full of snowmobilers, large trucks and large machines, large money. As the gas was being pumped, I talked with Clinton, Robert's son. Clinton and I are the same, somehow, we didn't come out right, with me I am more broken on the inside where it is invisible. Perhaps I listened to too much Leonard Cohen in my youth, imprinted with a melancholia brought on by certain melodies and low light. I pass and blend, life goes on. With Clinton, there is a syndrome, one of the many mysteries of pregnancies and birthing, that define his life and speech. I doubt there is melancholia inside Clinton, in fact, I am sure his inside self is fine.

Clinton's speech is staggered with noise and hand gestures, I think we were talking about the snowmobile runs further up Six Mile Creek Road. We talked like we always did, like we just talked yesterday, instead of eight years or so ago.

We ventured inside. Now it was really obvious that I had been away eight years. Little Kingdom was full to bursting with things, things everywhere. I was in the middle of “Society of the Spectacle”, Guy Debord's movie of nanosecond visual bytes: I didn't know where to look, where to focus. I was intrigued with the beads in glass vials, the winter bargain on hand gloves, movies to rent, movies to buy, clothing on sale, towel sets, candles, road maps of California, fresh baked bread, soda water, fresh cucumbers. The carabiner aisle was a tractor driver's dream and I knew then that I had the fever, for I had never been impressed with home hardware before. A mild fever, really, for some on Westside come out roaring and shooting this time of year, when Westside pretends to be the Arctic, with ice flows and white birds that ride the waves.

Other people came into the beautiful of the spectacle. The Little Kingdom of the postcolonial, that somehow survived “us”, perhaps with the help of the swans, the raccoons, herons and the eagles and the pine beetle. I returned to the jeep and watched a lady open her white van with Alberta plates. Inside was a baby and a dog, and I sat there wondering who in the 21st Century would leave their baby in the car. I wondered where they thought they were, or is Little Kingdom an obvious safe place on planet earth.

It was time to go home.

2.2.Tuesday and October

high resolution save PSD TLP					OCTOBER
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	
attendance 15% 25%		yoga	1		Septem S M T 1 2 7 8 9 14 15 16 21 22 23 28 29 30
5	6	7 6-9 USA 131 yoga	8 YOM KIPPUR BEGINS AT SUNDOWN 10:00 grad show		October S M T 5 6 7 12 13 14 19 20 21 26 27 28
12 DAY OF THE RACE (M)	13 COLUMBUS DAY OBSERVED (US) THANKSGIVING (C)	14 ELECTION yoga	15 3:30-6:30		November S M T W 2 3 4 5 9 10 11 12 16 17 18 19 23 24 25 26 30
19	20 Tires 10:am	21 yoga	22 Sean Caulfield SSC 026 2-3:30pm Russell Thornton 1:30-9:00		December S M T W 1 2 3 7 8 9 10 14 15 16 17 21 22 23 24 28 29 30 31
26	27	28 yoga	29		January S M T W 4 5 6 7 11 12 13 14 18 19 20 21 25 26 27 28
		6-9 USA 131	3:30-6:30		February S M T W 1 2 3 4 8 9 10 11 15 16 17 18 22 23 24 25

Tuesday and October

Tuesday is the day of Mars, Mars being the Roman God of war, somehow related to Zeus. Tuesday's colour is pink, the child born on Tuesday is full of grace, and the Greeks and the Spanish consider Tuesday to be unlucky. Tuesday is associated with the planets of Mars and Pluto, a day then to move through what needs to be done and faced full on. Think of all the Tuesdays since Tuesdays were thought of.

In the Gregorian Calendar, October is the tenth month and one of seven months that contain thirty one days. Latin for eight, the eighth month of Romulus, October became the tenth month on February 24th, 1582. Think of all of the Octobers since Octobers were thought of.

By October, Tuesday morning (before coffee) shows the lake as a blue that would be difficult to mix, using either synthetic or mineral pigments to record the time of nuance. When the sun rolls up the colour has changed. A different refraction of light from the Monashees.

By October, the real Tuesday begins with the shutting of the door, a last look at home, the lake, the leaves, the pine and fir needles an indescribable orange, a colour often under-rated, the perfect complement for October skies; another orange altogether in the rain. The car, the commute, Derridean in nature, isn't considered "green", however, one leaves the property slowly, dodging wildlife, embossed footprints and scat. You look around, not at the road, not yet, not until you merge with a road named after a creek that describes trees in a wash.

By October, Tuesday commutes have all the usual diurnal suspects. The indecisive chipmunks, mud puddles, the cows which are in hiding from the fall round up, the white van that can not drive within the lines, the snow line on Terrace mountain, the blue Honda that tailgates, a lesson in perspective when one looks down the lake, the loaded logging truck, the red Porsche for whom rules don't apply, the other grasses, then the traffic lights at the highway. Then the William R. Bennett bridge, the bridge that gave me my life back. I am very fond of this bridge. The engineer's gave me "choice", and every morning I carefully choose the lane I need to move down a highway called harvey.

By October, forget parking close to anything at the campus, turn right into the parking lot near the airport. And walk to the Village, past the parking attendants who do not walk anywhere. And walk to yoga. Tuesday's have yoga. Friendships have been forged in a room in the heart of the gymnasium painted red and blue, an odd red with an odd blue, a type of colour theory of which I am not familiar. Stretch and balance, stretch and balance and breathe. Hands together over the heart. Namasté.

By October, Tuesdays are a long afternoon that lead to a room called FINA 223. FINA 223 has a sink with a stainless steel trap on the south wall and windows that look towards the Arts building, the side with the mud. There is a compliment of easels, the good kind, grey and solid. If a canvas is too big, just use two. This classroom holds pockets of oil paint like secrets and my little scientists, nurses, and computer geniuses arrive yawning and hungry and ready to add to the paint pockets in the studio. It is hard for all twenty one students to arrive every Tuesday. Confused

about their marks, both academic and visual, interested about art, shy, and culturally diverse these artists attack the white of the page and the texture of the board with determination for three hours.

By October, the Tuesday commute home is in the dark. The highway and the bridge pretend that there are no traffic problems here. The turn on to the westside highlights the light of the moon which cast shadows as bright as summertime while the usual nocturnal suspects wander and meander, eyes lit red by the headlights. Up the hills and around the corners I drive home thinking about Tuesdays and Octobers as parallel narratives that become infinite when one thinks of all the october tuesdays since October Tuesdays were thought of.

3. Writing Identity: Family and Self

3.1. Three Steps

Three Steps

One step, two steps, three steps, clap softly

One step. I had a father; however, he died. He already had been banished from the bed, but I think we met each other before his heart attack.

step-child 2: one that fails to receive proper care and attention

Two steps. Then I had a step-father, and I was his step-daughter. He was complicated, and I was a child. My step-father had a step-father, but I think the step-father was good, and it was the father who was bad.

Step – comb form; related by virtue of a remarriage (as of a parent) and not by blood

Three steps. My mother had a step-mother and she was a step-daughter. The step-mother was good, but so was the mother, who died young and was missed forever.

Step 2a: To move the foot in any direction

Clap softly. I am a step-mother and I have a step-daughter. She is good, and I try to be. She has a father, who is good, and she had a step-father who was somewhere in between good and bad; one of a pair of brothers who were musicians and fussy about their food.

