MEMORY AND IDENTITY (DE)CONSTRUCTION:
AN A/R/TOGRAPHIC ACT OF INQUIRY

by

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ABSTRACT

This text documents an a/r/tographic act of inquiry into memory and identity (de)construction. Speaking in, through, and of images the work physically situates itself in spaces uncharted. Meaning asserts and reveals itself between words, creating an other-text which defies boundaried definitions in its resistance to be known. That which we seek to map or mark eludes us. Knowledge is displaced in its representation. It is our longing for meaning which paradoxically interferes with its own processes. Spaces (dis)lodged between borderlands (Irwin 2004) shift and elude our grasp. The work resists that which it seeks to define and erases that which it seeks to name. It calls upon us to create space for doubt and unknowing within our own longing for understanding(s).

If, as Grumet (1996) asserts "education is about a human being making sense of her life" (17) we must be aware of the ways curricular directives “do and do not stand for our experience” (19). The crisis of modernism is that we exist as fractured selves (Pinar 1996) within curricular landscapes which cut us off from our own identity (24). Pinar claims that “understanding curriculum as the revelation and construction of identity implies understanding education as a form of social psychoanalysis... (American) identity is constructed partly by denial, by maintaining fictions” (25). I view curriculum as traumatized text - that which refuses to be ‘known’ by the curriculum serves to subvert, bury and deny the
learner’s knowing. Absence of authentic dialogue creates gaps in the curricular landscape which serve to silence and partition off knowing - essentially, the learners are partitioned off from themselves.

The work calls upon us to re-imagine curriculum as the space between learner and text/image, where meaning is continually (re)(de)constructed in the fissures of lived experience. It calls upon us to dwell (Aoki 1993) in spaces of uncertainty and ambiguity – spaces for possibility. If wisdom begins in wonder (Socrates) as I believe it does, we must embrace what may be the ultimate paradox in teaching: to facilitate learning we must also be willing to facilitate unlearning.

May we, as Walt Whitman decrees, ‘ordain ourselves loos’d of limits and imaginary lines’.
# Table of Contents

**Abstract** ........................................................................................................................................ ii

**Table of Contents** ......................................................................................................................... iv

**List of Images** ................................................................................................................................. v

**Acknowledgements** ....................................................................................................................... vi

**Dedication** ...................................................................................................................................... vii

**Invitation to Reader** .................................................................................................................... viii

**Cover Image** ................................................................................................................................ 1

## Chapter 1

**Introduction** .................................................................................................................................. 2

## Chapter 2

**Textual Archive - Deconstructing an Identity: A/r/tographic Renderings of Self and Memory** ...... 11

- **Frontiers** ..................................................................................................................................... 12
- **Room with a View** ....................................................................................................................... 18
- **Hyphenated Spaces** .................................................................................................................... 22
- **Metaphoric Spores** ...................................................................................................................... 26
- **Speaking in Images** ..................................................................................................................... 31
- **A Metaphor for Teaching** ............................................................................................................ 33
- **Contained Sites** ............................................................................................................................ 36
- **Shape Shifting** ............................................................................................................................... 38
- **Of Ghosts** .................................................................................................................................... 40

## Chapter 3

**Making Meaning** ............................................................................................................................ 50

**References** .................................................................................................................................... 78
# List of Images:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Photograph, Children</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>My Hands</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Imprinting Space</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Spyrograph Illustrations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Games without Frontiers, Detail</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Games without Frontiers, Detail</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Antique Kitchen Implements</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Children Aware of Their Subject Position</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.1</td>
<td>Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores i</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.2</td>
<td>Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores ii</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.3</td>
<td>Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores iii</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.4</td>
<td>Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores iv</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9.5</td>
<td>Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores v</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Telling, Detail</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12.1</td>
<td>Data Collection, Detail</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Obscuring Sites of Trauma</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Imprinting Space, Detail</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>Self Portrait: Devil</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 16</td>
<td>Self Portrait: Ghost</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 17</td>
<td>Imprinting Space</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 18</td>
<td>Partial View, Imprinting Space, and Photograph</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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And my children too.

Figure 1.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to anyone struggling to speak out against violence and oppression. May we speak for children when we are called upon to do so.
MEMORY AND IDENTITY (De)CONSTRUCTION
AN a/r/tographic act of inquiry
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
There is a silence where hath been no sound
There is a silence where no sound may be
In the cold grave, under the deep, deep sea.

Thomas Hood (1799-1845)
This is a textual account of an a/r/tographic act of inquiry into the role memory and trauma play in the (de)construction of an identity. The text by no means provides a definitive explanation of identity construction, but offers, rather, a glimpse into ways we might possibly (re)conceive ourselves as educators. My goal is to contribute to research in the field of anti-oppressive education, specifically to challenge curricular practices which fail to acknowledge the complexity and sophistication of the learner. By questioning what it means to know it is my hope that we gain greater insight into what it means to teach.

Irwin (2004) conceptualizes a/r/tography as living inquiry which engages artist-researcher-teachers in hybrid and hyphenated acts of knowing, doing and making. Metissage is used as a metaphor for the (dis)located positionalities in which inquiry is performed. It is also a metaphor for the very processes and products that are created and used within such activity (Irwin, 2004). A/r/tographic processes invoke and provoke dialogic exchange between destabilized positions of knowing and being. As artist/researcher/teacher I am ever aware of my hyphenated existence. Knowing streams through me, then shifts and moves out of me like a restless child. Even more striking is the phenomenological manner in which products of such processes continue to resituate themselves in our consciousness. Meaning shifts along with the lenses we bring to each viewing.
I am primarily concerned with connections between memory and identity in this work, although it may be helpful to provide a brief overview of theory surrounding the concept of self and identity. There are not only multiple theories which speak to the concept of self, but the term is also used in multiple ways, often interchangeably with the term ‘identity,’ and at times located in its hyphenation, each carrying a set of expectations and beliefs about its nature. General consensus in western scholarship asserts that a self is evidenced by first-person thoughts. An enduring philosophical dilemma pervades, however; this dilemma lies in the simultaneous status of self seen as both subject and object of awareness (Kihlstrom, et al., 2003). Who is the ‘I’ who perceives ‘me’? One might agree with Allport (1961) who claims that it is much easier to feel the self than to define it. Eastern philosophical thought posits that self is at all times constructed, and hence identity a construct thereof. Seen as a construct of mind, self and/or identity are not interpreted to exist prior to experience or stimuli.

