

WHAT I MEANT TO SAY ABOUT LOVE: A POETIC INQUIRY OF
UN/AUTHORIZED AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

What I Meant to Say about Love is an ever-différing interstitial text which has left open spaces for artists, researchers, and teachers, called a/r/tographers, to contest the curriculum and pedagogy of reduction and pragmatic means-ends orientations that monopolize schools.

This text wanders, meanders, and digresses to places where, through poetic inquiry, the notion that *there is no pedagogy without love* can be explored. In a broad understanding of midrash, as it is performed poetically, three years of an English teacher's life are recorded fictionally. James, the main character, discovers that love is a physically potent force that structures and deconstructs, just as it connects and disconnects. His story considers how the professional emphasis in education compartmentalizes and separates the inner life from the outer life. In love with life, with learning, and with others, the James of this story writes poetry to acknowledge love's power, and to restore its credibility in the classroom—that the lovers' discourse might be trusted again.

This un/authorized autobiography ruptures the predictable stories of what it means to be a successful teacher by considering one teacher's journey as a limit case, examining phenomenologically how he connects his life of love and poetry to his classroom practice and how his students respond to his poetically charged way of being.

My hope is that it might be possible to offer here, in this place, one poet's understanding and celebration of différence in the world. Recognizing the relationship

between what is original and what is shifting, I hope to keep complexity and diversity alive, to resist answers, to continue to converse and traverse and transgress.

Thus, with careful attention to poetry as a way of knowing and unknowing, and by attending to the paradox, humour, and irony in one poet's lived experiences, both public *professings* and inner *confessings*, as they are understood in relations of différence, or as they are understood in relations of decomposition and fertility, it is possible to consider how powerful emotive experiences, oftentimes relegated to the personal and therefore insignificant, can and do have profound transformational effects on praxis.

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In the living inquiry,
there were many who shared their energy
and affirmed the need for love,
having loved and supported
exactly when it was needed:

to phil, a deep well

to mark, the finger's imagination

to courtney, a swiftness across the sun

In the writing journey I cherish
those who have helped and inspired
the ongoing work:

so, to carl,

*who cares fatherly, motherly, poetically
and to rita*

who speaks truthfully, courageously, heartfully

*and to karen
who holds wisdom gently*

And to my life-long partner
who over many years has been with me
in a vast array of roles
hearts kept close:
wendy

DEDICATION(S)

for all those who have gotten down on their knees

and howled for the ones they love

INTRODUCTION

INVITATION(S)

a/r/tographic autobiography:

this locked door
that nurses lush liberty
receives a key

phenomenological fiction:

fall flowers
accompany his memory
still audible

un/authorized a/r/tography:

all those flaws
behind such a pretty face
do little harm

mytho-poetic midrash:

I stretch out as red
as a riot of red maple branches
rest is a pink glow

un/authorized autobiography:

our backs turned
completely to one another
we return to love

intertextual currere:

nineteen hours
trying to remember last night's dream
new sleep sweet

This a/r/tographic, un/authorized autobiography, through the poetic and performative strands of contemporary midrash, traces the discursive journey of James, a famous poet (aren't all famous poets unknown?) who knows the world as a poet and a teacher. Then he falls in love.

When performed poetically, midrash can breathe spirited impulses into dusty presuppositions. Connected to canon, to what is sacred, Midrash holds great respect for tradition, while at the same time questioning traditions again and again, reinterpreting them in their ever-changing contexts. This more open and poetic style of midrash acknowledges the textual and cultural processes involved in constructing our lives.

Thus it is that a poetic *midrasher* often contests that tendency to subscribe to a particular tradition and prescribe it to others. In this text, the midrashic voice continually pokes, prods, troubles, and questions, in hopes of creating new kinds of spaces for understanding curriculum and pedagogy.

ASIDE: Sometimes this omniscient editor, the midrasher, will be visible in the text. This is to acknowledge what is invisible, to help retrace the traces that have been erased.

In the text which follows the midrashic voice is carefully interwoven with a/r/tography (see Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, and Gouzouasis, 2008). Considered from the perspective of a writing teacher, a/r/tography is a fertile soil from which new ways of being and imagining the world can be explored.

ASIDE: James is a writing teacher who falls in love.

More about James later.

A/r/tography's multifaceted identity (artist/researcher/teacher), helps teachers to imagine that they are teaching not "student-artists," but actual artists who are thinking about what it means to make art and be artists themselves in a community of other artists. Students and teachers together struggle with the *whys* and *hows* of artfully living, learning, and loving.

ASIDE: A/r/tography and midrash.

Because a/r/tography is still emerging as a field, I approach the notion broadly, as a midrasher, hoping to give many subtle and even conflicting nuances to how a/r/tography can be understood and practiced in classrooms.

ASIDE: A/r/tography and love.

Because of the art context, or umbrella, or safety net, or milieu, because the connotation of "artist" suggests a particular kind of creative and imaginative classroom

pursuit, I've found that once teachers name themselves as a/r/tographers, they are more inclined to expose themselves to their students' lives. When teachers connect with students and commit to chasing a *living* curriculum with them (staying open to multiple and shifting points of view), then openings are created to genuinely love students. Love, rather than being a distraction to teaching, can actually enliven it. With love, by love, and in love, students can find their own voice, trust the importance of themselves and their own words, and believe in their own contribution to a larger symphony.

A/r/tography, thus inter-woven with midrash, utilizes artful and poetic means to inquire, to theorize, to form, to reform, to contest, to re-present, to survey, to suggest, to imply, and to make merry in the meaning, in the process, in the inward and inner awareness of curriculum.

THIS SIDE OF THE ASIDE:

Midrash has a poetic tradition of

writing extra-canonically, giving voice to that which has been silenced via erasure. From midrashers we hear feminine voices, marginalized voices (hence the affinity for marginal notes), minority voices, different voices. All permitted and invited to speak here in the position and disposition of the omniscient voice. With this celebration of différence comes hope, an ongoing hope that creativity will continue to rupture all that has been stratified and “commercialized” in education (Wright, 1997, p.181).

As in midrash and as in a/r/tography, the exploration is somewhat autobiographical, for it is deeply connected to who I am inwardly. But the old dichotomies will not be helpful here. To ask whether James is me or whether James is real is no more purposeful than asking for one version of the facts. There are many stories, and I have no authority to reduce them all to one privileged narrative. The poetic narrative has been fictionalized from many stories and re-presented as this intertextual performance, this midrash, this un/authorized love story.

Rather than the ambivalence, ironic distance, or heartless telling of the one authorized voice, the many stories here offer engagement with the complex classroom experience. Isn't this what is so sumptuous and dangerous about hearts, about teaching? Oh, how much better to teach without authority! Thus, this telling is more properly un/authorized. To be un/authored is also the claim of not having authorial power in teaching or in living, of not being able to create, to name, to call to permanence those things which are more like fairy dust.

ASIDE: I am un/authored because I refuse to die so easily, because learning is so damn important. In the movie, *The Princess Bride* (1987), Miracle Max yells down the throat of the hero, Wesley. He says, "What's so important? What is worth living for?" The answer: true love. Miracle Max brought him back to life on the power of love. In a paradoxical way, the only way to love is to die, perhaps it is a kind of dying to the self, to walk as one living dead, to admit to being un/authored.

ASIDE: When I am an a/r/tographer, I realize I have joined Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who, even when aware of their fate, did not despair because of their lack authority, or ability, or influence.

(Inside the ASIDE: Holding tensions, even ones as ominous as life and death, is not singularly the

position and disposition of minor characters such as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Ophelia and Hamlet were in love, and they joined Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as well.)

ASIDE: The human living curriculum is a world of complexity, holding tensions but doing so in rhizomatic ways, creating disparate but connected and inter/intrdependent relationships. This is ecological and holistic, such as the whole plant and the whole child and the whole teacher; such a union of heart-mind-spirit-body moves beyond a focus on the singular to reveal an explanation for the whole, where organization and planning is the everyday life processes and experiences of the living organism and how that organism lives an artistic, creative life (Wiebe et al., in press).

ASIDE: I want to teach with this openness, not only to the intellect, but to inspire the heart to create—to give a fuller, richer experience pervaded by meaning.

ASIDE: To be un/authored is also to be unseamed. What I mean here is closely related to Shakespeare's use of the

term in *Macbeth*. In I.ii, a captain is reporting to King Duncan about Macbeth's exploits in the war against Cawdor. He describes the honorable Macbeth, the great Macbeth, the noble Macbeth as being so mighty with the sword that he can unseam his enemies. It is a sewing metaphor and an a/r/tographic one. With the sword, Macbeth unseams the thread which holds men together. Once unseamed, men's insides fall to the ground. Passion and suffering—together. Wearing one's heart on the sleeve. Passion and suffering are akin in the hearts of a/r/tographers, just as the identities of artists, teachers, and researchers share kinship in hope for artistic ways of being in the world.

it is my hope	it is my classroom pedagogy
to translate the poetic	to explore art creation into artful
and meaningful	
classroom pedagogies	into hope

Poetry is a kind of translation of experience, particularly the inner, often unseen and un/authorized experience. And because poetry is a flow of inner thoughts, a dialogical communion of soul and heart with the outward and intentional world, a careful attention to poetry as a way of knowing and to poetry as lived

opens spaces for curriculum scholars to understand those places of pedagogy which are connected to how teachers understand themselves in relation to a curriculum of living inwardly in practice.

ASIDE: What does it mean to be creative? To engage in scholarship? Why are journals so boring? What is creativity? What motivates creativity? What does creativity mean in the context of society? How does the word “artistic” cover some of the ground? Craft combined with creativity. Statements of limitations. Situate self with transparency in context (researcher’s notes, a/r/tography meeting, July 2006).

Poetry creates/translates
experiences the inner un/authorized experiences
often unseen.

And because poetry is a flow of inner thoughts, a dialogical communion of soul
and heart with the outward and intentional world
a careful attention to poetry
as a way of knowing

and to poetry as lived

opens spaces for curriculum scholars to understand those places of pedagogy
which are connected to how teachers understand themselves in relation to curriculum.

All the poets I've read have changed my life; they are the searchers. I know the world as a poet, so I endeavour to cite poetry as a way of leading us to curriculum theory in a new way. In "The Body of Knowledge," Mary Doll (2005) points out that poets are great theorists. Reciprocally, theory with poetry and poetry with theory is perhaps more in tune with the lived experience in classrooms and out of classrooms and everything in between. Ted Aoki, in his class on deconstruction, also let me know that he seeks his curricular inspiration in artistic fields (personal communication, 1996). He knows the soul of the poet to search out.

Representation is translation; translation provides new knowledge, both in discourse and in thought. Research can be a fictive movement or a truthful moment. Moments, whether moving, overly moving, such as the lugubrious display, or unmoving as in the ironic distance, have motion. Moving moments, ongoing moments moving.

Therefore:

1. This a/r/tographic exploration of un/authorized autobiography has been re-presented as the unauthorized story of James G—told as fiction, a fiction always translated as midrash in performance, moving “from” form and to intertextuality “as” a poetic pedagogy.
2. The story acknowledges the magic of poetry, and because the fiction promises to reveal what cannot be told otherwise, the un/authorized, the curriculum of the inner life makes its heartfelt/soulful contribution to education. Poetry is a language of reflexivity rather than reflection.
3. Intimacy, in its fictional form, because of its efforts to not imitate truth, to avoid falling in love with one’s reflected self in another, is a powerful pedagogy.

ASIDE: We must linger here in poetry for a moment, for intimacy in education (see De Castell, 1999), because its dangerous possibilities, such as abuse, exhibitionism, and exposure, have been generally shunned in favour of professional distance. But professional distance, if sought out because of fear, leaves us as hollow bodies without hearts (Wiebe & Daley, 2006).

Anima’s enema

*Tragedies leave behind eternal marks,
while the glories leave useless memories.
Coelho, 1998, p.135*

September 2nd and a new
academic year is here waving

wildly, freshman cars drift by,
playing a glorious future

packed full with belongings
and long weekend longings

I pick up the paper wondering
if she really did say that?

Sometimes love has a voice
distorted, a grip that frowns,

leaving me talking to myself
in open-ending vowels

a mouth without lips,
whose words come back

lacking conviction
attracted to different languages.

Stripped of artifice she rolls
her eyes as if to this present life

a litany of etiquette can turn
around time and break her

free from my fake spooky smile,
sinners together without mirrors.

Now looking back I can see it,

intimacy without bowels

has a short shelf life:
time to find my animus

or my anus, and pack my shy
little lessons, gifts given

only as whores, letters still with lipstick
smudges, and piss on everything.

Not so wrong when you consider
how we will spend poetry

and marriage scared, smiling,
recalling our invisibility

like the poor schmucks
inside their cars, inside

their belongings, daring anyone
wearing string bikini underwear

to come in and find another
glorious future to drink to.

ASIDE: I hope that the
poetry in this dissertation is
like reading a second-hand
book with marginal notes
written in by hand; they are
interesting by the very fact

that they are not printed with
the original edition; it is in
the spirit of midrash—
un/authorized, having the
appeal of voyeurism.

Poetry is a way of knowing that is uniquely different to individuals, and yet simultaneously collaborative, for when shared, poetry relates individuals to one another intimately. Unethical? No. It is a pedagogy with the same ethics and the same value as fiction.

Thus, in telling James's lived story and by translating it into poetry, there is an unveiling of an inner, personal pedagogy and simultaneously a collaboration with others. Such an approach, which is slow, meditative, and infinitely discursive, hopefully does not become a method, nor unfold methodically. It is akin to Pinar's notion of the Latin verb *currere*, which is autobiographically understanding our situations, "both as individuals and as a group" (Pinar, 2004, p.5), and, I would add, is understanding the collaborative relationship of individuals with and within the group. hooks says that "when we choose to love we choose to move against fear—against alienation and separation" (hooks, 2000, p.94). If, in this marathon of daily teaching, the teacher can slow down, share more in the journey, go on his students' journeys, recognize weakness (including his own), and let students' hopes and fears influence her heart as well, then she is more likely to be present in her student's lives just when she is needed.

As the personal becomes a way of exploring the curriculum with others, the curriculum of the inner life, it becomes necessary for poets, as those who live in/ with/ by/ and through language, to write poetry so that a poet's understanding of the world can celebrate its difference rather than sameness, can offer ongoing hope for change, which is ongoing difference. I don't propose to hang this great obligation on only the poets, but I do believe poets in the mytho-poetic mode (rather than the logo-centric) of writing and living are particularly heartfelt and hopeful, and can thus face society's collective fear of intimacy (hooks, 2000, p.91), that "extreme isolation" of love's discourse that Barthes speaks of (1978, p.2). hooks believes that "fear is the primary force upholding structures of domination [because] it promotes the desire for separation, the desire not to be known" (2000, p.93). Poets often address fear with love, address the threat of sameness with difference, and "can inspire us and give us the courage to make necessary changes" (hooks, 2000, p.91). Thus, "[t]he choice to love is a choice to connect—to find ourselves in the other" (hooks, 2000, p.93).

Love Holds On

You said you didn't love me that much
it's not for lack of trying
like prayers to midnight gods
we cannot see past the beliefs we hold

I wonder about the nature of love
though it's pretty, love is not a prettiness
it's not a lust that floats and pops
love is pure (not in that old way)

but in a way that we cannot pollute
or put limitation on its intention
love seems to creep right up
and surprise like that

and then you say I love you
those words coming with more promise
than we know in the uttering
of something sacred

creates a new land with us in it
pushes us out the door in bare feet
walks in the snow takes us in heart
moves on keeps on holds on

we will find our place there surely
as the wind blows and cannot be held

the love that hurts without its presence
changes direction as it leaves

Currere, mentioned above, is Pinar's (1975) notion of connecting self and other without falling into autobiographical narcissism. By linking running and understanding, Pinar speaks of the *mobilization* of the public (2004, p.xiii). Pinar says that we analyze our "experience of the past and fantasies of the future in order to understand more fully, with more complexity and subtlety, [our] submergence in the present" (2004, p.5). By doing so, we can have a new ontological understanding of our present selves by living "simultaneously in the past, present, and future" (2004, p.5). In translating James's lived story **into** poetry, one may think of this as data by free association (see Pinar et al., 1995) or as phenomenological bracketing (see Merriam, 2002). Then by revisiting it **in** poetry,

and by looking poetically for overlap with others' complicated stories, in the sense of *poesis*, that is to create, there is the possibility of renewing the political with the personal (see Bruner, 1996). Like Pinar, I point out that this poetic inquiry is not self-theatricalizing or ironic distance but something in between, "an intensified engagement with daily life" (Pinar, 2004, p.37). What I am calling intimate, Mary Aswell Doll calls "intense interiority" (2000, p.xii). Drawing from what she calls a mytho-poetic tradition to inform curriculum theory, she says the curriculum theorist should tap an intense "electric current...which gives life to a person's energy source" (2000, p.vii). Further, Megan Boler likens the intimate, autobiographical approach to "collective witnessing" (1999, p.178) because an inner psychological conception of knowledge is "always understood in relation to others" (1999, p.178).

ASIDE: In this un/authorized autobiography James's love for Madeline is connected to an aesthetic experience, to this meaning making or *poesis*. By example, James's story shows how many in education can find collaboration in both the head and heart, and with others, find a collaboration closely related to creation, reflection, and pedagogy. This is an intricate balance which requires an intense love for students

as individuals. The call is to create classrooms, not of respect, but of care and understanding where students can make meaningful decisions about their lives and learn the social skills needed for making connections to a community that is more fluid and flexible depending on the needs of its members. Irwin says that aesthetic “activities weave in and through one another” (2004, p.28). As we can see from hooks and Pinar above, this aesthetic weaving describes both *currere* and love as well. And with love in *currere*, that aesthetic experience comes alive, often presented as poetry.

4. Not only does poetry create new understandings for pedagogy and for curriculum, but as poets become connected to a/r/tographic communities, they take on new responsibility for staying inwardly whole, which includes the need to work with students as human beings with needs, hopes, disappointments, desires, and

dreams. A/r/tographers are committed to living fully and joyfully, for attuning attention to the present, and for hearing the call of others in this world.

5. Poets are often at home in a/r/tography because of how the roles of artist-researcher-teacher commingle in lived and poetic ways. Irwin (2004), within the context of a/r/tography, says that “[t]he arts have opened up new possibilities for meaning making” (p.27).

ASIDE: Leggo asks (personal communication on an earlier draft of this dissertation, July 2007), “Why are poets at home in a/r/tography?” and then later, “Actually, how many poets do you know who are at home in a/r/tography?” To answer his questions would render them answerable, reducible. Let me not reduce Leggo to LEGO™, and by so doing build this dissertation out of plastic bricks. Instead, I will let go, defer, always going after, always after Leggo.

ASIDE: Mark Edmundson, however, appears to want to answer Leggo's question. Though the question came after the answer (speaking only temporally). Speaking favorably of the humanities and the role of the humanities professor, Edmundson claims that the arts have always offered the new, have always offered to fill that yearning in the human breast.

ASIDE: "Look at / what passes for the new," Williams wrote. "You will not find it there but in / despised poems. / It is difficult / to get the news from poems / yet men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found there" (in Litz & MacGowan, 1988, p.318).

Edmundson (2004) says, "Literature is...our best goad toward new beginnings" (p.3). And he later says that literature (rather than philosophy, or ethics, or religion) is "best suited for addressing the questions of 'Who am I? What might I become?'"

What is this world in which I find myself? How might it be changed for the better?" (2004, p.5). Leggo, though, should not be offended that Edmundson seems to answer his question before it is posed. Edmundson, throughout his book, provides answers to Freud, Marx, Heidegger, Lacan, Lyotard, Rorty, and Derrida. Total number of pages in *Why Read?* You guessed it, one hundred and forty-three. I do agree with Edmundson's cavalier, isn't it obvious style, on a point he makes about the current ethos in universities. He says, "we are not willing to ask the questions that matter. Into the void that we have created largely by our fear, other forces have moved. Universities have become sites not for human transformation, but for training and for entertaining" (2003, p.6). Following Edmundson's reasoning, then, here is a little hint at why poets are at home and not at home in a/r/tography. Briefly but not completely, the poet is rarely only a social scientist, that is, a social science researcher. By way of simple example, consider that in the vast majority of poetry collections, poets, while celebrating and citing the work of other poets,

rarely use APA. A/r/tography, as a kind of arts-based-research, is situated in the social sciences while also stretching beyond it. It is not just research that is aesthetic, arts-informed research, or based solely in the arts. A/r/tography in its multiplicity is both science and art, both an art form that celebrates art and a rigorous and interdisciplinary research approach. And just as a/r/tography resists limitation, by both borrowing from and contesting work in the social sciences, so too the poet stretches beyond boundaries, often feeling collegiality with a/r/tographers because of their commitment to live artfully in as many spheres, domains, discourses, identities, and so on as possible.

ASIDE: I call myself an a/r/tographer because in the classroom the multifaceted identity overlaps with others who in the classroom are also discovering the relationship of self and other. Here, in the in between spaces of being, life unfolds. Somehow, it is the poetic process that brings collaboration and

unity within the divided me—the artist of
a/r/tography.

poets have much to say
but rarely in APA

SPECULATION(S)

I heard my soul singing behind a leaf... I held it in my hand
and I heard my soul singing mightily against me.

(Leonard Cohen, 1984, p.3)

ASIDE: In an earlier version of this work,
there was a longer citation from Cohen's
Book of Mercy. It cannot be included here
because of copyright restrictions, so please
imagine with me now the resonant voice of
Leonard Cohen, and fill in for yourselves
four lines of text about love breaking
through veils, walls, and curtains.

I am a teacher and my soul sings
both love and longing

ALLUSION(S)

fall flowers

accompany his memory

still audible

After studying James's poetry intensely for over 6 months, I began to be pleased with how much I could understand, even in the fragments. I generally spent about four to six hours each day labeling, structuring, recording, and re-ordering. Hoping that, like most teachers, once I had things "broken down into isolated, seemingly unrelated fragments, it would be clear sailing from here on in." A few tweaks here and there and the rest would be "monitoring and management" (Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2003, p.6). I was looking for an arrangement of best fit for the poetry, diaries, and essays.

Best fit? Who was I fooling? Worse, I had this vague impression that over time I would be able to accurately present what his poems hinted at. I think I was a structuralist at heart. Still living with the over confidence that no matter how complex the system, I would still be able to manage the variables and retrace my steps. My commitment was becoming increasingly less noble, as I was fixated with fixing the poems, a kind of deadening of language and experience. Living knowledge, for Bill Doll (2003), is a "living array of 'tried and true' knowledge which is only true to the extent that it is open to being 'tried' yet again, here, now" (p.xiv).

Here is the evidence of my blatant over-confidence:

Only knowing James for a short time, I had no way of knowing his exact thoughts and feelings. So, this text is not an example of exact transcription. However, as a poetry critic, I have always regarded poetry, diaries, and essays as excellent

source material. And this is what James bequeathed to me. I say this with confidence because of a life filled with the necessity of making such distinctions around poetry.

Of course, I came to my over-confidence honestly. Believing like many others in the human sciences that with careful rigour I could come to know something valuable, measurable, and communicable (Rosaldo, 1989).

Perhaps you have rightly guessed that I have changed since those months of sorting James's poetry. What has come fresh to me is the importance of letting the story live in the gaps of its telling. The tried and true, as Doll says above, is living again because I return to it again, and hopefully again and again.

Thus, this is not another text, like so many sacred texts and science texts, which prescribes as it tells. I believe, like Toews (2004) that there is no room to breathe, or grieve, or believe when "everything that happens is God's will" (p.173). That is, the will of those with authority, with power. Noting how easily power relations are constructed in the very act or performance of word preservation, in producing and collecting of books, this text hopes to unravel its yarn, that is to tell its story, and to ravel its yarn, that is to not tell the story, but many stories, to revel and ravel and reveal in an interstitial and intertextual autobiography.

In the many-storied world, we can see how James's journey does elucidate a unique world of lived experience: *secrets*.

ASIDE: I fear that I have not made you much of a map to navigate James's journey. Perhaps it is best if we agree

with each other right from the outset that the gold at the end of the rainbow will not be found in the pages following. The magician (is that me?) has no intention of ever revealing the secret of his tricks. Once a trick is known, or can be duplicated, the magician is soon unemployed. And since it is employment, and later promotion, and later tenure, that matters so much in the “real” world, we must bend ourselves over to the fictive world when it comes to secrets. There are many secrets, and I have not saved them for the end, for one place, for one finale.

Secrets

watch'n witch'n mad
my kind of care not reading
her mind back to the secret doorway
held and holding on for the role
because she wants to be alone
and the house is soundproof
too small

©, James G—November, 2005

I now believe, as Britzman (2006) considers in *Novel Education*, that the best way to tell a secret is to fictionalize it. She asks, “If the case study reads like fiction, like meta psychology, what can we say is represented?”(p. vii). In representing education without

reducing education, by allowing an overlap of fiction and truth and allowing for the “potential pitfalls” of mixing the personal and public (Salvio, 2007, p.4), by remaining in the tension of still wondering what to say, we can thus continue the autobiographical and pedagogical quest. Britzman’s question leads me on to some of my own, questions here which are both novel, and part of the novel. Why did James want his story told? And why do I tell it in an un/authorized form? Why might this matter? How can I bring the personal into teaching without seeking attention, like a kind of voyeurism? And, does this matter? What kinds of confession are part of the reflexivity that leads to praxis?

The answers are ongoing and complex—the text which follows gives some scope to just how complicated. But for those who refuse to read on without reduction, simplification and abstraction, I will say this: James felt that the professional emphasis in education compartmentalized and separated the inner life from the outer life. He wrote poetry to restore some balance, to acknowledge love’s power, and to restore its credibility in the classroom—he wrote with the heart of Barthes (1978), that the lovers’ discourse might be trusted again.

ASSURANCE(S)

Out of a feeling of duress, I did, just above, just now, provide a 53 word summary or purpose. I feel awful. I did not want to give in to the pragmatists. I was hoping to leave William James, John Dewey, Ralph Tyler, to name only a few, respectfully in their paradigms. But that foggy mist which surrounds the university, which as Edmundson says (2004), causes universities to prioritize their marketing departments (p.17), also, by extension, causes them to prefer the economic system of knowing to the discursive one, demanding a kind of clarity and centrality so that one product might be distinguished from another. Then, presumably, academic work can be marketed and sold on its unique properties.

Always the teacher and poet, I thought it might be fun to assure ourselves that we can meet the demands and contest them at the same time. So, let the games, i.e. the contest, begin.

Abstract

a brief summary...

to help the reader quickly ascertain the paper's purpose.

Boy meets girl.

Girl loves boy.

Family and friends intervene.

Boy dies.

Girl dies.

Since this dissertation is clearly not that, then this must simply be this, and I can't call it that. But if that is what I'm supposed to do, what am I going to do with this? Not really a real problem if this doesn't exist because it's not that.

Abstract 2

an abstract always appears

at the beginning of a manuscript, acting as the point-of-entry.

Worthy man seeks promotion.

Nepotism followed by Murder.

Bad dreams.

That clearly exists because it has a definition. But without a definition, this is really less than that. At best, some kind of inferior that. For example, that and that make two thats, and by extrapolation [I love extrapolating] could procreate and there would be many more thats that look just like the first patriarchal that. But this and this is troublesome because, by extrapolation, there might be too many thiss [does anybody know the plural of this?], and if there are more thiss than thats, then that's a big problem for the status quo, especially for those with status in the status quo.

The trouble with abstracts is the same as the trouble with Haikus.

The Problem with Haiku

Of all the things I
Wish would be, the one that most
Occurs to me is...

Abstract 3

*Abstraction and indexing services
are available for a number of academic disciplines,
aimed at compiling a body of literature for that particular subject.*

Boy loves girl.
Girl rebuffs boy.
Boy goes crazy.
Girl goes crazy.
Crazy girl commits suicide.
Crazy boy kills parents.

Abstracts are like visiting airports. I've been to Montreal six times. When people ask whether I've been to Mount Royal Park or Notre Dame Basilica, I say, *no*, but then I remind them of how I've been to the Air Canada lounge, and surely that counts.

Or like when reviewers for dissertation awards only read the abstract. How do you feel now, reviewer, knowing that I'm going to give you a multiple choice test on the dissertation, and you have only read the abstract?

James falls in love with Madeline because...

- a) He was on the rebound from separating with his wife.
- b) He was at the Twister Sister nightclub and saw her striptease.
- c) She tied him up on their first date and this was always James's fantasy.
- d) She picked him up in a 1969 Mustang convertible.
- e) Both A and B
- f) Both C and D
- g) All but A
- h) All but C
- i) Partially A, but James was divorced, not separated.
- j) Partially B, but the striptease was only in James's imagination.
- k) Partially C, but James wasn't tied up until the third date.
- l) Partially D, but she couldn't get the top down without James's help.
- m) Both O and R
- n) Both P and Q
- o) None of the above because James does not fall in love.
- p) None of the above because there is no James at all.
- q) None of the above because there is no Madeline.

- r) None of the above because this writer doesn't believe in love.
- s) All of the above because the story never ends.
- t) All of the above because there is always another iteration for the subplot.
- u) All of the above because believing in belief is all that is required.
- v) All of the above because you're so smart you can argue anything is true.

If you guessed correctly, then does that show how smart you are, how good the abstract is, or how poorly the test is designed? Or some other reason, but since that other reason is not named, how much more difficult to think of it.

HINT: Some people think that test writers subtly reveal the answer to earlier questions later in the test, so, maybe because I just used the word "smart" maybe you should pick V.

HINT: Others think that D is the right answer more often than A, B, or C. But that's when there are only four choices. If we extrapolate, in theory, that would make v the right answer because it is the final choice.

HINT: Did you ever see Kevin Nealon play "Subliminal Man" on *Saturday Night Live*?

Sometimes subliminal messages are deliberately used to distract. Or did you see *The Princess Bride* (1987)? That part where the Dread Pirate Roberts has a game of wit with Vizzini. Of course, the *Iocane* powder is in both cups. [Damn: Microsoft Word spellchecker doesn't recognize *Iocane* as a real word. I'll try Wikipedia. While I'm there I'll also check the definition of abstract.]

HINT: Some think that knowing the teacher's life philosophy can help. So, am I a kind person, an optimist? Do I want to trick you because like most poets I'm a prankster, or, am I still a people pleaser, a good kid (Rasberry, 1991), hoping that you will get the right answer so you can all have As.

HINT: Some think that knowing what a teacher reads will reveal something of his or her choices. Currently I'm reading Wordsworth. Does that help? Of the Romantic poets, Wordsworth is not the one remembered as being subversive. And yet, in his youth, Wordsworth sympathized with the French Revolution, lived in France, sired a natural

daughter, and wrote good poetry. During this period, so-called subversive years, he was a “bad” man. Then he became “good, “ abandoned his daughter, adopted correct principles and wrote bad poetry (Wiebe, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2007).

don't ask what is it?

Let us come and take our visit!

ASIDE: I think like Prufrock, I am afraid to make a real proposal—but this is what my heart wants to do. Come with me. This is my proposal: Come celebrate life with me. Come out to play. Here I am beckoning with my finger: not on bended knee, though there is some familiarity in striking such a pose. But the posing here will not be to strike a pose, but to pose a strike—to strike out with legs of poetry to poetry that is on the move. The fiction must follow its plot.

Not everyone believes in magic, and if they do, not the magic that matters, that material magic, that is less arterial magic and more magical magic, for that matter, and not everyone gets the chance to matter. This is magic. Mattering is magic. Making matter is midrash. Making matter out of nothing is creation. Midrash is not creation but recreation.

What I say about midrash will unlikely matter to serious midrashers, or the larger midrashic traditions, and there are many. Bakhos (2006) says “there are countless avenues one may traverse in attempting to understand midrash” (p. vii). There are also countless issues, and countless ways of dealing with those issues, both the current ones and the ancient ones which are becoming current again.

Midrash and a/r/tography. A strange arrangement. Both are open to strangers. Both invite strangers in. There is room at the inn. With Maxine Greene’s (1973) call to see ourselves as strangers, many in education have been aware of the value of leaving familiar territory and wandering into new lands. The journey, the pilgrimage, the quest.

Alan Block (1998) says that in classrooms where “all is prescribed and known—in which it is declared what a teacher should teach and a student should learn—there can be no teachers and no students” (p.15).

ASIDE: My proposal is not merely to interpret and analyze, but to interrogate the classroom as a community; not just to criticize the status quo, but to move beyond it and create the kind of community

where individuals are not forced into a “community standard.”

Chinnery (2006) has approached this challenge by suggesting classrooms need community without community. She says that even when there is an honest intention to respect differences, too often there is an erasure of difference instead. Block (1998) says, “In such a place we would be not strangers but unseen” (p.15). We should be careful when declaring our *whats*. Perhaps it is better to be in a state of, “What’s that?” Midrash and a/r/tography. What’s that? In the process of asking, maybe the invisible becomes visible.

Visibility is helped in art (Silverman, 1999). A/r/tography as an artful form of research “sees” into the messy world of classrooms (Wiebe et al., in press). Like Greene’s (1973) call for us to be strangers, estranged to ourselves and to others, a/r/tography calls teachers to be artists, which in overtly instrumental educational settings such as ours, is also a call to be strangers in a land of empiricist, pragmatic, technocratic, and economic models of education. That is, this land is our land, “this nightmare” that is currently ours (Pinar, 2004, pp.5,6,22). But we cannot close our eyes and go to sleep. A/r/tography, in addition to being an art form, is a research method that opens our senses, our eyes, and ears, and noses, and skin, and whole bodies to be awakened anew. Midrash does this too.

