WIKIS AND THE CREATIVE WRITING PROCESS

by

JENNIFER ANN BRAUN

B.Ed., University of British Columbia, 2001

B.A., McGill University, 1996

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Abstract

A wiki is one example of social software that can assist and augment the creative writing process in a number of ways. In this thesis, I present a work of original fiction developed in a wiki, a select literature review on wikis, an autoethnography of my creative writing process while working in a wiki, and an ethnographic study of my students who wrote their own wiki stories. The research thus far suggests that wikis can facilitate the following vis-à-vis creative writing: increased risk-taking; more extensive revision and editing; greater flexibility and freedom for writers; instant access to writing via the internet; the storage of intermediate drafts; and the ability to incorporate multimedia and hyperlinks to convey complexity in ways not possible in print. Wiki environments may also support dialectical inquiry and collaboration between students and teachers. This opportunity for easy (and easy to monitor) collaboration, along with their organizational and creative affordances, is why wikis should be more readily adopted into school curricula. As many texts today are digital, collaborative and under constant revision, wikis can support the creative writing process in a milieu that is becoming increasingly comfortable for people and provide them with a much wider audience than most print formats.

Table of Contents

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Special thanks to my family for your endless encouragement throughout my life. Because of you, I have been able to achieve things that I would never have been able to do on my own. Dave, I could not have survived this whole process without you. When it is your turn, I will be there for you every step of the way.

Dedication

To my husband Dave, my family, my friends, and my students – I love you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

"I am a living body, a writing body, a teaching body, a knowing and being and becoming body" (Leggo, 2006, p. 85).

Leggo (2008b) speaks of how he "almost always felt inadequate" (p. 217) when writing in school. Rather than explore his own voice through creative writing, he learned to master essays – writing that is less personal and more "objective", writing that is based on logic and is, presumably, easier to evaluate. Similarly, I developed confidence by writing argumentative essays and was terrified to show anybody what I considered to be my "real" writing – poetry, journal entries, memoirs, and fiction. It was not until my twenties that I began to overcome this fear of exposure and to share my writing with others. By inviting others to read my creative writing and by incorporating their feedback, my confidence and skill grew exponentially.

At the same time, I became increasingly aware of how much I still did not understand about my own creative writing process or that of others. After being accepted into the Master of Arts program in Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, I enrolled in a narrative inquiry course with Dr. Carl Leggo to better understand the manner in which narrative can help us make sense of our lives. The course prompted important questions that compelled further exploration. For example, why did I choose particular themes for my writing? Why did I avoid others? Why was I attracted to certain genres of writing over others? This course helped me understand my own writing process as a writer and a teacher of writing and how I might help young writers to understand theirs.

Along with this desire to learn about the writing process and teaching the writing process, I knew that I needed to learn more about how literacy is changing in our digital age. It is undeniable that more and more people are doing much of their reading and writing online through social media. I enrolled in a graduate-level Digital Literacy course with Dr. Teresa Dobson: an initially frightening prospect because I did not feel particularly confident with computers other than the most basic word processing functions. This course helped me to better understand how social software and the internet are changing how we read, write, access, and produce knowledge. Rather than fear these changes, I began to be excited about the possible advantages of using social software for creative writing.

A wiki writing exercise, completed in this course, interested me in writing fiction in digital environments. To initiate a "fictional frolic", Teresa posted a writing prompt in the wiki and invited the class to write a story collaboratively. Having never written in a wiki before, a few of us had some trepidation about learning the technical aspects of the wiki. Because the wiki was so user-friendly, we quickly got over our fears. As Lamb (2004) writes, "even confirmed technophobes have grasped and mastered [wikis] quickly" (p. 40). The joy of working with others, of observing the multiple directions that a story could take, of exploring the multimedia aspect by inserting image and sound into a story, and the sheer pleasure that I had while writing in the wiki lead me to pursue the following question for this thesis: what are the affordances of wikis for creative writing and the teaching of creative writing?

I began the process of this inquiry in January 2007 – during Dr. Dobson's course – through my autoethnographic writer's journal. I kept this journal while writing an original work of fiction in a wiki as a way to gain insight into my creative process while writing. As often as possible, I documented my thought processes, commenting on characters, images and themes as they arose. The easy access of the wiki was crucial to the story's development, as I was able to work on it from any location where I had an internet connection. The wiki's straightforward linking and editing qualities helped me to develop multiple story threads at the same time, something I had never done before in my creative writing. Because I was so enthusiastic about the way that the story was developing in the wiki, I discussed my story with other people as I was writing it (again, something I normally did not do prior to working in the wiki). Simply put, I felt a sense of freedom writing in the wiki that I had never felt before, which helped to alleviate the chronic anxiety and need for perfection that I often feel while writing. At the time of starting my research, there were only a few published studies of the use of wikis for creative writing (Désilets & Paquet, 2005; Dobson, 2006, 2007; Luce-Kapler & Dobson, 2005; Luce-Kapler 2006, 2007). In the hopes of contributing to a better understanding of creative writing processes in wikis, I elected to conduct an autoethnographic study of my own writing and teaching using this form of social media.

Chapter 2 of this thesis is comprised of my wiki story, "Past Echoes, Family Present," which I originally started in a word processor. Putting the story in the wiki and investigating different creative possibilities lead me to create a much more interesting and complex story – something, I am convinced, that I would not have been able to do if I had not written in the wiki. Chapter 3, entitled "Creative

Writing and Social Software," is a literature review of relevant studies that sheds light on how the creative writing process is modified and extended through social software. In Chapter 4, "An Autoethnography of a Teacher and Writer", discuss my creative writing process while working in the wiki. Chapter 5, "The Affordances of Wikis for (Teaching) Creative Writing", presents findings from a study of creative wiki writing conducted with my Writing 12 class. Chapter 6, "Implications for Future Teaching and Writing," offers some observations about how I have changed as a teacher and writer as a result of this work, along with some suggestions for educators who might want to integrate wikis into their own teaching practice. Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, underlines the importance of educators providing tasks, such as creative writing in a wiki, to help students engage their imaginations.

Chapter 2: "Past Echoes, Family Present"

"Past Echoes, Family Present" is a work of digital fiction with multiple pathways that I wrote in a wiki environment with a view to exploring the affordances of the medium for creative writing. It can be accessed through www.kitwekanadian.ca. I have included a linear version in Appendix I to ensure accessibility in the future with the proviso that the presentation of the work as an ordered sequence of paragraphs severely limits the effect for readers. Finally, I commenced this story on a word processor as a conventional linear narrative before being introduced to wikis. This initial draft is included in Appendix II for comparative purposes.

Chapter 3: Creative Writing Process and Social Software Theory

3.1 E-literature: Part of our "cultural dynamic"

I have long thought that reading e-literature is most akin not to reading print literature, but to viewing art installation, wherein the space is meticulously prepared, but where viewers must choose their own paths through the gallery, encountering in their respective journeys views perhaps not perceived by other visitors to the space, creating in their respective passages juxtaposition and continuance, seams and rifts (Dobson, 2007, p. 268).

In *Writing space: Computers, hypertext and the remediation of print,* Bolter (2001) argues that "writing technologies do not alter culture as if from the outside, because they themselves are part of our cultural dynamic" (p. xiii). Writing evolves with culture; when viewed historically, it is possible to recognize that even the newest forms share traits with the oldest forms (for example, many electronic texts employ coloured images as did texts produced on medieval scrolls). Electronic writing, similar to handwriting and typing, is both a visual and kinesthetic process. While the feeling of typing on a keyboard is different from holding a pen, both technologies allow writers to transmit their ideas to others. Although words on a computer screen may have a different aesthetic than they do on a printed page, both writing technologies manifest a writer's ideas visually.

Because of this interplay between both print and electronic writing, Bolter (2001) asserts that we are in the "late age of print" (p. 2). This is generating, among other things, some interesting debates over what constitutes "literature". Writing in digital environments is often flexible, fragmented, and interactive, so it can challenge the stability of the printed word as well as clear notions of authorship. Traditional print forms are often based on Western and classical traditions which rely on a unified, consistent voice, whereas "an electronic text may fracture the single voice of the printed text and speak in different registers to different readers" (Bolter, 2001, pp. 10-11). In the case of literary writing in digital environments, or e-literature, readers are often encouraged to make choices between multiple or divergent story threads, unlike a printed text which (usually) follows a pre-determined linear pattern.

In addition to the choice given to readers, e-literature offers creative possibilities for writers that are difficult or not possible in a print realm. In a digital realm, a writer may blend genres of writing,

incorporate multimedia, and create a narrative with several stories that may or may not intersect. Bolter (2001) argues that:

> In our current world of publication, electronic texts… are offered to us as fragmentary and potential texts, each as a network of self-contained units rather than as an organic whole in the tradition of the nineteenth century novel or essay. This fragmentation need not imply mere disintegration, however. Elements in the electronic writing space need not simply be chaotic; they may instead function in a perpetual state of reorganization, forming patterns that are in constant danger of breaking down and recombining (pp. 11-12).

 Bolter further suggests that while the word "fragmented" often has the negative connotation of being incomplete or disorganized, the notion of fragmentation can be constructive as well. E-literature's often fragmented form can facilitate multiple interpretations of a story and challenge positivistic notions about what makes a "good" narrative. Seemingly unfinished works of digital fiction might also be an acknowledgement that no story is ever truly finished, or that multidirectional narratives can convey complexity better than linear ones.

For this reason, Luce-Kapler's (2007) metaphor of fractals, as opposed to fragments, might be more accurate in conveying the "sense of interruption, of brokenness, yet… energy that binds the ideas to a centre of gravity" (p. 263) in e-literature. "Fragment" and "fractal" share the same etymological root, but fractals are geometrical figures which are connected to the whole. Luce-Kapler applies this concept of fractals to a few examples of e-literature, noting that as each story progresses, the characters emerge in more depth, and themes and events weave together in greater sophistication. Luce-Kapler offers the term "fractals" to connote "the exploration of identity [as] not one of broken pieces, but one where the intricate pattern of human experience and relations continues to unfold in all its complexity" (p. 264). Whether employing "fractals" or "fragments" as metaphors to convey the intricacies of creative writing in a digital realm, e-literature offers exciting potential for creative inquiry.

3.2 From "hypertext fiction" to "e-literature"

"Electronic literature tests the boundaries of the literary and challenges us to re-think our assumptions of what literature can do and be" (Hayles, 2007, ¶5).

What exactly is "e-literature"? It is often an amalgam of genres and, similar to print literature, it is impossible to supply a simple explanation for such a complex genre. Nonetheless, in her essay "Electronic Literature: What is it?" Hayles (2007) defines e-literature as "generally considered to exclude print literature that has been digitized [and] by contrast 'digital born', a first-generation digital object created on a computer and (usually) meant to be read on a computer (¶5).

Like Bolter (2001), Hayles (2007) emphasizes that e-literature has been influenced by hundreds of years of print traditions and even longer manuscript and oral traditions, digital media such as animations and games, and other visual media such as film and graphic design. Her article gives a comprehensive overview of the rapidly-changing field of e-literature, including some of the seminal works and terms that have been used to describe different genres of e-literature over the past two decades.

Hayles (2007) begins her discussion with "hypertext fiction". Many writers of the "first-generation" or "classical" tradition used *Storyspace,* the tool of choice for many writers in the late 1980's and 1990's, to create impressive works of digital fiction such as Michael Joyce's, *afternoon, a story* (1987) and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995); these stories provided the reader with a number of reading pathways as pre-determined by the author. "Interactive fiction" (which has also been called "second generation" or "postmodern" e-literature and generally refers to as work produced after 1995) differs from the other forms of e-literature in that it contains strong gaming elements; for example, narratives, such as Emily Short's *Savoir-Faire* (2002), often cannot progress without the participation of the reader-gamer, who inputs commands for a character (as opposed to other examples of digital fiction in which possibilities and characters are pre-determined by the author). The most recent form of e-literature is a move from the three visual dimensions on the computer screen to the immersion of the user (the reader) in a three-dimensional space, with narratives specific to the location. For instance, Blast Theory's *Uncle Roy All Around You* (2003) required that participants search for a postcard delivered to a particular location; a series of clues were sent to their PDA's.

In her discussion of the different genres of e-literature, Hayles (2007) emphasizes that the boundary between literature, computer games, and other media is often hazy. She states:

> Hypertext fiction, network fiction, interactive fiction, locative narratives, installation pieces, 'codework', generative art and the Flash poem are by no means an exhaustive inventory of the forms of electronic literature, but they are sufficient to illustrate the diversity of the field, the complex relations that emerge between print and electronic literature, and the wide spectrum of aesthetic strategies that digital literature employs (¶31).

As Hayles makes clear in the above passage, the terms used to define writing in a digital realm have shifted over the years. I use the term "e-literature" as a general term and "digital fiction" or "digital stories" when discussing digital narratives specifically.

3.3 Wikis: A select literature review

Wiki, meaning "quick" in Hawaiian, is an online, digital application that enables contributors to add or to amend information. Wikis, like blogs, enable writers to post their thoughts online and, if they so choose, to collaborate with other writers. Dobson (2007) states that wikis

> allow communities of users to add or edit web pages very easily using any browser on any machine without any previous knowledge of the more challenging aspects of web design such as code, file structure, file transfer protocols, and so on. Because of its simplicity of use and open philosophy, this software has been described widely as an anarchistic publishing tool: users may edit one another's pages, they may add or remove links and pages, and so on (p. 268).

With wikis, minimal technical training is needed, and "content is ego-less, time-less, and never finished" (Lamb, 2004, p. 37). Furthermore, many people have observed that traditional notions of authorship and ownership of ideas can be radically altered in a wiki (Coley, 2007; Dobson, 2007; Dobson & Luce-Kapler, 2005; Dobson & Vratulis, 2009; Lamb, 2004; Luce-Kapler, 2006; Mak & Coniam, 2008; Moxley, 2008; Vratulis & Dobson, 2008).

Lamb (2004) notes that in education wikis are most commonly used for writing instruction. Wikis offer an opportunity for collaboration between writers; wikis can also be read by a much larger

8

audience. Lamb cites some of their benefits, many of which have been validated by academic literature on the subject:

> Wikis invigorate writing ('fun' and 'wiki' are often associated); wikis provide a low-cost but effective communication and collaboration tool (emphasizing text, not software); wikis promote the close reading, revision, and tracking of drafts; wikis discourage 'product oriented writing' while facilitating 'writing as a process'; and wikis ease students into writing for public consumption (p. 44).

3.3.1 Studies of expository collaborative wiki writing

One research team conducted research over a 12-month period with 35 pre-service, post-baccalaureate elementary education students at a university in western Canada (Vratulis & Dobson, 2008; Dobson & Vratulis, 2009). They explored the manner in which a wiki-writing project affected the teaching and learning of the students and instructors as well as its effects on the social negotiations between the students. The purpose of the particular project assigned students was to encourage a collaborative response to a set of professional standards for teachers. Prior to writing together in the wiki, the cohort (the students, the two instructors and the two digital learning technologies facilitators) had a strong sense of community, which was tested as they struggled to adapt to the new learning environment and to express their individual voices within the collaborative space (Vratulis & Dobson, 2008). As a result of these intellectual and social struggles, the researchers observed a pattern of linear hierarchies forming in some of the groups throughout the project.

These hierarchies may have formed in some cases when particular groups elected of their own accord to assign the task of recording ideas to one member. While the writing decisions by the recorder were meant to be based on discussion and input from the group, this did not always occur, and at times, the recorder appeared to have more control than what was deemed appropriate over what was written in the wiki. Groups did rotate the recorder position to help distribute power, yet the problem of one or two members dominating the process was not entirely alleviated. This practice contributed to feelings of resentment and prompted some group members to "renegotiate their role from legitimate to peripheral participation when they felt their participation was not contributing to the completion of a coherent text" (Vratulis & Dobson, 2008, p. 291). Some students felt strongly about having their individual voices included as opposed to trying to write a unified text. Demonstrating the conundrum

of balancing community and individual needs, tensions arose over issues of voice, register, tone, and purpose.

In spite of this, many students began to shift their attitudes about authorship as the project progressed. At one point students questioned whether they should include individual names as authors on the document because the project was a community endeavour. This discussion was exciting for Ruth (one of the instructors) and proof that "the writing process facilitated by the wiki could indeed encourage students to interrogate their assumptions about knowledge creation and diffusion" (Dobson & Vratulis, 2009, p. 23). This debate over authorship highlights the fact that the collaborative nature of the wiki project is different from most assignments that usually privilege a sole author, although the authors note that the model is not new—collaborative forms of inquiry were the norm in Europe before the printing press (Dobson and Vratulis, 2009). Wikis and other social software, they conclude, "take advantage of the computer's network capability to bring people together in a community of inquiry, generating a social, rather than individual, model of learning or scholarship" (Dobson & Vratulis, 2009, p. 24), learning that has the potential to transform the manner by which knowledge is created and shared.

In spite of the conflicts encountered during the project, the majority of the students expressed positive feelings about the wiki writing experience with "some remarking that it was one of the most profound learning experiences of their formal education" (Vratulis & Dobson, 2008, p. 291). Furthermore, as Vratulis and Dobson (2008) note, the collaborative work in the wiki seemed to inspire rich learning:

> The students were forced to assume more active roles in negotiating the process of learning. The instructors stepped back from any traditional role as 'gatekeeper of knowledge' to ensure that students maintained control over the development of the wiki, in the process becoming decision makers in a constructivist learning environment and negotiating new ways of redefining the transient, multiple, iterative network of power relationships within the classroom p. 293).

As well, the wiki helped the instructors to facilitate some of the core values of the cohort, such as building a strong community of inquiry in which all voices are heard. Although power struggles occurred, "non-dominant group members nevertheless found ways of subverting hierarchies" (Vratulis

& Dobson, 2008, p. 293), and most students were able to work through the confusion and frustrations that arose while working in the wiki. During their exit interviews, for example, "90% of the students stated that they valued the process and that it encouraged them to think more critically about the [professional standards] through 'hard' but fruitful inquiry. They also came to realize that an open instructional design, whereby decision making was undertaken by the community, has merits" (Dobson & Vratulis, 2009, p. 21). Most importantly, the students seemed to appreciate the value of struggling to learn on their own, rather than relying solely on their instructors. While Sonia aimed to provide clarity and organization for the students, Ruth focused on disrupting their assumptions about teaching and learning. In this sense, "the anarchistic nature of the wiki writing space became productive in this instance expressly because of the enabling constraints imposed by the instructors… a point worth bearing in mind in contemplating the design of [future] wiki writing activities" (Dobson & Vratulis, 2009, p. 16).

Many educators rely on their own educational histories to shape their pedagogical practices. For this reason, as Dobson and Vratulis (2009) observe, it is perhaps not surprising that student teachers (most of whom have never encountered e-literature in their own schooling) may have conservative ideas about what constitutes an appropriate text, and "their attitudes in this regard are likely to be a constraint on their ability to mediate literate practices in their own classrooms" (p. 8). With the emergence of digital technologies that challenge traditional notions of authorship and authority, Dobson and Vratulis (2009) argue that teacher education programs must "contemplate strategies for engaging teacher candidates in innovative writing spaces (print or digital), and new knowledge economies with a view to enabling them to mediate the literate practices of their own students in a variety of media" (p. 8). Writing collaboratively in a wiki is one exciting way to attain this goal.

3.3.2 Using wikis in secondary ESL teaching

A study by Mak and Coniam (2008) concentrates on two important concepts in ESL writing instruction: process writing (which focuses on the writer) and audience writing (which conceptualizes writing as a social activity produced for a particular type of reader). The authors conducted research with 24 Year 7 (aged 11), Level 1 ESL students at an English-medium school in Hong Kong over a 6-

week period in 2006. In six groups of four, the students' task was to create different sections of a brochure about their school for their parents while writing collaboratively in a wiki. To avoid editing conflicts, students wrote primarily at home. In the first week, students learned the technical aspects of the wiki; in the remaining five weeks, students wrote different sections of the brochure. The project concluded with a final draft of the brochure (copyedited by the students' teacher), and the printing of the brochures.

Mak and Coniam were interested in how the students collaborated in the wiki as well as the effects of the wiki-based writing on the finished project. In the beginning, students only added to each other's sentences, but as they became more comfortable working in the wiki, they began to edit and modify the written content. Throughout the project, the students' writing grew in length and sophistication, as they extended and revised their original work. By the end of the project, many students had far surpassed their 150-word monthly freewriting component as required by the teacher, writing about 500 words each. Coherence and sophistication in written content also improved consistently throughout the project.

