GENDERING THE BODY: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE PEDAGOGY OF FAMILY RITUALS

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Educational Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

April 6, 2006

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is an inquiry into issues of narrative, childhood history, gender and the body. In particular it offers a critical inquiry into the pedagogy of family rituals. Supporting this endeavour I marshal the theoretical strengths of feminist theory and heuristic writing pertaining to autobiographical narrative to conduct this research. Writing and examining personal narratives raises questions and challenges about issues of voice, gender, history, and the interpretation, meaning and value of narrative within our current culture. It is an autoethnographic and experiential inquiry in which I explore my own childhood experience from the perspectives of New Zealand small town girl, Canadian urban middle class woman, remarried mother, wife, teacher, writer and researcher. This thesis is an expression of my desire to re(discover) and address the positions I occupied in childhood as they shaped my personal notion of gender. The process of writing myself undresses and re(dresses) the child I once was. Through autobiographical narratives and theoretical inquiry, my thesis demonstrates the potential of autobiographical writing to reveal how the history of childhood and the pedagogy of family rituals shape the experience of becoming a gendered body.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following people who have assisted me in my journey of writing this thesis. My husband, Alex Startin, has provided unceasing love and commitment to my growth by listening to my stories, and by assuming many extra household duties to create space for me to write. To my children, Michael, Oliver and Brenna who have been interested in my project and have uncritically accepted my preoccupations over the past three years. To Diana Davidson, whose wisdom on how to love and hold one’s family encouraged me to record my father's memories on audio-tape, and to return to see my mother one more time before she died. To Luanne Armstrong, whose friendship and editing helped me to move back into writing, and to finish. To Shelley Bieshke, my friend and colleague, who doesn’t know how talented she is. Despite recovering from pneumonia, Shelly provided invaluable technical and formatting support. To all of you in Women Writing Women, who have listened, applauded, and shared your own struggles, which has in turn helped me to move through mine. To Dr. Mona Gleason, for her patience and kindness to me throughout this project, and for knowing when at last, to push.

Finally, I wish to thank my parents, Mary and Christopher Stubbs, and my nine brothers and sisters: Geoffrey, Margaret, Elizabeth, Henry, Warwick, Richard, Helen, Beatrice and Joyce, many of whom have offered encouragement, and provided material that has helped me to write this thesis.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

OPENING POEMS

Voice / The Weaver of Holes

My voice reaches stretches
searching hoping to discover
itself
uncovering installations
carved by others' voices
a medley of cacophonous
beliefs dominating, controlling,
suppressing, constraining
and freeing

Jean Stubbs (2005)

Autobiography of Holes

In writing life
It's not the life of self
I write
but the life self writes its way to
the whole cloth
filled with holes
whose pulled threads hold connections
in multiple lines of weaving
I am the weaver
And every woman who reads the self I write
lives on in me

A found poem based on Daphne Marlatt’s (1992) article “Self-Representation and Fictionalanalysis” in D. Currie & V. Raoul (Eds.), Anatomy of Gender: Women’s Struggle for the Body (pp. 242-247). Canada: Carleton University Press.
Figure 1. Lieutenant Christopher Morgan Stubbs, aged 22.

Figure 2. Mary Winifred Stubbs, B.A. aged 22.

Figure 3. The Stubbs Family: Front – Jean (1957), Helen (1955), Beatrice (1960); Middle – Elizabeth (1949), Spike, the Cat, Christopher (1922), Warwick (1952), Richard (1954), Geoffrey (1946); Back – Margaret (1947), Joyce (1964), Mary (1922), Henry (1950).
The Beginning of a Thesis: Positioning Myself as Researcher/Researched

I enrolled in Graduate School at the University of British Columbia, Canada in September, 2002. While taking a course in Educational Studies called “Making Sense of Sex: Gender and the History of Education” with Dr. Mona Gleason, in 2003, I was instructed to write a final paper on the subject of gender and education. As I contemplated the topic, it occurred to me that my own life was a personal history of gender. Although I had never heard the word “gender” as a child, I did know that in my family, whether one was male or female made a big difference. How could I demonstrate some of those differences? I scanned my childhood, searching for patterns of gender difference and found rituals. Eating was something we did every day, and in our house it was a highly formalized and predictable performance: meals were served regularly and at the same time every day. My parents and my brothers and sisters had set places at the table, and my parents performed separate and regular duties, as did the children. I wrote the first version of “Dining in the Stubbs’ House” and developed my paper around it. In the process of that writing, I discovered things I hadn’t thought about for a long time. Memories stirred more memories, and the desire grew within me to explore them by writing more. I have written many stories and in the writing of them have come to understand that not only did the stories themselves offer insights into the ways I was shaped as female through family rituals, but the process of writing uncovered issues of voice for me. In childhood my voice was shaped by the voices of my parents, particularly my father’s. As the body of my writing grew, I found myself exploring the ways my voice was listened to, responded to, and encouraged or discouraged. I found answers to long-standing questions about why I have struggled to write about my own
ideas. As one of the younger children in a large family, my voice was less strong, and when I did speak, I was often silenced or pushed aside to allow stronger voices to be heard. The writing of this thesis has carried me to a new place of knowledge, understanding and voice.

*Collecting Stories – The Basis of a Storied Inquiry*

I have been collecting stories for a long time. I was born a girl. I grew up and lived in a New Zealand upper-middle class Celtic-Gaelic home during the years 1957-1974. My father, Christopher Morgan Stubbs, was born in 1922 in Leicester, England. As a doctor who enjoyed stories, he liked to think of himself as a “medically trained poet”. My mother, Mary Winifred Kirk, whose parents were Scottish and English, was born in 1922 in China. She had a university degree but never worked outside the home after she married my father. Together they produced ten children: six girls, four boys. On average my mother was pregnant every 18 months, though her pregnancies were less frequent as they grew in number. There are 19 years between Geoffrey who is the eldest, and Joyce, the baby. At the age of four, when someone asked Joyce if she’d like another brother or sister, she answered, “Not unless Mum forgets to take her pill.” The “pill” arrived in New Zealand in 1964 and Mum and Dad never looked back. Although Dad had wanted a dozen children, when he was younger, influenced he said by the book, *Cheaper by the Dozen* by Frank B. Gilbreth and Ernestine Gilbreth Carey whose stories of family adventures we grew up reading, I think he and Mum were sick of the whole business by the time the last child was born. Each of us left home when we finished high school. After Joyce left, Dad heaved a sigh of relief and said, “Thank God, FINALLY, I have my money and my wife to myself.” Like my mother before me, I married a man
from overseas. I left New Zealand within three days of our wedding, for good, arriving in Vancouver, Canada, on January 1, 1982, and have not left yet.

My parents’ lives were rich in oral narratives of adventure, travel, politics, marriage, work, living and dying as well as written stories that were read to me when I was young. Like all children, I devoured stories, and I think I have been preparing to tell this story all my life. My collecting of stories intensified when my father was diagnosed with bladder cancer in 1990. I wanted to preserve some of his stories, knowing that if I didn’t, they would die with him. I returned to New Zealand in 1991 and together we recorded two audio-tapes of family stories. I told him then that I would use these stories one day to write my own. He said, “These stories are yours. I give them to you freely to use in any way you wish.”

Several years later, my sister, Elizabeth, recorded two audio-tapes of my mother telling her stories, copies of which she sent to me. My father’s tapes, in particular, have provided me with a great deal of information for my thesis. While my mother was alive, I could still speak with her and did so frequently, by telephone, and during occasional visits.

In 2003 when I began to write my thesis, I recorded incidental rememberings of events, and rituals. While writing at home in Vancouver, I would often phone my mother in New Zealand to read what I had written to her and she would respond with additions and recollections of the events I described. My stories and notes grew from, and out of, those conversations.

My mother died last year, in May 2005. I spent most of March that year in New Zealand during which time I read many of my stories to her as she lay dying. She was
delighted to hear about our lives, at a time when she herself was reviewing her own life and preparing to leave it.

Some stories emerged full bodied and complete. Others crawled out of anecdotes. Max van Manen says that anecdotes often tell all that is left and are implements for laying bare the covered meanings of events (van Manen, 1990). For me, the anecdotes were all I thought was left; they were the bones. But as I began to flesh them out I did discover there was more. The flesh grew out of memories which I slowly joined together using the same threads of theory and ideology that had held them once. In the (re)membering of the events, I uncovered and discovered meaning. I began to understand that the events I was describing were the rituals of our family life.

*Family Rituals and Pedagogy*

Rituals are actions performed over and over. They give the impression of being purely manual operations, like giving birth, eating, working, speaking, shopping or doing work about the house, but embedded in them are the values and ideologies of history. Tom Driver describes ritual actions as a means to stabilize and establish “patterns of ethical behaviour” (Driver, 1998, p. 46). He claims that values and ideologies have been celebrated in ritual throughout recorded history, linking sex and power for example, which has resulted historically in the espousal of male domination and female subservience (Driver, 1998, p. 46). In my family many behaviours were ritualized and the repeated enactment of those rituals linked us to each other in a map of ideological protocols. Remembering and recording those rituals divulges much about the values and ideologies that my parents and their social world espoused. I demonstrate in this thesis that a critical investigation of these rituals suggests a complex story about how gender
and beings are made. My parents’ world was patriarchal, upper-middle class, heterosexual, and white. I, like my siblings, was shaped by these ideologies that informed the pedagogy of my childhood growing up in New Zealand.

How might we better understand and find value in a pedagogy honed in domestic, familial spaces? My study is an attempt to turn our attention to this inquiry. Pedagogy is instruction, or discipline; it is a system of training. In ancient times the pedagogue was responsible for the oversight of a child or a group of children. The pedagogue walked with the child on her/his journey of becoming. The word “pedagogy” springs from the word “pedagogue”, and it too is concerned with the process of becoming. Pedagogy involves all the experience of living, including not only the facts but the meaning we derive from it. Pedagogy is taught from without, and sought from within. My family was my pedagogue and within a structure of ritualized behaviours I learned both explicitly and implicitly how to be female.

I focus on gender in particular because in my family, like many others, the distinction between male and female was sharp. Issues of class and race do arise but they are incidental to gender in my case. My family was upper-middle class. That has certainly shaped my life. I was and am privileged in terms of class: I have never lived in poverty. I have always had a home and an income, either my own or my husband’s. I have had opportunities to pursue education and in middle-age I am financially secure and well-paid as a teacher.

When I was a child, New Zealand had a population of three million people, mainly Europeans of British descent, and Maoris, who had settled there long before the
pakeha\(^1\) arrived. The largest Maori population was in the north; I lived in the south. My father was discreetly but openly prejudiced towards the Maori people, viewing them collectively by and large, as lazy, poor, carefree, and criminal; this view was not uncommon within the general pakeha communities to which I belonged. My mother saw the Maori people as “unfortunate”. Regardless, race was never an area of struggle for me. I belonged to the ruling and dominant racial class.

As a woman, however, I have struggled to distinguish and assert my own voice and my own needs from the males who surrounded me, in childhood and in adulthood. This thesis turns a sharply tuned lens onto the often subtle and sometimes unsettling overt ways in which this is accomplished in familial time and space. In my first marriage, I found myself recreating the gender relations of my childhood home, while living in a world in which concepts about gender were being challenged more and more, as were women’s traditional gender roles in both marriage and the workplace. I felt unsettled and limited then as a young woman working as a secretary briefly before becoming a wife, and mother. Like many women, gender and voice have been areas of challenge and struggle for me.

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\(^1\) *Pakeha* is a term used to refer to Queen Victoria’s non-Maori subjects in New Zealand, in the Maori text of the Treaty of Waitangi. This term is not derogatory. Its origin is thought to be from the pre-European word pakepakeha, denoting mythical light skinned beings (King, 2003, p. 169).
Outlining the Thesis

My thesis addresses the following three questions:

1. How did the family rituals of my childhood shape my ideas of what it meant to be female?
2. How did my specific position in the family shape me as a female child?
3. How has the process of writing myself into narrative helped me to achieve a voice and how has that transformed me to a place of knowledge and understanding?

I answer these questions using autobiographical narrative as my research method of inquiry. The thesis consists of narratives I have written, based on family anecdotes remembered and gleaned from conversations in the past, and during the three years of the writing of my thesis among brothers and sisters and with my mother. The narratives focus on family rituals and memories of events and interactions among the people who either lived in the house in which I grew up, or the people who entered, exited, and interacted with those of us living there. I refer to tape recordings my father and I made together. These are a collection of his past memories. My own memories concern the self in relation to others, and the self in relation to the culture in which I lived. My central argument throughout the work is that the process of gendering, and in my case learning to be female, is an embodied event, propelled by the events of our lives, and re-inscribed by the stories we are told and we remember.

I attempt to answer my three research questions in two ways. The autobiographical narratives themselves introduce members of my family and situate them in small town New Zealand from 1957-1974. My narratives are the data of my research.
They appear in a variety of texts – transcribed interviews from the past, photographs, poetry, paintings, and creative non-fiction – all of which become emblems of the now vanished world of my childhood. My methodology section provides the scaffolding upon which I draw some critical meanings on the gendering of my body in my narratives. This section explores the theory and history of autobiographical narrative as research, gender and its installation, heuristic writing, and the body. Considered together they create a subjective bridge between the past and the future as I retrace the footprints of my own history. My concluding section offers reflections on the significance of the research and the research process, for me, and for others. I also re-address my research questions introduced here. My own body then, becomes the primary educational site for my inquiry into childhood history and the inculcation of gender through the pedagogy of family rituals.