Both midrash and a/r/tography acknowledge the slippery notions of language. Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen (2003), referring to interpretation, say, “[p]articlar events are ‘read’ or ‘treated’ as a part of some longstanding whole to which it belongs and from which it gains its sense and significance” (p.12). For example, in an earlier version of this

work, on this same page where I have these new words, I had some business about thanking a publisher, and book sales, something like this, “As book sales, though not spectacular, are enough for this modest second edition, perhaps it is best to clarify a few things this time around? Actually, there is only one thing to clarify—James’s death.” Lewis Hyde (1983) suggests that “the way we treat a thing [like an earlier version of a work] can sometimes change its nature” (p. xiii). Midrash is commentary; it is reply; it is excess; it is new growth; it is palimpsest. It is not ordinary, but originality. Midrash treats texts with respect, but rejects the dust on them. And so, in shaking off the dust of this early version, I see that some words are falling through the cracks. In such an erasure, these words still leave their traces, thus the spaces are openings to the new and the old, a portal for going back and forth.

Interpreting a Dissertation

The page must be turned in faith

(thank you, rabbi)

Bits and not pages

resist reading

according to... this opportunity

Silences

Extended

(a metaphor of serenity)

I step in trepidation of tradition

seeking location (go Hermes)

on the page
(perhaps beside the editor who is not having lunch
but *lunching* with a BIG NAME)
set aside understanding
an opening
a way of going under
standing no more)

In an earlier version of this text, I wrote that there is a “growing acceptance of a/r/tography as a means of artistic autobiography.” Growth. Did I mean bigger? faster? stronger? more significance? more money? more influence? Was I speaking as an idealist? an opportunist? a pragmatist? Perhaps I was thinking in Kantian? Or Nikean? Just do it, just think it, only imagine it, and it will grow, it will come, it will be yours, just stretch out your hand. Acceptance. Exceptions. I am not sure I meant what I said, or was meaning anything more than what I am saying now.

When it comes to autobiography, I was there and now I am here. Not quite. I am still there and I am also here. Here is always changing, always becoming there. Once there, we can hear a new here—with attention to the ear, perhaps a “third ear” (Ellsworth, 1997, p.71). But that is exactly what we fear, or what we are trying not to fear. I want to admit and submit to being under, to standing under and not understanding my self. This is an undressing that is confessing what is otherwise never professed. It is a new dress, a new kind of address in learning.

ASIDE: One way classroom teachers can resist
disinterested knowing and address their student

relationally, is to be "More AI" agents, models of subversion (Wiebe, Leggo, & Sameshima, 2007). "AI" is simply a person who "devotes his or her time to reflecting on the present moment and the current context. She resists ritualistic practice. He lives poetically, not necessarily as a poet but as someone who seeks to understand small moments as pedagogical" (p.7).

More AI Poetry

I don't need
anymore words of advice
disguised in poetry
stop the broken record
of your ancient wisdom

I need more AI

the AI who left
in the middle of the night
and lost everything
the AI who's partial
to dope and tattoos
who's got more hiking boots
than shoes

the AI who listens
because he doesn't know
the ending to this poem
who'll take off
his only shirt
to stop my bleeding

and not look at his watch
during my confession

Ellsworth (1997) says that finding out “where, when, and how teaching happens is undecidable” (p.193). The teaching and learning process needs our confession that we do not know. It is also, in some sense, “impossible,” in that “all modes of address misfire one way or another” (Ellsworth 1997, p. 8). In addition to being a condition of teaching, I see this *undecidability* as a desirable autobiographical muddle, inevitable because “I never ‘am’ the ‘who’ that a pedagogical address thinks I am. But then again, I never am the who that I think I am either” (Ellsworth 1997, p. 8). When thinking of midrash and a/r/tography autobiographically, I am looking for ways to continue on in difference. Self reflection, Ellsworth (1997) points out, “is always in danger of becoming just that—a reflection of the prior, same self” (p. 94). Too often *knowing something* shields us, especially the rational disinterested kind of knowing, from the relational, from the unmeant, from mystery, and searching. I am hoping to avoid what Ellsworth (1997) calls “mirror reflection,” that “illusory functioning of symmetrical reflexivity” (p. 94), and instead be open to disorder, to allow emotional outbursts, ambiguity, and nonsense.

Ellsworth’s warning of narcissism provides convincing reasons for disrupting self study with midrash and a/r/tography, for then presenting that disruption fictionally. After all is written, the modernist author can die. But what happens after his death, in the post mortem, in the post modern? I am interested in what comes after that overly-defined, that overly dead version of self. In considering the tension between fiction and truth, Britzman asks, “Existentially, what form of life do words create?” (2006, p. vii). I am

interested in life, in forms of life, in what is created in words and by words presented as more words. The wordly me, which brings me back to James.

We were friends so he asked me to write a fiction of his earlier life—one based on his poetry.

Once upon a time there was an English teacher named James.
I write “once upon a time” because this work is a fiction,
and like most fictions,

there will be a love affair,

and there will be death.

(He must have known when we met that he was planning to die.)

I write, “I write,” not because (I) am the writer, or the writing. Yet,
to some extent, both of these premises are true.

I write, “I write” to acknowledge that process in writing never
ends.

But I must not exaggerate, either. For there is a relationship that must be cared
for: This *I*, or our relationship, either “ours” as in you and I or “ours” as in James and I.
I’m not one to exaggerate—we only met once at an a/r/tography meeting at UBC—but
the connection was instant and I was lucky to have met him at a turning point in his life.

ASIDE: I'm not really
sure why he chose me. I had
just met James in Vancouver.
Sure, I had read his poetry—
who hadn't? Maybe there
was a connection? Maybe he
liked the idea that I was a
poetry reviewer and a
scholar? One thing is for
sure—she is beautiful, and
meeting her made all the
difference in writing James's
un/authorized autobiography.

ASIDE: Perhaps you are
wondering who "she" is? Do
you have to know now?
Many hints have been given
already, but perhaps we
should go back to the
beginning? Which is right
here, as we are still in the

beginning, we are still
waiting on and for page 1.

When the mourning quieted, I collected, wrote into, relived—used really any means of aesthetic inquiry—to represent the relatively unknown story of his other life, of why he left teaching to become a poet, or in his words, a “reinvention of himself as a new kind of teacher.”

It’s been a long time. I wanted to wait a bit longer, but promised James. I may not be much of a writer, but I’m one to keep promises.

James wanted others to know how poetry, particularly love poetry, is not simply a genre for a few rare birds who read off the best sellers’ lists, but how poetry is a collaboration of the head and heart with one’s self and with others, a collaboration closely related to creation, reflection, and pedagogy.

After he won the Griffin prize, no one seemed to care or ask questions about his life as a teacher. As a poet, he seemed to appear out of nowhere. To me, this is a shame. The poetry and pedagogy are intimately connected.

And please, for those of you telling me to leave a great man’s memory alone or that I’m jealous and wish I were in James’s place—read the original foreword again. This is a fiction. The James of this story is not James G—. For the real story, purchase the official biography. It’s still on the best seller list in Canada.

I guess imagining that a great master can be taken from this world is too difficult; even harder to imagine is that he had roots, had an inner life that was full of fear, struggle

and bitterness. When heroes become too much like you and me, they cease to become heroes. Or do they?

Most truths are
best understood as a fiction.

How is this paradox possible?

Well, according to James himself,
who has come to life even apart from these pages,

“At every moment, for every breath, we live in two worlds at once.”

What he means is that most of us
avoid the abyss of our own hearts.

He means that there are truths so deep down
that they have become unauthorized and lack permission.

Perhaps you and I are like James, and we rarely give ourselves permission to
write the truth?

As Nabokov (1955) has said:

“I feel my slippery self eluding me...I have camouflaged what I could” (p. 280). And so,
the truth is kept secret—from others, yes, and more importantly from ourselves.

James has allowed me to tell his story as a fiction because fiction allows us to understand multiple realities, not only by their metaphorical implications, but by their ontological ones as well.

ASIDE: Metaphor and ontology are definitely an odd mix. From Block's (2004) *Talmud, Curriculum, and the Practical*, I've learned that the Western philosophical drive to define the subject (ontology), what the subject knows about the world (epistemology and to some extent theology), and what exactly that world is or is like (metaphysics, empiricism, and to some extent teleology), has not been the Talmudic approach. In Talmud, since creation is presupposed, the philosophical drive of knowledge cannot be separated from prayer (pp. 2-5). Study is prayer, prayer is study. Reality, truth, essence, individuality are thus not understood as question and answer, but more as a growing and ongoing meditation for the soul. Block says (2004), "If contemporary chaos theory argues that there is order in the universe, and that that order is only recognizable in time, then engagement in prayer and study acknowledges our patience and our hope" (p.

6). Following Block, I imagine that when the “soul sings” (Cohen, 1984, p.3) it breaks down walls between this world and the next: it is the link between being and becoming.

From ontology and metaphor emerges fiction. That responsibility, through imagination, is to describe who we are, not to know ourselves, but to mediate through and meditate on such a question. Fiction, understood in the Western tradition, is that place where scholarship and prayer meet. Love might be understood in the same way. Though, because of the strong princess/knight narrative in literature, a metaphor of princess/monster might help in understanding the connection between love and fiction as prayer.

The monster, or lover, is the link between a banished inner ugliness (prayer when separated from public spaces) and the more acceptable social being (the scholar who can discern truth from belief). This link provides crossing between the outward form of being and the inner discourse of any passion which can't remain only inside, yet can't be acknowledged as our own. The irony is such that the inner monster's profound beauty is hidden, or rather complies to a social form. According to James, “love poetry is a place of extremity (sometimes confused with romanticizing) and is thus strange or monstrous (from the latin *monstrum*, meaning monster, which is from *monore*, meaning warning) and reveals the beauty in what can be alienating (Beasley, 2007). Perhaps this is why love comes to us as a fiction or fantasy, so much so that we can hardly believe it, even when it is knocking at the door of our hearts.

ASIDE: I also wanted to publicly credit James for allowing me to use his poetry and papers. He wanted only the poems, and he is right: the poetry is enough to tell the story (see chapter 16). But there are editors and readers, and in this unauthorized account, for those who do not know James as the famous James G—I have provided a few details so that a wider audience can make sense of his life.

What follows, in a word, is “poetry” that has been collected,
sifted,
shaped,
mused on, ordered, reordered,
lived into,
written into,
written on,
written from,
performed, etc.

I have used whatever artful means available, like a bricoleur.

While still in its infancy, the word that James and I agreed on to describe the multi-artful, collaborative process is ~~a/r/tography~~, midrashogiography/a/r/dyspeptic, used here as a kind of artistic autobiography.

ASIDE: In case you forgot, sometimes this ~~omniscient~~ editor, the midrasher, will be visible in the text. This is to acknowledge what is invisible, to help retrace the traces that have been erased.

A/r/tography works well with midrash. Thus it can welcome the midrashic voice. It is a methodology that is most fluid and freeing when writing collaboratively about the unauthorized.

ASIDE: I am both here and there. When I met James in Vancouver he was interested in the words collaborative, unauthorized, translated, and poetry as they relate to a/r/tography and how the overlapping identities of artist-researcher-teacher provide links to being and becoming in both lived and fictive ways. And now I am also interested in the intertextuality of a/r/tography, its possibilities within the poetic and performative strand of midrash.

ASIDE: A/r/tographers need a flexible, meaningful, theoretical approach that enables a full use of language, particularly its philosophic and poetic value. From van Manen's (1990) work in phenomenology we've learned that creativity, in addition to being fuel on the quest, is also inventing the approach that will enable an energetic response. So, in keeping the energy, a/r/tography seeks to be serendipitous, collaborative, real-time, dialogical, autobiographical, un/authorized. None of the labels really fit, but they all fit: it is both inherited from the past and a reinterpretation of it.

(James) has done much of the writing—the poetry is his, the teaching is his, the inner curriculum is his. So, this is autobiography; then, as an a/r/tographer, (I) have “translated” his/my experience for the page.

ASIDE: I is sometimes (I), as I am both here and there.

ASIDE: I consider the question of who is writing who, that sticky matter of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, in the same way post-

structuralists make use of the word intertextuality.

The notion that a signifier floats, or shifts, according to multiplicitous, rhizomatic, and ongoing iterations can be borrowed from post-structuralism when thinking about subjectivity. Hence, as in language, when in a particular discourse it appears that a signifier “touches” down in between two signifieds and creates associative meaning, so there are times in this text when it appears the subject takes on a place of authorship. Though this is not the case. The authority of the author is displaced. Appearance often appears to be reality. Here, though, as seen above, reality is not understood in the empirical tradition, and so there is little attempt on my part to distinguish between appearance and reality, or who is writing who.

Translating Love

leaning on this crutch
sipping a cup full of spirit
these ideas come at night
scratches of ink
running down my back
still fresh as nails sinking in
I am caught writing again
another fragrance on my chin

His scholarship on the inner life, on nurturing wholeness, on living artfully, is expressed as much in the poetry as in his papers.

ASIDE: Thinking again about intertextuality and intersubjectivity, I am reminded that the displaced signifier affects our understanding of what is believed and what can be conveyed in conversation. One benefit of intersubjectivity is a lessened fear of disagreement in conversation, of needing to bring everyone in the room to the same vantage point in order to ensure a kind of false harmony. Taylor (1992), like most analytic philosophers, for example, privileges reason in conversation, putting the onus on reason to convince another of the better way of thinking. Considered holistically, agreement is not even desired, for we know that we are all connected to the whole from a different vantage point. Our goal in conversation should not be agreement, as if there is some moral imperative in convincing another person of your point of view, but ensuring that everyone in the room has had an opportunity to speak, to listen, to be understood.

ASIDE: I do agree with Taylor (1992) that conversation is needed so that debate does not become inarticulate, so that with articulation we “may make a difference to [others’] lives” (p. 21). “Articulacy,” he says later, “has a moral point, not just in correcting what may be wrong views but also in making the force of an ideal that people are living by more palpable, more vivid for them; and by making it more vivid, empowering them to live up to it in a fuller and more integral fashion” (p. 22).

Another Vasco da Gama Crossing

The day was bony and hot
and I had been taught to share

everything in the world made sense
so I came outside sure we would be friends

smiling with the lemonade
crossing boundaries of race

that conveniently marked our houses
on opposite sides of the street.

I tell this over and over again
because after the lemonade was gone

we moved to a better neighbourhood

and the friends there didn't share either.

Having lived with James's poetry for the last five years, it is my claim that his poetry tells all that needs to be told, that it is a story of the lived curriculum of his classroom. In a/r/tography, poetry is a kind of translation of experience, one that has required close care, particularly because James's life was actually lived and can be known in the poems. In fact, there is much I've had to infer from the poetry. I've had to push and prod a little, even add a few things to get a telling story, that mix of fiction to reveal truth.

Neilsen says translation is a recursive process,

“building the knowing on the known” (1998, p. 40).

James's poetry has filled in some of the gaps, built a new knowing of James that is more true than the public record.

ASIDE: But gaps are still gaping. There is a gap between what is written and thought, and there is a gap between what is written and what I want or could have meant to write. Writing cannot replicate; it is discursive and recursive.

ASIDE: The largest gap, of course, is between what is written about what others write.

Perpend: (1) there is a gap between what is written and what we read; (2) there is a gap between a first reading and any subsequent reading of the same text; (3) there is a gap between what we understand and how we think it into language; (4) there is a gap between what we think to write and what we actually write; (5) there is a gap between what we write and the medium we use to express it in; (6) there is a gap between what is written and any revision thereafter. Repeat.

Dunlop (2000) says, “The reader fills gaps with imagination, as does the writer...the writer becomes the books she frequents” (p. 12).

James’ poetry is fiction
amuck with truth.

While his poetry has won awards, it is raw. It is still bruised and swollen, a poetry down low. It is the poetry of muck and earth and dirt.

This is how James wanted it. Not that stuff in greeting cards, in anthologies, and printed single file on clean, cotton t-shirts. The poetry here is on the move, and if we want to find James, we must chase after it, not knowing what route or direction it will take.

His work is known for its many points of view as one self-story competes for another. One critic, Rachel Sequin, has said that reading James is like, “wrestling (mud-

wrestling really) with the untold, the secret parts that could not otherwise escape, and may only escape in the truly unauthorized sense.” She is right, of course. How could it be otherwise? The lived is not only the source but a structuring force for how knowledge is understood. And this structure sinks into the ground down low.

To understand James I’ve had to get down. It was one of James’s famous sayings, “If you can’t get down, you won’t find love.” Since my own life hasn’t exactly been one of golden symmetry, I’ve listened to James, and have learned to get to my knees and get my nose close to the earth. That bears repeating—the lived is a structuring force, down low.

Biographer Paul Meyers (2003) has a preference for the naked truth. In his telling of the Barenaked Ladies’ story, his blend of the public and private shows a commitment to the untold—all the lurid little details, delights of gossip, and frank frivolities that few have the courage to write. Like the unauthorized biographies of famous people, so this too hits the bookshelves with the anticipation of getting to the good stuff.

Yes, it is possible to find James’s authorized biography under the entry James G—! on the bestseller shelves, but there will be no reference here to that kind of political and economic fakery that pleases one’s non-fiction diet in the same way M—‘s holiday cookbook can refer to a raisin as reason for *raison*.

No, most true truths must be revealed as fictions.

I, for one, have grown tired of “official” versions of the truth.

In James’s favourite movie, *A Few Good Men* (1992), an impassioned Jack Nicholson plays the role of a decorated U.S. general

who protects the southeastern shore from enemy attack. At the climax of the movie he roars out before a disbelieving courtroom, “You can’t handle the truth.”

James would say to me, “We can’t handle truth. We prefer lies. We tell lies to stay sane.” For James’s sake, I write his unauthorized biography as a fiction.

But this a/r/tographical fact of fiction,
or perhaps better expressed as an unifact of fiction,
or maybe more exactly an inflected fact of fiction,
is nothing to cry foul, or wolf, or uncle, about.

As I said above, James has given permission for a fictitious telling. But more compelling is that fact follows fiction: fiction is just as true, if not more true. After all, James came to the truest understanding of his life truths from a movie.

But I digress.

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RECIPROCATIONS

Dear Sean (or should I say dear writer),
I don't want to be facetious, but since this is my story, who really is the author? I won't rise up from the grave to dispute anything, but I would like you to at least acknowledge the collaboration inherent in writing auto/biography. Living and writing being as they are in cahoots.

Even in fiction, this work is a collaboration. Even in living, I acknowledge freely and openly that the ideas that have driven my life forward are the work of many hands, some loving and some not. This is not to say that I have lived or loved many and that we have all written this together. No, I simply want to acknowledge that this unauthorized work is seen through the eyes of a minor character. That night I shared with you the idea that we are trapped in plot, with events outside our control. Without this control, we might as well accept the fact that we are minor characters, playing a supporting role.

But this acceptance of loss creates hope, for the way we choose to live is a structuring force—no, not strong enough to change the plot (for we are minor characters), but a force nonetheless that brings meaning to what seems like chaos. Love does this. Amelia Jones (1998) says, “The relation to the self...to the world...to the other, all are constituted through a reversibility of seeing and being seen” (p. 41). In the contexts of a novel that means we are minor characters in other's stories. Who knows who is writing who? Tell my story that way. As a minor character, you cannot really write a strict autobiography because the plot is focused only on the main. I am an other to my own writer, reversibility.

A collaborator to be sure, a voice, a participant. And even though as participant I have been fortunate enough to hold the pen and write this down, I am gravely aware that I am third person. My life is in your hands now. I am simply the unburied but unbodied voice that lingers in these pages, but it is you that gives them the artful and poetic style.

My life is also a collaboration in the sense that so many share the same earth. We walk on it together. Since becoming a poet everything I've written has been poetry. Since becoming a researcher I've realized that I'm not a poet or a teacher, but a poet and a teacher. In this combination, I realize that all along I have been an a/r/tographer.

The a/r/tographer lives in the multiplicity of a community of discursive relationships; the a/r/tographer, writer of unauthorized (even collaborative) autobiographies, creates fictions—reproductive and resistant—intimate textual intertwinings that tell of both self and of culture and of writer and reader. It's what I want you to do for my life. I came back once: bring me back again in words— not into a wholeness, but a presentation of the collection of fragments. Maybe some will connect the known James to the unknown me.

Anne Carson (1998) says, "the history of text is like a long caress" (p. 6). Your writing my story is not so much biography, but love. To share this with others, if they are to understand my work, tell them about love. Tell them about the banished inner love. The estranged love.

*I stopped to listen to its voice,
but it did not come.
So I began again with a sense of loss,
and in this deepened sense,*

*I've had to get down, get my knees and elbows dirty,
and get my nose close to the earth.
Seeing its dirty bottom—nay—
even breathing in the musty air
has shown me the underside,
the backside, the undergrowth
that is underground.*

Jane Gallop says the “crude...is all too apt” (1995, p. 80). In her sense, there is nothing crude about the underground. It is where love is found.

Loving Madeline was suffering, but the kind of suffering which is true passion. Before her, love was strategy and an increasing intricacy of compromise and bargains. It was suffocating me. She offered me escape.

Don't you love love's irony? In love I went underground. Nothing illegal. Quite literally, I mean underground. Like Narcissus, I spent many years looking for myself. And like him, also suffered a sort of underwater fate. Looking at my reflection in the well, I fell in, sunk so low that I went under the earth. There in the underworld is a parallel world, one that is more a/r/tistic, more suited to those who with great skepticism look out onto the frantic world and shake their heads.

Going under was not all me. Love gave me the push. And, because it is a collaborative process, there is something that is noticeably self and something distinctly other. She is beautiful. But I did not disappear because of her or into her. There is a process of creativity, an artistic moment that can bring self and other together while

remaining separate. This is true among persons, and it is also true within persons. This paradox of community and identity is also true of poetry and can be explored in the reading and writing of poetry. It is, surely, a ruthless and loving poetry of destroying the self while simultaneously writing the self into being.

As a poet, when I became part of a community of a/r/tographers, this same paradox was present, and it empowered new meaning in the shared life of discovering self. The practice of poetry in the community of a/r/tography has allowed me to come back as a new James. Thus, within me is self and other, and in a/r/tography has been a possibility to discover myself anew in poetry. Merton (1988) uses the word personalism to explain how it is possible to be both other and self. He says, "To give priority to the person means respecting the unique and inalienable value of the other person as one's own" (p. 17). He is referring to the slippery notion of being, noting that to be an individual is not an inherent property of being. Thus, in poetry I am searching myself, and yet, in poetry, I am othering myself. This is the nature of being, of multiple being always in preposition by, to, with, among, and between others. Yes, as Merton alludes to, there is a process, and for me, it is the poetic process that brings collaboration and unity within the divided me—the artist of a/r/tography.

You are an a/r/tographer too. I know you hesitate, preferring the simple trade of reviewing poetry, but it's there. I felt the connection that night.

Because of this possibility, as well as others that I hope you discover, employ the practice of a/r/tography, un/namely poetry, not only as the un/genre of this unauthorized, collaborative, fictional biography, but also as a research possibility. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman (1995) have noted this possibility of research, of finding

understanding in the deconstructed text (p. 449). Thus I raise my glass to poetry, I mean, to what I've written—to what you've written—to what I've lived—and to what follows after this.

With a loving trust,

James

CHAPTER ONE

TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT

HARD WORK AND EMPTY PRAISE

THE BLIND LEADING THE BLIND CURRICULUM GUIDE¹

THE PEDAGOGICAL PROMISE ESCAPES

Like all English teachers, James was born with a pedagogical instinct. He taught his brothers to read; he volunteered in Sunday school and later with his church's youth group; he worked at the local community center teaching tennis lessons in the summer and power skating in the winter. In school, he delighted in pleasing his teachers.

Like most small town adolescents, James thought the world of his father, who worked a man's job, out in the bush, stockpiling trees that were eventually converted to lumber and paper. The town he lived in was small. His mother worked at the only bank;

¹ In curriculum class last night, in a long and narrow room, one of the students leapt up and wrote his definition of curriculum on the white board. I'd been sitting for a long time, and I hoped, like me, he had risen up simply to rest his bum and by shifting his weight redistribute the wealth of blood to other parts of his body. But hopes are short-lived. Apparently, he felt that by fixing his definition to the wall, an important step in understanding would be served, knowledge could be known, our task could be clear, right thinking separated from wrong thinking. With definition came purpose and a reason to exist. Now the real business of ordering things, developing schema, organizing structures could begin. We had a center from which all lines of thought could flow. [continued in note 2]

he played at the only hockey rink; and he, along with his brothers, attended the only school.²

ASIDE: Where are the trees? The Fraser river? What did James's house look like? His school? His friends? The detailed narration of the "close up" is mostly absent here. This narrator, in the tradition of midrash, will leave gaps in telling, glossing over some details to rush into others. It matters little if in pacing James's journey whether meaning is folded beside the socks, or crammed in side-pocket with the toothpaste—the important thing is that on the journey there is some metaphoric value to education, so that after James passes through airport security, and arrives at the new land (either love or death), the implications of his fictional life to education can be discussed.

² [From note 1] Like my father, I, too, come from a long line of "fixers" though I've never been much of one myself. Whenever my car doesn't start I call BCAA and ask for help. But when I was living at home my dad would fix everything. He built our house, then renovated the basement, then built a garage, and so on. He could fix anything from cars to toilets and the surest gift at Christmas was a tool purchased at Canadian Tire. There is a deep connection between this man and his tools. My brothers are just like him, so when we get together the talk is always of what's wrong and what needs to be fixed, always, forever fixing.

So when the definition of curriculum was fixed right there in front of me (see note 1 above), I felt I was somehow on familiar ground. That what was broken was now whole, that what was once an empty white board now had some purpose and value. Like the pouring of concrete, we now had a foundation on which we could build. But I also knew the illusion of fixation. Being too fixated on a world where everything works. There was not a single day of growing up where my dad sat down on the couch to watch the *Red Green Show* and said, "I've got nothing to do tomorrow. It's all been fixed." A man's work was never done. [continued in note 6]

The midrashic strategy here, disrupting the narrator, who himself, is disrupting a story, is used to counter a silence, the silence of our relation to inheritance.

In its narrowest sense midrash refers to rabbinic exegesis of biblical text. More broadly, midrash has found influence in social science research as a form of hermeneutic inquiry (Neusner, 1989). When eras, movements, cultures, family traditions, and personal living histories are explored as text, then midrash is a kind of re/membering, when new kin of new kinds find new inheritances from what was previously fixed in stone tablets, in the rules of ten, procedures of methodology, commandments for morality.

Bruns' (1987) essay "*Midrash* and Allegory" explains that "the term *midrash* derives from *darash*, meaning 'to study,' 'to search,' 'to investigate,' 'to inquire': it means 'to go in pursuit of'" (p. 625). For this moment, the pursuit is to understand the continual fixation with positivist approaches to a knowledge which counts and can be counted on. Even further, the inquiry here, for the time being, is to go back and query the odd assumption that anything not objective lacks purpose, rigour, validity, and so on.

Reason and Rowan (1981) challenge the bifurcated discourse which supposes that anything not objective is necessarily subjective. They say that "the basic problem for our understanding is how to distinguish between 'legitimate' prejudgments and those

which get in the way of our understanding” (p. 133). Like Jardine (2003), they conclude that by honouring our ancestry, our inheritance, we can open up new possibilities for the future:

Once this historicity of human experience is realized...[we can] distinguish between some notion of an ‘objective’ understanding or interpretation which is unattainable and meaningless, and reach for an interpretation which is ‘intersubjectively’ valid for all the people who share the same world at a given time in history. (p.133)

The hope is that by daring to make commentary on what has become stratified and fixed and by daring to explore the boundaries of text and subjectivity, that it is possible to question the sacred without sacrilege or a sacrifice. Instead, this daring is process of freedom, a process which makes a text a living thing. Such an approach parallels the midrashic tradition which both respects the sacred but offers translation and interpretation of it. Genuine inquiry shares a midrashic, interpretive inheritance in that research defined as inquiry tends to be open, meditative, and circuitous (see Douglas-Klotz, 1998).

As an adolescent James dreamed of playing hockey for the Montreal Canadiens, and, like Ken Dryden, he wanted to practice law—to make a name for himself. He hoped that by playing hockey he would be able to leave his town and one day fall in love and buy a house overlooking the ocean. He knew he would make a good father and dreamed of his own children admiring him and following in his footsteps.

While James was waiting to be drafted into the National Hockey League, all he could do was practice and dream. Each morning he got up early to stretch, to run, and to lift weights. In the morning, James was a serious dreamer, an idealist surely, one who expected that with much effort would come deserved reward. In the evening, James let his mind wander: here his heart thought of love, fame, and heroic deeds.

James fell in love in grade 9. Like most love, it happened at school in a rush of meaningless classes and boredom.

ASIDE: Greene (1995) says, “It is understandable that. . . boredom and a sense of futility are among the worst enemies of education. At a time of diminishing opportunity in so many lives, at a time when upward mobility cannot be guaranteed, feelings of futility are widespread” (p.141). Salvo (2007) says that “professional anxieties are too often deemed unworthy of attention. At the same time, they slip into our pedagogy uninvited” (p. 7).

Unworthy of Our Attention?

A sense of futility
diminishing opportunity

anxiety

from **Self Love**

caught in the thrum of hot air rising
his unseen wings are loosened
from layers of expectation, silent
accumulation, even from within his own

Cro-Magnon howls, there is her music,
her vowels alive, aeolian. In dreams
desire is publishable, reciprocated
someone who reads him, feels him, finds

him at the forge, cathetic, beating out
a rhythm, and counterpoint leaps into the air,
deepening the welcome. He stares mouth open,
drops everything, and flaps his arms.

ASIDE: My hope, like Greene's, is that imagination will lead students to the confidence to live out of the structures which have power over them. In my own case, I add love to Greene's hope for what imagination can offer education. Love provokes me from anxiety, at times fears, and allows for my weaknesses as a teacher and scholar in such ways that do not overwhelm me. Referring specifically to Anne Sexton and generally to all teachers, Salvio (2007) says that teachers are not immune from "confusion, excess, and anxieties about teaching" (p.8).

ASIDE: Thinking grammatically, and also metaphorically, I notice how brackets easily enclose and segment our world. Not always aware of our choices and what has and is influencing them, we create a bracketed world, and then live in it. Rather than see this as a form of individualism, or narcissism, that is, living in our own bracketed world, I suggest that we acknowledge the importance of such self-construction, so that we can then “reach beyond...[and find] dimensions of experience disclosing themselves in wholly unpredictable ways” (Greene, 1997, p. 391). In other words, rather than dismiss how we do live in the world as human beings occupying bodies, which to some extent helps delineate our senses of self, we could instead acknowledge the importance of our bodies as a boundary or bracket to our world. A body’s knowing could be called a “quest for authenticity” and such a quest could give meaning to the anxiety, futility, and diminishing opportunity that Greene (1995) and Salvio (2007) speak about above.

She sat across from him in science class, and seemed to be always within arm’s reach at lunch too. They never exchanged a single word, but a whole means of communication can be invented in love. The way she twisted her blond hair meant she was dreaming about him; when she asked to borrow a piece of paper it meant that she

wanted to get married; when she asked for a piece of his apple, it meant they were made for each other; and when they both scored a hundred percent on Mendel's inheritable traits chart, it meant their children would both have blue eyes.

ASIDE: Inventing love is not out of the "thin air" of imagination. As Wiebe, Leggo and Sameshima say (2007), "transformational change is primarily emotive...[I]ngering in the emotive experience with a reflective and reflexive focus on the present, with consideration to relational connections creates openings for learning possibilities" (p. 9). Citing poet Jeanne Walker (1990), they speak of the necessity of the emotive experience in staying open to possibility: "I invent the door that stays open while it's closed" (p. 13). Walker's invention of an open door, for James, gives him the possibility of walking into love and being welcome.³

³ Here Walker is also speaking of the necessity of fiction. Fiction can unburden the lie of truth which has us carry heavy burdens. Truth today, particularly its pursuit in forms of excellence, is a kind of oppression that drives us forward. This kind of truth has an arrogance that cannot be tolerated within community. There is a lost truth of the spiritual community that we must learn in education. I wrote on my office door last week that I believe in the possibility of impossible love. Perhaps translated, this means I believe in fairy tales—and I do—and I believe that in schools we don't tell fairy tales with enough conviction. I bring up this quote to point out that later in the day, drawn into this quote-on-door conversation, an unknown colleague, wrote below my quote that only in action can we make love work. I enjoy conversation and thought at once how fun it would be to have door dialogues—to put out these challenging quotes for staff, and to create the dialogue on my door.

But how to respond? The more I walk the halls of my school, the more I notice the trend of increasing stress. The longer the "to-do" lists for teachers, the longer the lists of things to do for students. Where does this drive to do more come from? Walker (1990) writes of a place where we can rest and be "stunned by grace into silence" (p. 11). I don't think the truth can stun us the way fiction can. Here is why

The best part of James's day was student council meetings. James always took extra notice of her inviting smile, and after the third meeting, when he had almost worked up enough courage to ask for her phone number, it finally happened. She came up to him with a note folded in the shape of a star—what luck!

His legs were jelly. His throat frozen. How he had dreamed of holding her hand at lunch and after hockey practice! She would watch him on T.V., and they would buy a huge house in Montreal, big enough for air hockey and their own pool. He already knew how much she loved him and could imagine the three words he so longed to hear. But when he was alone in his room that night, he discovered for the first time how painful unrequited love can be.

fiction is so important to research—it is hopeful. Fiction can bring abstract truth into situations, locations, and contexts, and thus, bring to bear on truth more possibilities, which is a more hopeful understanding of the world and our agency in it.

There is nothing more pedagogical than hope (Freire, 1992). Education, after all, exists because of hope, perhaps that the next generation will not repeat our mistakes, or that our children will take on new challenges that we were not prepared for. We must be careful here. It is a dirty business when the hope of education is replaced with excellence in education. Excellence is heavy to carry, a burden. When we speak of lightening our burdens, there comes with it a faith in something more than the truths of this world. And so, if only this world matters, which is what the word excellence seems to imply, then truth is too short sighted. Which is why I defer to poetry, and to the arts in research, particularly a/r/tography. With Walker (1990) I'm reminded again of truths we lay down. In a poem called "Seizure" (p. 15), she writes about having come to her limits, like we all do. No more can be given, our energy has been used up. It's the last time. Something is going to break. However, by poem's end, the speaker still has more to give. What has happened so that the speaker's limit still holds possibilities to expand? Well, in a word, impossible love. In the seizure, when, as Walker describes, the baby has bluish skin and legs and arms flail in the air, we are summoned to more, we become different. The old truth of our limitation is replaced by the new truth of our desperate but possible hope, not because desperation is any more present to us, but because hope can welcome desperation and still hope. [continued in note 7]

“My friends think you are a suck up.”