The authors conclude, then, that having an authentic audience and the ability to collaborate were indeed significant factors that helped the students to produce an impressive brochure in English. Because most students wrote in more depth than in previous writing assignments, they seemed to have benefited from both the peer edits and the collaboration afforded by the wiki. The teachers involved in the study said that working in the wiki helped to boost student interest and attention during class time, as the students really enjoyed the project. Other members of the school community were so impressed with the outcomes of the research project that the wiki activity was extended to include all 199 Year 7 students. At the time of writing, Mak and Coniam report having been approached to institute similar projects in several other schools in Hong Kong.

Mak and Coniam laud the technical ease of wikis in enabling students to create a sophisticated hypertext document. They provide a concise explanation of some of the pedagogical benefits of using wikis for teaching writing:

One of the great advantages of wikis with regard to language learning, process writing and revision, is that as students work towards the final document, all intermediate copies are retained. This provides an invaluable learning tool for students whereby they can see what errors they initially made – and subsequently corrected. Further, the picture of revisions themselves may provide a useful research tool for the teacher herself in looking at development in her students' writing (p. 441).

Their findings are valuable not only for second-language learners, but arguably for all educators who are interested in helping students to write and to revise with precision, confidence, and with an audience beyond the teacher in mind.

3.3.3 Wikis and journalistic writing

Ma and Yuen (2008) conducted research with undergraduate journalism students, exploring the affordances of wikis for writing instruction. They identified four pedagogical areas that wikis support: student-centered system design, facilitation of the drafting process, complete support in the revision process, and continuous (re)organization of content. They extol many of the same technical and writing benefits as other authors in this literature review, and they also argue that "unlike some e-learning systems whereby instructors are the only persons to deliver teaching material, wikis allow all users to generate content" (p. 298).

Ma and Yuen highlight three important factors that affected student writing and critical thinking in their study: the task (news writing), the learners (526 undergraduate journalism students attending a university in Hong Kong) and the medium (the wiki system used by the students). Prior to conducting their study, the authors postulated that a high level of self-efficacy and a learner's revision process would positively influence written performance in the wiki. As well, they believed that the constantly changing content of the wiki –users of the wiki would read articles, add and amend content, and post links to other articles and information – would affect the students' thinking and writing processes.

Ma and Yuen collected data in two research phases. In Phase I, 138 students completed open-ended questionnaires asking them to reflect on their thought processes while using the wiki. Just under

half of those who completed the questionnaire indicated that they did not have a strong feeling about working in the wiki, while more than a third cited positive feelings: augmentation of their knowledge base, easy access of information, convenience for storing their writing, and exposure to a wider audience. About one-sixth of the participants had a negative reaction to writing in the wiki due to confusion over either the technical aspects of the wiki, the perceived increase in workload, or the public nature of the wiki which allowed community members to delete and change content at will. Regarding the wiki as an open platform for posting news articles, the majority of the students appreciated the benefits of having shared community resources. Ma and Yuen argue that the students who made the most effective use of these resources were those who read more of the available resources, revised more often and with greater accuracy, and completed their articles in a timely fashion (Ma & Yuen, 2008; W. Ma, personal communication, January 21, 2009).

In Phase II, the authors focused on Year 1 students who had no prior experience with wikis. 75 students completed a survey measuring their level of self-confidence on a number of writing tasks. Ma and Yuen also carried out a content analysis of the students' personal pages, the history pages which recorded previous usage and revision, and the news article pages. (The news articles were weekly graded writing assignments on seminars given by industry leaders to journalism students.)

The authors report some fascinating findings. For example, more than 75% of the students continued to edit their news writing once they uploaded their article to the wiki, even after having received a grade from their instructor. (Dobson & Vratulis, 2009, report this tendency for students to go beyond formal expectations, as do Mak & Coniam, 2008). About two thirds completed all of their editing on the same day while the others took anywhere from 1 to 21 days. Finally, the number of edits was important in predicting the grade on the assignment, and individual revision in the wiki lead to a higher quality of written work.

3.3.4 Studies with readers and writers of e-literature

A number of studies with readers and writers of e-literature have been published by Dobson and Luce-Kapler, either in collaboration or as single authors. In their article, "In search of story: Reading and writing e-literature", Luce-Kapler and Dobson (2005) report findings from a study with twelve pre-

service teachers. During the research, the participants partook in a series of digital literacy workshops conducted by Dobson in order to learn about various digital applications, including wikis. They also engaged with various samples of e-literature, such as Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995) and other examples of interactive fiction from Eastgate Fiction. Participants were asked to read and respond to the above e-literature in addition to writing creatively in a wiki. Many experienced feelings of disorientation while reading e-literature as they struggled to make meaning from the multidirectional texts. Having never read e-literature before, the participants had expected it to follow print conventions (such as sequence and closure) and became bewildered when the digital stories did not meet their expectations. In this sense, the participants were "unschooled" in e-literature.

The two report, among other things, on Luce-Kapler's journal entries, comparing her experiences of reading and writing to those of the research participants. Like the participants in their research, Luce-Kapler underwent a similar struggle to understand the often non-linear world of e-literature. Furthermore, she found that her process of creating e-literature was different from her previous creative writing experiences:

> In *Storyspace*, Rebecca was deciding not just the 'and' of what would come next, but the 'and or and or and...' Instead of her customary way of working with 'a chain of metonymies' to create a coherent metaphor, a story, she was hovering in a space of possible stories, trying to keep multiple threads extending and connecting (Luce-Kapler & Dobson, 2005, "Reflecting on the Journal", ¶1).

Rather than laying aside the emerging themes, characters, and events for later reorganization as she had done with previous works, Luce-Kapler was forced to pay attention to these elements as they appeared, consider how they were linked to each other, and conceptualize how each piece fit with the story as a whole. In most traditional narratives, authors need to shut down possible plot lines to ensure a unity of text, but, as this article argues, e-literature can support greater complexity of meaning through multiple storylines, divergent outcomes, and plurality of meaning.

However, the openness and the ceaseless possibilities of creating e-literature can be disconcerting. Many participants in the research wanted to limit possibilities and impose some structure to avoid being overwhelmed by endless choice. While stories written in *Storyspace* can allow an author to instill some authorial structure (for example, a reader cannot access some windows until

15

they have read others), open-access wikis are just that – open to infinite possibilities. This was as much a challenge for readers as it was for writers. Many of the participants felt frustrated reading *Patchwork Girl* because it negated their notions of what a narrative should be: a cohesive, stable story with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end. It was only when the participants were able to be "lost in the text" (Hayles, 2007, "Conclusions and Implications", ¶1) that many were finally able to appreciate how the individual story nodes conveyed an evocative story. Because e-literature does not often look like traditional print narratives, first-time readers need to be willing to put aside preconceived notions about literature and be open to the possibilities and complexity that are offered.

In "The love of a good narrative: Textuality and digitality," Dobson demonstrates that participants in a study with readers and writers of e-literature were better able to appreciate e-literature and complex print fiction like Alice Munro's *The Love of a Good Woman* after engaging in creative writing in a wiki. To facilitate the creative writing process, Dobson gave this group of participants (fifteen pre-service teachers with bachelor's degrees and English majors or minors) a writing prompt from the beginning of Munro's *The Love of a Good Woman*. Because the participants had been working with e-literature and wikis, they "saw this as an opportunity to write in networked form" (p. 61) and proceeded to create non-linear narratives using various linking formats. Several of the participants were able to create quite sophisticated digital stories, both in meaning and in structure.

Dobson concludes that the creative writing exercise in the wiki helped the participants to shift their imaginations from a perceptive to a creative mode. By reading the Munro prompt in order to select interesting narrative elements as creative fodder for their own stories, the participants gained a greater understanding of the subtleties of *The Love of a Good Woman*. Furthermore, the creative writing activity helped the participants to move beyond plot and to focus on elements such as theme and characterization. The network capability of the wiki "allowed students to create complex linking structures that reflected the implicit structure of the Munro narrative" (p. 65). It appears, then, that writing creatively in a wiki environment helped the participants to learn to appreciate reading multi-layered narratives, whether print or digital.

In her article "In medias res: Reading, writing, and the digital artefact", Dobson explores the complex processes behind reading, writing, and engaging with digital artifacts. Dobson (2007) notes that reading and writing are often conflated although studies show that they are in fact "cognitively and

experientially separable" (p. 267). The article reports on research conducted with fifteen pre-service education teachers who shifted continuously between reading and writing computer-based, multidirectional narratives and poetry in a series of workshops. The research participants responded to e-literature while working collaboratively in groups of two to four to create original e-literature in a wiki.

Dobson observed a "fascinating tension as participants attempted to reconcile their responses to the medium as readers with their responses to the medium as writers" (p. 268). Because participants were unfamiliar with the genre, it was not surprising that they were initially critical of e-literature. Their attitudes about the genre only shifted once they had had the opportunity to write creatively in a wiki:

> Students were unanimously enthusiastic about the exercise [writing creatively in a wiki], and notably brought a far more open attitude to the task of writing than they did to the task of reading… automatically engaging concepts they had challenged adamantly in their roles as readers; moreover, they frequently employed the same writing strategies that had frustrated them as readers, seemingly without awareness of any inconsistency in their position (p. 269).

Dobson comments on the dramatic shift on one participant's attitude – from "technophobia" when reading hypertext fiction to "technophilia" when writing it (p. 269) – a trend she observed with many of the other participants as well. As elucidated in the above passage, many participants began to employ the very techniques in their writing that they had criticized while reading e-literature, such as circularity and multidirectionality.

Dobson suggests that the shift may have developed because readers in this study tended to be more product-oriented while writers were more process-oriented. She also proposes two other causes that may have influenced the participants' different responses to reading and writing: the formal schooling of the participants and the fact that the writing was collaborative. Participants in the study had never been taught e-literature, and so they may have applied their formal understandings of what constitutes good print literature to the genre. As well, collaboration may have reduced performance anxiety for the writers. Additionally, the medium may have helped participants to "abandon the institution and norms of traditional literary art" (p. 270) and take creative risks. This study supports the

concept that reading and writing are two related, yet separate practices and provides insight into "the distinctive and complementary features of the various literary processes at play when learners encounter digital artefacts" (p. 271).

Désilets and Paquet (2005) also carried out research on creative writing in a wiki with elementary students at École Côte du-Nord, a French-speaking school in Gatineau, Quebec. The students were in Grades 4, 5 or 6; they ranged widely in terms of their scholastic aptitude and computer literacy; and they participated in the study on a voluntary basis. The project took place after school hours during six, 90-minute sessions. In any given session, there were 12 to 25 students who often worked in groups of 2 to 5, although they did have the option of working alone. Prior to writing in the wiki, students were shown examples of digital fiction.

During the first session, the students focused on creating the following: an idea and title for their story, a story map, a central character along with his or her goal, and a setting. Students then drafted their ideas on poster paper prior to writing in the wiki. Students used the particular terminology "nodes" (possible scenarios or places) and "arcs" (descriptions of how the character would get there or choices) in drafting their stories. The researchers stipulated a maximum of five nodes per student and three arcs per node to ensure that the story could be completed in the remaining five sessions. By providing these guidelines, Désilets and Paquet recognized that students clearly need "parameters for learning experiences [to] allow enough latitude for experimentation, idea generation, and potentially diverse outcomes" (Kelly, 2008, p. 31). During the second and third sessions, students wrote consulting their story maps and were encouraged to talk to each other as they drafted their stories. In the fourth session, the students searched Google for appropriate images to accompany their stories or else drew their own pictures to be scanned and uploaded to their wiki pages. After each session, the authors spent about one hour reviewing the content of the pages and posting comments in the wiki.

Désilets and Paquet's paper focuses on how the students collaborated while working in the wiki. They were also interested in gender differences, the level of technical ease of the wiki for young children, and the children's ability to create complex hypertext stories. The authors state that while some students encountered problems of a social nature, such as creating groups or finding a suitable topic that all could agree on, the students generally collaborated well. The poster map seemed to be crucial for the development of the story: un-prompted by the authors, students ticked off stages as

completed and consistently referred to the map while developing their story. This practice likely helped the students stay focused and share tasks equitably while collaborating in the wiki.

Désilets and Paquet observed three different types of collaboration during their research: synchronous (all students developing their story maps with individual paper and pens at the same time), asynchronous (students working on different pages or tasks at different times) and pair-editing (in which the "driver" types the story while the "navigator" makes suggestions, points out errors or alternatives, and so forth). The researchers found that the pair-editing collaboration failed either due to a lack of clear guidelines for the students or because it was insufficiently stimulating for the navigator. The authors also noticed different strategies for the division of labour amongst students who collaborated: random walk (in which a child randomly looks at a page and attends to what needs to be done), page-based (in which each child is responsible for an entire page), and role-based (in which each child chooses the task he or she feels most confident undertaking, such as drawing images or writing the story). All types of division of labour seemed to work equally well, perhaps due to the ease of the wiki and limits of the task. Regardless of their role, students felt a strong sense of collective responsibility and ownership and did not hesitate to help each other as needed.

Regarding social dynamics, Désilets and Paquet did not observe the formation of social hierarchies with the exception of two groups. In one group, an individual emerged as an effective leader due to his superior computer knowledge. In another group, one child surfaced as a domineering, ineffective leader because he masterminded the story to the point that nobody else could follow his vision; this resulted in his having to do most of the work himself. In terms of the size of the creative teams, both small and large teams seemed to be reasonably efficient, but the authors argue that the larger teams produced lower-quality stories due to inconsistency in voice. Désilets and Paquet (2005) suggest that this problem could be mitigated by having one person be responsible for ensuring a consistent voice in the story. (However, as Dobson and Vratulis [2009] intimate, such an arrangement may curtail some aspects of collaboration).

Désilets and Paquet (2005) offer some suggestions for educators who want to incorporate collaborative story writing in a wiki into elementary classrooms. First, they recommend using synchronous collaboration for mapping the story on paper and co-located semi-synchronous collaboration (children sitting side by side each other but at their own computer) for story writing.

Secondly, instead of teachers selecting the groups, teams should self-organize. (A possible exception to this self-organization would be that, for teams of four students or more, educators should encourage each group to appoint one person to monitor voice, consistency, and quality.) Third, students should avoid the pair-editing model because the "navigator" tends to not be adequately engaged in the task. Fourth, educators should frame the story design phase in terms of a spatial metaphor: the hero's choices move the character(s) from one location to another to aid in the creative development of the story. Finally, Désilets and Paquet argue that educators should take the opportunity to communicate with each team in the wiki.

These suggestions are reasonable for educators who have relatively few students and easy access to several computers at one time, although the amount of response required from instructors seems onerous. As well, the "hero" model is limited and would likely be too naïve for older students. Nonetheless, Désilets and Paquet provide clear and pragmatic recommendations for educators who would like to introduce creative wiki writing into their curricula.

3.4 Summary: the affordances of e-literature and wikis

Like culture, literature develops over time. Currently, there is a mixture of both print and digital writing technologies, and many (Bernstein, 1998; Bolter, 2001; Coley, 2007; Désilets & Paquet, 2005; Douglas, 1994; Dobson, 2002, 2007; Dobson & Luce-Kapler, 2005; Dobson & Vratulis, 2009; Hayles, 2007; Lamb, 2004; Luce-Kapler and Dobson, 2005; Luce-Kapler, 2006, 2007; Mak & Coniam, 2008; Moxley, 2008; Walker, 2004) have argued that digital writing is challenging traditional print notions of authorship and narrative because of its potential for flexibility, interactivity, and fragmentation. However, rather than merely attempting to topple the old (print literature) order, e-literature is steadily gaining legitimacy (Hayles, 2007) and breaking new ground for creative expression in both print and digital spaces (Hayles, 2003). A wiki is one example of social software that can assist writers in creating their own e-literature with relative ease.

Based on the research thus far, wikis seem to facilitate the following: a greater appreciation for complexity and ambiguity in literature, whether in a print or digital realm (Dobson, 2007; Luce-Kapler, 2007; Luce-Kapler & Dobson, 2005); new possibilities and processes for creative writing (Dobson,

2006; Luce-Kapler, 2006, 2007; Luce-Kapler & Dobson, 2005); a shift from product-oriented writing to process-oriented writing (Dobson, 2007; Dobson & Vratulis, 2009; Lamb, 2004; Ma & Yuen; Mak & Coniam, 2008); enhanced critical thinking skills through collaborative inquiry and problem-solving (Désilets & Paquet, 2004; Dobson & Vratulis, 2009; Mak & Coniam, 2008); and engagement in the writing process (Désilets & Paquet, 2005; Dobson, 2006, 2007; Lamb, 2004; Luce-Kapler, 2006, 2007; Luce-Kapler & Dobson, 2005; Ma & Yuen, 2008; Mak & Coniam, 2008). While many first-time users experience some level of disorientation in learning how to use a wiki, most people quickly overcome any frustrations and come to enjoy writing in this digital environment.

Wikis are becoming increasingly used for educational purposes, and in particular, for writing pedagogy. Writers have enhanced creative freedom to create complex narratives through the inclusion of multimedia as well as the ability to convey multidirectionality through sophisticated hyperlinking structures. Wikis also support the revision process, as writers can edit their documents from any computer with Internet access; furthermore, wiki systems preserve important information about how students revise. They can also support collaborative writing and provide students with a much wider audience than other types of print writing. Ultimately, the research thus far shows that once people gain confidence with the technology, they tend to enjoy writing in wiki environments and gain a greater appreciation for complex print and electronic literature.

Chapter 4: An Autoethnography of a Teacher and Writer

4.1 On autoethnography

"Writing always involves ideological, aesthetic, and ethical decisions. There is no innocent writing" (Richardson, 1997, p. 108).

> The bell rings, and I watch the twenty-five teenagers bustling before me. I see two laughing boys high-five each other as they stroll to the back of the classroom. They throw me a grin that says "We're not late!" and fold their lanky frames into the too-small desks. I respond with an arched eyebrow and a smile that says "You're lucky this time!", as I pick up my journal and pen. I see a group of girls to my right, some of whom are reading books (*The Lovely Bones, Twilight, The Time Traveler's Wife*, and *The Kite Runner*) while others are already writing in their journals or on their laptops, their faces far away. I see groups of boys and girls talking loudly, their bodies undulating with adolescent energy, their faces animated with big eyes and even wider smiles, their hands gesticulating as they share stories. I see a tall boy with a sweet face and an elegant girl with a thoughtful one looking at me, their heads tilting in towards each other as their bodies fan out like butterfly wings. They are waiting patiently for me to start the class. So I catch their eyes, and we share a secret smile, and with a quick call to attention, we begin another creative writing adventure.

I identify as both a teacher and a writer, as the above scene from my Writing 12 class demonstrates. These two identities are inextricably linked and reciprocal works in progress. Sometimes the two identities conflict, but in spite of these tensions, I could not be one without the other. I am grateful for these two interrelated passions that help me to live with joy, consciousness, and purpose.

As I mentioned earlier in this thesis, I first became interested in the affordances of wikis for creative writing and the teaching of creative writing when I participated in a wiki creative writing exercise in a graduate course. I explored the wiki in more depth when, as a final project for the course, I wrote the narrative in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In addition to writing the story, I kept a writer's journal to better understand the effects of the wiki on my creative writing process. Although I had kept journals since I was a small child, I had never kept a writer's journal, let alone an on-line journal:

April 14, 2007
> I have never kept a writing log like this while writing. I have to say that I was a bit skeptical, because I thought that if I focused on the creative process – rather than just letting it happen – I would sully the raw idea. I don't believe this now. I think this log [journal] – and being meta-cognitive about writing the story – has helped me understand the connections I made in the first draft and strengthen those connections.

Clearly, I had some apprehension about this writer's journal. In addition to worrying about becoming overly analytical of my creative process, I was worried about others being able to read my intimate thoughts.

