A LEARNING TEACHER: REFLECTING ON PEDAGOGIC MOMENTS
(At)tending to voices of self/other in transformative spaces

by

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Abstract

An inquiry invites many questions. How does one pause to write about learning and living begun in the past, yet is so present and continuous? What genre, what words, what position and what tone art-fully communicate without artifice? Questions lead to possibilities; in/decisions open to places unknown.

The title announces the subject and focus. As a learning teacher, I pause in my work and studies to consider pedagogical moments. A thesis typically promises findings of original research from a specific view. My reflections are original, but what do they find? I explore formative experiences, from sundry points of view/time, but claim no pronounce-able conclusion. The writing is a text-ured partial weaving of poetic, narrative, and autobiographical styles through hermeneutic inquiry that opens me to post-modern possibilities.

And what findings emerge? In un/raveling pedagogic moments, I am entangled in spaces which (continue to) arrest my linear intentions, give me pause and stimulate change. In writing and re-writing, recent stories replace older ones while conflicting nuances and tentative understandings intrude. I find myself caught in past-present moments which provoke more questions, evoke more in/decisions and invoke more wonder.

The sub-title further articulates intent. *Attending* involves paying attention, listening and taking care. Rooted in French, *tendere* means *to stretch*: teaching certainly tugs and enlarges. Alerted to *tend*, I recognize the call to serve, to cultivate, to foster. As I at-tend to self and other, urging students to have voice, I am exposed to richly relational experiences, which are disruptive and risky.

The structure interlaces five questions, each prompting a story followed by threaded thoughts. Through to-and-fro movements, I interact with diverse, mind-ful thoughts gleaned from others engaged in pedagogical and philosophical work. Interludes offer a/rhythmic pulses. As the question-story-thought-threads spin on, I find myself seeking less control of knowledge and craft, rather re-reading my teaching life in order to dwell in awkward, tremoring pedagogic spaces, cracking with questions and vibrant with complicated relationships. The writing pauses to an end, which is not a stop, for as a learning teacher and teaching learner, I will continue to invite/join conversations found in transformative spaces, anticipating learning anew.

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Acknowledgements

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Invitation

Come join a conversation
  Read voices distant and near
  Busy poly/monologues
  Noisy with difficult simplicities
(Re)-echoing
  Inter-twining
    Into/out of (un)beckoned spaces

Come wend a way
  Through textured weavings
  Of ordinary memory moments
 Layer upon layer
  Of multi-storied edifications
    Fragmented
    On concrete thoughts

Herein lies the truth
       Not here but there
         Where lies?
Not now but then
           When lies?
       Not this but that
            What lies!
        Scarlet whispers falling on white leaves
                 Wildly gesticulated to solemn ends

(Un)tangle together threads
   Of multi-voices
  Imagining real pictures
    Where true?
    Evoking feeling glimpses
       When true?
      Declaring fumbling clarity
      Stuck in fearful hope
          How true!

Come
  Story tendrils
  Creeping into places
Join
  (In)dwelling hidden spaces
A conversation

A LEARNING TEACHER: REFLECTING ON PEDAGOGIC MOMENTS
(At)tending to voices of self/other in transformative spaces

What follows is a three-part introduction to a woven piece of writing through which I re/consider my life and work as learning teacher. In reflecting on my pedagogic moments, I am called to attend to the stories of experiences past and present so I might move into the future with a stronger sense of who I am, what I do and with whom I work, and play. The majority of my thirty years of teaching has been spent with Japanese international students in various programs and settings, and almost half of those years with college-aged students at a private institution. With so many voices to listen to, so many conversations to re-member, it is impossible to include them all. Therefore, the writing is only partial. There are necessarily (only) traces of the absent in what is present. Voices echo between the lines, and the reader is invited to join the poly/dia-logue.   In acts of looking and pondering, in wondering backward and forward, the substance and direction cannot be fully anticipated or understood. The inquiry threads stories and voices, people and actions, ideas and theories.

In Reflection

Look at Latin to see
in *re* can be *back*
in *flectere to bend*
how far back to look
what cracks in the bending

Look at Old Norse to see
bend can be *fetter*
what chains are found
what bounds broken

in Reflection?

The introduction has three parts to represent at least three aspects of what is at work in the preparation of this recorded document. The preface offers background to my method of inquiry; the prologue considers the language and discourse I use to ex-pose my inquiry, including how I structure the record(ing) of the various reflections; and the prelude suggests an attitude and tone, important for an inquiry which weaves in and out of experiences, re-/in-trospective in order to re/write.

A Preface: What Face[1] to Expect?
How shall I face, how position myself, in order to attend to voices of self/other?

I begin, not at some fantasized place of clarity and distinctness and methodological security, but begin, rather having already begun: in the midst of the roil of everyday events, everyday experience, in the midst of the life I've lived, in the midst of what has become of me after all these years.   (Jardine, 2000, p. 106)

There are countless pedagogic moments in teacher-lives, from the time we are young learners until we stop teaching, if we ever do stop; furthermore, the lines blur between when we teach and when we learn.   These teaching/learning moments contain kernels of experience and (mis)understandings which stay with us re/in/forming all we do and who we are becoming – transforming and being transformed over time, through layers and layers of other pedagogic moments. I used to think that learning was about getting it right and that teaching was helping others 'get it right' but as I look back on my various educational experiences from a position of hermeneutic inquiry I am encouraged to try to open myself to look at teaching/learning as a living, transforming process, full of life and possibly danger.

The traditional position for research presents an activity of searching again (and again) for something that can be found. A search seeks something that has passed in order to understand it as thoroughly and objectively as possible, meaning that there is a strong push to maintain distance, to keep the researched separated from the researcher, separated or isolated in time and space, including emotional and relational space. Data can become contaminated if the researcher and the researched are too close. However, my re-search is an inquiry, a questioning, of pedagogic moments attempted through reflecting on experiences past and present. This kind of inquiry does not expect to come to some objective conclusion. It also relies not on distance and separation, but on unavoidable entanglement: I am both, and at the

same time, the researched and the researcher.   Therefore a traditional research methodology based on a logical, scientific model does not apply. A hermeneutic inquiry allows me to consider what it means to be a learning teacher, by listening to voices within myself, which also carry voices of Other. As Jardine (2000) points out, "the goal of hermeneutic work is not to 'methodologically contact' that life from a place of purposeful estrangement.... [because] such ideas of such 'contact' and 'separateness' always comes too late. The ordinary events of our lives are always and already full of relations, full of the whole complex of human inheritance, full of voices and spooks and spirits and desires and tongues, and full of inheritances far beyond the human voice ..."(p. 106). In fact, it is precisely the human relationships, with all of their complex inheritances and voices which I hope to (re)discover in the process of reflecting and becoming more aware of what I really do as teacher. When we first live an experience, we so often attend to the immediate and the obvious, but in stopping to look back we have opportunities to pay attention to other nuances and meanings beyond what is initially noticeable.

Speaking about education from a psycho-sociological view, Doug Aoki (2000) suggests that "the meaning of teaching, carefully considered, turns into something – translates into something – very unsimple and unobvious. Indeed in the nuanced relations between teacher and student, classroom and curriculum, it translates into something much more than translation, no matter how adept or otherwise" (p. 10). When I began my teaching career, good teaching appeared to be a science that was to be mastered. My desire was to help young people make meaning of the world, which actually meant I would teach my meaning of the world through simplified explanations and orchestrated activities.

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[1] Although the actual etymology of *preface* is *saying beforehand*, I take the liberty to extend the meaning to include aspects of *face.* Language lives so words can and do swell, in use, to present new possibilities.

After many years in one classroom or another, as student, student-teacher, teacher-student, the significant and signifying experiences and awarenesses are complicated and murky. Any efforts to deliberately (re)consider experiences, to thoughtfully attend to stories and ideas which frame and constitute my doing and being as teacher, will not be a simple, linear task. Threads of tracings and interconnections suggest many possible intertwining meanings. My wonderings also lack linearity because the moments are unsystematically chosen: Memory surprises me as it randomly re-calls certain events, ideas, feelings, and insights; re-membering one pedagogical moment leads to others in no obvious pattern.

Furthermore, full understanding is not possible. Doug Aoki writes "… translation is never fully accomplished. It never ends. (Even plain language must be translated) … even *teaching* must be constantly reread, rewritten, reinterpreted, and relocated; even clear writing cannot avoid being further translated, which is why it cannot avoid leading elsewhere" (12). In my journey as a teacher, 'elsewhere' is still ahead, unfolding through endless choices, events and interrelations.

When we make a choice, whatever we do not choose is then left or missed. Whatever task we complete, another task awaits. In our classrooms we look for strategies which give us a sense of control and peace, ways to ensure fewer problems and encounter less difficulty. Similarly, in traditional educational research, we try to limit the scope of the work to the manageable in order to arrive at some point of clarity or some tidy packet of understanding. Jardine (2000) points out that technical-scientific discourse "longs for the last word" and hopes to discover solutions to problems so that "the difficult nature of life will be solved" (p. 18). However, in attempts to establish order and understanding, we fight against a more natural order because, despite Herculean efforts, the last word never comes and the solution

is never final. Our experiences in living don't work that way, and fundamentally education is about, and is, life: "the bringing forth (*educare*) of human life. It is essentially a 'generative' discipline, concerned with the emergence of new life in our midst" (Jardine, 2000, p. 115). How can I teach, explore, and reflect in such a birth(ing) place, such a slippery, ever-changing context?

A hermeneutic inquiry offers me the opportunity to reflect on my pedagogic moments with a "goal to educe understanding, to bring forth the presuppositions in which [I] already live" and "to recollect the contours and textures of the life [I am] already living"(Jardine, 1992, p. 116). This means that I am not looking for solutions to problems or for information to help me pronounce the final word on a given topic. Instead, a considering of pedagogic moments from a hermeneutic position calls for openness to "restoring life to its original difficulty" (Caputo, 1987, p. 1). I do believe life is difficult and any previous attempts to deny or fight against this difficulty actually render me hopeless and helpless. I seek an opportunity to reflect on my (teaching) life as a place of struggle in order to continue to be a teacher, a teacher who continues to learn.

A Prologue: What Words to Expect?
How do I write reflections of pedagogical moments?

As in spinning a thread, we twist fibre on fibre. And the strength of the thread does not reside in the fact that some one fibre runs through its whole length, but in the overlapping of many fibres. (Wittgenstein in Jardine (1998), p. 25)

This written document is only one way of recording the process of reflecting on a sampling of pedagogical moments. I struggle to choose appropriate words to express the teasing out of themes or kernels of thought which call me to think more deeply about what I do and who I am as learning teacher. As the words form strings and the strings lengthen, the ideas begin to intertwine and wend their way into unknown places. Tucked into the word

thread is a concept or image for the writing, which could be likened to a 'tapestry' of words and images, voices and ideas. However, the metaphor does not quite explain what is being attempted because this piece of writing is not a tapestry, or even an unfinished tapestry: it is not (only) visual, because I hope to invoke other sensory experiences, it does not attempt to create a specific pattern or picture and it does not promise to eventually be framed or 'tied off'. Still Wittgenstein's imagery pulls me into places of overlapping themes and ideas, and repeated voices named and unnamed; what emerges cannot pretend to be whole and complete. The work begins in a place somewhat arbitrarily chosen, and with all its "fragments fraying at the edges" (Low & Palulis, 2000, p. 68). The piece will remain unfinished even though the writing itself will come to a (temporary) 'end' Certain parts will be highlighted but the reader must imagine that this bit or that is also part of another unfinished story, partially told. A possible strength in this kind of writing actually dwells in the incompleteness, and on the multiplicity of fibres, of other voices and happenings. In the process of re-viewing and pondering, writing and re-writing the stories, with threads semi-/attached, the reader is invited to be involved. Hopefully he or she will engage in the spinning of this written version of a life(at)work, by sifting through the stories and ideas while adding his or her own, as a way of participating in a dialogue.

What follows is a *spinning and weaving* of story, thought and conversation as a way of recording what is remembered and imagined of pedagogical moments. There is a seemingly loose structure on which the writing hangs together: a story is followed by connected dialogical wanderings and wonderings. Each threaded thought is explored as if it follows a separate thought, but the thoughts are inextricably (en)tangled with ideas and themes beyond my control. The chapter-titles are questions, as a reminder of the importance

of wonder(ment) in process. Each question has the potential to open up "a rich, delicious territory to be explored" (Jardine, 2000, p. 112). The story-fragments introducing each chapter are basically autobiographical, coming from as far back as elementary days because at that time, and in fact even before, I was becoming a teacher. My goal is an unfinished colourfully succulent and lyrical not/tapestry: as one story begins, threads of other stories intrude and protrude; as thoughts develop, other thoughts emerge and interact; as one conversation unfolds, other voices and ideas speak up. Hopefully, senses become engaged. I am indebted to all the stories, thoughts and conversations – only some of which are included in this written recording – all of which make up the fabric of who I am and what I do.

What follows is a *spinning and weaving* in order to focus on motion. The reader-writer and readers move back and forth through word-constructions to many different places and times, including now. Use of the slash and parenthesis invite the reader to consider the possibilities of "and" and "but" Also, the writing itself is not a linear piece even though the eyes will want to move in a left-right line across the page. "Rewriting resides in a double gesture, forwards and backwards." (Lyotard, 1991, p. 30) Variations in format and presentations of storied ideas are attempts to stop that linearity, causing the reader to apply the 'double gesture', moving forwards and backwards, re-viewing the words and bringing his or her own story into the reading and re-reading. In fact, the spinning and weaving has the possibility of being more than two-dimensional. Like Carl Leggo (1997), "I am seeking a nonlinear composition, a kind of hypertext model with lines going in multiple directions with multiple possibilities" (p. 69). As writer, I can try to construct word-threadings to invite movement into generative spaces, but it is ultimately the reader reading reflective writings of pedagogic moments who can actually take it into those 'hyper-text(ual)' places.

What follows is also a *spinning and weaving* in that it does not declare to tell facts given as evidence or ideas ordered in sequence. It does not promise to reveal *the* Truth about being a learning teacher. Am I actually spinning a fanciful tale? A web?

> Many notions of true, as with the carpenter's perpendicular line, argue that the world is stable, fixed, so that a written line, thrown down, will be true. But the world is not fixed, and a line is never true except in relation to other lines. I throw out my lines to connect with other lines. (Leggo, 1997, p. 84-85)

In not aiming to *prove* what is true, I hope a notion of true will be present, true as something which tugs in the reader as a line worth connecting to. The stories are from memory and so they are true as far as Memory has been able to re-member them. Quite naturally, time and interferences have muddied images and details. Also, deliberately, the names of students, teachers and colleagues are representative; their stories are composite – having been composting in my mind since the point of writing and back over twenty plus years of teaching, more years of residing in a classroom and more again of living/learning on this Earth. However, even though stories and names do not identify a 'real bodied person', they attempt to embody real human experience. The boundaries of a story may be de/re-composed and any measuring of their veracity and validity comes from common understandings from living humanly in the world of education. As Wittgenstein urges, "*look* and *see* whether there is anything that is common to *all*. For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships and a whole series of them at that … we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail"(in Jardine, 1998, pp. 31-32). A further possible mark of validity or veracity will be in the reader's finding similarities,

including similarities-in-difference[2], which resonate with his or her own sphere or kind of knowing. Furthermore, the reader is invited to add and extend any stories and ideas beyond the pages held in his or her hand, because "there are many possibilities of true lines, many possibilities of stories, always more stories to be written"(Leggo, 1997, p. 85). If the reader can so participate, he or she joins in and contributes to the 'strand-ed' conversations.