Locke was the first western theorist to identify and articulate a connection between memory and identity in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690, Book II, Chapter 27). Where Descartes (1641) locates the self in the immediate conscious experience of thinking, Locke (1690) locates identity in the extension of consciousness backward in time (Kihlstrom, et al., 2003, 71). Locke’s theory would explain why an amnesiac loses a sense of self along with his or her memory. In contrast to the
Cartesian self of immediate experience, Locke determines that knowledge is derived as a result of experiences of sensation and reflection. Kihlstrom, et al., interpret this to mean that "without the capacity to record such experiences in memory, there can be no self - just an organism responding reflectively to environmental stimuli" (2003, 71).

Locke's ideas were later supported by Hume. Although Locke's empirical view of the self-as-memory is based on our ability to reproduce experiences from memory, Hume extends this notion to say that it is our ability to reconstruct our experiences in memory, which further constitute the self (72 in Kihlstrom, et al.). Although Freud (1916-1917/1963) agreed with the basic premise of Locke's theory, he asserted that memories stored in the unconscious played a more significant role in the development of a self.

Klein (2001) extends the notion that identity is derived from memory arguing that self is "one's memory of oneself" (71 in Kihlstrom, et al.). This argument positions self as both subject and object. In his Treatise of Human Nature (1739-1740, Book 1, Part 4, Section 6) Hume affirms the epistemological connection between memory and identity. He claims the role of memory is to permit us to understand causal relations between events. Kihlstrom et al. extend this thinking to include use of personal narrative which speaks to events which must have occurred, given what one does remember (2003, 72).
Traumatic experiences which are initially 'blocked' from cognitive memory, and are therefore initially 'unknown' to the self, play an extremely significant role in the construction of identity(ies). Such memory is never totally absent, but rather, displaced. Knowing is therefore established within its own displacement. It asserts itself within the performativity of displacement and dissociation. It is these sites of awkwardness, where 'not knowing' becomes a form of knowing in and of itself, that I am particularly interested in, and specifically, how our understanding of such can inform our research and teaching practices. I view curriculum as traumatized text when it fails to acknowledge the learner in her/his fullness of being and subsequently prevents the learner from knowing herself/himself fully.

My a/r/tographic research exposes a multiplicity of selves, forever kinetic in their (de)construction. While it is possible to chronicle a linear timeline of significant events in my life (this is how we are taught to understand our 'unfolding') my experience of self is anything but linear. The metaphor I use here - to unfold - implies there is an essentiality to be unwrapped, revealed or discovered. Such thinking, however, limits our understanding of what it means to be a self, and subsequently a learner, a researcher, an artist, a teacher.... While it is possible to create this linear timeline of significant life events, it is the import of such which is timelessly reconstructed and resituated in our experience of self. Identities are born of experience and are at all times contextually situated in their performance. If we are both subject and object of awareness, we are also simultaneously constructing and constructed.
Cognitive-psychologist, Marya Schechtman (1994) argues that autobiographical memory does not provide simple connections between discrete past and present moments of consciousness, as suggested by some 'psychological continuity' theories of personal identity. It is rather by summarizing, constructing, interpreting and condensing life experiences, often smoothing over the boundaries between different moments in our lives, that autobiographical memory produces any coherent narrative sense of personal past. She contends that issues of contextuality must inform any discussion of memory and identity. Sutton (2004) points to a need for an interdisciplinary approach to any discussion held between philosophers, cognitive psychologists, and cognitive anthropologists on the subject. Hardcastle (1996) challenges the underlying assumptions incorporated in domain specific research traditions, including developmental psychology, clinical neuropsychology, animal neurobiology and experimental cognitive psychology.

Increased recognition of the context-dependent nature of memory has seen a shift toward connectionist accounts which include socio-cultural perspectives that assert a self is constructed within the culture it resides in (Stryker 1980). If the core of selfhood is its ability to reflect upon this reciprocity (Mead, 1934; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stets & Burke, 2003) identity is located within processes of responding to, reflecting upon and negotiating meaning. It is critical to note however that the constructed self is not only subjected to sociocultural processes of naming and assignation, but also to exclusion from sociocultural normative processes. The demand for an individual self to perform in
multiple ways lends itself to the creation of unfixed identities. Fixated rather, it buries and lies buried within the gaps and ruptures of its boundaried positionality. The unconscious is seen as the repository of that which is unspeakable, unintelligible and incredible.

Smith (1993) looks to autobiography as an act of emancipatory politics, a manifesto which directly engages:

the cultural construction of identities and their sanctioned and legitimated performances, engaging the ideological systems pressing specific identities on specific persons. It takes a public stand on behalf of purposeful deflections, intervening in oppressive identity performances, troubling culturally authorized fictions (437).

She explores issues of performativity in autobiography (1995) challenging the notion that an intrinsic narrative coherence exists pre-disclosure and that a self-identity emerges from a specific psychic interiority (108). If all personal narrative is contextually situated, it follows that radically divergent narratives will perform in a variety of contexts. The self is subject to external processes of normalizing, or as Butler refers to, “rules that govern intelligible identity” (1990, 145) which must conform to “cultural affirmations of a narrative 'self' (Smith 1995, 109). Butler argues that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results (1990, 24-25). She
asserts that the cultural normative imperatives produce “necessary failures, a variety of incoherence configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are generated” (1990, 145).

**BLURRING BOUNDARIES**

**BETWEEN INTERNAL COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS**

**AND EXTERNAL (CULTURAL) REPRESENTATIONS OF MEMORY.**

*Necessary failures.*
CHAPTER 2

TEXTUAL ARCHIVE

(DE)CONSTRUCTING AN IDENTITY:
A/R/TOGRAPHIC RENDERINGS OF SELF AND MEMORY
FRONTIERS

I can think of no greater thrill than to discover art as it reveals itself in the making. This work began when I was cleaning out a closet of toys in one of my children's bedrooms. No, it began long before that. When I was a child, actually. My world lit up when I opened up a Spirograph set for Christmas one year. The box contained a set of plastic, serrated and inter-connected discs which, when aligned correctly, allowed one to create magnificent spiral graphic designs with the red, blue or green fine pens provided. As long as the pen didn't slip I could make perfect and lovely geometric designs. It took some concentration and a steady hand, but when well executed they were perfectly exquisite.