However, I quickly began to see the affordances of the wiki journal, the same ones that many of my students observed while working in the wiki: easy access to the journal, centralized organization of my thoughts without having to worry about lugging around or losing a book, and the efficiency of being able to cut and paste text from one software program to another. I overcame my concern about the public nature of the journal by focusing on the writing process, and I soon began to write my thoughts without censor. However, because I knew that this particular wiki was open access, at times I worried if others might change or delete my words. In order to alleviate my anxiety about forever losing my original work, I followed the philosophy behind Stanford University's LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe, 2008) program by saving multiple copies of the story on different computers as well as keeping hard copies of the story and journal. Nevertheless, this issue of preservation remains problematic. How do we adequately preserve text that is digitally-born and can only be read on a computer or via the Internet? This issue of preservation is a critical one, and I address it briefly in Chapter 5; however, an extensive discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Unlike my previous journals, this wiki journal had a theoretical purpose: to better understand my own creative writing process and, in doing so, how I could possibly help my students understand theirs. I wrote about my thought processes and emotions while creating a work of short fiction because I wanted, as Ellis and Bochner (2000) suggest, to "try to understand the experience I [had] lived through" (p. 737). I did not realize until later that what I was doing was a form of *autoethnography*. Ellis and Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as

an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their cultural experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations... Usually written in first-person voice, autoethnographic texts appear in a variety of forms – short stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose. In these texts, concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness are featured, appearing as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language (p. 739).

Bullough, Jr. and Pinnegar (2001) make the pithy observation that "who a researcher is, is central to what the researcher does" (p. 13), so it is not surprising that I turned to autoethnography to understand my creative process in the hopes of developing as both a writer and teacher of writing.[1] Bullough, Jr. and Pinnegar (2000) note that researchers who engage in autoethnography need to strike a balance between "the space between self and the practice engaged in" (p. 15) and to represent their research with honesty, authenticity, and an attention to literary elements. Most importantly, autoethnographic studies should involve "something genuine … at stake" (p. 16), such as a problem or an area of inquiry that is important to the researcher.

Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (2007) state that in the field of education, autoethnography can be a type of action research as it "connotes 'insider' research done by practitioners using their own site (classroom, institution, school district and community) as the focus of their study" (p. 2). They also say that autoethnography is a reflective process backed up with data to support findings that places an emphasis on experience and narrative because it is "largely through narratives that humans make sense of and express their understanding of events and experiences" (p. 47). The scholarship on autoethnography has been linked by different authors, explicitly and implicitly, to various "turns" in the social sciences and humanities: the move toward blurred genres of writing; a heightened self-reflexivity

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[1] This reminds me of Atwood's ironic quote: "Writing itself is always bad enough, but writing about writing is surely worse, in the futility department" (2002, xvi).

in ethnographic research; an increased focus on emotion in the social sciences; and a postmodern skepticism regarding the objective generalization of knowledge claims. Denzin (2006) states that autoethnography has undergone a few paradigm shifts (referring to these as the First and Second Chicago Schools), and what he calls the Third Chicago School, or analytic autoethnography. Denzin states that over the past fifteen years, autoethnography has also been called auto-anthropology, autobiographical ethnography or sociology, personal or self-narrative research and writing.

Leon Anderson (2006) claims credit for the term analytic ethnography, calling it an offshoot of evocative ethnography (or the work done by Denzin, Ellis, Bochner, and other prominent autoethnographers). He proposes that the key features of analytic autoethnography are complete member researcher status, analytic reflexivity, narrative visibility of the researcher's self, dialogue with informants beyond the self, and commitment to theoretical analysis (p. 378). He argues that

> unlike evocative autoethnography, which seeks narrative fidelity only to the researcher's subjective experience, analytic autoethnography is grounded in self-experience but reaches beyond it as well... The purpose of analytic ethnography is not simply to document personal experience, to provide an 'insider's perspective', or to evoke emotional resonance with the reader. Rather, the defining characteristic of analytic social science is to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves (pp. 386-387).

Denzin is direct in his criticism of Anderson's view of "analytic" autoethnography. He argues that autoethnographers such as Ellis, Bochner, Richardson "and their cohort want to change the world by writing from the heart (Pelias 2004). The writers in the third Chicago School want none of this" (p. 422). Ellis and Bochner's article "Analyzing analytic autoethnography: An autopsy", written as a lively conversation that takes place in their living room, debates the differences between "evocative" and "analytic" autoethnography. Bochner (in Ellis & Bochner, 2006) writes:

> It's clear to me that the work we've been doing has a different aim than the work of the analytical ethnographers. We think of ethnography as a journey; they think of it as a destination. They want to master, explain, grasp. Those may be interesting word games, but we don't think they're necessarily important. Caring and empathizing is for us what abstracting and controlling is for them. As you just said, we want to dwell in the flux of lived experience; they want to appropriate lived experience for the purpose of abstracting something they call knowledge or theory (p. 431).

Bochner asserts that "we think of what we do as both evocative and analytical. The difference is that we use stories to do the work of analysis and theorizing" (p. 437). What exactly does he mean here? Is he suggesting that stories, through their literary qualities, are better able to speak to both the head and the heart? Ellis's voice in the article is particularly interesting because she remains true to one of the central tenets of autoethnography: she tries to tolerate different readings of Anderson's article and to sit with her uncertainty. While at one point she criticizes Anderson's work for being "realist ethnography'" (p. 432), she later concedes that she admires much of his work and that perhaps both schools still have much in common.

I agree with Ellis that both "analytic" autoethnography and "evocative" autoethnography can agree on the following principles: researchers should ideally be members of the communities that they are researching (versus much of traditional ethnography, in which the researcher is separate from the community); they should use self-observation and reflexivity to explore theoretical ideas; and they should employ narrative elements in presenting data. Both schools incorporate personal narratives to ground theory, and both use emotion and reason as rhetorical devices to communicate broader concepts to others. For these reasons, making a distinction between "analytic" and "evocative" autoethnography seems troublesome, so I simply use the term "autoethnography" to describe my own research methodology.

By employing autoethnography as a research methodology, I hoped to gauge the effects of writing narrative in the wiki on my teaching and writing, and the relation of these to my students' learning and writing. As often as possible, I documented my thinking while writing, flipping back and forth between the story and the journal as insights emerged. This process was invaluable for gaining understanding into my creative writing process and how this process changed while working in the wiki. Specifically, I learned how my process is extended and modified in a digital environment, knowledge that has consequently changed how I teach creative writing to my students.

I will not pretend that my research findings "fit" together perfectly. As Denzin (2006) states, often "our research practices are performative, pedagogical, and political [and] these performances [can be] messy" (p. 423). In presenting my findings, I highlight some patterns in my research through a

mélange of dialogue transcriptions, my wiki journal, and references to scholarly work, for, as Leggo (2004) observes,

> in telling a narrative, there will always be a focus on patterns and connections among events, emotions, and insights that help to evoke an engaging sense of the experience as lived. In order to compose the narratives that represent our experiences, we will use the resources of imagination, heart, intellect, memory, courage, and wisdom to shape the stories meaningfully (p. 101).

I aim to tell my story with relevant details, lingering questions, serious inquiry and, when appropriate, a sense of humour. Like Irish writer and BBC foreign correspondent Fergal Keane (1996), I write my research findings from both the head and the heart (p. 10) to give some sense of what it was like to engage in creative writing in a wiki environment.

4.2 A new level of openness, enjoyment, and empowerment

Luce-Kapler (2006) uses the word "play" in relation to her experiences of writing in hypertextual environments. I aimed to embrace this playfulness and view "language as open and meaning as emergent" (Luce-Kapler, 2006, p. 8) in order to take creative risks with my wiki story, as the following entries indicate:

> April 10, 2007
>
> I'm excited about working in this format because I think it could free up some of my creativity with this piece… The openness of the wiki form – and Luce-Kapler's article about how working in a wiki environment freed up her imagination and strengthened her writing for her Moodie piece – is why I chose this environment to work in [for my final creative project for the Digital Literacy course.]… It's the end of Day One [of writing in this wiki] and in spite of taking a bit longer to make new pages than I would have liked (and trying to figure out how to link them in a meaningful way), I am really enjoying working in this environment.

April 12, 2007

I am REALLY enjoying writing in this environment! It allows me to not only write at home, but at school, during my prep, so I'm not bound by appointment to writing. For me – who tends to avoid writing, although I love it (fear of failure) – this is helping me to break it down into small chunks, tackle a little bit at a time and thus ultimately be more productive.

Writing narrative in a digital environment clearly gave me a sense of freedom and empowerment. Because I enjoyed writing in the wiki, I wrote as often as I could, which helped my creative process.

Prior to working in the wiki, my normal creative writing process was to freewrite an idea by hand in my journal, move the idea for further development into a word processor, self-edit as best I could and then, if I thought the piece was good enough, show it to other people. One key difference that I noticed while writing the wiki story was that I talked to others about the development of the story as I wrote:

April 13, 2007

I noticed I'm doing this more, as I write this piece – talking about the writing, as I write it. I usually tend to just write on my own, only showing people the final draft (except for maybe Dave or good friends who are also writers.) Perhaps because I'm excited by this new form; perhaps it's the openness of the form that has inspired an openness to discuss my creative process. I have an incredible urge to share with others how writing in this wiki has been for me, how it has opened up my creativity.

I keep wondering how these episodes will all fit – like the bee one – but the more I trust my instincts and follow the thread, the more the connections naturally manifest themselves in my writing. This has been an important lesson for me – trusting my instincts, trusting in the process.

Talking with others and writing about my story in the wiki journal proved invaluable to gaining insight into my writing process. I began to see connections between characters and plot events as well as the emergence of the following interrelated themes: the effects of a tragic death on the living, repression of female sexuality, and an inability to communicate that which is most important. Furthermore, this journal helped me to gain confidence in my creative instincts and avoid self-editing while writing the story, something that I struggle with due to perfectionism.

Learning to let my ideas flow, even when I did not understand them, helped me to create a more interesting story, so I began to communicate this newfound faith in trusting my instincts to my students:

JENNIFER: What I was saying was with the wiki, I found it helped me trust [my instincts]. I didn't always see how things were linked, but then I kept a journal as well, a writer's journal, and I wrote about that. 'I don't know how [*sic*] this has to do with anything.' But in my first draft, there's a reference to this novel *Bridge to Terabithia*. It's a novel I read when I was 10? 11?

(Female student nods and says "mmm hmm".)

JENNIFER: Maybe 10. Anyway, so in it, they're really good friends. She's from the city and moves to a rural area. Anyway, so she doesn't know how to swim. She ends up…

TERESA: Because she's from the city, she doesn't know how to swim. (*laughs*)

JENNIFER: (*laughing*) That makes no sense.

TERESA: (*laughing*)

JENNIFER: That's faulty logic. Anyway, she doesn't know how to swim.

TERESA: She's from the Antarctic.

(All three laugh.)

JENNIFER: Anyway, she doesn't know how to swim. So they go and play in the woods. It's a really wonderful story in that they create their own little magical world. And then what happens is that she ends up drowning, and it's really, really sad. It's very tragic. But I had no idea in that first draft of the story. I was trying to think of a novel that a Grade Three or Four kid, you know, would be reading. That was the first thing that came to my head. But then it obviously influenced my wiki story, because what happens in my story is the mother [Geraldine], you know, her sister [Susan] drowns. And then later, I'm like "Wait a minute!

That relates! But I had no idea that it was tied. So, I mean, that was something that I found that when I wrote in the wiki I actually… realized

TERESA: umm hmmm

JENNIFER: … that there was some connection.

The passage highlights not only how I am learning to laugh at myself but to also be alert to "connections and… emerging patterns" (Luce-Kapler, 2006, p. 11). I am also learning to focus on "staying attentive and identifying the patterns and connections at regular intervals" (Luce-Kapler, 2007, p. 260) as a result of continuous reflective practice, autoethnography.

4.3 Searching for patterns: structuring my wiki story

After reading "Patterns of hypertext" by Bernstein (1998), I used the "Counterpoint" and "MirrorWorld" structures to develop my first draft in the wiki. In the Counterpoint structure, "two voices alternate, interweaving themes or welding together theme and response" (¶1), while a MirrorWorld **"**provide[s] a parallel or intertextual narrative that adopts a different voice or contrasting perspective [echoing] a central theme or exposition, either amplifying it or elaborating it in ways impractical within the main thread" (¶1). The Counterpoint and MirrorWorld structures are critical for understanding the relationships between Geraldine and her daughters and the parallels between Shelley and her mother [Geraldine], which I will discuss in more depth momentarily.

Luce-Kapler (2006) implies use of the Counterpoint structure when she discusses her process of writing linear strands and then connecting them in her own writing. She articulates how working in *Storyspace* helped the structure and story to emerge simultaneously:

> On the one hand, I think about the small piece that I am working on, but then I have to think about how it fits into the whole piece, where it should be connected and how it might contribute to that whole. I am very interested in this interplay of thinking — back and forth. Small details, larger picture. I am finding that working in *Storyspace* is giving me a structure in which to think about my writing even though I am also creating the structure. It is causing me to think about relationships among ideas and the overall shape of the piece in a way that I have not done before when working on a novel, for example (p. 11).

I had a similar experience of bouncing back and forth between particular details and the larger narrative while writing my wiki story. Once I had written a few nodes, I mapped out what I had written so far on Dobson's advice and was surprised by what I discovered visually:

April 14, 2007

I sketched out a mind map of how the story has developed so far, and I'm not sure what the picture tells me, other than that Shelley and the mother are connected very closely. Eva seems to be on the fringe at this point. I started a node for her story, "heaven", and I felt like it would relate [*sic*] to Susan somehow. Perhaps Shelley and Agnes [later changed to "Geraldine"] are mirror images for each other, while Eva and Susan are? Ah, ha! I think there is something there!

Like Luce-Kapler (2006), I experienced these moments of "serendipity and surprise" (p. 11) in creating my wiki narrative. My original draft started with Eva and Shelley, so I expected the story to focus on them. However, after seeing the visual map of the story, I discovered that most of the nodes involved Geraldine, whom I initially considered a very minor character. The linking structure of the wiki encouraged me to explore Geraldine's history prior to the opening scene where she is with her daughters. Specifically, I wanted to understand why she had become an alcoholic. Through exploring her story thread in the wiki, I began to see parallels between Geraldine and Shelley: they both smoke as a way to deal with stress, they both protect and care for their younger sisters, and they both have a smoldering, unspoken sexuality.

While the openness of the wiki was necessary for creating my story, I did worry about getting lost in the multiple story threads. Like Luce-Kapler, I wanted to "develop some of the points that [had] emerged already rather than spreading out too much further with the plot" (Luce-Kapler and Dobson, 2005, ¶2). Other minor characters surfaced that I was curious about – such as Shelley's friend Kyle, Geraldine's high school boyfriend Michael, and Geraldine's father Norman – but I did not want to make my story overly convoluted, so I chose to focus on the four women's stories instead. Writing in the wiki allayed worries about the final product, so I was able to set aside these characters for later exploration.

31

I still see "Past Echoes, Family Present" as a work in progress. In the future, I plan to delve more deeply into Eva's character and explain how she might connect to Susan. I would also like to further explore Shelley's sexuality and how it might compare to her mother's. As for Geraldine's history, I do not believe Susan's death is the only reason for her alcoholism. What else may have led Geraldine to suppress her emotions with alcohol? I am excited about further developing this story in a wiki because like Luce-Kapler, "digital forms of writing seem more able to facilitate my creation of multifaceted and complex characters" (Luce-Kapler, 2007, p. 257). Multiple story threads can convey a more intricate relationship between characters, themes, and story structure than a linear narrative for this particular story.

4.4 A new revision process

In her article "Writer tells all", Charlotte Doyle asks five contemporary published writers and teachers of creative writing to reflect on the creative process that takes them from an initial idea to a published work of fiction. Although each writer has his or her own process, Doyle (1998) identifies commonalities between them which she categorizes using the following terms: "seed incidents" are important real-life events that inspired the writers to write the work of fiction; the "writingrealm" is the time and space that a writer allots for planning and reflecting on his or her work; a "fictionworld" is the author's imaginative sphere that contains the characters and events in a story; the oscillation between reflective and non-reflective thought is when a writer switches back and forth between the writingrealm and the fictionworld; finally, "revisioning" is a particular type of revision in which a writer reflects on themes and images that have arisen in the fictional narrative.

Doyle's analysis resonates with my own creative writing process while working in the wiki. My seed incident was a dream I had involving Eva and Shelley, which prompted me to write the first draft. When I started the story with the two sisters and their mother, I knew that it would be about how alcoholism can create a culture of silence (Eva and Shelley do not confront their mother about her alcoholism or discuss it much), modify family responsibilities (Shelley has to care for her Eva because Geraldine is incapable of doing so), and foster in the family members of the alcoholic a determination to have a better future (Shelley stays up late studying after taking care of her sister). Once I moved my

story into the wiki and the fictionworld deepened, I began to see that it the story was much more complex than I had originally thought.

My wiki journal (a tool of my writingrealm) allowed me to alternate between reflective and non-reflective thought while writing the story. I state in my journal that "this story is [also] about memory and how it can put a stranglehold on the present, about how a painful experience from many years ago can exert such control over the present, especially if the demons associated with pain (e.g. guilt, shame) haven't been exorcised". While in the writingrealm, I also began to perceive other themes. For example, there is a theme of female rebellion against societal roles as Geraldine is openly sexually active in a time when many young Catholic women were not. Also, Shelley projects an alternative persona in her appearance through her use of punk-rock clothing and make-up. As well, Geraldine's unspoken love for her daughters, the secret guilt she carries over her part in the death of Susan, and Eva's quiet rage against her mother's alcoholism all demonstrate the women's unwillingness to communicate complex emotions. The writingrealm helped me to see that patterns repeat themselves over generations as Geraldine and Shelley take on a caretaker role for their younger sisters, and Susan and Eva rely on their older sisters to take care of them. Once I began to see these themes, I was able to revision the story by employing the Counterpoint and MirrorWorld structures which were instrumental in strengthening the connections between the characters.

While oscillating between the fictionworld and the writingrealm, the drowning motif arose. As I stated previously, the first draft of my story included a reference to *Bridge to Terabithia*. I included this book simply because it was a novel I had liked when I was about Eva's age, about eight or nine years old, and it was only when Susan died in a mysterious drowning accident that I saw its influence on my wiki story. I had not consciously decided that Susan would drown; like Joan Peters who felt "possessed" (Doyle, 1998, p. 32) while being in her fictionworld, Susan's death seemed to write itself. Furthermore, it was not until I received feedback from Dobson on my story that I realized that "Creek" (the story node which focuses the drowning) was the centre of my story. While I instinctively knew that this scene was important, it was only after receiving Dobson's feedback that I realized all of the other story nodes radiate from this scene.

As well, because I viewed writing in the wiki as an experiment, I became more open to feedback from others who gave me insights that I would not likely have made on my own.

Furthermore, similar to the findings of Ma and Yuen (2008), Mak and Coniam (2008) and Dobson and Vratulis (2009), I kept writing and revising the story even after I had completed the assignment for Teresa's Digital Literacy class. I am still in the process of "revisioning" (Doyle, 1998) the story in the hopes that I can develop it into a longer work for possible publication. I want to develop some of the story threads further in the "Past Echoes, Family Present" fictionworld while taking time to reflect on the emergence of the story.

Chapter 5: The Affordances of Wikis for (Teaching) Creative Writing

5.1 Wiki writing with students: an (auto) ethnographic study

"What makes ethnography humanly connected [is that] the ethnographer cares about the project" (Richardson, 1997, p. 105).

As an extension of my autoethnographic work, I explored wiki writing with my senior creative writing class. While I continued to embrace autoethnography as a theoretical framework, I also employed ethnography to learn directly how wikis might be useful for teaching creative writing. Ethnography is "grounded in a commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of a particular social and cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation (Atkinson et al, 2001, p. 4). More recent forms of ethnography – such as critical ethnography, interpretative ethnography, reflexive ethnography, and performative ethnography – acknowledge that the positioning of the researcher vis-à-vis the research participants influences the study at hand. Rather than making universal claims about human behavior, today's ethnographers build theory from specific contexts while acknowledging that any claims to "truth" are tentative and only one of many possible interpretations (Hill, 2009; Malin, 2003).

While traditional ethnography has been criticized by some for being "neutral, authoritative, and scientific" (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, p. 22), "distant, removed [and] disengaged" (Richardson, 2000, p. 253) or even voyeuristic (Denzin, 1994), much of the recent academic literature on ethnography aims to be transparent and reflexive about the researcher's stance, is written in the first-person voice, and acknowledges that any claims to "truth" are partial and uncertain (Atkinson, 2004; Gordon et al., 2005; Malin, 2003; Richardson, 1997). For these reasons, I agree with Eisenhart (2001) that "to be involved directly in the activities of people still seems to be the best method we have for learning about the meaning of things to the people we hope to understand… Conventional ethnography, it turns out, is still a good methodological choice in many situations (Eisenhart, 2001, p. 23).