3.2.September 2

September 2

On the eve of the day of your birth, we sit and listen to our Serengeti sounds fill the air of our house. We have sat together for many September birthdays that have refracted light and Serengeti. I still sing off key to you, sometimes with Mira, who sings well. We recently sang for her, and she laughed and blew the candles out. She gave you a book for your birthday, Leonard Cohen's "Book of Longing." Last week, you had taped the Serengeti on your voice recorder and when you replayed it, we sat in pink light. We both know that Vlado will call tomorrow. We will forget to carry the phone with us, and running down the stairs, one year older, I will not reach the call in time. But we both know it is Vlado calling. The message mailbox holds his voice. You call back, and like last year, I lie down and listen to the cadence of a language I do not know. A language that requires declination. I tried to learn it once. I can say "This is my favorite hat". Slovakia is full of an unbearable lightness of being, a lightness that Milan Kundera wrote of. I look at your cheeks when you say goodbye. Next year you will be fifty. Maybe you will see them in Bratislava then. As we sit down to your birthday dinner, I ask you how "49" is so far? You smile, and begin to eat. It is dusk, and we eat, and listen to our Serengeti sounds fill the air of our house.

3.3.Mira Sláva Čulen

Mira Sláva Čulen.

I am sitting, listening, once again, to my Christmas present from Mira Sláva Čulen. She gave me a retrospective of the Beatles – then and now – a personal mix that she chose for me, and I remember a ride home, at mid summers eve, when we sang Beatles tunes together; maybe this is where she got the idea. Mira gave Luboš a mix that started with Dylan and ended with Cohen. Luboš brought the CD's home one day, after she had come back to Kelowna for her winter semester at Okanagan College. She gifted us, we were charmed.

We came home, we unloaded the car, we unloaded the day, we started to peel and chop for dinner, we put the CD on. We started listening to the disk for Luboš, her dad, “Pappy D”, as she has bestowed this name upon her father, something private, just for them.

We started dancing. Immediately. I listened with the recognition of her time, of her choice, of her insight, choices for her “Pappy D”. I burnt the onions. I re-chopped. We danced through it all. Leonard Cohen had to be replayed twice. Something about “here’s one for the Devil, and one for Christ” that needed to be heard again. One for each. One for the fallen angel. One for the son.

Then we put on the Beatles. I don't know if I told her that when I was young I was not allowed to listen to the Beatles. My step-father, I think, was frightened by

John Lennon. It was Lennon's comment about Jesus. Jesus: still so controversial. I burnt the onions a second time. Give peace a chance.

*

Mira Sláva's mother, Hanna, studied medieval history, was intrigued by an Italian who married a Hungarian way back when and used diplomacy with the Slovak tribes of what would become, much later, Czechoslovakia. Luboš, her father, studied theoretical cybernetics, a conceptual idea of a conveyance of information, also known as information theory, titled from the Greek language, to navigate the ferry boat, Kybernetes. These two were poets in the world of Slovakian Academia, and they stole away to Canada. Their decision took them first to Paris, then to a city by the sea named Vancouver, and then to an acreage entered by a bridge over Silver Creek. Mira Sláva was born during a thunderstorm in Salmon Arm in 1987, under the sign of Leo.

*

Mira moved from Nelson to Kelowna last year, lived in the residence at OC. I watched her bravely endure the shock of the new, and in the process, she discovered that she could. I saw that in her when I met her, though; I met her when she turned two. Back then, her first language was Slovak, and now, when her parents, Hanna and Luboš, raise their hands in exasperation, claim defeat in the face of her will and her arguments, I smile.

She is the daughter of her mother. She is the daughter of her father. I love this kid.

I remember e-mailing her about dancing the night away, leaving out the part about burning the onions twice, having to add “6 in 1” tomato sauce hoping to disguise the burnt, going for a gourmand crunch. It was a time when she was busy, a time when she had just met Daniel, a time when we were humbled to know that we really were not on her top five list of people she would respond to, by e-mail or by phone. The phone that she was now paying for. But she did, she responded to the e-mail about our dancing.

3.4 Air and Fate

Air and Fate

I made a book, once, in a drawing class where I deconstructed a book, took out the words of someone else. I painted cotton pillow ticking and made a cover. I chose BFK 285 gms, and tore this paper for the pages. I wrote and I drew about the Fates. I wrote about how the great-granddaughters of Chaos held my fate in their hands. The story is that first there was Chaos, who, with Cronos, gave birth to Gaea, who gave birth to Zeus. Zeus had many love affairs with mortals as well as immortals, so, although he was married to Hera, his sister, he had an affair with Themis, the daughter of Uranus and Gaea, and the Fates are the daughters of this union.

The three Fates determine our destiny, the Greek myth tells us. Clotho was “the spinner”; she spins the thread of our human lives. Lachesis was known as “the allotter”; she dispensed the thread. Atropos was the one who cut the thread; she was known as “the inflexible”. I sometimes imagine that Clotho must have been the happiest of the Fates, up there where the Gods lived their lives, spinning, perhaps listening to the radio or watching her favorite show in the sky. Spinning is a meditative art, and I can also imagine Lachesis happily accepting all this spun thread, carefully, gathering it in spools to be allocated to the specific life. It is Atropos that I don't trust; I understand her as the moody one. I know that some days she is inattentive to her task, bored by eternity; perhaps she becomes more arbitrary than fate really needs to be. I feel that on one particular day, just for the fate of it, she cut my thread too short. I got some bad air.

*

Air is a mixture of nitrogen and oxygen, mostly, and surrounds the earth. Air is what gives us speech, air passing over the vocal chords is our voice. This voice enters our ears by sound vibrations, directed by the middle ear to the brain, eventually. Air, passing over our vocal chords changes how we feel. This air changes our chemical makeup; this air can make our heart pound faster, make us sweat, make us laugh, make us calm, make us sad. It affects our neural transmitters, it affects the pressure of our vital liquid.

Air is complex. Sometimes I feel I don't get enough air. Sometimes, I get too much air, and it is bad air. Too much of any air can keep me awake.

*

The first time I had bad air, I would not let it matter. The next time I had bad air, it mattered very much. I did not sleep, did not remember basic hygiene; I had ringing in my ears, which prevented any more air getting in, which, oddly, stopped time. I wandered, out of the country, entered and left another country, crossed another border and finally stopped at the ocean. The Pacific Ocean, the western ocean, where the waves meet the sand. Eternal movement describing eternity. I sat on the sand by these waves drawing palm trees, eating tortillas and avocados, for quite a while. I watched birds, albatross, every day at dusk. I watched as they flew this day-end dance as they circled the setting sun; hundreds of fliers soaring in circles, an eternal dance describing eternity.

Eventually, breathing in and out, in the sand by the waves, the bad air left my body and I started to remember who I was. My short thread became a moment in my past.

*

We all have the air and fate moments; I have listened in Workshop, here, and know this to be true. Your air and my air are articulated inside as thought, spoken out loud as voice, and enter our ears by vibration. Air makes our stories.

3.5.Opposites

Opposites

Luboš and I live at our house, and in our house, true opposites live together. During my childhood, my mother, Carroll, poked raw potatoes before she baked them in the oven, while Margita Čulenová would never have thought to do that. I inherited the fear of the exploding potato, he did not. We do not stack dishes in the same way, we encounter rogue elements in the kitchen when our backs are turned. Luboš pays \$115.9 for gas in Vernon and I do not. I can find the mushrooms in the refrigerator, and he cannot. I, really, cannot get the difference of an amp and a volt, I really cannot start the generator if it is minus 9 degrees, I really do not like to change the propane tank because they hiss. Luboš understands amps and volts. Luboš can start the generator in minus 9. Luboš can change the propane tank in minus 9, and, it does not hiss. Luboš paints with big brushes, I do not.

I am a monoglot he is a polyglot.

I am approximate; he is meticulous

He needs to know; I need to sit at the window

He likes Volkswagens; he likes to shift gears.

I am too lazy; I listen to CBC.

He draws pictures for me and I often nod and smile at him when he says earnestly “Do you know what I mean?” He took theoretical cybernetics in high school in Bratislava. At Claremont Senior High School I wrote long ramblings, without punctuation, like the Beats.

He says, "Don't be concerned", and immediately, I am.

*

I remember the first time I saw him, pheromones on the wind, because I turned, and saw him in yellow, we were at Fowler Creek, a roadside plantation. Also, he remembers that day. Opposites, turning at Fowler Creek, to look at each other.