My theoretical framework, which I will explore in more depth in the next chapter is primarily drawn from the research scholars in a number of areas that impinge upon my focus on memory, childhood, gender, and the body. The work of Laurel Richardson, Helen Buss, Carola Conle and Susanna Egan guided the autobiographical narrative as the research approach that I take here. Norman Denzin was particularly influential for my understanding of ethnography. This work is also partly a history of childhood, my childhood, and has been shaped by the work in this area by scholars such as Richard Coe, Mona Gleason, and Neil Sutherland. The study is also grounded in feminist theory and is indebted to the work of bell hooks, Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, Jill Tarule, Janet Radcliffe Richards, Virginia Woolf, and Carol Gilligan.
CHAPTER TWO

Gendering My Body: Methods and Theory

Why Narrative Inquiry?

As a graduate student, I search for connections between ideas learned in the formal educational setting of the university, and those learned in my own life’s practices. When I discover the links between theoretical, academic discussions and my own personal experiences, my experience illuminates and enhances my understanding of academic material. It is freeing when I am able to do this. But I have struggled to find connections to bridge that gap.

Research, as the tool of education, must transform. Transformation changes us. It shifts, mobilizes, informs, evolves, transgresses, prods, frees, alters, burns, activates, excites, consumes, and heals. Narrative writing is one medium of research that offers opportunities to change, grow and learn.

I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it.

I was taught, though, as perhaps you were too, not to write until I knew what I wanted to say (Richardson, Laurel, 2001, p. 35).

There have been many times when I too wrote only when I knew what I wanted to say, but it has become increasingly difficult for me, because my voice was being choked by the voices of others. Helen Buss speaks of voices that surface, sputtering, tentative, and fearful (Buss, 2002, p. 96). This has often been my experience. My journey of writing has been a difficult one since high school. In formal academic writing I did not trust my
own voice and looked for others' voices to speak for me. While taking a graduate composition course with Carl Leggo, he asked us – his students - to consider the history of our writing. This was a salutary exercise for me. I wrote a narrative describing an incident, included in Chapter 3, in which I sought help from my father to write a speech for the Third Form Competition. The discussion between me and my father resulted in confirmation that my ideas were inadequate, while his were not. I accepted the voice he imposed on my writing, and doubted my own. The incident was destructive for me because in deferring to his voice, I came to believe that my voice was deficient.

When I was a student in school in the sixties and seventies, my experiences of writing comprised for the most part, the exercise of responding to questions based on reading, copying notes from the black board, or recording notes dictated to us. We wrote essays, or stories on assigned topics. Strict parameters were placed on such writing. I was rarely able to choose my own topic, and the work I did was always a single draft, completed in part of, or within, one class period of forty minutes’ duration.

In large part, then, this thesis is a reclaiming, not only of my sense of self but of my sense of “authority” - my voice, and my ability to both write and understand my story on my own terms. Writing this thesis has been a dialogic reflective reclaiming of wholeness. I articulate memories of my childhood as viewed through the multiple subject positions of my life: child, girl, sister, friend, daughter, woman, lover, mother, wife, student, researcher, teacher, writer. I do this to address the question of engendered knowing in childhood. My research adopts autobiographical narrative inquiry as a means of personalizing history while historicizing the personal (Hart cited in Buss, 2002, p. xi). I construct an historically specific subject through my own history. This methodology of
autobiographical writing places experience in an historical context of time and place, to reveal the legacy of history as it molds the future of the individual.

Autobiographical narrative inquiry is a method of research that is becoming more popular, especially in the field of education (Barone & Eisner, 1997, in Conle, 2000, p. 189). Carola Conle describes an increase in the number of theses being written as “personal narratives” and cites the personal experiential narratives of Conle ([1987] 1992, 1993), Beattie (1995), Bell (1991), Li (1991, 1998) and Mullen (1994) as narrative inquiry (Conle, 2000, p. 189). Traditional research tends to dwell in the intellectual realm while narrative inquiry embraces not only the intellectual, but the emotional and sensory. In fact, it erases the distinction between these two. This research method investigates the researcher’s own life by exploring a particular topic using artistic means.

Laurel Richardson, an advocate of writing as inquiry, describes autobiographical narrative research as a “call to writing-stories that situate [the] work in sociopolitical, familial, and academic realms” (Richardson, 2001, p. 34). It is a method of constituting the world and reconstituting oneself through evocative writing that touches us where we live, in our bodies (Richardson, 2001, p. 33). The self-reflexivity of such writing shapes and transforms us.

Researcher Peter Clough commends narrative research as useful because it “opens up (to its audiences), a deeper view of life in familiar contexts...[making] the familiar strange, and the strange familiar” (Clough, P. 2002, p. 8). Peter Cole’s doctoral thesis from Simon Fraser University in British Columbia is a narrative inquiry written in poetry (Cole, 2002).
Narrative inquiry, autobiographical or not, represents a body of emerging knowledge. It is a branch of the creative arts in research and is important because it brings the personal and familial into the academic sphere. As Laurel Richardson says, “Creative arts is one lens through which to view the world; analytical science is another. We see better with two lenses. We see best with both lenses focused and magnified” (Richardson, 2000, p. 254).

I perform myself through meditations on the performance of my childhood family and community, and permit a reflective/reflexive consciousness of the narrator-self as the medium to make the past relevant, in terms of the present (Buss, 2002, p. 125). I am therefore not only interested in the inculcation of gender through family ritual, but equally interested in the potential of autobiographical narrative inquiry to be an agent of change. My autobiographical narrative is an attempt to “repossess history for the purpose of performing a female-identified account of the past”, believing that the process of remembering and reconstructing the rituals of my childhood, through the lens of inner experience, will be more than a personalized story (Buss, 2002, p. 96). I believe that this will become a testament to a particular time, in a particular place in history.

Heuristic Writing

Heuristic writing acknowledges the emergent nature of writing, and embraces it as a “method of inquiry that moves through successive stages of self-reflection” and discovery (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p. 10 in Conle, 2000). When one writes with an open heart and an open mind there is the opportunity to discover new knowledge, and to transcend oneself. To transcend is to undergo change, to be transformed. It is finding yourself in a place not anticipated before you began the writing. It is writing off the
page, losing yourself in words, ideas and feelings, when the awareness of your audience fades, and your writing becomes a performance of self for self. Too often in the past, my writing was used to check me out. When someone - a teacher, or a parent perhaps - wanted to know if I knew what they thought I ought to know. Heuristic writing opens the door to new ways of thinking, new ways of seeing, that spring from writing itself. This kind of writing can be whimsical, humourous, and often surprising because it takes you to new and previously unknown places.

Autobiographical narrative research acknowledges the heuristic nature of writing. This type of research explores memories, some of which have solidified over time and have transformed themselves into monuments connecting the past and the future.

Autobiographical narrative inquiry creates its own data. It uses many texts - it may offer journal writings, transcripted interviews from the past, photographs, poetry, paintings, creative non-fiction. It is a subjective bridge between the past and the future. Here, the researcher and the researched are the same. In recreating and retelling one's own stories narrative inquiry gives balm to a hurt mind, and knits up childhood's ravell'd sleaves of care.² It re-lives and re-enacts excitement, sadness, questions, longings, and understandings as it retraces the footprints of one's own history.

² In Williams Shakespeare's play, Macbeth, Macbeth laments the terrible and unnatural murder he has committed, and recounts to Lady Macbeth the ominous voice he imagined he heard, as he left the room where the king, his murdered victim lies. The voice compares the unnaturalness of his act to the murder of sleep itself. "Sleep, 'the innocent sleep,/Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,/The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath, Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,/Chief nourisher in life's feast," (Shakespeare, 1994, II, ii 36-40).
Traditional Academic Research

In my father's traditional, patriarchal world objective and subjective knowledge were absolutely separate. This reflects a traditional western view originating in Descartes, now referred to as the Cartesian view, which holds that "the mind exists independently of bodily need and individual experience" (Currie & Raoul, 1992, p. 1). Using reason alone, the thinker/researcher acquires a view of the world which "transcends its point of origin" by severing the activity of the mind – reason – from emotional and political considerations. From this perspective, the objective knowledge of the knower, "like an omnipotent god, comes from 'nowhere'" (Currie & Raoul, 1992, pp. 1-2). I grew up in a family where women's subjective voices were strongly taboo, and I continue to challenge my father's voice and his views of women.

The Cartesian separation of mind and body has resulted in the subordination of the body to the mind, the consequence of which deems the body as irrelevant to the production of knowledge, and even as potentially subversive (Currie & Raoul, p. 2). This is evident in our schools that have traditionally been sites in which the Cartesian view of the mind and body as separate entities has been reproduced. Historically the education of children has excised body knowledge from the process of learning and it is only recently that researchers have begun to explore the ways that the dominant culture has been embodied and lived out (Gleason, 2001; Gordon, 1999; Shapiro, 1999).

The Fallacy of Immaculate Perception

If traditional western research posits objective knowledge as good research, then it follows that subjective research under that umbrella would be viewed as bad research.
The voice of the objective researcher was somehow regarded as one of detached distance and a necessary mediator of subjective experience. My study challenges these ideas. It asserts my own subjective experience with me as a thoughtful, conscious mediator/researcher of those rituals and stories surrounding my own childhood. There is no such thing as an immaculate perception, as shown in the work of the mathematical physicist and philosopher, Werner Heisenberg, who in the 1920’s demonstrated that it was impossible to observe a phenomenon without interacting with it. Objective research is both unfeasible and unattainable, because the researcher must enter “inside” the phenomenon being studied (Pryer, 2002, p. 24). There is no objective knowledge devoid of the subjectivity of the “knower” (Pryer, 2002, p. 26). Unlike much traditional research, mine does not attempt to suppress or devalue my subjective voice, and although it would at one time have been regarded as flawed research, it must now be considered “good research”.

Furthermore in researching the emergence of a gendered identity in childhood it is appropriate that my research uses my subjective voice. My personal struggle of developing a voice is, I think, a reflection of the dominant mode of consciousness under the Cartesian paradigm that has prevailed for almost three hundred years.

My focus on the subjective voice is appropriate to my research that investigates the emergence of gender identity within the context of family rituals, experienced in childhood, by positioning the subject as an authority on her own experience. This research method accepts memory as the mediator of experience to envision history.

History cannot be studied directly. It needs to be constructed by looking at the bits and pieces of history that remain (Palys, 1997, p. 159). Those bits and pieces are
either concrete artifacts, reports of remembered events, and/or conversations. The moment we begin to record the events of our lives, through written or spoken language, we are remembering what has already passed, and this has been done by indigenous people across the globe for thousands of years. My own Celtic forbears had no written language so the wisdom of their collective experiences was committed to memory and passed down in an oral tradition. The only way to record experience as it happens, without mediation, is to do so internally through body memory. Reports of events impose a perspective, a point of view, a bias. All history draws on the memories of the events and feelings of somebody.

Voices

Voice: A Prose Poem

Voice is one’s own footprint. Each voice is unique; no voice can be duplicated. Voice is one’s textual DNA. Voice is not static: it moves; it meanders; it bursts; it flies; it hides; it slithers quietly away, providing space for other voices. Each of us lives with developing voice(s), which may shrink and shrivel or stride out, and grow loud. A voice speaks within and without; it lies dormant, like a slave, waiting to be freed. And sometimes when freedom comes and looks it in the face, the voice is afraid, and so it retreats, to seek enslavement again.

Jean Stubbs (2004)
Although my father, Christopher Morgan Stubbs, died eight years ago, in 1998, my memories of his living continue. His voice lives, breathes, and speaks through me still. For many years I didn’t recognize his voice, but now I know it and understand that it is not mine. I am now aware when his voice ends and my own begins. At the moment of birth my voice called out in search of connection to the social world. Like all voices, mine originated in my body and found its way and its expression through breath. I learned about the social world through the voices I first encountered, those of my mother, my sisters and brothers, and my father. Although my father spoke directly to me the least, his voice resonated more than any other voice. These voices then, the voices of my immediate family breathed into me; I inhaled deeply, taking those ideas and feelings into the depths of my small body - so deep that I could hear them even when their speaker was not there. My family’s voices became the vital centre of my inner world. For many years, when those words did venture out, I believed they were mine. And it was amidst those voices that my own voice wrestled to grow, to gain strength, and to find its own place in the chorus that accompanied me through my childhood.

As I slowly grew into adulthood, I became aware of my own emerging voice and strove to claim it as separate, bravely revealing it while rejecting other voices that clambered to assert themselves. I grew up in a house of hierarchies. There were rigid hierarchies of gender and age. Our home was controlled by men. This was so, even though the number of male and females was not very different: five male, seven female. However, my father’s voice carried the most weight; girls’ voices carried less, and in the case of the younger girls, in mixed company, we were silent. I don’t mean that we were literally silent, but that female voices didn’t count for much. I didn’t feel I was heard, or
known by my father or my brothers. Because male voices were so strong, and because I was the eighth child, my voice wasn’t given much space. Others’ voices spoke, and assumed primacy and I learned to get in line to talk or to silence my own voice.