During a short wiki-writing project with my senior creative writing student conducted in collaboration with one of my research supervisors, Teresa Dobson, we employed ethnographic methods to gather data, such as participant observation, face-to-face interviewing, researcher reflection, and

audio-taping of classroom sessions (Eisenhart, 2001). It is important to not here that the distinction between autoethnography and ethnography in this particular study is not a clear one because at times there was a "radical weakening… between the observer and observed, the researcher and the topic of inquiry" (Atkinson, 2004, p. 104). My role sometimes oscillated between the more "distant" ethnographer who focused on observing participants, recording data, and discerning patters to a more "insider" co-participant (as a fellow writer and student), who gained intersubjective insight into my own creative writing process through discussions with my students (or fellow writers). Somewhere between those two spectra lay my role as a teacher intent on improving her professional practice[2]. While these shifting identities were confusing at times, they ultimately facilitated a deeper engagement in the research process and aided me in theorizing and writing about the project.

5.2 Context and methodology

"Theory, writing, and ethnography are inseparable, material practices. Together they locate the social inside the text" (Denzin, 1998, p. 406).

Sumara (2002) advocates for "shared interpretative projects, especially those that ask human beings to imagine what exists outside the familiarity of perception" (pp. 143-144). For all of my students, creative writing in a wiki would be a new experience; while a few had received some prior exposure to creative writing in a digital environment, whether on "fan fiction" sites or using blogs, this wiki project would be uncharted territory for most of them. Although I was excited to see what they would be able to create, I did have some reservations. Would they enjoy writing in this environment as much as I did? Would they be able to overcome technical difficulties as I had? Would they find the wiki a useful and engaging tool for creating stories? To set them at ease, I emphasized that writing in the wiki was meant to be an experiment.

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[2] As such, my position was akin to what is described in A/r/tography, wherein Irwin (2005) observes that individuals may simultaneously identify as artist, researcher, and teacher.

As their wiki writing was not to be graded, I wanted the students to feel free to take risks and to enjoy experimenting without fear of evaluation.

By way of contextualization of this research, I teach at a high school in Vancouver with an enrolment of approximately 1000 students. At this school, students come from disparate socio-economic backgrounds, although the majority would be classified as working class. They also come from a variety of different cultural backgrounds, and many are of mixed ethnicity. As most students are first or second-generation Canadian, many speak another language (or languages) at home and are also fluent in written and spoken English. Finally, our school is known to have a positive school culture because staff and students from all backgrounds generally interact well.

I chose my Writing 12 class for the wiki project. Writing 12 is an elective creative writing course for Grade 11 and 12 students and is usually selected by those with an affinity for this type of writing; however, some students do take this course to improve the general quality of their written expression, and some to fulfill credits for graduation. As such, the students' writing abilities generally vary significantly.

Teresa Dobson introduced the project to the students and distributed consent and assent forms. Although students appeared interested in participating, only three of the twenty class members were able to obtain their parent's permission to participate in the study. Possibly this was due to the aforementioned language barrier in many student households, whereby parents have limited understanding of English and may not have understood the consent form. Locating translators to resolve this situation was beyond the resources of this project. The three participants nonetheless provided valuable insights into creative writing in a wiki.

The five 75-minute wiki-writing sessions took place between February and March 2008 in the computer lab. Teresa and I gave students a few options to start writing: respond to a prompt, expand on a previous work, or start something new. Over the five sessions, Teresa and I circulated around the class and asked students to reflect on their writing process as they wrote while tape recording our conversations. As much as possible, I tried to let my conversations with my students emerge naturally, rather than adhere to pre-selected questions, so as to remain open to interpretation (Frank & Uy, 2004). Toward the end of the study, Teresa held open-ended interviews with the two participant with the two

participants who by that time had submitted consent and assent forms (the third participant submitted the forms after the project had formally ended and her comments are therefore only drawn from the recordings of the in-class discussions.) After the project was complete, I transcribed the audiotapes. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) discuss the importance of collecting speech verbatim in ethnographic notes:

> As far as possible, therefore, speech should be rendered in a manner that approximates to a verbatim report… We can inspect the notes with a fair assurance that we are gaining information on how the participants themselves describe things, who said what to whom, and so son. When we compress and summarize we not only lose "interesting" detail and "local colour", we can lose vital information. The actual words people use can be of considerable analytic importance (pp. 181-183).

While transcribing the tapes, I coded and categorized any patterns and themes that seemed relevant to me (Hill, 2009), commented on dialogue that seemed particularly intriguing or confusing (Frank & Uy, 2004), and refined those themes as new insights emerged. As my transcription notes alone are ninety pages, I have had to limit my discussion to those themes that appeared most salient at the time of writing. What follows, therefore, focuses on the responses of the three students in addition to my own reflections. For the purpose of this thesis, I will call the three students who signed consent forms Aislinn, Cheng[3], and Bridget.

Aislinn was a Grade 12 student with many creative interests. Aislinn was a chatty, enthusiastic, and hard-working student. Although she had some learning disabilities, she excelled in school and was always on the Honour Roll or Principal's List. She was a skilled visual artist, specializing in manga and animé styles of drawing. She carried with her, at all times, a sketchbook filled with her works in progress; much of her art was displayed prominently around the school and in the yearbook.

Aislinn was particularly fascinating because of how she talked about her fictional characters, discussing them as if they were actual people. It was clear that her relationship with them blurred the

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[3] Please note that here and elsewhere, I have used pseudonyms for my students. All participants cited in the study signed consent forms in accordance with Canadian Tri-Council policy on ethics.

boundary between imagination and reality. Aislinn and her group of friends cheerfully identified themselves as social "outsiders", and they comprised a fascinating mix of socio-cultural backgrounds and academic abilities. They all shared a love for creative outlets such as drawing, photography, animé, manga and other fiction, playing video games and so forth. Aislinn was a prolific reader and writer. Much of her creative writing centred on these interests and was written in tandem with her artwork. She was very tech-savvy, and along with Cheng, was one of the two student administrators of our class wiki.

Cheng was a Grade 12 Mini[4] student who liked to write stories and poems, particularly about teenage relationships. Cheng was a polite and soft-spoken young man, and he was a very focused and mature student. (It was a joy, knowing him since Grade 9, to see how his self-confidence had grown over the years.)

Cheng was very comfortable in digital environments. Along with Aislinn and the school technology teacher, he was responsible for setting up the class wiki[5] and inviting students to participate in it well before the research began. When he was not working on his own story, Cheng helped other students with patience, grace, and enthusiasm. The wiki project seemed to bring Cheng out of his shell; his constant smile and upright walk suggested pride in being the de-facto wiki expert of the class. On a practical note, it was very helpful for me to have such a competent assistant as this allowed me more one-on-one time with students. I do not want to suggest that Cheng was the only assistant, as all of the students helped each other, but Cheng took on an unprecedented leadership role during the project.

Like Cheng, Bridget was a Grade 12 Mini student who loved to read and write literature, so much so that she was auditing Literature 12 for the second time. Bridget was an intelligent and often humorous young woman, yet she was also serious and thoughtful. She was very articulate in both her oral and written communication, and her creative writing interests were primarily poetry and short

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[4] "Mini" students are part of a five-year Honours cohort. They share several of the core academic classes together and take part in extra-curricular field trips.

[5] The particular wiki we used was http://www.wikispaces.com. It was recommended to me by my colleague because it is free for educators, it is user-friendly, and privacy settings are easy to implement.

stories. She has since moved on to study Arts at a local college, and she eventually wants to pursue an undergraduate degree in either Journalism or Creative Writing.

Bridget was a beautiful, athletic, and popular girl, and she seemed able to get along with students from every social clique. She appeared confident and worldly, although vulnerability and uncertainty came through in her honest and descriptive writing. Several of her pieces moved me tremendously, and her writing was published in two student anthologies. Bridget preferred to write by hand, and she did not particularly like computers. Thus, she approached the wiki writing with some reluctance.

The remaining sections of this chapter will focus primarily on what the three students and I perceive to be the affordances and challenges of writing in the wiki.

5.3 The affordances of writing in a wiki

5.3.1 New creative processes, new literary patterns

Except for some students who had experience with Flash or PowerPoint, most students had not written in a multimedia environment. Many of the students wrote more in the wiki than they had previously, similar to the students in the studies by Mak and Coniam (2008) and Ma and Yuen (2008). I noticed that in addition to writing more, they seemed to re-write more in the wiki; this observation is supported by Coley (2007):

> Writers who understand the technology... can use wikis to look at their craft in a new way. Traditionally, writers complete a draft or two, proofread their work, revise it, and consider it finished. But wiki writers, Mr. Morgan says, are more likely to use a process he calls 'refactoring': posting shards of text, spinning them off into larger pieces, reworking material constantly instead of doing so at set points during the writing process. 'On a wiki, the writing space is just a browser window,' Mr. Morgan says. 'Students see it as pretty plastic, and they're less apprehensive about throwing things out or reorganizing themselves than when they're using Microsoft Word" (p. 5).

For some students, like Cheng, writing in the wiki not only prompted them to re-write but to think about writing fiction in a different way. In the following interaction, Cheng and I discuss this change:

JENNIFER: Alright, um, Cheng, is that your story? So, how did you, so um, can you just talk about your story?

CHENG: Um,

JENNIFER: What you're doing there.

CHENG: Right now… I'm putting down part of the ending.

JENNIFER: Yup.

CHENG: And then you have to, uh, make your way around to find the intro of it so that...

JENNIFER: Oh!

CHENG: To find the intro, to find what really happened and what's really going on.

JENNIFER: Interesting. So this is the ending, and it looks as if you've got some images, is that right?

CHENG: Oh, um, I was just testing with the widgets, and you can add some media and some *Youtube*.

…

JENNIFER: And then people have to figure out the beginning.

CHENG: Yes.

JENNIFER: Now, are you guiding them to the beginning or are they…

CHENG: Um, they'll have to make their way around. Like, find out different pieces.

JENNIFER: Can you just expand on what you mean by that, by "different pieces"?

CHENG: Well, um, I'll have some key words, um, to link back to a different page.

JENNIFER: Oh, like hyperlinks.

CHENG: Yeah. And then you'll read a little bit of it...

JENNIFER: Okay.

CHENG: To go to a different hyperlink, so to just get to different parts of the story.

JENNIFER: Fascinating! Now why did you start with the end rather than the beginning?

CHENG: I just wanted to try something different.

JENNIFER: Oh, that's fascinating! So for you, now, have you done that before, when you create [*sic*] stories? Have you done that before, where you actually start with the end, or is this just something brand-new that you wanted to try?

CHENG: Something brand-new.

It appears as if working in the wiki inspired a new creative process for Cheng: starting with the end in mind, and then creating story episodes that radiate from that ending. Prior to writing in the wiki, he would often write various scenes on paper and then figure out how to link them together to create a cohesive narrative. Working in the new wiki medium, then, seemed to help Cheng expand his repertoire of strategies for writing fiction.

As Cheng wrote his story, he continued to have interesting observations about his creative process. Sometimes he was very aware of why he had chosen to create a link, but at other times he was not sure or did not see a pattern:

TERESA: Your whole linking structure is fascinating. Can you explain it? How did you choose to link certain events and leave some links broken?

CHENG: Well…

TERESA: We've sort of gotten into that a bit, haven't we?

CHENG: Um, yeah. I don't how I choose them. (*pause*) I just think it's kind of random. Like I plan on adding something-

TERESA: Right.

CHENG: -and I just make a link and then I –

TERESA: Sure.

CHENG: – go back.

TERESA: Yeah.

CHENG: And I go back and add to it when I have something in mind.

TERESA: So how long did it take you to write? Were you primarily writing in the classroom, or did you go home and write in it as well?

CHENG: Mostly in the classroom, but um, sometimes at home when I was bored I added to it.

TERESA: So like a (*indecipherable*) project, or something?

CHENG: Yeah.

TERESA: So these little links really were helpful in terms of keeping it going because you're not doing it all at the same time.

CHENG: Right.

TERESA: Um, it's funny because with the linking structure – I'm interested too. I'd like to see it; I'd actually like to see it mapped out. Did you ever feel like you wanted to see it mapped out?

CHENG: Um yeah, because like I plan on expanding on this a bit more, like adding more links. I plan on making a small diagram about how everything links. So there might be a broken link that I forgot to add to it, or something. And it helps me (*indecipherable*) so I would not try to make everything lead to one thing.

TERESA: Right.

CHENG: That's my intention. (*pause*) Yeah.

In this conversation, Cheng seems to want to avoid oversimplification and cliché in his story by ensuring that the story nodes do not all lead to one episode. When the interviewer raises the notion of mapping, he indicates that mapping out the nodes is something he had considered as a way to make sure he meets his goal.

5.3.2 Integrating multimedia

For many students, images and music were an important part of their wiki story, while others included neither. For my own part, I did not integrate any images or music in my own story, primarily because I wanted to focus on writing. Why did some students choose to use the multimedia capabilities of the wiki while others did not? For students interested in the visual arts, original artwork and photography were integral to their wiki stories.

Aislinn, for example, drew some beautiful and intricate drawings of two characters, Siena and Darien, of her futuristic trilogy:

JENNIFER: Do you plan, do you know at this point, would you include any images, any of your own original images, or?

AISLINN: Um, I have some images that I'm sketching up now (*laughs*).

JENNIFER: Oh, I see, so you're working on the images separately.

AISLINN: Yeah

JENNIFER: And eventually, later, you'll add them into your story. Cool.

AISLINN (*showing me a sketch*): I got [*sic*] a picture[6] of her. I did a mermaid one –

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[6] Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the image.

JENNIFER: Um hmm.

AISLINN: - of a, guess of, what she maybe could have been–

JENNIFER: Mmm.

AISLINN: – 'cause they kept her in a lab.

Drawing original images of her characters was critical to Aislinn's development of her wiki story. She often switched back and forth between sketching and writing her story, and being able to include her artwork with her story was a feature she really enjoyed about working in the wiki. She planned to upload her images into the wiki at a later date, but she never did. I am not certain as to why she did not.

For some students, like Cheng, music was essential for creating the right mood for the story and the reader. He thought carefully about how to match songs with important scenes in his story:

JENNIFER: And so, you've done sound, is that right?

CHENG: Yeah.

JENNIFER: (*sneezes*) Excuse me. Can you show the sound again (*sic*)?

CHENG: Um, (*pause*) how to make the sound, or…?

JENNIFER: Just show me where you put the sound.

CHENG: One of them I (*indecipherable*). The other one is just to get the feeling of the, um… (*pause*)

JENNIFER: The atmosphere?

CHENG: Yeah, the atmosphere.

Later in the conversation, Cheng refers to a "spooky" song he wished to include in his writing:

CHENG: Uh... (*pause*) I think it's... (*pause*) "Ai," which in Japanese means "love".

JENNIFER: I have a friend named Ai, and she's Japanese.

CHENG: And... (*pause*) except, it's kind of a spooky song.

JENNIFER: Oh!

CHENG: It doesn't sound, um, it doesn't sound like it has anything to do with love at all.

JENNIFER: Why did you choose it?

CHENG: Because this is supposed to be a newspaper article –

JENNIFER: Umm hmm, umm hmm.

CHENG: – about a really bad incident that happened.

JENNIFER: Oh, okay. (*pause*) So you wanted it to be kind of a dark kind of song.

CHENG: Yeah.

. . .

CHENG: I tend to choose songs that don't have lyrics so they can read –

JENNIFER: Oh

CHENG: – without having other words interfere with the meaning.

JENNIFER: So, it's almost like a movie soundtrack.

CHENG: Yeah (continues to type).

I was impressed by how much consideration Cheng had given his song choices in order to convey an appropriate atmosphere for his story. His choice to only include music without words could indicate that he wants readers to not be distracted by lyrics that would convey a conflicting (or at least different) story from his story.

Cheng's decision to insert music into his story afforded a connection with other social media communities, as revealed when Teresa interviewed him after the project:

TERESA: Those fifteen comments there? Are they comments from where you're pulling the music from?

CHENG: Um, where?

TERESA: It says "fifteen comments", those fifteen comments there.

CHENG: Um…

TERESA: They're probably on the actual site, on the Imeem[7] site.

CHENG: Yeah, the people who uploaded it would have, uh, have fifteen comments.

TERESA: That's interesting. So you can actually look into their comments when you're using them in your narrative.

CHENG: Yeah.

TERESA: (*laughs*) That makes it an interesting sort of connection.

Inserting multimedia into a wiki story is a relatively quick and painless process, which encouraged students to experiment with incorporating image and sound into their wiki stories and provided opportunities for making interesting connections beyond the narrative.

5.3.3 Extending previous creative works

Several students, perhaps influenced by my own wiki story, decided to put a piece they had written before in the wiki and to expand on it. For example, Bridget chose a postcard story written

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[7] Teresa is referring to a free music-sharing website.

during a previous unit as the starting point for her wiki writing. Bridget's original story was about an 18-year-old girl leaving for university in Saskatchewan. She decided to use the wiki to imagine other episodes in this girl's story, like the death of her father as well as the life histories of some of her other minor characters.

> BRIDGET: I'm going to talk about how her dad died, a story about her at that time.

> JENNIFER: Okay, so it's like a flashback.

> BRIDGET: Basically, yeah.

> JENNIFER: Okay, cool. Now – that's interesting – so for more information on her.

> BRIDGET: Yeah.

> JENNIFER: Interesting. So, what else have you written in your story, or is the first time you decided to-

> BRIDGET: This is my first time. And then I think I'd like to branch out a little (*indecipherable comments*) –

> JENNIFER: Okay.

> BRIDGET: – and then I'd like to do just a whole bunch of background on the different stories.

When I checked in with Bridget a couple of classes later to see how her story was developing, she had some interesting ideas about how verb tense affects a story. Furthermore, she commented that it was easier for her to imagine a character when writing in the present tense. This lead to a thought-provoking discussion about the creative process, in which I followed up on Bridget's comment that she prefers present tense:

> JENNIFER: Why do you think, for you, why do you think you're writing in the present tense? Why is it easier?

> BRIDGET: (*pauses*) Well, I guess it's more, like (*pauses*), like everyday things.

JENNIFER: Umm hmm.

BRIDGET: Usually in the past, like, you don't talk, you don't have speech like that so I think it's a bit easier. It flows a bit better.

JENNIFER: Yeah.

BRIDGET: I like the past for, like, a technique.

JENNIFER: Right.

BRIDGET: I guess. When I'm just writing something, I'll write in the present tense.

JENNIFER: So, like, in the initial –

BRIDGET: Yeah

JENNIFER: – creative stage, when you're just writing.

BRIDGET: Yeah.

These are interesting observations about Bridget's creative process. I realized that I felt the same way. In a later conversation, Bridget suggested that stories in the past are more plot-based; her comment implied that the past tense can produce an emotional distance between the reader and the characters.

In addition to expanding on their own writing, some students wrote stories based on creative works by other people. For example, Cheng created his story based on a Japanese animé, as Teresa discovered while interviewing him:

TERESA: So start with your story and . . . just walk me through what you did.

CHENG: Well, at first I decided to start with my conclusion. I kind of started with this animé I was watching.

TERESA: Oh, which animé is that?

CHENG: It's called "Higorashi".

TERESA: Okay.

CHENG: It's um, the English title is "When They Cry".

TERESA: How did you get it? Is it online?

CHENG: I think you can get it online if you want. This animé is, um (*pause*), is a kind of, is a story that, um, it's kind of really hard to explain (*pause*). It's kind of a bloody animé (*laughs slightly sheepishly*).

TERESA: (*laughs supportively*) No worries.

CHENG: I can show you the opening.

TERESA: Okay.

(They go to "Higorashi". A Japanese song starts playing. Cheng's initial comments are inaudible due to the music.)

CHENG: (*speaks excitedly*) And then in the ending you know what happens, and then afterwards you have to watch a different episode which would show a different character's perspective, and you'll see what really happened.

TERESA: Okay.

CHENG: What happened and why they did it.

TERESA: Interesting, okay.

This conversation is worthy of note because most of Cheng's story is written from two different perspectives (a boy and a girl in a romantic relationship) and has several story nodes accompanied by music. Writers are often influenced by what they read, and Cheng seems to appreciate the particular narrative structure and the style of music of "Higorashi". The ability to hyperlink episodes and incorporate multimedia clearly aided Cheng in creating his own story with precision and complexity.