The writing/reading of story is a dialogic process even though physically it may be accomplished by one pair of hands. In fact, it is impossible to consider self without Other. What is Other? From a psycho-sociological point of view, the 'Other' in me could be my alter ego(s) or the ability I have as a human being to talk to myself, presenting contrasting views and working out my thinking by engaging in inner dialogues or conversations. From a social-constructivist view, the self is seen as a developing and transforming "self" co-constructed through interactions with Other. In my work with Japanese students, I have an interest in their language and thinking, so it is 'reasonable' to expect that my thinking and my language have changed through years of interactions with students. Another possibility is connected to different cultural understandings of who 'self' is. In Western society, self is clearly singular and unique. Our society has a highly developed sense of what an individual is and current western society values individualism. On the other hand, 'individual' is a somewhat new concept, because traditionally and in other societies, culture has been built on the solidarity of group behaviour which did not require a person to be viewed as individual.

In the Japanese language, "a person is graphically textured as 人 (hito), the two strokes saying that it takes at least two to make a person, self and other together...Moving

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[2] Jardine (1998) suggests that analogical thinking, which involves exploring likenesses, similarities and correspondences, is an incomplete discourse. Rather than encouraging comparison of differences, which isolates, he encourages us to consider the possible conversation or dialogue between these two realms, thus sustaining what Norris-Clarke (1976) referred to as 'similarity-in-difference' (p. 26).

into the space of inter-language and inter-cultural difference…they allowed inter-textual play and coined a new word 亻囲人 (kojin) supposedly meaning 'individual'. Graphically the 囲 in the first character… reflect[s] the isolated self of the individual. But … they added 人(hito)." (Aoki, 2000, pp. 7-8). In combining these symbols, the Western idea of individual is graphically accomplished in a way which intricately entangles self and Other. The Japanese conceive the possibility of individual by understanding that self and Other are intrinsically inter-connected. The constituted character is significant because it shows how a Western concept is translated into Eastern thought/language, and what we Westerners would consider two very separate parts, in fact, are not separated in Eastern thought but exist as one single entity. The stories I am re-membering cannot be parsed to show which is really me and which is actually Other. With no dividing lines the story can never be simply my story. There can be no re/writing nor re/reading without a hybridization, without 'self/Other'.

Furthermore, there is no one reading of the chapters written; but rather multiple readings of the writings, through time, place and persons. In "Teaching as a Messy Text" Low & Palulis (2000) suggest there are no simple readings of being a teacher, and life in a class room is shared inter-textuality: "we pass texts between us … The text is material, it has texture, it is woven: we pull and tug at it, it winds around us, we are tangled up in it" (Grumet, in Low & Palulis, 2000 p. 71). Life in a classroom with living students is not a simple reading. It cannot be understood without interaction because it emerges from experiences of, and in, community. Recently, I asked some fourth year students about my focus on etymology as a way of vocabulary-building. Thinking I could just refer to the parts of speech when teaching suffixes, I found students got stuck because they had forgotten the labels. I also get stuck on the labels because the descriptors are not as simple as they might

seem, and I'm not sure of the value of spending time on them. So I asked some students, almost apologetically, "Is this too basic for you? Or is it useful?" Several students assured me that they liked it and thought they needed it: "I wasn't interested before so please teach us now." I still struggle with how much time to spend on labeling, but we are having discussions about usage and sentence construction; students are trying to pay attention to their accuracy, and so we will keep working out how to teach and learn together.

Tidy classrooms exist where interaction may be muzzled if a teacher lectures from single texts in order to avoid relational connections, but what kind of teaching/learning happens in such spaces? The teaching I am interested in ruminating about emerges from community and is, therefore, a 'messy text'. Writing of such inter-textuality will then itself be somewhat messy: in movements to and fro, in (partial) threadings of ideas and stories, and in possibilities of some "dialogic journey" (Smith, 1999, p. 38).

I invite the reader to partner with me to (un)tangle threads. As we untangle and tangle, for both will occur, we will hopefully notice an apparent lack of order on the surface but hopefully sense a deeper-down pattern which contributes to vibrating inter-textuality. As we *un*tangle, we seek to make sense of our experiences – stopping the vibrations to create definition and establish some degree of control or order so we can understand. At the very same moment we strive to make things neat, we further tangle – both wrestling with the concepts and experiences as well as 'messing up' any possibility of (finally) getting things straightened out. Life and relationships in the classroom are never neat and orderly on all fronts. Just when we get the blackboard wiped clean, a question pops up from the back of the room needing marks on the board. Just when we get the chairs all lined up, someone initiates a group discussion. Just when we think we've covered a portion of the curriculum,

someone suggests a (seeming) tangent, perhaps to some exotic place of learning. Just when we think our words have cleared up a misunderstanding, a hurt is revealed or suspected. There is no excuse for negligence or chaos and so blackboards are erased, chairs are kept upright (most of the time) and curriculum material is dealt with responsibly. Nonetheless, questions, discussions and relational talking contribute to *educare*, when students are engaged and there are opportunities for generativity, for "genuine conversations" (Smith, 1999, p. 9). Instead of insisting only on creating order, singularity and univocity (Jardine, 1998, p.14), we do better to accept that learning lives in complicated and messy places.

Language itself contributes to the messiness. There are no words with singular meanings, which students learning English as an additional language so soon, and often despairingly, come to know. The context changes the meaning; the function/grammar changes the meaning; the living speaker/writer plays with the meaning. In a dynamic classroom, it becomes clear that students cannot pin down only one meaning to a word or come to a definitive paraphrasing of a phrase or sentence. All readings will be partial. Students need much conversation and encouragement to realize that the living, breathing words change and adapt to the environment and function. To the messiness of words, phrases and discourse in English, add the complications arising with cross-language and cross-culture translation(s). Conversations which help students grasp the multiple possibilities of meaning(s) and assist students to gain confidence to work with slippery, living language can never be totally pre-meditated. And these are rarely simple conversations.

In re-viewing and recording pedagogical moments, I am responsible to recognize the difficulties inherent in writing about my experiences with international students who are struggling to learn and use living, messy English, within and without the environment of a

classroom. I am also responsible to approach my work seriously and care-fully. The task is not taken casually because in trying to speak about living pedagogy, others are implicated. Also, I am not untouched, for Smith (1999) reminds me that, "a profoundly ethical aspect to hermeneutic inquiry in a life-world sense … [is] a requirement that a researcher be prepared to deepen her or his own self-understanding in the course of the research"(p. 38). A written document will be created but it will never express all that has been reflected on and (re)read. In the end there will be some shape to the written re-cording. However, in adopting a hermeneutic posture toward learning and living, form or format is somewhat arbitrary. The writing need not follow a set pattern but rather, I will try to follow the pattern which emerges. As I sample pedagogical moments, I am involved in attending to, in paying attention to and tending to, voices of students and colleagues, as well as my own voice. I cannot predict where the at/tending will take me, but in recognizing the "full complexity of the work"(Smith, 1998, p. 116), I anticipate that I will find myself in messy places and interstitial spaces, cause for both excitement and concern.

Prelude: What Play to Expect?
How do I expose and express my reflections?

"How do I explore ideas in credible ways, serious but joyful in the endeavour? For interpretation to engage, the text and I must be allowed to 'play'." (Jardine, 1998, p. 44) *Ludere* is Latin for *to play* and this 'pre-lude' highlights my approach to the work ahead. Through a process of reflection, I attempt to bring to light sample pedagogical moments in order to consider what it might mean to be a learning teacher. In exposing these (not so) hidden texts of my experience, there will necessarily be safe moments of remembering alongside memories dark with mistakes and misunderstanding. There is some danger in opening up to such

reflection. That is part of the serious side of play at work. However, the work of interpretation, of bringing to light re-collections and reflections, also dallies with the possibility of engendering joy and the potential for healing in new time-spaces.

Play itself is basic to living, a significant part of the rhythm to our days: work and play, play and work. In play there is rest and renewal as we move to a different pace and expect the unexpected. There is a sense of joy in creating outside of the norm; a deep sense of satisfaction and productivity can occur when we have opportunities to play at work. The practice of creating is part of our teaching experience. Often we 'play' in order to achieve our goals. We 'toy' with ideas to come up with solutions or inventions, often 'tossing them" around like a football with our colleagues. At the same time, we sometimes compromise ourselves to 'play the game', adhering to the system by knowing the rules. However, we have to be careful not to 'play a game' with the lives of those entrusted to us or trusting us to teach. I struggle with this tension of being creative while remaining faithful to rules. The stakes can be very high. For example, when a student is asked to withdraw from a program, the rules already publicly articulated are extremely important guideposts. On the other hand, in at/tending to the story of an individual, the manner of implementing policies needs a creative human touch, for coming alongside the student moving through the pain of the actual experience. The balance of play/not play is anything but simple and safe.

When we seriously engage in play, we find ourselves maneuvering through generative spaces because this space is a living space, where we have time to pay attention and re-visit our thoughts and noticings:

Producing a 'reliable' interpretive reading of this instance requires living with this instance for a period of time in order to learn its ways, turning it over and over, telling and retelling it, finding traces of it over and over again ... (Jardine, 1998, pp. 44-5).

In exploring my life as learning teacher, I situate myself in a place which offers/requires generativity, a place that encourages playing with language, ideas and a pre-conceived sense of self and others. David Smith (1999) provides an explanation for the current heightened interest in hermeneutics when he says that "for Western cultures at least, there is a crisis of value at work that cannot be resolved simply by appealing to traditional forms of logic and authority" (pp. 28-44). Scholars and educators are re-evaluating the place of quantitative research; teachers are testing out qualitative forms of assessment. Ideas about 'knowing' continue to change. Smith points out that in the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher was considering three themes which have become important to hermeneutic inquiry and to the classroom: "the inherent creativity of interpretation, the pivotal role of language in human understanding and the interplay of part and whole in the process of interpretation" (p. 30).

Hermeneutics has a very long history, as long as thinkers have been trying to interpret the world they live in, probably as long as two humans have been in conversation. As a more formal study, hermeneutics lives inside and outside pedagogic circles, but Smith shies away from proposing a hermeneutic method for educational research. Rather he supports a posture or attitude which he calls the *hermeneutic imagination*. In considering what I am trying to do in my inquiry and writing, I appreciate Smith's outline of four requirements of hermeneutic imagination. First, I/we must "develop a deep attentiveness to language itself, to notice how one uses it and how others use it" (p. 39). As a teacher of students learning English, this seems like common sense. However, it also encourages me to go beyond the obvious aspects of language that we work on in class. There is room for playing with the multiple meanings

of words, the vocabulary students learn, the terminology we teachers use in our craft, and the words that we share as we live life. Secondly, there must be "a deepening of one's sense of the basic interpretability of life itself" (p. 39). Working with students from other cultures, I am keenly aware that my understanding of life is not the same as my students or colleagues, and as I grow older I am challenged to re-think what I thought I knew so well. A third requirement is that we understand that hermeneutics should not be caught up in its own discourse, but that "far more important is its overall *interest* which is the question of human meaning and how we might make sense of our lives in such a way that life can go on ... [it] works to rescue the specificities of our lives from the burden of their everydayness to show how they reverberate within grander schemes of things" (p. 39). My college-age students are not interested in repetitions of the 'same-old- same-old' mundane activities. They come alive when they sense that what is happening in class touches on real life, or when conversations lead to relationship and to making of meaning. The fourth requirement of hermeneutic imagination "has to do with its inherent creativity ... creating meaning, not simply reporting it" (p. 39). If hermeneutic inquiry invites me to seriously play with what I take for granted, then this is a worthwhile pedagogic endeavour.

Exploration is a time-consuming and risky business, and although I think I know where I am going, I do not pretend to know all that will be at the end/no-end of the exploration. Therefore, I must also be flexible because the unexpected is bound to happen. Inherent in hermeneutic inquiry is a sense of play, of exploration, of flexibility and even of fun. This exploration invokes polylogos, more than one word and many voices. Quick reflexes, creativity and openness to not knowing, and therefore making mistakes, allow the

'game' to go on. The goal of the exploration is partial/understanding and as Gadamer (1987)

says, "Understanding is an adventure and, like any adventure, is dangerous"(p. 332).

Part of the risk and the (potential) fun comes because 'Hermes' is engaged. Hermes,

the messenger of the gods, was a friendly, ever-youthful character with powers of prophecy

and fertility. Also an imp, he was a trickster known for his courage to 'mess with' the most

powerful gods, even "inciting [Apollo] to great rage" (Smith, 1999, p. 28). This

mythological being, a spirit within hermeneutics, exuded life in all its messiness. His

characteristics remind me of the various people connected to my teacher-life and encourage

me to anticipate unusual dis-coveries and even 'dangerous adventures' as I consider my

samplings of pedagogical moments, at/tending to the (multi)voices. Playing in such spaces

promises to be generative and transforming.

Furthermore, a prelude is often connected with something musical, an appropriate

connection, because I hope to encourage the reader to listen to the writing full of beats and

breaths. Between the stories and the dialogic musings, with their own melodic and rhythmic

patterns, there will be 'inter-ludes', additional poetry or ideas playing between the threaded

ideas.   All the poetry is meant for playing with meaning and for singing, in some ways

unfinished for further dialogues and spaces and ideas.

And finally, by invoking the idea of play, I am reminded to keep a perspective and a

sense of humour - to hold my ideas, and my-self as writer, lightly. Play is curiosity acted

out: the outcome is not determined ahead of time; the time of getting to the goal may be as

important (in fact even more so) than arriving at the end. Therefore, I begin a playful work

and work-ful play, reflecting a sampling of pedagogic moments, with a hope that the

endeavor will lead to some understanding of myself as learning teacher.

play

listen

move

write

wait

cry

look

speak

hide

watch

read

pause

laugh   sigh

dwell

I   N   T   E   R   L   U   D   E: on learning

Who is Calling?

The Conch and the Turtle Shells

"Now boys and girls, when you finish your work, you may quietly... like little rabbits... read at your desks or go to a corner table to explore something there."   Miss R.. in my grade 2/1 split class

The quiet call of the corner table
The mystery there
The wonder there
At the corner table

Corner table – a new world to explore
Nature books there
Conch shell and turtle house
Quietly calling me to live there

Coral and rough/smooth,
Mysterious memories of warm, wav-y sand beaches
Conch shell resonating untold stories of a life some time past
Calling my imaginings
Remnant residence once blaring of a creature inscrutable
Calling me to consider the unknown

School – a new corner to explore
Books of all kinds there
Teacher voices
Echoing halls full
Quietly calling me to learn there

Moss green and soft/hard
Firm barrier to hostile intruders
Turtle's home recalling stories of an un-safe life lived long ago
Invoking my hope-fears
Shell shield once protecting a timidity (un)imaginable
Conch calling me to venture the unknown

Education, a new world-corner to explore
Learning of all kinds there
Multiple dwelling shells
Mixtures of storied lives
Quietly calling us to be there, together

I remember coming home one afternoon to find my mother having tea with her friends. They drank out of dainty flowered tea cups and nibbled on home-baked goodies. Asked about school, I replied, "I love school. It would be great to live there. I love Miss R. and I want to be just like her." After years of trying to be something/one else, I am (becoming) me as teacher - learning to dwell in pedagogic places, in and out of my shell.

A Calling

Vocation comes from the Latin *vocare, to call or to name*. A vocation may also be a *summons*, whether to a religious life or a career requiring a special commitment. Related verbs include *provoke* and *evoke*, also with the noun root *vox*, meaning *voice* (Encarta Dictionary). As a young person I felt 'called' to be a teacher, drawn into the place(s) where pursuing curiosities and gathering with others to think, give voice and create were valued and enjoyed. David Smith (1999) talks about difficulties in classroom spaces which he calls 'periods of provocation': students are challenged and then challenge back. He suggests that "[teachers] must become increasingly skilled in learning to read and understand our own childhoods, to understand our personal and collective pasts in a truly pedagogic way … that contributes positively and dialogically to a new understanding of appreciation for the world" (p. 139). The provocations, even when painful, offer opportunities for learning.

Through reflection, I recall evocative and provocative incidents of learning/teaching. Jardine (1998) discusses how interpretative research is not begun "with an ideal of clarity, distinctness and methodological controllability" but rather "with the evocative, living familiarity …in all its tangled ambiguity" (pp. 39-40). Further, he proposes that incidents re-membered in one teacher's story are likely not isolated ones; possibly others sense something "vaguely familiar, vaguely recognizable" that "warrants further investigation" (p. 41).