4.POETRY

4.1.When in Rome

when in Rome, ancient Rome
perhaps one could go to the baths
all day in the low light of winter solstice
instead of rushing off
to class and work and the highway called harvey
one could go to the baths and steam
all day in the low light of winter solstice
next to the watercolours in the corner by the mosaics
an activity suited for the low light of solstice
from the steam in the baths in the low light of winter
watercolours by the mosaics, another way of painting
heat melting pigment on clay baked orange

4.2.The Propane Refrigerator

The refrigerator is full of air
that is cold,
from heating a gas, an exchange
of energy causing air to cool
he explained

the refrigerator is full of air (cont'd)

that is cold, the space
holding one red pepper and two jars
of yellow mustard
it is her turn to buy the groceries

the refrigerator is full of air that is cold
made in Brazil, the directions
are in three languages
when they are out of propane
she is on her knees
pushing the icon of flame

4.3. Orange Car

washing down the dash board

driving over the Monashees again and again
one last time to be present for the flash and fleeting
finding valentines and a purple glove
childhood of the blended family
the memories pulled out
found in this orange car
to wind, snake beside kootenay rivers
stopping and sitting as a passenger promise of breakfasts together
white water grey scale of pavement (cont'd)

where you just stood
you see the placement of muted colours
painted by the white air of fog
the rushing of water somehow released
you are saved because you were there
to witness like a Quaker
where you just stood
you behold a water course
a water course of great magnitude
it nudges you to a new direction
crunching through ice at an edge
you are crunching through ice
and looking down you see
that where you are walking is where you just stood

4.5.To Aunty Ev

Aunty Ev --- now --- might I see you
with you dark hair and reluctant smile
 of a large family---and a co-ordinated
 turtle neck for your slim tall body
moving around your kitchen washing
 dishes twice to fill the dishwasher
 the black and white checker of linoleum
 where the soup was served (cont'd)

after church on Sundays

I always wanted more

as I waited for parent and step father

Allen getting the last serving

Colleen the skinny sister

You managed the money

carefully in your pocket

the pride of one pay cheque

divided by three

---Your long sad face

the years after the physical abuse (cont'd)

of alcohol soaking the love away

like a stain

---the time I sat still on the chair

You wielding scissors to trim my bangs

You promised and then lied

---Baring my forehead I so wanted to hide

You knew of my anger of betrayal then

the challenge of family dysfunction

Where the mother chooses the husband

over the child

(cont'd)

Aunty Ev

Kelly is dead, Kelly is in eternity

Or did he just move across town

On the Number 14 bus?

Though I think of you still, a ghost

in the renovated house built by Norman

wiping up piddle from a nervous poodle

putting tea in a pot on the table

in a co-ordinated turtle neck

welcoming us, treeplanters from Westside

---driving us to Doole Road to see

the house of the childhood

clapping your hands for the survival (cont'd)

over time spent there and elsewhere

Kelly is dead and his writing has gone out of business

Hear That Train Blow and *Many Broken Hammers*

are out of print

Uncle Norm is still grieving

Allen is out of jail now

Colleen sits in Chemanius

In a house by the sea

Carroll sits in a chair by a radio

In an Aquarius building blinking
at tennis volleys

last time I saw you with your portable oxygen
sitting with you in your van
driving through memories
of rain soaked cedars
and tide pools with starfish
the wars of Pease Lake ended long ago

AUNTY EV

4.6.Allen, Have You Ever Been To Canada?

A Poem for Allen

Allen, have you ever been to Canada?

Here we Prorogue

I insist that we Prorogue

Immediately

in this moment defined by our

mutual continuum

stop briefly the insanity

a six week break like Stephen's

We must cease workshop and

creative practicum (cont'd)

Immediately
we might go instead
to Tangiers to transcribe
a friends draft of cut and paste prose
or divert to a FUGS concert
to sing backup for the message
or we might, instead
ponder a moment
perhaps the ice flows of a lake
placed in a northern desert
populated by white birds
new born calves
and a myth of a serpent
who lives in freshwater
ALLEN, HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO CANADA?

5.Conclusion

An investigation of location and identity allows for the remediation of the postcolonial place and provides this cartography of meaning: a written and visual documentation of my ideas surrounding identity and place.

The initial inspiration for the text based works was a small 6” x 6” drawing by the late Robert Smithson titled “A Heap of Language”. Smithson and his work are based in Conceptualism, and although he is primarily known as an Earth Artist, his drawings feature written language that is used in conjunction with visual language to produce artwork. This work led me to the solvent transfer series that re-configured the lyric essays I wrote. These essays investigated identity through the writing about family and memory.

The solvent transfer process involves making a photocopy of the written work. The copy is a mirror image of the page, and a solvent pen is used to rub the toner off of the photocopy and on to a piece of BFK paper. The process is not true to the copy, not every word and mark is correctly copied onto the new paper. The look is reminiscent of an etching print. The solvent transfer process was also informed by the cut and paste process used by the artists such as Tristan Tzara, William Burroughs, and Brion Gysin. In cut and paste, the initial text is deconstructed through random cutting of the essay, and then reconstructed through pasting together the sections. The process allows for the production of meaning to be interrupted allowing the viewer to ponder a meaning specific to their own subjective experience.

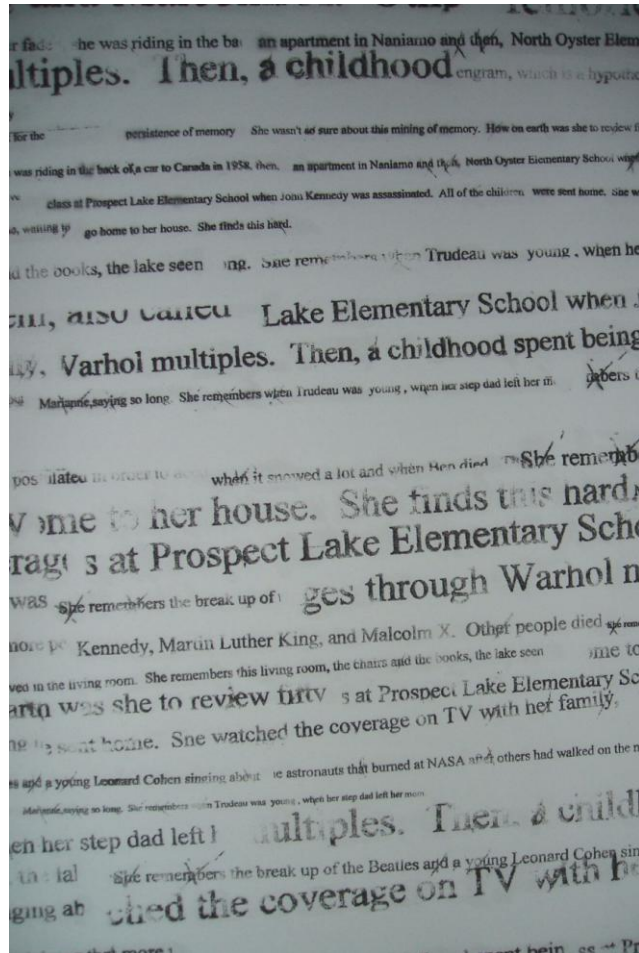
[illegible]

spood spent being in someone else's
ag.

Went to the moon about 1968
to died, Whitney was
amounts burned at NASA, others walked on the moon
Morrison died in Paris, and Elvis was ill
in the living room, she
the break up of the Beatles
left was young, Leonard Cohen was young
step dad left her mom, it showed

wasn't so sure about memory
space shuttle blew up leaving turn
years throwing the coins, thunder
step dad came home, the left
it Spanish was the fiscal cuts
a school to Europe
r years under Ter
ing nine o'clock
getting twenty seven coins
ing invested in M
money saved
sights, memories would stay
ing nine o'clock, getting twenty seven coins, getting abandoned by evil cor

Figure 5.3 Memory Trace II Lyric Essay



The solvent transfer investigations led me to the works on backlit film.