Figure 4. Spirograph Drawings.
Spirograph is a trademark of Hasbro Inc. The geometric drawing toy was invented by Denys Fisher who first exhibited it in 1965. The set of plastic gears are used to produce mathematical curves known as hypotrochoids and epicycloids. Hypotrochoids are generated by a fixed point on a circle rolling inside a fixed circle. An epicycloid is created when a fixed point on a circle rotates around the exterior of another circle. Weisstein, Eric W. "Spirograph." From MathWorld A Wolfram Web Resource. http://mathworld.wolfram.com/Spirograph.html 1999 - 2006.
Now, I wasn’t one for board games, but I loved the contents of the 1970’s Parker Brothers game called *Masterpiece*. I don’t think it even mattered if I actually played the game. I would take the art images out one at a time just to look at them. I could play curator, connoisseur, or would-be artist for hours on end.

Grandpa and Dad took us out to practice shooting with the rifles. They would set up tin cans for us to shoot down. I was 7.

I did get a chance to paint. Paint by numbers, that is. The kits would come home... boards with images of horses, ranches, and mountain scenes. Kittens and puppies, too. The trouble is, the little tubs of paint and horrifically flattened brushes were so hard to work with, especially when you were supposed to stay in the lines. When I stumbled upon a *paint-by-numbers* set at a garage sale about a year ago, I laid down a dollar for it to show the kids. They wanted to try it.

We slept in rooms with guns.
The kids each chose a side of the painting to work on. Meticulously, they worked from the outer edges inward, almost like you would a jigsaw puzzle. I think it gave them a sense of confidence, albeit a false one, about their abilities to paint perfectly. The guidelines were simple. Stay inside the lines.

I was a little girl shooting at tin cans with a rifle, in a white undershirt, jeans and rubber boots.

Figure 5. *Games without Frontiers* Acrylic on ‘Paint by Number’ board, hand painted by artist/author’s children. Plastic toys and figurines. 2006.
I collect visual artefacts - signs and signifiers of culture. When I came upon a plastic set of miniature cowboys and Indians I had to buy it to show my children. *This is what we played with when I was a child. I was always an Indian.* The set had been stored in my son's closet along with other collector's items found at garage sales. An old hockey set, the kind my brother and I played with until it got cold enough to make our own ice rink in the back yard. Red line, blue line, we poured paint onto the surface and then built additional layers of ice on top of that. You knew spring was coming when the ice began to melt and the red and blue paint blurred itself into slush. In summer time, forts were constructed. Bombs were made with prickles stuck in wrinkly fruit fallen from trees. Burrs were shot out of slingshots made from forked branches. I was always the Indian evading capture. Barefoot. Saving a bird with a broken wing. I yelled at men cutting tree limbs: *How would you feel if someone came along and cut your arms off?*

*Games without Frontiers* explores a conceptual underpinning inherent in many children's games - the culturally saturated imperative to divide and conquer. Historically, the term *frontier* has been used to refer to something which is meant to be conquered, or at the very least, controlled. Its territory may be marked by lines on a map. It may have also taken on an abstract quality, such as wilderness in need of taming. Or draining its natural resources. A frontier is often a place inhabited by an 'other' who possesses some defect of character or deficiency of mind. I want to imagine a world where children are invited to rest in intertextual spaces which cannot be
conquered, captured, overtaken or overthrown. A place where they feel safe enough to embrace contradiction and uncertainty. To accept difference so that they may live differently.

Figure 6. *Games without Frontiers* Detail. Acrylic on ‘Paint by Number’ board, hand painted by artist/author’s children. Plastic toys and figurines. 2006.
Which knowledge constructs are affirmed by curriculum?

Which ones are denied?
ROOM WITH A VIEW

As an artist and academic the last thing I ever wanted to be was chained to a kitchen the way my grandmother was. I would rage against such imprisonment by moving into the kitchen-space with my books, art work and supplies, my collection of artefacts, my collection of seed pods.... I would ensure there was only a fraction of counter space available to prepare food upon. Flour bins became home to found objects destined for art work. Magazine and newspaper articles spread out across counter tops. Yes, I would assert myself in this space called kitchen. My presence would displace its gender bound utilitarianism. The weight of my presence spilled over onto the kitchen table as well. Again, academic books, feminist literature, art work, archives of visual images took over. For the sake of my children, I cleared two spaces large enough for a placemat so they could eat.

I happened to describe this scene to Carl Leggo once. He suggested that acts of resistance often serve to recreate that which the artist sets out to resist in the first place. What could he possibly mean? My grandmother was never able to sit down at her kitchen table – she served others all day long. Surely enough books and art had invaded the space to prevent me from the same fate. Carl asked if there was room for me to sit at the table. “No,” I replied, “I eat standing up, in between cooking and cleaning dishes.”
Woman with Window is a collection of images of women in kitchens with windows. I cannot actually say that the women are looking out of the windows, as most of them have been made obscure or darkened. It has taken many years to collect these images. Images of women looking out of windows in kitchens are not easy to find. On the other hand, if you wish to find images of women cheerfully beaming about their role in the kitchen, you need only look to the visual propaganda campaign which successfully managed to get women back into the kitchen after World War II.

I look to the window as a metaphor for space in which to imagine a self not confined to socially determined, gender-specific spaces. A space to open up and be... a gardener, a bird watcher, a lover, an artist. Not just someone with raw, cracked and bleeding hands from washing, washing all the time. Dishes and clothes and floors. Generations of women in my family were pulled out of schools to run households. My grandmother, with her poetic letters and her artistic legacy: "I was good at art. I made a picture in Grade 1 and it was good!"

Ironically, my daughter yearns to bake and develop her skills as a textile artist. She demonstrates a natural ability in these areas. Generations of women in my family have been known for their baking talents and fibre artistry. The community surrounding them knew of these talents, and truth be told, many of my fondest childhood memories lay in the moments I hovered over pies waiting to cool. Morning breakfast prepared by my Finnish great grandmother always included a ceremonious dip of the most wonderful
cinnamon sticks in our coffee cups. Yes, as children, we dunked what would be compared to *biscotti* in our morning coffee. These memories have the power to fill my senses today. It is a pity that women’s ability to nurture has been limited to culturally assigned psychic and physical spaces. I can only hope the presence of art work in the kitchen of my children’s home will spark discussion around what it means to create, and what it means to give to the world. I hope that the metaphor of a window can create space for wonder and uncertainty. Space for possibility within ourselves. I now know, because my daughter has taught me, it is not the kitchen’s fault that we lose sight of these things.