*The Sociology of Voice / Socio / Political Constructions*

The social construction of my gender, class and race requires more than an analysis of the material conditions of my childhood. It needs some accounting of the linguistic or ‘discursive’ construction of gender, class and race. The importance of voice is crucial because discourse originates in voice. One’s identity or consciousness develops through discourse and one’s position on the social hierarchy of power can be traced through it. Power grows out of human relations conducted through the material conditions and the language of our lives.

Just as male voices dominated female voices in the private world of my family, in the public world too, male voices held rank over female voices. In the western cultural milieu in which my ancestors and I have lived, voices have developed ways of organizing themselves as dualistic binaries in which one voice is given primacy over the other. Dualism divides ways of thinking into two parts that classify and order all existence in such a way that one part of existence is exalted and privileged over the other (Pryer, 2002, p. 7). For example, in the following binaries the first in each of those listed is exalted over the latter: mind/body, human/animal, culture/nature, mental/physical, masculine/feminine, spirit/matter, public/private, sacred/profane, intellect/emotion, thought/feeling, analysis/intuition, logic/metaphor, rational/irrational and so on (Pryer, 2002, p. 7).
Educational researchers are becoming increasingly interested in “voice.” My own interest is two-fold. First, because voice creates discourse and there is a strong connection between discourse and power. Second, because by tracing my own voice back to childhood, I can track the voices that shaped me as a living, sentient being. I want to identify which voices shaped my identity as female? In childhood, whose voices did I listen to the most? Why? How do voices change over time? What is an emerging voice? How many voices do I have?

This accounting of voice is important because at another level voices create discourse. Discourse is the collection of “organized systems of knowledge that make possible what can be spoken about and how one may speak about it” (Adams, 1999, p. 6). These systems are built upon statements used to define and describe a subject. The voices that create those discursive systems are those of authority that emerge from the main intellectual disciplines. These voices of authority are implicitly accepted as statements of truth (Butler, 2002, p. 44). When knowledge is essentially controlled and dictated by a small elite group it means that many voices are never heard. However, burgeoning calls beckon the voices of those who have hitherto been silenced. Autobiographical narrative inquiry is one of the more recent research methods to surface that wants to hear from voices that were silent, silenced or inaudible.

*Meditations on Body*

The body is not only the physical structure of living beings and animals, but a whole material organism to be viewed as an organic entity. A human being’s existence includes a consideration of the corporeal and a comprehensive collection of mental, emotional and spiritual details as well.
Historically, social science research about bodies has focused on women's bodies with a keen eye to how they differ from the bodies of men. This has lead to an unqualified focus on sexuality and reproductive capacity. For the most part men and women have learned to move, hold, and manage their bodies differently. Men sit, stand, walk, speak, and gesture differently. Generally women's bodies are more confined and restricted in their movements. Individual differences will in part be a result of race, class, sexuality and genetics, but overall men's and women's bodies behave differently. In the past such variances appeared to be natural, or insignificant; however, the theoretical work of feminists and social scientists suggest that these differences may be consequential (Martin, K., 1998). Bodies are resources to be "trained, manipulated, cajoled, coaxed, organized, and in general disciplined" (Turner, 1992 in Martin, 1998, p. 495). Taking this idea further, Foucault contends that controlled and disciplined bodies regulate more than just the individual body; they create a context for social relations because they also signal, manage, and negotiate information about power and status among groups of people (Martin, 1998, p. 495).

Anthropologists claim that the human body is universally used as a symbol for human society, and control over the body can be viewed as a symbolic expression of social control (Kipnis, 1996). Bryan Turner states that any sociology of the body is centred on the nature of the sexual and emotional division of labour. Furthermore, a "sociology" of the body turns out to be a sociological study of the control of sexuality, specifically [the control of] female sexuality by men exercising patriarchal power" (Turner, 1984, p. 115). Patriarchy can be viewed as a system of power relations in which men hold sway over women and where women are placed in a subordinate power
relationship to men. Both the body and society are frequently presented as being split into higher and lower strata, with the upper half of the body symbolically representing society’s upper echelons; this is a space occupied by men, dominated by reason, and represents those who are socially powerful. Conversely, the lower half of the body symbolically represents the lower tiers; this space is occupied by women, dominated by the physical body, and represents those who lack social power (Kipnis, 1996, p. 134). Woman’s subordinate positioning comes about because of her reproductive role in society. Reproduction is associated with nature, rather than culture, and has been relegated to sub-social status because of the correspondence of nature to animality. Women are thus tied to nature through sexuality, and reproduction (Turner, 1984, p. 115). Although the distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ is itself a cultural product, these are categories that allocate women to inferior ‘natural’ status and men to superior ‘social’ status. With women assuming the work of ‘nature’ in reproduction, men are free to occupy themselves with higher ‘cultural’ status activities.

Mind vs. Body?

The first stirring of desire to write about my own embodied memories began with my discovery, in yoga, that mental energy was not the antithesis of physical energy, contrary to the dualistic model. This model positions the mind as opposite to body; a mental state that is separate from, and contrasts with the physical. The two states, body and mind, have come to be regarded as separate as a result of years of accumulated associations that hold them disparate. Yet the two are inextricably joined. Mind, body, and spirit are the substances of embodiment, which is ontologically to be human.
When I listen and notice the emergence and confluence of these aspects of my own self, I become aware of a rich, complex and alive learning experience. Through the concrete movements of my body in yoga, I become aware of a melding of thoughts, feelings, memory, imagination, and intuition within me. Sometimes, I become aware of a release of memories that have been locked inside my body. Memories do not always reveal themselves through the language of words. When entering a particular physical movement, I have, for example, felt a flow of emotion rise within me, filling my conscious senses with a poignant image which may or may not herald an understanding which can be articulated in words. As I noticed the ways the different parts of my body responded, or struggled to respond, in certain yoga poses, I began to understand that my body was a text\(^3\) – a text of body memories containing the stories of my life.

*The Engendered Body*

My body is the text of an engendered life; that is, a life imbued with gender. In my case: *female*. I experience my body as deeply acculturated within a system of gender difference.

Gender develops in childhood through individual encounters with the nuclear family, and with the symbolic systems begun by the parents who carry out socially imposed roles in their dealings with their children (Jones, 1981, p. 361). My parents were a mother/father pair. Ann Jones describes the perceptions of our own sexuality/gender developing through a “jumpy, contradictory mesh of hoary sexual

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\(^3\) Nané Jordan, an innovative poet/researcher and member of *Women Writing Women*, a writing cooperative I am a part of, coined the sentence, "If our bodies were the text we would believe ourselves to be true." from which I have borrowed the phrase, "body as text".
symbolization and political counter-response” (Jones, 1981, p. 363). Although the question of how woman is different from man is important, a more revealing consideration is an analysis of the power relationships between men and women, and the behaviour that ensues from and is reproduced by them.

This thesis is an exploration of such a history. As I recall the rituals of my own family, noting whose voices spoke, loudest, softest, most frequently, least frequently, when and where, and whose bodies were present, and under what circumstances, the relationships among family members are exposed and invite interpretation and analysis. As I recount stories of my childhood, recalling some of the ritual activities performed in the household such as dining, shopping, chores, dressing, holidays, and leisure activities, I realize that these stories reflect underlying philosophies and political structures inherited and acquired in both my parents' childhoods and adult lives, that they wittingly, and unwittingly, passed on to me, and my brothers and sisters. Looking back at my parents' relationship to each other, to me and to my siblings, I see how my identity was gendered by those rituals we performed together. Each story reveals attitudes and beliefs held by my parents about gender, from which we, the children, carved out our own gendered identities.

**Gender**

Gender acknowledges the constructionist view that while *sex* denotes a physical/biological difference between female and male, *gender* describes the social production and performance of differences between maleness and femaleness. However, that concept of gender has been further problematized so that gender cannot be viewed as
fixed. Its definition and identity are changing as I write. Judith Butler, a leading feminist scholar, whose area of passionate interest and dense writing on the subject of gender, describes it as a ritual performance that produces the imaginary fiction of a “core” and stable gender (Butler, 1999). The production of gender, Butler states, is linked to normative heterosexual relations and “is always a sign of subordination for women” (Butler, 1999). Sociological work suggests that gender is something that is “done” to us. These two concepts, “gender performance” and “doing gender” imply that bodies are managed, instructed, adorned, inculcated with gender and gender relations (Martin, 1998, pp. 494-495).

*Why Gender Matters: Sex and Gender*

Sex clings to the body like a tight dress. Why? Why is sex so conspicuous? When a newborn baby leaves the solitary world of the womb, and joins the social world of other bodies, the first question on everyone’s mind is, “Is it a boy or a girl?” Why is it that the sexual identity of a body becomes crucial at the very moment that it enters the social world? And how do the rituals of our daily lives proceed to dress those bodies with gender throughout childhood and beyond? Why do we need to categorize ourselves and others by sexual/gendered identities and behaviours? Because the possession of a body and its specific features, has a particular placement in society which is crucial for everyday recognition and identification (Turner, 1984, p. 55) and because our bodies are marked with the politics of the culture in which we live.

Language is a most convenient marker that assigns “nominal essence” to the body. Diana Fuss describes nominal essence as, “a linguistic convenience, a
classificatory fiction [that] we need to categorize and label. Real essences are discovered by close empirical observation; nominal essences are not ‘discovered’ so much as assigned or produced - produced specifically by language” (Fuss, 1989, pp. 4-5). What the ancient Greeks understood by “man” and “woman”, and what North Americans understand by these words in the twenty first century is radically different, because when viewed through a constructivist lens, the categories of “man” and “woman” are neither stable, nor universal (Fuss, 1989, p. 3).

*Installing Gender in the Body*

The stories that follow are retold or remembered, and exemplify the concept of embodiment as the process by which our bodies become a vehicle for socialization. These stories show how ideological social structures are inscribed on the body.
CHAPTER THREE
Stories: Data

*Time is the greatest of storytellers.*

Anonymous

*If we are without knowledge of our past, then we are without knowledge of ourselves.*

Anonymous

*There are some stories you can never hear enough. They are the same every time you hear them – but you are not. That’s the one reliable way of understanding time.*

(MacDonald, 2003, p. 129).

*Stories are embedded with instructions which guide us about the complexities of life. Telling stories of childhood soften old scar tissue, balm old wounds and restore old skills. Stories are medicine. Stories have such power; they do not require that we do, be, act anything – we need only listen to them. The remedies for repair or reclamation of any lost psychic drive are contained in stories. Stories engender excitement, sadness, questions, longings, and understandings that spontaneously bring ... Wild Woman back to the surface.*

Although my paternal grandfather, Eric Strawson Stubbs, was born in England, his father had emigrated to New Zealand when Eric was two years old. He had spent his childhood in New Zealand until, at the age of 17, he went to England to study medicine at Liverpool University. It was common for well-to-do New Zealand families to send their children to England for professional training. My grandfather’s sister, Winifred, who

Figure 4. Professional photograph of Christopher Stubbs. The exact date is unknown but I believe he was approximately 65 years old.
graduated with nursing training from Nelson Hospital in New Zealand, traveled to England where she kept house for Eric and her other brother, Clifford. Clifford entered Liverpool University and achieved a Doctorate of Science for a thesis on the conductivity of metallic vapours, and was appointed Professor of Chemistry at the Western Reserve University in Chengtu, Western China in 1913, at the age of 25. My grandfather, Eric Strawson Stubbs moved to New Zealand, from Belper in the Midlands of England, in 1926 as a result of a medical misdiagnosis.

My father, Christopher Morgan Stubbs, shown in Figure 4, told me the following story (which appears in italics) in 1991.

*My father had developed a persistent cough which led him to seek the advice of the great Beaumont who was then a very fashionable physician in Harley Street, and the author of a number of recent advances in medicine. Beaumont had a very stylish practice and my father told me that he was examined in a room, perhaps 16 feet cubed, whose only furniture was a table and a chair. There, he sat on the chair and a wonderful cashmere shawl was thrown over one side of his chest, to keep him warm, while the physician sounded the side of the chest that was bare, then the cashmere shawl was removed to that side, and the other was sounded.*

*Without any good evidence at all, my father was declared to have tuberculosis and was sent to Switzerland for a period of 18 months, possibly longer. There he made an excellent recovery as he did not have tuberculosis at all. He did apparently learn a great deal about living at high altitudes, about heliotherapy which is treatment with sun, and about trees that would grow at 5,000 feet.*
Eric returned to Belper, having by this time two children, and then after the birth of the third child, Brenda, in July 1925, the family moved in 1926 to New Zealand where it was thought that my father's chance of survival, would be better.

My father contacted old friends in New Zealand, having made the six week trip on the ship, Port Adelaide, which berthed in Wellington. He traveled the country for a while to decide where he should set up practice. He was persuaded to settle in Oamaru, a little seaside town, and it was there on the 1st of January, 1927, living in a house on Wharfe Street which he rented from distinguished business people by the name of Bulleid, that he began a general medical practice. There in a small hall, his patients sat on a monk's bench – this was his waiting room – and he took them, one by one, through into his consulting room.