During the solvent transfer investigations, I used transparencies and this allowed for the production of many varied photocopy pages that were used to compose and reconfigure the lyric essays. The backlit films allowed for the ideas to be expressed in a larger format, and this format encouraged the use of light and shadow. The use of light and shadow as an integral component of the work allowed for the shadow to be a representation of a liminal space.

Figure 5.4 Alarmed Day and Night



The works on canvas began as investigations into multiple narratives. Initially, these paintings used the ball point pen ink as a metaphor for writing. This was drawn directly on a canvas as a ground. Acrylic paint was then painted over top of the ink with the use of a stencil. The resulting grids were visual representations of the interdisciplinary aspect of writing and painting

Figure 5.5 Mapping Identity

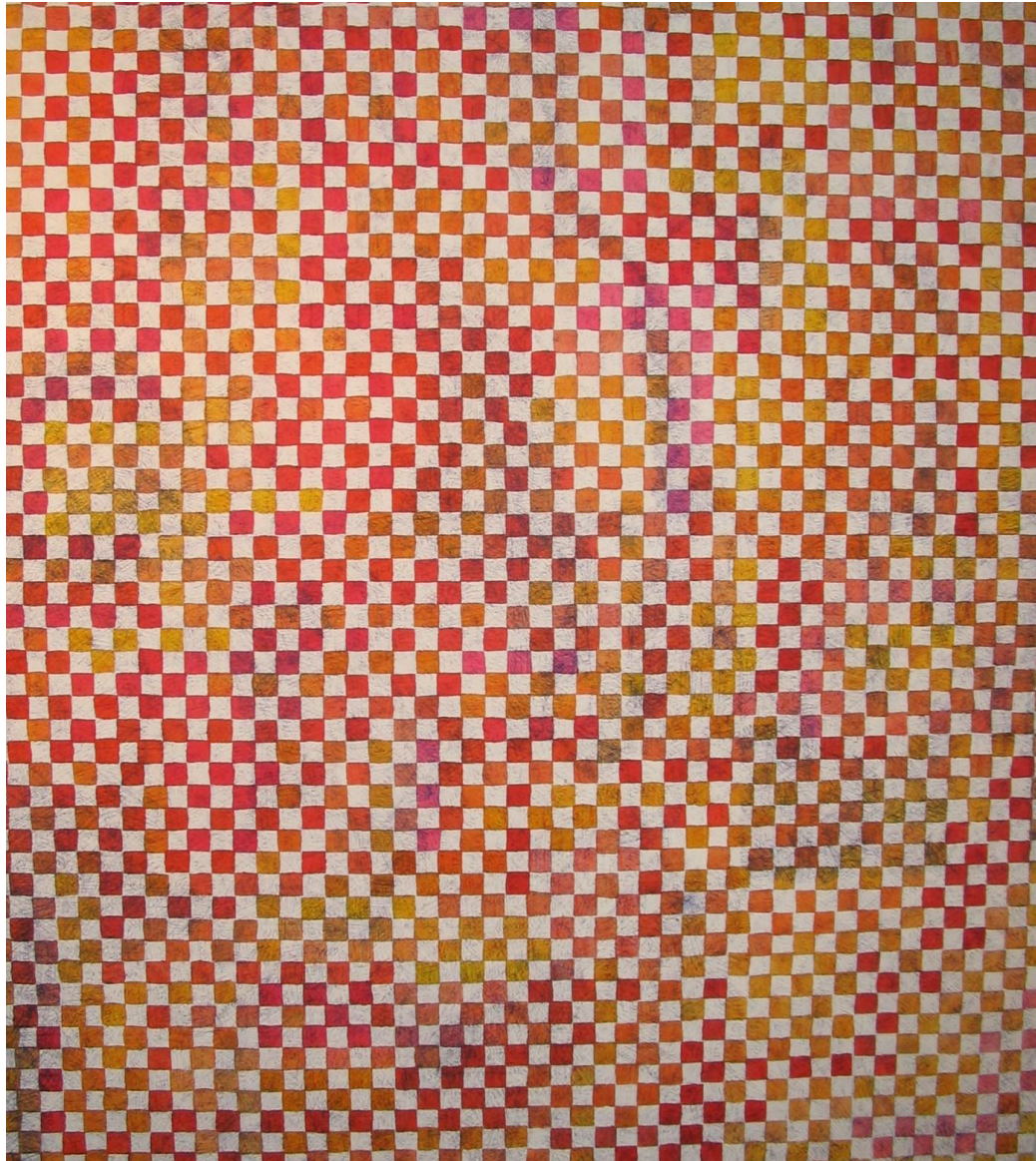


Figure 5.6 Tuesday and October

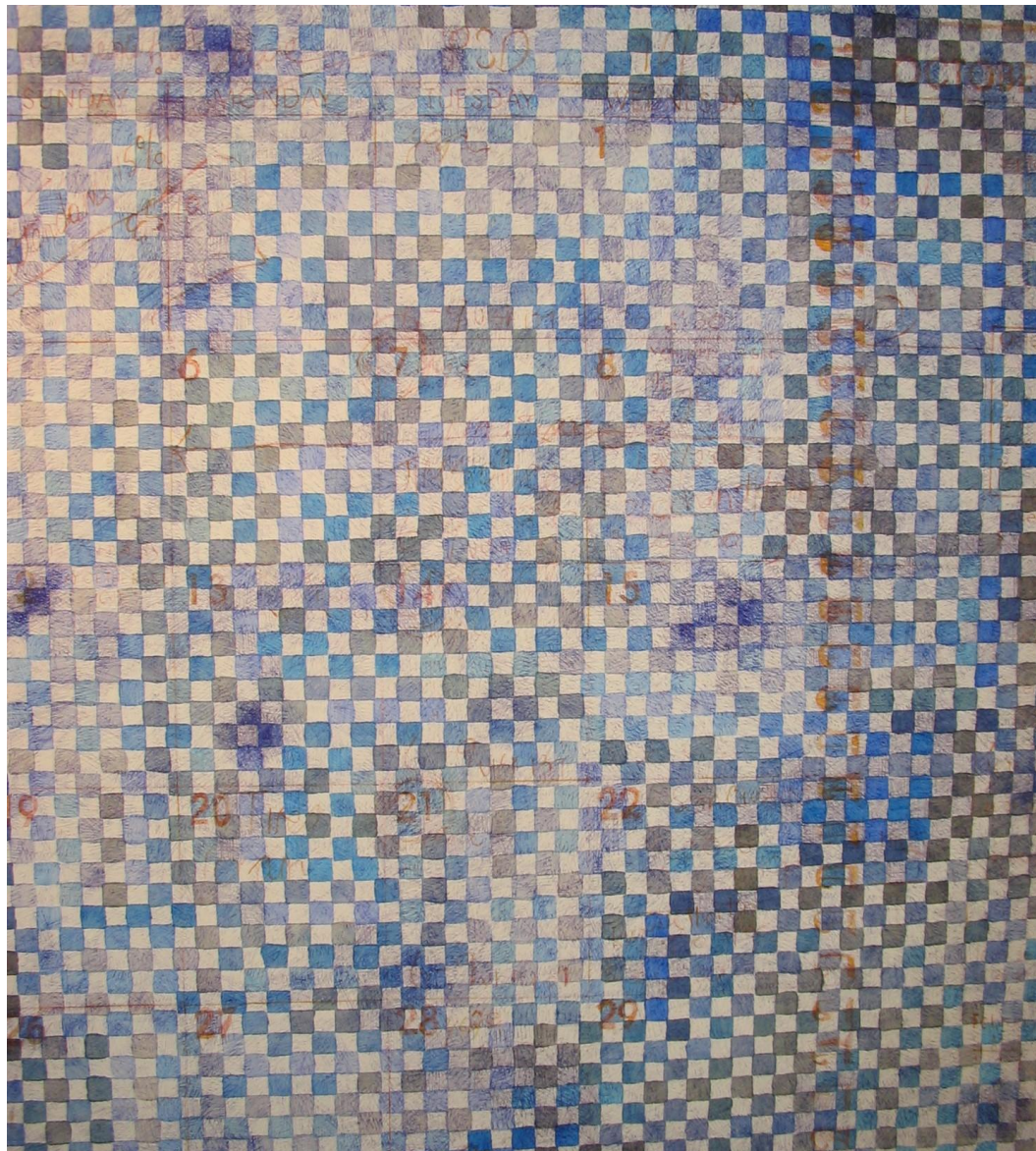
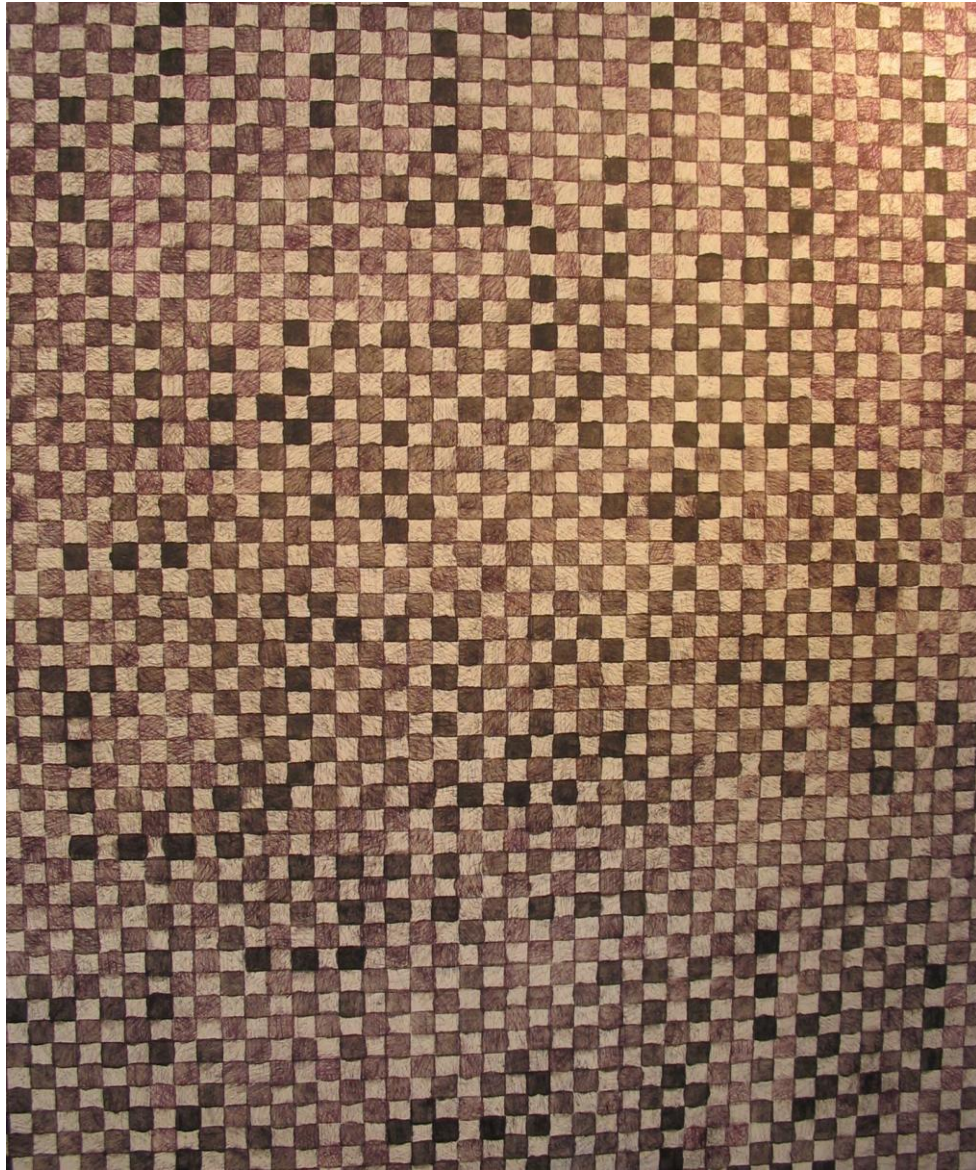


Figure 5.7 10,000 Intersections



The investigations of cultural identity through poetry as an uninterrupted private voice resulted in works that paid tribute to the Beat poet Allen Ginsberg. These works used both Ginsberg's version of his poem "Howl" and versions of my tribute poem of "Howl" as the visual forms used in the composition of the paintings.

Figure 5.8 Allen, have you ever been to Canada?