James had always written poetry at night. He knew that poetry was a special language; he took care when using his thesaurus to rhyme lines. His first poem was about heaven’s bells ringing: he described the ongoing gongs with a flourish of adverbs and flamboyant onomatopoeia. But tonight James forgot to rhyme, and he wrote his first love poem. The outflow of his emotions didn’t allow time for opening his thesaurus. He poured his heart out and discovered that poetry, like going for a long run in the morning, could be an ally for his emotions. He didn’t understand his emotions, nor did he realize that his writing was sorting out his spirit. He knew enough about his own likes and dislikes to know that writing poetry every night was a way of being in love, and something he would like to be famous for.

How to Eat a Dream Deferred

*What happens to a dream deferred?*⁴
~ Langston Hughes

*there is no core / or stem / or rind / or pit
or seed / or skin / to throw away*⁵
~ Eve Merriam

if only I could dream her
again when she received my kisses
again lick the juice
that festered like a sore

if only I could
pick them up with my fingers
ready and ripe now

⁴ Available at www.cswnet.com/~menamc/langston.htm

⁵ See “How to Eat a Poem” at www.tnellen.com/cybereng/poetry/eatpoem.html

the whys and hows
of where I've been
like rotten meat
syrupy sweet

and bite in
it will not explode
and run down my chin
it does not matter now
for there is no core
this is a dream
gone far past the point
of turning back

After searching among the words, and not finding ease, James finally turned out the lights. But he couldn't sleep. He felt as if love were divided against itself. He was ashamed to have been deceived by love, and yet, the possibility of future love still gladdened his heart.

In the morning, James seemed to have a renewed vigour;⁶ he tried harder: newer clothes, longer workouts, stronger holding gel and rehearsed conversations. He waited for the next time and the next time to be different. But nothing seemed to change: something always went wrong. He grew more and more insecure. This process repeated itself month after month; James fell in love with about twelve girls a year for four, long high school years. He came to the conclusion that women only brought pain, frustration, and suffering.

Unlike other boys his age, his zeal for falling in love was surpassed by his only other distraction in life, dreams of playing hockey in the NHL. He began to wish desperately that he could leave his small town, and with no offers to attend training

⁶ [From note 2] I wondered if I should say something. Perhaps share Doll's (2003) words that "vigor and possibility come from seeing anew" (p. x). Perhaps even a little witticism, that something fixed on a wall is not fixed at all. Because after all, we live in a temporal world. Ideas wear out as fast as and even faster than our bodies. In *Everyman*, Phillip Roth (2006) structures his story around operations the narrator has undergone. Perhaps that which we collect and canonize, our body of knowledge, should wear out like our bodies. Each generation, then, would need to discover its own body for its own time. We couldn't simply inherit our father's house all perfectly fixed up anymore than we could inherit our father's body.

Like Jardine (2003), I've come to see the danger of fixing. "[Fixing] seeks to eradicate difference; but it also eliminates openings and possibilities" (p.43), but I am not a proponent of cutting family ties. My father was a fixer. He acted with his tools the same way folks like Tyler, Bruner, and Schwab act with their empirical, and overly reductionist pens. And still, one of my favourite activities when I return home (and my father's home is still also home) is to hold his tools, to gaze and admire what he has fixed and fixed again. There is incredible order there, his tools in gigantic red tool boxes.

Jardine (2003) says that "children can bring about the transformation and renewal of the center" (p.43). So I take a second look at his tools, each with its place, its purpose, and function. The sheer volume of it all. I am in this place of generosity, somehow feeling my technical inheritance to tools, to technique, to problems and solutions but simultaneously knowing that I can discover tools for myself, that I can even add to my inheritance, contribute to my father's world which is not dead, but ever alive in me and others who look back with a willingness to understand anew. [continued on note 8]

camps that summer, he began to send out university applications all around the country. He had two criteria in narrowing down his university choices: the ratio of girls to boys, and the possibility of playing hockey.

The nightly writing of poetry did leave him with one unconsidered skill: he woke up one morning with an ear for language and he was convinced that he could be a famous writer. It gave him a new hope⁷, a new blood, but he couldn't quite place where it came from. He wanted to talk to somebody about his plans, because maybe if he could even hear himself out loud, he could put his finger on the thing that was never quiet within him. Not knowing himself, maybe.⁸

⁷ [From Note 3] I'm not an advocate of desperation but of hope. Only to point out that in desperation our hope is finally of the quality to release the oppression of truth. Hope of this quality makes the fairy tale real. When Kansas is only a click of the heels away, we wonder why Dorothy hasn't returned home much earlier. Perhaps her journey is about recovering hope, about up-turning those old truths of fear, heartlessness, insignificance.

There is a choice before us. We can put before our children the road of excellence, the road of working harder and harder, faster and faster. We can tell them, that in the face of a global economy, they will likely face lower wages and jobs will be scarce, that this in fact is the real world. Oh yes, this is true. But don't believe the truth. How arrogant to draw a graph supposing variables remain the same over time. Hope at times is the ultimate variable. Instead, let's read to our children stories. Tell them the fictions that matter more. These truths on earth will pass, and fiction will become more real. What lasts on earth here will have far more to do with beauty than truth. Of that, Keats was surely right. The only truths we have are those confined to the side of an urn. I don't know where your ashes are, but I'm going to sprinkle mine into the air, watch them become fairy dust, and float into "Never Never Land."

⁸ [from note 6] This new life of my father in me is new blood to me and new blood to my father. "Bereft of new blood," says Jardine (2003) "the senatorial becomes merely senile" (p. 57). I will not be prostrate to the past, though I will share its prostate. A brief example might illustrate such a relationship. In texts, a **lacuna** is a gap, a missing piece, or a silence. For those who take up the task of translation, like the son who translates his father's world, often there is no direct, one-to-one corresponding lexical unit. In such cases, a descriptive phrase is usually used instead. Sometimes in these old manuscripts, when there are blemishes and weathering, the missing words are inserted from the context.

And so, with marks in English and Creative Writing high enough to gain him entrance into a first year arts program, James put together a writing portfolio that gave him entrance into the University of Calgary.

I Know it was Enough But

she kisses me vermouth
the dull edge cuts
the sharp one shaves
in partial truths
I swallow strawberries
whole and inside
they are preserved
a pit in my stomach

This troubling slip of language creates possibilities for rethinking what is sometimes previously taken for granted. Going back to consider the many layers of meaning should be more than fitting an appropriate link for the lacuna, but should be a genuine receiving of difference such that multiple understandings can be held at once. When I think of my father's fixing, that means holding his tools in my hands again. Re-thinking what it meant for him to be always fixing. With so many tools in my father's house, I wonder why I didn't see it before: I'd always thought he was an idealist, that he was Kantian, and wanted to nail it all down, once and for all with some kind of pure hammer, some smooth unbiased swing.

But looking again, choosing to add to my inheritance, to actively construct the context of my past (Kincheloe, Slattery, & Steinberg, 2000), I have this new sense that my father's many tools were like many voices, many possibilities, many nuances. That he did believe in the need for continual fixing. Often my father bought a tool just in case, in that wise anticipation that he would need a tool like this someday, that he could be confident again, and again, and again, that there would be work to be done.

Aoki modeled this kind of thinking (see Pinar & Irwin, 2003). Reviewing the curriculum field of the 1960s and 1970s he was generous in attributing early shifts away from the modernist constructs to the modernists themselves. Citing Bruner, Schwab, and Macdonald, he found nuances in their work which called for reconceptualizing curriculum (Pinar, 1976), for understanding curriculum in a new key (Pinar & Irwin, 2003).

Yes, I've inherited from my father that the state of things is in disrepair. If you believe in god, then he too must continually create. If you don't, then how could chaos be otherwise?

to be seduced by consent

outside my lips are still
my tongue stained
languishing an old joke
a thin glass of cabernet
in a cloud of smoke

I'm paper clipped
to loneliness
fill in anything
on my application:
liar, story teller, honest jack
too young to know
night's darkness
day's breaking back
of bitter satisfaction

but I know
I know the satisfaction
in never being
quite satisfied

I need to dance more often

the master
the one I know
I need to think
I'm in control
this is what makes
me grow
to know that
maybe I can

let go of diaper days

I'm sure it is all
pretending anyway
I haven't heard
any different
I haven't been in the woods
that long
and the trees are already
burning

so quickly it changed
yesterday it mattered
why not today
is it that tenuous
am I that vulnerable
open to every whim
of emotion

can these days
be escaped
somehow loosed
from the wrists
let out the air
and rise up with the hiss
looking down
looking away

can I be so spent
so stuck
so recluse
and unwoven

TEACHER BURNOUT

STUFFY PRAGMATISM TELLS A FAMILIAR STORY

THE ART OF NUMEROLOGY

PRACTICAL LOVE

A CURRICULUM OF THE STATUS QUO

James left for the University of Calgary tormented by love and with new prospects for being rich and famous. He knew he was living a “cover story” for inside secrets.⁹

ASIDE: Why? Because for some it is better to cover over the personal before it ferments and poisons, or worse,

⁹ In his poem “Five Roses in the Morning,” Stephen Dunn (2004) contemplates change. The world is clearly in need of change, some kind of better world where we could move beyond the “is” and perhaps contribute to the way it “ought” to be. He writes: [They] won’t change a goddamned thing—/ goddamned things, it seems multiplying / every day” (p. 34). From his place of privilege, watching television presumably in the bedroom, the speaker in this poem interrogates societal structures that make change impossible.

Like the speaker, in the context of my work as a teacher, as a graduate student who has been afforded the luxury of further education, I have to question why profound inequities, both locally and globally, never seem to change. I realize that my own unease with change makes me profoundly complicit in accepting certain beliefs, traditions, and rituals of my own culture. Not so surprising given my conscientious school experience where in my eagerness to achieve and to please the teacher I was all too happy to take on the common sense values and attitudes that lead to my eventually becoming a teacher myself. Combined now with my responsibility to the organizational structures and policies of school, I am becoming alarmed at how the status quo continues to be reproduced. [continued in note 10]

before it becomes *sacred* in the form of another human being or some human idea (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Five years passed. James took courses in Creative Writing, Shakespeare, English Composition, and Principles of Teaching. His face was older now, and he was relieved to be almost finished his first degree. There was something about getting near completion that gave him a wild feeling and made him want to yell or sing or raise up his arms and fly. He began writing poetry every night, a kind of diary and a record of his increasing desire to live differently and more poetically during the day?¹⁰

James went to poetry as a way of understanding his inner life; it was a meditation for him, a learning that was self-formation, a partial uncovering of something always just

¹⁰ [From note 9] Dunn (2007), it seems, is more hopeful than I am. There is a brief moment in his poem, "Five Roses in the Morning," where beauty is given enough sway to change the night. Not the whole world, not the news on television, but the night for the speaker and his lover. She is beautiful wearing a rose in her hair, and because of beauty, Dunn (2007) says, the night changed a little, "for us, I mean" (p. 34).

Reflecting on the notion of beauty as a change agent, I have wondered whether it is substantial enough to dislodge my suffocating assumptions for thinking about school: What is a successful teacher? What is success? Could I ever fail? Teach badly? Is it possible to even have the courage to be more authentically oneself? Is yes the only answer to the later question?

Asking such questions leads me back to James and his imagination which is continually pushing him to seek beauty in the every day. Deleted from the original text are these lines: *Wasn't there something real about his imagination: the beach, elegant women who wore short, leather skirts on the back of his motorbike, and long conversations punctuated by stops in coffee shops anywhere along the west coast?* Beauty, whether imagined as love with another, as in this case, or imagined about the particularities of the world, is a powerful change agent because of its deep connection to how we feel ourselves to be. This brings me back to Dunn's poem above. Dunn is not the only poet to construe beauty with transformational power; any number of poems could have illustrated James's yearning, from the Romantic poets to the present day. Poets such as Keats, Whitman, Thoreau, Eliot, Collins, Atwood, Acorn, Tate, and many others have all considered the relationship of beauty and truth. [continued in note 11]

beyond his reach. He wanted to tell somebody about his cover story, but how? It seemed like there was only talking and talking. Who could understand what he meant? His dreams and imagination—and love—how could he teach about love?

As a poet, he saw the continual need for re-imaginings and re-understandings of love in the classroom in order to rupture spaces from which new possibilities could emanate. James believed the actions of one person could affect those in the entire community (see Thomas, 2006). At first, love conceals more than it reveals. But gradually, the genuine love of one person works its way to a general awareness. Love, like words whispered in secret, can suddenly and simultaneously become actions.

“I want,” he said to himself, “I want to know the truth. I want to know what it all is supposed to mean. I don’t want some artificial curriculum or some labeling of the parts of a poem. I am twenty-two years old, and I want to know why I am alive. And I want to know what I’m supposed to do with my life. I want to know why love defies knowledge but is so important to it at the same time. I want to know why education hasn’t really changed that much, and if releasing a little love into the classroom might just be the difference I am looking for.”

Because "the fabric of our society conforms to the evolution of changes as made by choices and decisions" (Paley, 1995, p.10), James knew that even one classroom teacher willing to live poetically and lovingly within a community could be a voice that affirmed the multiple voices of others, giving support for their “multiple realities and experiences” (Paley, 1995, p.10). But he wasn’t absolutely sure. What he needed was a sign.

Tea for One

On the counter
cold tea awaits drinking
on the table empty cup
the warmed coaster knows stories
secrets kept

What James really wanted was an indication that he was on the right track. He felt frozen in time, as if to feel this way was not even the truth of who he was. James didn't even know who he was, all he knew was this "family resemblance" in poetry, in the particular instances of lines and images rather than universal truths (Pitcher, 1968, p. 36).

Despite all his professor's efforts to keep him focused on the universals of lesson planning and the best practices of teaching, poetry was James's way to be alive, to feel his body and his imagination, to be evoked, to feel the inspiration of beauty.

Cultures

can't study desire in a Petri dish
caught eventually
its message
isolated

The Beating of a Dream

I am tuned to the beat
Calgary's hits station
m&m is telling me to lose myself

in the music I can't do it
mercy is too distant
reserved for real sins

Hamlet knew enough to curse
himself and god
what choice did he have
there is a plot to follow
I reach out my fingers
but in the theological game
of chance and choice
there is no control

he knew the hollow smiling face
a fishmonger dancing to the drum machine
beating down his dreams
all curves and promise
too much to be in this sun
tears shaking the broken
edge of reason
no equation to reconcile loneliness

and suffering is always alone
feelings come with the body
cannot be bargained back
just sat on
like the mockery of shit
in your pants

putrid movements of minor key
the magic protestant order
faults nobody really
Ophelia found peace
such a doubt descends
a curtain over my imagination

that's the problem with me and characters
not so flat and stale
as the white they're brought to life on

this love song was written
before the love even before
the minor characters
could figure out the tipping point
past a happy ending
that is the tragedy
to have a plot
that cannot be abandoned
feelings that cannot be set free
or inhabited by another

Perhaps teaching wasn't really the best occupation for someone who loves Walt Whitman. Since it is rare to live out dreams in rows of classrooms and narrow hallways, the teacher education program at Calgary was not nourishing James's passions.¹¹ He still felt like a little boy obsessed with cigars, wine, beauty and love, and yet he was being

¹¹ [from note 10] For me, the writing and reading of poetry has opened a kind of creative self awareness that has lead to questions about what it means for me to be a teacher, and it has brought under scrutiny my thinking about students, parents, and administrative policies. I've wanted to consider a more authentic pedagogy, something acknowledging the need for transformation and the hope that beauty can provoke that process. In poetry, is it possible to throw off the cultural mask that hides a complicit identity in traditional expectations and possibly embody an identity that is less culturally stable, and possibly more in tune with the movements, oppositions, partialities, and temporaries of knowing.

Karl Elder (2005) suggests that a way to move beyond our masks is to wear them with more gusto or pizzazz. In his poem, "Everything I Needed to Know," he describes his kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Cunningham, wearing the perfect mask of "grave countenance" (p. 35). Her students do not know her, and she does not want to reveal her "secret identity" (p. 35). Elder ends the poem with his own need to wear a mask. He says to his kindergarten teacher that he wants to grow up to be Zorro because a poet "needs a mask" (p. 35). [continued in note 12]

asked to understand his desires only in his head. Like the student in Whitman's poem, "The Learned Astronomer" (see Whitman at <http://www.poets.org>), he felt like he was dragging his feet to his lectures, and more often than not, wanted to be outside staring at the "perfect silence of the stars."

Still, with his grandmother's advice of "Bloom where you are planted," and especially since his father was a small town forester and his mother a banker, he soon realized that he was going to have to change the circumstances right in front of him. His grandmother was always quoting Wordsworth, so he remembered her poetic advice to find dreams right in his present circumstances and accepted his first job offer at a small school in Calgary: Calgary Christian Academy.

James proved his worth early on. With a simple motto of "love your subject and love your students," he had some instant success. He studied to improve himself, reading everything remotely connected to language and literature, particularly collections of modern poetry.

During that first year, in the falling temperatures of autumn, he fell in love with an accountant. With her attention to detail and the bottom line, and James' wanderlust for a Romantic life along the coastlines of the world, they merged their bodies and their assets, buying a home beyond their financial means not so far from CCA.

The day before the new Winter term began, he swore in Church that morning that he would make a real difference in his classes; we would motivate students apart from grades, and welcome his students to seek authenticity in their own way, to be open to their hearts and minds in connection with what really mattered in the world: love, joy, fulfillment, and meaning. But these words were overshadowed by words like success,

grade point average, good jobs, and working harder. At what he wondered, and for what?¹²

James left the church service early and went down to the Bow River. It was a warm enough place to spend the afternoon. He listened to the barely audible sound of the wind in the trees. He was grateful for the silence, something tiny and light. He opened his journal; stuck in between the pages was a sticky note reminding him to email the director of studies at CCA, Bill Bakerman. He removed it carefully, examined it for a moment, and then released it to the breeze.

He began to write:

I think spirituality in education

(do I mean love?)

needs to connect the inner life with the outer

¹² [from note 11] This little twist that one's identity can be explored in more authentic places when the mask is actually on is not so surprising when one thinks of how a mask gives confidence to take risks. Under the security of a hidden identity a more authentic identity might be explored. Behind the mask we can cast off the cultural mores which can be suffocating to a genuine exploration of personality.

In his poem, "The Urban Myth," Jamey Dunham (2005) explores the frustration when firmly held beliefs do not play out as expected. Using child rearing as his example, the parents hold fast to their urban myth and send their child to the finest schools and "indulge it with every extravagance" (p. 33). The tragedy and comedy of this poem is that parents continue to live out their now empty beliefs, preferring the safety of custom and expectation. Ironically, Dunham gives the parents a somewhat happy ending as a trade for all their energy of child rearing. In the last line of the poem, there is a stack of money on the bed. Presumably the parents have fulfilled their obligation and are now getting their payback. [continued in note 13]

more morally observable life.

*Schools are sites of key influence
in early developmental stages,
children's core values and beliefs
are a vital moral socialization function in our society (see Thomas, 2006).*

*Children in schools need to feel love in order to be empowered to write
their own lives, to learn diversity, to be non-conformist, to be seekers of
truth and wisdom.*

James wanted to think for a long time about how he could make changes in his classroom. Change often started with just one person, two or three at the most. What he really needed was something that made his heart sing, something bold.

He began to write again:

Poetry can be a valuable tool. It promotes a highly energetic style of teaching. It forges students' connections to self, school, and community (see Stanley, 2004, p. xi).

The Jesuits' maxim, "give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man," attributed to Francis Xavier, while speaking about spirituality, could easily

refer to poetry. Youth today are challenged with many situations that are specific to their generation. This creates a great challenge.

The diverse spiritual and moral needs seem to supersede the more systemic, curricular approaches. Poetry could make a real difference because it connects at an emotional level, engaging and involving its readers. It is especially important in this time and age for teachers to make connections with students and to become engaged in deeper conversation.

It took James a long time to write anything else. He began to talk to himself out loud: “What can I hold on to? I know poetry isn’t fluff, but is it something I can get a grip on to make my classroom come alive? What does poetry have to do with standards, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension?”

ASIDE: Too often teachers are inclined to favour the rule over the person. In an age of grade level achievement standards, and funding tied to provincial achievement results, how will lower-performing students be welcomed? “Perhaps instead of asking how can we make students do what we want, we could ask what do they require in order to flourish.” (Wiebe, Leggo, Sameshima, 2007, p.15)

James knew that a love of poetry came naturally to most of his students, especially in rhyme, rhythm, and repetition. Even as a child himself he remembered its imagery and

the joyful experience of reading and performing poetry in Mrs. Brown's class. But he would have to get past the stereotypes. He knew the reports that poetry is not a vital factor in many teachers' lives, so unfortunately they know little about it and feel uncomfortable using it (Ford, 1992).

ASIDE: According to Ford, the reduction of poetry to its devices is a matter of being stuck in curriculum guides. Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen (2003) argue that teachers have either lost or never had a love of the disciplines. Edmundson's claim (2004), related to Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen's (2003), is that the humanities have become too abstract, moving to a love of theory rather than a love of literature. He says, invoking Foucault, "that all disciplines discipline...every area of intellectual inquiry [the disciplines] tend toward providing reductive norms...thus delimiting possibility" (40). For myself, I simply listen to my colleagues. Rarely do they read poetry, and if they teach it, they teach only the same poems they read in high school. The fact that the poetry section in Chapters is almost non-existent furthers my thought that poetry is a form reduced to the poetic devices rather than something that is read, loved, and lived. Poetry has become too distant from our hearts and souls.

Being unhappy with the status quo, for James, was the very reason for change. If he didn't, he would be assuming unconsciously the values, beliefs, behaviors and other attributes of the curriculum. He would have to learn to live and breathe poetry.

The breeze was getting a bit chilly. He hitched his jacket tighter. It took him a long time to reach this conclusion. When he got up from the bench at last he seemed much shorter and smaller. The reality of actually following through on his dreams was terrifying, and his legs felt for a minute like they would crumple up with him.¹³

The following day, armed with a course proposal that would invite a genuine love of life and learning back into his classes, he entered the school staffroom thanking God for bringing him to a place where he could live out his dreams of writing and having influence. He didn't spend much time chatting with those who agonized over the prospect of another long term before spring holidays, and went directly to the Director of Studies' office to make his pitch.

“I want to teach a creative writing class.”

Scratching his ear, the Director paused to examine some wax, then without much dramatic effect said, “It doesn't have the right ring to me, James. Could you shift your focus and help students with their university applications? What about a noon hour study club to improve student marks on the grammar section of the diploma exams?”¹⁴ Perhaps

¹³ [From note 12] Keeping the mask on may be more complicated than it seems at first glance. Our traditions and values which make up the mask are invisible to us, and tend to remain unchecked mostly because the mask is not acknowledged or recognized. To make the claim that what has been held most dear is only a mask requires deep and heartfelt examination and questioning of all that was formerly not doubted. It is not an easy process to declare a truth as beauty, to realize that something we once believed is really something we put on to adorn ourselves.

¹⁴ Pinar (2004,) notes in the preface to *What Is Curriculum Theory?* that “there is a history of anti-intellectual vocationalism within the scholarly field of education” (xiii). This would include the mind-numbing focus on submitting education solely to the task of university preparation via training in the academic disciplines. Edmundson (2004), too, is frustrated with the practice of teachers taking on a narrow, vocational focus, whose only instructional responsibility is delivering one's subject. Pinar recommends

if you had more experience. Even my class in Twentieth Century British Literature has been losing enrollment. Let's wait a few years. I'll tuck this proposal in my folder for new course offerings, and we'll revisit it when you've had some time to learn how things work around here. Oh, and James, be careful. A lot of new teachers don't last here. Do you remember the movie, the one where the idealistic teacher starts making a fuss? There was a good line in there. Something like not teaching students to think for themselves. Just get them into a good university and let the rest take care of itself. Good advice that."

ASIDE: This scene still upsets me, though I'm starting to understand it. The issues of standardization and test results that Bakerman raises continue to reverberate through literature, becoming in many ways their own stratified discourse. Looking at the theoretical concept of "performativity" in discourse, helps explain how Bakerman does not really choose to say or think what he means to say. Derrida's (1982) notion of performativity explains the ways that identities are constructed iteratively through complex citational processes. In effect, this means Bakerman's letter (which follows below in the story) has a performative dimension, is more scripted, ritualistic, and ceremonial than he would ever admit. He is performing the role of a concerned but firm administrator, one concerned with the school's reputation for excellence. In many ways the role performs him. It's worth

instead, imagining a school where "teachers might more fully appreciate and be allowed to demonstrate how the subjects they teach illumine the issues of the day" (2004, p. 230).

keeping in mind that in deconstruction performative speech-acts are ontologically non-referential. Coming again to de Man's (1979) demonstration of the "radical estrangement between the meaning and the performance of any text" (p. 298), it has become easier to accept Bakerman's complicity in a discourse he is likely not even aware of, i.e. the "aberrant" relation to its own reference, its performativity.

Later that afternoon, after his conversation with Bakerman, James received the following e-mail:

January 29, 2005

Dear James,

Thank you for your earnest proposal today. It is always great to receive an innovative proposal from a new boy. Remember, though, that all those theories floating around don't have much practical merit when it comes to being a master teacher in the classroom.

Keep in mind, James, that our school has been around quite some time now, seventy-five years in fact, and it's a tradition for excellence that has kept us successful for all those years. When in doubt, it is best to stick to the curriculum. Teach your students how to write an argument, how to use evidence.

What we pass down to the next generation is important—so keep it intact because too much experimentation and sentimentality only confuses the students. In your role, James, you can't really care as much as you think you can. Best to be firm, fair, and friendly. That is the position of trust—and the position from which you will gain respect.

Once your exam marks come in this year, I'll take another look. And, if there is not another faculty member with more seniority who would like to teach creative writing, then I'll let you develop it for 2009. That should give you enough time to learn the ropes.

I also wanted to let you know that I usually receive these kind of proposals in writing, and with more attention to the school's mission. Next time, try showing how a proposed course will improve our exam marks. I've placed a summary of our last five years of scores in your pigeon hole.

Sincerely,

Bill Bakerman

James wondered if Bakerman's letter was the sign he had been looking for: Moses' burning bush. Actually, it was probably more accurate to say that he was making his own signs, numbering his own stops on the journey. He was starting to see more clearly what had been there all along, and was given an opportunity to enter the same world, only differently. Like with scores, numbers, and dates! He could see them differently, learn to walk inside them, be enveloped by them, and then be transformed.¹⁵

¹⁵ Leonard Cohen, (1984) in poetic examination of what brings community, writes that our relationships are often full of strategic maneuvering. Too often, according to Cohen, our relationships are based on

His best friends taught math, but he didn't hold that against them. Someone had to sink his teeth into all those zeros, which to James, looked like doughnuts, or targets to throw darts at. Empty space filled with more emptiness.

Perhaps he could look back one day and see his imagination at work even in the very times he felt stifled. James set off down Fourth Street, and never did return for the staff meeting after school. Instead he found a bench, closed his eyes, and went to poetry.

icy email

bargains, “trading buttons for love” (p.1). Such a bartering system describes well the typical school culture. As a poet, I refer to Kirby for an explanation of a school's preference for a controlled environment, for a system that tends to “handle” and “train” children, offering ways to outsmart them and methods for establishing consequences. Why do schools trade love for buttons? This ensures compliance, yes, but does this really promote a meaningful learning environment? Kirby, (2003) in a poem called “The Ha-Ha, Part II: I Cry My Heart, Antonio,” discusses what he means by “Ha-Ha.” It is not a signal for laughter as used in the Internet chat rooms, but “from eighteenth century England” it is a “sunken fence used to keep cows at a picturesque distance / from the manor house so they can be seen grazing on the greensward, / kept by the ha-ha / from trampling the lawn and mooing at the guests” (p. 18). Kirby points out that the ha-ha is “a structure against chaos,” much like the rules of a classroom. Working with this similarity, and imagining the “ha-ha's” that teachers construct, reveals some of the reasons for why classrooms are resistant to change.

Historically, the ha-ha was structured in such a way as to please visitors. Most important to that aesthetic was the appearance of order so the guests could look out onto the green fields and admire the landscape. Is this not a similar motivation in the classroom? I've certainly noticed that same teacher impulse to create ha-ha's in my classrooms. The structure emerges whenever others are present, whenever one's reputation is on display in the behavior of the children. This is true not just in classrooms, but at the shopping mall, Sunday schools, airports, visits at friends' houses, restaurants, playgrounds—really anywhere there is a public place.

Kirby's remembering the ha-ha reveals a tacit and twisted motivation in education: the preservation of reputation; that what we are passing on to the students in our classrooms is the need for an appearance of goodness—I can think of nothing more harmful to genuine motivation, or authentic community than when appearance of respect is given sway over the possibility of true human dignity. No one wants to be cared for in appearance only.

If you're talking
the course
I'm sorry
I would
but my work
I cannot care
you are more work
you're too sure
you'll write
you've got to
see like me
the end soon
in lieu of you
I also have to
and I have to
then I
will be on my own
provoking something
too much
Thank you

The Numbers I Remember

My dad said
7 is God's number
that 40 is for
the end of the world
and the number of temptation
my other dad
wore the number 20
when playing baseball
(that's .5 of temptation)
or half way to hell

on that baseball team
was a man who
wore number 69
my mom said
that was disgusting
my favorite number was 29
Ken Dryden wore that number
I was a goalie too
my friends liked the number 99
or the number 10
10 was the best
number in school
all the good boys
and girls got 10
10:30 in Newfoundland

Numbers don't seem
so important now
being a good boy
even less so

The numbers ruling my life
now so much more strange

2 for the number of kids
1 dog (I meant 1 god)
7 for getting up
5 for going home
20 for a movie
200 for a ticket to watch hockey
2000 for season's tickets
20000 for a down payment
2000000 for a mortgage
20000000 needed in an RRSP
200000000 the recommended liability

2000000000 my chances of catching SARS
20000000000 the amount the national debt increases every 20
minutes
200000000000 the planet's sustainable population
2000000000000 Bill Gates
20000000000000000 for love in teaching

The problem with numbers
is no one knows
what they really mean
the denominators lie
underneath each number
veiled in the promise
of normalcy
oof meaning
ooof standards
oooof grades
ooooof importance
oooooof of value

I think it's silly
all these 0's around
adding value
looking so much like o's
the empty letter
the one we see right through
the bull's eye for boys
sledding down hill
and the call of poet's
with long memories

Coming at last to the end of his fury, James's hurried scrawl came to a point at
one idea:

“I am stuck. I am stuck. I’ve become so used to the linear world. I used to put salt on my fries because I like salt and vinegar chips. But now, when I reach for the salt, I realize it’s not so simple. That whether I’m eating, teaching, writing, or making love, I’m continually being created and recreated in the contexts around mewith salt comes light!

But without something to put my feet on, without the solid ground of reality, I don’t know how to live. So much so that now, unstuck in time, I cannot even think. I don’t know how to move.

I’ve become unstuck in space and in the world of my ideas as well. I am like Billy. Being stuck here is to be unstuck there. My hope is writing this down.”

But certain hopes are lost forever. There at the bottom of the page, he had to confront having nothing to hold onto. James felt like Billy in Kurt Vonnegut's (1969) tale *Slaughter House Five*. Billy, the narrator, had become unstuck in time. The past and future were commingled and Billy could not find his present meaning. As he tells of the events, the readers become equally stuck. James did not know how to pull himself out. There was no meaning or purpose, nothing solid to grab onto.

CHAPTER THREE

A PEDAGOGY OF FEAR AND BLAME

PROCESS AND PROCEDURE IN THE REAL WORLD

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF INSPIRATION

THE ARTIST AS TEACHER

THE PRICE OF LOVE AND TEACHING

SUFFERING IN SILENCE

At school and home James learned how to use the word “tomorrow” to sustain his hope, and that each present moment could be passed over by thinking of a vast and exciting future that might unfold. He was young, he could always leave CCA when he pleased, and even though the brown fields and dusty streets of Calgary left him with a constant feeling of being unwashed, there was a still a river, some paved bike paths, and perhaps one of them one day would lead him to a place that inspired his own writing.¹⁶

¹⁶ What James was hoping for in his school was a kind of poetic community, something multi-faceted where dangling lines stretch into so many different areas, especially to areas of gentleness and joy. Not because it is full of poets but because there is a celebration of art-making that is attentive to words and the spaces words leave for beauty of the human spirit and the passion we have in making meaning in our world.

James had to content himself with suffering in silence until the school year ended. He composed a resignation letter, but never did send it. His wife came into the room, read it and frowned: “Don’t over react. What did you expect in your first year?”

James wondered about the connection to being only a first year teacher and his passion for wanting education to matter more in the lives of his students, but no one was able to give him a satisfactory answer. Apparently it was normal for students to talk about movies and video games, to cut class, and to find passion for learning only a few days before exams and project due dates.¹⁷

James tried vainly to get used to marking essays that had no development, and to get used to students who saved anything heartfelt for after class. No one seemed to have any energy to change the status quo. He wanted to be forming different relationships amongst people and ideas.

ASIDE: Walker (1990) in “The Cars on Walnut Street Stop to Let a Dog Cross” reminds us that in life there is a beauty when what is least in our midst is given our full time and attention. She remarks, amazingly, of “all that metal idling” (p. 21) of the drivers in spite of the hurried pace that drivers are expected to take. What is so amazing in this moment is that the very technology of the car resists a slowing down. After all, a car is meant to speed our lives up, enabling us to do more with our time. The point of a car is to be in motion—and a car is rated according to what it can do when

¹⁷ Why don’t students see school as part of their pursuit of pleasure. Poets, not as a whole, but in my fictitious imagination of who we are, are pleasure seekers. Holding the epicurean banner we seek happiness, often even to self-destruction, and it is this pursuit of beauty of the honesty of the heart’s passion that I believe would transform education. Perhaps our students need to hear in poetry the heart’s longing, of love, of not wanting to be let down by a life of mediocrity?

it is in motion. The value of a car is not in being at rest. Yet here they are, drivers, stopped. This notion unsettles me in the way that art should unsettle me.

Art, too, ought to arrest our senses like this dog that is crossing the road on Walker Street (p. 21). While most of the world is speeding away as intended, art must remind us to stop, but art cannot do this unless it is willing to slow its own world down. Art must have an intense commitment to beauty, to a kind of peace, that allows many players into the performing of that form.

When the drivers stop their cars, the dog, in this case an Irish Setter, is able to finally be who he is—a dog—and so he sleeps, pointing “his bottom toward heaven” (p. 21), right in the middle of the road. Only a few lines down, Walker acknowledges the limitation of this wonderful moment. Soon, she says, someone “begins to play his horn” (p. 21), and here we see the necessity of fiction to extend this moment. The art/fiction/poetry must go on, and so in the one world we know anger is rising, but in the art it is the music which rises. In the one world, drivers are slamming their doors, but in the artful and heartfelt world that Walker creates, these doors are slammed like applause. The dog begins dancing, and the poem concludes: “This is the day that Chrysler and Toyota and Ford / cancelled their business to save a fleeting heart” (p. 21).

Yes, art must be about heart. Art restores the heart to living. But to do so, art must be ready to defend artful living against what Pinar (2004) calls our current nightmare or what Dunlop (2000) says is oppressive to our bodies (p.12).

Oasis of happiness

The hottest day on record,
humidity is heavy

on my shoulders, sloppy warmth
down my neck, sticky.

Looking at the oppressive sky,
I wish I could peel off

its blue label warning 39 degrees
seek out shade, drink lots

of fluids, and change the contents
for a touch of your snow,

frost upon frost, white breath
down my back, its cold

roundness in my mouth, shivery
inside, a cool ride. *Imagine*, you say,

*if we could lick each other
to cool down.* Your sweetness

softens my warm and perspiring

body, tangled and wilted, soaking

wet, right to my eye sockets,
tongues already forgotten

oppressive summer heat,
we rest our arms over each other

overwhelmed, utterly wasted,
an oasis of happiness.

I ask, with respect to the oppression of truth, success, or
excellence, what is the effect of the poetry or art?¹⁸ Perhaps we have
ceased to know what art is for, particularly in classrooms.¹⁹ A good artistic

¹⁸ There was a time, presumably, as Daniel Quinn (1992) reminds us, that human beings as hunter-gatherers went out to make a living. The making a living might be equivalent to today's world of nine-to-five, or eight-to-six, depending on your financial situation and inclinations. Where I think we are strikingly different from Quinn's description of humans as hunter-gatherers is what happens when we return to our caves. Our ancestors drew on the wall. They made art—they started to live rather than survive. I fear that in our society the making of art has somehow been confused with the practice of hunting. That art-making is simply a new kind of survival. If we are to only survive on this planet, then maybe art can be oriented toward success, and excellence, and truth-making. But if we are to live, if we are to have life, and to know a new quality of life, then there must be art, and a radical kind of art that exists for the passions of the human spirit.

¹⁹ In the role of poet/teacher, I have had opportunity to observe a good number of classrooms. I have noticed that with increasingly multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial classrooms, teachers have had difficulty meeting the diverse needs of their student populations. The artist/teacher experiences the same difficulty as diversity of style, form, intent, audience, and content disrupts notions of quality and excellence, which are themselves concepts borrowed from a language of efficiency and profitability. While there is a good discussion taking place on multiple learning styles and individual needs, a multi-valued approach (particularly pedagogy around artful experimentation) receives less attention because individuals, as students and as artists, are expected to conform to the community standard. According to Albert (1992),

pedagogy will free art and a/r/tographers from an overly globalized commitment to money-making, and instead return what is human to human beings.

Finally, the night before spring break, James couldn't sleep. At three in the morning, he confronted what Shakespeare called the "witching hour" or "wolfing hour" and wrote a few poems about teaching. It seemed that his colleagues had forgotten the world that students really lived in, and that poetry, with all its celebration of feeling, emotion, and pure love was something too dangerous for the classroom (Aoki, 2002).

Perhaps even worse, he began to believe that God inhabited a distant heaven and didn't concern himself with the smaller details of a person's heart. He opened his poetry books to Blake's (1995) poem "The Poison Tree" and then to Frost's (1969) poem "Design."

It's true, James said, "In this battle with God, I am too insignificant."

The Hour of the Wolf

the problem with writing
that I lay all night
staring at the ceiling
without a wink of sleep
is that it's true²⁰

without "powerful reinforcement...students will likely revert to less cooperative ways" (p. 93). By enforcing the old rigors of conformity, I think that schools have been too successful in creating compliance.

²⁰ As a poet, I am often up late at night imagining what it would be like to sell everything, and flee to the simpler life of writing—to set my feet upon the beach, to lie down in sand and compose the heart's longings. I imagine the ebb and flow of waves, but then another longing comes in—the longing for

I turned every
quarter hour on the spit
cooking up frustrations
cursing god and wishing
for a better life

I could write that
I stayed up all night
having sex and
no one would blink an eye

I am not ready for the truth
are you

Safe Love

why should I
have to think twice
take a throat swab
consent to blood
tests assess my options
before falling in love

what's so great

relationship, for connection to others, for a purpose and a calling (see note 15 above). Paradoxically, these were the very things that my poet's heart was fleeing in the first place. They had made themselves into obstacles and burdens—how soon though, in seeking meaning in pleasure, they build themselves up again. I'm lead to conclude with many of the existentialists that one cannot leave meaning to pursue pleasure—but maybe it is possible to bring meaning along on the pursuit. Susan Sontag (2003) brings this idea close to my heart. She connects suffering to passion to pleasure. From her writings on the artist as an exemplary sufferer, I think of the teacher as a necessary sufferer, as one who has found a utility of suffering that is transformed to motivation, or the reason for delaying gratification. The pleasure of sweat is part of the pleasure of learning. Or, the pleasure of suffering is not unlike the pleasure of learning. James's love of poetry (Madeline) illustrates, likewise, how love can be instructive to pedagogy as pedagogy.

about hidden feelings
like under-the-table dealings
always suppressed
and interrogated
for breaking hearts

why blame love
I'd like to blame
international treaties
that overemphasize
strict regulation
FBI dogs
in a containment cell
sniffing secret desires

let's find a new
goat to let loose
the real culprit
might be wild
bats from China
flying foxes
carrying the world's
most deadly viruses

or I could recast
the spotlight on
software insecurity
code written with back
doors where relationships
could be compromised
take a wrong turn

maybe it is too late
to set back the clock
for love by some

human error some
distorted expectation
has become a rank fake
and hearts are radioactive

laws should be passed
I would lobby for fewer
safeguards in love
where impossible wishes
and dreaming up poetry
like carry on luggage
travels close by
within arm's reach
ready to be taken up
at any moment

It was not enough

everything is given
and known in your mouth
I miss even the emptiness

the coming and going of kisses
the unraveling of a chord
that does not end

it absorbs all motives
as deeply as your own
'til I discovered
it was not enough
to return to love

loneliness ripens politely
not separate from a body

soft with habit

nothing held back
there a bilingual offering
that empties and fills

empties like lightning
fills like the collision
of hot and cold

THE ARTIST AS RESEARCHER

LOVE'S DISCOVERIES

KNOWLEDGE IS FRAGMENTARY

GOD REPENTS

Three years passed and James managed to not repeat his first year mistake. He enrolled in a master's degree at his alma mater, hoping to add something to his humdrum life. He was hopeful again. He would return to his hometown one day, rich and famous, with the love of his life, with someone he could share his dreams.

In his third class of the first semester, sitting in the same chair in Rundall Hall, finally, James's professor, Hans Zimmerman, made a remark that could be described as life-changing (to James at least). After having noticed that every student was still sitting in exactly the same chair as the previous class, and the class before that, Zimmerman remarked, that we, as human beings, are creatures of habit. He said that we return to the places to which we are accustomed and that we tend to find what we are looking for.²¹

²¹ Zimmerman's comment is also helpful when considering research questions, which too often determine the results before the search even begins. Rather than evaluating a question's worth by asking how it gives weight to the predicted result (validity of hypothesis), perhaps it is more true to question from the felt need, from perplexity and provocation (Green, 2007). Questions from this place of embodied being involve the imagination and are a rich soil for investigation. Following Caputo (2001), I have left James's journey open, keeping knowledge of its end even from myself. Caputo finds vitality in the unknown and

James's life did not change then and there. He didn't realize the full impact of what Professor Zimmerman was saying. What student does? Like his own students, he rarely reviewed his notes, and most days he was not really sure what contribution he would make in this world. But he wrote down those words as something slightly more than the serendipitous misfirings of an academic eccentric.

In fact, James completely forgot about those words, until one night at the Wicked Twister, a club in downtown Calgary, it happened: James fell in love, and in his rush to think up some way they could meet again, Zimmerman's words came rushing back over the *Boom Boom* of the base.

“What?”

“What's your name?”

“What was that? Madeline?”

“What is it you wanted to say to me?”

“I've found what I'm looking for.”

“What did you say?” Her eyebrows could tell a whole story.

James, still not sure how he might have offended her, quickly clarified: “I mean, we, not us, but people, you know, we tend to find what we are looking for.” And with that, he swung his laptop case over his arm.

Such was his focus to find the nearest all night coffee shop, that he left her there shaking her head. He barely remembered to look back, catching her eye enough to quicken his pace: “Hopefully, I'll see you again.”

mysterious, pointing out that our investigations need faith. He says, “I know it is ‘faith’ which drives our search to know” (p. 30).

Love's Irony

the irony is that when you are
thirsty for sleep
say not that much

it means more
past the boundaries
to what is possible

before we ever knew
and can know
it will be magically true

how do you know
your own love
past pains and climbs

I do not know either
I will hurt
but be in love

don't look at me
think that I will age
for I'm in love

this body will always
long for you in sprightliness
like I know there is a future

even through us
I cannot predict
its youth

to our own speculations
love is more
than we imagine

if I believe anything
it is love around
the other door all along

James was still fumbling over his own thoughts. His cheeks were hotter than his latte. At twenty-six, he was still young enough to recognize he'd just played the fool, starting to speak too soon, then disappearing to write, to work out through words what he was feeling. She was lively, attractive, easy to flirt with, but he left her there anyway. Was love the spark for writing, or was writing the spark for love? Perhaps both? Was she simply source material, part of the journey's adventure, the excess which made his love story interesting? All he knew for sure was that Wordsworthian feeling of the heart leaping up.

The kids by the window reminded him of his own students, and suddenly he became conscious of the possibility that they might think he was a poor teacher. He could almost hear their complaints out in the hallway. *Ya, he's got no idea what he's talking about.* He'd try and take them by surprise some time. He wanted Madeline to take him by surprise, the way poetry did, get to the bones under his skin.

James was starting to drift off, and the only thing he could remember of Zimmerman's flattened ramblings from the other night was that research is over before it starts. Whether his search for love or his research, it was all already determined by preconceived questions. That sure stretched his small town notion of love. That was why

he could not fall in love before: he always knew the end of the story. He believed too much in the fairy tale of love and dreams.

Even though he hurried away, she was close enough to be in all his senses. He should have felt tired, but his heart was full of thinking, translating his life to poetry. The inner dialogue of his spirit deluged him with fragments of thought and questions: *As he looked around, there were wonders in every direction. Am I already at the end of my search? Is love predictable? Will my journey reach the inevitable end of the questions I have posed? What about my students? How can I make a difference, create change. Perhaps in love everything could change: enthusiasm, empathy, perception, performance, love.*

He decided to roam the streets for a while. Sitting in the coffee shop late at night was not allowing him to get settled. Some nights were just like that. For one thing the thought of another letter from Bill Bakerman unsettled him. He once explained to Bill Bakerman that the curriculum guide is too focused on labels and categories, on reproducing itself.²² He knew his colleagues, when they did use poetry, frequently chose pieces that were too abstract, so they could dissect each line one by one, as if looking for a confession. James knew he was a good teacher, but wanted to be more than a television

²² In presenting an organized picture of the world, the curriculum guide emphasizes the individual parts, labeling the tree as leaf, twig, branch, trunk, roots and so on. "The words make it easier for us to categorize and comprehend reality. But we must not think that just because we have words for all the parts of a tree, a tree really has all those parts" (Kushner, 2006, p. 54). The leaf cannot know, for instance, when it stops being a leaf and becomes instead a decoration in a child's class project. And the trunk is not aware that it has stopped being a trunk and has become a Christmas tree. Indeed, "the roots do not know when they stop being roots and become soil, nor the soil the moisture, nor the moisture the atmosphere, nor the atmosphere the sunlight" (Kushner, 2006, p. 55). That is why the curriculum guide has to give way to a living guide.

set. His students could too easily change channels. He needed to break through and open the world of possibility again and increase his expectancy of what could happen in the classroom. It was time to unlock the curriculum. He needed to replace the old limitations with an intensity of feeling, to be more receptive to his students' lives, to remind his heart to listen, to embrace, to feel.

James did not want to go back into the coffee shop just yet, a new force seemed to be at work on him. Experiencing an instance of love, James began to feel the insistence of love, its need for spontaneity and meaning. On the way home, Madeline seemed to be the embodiment of how he wanted to teach, with a rediscovered longing. Love creates the best discoveries.

a rejuvenated heart

some subtractive force
seems to be at work
and on the subway
you were gone
oh I remembered
you too late

I want to move on too
to another life
to find another city
isn't there anything
to increase my love expectancy
to tell my heart
to be more receptive

with 23,000 genes
inside each cell

maybe I need
to turn on
a love expressive gene
or correct a DNA error

replace old limitations
in the bloodstream
inject new cells
that embed themselves
with dreams of longing
burrowed inside
the right ventricle

Outtakes on reality

sunlight always finds its way
through my shutters
after a long breath
barely believing
there is treasure
under water I emerge
from my covers in cutoffs
sand in my pocket
wet and fishy
bony finger open
hand of nothing
what is my claim
under there
going deep
gasping for air

just yesterday I
was wheeling my wagon
down 17th avenue

like some domino unfolding
and today I wake
a century later
in time
soaked clear through
my bedtime armor

there is a garden walk
in my dreams
creamy flowing silk
aimlessly all night
meandering through hedges
we walk
we wonder what kind
of flowers grow
on the other side of dreams

me, I remember tulips
upright and huddled close
like old nuns risking
a purple habit
or daisies
dazzling in the moonlight sky
jealous as stars to every gazer
you, you say it is my mouth
or remember my skin
and hair as if you were always
woven in my walk, a rib
unearthed like a necklace of sand dollars
out of black hush.
You are a call
and response going back to the first
praise-lament, the old wish
made flesh.

and I wake again
after a long breath
this time with you
sunlight somehow gentler
showing there is treasure
under water
I emerge
from my covers
spontaneous bathing suit
my pockets are leaking
but my hands full of gold
it doesn't matter
that I wear
someone else's clothes
a key in sight
and if found
I will give it to you
it unlocks the door
between wake and sleep

A WRITING CURRICLUM OF OPEN SPACES

A PEDAGOGY OF 99 SHEEP

THE ARTIST AS DECONSTRUCTED TEXT

James felt invisible when he awoke. It was so dark. He had sunk deep into his pillow and his heart was barely beating. On the outside he was frozen all over, but his memory of the music last night was hot inside his heart. How did it come? He had only just met her. Still this music was poetry, was her—the plain her. He rolled over to the edge of the bed.

Even before starting his graduate degree he loved mornings: in the quiet of others' sleeping, poetry always came to him hard and loud. It was him: walking in poetry at night, waking in poetry each morning. With Zimmerman's high expectations for scholarship, he had to add academic reading to his morning routine. He began to analyze everything more carefully, sometimes just lying there, sometimes in his journal, occasionally in poetry that he hoped to publish.

ASIDE: The fictional monster, or lover, is so persistent that it keeps knocking all through the night. For James, this knocking is ironically the very link between a banished inner ugliness and the more acceptable social being. Thus, the lover, like the poem,

provides a crossing between the outward form of being and the inner discourse of passion.

James looked in the mirror. He looked sick. “Oh shit.” His mother would chastise him for his language and for not taking better care of himself. He was always negotiating a kind of trouble with authority. The best teachers he imagined actually corrupted their students.²³ One of his favourite poets, Al Smith, told him that poets should write to make God repent of his sins. Blake did that. So did Shelley. So did a lot of poets.

ASIDE: Corruption is a question of where power is located. Because disruption of what is fixed and uncritically examined is what scholars often call for, the relationship of corruption to disruption becomes an important curricular question. Giroux (2003) reminds us that we ought to “analyze how power shapes knowledge” (p.122). Given this reminder, the poet’s association with corruption is one of justice and not tyranny.

James didn’t understand what was happening to his heart. He tended to side with the lonely heart, even his own extreme feelings. He’d never felt slain like this so his first instinct was a dismissive, *Who cares what others think?* Still, if his colleagues discovered his adult infatuation, he’d be labeled. The thought police would turn him over.

²³ See Socrates’ discussion with Glaucon in Plato’s *Republic*.

*Was his Madeline like Winston's Julia?*²⁴ Love was a powerful deconstructing force.

Perhaps this is why love often comes as a fiction or fantasy—it can hardly be believed.

He wanted to provide some form to his words this morning, but all that was available were fragments, loose ideas, and bits of lines. His ears were plugged with unceasing thoughts, decisions ascending and descending, creating a kind of vertigo around his future. New words seemed to be hiding, ideas boiling inside. Then at last the opening came, with all the different rhythms bunched together: each word like a hard, tight fist knocked at his heart. And he could not type fast enough to get it all down.

At the Wicked Twister

for 10 years
I've focused on the missing
moved several times
following the breakup

when I finally arrive
you recognize my clothing
so we enter
Export A's build trust

it's a circumstantial match
they estimate age and stature
go through the entire package
a database of delays

three metal tables laid out
neatly pushed together

²⁴ See Orwell's (1949) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

to identify blood samples
so many expectations in hand

tensions still simmer
crammed into my pocket
I dig for i.d.
the music is bone to bone

commingled rhythms
bring us face to face
I want you to be whole
resist insisting you shouldn't smoke

in an effort to conceal
the bathroom lines
you apply bits and pieces
of conversation to your lips

I too am far from settled
have need of flying
but together we are no longer
victims dumped in the wars

sure interest could fizzle
when the lights are on
when feelings are dug up
and sincere concern remains missing

the truth at last
we are found together decomposing
pieces of each other missing
but forging ahead anyway

Now that he was feeling better, it was time to get going. Even though he could not understand what was happening to his heart, or why he profoundly missed her—he whispered these words out loud—*Perhaps the real problem was that his heart was too small?*

Why did he need a reminder that he could sing whenever and wherever he wanted? Maybe even at school the music would come back to him, and there would be other parts to add to what was already in his mind.

As a teacher, it was his renewed hope to translate the poetic into classroom pedagogies. The poets he'd read had changed his life, and it was time to acknowledge that in his practice. He knew them as curriculum theorists, classroom experts in that they were life experts. Experts of the secret passions of the heart. Postman (1994) said that education is the passion of passing secrets onto the young. Poets have held these secrets well, and have a magic way of revealing them. James wanted to write and teach in a way that acknowledged the process of poetic living.

ASIDE: Perhaps our classroom structures should be replaced by poetic processes,²⁵ allowing for unanticipated stopping points along the way. There's almost no problem that a commitment to

²⁵ Is this commitment to process not a human translation of curriculum? Kirby (2003) likens it to "walking" saying that "there's almost no problem that a walk can't solve" (p. 31). Poets are walkers: they walk beaches, they walk with lovers, they walk to rest and connect with the communities in which they live. de Cosson (2003) also explores the subversive pedagogical journey through walking. He says, there is "a need for a whole body/mind/spirit connection for a grounded artistic understanding" (p. iii). Like de Cosson, I suggest this same movement approach in teaching: walking is a commitment to process, to movement, to moving slowly. Is it possible to move slowly in a world that has gotten used to efficiency in curriculum, in classroom management, in discipline, in solving those problems now, in expectations of behavior change now, and to deadlines on spiritual engagement?

process cannot solve.²⁶ Such a commitment is a sense of love and care for the individual. Even in process, there is a sense of the ongoing relationship, that teacher and students will stay with the process until both are restored to community. At report card time, that dangerous time when process seems to fade into the background, teachers could be loving by asking themselves important questions such as whose timeline establishes when reports are due? Or, why are all students' results reported at the same time? These are dangerous questions that are too often too quickly dismissed because schools are not structured for individual learning. There is an efficiency in treating students as a group rather than individuals.²⁷

I Love to Quote Myself

I love to quote myself

I say great things

²⁶ For example, by *walking* through the curriculum, the usual rainbow of emotions that children experience during a lesson, including fear, humor, sarcasm, wonder, anger, and disbelief, may not surprise a teacher quite as often. Teachers often do not know how to work with their students' reactions, sometimes only because they are sprinting rather than running. What should happen when a student yells out, "I hate poetry!," and storms out of the classroom?

²⁷ I've found that once teachers themselves slow down, expose themselves to their students' lives, and the rich variety of possibilities of knowing and living, that when teachers connect with students, and commit to chasing a living curriculum with them, even from their multiple and shifting points of view, then love, rather than being a distraction to teaching, actually enlivens it. In this way, students can find their own voice, trust the importance of themselves and their own words, and believe in their own contribution to a larger symphony.

like "there is no point speaking of hope unless
there is an accompanying tragedy for which hope is needed"

and "we do not have a world worth living in until
beauty and ugliness are treated with the same dignity"

and "teachers need to stop inculcating fear by
motivating students with the promise of success"

or "I believe in the possibility of impossible love"

actually, that last one is not mine
only I've said it so many times now
rehearsed it along the way now
offered that hope to myself now

that crafted into my heart now
those words are not just prayers
prayed in the dark

but who I am now
a translation so delicate
that searching among the words
the author of those pretty lines
will have to fall into my eyes
embrace the falling and find that place
where there are no fingerprints
to get them back

THE LIVED CURRICULUM

A MORE AL EDUCATION

A PEDAGOGY OF ENLIVENED LOVE

WORDS OF DESIRE

THE ARTIST IN FULL CHASE

PASSWORD TO CONFESSION

In his first block class, grade 12 English, James began with Stephen Dunn's (1989) collection, *Between Angels*. His lesson was that there are times in life where it seems like there is no providence, that there is no angel looking out for us (How well James knew his own lesson!), but that patience helps us remember we are simply "between angels." He wrote on the overhead: According to Dunn, our journey happens while traveling elsewhere.

"Isn't that like that song?"

"What song, Christy?"

"The fucking high song. The one where an angel puts two lovers together, but it's not their actual destiny."

"That's a good example. How would you react if you were one of the lovers?"

Christy knew she'd be angry. She had already determined that Matt was who she wanted to marry, and have children with, and buy a big house in the south with, and maybe not in Calgary at all.

“I don’t know.”

“But haven’t you ever wanted to love someone forever?”

“No.”

“Well, Christy, I have. And I think that’s what your singer and Dunn are talking about. Someday soon you’ll fall in love, and what the poetry is saying is that the love, all by itself, is enough.”

James’s lesson took off from there. The students knew he was willing to chase the poetry with them, even from their multiple and shifting points of view. James noticed it, too; he seemed to be living in the classroom there with them. The poets he read from were not just the subject of study, but they seemed to be offering a different way to teach. He was learning from Stephen Dunn that in the classroom the stop points along the way are unanticipated, appearing while he was focused on something else entirely.

Oh, how true that was. Most intensely, in fact, when he was teaching. It was not as James expected. He spent long hours thinking about Madeline during the day, but rather than distract him from teaching, being in love enlivened it. The poetry he taught began to come off the page for him. Words and text floating in the air, circling his body, all to bring him to a closeness—a closeness to what exactly? He didn’t know. He felt closer to Madeline, to his students, and to the poetry.

ASIDE: Midrashic poets use midrash both interpretively and creatively, often giving voice to what is not expressed in the original text. Midrash is a way to invade the text from the inside (Schneider, 2001). Thus, for example, the midrashic poems of this text create the possibility that Madeline might become more than

James's imagination. In midrash, the original text yields new meanings out of the overflow of the poetry. Schneider (2001) likens the midrashic poetry to putting flesh on bones. By encountering the love story through poetry, we are given opportunity to contemplate how love might affect our unique lived experiences. In this sense the midrash comes with the text, but also with ourselves.

Like a Movie Set

*The worst part of being unbearably alone
is that you have to bear it.*

~Roth, 2006, p. 102.

Hungry he comes to her
strips down quietly
and waits.

In pajamas still, she
she starts to drift
off to sleep.

A flame ignites in him
a slow burn evaporating
everything, even air.

It's 12:45 a.m., he turns on
a lamp and the neighbours
wave, smiling.

He and Madeline had made plans to walk along the Bow River. He began to think of love as more about a person's absence than her presence. When he heard his students talk about their girlfriends or boyfriends, he would imagine himself; when his students talked about a house party coming up, he took pleasure in his own plans of meeting Madeline for dinner, a walk, or dancing at the Cherry Lounge.

Billy Collins (2002) and Howard Nemerov (2003), two more of his favourite poets, wrote about the pain and pleasure of absence. Nemerov wrote that the light in the darkness is only temporary, that we must learn to see in the dark.²⁸ And Collins wrote of finding a melody in, of all places, the barking dog.²⁹ Yes, he could learn to see in the dark, find the melody in absence. A new lesson was unfolding for him. What he was longing for in love was probably what his students' hearts were longing for as well. Already he had a lesson for tomorrow.

He was learning how to teach again. Not so differently from his youthful idealism. He used to believe the two most important things about teaching were loving his students and loving his subject. This new found passion was like that, but deeper, in a way, more connected. Almost like he was willing to share more in the journey, to go on his students' journeys, and to let their own hopes and fears influence his heart as well. There would be no way to put this down in a curriculum guide! He'd never be able to teach the same lesson again twice. Nor did he want to. The same heart that wanted every date with Madeline to be new was the heart pushing him to love his students enough to make every class a date for people in love with life, with learning, and with each other.

²⁸ See his poem, "Idea," p.10.

²⁹ See his poem, "Another reason why I don't keep a gun in the house," p.18.

He wasn't planning on writing a poem about this pedagogy of enlivened love. To be truthful, even the process through which he recorded his words remained a mystery. Who knows? But the first stanza happened so clearly in his mind, he had to write it down. He listened in a quiet, slow way and thought the lines out, letting them overlap and twist like a rhizome. He could see the shapes of images come together as clearly as he could hear them. Then he opened his eyes: he wrote for the entire lunch hour, so effortlessly he suspected that his words were not his own. He imagined that his hand had become the instrument of someone else.

How to Say I Love You

Never seek to tell thy love

~William Blake³⁰

out for a stroll
under a sudden sky of mud
it threatens to downpour
full grown families are ducking
behind brick walls
as we too scramble indoors
to watch the parade
the hard rain
stir up the dust
its blinding white
dance shocking itself
against the pavement
like rubber rising up
bouncing past lines of steel

³⁰ Available at <http://www.eliteskills.com/c/1726>

creating some
prehistoric autumn:
a password to confession

I never told you how
so often I've wanted to sit
on the piano bench
beside you and flip
the pages of the music
searching for signs
that match my heart

or never told you how
I long to play the cello
sound out the low note
and play my emotion
or simply sing along
full volume to the radio
and feel love's light
like the sun now coming out

we both understood
the wounded landscape
injured and healed
as we watched
through a small round window
the sudden sky open up
and dry my silence

Somehow, like the barking dog that woke Collins in the middle of the night,
James felt awakened in the classroom. He felt like uncertainty was something he could
listen to, moving with the symphony of conversation. Without love it wasn't possible.

New love unsettled him, but he wouldn't look back because it also pushed him into new areas of understanding.

After his last class of the day James went to Starbucks. The sky was curved, like the inside of a huge glass ball, very dark blue. There was the smell of melting snow, warm and wet grass—being outside in the warmth of the Chinook.. He needed to just sit for a while and let it all sink in.

He wanted to spend some time with Robert Creeley's poetry. He had borrowed a collected edition of Creeley's poems over the weekend, and wanted to sip on a coffee while savoring the poetic conversation.

Creeley did not disappoint. Just when James was having his doubts, too. He wondered if his department head would bring a closer scrutiny to his classes. He started to think, too, about the implications of being in love with someone other than Angela. Ha! What a pun. He was "between angels," between Angelas. Love could be dangerous, but the poetic advice was clear. Creeley (1985) was telling him to "drive." To simply get in a "big, old, god-damn car and drive."³¹

After the coffee shop, James drove to Madeline's. All the while he was thinking of Creeley, that old magician, the one full of lust and irony. A strange combination. Like the driver of Creeley's poem, James knew that while he drove, while he experienced that freedom of wind blowing through his hair, while he was distracted with his pleasure of the art, out of no where comes—blindsiding—look out—he must swerve—alas it is too late—he runs into...what? This James didn't know. He didn't know what to expect from

³¹ See "I Know a Man" available at http://www.diacenter.org/prg/poetry/87_88/creeley2.html.

this plot. Somehow the events that started this novel could not be escaped. Even the love he felt now had to be reconciled with choices he had made earlier in his life. He wished he could pull it all apart. Start again, but this time, with a knowledge of the end of the story. How unfair that the author kept knowledge of the ending away from his characters!

They went for a walk down by the Bow River. They talked a little, and Madeline wanted to know if he had always wanted to be a teacher, but instead of answering, he kissed her!

It wasn't really his plan, but how he longed to kiss her. The dance around him seemed to take on a new rhythm. Arms and legs floating, the light reflecting off moving bodies, the wild beauty of eyes and mouths desiring, and the music always there but seeming to float out into the distance.

Madeline pretended to draw back, but then she kissed him hard back. James could see her tattoo, just visible below the neck line of her t-shirt. They repeated again what he had been imagining: the rub of lips in rhythm, half-frenzied, half stillness. Life moves very fast.

“You are delicious.”

“I like kissing you.”

It didn't matter what James said now. The whole universe seemed to align in his favour. He kissed her again.

That night, paying some attention to revision, James wrote the following poems in his journal. He was vaguely aware that his writing was more than spilling his feelings onto the paper, but a kind of search into who he was as a person, and teacher, and poet. One day he was sure that something important would come of his words.

Suddenly Love Lasts

walking warm in rain
the tops of trees
have caught it for us
like confetti caught in netting
before a wedding
summer silence shimmers
the darkened garden undressed
and gone to sleep
heavy with perfume

blurred into another time
I find my body electric
like words jumping
in every shade of white
back and forth across
the fold of poems
side by side in this pocket
full of time

less and less dressed
my hair tousled
gentle scritch-scratch
we watch the city's lights
blur into a wavy water windshield
smoke up the glass
and in such fog of passion
bodies roll in air

this performance has burned
past the body
right to bone
the other poem is where

I want to be the other pages
where love will last

Backwards Love

after years of searching
a tightrope walk
high over mountains
dangerous but alive

this backwards love surprises
turns me on its head
and no there is no shame

this love happens to me new
you move in the opposite direction
like a swing rushing back

to knock me over
like wavelengths of light
travelling 300,000 km per second

ripples travel through my body
arms stretched out I feel
your force set in motion

all I have imagined is you
and move in response
back and forth in time

desire with your words
skin like glass
wants to be released

but here I am not jumping
stuck in this in-between
afraid of the possible choices

to feel you as clothes to candles
love is as you say
all in a single grain of sand
rubbed into skin

Our Eschatology

I was writing love
in a poem
when I saw our future
riding white horses
carrying a green flag
on our laps
green on green
choosing the color to match
our feelings

we are together
lolling through the meadows
when we lie down
the animals come
and shelter us
even with no need
of shelter or food

everything we touch
turns to love
because there is no way
in this world there is no

destination in this future
we are always here

there are large pillars
and angels blocking the gate
it is dangerous
my body is still
but you know
the password

then I know
that as long as I'm in love
I will not finish
the poem I'm writing
will still be inside me
lost forever
in this place

CHAPTER SEVEN

KISSES AND A NEW LANGUAGE

POSSIBILITIES AROUND WORDS

UN-AUTHORED IN THE DARK

IN MEDIA REZ

AESTHETIC USURY

THE LEAP TO POETRY

James's life was opening up before him. His new love was seemingly separated from his day, relegated to escapes from work and home and family. And yet, this love opened up new possibilities all around him. Even his teaching seemed to have more meaning, teaching that had, of late, become quite stifled.

ASIDE: With his heart open, James is on a new journey, scribbling furiously to catch up with his new feelings and emotions. Where he was previously worn out from work, experiencing some kind of lack, he is now experiencing a kind of compulsion to find new meaning. Frankfurt (1999) explains that, because we are creatures to whom things matter, we are compelled to love certain things, such as

personal ideals or a significant other. His view on existential meaning is valuable because he introduces the concept of “unthinkability” with respect to responsibility. “Unthinkability is a mode of necessity with which the will sometimes binds itself... and limits choice” (Frankfurt, 1988, pp. 189-90). According to Frankfurt, loving something is a volitional necessity, in other words, not altogether under the person’s voluntary control. Unthinkability, the counterpart of volitional necessity, constrains and limits, but is not incompatible with free will. Frankfurt argues that unthinkability is required for true authenticity.

His love of Madeline was not unlike his love of reading. A pile of books now reached higher than his desk. Most of them were chapbooks to feed his poetry addiction, but atop the pile was Irwin and de Cosson’s (2004) new text on a/r/tography. As a poet, James was drawn to this arts-based inquiry because it welcomed not just his poetry as an artifact, but his poetic way of living. He often taught his students that poetry was not collected and published in chapbooks, but a way of living. And now, with Madeline, it was even a way of falling in love again.

He thought back to her kiss. James was discovering something deep about beauty, something he knew he would cherish more than ever. It was enlivening his poetry, and because poetry, like beauty, like love, was an aesthetic experience, he knew

somehow that words needed to be shared in the same beautiful way that kisses could be shared. Words are kisses. That was worth writing down.

Dear Madeline,

Your kisses have become words for me this morning. I notice myself changing. Even in my body, there is something that is noticeably self, perhaps an old self, and something distinctly other, something that is becoming me and has perhaps always been me. Is that you? Can kisses and words change a person that much?

I've been getting up early now for longer than I can remember because there is something in the process of creativity, an artistic moment that can bring self and other together while remaining separate. Within me is self and other. In poetry I am searching for myself, and yet, in poetry, I am othered to myself. Poetry opens me to you, and you open me to a new me. Even if I'm the only one who experiences this, which I doubt, it's true. It is true within persons, and it is true of, in, and by poetry.

Somehow, in thinking about the poetic process, I can feel circulating around in my heart right now a need for unity in the soul. A kind of collaboration of parts that poetry helps search out. I can feel myself changing, both in the day-to-day, but also gradually over time. And, suddenly, too, as new, profound knowledge and experience come rushing in.

Love always,

James

James could write to her all day. He always wanted his letter writing and scholarship to find a closer connection. He was about to tell her about a/r/tography, that with a/r/tography there was a way to explain the unity and division he was experiencing with her and with his writing. A/r/tography had an ecological and holistic approach to inquiry which overlapped with his poetic spirit. It was in the overlap, the doubling of identities, that he found possibility and even structure for his unstructured questions. Irwin (2004) in her introduction to a/r/tography helped him see himself as an a/r/tographer.

Like an a/r/tographer, James knew that he lived in the world as an artist, more specifically a poet. He lived in his classroom this way too. And more and more he was beginning to see how the two overlapped. According to Irwin (2004), an a/r/tographer is a reflexive practitioner who metonymically lives in the world as an artist, researcher, and teacher. He had already experienced a merging and overlapping of these identities and because of it, he was experiencing better success in the classroom.

He had always been a good teacher, but now he was aiming for the heart, and it was changing everything. Even his language for teaching? When in love, what is a lesson? What is an activity? Can love be an activity? He couldn't even describe his activities as "hands-on" or "active." Hands didn't seem to matter as much as hearts. "Hearts-on" learning. That was a good title for a paper.

James had to turn on his laptop.

The a/r/tographer lives in the multiplicity of a community of discursive relationships; the a/r/tographer, particularly the poet a/r/tographer, is a writer of unauthorized (even collaborative), autobiographies. He or she creates fictions—

reproductive and resistant—intimate textual intertwinings that tell of both self and of culture and of writer and reader. This is poetry. It is, surely, a ruthless and loving poetry of destroying the self while simultaneously writing the self into being.

James knew his thoughts were still fragmentary, but this kind of writing was research into his very soul. He felt it growing from within, in all directions, in all facets of his life—like a rhizome. “That’s funny,” thought James. “All this time Ben Jonson was right, ‘It is not growing like a tree.’”³²

He had to keep writing—with every word he seemed to be changing.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe rhizomes metaphorically through the image of crabgrass (p. 21). Through this image they stress the importance of the ‘middle’ by disrupting the linearity of beginnings and endings. As Wiebe (in press) writes “A rhizomatic teaching could thus be characterized as going in all directions all at once. The rhizomatic is inherently a pedagogical reminder that hierarchical structures, linear procedures, and repeatable techniques can lack a specific appreciation for individual contextualized learning.”

James checked his watch. 6:55 and he still hadn’t showered. He had to run. He’d have to embrace the rhizomatic later.

In the staffroom, James let slip that he was out last night at the Cherry lounge. After all, falling in love is no fun unless there is someone to tell. Only Harry lifted his eyes above the Calgary Herald long enough to comment. “Nothing better to do, James, than stay up late and party with pimply freshmen?”

³² See “It is Not Growing like a Tree” available at www.bartleby.com/101/194.html].

“It’s nothing I can explain.” James laughed, pretending he didn’t care. When he got to his office, he allowed himself to dream a little. Harry was always late to gather his materials, and Jane was part time so she wouldn’t be in until almost noon. He remembered the feeling of dancing with her, of examining Madeline’s body, the pleasurable sensation of her lips, her eyes closed, her hand placed on his head, her head tilted just so.

12 AM 12 YEARS LATER

pushing myself
trembling
into the dark
we leapt
your shoulders bare
your nails
along my back
my eyes shut tight
unleashed fear gnawing
inside the real stuff
down
 down
12 years
inhaling empty
weak coffee and cheap clothes
the drive-thru window

but like a creamy cinnamon
bun with swirls
cotton whites
crisp and slender
buttons and black hair
under the covers

rolling to lasting glow

He knew how alive he felt, and had only a small glint of worry. His aim was to bring this kind of feeling into the classroom, to understand how love and teaching were connected.

At 9:05, after assembly, James wrote “The power of beauty” on the blackboard. Then darkness.

“Hey—what happened?”

“Just a second, they’ll come back on.” The class seemed to be suffering in the silence of the dark, so James tossed out a question: “What is it like to be ugly. I mean, is the world any easier for beautiful people? We’re all in the dark here, maybe it’s a good time to think about your skin, your eyes, your hair, all those things on the surface that nobody can see right now.”

“Well, if you are ugly you have to suck up to everybody, especially if you like someone, then he could use you.”

“So, the beautiful use the ugly to get what they want.”

“That’s about the truth of it.”

“What about the risk of becoming hostage to your own beauty?”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s like the movie we saw. In *Gattaca* (1997), Jerome is a slave to his own expectation of perfection. He is born perfect and cannot get away from the desire to achieve the best. Beauty, when it becomes a form of usury, ends up enslaving everyone. I think we are better off recognizing the beauty in everyone, even for selfish reasons, just to avoid slavery of our souls—that would be reason enough.”

“Yah, but it’s gone in no time.”

“Beauty is fleeting?”

“Ya, so take advantage of it when you are young. You know, who needs brains when you’ve got these?”

“It’s still slavery. How much money do you think is spent in fashion, health, and beauty each year? I have no idea.”

“All those things are important.”

“Ya, they feel true, like taking care of yourself.”

“But should it drive how we understand ourselves?”

“I’m for beauty, but for a different kind of beauty—one that embraces something beautiful in everyone.”

This complicated conversation did not take a long time or a short time. It did not have anything to do with time going by at all. He sat on the floor with them in the darkness, his arms held around his legs. He prodded a bit here and there, but there was little need. The questions became dialogue, and soon James was among them.

The darkness covered them and in the darkness their hearts came to light in a new way—like the whole world was changing and there was no use thinking back how it was before. It felt right. James didn’t know what to call it yet, but this was how he wanted to teach from here on in. The poetry rose up confident, with excitement underneath.

It was like love. At night, with Madeline, he could be naked and that was how he wanted to love from here on in. It was how he wanted to teach, and all he wanted to write about.

ASIDE: James was learning a new responsibility in his classroom. Instead of responding to external influences, such as the written curriculum, others' expectations, lack of funding, overwhelming practical matters, or even his own understanding of who he was as a teacher, he was learning to engage with the real decisions that confronted him. The truth of his freedom did not depend on circumstances, but in his remaining open.

Love Blacked Out

in the morning
of February 10, 2004
love's electricity failed
and my body's power plant
seems to have shut down
in tense darkness
I'm left on the shelf

outrages operating
at 765,000 volts
cascaded through my belief grid
like dominoes
the failure darkening dreams
that cannot simply
pump more voltage
through an old heart

even as dreams compete
to generate and deliver
as much power as
my imagination demands
I know my body
needs a break from
a bed that does not fit

to hear the door slam
from giving in to expectations
a high voltage
imagination is over heated
knocks all my dreams offline
memories of my own blood
flow right out from holes
in the bathroom ceiling
and my control grid
short circuits again

in the dark wondering
who will speak my name
loneliness flows
out of my wrists
in the deep spaces of infinity
who would want uniquely me
mysteriously on a new frequency
a single thought
mustered the resolve
over hundreds of kilometres
keeps love ultracold
a perfect conductor
gradually evolves
away from dependence
spurs alternative
forms of love

creates healing

Although he didn't see her until midnight, he was carrying forward all his day's energy. Madeline was always a surprise in her clothing. She was cat woman tonight—all black, and wearing a custom, leather red coat.

“Aren't you beautiful!”

“Beauty, my dear, doesn't last” She kept him at arm's length for a while. It was a dance of longing, one that stoked the fire.

“I missed you.” He reached out and brought her close, not caring if anyone noticed their embrace or recognized him.

“More than yesterday?”

“I smiled a lot.” James ordered two cinnamon dolce lattes. “A venti for me. And a grande for cat woman. No whip.” When I smile it means I'm thinking of you. Actually, I was jealous all day. I think it's because I wanted to hold you tighter and longer than before.”

Madeline recognized the flame of love in his eyes. She decided to stoke the fire: “Sometimes it's dangerous to be loved. We don't have to be in love to walk along the beach after coffee, or swim in the ocean just after sunset. What makes you so sure you are my prince?”

“Thinking of you brings a double meaning to everything I do. It feels like I'm stepping forward but stepping upwards at the same time.” Madeline picked up the order

and then bought a muffin for herself.³³ “When I looked out the window this morning, I wanted to experience the sunshine with you, in a lazy way, lingering together. Only, that’s a poet’s talk, full of cliché and insincerity.”

James was a bit saddened by her words, but not set back.

Love Spars and Scars

our backs turned
completely to one another
we return to love

He liked to spar with her, receive her teasing. “Maybe cliché is wrong. I think there is still meaning, simply different meaning. Not less genuine, not less authentic, only a new language.”

“I think it's cliché because it's stuff I never hear, only read about—to do with love, but lovers do not use them, only poets.”

James didn’t want to appear too pushy, so he chose his words carefully, even a little awkwardly: “A private cliché perhaps: one that comes to love when love is heightened.”

“You can quit trying.”

³³ In *The Sacred Prostitute*, Qualls-Corbett (1988) explains that “falling in love is always a result of projection; it is not a mature feeling of respect and appreciation for the other; rather one loves an aspect of oneself” (p.72). Madeline can feel urged on in love and pulling back at the same time. While constructing a projection it can also be simultaneously coming apart. Qualls-Corbett (1998) says that “when the partner does not live up to the demands of the projection (and no human possibly can), the projection cannot be sustained” (p.72).

“You surprise me; you always do. I can be working away and then there is this rushing joy in knowing you are there. You come *in medias res*. If only I could click my heels three times.”

“You make me laugh.”

“I’m serious, you come like an angel in the middle of my thoughts, in the middle of my day. And just like the medieval plays, you rescue me from danger. In this case the danger is a life of mediocrity.”

“Are you yourself with me? Are you really with me?”

“Possibly neither, or a lot of both.”

“That’s exactly what I mean. I’m totally new. I like to stare at you. And then during the day a hungry absence sets in. It’s one thing to look back at my memory of you and quite another to look directly at you.”

“Staring is rude.” James watched her breathe out a sigh. She was having fun now and he knew it. “Let’s go to my house. I didn’t sleep long enough last night, so I don’t want to stay up too late.” He smiled back.

Entangled States

Quantum entanglement is a phenomenon in which the quantum states of two or more objects have to be described with reference to each other, even though the individual objects may be spatially separated. [see www.wikipedia.com: retrieved March 4, 2007]

the qubits
in quantum physics
are speed dating
sitting at a table
one minute to discover
the deep secrets

in another's heart

there is little chance
for love after 60 minutes
given 60 choices
that the only one
right now is selecting
me as the only one

linked to a companion
in a subtle way
(even though the choice
is totally random)
the qubits find each other
like lovers in the dark

at 10 seconds
your smooth stride
down the off wing
better than I expected

at 20 seconds
your poetry in rhythm
pressing against my soul
a reflection so similar

at 30 seconds
I can see you
barefoot in the Yukon
dance round the rim
of slave lake
bringing in the new moon

at 40 seconds
an ice angel carved

with your husqvarna
cold but not melting
holding it up so clear
you see me through it

empty headed heart full
I wonder about the odds
stare and smile
in a Schrödinger cat state
all the qubits are in love
can be both 0 and 1
at the same time
who needs 20 more seconds
you and I entwined
tangled in a single state

“Help yourself to anything in the fridge. I’m going to make myself comfortable.”

James ignored the little warning signs. Love was not something to second guess: it was all a question of vibes. Her kiss had awakened him, and his heart could never sleep now. Their exchange of words was already an embodied experience—it would only be natural to exchange bodies too.

“We’re on different planes. I’m trying to find a place in my body that feels right for us. I wanted you tonight, more than I wanted any man, but I’m not sure I want to be rescued by a prince. Sort of a wanting and needing but not able to touch that wanting.”

“I believe in fairy tales.”

“It’s a story you’ve made up and it feeds you, but I am not in the story yet. Words are not hands. Letters are not lips. Your words are beautiful, but not without tension. Tension is desire, but it is also confusion.”

“I like the mind stirring. You make me think about things in different ways. You speak me back to me and I know myself better.”

“I look at you but still don’t know you”

Bedroom Love

I’ve never seen your bedroom
I imagine the ice sculptors
on your dresser
never melting
the hot breath
from her lipstick
scrawled across the tiled mirror
beside your note: be back late
the flashlight
for early mornings
where coffee calls
or early mornings
after last call
how useful tiny lights
that make no noise
at all

I imagine how she sleeps on
in love as ever
knowing bedroom love

socks in drawer
9 summer suits on hangers
khakis and collared shirts
romance in the book
by the bedside

James was up early making coffee. *Maybe I've made a mistake, but I realize now that there are no second chances. It's best to accept what stirs the heart. Risky, of course. But if I'm going to take on a life philosophy, it might as well be one lead by passion and poetry. If I'm looking for true love, then I might as well let go of the mediocre.*

With Madeline routines were changing; the leap to poetry was inevitable.

Backwoods Love

off the beaten track
where lumberjacks sculpt
ice in winter
as easily as writing poetry

where the best collection
of naked ladies
on the wall
belongs to Courtney
whose scars along her arms
run just as long as anybody's

where the trophies
that line the ledge
are not for spelling bees
memorizing bible verses
or simply participating

in dance marathons

where one story
told many times
becomes as certain
as the 7 days of creation

that's where I learned
to love you
so when you blow
the milk foam
of your latte
and ask how I know

I look within to where
belief is collected slowly
as sure as the forests
I grew up in

when I invite you in
nothing can pull you from
the resolve in my body
a pearl in the dead of winter
is sunshine on the horizon
as well as treasure

This Web of Lines

*What starts things
are the accidents behind the eyes*
~Stephen Dunn, 1974, p.3

poetry poetry poetry
broke her virginity in university

the empty eyes
sloked with some dope
her tongue has moved
doped out and broke
three lays for a smoke
everyone in the mouth of her stain

poetry poetry poetry
whisperings within the soul
the forgotten smile
like a jaded 40 year old
entangled in this web of lines
her hands with many lines
we see her acquaintances drive by
because they hate her

poetry poetry poetry
transformation in the baking sun
the summer oil on her legs so slick
hers is the most beautiful soul
she writes poems like mannequins
lost in another era

poetry poetry poetry
so much a beautiful girl
floating idly back in time
off this roof into the sky
finding party favours that rhyme
with her body

CHAPTER EIGHT

LEARNING LANGUAGE AND LOVE

UNPLANNED A/R/TOGRAPHIC FRAGMENTS

A CURRICULUM OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

THE PEDAGOGY OF GIVING

WRITING REVEALED IN FAITH BY FAITH

BEYOND THE CIRCLE OF GRATITUDE

NO LONGER AFRAID IN RELATION TO OTHERS

COURAGE TO TEACH FROM THE HEART

THE WORDS ARE SACRED

James looked at his fingernails in the dim morning light. Yes. He was still in love. *Come with me anon, nonny, nonny, no...* Compulsive and embodied, spontaneous and fragmentary. Writing was like that too, being in love with the language, with creation in chaos. He was, following love's prompting, going places he never intended, seeing things that he had never dreamed of seeing. Lying in bed it was always easier to read than write. He focused his eyes on a highlighted passage. Derrida (1997) had written that "deconstruction... is affirmative in a way that is not simply positive, not simply conservative, not simply a way of repeating the given institution" (p.5). If the intuition were language, or love, or school for that matter, then meaning

continually slipped. What an impossibility! Perhaps that was it, renewed wonder, a return to awe. Before learning, before falling in love, he had to realize how impossible things really are.³⁴ But James believed in the possibility of impossible love. Madeline. With her, his life was prompted. With her was an opening for meaning.

come with me anon, nonny, nonny, no...

I wonder how you are breathing
whether you might come back in silence
no different than you left

He was always an admirer of Derrida's work, and was trying to write with attention to the prepositional flow of language: one step forward, two steps back (or perhaps down). He wanted to write the same dreamy way of being half conscious, imagining writing lying down as being equal to the trim and neat strokes of sitting up, even if it meant some words would be lost, never making it to his computer. Life's little uncertainties. Sometimes the pen needed a break from the precision always demanded of it, like a free dress day at school. The suit could hang in the closet.

But what about report cards? Those were due in two days. He wanted to be authentic there too, creating a dialogic "contact zone" (Bakhtin, 1981) that could keep in process this sense of renewal and invention he was feeling, drawing near to her love

³⁴ Block (2004) says that "wonder arises in the awareness of the world's glory, which always exceeds our comprehension and our grasp. To our sense of wonder we respond with awe...[and] we acknowledge that ...we can never fully understand" (p.2). Awe is the tension between the possible and impossible, something like the tension between desire and fulfillment. That is, desire is always only temporarily quenched. To become places of awe, schools need a renewed sense of the impossible, an impossible that is like desire, that keeps being impossible, even after the temporary possibility.

unexpectedly, and having it nourish, bringing newness of life in everything he did and thought and said.

Come with me anon, nonny, nonny, no....

remember time spent over breakfast
spontaneous in bed bodies so imaginary
fragmentary not different
than my dream of being the fog

pressed to your face
circling your thighs around my waist,
and shoulders like run on sentences

With Madeline, there was meaning *in the process*. Learning and love were processes and not objects,³⁵ and he was beginning to understand his lived experience metaphorically: like scattering seeds in a field, he knew that some ideas would sprout, and he no longer fretted about whether others would not, and even joked about those that might be stolen; sure he hoped for those few genuinely spontaneous ideas, anticipating a harvest of something he would never have guessed.³⁶

³⁵ Coupland (2004) in *Life After God*, also sees the need to disrupt our confidence in an objective world. He says,

I looked at it a different way. I thought: here it is, as a species we've built satellites and cablevision and Ford Mustangs but what if, say, it was dogs and not people who had invented these things. How would dogs express their essential dogginess with inventions? Would they build space stations shaped like big bones that orbited the earth? Would they make movies of the moon and sit in drive-ins howling at the show? (p. 10)

³⁶ The metaphor of scattering seeds is like Alison Pryer's (2002) description of research as memoir. "Fragments of memory are not simply represented as flat documentary but constructed to give a 'new take' on the old, constructed to move us into a different mode of articulation" (p. 23).

ASIDE: Midrash lets go the presupposition that only through serious effort and manipulation on the part of the writer can all the parts fit together. Midrash questions the notion that authorship relies on compulsion, authority, forcing the parts to fit into what is inevitably an artificially constructed unity. The metaphor of scattering seeds infuses research with a certain imagination, and the surprise of meaning cannot be expressed solely through structuralist-instrumental approaches. In midrash, we can think of the parts as seeds, as infused with the possibilities of life. For those in the structuralist paradigm, the parts are often seen as objects, having no life in themselves, and are only brought to life when the author discovers that one fit. This view of authorship is like Frankenstein gathering his parts in the graveyard, and through his genius he “creates” life. I suggest, rather, that the parts are already alive. They are seeds and no matter how they are scattered, there will be harvest. The parts are so alive, so pregnant with possibility, that they attract one another, finding with each scattering a new meaning.³⁷ Thus it is possible for Leggo to ask (personal

³⁷ “I seek to remember that we are part of a cosmos whose cycles include and embrace our existence” (Wiebe, 2003, p.6). However, too often I still create a world where I am the agent, controlling how time advances. This finality is unsettling. In such a subject position new discoveries only add to the chaos. My hope is to remember that ours is a limited, obstructed view, to remember that we are not absolute nor are we in charge. We do not find, but are found. Stephen Goulding (1997) reminds us that history is what makes us. As an artist, teacher, and researcher, I hope to understand the proportions of the cosmos overshadowing us. Our practical world itself would collapse if it lost the halo of unattainable mystery

communication on an earlier draft, July 2007), “How do all the parts work together?” He understands that the parts themselves are working, and working in many multiple ways.³⁸ At least that’s what I hope he meant. And, if Derrida is to be mentioned at all, then my hoping what Leggo meant changes what he meant. Otherwise, as mentioned above, we simply repeat the given institution, in this case, a dissertation that hollowly follows its form, another norm.³⁹

without saying goodbye, the hour not safe
ghosts too eager to steal that moment
open as if to swallow

our silences on the drive across town
un/confessed dreams still in the mouth
ready to get reacquainted

surrounding it. This is awe, to be affected by the promise of a new kind of search that is imagined out of chaos, and not only on the shoulders of what has gone before.

³⁸ The midrash even on this page is working, disrupting the narrative with new openings, displacing the academic phrase with the poetic, fictionalizing experience, and simultaneously translating it back so it finds its overlap in the phenomenological, that psychological effect or belief that personal experience is transacting with reality.

³⁹ Gary Knowles (2001) says that the heart of pedagogy is “but fragments of memory, bits of a life, snippets of meaning-making” (p. 95). Truly, a seed finds a unique place to dwell, and not by our own machinations.

James wondered if he could resist getting up and writing something down. Buzzing all around inside was the connection between the spontaneity of writing, love, language, and research. Inspiration was always part of writing, like a gift.

come warm me with your smile
before apologies and promises prepare
the way for fear

come before loneliness sprawls on the bed beside me
listening to the bathroom fan whir
wordless slips, slicing like a comma

Last night was the best gift of all. He and Madeline were reading Caputo together. Sharing thoughts about faith and unfaith, they felt something they'd known viscerally for years, that the heart of faith overlapped with the heart of love. Their conversation was what he wanted his writing and teaching to be like, unstructured, rhizomatic, wandering here and there not knowing exactly how it would turn out. Their thoughts were always moving, always changing, always in flux. What was said was often by clarification then unsaid and reversed. He was reading and she toyed with him, pushing, pricking, never letting him rest. And her retorts rolled off the tongue like, like—oh what did it really matter what it was like. It was hopeful for James, each syllable was a little unbuttoning of what was just beyond his reach.

don't wait for time to settle
for comfort or sleeplessness to begin
don't even brush your teeth

Caputo (2001) writes: "Faith is always –
and this is its condition – faith without faith,
faith that needs to be sustained
from moment to moment,
from decision to decision, by the renewal,
reinvention, and repetition" (p.33)

as the gesture of unconsciousness
like going out for a hamburger at Milestone's
don't bother about leaving properly

come as the lesson of humour
teach me how to imbibe my own balance
how to prevent a scene

in these moments
the secret of concealing embarrassment
of course the perfect apology for difference

James loved how she sat cross-legged, like it was story hour, as if every complication was pleasure. Except she said, "She didn't enjoy it." His reading. "It was rude."

"Is it against the rules?" She would shift when she talked, almost like she was out of sync with her mouth. "Be careful what you say. This takes a lot of trust."

"Not necessarily. Like Derrida, Caputo writes to rewrite. And then again, there are other possibilities."

"That you'll stay." That stung a bit.

He rolled over and snuggled the pillow under his elbows. “Reading his⁴⁰ thoughts on faith, has helped me understand the connection between the spontaneity of writing, love, language, and research. You can read my writing, right?”

“That takes faith.”⁴¹ She smiled coyly.

“Take as long as you want. Like Caputo, I want to see faith as a gift,⁴² writing in faith by faith, surprised by what can be written unplanned.”

“What if you go to the bathroom?” Was she making fun of him? Groping around awkwardly for an apology, James could feel a little tightening in his throat and his first instinct was for some kind of soothing throat lozenge.

the phrases to hang our memories on
I guess its like breaking tile
then groping for how to grow them new

somewhere over the Rockies
I see you writing in midnight snatches
letters gathering in your hands

⁴⁰ See Caputo (2001, pp.30-45).

⁴¹ For example, Caputo (2001) says that faith is “always inhabited by unfaith, which is why the prayer in the New Testament makes such perfect sense, “Lord, I do believe, help my unbelief (Mark 9:24, RSB)” (p. 42). Like Caputo, I realize my own searching, my faith, cannot be insulated from unbelief; it is co-constituted by unbelief, which is why faith is faith and not knowledge.

⁴² Thinking of writing or of research, when a gift is given, no gratitude can be proportionate to it. Like infinite difference, or the relation of singular/plural (Nancy, 2000), the gift is not a contribution to shared commonality, but rather an iteration that is always moving “on a continuous passage to knowledge that is incomplete” (Ellsworth, 2005, p.57). A gift is something that a singular subject cannot be thankful for. As soon as I say “thank you” for a gift, I start canceling the gift; I start destroying the gift by proposing an equivalence, that is, a circle which encircles the gift in a movement of reappropriation. So, a gift is something that is beyond the circle of reappropriation, beyond the circle of gratitude.

“Are you getting this? The transaction of language and faith overlaps in the same way as research and faith. I can both attest—”

“—Did you just make that up or is it your standard bullshit?” That cut right through his whole body. “What is it?”

“I’m getting a cramp in my neck.”

“Is that all? Your big blank face is saying something else.”

“Ok. Yes. I was hoping—I actually think this is interesting.” He was trying hard to avoid staring at the swoop of her neckline, which always gave him an exquisite shiver. With visible effort he stared right at the middle of her forehead. “It is an important paradox: We *think* we have faith but we don’t. It’s an over confidence of writing ability, or training. That somehow out of our effort or devotion to thought, to searching, to drawing closer to research and language we *gain* knowledge (because we fear scarcity or lack or want). This is faith as a noun, for we think of ourselves as agents in this process.”⁴³

“Gotta think about that one.” She cupped her chin in her hands and gave him a quizzical look. He loved how her chic features were their own utterance, always coming together with her voice, just under her breath. “What is this useful for?”⁴⁴

⁴³ In *Curriculum in Abundance*, Jardine, Friesen, and Clifford (2006) point out that faith in abundance creates more abundance. From the context of complexity theory, they show that if we view our resources, our time, our teachers, or our students through a lens of scarcity, then we don’t believe in innovation. This is why Caputo (2001) says faith is a verb. It allows our resources, our thinking, our searching to overflow from abundance. Ongoing gifts.

⁴⁴ Still in the pragmatist paradigm, a common way to accord value is to measure utility. In research, it is often the arts which take time to look closer at those resources which do not have widely proclaimed value. In education, this is what Keith Walker (2006) refers to as “appreciative inquiry”—finding value where it is normally unseen and unacknowledged. In the language of gifts, for example, as soon as I know that I give

to worry at all hours
while the collective sleeps to pray
to hurry to the mailbox in the morning
a fortune even for your fingernail clippings
to hope that one night you won't tiptoe off in silence

“This means when I'm researching or teaching I have to learn to stop the tape. It is more authentic to let the words of that night float up into the air. If any fall back down to the ground tomorrow or the next week, then those can be recorded. Those words would be a gift of knowledge rather than a gain of knowledge. Of course, that is the gift of having met you.”⁴⁵

“In other words, do not let not your right hand know what your left hand is doing.”

“Not quite. But I like your translation better.”

“If you weren't so arrogant, you'd see I am trying to have a conversation with you.”

“If you say so.”

something, if I say “I am giving you something,” I cancel the gift. I congratulate myself or thank myself for giving something and start a cycle which cancels the gift. Instead, in appreciative inquiry the gift remains as gift and should not be thought of in means/ends pragmatics. For as soon as the gift appears as valuable, then the movement of gratitude, of acknowledgment, has started to destroy the gift. If it is possible, my hope is to never be sure that there is a gift, that the gift is given. That is paradoxical, but that is the condition of writing in faith and by faith.

⁴⁵ Gifts of writing which simply *appear* do relate to our understanding of ourselves. That is the condition the gift shares with self. Britzman (1998), referring to our understanding of self through autobiographical writing, says that the crisis of difference is something we learn from. Thinking of inter-subjectivity and inter-textuality together, as a gift of writing appears so does the gift of self. Not only are both continual acts of invention in their own discourses, but because of the cross pollination in discourse, there is inter-invention as the gift of writing becomes the gift of self, and vice-versa, always ongoing.

“It’s just your face is talking again. It doesn’t mean anything. Let me in there. Give me something to want to experiment with.”

“Well, I love you.”

“You’re way ahead of me. The unknown, James, is what makes the gift a gift. It’s not an exchange, and judging by the few emotions conveyed on your face, you are expecting me to say I love you back. You talk, talk, talk, and yet here you are forcing love, or writing for that matter, from every conversation. You want to save every drop of blood, to the point of squeezing it out of me.”⁴⁶

“I’ve never been in love where saying I love you is a problem?”

“Well, then go back to them, to where you’re comfortable. The power of gifting is that you’re not supposed to recognize it.” He braced himself. James felt like he’d found his way inside time’s *tic tic toc*. It was an odd consoling thought, to instantly retrace his past conversations and to appreciate what new thoughts had sprung up since.

Her voice was more tender. “James, it’s not a criticism. I just don’t like the stress of your teacher’s voice, or being your student, of trying to keep up with you. Get excited as a lover and you’ll have me.”

“The poet in me wants to say that I think about you all the time, that you have bruised me, got under my skin, enriched my sense of language and self, and that no matter where I go I can feel you still there.”

⁴⁶ The self cannot be known, for, like the gift, as soon as it is known, it ceases to be a self. It becomes instead, dead. It would be a closing of the self. It is this continual invention of the self which makes it what it is (Waldrep, 2004). Like any organization, if the self compels unity there is not unity but terrorism. In the self, there is a deconstruction of the whole, so that the whole can continue to be whole.

“It’s difficult to believe that.” James wished he could ring a little bell and make it so. “If you speak true, how can I even know myself? Am I supposed to depend on you to be alive, to feel my body’s electricity? How would I go about proving that there is a me, someone unique from everyone else?”⁴⁷

“I can’t imagine living a life without you.”

it’s not ‘til afterwards, ‘til the last piece
that sanity surfaces
that’s what it’s like to be in love
my blood sent back priority post

The Truth You’re So Attached To

He was lying down
lazy big belly
in the sun
calling out boldly
to everyone:

This is Our land
our inheritance
white powder clean
take off your country

so we left graciously

⁴⁷ There is a tension in James and Madeline’s dialogue that is held in an important paradox of subjectivity. Perhaps I can explain such a paradox this way: I propose that the self, even how we think of who we are, including our struggles with non-identity, disassociation, and endless inadequacies, show not that the self is unknowable, or lacks unity, or has no sense of soul or purpose, but that it is infinitely transcendent, that by being so many selves it therefore becomes a unique self of which there is no duplicate.

singing the gift of old song
and found abundance with those
who do not belong

The Real Me

compulsive and embodied
spontaneous and fragmentary
in a dreamy creation of being half conscious
I am love
and in love with language

Caputo (2001) writes "Who am I?"

I am one who finds his life a question,
whose life is always being put in question,
which is what gives life its salt.
We seek but do not find,
not quite, not if we are honest,
which does not discourage the religious heart
but drives it on and heightens the passion,
for this is one more encounter with the impossible" (p.20).

Beyond the circle of gratitude
always in preposition⁴⁸
no gratitude can be equal to
the flow of the invention of me

always surprised by what can be
written unplanned in faith

⁴⁸ In a similar way, Caputo (2001) speaks of letting go of mastery. "[We can] let ourselves be reinvented... let ourselves be overtaken by the impossible. I am asking that we open ourselves toward a future we cannot see coming,...for which nonetheless we passionately hope and long" (p. 24).

written by faith
one step forward, two steps back

learn to stop the tape
let the words of that night
float up into the air
always moving, always changing,
always in flux

Our thoughts are
renewal, reinvention, and repetition
unsaying we are in love
as important as the poem set down
with the language
and each other

continuing to journey without answers
the heart of my pedagogy
opening ourselves toward a future
we cannot see coming
the heart of love

Only Echoes

No one says I am who I am
or I am (x), where (x) is anything conceivable
Being's essence is not matter
cannot be a matter of theory
the mad hatter's determination,
I cannot know that I am.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Caputo seems to agree. When asking, "Who am I?" Caputo (2001) says that "the answer that comes back is another question; the answer is to keep questioning, to keep the question alive –that is what a 'self' is – to keep questioning" (p. 27). And because the self is infinitely transcendent, always, so to speak on a quest, always changing, then it follows that our changing self be understood in relation not just to time and space, but to others in our time and space. In other words, the self cannot relate only to itself because it is not a

I am tricked into thinking I can
know myself because it is possible
to feel hungry, logically,
theologically I am further tricked
see my moral self, actions, conscience
feel my emotions, and still
this is not equal to I am who I am.

Here is no matter of calculation,
a compilation of true statements
that, according to the code,
such and such is true about me
that you can make true statements about me
does not mean I am who I am.

James sat back and closed his eyes. *When I become more dead, as in dead in the grave and physically buried, then I think I might become an author. Words pass away. Thoughts are fleeting.* He could smell Madeline's perfume. Complicated conversation was a fictive moment, a poetic movement. What a dance! Funny though, he could write about faith and true love, but conversation like this hurt the worst. Was this how Sylvia Plath felt? Anne Sexton? Or perhaps, like in writing, when there is love, we hope for the resurrection of the beloved—so that the one who has gone is not really dead, but grows and is created for a second time in the soul of the living?

thing or an object; therefore, I must admit that any self-knowledge I seem to own, or have constructed, is not a fixed mark on which I can place the confidence of knowing. I move forward on the quest, admit that the self is constructed, even socially constructed, knowing that I am not a human being, but a human becoming.

Before Madeline, the idea of love had just been a dream, a dream that was pleasant enough, but now the dream pushed him in all its risk, frustration, and difficulty. He was even losing patience with his past satisfactions, ones that were born out of contentment rather than passion. Before him there was this infinite outside and the writing was loud and quick in his mind. How to live in the now? How could he possibly deal with the challenges and dangers of a life he could not predict? Was his now another story he could tell?

He was definitely craving potato salad.

Come by Priority Post

I wonder how you are breathing
whether you might come back in silence
no different than you left

how you remember time spent over breakfast
in bed bodies so imaginary
not different than my dream of being the fog

circling your thighs
around your waist, pressed to your face
and shoulders like run on sentences

or time saying goodbye, the hour not safe
ghosts too eager to steal that moment
open as if to swallow

our silences on the drive across town
un/confessed dreams still in the mouth
ready to get reacquainted

come warm me with your smile
before apologies and promises prepare
the way for fear

come before loneliness sprawls on the bed beside me
listening to the bathroom fan whir
wordless slips, slicing like a comma

don't wait for time to settle
for comfort or sleeplessness to begin
don't even brush your teeth

come as the gesture of unconsciousness
like going out for a hamburger at Milestone's
don't bother about leaving properly

come as the lesson of humour
teach me how to imbibe my own balance
how to prevent a scene

in these moments
the secret of concealing embarrassment
of course the perfect apology for difference

somewhere over the Rockies
I see you writing in midnight snatches
letters gathering in your hands

the phrases to hang our memories on
I guess its like breaking tile
then groping for how to grow them new

it's not 'til afterwards, 'til the last piece
that sanity surfaces
that's what it's like to be in love

to worry at all hours
while the collective sleeps to pray
that one night you won't tiptoe off in silence

to hurry to the mailbox in the morning
a fortune even for your fingernail clippings
my blood sent back priority post

RHIZOMATIC SIGNS AND WONDERS

A PEDAGOGY OF RECYCLING FAIRY TALES

SURPRISED ON THE JOURNEY

A CURRICULUM OF THE PRESENT MOMENT

To the observer James arrived at work in the morning, attended staff meetings, went to class and taught his lessons. His routine had not changed. Sure, he was up late now, but routine was larger and more stabilizing than that. As long as he was there, there was no worry. How infinitely odd! He had changed profoundly, but not observably. The structures of school were not attuned to notice these kinds of changes. Love had pervaded his classroom yet there was no reason for anyone to notice. Perhaps tomorrow he should simply pack his bags; then they would start asking questions, start looking for the changes. Mostly, there would be surprise, and no one would be able to track him down again.

In the afternoon he would meet her. They had decided to go mountain biking. He imagined something completely different, rather than hurtling down the trails, he thought of the slow pace of companionship. Sometimes the force of another was greater than going down a steep cliff. Being on the edge of control, risking being hurt, and smiling in the sublime of practically impossible odds, seemed less about mountain biking and more

about a new kind of “yes!” in relationships. He had spent much of his life saying “no” but with Madeline was a new “yes.”

He saw a group of boys laughing as he pulled in. Before Madeline he might have been more self-conscious, wondering if they were laughing at him, his bike, anything—how foolish. But now he was no longer afraid. He made a silent prayer that his heart would never be stone, that he could be at ease with his decision to keep moving, to look for opportunity.

How seldom did he ever rise to the person he was in his imagination. That was what love did—it was a spring board to be that imagined person. He went into the school with a renewed confidence in love, with a courage to teach from the heart (Palmer, 2007).

ASIDE: Courage in this story considers what we might loosely term an “existentialist” version of autonomy, in other words, love acting with response-ability. Heidegger (1962) and Sartre ([1943], 1957), have written that human beings hide the true nature and extent of their freedom from themselves for much of the time. Courage, then, would be admitting that there are still choices within diminished circumstances. Imagination understood this way is less about authoring fairy tales and more about the possibility that teachers are always free to respond in love, no matter what

situations they find themselves in. Even when teachers are “thrown” into the classroom, they must decide—and take responsibility for—the possibility of student learning. To teach in this way is to be authentic. This is an awesome task and why it takes courage to teach.

Friday’s Love

love is too
civilized for me
it comes with
phrases uttered in a Christian
way that cuts desire at the cross
no no no
it is all wrong
I want desire
that has risen up
grab me
like you never
want to let go
don’t hug because
I’m home
don’t let me
leave again
clutch your fingers
into my skin
dig them deep

so that I will bleed
tell me how
there is a need
for our bodies
to touch always
how can I live
any other way

Madeline was waiting for him. “When do you think you’ll be done? It’s not raining. I thought maybe you could leave early.”

“Lunch time, I guess. I could skip the department meeting, which was going to be a bore anyway, and I don’t teach last period.”

“You are hard to be with. I was hoping you could leave now.”

“You might as well blame the mountains. If I could leave now, I would.”

“That choice is always yours, James.”

“It’s all I’ve been thinking about: moving on, opportunity. I want to spend my whole life with you on beaches and in coffee shops.”

“What can you do for me? My heart is permanently broken.”

“I can give you mine.”

“Yours is broken too.”

“But it will work in you.”

“Only when I imagine it’s forever. When I know that it’s not forever, then it becomes temporal and makes me cheap. That’s when I’m cruel. But I want to be gentle with your heart—more than I should want to.”

“I will love you forever.”

“You are gentle, too gentle on my breasts. Perhaps I need you to sting me, to make me remember. Stinging can sustain me.”

“I would need to learn to sting with love. There is a way I am with you that fits my dream of you.”

“Today is Monday, and already you won’t come with me. How can you love me like that?”

“I don’t know how else to live? I am with you all day, and then will be with you again at lunch.”

“You are not with me. Gentle is slow and fluid, poetic and lyrical. Don’t lie to me with a poet’s words.”

James was in such good spirits that he took her hand and just stared at her. He realized with a mixture of fear and relief that he was serious about what he said. He would have to leave everything to be with her—and he would. Maybe not today, but soon, very soon.

Before heading out to get some errands done, Madeline stopped to look around.

“Impressive isn’t it? I’m Headmaster Glass. Can I help you with anything?”

“I’m Madeline,” she proffered a hand right on cue. “A friend of James. Everything seems so large here, almost unreal.” James had told her that given any opportunity to brag, someone at the school would mention this or that accomplishment.

“We have our stars. Do you know Olivia Gilles, the head of our art department? She just received a grant from the Canadian Arts Council to create an online gallery.”

“What do you do nine to five, Madeline?” This was always such a complicated question. Was she a painter? A dance instructor? A photojournalist? Even James sensed

that she was in transition, looking for something stable but running away from the expectations and demands of full time work.

“I’m an actress. I have my own place downtown. And my contract with Glenbow starts next week. I’m playing the part of Nadia, a young dancer who wants to leave her small town and travel the world.”

“And does she?”

“Yes and no. Not in the way she imagined.”

“We don’t get visitors here that often. I’m sorry. I’ve kept you from enjoying the gallery. Nice to meet you, Madeline. I’d best be running.”

“Nice talking to you.”

“Maybe you would like to see our production of *Guys and Dolls* next week?”

He paused just long enough to be awkward, to perhaps get in the final word. But he was a busy man and his to do list was beckoning. In one step he was past her without so much as a backwards glance.

The Fragile Silence

I had forgotten snow shoes
imagined we’d walk together
crowding out the weather

this is the love of my heart
a call I could not put in words
and am left wanting

you ask what’s wrong
before I know how to reveal

a few days of frustration

the snow is deeper
and I sink deeper in it
I can't help but wonder

how in this time zone
how our love can survive
the fall of words

I don't know how to say
I miss you anymore
we have tumbled in the snow

my love for you is not enough
I am only cold words
an empty white all around

She returned just after lunch so they could go mountain biking. James seemed to jump in the car and kiss her in all one motion.

"You are such a fool."

"I'm happy to see you."

"You should look before you leap. You know people here. You probably don't even delete my emails."

"I haven't kissed you yet. Isn't that something?"

"Only if you were a monk. I know how people really love gossip, and our little story would be the perfect one to share in secret. We are not living in a fairytale and you are not my knight."

"You've said that before."

“I didn’t think you heard. Sometimes it takes a whole history for you. You’re more stubborn than you let on.”

“The knight comes and takes the princess away whether she wants to go or not. There is no choice that can go against the plot. I believe my life would be better if I were with you, so, yes, I want to take you away on my horse.”

“I cannot go with you yet. You have not killed the dragon. Your heart could use some room.”

“What do you mean?”

“Space and time to heal. Go live in a monastery for a while. Learn to accept destiny again, instead of trying to make up a whole new one for yourself. Haven’t you learned from the Greek tragedies.”

“Well then, I’m the monk who falls in love in the mountains.”

“But I am attracted to godly men. You knew that.”

“It’s really the poetry you are attracted to. Mystery and depth are the same thing as holiness. It is the words which are sacred.”

“Like words, give your heart some room, let it breath, be easy with it. I shouldn’t, but I get hurt by people who say they love me or act in ways that imply there is something lasting or exclusive. How can I trust your words?”

“I don’t feel any constraint with you. It’s not about being exclusive, but simply enjoying both where we are and where we could be.”

“There is no could be, James.”

Watching her drive to Canmore, James was drawn into the dream.

This lovely, dark girl with her pale eyes and hair as black as licorice. His resignation letter was already written (this he would keep to himself), and his bags were packed. But really, what was he supposed to pack?

Letter to a Driven Healer

Off they would go
to a land of wine
long dinners along the beach
but obey the road signs
know the dotted lines
mark the distance
calculate your speed
late evenings writing
and early morning walks
and gas—
don't let your tank
get empty

shoulder closed:
means just that—
no more crying
bumpy road—
get over it
pass your grief

uneven track—balance
steep grade—
gear down my love
men are at work
this delay will be for hours
even days
and if I can help it

you won't find your car again

They arrived and the conversation in the car had been difficult. James looked her up and down and was filled with sympathy. "You look exhausted. I'll bring in our stuff and get the bikes ready. A ride before dinner will do us both good. It's still warm, and there is a trail just west of here that will be a perfect appetizer."

"Thank you. I'll change and wait out here for you."

James felt the silence on the way up. The ground seemed to be shifting under him. The truth was he couldn't help but imagine a fairytale future with her, but he didn't want to spoil his adventure by racing too far ahead. A weekend would be pleasure enough.

ASIDE: At this point in the plot, James is still in control, authoring his fairytale with Madeline. His imagination is more rational than loving. Love is still only a part of James's will and desire for certain outcomes. Love, as it becomes more authentic, is less part of rational reflection, and more freeing. Love knows the other has his or her own story. The fairytale, while having the veneer of imagination and wonder, is a product of rationality which shows insufficient care for others, subordinating them to the main plot, that is, the plot of our own colonizing desires.

A man of earth

doggedly through tree and trail
inhaling empty
I don't often gaze
up into the sky
and admire the clouds

my eyes are shut tight
clouds after all move so
quickly spelling the evolution
and revolution of everything
I'm building here in this soil

You, you are sky person
your laughter is cloudlike
ringing from cumulus to cumulous wonder
embracing rain and sunshine alike
you spread open your arms and fly
woman of the sky

A few meters into their ride, the adventure set in. Everything around them was pure Rocky mountains. The view, in particular, seemed to talk loudly to them, beckoning them onward and inward. The peaks were still covered in snow and in stories of being miles away from everywhere. James had forgotten his feelings of who he was, and even more so, who they were to each other. It didn't seem to matter here how much was in one's bank account, or whether they would be able to be together forever.

"James, let's stop. I need a drink."

"Ok, let's rest just for a bit, or I won't be able to get going again."

"We could stay here for a while. After riding, everything feels different."

“I might fall into old habits. It would be hard to hold you loosely.”

“It’s not so hard to figure you out.”

“What am I thinking, then?”

“I’m a princess, and you didn’t bring a blanket.”

“That’s not what I was thinking.”

“Thank you for loving me.”

They kissed very slowly. There was pleasure in the treasure of right now.

James was surprised at how cold the ground was. It didn’t seem to matter.

ASIDE: On an earlier version of this text, Leggo comments: “In the way of love stories, the reader knows that this story will end badly! Lovers almost never live happily ever after, at least not in stories” (personal communication, July, 2007). At the end of *The Valkyries*, Paul Coelho (1992) says, “God is love” (p. 245). At the end of *A Lover’s Discourse*, Roland Barthes (1978) says he does “not abandon the dream of total union” (p. 228). At the end of “Tuesday Afternoon Meeting,” Walker (1985) says, “[L]ove will run...into the mountains” (p. 31). In *All About Love*, hooks (2000) says, “Love is a transformative force” (p.xix). In “Ten True Facts About Me” J. Allyn Rosser says, “He could never remember I take my coffee black. / Nevertheless we were lovers” (retrieved August 8, 2007 from <http://poetrynet.org/month/>).

Laughter Saves Us

I can laugh
rising up with majesty
mountains touching sky
offering promise
a jar filled
with olive oil

curling down with streams
like hair around the ears
embarrassed at breakfast
tongue numb
but hopeful

falling along the shore
with snow
on a warm afternoon
the unexpected smile
such a luxury of affection
to jump from

ringing across the valley
deeply risible
guffaws spread out
from shoulder to shoulder
as spontaneous as embrace
is sunlight
through holes
in the body

THE ARTIST AS LIVING DEAD

A/R/TOGRAPHY WITHOUT SEAMS

AN INCLINATION TOWARD LOVE FOR KNOWLEDGE

HIDDEN LETTERS GIVEN THROUGH THE BODY

PERMISSION

I love to quote myself:

The purest democracy is death.

We can't live in ourselves alone.

*In the debate between theory and practice,
practice is just as abstract as theory.*

James woke up early and went down to the lobby to be still. He found in a silent morning a kind of escape—a chance to reflect on who he was in the classroom. The fireplace in the lobby was still hot with last night's glowing embers. He felt himself sink into a heavily stuffed leather chair. The dark was just receding to a small, scarlet shiver of dawn. There would be no singular

autobiography now. In a/r/tography, his life was a combination, a collaboration of love. But he did not yet understand it. He still felt some trace of his old self.

ASIDE: On an earlier version of this text, Leggo comments: “There is something odd. Is James in love because he is in love, or because he wants to improve his pedagogy?” (personal communication, July, 2007). As a living/breathing person, James needs to understand how his wonderful desire is not just self interest, but a way of loving Madeline, and then by extension the many others who come into the spaces of his life, particularly his classroom spaces. So, whether he writes to Madeline in love, or is preparing lesson plans with a love of words, his approach to knowing is a loving one. And when done artfully, a kind of a/r/tography. The artful way is also the heartfelt way.

Dear Madeline,

I sit here in the lobby, wearing the green robe of the hotel. Yesterday was a kind of magic. But I don't know really how to understand us. Do we write the fairytale, compiling, compacting, sorting to find the ending we want? Or, maybe it's just Canmore and we discover love's unique reality along the way? Looking into your eyes, the present comes into focus.

Twice now, James tried to flag someone to bring him a cup of coffee. He resolved himself to the fact that no one was likely to be on duty this early in the morning. He wondered about Madeline and whether she was still lying in bed.

Up to now in my life, I thought I knew what was coming next in the journey. I might even have been tempted to write my autobiography before even living it. But you have come into my life as such a surprise, and now I have no idea what it means to be on the Freedom 55 fast track anymore. There are no signs. Do you ever start thinking backward? A few years back (and hopefully with you some day), with visions of Mickey Mouse and Pluto dancing in my children's heads, and in mine the delight of collapsing on the beach, we all piled our stuff into the station wagon and started to drive. I'm not much for maps, expecting to simply drive in a southerly direction and eventually find sunny skies instead of rainy ones. In thinking of that poetic way to travel, I was surprised on the journey to find out just how poetic the transportation people are. Unlike the academic expectation of writing, where the purpose and destination is revealed at the outset, those who signpost our highways have the poetic sense to not place at the beginning of the journey: "Disneyland, 2567 miles." In fact, the first sign we saw was for Bellingham, then Everett, and so on. No sign for Disneyland, Los Angeles, or San Diego gave the promise, or even presumed that our destination was exclusively there. How Poetic.

James sat back for a minute. When he tried to remember her face it was like she was right there with him. Especially clear in his mind were her feet—soft and white with slender toes. The bottoms were pink and near the right heel there was a tiny brown mole. Last night had taken off her shoes and kissed her poetic feet!

One thing I know for sure, love does not presume the final destination. Our drive to Canmore is the perfect illustration.

ASIDE: Similarly, in the classroom, I don't need to have a perfect correlation of goals and methods, of knowledge and strategies. There is no one-way of proposing an answer, just as there is no one way of going on a journey. Just like in love, an "engaged pedagogy" (hooks, 1994, p. 15) is related to a willingness to be vulnerable, to let go of assurances, to allow love to be more than a silly romantic notion.

ASIDE: As James tries to live joyfully, to live out and in the joy of love, I see efforts in the contexts of a/r/tography, which, for me, has been a relational bridge, a back and forth crossing that ranges from the opaque and familiar, to the tension of difficulty and disruption. A/r/tography proposes that learning happens in the relational contexts in which curricula are embedded. It emphasizes process, relationality, simultaneous use of multiple strategies, and a commitment to openness in learning. When teachers become a/r/tographers, they enrich their classroom, seeing

teaching as an aesthetic opportunity to value each child's unique artful and contributions.⁵⁰

I think my colleagues, though, are hoping I'll make a mistake. The classroom becomes a dangerous place for one who is in love. Mediocrity makes things easier. How much easier to understand my work when I am no longer around to dispute claims about it. It was only recently that I was at a conference where great thoughts were preceded or introduced with the phrase, "So-and-So would agree with...or Such-and-Such would say." So, such talk amuses but cuts. Blood spills.

What Lovers Don't Lose

This melancholy still works away in me
pulling in close, I lie down beside your ghost
living with the absence of you.

Because love knows I write myself
the love I need, embrace myself in poetry.

Being in love with you, my insides have fallen out. I'm changing from the inside out. Right here, on the page. Writing is easy, right? Simply open a vein and catch what flows on paper. Bloody pages. So many others have made the connection between writing and blood letting. Pages written in blood are holy because the entire being has been spilled out. There is an understanding that the genuine, the authentic, the wise words of

⁵⁰ See Wiebe et al, 2007, in press. According to Irwin (2004), "imagining and forming different relationships among people and ideas" would be a fuller understanding of rhizomatic integration (p. 34 and personal communication, July 2006).

an author are those than are written in blood. The words which had to come out despite having no ink. The urgency of the message, the importance of the message being so ultimate that it will be written in blood if need be. I will write this, so to speak, even if it kills me.

Oh, I hope I don't disgust you. I have become unbuttoned, at first what seemed romantic, only to find out that I am in fact bleeding, another kind of romance to be sure—there is a reason the fairytale knight carries a sword, but that also means if not already dead, the knight's guts are spilled out onto fabric—either to his foe or to his princess. This is where the knight becomes hero. Before he was an unknown knight. When blood is shed, he is finally a knight for fairytales.

Whether alive or dead, every living moment is a possible moment for realization, contemplation, experience, or action. This truth would be depressing if it weren't for our love. Love is rhizomatic.

ASIDE: According to Stephen Nachmanovitch (1990), there is a kind of free play or improvisation that “free[s] ourselves from arbitrary restrictions and expand[s] our field of action” (p. 43). Love is like this, a kind of spontaneity in response. Thinking specifically of classroom pedagogies, I believe that demonstrations of how “play fosters richness of response and adaptive flexibility” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.43) might prompt us to experiment with a "pedagogy of the unknowable" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 318).

I prick my fingers on the rhizomatic bush because I cannot easily find the main root. But isn't this the whole idea! That stories are digressions, philosophies only introductions, fictions simply prepositional. We are prepositional. This letter, too, is prepositional, that space between ideas, which hopefully offers the transitional, even translational space for new possibilities to emerge. There are prepositions in my heart that act as rest stops. Like that journey to Disneyland. Love can't be planned ahead for it is desire which creates the reach, the whole leaning toward the rhizomatic unknown. It is a reaching without expectation, but a reaching so sincere that it is a desire stretched out in blood.

James stirred and glanced at his watch. He realized his letter had become something else. That was the rhizomatic way of writing. In a little while they would go for a walk down by the river. In his mind he went through the motions of stopping, casting rocks, maybe spreading out a blanket. Sun on the white mountain tips looking down on them, and the newly open flowers.

Yes, this is love. It unbuttons our façade. There are as many kinds of nakedness as there are loves. When I speak of unbuttoning I know how much more important it is to be in love than to have finger dexterity. Too often, I fear, that when we perform love it is done with dexterity.⁵¹ When I come back to bed, I will unbutton this robe, but even when I first met you I knew I was unbuttoned. Unbuttoning is a pedagogical act. It has to be. I only tell you this to show you how falling in love has changed my entire being. I am not just in love with you; the entirety of my life is now lived in the context of that love.

⁵¹ John Barth (1995) says that “technique in art has about the same value as technique in love-making” (p. 159). Heartless skill has its value, but what we want is “passionate virtuosity” (p. 160).

If anything, in all that follows in our journey together I know I can trust you because our love is unbuttoned. Once unbuttoned, there is no need even to have the authority of marriage or any other institution. Who needs power when there is love? Is this not what Orwell (1949) meant in Nineteen Eighty-Four, when those in power hunted down Winston and Julia: love threatened power. Julia knew that before Winston did. She meant to overthrow the government with three words: "I love you."

James sat for a while longer. The debate inside him was the same as it was three weeks ago. He was writing to her, and in his blood the writing and the love were inseparable.

Chainsaw Woman

After watching the mystery
of my father weld
awed by the danger
the oxy-acetylene tanks
and his skill with sparks
told to shield my eyes

I'm not jealous
simply in love
with your tattoos

After hearing Super B
highway trucks as large as houses
rumble down the single lane road
scared of these dragons
shaking up the trees
spitting rocks

I'm not jealous
simply in love

with your class one beauty

After spinning my finger
round the globe
my hand stopped on pyramids
my head bowed down in temples
longing to look past
my city limits

I'm not jealous
simply in love
with your rocks from Aruba

After breathing deep
the mix of nitro
and flying spruce chips
stumped by lumberjacks
who handle chainsaws
with the ease of tweezers
no thought of cutting off a limb

I'm simply in love
with the chainsaw
in your pocket

Later that morning, Madeline and James went shopping on main street. The sun was warmer than usual for March, and it helped highlight Canmore as a colorful, throwback kind of town. They met people of all kinds of shapes and colours. Some who looked good in gold bracelets and necklaces, and some who looked better in tie-died scarves and jeans.

James felt proud to be with Madeline; in the afternoon they sat down to a cup of hot chocolate. It was too cold to be outside on the patio, so they sat in the window with the sun on their faces. It was quiet. Pleasant. It had been five weeks since he had met Madeline.

“I’ve been here before, but everything is new, the new of right now, of letting go maybe.”

“I’m happy to sleep in your bed. Though I like floors too! And ceilings and doors and walls. I like houses with art hanging on the walls.”

“What?”

“You have a house, you are doing renovations, making plans with your wife and family. Am I going to be part of the new wing? Or are you just going to keep me in the basement?”

“I’ve already said I would move in with you.”

“That’s just running away. You don’t mean it.”

“The wing of the house still needs a foundation poured.”

“I am a princess but you don’t treat me like one. You’re not an honorable knight, James. You are a thief.”

“I’ve only been seeking permission. My love holds me back, love is not presumptuous as you seem to imply. When I was explaining about being profoundly loved, you connected it to emptiness.”

“Are you blind? Who’s bed were you in last night? Stop waiting for me to tell you. Actions are words too, and that is what I’m afraid of. You are all words, and worse, those words are just a fairytale.”

“You are wrong. Everyday I am greedy, wanting more, wanting *you* more and more of my day—”

“—No empty words. I want to trust you, that your words and body are one. I know the love is there, but it is not the words, but it was the way you said them that got me. I think you love me in a profound way.”

“Always wanting more is tiring. Having my other emotions heightened is tiring. My joy is increased, and now everything in my day receives more from me, so by the time I go to sleep I’m physically exhausted. Is that irony or paradox?”

“This is the kind of love I mean.”

“I do love you.”

Outside James was calm. Inside he was hysterical. She thought he was a thief. But she loved him. There were no magic words to solve this dilemma. They spent the rest of the afternoon as tourists: buying presents and taking photos.

She Would Rather Read a Book

smoke from candles
a hazy drizzle
fills the bedroom grey
with night sheets stuck
to my loose fitting skin

why can't I sleep
worry tucked into creases
like emails sent and sent
in fragments
or a scrap of paper in the wind
there is absence

a mouthful of the past
that can't be crossed

time has snapped
that bitch prudence
holes in her eyes
her features frozen
lies there still
like sharpened stone
wrapped in old quilts
and weeps her hopes
with practiced smile

in her hands I am
a ghostly metropolis of routine
not quite something real
siphoned off dreams
that smell of taxidermy
glassy eyed feelings
sharp enough to cut
and that usual muddy expression
burnt with shame

inaccessible as cookbooks
I am the bestseller
read for its thin taste
and discarded
or for love
stored above the stove

A CSI Effect

last night on CSI
a woman's lipstick was found

on her lover's collar
under interrogation of course
he was caught
with his pants down
and an unknown sample
but there is not a shred of
evidence that I love you
or that I submitted
to your unreasonable demands

you bring the bloody coat
some kind of candy wrapper
fast food papers
corrupted files on your computer
chances are good
despite having
nanograms of DNA
scheduled for analysis
most of these items
are a mismatch
a distorted view
of what love can and cannot do
between fiction and reality

the database is cold
love's not as precise
as television's case
it doesn't look like the screen
all flashing blinking lights
that fascination with trace
tire marks and foot prints

I tell you I'm not guilty
by reason of TV
there are no tool marks

or bite marks on your body
that bloody coat
has not been tested
there are no bullet striations
from my gun

I'll take your lie
detector test
hypothetical charges
and count on the error rates
of hand writing matches
from this whole affair
what you can conclude is there
are too many forensic
shows on TV

and with only anecdotal evidence
love does not exist

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A PEDAGOGY OF TRUST

WRITING BECOMES THE TEACHER

A COLLABORATIVE AESTHETIC

A CURRICLUM OF LOVE WITH DESPAIR

I love to quote myself:

With others we have access to ourselves.

Love is a strict, double-blind control.

James got up and stretched his legs. He needed a little break, so he wandered down to the staff room. The physical building of his school was like a metaphor for his own journey. It was like there were two places—the staff room and his classroom. The routine of school like assemblies, report cards, attendance, and supervision were in the staff room. Teaching writing was in the inside room, his classroom. Poetry was there too.

His life seemed to have those two rooms as well. The inner, secret room, up until now, was where he'd gone to be alone. But now Madeline was in that room. She was in his outside room too—how strange that she could be so comfortable in both. They had built a relationship around spontaneous living and around writing that gave them a kind

of transforming energy, and yet she always a few steps ahead—in love with adventure, something just beyond reach.

He hadn't seen her for three days. He was looking forward to their trip to Vancouver, of starting over.

Of Love and Leaving

*"The word managed to destroy
without leaving clues"
Coelho, 1999, p.64.*

It is not called falling out
until I am my father,

born in eastern Canada
itchy and ready to scare

the shit out of common sense,
who doesn't belong to marriage

or mortgages, or suggestions
that work can contain dignity.

Your friendly little neglect,
thick sweet feeling of banality,

public displays of nothing much,
and benign thoughts of heaven.

The writing would have to set the stage for his journey: James imagined trekking through terrain that was at times breathtakingly sublime, but at other times hardscrabble

desert. He would have to learn to trust the writing both when the hiking was easy, and when it was more challenging. James was making that statement more and more—leaning to trust the writing for the gaps that he could not fill. Even with Madeline he trusted the writing. Every relationship seemed to have gaps, roles and plots already underway. But writing was like love, coming right up out of those gaps, most alive in the in between places.

I Can't Keep Up

stomach tied up in knots
I can't keep going
an old wound has opened up

your legs cover distances quickly
your breath flicking
tongue pressed in determination
with each step your lungs expand

my eyes try to pull you closer
but your muscles hardened now
up to the final summit
Is this what it's like to say goodbye?

such hard pain in you
flexion like ridges rippled
legs wide open
the very tip just ahead
one lunge and its all over

you sprawl glassy eyed
then buckled over in grief
listen finally for my panting

so many steps behind

in this moment passing
I watch the distance
it is nothing to grieve over
I hold you up and we look
in every direction

With Madeline, he felt like he was writing differently—as if there were a new dialectic of the heart and mind, one that is reflective, conceptual, reflexive. How could he even begin to name it? Simply, they were together in poetry. He hoped that he and Madeline would one day write together. But collaboration of a kind that mattered to their hearts, that bared and expressed meaning, both to them as lovers together and to anyone who cared to read their work.

Foolish idealism? Without love, definitely.⁵²

⁵² Because of an idealism born of autonomous reason, significant long-term collaborative working relationships only based on mutual respect, trust, intents, and a potential for mutual benefit eventually fail. These “self-help” styled working relationships reproduce the kind of research that individuals can produce alone. Instead, there can be a love where individuals empty themselves in a dynamic of openness to the other. This creates an infinite (im)possibility where meaning and significance shift and evolve in responsive rather than pre-determined ways. Such an openness in living and in collaboration could not be assessed according to rational criteria, for the very idea of “ownership” of one’s beliefs, thoughts, and choices is one of the key points of divergence between the way of love and the way of planned mutual benefit. While both points of view acknowledge the need for ongoing recognition of and attention to inherent complexities, ranging from personal characteristics and individual differences in working style, needs, professional position, purpose, and the like, it is the way of love that is most responsive and, over the long term, response-able.

ASIDE: Idealism often takes its cue from Kant who thought that when people chose morally according to their reason, they could govern their world. This self-styled authorship allows the imagination to create a story where the character is also the author, writing himself or herself the ideal ending. Love is a counter balance to idealism. Heartful activities given and received in love do not need to be validated by public opinion or autonomous reason. Thus, love is free, and lovers can act with integrity resisting the power of idealism which leans toward authoring another's story.

ASIDE: At the same time, love with idealism is hope. In this way love is conceived not simply, or even primarily, as a set of objective conditions, but a kind of letting go of circumstances, so that love is stasis, a dwelling in each moment.

Détente

It is hard when looking at the pasts of other people to understand the fine points of their lives.

~Alistair MacLeod, 1999, p.62

The stakes are already too high,

but she wants to catch him, and raises

his fifty points by another fifty
monkey see, monkey do, expectations

trapped, and they leave after the auction
smoking their cigarettes, choking the life

out of their lungs. When breathed in,
every wandering urgency spreads

its perfume, carries on coolly
with slippered feet, as the forecast

calls for wind to rage against the window
like it's asking for applause.

Read the ancient Greeks, they blame
all around, muscular and oblivious,

as Achilles makes a mess of it, Hector
transfixes her kiss to his helmet, as good

as the other, the way a surgeon sculpts
better drafts of your nose, or chin,

or cheeks. Coming to the past,
such stormy methods lack memory of rest,

lack the limbs of yoga's slowness:
when she didn't need to need to

straighten his back, or display her dark gash,
when he could lie prone in bed,

tempers sagged and fagged out, floating
around like wisps of blowing snow.

Chirping even through winter, sparrows
nest together, she comes with something found,

presses it into his yellow beak, lining
a way to survive their own ruin.

They had arranged to meet in a chic restaurant downtown. Soon they would be sitting across the table, and James would look at her and she would look at him, and they would be thinking of new ways of thinking, something beyond the familiar. He wanted to talk about how poems gave him a chance to linger,⁵³ that they were a form for ruminating on his teaching and the world around him.⁵⁴

⁵³ “My poems are an attempt to linger on the artistic moment that can bring self and other together, whether on the beach or in writing with students. Often that moment appears common place, but every word depends on nuanced details, and lingering spirit. When poems inquire into these moments and develop them as moments of significance, those *lingerings* often hold more transforming energy. The beauty is in the motion of picking up the moments while all around the classroom events continue to unfold” (Wiebe, 2007).

Without a Trace

Morning Laughter calls
warmly dressing me to share
a cup of coffee

our lips sip gently
sunshine peeks through the shutters
sitting together

we want to linger
longer but the day's plans take

Cliff Jumping

inside my cabin, a refuge, from the cliff
I prefer illusion, the small joy of unique charms,
the quiet, inner rocking motion like genteel soaking rain.
Then you, walking into this happiness, sloping things,
space and weight now growing steep, off balance.
I too fall deeply, shocked,
shocked under the surface, can feel your heart beating out riffs into the river,
wet sighs seep into me, a rush of missing.
I inhale quickly sober truth, bathe in that feeling, the unfolding story,
hang onto secret bliss. With love who can stand back or only linger
at the edges, always the need to swim again upstream.

It was a little chilly and James had underdressed for their night out, but James felt an overwhelming sense of completion and joy—it made him feel like a drunken man—psychologically warm, despite the cold.

Madeline looked more sexy than elegant; it was a frankness of dress that could charm most men. “Do you like that painting? The one where the servant is holding up an umbrella for the lovers?”

“I think it’s one of Sam’s. He owns the restaurant here.” She nodded, as if concentrating on the food.

shape. I’ve hid your shoes!

⁵⁴ “Through my conversations with Ted [Aoki], I knew that the next surge of scholarship in Canadian curriculum studies would only happen if curriculum scholars took up the task of (re)conceptualizing the forgotten spaces lingering within the etymology of the words we hold dear, as well as the very premises from which we understand curriculum today” (Pinar, 2003, in William Pinar and Rita Irwin, p.xx).

“I’m not going to spend the evening pretending that you haven’t ignored me for three days. I came here to tell you that everything is different.”

“She knows, Madeline. I’m going to resign and we’ll move to Vancouver.”

“I can’t live with you like this, pretending to linger over a drink like we’ve just met, and not one word about all the shit going on in your life.”

“Let’s talk after we’ve had a drink.” He looked at her, trying to imagine what she might be thinking. She had his thoughts now, but he did not have hers. In love it was not supposed to matter, so James tried pushing his fears aside. The pause was too long.

“I worry about you.”

“I forgot to eat. Am tired. Writing, more like struggling with my keyboard—fingers feel like visitors, clunky.” He missed her. “I need a keystroke that brings you to me.”

Female Email

two keys

keep me

ctrl esc

“I worry about the profound love you need.” He realized tonight was a turning point. Dinner was simply a distraction. “What’s that face supposed to mean?”

“I’m hungry.” His thoughts were rushing out. Knowing of love’s existence, he did not want to pretend that work, money, influence, power, or even food could substitute for it.

She filled his glass. “You have taught me about love, but have hurt me more. What I mean is that I love you in a way that I would not usually love. I rarely feel that I can say those words.”

“Let's wait for that.”

“Isn't it better to say, “I feel warm, or I feel a flowingness?” James thought about meeting her for the first time. His excitement about being at the Twisted Sister for the first time, about their dancing, about the passions and the loves lost along the way.

“There are a lot of people like that in my life. I do not miss them, only appreciate them when they come into my life. I think many people wonder what my love means for them.”

“I know what you mean; people like that are gifts to us, a kind of joy that, as you say, warms—”

“—That would be better.”

“And mysterious; I think it comes in unanticipated ways. I hope on that.”

“I'm here with you now.”

“You're love touches so deep it sometimes needs that extra explanation. I'm not really sure what I mean. I was about to ask you for a kiss and confused myself.”

To James's surprise, she began to cry. He wanted to reach over, but was somehow sure that he was the problem. He called the waiter over and asked for the bill.

“No, don't do that. Pour me some more wine and just let me cry for a while.” The rest of dinner was eaten in an awkward silence. But James couldn't help it; there was only one thing he could think about, so all he could do was stare and sometimes smile.

Despite new opportunities on the horizon, his life consisted of endless hours hoping for more, hoping for a kind of joy that always seemed to evade him. He felt it when he was with her, like the adventure he always thought love should be. He knew love had changed him. Love was undoubtedly one of the things capable of changing a

person's whole life, from one moment to the next. But there was the other side of the coin, living life unplanned—was that despair? Did he really need to be in control?

Flat Ground

*Life is made of our attitudes.
And there are certain things
that the gods oblige us to live through.
Coelho, 1998, p.183*

The one I love
not knowing what else to do

lies naked out in the rain
clinging to brightness.

All we have to do is
have something painful

to concentrate on,
drink water or something.

Threatened by longing
with nothing to wait for

I too forget my pants,
nothing real clings.

All we have to do is
measure light or something

it lies broken over
secular stones.

For a moment

endings are my weakness.

Looking for an Explanation for Why I Love You

extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence

~skeptics

when it comes to the evidence
for love a strict double-blind control
will hardly do
you must simply trust me
when I say that I love you

would you prefer a different love language
over wine perhaps a rich merlot
I could whisper gently
that there is increased
activation of my dorsolateral prefrontal cortex
when I'm with you

But when I say dorsolateral prefrontal cortex
I always laugh
and might choke on my food
or spit it out
in some uncontrollable
ejaculation of mirth
even though it might be true
that in my dorsolateral prefrontal cortex
I'm thinking about you

but when I say orbital frontal cortex
that is a serious matter for the heart

so even if my
posterior cingulate

warns me of the consequences
or if my anterior cingulate
is tied up in knots
I must not make fun
of scientific language

because my
ventral striatum
confirms why I am in love
so pull out your portable
MRI scanner
and with one quick pass
over my noggin
you won't need to trust me anymore

Love had transformed him, but despair seemed to do the job more quickly. He had to laugh to himself. Imagine that: love and despair in education. Powerful emotions for the classroom. Perhaps too powerful.⁵⁵

What should he do? Should he move to Vancouver? Resign? Or take small steps and be patient? Maybe the easy life and easy money of a high school teacher was enough? If he could learn again to live mostly in his head, if he could somehow curb his desires, then teaching could become what it was before. Something that he was good at. Then he could really be satisfied by the distraction. But could he even turn back now? What was happening here?

Madeline was looking around at the paintings again. "More wine please."

James seemed to be watching it all from a distance.

⁵⁵ Doug Aoki (2002) in "The Price of Love and Teaching" argues that our deeper horror about love is that it "can go wonderfully right" (p. 23). Later, he says, "We cannot bear this kind of honesty" (p. 24).

“Pay the bill and let’s go to a hotel.”

The Passenger

I am not afraid of being exposed
for that one dance
for that look of longing
which is a gun on my back
pushing me
into this poem

I navigate the page
in only a matter of time
the only way is to make more
and more plans
they are a good thing
like steps or good works
that can be traced
and retraced for maximum security

I retraced my steps
perfunctorily no philosophy of time
reread Bukowski
while you were off guard
massaged my own way out
of this poem

I drink to my escape from time
no longer eaten by sadness
all the dates are cleared
all the dancers have gone home
and only one has looked back
with longing

Lovers Quest

a boy can run
so far ahead
he makes full
circle of the glade
those are the days
when he can leap
over any paradox
not afraid of knowing
what he might believe

but he doesn't feel
welcome at home
the future life
pushes him out
to discover another psyche
a lover in love
his quest is
a rite of passage

imagine right now
who I might be
searching out a cozy bed
a place to dream
and pass a child's laughter
a little mystery
seems to be breaking
over this meaning

I'm afraid of me—ing
it does not knock
but like the boy
pushes me out the door
even a tame lion

when it is poked enough
with a sharp stick
remembers its strength
makes me wonder
why I am still here
a beggar balancing
his feelings on his knees
looking for something
not in this world at all

CHAPTER TWELVE

ESCAPE FROM TIME

A NEW CONSPIRACY IN AN OLD PLOT

A CURRICULUM OF REINVENTION

FEAR OF COMING IN SECOND

WIDE OPEN

THE ARTIST FINDS HIS FIT

A PEDAGOGY OF COLLABORATION

OVERTAKEN BY THE IMPOSSIBLE

NO LONGER WITHOUT A NAME

I love to quote myself:

Time to let the old poems out of their shackles.

*The well-intentioned is selfish commitment
to free badness from propriety.*

So that was how it worked. As easy as that he could jump from one story to another. He had no guilt. In fact, he woke up with a tremendous sense of freedom. He could remember everything, although maybe not the exact moment when he decided. He looked over and wondered whether his “yes” of last night was one of choice or simply another plot planned out for him. More than ever his dream seemed just in front of him.

ASIDE: Leggo tells me he wants to spell out the identity of the researcher. He says, “the institute promotes a certain kind of research—that which can lead to publications. It’s not the culture I’m living in. I want to do things slowly, with integrity—I need to know people. There is not enough humility in the academy. I want to acknowledge the fragility and smallness of what comprises the lived day” (Personal communication, A/r/tography meeting, July 2006).

guilt is good

a loon looks low
neck darts down under
the surface

and I hold my breath
longer and longer
he’s gone

like me
his reasons for breathing again
are blurry

And what about Madeline? Was she a collaborator in this new plot? How much of his destiny from here on in could be attributed to meeting her? His love for Madeline was connected to an aesthetic experience—an aesthetic destiny! Funny. It made them collaborators in both the head and heart, and it was closely related to his ability to create, to reflect, and to teach.

He decided that he would devote the entire day to thinking about his new future. No memories. Up until then his indecision was part of a preoccupation with what other people were thinking: his family, his mother, his colleagues, even complete strangers in the street.

I believe in the possibility of impossible love. If it has happened to me, then why not others? Living in this (im)possibility of love, my work is full, artful, heartfelt.⁵⁶ It becomes part of me rather than an object of pursuit. In this way, I am wide open. In this openness, I hope for a dis-covering, where what was previously covered over can now be revealed instead of re-veiled.

I want to teach with this openness, not only to the intellect, but to inspire the heart to create—to give a fuller, richer experience pervaded by meaning. Irwin (2004) says that “the arts have opened up new possibilities for meaning making” (p. 27). She is right. She is speaking of a/r/tography. And when I am in love, my head and heart know how to relate. Love is connected to a/r/tography.

James no longer wanted thinking to be more important than feeling, as if that were even possible. Love called into question that notion, preferring a kind of flow; he knew too many examples where particular aims and goals drove a project toward a preconceived end, existing only for itself.⁵⁷ At CCA parents paid high fees for the

⁵⁶ Dewey (1934) upheld the aesthetic experience as a way of resolving head and heart. And with love, that aesthetic experience comes alive. In love, both the universal and the particular can be reconciled, where the particular accomplishes the universal and the universal accomplishes the particular.

⁵⁷ Irwin says that a/r/tographers can be “a living thirdness, a new third world in which tradition no longer constitutes new identity: instead there are multiple identities” (2004, p. 29). An illustration of this might be taken from any instance where an individual is in relationship to a community. What comes to mind is a student’s connection to her school. The school’s first focus ought to be its students and providing for them.

promise that an elite community leads to quality, academic preparation for university. Somewhere along the line his school forgot the students and cared more for its reputation. The ever hidden agenda of success. This agenda had to be given over to the possibility of other, other in this instance being that which fell outside the circle of one's preconceptions. This was higher order. Not that it was really an order, but a kind of ordered disorder.

His eyes seemed to take in everything around him. The hotel patrons were just starting to come down to the lobby for a morning hit of coffee.

He was trying to remember something Irwin said about a/r/tography and categorical thinking. Something like there being a "refusal to be aligned with any one category" (2004, p. 28). Thinking and feeling. Order and disorder. Both brought together in one space. His lived world and his written word. Love brought us here and came from here. Division lost, bitterness gone.

All Night Heaven Dances

The trees are bare and bent
hard rain pelting the island

abuzz with native mythology

Over time, and no school is exempt, the school begins to exist for itself. Its flexibility is limited, its tolerance is less. The school's reputation becomes more important than the students' growth. The school's success is more important than real learning opportunities. The school's permanence, growth, and influence become the be-all and end-all of its mandate. Foundational documents, if not lost or covered in dust, have no impact. Policy favors the institution and soon the individual is not only powerless in the community but needs protection from it. This is why a/r/tography is so appealing. It is "an existence that desires an aesthetic experience found in an elegance of flow" (p. 29). Flow. Students need more of this.

of the coast. I am marooned

and shivering, a dark spirit
the loner of a spooky story

icy eyes twitch feverously
wishing with keen nostalgia

for a glimpse of you. It is
a small marathon before down

by the bay we steal shy glances,
I bite my lip until your smile

glows in the dark, the warmth
of milky sweet tea, wide as

the devil's boots. With a feeble
sigh I edge closer, my hands

have at last lost their sting,
busied in making a bed

of feathery leaves. The storm, too,
subsides, which is never the right

size anyway, now small and pale
as the moon's dream language

we lie on and on in silence
then watch the swans at dawn.

His coffee had gone stone cold. As individuals from birth, he and Madeline each had a methodology, a procedure, a way that was uniquely their own. This singularity was

part of how they lived in the world, how they kept one foot planted on that ground. It was faulty pragmatism to think they could suddenly and simply compromise, list pros and cons, and suddenly listen to each other. It was more likely that they would smash each other to bits.⁵⁸

The Impossible Word

On the wooden stairs
stands an old tired woman
red and swollen hands

For years I've been in
the attic without notice
mechanically

"Go wash for supper,"
she says. I withdraw again
to write one more poem

Maybe they were just luckier than others.

James was feeling more relieved; the relational complexities were tiring; being in love was hard work. There was always a *why*, *always* a reference to his own choices, deliberations, reflections, judgments, and reasonings. There was always thinking about what prompted his actions, as if every important area of his life could not be explained without reference to his own activity of mind. And yet, he was starting to get it, to feel a

⁵⁸ The researcher of the largely rationally-dependent world cannot fathom how two educated people would not be able to get along. Habermas (1972) was clear that a critical reflexivity, especially in autobiographical inquiry, could not be reconciled with the means/ends idealism of the pragmatist. For another explanation of this, see Pinar's "Lingering Note" in William Pinar and Rita Irwin (2004, pp. 1-5).

different script working through him. Almost as if love were performing some kind of slow miracle, even if it meant being off the ground, suspended, timeless.

This idea would serve him well in his collaborative research, help him to challenge the notion of authentic inquiry by being attuned to the desire of the other.

ASIDE: Institutions operate on the principles of collegiality, openness, and mutual growth necessary for collaboration, and it is the rare institution which offers fertile ground for collaborative work. Further limitations are imposed by lack of time, opportunity, and resources necessary to support collaborative efforts, the organizational structure of institutional life, historical precedents defining what counts as work, and a lack of professional recognition and valuing of collaborative work and professional development in general. Our first tendency, living in the tradition that we do, is to overcome the obstacles that collaboration poses. Listen carefully to the “technique” or “methodology” behind these leading questions offered by Cole and Knowles (2000):

- How are responsibilities to be appropriately assumed and/or shared throughout the inquiry? How is the research process controlled? By whom?
- How are differences in emphasis and expectations to be addressed?
- How are the (autobiographical) reflexive inquiry elements of the research project articulated in process and form?

How does each participant contribute to the reflexive inquiry element of the research process?

- How are individual differences in roles and responsibilities, rhythms, and patterns of work to be accommodated? (p. 142).

Cole and Knowles are thoughtful, successful collaborators.

Their anticipations of difficulty and emphasis on relationship are helpful, and many hoping to research together are well-advised to read their work assiduously. My critique of Coles and Knowles is their belief that with the right combination of inputs, processes, agreements, and so on, success can be predicted, or like a variable, controlled for.⁵⁹

James felt that he was beginning to understand what it meant to listen closely to relational ways of being, to be an a/r/tographer who could imagine that collaboration is about receiving.⁶⁰ He no longer felt uneasy thinking about the paradox of the mind and the body. His forehead throbbed. Was that it? His head felt pain. It was not a separate,

⁵⁹ Irwin (2004) is deliberate about a/r/tographers finding a creative energy by working in communities and building communities. Certainly there already are relationships between teachers and students, teachers and parents, teachers and fellow teachers and other educational community members, etc. It is true that “good” researchers are “good” because of the various kinds of relationships they form. The world is full of “successful” schools ready for the 21st century. And yet, a/r/tographers often have more spirited methods of collaboration. Collaboration can be so much more than finding curricular overlap. Like Liora Bresler (2003), I believe collaboration does not have to be curricular. Its benefits can be felt at any level and in any degree.

⁶⁰ This is close to Aoki’s idea of what it might mean to dwell in two places, to stand between two places (see Pinar, 2004, in William Pinar & Rita Irwin, p.7).

objectifying receptacle for receiving sensory experience. The artistry he needed right now was for the aspirin tablets to work their magic.

His mouth worked in conjunction with his pen, as he tried to find the right rhythm and hum for his words. A shudder passed through his body. He sat up a little straighter. Funny, “Sit up straight!” was the call of most teachers. He knew of hundreds of examples from the classroom that illustrated how hearts can be lost through objectification. Even when someone recounted a story of a genuinely moral act, like volunteering in a soup kitchen, he sometimes got uncomfortable. Dutiful do-gooders.

He, too, was a do-gooder. Like many teachers, he would often dutifully design a curriculum lesson mostly unaware of the subject/object duality created by defining objectives before entering the classroom. These days, his classes were becoming more free, and he was offering freedom to his students, but it was often one step forward and two steps back.

ASIDE: James’s relationship with Madeline expresses in a variety of ways how the nature of love works out a kind of freedom in the classroom. Education is by its process an experience of liberation and not simply an objective of education. There is an openness of heart, through love, that the humanist tradition of child-centered education relies on (as in Rousseau, Dewey, Rogers, and Illich). For

James, becoming more authentic⁶¹ personally is
connected to his professional practice.

Usufruct

*My kid's gonna be a plumber and charge big money
to make house calls, just like a doctor, so I don't see
why he needs to clog his head with twenty-dollar words.
~McCourt, 2005, p.75*

With luminous ideas on learning
wafting from my five point lesson

plan, I was sunlight, perched
in an effort to reach them,

to make something come true.
But they refused to hand over

their interest so easily. Heavy
with illusion about the consequences,

I wanted to sweep the place clean
until with unplanned kindness,

cover girl Amil, who'd learned
well the lesson that clothes

reveal us, slit open my whole
limp perception, *who wants*

old dusty words on our fingers?

⁶¹ See Taylor's (1991) discussion of authenticity in *The Malaise of Modernity*.

They're not diamonds, like we

could make some sort of profit.
Should I push this matter forward?

or see it for what it was: a rescue.
In my reluctant way, mouth full

of dust, I agreed to change
the shape of what I required,

apparently I could not see
my own need to learn three words

I'd yet to use when teaching. No one
even bothered, what's the value

of 30 zeros so disregarded,
and blank walls for a semester?

He was learning not to objectify his students with predefined outcomes, codes, desires, and so on. These too often crowded out the hearts of his students. And once the subject/object duality constrained the curriculum, any possibility of serendipity was nullified.

Perhaps instead of thinking of curriculum as moving around a course—the image of an athlete running round the four hundred meter track comes to mind, as well as the obstacles that one might face with a putter and golf ball—we could reflect on the movement inherent in the heart.⁶² With educational buzzwords like economic progress, technological advancement, and future planning, I wonder how well we have heeded

⁶² From the heart, we are moved (Wiebe, 2003).

Aoki.⁶³ Educational mission statements across North America continue to assert that education is future oriented, that good education advances the course, the currere.

Teachers are relentlessly under the thumb of student success.⁶⁴ This new accountability is measured yearly, sometimes more, and is often coupled with stiff sanctions.⁶⁵ It is my hope that a/r/tographers—and really all teachers—could live and teach differently, more heartfully, releasing those around us, especially students, from our prescribed list of outcomes and expectations.

The application to James's own life was simple. The whole concept of happiness and unhappiness was drawn only from a world where subjects dominate objects. The more he sought what could be known outside himself as something to be acquired, the more he was faced with the necessity of discussing, studying, understanding, analyzing the nature of what could be known. The result was becoming overly involved in abstractions and in the confusion of divergent opinions. From Madeline he had already learned that it was an artistic integration, rather than a factual orientation, that could convey meaning in relation to happiness.

The perfect example was his indecision regarding his future. The more his choice was objectively analyzed, the more his world was treated as something to be attained by special, virtuous techniques, and the less real it became. As it became less real, it receded

⁶³ Whether avoiding obstacles or racing to a finish line, Aoki (personal communication, 1996) warns us not to think of curriculum as only movements forward.

⁶⁴ Certainly, with "achievement imperatives" (Turnbaugh-Lockwood, 2005), a vortex of educational changes now affects the way public educators at all levels conduct daily business.

⁶⁵ When curriculum is focused on "end products...in accumulative fashion" (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 415), then curriculum is static and loses its sense of wholeness and movement. As Aoki (see Pinar & Irwin, 2004) argued, curriculum research ought to be a living inquiry.

further into the distance of abstraction, futurity, and un-attainability.⁶⁶ This meant that he could have peace in whatever happened with Madeline.

My understanding of a/r/tography isn't just performing another method, but rather a "first endeavor in inquiry." The difficulty is exactly with having "ends" in themselves, ends apart from heartfelt, daily living (Palmer, 1993, p. 15).

Clandestine Poets

for Madeline

full of rich promise
on my bed in the darkness
fumbling with my words

it is time to go
to commit some obscene act
a quick cheerful smile

quiet dignity
a hidden place of horror
finally for show

James had always found an attention to ends and goals ironic anyway. Just about everyone he knew was searching for real life, but didn't have a way to define it.⁶⁷ It was as if humans were an entirely different race to be studied from an alien perspective. He

⁶⁶ Levinas (1996) rejects the prevailing construal of subjectivity as sovereign rational autonomy and posits instead that our relationships to one another precede and have priority over ontology (see p. 101).

⁶⁷ A/r/tographers are well positioned to consider carefully the impact of future-oriented research, research that conceives the future as an extension of the present—in a/r/tographic work it is possible to imagine curriculum as more than the mere solution or outcome of our present desire.

slid down in his chair a bit to get a quick stretch of his legs. The traffic outside was starting to pick up. That was real life. Commuting for a couple of hours to work. Listening to the radio, or a podcast downloaded onto an Ipod which could be plugged into the onboard combination GPS and sound system.

Why should so much attention be lavished on generalities and so little on the inner development of the person? (Franck, 1998). It seems like every purpose is served except for the wellness of human beings. Especially in such a technological world. I know plenty of researchers who have difficulty defining significance, substituting instead the words reliability and validity, where rigorous method hides a kind of conceptual nakedness, that is, something that matters to living, breathing human beings.

He knew significant attention had to be given to the relational, letting himself be reinvented, even overtaken by the impossible. This was a/r/tography: being open to a future he could not see coming, perhaps only in traces, for which, nonetheless, he passionately hoped and longed for.

He felt new, invigorated, and knew even then that an angel of beauty had opened his eyes. He was glad to be a poet. Walking back to the hotel room his soul felt softer, like he could embrace Madeline without wounding.

Anniversary

You're the chocolate. I'm the swath of cake.
It's our three month anniversary.

Beware my small hands. Beware my blue eyes.
I cover my eyes. Do you know

what's coming? Don't look.
Around the bend, up ahead, galaxy star.

I remember you in the dark.
Your voice weaves through mp3 players.

Air changes, breath is beautiful
you are an angel with pulleys from a play

up up and I am in your arms
nothing over us anymore

I replace the narrative word by word.
to keep the rain off you,

even though you dance with me, you say
the figures don't add up,

and hope in these words, clumsy, punctuated
with love, in every pulse, every bowl and cup

on this poem tag a kiss and a hug
an X for you, and O for me

O, oh, that is the depth charge,
the long bellowing of longing that never ceases

He wanted to live beauty. That was his poetry, living beautifully. With this commitment, he knew he would be a better teacher. He imagined what it would be to nurture another writer, to find a space of continuous growth by offering his students his personal life, more of his own wholeness, and, too, his lack of it. The teachable moments

would be his own search of these last months, his search for integrating head, heart and all of life.

Now he needed to live his personal life.

He wasn't disappointed that she was still in bed. "You get better looking every day."

"Foolish fool. Maybe one day you will be more famous and more powerful and not think I'm so beautiful."

"I'm not eager for success, not interested in fame or power, only love. I've decided to resign and go back to school."

"Why is that?"

"I'm still curious; there is more to learn."

"It will come to you anyway."

"Things are changing in Calgary, my heart is shifting. I love you."

"Will love keep coming for you? I gave you a smile and you thought it was forever. I gave you a fuck and you thought it was eternal."

"You can be a little heartless sometimes."

"Where is the heart? Is it in the body or head?"

"You can trust it you know. It comes in pieces, in many forms, and then who knows, maybe all at once. I am not always joyful. I feel the pleasure, sure, but there's also a part of me that is lost."

It was not Betrayal

The morning sunlight
far out over the water

past the Baptist church

The smooth lake water
that's what I come here for
off the dusty road

I could go fishing
make myself comfortable
nobody blames me

“I struggle with the way I want to be.”

“You are too mysterious.”

“True. I don't like predictable love; I am fine to let it be free.” James knew he needed to mail the letter this morning, or he would never seriously consider taking a leave of absence. Just for a year he told himself.

Dear Bill,

I write to you without excuse and without guilt. Initially asking what my moral obligation to the school and to others might be, I thought I was prepared to spend my life here. But lately I've experienced a different kind of failure in the relation between self and other. Inevitably, obligation is failure, and in the face of obligation, failure is difficult to face because it is so sure. My failure at Calgary Christian Academy is certain.

This does not mean that I will stop living or stop my search for self. Everyone ought to search as rigorously as possible. But there is a point or limit beyond which searching must fail. Recognizing this has been most difficult. Reading David Kirby's philosophical poetry has helped. According to Kirby (2002), in our attempts to describe

the world we lose its beauty, and in so doing we lose everything: "it occurs to me that if the world depended / on our precise description of it for its existence / it would be a spotty patch, indeed, consisting of little more than childhood memories, a clutch / of keen resentments, and a vague sense of our last few meals" (p. 18).⁶⁸

I don't want to lose everything, but the "everything" I can't lose is the love of the journey, the initial vision of hopeful discovery. I used to have that in teaching alone,⁶⁹ but now it's more complicated. Consider Kirby again: "we don't want to become such misguided champions / of clarity" (p. 19). Kirby is right. It is "certain that a beautiful reality can be reduced to a pile of rubbish / by the application of some slipshod language, like a coat / of naval-issue battleship-gray paint on a fine old Tuscan table" (p. 19). When I read his words I can't help but think that's what schools do. Not always CCA, but we are well-designed for that sort of thing.

⁶⁸ My poems are an attempt to describe the world, not accurately, but with allowance for ongoing difference. Even though I write from spontaneity, in those unforeseen moments my poetry often explores the idea of creating transformative memories in the classroom. I explain this from the context of an a/r/tographer because the a/r/tographer develops an aesthetic interaction with the world, an artistry of words, living inquiry, and teaching, and simultaneously develops a community of relationships around that aesthetic.

⁶⁹ David Jardine and Sharon Freisen (2006) in their paper on "The Contemporary State of Curriculum," point out that teachers who are invigorated in the query of their discipline are like explorers striking out to discover a new world. I always feel alive when writing poetry, in love with its adventure, willing to go places I'd never intended to go. I like to share this feeling so with my students, we quickly get on with the business of writing workshops that simmer and hiss, of stuffing envelopes with the promise of plenty, and of licking stamps. Our success rate is as low as can be expected, but that is only publishing success. The success I'm hoping for is in learning to live poetically, to dance naked or walk on water or disappear before the mirror. I mean that the poet lives so that nothing which is not life-giving will survive. This success is one which provokes passion, but also one which lingers. It is the desire to create some lasting influence, a community spirit that lives on past its present members.

Our penchant as teachers is to rely on definitions to make arguments, finding them seductive, satisfying, neat, and tidy, apparently organizing our chaos and offering the formulae we crave. Seduced by the definition of obligation, I was being controlled by the larger more master narrative which says that there will always be dichotomies such as self and other in society.

I struggle with the possibility of failure. The failure here is not understanding the overpowering desire to remember as a way of archiving. I want to remember. We teach our students to remember, but the kind of memory we are teaching has turned into its own purpose. I don't want to only write to remember.⁷⁰

This same desire to preserve is present in taking photographs. I say to myself that there are moments which are so precious that they cannot be forgotten. This prompt of trying to remember gives me the false assurance that the memory of the event is

⁷⁰ Because of what schools choose to foreground, that is to remember and preserve and pass on about the curriculum—in this case writing—students wonder whether they are real writers, whether they will become writers, whether their writing is any good, and by extension, whether they are any good. For half my life now, I have worked with student writers: writers of all ages, talents, and interests, and the most consistent thing I have done over the years is teach writing to writers, not to students. By focusing on the end product, schools often makes it difficult for students to make the leap to being a writer—often the only impediment to writing well is belief in the identity of being a writer.

Once self-identified as a writer, a student can carry with her the commitment and care of writing practice, that tireless scrutiny and rumination of the world around her. This commitment carries over to one's sense of self, even to confidence as a human being, and to a resonance in writing that is both artistry in craft, but artistry in an aesthetic living.

As a teacher, I have influence on how and whether a writing identity is taken on. For adolescents particularly, the notion of being is in flux, and one's identity can be discovered, even given, right in the classroom community. Creating that community does require an amazing openness of heart where writers can take real writing risks (however momentary). This is where I like to linger in my teaching: it is where the energy lies. And it is why, I suppose, that I now call myself an a/r/tographer: the name has been given to me, though it is clear I have been an a/r/tographer from the very beginning.

making the event itself last longer. I still wrestle with the aspect of control in all of this. I wonder if a moment is designed only to be a moment. What reason would I have to try and keep a moment longer than it is? What is my doubt about the future moments that I will live that I must hang onto the past as if it is what will sustain me in the future? Is there a fear of the future that is implicit in teaching?

I'm not saying I'm against memory, only the fastidious production of preserving it. I have experienced great pleasure in remembering and reviewing the moments that have been so meaningful in my life. One in particular is sure to make me smile again and again. One Saturday morning my son (seven at the time) came upstairs to my bed in a jolly mood. I hadn't ever seen him so joyful. He was full of giggles and his smile was as silly and delightful as I can remember. His laughter had been prompted by looking at our wedding album. He exclaimed: "Mom, you were just a teenager when you were married!" I smile to think of it. His joy lasted the entire day. He giggled about his uncles, how much hair they had, that they wore mustaches back then, and the notion of change was delightful! Wow, could people really change that much. Could mom and dad ever have been so young? I want to live in moments like this, not so much to control the past, but to enrich the present.

I like the overlap of the past and the present, and it was a moment like this that taught me to ground my teaching more in the events of my life, to connect them to the poetry I write and to my living inquiry. It is important to note my change of heart. Because it is this change which I feel no longer fits so well.

At one time I was so worried about forgetting, archiving was a way of preserving memories, preserving me, a kind of guarantee for the future. I was holding onto my job,

my family, my life with a kind of fear. But now, in thinking of my son's delight at change, I'm learning, too, to embrace change and see the delight in it. Is this what teaching and poetry is about, a preservation of the past which is simultaneously a delight in the changes that bring us to the present?

This failure in trying to control the past is similar to the failure I experienced in trying to control my teaching outcomes.⁷¹ Giving up on the easy dichotomy, and giving up my dependence on the definition, the definitive, meant understanding the inevitable failure as a new perspective, allowing my poetic exploration to have more layers of interpretation and to be many things. It meant giving up on my part in the dichotomy, where it was me who tended to create an either / or situation. Instead of failure there are multiple answers.⁷² In reading Kirby, I have realized obligation is hardly the notion on which to proceed in teaching. Instead, what is becoming clearer is that failure is beautiful.

⁷¹ Words can sustain hope. For example, in teaching with a kind of mentorship emphasis, there is a sense of responsibility to keep and maintain relationships that keep us writing, both student and teacher. And within this role or responsibility, there can be so many relationships, so many students to stay in contact with, that it is possible to feel overburdened. But with the reminder that it is possible to love everyone (see Sameshima & Leggo, 2006), I learn that the words themselves take us the rest of the way. This lingering legacy may begin at first with the teacher's enthusiasm, her own sense of writing, or his own sense of living unburdened and enlivened, or perhaps with just the right encouraging words to inspire some confidence (Wright, Horn, and Sanders, 1997), but it is the writing which brings completion to what a teacher begins. Writing sustains, writing keeps the heart warm; the words warm, and writing brings us back to remember the first writings that we had. Trusting the writing allows me to accept my own limitations. When I believe less in the writing, when the writing is not affecting my own heart (see Neilsen, 1998), it is then that I try physically to do more, try and connect more, and am most susceptible to burnout. It is imperative that I let the writing do the work. The writing brings the connections.

⁷² Irwin (2004) says that "perhaps all educators desire to become artist-researcher-teachers when they begin to yearn for enhanced meaning" (p. 29). This means resisting Cartesian ideas that demand certainty and disembodied notions of the mind.

I know that is shocking, especially at CCA where success is the only option. I confess it is something I have been teaching in my English classes for years, but had not been listening to myself. After teaching a novel like Huxley's Brave New World (1932), I asked what the horror of such a society was. In such a seemingly perfect world, why could Bernard not stomach it? Well, it seems like the answer is individuality. In this new world, individuality is not tolerated because it is so imperfect.⁷³ I've found this idea illustrated more aptly for the modern reader in the film Gattaca (1997). Gattaca describes a world of perfection largely as a result of genetic engineering. A whole upper class had emerged that took the best jobs, the sports records, and all the hopes and dreams of living a fulfilled life. Ironically, the main character, Jerome, is oppressed by his perfection. Who has the authority to measure out blame? Jerome was feeding that artificial authority by blaming himself. It was his perfection that said second place was not an option. Right after coming second in an Olympic swim meet, Jerome tried to commit suicide. In his words, "I was not designed to come second." Imagine a world

⁷³ Regarding imperfection, Herbie Hancock recalls that when Miles Davis heard him play a wrong chord, Davis simply played his solo around the wrong notes, making them sound correct, intentional, and sensible. (Chinnery, A., 2002, p. 8). In other words, there is a letting go of control and expectation, so much so that for Billy Collins (2002) even the barking dog is rendered beautiful in Beethoven's symphony (see p. 18). And similarly, for Levinas, passive re/sponse-ability entails going through what Caputo and Derrida (1997) call "a sort of experience of the impossible" (p.43). Serendipity offers no guarantee, no certainty, but the possibility of surprise. Irwin (2004) says that "the roles of artist-researcher-teacher often cause inner struggles as individuals attempt to carry the weight of disciplinary traditions and achievements while experimenting with new forms" (p.30). True experimentation is hard work. But being open to surprise is a more authentic notion of inquiry where one's own expectations are exceeded. The a/r/tographic notion of collaboration and Levinas's (1996) notion of responsibility are about surrender and openness to the other; about saying "yes" to the otherness of the other; in its absence, perhaps like Bernard we are uncomfortable around perfection.

*where failure is so despised that we, ourselves, are not good enough to live in that very world.*⁷⁴

*I had been teaching my students that we need to love imperfection, that to be human in this world we needed to see failure as beautiful.*⁷⁵ *Ironically for me, I didn't hear my own message. It's time for me to listen to my own teaching, otherwise, there will be little left of my heart.*

In a related event, I remember reading poetry at one of the writing cafés hosted by the Calgary Centre for the Arts. Introducing my series of poems as part of my "short" period, I remember saying somewhat jokingly that what made these poems so short was the editing process. I said that if I didn't stop editing, these poems would eventually disappear altogether.

It is true, the more I edit, the more I feel the obligation of perfection. I pity the poem that goes through more than one or two edits because it loses too much, all that was close and personal in voice; it loses lines that might have been relatives of deep meaning. But under the force of an editor's pen, under the force to create only one intent or impression, under the force to create unity and flow, so much is deleted. In thinking of

⁷⁴ Society exerts a great deal of pressure to live up to expectations, in other words, our existence is conditioned by a perfected individuality. Of course, what a/r/tographers are speaking to is collaborative research, and how collaborators relate to one another in their research. A/r/tographers have felt the destructive impact of successful research; as research succeeds, it exists for itself, and as it exists for itself, those meant to benefit become slaves to it.

⁷⁵ Paradoxically, once such a claim is made, the actual boundaries of existence come into play with the theoretical ideal of why we exist at all. Perhaps it is for relationship with others. This is the theory for a collaboration which nurtures meaningful, productive, and mutual relationships. A/r/tographers are the first to recognize that there is a tension between the desire for individual expression while remaining open to the other in collaboration.

these two moments together, I have been genetically altering my poetry so that it could “win” the approval of being great. Shame on me. I have been insidiously promoting a world I don’t believe in, promoting the fear of coming in second.

There is one other similar moment I will share. Last year, at another poetry reading, at the event we put on here at CCA, there was a moment or turning point where the poetry became a celebration of words, selves, living, and connectedness of poets of all ages, colours, genders and sizes. At high school poetry readings, there are usually some awkward moments, long silences, especially before the intimidating “open mic” session. Well, in this open mic, the students magically went past the barrier marking this poem as “great” and this one as “draft” and instead simply loved reading poetry. There was a definite turn in the night when eagerly student after student almost ran up to the microphone to read. That moment affected me. That night I was able to read poems that had been stored on a shelf for fifteen years. Poems that I had written in high school. Poems that were not allowed to come out or be seen. I read the poems laughing that night. Then laughing on the way home, I knew again, perhaps deeper this time, it was time to stop using a red pen on my own poetry. It was time to go back and let the old poems out of the shackles.

What I have felt, in poetry, is an enthusiasm for a kind of living much needed, much more needed than I had realized. For example, after this last spring break holiday, I shared with my Creative Writing 8 class a feeling of my life changing while I was at Canmore. I was surprised about my favorite part of the trip—lying down by the bank of the river after a mountain bike ride—not to tan, or even to google my surroundings, but to lie there, dead, in jeans, jacket over my face, slipping in and out of consciousness.

Lying there, like so many other unplanned curricular moments, was restful and beautiful. I know its beauty because I recall this story with longing.

*Still curious to me is how 13 year old boys, lovers of basketball and junior high dances, have reacted to this story, to this moment of living poetically. **They too** have need of rest, of lingering moments that last, and of finding the beauty of poetry to offer some balance to the rigour of their own studies.*

My students know tests, standards, competition: they know at 13 the unemployment statistics, the university entrance standards, and the heavy weight of parent expectation. Rigour comes to them like rigor mortis to a body (see Leggo, 2004b).

Let me conclude with another thought: during an English class this past semester, the lights went out, and the dialogue which emerged right out of the darkness reminded me that beauty is cherished more than ever, and I have some idea that the enlivening of poetry can help. Like beauty, poetry brings together some kind of collaborative aesthetic in the shared space of words. The poetic aesthetic is with, among, beside and between us—we can feel the resonance. And by being in touch with our own being, our own writing resonance, we also touch others, and become part of their shared space of words.

Bill, I have to do the same for my life now.

He showed his letter to Madeline and they both laughed. He couldn't send it. Resignation letters shouldn't be mission statements. They decided to go lingerie shopping and write the letter later.

Dear Bill,

*I've been teaching at CCA for five years now. I would like to take a year of leave
to pursue more education.*

Sincerely,

James

Memory Preserves Us

The house
too small
the living room
abundant but empty

On the table
chicken legs
borrowed
tea pot with no
aroma only hot water
I drink
and think of us

Some new
releases atop
the TV
I wish the old
the lost days
the yet
promised
I drink
and think of us

I walk back

through these
rooms that tell
what we were:
childish as tops,
spinning songs,
loosening our tethered,
formal love,
we always
found love
hands hanging
cheeks child-ruddy

My memory stops here.

Soon I will
slide out the side
door and stand in
the blue nightfall
let sorrow come
back in the present

I step to the cool
edge of stones
at the alley
not myself but some other
spirit, benign
and stand
lit up, glowing
inside thinking
happy

There was a Time When These Things Didn't Mean Anything

I'm becoming more comfortable
at funeral homes
meeting dead people is easier
than the living
who also know
it is difficult
to be a human being

alive people want
something
coming up close
like perusing footnotes
look into my past
look for the real man
underneath the veneer
ask if there is any purpose
under there

the words
make no-sense so
alive people stare
and take stock
decide if my clothes
are too old
want small talk
looking down my throat
searching for any
dreams stuck
in the esophagus

alive people probe
and peer and want
me to care

and I get the distinct
feeling that what I'm saying
is being "interpreted" (as a cry for help)
stepped on
ground into blood
drying in the sun
under the sole of their feet (he's so weak)

anyway
alive people
offer a few condolences
like the coughing up of oil
on my engine:
what really is there
what is
there to say or think or do
or believe
they are grease
clogging the arteries
the pistons

is it really worth it
the whole
effort to not be
concerned with what
alive people will say
or write on
my permanent record
as if
the impressions they
leave are so important

I rarely remember even
in my heart
this freedom

now I want them
whoever they are
to say something
more meaningful
than the dead

I Do Not Exist in Time

I've sent you off
and cannot call you back
sounds from lips
these words
so silent on the page
cannot embrace
or quench the distance

I've been chasing cars
looking for you
behind the wheel
so certain you have driven by
beauty in another time
If only I could dream again
the whys and hows
of where we've been

my love is only here
lonely here
between the lines of rhyme
yours too
our bodies ever locked
and intertwined
as threads woven
in another time

trace the letter L
along my cheek
keep your breathing
body close
when morning comes
beside me
you will be here
arm under waist
a single moment
full and fragile
teetering towards a timeless place
that knows no taming

through some incantation
my heart has summoned you
and here now
top down
my heart is finally at rest

BEYOND THE GLITTER

HOLES IN TRANSLATION

A CURRICULUM OF QUEST

James wanted the triumphs and challenges of his work to be more than just a repetition of what had been done before, even if it had been done well. Instead, just as in love, he always knew he needed to receive, needed to connect to every other. Cramped up in his office like he was, he felt like a duplication of someone else's life. Charcoal suit, conservative tie, top button done up, shoes polished. This feeling of being huddled up under blankets of paperwork. It didn't take much imagination to believe that there had to be something more, that the experiences of other souls should appear in his own life, just as his would show up in others' lives, even in generations to come.

Waiting for Bill's reply was as bad as waiting for Madeline to finally decide if she was coming. She wasn't immediately willing, so James told her to think about it for a few days. Why not? He hadn't decided anything permanent himself.

Holes

A black hole is an object predicted by general relativity with a gravitational field so strong that nothing can escape it — not even light.

it's been 5 days

in the drain
clammed up
my body
all mass and spin
vigorous desire
sprung from time
happiness is not
flexible as
a rubber band

James had been surfing the rental deals in Vancouver when Bill's reply came.

Dear James,

Your request for a one year leave is granted.

Should you decide not to return to Calgary Christian Academy, please notify the school immediately so that we can make preparations to fill your position with someone else.

Everyone here thanks you for your five years of service, and we hope that your leave opens new possibilities for you.

Sincerely,

Bill Bakerman

He turned on his mp3 player. He had nothing to fear. But a growing sense that he was making the wrong decision was eating at him. Even now, he knew he was still on the

a/r/tographic quest, as he was always in process “answering” the question.⁷⁶ And the quest and the answering were the same. The adventure only stops when “THE ANSWER” in all caps appears. He wanted to give his writing the freedom to go places, places he didn’t even know yet.⁷⁷

Through the music in his headphones, James had momentarily lost track of where his writing ended and the rest of his life began. He had fallen in love, and that was a spur to be less satisfied with his current answer, to desire many answers.⁷⁸ Under the influence of Madeline, writing was everywhere, and he was writing. No matter where he was standing at any given moment, another answer would come to him, often in the form of a question, which was a prompt for writing.

His writing was still affected by their conversations with each other as they shared how to live, how to think, how to be better human beings. He knew this as meaningful collaboration because he was affected deeply by it.⁷⁹ James wanted the triumphs and challenges of his work to be more than just a repetition of what had been done before, even if it had been done well.

⁷⁶ This means there is no “answer” as a noun, but only “to answer” as a verb. Caputo (2001) comes to similar conclusions: “My idea is to give the passion of this question full throttle... since I doubt that there is something called “The Answer” to this question... the only thing we can do is to answer” (p. 28).

⁷⁷ A/r/tographers usually agree that not knowing is as important as knowing. We want to live in faith, to understand faith as a verb, as a process of living. Because we do not know, we are, in other words, to be in the process of answering. An “answer” would only be a paper or a presentation, but the process of an answer would be a life long pursuit of study.

⁷⁸ Block (1998) says, “Too often students demand to be simply told what to do rather than be plagued with thinking about what they already do and what must yet be done” (p. 17). They do not desire to question but merely to answer.

⁷⁹ According to Bresler (2003), “collaboration should not be imposed with prescribed outcomes, but as a process, generated by growth and meaningful relationship” (p. 5).

Holes

your shoes
at my front door
in my eyes
spiraling light
how the sun glints
off your hair
so soft

these dreams
beams sent
via satellite
folded from
top to toe
like a belt
that creases
my body

He wondered if he'd still be going to Vancouver if he hadn't met Madeline. Their tickets were already booked, hopefully she'd say *yes*.

On the corner of his desk was a photo of him with his children. People were so consistent. They tended to assume the same poses for every shot, the same expressions. He was no different. There he was with his arms still folded, a favourite stance whether at the beach or in the living room. Maybe we are who we are from cradle to grave.

Translating love

How can we translate
these words fall out
of me like a jumper
without a chute
I have lost my language

my hands smell of fish
in pockets of a lopsided love
here I am stuck in between
birds' wings flapping in panic
within wanting
what I can't live without

time snaps my bones like thunder
one foot in the sandbox
pulled under by play
the other in the door frame
of dry kisses

if only I can get through
the bends and tortuous climbs
the crisis of circular courses
of course it's easier to blame
the sagging umbrella for the rain

This was a sticking point for him. Following the corporate lead, he would seek to find the right institution and land the perfect job which would allow for personal growth. Sounds appealing. But wasn't this settling for the facsimile. Could close approximations of love like "collegiality" be enough? Sure, he could take it upon himself to find the right colleagues, and then somehow become the kind of person who can live morally and ethically, succeeding in all the necessary tasks. He could publish and attend conferences and become an expert. Right? Could "growth" be as heartfelt to him as transformation?

Any quick reference to Derrida showed him that these ideals still allowed for compartmentalization, a utilizing of strengths, a kind of assembly line too typical of the rational, autonomous educational system that he hoped to question. The irony was

humorous. James knew it was rare to find those who had given up control.⁸⁰ That was why love seemed to be so present and meaningful.⁸¹

Holes

I am caught
spinning alive
in space
sucked into
the black hole
of my heart

I wonder if
by furrowing
along the edge
of time
I could
spring back

That was the phone. He hoped it was Madeline calling to say yes.

Questions and Answers

*I don't invent things. I've become braver,
thinking of my journey into the self
like climbing down a well without a rope.
~Natasha Sajé, 2003, p.24*

⁸⁰ To give up control a/r/tographers admit to living inside a tradition. Well-established is the idea that our tacit behavior and beliefs develop inside a tradition that we scarcely even recognize. The powerful ideas that shape our world are the ones we cannot identify. And so, recognizing such a limitation, our personal limitation, is a means of giving up control—not to live outside of a tradition, to reduce its control over us.

⁸¹ Daniel Quinn's (1992) humorous description of all the "mooncalfs, softheads, boobies, ninnyhammers, noodleheads, gawkies, and assorted oafs and thickwits" (p.2) who would respond to an advertisement to change the world, shows how easily *human desires* (leading to a control response) creep back in to haunt well-intended endeavors.

Velcro students

"They are experts on teachers...Kids watch, scrutinize, judge. They know body language, tone of voice, demeanor in general. It's not as if they sit around in toilets or cafeterias discussing these things. They just absorb it over 11 years."

~McCourt, 2005, p.12

In the classroom, I arrive just right for standing
on the podium of this fledgling world,

inventor of moonlight, a great idea rises up,
through my heart, the whole engine beats

like blood, contracts expands contracts again.
There in the back, pretending to be asleep

is there not a monster chained, my mission
to remove the bad boy shoes red with sedge

for paper slippers, find his features
with the laying on of delicate garments, and

draw out new hair designed to be industrious.
Then we can pretend to live as civilized man,

in there walk about on our own two legs
hearts insulated from the cold wind.

No surprise my naiveté broke easily
apart, some windows remain painted

shut, some tables live entire lives
with uneven legs. In here, they

are far from home, they will not let go.
The dangerous tools are those for quick

draw solutions, like love with limitation,
on terms twisted from their mouths.

I learn to stop asking them these questions,
stop assuming my world is one they want

to step into. Grace is the opposite of choice.

The Dogs of the Heart Follow Puppy Love

*And who can quiet them once they start
the dogs of the heart*

~ Jeanne Walker

I am running round this bend
descending down now
toward Spanish banks
not so dogless as it appears
she has gone off somewhere
to sniff about new meaning
and leave what's best
of art and beauty

where is she?
from far away I cry
still I cannot see
where she hides
I am not some strange collar
I call my love
my voice is in the wind
and cannot be made
a circle round your neck

I wander semiotic too
from place to places
seeing only spaces
between the grains of sand
my hands hold nothing
the shores are gone now
receding into darkness
I can run without falling
but I've fallen in love

oh how I want
to slide down the red rope
which used to be
your collar
tie myself to you
and feel you strain
against my love
holding under tension

Where are you my love?
how much has changed already
I have taken off
my jogging suit
my words are unbuttoned
lacking polish
see my sandy toes
they are pudgy
and unshod

even you
wandering as someone else
your yesterday I knew
but today
those puppy eyes

in wind blown rain
you turn again
I realize so far away
how your mouth
becomes another

I am lost like you
cannot offer
what I do not have
my nothingness is freedom
it doesn't tie you down
I will not build a world around you
and keep you in

come with me
out of this park
over the sea
across the Rockies
to a cabin in the trees
between the rocks
we'll write letters
on each other
new languages
to look at yet

I know you hear my voice
I have been here
every night
at this point
an ever fixed mark
that sings of love

quiet—a puppy barks
oh how I will keep you
in my arms

and there in touch
there if faith
be faith I
will believe in love

I hold you always
sometimes palpable
sometimes in dreams
are you not the master
nose down
tracking me
your instinct to bite
and never let go

A NEW WORLD

HERE I AM

A PEDAGOGY OF BECOMING

CURRICULUM IN A TIME OF LIFE

THE WANDERING ARTIST

The Red Eye

down there I hide my eyes
I've brought books to read for cover
because I need a break
the atmosphere hopefully up here
can ease the daytime temperatures of love
red eyes don't look so good

the words I've stuffed
beneath the seat in front of me
so ephemeral and satisfying
sleep can act to cool the heat
of this flight's poetry

how good you look over me
daytime jetting along the beach
thin clouds like hot exhaust
swept in wisps of sunlight
along the waves sail

little boats like gulls afloat
still on the water

next to you I'm a global traveler
overnight flights twice to Rome
or Florida just as likely
where love is formed
and continues to expand
by words and the morning warming

one kiss will increase these flights
even romantic thoughts eventually
become as air traffic
a global scale problem
so many saying love contributes
a quarter of our total air
and that a reduction in these nighttime flights
destroys the atmosphere itself
I guess I'll hold my breath

or fly during the day I suppose
when there is less risk
of my thoughts taking flight
and flooding the flight corridors
with immature exhaust

how much changes with a bag of pretzels
from a Westjet stewardess
who wakes my reverie with service
I rise slightly in my seat
and kiss the red eye goodbye

Foggy Love

today is fogged in
wet on the skin
like the steam in a shower
gone cold

I want to write
with an eagerness that's love
a timid love
and in writing thank you
for the joy given
the gestures of stories
private and public

with the sunlight
breaking through
its led to a new
longing to walk the beach
stillness inviting me
into the water

Flying at night was walking through an open door into a new world. Leave in darkness; arrive in light. James felt exhilarated. He was fighting for his future and had the courage to negotiate with his fears. One day, in the silence of his heart, he would remember this trip.

James wasn't sure whether to go to the university or down to the beach. Madeline had a strong preference for the beach, so they dropped their bags at the hotel and strolled

down Denman Street to English bay. Time seemed to slow down for them, and after a leisurely coffee, they spent a few hours talking, lying down at the beach.

“Is there a fear here; like the fear we talked about last night?” Money was seldom a concern for Madeline, but in a strange city, she hadn’t yet caught her bearings. The downtown was similar enough, but she wanted to spend more time with James.

“You are here with me, and the rest doesn’t matter.”

“You will change and so will love.”

“I trust passion. It’s a stronger feeling than emotion.”

“I sense a tension in our obligation to each other.” He stood before her, this man in his thirties, and watched as Madeline seemed to step out of her own body, observing them both from a new place. There was so much to explain and yet not much to say.

“There is only freedom. Look, you can breathe. We are far away from obligations. Don’t fly back to them so soon.”

“I don’t want to feel tied.”

“I will wait for you.”

“Come with me to the auction.”

“I want to see the university. We can meet up at the hotel.” James stood there, strangely, inexorably slow, as if mentally preparing for a steep climb. He drew in a long breath, his way to manage complicated emotions.

“That’s what I mean. Why can’t we stay here?”

“Love this perfect is not so easy to find. You can learn to trust it.”

Walking on Water

We still hope that love will prevail.

~hooks, 2000, p. xxvii.

On the beach below Point Grey road, the unspoiled
mist is sacred music, moist torpor,

a shared plenty for city mariners lured by the Pacific
pan flutes. Down worn stones as steps,

not so rugged now, I deepen toward salted shores
whose mystery I muse in, a quiet music.

Graceful sky winds wind up the leaves, trails of whatever
my imagination can charm in a moment.

This rain—greyish and hospitable—grooms the loose gravel
passageways, long-time lovers

in rubbers avoid puddles, their artists and angels
loving how water thrives on what is

decided, set down in stone. In fall, bare trees, bent branches
through every cold share the many slants

of plenty, spirits cradled by the tide's sense of swing
and sway, like walking on water

or tracing out the womb blossoms on one's palm.
Washing its way up the shore

scarred wood invites wanting coffee table time,
organic tea, seaweed coasters,

cozy home grown memories, knit mittens, a woollen
waist adorned with handmade time.

For all this, I am here in hope only that you will walk
by me, and in wind swept motion,

my heart will tumble toward the island evening
where I know you are writing, where

Marechal Foch waits, where drowsy rain slows
words down to a whisper.

Madeline went off to the art show.

It wasn't exactly like being at a funeral, but the resemblance was a little
uncanny—standing far back, observing with the quiet hush. Others thinking tic tic tock.
Empty thoughts. The hallways were too thin, as if imagination was meant to be driven in
a certain direction: left turn here, three blocks, stop, pedestrian crossing. Avoiding
crashes seemed to be the whole idea.

A man came up to her while she was looking at a local piece called “Candied
Eyes.” Like half the men in attendance, he figured one line was enough to lure a woman
to be a lover for the evening.

“You are pretty, you know.” Madeline looked at her watch.

“Is the auction starting soon?”

“Do you want some weed?”

“If you promise to leave me alone.” She did come here for something for James.

An hour or more had passed and Madeline had looked at almost every piece in the catalogue when she discovered a women in the shape of a flower, about to take off her clothes.

At the hotel, James was already there, waiting. The lounge was still not crowded – it was the hour when men who have been working all day at the office come ready to start a new kind of day. The sleepy waitress was serving avant-garde cocktails and coffee. There was no noise or conversation, for each person seemed to be alone.

“Would you like a drink?” James, who had seemed so sure of himself this morning, was a little short on charm now. “So, would you like a drink?”

“Not now. I want to show you something.”

James could sense something was up. She looked terrified, like after long months of self-control, the pressure, the volcano of her soul was showing signs of erupting. He could hear her voice in his head: “Who is this wretched poet? Why are the alarm bells ringing in my heart?”

Perhaps she sensed that the same thing might be happening to him.

“I need you.” A pause. “I need you, Madeline, and don’t think I am just trying to seduce you with my words. Feel the heat on my chest.”

“When your love has consumed all the air, what will become of me? Do you not wonder how I will breathe in the presence of your love?”

“We can always live out our first love, as souls joined in any struggle, forever.”

“What next?” It was Madeline’s turn to be silent.

“I cannot be who I am without you. We are an exchange of hearts, try as I might, I’ll never break free of that. Our lives and deaths are married. I don’t ask you not to die,

but know that when you die, I also die.” Other men had said similar things, but they wanted to rescue her, to somehow save her. She had had enough of knights in tarnished armor.

She uncovered the painting, turned out all the lights, and asked James to sit opposite her. “We won’t go to the bedroom.” Something was happening, and it wasn’t the wine or the cozy atmosphere. James was seeing the gift, he was seeing her break out like the flower in the painting.

They were silent for a long while.

“I’ve discovered something I didn’t know before. The giving of gifts. Giving something important rather than asking.” She got lightly to her feet and kissed him.

“Come with me. I have another gift for you—something that will make you laugh!”

Grass Makes Me Laugh

the whole green of it
springing up all round
invading brown spaces
like some kind of weed
that thinks it’s going to win
the blue ribbon

full parks of it
down by the beach
not awkward like
but attracting all the yet
summer bathers
looking for an early spring

I cannot help but laugh
how I’m drawn in

to fly across the Rockies
and breathe in the grass
suck in my lungs
bc coastal pure
first to spring
while everything else is brown

look at the mountains
and the trees
all decked in green
proudly sprung from winter's snow
my neighbour
flinging fertilizer
for the lush green envy
that makes picnics
plastic plates
and white wine
the magic of grass
the color of my heaven

At Sotheby's

She went to the auction
for a soma injection
to shake these doldrums

still beneath my skin
the burning with belief
the sting of requited memory

so many near misses
what she came for moved on
before what I'd wanted

but then a slow photograph
by the fingertips of an Abyssinian night
emerged a perfect match

stolen from a crowded room
I lie with your smile
dark lipstick the tilt of a head

the legendary film flower
opened by a kiss stem and nape
marked on your shoulder

a perfect hunger slipped in
unknown and haunting
every knot in my body untied

raw on my tongue
everything crazes out to a flash
of silver in the eastern horizon

out of tide-lull and upwash
this morning I have you inside
dangling the line of hope

reflected in shop windows
our embrace makes the oldest hymn
just another take

it is still mystery
how old days become our days
how rain becomes poetry again

LIVING, LOVING, LANGUAGE AND LAUGHTER

TWO SLIPS AND A THEORY OF DEATH

They wanted to wait a week before moving in together. That is, before James disappeared.

ASIDE: I did as James wished. This text is his un/authorized, collaborative autobiography. It hasn't been easy. Love is a back and forth business with no predictable direction. From James's love, we learn to accept the process rather than create an illusion of an imagined or recollected life. It is possible, in the process, to retain all the possible endings. Thus, James is alive and he is dead. He has disappeared, and yet he is still with us. Love is burning fire and has a greater capacity than to be directed into a corner or to be the sole use of an author's plot.

I called Madeline to speak with James, hoping to question him further about his idea of us writing a collaborative autobiography.

“I’m amazed to finally get in touch with you.”

“I have to go.”

“You seem to be upset about something.”

“It’s James; he’s left. I don’t know where.”

“Does he still love you?”

“I never seem to know.”

“Maybe he’s gone back to Calgary?”

“No. He said he loved me, and I believed him. Maybe I’m no wiser for loving him back, and maybe I have to let him go, but I know he loves me more than going backwards.”

“After all you’ve been through, this isn’t at all how it should be.”

“Don’t give me your foul-tasting sympathy—this is real life. I went with him willingly, authoring my own story. I honed my skills. Maybe he could not love me as he imagined he could. I’d rather bare this lack than chase him, or try to alter him.

“Is that what you really think?”

“Please don’t call me again.”

“But what about James?”

“I’ll move on.”

And then she hung up. I wish there were more I could tell you. In the mail a few weeks later came a letter, and poems, hundreds of them. I thought I’d be working with

James, interviewing, recording his thoughts, piecing together his life. I've realized since that the poetry was his life, and for that reason, he's still with me in the present.

When James and I talked about his work. I could tell waiting was the most difficult bit for him, but he said that profound desire could wait because it found its soul in being close to someone, that when people feel like this they are not in a hurry.

ASIDE: Feel. Love's heat is impressive. It is always just under the skin. James spent his life in love, it was all he was. If James ceases to love, he ceases to be. He dreamt love, ate love, breathed love, bathed in love.

He found his home in a/r/tography, and not surprisingly, didn't have clear divisions of role. It was always difficult to recreate emotions around his classroom, or his writing, or his research. He knew that all of sudden words (like love) come from nowhere, that ideas are serendipitous, and that we fool ourselves in forcing words under our control.

ASIDE: For all of James's pronouncements of love, love does not become meaningless. Love is more than a word, more than careful reason or constructed logic. Without it, how much of life really matters, how do we become who we become? Love drives us into living with passion, so much so

that life and death become bound together in
paradox (see Merton, 1962)

But what now? Can any of us really have love?

ASIDE: Love is a sea of desire. The world's infinite mutability; all possibility and perception are knit up in its inevitable opposites, a magnificent death that suggests levity, or an innocent life smelling faintly of blood. A dream which makes the world seem. The way of love begins in imagination, but is far more.

Perhaps for James, the rest of the story depends on how we imagine his rest. Is it a rest stop, a pause to gather up again all which is needed to continue on the journey? How we understand love informs our point of view on this very sticky point of ending: "the rest" or "what is coming next" is some multiple combination of what we know and what we don't know. The rest, the imagined outcomes, even with love, as in words and word-making, offers no guaranteed outcomes. Very likely, it is love which learns to let go.

ASIDE: The ending, no matter how drawn we are to fix it in time with a label of comic or tragic, resists such a reliance on fixed understanding. The ending, so hard fought for, so hard won, resists our tears—so whether crying in joy or in heartache, this

microcosm in which loss, love, sorrow, or consequence dwell in miniature, is at best a projection of our own desires held in a point of time. Because love cannot be fixed, in time or otherwise, it dwells beyond our desires. For love to be a sustenance for living and for teaching, we can acknowledge that for all the authoring of our own stories, there is still much left to unfold, and hence this is not autobiography which begins and ends, but un/autobiography, where the author accepts that the shadowy construct of his imaginations cannot imagine all the possibilities. It is thus that im/possibility is a way of hope for love, for a softening of what has become fixed and stratified, for an openness to renewal in living and teaching.

For James, I've always had a secret belief that he and Madeline were so much in love that they found some secret way to live together. I'm waiting for an Elvis sighting. Perhaps they will be together along the beach?

ASIDE: It's over now. With love, hearts either soften—or break and form scar tissue. With love, we are always blind until we see. Where and when

James and Madeline appear again is unknown,
unknown in the same way that the end of our
present blindness is also unknown. And yet, with a
softened heart there is no need to dig a grave or visit
the dead. Love is alive.

It is easy to read “The Jellyfish Cure,” (see chapter 16 below) and conclude that James and Madeline experienced the anguish of true love lost. But I’ll let you make up your own mind. I’m just a writer of fiction after all. Perhaps James has reinvented himself as a teaching poet, leaving one form of education and influence for another—the world of poetry. One day, he may come back and write yet another version of his story. But there are as many ways to die as there are to be alive. The truth is, there is an interplay between life and death, just as there is between the interstice of reader and writer. Both leave behind marks, texts to be edited. That is at the heart of writing.

ASIDE: Imagination and perception slip and slither together. This is our responsibility—to take care in our authorship, which is to let go of it. We can embrace our stories, can hold them, kiss them, weep with them, even beg forgiveness from them, but there is a folly in clutching them for a singular possibility. The warm and strength of possibility is that there are many possibilities. The singular possibility when removed from the plurality of the

many, becomes stagnant, becomes a make-believe world of fancy talk, no more substantial than fairy dust. What is real? What is not seeming? Love, which seems the realest thing, is really nothing at all, only a weightless breeze. And yet, love's more dense and more weighty than the earth's core. The paradox is our responsibility.

It is thus that you, too, as readers, have just as much opportunity to be in love's paradox, in fact, are invited into this process: for the poems which appear in chapter 16 have been written and have arrived in my hands via post after James's disappearance. Your own preferences for genre—romance, fantasy, history, etc.—will be a fitting guide for deciding the ending of this story. I think, in fact, that from these poems, more of the story can be constructed. Feel free to change the order, to fiddle and play, come up with alternative hypotheses. For the artistic among you, chapter 16 may be the only chapter you ever need to read. Whether dance, theatre, music, film, and so on, the performance is its own explanation.

I've simply translated his inner life of pedagogy from the poetry. So I leave you with the poems of chapter 16—they need no commentary.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

POETRY AS FIELD NOTES

POETRY AS IMMEDIATE PRESENCE

POETRY AS HISTORICAL RECORD

POETRY AS SELF STUDY

POETRY AS SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTION

POETRY AS METHODOLOGY & THEORY

POETRY AS SHARED PRIVACY

POETRY AS PRESENTATION OF DATA

POETRY AS EMBODIED PERFORMANCE

POETRY AS DIDACTIC TOOL

POETRY AS CONTEXTUAL, CULTURAL CRITIQUE

POETRY AS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

POETRY AS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

POETRY AS AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

POETRY AS SHIFTING MEANING

POETRY AS LEARNED AESTHETIC UNDERSTANDING

POETRY AS COMPLEXITY OF BELONGING

POETRY AS DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCE

POETRY AS AN ACT OF LIBERATION

Exchanging Lives

Today a friend called
to say you were dead
I'm worried now
what evidence I may
have left
recalling now my fingerprints
the paper in the waste basket
did I use the bathroom?

I'm sure my poem
has killed you
words as powerful as knives
or poison circulating
its sorrow and passion
who can resist when language
rears up across the centuries

that knock
must be the law
perhaps I'll be given
only house arrest
if I promise not to write
oh—it is you
still alive
you didn't read it—
just a minute
I've left a chalice
full of wine
on the table

The Jellyfish Cure

I woke up ungodly early
to read up on jellyfish

sunlight through shutters
enters by random
the world of my humdrum

birthed between glossy photos
short nod-offs and soy milk
in my cappuccino
this poem is a miracle
coming in stutters

jellyfish are early risers
they produce some of the fastest
movements in the animal kingdom
their stinging cells
discharge in 700 nanoseconds
and strike with the force of a bullet

If only I could write poetry
like the jellyfish
then highways and turn lanes
signals and mountains
wouldn't matter

you would love me
and my hand around your waist
would feel desire warming
the glass of your skin
love's sting measured
in nanoseconds

Houses

trading a paper clip
for a house is the easy part

who thinks about the long
term implications of office supplies

I thought it would be alright
to pile love into boxes with books

so when the moving truck
weak with nausea stumbles

with 15 years of marriage
and backs its load

right into the living room
there's no way to stop it

not expecting you would
want to go home

for the scarf you left
in the cutlery drawer

this house echoes
I hear the phone ring

but not your voice
like early morning traffic

I will keep my engine running
instead of saying grace

its not so easy to win a staring contest
with day dreams

it takes a long time

to fill a kitchen with laughter

Cloning Your Poetry

as the volume of poetry rises
the interest in love falls

and we Canadian poets always
jockeying for position
on the Vicki Gabereau Show
must deliver results

or like our counterparts
in the National Hockey League
will suffer salary rollbacks

and might be forced
to open second hand book stores
beside the Tim Horton's

but since the announcement
of cloning human embryonic stem cells
I've found a way to compete
in this high stakes game of love

my sullied reputation
I'm hardly worried about
even the best poets hardly qualify
for the pittance of low profile scandal

some even say poets should
never be trusted anyway
always party to some cover up

when this fakery's uncovered
when finger-wagging editorials
say there are crimes against love
that I should be ashamed of

and when the Canada Council of the Arts
decrees the poet's penance is living
with accusation of fabricated feelings

then I will say this in my defense:

few have soared as high
true love has risen up
undetected all this time
and in my starched white
lab coat there is one thing
I can verify
con men cannot con love

It Was Not Enough

everything is given
and known in your mouth
I miss even the emptiness

the coming and going of kisses
the unraveling of a chord
that does not end

it absorbs all motives
as deeply as your own
'til I discovered
it was not enough
to return to love

loneliness ripens politely
not separate from a body
soft with habit

nothing held back
there a bilingual offering
that empties and fills

empties like lightning
fills like the collision
of hot and cold

Love's Memory

If I cannot love you
but have the memory of love
then I can at least make a map
to your front door

If I cannot steal a glance
but have the memory of you
across a crowded cafe
then I can at least sit
where you would sit
and sip your favourite latté

If I cannot walk alongside you
but have the memory of shoes,
then I can at least roll up
my pants and put my feet
in the footprints where
you have walked

If I cannot hold you

but have the memory
of your shoulders your waist
then I can at least write
your name across my back
when my body aches

If I cannot kiss you
but have your mouth's memory
then I can at least pour wine
circle my lips along the rim
and toast your taste

If I cannot lie down with you
but have the memory of your touch
then I can at least sprawl out
with longing on a sleepy blanket
by the beach and dream sunshine
wake with belonging

If I cannot work with you
and slip into a future fit for us
but have the memory of music
holding my breath in your office
then at least I can sing
of the ways I have loved you
write the lyrics to a new poem
and know that our words
can be forever side by side
in dusty pages stuck
together on the shelf

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