Figure 7. Antique kitchen implements (strainer and yolk separator) represent some of the collected artifacts displayed in the home.
It is a misunderstanding to assume that a memory necessarily equates a finished experience. It is better understood as an active experience, one which is constantly moving and shifting in meaning and relevancy to a particular moment.
HYPHENATED SPACES

I am caught between the antagonistic roles of single mother, artist, researcher and teacher. All at once I feel guilty that I am not participating in my children's lives in the way I should (soon they will grow, move away and it will be all that I yearn for). I am the academic, writing at the computer, I glance out the window to see they have created a wonderful architectural structure out of snow. My son, who wants to be an architect when he grows up, is working on an elaborate archway. Their cheeks are so rosy and I am abundantly pleased to see them playing together so well. I run to get the camera, I want to capture this beauty, the beauty of human beings interacting with one another and with nature in such a meaningful way. THE ARTIST IN ME NEEDS TO CAPTURE THE AESTHETIC QUALITY OF THIS MOMENT.

My senses are fully engaged with awareness. It is okay to run from the computer. THIS IS RESEARCH. THIS IS HERMENEUTIC INQUIRY. This matters more. I bang on the window and gesture to the children that I am going to get the camera. They understand and nod. I rush outside with the camera ready to go... only to find... that everything has changed. Now subject of observation, they relapse performatively into a place and space so far removed from where they had been only a moment ago. I am now mother, not their artist, researcher or teacher, and they must vie for my attention. My daughter falls down on the arch my son had so carefully constructed and breaks it. The two of them lapse into a wrestling match in the snow, their movements oddly restricted by
snow pants and jackets. My son's hat falls off and he is now getting snow all over his head. I am yelling for him to get his hat back on and telling them both to stop, "Why did you have to ruin it?" I implore. I am upset now - they have ruined the crystalline essence of the hermeneutic moment! They have ruined the art! How can I teach?

I become painfully aware of the antagonism located in the borderlands Irwin speaks of. I am overwhelmed by my hyphenated existence. I understand only too well the push and pull, the constant antagonism experienced within places caught between artist, researcher and teacher, which says nothing of my parenting - expecting my kids to cooperate so that I may create a better product! This notion of interference. I am frustrated by these constant interferences. And yet it was I who interfered with their learning. I am left feeling I am less of a mother to my children - I should be making hot chocolate for them. I want to be the mother who brings hot chocolate to her children when they are playing in the snow. Are my children suffering because I spend more time trying to bring positive change to educational practices than I do hot chocolate to them? I can think of nothing more important than bringing hot chocolate to children playing in the snow.

Later that evening I, single mother/artist/researcher/teacher, search for and show my children online images of snow and ice sculptures from the Winterlude Carnival in Ottawa and the Quebec festivals. We marvel at the skill involved and the dedication to see such projects through to completion. Modern technology has made art more
accessible. Our experience is limited though, it is not multi-sensory. We cannot feel how cold the air is there. Or hear the crunch of snow beneath our feet as we walk closer to each piece. Nonetheless, we are transported to a world where anything is possible. We view the spectacular pieces together. Having completed my first university degree in Ottawa, I tell the children stories of skating to school on the frozen waters of the canal during winter months. Another time, another place, another me.

We check online to see if there are any messages on the school board website about school closures due to the snow storm here. We find that the schools are set to reopen the following day. My son groans and complains that he will now have to do his homework. I fully inhabit my role as Mother and Teacher and scold him for waiting so long to do it in the first place. He has, you know, been playing in the snow for three days straight. I catch myself as I slip into a dogmatic chasm where greater value is placed on homework than on any learning which might take place at home.

My daughter, now poised to head back out into the social world, with all of its directives, must re-enter the public sphere and align herself accordingly. To re-enter the space of this cultural self she must adhere to the doctrine of material culture, the cultural imperatives established by the beauty industry. She immediately demands to have a bath so that she may wash and straighten her hair. She also demands that certain articles of clothing be washed for the morning. We argue, of course. I insist she is being rude. She insists that I am 'annoying'. I talk to her about bringing her shoes in her
backpack in the morning so that she can change out of her boots when she gets to school. She shrieks and declares she would rather be dead than seen wearing those boots to school. I have lost my child again.
METAPHORIC SPORES

As a result of water damage, mold began to grow on pages of a reference book used during the course of this research project. The living organisms managed to obliterate handwritten passages I had tucked into the book and to obscure notes made within the text itself. I am mesmerized with the aesthetic quality of decay. Its live interference with inert text on paper makes a mockery of thought. It reproduces itself and the text swells in size. Then words are lost.

Figure 9.1. *Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores*. 2006. First in a series of photographs documenting damage caused by a flood in the artist/author's home.
How do we position or find ourselves in the spaces between life and text?

Figure 9.2. *Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores*. 2006. Second in a series of photographs documenting mold and text.
Figure 9.3. *Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores*. 2006. Third in a series of photographs documenting mold and text.

How do we determine which is the border and which lies between? Is it the living mold or is it the text?
Is text inert until we engage with it?
THE MOON IS THE MOON.

FULL, HALF, AND QUARTER.

Figure 9.5. Metaphoric (Hermeneutic) Spores. 2006. Fifth in a series of photographs of mold and text.
I did not know how this painting would evolve. I only know I stood in front of a blank canvas and looked down at an assortment of paint colours and brushes before me. The only conscious decision I had made was to finally tell – in the safest way I knew possible – through, and in art. I need to make a clear distinction here though, the painting is not about a traumatic event so much as it is the telling. The painting performs more so than it produces a product. I ask the viewer to consider painting, and other acts of art making, as active processes. There is too great a divide between the verb, painting and the noun, painting. I do not see that they can be separated so easily.
The making and the made merge, splice, disintegrate and create new spaces for meaning. In fact, this *is* the meaning. The interstitiality, the lack of definitiveness which sheds light on that which we yearn to define. I used to think this wasn't a painting – the kind I could hang on a wall. I thought it was just an exercise in research through art making. I have changed my mind. I think it is a painting in every sense of the word now. It is a doing, which now rests.
A METAPHOR FOR TEACHING

Do we facilitate the birth of, or create a painting?
Does a painting choose you to paint it or is it that we meet the paint?
I will venture to say that we meet the paint, the way a sculptor meets stone.
CONTAINED SITES

Figure 11. *Data Collected* 2006. Series of glass jars with contents.

1. Glass jar, metal lid, red ribbon, paper wrapped assortment of seed pods, birch bark, twigs, stones and shells, prints made from photograph of mother and child.
2. Glass jar, burned fragments of paper, missing words.
3. Glass jar, metal lid, plastic prescription bottles and lids.

In terms of presentation, the placement of jars can vary, although it makes little sense to place them in chronological order. The meaning embedded in memory shifts in depth and density, distorting linear compositionality and oftentimes displacing itself. I am surprised by the forensic tone of the work. There are overtones of violence. I guess I should not be surprised. I once presented the wire sculpture *Imprinting Space* on a black rectangular table top. Viewers commented that it looked like a body in a morgue.
I feel more settled when the piece is suspended delicately from the ceiling, moving ever so slightly when air currents shift in a room. Butterfly wings flutter in Japan and shift air currents here. Lit from beneath, it takes on a luminescent quality. We are all connected by dark places which shimmer with light. Violence has no aesthetic quality.

The jars contain visual signifiers – some point to that which has been made absent, others to sites of psychic trauma, simultaneously reviled as they are revisited. The author wishes to withhold further details. The burnt fragments of paper represent words which will not be spoken.

Figure 12.1 *Data Collected*. Detail, Glass Jar #1
SHAPE SHIFTING.

An established self-schema affects one’s interpretation of episodic memories. In turn, episodic memories will shape and shift self-schemas. Everything is in flux. But what about truth? Is it possible for truth to exist in memory? Perhaps it is better to say there are perspectives. And here we have the dilemma of post modernism - if all is a matter of perspective then what is considered to be an abuse of power by one may just as easily be discounted by another.
On a grand scale we run into questions of culture. Who creates national and global narratives? Which perspectives have dominated historically? What happens to the memories belonging to victims of genocide? They are displaced within our collective (un)conscious. What happens to a culture which sanctions infanticide? Absence makes itself present. A woman is raped in Pakistan, yet is accused of and legally charged with the crime of adultery unless she is able to produce four male witnesses to support her claim. Cultural coercion. A child is molested by an authority figure in North America. Cultures of silence. The collective psyche of humanity is traumatized. Children born into such a world become our students.

It is crucial that issues of power be taken into consideration when examining issues of truth in memory. Stand point epistemology (Harstock 1998; Harding 1986, 1991, 1998) which incorporates analysis of specific confluences of social, psychological, economic, and political forces of oppression seeks to validate that which has been silenced.

According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, every two hours a woman is raped in Pakistan and every eight hours a woman is subjected to gang rape. The frequency of rape is thought to be much higher but many rapes remain unreported due to a combination of social taboos, discriminatory laws and victimization by the police. The Hudood Ordinances are a set of laws in Pakistan intended to make the criminal justice system conform with Islamic law. These laws cover offences including Zina crimes (unlawful sexual intercourse including adultery and rape) and Qazf (wrongful accusation of Zina crimes). The maximum punishment for Zina crimes is death by stoning. Many women are imprisoned for years, convicted or awaiting trial for Zina crimes.

Source: http://web.amnesty.org/wire/July2004/Pakistan

In the editing stages of this thesis, pressure placed on the Pakistan government by the international community to amend the situation achieved significant results. The Protection of Women bill was passed in Pakistan parliament in November 2006 which permits rape trials to be held in civil courts. Thousands of Islamist protesters, however, continue to hold public demonstrations against this measure. Women's rights supporters are pleased with the law but see need for further change. Parliament has not repealed the Hudood laws which permit women to be stoned to death for adultery.
The rooms we were 'visited' in... the ones upstairs mostly... the ones connected by the grand cubby hole labyrinth my grandfather had built into the home. He built everything in that home, right down to the cupboard doors, even the fabulous laundry chute that traveled from the bathroom down to the basement. We children marveled at this invention and wondered what it would be like to slide down into a big pile of laundry ourselves, yet knew the cement floor beneath would not be so kind. The porch, the door with slats cut into it so the clothesline could travel through - this way my grandmother could stand *inside* the porch while hanging clothes on the line. Her fingers would have frozen otherwise. But the rooms upstairs. Attached to the dark cubby
holes, the darkness my brother and I were so afraid of, the darkness I later learned had
enveloped an assault on my grandmother. These were the rooms the ghosts chose to
visit us in.

Now, I know I am putting myself out on a limb here, with what I am about to say. But
ghosts do exist. I know this not because I have been visited myself, but because
countless members of an extended family who had never individually spoken out about
their own experiences suddenly broke the silence one Thanksgiving dinner. Someone
started it. Someone mentioned something about a ghost at my grandmother's house.
After that, no one could get a word in edgewise at the table. People burst forth with
their own stories of visitations there. It was incredible. No one had ever shared his or
her experience with another until that day. We had assumed our individual sets of
imagination were to blame. But with at least twelve people corroborating the same
story, how could we deny its veracity? Besides which, we had each had more than one
experience.

Since that day, other extended members of the family have experienced similar
visitations. When my grandmother died we could not bear the thought of selling the
house. Beyond the obvious difficulty we had parting with the shared heritage, our
insatiable desire to hold onto her somehow through the house, we were quite concerned
about the ghosts. We knew no stranger could possibly live there and cope with the
haunting, and if the house was ever torn down the ghosts were sure to be displaced....
I am curious as to how this phenomenon manifested itself in our family. I do know that it ultimately provided a public (family) forum in which to discuss stories of pain and suffering. You see, we never spoke of our dead. Not a word. Some members of our family had died horrible deaths. Others died after living hard, hard lives. No one talked about loss. And yet it haunted us. It stalked us.

Are ghosts manifestations of displaced psychic trauma?
I experimented with a variety of computer techniques to create 'frightening' photographs to send out at Hallowe'en. All in the spirit of fun, of course. Not only was I quite pleased with the colour self portrait *Devil*, but I was absolutely transfixed when I viewed the ghost image of myself. For me, the most chilling aspect of this piece is its simultaneous subject/object position. My own gaze stares back at me in a manner too reminiscent of the ghosts in my nightmares. If I can personify terror, perhaps it is possible to expel that which terrorizes me. My own gaze pierces that which seeks to objectify me with its gaze.

Figure 15. **Self Portrait: Devil.** 2006. Computer generated photograph.
The unconscious is an "interiority of the identifying subject, an effect of an effect" (Butler 1990, 188) or as Eakin (1993) claims "a construct of a construct" (102). According to Butler, the domain of the excluded "haunt[s] signification as its abject borders, or as that which is strictly foreclosed: the unliveable, the nonnarrativeizable, the traumatic" (1993, 188).

Figure 16. Self Portrait: Ghost. 2006. Computer generated photograph.
I am intrigued with the spatial-temporality of memory. In the most literal sense, we could say that we inhabit an 'other space' when we remember. In a deeper sense, we acknowledge that memory creates other spaces in which to experience knowing.

Figure 17. *Imprinting Space* 2004. Wire mesh.
Secrets and ghosts.

Omissions and lies.

Denial.

(Terror in enclosed spaces.)
A suffocating terror which

screams Silence
HOUSE DREAMS: THE HAUNTING. THE FEAR. LOOKING FOR A HOME, I FIND HOUSES WHICH ARE EITHER HAUNTED - *UNSPEAKABLE HORDORS*, OR ONES WHICH ARE NOT SECURE - *SOMFONE CAN BREAK IN TO RAPE AND KILL ME*.

FIRST DREAM OF CHILDHOOD HOME BEING GIVEN TO ME AS AN ADULT FEELING AS IF THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A FRESH START. I CAN RENOVATE IT. IT IS MINE, I CAN HAVE MY OWN EXPERIENCES IN IT. I FEEL VERY CONTENT IN THIS DREAM.

IN THE NEXT DREAM, HOWEVER, IT CHANGES. I AM IN MY BEDROOM IN THE HOUSE I GREW UP IN. FOR SOME REASON THERE ARE TWO MEN WORKING IN THE HOUSE - THEY HAVE A BASEBALL BAT. THEY APPROACH ME IN MY BEDROOM. I SCREAM, "NO, THIS IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!" *PART OF ME IS TRYING TO WAKE UP*. THE LEADER OF THE TWO MEN LAUGHS AND SAYS, 'YOU'RE NOT THE ONE WHO GETS TO DECIDE!' I WAKE MYSELF UP I AM SO TERRIFIED.

HOUSE. CRACKS IN DOORWAY FRAMES. THE PLACE IS NOT SECURE, IT IS OLD AND FALLING APART. I AM AFRAID SOMEONE WILL BE ABLE TO GET IN. I HAVE TO PLAN MY DEFENSE REACTION IN EVERY SINGLE ROOM. AT THIS POINT I AM IN THE SHOWER. EVEN SHOWERING I MUST BE PREPARED AND ALERT. PERHAPS I CAN SHOE THE CHAIR UP AGAINST THE DOOR. SLOW THE PERSON DOWN AND THEN TRY TO GET OUT OF THE WINDOW. IT'S LIKE SOMEONE IS ALWAYS AT MY BACK, I HAVE TO BE READY. ALWAYS.
Memory as place. The spatial aspects of memory. Inhabiting a space in memory. Imagining a place which is infected by memory. Yearning for a place to escape memory. Memory infecting every place, every space inhabited by your psyche.

FEAR IS A PLACE.
Chapter 3
Making Meaning
We are often most attached to a moment for what it does not contain.

I count missing sheets of paper on a notepad to know you more.

The plasticity of memory....

It's superpositionality

An individual self is "a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in perpetual flux and movement."

David Hume 1888
I walk to the store at lunch time, then across the park and back to school. It is always autumn in my head. The bright blue sky, the air crisp. I buy a MacIntosh apple, my favourite, for 5 cents. Other days, maybe sponge toffee for 10 cents, or the licorice you dip into a very tart, white powder. I think everything seemed fine up until my mother died. Like I could skip through life in my knee high socks, skirt and fall sweater, curly locks bouncing off to school.

When I was a girl, a teen, I suffered from severe and chronic laryngitis. I was sent to see a throat specialist. My parents were told the reason for its persistence was psychological. They said, ‘oh’ and it was never addressed again.

Performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.

Judith Butler 1993
Duck hunting. Red plaid outdoorsman jackets. We are cocooned by the most colourful array of autumn leaves. The air is crisp. And we, the children, wait for something to happen. Ear plugs numb the sound of the guns. We get to keep the empty shells.

The experience of memory is not only timeless, it timelessly constructs human experience.

What I remember most is the crisp autumn air, so fresh. So beautiful. Going back to Grandma’s where it is warm and she has baked a pie. The house smells like a bakery. Cheeks rosy from being outside all day, cosied up nice and warm. Sleep like babies.

Grandpa killed a huge deer once, luckily we weren’t there to witness it, just that it’s head was mounted on the wall. In the basement.
Locating Meaning.

Locating meaning shifting.

Locations of shifting meaning.

Shifting meaning locates us.
I was delighted to discover that in addition to surfacing while writing, unbidden memories (those which are not consciously retrieved) also surface during the course of re-writing and editing. *Streetcar. R’s cousin. His Lithuanian, hence legitimate, ‘girlfriend’ is grilling me for information. I resent her. SHE RESENTS ME.*

The memories are like strands of thread which constantly reconstruct a densely textured and dynamic work of fabric. *Listening to Bryan Ferry on the couch. It is my going-away party. He is sitting with me on the couch. I guess that made it easier for him, the fact that I was going away to university. It was hard to leave my friends behind.* They weave in and out of meaning: the memories are the threads, the meaning is found in the spaces between them. Just as the tension of thread changes with a fabric’s movement - draped over someone’s shoulders or thrown into the back of a car - so too, the positionality of memory brings shifts in meaning. *Hallowe’en in the neighbourhood I grew up in as a child. Was I a nurse that year? Costumed children float under the street lights. It is a quiet carnival, this quest for candy.* Some threads work to conceal others. Some are frayed by the time they are revealed. *Moving down to Queen Street. In essence, there is not only a texture to the fabric, but multiple textures. The Old Mill, bottom of hill, I can go to the tennis courts, or turn to go into the park. Again, my memory has just gone to R’s cousin. If*
I try to analyze this, the first thing that comes to mind is feeling 'othered.' I was considered a threat. I know now it was because they wanted to contain something they feared losing - their language and culture. They did not want their children to marry outside of their culture. And their intense desire to maintain a culture led them to 'other' me.

Poststructuralist theory positions itself within ruptures of dissonance. It problematizes issues of subjectivity, authority, authorship, reflexivity, process and representation in matters of truth. It pulls at skin, opens up wounds, reveals the organicism of chaos and brings doubt to light. Woolthworths in Sudbury. The jewellery counter. With my grandmother and brother. She moves with fluidity in my waking dream. Dressed up to go down town and hair all done up. Maybe later we will get fries with gravy from the cafeteria and that watery punch you get from the dispenser. You press your cup up against the metal bar on the machine, it makes a swishing sound as it fills up. But maybe not on that day. On that day we look at jewellery, only quickly - the way a woman does when she has children with her. Children who don't understand why women long for beautiful things. The way I take my children into high-end home decor shops and imagine purchasing a distressed, pale pink chandelier for my daughter's bedroom, priced at just under a thousand dollars. Funny, how distress can be in fashion.
Richardson (2000), challenges the notion that we must always proceed, as academics, in a manner which delineates a pre-conceived argument. To use the metaphor of a garden - writing which simply 'reports' is like a photograph (a visual document) of a resplendent garden with flowers in full bloom. Never too full in bloom as their colour may have begun to wane, their stems become less erect, perhaps even begun to droop, with leaves curling into themselves, browning at the edges. Nor would we choose to represent the garden too soon with our photograph, before the shoots were ready to burst through the soil, when worms worked to aerate the earth. No, we want to represent the end product of nature’s processes. But in doing so we also miss the moment the wind rustles through the falling petals and the seed pods drop that which they contain back down into the earth. Who knows where they will drop, it depends on which way the wind moves at any given moment. A flower, in this sense, is but a moment in a wonderful and complex process, not merely an end product.

*I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it.*

(Richardson 2000)

Within the dynamic process of writing, meaning can evolve, elucidate and even betray itself. Personally, I think we are aware of moments when meaning betrays itself in our own writing - I think these are wonderful junctures - these areas of disjuncture. They depart from that which is prescribed and open us up to possibility.
What is contained in the space between departure and arrival?
As a child I run barefoot for what seems like forever in my ‘Indian’ dress given to me by a woman I believe to be my grandmother. She is not my grandmother, she is a Scottish woman who is really my great aunt, sister to my maternal grandfather, who ‘raised’ my mom. I am so brown I feel Indian. I am so brown running in my Indian dress. This tiny Scottish woman wouldn’t have known - if she had - she certainly wouldn’t have given me the dress. I wouldn’t find out until my late twenties, from a cousin, who had found out from a mutual aunt, that I had Cree blood. No one had ever talked about it in my family. Later, when I was pregnant with my daughter I suggested Cree as a possible name for a girl, but her father had said, ‘No, it sounds like an Indian’.

I remember being in my body at the age of 10. Jean cut-off shorts, long brown legs, carrying a red geranium in a pot for Grandma. A child’s sense of what matters in the world - carrying a potted geranium carefully onto an airplane, to be delivered to a grandmother.

This memory comes to me in slow motion - the moment I was informed of my mother’s death. Now, I cannot remember her. The only memory I have of her is frozen for me, the last night I saw her, on Toronto Island. This memory was triggered when I heard Alone Again on a late night television commercial for K-Tel records. The song had been playing on the loud speaker while we waited for the ferry that night.
Remembering is bearing testimony, breaking the conspiracy of silence.

Judith Herman (1992)

Mementos. My house is cluttered with them. People tell me it is like a museum. A gallery. Everyone experiences it in different ways. They connect to their own memories. Shrines. Road memorials. Death and absence. We collect momentos for fear of the absence of experience.

There is much contradiction in my attempts to contain experience. Collecting artefacts consoles and contains me as I fumble with my inability to contain experience. I am grasping nothingness fully.

Bearing Witness

Is my art making an act of bearing witness?
I 'know' that my mother taught me how to fold the paper when wrapping presents and tuck in the sheets like they do on hospital beds. But I don't remember her doing so. I can't see her standing there showing me these things. I cannot see her and this troubles me.

I am full with emptiness and empty in my fullness.
The shadow past is shaped by everything that never happened. Invisible, it melts the present like rain through karst. A biography of longing. It steers us like magnetism, a spirit torque. This is how one becomes undone by a smell, a word, a place, the photo of a mountain of shoes. By love that closes its mouth before calling a name.

Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

Common objects take on the status of artefacts in the museums of our mind. My grandmother’s apron, which I carried around in my camera case for months after her death, taking pictures of it in the most absurd settings, was taken when my camera was stolen. I was upset with the loss of my camera, but dismayed that my grandmother’s apron had been tossed aside in some back alley behind some greasy pawn shop in East Vancouver. That is not where my grandmother’s meaning lies. No, it lies in the fine dust of flour settled in the creases of her apron, as she stands in the hand made yellow house, asking us to ‘go pick a pie’. Combing the mountain, we imagined encounters with bears, inscribed messages on torn birch bark with twigs... adventure always meant taking the long way home. Blue stains on our teeth, we would finally return to present the green tupperware bowl full of blueberries. And so we would wait, because there is nothing else to do but wait when someone is baking a pie for you.
In response to Anne Michael’s novel entitled *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) I have created a work of art I refer to as *Container*. I am moved by the notion of earth as protector. I have placed a photograph which I feel reflects a strong sense of self connected with nature beneath the surface of the soil in an act to protect myself and that which is meaningful to me from all that seeks to undo it - time, loss, absence... In addition to baubles from girlhood pony tails, a cookie cutter from my grandmother’s kitchen, and a foreign coin for my wandering spirit, there are burnt fragments of paper - remnants of efforts to burn my writing, all of my writing, so that I would never be found out again by my parents and sent down into the basement to be punished... for writing. There are pieces of my own children’s teeth, crumbled now, broken by time, otherwise stored along side heirloom jewels in my room. The inclusion of natural objects in the container point to significant memories I associate with nature or simply to nature itself. Perhaps the significance was the encounter with nature. Encountering myself in nature. I am working with a theme of time here, also. History. My own is repeatedly linked with nature. I am nothing without it. Nature and its processes, like life, is constantly changing, moving, spilling forth, giving birth, softening and decaying. The soil becomes a metaphor for meaning in this piece - it is not only the presence of the objects, but the spaces between them which work to convey their meaning. Often, the space is silence, folding into itself.
...the dark deciduous silence...

Anne Michaels

I am waiting for my father to pick me up at the Jane and Bloor Subway Station. The air is hung with autumn in Toronto - crisp sunshine and blue sky, golden mellow burgundy leaves whisper their way to the ground. I lean against the old brick wall, arms full of books, and watch people shuffle into Ukrainian and Polish delicatessens where salami hangs from the ceiling and women round as clouds wrap cheese in brown paper for you.

The educator "comes to understand empathetically the lives of her students in order to arrange the environment intelligently toward the promotion of aesthetic experiences" which lead "toward the continual revision of the poem of who that student, specifically, can be" (Barone 2000, xii). This is beautiful - I would extend this to say poems. Ironically, my daughter calls out to me again, she wants me to look again - to watch her on the skim board in the tidal pools at Tsawwassen beach - I tell her I can't, I'm busy, (writing this down).
In Australia I am obsessed with trees I have never seen before. I carry enormous limbs and branches which have dropped to the ground around with me everywhere - down city streets, onto water taxis and into conference rooms at the university. The branches take up full seats beside me.