5.3.4 Facilitating organization and focus

Several of my students, such as Cheng, commented on the organizational benefits of the wiki. In addition to feeling more organized and focused, Cheng also seemed to experience enhanced freedom (compared to writing with other technologies) in creating the story that he wanted to:

TERESA: Do you like writing in this space?

CHENG: Yeah, I do.

TERESA: Yeah? So has this been, um, have you found it significantly different from the other forms of writing, and why do you like writing in this space?

CHENG: Um, I think it's more unique for me, like it's more organized for me, so I don't have to shuffle around papers. I don't have to look for the papers. It's just, like, here for me.

TERESA: Oh, okay. Do you find when you actually write a story that you write it in a lot of different scenes and put it together, or do you just write it from beginning to end?

CHENG: Um, I prefer to write different scenes and then kinda place them around.

TERESA: Oh, okay, so this really helped you, then.

CHENG: Yeah.

TERESA: Because you're not –

CHENG: Because I'm not sure if I want to put this at the end, or put this near the end, or put this at the beginning.

TERESA: So why do you think you write like that? Is that because you watch a lot of animé?

CHENG: It might be but (*pause*), but it might be because I'm not that great at, uh, planning out the story completely. So I like to focus on bits that I'm really interested in, and then shuffle them around and see what works for me the best.

TERESA: So what do you think is the hardest part of the writing process?

51

CHENG: Um, the hardest part is planning it out.

TERESA: Planning it out. Do you mean figuring out what order it goes in?

CHENG: Yeah. (*laughs softly*)

TERESA: So you like just writing a little bit and sort of seeing where (*indecipherable*).

CHENG: Yeah.

TERESA: I think that this must be really neat then. (*laughs*)

CHENG: It makes it a whole lot easier because I can just change the link. So, when I'm writing I don't have to put arrows, and it gets all messy.

TERESA: Do you do that, when you're writing? Do you put arrows all over the place?

CHENG: I sometimes do.

Cheng clearly appreciated the ability to focus on an episode without worrying about keeping track of the whole piece. Because the wiki saved his work in a consistently available place, Cheng did not have to be concerned about losing drafts or getting distracted by messiness. For students who choose to collaborate, a wiki provides immediate access to their story as they write it. That said, evidently there are preservation issues that need to be considered in the long run.

Hayles (2007) addresses this problem of preserving e-literature. Unlike books, which can last for centuries, many digital programs authors use to create e-literature can become unreadable or unplayable after a less than a decade. Given the transient nature of computer software, it is reasonable to assume that wikis will become outdated and replaced by something else. How, then, do writers tackle this problem of preservation? Hayles (2007) offers some suggestions to writers of e-literature to help them preserve their work. First, she suggests publishing under open-source as opposed to corporate-driven software, which bypasses problem of proprietary encoding that is dependent on commercial software for readability. She also recommends that writers save their work in plain-text formats that are more likely to be readable over time. Finally, as "XML (Extensible Markup Language) will continue to be the most robust and widespread form of Web markup language into the

foreseeable future" (Hayles, 2007, ¶5), she recommends that older forms of e-literature be converted to this format and that authors consider use XML to create new e-literature. Another solution, as I discussed previously, is to subscribe to the LOCKSS[8] program, based out of Stanford University Libraries.

5.3.5 Sharing stories

"Creative writing is… a lens into our humanity, a way of understanding our strengths, weaknesses, and motivations" (Krygier, 2008, p. 16).

After reviewing my transcription notes, I realized that I shared many stories with my students as a way to connect with them about an issue or a theme that had arisen during their writing, especially when a student seemed uncomfortable with or discouraged by the wiki technology. For example, when students were off-task or appeared frustrated, I would sit next to them and tell them a story of how I had overcome technical or creative problems while writing in the wiki and in other environments. I do not think that this is a unique byproduct of working in the wiki, but I did find myself being more candid with my students than in my regular classroom. Likewise, several of my students disclosed details about their lives in ways that surprised and moved me.

What was it about the wiki project that allowed us to divulge our personal stories more freely? Was it the fact that the project allowed me more one-on-one time with the students and I seemed to spend less time in front of the class as I wandered from machine to machine in the computer lab? Did the presence of the computers provide a conduit for shyer students to convey intimate thoughts because they did not have to communicate face to face? Did the presence of the tape recorder convey unspoken affirmation that our stories were important? Did the openness of the wiki medium encourage us to be

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[8] LOCKSS is an international initiative that provides inexpensive, open-source software to libraries to help them preserve digital-born writing published on the web. It preserves both the intellectual and aesthetic (look and feel) content of the work while continually updated and repairing any documents as needed. It is decentralized, peer reviewed, and cross-referenced on a continual basis. This iniative is aimed primarily at institutions such as libraries and publishers, but it is available for individual use as well.

more unguarded? Did being able to access each other's stories as they progressed strengthen our sense of community? I imagine that it was a combination of these factors.

5.3.6 A dialectical relationship

One of the most exciting aspects of this wiki writing project was how it seemed to empower students to adopt instructional roles. I have already discussed how Cheng was our wiki expert, a role that seemed to give him additional self-confidence and status in the class. He often learned through trial and error and then passed on his knowledge, as the following exchange reveals:

JENNIFER: What about fonts? Can you play with the fonts or are you limited to a font, specifically?

CHENG: Um, I think you are able to change fonts, but you have to copy it [from a word processing program].

JENNIFER: Oh.

CHENG: You can't change it in here.

JENNIFER: Oh.

CHENG: (*starts typing*) So you have to...

JENNIFER ...go to Word...

CHENG: ...and change it.

JENNIFER: Type it first (*indecipherable*) font?

CHENG: I'm not sure if the font does but the colour does.

JENNIFER: The colour does?

CHENG: Yeah (*He pauses and checks.)* Yeah, it does.

JENNIFER: Oh, it does!

CHENG: Let me quickly change it just to make sure.

JENNIFER: Oh yeah.

CHENG: (He pauses, as he cuts and pastes from MS Word into Wikispaces.) Yeah, it does. (Continues typing)

Thus, through discussion and demonstration, Cheng taught me how to insert images, to make font changes, indents, and so on. Our interaction shows how a teacher and student can switch roles or embody both at the same time. Freire ([1970] 1993) refers to this concept as a dialectical relationship:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who himself [or herself is] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach[es]. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (p. 61).

This type of learning stands in contrast to Freire's ([1970] 1993) notion of the "banking style" (p. 75) of education in which the seemingly omniscient teacher deposits information into passive student "intellectual receptacles". In the previous discussion, the dialogue is natural, the learning is genuine, and mutual respect is evident. There was a pronounced change in our teacher-student/student-teacher relationship. Furthermore, it encouraged other students, many of whom jumped into the conversation afterwards, to offer their advice and thereby take on teacher roles.

I like to think that positioning myself as a fellow learner during this project had a democratizing effect on the class. Due to age and position, there will always be some power differential between teachers and students, but I wanted students to know that I was not the expert in every instance:

JENNIFER: (*addressing a student*) Yeah, you know me, too. That's the one thing (*pause*). Well, you know, to be honest I'm not very good at images (*laughs sheepishly*), which is probably why I didn't even use that capability in my story. I'm not very confident with that… I know that, for me, I think that's something that's an area of growth, like, eventually get more confident at that sort of stuff [*sic*].   I'm just not very confident at that right now.

I felt that it was important to emphasize that the wiki was a new tool that the students and I could explore together, and I hope that positioning myself as a fellow learner helped to minimize the traditional teacher-student hierarchy.

5.3.7 A breakdown of social hierarchy in the classroom

"If students see themselves as contributing members of a writing community, then the motivation to sustain and enhance the community may well cause students to value and contribute to their newfound identities. Students will likely begin to identify with other writers, thus adding to the classroom community in productive ways" (Street, 2000, p. 640).

Czarneki (2008) discusses the breakdown of social hierarchy that can occur in digital environments with Jeremy Jones, a high school English teacher from South Carolina. Jones started an innovative, on-line creative writing program called Shared Worlds, a program that brings together students and authors to create complex imaginative worlds and apply these worlds to fiction, art, and game design. He started this program when he noticed that two of his students were avid readers but did not have any friends. When other students in his class saw how much fun they were having, the group grew from two to forty students causing a "complete social hierarchy inversion" **(**Czarneki, 2008, ¶3). Similar to the students in the Shared Worlds workshop, I watched social cliques fracture during the wiki project. One of these examples of the breakdown in social hierarchy was when two Grade 12 boys (one definitely more "popular" than the other) who had never worked together before or even sat near each other decided to write a story from two different perspectives. Later on in the year, they co-wrote a poetry rap for our school's Spring Arts festival. Would they have collaborated in the

spring if they had not worked together on the wiki story? It is impossible to be certain, but it seemed the wiki project facilitated a new partnership.

5.3.8 Enhanced freedom and flexibility for writers and readers

Much of the academic literature in this paper (e.g. Coley, 2007; Dobson, 2006, 2007; Désilets and Paquet, 2005; Luce-Kapler, 2006, 2007; Luce-Kapler and Dobson, 2005; Moxley, 2008) highlights the freedom that wikis offer writers. I have already noted that this was definitely true for me as well, and I let my students know this.

> JENNIFER: (*addressing a student*) I really found it allowed me a certain freedom. Like, I don't really know where this is going to go but that's okay, I can just sort of work on this for now and come back to it. Whereas, when I'm writing on paper, there's something final about it.

As I stated earlier in this thesis, the wiki assuaged the anxiety that I often feel while writing because I knew that I could focus on particular episodes and try taking the story in multiple directions. Cheng echoed this theme of freedom in creating his own narrative, particularly with regards to changing perspectives:

> TERESA: ... if you imagine your narrative, if you were to think of the particular space in which you're writing, how do you imagine it?

> CHENG: Um, (*pause*) I would say (*chuckles*) all over the place.

> TERESA: All over the place.

> CHENG: Yeah.

> TERESA: Because these guys are sort of peripheral to the main.

> CHENG: Yeah. So at times, um, (*pause*) at times, it will be from one person's perspective or from another's perspective, like a third person's perspective.

> TERESA: Right.

CHENG: No one's really, um, (*indecipherable*) it, it's just telling what really happened. And it might be someone else's personal experience and, um, telling to or talking to each other.

TERESA: So, do you change perspective a lot?

CHENG: Yeah.

TERESA: And you feel free to do that?

CHENG: Yeah.

TERESA: More free than –

CHENG: Than writing [in other environments], yeah, because it will be kind of hard for the reader to follow with it.

TERESA: Right, because every time someone comes to a new node, it's like they're coming to a new –

CHENG: A new beginning.

5.3.9 The expanded audience provided by the wiki

"Wikis also change the teacher's role by limiting the authority of the teacher as audience, making writing more public, and thus enlarging the audience" (Coley, 2007, pp. 46-47).

Considering one's audience is important for any writer. Unfortunately, most writing assigned in school and post-secondary institutions is for an audience of one: the instructor. Writing in a wiki, then, can grant students a diverse audience and an opportunity for feedback from several people. This has been noted by many researchers (Coley, 2007; Lamb, 2004; Mak& Coniam, 2008; Ma & Yuen, 2008), and it is a primary reason why many educators are incorporating wikis into their curricula.

The interaction may be public, but not in a traditional face-to-face sense, whereby a student shares work by reading aloud. This feature seemed to appeal to many of my less confident students, who preferred receiving written feedback through the wiki. This observation prompted me realize that I could easily incorporate wikis into my creative writing class in a way that I had not anticipated. For example, students could put writing in the wiki that they would like feedback on, and everybody could be responsible for commenting on each other's stories in a respectful way. Alternately, students could choose which presentation and feedback forum they preferred.

Many of my students commented on how much they enjoyed reading each other's stories as they developed. Cheng remarked, "I liked to read some changes made by other people and see how their stories were going along." Charting the creative process of other students in the class also seemed to motivate him to keep writing his own story:

CHENG: Um, well, um I said this yesterday, but being in a wiki, um (*announcement interrupts him*). Seeing how other people are progressing and then reading what they have, and then reading how they might have changed from before, it might inspire me. (A*nnouncement interrupts him)*

TERESA: Can you just go through that again? So, you'd go into other people's stories, and see how they're writing

CHENG: Um.

TERESA: Do you keep track then, of what other people are writing, all the way through? Is that what you've been doing?

CHENG: Um, no, but there is a way to see how they've been progressing.

TERESA: Right.

CHENG: If I click on this, I can click on "history –"

TERESA: Yeah, yeah –

CHENG: – and see what they've all (*interrupted by bell*).

TERESA: Yeah.

CHENG: But I can see how they might have dealt with changes (more interruptions – bells and announcements. Conversation continues but is indecipherable.)

TERESA: So that's interesting, you go back to other people's narratives, and that can sometimes you give an idea of what you might do.

CHENG: Yeah.

Many students enjoy reading each other's stories, and like many teachers, I incorporate a day at the end of each writing unit for students to present and celebrate their work. However, what is unique about the wiki versus other writing environments, is that it allows students to track each other's revision and artistic choices at a time that best suits them. This transparency can inspire students, like Cheng, to keep writing and reflect upon their own creative process in light of the creative processes of others.

5.3.10 Wikis: engaging and useful

Most of my students seemed to enjoy working in the wiki. I was, likewise, excited about this wiki-writing project and our collective laughter seemed a testament to the satisfaction of the experience. I am not suggesting that everything in education must be entertaining, but pleasure is clearly important in encouraging any type of long-lasting learning. In addition to being enjoyable, working in the wiki was educational. For example, several students stated that inserting hyperlinks in their story provided them with greater insights into the content of their writing. Moreover, the simple fact that the wiki was internet-based helped students to research their stories.

CHENG: I usually use the internet first and look around to get some more inspiration.

TERESA: Right.

CHENG: As opposed to when I'm writing, using – when I'm just writing on a piece of paper, there's usually not much around to help me.

TERESA: Right, right.

CHENG: So I would get distracted and just give up and go on to something else.

My experience was similar to Cheng's. When I started to write my story in the wiki, I wanted to explore Geraldine's history – to understand what it may have been like for her to grow up Catholic in small-town Ontario in the 1960's. I used the internet to research popular names of young women during this time period, fashion (such as Mary Jane shoes), cigarette brands (like Player's), and Latin translations for Catholic funeral prayers. I suppose that it is possible that I would have searched for this information had I continued writing in a word processor or a paper journal, but writing in an on-line environment seems to keep the awareness of one's connectivity in mind.

I felt encouraged as a writer, knowing that many of my students agreed with me that a wiki could be an engaging, useful, and liberating tool. I felt validated as a researcher because, prior to the project, I had considered myself more tech-phobic than tech-savvy. Like the instructors in Dobson and Vratulis's study, taking on the project was a leap of faith. Finally, the wiki project reinforced my role as a teacher who tries to be innovative. As with any risk-taking, the wiki project might have failed, and my entire class could have found it a waste of time. Hearing students echo many of the same affordances that I had experienced while writing my wiki story boosted my confidence as a teacher of writing, a researcher, and a writer.

5.4 The challenges of working in a wiki

5.4.1 Mitigating anxiety and frustration: technical difficulties

Like most people learning something new, many students did not know how to start writing in the wiki. As mentioned previously, I suggested that they use the creative writing prompt that Teresa had given them, develop one of their works further, or write something completely new. Interestingly,

some students took a character or a key phrase from a friend's story as a starting point for a new narrative.

Some students experienced anxiety in learning the technical aspects of the wiki, such as creating pages or inserting hyperlinks. As a way to empathize with them, I shared my own stories of frustration while working in the wiki. For instance, I once worked on my story for over an hour, forgot to save my changes because I was so immersed in my fictionworld, and then the computer crashed. Aislinn had a similar experience:

AISLINN: *(breaking in)* Mine didn't save, one time.

JENNIFER: Oh really?

AISLINN: It was (indecipherable comments).

JENNIFER: So was it one of Darien's stories?

AISLINN: Um, yeah.

JENNIFER: I know. I've done that before, too.

AISLINN: (*indecipherable comments)* make sure I didn't save that big chunk and I'm like "Oh, crap."

JENNIFER: And then you try to reconstruct it and you're like "I don't know if this is right."

AISLINN: It saved part of it, but not all of it, so I'm like, "Aw man."

Of course, this could happen using a word processor as well and is not a challenge exclusive to wikis. We suggested students write long passages using word processors and then paste them into the wiki if they were concerned about the possibility of losing their writing; this was also a way of preserving the writing in the event that Wikispaces might cease to offer their services at some point in the future.

I also heard several students complain about the slow and sometimes intermittent internet connection. It often took minutes for a page to upload, something that can block the flow of ideas. Because of the high volume of internet users at the school, the connection would sometimes shut down

while students were in the middle of writing. Furthermore, not all students felt confident with computers, in spite of Prensky's (2001) assertion that they are a generation of "digital natives". Many students can type quickly, and they found the wiki engaging because they could write more quickly than by hand. For those who could not, working in the wiki actually impeded their creativity. Bridget made the valid point that although working on a computer seems easier than working by hand, sometimes this is not the case.

I continued to have my own frustrations with the technical aspects of the wiki while teaching. At times, I accidentally gave incorrect instructions to students. I thought of the instructors in Dobson and Vratulis's research, who did not elect to learn the wiki at all, and therefore "inadvertently eroded the confidence of some students in their own abilities with the technology" (Dobson and Vratulis, 2009, p. 21). However, the difference was that I did learn how to use the wiki, and others may have felt comforted that we were learning about it together. My errors led to some good-natured teasing and an exchange of stories, which built a level of camaraderie between me and certain students which had not existed before. Either way, my students were gracious about the mistakes that I made and quickly jumped in to help me and each other as needed.

Some students, such as Cheng, found clever solutions to their technical problems. For instance, Cheng wanted to indent for paragraphs but Wikispaces would not allow him to do so. He created his own method for guiding the reader: a dot at the beginning of the sentence which indicated that the story was shifting in a new direction. For Cheng, the wiki offered an innovative opportunity, not only for creative writing, but for critical thinking.

While some students never felt entirely comfortable working in the wiki, most became quite adept at navigating their way around it. Several students became more interested in the wiki writing once they had had some direct, one-on-one instruction. For example, one male student appeared to be disengaged from the project until I taught him to create new pages. One girl was a top student who had consistently produced excellent writing throughout the year but seemed quietly reluctant about the whole wiki project from the beginning. I soon realized that her skepticism was really a feeling of insecurity in this new environment, so I made more of an effort to walk her through the technical process, whereupon she became much more interested in the project. After gaining more confidence

with the technical features of the wiki, she proceeded to take risks with her writing by integrating different genres into her wiki story, something she had never done before in previous assignments.

5.4.2 Uncertainty over "wikiquette"

Wiki etiquette, or "wikiquette", was not an issue to which I gave significant attention prior to the wiki project because of our school's code of conduct, which is well-integrated into our school culture. I expect my students to be respectful, and generally they are. In spite of this, some students mentioned in the final group interview that the rules of etiquette for the wiki project were vague (unlike in our regular classroom setting, where the guidelines for giving constructive feedback are made clear through peer-editing rubrics). For example, students were not sure whether or not they were invited to edit each other's stories. This was important feedback for me as a teacher. In the future, I will initiate a discussion with my students about wiki etiquette before embarking on any projects. Together, we can decide upon some shared guidelines for giving and receiving feedback and writing collaboratively. At the same time, I do not want to be too proscriptive or over-emphasize rules so as to limit potentially rich interactions that may occur as students explore the space and develop rules organically.

This issue of "wikiquette" is particularly important for students who collaborate. As discussed in Chapter 3, creative collaboration works well for people who choose to collaborate and agree upon the rules for collaboration. Educators understand, however, that even voluntary collaboration is not always unproblematic. As Vratulis and Dobson (2008) and Désilets and Paquet (2005) discuss in their findings, it is possible for one individual to assume a domineering role and silence the voices of others. Is everybody involved in the collaboration to be deemed an equal co-author? Teresa had an interesting conversation over this issue of authorship with Cheng:

> TERESA: I'm wondering about, uh, the second question which has to do with the two broken links, "Baseball" and "Human". Is it an intentional invitation for other people to participate in the narrative or have you just not had a chance to finish them up?

> CHENG: Uh, I actually just never had a chance to finish them up.

> TERESA: You said that at the beginning, yeah.