In between times he built a summer house, developed a garden, and made himself known about Oamaru by driving a red Essex Super VI all over town at high speed, in order to show how much in demand he was, and consequently how good he was. Whether this was really a successful form of advertising remains unknown, but he certainly did gradually acquire a considerable practice.

The Bulleids continued to raise the rent on their house making it clear to my father that they needed the house for other purposes, and compelling him to offer a high rent in order to stay there and continue to practise medicine. After they had done this several times, he decided that he must build his own house. So he borrowed money, bought a section lower down Wharfe Street at number 49, and planned the house, plans for which were drawn by himself and a foreman by the name of Tom Jacobs who worked for Craig and Co. The price of the house at the time was 3,300 pounds. Eric took alarm
at the price and reduced the size of it, which he ever regretted, to the cost of 3,000 pounds.

The builder was a man by the name of Mollineux who had been a ship's carpenter. He did it so well that my father presented him with his last store of several golden sovereigns. He told me that Mollineux bit them to make sure they were gold, put them in his pocket, without a word of thanks, and got on with his work.

The House my Grandfather Built

Figure 5. Photograph of watercolour painting of 49 Wharfe Street house. C. M. Stubbs commissioned the painting from artist, Dorothy H. Jones.
The house in Wharfe Street [Figure 5] had downstairs a surgery to which was attached a laboratory, darkroom and toilet. Across the front hall was a waiting room for patients who had come to consult the doctor. The front hall opened by sliding glass doors into the main hall of the house, from which there opened quite a large kitchen, a dining room and a sitting room. The dining room opened into the sitting room by way of glass doors and accessed the kitchen through a slide, with diamonded glass panes on the dining room side and a plywood door on the other. It was a large kitchen with a long kauri bench and windows looking east over the sea. There was also a spacious walk-in-pantry with shelves to the ceiling, and through the back door, both a wash and a coal house. Upstairs, and they were particularly attractive stairs, designed by a man called John Reid who did them in one piece, were five bedrooms and a sun-room.

The distinguishing feature was that only one wall was common to two bedrooms on that floor. The master bedroom was on the northeast corner of the house; it looked over the sea, over the town to the east and to the north. It also was at the point where the main railway trunk line and the main street of Oamaru would have met, if produced in a southerly direction. So that from the bedroom window of the master bedroom, one looked straight up the railway line and straight up the main street. The advantage of the former was that as the express train going north or south through Oamaru stopped 23 minutes for lunch, it was possible to look out of the window, determine that the express was in the station, and then pack and go down to it, get aboard and go to Christchurch.

Next to the master bedroom was my room which was effectively separated by the complete south wall of the master bedroom, being occupied by wardrobes, the clothes inside of which would deaden any sound. On the south side, again of my bedroom, was
a linen cupboard, about five-feet wide and twelve-feet long so that that completely
separated my bedroom from the bathroom.

It was a large bathroom with a bath, free-standing in the middle of one wall, and
a large area with shower gratings for the family to shower. There were two windows
both of which looked over the harbour, Cape Wanbrow, and the sea to the east. The
lavatory was next to the bathroom, and the maid's bedroom in which was a ladder that
lead up through a trap door into the attic. The maid's bedroom, on the west, had a wall
in common with another single bedroom which had a wardrobe where the twin room next
to it had two wardrobes, so that that wall too was completely occupied with wardrobes
which meant that no sound reached from one bedroom to another.

The sunroom was used as a bedroom, later by my own family. It was in the
northwest corner of the upper storey and had large windows that pushed right down into
the wall so that it became in effect a balcony.

Almost all of the rooms had gas fires, gas being reticulated to Oamaru at that
time.
The House on the Hill Where I Grew Up

I remember only one doctor whom the nuns called on who was not a Catholic and that was Dr Stubbs in Oamaru. He and his son were both no-nonsense men and very good diagnosticians. Their surgery was part of their large, rambling house and we frequently met several of the numerous brood of very uninhibited children who tumbled in and out of rooms very much like the Dickens’s Pocket family. It was a tonic in itself to visit them.


I grew up in a house overlooking the sea. From the window of my parents’ bedroom I could look north straight up the railway line and main street of the town. To the east, a few blocks below our house, the Pacific ocean stretched out from the harbour. This was an east coast town on the south island of New Zealand. Population: 13,000. Latitude: 45° south. Southeastwards the ocean hugged and was held by the Cape – a high peninsula hovering over both the sea and the south end of town. Behind the forested land view of Cape Wanbrow lay open fields, tall grasses, and a lighthouse, nestled between sea and sky. Here was a place where I found solitude in my childhood. I never met another person there. That house, on the south hill overlooking the sea was built by my grandfather; it was where my father had spent most of his childhood, and where I was to spend mine.
My Birth: A Monument to Women's Birthing

In 1957 when the labour of my birth began, my mother phoned a taxi to take her to the hospital. My father didn’t drive her, let alone accompany her through the experience. Much to her relief she remained in the hospital for seven days, reprieve from her regular work load of managing what was by then a troupe of seven other children, and a doctor in the house. An unmarried aunt was called in as surrogate mother while Mum was in “confinement”. It was a harrowing experience for Aunt Helen, and repeated only once more when the ninth child arrived. Family mythology, that harbinger of psychology, claimed Aunt Helen’s emigration to England was an escape - in part – to avoid the inevitable duties of substitute mothering thrust upon her by a determined and assuming brother. Duty compelled her to accept the mission.

In a large room in the Oamaru hospital, in a small town in New Zealand, a little country not quite at the bottom of the world, my body emerged head first and naked, from my mother’s womb, her smooth, splayed legs strapped wide, metal stirrups holding, to give me passage into a new world. My first meeting was with Dr. Mulheron. He was a man. Few women graduated from medical school at that time. I know what he was wearing: a green surgical gown with matching green cap, and rubber gloves. His gray, flannel trousered legs poked out from beneath his gown. There was one other person in that room, a female nurse who had prepared the way for the doctor, calling him at the last minute, protecting his precious time. A man’s time was valuable and was guarded, mostly by women, thus affirming the accepted primacy of men and servitude exacted from the women who worked beneath them.
Behind every great man is a fine woman.

Christopher Stubbs

Preparing a woman for childbirth meant shaving all pubic hair, giving an enema, or the dreaded rancid castor oil, to empty the bowel - lest any feces emerge unexpectedly and embarrassingly. The birthing mother was bathed, stamped clean, “antiseptic.” She was scrubbed outside and swabbed inside. This decontamination served to protect my mother from contracting unwanted infections, but it was also, I think, safeguarding those who would touch her physical body, from contact with those most private parts and any emissions that might flow from them.

The man who views his wife giving birth, or moving her bowels, will never make love to her in quite the same way again.

Christopher Stubbs

My mother’s labour was done largely alone. The nurse popped in now and again to check for cervical dilation, and to see that Mum was coping. Mum accepted this; she believed she had no other choice. I remember asking about the nurse’s presence, wondering if Mum had felt she needed more of it: “Had I had more nurses in there they would have just sat around, bored stiff,” she said. “I didn’t want anybody there. Bloody hell, I have to entertain the nurses as well as have a baby – too much. I just got on with it.” The setting was as clinical as the preparation of my mother’s body – white bare walls, uncomfortable white, starched sheets, and bright lights. My mother wore a surgical gown that opened at the back.

After one week’s “rest” in hospital my mother called a taxi and returned home, with me in her arms.
Mum resented my father's disinterest in the births of his children. She tried to hold on to the resentment, but eventually gave up when my father continued to do it anyway. She never forgave him though for his neglect surrounding the birth of their fifth child – Warwick. Dad finally showed up at the hospital to visit Mum, and the new baby, 36 hours after the birth.

Mother and Father: Snapshots

"Snappy" cameras made popular birthday presents in 1969. They cost only $4.99. I was 12 year's old and was thrilled with my gray plastic "Snappy". It can't have weighed more than three ounces. My family was antiquated in the technology department. We never owned a television set although Dad rented one as an experiment the following year. The experiment was a success. He decided we were better off reading books, and playing outside in the fresh air. We had a single wireless radio which we younger children crowded around on Sunday mornings, to hear the Children's Requests on the National Programme. We listened happily with rapt attention to: I'm a little fire engine - Flick is my name, Puff the Magic Dragon, Diana and the Golden Apples, Tom and Jerry, and The Lone Ranger. We owned a portable box gramophone on which my mother played her meager collection of 78 rpm classical music furtively at night, knitting and smiling while she was transported into the world of music that she and my father could never share. My father was indifferent to music, and claimed to be tone deaf. It was true. There was a small collection of 33 rpm records which included, Peter Rabbit and Other Stories, Classic Nursery Rhymes, Thumbelina, and Jack and the Beanstalk, The Green-Eyed Dragon with the 13 Tails and Uncle Peter's Birthday Party.
There was also a small collection of long playing records that we listened to infrequently on cold Sunday winter afternoons as an entire family. The ones I particularly remember were, Tom Lehrer’s, *The Year That Was*, Wayne and Shuster’s, *Rinse the Blood off my Toga, I’m a TV Addict*, and Dr Murray Banks’ *How to Live with Yourself until the Psychiatrist Comes to Visit*. Mum owned a gold wrist watch while Dad used a pocket watch, until the 1970’s when we moved to Nelson, where it was too hot to wear a waistcoat much of the time.

The family camera was a Box Brownie, used only occasionally, and judging by the photographs themselves, during Christmas holidays, when we left town for our annual summer holiday. There, Mum and Dad were able to relax, away from the relentless demands of a busy medical practice, filled with telephones and patients needing immediate attention. It was during this three-week annual holiday at Lake Tekapo that most of our photos were taken. My mother said there were few photographs because she and Dad could never get us all looking nice at once which was discouraging for them. The accumulated family photographs were of the two-and-a-half by three-inch variety and filled a small 6 inch-square cardboard box. They were stored in small envelopes, each bearing four numerals to identify the year the pictures were taken. Consequently family photographs were few. I own no more than eight photographs of my childhood before the age of 15 and the two I want to tell you about were taken by me with my “Snappy” camera when I was twelve-years-old.
This photograph, Figure 6, of my mother, is a story in itself. Taken during our Christmas/summer holiday, my mother’s barefooted body rests outside in the open sunshine. She is wearing a style of dress at the age of 47 that she continued to wear until her death, at the age of 83 in 2005. She was buried in an identically styled dress with a very similar floral pattern. That style was discovered by my father. He liked it so much that every dress my mother owned was a replica of that style. Mum’s “uniform,” as she came to call it, was cut in a broad V-neck to reveal her sufficient, yet modest bosom. In those days she owned three dresses. The style was identical, only the fabric varied; whether the dress was for daily wear, or evening attire, the style never altered. And that style was dictated by my father. So, I suppose it could be said, my father dressed my mother in his chosen image. My mother holds a book in her lap. She always read, and
over her life-time accumulated a large collection of books, history mainly. As I begin my own research into the history of my childhood, I can see how my mother’s reading kept her sane, and gave her perspective.

The next photograph, *Figure 7*, was also taken by me with my “Snappy” camera. It was taken on the occasion of Lookout Point – an area overlooking the town of Oamaru – being dedicated to my grandfather, Eric Stubbs, in 1969, two years after his death. My grandfather was an environmentalist, though that word wasn’t used then. He had actively volunteered his time, planting trees and lobbying for the creation of reserves of park land to ensure green space all over North Otago.

*Figure 7. And Himself Speaks.* Photograph taken by the author in 1969. Left: W. Laney, C.M. Stubbs and M.W. Stubbs.
Remarkably, this photograph captures the gender and class relationships of that time. That’s my mother disappearing off to the right; her body is only partially present. Her face is invisible. She is half a faceless body. Her body is present though and was necessary because it bore ten children who would carry the Stubbs name into posterity. My father is speaking with Mr. Laney, the Mayor of Oamaru, who was officiating at the ceremony. He is wearing the official mayoral necklace. These men look comfortable with their bodies, and each body speaks to me now.

Up until 1973, when I was 16 years old, my father wore a three-piece gray suit with an ironed white shirt and a tie every day. He worked seven days a week from 1955 to 1974, when we left that little town where he and I grew up. His tan coloured corduroy trousers, worn with an open-necked long-sleeved shirt were only worn during summer holidays. Those trousers didn’t get a lot of wear, and he wore them up until his death in 1998. In the photograph, my father is talking; he wears the authority of his profession (a medical internist), the authority of his family status in the town, and the authority of his world’s belief that men are in charge. Mr. Laney is one of my Dad’s competitors. He’s not looking my father in the eye – that’s because he’s a little unsure of himself, and my father, who understands the power of language is a master wordsmith. There was palpable tension between these two men. My father was always courteous, and often patronizing when speaking to or of Mr. Laney.