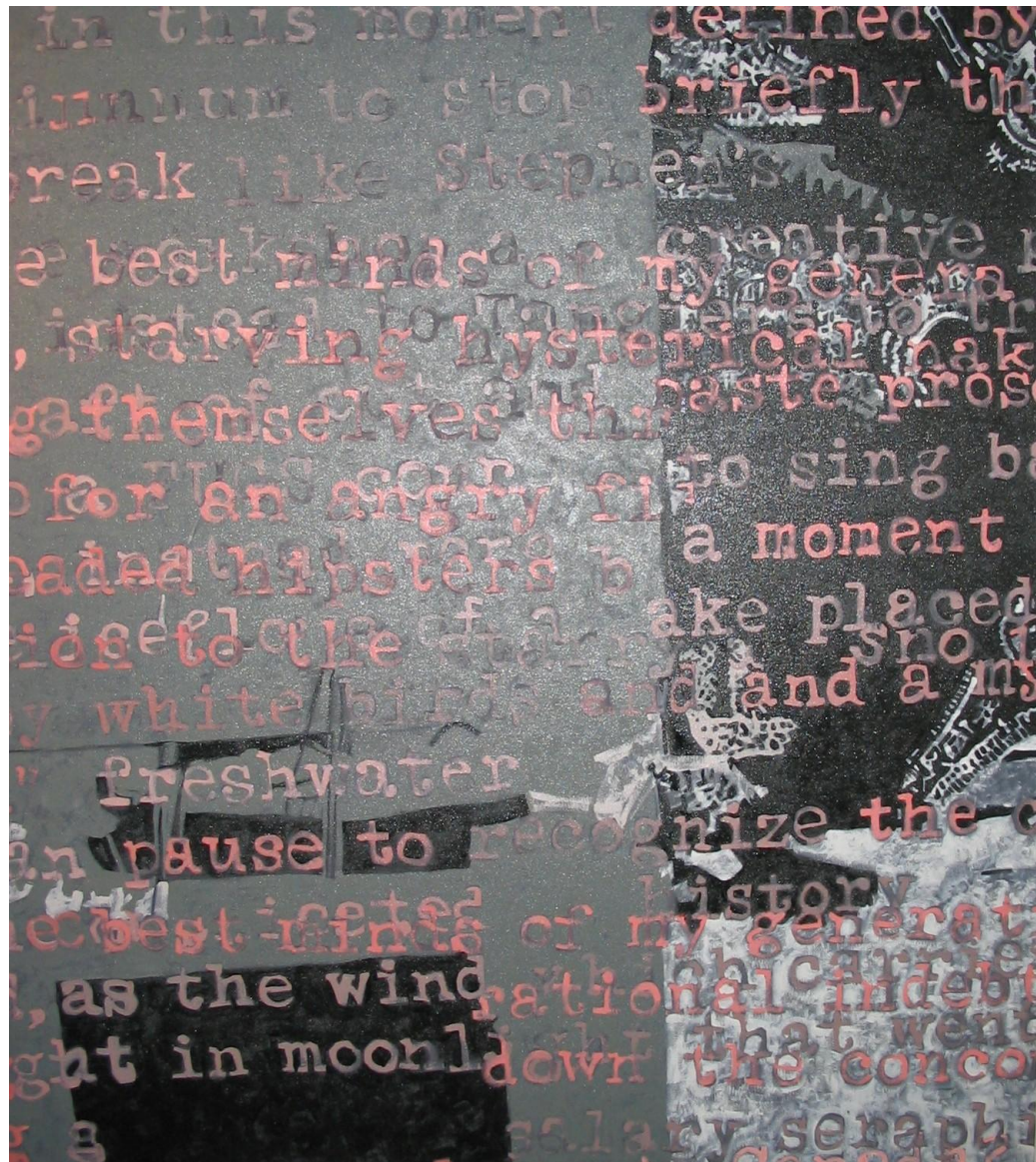
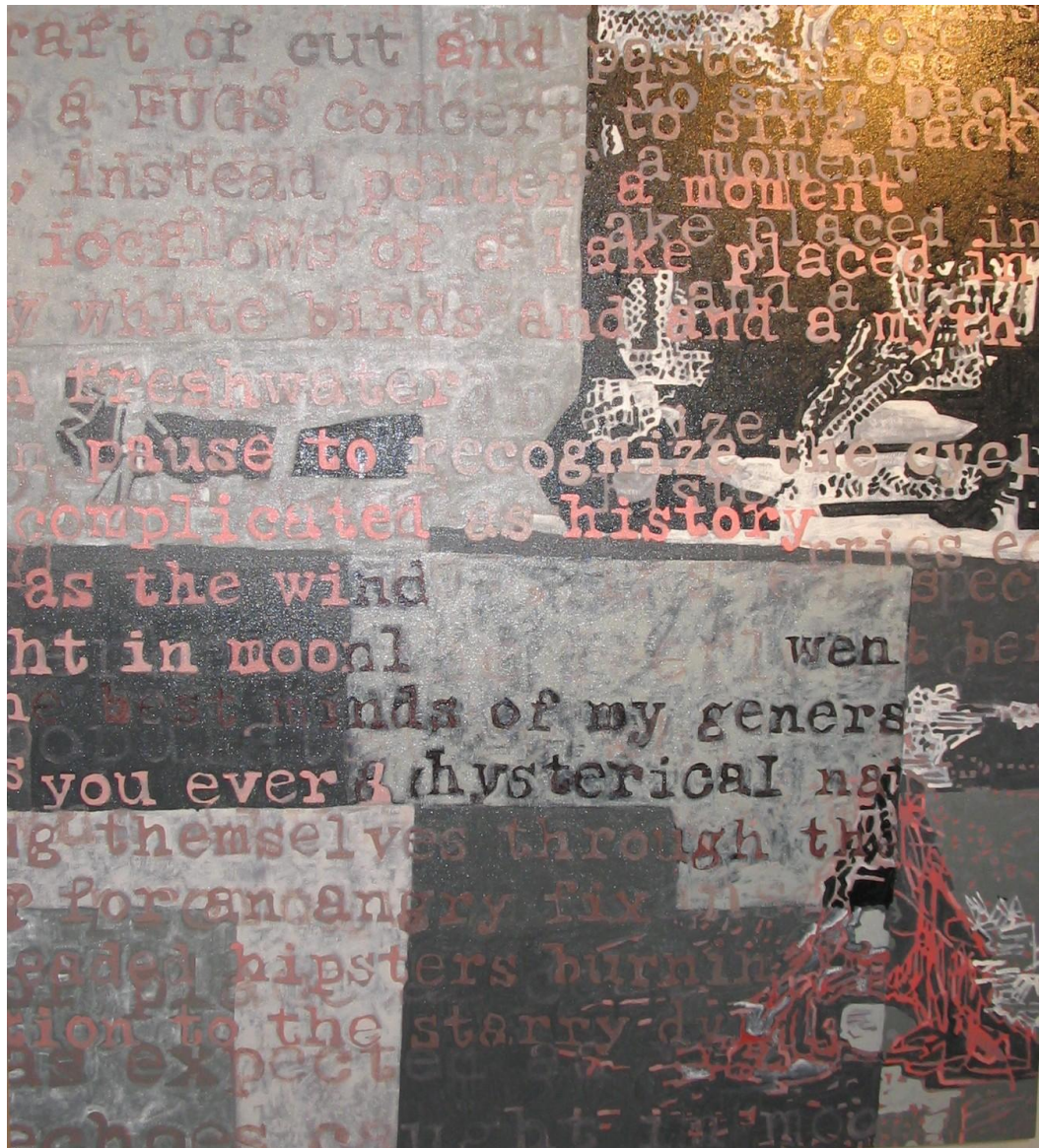


Figure 5.9 Illumine



The next group of work explores personal voices and polyphonic histories with an intention to highlight what is unspoken and unrecorded. These absent narratives are recognized and placed alongside our recorded cultural and personal histories. The grey scale of the gessoed ground of the painting is left unpainted as a visual representation of the unrecorded narratives, both individual and historical. The other text narratives are painted in, and the visual difference of figure/ground is how these ideas are rendered in the paintings. The resulting compositions of multiple texts become pluralistic in meaning.