CHENG: But, um, I don't mind if anybody else wants to –

TERESA: Oh, okay.

CHENG: – um, edit it or add something else (*pause*). But, personally, I would prefer that, um, [*indecipherable*] me first and then add because they might steer away from what I... where I was trying to go.

Cheng's comments seem to indicate that he feels his story (or narratives, in general) should have a unified voice and begs the question of how writers in collaborative scenarios work to resolve conflicts about consistency of voice.

Many writers have difficulty in relinquishing creative control, particularly if they feel strongly about their vision of a story. Can story writing be truly collaborative; can all parties feel as if they have equal say in the creative development of the story? Collaboration can be a difficult process, but it is a skill that is becoming necessary for many occupations:

> Creative writing refers to the imaginative production of text… It is a subject which traditionally assesses most work on an individual student basis, in this way imitating an 'industry standard' of production (publication and performance) of works by individual authors. Importantly though, and increasingly, many real world creative writing applications do call for collaborative story production (or the collaborative production of other creative text types). This is especially true today of production of texts for screen or stage, committee reporting work and translation (Biuk-Aghai, Kelen and Venkatasen, 2008, p. 98).

I am not suggesting that students should always collaborate, but might wiki-writing projects help challenge traditional ideas of authorship and encourage true collaboration? Although the process was not unproblematic, the findings by Vratulis and Dobson (2008) and Dobson and Vratulis (2009) seem to indicate "yes".

5.4.3 Privacy concerns

A few students expressed concern over the lack of privacy in the wiki. (Our class Wikispaces page was open-access to members only, but everyone could read each other's pages.) One particular student felt that the public nature of Wikispaces was preventing her from exploring personal issues through fiction, so Teresa suggested that she create a secure page in another wiki. Aislinn "was still freaking out about it maybe not being private", so she coded her pages with rather cryptic names. Similarly, Bridget worried about other people seeing her story nodes: as she said, "this computer, they're saved on here. I don't want them on the computer". Privacy was not a concern that I had adequately considered in designing the wiki project:

> JENNIFER: It's interesting because someone was saying last day, you know, an issue I hadn't even thought about.

> BRIDGET: Umm hmm.

> JENNIFER: You know, that if you're writing something that's kind of sensitive in this sort of setting you might not want other people to read it. And I was like "of course", but I didn't even think about that.

This issue of privacy is a serious one, and in future I will give students a choice of working in a more private or more public wiki.

5.5 Limitations of the research

"As interpreters we need humility and humour and a sense of skepticism about our word-making" (Leggo, 2004, p.108).

On reflection, I wonder if different approaches might have improved the experience for students. Perhaps, for example, I might have offered students more examples of wiki writing and e-literature prior to starting the project. As well, I made an interesting error at the outset that proved

revealing: when Teresa suggested that I show students how I expanded my story by showing them both the very first version written in a word processor and then the expanded version in the wiki, I misunderstood and printed off my wiki story. We laughed about it later with a student:

> TERESA: I said, why don't you give everybody a print version of your very first one and then show them how it got expanded. But she read my email to say, "Well, put your expanded version in the wiki and give it to them in print form." (*laughs*) So, she had to decide what order it went in. (*laughs*)

> JENNIFER: (*laughing*) Which was interesting. It was hard!

> TERESA: (laughing) Very hard.

Hard indeed, and it negated the whole point of the wiki project: to write multidirectional digital stories! It also pointed to the affordances of the medium and its influence on the artistry of the piece. Once the story existed in network form, converting it to print was exceedingly hard – practically unthinkable.

Another challenge was the limitations of our school technology. Teresa and I had originally thought that we could record interviews with the students and access data off the computers by using the usability software, Morae, but the program proved to be too much for our school computers to handle. Thus, the majority of my data is drawn from tape-recorded conversations, which discounted the multimedia aspect of the work and also proved challenging because it was difficult to decipher voices at times in a busy class. Finally, because of the consent form issue discussed earlier, I only had permission to gather data from three students, and some of the rich observations of others cannot be included here.

5.6 Chapter summary

The findings from my research demonstrate that wikis can support and extend the creative writing process in a number of ways. By employing autoethnography as a methodology, I began to see the effects of the wiki on my creative process while writing fiction. Specifically, I enjoyed writing my

wiki story more than some other projects for three central reasons: I felt more relaxed while writing; I took more imaginative risks; and I was able to write more often.

What was it about the wiki that modified my creative writing process? One significant factor was the ability to work on my story on any computer with internet access, which allowed me to write and revise with greater frequency than if I only wrote on my home computer. Even more important, though, was the wiki form itself. Because of its potential for multidirectionality, I was able to overcome writer's block by taking the story in several directions when I was not sure how I wanted the story to progress. In doing so, my previous perfectionism abated because I was able to explore different possibilities and to enjoy the emerging story rather than worrying about the end product. Focusing on this process helped me to develop a more intricate plot with more complex characters. While "Past Echoes, Family Present" may not be finished in the traditional sense, it is clearly a better story than my first draft created in a word processor, and I attribute that to the unique affordances of the wiki. My future challenge might be to determine what it means to "finish" a wiki story, or if that is even desirable, an issue that is beyond the scope of this particular thesis.

Many of my students created interesting wiki stories as well, and the majority of the students seemed to really enjoy the project. Some of them, such as Cheng, greatly benefited from the organizational advantages of the wiki by having their writing available in a consistent yet flexible place. Others, such as Bridget, used the wiki to expand on a previous work and made some important insights while writing. Several students experimented in ways that they never had before, such as blending genres of writing, incorporating multimedia into their stories, or employing new literary patterns. In this sense, the students made greater use of the wiki's capabilities than I did, something that is not entirely surprising as, so often (particularly when it comes to technology), students can surpass their teachers. In this sense, the wiki project became a dialectical process: I learned as much (or more) from my students as they learned from me through sharing our stories and helping each other solve technical difficulties.

Chapter 6: Implications for Future Teaching and Writing

6.1 My transformation as a writer and teacher (of writing)

"Hypertext writing [or e-literature] has acted like a hinge to move me from my usual thinking about texts into different patterns of story. I do, of course, like all writers, consider and discard numerous possibilities, but this time, the space seems bigger, with more room for alternatives. I move between crafting a fragment and seeing it as contributing meaning without being concerned that one design is emerging or that all the loose ends are tied up. I have to remain more ambiguous and open to what is emerging as the fragments build, influencing one another and shaping my understanding of this project" (Luce-Kapler, 2007, p. 258).

My wiki writing and research have inspired a new openness in both my teaching and writing. I used to believe that most students needed significant structure to begin writing, so I would assign graded plot outlines and character sketches to be completed prior to writing a narrative. While step-by-step guidelines definitely help some students, I began to see this approach as too proscriptive for others. The reason for this change is that many of the events and the complexities of the characters in "Past Echoes, Family Present" only emerged when I was immersed in my fictionworld, in a state of non-reflective thought. Instead of insisting that all students follow the same procedure, I now provide students with different options (such as creating an outline or freewriting first) so that they can develop their own idiosyncratic processes.

I am less afraid to point out flaws in my writing to my students, whether in my draft or published work. At the same time, I am learning to celebrate my strengths in the hopes that my students develop a balanced assessment of their own work. I continue to praise my Writing 12 students for having the courage to take the class (I was too insecure to show anybody my writing until I was an adult). I remind my students that they are well ahead of me in developing their self-confidence and skill as writers. By positioning myself as both a teacher and a writer, I aspire to facilitate a community of writers in which teacher and students become capable of helping each other grow.

6.2 Why educators should embrace wikis for writing pedagogy

In his article "Datagogies, writing spaces, and the age of peer production," Moxley (2008) writes that wikis "offer a powerful, underutilized tool" (p. 193) for English educators. Wikis are not being used as widely as they could be, potentially for the reasons discussed by Dobson and Vratulis (2009) in regards to faculty reluctance to take up digital technologies in teaching, a lack of knowledge by educators, skepticism of the pedagogical worth of digital learning technologies, or a more traditional ideology of authorship.

Moxley poses an important question: why should English educators care about wikis specifically or social software in general? He argues that we are at a tumultuous moment in the history of literacy, and educators need to pay attention. Due to the increasing number of people using social software, Moxley urges post-secondary institutions to address these changes:

> Newsvine, Wikipedia, MySpace, Facebook — these popular writing sites provide models of new learning environments that enable writers to reach broad audiences for their texts, providing a world stage for collaboration, dialogue, conflict, and innovation. Open Access, Open Archives, Open Source — these are all examples of collaborative, decentralized, online communities where crowds of people interact to construct knowledge (p. 184).

Ostensibly because of the internet and social software, Moxley argues that there has been a transformation in how people think and interact, and educators need to embrace this cultural shift.

As a result of social software, the ways in which we collaborate, author, and archive ideas have radically altered. The texts that many people read and create today are "dialogic, hypertextual and… under constant revision. [They] include multiple channels of communication…. [They] engage new ways of reading, interpreting, and collaborating as they allow users to interact as authors, coauthors, editors, and readers" (Moxley, 2008, p. 185). The knowledge produced by these texts can potentially challenge economies, governments and academic institutions; in this sense, social software is influencing to "some degree what it means to be human [and to] participate in society" (pp. 184-185). Moxley's claims may sound dramatic, but he does have a point: literacy is changing, and "to account for these new literacy practices we must broaden the nature of our work, our conception of what constitutes texts and how to prepare our students as citizens and critical thinkers" (pp. 199-200).

Some educators may find the somewhat subversive nature of wikis disconcerting and this may prevent them from integrating such media into their curricula. I had to battle my own concerns of not being fully in control while researching and writing in the wiki, but I was able to overcome these fears once I opened myself up to the creative possibilities that wikis have to offer. I discuss this in my wiki journal[9]:

February 6, 2008

I think with both computers and writing I feel on a more equal playing field with my students – computers because, as digital natives, they know so much more than I do and intuit the infrastructure of the digital world better than me; writing because the more I read and write the more I realize that I am a child in my expertise and experience, and better yet, I am learning to embrace this childlike state as one of creative openness.

As teachers, we don't often become the students, or when we do, it's in a way that is still engineered by us (e.g. students give a presentation which we learn from.) That is definitely still valid, but there is an artificial quality about it. With computers and writing – memoir, poetry, fiction – the mélange of technology that speaks to many youth and the opportunity to write about issues that are really important to them has a level of engagement and authenticity for me that I haven't experienced before. By admitting my own vulnerability in this area – and by putting myself in genuine learning situations, situations in which I really want to learn – has transformed my relationship with my students. Petty power dynamics dissipate and we see each other as equals – people trying to make sense of our lives, to remember experiences through poetry, verse and image, as people who want to connect with other people through media that can help us to communicate honestly.

I can hear the critics as I read this, skeptics, who say, "Come on, Jen – stop being so Pollyanna and unrealistic! You're the teacher, and they're the students, and you can never get away from that power dynamic! You can never really be equal, even in art!" I can't speak for everyone, and I'm not trying to gloss over the downsides of writing autobiographically in general (e.g. the risk of narcissism and delusions of grandeur) or of writing in digital environments (e.g. the dangers of creepy adults trolling for naive children, playing on their need for attention). But I know that for me, having something as public as a wiki page helps me to better understand the vulnerability and pride of showing my work to others. Positioning myself as a writer (even though I still don't comfortably bear that label) has given me good pressure to not only write but to publish. And I know that due to the ease of typing (i.e. speed) and easy access of wiki (i.e. immediate), I write more.

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[9] I have deliberately chosen not to edit my journal.

By writing and researching in an area that was beyond my comfort zone, I have expanded as a writer, as a teacher, and as a person. I have become more comfortable with not knowing, and I now try to welcome the unknown as an opportunity for growth. As I embrace our changing literacy practices, I feel more confident that I can help students adapt to these changes as well.

6.3 Summary: the affordances of wikis for creative writing

"Throughout the documented history of the teaching of writing, educators have engaged in various methods through which to guide student learning in the textual medium. In recent years, the digital age has provided a plethora of educational opportunities from long-distance learning and virtual courses, to course management systems, blogs, and wikis. The wiki has emerged as a growing technology with the potential to transform the rhetoric of the writing classroom" (Coley, 2007, p. 2).

Educators and students alike recognize that much of what is taught in schools can seem antiquated or irrelevant, so social software presents students with interesting possibilities for writing. Wikis (like other examples of social software) can facilitate the creative writing process in an environment that many students enjoy or at least appreciate.

> JENNIFER: Do you ever write by, I see you writing by hand sometimes, but do you prefer, like do you generally...
>
> AISLINN: The computer. I just find it easier to type it all on the computer.
>
> JENNIFER: So just, if you had a choice, you'd rather start with a computer?
>
> AISLINN: Yeah.

Like Aislinn, many of my students prefer to write on the computer, and these students were engaged in the wiki project in a way that I had not seen before. For those students who did not feel very tech-savvy, learning to problem-solve in this environment helped build their confidence in digital environments.

72

As an organizational tool, a wiki helps students to locate and to store their writing in a space that is likely to be available for at least a few years. This easy access enables students to work on their writing at school, at home, or at any other place of their choosing. For students working collaboratively, a wiki makes giving and receiving feedback a relatively painless process and inspires many students to continue revising their work. A wiki provides an easy platform for students to publish their work and a much wider audience than most print formats.

In addition to their creative and pragmatic affordances, wikis can offer emotional benefits for students. Working collaboratively in a wiki can rupture existing social hierarchies and lead to unforeseen writing partnerships between students. These benefits could lead to students taking more creative and intellectual risks. For all of these reasons, a wiki can be a powerful tool for writing pedagogy and community-building, both in and outside of the classroom.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Openings

"As I make meaning out of lived experiences (my own and others), I am an interpreter who stands between the chaos of the experience and the production of a tidy narrative that re-presents the experience. In the end, the narrative becomes one of multiple possible stories" (Leggo, 2004, p. 105).

Why should educators explore creative writing in a wiki with their students? In an educational climate where increasing emphasis is on skill development and the testing of those skills, making a case for teaching creative writing at all can seem daunting and frivolous. However, Leggo and Kelly (2008) articulate that educators should help students to develop their imaginations:

> We believe that this is the central task of education – to create a stimulating environment in which creative thought is encouraged. It speaks to the importance of providing [young people] with opportunities to experience new things, draw upon the experiences of others, and to be allowed many opportunities to create materials that embody their creative thought. By nurturing students' imaginative thought, [educators] are preparing students to become creative thinkers and problem-solvers who have the capabilities to explore difficult problems and issues in new and creative ways (pp. 184-185).

Like these authors and many arts-based educators, I believe that nurturing creativity should be a central aim of education. Creativity may be one of the most important skills that students can learn.

The unfortunate reality is that "the time and energy of public education is largely devoted to having students project what is already known, not to invent new ways of knowing" (Sumara, 2002, p. 160). I hope that writing in a wiki environment, with its implicit encouragement to experiment with different genres of writing and multimedia, can be one tool for students to create new ways of knowing that are important to them. Based on my experiences of writing and teaching creative writing, I now believe that writing in a wiki environment can engage the imagination in a way that is not possible in other environments. For those students who might not deem themselves as tech-savvy, learning to integrate text and media in a user-friendly wiki environment could arguably build their confidence writing in digital environments.

Leggo (2006) notes that "writing is always opening up new gaps and fissures for seeing the world in multiple ways" (p. 77). Wikis offer exciting possibilities for writers to represent the world through innovative narratives. I hope that this research on writing in a wiki environment proves useful for some writers and teachers of writing, and that it validates complex, non-linear narratives in both print and digital environments. For my wiki story to develop meaningfully, I had to tolerate disorientation and trust in my creative process, concepts that I communicated to my students as they created their own wiki stories. Once I figured out how to use the technology, I was hooked: I am convinced that many students and teachers, given the opportunity to write creatively in a wiki environment, will become hooked as well.

Chapter 8: Epilogue

When I began this thesis, I was nervous; how was I going to be able to bring together my different ways of thinking, living, teaching, and writing? How would I balance the rational logician in me – the person who liked to slot ideas and experiences into recognizable theoretical framework – with the more passionate and rebellious part of me, the artist who reveled in the murky grey of multiple and shifting identities and conflicting paradigms? Like Laurel Richardson (Ellis et al., 2008), I wrote this thesis "experiencing the tension between two sides of myself: the scientist and the poet. I wanted to feel more integrated. How was I going to put myself together?" (p. 266).

This entire process – graduate studies, research, continued writing and teaching – has helped me to reconcile some of the tensions that have battled within me for years. Reconciling does not mean "eradicating"; what is different now is that I try to embrace these tensions as sources for dialogue and growth rather than push them away or subjugate them with firm definitions. Writing my wiki story has opened up new creative potential for me as a writer. I am excited about the possibilities for using wikis for the teaching of creative writing. After reading this thesis, I hope that other writers and educators feel the same way.

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Appendix I: "Past Echoes, Family Present" (Linear Version)

Eva was on the bathroom tile lining up the rubber animals when her mother crashed to the floor behind her. She turned, looked at her mother's mashed curls, and went back to her animals. The brown bear was her favourite because he was the first toy her grandfather had given her before he died.

"Eva," moaned her **mother.** "Eva. Eva."

Eva didn't respond and moved the purple hippo behind the bear. She was creating an army. Of course, the brown bear was the leader so she put him in front.

"Eva," said her mother, louder now, her breath rotten-smelling. "Eva, get Mum a glass of water."

Without looking at her, Eva finished off the line (the yellow lion and green alligator after the hippo), and she walked down the skinny hallway. She noticed that the **bees** were back.

When she got to the kitchen, she picked the clay mug out of the sink, crunching a struggling cockroach first. It was one of the mugs her mother had made, round and bright blue, with the handle broken off. She turned the water on, but it was after 9:30 so the water had already been shut off. Instead, she got some from one of the reserve tanks next to the fridge.

"Mum passed out on the bathroom floor?"

Eva turned and saw her older sister Shelley standing at the doorway, cigarette in hand.

"Yeah," sighed Eva, as she screwed the cap back on tight.

Shelley eyed her younger sister, as she clicked on her cigarette.

"Come to my room, and I'll do French braids," she said, putting her hand on her sister's smooth shoulder, before walking towards her bedroom.

Eva smiled up at her sister's blue eyes and followed **Shelley** down the hall, her grip firm on the chipped mug of water.

Back to beginning of **story**.

Mother

Not always mother, not only mother, though her daughters don't know that, that's all they see her as. They never saw her when she was young and beautiful, when boys stopped talking as she walked past them.

They don't know about Susan, about what happened to her.

Day of wrath, O day of mourning

The words came back to Geraldine as she laid on the floor, listening to Eva with her animals, those cheap rubber toys that her father had given in a puffed-up way, an octogenarian penguin. He was so different with the girls, like history erased, a smiling 1950's dad he never was.

Death is struck, and nature quaking,

Susan, always Susan.

Worthless are my prayers and sighing,
Yet, good Lord, in grace complying,
Rescue me from fires undying.

Geraldine felt the drool at her lip but couldn't move to wipe it, let it pool, one more moment of not being mother, of not **remembering**.

Back to beginning of **story**.

Creek

Geraldine hurried along to the gnarled oak tree, re-tucking her white shirt into her skirt as she walked. Looking back, she waved and smiled at Michael before checking her watch. Four o'clock - damn it. She hoped that Susan wouldn't be mad.

When she got to the tree, Susan wasn't there. Geraldine felt the acid bubble in her stomach, but logic reasserted itself. "She probably just walked by herself, she knows the way," she thought, heading down the red dirt path that lead to the creek.

She snaked her way through the thick bushes and trees, following the sound of water tumbling on rocks, until she arrived at their secret spot, but no Susan. Geraldine looked up and down the creek as far as she could see, twisted her head and body back and forth, searching the tall trees. Acid again. She dropped her textbooks and ran in the direction of the pool.

"No."

She began to pump her arms like she was running the 100 meter dash, running faster, "please God", reciting Hail Marys in her head. She arrived panting at the pool, bent forward, catching her knees in her hands, searching the water's surface. Nothing.

Wait. Not nothing. What was that, in the middle..?

Geraldine pulled off her shoes and shallow-dived into the water, swimming with her head out of water like she had been taught in her lifesaving course, her arms slashing like saws.

"Oh God, no!"

Her hand grabbed the blue cardigan, pulled it to her chest, her other hand grasping the sodden locks, pushing the head into the crook of her arm, Susan's mouth open, air rushing in. Geraldine scissor-kicked back to shore, pulled Susan onto the grass, face sky up, but she was already **gone**.