Calling Students

What do we call our students out of and into? As professionals within educational systems, we sit in positions of power, where we can insist on what they learn and how they learn, and in doing so, we somehow influence who they are be(com)ing. Do we call them to learning? And whose learning? Do we call them to conform? re-form? de-form? inform?

Trends come and go in education; wave after wave of new/old ideas and approaches move into and through classroom at all levels – pedagogical and cultural changes constantly affect what happens in schools. Smith (1999) reminds us that we need to be mind-ful of the influences, particularly the "deep cultural biases, rooted in ideological assumptions and socio-economic arrangements which occlude the expression of alternative ways of being in the world" (p. 145). In our attempts to educate well, we often try to influence students to become more 'normal' or help them to act and live 'appropriately' and 'successfully' in their world. However, as Smith (1999) points out, "every culture is 'inversely crippled' (Nietzsche in Smith) in its own way, and children/students go through life crippled to the degree that the significant adults in their lives have not understood their own crippledness, that is their inevitable constraint within limits of knowledge and materiality" (p. 145). If we are calling our students to learn what we know, they will most certainly be crippled. With every increasing technology, information is available at speeds beyond any individual teacher's ability to gather. Furthermore, information is not necessarily knowledge or mutual/self-understanding or wisdom, and my life-/context is not my students' life-/contexts. Lists of learning outcomes for language and skills give guidelines and may provide goals for curriculum design and student evaluation, but they are at best sketchy, skeletal frameworks which cannot become the boundaries of what is attempted or possible. Such lists may be teacher-generated and the significant 'other half' of the classroom equation is often missing: the students, including what each student brings and lacks.

Also, lists often become static and standardized, prepared before students even enter the room or before we know the unique persons in the class. David Jardine (1998) suggests that teachers desire "to get the curriculum 'right', 'straightened' out once and for all", and

that "such desires require a basically disintegrative, analytic act aimed at rendering education a closed question, aimed at rendering human life lifelessly 'objective' under the glare of knowledge-as-*statis*" (pp. 72-3). He also reminds us that *educare*, meaning *bringing forth*, is compromised when we see educating student as something done from the "neck up" because we are actually subscribing to a "strangulated approach to education" (p. 74). In fact, "it is not [students'] epistemic excellence or their mastery of requisite skills or their grade point average that matters most fundamentally, but quite literally their ability to live, their ability to be on an Earth that will sustain their lives" (p. 75). Therefore, our approaches need to be organic and holistic in order to assist students to be well-grounded in life and learning. We need to find ways to call students to learning which does not hinder "the expression of alternative ways of being in the world " (Smith, 1999, p. 145). We can provoke and be provoked in order to participate in genuine and generative conversations. We can remember to call them to express themselves, not echo our words and worlds of being and doing.

Marla Morris (2000) invites her readers to "muddle along in the primordial muck of *poesis* and *educare*. Call forth and bring forth a multitextural manuscript layered in artwork, scholarwork" (p. 6). Her distinction between educare and poeisis are slight but meaningful. John Zuern (1997) teaches about Heidegger's concept of poeisis. Poesis refers to a calling or "bringing forth in the sense that something that was not present is made present" (p. 292). Heidegger also refers to responsibility not so much in the sense of moral obligation as in an urge to initiate, somewhat like a birthing. This process suitably describes the interrelationship between student and teacher as learning occurs when there is a calling forth which is open to poeisis. What emerge may be messy and unpredictable but full of generative possibilities.

Compos(t)ing Teacher

How do I reconcile the messiness? the difficulties? I am called to teach and teach by calling forth. As a professional I hope to teach what I think I know in order to help students learn what they need. However, can I know what they need – exactly and completely? With all the best intentions of protecting and leading my (younger) students and a belief that they want and trust me to direct them, I have a job to do. I have a calling, my vocation, to fulfill. In the efforts to compose the students, I am myself being composed by experiences in life and in the classroom. The knowing of who I am, who the students are and what I/we could be doing is only every partial. Although I feel the responsibility to care-fully choose what and how I teach, there are no quick and easy solutions to the problems in choosing.

A crucial element in deciding is humility[3], and humility grows when composting is part of the composing process. Humility may be present if I start from a self-understanding that I both know and do not know, that I can both succeed and not succeed. Our experiences provide considerable organic material for compost, for on-going learning to become rooted within the life and soul of teacher. By cultivating a space between my knowing and not knowing what is best for my students, I leave room for multiple opportunities for and expressions of 'bringing forth'. Even in my not-succeeding and my not-knowing there is (the potential for) education and growth.

Humility does not come easily and cannot be called upon falsely. It does not come cheaply but from multiple experiences fraught with pain and loss. Real teachers in real classrooms undoubtedly can relate stories of such experiences, just as real students sitting in

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[3] 13th century. via Old French *(h)umble* from Latin *humilis* "lowly" (source of English humiliate), from *humus* "earth"; the underlying idea is "close to the ground" as explained in Encarta World Dictionary.

real classrooms could do. Herein lies part of the common ground for the teacher/student relationship. We have all been students at one time or another: we have all had a degree of shame and failure as well as some success. Unlikely that people experience only success and joy, what do we do with the memories of hardship and pain? I wonder if the degree of compos(t)ing of such experiences contributes to our level of comfort with the concept and expression of humility. If the feelings have not finished rotting within us, roots of bitterness grow and deepen. However, if our hurtful experiences are able to compost, and compose, we may be humble, yet not lowly. We may have the capacity for being compassionate, yet not weak.   If grounded in an ecological perspective of the cycle of life leading to death leading to life, humility is not self-debasement but rather potentiality.

Jardine (1998) points out that teaching "…involve[s] cultivating in oneself the ability and desire to keep the world open. This simply means that good teachers, like good 'interpreters', must cultivate in themselves and the children they teach a sense of the interpretability of the world" (p. 1).   Being open to the world and possible interpretations requires humility, because all is not known already, creating the possibility of fresh conversations and unique discoveries. Composting is vital to the cultivating of self; cultivating is important in the composing of our teaching/learning lives.

Expecting Students

Students come to the classroom from so many places none of us have ever been. I wonder who or what "calls" them to choose our school. Why do they come and what do they expect to learn? I also wonder if they ever expect to teach.

Having worked for over a decade in an international school environment, primarily with Japanese nationals, I have come to believe that part of my professional calling is to

understand the students, although I have mostly informal learning about the language and the culture. Nonetheless, through years of working in a somewhat, perhaps pseudo, "bi-cultural" environment, I make assumptions about the students, their backgrounds and their culture. Each year in the spring, in accordance with the Japanese school year, the faculty prepares for a new group of students, wondering what to expect. What will be the same and what will be different about the next intake of students? We make an effort to learn about students' abilities through pre-testing and we imagine who they are, through their photographs and the application information. At the same time, we rely on our prior experience at the college, setting our expectations for learning and teaching, and making assumptions about who the students will be and why they have come to Canada to learn.

Using locally developed curricula designed to 'suit' our Japanese clientele, we make calculated efforts to link, as well as to un-link, what we anticipate of their knowledge, practices and experiences with our Western liberal arts program, conducted almost exclusively in English. We call upon our Japanese colleagues for updated information on the current life and society, relying our professional expertise to provide a quality education. Although there is room for change and flexibility within each course, we may resist change because we get stuck on our assumptions of who the students are and what they need. We also find ourselves resistant to change because of what students seem to assume and expect.

Because the teacher is the expert who decides the curriculum, students assume it will be definitive and effective. Often they want to work, and for some to work hard, in accustomed patterns of learning. When encouraged to participate in learning with me, to see me as a teacher who learns with them, some students resist. They expect to call me 'sensei', 'master', pronounced with a deep sense of respect for my knowledge and experience to help

them learn successfully and neatly. When I don't take the position of authority or when I urge them to be involved in the process of deciding how to learn, students may feel lost or even betrayed. They don't want learning to be 'messy' and when it gets messy, they show or tell me it is my fault because I am not a responsible sensei. Students teach me about the complex role of being master, teacher. Even knowing what they want does not confirm me to be the expert they call for. In fact, my expertise is a growing awareness of how little I do or can know.   I continue to wrestle with the dual role/expectation. Wanting to be responsible and professional, I hope to be responsive but when students resist my willingness to be flexible and open to change for them, the conversation between us becomes awkward.

As a young teacher, I wanted to be a leader, taking youth from their 'unknown' into my (exciting and superior) 'known'. Now, I find myself seeking to walk with my students from our humble 'known' into our 'unknown' and I remember my grade school class experiences of mystery and wonder at the corner table where I first touched the conch and turtle shells, and when a life-longing to learn touched me:

> Education, a new world-corner to explore
> Learning of all kinds there
> Multiple dwelling shells
> Mixtures of storied lives
> Quietly calling us to be there, together

On the other hand, perhaps my vocation hasn't really changed at all. Initially, I expected that teaching was a profession to be accomplished. I got side-tracked for some years, busily accumulating knowledge and skill, and then dwelling in safe places where I could be in control, noisily dispensing my knowledge to make significant impressions on younger minds. However, being called to be teacher I find myself learning more than I expect, or sometimes want. The learning does not always happen in tidy safe places nor in quietness.

Constructing Boxes

Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes made of ticky-tacky,
Little boxes, little boxes,
Little boxes just the same ...

And the children go to summer camp
And then to the university,
And they all get put in boxes
And they all come out the same.

Pete Seeger sang Malvina Reynolds' song "Little Boxes" in the 1960's, and as a young girl I remember singing about the yellow ones and the green ones. Years later, when I applied for entry into a master's program, I had a topic to pursue: boxes, not pink ones or ticky-tacky ones, but boxes just the same. At that time, I thought an aspect of my role as teacher was to make things simple and clear for students, especially when my Japanese students were interested in mature subject matter and capable of complex thought, even though their language did not always keep pace. Recognizing the value of computers, and despite being intimidated by the rapidly changing technology, I articulated my interest in improving my teaching by focusing attention on how to use charts and visuals, especially connected to using the computer. I was looking for ways to put complex ideas into boxes, creatively and colourfully, of course, in order to eliminate the seeming chaos of complex learning managed in a second language environment. I wanted to be a helper, to rescue the students from the messy aspects of learning a language and a culture through studying a liberal arts curriculum. If only I could strip away the extraneous and thereby simplify things into key concepts, my students would be more successful and better prepared for their lives. I did not realize that in doing this, I was seeking to construct a different kind of box, a cage, which would actually constrict their learning.

I continue to struggle with getting caught in the trap of trying to box learning. On one hand it feels like the right thing to do. Isn't that what teachers are for? As experts in our field, should we not guide students' learning, as quickly and simply as possible? This means

we translate complex concepts and unfamiliar language into something plainer and clearer for the purpose of facilitating understanding, growth of knowledge and development of language. However, Douglas Aoki (2000) challenges this notion when he writes about the difficulties of 'clarity' and 'plain language'; he contends that "the thing never speaks for itself" and so if we idealize clarity of thought and language, or even consider absolute clarity something attainable, then there is actually a "radical refusal to teach" (p. 3). These ideas significantly disrupt my understanding of my calling to teach.

Aoki primarily addresses teaching in his field of sociology but suggests that there are ramifications for any teaching "wherever clarity is linked to good pedagogy" (p. 3). He confirms that there are some absolute decisions which need to be made: for example, neurosurgeons must "perform their exacting procedures in exactly the 'right' way" (p. 31). Although he is not arguing against responsibility, or being clear or using plain language per se, Aoki does remind us of the difficulty inherent in language and thinking (p. 24).

In second language teaching, terms like mastery and grammatical correctness encourage us to believe that the ideal is possible, and therefore something we can help, even demand, students accomplish. These terms require us to believe that language is static, not dynamic, package-able for consumption, and later production, by students. At the same time, I have a responsibility to work with students to understand that there are societal and relational expectations of some standard of English. There are rules to learn and information to know. However, as a teacher, my role may not solely be the guide to clear and simple knowing. My role is much more complicated than that: "if people at least come away with the feeling that it [the "art of teaching"] *is* complicated, that's already a good lesson to have learned (Bourdieu, 1990, in Aoki, p. 25). The 'good lesson' is a hard one to hold on to, and

even to live with, but I am alerted to be watchful of my attitudes to mastery – either of language or of teaching. Making boxes is a very tempting practice but potentially dangerous.

In a conversation with a student in her second year of four at our college, she told me that she was working to improve her accent because her goal was to sound like a native speaker. I suggested that language learning was probably more complicated than she might have thought. With hard work she could become very competent in English but she would not be able to speak with native-like fluency or accuracy. There would always be (wonderful) traces of her own language in her speech and writing. She seemed shocked by my declaration so I was concerned that she might be angry and discouraged that we had somehow deceived or failed her. However, the next day I received an email thanking me for telling the truth. She knew that language learning wasn't simple but was surprised I would be so honest. I thought I'd freed her from being boxed in by her unrealistic expectations and that she was grateful for this freedom. However, still struggling with the issue, she later said she was glad I wasn't her teacher. Despite her goal to speak well, she wasn't pleased if I tried to correct her speech and spelling. What good lesson can I learn from this interchange?

Still, I am encouraged by Aoki's reflections and insights: "… even experienced and expert teachers can be surprised or unsettled in the classroom, for uncertainty and the unexpected abide in even the most mundane practices of teaching". I freely admit becoming unsettled in my box-places, the classroom and my office, where I meet students a great deal. It is helpful to be aware that as teacher I am called not to remove the uncertainty nor to banish the unexpected but rather to welcome both as contributing to life that is teaching. It's not always comfortable but it's real.

VENEERIAL DIS-EASE

Sitting in classrooms, surrounded by strangers
How is my polish?
Shiny, I hope, but not attractingly bright
Bright enough to deflect them, not draw attention
What if they dis/like me?
(Either will be dangerous)
My veneer, my protection…easily summoned
It's in place
I'm afraid
I'm dis-eased

Standing in hallways, surrounded by strangers
Such different re/deflections – some glossy, some matte
This one disinterested – what passions belied?
This one calm and strong – what tremblings denied?
This one shining brightly – what darkness to hide?
This one enigmatic – what answers supplied?
What if I dis/like them?
(Either will be dangerous)
More or less just like me
I'm afraid
I'm dis-eased

Socially stigmatized
Facades cover our dis-ease
Crack the shells slowly, gently finding safe places to share
Share the cracks gently, slowly letting shell fragments fall
Ease places dis-eased
Dis-ease easy spaces
For becoming ourselves, to be no longer strangers?

INTERLUDE: on hiding

What's your Name?

First Day at School

I was five the September my family moved to a new neighbourhood, when I could finally go to school with my big brother. And to a big school at that - an imposing brick and stone structure, built in 1892 in the heart of 'old' Vancouver. I remember how the school rose mightily into the sky, and later knew that it also had a low-ceilinged but cavernous basement, where we played tag at recess in inclement weather. Above ground were two stories of rooms with what might have been 20-30 foot ceilings, followed by an uncharted attic full of dusty old books and, according to legend, at least one skeleton. The huge red structure, flanked by snaky fire escapes, had a peaked roof-cap poking high into the sky. Inside, two grand staircases made of gleaming oak led to the principle's office on the top floor. Massive and ancient, this school was obviously a very important place.