*Who is this woman carrying large tree branches through the city streets?*

She wants to take them home and hang them on the wall in Canada.

*The branches are as big as she is.*

She has never seen trees like this before.

My fibre is embroidered in the tenure of these trees.
Does the earth remember what we have done to it?

If nothing but to observe the texture of my life
lived within a moment,
where sunlight rests
on water droplets.
I remember the first time I ever saw an artefact cast in resin. It became an artefact in my mind because it had been cast. Moonlight Beach at my grandmother's. The need to capture something, contain it, isolate it from all otherness as if to own it, define it distinctly, definitively, showcase its individual characteristics. And yet the act of casting mediates its meaning. I remember this experience so vividly, I thought it was the most exciting thing in the world.... but I cannot remember my mother's face. Almost nine years we spent together and yet I cannot remember anything up to her death. I can't see her face, except the one I see in photographs.

I discovered something I did not anticipate finding when I begin taking photographs of a sculptural piece called Imprint in Space (2004). I have it suspended from my bedroom ceiling, near a window. I WAS NOT AWARE (consciously) that I had placed it so close to a photograph I have framed on my wall. It is an image of a mother and child lying naked on a bed. The mother is lying on her side, facing away from the camera. She is faceless. The child is draped over her. I came across the image when I was a teenager and have carried it with me through every single move I have ever made, which must add up to about 17 spanning 25 years now. Imprint in Space is made of wire mesh, which is sculpted by my body. The intent behind the piece was to capture the imprint my body makes in empty space in the passage of a moment. This is the piece viewers suggested looked like a dead body in a morgue when it was shown horizontally on a black rectangular table. It is true, that is where this body may have ended up long
before now, and will undoubtedly end up some day. Up until now, I have been mostly aware of its suspension in a space of otherness which is simultaneously conflicted and caught between moments of grace and violence. But I had never ever considered its other positional possibilities. As I photograph this now, I move through many hyphenated spaces. I am artist-researcher-viewer-teacher, then artist-researcher again (photographer), and viewer anew. I am subject/object and teacher.

I am a child lying on a bed with her mother in an apartment on Victoria Avenue in Vancouver.

![Image](image.jpg)

Figure 18. Partial View of *Imprinting Space* with black and white photograph of mother and child.
It is splendidly wonderful, the things that lie beyond, that we try to capture with instruments, paint or words, the same things we are all trying to build, to create, the things that our bodies are trying to give spirit to, and our spirits are trying to provide with bodily expression.

Emily Carr
There is much contradiction
in love
in being

The texture
is rough smooth
I recoil
as I collapse into it
I pour the granular laundry detergent into the washing machine, watch as it falls into the folds of a garment - I remember the cottage on the other side of Lake Nipissing in Northern Ontario. They all look the same in my memory: all cousins to the same architecture, the white painted wood exteriors and the lacquered walls inside - stuffed fish above a doorway and hand crocheted doilies on the arm chairs. It is always very clean inside. The wives clean the cottages while the men build docks and catch fish.

If we are visiting Finnish family members there will, of course, be a sauna. A glorious sauna in which to sweat out all the things we should not have to carry around with us in this world. And a glorious cold lake to jump into afterward - nude if it is night time.
February 12, 2006: Exhausted, I drive my son to his baseball training clinic for 7 o’clock in the evening. We have already driven into Vancouver from White Rock at the end of the school day for World Music lessons at Britannia on Commercial Drive, rushed back home, had dinner and, because my son is also a baseball player, are now on our way to Ocean Park. The traffic has slowed to a halt on Crescent Road, a beautiful winding road lined with 200 foot cedar trees. We realize people are turning into the parking lot of an old community hall - this is why the traffic has slowed down. I look up to the entrance of the hall to see women, in their seventies or so, running up the steps in 1950’s hoop skirts, the expressions on their faces those of young school girls rushing into a dance hall. I have never seen so much happiness all at once on the steps of a community hall. We smile as we pass them. Traffic can slow for this.

We cling to memory, trying to recapture something which defines us.

And yet it is the grasping at loss which defines us, really.
Off in the boat fishing with my father and grandfather, the rain is whipping us wet and cold. My brother and I huddle under the front cabin. They give us what is left of the food, to keep us warm, keep us occupied, hard boiled eggs and Eatmore chocolate bars. I recall we were out in search of an anchor we had dropped - a tin can filled with cement. We didn't find it. The rain kept pelting at us, sideways. Was my grandfather in the boat that day? Or had he already fallen in the elevator shaft at the mine and died?

Gravedigger,

when you dig my grave,

can you make it shallow,

so I can feel the rain.

Dave Matthews
A sliver of memory can contain a well of meaning,

as can the absence of one.
We are what we know. We are, however, also what we do not know. If what we know about ourselves – history, our culture, our national identity - is deformed by absences, denials, incompleteness, then our identity... is fractured. This fractured self is a repressed self. Such a self lacks access both to itself and to the world. Repressed, the self’s capacity for intelligence, for informed action, even for simple functional competence, is impaired.

William Pinar (1996, 24)

A curriculum of and for the self must incorporate analysis of the situated contexts in which knowledge is produced. Madeleine Grumet (1996) refers to the arbitrary contract that is curriculum, “an agenda of control imposed on a community whose diversity splinters the steady rhythms of shared lives” which allows no place for a ‘multiplicity of betweens’ (Aoki 1993). If wisdom begins in wonder (Socrates) as I believe it does, we may do well to embrace the ultimate paradox of teaching: to facilitate learning we must also be willing to facilitate unlearning in our classrooms.
Perhaps it must begin with ourselves. Perhaps we must revisit what it means to be a self who teaches. As an artist/researcher/teacher accustomed to restlessness which situates itself in multiple and contradictory spaces, I am reminded to dwell (Aoki 1993). This is the gift of a/r/tography (Irwin 2004) - the invitation to dwell in hyphenated spaces of knowing, doing and making. In dwelling, I see that absence (unknowing) creates presence (knowing) and that memory is the pulse which informs one of the other. May we remember to include space for the learner in our teaching, so that we may hear its pulse.
A collection of glassware is sent to me from my grandmother's house. The scent of her home, *one of my homes*, rests upon the rim of the glass, fleetingly. And then it is gone.

**Grasping at Emptiness.**

**Emptiness defines us.**

The train whistles outside, and I am transported back to her house. No conditions.
REFERENCES