Figure 5.10 Westside Trilogy III

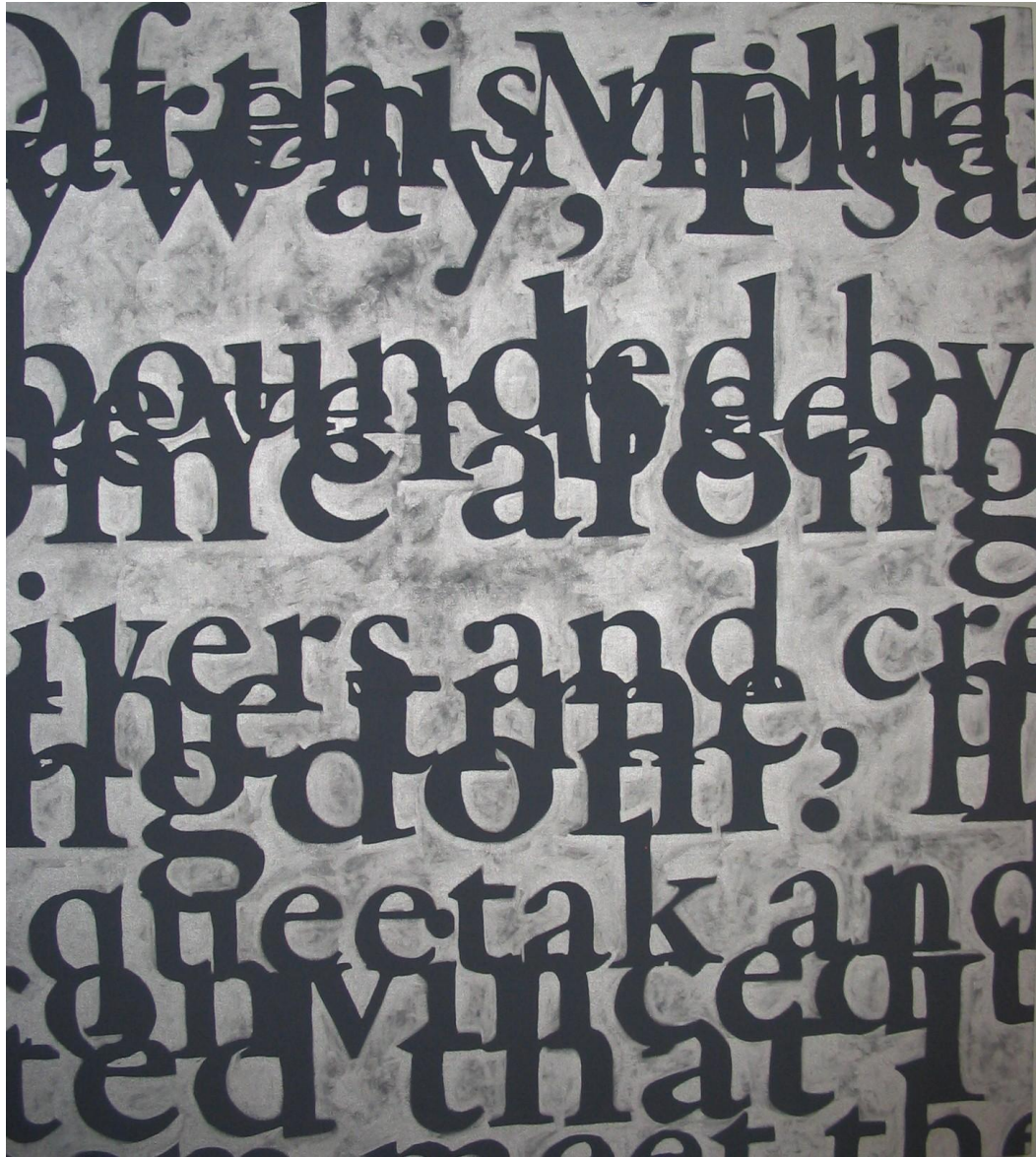


Figure 5.11 Westside Trilogy I

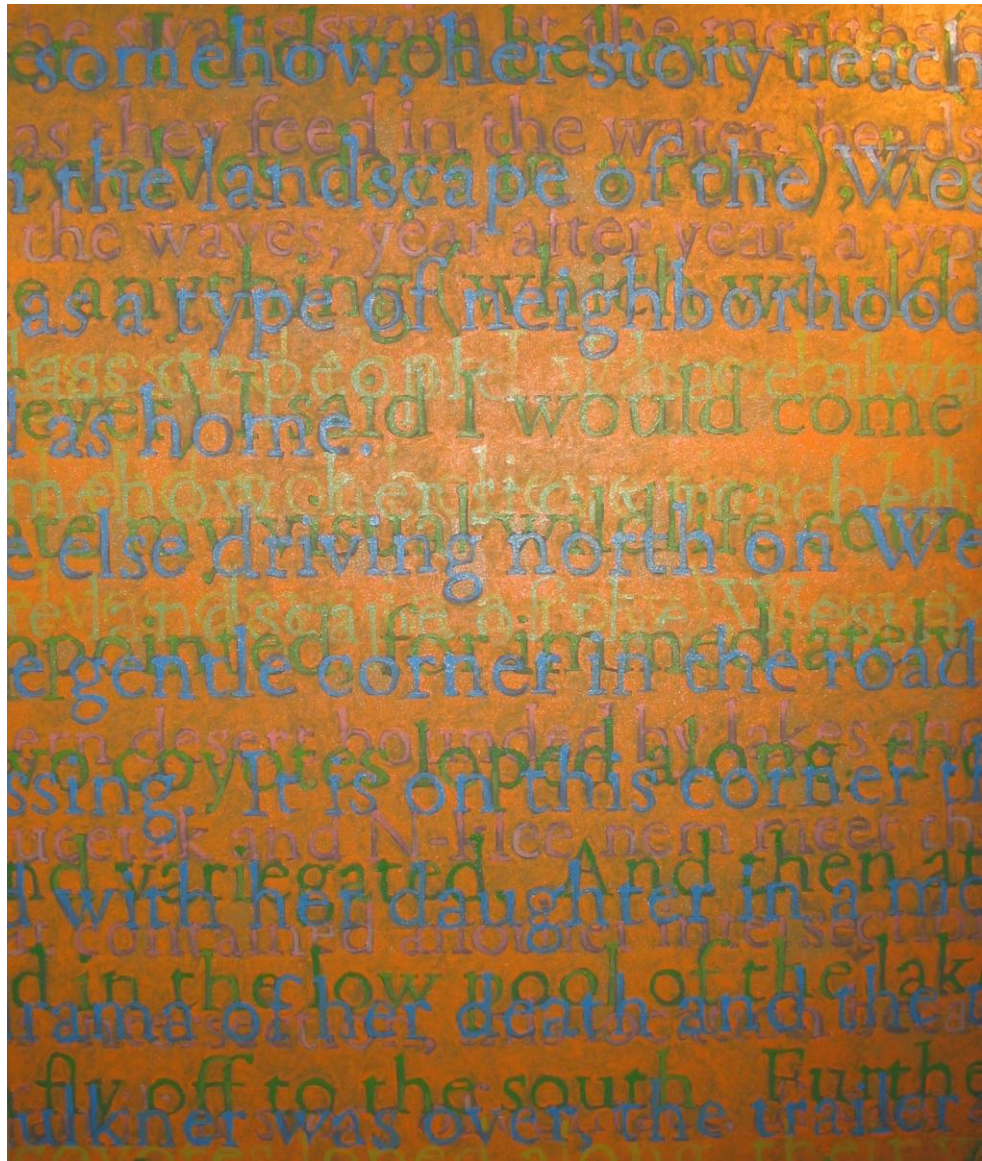
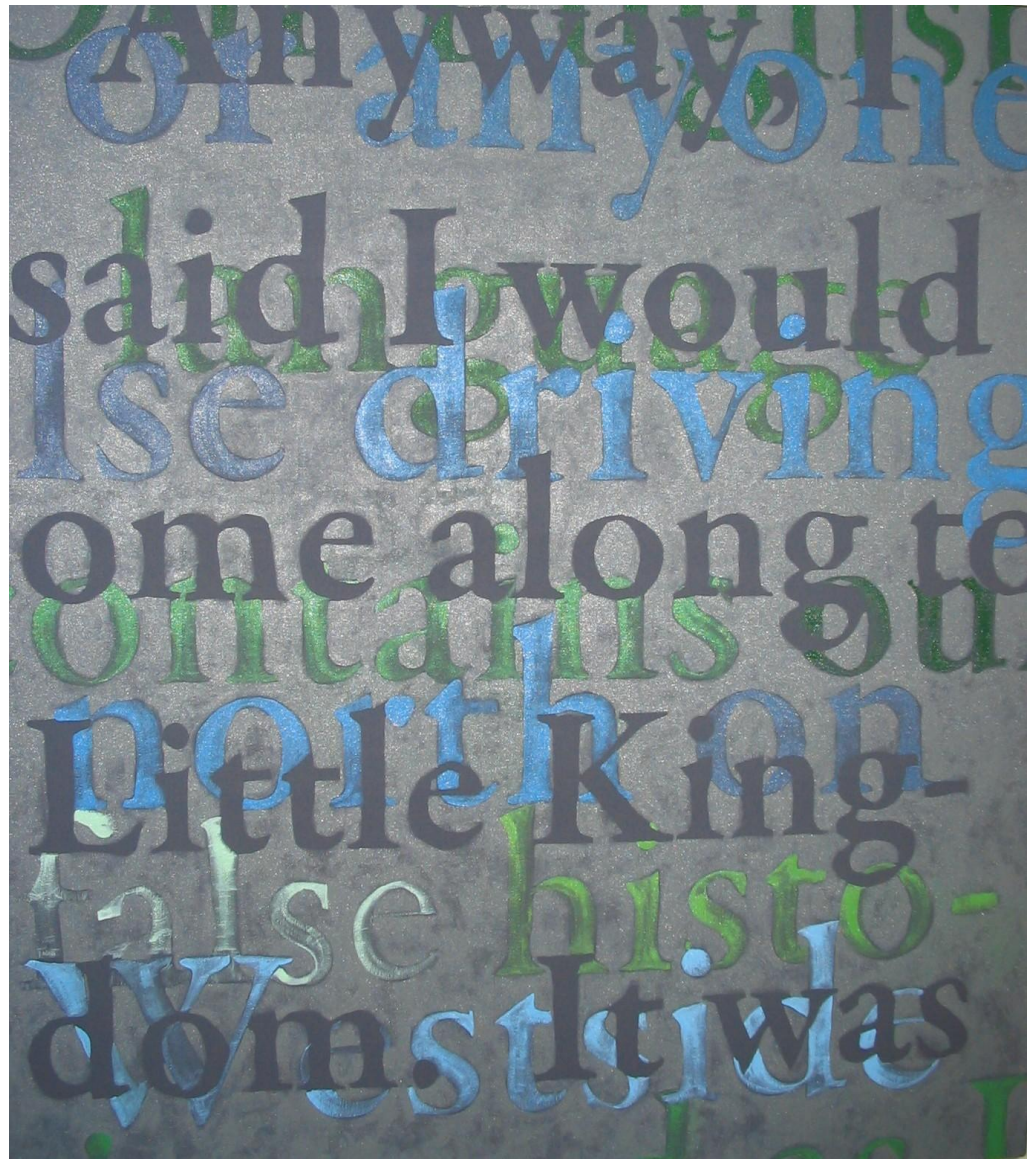


Figure 5.12 Westside Trilogy II



I have used my creative writing and visual artwork as cartographies that explore identity and place. These intersections of personal and regional histories have provided a map of an ever-shifting site of meaning. Like Rembrandt^{xxi}, I suggest that we must keep looking in the mirror to remind us to look closely at ourselves and our narratives. We must keep a concern with history (Weedon 32) to foreground the concerns of power and the making of meaning; culturally, it is understood that there is no view from nowhere, there is always a lens that filters a specific point of view^{xxii}. Mark Dickinson^{xxiii} writes about an ecological renaissance that begins with Northrop Frye's question "Where is here?" and progresses to "What is here?" and "How to be here?". (Dickinson 62) The poets he elicits to answer this contend "... it means tackling the difficult work of crawling out from under a constricting account of reality". (62)

ⁱ Chris Weedon's "Feminism & the Principles of Poststructuralism" outlines the attempt to articulate how poststructuralist theory is subject to a constant rereading and reinterpretation in order to remain compatible with the questions contained within feminist concerns. Weedon suggests that within the range of economic, social and political models, meaning is constantly shifting in discursive practices as the sites of power shift.

ⁱⁱ Ferdinand de Saussure was the author of the Structuralist Linguistic theory of semiotics that suggested that meaning was socially produced. His theories were critiqued by the post-structuralists because they felt Saussure ignored how social and historical change affected meaning.

ⁱⁱⁱ In her work titled "Sleights of Hand: Derrida Writing" Derridean scholar Dawn McCance traces Jacques Derrida's writings and his penchant for beginning by a doubling back, or a return to the traditions of language that shape meaning.

^{iv} Dennis Lee, in his book "Body Music" states that as English Canadians, we occupy a colonial space. He suggests that we could understand our language, media and discourse as a colonial media which works to serve the interests of imperial political and economic structures of power within our society.

^v Homi Bhabha's essay "The Postcolonial and The Postmodern: The Question of Agency" outlines his investigations of the postcolonial through a post-structuralist theory of language. He examines the intersections of history, language and ethnicity in an effort to explicate that a multicultural society does not share fixed meaning or values, and he suggests that this is the meaning of a postmodern society.

^{vi} Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, in her essay "Scattered Speculations on The Question of Cultural Studies" examines cultural studies through the lens of language and history. She insists that this be done outside of the Eurocentric lens, as this lens is complicit in a "sanctioned ignorance" of colonial histories. She is also concerned that the ideas of Post-Colonial revisionist histories do not filter into the socio-economic stratifications that it seeks to redress.

vii Michel de Certeau, in both “The Mystic Fable” and “The Writing of History” illustrated the writing of history as the writing of a narrative. Certeau examinations are specific to what is not written and illustrated history as a product of a society that specifies a combination of meanings and specific conditions of discourse.

viii Rebecca Blevins Faery, in her doctoral thesis “Cartographies of Desire: Captivity, Race and Sex in the shaping of the American Nation” investigates the shaping of identities in North America through the colonial and postcolonial through the captivity narratives of two women entrenched within the myths and histories of America.

ix Ella Shohat co-authored an essay with Robert Stam titled “Narrativizing Visual Culture: Towards a polycentric aesthetics”. Both authors suggest that in the 21st Century, culture must have many centers of authority and control. The Eurocentric tendency to privilege certain locations and geographies of culture and art over others undermines intentions and theories of the postmodern era.

x Kelly Oliver, in her book “The Colonization of Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression” contends that we must decolonize psychic space by acknowledging what has been erased or ignored in our social histories, and by doing so we can then authorize the agency of those othered.

xi Judith Butler, in her book “An Account of Oneself” traces the theoretical legacy of identity. She suggests that we have limits of self-understanding, and that to recognize this in ourselves, we must recognize this in others by actions of tolerance and forgiveness. Butler advances the idea that this is a paradox of ethics, and that we must engage in a social critique while at the same time suspending judgment of others.

xii Graham Caveney investigates the cultural identity of America through an investigation of Allen Ginsberg and the Beat writers and their literary legacy. He contrasts biographies of the 18th centuries with autobiographies and the confessional tales of the 20th century using the life of Ginsberg to articulate identity politics of the 1950’s and 1960’s.

xiii Shirley Louis, in her book “Q’sapi: A History of Okanagan People as Told by Okanagan Families” provides a history of colonial legacy in the North Okanagan through the stories and scenes remembered by the family kinship lines of the Okanagan People of Okanagan Lake and Duck Lake.

xiv Harrison Candelaria Fletcher, in his essay “Writing a Shadow Box: Joseph Cornell and the Lyric Essayists” writes about the methodology of the art work of Joseph Cornell, and suggests that the act of working between intuition and intention that Cornell employed is a parallel to the workings and complexities of composing the lyric essay.

xv Visual artist and writer Sean Lowry, in his essays “Ghostly Familiarities” and “The Agnostic Model: Contemporary Art after Postmodernism?” investigated the methodologies of appropriation inherent in the postmodern paradigm and suggests that the agnostic model is an arena where uncertainty can remain the only certainty.

xvi Pamela M. Lee in her essay “Some Kinds of Duration The temporality of Drawing as Process Art” investigates the dichotomy of drawing as it occupies a site of dualities, both drawing as process and drawing as a medium with historical foundations.

xvii Don McKay’s, recent book “The Muskwa Assemblage” was written in an artist’s retreat in northern British Columbia. His works explore how language mediates our experiences of nature.

xviii Josiah McElheny in his article “Readymade Resistance” chronicles the art of the readymade from Duchamp’s Fountain forward through the historical discourse. He understands that within the complexities of global economics, that there is room for artists to investigate both aesthetic and non-aesthetics in an attempt to articulate individual ideas and concerns.

xix Patrick Lane, in his novel “Red Dog, Red Dog” investigates personal redemption narratives through a post-colonial lens of the Okanagan valley.

^{xx} Fred Stenson investigates the narratives found within the absences of historical record. In his novel the “Fur Trade” he examines our exploitation and desire of the other that is part of our colonial legacy of Canada.

^{xxi} Rembrandt van Rijn produced over 100 self portraits within his lifetime.

^{xxii} In the article titled “ Documentary/Vérité: Bio-politics, Human Rights and the Figure of ‘Truth’ in Contemporary Art” Okwui Enwezor discusses how, for even the most scrupulously detached observer, it is difficult to remain objective, that to grasp a reality visually and conceptually is a complex matter.

^{xxiii} Mark Dickinson, in his article titled “Canadian Primal” suggests that Canadian poets are engaged in a re-thinking of our relationship with nature, a concept of nature that is outside of our societal thinking of provincial parks or conservation areas and more inclusive to the whole of our landscape, urban, rural, and industrial.

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