I don't remember being in the office on the day I registered, but I do recall afterwards climbing down the huge outside steps of the eastside exit of the school, clutching my mother's hand, sensing that I would never be the same. First, I had begun my formal education; second, I had a new name. As second generation Canadian, my Icelandic heritage is held in two given names, one for each grandmother. They formed a poetic phrase in Icelandic, especially when my dad spoke them. However, when my mother registered my name at school, the anglicized version stuck. Looking back, I realize that although Icelandic was freely used at home, our fully-bilingual parents didn't want us 'stigmatized'. Icelandic was the language for parents to share; English was for the children, to ensure that we would have a 'pure' Canadian accent. At school, I got a 'pure' Canadian name: Maria, with a flat sounding 'r' and an accented long 'i'. On that first day of school, I hiked down the stairs whirling the name in my mouth. It felt strange,

somehow not me - yet. And so, at age five entering kindergarten, I had several oral

versions of my name – a given name which my parents used at home and an anglicized

name used by teachers and

schoolmate-acquaintances. I also had

a pet name given by a lisping brother,

to be called out in backyards and

> [My] mind is engaged in a rapt contemplation
> Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of [my] name:
> [My} ineffable effable
> Effanineffable
> Deep and inscrutable singular Name.
>
> T. S. Eliot, *The Naming of Cats*

empty lots. Later, whenever asked, "What is your name?" I had to pause and consider the

relationship. It was difficult to decide which name to give. Who could say my singular[4]

name? Who could know the real me?

Simple Beginnings

Such a simple question

Common opening line
As teacher greets new student
What's your name?
Such a natural place
Phrase rolling easily off tongue
For teacher-student relationship to start
What's your name?
Not a simple question
Too complicated
How to answer
Such a question,
What is your name?

I am...

How many times have I asked this simple and common question? How many times have I

had to ask again and again?

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[4] S*ingular* sounds like 'one' but within the idea of singular there must be the concept and reality of Other,
even many; 'unique' is only possible in the presence Other and of a multiplicity. And still, there is singular –
one as distinct from many or other – and unique – one of a kind.

Apprehensions of Mispronunciations

I have noticed how a child, or an adult for that matter, may pause when asked his or her name. In years of teaching in public schools and a private college, teaching in multi-cultural classrooms, 'normal' and 'ESL', and undoubtedly sensitized by my own experience, I sometimes see a hesitation before a student gives his or her name. Is the student wondering which name to give? Once given, I sense heightened anticipation as the student watches my struggle with a name having unusual sound combinations or watches my surprise when an anglicized name is given instead of an anticipated 'ethnic' one.

Furthermore, like many children in our classrooms, I wasn't given the opportunity to answer the question, "What is your name?" I don't recall whether the pronunciation was negotiated. Did my mother try to give my Icelandic name? Did the secretary write the letters down and give a version which my mother accepted? All I know is that I shook hands with someone who called me by a new name, which I learned to respond to when the roll was called. I gained a new label, but I lost some of me. Slowly, I am re/discovering my given name, after years of responding to my school-written name.

Teachers get lists and lists of names to re-/call, and to recall. When I started school many unusual names obviously belonged to children of immigrants, but lately, perhaps in an attempt to be unique, standard Anglophonic names have unusual spellings, crossing and reflecting many traditions. When faced with a new class, teachers may not ask a student to tell his or her name because the class list is the place to begin. How many children, adolescents or adults have the confidence to stop a teacher in mid-(mis)pronunciation in order to give a correction? Very few students have such courage. Therefore, from the first day, many students are called names which somehow aren't quite theirs.

I try to ask students to teach me to pronounce their names properly, although this too may cause embarrassment. Even if I work hard to reproduce what I hear, I am not always attuned to hear the phonetic nuances. For example, in twenty-five plus years of teaching, I have called the roll for perhaps fifty different young women named Yuka and Yuko, always saying the first syllable "Yu" the same, while changing the vowel of the second. I thought that Japanese had five 'pure' vowels, always pronounced the same. Only recently, I noticed a colleague pronouncing the *Yu-* differently: the vowel longer for Yuko and shorter for Yuka. My colleague could not say why, other than it's just the way *Yu-* is said; there is no such word as Yuko with a short-vowelled *Yu-*. Now I try to get it right. How many other names have I mis-heard and mis-spoken?

An important question is whether or not a mispronunciation matters to the student. For me is matters, so I prefer people to call me by my brother's pet name for me, "Mai-a" if they cannot say "Maria" with its rolled 'r'. Recently I spoke to a student with a tongue twister name, at least for most English speakers, asking how she felt about our mispronunciation of her name. She was fairly nonchalant. She expected Canadians to mispronounce her name and was glad when someone remembered any approximation of it. In fact, in a group of new friends, she was given a nickname which wasn't a name, but rather an English idiom. However, the phrase replicated the cadence and vowels of her name, though not the consonants. She laughed about it because even though it was a silly phrase, she was glad the new friends had given her a name to address her personally. How do I avoid calling out a name if I'm unsure about the pronunciation? How often are students ignored when their names are forgotten? At least for this particular student, she knew that new friends remembered her and cared enough to use a name coined for her.

Re-member?

Students want to be noticed and remembered. For some, negative noticing is better than nothing; for others there is a positive, though unspoken, sense of human connectedness. Remembering faces is important, but calling a student by name creates a connection. Sometimes being able to put a name to a face has been a coping or control strategy but more often has contributed to the value of getting to know students as people, individuals gathered in a community for learning.

Early in my career, I had 125 students in an 8 block rotation of English classes. A memorable first day was coming in the back door of the classroom, having to step over desks which the "bad" boys had lined up in a game of "Test the Teacher". During roll-call, I made notes to facilitate memorizing all the names during the remainder of class time. The next day when the boys tried another stunt, I could call each by name and direct the class with a sense of control. I also learned that knowing names, being respectful, was worthy of respect.

Despite my not enrolling a class presently I do have considerable contact with all the new students, as well as with students having academic difficulties. I use various memory methods to learn all their names and when we meet in the hall, I try to call them by name and begin to engage them in personal conversations. The glimmers of surprise and delight that students respond with when recognized and personally identified emphasizes how they want to be known, and that each name is a precious and personal know-(th)ing.

Our names are given at or near birth: each name identifies a person as unique and singular, yet attaches that person to the significant others who have cared to give him or her a special name. So often names have meanings and historical connections which form a belonging. In naming is mystery: a person is both known and not known, perhaps even unknowable, (un)pronounced, sometimes unpronounceable – unique and individual.

Ache
Know me touch me learn me
Proceed slowly

Still, the tension between wanting to be private and to be noticed is tentative.

Hidden in the Un/pronounceable

Every child receives a name as a gift from his or her parent. We are not called Child #3 or Baby Q. Even names other-judged to be silly or unflattering are given for some reasons, and the name(s) id-entify and im-print in lifelong ways. There is meaning within the story of the naming, often carrying other connected and connecting stories.

Named for two ammas, grandmothers, I am inextricably tied to them. Maria died 50 years before I was born; Soffia saw me twice in her life but I only remember the visits from some photographs, which also tell me that I look more like her. And my names carry some of their life stories. As I grew up, I learned more about each one and learned that when my parents intoned the letters of my names, they re-called their mothers.

M A R I A

With emphasis on the first proud syllable,
the tongue delicately flapping the 'r'
Mahreeah

*Named for father's mother, who died in 1922,
giving birth to the eighth child, last in an orderly
boy-girl sequence. Sad day for baby "Maria"
who never knew her same-name mother, Maria
- Icelandic for* Mary, mother of sorrows. *This
was a pioneer family, with two sorrow-filled
Maria's. Their stories entwine mine, though I
know little of their deep lives. Who can know
their joys and sorrows? I never knew my aunt,
who died carrying her third daughter, running
up a hill in a rainstorm. On my wedding day, I
wore the watch my grandmother wore, given to
her by her beloved on their wedding day. He
had kept it in a box for 30 years, to give to me,
the only grandchild named for his Maria.*

*Maria is Sorrow
Mother Mary is sorrowful*

*Sorrow infuses sufferers
sad over losses
of youth
of dreams
of hope
of courage
of parent
of child*

*Sorrow absorbs sadness
Waiting quietly
Unable to articulate the pain
The ineffable
Bone-deep
Heart-ripping pain*

*Maria is Sorrowful
Mother Mary is Sorrow*

*But Sorrow births joy
to sing...
    One day or some days*

At school my Icelandic name was unpronounceable and some of me began to hide.

M A R I A

With emphasis on the second syllable;
'i' sounds like "ee(k...a mouse!)"
and there is no delicious flapping of the 'r'
Muhreeuh[5]

Huh?   What did you say?   Say that again – can you spell it?
Embarrassing repetitions   Explanations long and short
What about

a proper name   for purposeful proprieties
a formal name   for legal formalities
a simple name   for uncomplicated efficiencies

Useful façade: helps the fitting in and hides the ineffable

pronounceable practical   but   not personal
where's the story?   where's the knowing?   where's the song?

The letters follow the conventions of the English locally spoken so there is no need for

explanations burdened with history or ethnicity.   The school name is practical, safe:

pronounceable, known and understood, or so it seemed, from letters on a page.

M A I A

emphasizing the first syllable:
two vowels playfully linked with rising intonation
Before delicately dropping the final 'a'
Mai-a

My brother, unable to maneuver the Icelandic
'r' gave me my baby name. Maia, or Maja[6], is
a given name to some[7], but for me the calling
was oral, for invitations to join the light/dark
play spaces of our childhood. Later my closest
school friends used this name, as a sign of our
growing to a different kind of knowing. Trying
to write this oral name has always caused me
trouble because the letters seemed to limit the
stories and the sounds of laughter and joy.

Maia is May
Month of joy
Springing forth in light and life

How do I write my oral name
A spoken name, a secret gift?
Such a name is not for the eyes
But for rolling on tongues
Playfully whispered
Endearingly chanted

Others letter the naming
Mia, Maya, Mya and more
Something gets lost in the trying
How do we amplify joysorrow

And who can sing this song?

Despite various phonetic spellings, and stumbling pronunciations, the oral name persists.

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[5] Apologies to my sisters who know the call of this name cadence. I like it for others but it doesn't fit me.
[6] In Icelandic, the *j* is like an *i*.
[7] In fact, I have two great aunts, sisters – one Marja, Mary - *Sorrow*, and one Maja, May – *Spring's Joy*

Rooted in Maria I also live in Maia, uncovering the embedded, entwined and inter-twining life-tales hidden in the letters of a name. Whether a student has only one name, more than one name or multi-cultural variations of their names, each carries traces of journeyed stories of self and others. How often do I really consider the traces or ask for stories? Often there seems so little time to dis-cover or explore what seems un/knowable and un/pronounceable in the lives of those who enter my classroom, but it is important to re-member, to wonder and, if possible, to ask. When I do ask, some students don't really know the story of the name-giving. Some names are given because of relational connections, or because of the musicality. For many Japanese students the meaning in the words or written characters is often a reminder/threat of parents' hope for their child's future or personal character.   From the naming to the living, the stories and the traces of stories hide/reveal themselves as we dwell together in our classroom places. How do I pronounce my students' names?

Who am I?

I am teacher and administrator, also Canadian, middle-aged, female, outgoing; I am… the categories are endless. Each student can also similarly describe him or herself: Japanese international student, young male/female adult, out/soft-spoken leader and so on. We could name/identify/label ourselves with attributes to distinguish each from others – for identifying differences and indicating similarities. However, there are not enough labels to fully describe our total individual identities because who we are and who we are becoming is un/knowable and un/interpretable, to ourselves and to others. We perceive one another through our various personas, or masks, and engage in conversations, perhaps unconsciously protecting ourselves and perhaps not.

IDENTITY: What does it mean?

Identity: What does it mean?
Idem et idem[8]
Singular essential
Unique distinguishing
Same and same
            I am never the same, yet I am always me and not you

Identity: What does it mean?
Sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing[9]
Idem et idem
Objective permits no argument
Reality declares no dispute
A thing
I am no Thing, rather I am...and you?

Identity: What does it mean?
Id-entity[10]
Id, not ego nor superego
Unconscious source
It is *das Es*[11]
Ineffable
Entity is entirely separately *is*
Essential is-ness
Distinct objective reality
Conceptual thing
            I think therefore I am...entirely no Thing[12]

Who am I?   How do I mean?
Independent searching
Solitary seeking
I am no thing to be found in looking on my own
I am me to be-coming in being myself
Indented by life
Encountered by others
Identifying me in them, them in me
I am becoming...who I am

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[8] Iden-ti-ty – Middle French *identite* from Late Latin *identitat-, identitas*, probably from Latin *identidem* repeatedly, contraction of *idem et idem*, literally *same and same*. (Your Dictionary.com)

[9] Ibid. definition #1. " the collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known

[10] Ibid Entries for *id* and for *entity*

[11] Ibid. translation of German Es, a special use of es, *it, as a psychoanalytic term*, from Latin, *it*

[12] The poem is a conscious play with Descartes' troublesome words which de-humanize.

David Smith contends that "*identity* is a problematic at the heart of almost all debates in the contemporary Western tradition" (1999, p. 11). His concern about the "Western preoccupation" with identity is related to the possibility that a teacher will determine that "what is to be done with respect to Others ... depends on who I think the Other is, and who I think I am in relation to them" (p. 11). Are not teachers, as professionals, hired to implement a current and meaningful curriculum in an environment where teacher/learner relationships are based on teachers using their own learning and experience to 'know' who the students are and what they need?

It is not surprising that I (un)intentionally teach Western values, particularly highlighting individualistic behaviours. Much of my ESL rhetoric promotes positive feedback as a way of encouraging personal goal setting and inspiring practice-leading-to-learning: "What do *you* want to do? Don't think about what other students say or do. Believe in yourself and do what you need to do. Be confident in what you can do by yourself. Don't be influenced by your peers: make up your own mind; speak out for yourself." Contrasting this Western emphasis on the individual, Japanese society is generally typified to be more of a 'group' society and in our college we have purposefully introduced our students to independence and self-reliance.

Alerted by Ted Aoki (1999a) I ask: "What image of 'self and other' should prevail in education?" He cautions an acceptance of the predominant trend to define self "in terms of self-identity – a self defined as an individual entity, an indivisible bounded whole unto itself." Aoki considers a teaching of the Taoist Roshan: the greatest delusion of humans is that I am here and you are there, and rues the North American view of the individual which precludes 'other' (p, 181). Not only is the search for the gratification of the autonomous

self a questionable path to follow, it is an arrogant fiction. Notably the Japanese character for "individual" includes two parts, one part meaning 'other'. Aoki (1999a) further informs us that the word for person is "hito...[and] features two graphic strokes saying that it takes at least two to make a person. A person is divided into both self and other" (p. 181).

Gazetas (2000) discusses Lacan who writes about the conscious self being "split and divided for it is constructed out of unconscious relations to the Other which it cleverly conceals from itself." Lacan suggests that the de-centering of self "permits the subject to rediscover that the 'absence' at the heart of (it)self is the desire for this Other" (in Gazetas, p. 61). Therefore, rather than paying attention to or seeking only an entity known as identity, we are better served to consider identification. With what 'Other' do we identify? Who are we becoming in/through our inter-relationships? 'Identity' can be viewed as a something birthed out of the individual alone. On the other hand, 'identification' highlights connections, inter-relationships worked out in human, relational settings. Because the classroom is an interactive, not solitary, space, awareness of 'identification' can help us in our daily interactions with students and others.

Other Names

Once students become 'known' to us, or at least when we determine some kind of knowing, we begin to give them other names. These often reflect exhibited behaviours or perceived personality traits. These names might be generous and fun, like pet names, but sometimes they are descriptors, often patronizing. "He's a softie; she's a sweetie." In my administrative role, I run into a very different genre of names, no less patronizing. Students who do poorly in their courses meet with me for help in getting on track to complete their programs. One day, a student came to my office because of reports that

familiar unproductive patterns were being repeated in the new academic year. When we talked about the student's progress, rolling of eyes accompanied details of how his unwillingness to be on time or to be serious about his work created tensions for the classes. We had names for his type, 'unmotivated', 'uncooperative', 'spoiled boy' and even 'skater', an indicator that we could keep up with the current culture. All these labels allowed us to create distance, to relegate the student to some other incomprehensible place, beneath the 'norm' and not on 'our' side.

When the young man sat down at my table, I considered laying out my concerns first, the usual list about attendance, effort and motivation but with added comments about arriving late in his trendy car, music blaring. However, I began with the question, "Why do you think I called you in?" As our conversation unfolded, I learned that he did not like class because he couldn't find a space to let others know what was really inside. His tough exterior actually protected a softer side seeking to be known by his teacher and peers. He lacked personal confidence belied by a cocky external shell. Furthermore, he was not unmotivated. He yearned to be able to use English intelligently with Canadians, and he wanted to be a gentleman. Uncertain that I had really understood his words, I verified his view he felt class was restrictive so he was unable to express his unique individual style. He didn't want to be the same as others; he wanted to be known, hopefully understood and appreciated as him-self. And he wanted some respect. Class and school rules seemed to make this impossible so he had found other ways to be noticed. Finally, he wasn't happy.

We talked for awhile about how rebellion against the rules and regulations felt like a good way to assert individuality but was probably misunderstood. We explored how he might be more responsibly involved in and out of class where he could contribute his

special interests to the college community. We discussed how open dialogue with teachers and positive action might allow him to maintain personal integrity and individuality without being misinterpreted. At the time he seemed excited to try to make some changes, so I was glad I avoided my usual first impulse of letting him know the names we were beginning to call and of telling him how to change.   I had tried to wait and listen patiently, so he could consider his own alternatives. In reality, his promises have not materialized and he hasn't become a model student, but the conversation is not over yet. As long as I see a glimmer of the possibility of maturity and growth, I need to pay attention to the assumptions I make, the names I call and the amount of listening I do. Each time we meet I struggle to determine the line: when and how do I express my concern and uphold my responsibilities as administrator without shutting down the conversation?

Talking with this young man reminded me how much students strive to be known and understood as unique people. Unfairly, we may stereotype students into grouped identities with narrow expectations of their age, gender and ethnicity. Class behaviour is seen as the 'real' expression of a student's ability and motivation to learn. When we see students slip in and out of what is acceptable, we often wonder why they have lost motivation to improve their English and increase their knowledge and skills. When this happens, and it usually does once the honeymoon period is over, we try to name the problem.   Once identified, the problem is to be tackled with various tools and strategies. In establishing the positive and negative sides of the situation, we focus on solutions; in naming students "un/motivated", "passive/active" or "non/cooperative" learners we believe we know who we are dealing with. We are stuck in a practice of focusing on one-dimensional labels which describe students' personalities and of creating "artificial

distinctions between the language learner and the language learning context." (Pierce,

1995, p.10)   In her study on immigrant women who are language learners, Bonnie Norton

Pierce writes of "social identity as multiple, a site of struggle and changing over time".

The teen-adult years represent a particularly important time for determining self-

hood and for finding one's place in society. The process is anything but simple or static.

Even as students try to establish their individuality, they do so in terms of 'self' and 'other'.

Singular sounds like 'one' but within the idea of singular there must be the concept and reality of many; 'unique' is only possible in the presence of a multiplicity.

They do so in community, not in isolation. When that community is the second language classroom, it can be a very complicated space, one not always conducive to the messiness of emerging, conflicting

dynamic identities. "When language learners speak, they are not only exchanging

information…but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are

and how they relate to the social world." (Pierce, p. 18) This reminds me how important it

is for me as teacher and administrator to avoid labeling and naming to find solutions, but

rather to encourage open spaces for genuine though sometimes difficult, even risky,

dialogues.

"The letter of the law, the gramma of the law, the law of grammar constitutes a pretense of order, constrains imagination, closes down possibilities. We need to be open to the spirit, the pneuma, which knows no limits, revels in tangled illegibility, searches and re/searches hopefully and tirelessly for the "original plurality." (Carl Leggo, 1997, p. 3)

Ordered in rows, our grade six class was lined up neatly facing the board, ready for relays. Mr. G, whistle around his neck from a lunchtime soccer game stood poised, pointer in one hand, chalk in the other. But today was not a day when the boys got into trouble. Today was a special event. Our desks lined   *Pointer & chalk missiles were powerful instructors....*
up naturally attached to runner or rails - which sadly never really went anywhere as a train could do - and we sat in our rows, hands neatly together, backs straight, eyes forward. We had switched from our regular seats so that teams could be more even – those who were good at the game, and those who were not. Everyone was excited that the usual class routine was broken. We were ready to go places now.

The first child in each row advanced to the blackboard to write the sentence dictated by Mr. G and then sat down again. Person number two waited expectantly until the order came. "GO!" barked the teacher. Dashing to the board, the parser began underlining parts of the sentence: one line for subject, double for predicate; round brackets for adjectives and square ones for adverbs - arrows marking relationships clacked into place as dusty chalk bits flew. Once finished, the race back to seats accomplished – the first one reseated was noted and sentences were checked. Mr. G kept score. Pairs three and four, then five and six repeated the exercise, round and round the team we went, while as watchers we groaned in our seats, even rolled in the aisles, urging our mates to get the right answer. Cheering – booing.

At report card time we waited to find out the new rank order. With shuffling and sniffling we took our new places with pride or with shame ...
Once the Sentence Parsing Relays were completed, the runnered desk units, skewed in the race, were once more realigned and we sat, backs straight, eyes forward, mouths closed. Order was once more restored. Despite my personal success in this competition, I often wondered why we did the event, thinking it must have had something to do with helping us get better at language. I knew about gramma, parsing as well as anybody, but I don't recall winning any awards for writing moving or thought-provoking compositions: pneuma was much more illusive. And later, on the field, the in-class ranking would be adjusted. Winners in the Parsing Relay were often ridiculed, and kids from the back rows of the class were often number one on the field. I learned too well that in class, there was a pretense of order.

Note the dots ...they remind us that every story leads to many others.

INTERLUDE: on order

When at Centre Stage?

Centred on the Dais

In grade four, we became intermediates, old enough for a classroom on the second floor. And so we climbed the tall, wide, sweeping staircase from the east to get to our classroom. Going down, we were often tempted to slide down the shiny, round banisters, but of course this was forbidden. I recall my classroom also had a dramatic setting. The windows, high off busy Broadway Street, offered an expansive view of the North Shore Mountains, perfect for daydreaming about the fierce lions locked into the twin peaks or about adventures on the snowy Grouse Mountain terrain. A door at the back of the high-ceilinged classroom opened to a dark and steep staircase, which led to the attic where, we were told by the grade sevens, skeletal remains had been found. Skeletal remains, we wondered – perhaps an old teacher, or worse, a child disciplined for talking in class! Just in case, we were very responsive whenever the teacher demanded silence. In grade seven, I learned that the skeleton was used for biology class, from an era when grade eights still enrolled in the elementary school. Why does the real story often ruin the delightful terror of a childhood legend?

Miss C. kept a tight control on our class. She was a commanding teacher and I recall actual lessons she gave – about mica, slate and granite, about grammar, and about her world travels. I also remember her sitting behind an impressive oak desk dressed in a white jacket patterned with green leaves and a crisp white blouse, pinned at the throat. Her lips were stained bright red. The large oak desk was situated in the middle of a dais which ran the whole length of the room; our rail-bottomed desks lined up facing east towards this most important aspect of the room. If bidden, we had to step up onto the platform in order

to write on the blackboard or line up with our workbooks for correction. In reality, the dais was only a few inches higher than the rest of the classroom floor but at the time, it was an impressive stage. Miss C. was at the centre.

I have memories of watching her, imagining that one day I would be on that stage, in the centre. I already knew that I wanted to be a teacher. Up there, I would be the actress in the spotlight, and the children would be able to look up, watching me perform with all my wonderful knowledge gained, like Miss C., from years of university and travels around the world. I imagined the power of having students waiting for my direction, but at the same time somehow knew that I would be responsible to take care of them, as Miss C. was for us. She was stern but she had a passion about life and the world: her dais was her stage and she was in command. One day, I would be on my dais, too.

At the Centre

I was struck by the lure of centre stage. Performance can hide signs of quaking confidence when the audience is captive. Wouldn't teaching be similar? Despite my shyness, I could be someone else - someone who knew about the world, someone who took charge. My desire to be a teacher was connected to a personal love of learning, but also to a desire to be in control, to able to organize information in such a way that students couldn't help but learn. However, real experiences in/out of the classroom have challenged my thinking about what it means to be at the centre, to be in control. It is not as glamorous or easy as I once thought. Should a teacher be performer, hiding his/her real self? Perhaps teaching wasn't about being at the centre, about being in control. If the teacher is not at the centre, then who is? Without the teacher wielding the power to maintain order, would

there not then be chaos?   Class dynamics, the interrelationships between control and learning, are complex and not without difficulty.

Off Centre

Leo VanLier (1996) observes that teaching has so often been about control and station: experts providing the lead from a central power position.   He supports a shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred classrooms, and his catchy phrase is often repeated as teachers try to be "the guide on the side; not the sage on the stage" (p. 25).   When I first read this phrase, it resonated with me because I had not experienced teacher-centred classrooms that worked well. After trying to be one who had to know and to manage every detail from the front, I found the task increasingly impossible. In fact, in my first year of teaching, I bought high platform shoes, in memorable purple suede, so I could stand as tall as possible in my senior English classes; I spoke commandingly from the front of the room and made sure that students behaved as directed. One day, a tall grade twelve student stayed after class to give me a little advice: "Mrs. M., I hope you don't mind me saying, but you try to control us too much. Give us a little slack. You are going to be a great teacher, but just relax a little." My costume and performance didn't fool him at all, and I began to wrestle with the tension of being responsible for my classes yet not wanting to command centre stage.   The idea of a being a guide, coming alongside students to assist them in learning the curriculum, expresses a kind of freedom and encourages a posture toward more genuine learning/teaching.

If I am guide, I may or may not feel the pressure of being an expert for everything that arises in class. Even if I am only one step ahead of the class every day, students can be included in the process of learning because the teacher role is to direct students in the

direction of knowledge, rather than to be the source of all knowledge. In fact, being guide

counters another pitfall of teaching practice, especially one that tired teachers who must be

sage can fall into. After years of being in the classroom, I found it is possible to collect a

corpus of knowledge and material, filed in a steel cabinet at the front of the room. For

some teachers the same worksheet is retrieved for the third week of September, or for

February 4th, the same lecture is dusted off. However, if my teaching obligations do not

include being the sage, then I will not likely fall into such a practice. The 'on-the-stage'

trap is a double one, because with the boredom of repetition, comes the need for survival,

forcing the teacher to barricade him/herself in the central stage position and become further

removed from students and their world.

Teacher as guide may be better than teacher as sage, but both words underline

teacher control. These nouns identify only the teacher's role, and even though the

movement from sage to guide is toward more student-centred learning, the focus continues

to highlight teacher, not students. Sage and guide have the same point of departure in

teacher-learner interactions, being teacher-dominated. In contrast, when David Smith

(1999) talks of "genuine conversations", he draws our attention to both words:

'conversation' and 'genuine'. A con-versation is 'talking with', an exchange of ideas,

opinions and feelings, coming from French *converser*[13], *to live or associate with*. Two-

way and dynamic, living/associating with opens to responsibility and action on both parts.

If a dialogue is consistently precipitated from, or monitored by, one person it is not

necessarily a conversation. In the classroom, such oral activity may be an interview or drill

practice with expected responses, a one-sided lecture, with nods and grunts of affirmation,

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[13] 14th century. Via French *converser* from Latin *conversare* "to live or associate with," from *versari* "to occupy yourself," ultimately from *vertere* "to turn." (Encarta Dictionary)

or even a 'faithful' regurgitation on a test, but it is not necessarily conversation. Similarly, the listening involved in 'genuine conversation' suggests activity and responsiveness on both sides. Furthermore, 'genuine' alerts us to the importance of open and honest interaction, full of surprise and generativity, because genuineness is not manipulated or manufactured. Initiative and responsibility for give and take require mutual commitment in the communication.

The two nouns, 'sage' and 'guide' also belie a certain lack of movement so important in teaching. It is easy to see that the sage on the stage is a fairly static position, with the sage standing firm in his or her wisdom and knowledge. The student is the one who will or will not move to absorb the knowledge presented. However, the guide on the side can also be static, if the guide is expected to know (almost) everything and give the cues for a script which is at least partially already written. Perhaps the student on stage moves, perhaps not[14]. Even if the guide is working very hard to observe carefully and respond individually, the assumption is that the guide does the directing, or at least the giving of cues. In reality, what goes on in a class can be more dynamic and even troubling. The teacher is dealing with tasks and curricular expectations while interacting with many students at different stages of learning and living. The interconnections and interdependencies within the relationships in any class take us beyond the realms of sage and guide. VanLier probably did not intend to be taken so literally, but I could read, and have read, the phrase "guide on the side, not sage on the stage" without giving up my position of control. Interested in having a student-centred classroom and adopting this

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[14] If a student does not move appropriately, is that the fault of the guide's direction-giving or the student's (lack of) ability to hear and act on the cue? This leads to other messy issues – evaluation and accountability.

phrase for myself, I would still be able to keep most of the power in my corner, even though I had moved (slightly) off 'centre-stage'.

VanLier (1996) considers an "aware, autonomous and authentic teacher" (p. 35). A teacher I have worked with fits the criteria of such a teacher, and she sees herself neither solely as sage nor solely as guide. Her role in the classroom changes as an academic year progresses. First she pulls the students along, when they are feeling insecure about their place in the class and about their language and understanding. Then, as they are ready, she tries to come alongside, making suggestions and giving feedback. By the end of the year, she finds them walking together - side by side or not – but moving forward together. She describes herself as shoving them from behind, or merely watching them go, sometimes running to catch up, sometimes running alongside in the tossing of ideas, or running ahead to clear a path. From her vantage points, she is aware of both the stumblings and soarings (McKay, 1999). This progression of teaching is in no way static. It is full of motion, requiring communication and adjustment on both sides – teacher and student(s). An "authentic, aware and autonomous" teacher is not a sage on the stage, nor even a guide on the side, but perhaps a pedagogue on a path.

In Ancient Greece, the pedagogue, a slave, escorted children to school

Such teaching, such pedagogy, is not simple because it is not formulaic although it may be rhythmic. These teaching/learning experiences "are akin to ecological journeys that take us into entangled webs of living pedagogy, into ambiguously vibrant spaces of generativity and danger. Unforeseen and unexpected discursive turns awaken in us relationships that are sustained by our inquisitiveness and yet infused with risk. We enter conversations already begun ..." (Low & McKay, 2001). Such pedagogy is extremely challenging in a messy, though live-ly, place to be, full of movement and unknown.

'Encaptured'[15]

The Greek pedagogue walked alongside his charge.   Wonder-ful, captivating conversations likely took place, as well as times of mundane chatter, and of (non)reflective silence. One question might spark another, or ten, and then a soliloquized response. Perhaps the dialogue was peppered with excited interruptions. The conversation would be lively, or deadly, depending on the individuals, the topic or the day. Nonetheless, the potential existed for *edu-care*, informal and human. The slave would likely have a strong sense of responsibility; he could lose his life if anything happened to the child. Dialogue options could be endless and natural, and learning was woven into everyday living.

Comparing a teacher to a slave[16] may not be a popular thought but playing with the idea permits a picking at the threads of what it means to be teacher. 'Slave', like 'sage' or 'guide', is a noun which focuses on the teacher, not the student. The meanings of 'sage' and 'guide' carry some degree of inherent power. A slave, on the other hand, has no apparent power but considerable, though not ultimate, responsibility.   As pedagogue, where does my power lie? What is my responsibility? In recognizing limited power, I can be freed from the need to wield control or pretend to be what I am not. Teaching is not a performance and it does not have to be on centre-stage.

Perhaps the word 'slave' more accurately describes our roles and responsibilities in the classroom than we might (wish to) think. We can find ourselves slaves to various aspects of our (teaching) lives, controlled by timetables and methods, mandated criteria and methods for assessment, or pet topics and what is already stored in the filing cabinet. We

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[15]A non-standard word, 'encaptured' plays with sound/meaning relations. *en-* is *into*; *capture* is *seize*, hence enslave; *captivated* is more like *rapture*, blissful happiness, which comes from *rapt*, also a *seizing* (Encarta).
[16] 13th century. via Old French *esclave* from medieval Latin *sclavus* "Slav, captive" , because Slavic peoples were widely captured and enslaved during the Middle Ages.

might assume autonomy, based on being alone in the classroom with a group of students, but authority often intrudes from somewhere outside our sphere and control. If pedagogy means we are involved in the difficult work of being open and in right relationship with our students, instead of needing to be in charge and to be right, then we can actually have a greater degree of autonomy. A sage has a certain prestige; a guide a certain charm; but a pedagogue recalls his/her responsibility and does not rely on status.

Furthermore, what might it look like to be *captivated,* held *rapt,* by students? How would we behave if our primary activity involved interacting and working in community with those students? Such places are difficult to attain because control often seeps into the equation. If the teacher is not in control, then the students might be, which means anarchy or chaos. However, to be *captivated* does not necessarily mean to be *captured* or *seized* with one side wielding power over the other. To be *captivated* in a more update definition can mean to be *attracted.* To attract and be attracted to students entails the giving and receiving of respect and involves sharing the stage where learning takes place:

> ... living with children means living in the belly of a paradox wherein a genuine life together is made possible only in the context of an ongoing conversation which never ends yet which must be sustained for life together to go on at all ... The openness that is required is not a vacuous licentiousness but a risky, deliberate engagement full of the conflict and ambiguity by which new horizons of mutual understanding are achieved. (Smith, 1999, p. 139)

If teacher and student walk along side one another and are willing to be wrapped together in the same spaces, the possibility of community emerges. Through the community, each member can find his or her voice, where speaking and listening takes place.

Sharing the Centre

A colleague who deliberately engages in the process of pedagogy, of pulling along, walking beside and then running with her students, speaks about the mutual attraction that

develops (McKay, 1999). As she shares her on-going learning and becomes vulnerable with her students, they open up to her. She plants seeds of knowledge, language and processes, remaining watchful of her responsibility to "teach" while finding ways to encourage students to pursue learning in a collaborative way and to connect their learning to the real world. Research supports that students invest in their own learning when they are in an environment which allows them to take risks and explore their own ideas and abilities: they "claim the right to speak" (Pierce, 1995, p. 26). Ultimately, when a pedagogue really walks with students, encouraging them to speak for themselves, the path necessarily moves outside of the classroom walls and into the real world. As the students gain momentum they find themselves able to "[collapse] the boundaries between their classrooms and their communities" (Pierce, p. 26).

Each year, my colleagues and I are surprised, yet not so surprised, to see the various ways that the 'boundaries' collapsed and growth occurred. At one particular year-end, students wrote of the significant learning they had experienced in one teacher's class, lobbying for me to schedule them into her class again. These students had traversed some very challenging places in their explorations of culture and the important yet difficult call to live well in a new, complex society, so it was gratifying that they could articulate the points which made the course so meaningful to them. It was a privilege to read messages which confirmed our hope that students could and would enter genuine conversations with their teacher. Moreover, these students were keen to continue the dialogue and had the courage to address the administrative powers to speak on their own behalf.

As I too try to establish an increasingly open classroom, I am struck by the difficulty of this shared place. Some students demand that I take charge and seem to be

disdainful when I display what is perceived to be weakness. Time and effort are needed to

convince some students that they are capable of being responsible for their own learning; in

fact, unless they experience respons-ibility for learning, learning may not really take place.

Wilga M. Rivers (1983) suggests that education must be involved in processes which

prepare students to take an active part in the rapidly changing world. "Procedures must be

developed for involving students in responsible decision making and self-direction: for

building a strong foundation of self-confidence and appreciation of one's uniqueness and

for raising levels of aspiration. Originality and creative endeavor must be encouraged, as

well as the flexibility of mind that enables each person to adapt to new circumstances and

recognize new opportunities. This is not an easy task, but is most certainly an urgent one."

(pp. 68-9)

Some students seem to appreciate the opportunity to gain autonomy but require

considerable support and encouragement. Working in an environment of shared

accountability also requires that I take my own, different responsibility very seriously.

While being persistent with principles, I need to be creative with details. Awareness of my

motives influences my ability to encourage intrinsic motivation. Being open to failure and

vulnerable in success is sometimes equally difficult. A classroom which negotiates

learning requires a flexible, skeletal structure on which is fleshed out a unique embodiment

of shared learning. Finding that skeletal structure and participating in the em-bodying

process can be exhilarating yet dangerous, or at least uncomfortable. Is it not easier to rely

on a sensible system of teaching and a formed curriculum? However, if I see a curriculum

as non-static, as a living experience based on a flexible document, then I can focus on the

be-coming in a very present sense without being solely concerned about having 'arrived'.

This concurs with Duff and Uchida's work (1997): "...in education practice as in other facets of social life, identities and beliefs are co-constructed, negotiated and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language" (p. 452). In this paradigm, both student and teacher are transformed, through negotiated learning in co-constructed spaces.

Centred on English

Despite the rhetoric of "learning is my responsibility", students often expect teachers to control their use of Japanese. Interestingly enough, getting our students to use English during year one seems remarkably easy. Students are excited by the challenge to learn English in Canada, and with support from teachers, staff and peers, they push themselves to communicate in English, inside and outside the classroom. However, some time after the middle of the first year, more and more Japanese creeps into their daily practice. The reason is not clear. Perhaps it is related to how our program moves from a language-centred approach into a more content-centred learning environment, where students are expected to use English as they work with increasingly abstract concepts and vocabulary, and develop critical and creative thought. Perhaps it is related to loss of that initial gloss of quickly becoming a fluent speaker in Canada. The arduousness of this task can be overwhelming. Perhaps it is the influence of older students. Perhaps it is the professional insight of teachers understanding that forcing English Only has been challenged in current ESL research and that a bilingual approach could be more effective. Perhaps it is laziness on the part of students or lack of vigilance on the part of teachers.

Periodically, students or teachers call for a stricter policy regarding the use of Japanese. When students on such a mission visit me in my administrator role, they may begin with a phrase like, "Teachers have to make us use English more..." I try to be

patient and listen but my success in *making* students do anything has been less than

exemplary. Students often ask for "the Jar", which raises spectres for me:

> Put a quarter in the Jar
> English only, please
> Class policy
> No Japanese spoken here
> Once you cross the threshold of the door
> Switch to English – stop the Japanese
> If you don't use English, there will be a penalty
> > Put your quarter in the Jar
> > Write a paragraph, "Why I used Japanese in class"
> > Make a speech to the class
> > Put a quarter in the Jar
> > > *Speak up!*

> Ask a question!
> Make a comment!
> Come on, you must have something to say
> Right – good – keep the discussion going
> Wait – was that Japanese I just heard?
> > Put your quarter in the Jar
> > Write a paragraph, "Why I used Japanese in class"
> > Put a quarter in the Jar

> You came to learn English, not me
> Use English - no Japanese please
> If you want to speak Japanese go outside
> In this classroom we speak English
> See the sign? English Speaking Zone – don't forget
> > Put your quarter in the Jar
> > Make a speech to the class
> > Put a quarter in the Jar

> Speaking English – that's your responsibility
> I'm not the police
> Did you come to Canada to learn English?
> Then don't use Japanese
> > Put a quarter in the Jar
> > > *But wait*
> > > *Is that really Japanese, I just heard?*
> > > *Oh, you were using English, I'm sorry*
> There's an echo in here
> > > *I must be hard of hearing,*
> > > *Better not challenge*
> Put a quarter in the Jar?

Take five minutes; it's the end of the class
Fill out the chart – how much English did you use?
Really use – 50, 60, 80, 95 percent?
Good for you – not so good?
Tomorrow you can do more
It's up to you

Remember, the money's for a party
To celebrate your success
We'll have a big bash – lots of quarters
Lots of quarters – your success?
We will celebrate
Use English Only
Stop the Japanese
Put a quarter in the Jar
Put a quarter in the Jar?

Early in my career, I used the Jar only once, because I couldn't make it work. Policing the airwaves while trying to facilitate a stimulating learning environment became an impossible task. Too often, I'd stop the flow of something positive, to reprimand a student, only to discover that I had misunderstood English spoken with a Japanese cadence. I was embarrassed and the student was silenced, so the learning stalled. Furthermore, the idea of using the money for a celebration seemed counter-productive. If the students wanted a grand party, they should violate the policy more. Other penalties for using Japanese also fell flat. Speeches and paragraphs never got finished resulting in more decisions to make about how to penalize students. I began to despise pretending to have control of students' motivation and ability to sustain English use in class.

Somehow I needed to put the responsibility back into the hands of the students themselves. Different individuals and classes have responded to different methods of encouraging reasonable use of English. Personal goal setting and class policy-making, where teacher-controlled penalties are not part of the policy, have drawn attention to the

issue but effectiveness is questionable. I try to meet with students individually to discuss their personal goals and the stumbling blocks they face. Students may take more control if they become conscious of their own actions, and if they gain knowledge about second language learning processes and the importance of strategic use of the native language. Students don't always take the responsibility for their learning, but I do nothing to help the maturing process when I take away their responsibility. By giving up any illusion that I control their behaviour encourages me to consider possible, often-elusive, ever-changing ways to influence students to engage in using English to learn.

I N T E R L U D E : on tearing

Words tear at the texture of teaching[17]

A text reduced to a
normative condition
of syntactic precision

Marked by
broken English

Broken by the
mark of
English

Metonymic Moment(um):

living in the space between

Planned

(Norma *l* unacy)

Unplanned

Obedient, sterile,
still[18]

In the midst of such potentially dusty and deadened talk,
new life interrupts,
causing a rupture
right in the middle of things.[19]

Reading as dismemberment [20]

Two Conversations[21]

How will you learn?	Are you comfortable with others (more/less)?
By myself.	Less comfortable...
Can you learn from others?	Can you learn from others?
I prefer to work alone.	*reluctant affirmative nod*
Can I learn from you?	Can they learn from you?
No, you are the teacher.	I will not share.

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[17] Palulis & Low, 2001, p. 49
[18] Palulis & Low, 2000, p. 73
[19] Jardine, 1992, p. 120
[20] Wolfreys, 2000, p. ix
[21] Low & McKay, 2000, p. 67

Why the Round Table?

What Shapes the Table?

I have sat at many desks in the seasons of my learning. In the early days we had desks attached to runners, linearly directed to the front of the classroom. Caressing the worn rails with my toes, I somehow felt safe - felt that I was going somewhere, whether positioned at the caboose end or the engine position of a row, organized by alphabetical order, academic rank or preference. In high school freestanding desk-chair units could be arranged in various configurations, although they were usually lined up facing the front. Long, solid rectangular tables with benches or stools in labs and art rooms were conducive to various manual tasks. Later, when I first taught high school, I came across other parallelogram variations designed to promote flexible seating arrangements.

The only round table I remember was in Miss R's grade two class, where a small table sat in one corner for quiet visits when we were finished our regular work. In actual fact, it was probably a small square one, but in my memory I always think of that particular table as round, maybe because it opened up my world in ways I could never have imagined. Then one day not so long ago, I revisited the idea of a 'Round Table' when faced with two resistant classes of seemingly (in)active college-aged Japanese students.

At a Round Table
What can we know/not know?
The world is flat not round
What can we say/not say?
It's hip to be square
What can we do/not do?
Ignore the boundaries
What shapes the table?
Our being there.

My teaching partner and I shared two class groups in two separate courses, in which we designed task-based work to integrate themes of political, social and communication systems. We were confounded when students seemed unpredictably energetic or lethargic,

interested or bored. We didn't know if the problem lay with interpersonal relationships, course curriculum/implementation or something else. We struggled to understand their perspectives and get them out of 'their squared spaces', and to get out of ours. One day, in an impromptu hallway discussion, my partner and I decided to try a 'Round Table'.

We arranged eight rectangular tables in an ovalish formation, roughly approximating our imaginings of King Arthur's Round Table, but we were unsure of what would happen - a bloody confrontation perhaps? We pointed out that there was no 'head' or 'foot' at the table: all invited had an equal voice. We explained that this style of discussion was something new to us and that we were interested to try this formation to better understand differing perspectives. In addition, we said we would listen to take notes but not speak, since our roles might create a power imbalance. Why they believed that we truly wanted to hear their voices is a mystery; this kind of class management was not typical in Japan, but not necessarily typical in North America either. There was silence before words began to flow. My partner and I sat on the edges of the table arrangement, nodding and smiling, fighting within ourselves not to speak. With some faltering – perhaps out of frustration or with an eye on the clock - students began to name their complaints and concerns. Once a point was made, others answered and responded, disagreeing and agreeing amongst themselves. Conversation between 16 students moved around the table.

I remember being surprised by what I heard; I was even more surprised to discover my own assumptions of what they did not/know and did not/like in the classes. They seemed puzzled that we did not try to teach them or stop them, even when they said something negative. It was an exhausting though insightful time. Resisting my own strong urge to run away and hide, we thanked them for their input. We had the weekend to

consider all that was said. By Monday, some adjustments to class planning and implementation were underway and from then on the year progressed, step by step, as our classes moved into a deeper, though not always easy, relationship. We followed up with other 'democratic' formats. However, we shared a strong memory of that first Round Table where voices tentatively began to emerge.

Lived Curriculum

We were dwelling in the somewhat scary place "between two curricula: curriculum-as-plan and the lived curriculum" (Aoki, 1993, p. 257); stalled in the midst of implementing the course plans, we looked for ways to be relevant in our teaching/learning. Not surprisingly, the idea of a round table discussion emerged from the planned curriculum with its language focus on oral skills development and content focus on personal and social issues. Students were practicing discussion skills while learning the difference between having an opinion and a perspective, so the concept of a Round Table was not out of place. However, it had had no prior place on a page of our curriculum documents.

In retrospect, we could see how the Round Table facilitated unique experimentation and implementation of curriculum plans. The course required students to consider political systems and power, and the round table became a useful vehicle for playing out one democratic model. For topics of personal power and empowerment, the idea of one having a voice and exercising one's voice could be experienced, imperfectly but with some realism. The college mandate included assisting students to improve their general communication skills. By providing a different venue for both planned and extemporaneous public speaking through role-play and discussion, students were challenged to think critically and creatively as they struggled to communicate effectively in public in English. Students surprised

themselves by their efforts to present and discuss seriously complex issues in a real-life situation. Confidence, a difficult but important characteristic of a second-language learner, could be nurtured through difficulty.

After the Round Table discussions took us off the curriculum pages, we continued to innovate, creating connections between course objectives and learning activities. As an aside, the Round Table, though added into the curriculum resources, was not used again, because new teachers and new students went in other directions. For us in that year, however, we experienced a rich time, as teachers and students journeyed through a curricular landscape (Aoki, 1993, p. 255) seeking to have genuine conversations (Smith, 1999, p. 9) which authenticated learning. Near the end of the school year we developed a unit for students to participate in their own Town Hall meetings. The class was divided into two parts, each half role-playing a side, alternating as 'council members' and 'citizens'. The council listened to issues of concern prepared by the citizen groups. Initially invited to create a more public atmosphere, college personnel came to sit in the 'gallery'. However, the students communicated so effectively on several issues of college-wide concern that follow-up sessions precipitated invitations to key guests who came into class to give information from the college-side and to participate in further discussions.

The somewhat simple interactive task provided another important opportunity for students to experience exercising the rights and responsibilities of having a voice in a community. When these students moved into their senior years of studies, they became actively involved in their own education process, actually pushing administration and teachers to helping them deal with issues and concerns. The student association designated liaisons to communicate with college personnel and the learning continues off the page, and

outside of the classroom. Several years later, the round table continues through student

government, and I must grow because the voices continue to challenge what we say and do.

Sharing Curriculum

Following my year in that classroom, one student asked me, as academic director,

to work with a small committee on academic issues. The committee wanted to continue

exercising their voices and influencing the power systems within the college. Our first

joint venture was to create process for conflict resolution. The product was a two-page

information sheet which outlined the policy, suggested a step-by-step process, and provided

language structures to aid the communication. Surveys were conducted from which issues

were prioritized and dealt with by ad hoc committee members. Students offered help and

expressed a pride in being part of the college: Students provided leadership with younger

students and actively promoted program initiatives. That initial fledgling committee

established itself as one option for stimulating discussion between students and the college.