Today, in the year 2005, I wonder how it was that I came to take those pictures. Why did I select those subjects in those particular locations? Did I unconsciously recognize then that I was capturing something that would hold so much for me in the future. Knowing what I now know, I can look into the past and understand so much of
the future of my childhood as it would unfold during the 1960's and 70's. My gaze, innocent then, is now experienced and analytical. Those bodies within the pictures would become educational sites for my research into the body, childhood history, and the inculcation of gender through the pedagogy of family rituals

The Photograph: Memory Stimulator

D. H. Lawrence lamented the invention of the camera. He was concerned people would be falsely led to regard the photograph as capturing the living life. Lawrence viewed the photograph as a simulation only. It captured a moment in time. For the purposes of my work the photographic image does just that – it captures a moment in a particular place, at a particular time.

Because family photographs were scarce, none of us ever owned our own photograph album. But, once I had my own camera, I was able to choose my subjects and so began my own private photograph collection. However, I think the dearth of family pictures has created a family habit of being neglectful in taking photographs. As a family we rarely share photographs among us. And of those I took as a little girl, I have only a few left. In a letter my mother wrote to my mother-in-law in 2003, she thanked her for sending photographs of me, Alex, and the children. Mum wrote, “NONE of my family ever takes photographs!” Those photographs that remain are all the more precious because there are so few.

Why did I take the pictures I did? Judging from those that remain, I chose to photograph relatives I loved, and always on special occasions - my mother relaxing, my father at my grandfather’s Dedication ceremony, my great-aunt Joyce and her husband,
Bill, who visited from England. I was especially fond of them because they rescued me from my father's wrath during one memorable visit, by offering to pay to replace the bed I'd broken by leaping on to it from a high Scotch chest; it was the nearest we ever got to a trampoline. The remaining three photographs are of me: in my school uniform at the only girl-guide camp I ever attended; me, again, at the top of a high hill during a Form 2 school trip to New Zealand's capital city – Wellington - and another of me with a group of my friends from high school.

*My Father: Second to God?*

Mum and Dad had no time for Church. Although Granny – Kathleen Stubbs (nee Pooley) - sent the local Presbyterian minister to our house to save Mum's soul. Mum responded, “I can’t afford the uniform and my Christianity wouldn’t stand it.” What she wouldn’t “stand” was spending the single day she had when there were no surgeries in the house, dressing the children for church. That was too much. When Dad joined his father in general medical practice in Oamaru in 1955, he and Mum had seven children and not much money. The Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes necessary for church attendance were an impediment to a regular turn-out to church. However, Granny was hopeful and determined. She once said, “I’ll give two coats, one for Margaret and one for Elizabeth. I want the girls at the gate after school on Tuesday and I’ll take them to buy coats.” “No,” Mum said. “Margaret has Brownies on Tuesday’s.”

That Tuesday, Elizabeth was at the gate to meet Granny. Later, Granny phoned Mum to say she had no money for a second coat. Mum’s mother in England saved the day. She sent coats for Elizabeth and Henry so at least two of the tribe could attend
Church. However, Henry never attended because Dad said there would be a prize for the child in his family who never attended Church.

I recall attending Sunday school briefly. I think I must have been about five years old. I thought it was fun for as long as it lasted. I got to see Mrs. McCurdy – our housekeeper - and her children there. But it was short-lived. I stopped going at the age of six when the Sunday school teacher eventually said to one of the older children: “Tell your mother and father, I don’t want any more of the Stubbs children at Sunday School. I’ve taken you off the list because you don’t have regular attendance, and I don’t know when you’re going to turn up. Just tell your parents not to send you anymore. This was from Mr Smith, who lived across the street. He had identical twin sons, Max and Rodney. One day Max told Elizabeth, “Your family is a bunch of atheists.” But Rodney said, “Don’t take any notice of Max. You’re good people and good people don’t have to go to Church.”

By the time I was six there were ten children, and a great deal of work to be done around the house. It was “scrubbing the steps” that drew me away from God and the church, back home to the home-grown spirituality of my mother.

Mum was an expert on Christianity. She had been sent to a missionary boarding school in Chefoo, in northern China in September, 1929. Mum was seven year’s old and her younger brother, David, was five when they began their formal education in Chefoo. It was a twelve day voyage by ship from Hong Kong where they’d lived with their parents since birth. Primary school in particular, left little trace on Mum, she claimed except an eternal love for her teacher, Miss Stark, and the memory of the multiplication tables, and verses from the Bible! Hebrews 11 and Corinthians 13 were learned, verse by
verse, each morning. "Spare time, [at that school], was spent trudging in a crocodile line through the loess dust of the Mule Road, to deliver religious tracts to the Chinese, we never otherwise would have seen. They rode in heavy carts drawn by mules, or pushed great triangular, single-wheeled barrows with live pigs, bound, one on either side of the central partition - wheels running down the standardized wheel track in the road." M. Stubbs (Personal Memoir, 1986, p. 3).

Mum quoted the Bible often, and over the years she’d developed a deep respect for much of the wisdom contained within it. However, the dogma of her organized Presbyterian branch of Christianity eventually cooled any fervour she might have had as a child, and by the time I was growing up she simply didn’t care. She always said she dropped the magic and kept the ethics.

As a family, we maintained a cheerful and friendly relationship with the Reverend Mr. Ernest Brown, minister of our neighbourhood Presbyterian church, who we affectionately referred to as the Rev. Brown. He and his family were patients of my father. Dad would sometimes sit with Mr. Brown at his Columba Manse, or in the sitting room of 49 Wharfe Street, debating the existence of God, good humouredly as I recall. They often talked until 3 am, driving Mrs. Brown crazy apparently. Dad told the Rev. Brown that if he could convince him of the truth of the Adam and Eve story then he would make time to attend Church. It never happened. I think both Mum and Dad evolved into atheists.

Dad never felt he needed God. And "God gets the women no-one else wants," he sometimes said, and Mum repeated this, but quietly. She knew it was cruel and sexist, not to mention irreverent, but the idea amused her anyway.
Dad was patronizing about many things: the church, Christianity, and women among them. He was keenly aware of the high place given to the church, but I think he thought he was above it. He had other more important things to do: practicing medicine, for example, which for him meant attending to patients who required assistance with so many aspects of their lives. For Dad, health wasn’t confined to disease of the body. He treated dis-ease of many kinds. In New Zealand, throughout my childhood, a doctor was second to God, indeed a cut above. New Zealand was parochial and there were no aristocrats living there. That left an opening for doctors.

*Women Come in Three Varieties*

I encountered Plato for the first time through my father, but didn’t recognize him until I met him again in an undergraduate course in university. My father had been influenced by Plato while studying the classics in school. There are three kinds of women he said: wives, mistresses and whores. Five of the six girls in our family fell into the “wives” category, he said and my identity developed in preparation for that role. Beatrice, the ninth child, was according to my father, “mistress material.” Beatrice has her own story to tell of the effect of this statement from which she carved an identity for many years.
Men's Erections Count

Women should not be too highly educated my father said, or no man will ever marry you. A man needs to feel superior to a woman to maintain an erection. If you’re too smart, you restrict your chances. Better to have less education and more access to as wide a pool of potential husbands as possible. I don’t remember him talking about what women needed; from his perspective, women existed to serve men. At the age of 70 my father was asked, “And what are your wife’s interests, Christopher?” Without hesitation he answered, “Why, exactly the same as mine, of course.”

The lessons I learned from these stories were that women’s sexuality was secondary to men’s – men’s erections are what count – and patriarchy depends on a woman playing her part to ensure it gets up and stays there.

Privilege in a Name

Boys were privileged in my family. My father frequently declared that the world was run by men, but, he said, behind every great man was a fine woman. My brothers were all named after Plantagenet kings – Geoffrey, Henry, Warwick, and Richard. Each was given a middle name at birth – all family names – to further invoke the power of “great” men who had preceded them. The girls were given one name only, because my father said, we wouldn’t need more. We would assume our husband’s name. Men needed two given names at least - in the event of their encountering other men with the same given name and surname, the middle name would serve to distinguish them. The message was clear. Female identities were always linked to a man: father, or husband.

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4 The Plantagenets were members of the family founded by Geoffrey of Anjou, and refer to the family of English kings from Henry II to Richard II.
Dining in the Stubbs’ House

Meal times were sacred in our house. They were formal and regular in my early childhood, although like most people, my parents, particularly Dad, mellowed with age, and as the older children gradually departed from home, life relaxed. Although we were all born from the same parents, and shared in many of the same experiences during childhood, the ten of us each came out a little differently. I remember dinner-time especially well, as did anyone who visited us and shared in that ritual.

We ate dinner in the middle of the day in the dining room, where the routinely two-course meal was served on a very grand and elegant, large polished oak table. Dad had been given this table from St. Kevin’s College – the local Catholic boys’ high school in the mid 1950’s. I associate this table with many bodies sitting at it, as my family did for many years.

The dining room table’s dimensions were customarily sixteen feet long and four feet wide. However, using a wind-up crank, the center of the table would open wide to accommodate additional leaves which would extend the table to the full length of the room – approximately twenty-two feet. The table’s legs were a solid six inches in diameter, and were ornately carved.

Hanging from the ceiling was a low slung wrought-iron chandelier shaded with a gossamer-thin curtain of primrose silk. Wainscoting encircled the walls. Two paintings were hung in the room.
Above the gas fireplace was a large painting, *Figure 8*, set in the middle ages, the image of which is vividly imprinted in my mind from years spent in studied silence in that room where I spoke so little. Two men, dressed in britches, are playing chess in the picture, one sits in obvious discomfort searching for a way to avoid a check mate while his opponent stands, smoking a pipe, warming himself in front of the open fireplace, looking smugly satisfied.
The other painting, seen in Figure 9, was an ornately framed print of the
"Laughing Cavalier" by Frans Hals (1624).

Figure 9. The Laughing Cavalier by Frans Hals (1624)

There was a single feminine touch provided by my mother. In the center of the
\n\ntable she would often place a low-sided square bowl, edged in gold-plate, and filled with
\nmarigolds, picked from her garden. They lay like lilies in a pond.

My father sat at the head of the table, closest to the door. Behind him, as if to
\n\naugment his authority as the head of the household, were four tall, darkly stained oak
\nbook shelves with glass windows that slid into the shelf above when opened. The books
were mostly leather or linen-bound and comprised mainly the "classics"\textsuperscript{5} and a voluminous set of Encyclopaedia Britannica. Sitting on top of the shelves were three items: a large globe, a decanter of sherry and a small set containing a decanter of port and several glasses poised on a tray.

My four brothers sat to my father's left, seated from the oldest to the youngest, at the very end. On my mother's right was a tall, antique, darkly stained oak high chair in which sat a baby. My mother sat opposite my father, with her back to the large, glass, wooden-framed french doors that opened onto slate steps descending into the back garden. To her left, sat the girls, filed neatly from the youngest immediately beside her, to the oldest girl seated next to my father.

My father's role during mealtimes, and this reflected his role in many aspects of our family life, was to provide a model of discipline and order, and to carve the meat. Before him lay the utensils required for that task – carving fork, steel, and two knives, blade-side facing inwards – laid on pewter carving rests. My mother's role was to serve the vegetables and to keep the baby and younger children quiet. The older children engaged in what were in my memory high-brow conversations about politics, science, literature, and school. As the eighth child of this brood, I was assigned to a position close to my mother. When my father was present, I said little, and sometimes listened, a reflection of the restraint I had learned to exercise as a member of this family. My recollection is mostly of excitedly waiting, anticipating the arrival of my plate, filled with

\textsuperscript{5} My father, who completed secondary school at Waitaki Boys' High School in Oamaru, New Zealand, in 1939, undertook a curriculum which included Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Latin, French, and a survey of English Literature from \textit{Beowolf} to Yeats. The classics have historically been the domain of the polished English gentleman, according to Kim Tolley in \textit{Science for Ladies, Classics for Gentlemen: A comparative Analysis of scientific Subjects in the Curricula of Boys' and Girls' Secondary Schools in the United States, 1794-1850}. 
delicious food that I then joyfully devoured. Much of the conversation was beyond my comprehension. Silences were my opportunity to ask a question which was customarily my way of gaining attention from Him. When my father left the room, the mood shifted; formality rose from the table and departed out of the door with him, leaving a collection of children to continue without the regulatory hand of an autocratic father, and in his place, thankfully, a benign and placid mother.

Meal times in the Stubbs house exemplified the tensions that exist between the dichotomies of private/public, female/male and mind/body. The role of my father at the dining table was one of the father/king ruling over his family – the patriarch. Historically patriarchy rested on the analogy, originating in Christianity, from Sir Robert Filmers' *Patriarcha* (1680),

[The] doctrine of patriarchal sovereignty, royal power is derived from divine power via Adam....The king is the father over his kingdom; Adam was father over nature and humanity; God is father over man. Patriarchy thus comes before the authority of law and is the source of all rights and obligations. Authority is thus transubstantiated through the body of kings just as it is transubstantiated through the body of fathers (Turner, 1984, p. 40).

My father, the patriarch, ruled from the head of the table. His wife and progeny sat before him. Their placement was deliberate and significant.

The order is clear. The boys sat separated from the girls, with the exception of the baby - in this case a girl - who sat on the boys’ side of the table. However, the baby was ranked according to age, and was thus positioned close to my mother. As an infant she
barely counted as a girl, for the process of female embodiment has only just begun.