Back to beginning of **story**.

Gone

Susan had been gone for twenty-five years. Twenty-five years, 7 months, and 10 days, to be exact. Geraldine marvelled at her ability to remember these details in spite of the vodka soaking her brain, as she lay here looking at her distorted reflection in the trash can. She could still remember the funeral prayer, its words and rhythm cemented to her neurons and synapses.

Ah, that day of tears and mourning,
From the dust of earth returning,
Man for Judgment must prepare him

"Mum?" Geraldine blinked, saw Shelley's blue eyes (from Norm, not her.) She had always thought that Shelley looked like Susan (same hair) but now she wondered if this was still the case, if it were ever really true.

Thou the sinful Mary savest,
Thou the dying thief forgavest,
And to me a hope vouchsafest.

"Mum, can you hear me?" Shelley asked, putting her hand on Geraldine's shoulder.

Low I kneel, with heart submission;
See, like ashes, my contrition--
Help me in my last condition.

"I'm awake," Geraldine said, wiping her mouth. She noticed the pillow under her head for the first time.

"Mum, do you want some water?" Shelly asked, nudging the blue clay mug on the ground in front of her forward, one that Geraldine had made in a pottery class a few years ago.

"Thank you", Geraldine said, using one hand to push herself up, the other to grasp the mug.

Back to **creek**.

Back to beginning of **story**.

Shelley

Shelley entered her room and went over to her dresser, selecting a brush with a firm handle and two purple hair bands for her sister's braids. She glanced at the vanity mirror, narrowed her mascaraed eyes, and pushed her lips into a sneery pout. Then she shook her head and laughed.

Eva entered Shelley's room, still holding the mug.

"Go give the water to Mum first, Evie, and then I'll do your braids," said Shelley.

"I don't want to."

"I can't braid your hair until you give Mum the water," Shelley replied, firmer now.

Eva sighed dramatically, but she left and returned quickly, sitting in front of her sister on the fuzzy white bedspread. Shelley began to brush out Eva's hair, noting that she needed a haircut.

"How was school today, Evie?"

"Fine."

"What did you do?"

"The Grade 5's came and helped us make piñatas."

"Wow! What did you make?"

"A bear."

The conversation carried on until Eva's braids were finished. Shelley brought Eva to the mirror and smiled as her sister grinned and slid her hands over her honey braids.

"Thanks, Shelley!"

"You're welcome, sweetie."

"Will you read to me?"

"Aren't you getting a little too old for that?"

Eva sucked in her lips and looked down, taking her hands off her braids.

"*You* could read to *me*," Shelley recovered. "Aren't you reading *Bridge to Terabithia*? I loved that book. Go brush your teeth and get ready for bed, and I'll come meet you in your room in a couple of minutes."

"Okay," said Eva, already out the door, her feet in a staccato run.

Shelley sat for a moment on her bed, thinking of her **Biology Test** tomorrow, the composition due for French, and the push-ups and sit-ups she still had to do. Rubbing her eyes, careful of her mascara, she stood up from her bed, tugging on her jean shorts and white tank top. She grabbed a pink throw pillow off the bed and walked to her sister's bedroom, stopping first to put the pillow under her mother's **head**.

Back to beginning of **story**.

Back to **gone.**

Biology Test

Shelley's Biology test was going to be based on dissection labs of the frog. Easy. Shelley loved dissection, learning about the different systems, loved picking up the tiny organs. She could take Biology all day.

"Salut, jolie fille," Shelley looked up from her notebook.

"Hey Kyle, how's it going?" she asked, turning back to the heart and veins she was sketching.

"Did you study?" Kyle asked, dropping his books on the long black table, sliding into the seat next to her.

"A bit. You?"

"I'm so screwed," **Kyle** moaned, grabbing Shelley's pen.

Shelley smiled at him, trying to grab it back. "Yeah right, you liar! You absorb this stuff through osmosis!"

"Don't I wish. Want to trade brains? We've got all the necessary tools", Kyle said, brandishing a scalpel.

"You are such a dork," Shelley laughed.

"Hey guys," Shelley and Kyle turned and saw Monica, her black curly hair fanning out from her face as she leaned in. "Guess what?"

Back to beginning of **story**.

Back to **Shelley**.

Kyle

Kyle was one of Shelley's admirers...

Back to beginning of **story.**

Back to **Biology Test**.

Head

Geraldine opened her eyes, could see her head reflected in on the metallic trash can, more silver now than brown.

Memory flash.

Newborn blue eyes and still bluer feet
gums geriatric grape
fingers web-like reaching out
hold me mother
but then slipping
into Norman's greedy hands

From that first pink wail
never hers
never really hers

"Mum?"

But I am here

I've never let you go

"Mum, can you hear me?"

Geraldine turned and looked up, saw Shelley's blonde hair, her eyes that she tried so hard to cover with coal, eyes too old for a **sixteen-year-old face**.

Back to beginning of **story**.

Back to **Biology Test**.

Head 16

"Geraldine, wait up!", Susan cried, strands of blonde hair muffling her mouth, dirty knees popping back and forth, her red cloth bag banging against her six-year-old legs.

Geraldine turned, pausing to push a dark curl behind her ear and take the cigarette out of her mouth. The wind pressed against her body, her white blouse and navy skirt suctioning against her skin. Geraldine examined the lipstick ring on the Player's between her thick eyelashes before tossing it on the ground and grinding it out with her Mary Janes. She crossed her arms under her breasts, thinking of Michael, as Susan ran up to Geraldine, wheezing slightly. Geraldine smoothed her sister's hair from her face, gently rubbing away a spot of jam on her cheek.

"Do you have your lunch, Susan?"

"Yeah."

"Robby Rabbit for Show-and-Tell?"

"Uh, huh."

"Okay, then. Are you cold?"

Without waiting for an answer, Geraldine bent down to button up Susan's blue cardigan, leaving the top button undone so she could breathe more easily. She looked into her sister's hazel eyes and smiled.

"Geraldine, can we go swimming after school?" Susan asked.

"If it's warm enough, and if I don't have too much homework."

"Will you teach me how to dive today?"

"I'll try," Geraldine laughed. "Meet me at the tree, and we can walk to the creek together. We better hurry up, though - mass starts in fifteen minutes."

Susan reached for Geraldine's outreached hand and began to skip, hair skirt and bag bouncing like a drum.

Back to beginning of **story.**

Back to **head.**

Eva

Eva had discovered the bees one day last summer, after swimming at the beach with her mother and Shelley.

"Why are there so many bees?", Shelley demanded, swatting away two that had dive-bombed her head.

"They like your mousse," Geraldine replied, putting down the faded blue and white striped beach bag.

"Mum, nobody even uses mousse anymore," Shelley said, rolling her eyes.

"Well, you know what I mean," Geraldine said, reaching for her pack of Player's in her bag.

While Shelley and Geraldine started to debate hair products, Eva walked towards the bees. They seemed to have come from the bathroom - there always seemed to be more in there - so she decided to investigate. She made her way over to the wooden cabinet, relishing the cold cement under her feet. The wood was warped from a leak that had never been fixed, and the doors were fused shut, except for one corner at the top. They had lived in the apartment for over a year, but nobody had bothered to try and fix the cabinet.

Eva grabbed the corner and pulled until the door finally came free, the rotted wood breaking apart in her hand. She gasped, backing away from the cabinet on tip-toes, her hands put out like Stop Signs.

"Mum?" Eva called.

"I told you, Shelley, you're too young," said Geraldine, her left hand resting in the crook of her right arm, the other hand dangling up, holding the cigarette.

"I'm nearly sixteen - older than you were when you started!" Shelley retorted, her index finger pointing at her mother.

"Those were different times, we didn't know any better."

"Shelley?" Eva called, louder now.

"You're such a hypocrite. What is it, sweetie?"

"There's a bee hive in the bathroom!"

It was more than just a hive - it was an apartment complex. Eva hid behind Geraldine as they watched

the bees, hundreds of them, teeming in their individual cells. Shelley crept up to the cabinet, kneeling down to examine the bees.

"What do we do?" Eva asked.

"Get rid of it," Geraldine answered.

"How?"

After enlisting the help of Lawrence next door, Raid Concentrated DEEP REACH Fogger with the bathroom door closed, the three women returned a few hours later to clean up the carnage. As they walked down the long narrow hall towards the bathroom, Eva pointed to the dead bees that had managed to escape the bathroom somehow. Shelley reached the door first, opened, and swore.

There were hundreds of bees all over the bathroom, most of them clustered around the window sills and pooled in the cracked tub. The three women stood there for a moment surveying the scene, silent. Geraldine gave each daughter two Safeway bags - one to act as a glove - and they began to shovel handfuls of the sticky bees into to the bags as quickly as possible. Shelley kept getting the gag reflex, and at one point Geraldine had to leave the bathroom because the Raid fumes were making her light-headed. Eva cried a little and wondered if the bees would go to **heaven**.

Back to beginning of **story**.

Heaven

Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum.
Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.

Geraldine recited the works mechanically, as the voice guided her from the pulpit. She looked up at Father Joseph, his outstretched arms, his bald head inclined, his thick glasses. She felt her father in the

pew next to her, shivering as if he were cold.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors.

Geraldine shifted her gaze to the small wooden casket, surrounded by flowers. It reminded her of how Susan had loved to sleep with her toys, around her head a halo of stuffed creatures.

Et lucis aeternae beatitudine perfrui.

Are you enjoying the light of everlasting life, Susan?

Death is struck, and nature quaking,
All creation is awaking--
To its Judge an answer making.

What's heaven like?

Guilty, now I pour my moaning,
All my shame with anguish owning:
Spare, O God, Thy suppliant groaning.

Forgive me, Susan. I didn't mean to be late.

Spare, O God, in mercy spare him.
Lord, Who didst our souls redeem,
Grant a blessed requiem. Amen.
Amen.

Appendix II: Original Draft of "Past Echoes, Family Present"

Eva

Eva was on the bathroom tile lining up the rubber animals when her mother crashed to the floor behind her. She turned, looked at her mother's mashed curls, and went back to her animals. The brown bear was her favourite because he was the first toy her grandfather had given her before he died.

"Eva," moaned her mother. "Eva. Eva."

Eva didn't respond and moved the purple hippo behind the bear. She was creating an army. Of course, the brown bear was the leader so she put him in front.

"Eva," said her mother, louder now, her breath rotten-smelling. "Eva, get Mum a glass of water."

Without looking at her, Eva finished off the line (the yellow lion and green alligator after the hippo), and she walked down the skinny hallway. She noticed that the bees were back.

When she got to the kitchen, she got the clay mug out of the sink, crunching a struggling cockroach first. She turned the water on, but it was after 9:30 so the water had already been shut off. She got some from one of the reserve tanks next to the fridge.

"Mum passed out on the bathroom floor?"

Eva turned and saw her older sister Shelley standing at the doorway, cigarette in hand.

"Yeah," sighed Eva, as she screwed the cap back on tight.

Shelley eyed her younger sister, as she clicked on her cigarette.

"Come to my room, and I'll do French braids," she said, putting her hand on her sister's smooth shoulder, before walking towards her bedroom.

Eva smiled up at her sister's blue eyes and followed her down the hall, her grip firm on the chipped mug of water.

Shelley

Shelley entered her room and went over to her dresser, selecting a brush with a firm handle and two purple hair bands for her sister's braids. She glanced at the vanity mirror, narrowed her mascaraed eyes, and pushed her lips into a sneery pout. Then she shook her head and laughed.

Eva entered Shelley's room, still holding the mug.

"Go give the water to Mum first, Evie, and then I'll do your braids," said Shelley.
"I don't want to."

"I can't braid your hair until you give Mum the water," Shelley replied, firmer now.

Eva sighed dramatically, but she left and returned quickly, sitting in front of her sister on the fuzzy white bedspread. Shelley began to brush out Eva's hair, noting that she needed a haircut.

"How was school today, Evie?"

"Fine."

"What did you do?"

"The Grade 5's came and helped us make piñatas."

"Wow! What did you make?"

"A bear."

The conversation carried on until Eva's braids were finished. Shelley brought Eva to the mirror and smiled as her sister grinned and slid her hands over her honey braids.

"Thanks, Shelley!"

"You're welcome, sweetie."

"Will you read to me?"

"Aren't you getting a little old for that?"

Eva sucked in her lips and looked down, taking her hands off her braids.

"You could read to me," Shelley recovered. "Aren't you reading *Bridge to Terabithia*? I loved that book. Go brush your teeth and get ready for bed, and I'll come meet you in your room in a couple of minutes."

"Okay," said Eva, already out the door, her feet in a staccato run.

Shelley sat for a moment on her bed, thinking of her Biology test tomorrow, the paragraph for French, and the push-ups and sit-ups she still had to do. Rubbing her eyes, careful of her mascara, she stood up from her bed, tugging on her jean shorts and white tank top. She grabbed a pink throw pillow off the bed and walked to her sister's bedroom, stopping to put the pillow under her mother's head first.

Appendix III: Autoethnographic Journal

April 10, 2007 - Day One of Working in the Wiki!

I've just created new pages for the "Eva and Shelley" story on the UBC wiki. I'm excited about working in this format because I think it could free up some of my creativity with this piece. I wrote this piece last year for Carl's "Written Composition" class - one of my first truly fictional pieces (I tend to work in poetry and creative non-fiction.) I know the old cliché - all fiction is non-fiction - but unlike many of my other pieces of writing, neither of these two characters are recognizably anybody I know.

I chose this for this creative writing project because I'm not sure where I want to go with it. I like what I've created so far, and I've gotten some positive feedback, but I'm not sure how to continue. The openness of the Wiki form - and Luce-Kapler's article about how working in a wiki environment freed up her imagination and strengthened her writing for her Moodie piece - is why I chose this environment to work in. I am going to do all of my writing for this piece in the wiki, which scares me a little bit because I know that any UBC student could tap into it and change it (though that is unlikely.) Part of me wants to save the different drafts in case something goes wrong, but I just won't give out the page names to anyone to alleviate my worry.

I've read Bernstein's article - "Patterns of Hypertext" - and I think the story so far lends itself best to "Counterpoint" and "Mirror World". Also, these seem the least "techy" so an appropriate place for me to start.

Okay - onto the fiction!

Actually, I just looked at Trevor's wiki story and I wondered if I can make mine look "cooler"? Maybe I'll play with that first. (Avoidance??)

Okay, just looked briefly into that - I think I need to focus on the writing first. I guess it's what I'm comfortable with.

later, 9 p.m.

I've just set up some pages for Agnes - the mother has a name now - and the voice emerging is so different from Eva and Shelley's, more broken. It's hitting something deep in me, her voice is so smothered, so sad. There is more to her, more with her husband Norman (just discovered his name, too) and her father which sounds like an asshole.

I'm worried about this being a stereotype - battered woman, becomes alcoholic - so maybe it's not battered, physically. I don't know. I know that my grandparents were alcoholics - my mum smoked cigarettes instead - so this is imagination. I tend to worry about "getting things right", but I guess I need to follow the advice I always give my students - let it come, edit later.

Though I do know something about silence - about holding back, wanting so badly to love, to let go, being afraid to hurt, and then hurting by omission, or not expressing love - so maybe that's what this story is about.

I think of what Dave Deveau - UBC MFA student who worked with my students - said, about keeping your big idea literally pasted in front of you. I think I'm realizing that I'm not that kind of writer - I don't really pre-plan. A scene emerges, or a character, and it begins to flesh out.

later - 10 p.m.

The end of Day One and in spite of taking a bit longer to make new pages than I would have liked (and trying to figure out how to link them in a meaningful way), I am really enjoying working in this environment. Bedtime.

One final comment - although I have no real title yet, interesting that the story has changed about being about the two sisters to their mother as well, given the working title "Two Sisters and their Mother."

April 12, 2007, 11:30 a.m.

I wish I had more time to write, but isn't that always the case?

I just wrote a new section "head16" about Agnes, Eva and Shelley's mother. The scene takes place in the late 60's, somewhere rural - can't decide if it's South Africa or Canada yet - and Agnes has a sister named Susan. I think the story that's evolving is a mirror world, but not exactly. Agnes, also 16, also with a younger sister who she takes care of. I don't know if I'll explore her parents or not - probably only tangentially.

It's interesting because writing this story is exciting, because I don't know at the time where it's going to go, but then when I look back I realise that maybe subconsciously I did know, or that my instincts are guiding me in ways I wasn't aware of until I actually wrote the story. And I see connections that I hadn't anticipated - how the novel Bridge to Terabithia involves swimming and now Agnes and Susan going to meet swimming. While I was writing I was thinking that maybe Susan would drown - because Agnes failed to meet her on time, or something like that - and that this is explains something of the pain that Agnes tries to bury with drinking.

When I read the "Patterns of Hypertext" I was fascinated by Counterpoint and Mirror World so I think that is influencing this story.

I am REALLY enjoying writing in this environment! It allows me to not only write at home, but at school, during my prep, so I'm not bound by appointment to writing. For me - who tends to avoid writing, although I love it (fear of failure) - this is helping me to break it down into small chunks, tackle a little bit at a time and thus ultimately be more productive.

later - 4:30 p.m.

Can't remember - maybe a half hour later I added to the Agnes-Susan story. I chose those names because I wanted them to sound 1960's - I went to a website that listed popular girls' names in the

1960's (I should go find that again) and those two names came up. I'm not sure why I chose them, though Agnes was my grandmother's name, my grandmother who died when I was a baby. I really don't know much about her other than what my mum has told me - that she was the son of a Protestant preacher who were Northern Irish immigrants to Ontario, that she defied them by marrying a Catholic, that she was fun and liked to laugh, that she was a quiet alcoholic after (or maybe before?) my grandfather died when my mum was 5, that she saw grandfather's ghost after he died (as did my mother.) My mother was raised, essentially, by my grandmother - who was a nurse - and being younger than my aunt Kathy - was raised a lot by Kathy. I know that grandmother eventually had a boyfriend who would come over, and mum and Kathy didn't like it. I know that grandmother sent Kathy and mum to a French-speaking Catholic girl's boarding school, which my mother hated, which wasn't too far away from Aylmer, Quebec where mum grew up. I guess my grandmother didn't feel she could take care of them adequately, which I suppose is good that she sent them away but would have made my mother feel somewhat abandoned (and strengthened the bond with Kathy.)

So I see some parallels - again, a mirror world, a bit - but these characters are fictional. This is what I find interesting about this whole story, from the onset - there are clearly elements from my life and the lives of those around me, but these characters are fictional.

Friday, April 13th

It somehow seems appropriate that I wrote the bee scene given that today is Friday, the 13th! As Anne (my colleague here at Tupper) said as I was describing my real-life experience of finding a bee hive in our apartment in South Africa, "It sounds like a horror film."

That's something I noticed I'm doing more, as I write this piece - talking about the writing, as I write it. I usually tend to just write on my own, only showing people the final draft (except for maybe Dave or good friends who are also writers.) Perhaps because I'm excited by this new form, perhaps it's the openness of the form that has inspired an openness to discuss my creative process. I have an incredible urge to share with others how writing in this wiki has been for me, has opened up my creativity. When I talked to Glenys and Denise (our librarians), and Iona (our principal) and Germaine (my Department

Head) about hopefully making this technology available to students, they seem as excited as me. We've all talked about how students are so comfortable with technology and as Glenys astutely put it, "(Writing on paper) is work, (writing on the computer) is fun."

I keep wondering how these episodes will all fit - like the bee one - but the more I trust my instincts and follow the thread, the more the connections naturally manifest themselves in my writing. This has been an important lesson for me - trusting my instincts, trusting in the process.

Saturday, April 14th

I was just re-reading my entry from the first day, about the big idea of the story (about holding back, fear, etc.) and I can see now that this story is about memory and how it can be a stranglehold on the present. About how a painful experience from many years ago can exert such control over the present, especially if the demons associated with pain (e.g. guilt, shame) haven't been exorcised.

Clearly this is the case with Agnes - she still bears the weight of her sister's death in her heart. It's one of the factors that drove her to alcoholism, and one of the factors (along with the alcoholism) that holds her back from really loving her daughters, or letting her daughters know how much she loves them. And yet she so badly wants to love them, but she's afraid because of the loss of her sister, afraid of really loving, afraid of the pain of love.