Although the 'committee' actually began as only one student, and sometimes functioned

with one main participant, I found myself drawn into a partnership of learning in my office

which has continued to stimulate my imagining what is possible when we open ourselves to

working alongside students in and out of the classroom spaces.

This experience with the Round Table, and the subsequent visits to variations of

that pedagogic space, has been shaping and re-shaping me in profound ways. VanLier

(1996) suggests that, "seeing the curriculum as a theory of practice, and incorporating a

dimension of research in one's teaching, is one way to transform the notion of

professionalism from an authority-based one into a research-based one" (p. 28). As I re-

read the pedagogic moments of the Round Table[22], I find my personal theory of practice is

constantly under review. After encounters with students experimenting to voice their ideas,

I think and re-think my own ideas of what it means to learn and to educate: I have a

responsibility to be teacher, but not the right to impose only my learning. I have a

responsibility to respond to student needs and to find effective ways to facilitate the

learning; I do not have the right to make assumptions that I will be able to find a package

that works all ways, or will always work. Therefore, I seek to acquire an increasingly

learner-based professionalism. This means my developing into "an aware, autonomous and

authentic teacher", which involves listening keenly, reflecting on ideas and solutions in

multiple places and spaces, being open to change, and "facilitating learning…not

simplifying tasks" (p. 35). This means sharing a lived curriculum, sharing learning itself.

Generativity of Living Curriculum

In the year after our first "Round Table", and when several serious issues surfaced,

some students proposed that we have an all-college Round Table. They had not forgotten

their second year experiences. Student leaders canvassed student opinion on various

topics; faculty and staff prepared concerns. This was no impromptu meeting but the

purposes were similar to that first venture. This time, the table was larger and decidedly

square, with a rather messy array of extra tables stuck in the middle. However, we did not

need a physically roundish table to stimulate lively discussion. A gallery for observers was

created with a rim of chairs. The 18 participates included students from all years, as well as

teachers and staff. We represented multi-cultures – Japanese and Canadian, teacher and

student, older and younger, male and female, 'powerful' and 'powerless'.

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[22] See McKay, 2003.

Following the Round Table where students, faculty and staff talked and listened, we are now "working on the side of true generativity even while in the midst of what we do not fully understand" (Smith, 173). Unsure of what will eventually emerge, the various actions are forming and in-forming my understanding of the kind of pedagogical space I want to participate in, as teacher and/or administrator.

Hybrid Places

As I re-turn to the first Round Table experience, I try to recall what I heard and experienced. Therefore, each time I look at the minutes and listen to my inner tape-recorder, I re-collect the pieces in different combinations. I also reflect on how I have been/am being re-constituted because of that event. My sense of being teacher, being me, is changing. I identify differently with my students and colleagues because of this experience. Hopefully I will re-member to seek to "abandon the position of the 'one who knows', recognizing…that [my] own learning is never, and never will be complete," and to seek to "question the ground upon which [I] stand" (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 80, 81).

Personal, as well corporate/cultural identity is not an isolated, absolute and static identity. Rather identity is self/other and Kondo, quoted in Aoki (1998), says it "…is not a fixed 'thing': it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available meanings and the open-ended, power-laden enactments of those meanings in everyday situations" (p. 6). The negotiations and enactments in everyday situations happen in relationship and in community. The interactions create new possibilities, create difficulties, and lead us into hybrid spaces.

Homi Bhabha (1990) suggests that his Third Space is actually hybridity, emerging through the genealogy of difference: in that "productive space of the construction of culture

as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness" (p. 209) and within the concept of translation: in that "meaning is constructed across the bar of difference and separation between the signifier and the signified" (p. 210). He asserts that "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges" (p. 211), hence the 'Third Space'. Trinh Minh-ha (1992) talks of a hybrid place, a place where "dominated and marginalized people have been socialized to see always more than their own point of view...saying at least two, three things at a time" (p. 140).

For me, our squared off Round Table was/is a hybrid space. Originally, I began with an 'Arthurian', western model in order to bring some kind of order to my understanding of student perspectives and to my standard of tolerable behaviours. In desiring such order, I had colonializing purposes which I justified because I was the authority, responsible for behavioural order and educational progress in my class room. What happened during the Round Table is that new possibilities were generated: the space became something other than we planned or expected. It was a hybrid space. We did not have control over the effects on each other and the learning which took place. Things were said with multiple meanings, and understanding was partial but something significant took place. For some, the memory is long gone, but for others, the second round of Round Table discussions one year later occurred due to memory traces of shared experience in that hybrid space.

Trinh Minh-ha (1992) suggests that a hybrid place is an edgy place – a rubbing, to smooth and to chafe, border space. However, because of the doubling of this space, it is both an edge and a middle, an end and a beginning – an outer edge of the known, full of the comfortable and the popular but smack in the middle of a threshold opening to an unknown, full of adventure and possibilities/difficulties. I am intrigued by this image because

marginalized people find themselves precisely in the margins – at the edges and borders, pushed out of the centre.   If they are/I am not open to hybridity, this space is an unwelcome one; but if they are/I am open to dwell in this hybrid place, possibilities tremble.

Of course, a complication is that most students 'automatically' assume a marginalized position or the institution and/or authority figure push them there. This is precisely why I need to pay attention to the 'messiness' of a middle space - for the students as well as for me. As Marylin Low and Pat Palulis (1999) point out, "Teaching becomes a messy Metonymic site of intertextuality, a site where the subjectivities of the characters involved collide, disperse and co-emerge as a bricolage of narratives" (p. 68).   If we try to keep order our students presume that they must be ordered, then we assume that teaching can be neat , and our meanings full of clarity. However, Doug Aoki (2000) would say "that teaching conceived as the translation of complex materials into plain language is actually a refusal to teach" (p. 2). Teaching, then, belongs in a messy place, a hybrid space.

The Round Table is potentially a neat figuration for simple stories told and heard. However, if it is constituted as a hybrid place, the stories become interactive and interwoven, confusing and informing and conflicting.

Standing under difference

In difference we gather
Together
To understand
Apart from each other
    At first
      and
         then...
A part in each other
We stand under
To gather
Together in difference

During the Round Table discussions, and in pedagogic places, we potentially become listeners, translators and interpreters; our stories (inter)change as we speak and hear. Teacher is learner and learner is teacher. Boundaries are blurred and through our struggles to understand and be understood in difference, we may possibly recognize our hybridity. The heterogeneity is not tied to lines of ethnicity or gender, age or role; it emerges out of living out life together in, and sometimes out of, the classroom.

Community Spaces

Living and learning together is a dynamic space, full of tugs and tears. A cornerstone for the learning context and academic focus at our international college is 'community'. We teach students to consider difficulties and possibilities in a world represented through media and business as part of a global community. Students are invited to learn about safety and culture in the Canadian/Vancouver community as well as participate in their own local community. Policies and activities are described in terms of being citizens of a college community, and the Round Table has garnered a special public enactment of a community living and working together. However, in each instance, we make assumptions about definitions of this (in)tangible we call community.

Ted Aoki (1999b) comments, "I see inscribed in the word *community*, the words *common* and *unity*, which I sense are prevailing signifiers in articulating the conventional imaginary of community" (p. 31). He also says that in Canada, community has been constituted as "a totality that in its heterogeneity exists some kind of homogeneity, a unity that is comm/unity" (p. 30). We pride ourselves on being a mosaic of ethnicities, as compared to the 'melting pot' of the USA[23], by which we mean that Canada is some unified

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[23] In fact, neither metaphor respects the people it con/sub-sumes. Both of these images ignore possible contributions of, and in fact de-humanize, citizens/residents from various (non)ethnic cultures.

whole made up of diverse and, apparently, equally valued/able "whole parts".   Homi Bhaba

(1990) criticizes the focus on diversity because it permits us to categorize and label people

for what he calls "a land of musee imaginaire" (p. 208). The heart of this critique is that

diversity 'thingifies' peoples and cultures – relegating their presence to some assumed,

definable and usually stereotypical entity.   When we label ourselves, for example as ethnic

or gendered, the label both prevents and protects us from being human and real. In a crisis,

however, that label may in/pro-trude, causing new difficulties or possibilities.

Disgrace?

After the all-college Round Table, I spoke with a young woman who felt conflicted;

she talked of her disgrace and fear that a relationship might be broken because she, a younger

woman, had spoken out publicly against an older male student defending their mutual friend.

Speaking becoming no longer a Thing defined

Young man speaking
With gentle voice, passion underlying
Heart concerned
For injustice - inflicted on a friend
Determined to have hurt community.

What small deed
What small ripple
What huge consequence   For what?

Young woman speaking
With passionate voice, gentleness overcoming
Heart concerned
For community – infected by a friend
Determined to have hurt hearts

What small consequence
What small community
What huge need   For safety

What disgrace?

The squared-off Round Table had been pronounced for her/us a place for voices – a safe,

communal space to break out of the stereotypes which had previously both protected and

prevented her/us from having a voice. She was experiencing the pleasure and the terror of breaking expectations. She was experiencing a doubling, which Doug Aoki (1996) refers to when he discusses the legislation of culture through normality, "...the thing of culture is produced by...two laws: the always explicit law of the external boundary which distinguishes it from other cultures, and the often implicit one of the internal boundary, which discriminates between its normal and its deviant" (p. 405). She had countered her cultural upbringing and had acted as a deviant, refusing to personally be 'thingified' - a troublesome, scary experience. She had gone against her ethnic, gendered community to participate in the community of the Round Table.

Homi Bhabha (1990) suggests that "the postcolonial perspective forces us to rethink the profound limitations of a consensual and collusive 'liberal' sense of community. It insists that cultural and political identity is constructed through a process of othering" (p. 219). The stereotypes are particularly harmful then because they can be static, dead. They preclude opportunities for growth or change. This idea is consistent with 'self and other' in the context of personal identity. The idea is relevant to the colonized and the colonizer. One might say that my organization, in fact not unlike any educational institution, did/does participate in a kind of colonization process. We have sought to indoctrinate students to accept our terms on which our community exists and functions. As I re-consider my view coming from my Round Table 'corner', I wonder how to enter a post-colonial era, when/ where I no longer seek to communalize and harmonize the diversities, but rather foster a perspective of difference, as the "cultural incommensurability and antagonism that (his) notion of cultural difference attempts to develop" (Bhabha, p. 219). The process involves an openness to being 'othered' and to helping others to be 'othered' within a community.

Table Shapes

A round table allows many to join the circle; all eyes can connect; with no head position; talk can flow smoothly and rapidly. A round table engenders egalitarian and collegial relationships. "This dynamic conversational space has profoundly affected my understanding of pedagogy. The space is fraught with difficulty, full of terrors and surprises, but the potential for generativity and genuine learning – perhaps primarily for me – leads me to continue dwelling there" (McKay, 2002).

When I encourage cooperative learning tasks and work to facilitate regular conversations and discussions, we can manage with the rectangular tables available. It is not the physical shape of the table that is important but rather what happens there. If genuine, risky conversations can occur as tentative explorations unfold, then the world is opened up to generative possibilities. Learning at this kind of table, whatever its shape, shapes teacher/students and the learner/teacher. (Inter)personal dialogue is not anticipated or duplicated, because we find ourselves in the very middle of "dealing creatively with the relation between our rationalized conceptual systems and the emerging uniqueness of life as it presents itself in the lives of our students" (Smith 1999, pp. 8-9). Transformative pedagogic spaces encourage participants to struggle to be and to become. Rather than a sterile passing back and forth of self-contained units of knowledge and thought, learning occurs in the 'humus' of human interaction with the connections between episodes of stimulus and response existing as undeterminable potentialities, (un)known and (un)knowable.

In the spontaneity of the interactive moments multiple voices join together, from minds and souls struggling to understand and be understood. A (con)vergence takes place,

a kind of meeting of teacher/learner and learner/teacher on (un)common ground.   The

visible may be the expected role relationship of teacher and learner, but what could occur is

a dynamic and precarious exploratory process of telling and tearing, searching and losing.

Often we don't allow ourselves as teachers to dwell on the verge of such spaces and yet we

urge reticent students to stand in such places. Sometimes students willingly stand in that

place waiting for us to join them but we do not come.

The (e)merging and (con)verging places challenge us to dwell there with our

experience and our humanity. We become listeners, translators and interpreters of our

cultures and ourselves when we are open to genuine conversations. Our stories merge and

interchange as we speak and listen. Teacher is learner, and learner is teacher. Boundaries

are blurred and through our struggles we seek to understand and be understood in

difference. Through living and learning together, we are transformed into becoming our

emerging human selves, and at the same time, we loosen ties to definitions based on age or

role, ethnicity or gender. Furthermore, we are never 'finished' which suggests further

difficulties and generative possibilities. Situated in a special learning community which is

being constituted as a hybrid space means that discussions at any table, round or square,

with any students, struggling with identities shaped as self/other, will continue to

transform.

[READING WORKS THE TEXT– ALWAYS ALREADY ON THE WAY TO WRITING]

Seeking shelter in the words of author(itie)s
– now dis/coursing through a frame –
frames me

I have just a little voice so the shelter is welcomed
And yet I want to be new, to ad/venture.
Who will I be in this writing? Who will frame me? Where will I go?

Tearing down and reconstructing togetherness – start with the humus – with the lived experience not with the frame. We build again slowly out from the earth. Through the pain of writing/reading together, riding the abyss, standing at the edge of the chasm, staying at the site of struggle, a spark ignites…

It is so hard to go to the edges, to look at what blinds, what binds.
I like to be safe: to fix, make simple, not know.
And yet…I am drawn out to ride.

We write our texts
– our reading –
always already entangled in the other

There is no such thing as my story.
There is my memory…but you are always there.

I think this works. I don't know anymore. Writing on and off the page.

Can I see…Can I know
When the page is b(l)inding

[READING HAS NO END BUT IS ALWAYS TO-COME AS WORK OF THE OTHER]

(left margin, vertical) [READING IS NEVER FINISHED] [READING ALWAYS TAKES TIME]

(right margin, vertical) [READING LISTENS]   [READING SETS THE TEXT TO WORK]

I N T E R L U D E: on reading/writing

Excerpts from Palulis & Low, 2001, *with my interactions.* 'Frame' quotations from Wolfreys, 2000.

Where is Listening?

Teachable Moments

On family car trips, when our children were young I took it upon myself to keep a resource book handy so I could explain the history, relate a quaint story or expound a little known fact about places we passed by.   As a teacher on leave from school to be at home with the children, I enjoyed the mobile classroom. Here was an opportunity to teach. My mission during the long hours on the road was to stimulate learning, distract the children from boredom and fill the gaps of quiet.

I honed my techniques of making games, giving mini-lectures and asking questions to stimulate the children's sense of wonder:

> What can you learn from…?
> What might be an explanation for..?
> Let's imagine ourselves…?
> What would you do if…?
> When is the best….?
> How should you?
> When could?
> Why does?
> What is?
> Who?

The front passenger seat gave me an advantageous view of what lay ahead, and the landscape provided endless topics to expand upon. There was a captive, though not always captivated, audience in the back seat. What more did a teacher-mother need?

Some years later, with one eye on the road and one eye on the commotion in the back seat, my husband calmly stopped me in mid-lecture, and the gist of the conversation went something like this:

Ah, your voice is getting louder; maybe now isn't the best time to…
But I just wanted to tell them about…
Did you hear what N was trying to say?

No, but I just want to be sure he saw...
Yeah, but now might not be a good time. Not every moment is a teachable moment.
What?
Sometimes it's better to listen. Not *every* moment is an opportunity for you to teach.

So I stopped to listen to myself, and thought about what I was trying to do. In my desire to

teach the children, I concentrated on what I was doing and was not available to listen or

understand what they wanted or needed.

The habit of talking to teach continues to be hard to break, especially when the

motive is good intentions. Teachable moments are for genuine dialogues, with to-and-fro

movement, so in tangled up, messy, negotiated conversations, where is listening?

Trapped into Talking

In the teaching process, the roles of talking and listening were traditionally narrow:

teachers talk and students listen. Furthermore, whenever curriculums need to be carved to

the basics and implemented quickly, that model seems efficient. However, David Jardine

(1998) points out that when "the living character of education is rendered by a desire for

clarity and distinctness, all that remains is what can be objectively documented without

difficulty and ambiguity" then, in fact, "we render [students] into strange and silent objects

which require of us only management, manipulation, and objective information and

(ac)countability" (p.7). In aiming to teach in clear and simple ways, it is possible, even

necessary, to forget to listen and be caught in the talking trap. When the goal is to

accomplish a teaching point, then stopping to listen to potentially tangential ideas

apparently takes the learning off course and creates frustration. It becomes easier and more

direct for the teacher to do the talking so everyone is clear about expectations and about the

meaning of what is being taught.

In the ESL classroom, even when working in a communicative approach in order to be more student-centred, where I have developed a repertoire of techniques for facilitating student-talk, I find teacher talking is often easy to slip into as a comfortable first line of action. Still I wonder how much teacher-talk is really needed to get the student-talk going. With effort, I can question whether or not I listen enough, whether or not I attend to the students in order to better teach and learn. Students rarely challenge me directly as my family did, but they do send signals which I need to read and pay attention to.

I recall the early years of teaching, when I would prepare extra material for the specific purpose of being sure that the time was filled because students weren't encouraged to talk. If heads nodded (sleepily), then my lecture material needed to be more entertaining. In the ESL classroom, the practice of having material to fill the spaces seemed even more important, when students were so quiet, often unwilling or afraid to speak. As a teacher of non-native language learners, my desire to model spoken language lures me into talking first and often. Certainly, students need to listen to authentic speech in order to hear what sounds 'correct' in English. Still, even though their eyes glaze over when teacher-talk has gone on too long, students may be reticent to speak up on their own. However, students need to be involved in language practice and dialogue which means my listening to find effective ways of prompting and setting up meaningful practice and waiting for students to speak. It means expecting gaps and silences.

To wait for a student to answer a question or offer a comment can be painful. Sometimes only a few seconds of silence become unbearable, and the temptation is to fill in the quiet. No matter how I frame the questions, students seem to know that if they wait, I will provide the answers or talk to break the disquieting silence. Claims of running class

discussions can be somewhat overblown. The situation is improved when I ask students to talk in pairs or to write down answers to sample questions before a discussion begins. Students need time to formulate answers and are often shy to challenge others openly so it takes careful work to create situations which facilitate conversations, especially genuine dialogue, which goes beyond the banter of yes/no questions and answers. Even in the creation of what I perceive to be an open situation, the question is always there. Did the students get a chance to say what they really wanted to say? Did I listen?

Refusing to Fill the Spaces

Students' inability to risk speaking out, and possibly failing, is often contingent on many factors, only some of which are connected to linguistic or communicative competence. They are often busy judging the group atmosphere and checking their place in the group.   If I feel that I must start talking to stop the silence, I avoid noticing the social pressures on students.   By filling silent spaces with our words, we rob students of the opportunities to develop their own speaking abilities and we maintain the substratum of power-relations within the class which block individuals from participating actively.

Since the social dynamics within a(n ESL) class may put a stranglehold on students, and especially if the teacher is not watchfully listening, it is possible to miss the signals which stop students from speaking up. Recently, I encouraged a shy student to respond to a question, which turned out to be a personal response. As he spoke, he became increasingly flustered; unable to communicate his ideas verbally, his hand gestures became more animated. I tried giving positive feedback by nodding and smiling, realizing that he was actually being vulnerable in his comments. Still I was a little puzzled about his difficulty until, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a peer subtly mocking his gesturing

attempts to communicate. He was well aware of the teasing. The Japanese traditionally do not use their hands so the more the young man shook his hands to emphasize his point, the more flustered he became. He may not offer to speak out again until he is more sure of himself. How do I help change these kinds of dynamics? What right does the mocker have to destroy the shy learner's opportunities to practice and to develop? How do I encourage the shy student and influence the mocker without creating serious damage between them? Adopting a stance of watchful listening alerts me to the importance of trying to foster a safe space for students to speak and be heard but most pedagogic spaces are anything but safe and comfortable.

Opening the Gaps

In order for listening to occur, space is needed. However, in creating space for many voices and much listening, the possibility of danger lurks for teacher and for students. I may not want to hear what is spoken when space is given. The meaning of the words might be difficult to handle, or I might have to act on the new knowledge or insight shared. What I hear and understand may not match what was spoken and meant. And what do they understand from me, when they were listening across barriers of age, culture, language and gender. Furthermore, underground interactions between students themselves take place in a stratum I may not understand or even be aware of. Much is communicated, verbally and non-verbally, within my students own cultural sharing: a nod, a flick of a finger, a tone of voice are all signals which can be heard by my students but are out of my hearing range. Opening gaps for voices to be heard is complex and difficult:

Spaces created in-between presence and absence invoke chiasmatic faultlines – quaking to-and-from movements of uncertainty...where teaching becomes a messy text and here, within our daily work as teachers, nervous performatives are constituted between the 'said' and the 'unsaid'. (Low & Palulis, 2000, p. 67)

The conversations I have with students who struggle with their academic or personal lives, are especially full of uncertainties and promises, given with trepidation from both sides. Even after years of conducting appointments with various students 'at risk of failing', despite knowing that listening is important and takes time, I find myself wanting to finish the business quickly which means being trapped into talking, punctuating with wild gestures and mighty intonation. Because the temptation is to slip into talking I have begun to write at the top of my notepad, 'listen', double underlined. When I do stop to listen more carefully, the problems aren't necessarily less complex or more clearly understood but the created space, with all its messiness, becomes alive with possibilities.

In fact once aware of the importance of listening, my sense of frustration can be more poignant. Before being sensitive to the importance of listening, I remember feeling confident that, once a student left my office with head bowed down, my advice and censure would surely effect a significant change. It rarely did, especially in cases where power was the issue: my authority versus his/her desire for control. If change happened, I was successful; if there was no change, the student didn't try. However, I no longer feel so sure that my words have taken root or that I have even understood what was said to me, despite efforts to listen carefully. Sometimes the interactions end amicably; sometimes there is a sense of loss. Nonetheless, the best I can do is to offer an invitation to a humble on-going conversation where I try to listen as well as talk. The results of such conversations are rarely completely known or understood, even when I'm the one needing to change.

Movement within interactions with teacher and other, teacher and self, attest to the value of spaces in learning and the reality of gaps. I do not actually open gaps so much as acknowledge that gaps exist and then look for ways of dwelling and playing as teacher and

learner in those gap-places. Miller (2000) affirms "that play be seen as central to life and

meaning" (p. 54). He includes a wide discussion on the concept of play from

understandings ancient to modern, from "the second-third century Christian writer, Origen

of Alexandria" (p 56) to Kant and Heidegger. However, his discussion of what he learned

from the German *spielen*, which means *to play* adds a most important element to my

willingness to play in the classroom. As well as a rhythm of work and play, or the

engagement of Hermes as the playful trickster, fooling us with our understandings of what

we think we do and know, I want to include an awareness of play that is *leeway*. Miller

recounts a conversation with Gadamer where they talk about riding a bicycle. If the nuts

on the wheel axle are too tight, then the bicycle stalls and cannot move; at the same time, if

the nuts have too much play, the wheel will fall off. In S*pielraum* there is a double

meaning; play room and room for play.   Similarly in a pedagogical sense, there is always

the existence of, and a need for, play. This leeway or play happens in the gaps, the ones we

might think we are creating to keep the class from stalling as well as the ones that are

already there when movement is happening. (Miller, pp. 58-9)

Listening and Reading

In efforts to reduce confusion or disorder caused by allowing leeway or

entanglements, ESL practice often separates language learning into four basic skills, the

first two being active, the second two, passive: speaking and writing, and listening and

reading. These separations can be quite practical for teaching and testing purposes.

However, the skills are not easily delineated because each one is a dynamic and messy

conglomeration of multiple acts and awarenesses. Furthermore, any division into four

categories is arbitrary, impossible and perhaps ludic-rous because the inextricable, difficult

and delicious entanglements are to be lived with and learned in, not smoothed out and simplified.

When Wolfreys (2000) writes about *reading listening*, he focuses on the interplay between the acts and shows how important it is to resist formulaic relationships. Not that reading *is* listening, but that reading listens. He alerts me to the need for control, with leeway, of the "reading ear" (p. 99), to *hear* what is *said* through the marks and spaces, the words on the page, always knowing that what is there can only be partial. Boundaries between listeningspeakingreadingwriting become blurred. He suggests that listening is the beginning of reading and "hints at a patience, an attentiveness, as the precursor to the response which it already is ... Listening gives up the self, *I escape myself, I uproot myself* giving it over to the *chance* reception of the articulation of the other. This is, in part, reading's *incipit*[24]" (p. 98, italics and spacing the author's). As I consider this post-modern discourse, I become aware of new ways of looking at what I do when I listen, when I learn, when I teach. Those things which I thought I knew, and could hold onto, are not as clear and constant as I might wish because "...reading is never finished" (p.100). As I become open to this post-modern possibility, I am aware that learning and teaching, speakingreadingwritinglistening, are not isolatable nor ever finished.

This does not mean these acts are impossible or meaningless. Is the post-modern position so open, so relative and so messy that nothing has meaning? Wolfreys would say that there is a call for integrity and control which makes the act of reading, or listening, possible. He suggests that "reading does not listen indiscriminately but only with an ear open just wide enough" (p. 99). We pay attention to both the opening and the closing so

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[24] *Incipit* means *the first part* or *beginning*, specifically, the opening words of a text of a medieval manuscript or early printed book. (Merriam-Webster)

that the space created allows the act to actually take place. Similarly with teaching, my

role is to help create a space just open enough and wide enough so that learning can take

place. Listening is the *incipit*, the beginning, of the process of (at)tending to that space.

A pause in the conversation

Jardine (1998) writes, " one problem … is knowing when to stop in the spinning out

of implications of meaning" (p.47). From a post-modern view, perhaps the spinning will

never stop. As long as I am a learning teacher and a teaching learner, for I am both, the to-

fro-movement will not stop, the entanglements will not relax and the difficulties will not

simplify. However, there is necessarily room for pause.

'In conclusion' seems like a respectable way to end a piece of writing, especially a

thesis, but I have struggled because I am not actually making any conclusion. Perhaps

'Anti-Conclusion' would be an option, imitating Marla Morris's (2000) lead when as editor

for a volume of the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, she titled her piece "Anti-

Introduction" (p.3).   In fact, she recognized that her introduction was not really an

introduction because although it was both a *beginning* and a *beginning again*, time and

memory complicated the problem of giving title which challenged whether it was a

beginning at all. On the other hand, "Anti-conclusion" would emphasize what this writing

is not, rather than what it is. These final thought threads bring to a close a particular set of

reflections, readings and writings of my life thus far, as a learning teacher/teaching learner.

I hope to lead back to the place where I think I began, but I can never go back to that actual

time/place. However, I do return and re-call the initial invitation to continue/to join a

conversation which has no real beginning, middle or end. That invitation remains extended

to me and to anyone wanting to interact.

The writings and (re-)readings reflect the past, but mirrors are at best two-dimensional silvered surfaces shimmering and tremoring in the presence of light. Still they only give an illusion that they are showing something more. Where are the third, fourth or multi-dimensions in reflection?

Writing from a postmodern perspective, Wolfrey's (2000) explores acts of reading. Over several pages he uncovers some of the history, uses and meanings of the verb *to read*. He notes that this word goes back to Sanskrit: connected to "acts of deliberation, consideration, giving thought or attendance to, or otherwise to succeed or to accomplish". The word came to mean "being open to receiving numerous significations, a complex web of possible meanings, a skein of traces and inscriptions …". Furthermore, no reading or re-reading could ever be complete or final: "something remains, something is left behind, something is missed altogether, something other is still yet to be read". He also discusses how reading can be connected to the *reads* or entrails and intestines of a body (p. vi-viii). The visceral image is more than messy, as it recalls the connection of reading, or learning or teaching, to life in its pulsing processes. In my writing, I began with reflection, which focuses on the past; but I hope to be open to reading which is a more entangled process.

When I started out to write a tapestry of thought and narrative I knew all the threads could not be followed or tied into a finished product. Not sequenced in time nor ordered by logic, the piece allowed me to select randomly any clear and faded footprints of my pedagogical moments so I could wander down paths, wherever memories, images, feelings and ideas took me. By choosing a hermeneutic inquiry I could reflect on "difficulty, risk and ambiguity", where there is "always something left to say" and where I could even be "provocative" (Jardine, 1992, p.119). At the same time, hermeneutics called for

groundedness and humility while allowing for playful ways of exploration. Still my hidden

hope was to make some things neat at least because urges for tidiness are hard to resist.

The post-modern view informs me that a dream of pedagogical tidiness is an illusion.

Instead of tying up loose ends, I find myself with even more fraying strands to deal with,

more fragments of ideas to consider, more learning to be in the middle of.

Post-modern thinkers challenge efforts of educational practices which promote

thinking rather than thoughtfulness[25], which accept traditional models of colonialized

classroom spaces, which use fossilized rather than living curricula, which seek to simplify

and answer rather than to multiply and question, which want to begin at beginnings and end

at endings. Teaching is not simple or obvious; it is neither an art nor a science, but

something less definable. What would happen if science were taught as a humanity[26]?

Blurred Boundaries

Inscrutable shimmering sun, moon and stars
Reduced to line drawings; bare words
Only hint at the wonder
Erased by the dictates
                              by logical reasoning
                              factual proving
                              institutional realizing
                                                        to
                                             precisely, an end

What of the mystery?
What of the glimmering?
What of the glimpes, elusive, ethereal?
                              in
                    tentative wonderings
                                        tenuous graspings
                              generative developings
                                             for
                                   hopefully, the middle

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[25] Ted Aoki suggests that *thoughtfulness* is "an embodied doing and being, thought and soul embodied in oneness of the lived moment", compared to *thinking* which is a "linear path to a logical conclusion" (class handout, Lethbridge, Summer, 2000).
[26] This poem is my response to this question, posed by Ted Aoki in a class at UBC, Fall, 2001.

Avoid
Dissecting the discourses
Parsing the truths
To degrees of tight facts under lenses
Compartmentalizing differences
This bigger, that smaller
                    in
                    laughable industry
                    decaying reality
                    sub/self-serving activity

Rather to
Shift position and view afresh
Understand be/coming
Seek (not) to arrive
                with
                    humorous life-liness
            humous-filled dwelling
                    humble searching
                            for
                                eventually, the beginning

When *educare* is a journey shared in community, then where we start is not always

the beginning and where we stop is not always an end. Furthermore, so much learning

happens in the between parts, attending to multiple voices in the transformative spaces, and

the best part of getting to an end is to dis-cover what next beginning we might arrive at.

Invitation, re-called

Come, join ...

But where's the conversation?
   With voices near and distant
Noisy with difficult simplicities
(Re)-echoed entanglements
     Reflected in/out of (un)beckoned spaces

Watch the wending way
  Stepping through shards
    Of ordinary memory moments
Shiny shadowed bits
  Of multi-storied edifications
     Fragmented
     On spongy underbrush

          Violet whispers falling on white leaves
            Dis-covered traces to ends begun

Hear opposing doublets
    In play-ful gaps gaping
Evoke feeling glimpses
      Hard soft (en)trailings
Invoke fumbled imaginings
       Dark light en-chantments
Re-read fearful hope

Come dwell in
    Story tendrils
    Creeping through hollows
 Readings
    Woven with living
    Frayed with passion
For
    Watchful listening

... a conversation

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