There was a hierarchy of age; the older children sat closer to the patriarch with whom they engaged in conversation. All of the boys were addressed frequently, and each one was expected to be an active participant in the conversation. They often competed with each other. Margaret, the oldest girl, who sat on my father’s right, did very well academically and later, tied as dux\(^6\) of school in her final year of secondary school.

Margaret, the second born child, seems to fit more into the boy camp than the girl. She competed fiercely, but quietly for my father’s approval by devoting herself to her schoolwork and reading. Despite diligent efforts, Elizabeth didn’t do well in school — family myth attributed her performance in school to a brain injury incurred when she was three. Margaret accidentally released hold of the pram in which Elizabeth sat, down George Street in the famously hilly city of Dunedin. The point was that Elizabeth didn’t have to compete because she couldn’t, and we accepted it. If Dad was disappointed, I was unaware of it. He seemed to accept Elizabeth without reservation and because she was female, he believed that in all likelihood, she would marry and be taken care of by her husband. Elizabeth was very nurturing of all of the younger children, especially me. She was a friend and mother in one. The smaller children spoke only when addressed directly, although irrepressible mutterings did escape from time to time.

The architecture of the large, solid polished, oak table contributes to an air of cultured masculinity, broken, but complemented with the bowl of flowers, “naturally” picked from the garden, and placed in the center of the table. The paintings too, in the depiction of their subjects, reveal men, from a distant time and of a privileged class. *The Laughing Cavalier* is dressed in his finery, cheerful, happy, and richly clothed. In the

\(^{6}\) "Dux" is the Latin term used to designate the highest ranking academic pupil.
painting of the two men playing chess, masculine culture and class are also represented. They play in an opulently furnished room, and are engaged in a game based on the public act of war which, until recently, was an activity engaged in by my men only. The painting also incorporates the notion of competition in which the loser maintains a physical composure that reflects the values of his culture – maintaining a stiff upper lip despite defeat. My mother, the reproductive center of the family, serves and maintains the peace at one end of the table which paves the way for the more important and more highly valued activity of conversation, dealing with subjects pertaining to the external patriarchal world which was the domain of men. It was also the father’s responsibility to ensure the reproduction of future patriarchs, and to inculcate that ideology in the minds of his young.

Money

Dad worked outside of the home and earned a good income that he controlled and dispensed as he saw fit. He oversaw the management of the family finances, including income tax, property taxes, house maintenance, car purchases and upkeep, school fees, paying the housekeeper, clothing, the planning and execution of holidays, the control and allocation of children’s allowances, and entertainment. Dad oversaw the purchases of all household items broken, worn out, or needing replacement. These were mostly physically purchased by him directly from the vendor, or on occasion he arranged to have them delivered to the house. He bought toilet paper and sanitary napkins in enormous boxes like refrigerators come in today. Those boxes were stored under the stairs in the Wharfe Street house. He held accounts with many stores in town so that we could
“charge” our purchases to those accounts as we became old enough to do our own shopping. He paid all bills, except the grocery account, which Mum paid with cash given to her by Dad, on a weekly basis. We all received a personal allowance (“pocket money”) in our house. We did not have separate bank accounts until we were older; I opened my first when I was 17. Dad was both our bank and banker. We didn’t need accounts elsewhere. He kept immaculate records in little black notebooks, clearly labeled and filed neatly in his surgery which was his office. Only Mum received her personal allowance in cash regularly: $5 per week for as long as I can remember. She never complained, and would save it, stashing it in the top drawer of her bedroom dresser. I knew this because I, and perhaps other children too, loved to go through both her and Dad’s drawers, and closets on a regular basis. When Dad was working at the hospital or making house-calls to patients, I would sometimes secretly enter the surgery, basking in the private and public worlds represented there; in this space where my father spent hours seeing patients, writing up medical notes, preparing lectures and preparing bills for his patients. His records were tended with meticulous attention to precision and neatness. I left no drawer or cupboard unexplored. His drawers were ordered and labeled. Everything had its precise place. The surgery was museum-like in its orderliness.

Every two months we children were called in, one at a time, to the surgery when Dad would calculate and enter the two months’ accumulation of pocket money and report the current balance. If I wished to withdraw money, I did so on the occasion of the two-monthly visit only. At that time I would declare what I wished to buy, and state the cost. I would be given exact change, and Dad would record the withdrawal in my presence.
My father controlled and oversaw the running of his household. He managed our family’s public presence, and in as much as he was able to, the private as well. Perhaps because his medical practice was run from the home, and because Mum did not drive, his sphere of influence extended into all aspects of our family life. In those days in Oamaru the private and the public were indistinguishable.

*Who Was My Mother?*

*Figure 10. Mary W. Stubbs. Photograph taken by her daughter, Helen Rinaldi, 2001.*
Flashback

“You’re my best work”
she would say
to me
and each of the other nine
And I felt special then

trained in unselfishness by her boarding school,
any selfishness squeezed out
christian ethics hammered in
and then hammered in some more

“self first, self last, anymore to come, self again” she said

when stretched too far
so many children to tend
and too much to do
    repeated ironically over and over
    to her, and to us - - - molding young bodies

how did she do it?
seven children born
with her husband still a student
and then three more
“For years I felt unfit for the world of adults” she said

I find that hard to believe

always so adept with words
played them like marbles
words rolling off her tongue
spilling out, in straight lines
aim, fire, bull’s eye!

words not usually intended to hurt
sharp witty, mindful
designed to teach
to make me think

odd how only once I saw you cry
when Grandpa died
always wondered why
Did I cry for you?
in the too large and poorly planned kitchen
my mother and I work

side by side

WELL DESIGNED KITCHENS NEED “TRIANGLES” the expert designers say:

fridge                     stove
                    sink

d this grand old house of Stubbs, romantic flight of fancy
celebrating exodus of children
stove and sink in one room, fridge in another
Mum loves to cook chinese food and does it well
better than most chinese restaurants
I ever ate at in God’s Own country

words chortling back and forth
while gathering ingredients for our feast
the meat, defrosting during the day waited
blood filled ..........................
you pick it up to walk it from the sink to the stove
spilling happily as you go
blood drop drop dripping trailing
just as Dad walks in
suddenly flaring
words spitting, “For God’s sake woman”

Mum stops,
she’s a midnight cat under the seering spotlight
I too stop, to witness

calling up years passed – a child’s memory
I’ve seen this before
her eyes look down, avoiding his harsh words
and others that give chase
watching myself in her
I, fresh from a marriage, short-lived
intense enough for a life-time
motionless she stands,
warrior shield emerging from no-where
dropping down – a force field of protection
“You can’t touch me”, I imagine she says–
she waits it out….all of 15 seconds

she doesn’t speak
she doesn’t run
she stands, unable to respond
she dies for a moment

abruptly my father turns
he leaves
the force field lifts
and she resumes
her preparations to serve

this event I translate into the fine print of adulthood

Jean Stubbs  July 2005

Mother Knows Best

My mother whose photograph appears in Figure 10, graduated with a B.A. from
the University of Toronto in 1944. Soon after that she completed a diploma in Education
at Murray House in Edinburgh. Despite these quite remarkable educational
accomplishments, achieved at a time when few women completed university degrees, she
never worked outside the home. Her life was largely confined to a life centred on the
body. She (re)produced 10 children whose bodies she fed, groomed and nurtured; she
beautified her own body, and in so many ways assumed responsibility for the
maintenance of her husband’s body. My mother’s political sense developed early. For
the first eight years of her life, she played only with boys. At the age of five she told her
best friend, Ross Robertson, that her most fervent desire was to be a boy. Trapped in a
female body, she knew then, there was more freedom to be got in a male body. Ross,
also aged five, kindly reassured her, “Never mind, when you’re eight you’ll turn into a boy”. By the time she was eight, my mother remained female, and so she proposed marriage to Ross. “No”, he replied, “I’m not going to do that because I’m going to keep a sweet shop with Dudley Passmore.” Foiled again. Even at eight years of age, mother’s life goal was to be a boy. If she couldn’t have that, the next best thing was marriage. And what did Ross Robertson want? He wanted to run a business.

Running the Ship

In the beginning, Mum said, a new baby arrived every 18 months. All ten children were breast fed for at least 18 months, by which time Mum was pregnant again. The three boys: Henry, Warwick, and Richard were born one after another. In retrospect, that was a lethal combination. My life would have been very different had the girls been interspersed between each of the boys. Eight years separated me and Elizabeth. When she left Oamaru to undergo nursing training in Dunedin (80 miles south of Oamaru) at the age of 18, I was 10, and necessity promoted me to the position of chief housekeeper on weekends that had been hitherto maintained by her. My weekend duties included vacuuming the entire downstairs. I dry-mopped and polished the wood floors, dusted furniture and shelves, and cleaned the surgery toilet and adjoining bathroom. Despite Helen being the next girl in line after Elizabeth left, I was a meticulous cleaner, and because I was particularly connected to my mother, perhaps I sensed her need and wanted to please and help her. Helen vacuumed and dusted upstairs, and cleaned the bathroom and toilet.
When I complained that the duties were distributed unevenly, Mum responded calmly and matter-of-factly: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.” In other words, Helen is not as thorough as you at cleaning, so you can do more.

The routine of our childhood home was run with mechanical precision. Our house was run like a ship and Dad was at the helm. We didn’t call him Captain, but my mother sometimes referred to him as “the master”, and in my teenager years, “himself”. She spoke the words kindly, yet there was an undercurrent of irreverence. Mum was Dad’s lieutenant, and the children followed rank all the way down to the youngest. When Dad was under particular pressure, Mum would take us aside, to explain and justify Dad’s mood and behaviour, encouraging and showing us that tolerance was necessary, indeed essential, to survive the demanding schedule of Dad’s essentially full-time private practice and part-time position as specialist internist\footnote{The term, internist, denotes a specialist in internal medicine in Canada, while in New Zealand and England, the term physician is used.} at the Oamaru hospital. Mum’s boarding school training in unselfishness where Christian ethics were hammered into her prepared her well to raise 10 children. While Dad did raise his voice, Mum did so rarely.

Generally speaking, apart from the laying of the table for meals, washing dishes, and the daily tasks of sweeping paths, scrubbing the wooden steps, and the polishing of the brass, the boys worked outside in the garden, while the girls worked inside cleaning.

The first official job I was responsible for on a daily basis, besides making my own bed, was scrubbing the steps. There were three steps of untreated kauri – a wood native to New Zealand – at the entrances to the back door, the wash house, and the front door. Everyday these were scrubbed with sand-soap and a scrubbing brush, large in contrast to my small eight-year-old hand. The task required that I fill and carry a blue-
rimmed, white enamel basin of warm water to the out side of the steps. First, I sloshed water over the kauri, then wet the bristles of the brush in the basin before sweeping the gritty sand soap over the brush, so I could then proceed to scrub the soap into the wood, back and forth, back and forth, creating a wonderful lather. I finished the job by removing the soap with a wet cloth rinsed in the basin of water, leaving a wet surface which when dry, gleamed grayish-white. Such before-school jobs were assigned according to age, and they too marked our position in the ranks of the Stubbs. When I was nine, I moved up to sweeping a path, the back the first year, and the front, the second. What bothered me most with that job was the wind. It was a forceful opponent. Oamaru had a lot of wind, so I frequently had to compete with it to clear the paths of leaves, twigs, dirt and miscellaneous gubbins.

Chewing gum was never found on our paths, only on the street, though it never stayed there for long. Gum was forbidden in our house, and was therefore a coveted treat. The only gum I ever ate was recycled. What we couldn’t buy, we simply picked off the street, removing any loose gravel prior to putting it into our mouths. If we were caught chewing, my mother would simply put out her, palm upwards and say, “Spit it out.” Reluctantly, we’d remove the gum which was immediately tossed into the coal incinerator, partner to our electric oven. As hobos search the ground for cigarette butts today, I kept a keen look out for discarded chewing gum.

The last job I ever had in Oamaru was the polishing of the brass. There were brass light switches in the kitchen, surgery, waiting room, and at the front gate the letters 49 designating our house on Wharfe Street, and the two “brass plates” bearing Dad’s name, his credentials, and his surgery hours:
There was so much work required to maintain a house that was always open to the public that boys and girls assisted in much of it on a daily basis. But when it came to cleaning toilets, washing clothes, and cleaning furniture – that was girl’s work. The boys gardened, mended punctured bicycle tires, and repaired broken contraptions of one sort and another.

*Actually what happened was that the man worked,*

*and the woman kept the house. This meant that I had free range. He earned a good income and I was brought up by the missions. The woman holds things together. Remember, we were living in our time. Your father looked after us in the same way that he looked after his troops in the war. He looked after his squadron morally and physically.*

Mary Stubbs (2004)
Mother's Escape

Our household rituals revolved around my father's ideas of how a family could work. My mother's job was to serve him, and I too learned to serve. She accepted the role and rarely intervened. In the early years of their lives together, Mum took care of cleaning the house, entertaining, and supervising the children, delegating the work to be done about the house to our housekeeper and the children, procuring and preparing the meals, greeting, entertaining, and listening to patients eager to see their precious doctor, and generally ensuring that Dad's demands were met. She accepted her husband and supported him in all that he envisioned. If she didn't agree, she mostly kept quiet. If she did disagree, her dissension and quiet protests were directed to our housekeepers, respectively Mrs. Hotton, and Mrs. McCurdy, both of whom became her confidantes during the period each worked for us, and occasionally to one or other of her children. If there was no-one to talk to, she boxed on or went to bed. Mum remembered one evening watching Dad sit several of us down - all under the age of 10, she said, and observing the "poor soggy children, listening, eyes glazed, to an erudite monologue on the properties of Mars." Mum went to bed.

Sexuality and Secret Visitors

The day Elizabeth told me how babies were made was just before Mum announced that a young Catholic woman was coming to stay for a few months. An "unfortunate" young woman, my mother said, from the north island who was unmarried and pregnant. Her doctor had known Dad from student days and had contacted him to see if he could find a suitable place for her to retreat to, where she would not be known, and where her pregnancy could remain a secret from her own community.
Her arrival was fascinating to me. What would this “unfortunate” woman be like? Annette arrived slender and over the next six months grew big with her child. She left six months later, not quite slender again but heading that way. Mum was excited because she thought she’d get some additional help in the house, but she was disappointed. Annette helped, but we children liked her so much that we downed our tools and sat talking with her whenever we had a chance. I plied Annette with uninhibited questions and she answered every one. Did she love the father of her baby? Where was he now? Why couldn’t he marry her and they raise the baby together? One day I woke to learn Annette had gone to the hospital, alone, as my mother had many times before her. She returned, a few days later, briefly, without a baby, then disappeared forever from my life to return to her world up north. The baby was “adopted out.” The north island was as remote to me and at that time for Annette, as Australia. It was overseas after all – Cook Strait separates the north and south islands of New Zealand.

I learned most of what I knew about sex from Elizabeth because we shared a bedroom for a few years. We slept in bunk beds and often lay on or in our beds talking. She was a tomboy like me. When Elizabeth left Oamaru, I got my own bedroom for the first time. I was nine years’ old. Elizabeth divulged the details of sexual intercourse to me when I was seven, and I didn’t believe her. How could anyone do such a strange thing – the genitals were organs used to pass urine and excrement from the body. When she told me about sex for the first time, I imagined babies growing out of urine deposits inside a girl’s vagina.

Elizabeth was a virgin when she married Allan Gorton, and I was eleven years old. All good girls remained virgins until they married, and Elizabeth was good. I don’t
remember ever hearing the words directly, but I believed that were I ever to become pregnant before marriage, I would be thrown out of the house and disowned by my father. My mother was silent on the issue, and so I thought she would, as she did in most aspects of her life, agree with my father.

In My Parents' Bedroom

My father was particularly protective of his bedroom. That was a private and sacred room where he had his wife to himself. My mother, who was raised by Chinese servants had spent a lot of time in her own parents’ bed. She didn’t mind who entered her bedroom, or who made her bed, as long as it wasn’t her. When I was a teenager, my father didn’t like anyone, except my mother, to clean that room. Mum was too tired to care. She often sent me up to vacuum and dust it. I sensed it was a sacred space which made it even more enticing and interesting.

On sunny days, this spacious, minimally, and tastefully furnished room sparkled with bright light. Two large mirrors refracted that light which danced for me. Even more pronounced in my memory was this room at dusk and nightfall, when outside the sea spread out to meet the sky in endless possibility. Inside, the lamp on my father’s large dressing table spilled sensuous red light into the room. Whenever I listened to my father reading from Burton’s translation of The Thousand and One Nights, and of the beautiful and clever Scheherazade, I thought of that bedroom. I was sure that Scheherazade created and told her stories in such a room, glowing with red light. It was a bedroom designed for love and adventure and the décor was overseen by my father. He had very definite ideas, and they were never pedestrian. The eiderdown was red and gold.
I can still feel my heart sinking when your father picked
that carpet with the roses in golds and blacks.

Mary Stubbs (2003)

Mum never wanted to make a fuss, so although she didn’t always like what Dad chose, she never said a word, to him.

“New” Clothes – A Child’s Voice Inside My Father’s House

Two times a year, at the beginning of Spring and again at the beginning of autumn, we girls gathered in Mum and Dad’s bedroom when Mum opened up the ottoman filled with clothes. In the event of a fire, Mum had instructed all of us to tell the firemen to take the ottoman out first. The smell of moth balls escaped as the seat was lifted. I liked that smell. These clothes were passed down through the line of Stubbs children. We were well known in the town because our family was so big, and because my father was a doctor and one of only two internists in Oamaru. We were not Catholics, although people assumed that we were. I loved this ritual when we all gathered to receive “new” clothes. Exchanging the clothes that I had worn for six months was exciting because I got to wear different clothes. I had fewer dresses than I would have liked. None of the girls wore trousers and I had to wait till I was ten to get my first pair; they were hand-me-downs from my cousin, Hugh. I remember having my eye on some

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8 The piece of furniture which I grew up knowing as the “ottoman” was a chaise longue whose seat was hinged at the back, and when raised revealed a large hollow coffin-like inside which in this case was filled with clothing.
particular dress or top, eager for the time to arrive when it would fit me. Suddenly it
would only be a teeny bit big, so I got it. I felt so piquant.

The girls got one brand new dress every year. These dresses were always bought from “Kiddy Corner,” a children’s clothing store on Thames Street, one mile’s walk from our house. We walked down into the town with Mum to go shopping. Joyce, who was still a baby would be in the push chair. This push chair looked pretty worn out – I knew no family with a push chair older than ours. Our family didn’t set trends in the pram department either. Miss Hodson, the owner/proprietor of the store, liked to see us all and made a great fuss over each of us. This was the only time I ever shopped with my mother. She didn’t go out much.

My mother described a period of fifteen years of her life raising children, when she rarely left the house, except to take a three week holiday to Lake Tekapo where we had a summer property, or to go to the local corner shop. Most people I knew in New Zealand called summer properties their “crib” or “batch”, but in our family, it was called the “cottage.” It sounds more high brow. This had also been my grandparents’ property, and was purchased by my father when I was very young.

Those days in New Zealand, milk was delivered daily, in bottles, to the gate. We had a steel crate to carry twelve pint-bottles. We drank twelve pints of milk most days, and every few days a half pint of cream. We would argue over who got the “top” milk from the bottle. If Mum was on the ball, she’d skim it off and keep it in a separate jug, then use it in her coffee. While in primary school, we children picked up the bread from the local dairy (a dairy is what New Zealanders call a corner store) where my mother had a standing order. In addition, both the local grocer and butcher delivered purchases,
ordered by telephone on a weekly basis. My mother was needed at the house to answer the phone, to receive and entertain patients, and to manage the household. Her children became her legs for many years. Mum never drove a car on account of being half blind in her left eye.9

Allusion in Stories

My mother was also a storyteller. When my husband Alex and I moved to East Vancouver in 1993 with our three children, I felt as if I were moving to a foreign land. I had always lived on the west side of the city, close to beaches, parks, pretty shops and inhabited mostly by middle class people. I felt safe in the security of familiarity. Writing to my mother of our imminent shift across to the less wealthy side of the city, my descriptions must have suggested I was moving to a red-light district where prostitutes and drug addicts lived, worked, and died. I was. My mother replied, cautioning me not to make hasty judgments. Then she recounted a story about a young woman who had been raised into wealth. That woman met, fell in love, and married a young army officer.

Because his income was small, her family had offered to top it up to enable them to live in a wealthier part of the city. The young bride turned down the offer saying she must live as her husband could afford. In their new home, in a poorer neighbourhood, the young woman sought and found friendship within her community and together she and her husband built a satisfying, happy life together there. That young man went on to become a general in the army. His name was Julius Caesar. Such romantic stories are

9 During my mother’s birth, which her father – also a doctor – had assisted in, she sustained an injury that left her hemianopic.
powerful in imparting values. Here, a young woman accepts her husband's position and income and takes pride in making the most of it. Although she could have accessed family money, she did not. She was determined to manage without assistance. She was the fine woman who stood behind a very great man. The allusion of Julius Caesar links me to him and to his greatness, in the same way that the art work on our dining room walls created the ambience and expectation of being part of an upper middle class world.

My mother was complicit in the values imparted to me and to my sisters. This was one story told to me, and I have remembered it. The message was clear: stand by your man, make the most of the situation, and you too may grow to become the wife of a “great” man.

The Boys

I was the eighth child born after Helen, whose birth had come after a succession of three boys, Henry, Warwick and Richard. The boys presented a guard of males, and my father looked to them and Geoffrey, the eldest, to continue the male role. Richard, the youngest son, was only three years my senior, yet that age difference created a particular circumstance that affected me. Our worlds operated quite separately. Each of the Stubbs children attended the local co-educational primary school, Oamaru South School, until the age of 10, except Geoffrey, who attended his junior high school at Weston, a small rural community south of Oamaru. The five older children moved up to the single sexed high schools: Waitaki Girls’ or Waitaki Boys’ High School when each was 11 years old. By the time Richard was ready to enter Form 1, an Intermediate school had opened and the remaining five children attended that school for two years. I entered
Form 3 at Waitaki Girls’ High School at the age of 13 and remained in a girls only school for the remainder of my high school education.

I had little contact with the boys and was keenly aware of their roles as older brothers. They inherited the male authority to discipline and guide us, and any infractions were reported to our parents. We were not equals in any way. I was weary of them. I didn’t know them, nor did I trust them. They rarely spoke to me other than to bark commands, to reprimand, or to assist in the organization required for the smooth operation of our large household. The “playroom” or “palace” as it came to be called tells some of this story.

At the bottom of the quarter acre section of the property at 49 Wharfe Street was a room sixteen metres long and four metres wide. This had been my grandfather’s work shed, but Henry, who was seven years older than me, converted it into a large bedroom when he was 12. There was a brass knocker on the door, and we were instructed to knock and wait at the door for him to answer. I went there only to call him for meals. When Henry left school and Oamaru, to attend university in Wellington, Warwick and Richard moved into the “Palace”. I was nine. Henry’s rules continued to apply. It was the “boys’” domain. The boys only entered the house to toilet, bathe and eat, or to talk with Mum and Dad. I was only occasionally allowed to enter their space. I remember one occasion when Warwick and I encountered each other upstairs in the house. For some reason I was angry with him and in a burst of either uncontrollable rage, or courage, I began to say, “Go get f....jumped on.” It turned out to be a mistake I would never make again. Warwick leapt at me, flattened me to the floor and punched me as I had never experienced before. My cries of protest quickly faded when my wails fell on deaf ears.
No-one heard and I never told. He was older, and he was male, and I was powerless to do anything but accept his dominance.

My brothers were groomed to lead and control and we girls were groomed to follow and serve. Had my arrival in the Stubbs family been followed by brothers and not sisters perhaps I would have had more contact with males. As it was, Helen’s birth preceded mine, and Beatrice and Joyce’s followed. I had virtually no one-on-one contact with any of my brothers, and certainly never knew them as I knew my younger sisters. Margaret was eight years older, and during the time she lived at home with me, I do not remember her presence as being significant in my life. She studied and read, and then departed for university. Elizabeth made herself part of my life by sharing a room with me, and even after leaving home, she returned frequently and continued to nurture me by confiding in me about her world and by taking an interest in mine. She talked to me about her life, her interests and concerns, and we spent time walking together.

It is interesting to me that so few memories remain of intimate contact with my brothers, yet many endure of conversations and activities with my mother, Elizabeth, Helen, and my two younger sisters. Later, when we moved to Nelson my brother Henry flew from Wellington on a weekend’s visit. He came to my bedroom and we talked for over an hour. He had asked me what I enjoyed in school. I described an Art History course I was taking and remember how odd it had seemed, to be asked what I cared about at all, and by a brother.

My best friend, Rebecca Westoby, who lived across the street at number 46 Wharfe Street had two brothers who I knew better than my own. I spent most of my spare time at her house watching television, playing and listening to music and “hanging
out”. In their home the parents, the children, and friends of both spent time together in the same room engaging with one another, while in ours my parents worked, and my brothers functioned as either indifferent overseers or vigorous whistle-blowers.

My Voice: Not Good Enough

"Your father was gold medalist of his graduating year in Medical School," my mother said. "We had seven children at that time."

Mary Stubbs

"In my seventh form year we memorized all of English literature from Beowolf to Charles Dickens," boasted my father.

"So you have to write a speech – come along then, let's write it."

"No, no, no, that won't do. Now let me think – how about..."

Christopher Stubbs

My father wrote my speech for the Third Form Speech Competition. We rehearsed the delivery of it together – that was one of the few memories I have of being a teenager when my father spent time with me alone, when he was focused on me. I was awarded first prize for reciting my father’s speech. I’d never received an academic prize before. The only prize I might have received, had there been one for such an accomplishment,
would have been for the child who got the strap the most times in Standard two – the year that I was nine years old. Everyone said I was the teacher’s pet.

When we tell a lie, we live it too. I lied when I said my father’s speech. I wasn’t proud that he’d written it, but it was such a good speech. I could never have written a speech like it. It was full of literary allusions, broad-ranging details, and clever humour. I wished I’d written it. Margaret Chisholm received second prize. Her speech was good too. I wondered if she had written her own speech, or if her father had written it for her. I wondered silently. I couldn’t ask. I was ashamed, yet I was proud. After all, the saying of the speech was important too – I said the speech – but still the speech was a lie.

I never won another speech competition. I never could measure up. My father was the best writer. He gave speeches in public often; I heard how he was applauded. I was so proud of him. And that was good ... except that I felt I could never measure up. The evening my father wrote my speech was the night I learned my voice was not good enough.

An End to Stories

The writing of this thesis began with stories and I think it must end with them too. My attempts to articulate the significance of the stories lead me into more stories. The layers deepen. And yet I must contain them. As I undress one story, another emerges, and I wonder how I can ever stop. I’m lead to ethical questions of what I can speak of and what I cannot? Which stories are my stories and which belong to others? Memory is recursive and again and again I find myself returning to the constraints imposed on me by males. Although my mother obeyed my father in most ways, she side-stepped him in
others. She provided outriders that gave me the opportunity to move outside and away from the patriarchal, gendered world of my family. Despite Dad’s distaste for music, Mum found a way to it, at night when she occasionally had an hour to herself, with children in bed and Dad busy in his surgery. Referring to my father as “himself”, and to her clothes as her “uniform”, were among the ways she drew attention to the demands he made on all of us, and to the control he seemed to need, and with a chuckle we rode out of that world.
CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

What do my autobiographical narratives achieve? What do they contribute to the field of education? Who do they educate? My narratives, constructed from personal memories of family rituals, reveal an underlying pedagogy that contributes to efforts initiated thirty years ago to write in ways that challenge research methods of the past. As a woman writing at the beginning of the twenty-first century I am using a research methodology that permits me, the subject, to find and present my own voice within an academic culture. My work takes a feminist standpoint, writing from the perspective of my experience as a female, whose identity was shaped by a gender based division of labour and culture that has excluded women from the public sphere (Denzin, 1997, pp. 55-56). These narratives of self contribute to the gendered knowledge of the world, by adding my own experience to the many-voiced polyglot of postmodernism.

Writing about my family and my experiences of living has been an act of undressing and removing the complex layers of experience that formed my embodiment. The Stubbs family was pervasively hierarchical: males above females, adults above children, mind over body and public over private. These polarities were enforced in me through the institutions of my family that were both ritual and patriarchy.

Bodies and the language spoken by them and within them can be viewed as a kind of evidence of the process of evolution in which an organism slowly develops from a simple to a more complex form. Such evolutionary ideas of growth and development came to shape much of the late nineteenth century thinking about the construction of childhood.
In biological terms, growth marks a progression through different stages of development. Children's behaviour and language also carry evidence of the human past with its distant and lost processes of acculturation (Steedman, 1994, p. 85). Such development was seen as an historical phenomenon, in which the child of the species came under investigation. A child psychology was partly constructed in the expectation that cultural and historical evidence was enclosed within the child's body and mind, and could be retrieved and used to trace its development. Historically, women have been positioned as bodies that reproduce, and regulate more bodies within the private sphere, while men were positioned within the realm of the mind within the public sphere. This has created a female body that must be "defined, directed, and controlled through the application of disembodied, objective, masculine knowledge" (Budgeon, 2003, p. 37). My research lead me to engage and deconstruct this paradigm and in the process I have come to understand the impact it has had on my life, and I think on the lives of many other women. The autobiographical stories I generated became the data for my inquiry in gendering the body, and from the male interpretive structure imposed by my family, I was able through writing to claim a sense of agency, and meaning as my own subject. Writing stories enabled me to re-produce myself.

Stories are powerful. In the stories I read, was told, or experienced, I heard what D. H. Lawrence described as "the low calling cries of the characters, as they wander[ed] in the dark woods of their destin[ies]" (cited in Burns, 1982, p. v). Stories linger as memories that tell us both how to live and not to live our lives. The lessons embedded in them become road maps that our bodies hold; they become part of the foundation that helps and guides us as we create our own lives. My memories are held within my stories.
For a variety of reasons they caressed my body and mind and became a part of me. My parents told stories, listened to stories, and lived in and with stories. Those that resonated for me were ones told repeatedly, in the course of our ordinary lives, at times of change, on special occasions, or extraordinary times of my own or other family member’s traumas.

As I reflect on the writing of my thesis, I now understand the deeper meaning of the ways I was shaped as female, and how my position as the eighth child contributed to my understanding of my role in the lives of men. My mother’s role, for example, was to serve her husband first, her family second, and herself last.

My father’s voice was commanding and unwavering in its purpose. His work came first, his wife and sons second, followed by his daughters, and oddly, as a man, perhaps he too placed himself last. He looked after his family in the same way that he looked after his troops in War World II, by taking care of his squadron morally and physically, as a collective unit. During the 1940’s and 1950’s Mum said, “What every woman knew was how to manage a man.” In my parents’ case, each was responsible for their own emotional well-being, and they assumed that moral and physical care would automatically include the emotional. It didn’t always.

I was surprised when I noticed that my brothers who are largely absent from my stories except as guards asserting the male primacy dictated by my father, were foreign to me. They played a supervisory role in my childhood, and because of the gendered rituals instated by my father, and condoned by my mother in her performing of them, I didn’t know my brothers. I learned to fear and to submit to them. I did not learn to interact with them as equals or as friends - my adult life has taught me that. As the eighth child born
after Helen, whose birth had come at the end of a succession of three boys - Henry, Warwick and Richard - above me was a solid line of males. The boys' withdrawal to the room at the bottom of the garden illuminates the segregation of gender that existed in my family.

The process of writing myself into this narrative has not always been easy. The discovery of autobiographical narrative as inquiry came to me as a surprise, when I wrote my first story while taking the course work that marked the beginning of my M.A. program. In writing about gender, ritual and my family I have found my own voice. Amidst the external voices of my parents and the structures of academic writing, I have claimed, and am still reclaiming a sense of personal authority and authorship. Autobiographical narrative research has given me a form to bridge the gap between academic and personal writing. At the beginning of my thesis I was instructed to start with a review of the literature surrounding autobiographical narrative inquiry, gender, education and childhood history. I moved very slowly, and often felt stuck. I felt overwhelmed by many of the academic voices I was researching, who seemed to articulate so well what I too wanted to say. So often the published voices seemed to say it all; what could I add I wondered? I was searching for other voices to authenticate my own, and that sometimes frightened me and stopped me from moving forward. External voices seemed to bear more weight. In placing myself alongside those voices, I was forced to interact with them, to enter into a dialogue with them. At times their presence caused me to feel intimidated and lead me to retreat to silence again. Yet through my readings, another part of me recognized echoes of my own discoveries, my own processes, and that encouraged me to continue to write and to draw my own conclusions.
To speak one's stories is one thing, to write them is quite another. The process of writing forced me to become a watchdog of cultural values. Autobiographical narrative gave me the opportunity to become the researcher/writer researching myself. Telling stories is a faster process. In telling a story it is easier to be a spectator to events. Writing pushes you into a dialogue with the plot; you become not only a spectator, but also a reflexive participant. By writing myself into the narratives I had to interact with them, and could not suppress my own voice. In retrospect, I understand that in the process of untangling my voice from within my family, I needed to untangle it from what I was reading as well.

My writing stopped for a year when it was discovered that an ovarian cyst was growing on the right side of my body. The cyst grew to be 13 x 11 centimeters, and I eventually had it surgically removed. Christiane Northrup, a wholistic physician says,

We women are meant to express our creative natures throughout our lives. Our creations will change and evolve as we ourselves grow and develop. Our ovaries, too, are always changing, forming, and reabsorbing those small physiological cysts. As long as we express the creative flow deep within us, our ovaries remain normal. When our creative energy is blocked in some way, abnormally large cysts may occur and persist. Energy blockages that create ovarian cysts may result from stress. Such stress is not necessarily negative....The left side of the body represents the female, artistic, reflective side, while the right side is the more analytic, male side. And amazingly, these differences are reflected in the differing connections of each ovary in the brain. Each
woman will have to decide for herself what this means (Northrup, 1994, p. 217).

During this process, I wondered about my writing. What did I need to do to keep it moving forward? I believe I needed to become more analytical by getting clearer about the value of my narratives and I needed to express my own voice; I couldn’t depend on others to do it for me. And perhaps I needed to walk away from my writing in order to return to it. I was too close to the academic voices of others, and by putting them aside for a year, I could incubate myself from them, giving me time to mull over and develop my own ideas. Doing so freed me to come back, fresh, and changed by the surgery, six weeks off my regular job, and a year away from the university.

Through my writing and research, I have now come to realize the power of the early voices in childhood and understand how much work I have been doing to free those voices. My sense of self was so tied up with my father’s voice. Why was my mother’s voice so quiet – present, but as gentle as a running brook? I believe it was because I identified with her. She allowed me my individuality; she did not insist on domination or control; my father did. Another obstacle to freeing my voice was that not only was I struggling against my father’s voice, but I was fighting to fit into a form of writing imposed by the university as well.

One of the questions that arises in writing autobiography as research is how can I both create the data and the analysis and when is the analysis enough? My interpretation is necessarily limited. What is the effect for others in reading and hearing my stories I wonder? Where is the educational value in my stories?
A few people have read parts of this thesis. I sent a copy of “Dining in the Stubbs’ House” to my brother Henry, who responded with interest. He recalled much of what I had described, and my analysis of the scene elicited the comment, “The formality of our lives was remarkable, and I have never thought about them as you have, and especially not from the girls’ perspective. I had no idea.” None of us did at the time. It was simply the way it was.

My friend Jenny Peterson commenting on the story, “Second to God”, noted that the Sunday school teacher was less concerned with our learning and understanding of Christianity than he was in managing and containing his schedule. The Stubbs children’s attendance was erratic and bothersome, and so he wanted us “off his list”. In addition, Jenny noted the division between the practicality of women’s lives and the way in which practical considerations interfered with the development of a theoretical and spiritual relationship with God.

While holidaying at Fry Creek in the Kootenays with a community that has developed over 14 years of camping there every summer, people asked me to read some of my stories. They listened to the rituals, and hearing them jogged their own memories of their own family rituals and stories. Stories jiggle and shake out “new” stories. Therein lies the pedagogy. We live and speak in stories. When we listen to stories we can’t help but look for ourselves within them. And when we find ourselves there, we feel compelled to tell our own stories, at very least, to ourselves.

I have been transformed in the writing of my story. I began with my father’s voice and memories, and slowly my own voice grew as I chose to mediate my own memories and perform my own text. In the sense that my text comprises, in large part,
recollections of my own childhood, their reproduction is the product of the writing process, and a focused writing from memory. What makes this important to the academy in which I perform, and from which I seek approval in its granting of academic standing, is the context in which I write. That context is upper-middle class, a Celtic-Gaelic New Zealand childhood in the years 1957-1974. Trinh talks of the ethnographer working within a 'hybrid' reality in which experience, discourse and self-understandings collide against larger cultural assumptions concerning race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, class and age. “A certain identity is never possible; the ethnographer must always ask, “Not who am I?” but “When, where, how am I?” (Trinh, T., 1992, cited in Clough, P.T., 1994, p. 116). In writing my text, my stories become structured units of experience. The experience of other members of my family may be different and that reinforces the fact that there can never be a final, accurate representation of what was meant or said. There are only different textual representations of different experiences (Denzin, 1997, p. 61). There is no single standpoint from which a final version of the world can be written, but my experience of writing and peeking behind the events has revealed the assumptions and ideologies of my parents' cultural inheritance concerning gender in particular.

There are many stories I did not tell. I wanted to but decided I could not. They were not only my stories. To tell them would not, I decided, be ethical. Families are complicated. The lessons we learn from living in them derive from our own experiences, as well as vicariously from hearing and watching those of others, but we also learn when we live the consequences of the experiences of those we live close to. I choose to tell the stories that I feel comfortable claiming as my own.
Those who read this thesis will be reminded of their own family rituals, and they too may take the time to talk, or write them, and in the process find, as I have, that their own experiences can reveal past worlds of particular times and places. Memory binds the past to the future and in recording those memories, opportunities to change the future arise. Pedagogically, my research constructs a context of self that in turn has the potential to help those people who also need to speak, and reclaim a voice. My friend, Luanne Armstrong, speaks of story as the basis of shared understanding. Autobiographical narrative inquiry provides further understanding into the diversity of human life. I could not have understood my own experience as a woman without deconstructing my past, and it in turn gives permission to others to do the same. It embraces individual voices and gives a place to them in a world that acknowledges cultural, racial, and gender difference.

As my mother lay dying, I read my stories to her. She nodded thoughtfully with pleasure and agreement as I recalled the control exerted on us all. At times, she would raise her eyebrows abruptly in acknowledgment and surprise at my interpretations of what had passed. And she reminded me that she and Dad had had their world and I was living mine. “Your world is different,” she said, “and I think it is a kinder and easier one. Yours is a world in which men and women can be friends in marriage, negotiating everything together, and I think in the end that is better.”
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