So her daughters turn away, to each other, and don't understand. They've never known about Susan - she's never told them what happened to her or own role in Susan's death, her parents are dead, and she has no other close relatives since she left Ontario and moved to Vancouver. Agnes sees herself in Shelley - the defiance, the veneer of cool - and this is part of their conflict, their similarity. Eva, I'm not sure about, really. I don't quite get her character, other that she likes order and control (because of the ordering of the animals), that she is curious, imaginative and sensitive. Well, I guess that's something!!

What is becoming obvious to me, though, is that this piece could be much longer. I won't be able to "finish" it for Monday, so I'm not sure how much closure to have with the story. I think Teresa will be

okay with an unfinished product; I think what's equally (or perhaps more) important for this class is my reflection of the wiki form on my creative writing.

Short answer? It's liberating!

later

One more note - something about the crook of the arms, again a mirror image, Agnes smoking the cigarette holding her hand in the crook of her arm, and that being the same place where Susan was when she towed her to shore. I'm not sure why that's important, but it has something to do with the body.

My friend Debbie gave me such good insight, about how my writing seems best when it connects the body and spirit and it's at its weakest when it intellectualizes. I think I can see this in this piece. The pieces with the mother, especially, seem very physically and spiritually connected.

I sketched out a mind map of how the story has developed so far, and I'm not sure what the picture tells me, other than Shelley and the mother are connected very closely. Eva seems to be on the fringe at this point. I started a node for her story "heaven", and I felt like it would relate to Susan somehow. Perhaps Shelley and Agnes are mirror images for each other, while Eva and Susan are??? Ah, ha! I think there is something there!

Maybe heaven is Susan dying, her drowning. Maybe I can bring in my experience of near drowning in the Atlantic Ocean when I was five to describe it. I also think of Kate Chopin's "The Awakening" when the protagonist drowns. I haven't read that since first year university for American Lit. I remember getting to the lecture hall early to finish the ending of the novella before class and being embarrassed as I bawled at the end of the story.

God, I feel choked up, emotions are rushing, like they did when I first wrote "Eva and Shelley" and when I've written about the mother. This is a good sign - it's my instinct telling me to go there. It's what

Stephen King and others have said - write what hurts, write what you are afraid of.

Another note - I have never kept a writing log like this while writing. I have to say that I was a bit skeptical, because I thought that if I focused on the creative process - rather than just letting it happen - I would sully the raw idea. I don't believe this now. I think this log -and being meta-cognitive about writing the story - has helped me understand the connections I make in the first draft and strengthen those connections.

Bed time.

Sunday, April 15th

I'm not sure what to write here - bring back Susan, I think? Yes - her drowning. Link it back to "creek". Do I want people to know why she drowned? Did she hit her head on a rock? Why did she go on her own? What compelled her to go in the creek? Did somebody lure her there? Did she see something? Was it a ghost of Susan and Agnes' mother or father or something? What would make her go into the water?

Does it matter, at this point?

Maybe it would be better to just experience her thoughts as she's drowning and make some reference to heaven, to angels, or something, I don't really know.

But I think this will be the final node.

Note: I want some of the same disorientation and confusion that a drunk person feels.
Maybe this node is not about Susan drowning - would she really have gone in by herself with her clothes on? - so I don't think she drowned, I think maybe she was murdered.

Maybe this node is about Agnes at the funeral, thinking about heaven, from her perspective. That

seems better.

later

Just talked to my mum, talked to her about the story a bit. We agreed I should change Agnes' name, that it's too weird for her to have grandmother's name. Mum suggested Geraldine, which I like.

Okay, I think I'm done creating for now. It's been quite a journey! I'm still not convinced about the prayer and the heaven node, but I'll make that clear in my artist's statement, and I'll get Dave to tell me what he thinks. Obviously, Teresa will have some insight as well.

Log - January 9, 2008

This is the first day I've started working on my story again, as well as the thesis. I've decided, in consultation with Teresa and Carl, that I've come up with a plan for the thesis: **Part I - Fiction**; **Part II - Theory**: **Creative Writing Process and Software, Part III - Method/Autoethnography**, and **Part IV - Implications for Future Teaching and Writing**.

Returning to this wiki - now having worked somewhat in wikis like wikispaces, I realise some of its limitations. For example, unlike Microsoft Word, you can't "undo". I just accidentally typed over my plan, thus wiping out a few minutes of work. Also, it takes a while to format (e.g. bold.) However, it's got a lot of server space, so this is what I'll be using for the time being.

Time to create new pages for the outline and thesis itself...done.

It feels good to be working on this again! After much procrastination, some of it legit (Dave's father and grandfather dying, his mother getting in a car accident) and some of it less legit (fear), the old adage rings true: the only cure for curing writer's block is to write. I mentioned this to my students in Writing 12 the other day, after a freewrite regarding New Year's resolutions. I told them about how perfectionism beats me down, and so I avoid writing (Debbie Chow and I spoke of this). I have a travel

short story due soon for Matt Jackson's anthology, and of course I've left it to the last minute. Again, some of the reasons are legit (e.g. my mother only just sent the journals), some of my reasons less legit (i.e. I could have started writing much earlier.) So deadlines are a GOOD THING! I'm not sure if I'll be able to meet the March 1 deadline, but I will try...

I think of my chat with Carl back at the BCTELA conference, about the importance of writing as a daily practice. Stephen King writes about it in On Writing, how serious writers should devote 4 hours a day to reading and writing. I feel like I am good about other things - exercise (running 3 times/week, yoga 2-3 week), reading nightly - but my commitment to writing still needs work.

So, today - a start. One of many. I am reminded of Lao Tzu's "A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step". I should put that somewhere in my classroom. Also, I should ask students to bring in cool quotes/images that are positive and inspiring.

Another limitation of this wiki - no spell-check!! Perhaps this will be a good thing for my students, as it will force them to edit based on their own critical eye rather than (over) relying on technology to fix their errors for them. How ironic - I just noticed I had typed in "erros"!! Also, how does a person put in footnotes in a wiki???

I have no doubt that there is something special about this wiki - I feel the freedom to type so much more than when I'm writing with pen and paper. This, I believe, is key to the process of creative writing - letting go of fear, having fun, and writing, writing, writing!

Things I Accomplished Today:

1. Logged onto "Jenlog" - started this log!
2. Created 2 new pages - "Jenthesisoutline" and "Jenthesis"
3. Worked on Part C of the thesis - including parts of my autoethnography.

January 10, 2008

I'm realizing once again the difference about writing on a computer, or how "real" writers write. We bounce around, jumping from working on my bibliography (started a new page today - "Jenbibiliography"), edit for mechanics, and revise content. This is something we can do on paper, but it is just so much more efficient on the computer.

January 30, 2008

Shoot, this is one problem about the wiki - once you delete, it's gone, unlike MS Word. I had written an entry, and I guess I typed over it.

In summary, I simply said that it had been a long time since I'd had a chance to write in the log (the challenges of doing an MA and being a full-time teacher at the same time) and that I wanted to write some poetry in the wiki so I could share it with my students. So I created a new page - "Jenpoetry" - and found an old poem ("Urban Gypsy") to experiment with.

This log definitely helps keep me motivated and engaged, like I imagine is the case for students. Just put "Urban Gypsy" (a poem revised in April 2006) into the wiki and edited. I think it is much tighter. I also found a really cute picture of a raccoon that I'd like to include in my poem, but I don't know how to do that. Maybe Justin or Colleen can help me tomorrow.

Before I forget - Germaine's cool haiku website: http://winterhaiku2007.blogspot.com

I will try to do a haiku by tomorrow with an image.

February 6, 2008

A small rant - trying to write a thesis and work full-time is difficult. Frustrating, hard to find a balance between teacher, writer, researcher. Like A/R/T ography - perhaps I should read more about that. And then to have provisos come back again! It's frustrating, because I want to do a really good job - to the

nth degree - and it's so tough. I'm not sure what to do - to ditch the research project or not. I really don't know how to balance the writing at times. Argh. But this is unproductive.

I wrote two poems in my other wiki - www.creativewriting12.wikispaces.com - and found it to be much easier vis-à-vis images. I guess this UBC wiki is older. I wonder if I should switch to the wikispaces wiki instead. Not sure.

But it's pretty exciting because Kevin - a Grade 8 student of mine - started his own wiki page after I showed them the haiku site, so I can't wait to see that!

And more and more I realise that what I truly love about this whole thesis thing is writing poetry and fiction, so that I will do.

On another note - I can't remember if I wrote this anywhere, but I am having a South African memoir published later this year! Very exciting. It's about hitchhiking with Carey. I know that I would have never have had the confidence to write it and consider it being published if it hadn't been for my academic studies and being a teacher of writing. Being involved in academic work has helped me clarify what my current roles and identities are in the educational world: namely, teacher (still first), writer, researcher, critical thinker, person. So much has gone on in the last year that's made me question everything - namely the deaths of Dave's father and grandfather, Dave and I getting engaged, seeing my friends have babies, adjusting to my own changing role from young adult to adult, and what that means. Yoga and running, and obviously writing, have helped facilitate self-discovery and balance teaching and its changing roles (e.g. Mini School head, etc.)

This process - writing, this wiki journal, my traditional journal - really validate what I think Carl has known all along: we need time to write, daily, for a more enriching life.

later

I showed my Humanities 8 class the wikispaces wiki and now I can see that Robbie and Kevin both

have their own pages linked to each other! Robbie put on some of his limericks that are pretty funny, and we started a page as a class, thanks to those boys.

It reminded me of what we talked about in Teresa's Digital Literacy class about the democratization of the digital age. I think with both computers and writing I feel on a more equal playing field with my students. Computers because, as digital natives, they know so much more than I do and intuit the infrastructure of the digital world better than me. Writing because the more I read and write the more I realise that I am a child in my expertise and experience, and better yet, I am learning to embrace this childlike state as one of creative openness.

As teachers, we don't often become the students, or when we do, it's in a way that is still engineered by us (e.g. students give a presentation which we learn from.) That is definitely still valid, but there is an artificial quality about it. With computers and writing - memoir, poetry, fiction - the mélange of technology that speaks to many youth and the opportunity to write about issues that are really important to them has a level of engagement and authenticity for me that I haven't experienced before. But admitting my own vulnerability in this area - and by putting myself in genuine learning situations, situations in which I really want to learn - has transformed my relationship with my students. Petty power dynamics dissipate and we see each other as equals - people trying to make sense of our lives, to remember our experiences through poetry, verse and image, people who want to connect with other people through mediums that help us communicate honestly.

I can hear that critics as I read this, skeptics, who say, "Common (what a funny typo - I meant to say "come) on, Jen - stop being so Pollyanna and unrealistic! You're the teacher, and they're the students, and you can never get away from that power dynamic! You can never really be equal, even in art!" I'm not sure; perhaps I should talk to art teachers, computer teachers, about this? I can't speak for everyone, and I'm not trying to gloss over the downsides of writing autobiographically in general (e.g. the risk of narcissism and delusions of grandeur) or of writing in digital environments (e.g. the dangers of creepy adults trolling for naive children, playing on their need for attention.) But I know that for me, having something as public as a wiki page helps me to better understand vulnerability and pride at showing my work to others. Positioning myself as a writer (even though I still don't comfortably bear that label) has

given me a good pressure to not only write but to publish. And I know that due to the ease of typing (i.e. speed) and easy access of wiki (i.e. immediate), I write more.

So how does this relate to my thesis topic - the creative process on writing and teaching? Very closely, inextricably.

One other thing: added three new poems today to "Jenpoetry" - Requiem for Len (#1, 2, and 3) Showed the students the last one, after Peter read the poem "The Heart" by Stephen Crane.

February 8, 2008

I'm at Killarney now, after a workshop with Denise North on databases, etc. She's helping me with my thesis, thank God! I just found out that I can use Academic Search Elite at Tupper (tu39, password library) or any VSB library to do research. This is so much easier than using the UBC library.

What we're finding is that there is very little information on the creative writing process and software/hypertext. So Denise had a very good point; perhaps my paper should talk about the lack of information on it and thus the thrust of the paper will be about that. So far, it seems like Teresa and Rebecca Luce-Kapler are the only people that have really narrowed the field to the creative writing process in a digital environment.

Appendix IV: Participant Assent Form

Department of Language & Literacy Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: (604) 822-5788
Tel: (604) 822-3154

Participant Assent Form

Literacy and Literacy Education in Collaborative, Computer-Based Reading and Writing Environments

Principal Investigator: Dr. Teresa Dobson, Assistant Professor, Department of Language and Literacy, Faculty of Education, UBC, 604-822-5788

Co-Investigators: Jennifer Mooney, Teacher, Sir Charles Tupper Secondary, Vancouver, BC, 604-713-8233; Tammy Iftody, PhD student, Department of Curriculum Studies, Faculty of Education, UBC, 604-731-6645

Contact Information: Teresa Dobson, 604-822-5788, teresa.dobson@ubc.ca

Purpose of Research: To investigate the experiences and practices of young adults as they read and write complex digital narratives. Specifically, we are interested in identifying and understanding the ways in which new digital forms of text are influencing literacy practices. The results will be published in academic journals and conferences and will comprise part of Jennifer Mooney's M.A. research.

Choice of Participants: The students invited to participate in this study are members of Jennifer Mooney's Writing 12 class, English classes, and her writing club. These groups have been selected because these classes are likely to have a strong interest in literature and writing.

Study Procedures:

1. You will complete an initial written questionnaire respecting your reading preferences, writing experiences, and experience with computers.

2. You will be interviewed to clarify the above information. Interviews will take between 45 minutes to 1 hour, will take place at the school during school hours, and will be audio taped and transcribed.

3. You will be observed engaging in a variety of computer-based reading and writing activities over the course of a series of 60 minute sessions including: a) reading contemporary print literature on computer screen; b) reading e-literature; c) playing and building multi-player role-playing games, and d) writing in *wiki* environments. Field notes will be taken by the investigators.

4. Your facial expressions, verbal commentary, and screen-by-screen activity while reading and writing online will be captured by *Morae,* a usability software program.

5. You will be interviewed intermittently. In these interviews you will review with the researcher data collected by *Morae*, identify significant moments and clarify any responses or activities.

6. You will participate in focus group interviews led by the researchers along with other students in the study group. The interviews will take between 60 to 75 minutes, will take place at the school during school hours and will be audio taped and transcribed.

7. You will not be required to spend more than 3 hours outside of regular class activities participating in this research.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential. Publications of data and results will not identify the teacher, school, or names of participants. All documents will be identified only by code number and will be kept in locked filing cabinets. Digital data records will be kept on password-protected hard drives and on disks stored in locked filing cabinets. Only the principle investigator and the co-investigators will have access to the data.

Contact information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Jennifer Mooney (604-713-8233 or jmooney@vsb.bc.ca) or Teresa Dobson (604-822-5788 or teresa.dobson@ubc.ca).

Contact information about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Assent: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your class standing. If you do not consent you will not be interviewed and your sessions on computer will not be recorded. You will still be able to participate fully in all required course activities.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this assent form for your own records.

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate in this study.

Printed Name of Participant

Subject Signature   **Date**

Appendix V: Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Department of Language & Literacy Education
2125 Main Mall
Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z4

Tel: (604) 822-5788
Tel: (604) 822-3154

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Literacy and Literacy Education in Collaborative, Computer-Based Reading and Writing Environments

Principal Investigator: Dr. Teresa Dobson, Assistant Professor, Department of Language and Literacy, Faculty of Education, UBC, 604-822-5788

Co-Investigators: Jennifer Mooney, Teacher, Sir Charles Tupper Secondary, Vancouver, BC, 604-713-8233; Tammy Iftody, PhD student, Department of Curriculum Studies, Faculty of Education, UBC, 604-731-6645

Contact Information: Teresa Dobson, 604-822-5788, teresa.dobson@ubc.ca

Purpose of Research: To investigate the experiences and practices of young adults as they read and write complex digital narratives. Specifically, we are interested in identifying and understanding the ways in which new digital forms of text are influencing literacy practices. The results will be published in academic journals and conferences and will comprise part of Jennifer Mooney's M.A. research.

Choice of Participants: The students invited to participate in this study are members of Jennifer Mooney's Writing 12 class, English classes, and her writing club. These groups have been selected because these classes are likely to have a strong interest in literature and writing.

Study Procedures:

1. Your child will complete an initial written questionnaire respecting their reading preferences, writing experiences, and experience with computers.

2. Your child will be interviewed to clarify the above information. Interviews will take between 45 minutes to 1 hour, will take place at the school during school hours, and will be audio taped and transcribed.

3. Your child will be observed engaging in a variety of computer-based reading and writing activities over the course of a series of 60 minute sessions including: a) reading contemporary print literature on computer screen; b) reading e-literature; c) playing and building multi-player role-playing games, and d) writing in *wiki*[10] environments. Field notes will be taken by the investigators.

4. Your child's facial expressions, verbal commentary, and screen-by-screen activity while reading and writing online will be captured by *Morae,* a usability software program **that has the capability to record facial expressions and sound, thus allowing the participants to voice questions, concerns, frustrations, and insights as they write**.

5. Your child will be interviewed intermittently. In these interviews he or she will review with the researcher data collected by *Morae*, identify significant moments, and clarify any responses or activities.

6. Your child will participate in focus group interviews led by the researchers along with other students in the study group. The interviews will take between 60 to 75 minutes, will take place at the school during school hours and will be audio taped and transcribed.

7. Your child will not be required to spend more than 3 hours outside of regular class activities participating in this research.

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[10] A *wiki* is a digital program that allows anybody with access to the *wiki* to add text, images, links, or sound to an existing artifact. *Wiki* means "quick" in Hawaiian; thus, content can be added and amended instantly over the Internet. *Wikis* can also have various levels of privacy, from totally private to totally public.

Confidentiality: The identity of your child will be kept confidential. Publications of data and results will not identify the teacher, school, or names of participants. All documents will be identified only by code number and will be kept in locked filing cabinets. Digital data records will be kept on password-protected hard drives and on disks stored in locked filing cabinets. Only the principle investigator and the co-investigators will have access to the data.

Contact information about the study: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Jennifer Mooney (604-713-8233 or jmooney@vsb.bc.ca) or Teresa Dobson (604-822-5788 or teresa.dobson@ubc.ca).

Contact information about the rights of research subjects: If you have any concerns about your child's treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598.

Consent: Your child's participation in this study is entirely voluntary and your child may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to their class standing. Students who do not consent will not be interviewed and their sessions on computer will not be recorded. They will still be able to participate fully in all required course activities.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to your child's participation in this study.

Printed Name of Participant

Parent or Guardian Signature   **Date**

Printed Name of Parent or Guardian

Appendix VI: UBC Ethics Approval

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road,
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - FULL BOARD

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:
Teresa Dobson

INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:
UBC/Education/Language and Literacy Education

UBC BREB NUMBER:
H07-01751

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

Institution
UBC

Site
Vancouver (excludes UBC Hospital)

Other locations where the research will be conducted:
Sir Charles Tupper High School, 419 East 24th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V5V 2A2
Classroom of Jennifer A. Mooney, Department of English Classes: Writing 12, English 8
Additional site: extra-curricular writing club

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):
Jennifer A. Mooney
Maryam Moayeri
Tammy Iftody
Natasha Boskic

SPONSORING AGENCIES:
N/A

PROJECT TITLE:
Literacy and Literary Education in Digital Reading and Writing Environments

REB MEETING DATE:
October 25, 2007

CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE:
October 25, 2008

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:

Document (Name, Version, Date)

Protocol:
dlp2_proposal_v1, Version 1, September 28, 2007

Consent Forms:
dlp2_tupperconsent_v2, Version 2, January 24, 2008

dlp2_UBCconsent_v2.doc, Version 2, January 24, 2008

Assent Forms:
dlp2_tupperassent_v2.doc, Version 2, January 24, 2008

Questionnaire, Questionnaire Cover Letter, Tests:
dlp2_UBCquestionnaire_v1, Version 1, September 28, 2007

dlp2_tupperquestionnaire_v1, Version 1, September 28, 2007

Letter of Initial Contact:
dlp2_UBC_intialcontact_v1, Version 1, September 28, 2007

dlp2_tupper_intialcontact_v1, Version 1, September 28, 2007

Other Documents:
dlp2_tupper_approval, N/A, January 22, 2008

dlp2_vsb_approval, N/A, December 18, 2007

DATE APPROVED: February 7, 2008

The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

119

Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair
Dr. Ken Craig, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair
Dr. Daniel Salhani, Associate Chair
Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair