

**Science and Mathematics Education Centre  
Faculty of Humanities**

**Until We Have Faces: Memory, Self and Place in Education**

**Michelle Waldock**

**This thesis is presented for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
of  
Curtin University**

**May 2019**

## Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

**Human Ethics** (For projects involving human participants/tissue etc.) The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) — updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number #SMEC 67-10.

Signature:

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019

## Acknowledgements

“Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans”, sang John Lennon (1980) and the writing of this thesis has informed my life as well as being informed by it. I began this thesis in my 40<sup>th</sup> year and now, a decade later, I find I am at the end. I write the words, but enfolded in the writing is everyone—colleagues, friends, Book Group members—I have met, spoken with, laughed and worked with over the past 10 years. Every conversation has been inspiring, or puzzling, or thought-provoking, or heart-rending. The writing would be poorer without these conversations. I say thank you to everyone.

Some people stand out amongst many, and it is to them I owe the most gratitude. To Bevis Yaxley, who started me on this journey and whose wise words gently nudged me in the right direction, thank you. You are greatly missed. To Roya Pugh, who has guided me through to the end, with your ever-patient and gentle suggestions, there are not enough words of thanks for your kindness. To Barry Fraser, whose avuncular interest and thoughtful conversations on your annual visits bolstered my flagging spirits and whose patience while this writing came to a conclusion is much appreciated. To Curtin University, who have been ever-helpful and provided much support as this writing dragged on far past its contracted end, thank you. My flexible and considerate editor, Emma Weitnauer, who shaped the mish-mash of fonts, indents and styles into a polished final product, has been conscientious and careful. Thank you, Emma for reading this writing and getting it ready for submission.

To all my students, without you this writing would have no form and no purpose. I am one of the luckiest people around to work in a profession I love

so much. Thank you for all the conversations, those tiny moments that made me aware of something much larger and important.

Finally, all my love and thanks to my family. Not once did you say, “When will you be finished?” You simply waited, provided cups of tea and believed I could do it. You give me the courage to look long and hard into the deep face of the world by offering unflagging support and unconditional love.

*For my beloved husband, John  
And my family.  
Without you, there would be no me.  
I love you all.*

*And for my Grandparents  
You are gone, yet you walk beside me always.*

# Table of Contents

Declaration .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	vii
Abstract .....	ix
Finding my Face.....	1
Chapter 1 .....	13
Orienting Myself for Research .....	13
Lighting a possible course .....	15
Relating lived experience as a “breathing of meaning” .....	22
Intersubjectivity and being-with-one-another.....	26
Understanding to provoke writing: writing to understand.....	30
Epiphany: Balancing the present moment with past traditions and history .....	36
Memories that light perception.....	40
Chapter 2 .....	44
The Continuity of Memory: An Imagined Self .....	44
World within and world without.....	48
Entirety and portions: The interweaving text of a Self .....	53
Travelling the curvature of Time in all directions .....	65
Chapter 3 .....	73
A Manifold of Appearances: The Self as a Flexagon.....	73
You haven’t changed a bit! The public Self across Time .....	74
Render or receive? When the public and private face collide .....	84
Chapter 4.....	93
<i>Lacunae: Perception, Interpretation, Understanding</i> .....	93
Embracing gaps .....	95
Perceptions and prejudices: Struggling for the foreground.....	98
Tradition and interpretation: Beyond the visual echo.....	101
Inside the echoes: Reflection and understanding.....	106
Chapter 5 .....	115
A Path through Fog and Quicksand: <i>Aporia</i> and <i>Bricolage</i> .....	115
<i>Lacuna</i> and <i>aporia</i> .....	123
A possible path: <i>Bricolage</i> in the classroom .....	131
Occlusion and illumination: <i>Bricolage</i> , <i>lacunae</i> and <i>aporiae</i> through another lens .....	139

Chapter 6.....	143
The Medium is the Message: The Role of Language in Interpretation.....	143
A cracked kettle: Demented language.....	143
The <i>verbum interius</i> : A way to melt the stars? .....	155
Chapter 7.....	166
Twisted Words: The Professor and Little Bo Peep .....	166
The Professor: Between written and spoken words.....	166
Little Bo-Peep: Not all words are equal .....	173
Play of indeterminacy: Negotiated meanings.....	177
<i>J'adoube</i> : Risk and ambiguity in conversation .....	180
Chapter 8.....	188
The Otherland: Belonging and Displacement on an Island .....	188
Once in memory: Traversing my island.....	191
The <i>heimat</i> : The imagined homeland .....	196
Reflections on a district school .....	200
Chapter 9.....	212
Becoming Real.....	212
Sheena: More than I can be.....	213
Liam: Freedom and responsibility.....	220
Alison: Three cups of tea.....	225
Until We Have Faces .....	232
References.....	244

## Abstract

In the journey of becoming the author of this thesis I came to find my focus in Hans-Georg Gadamer's work. Upon my first readings of his work *Truth and Method* (2004), I felt I had come home to ideas that until then I had been unable to articulate. Gadamer's ideas about hermeneutics seemed to resonate with my lived experience and my educational practice. In the lifeworld of schools within which I had been teaching I had not met any professional learning programs that featured the work of Gadamer. Gadamer's ideas of *Dasein*, *Miteinander*, language, tradition, application, and particularly dialogue and the "fusion of horizons" (2004, p. 305) came to me at first through Shaun Gallagher's *Hermeneutics and Education* (1996). Gallagher's presentation of moderate hermeneutics in which he explicates a role for Gadamer's work in educational practice awakened me to the possibilities of developing dialogical, pedagogical relationships that could foreground my interpretive understandings of school lifeworlds and the people who inhabit them. From Gallagher, I move cautiously yet decisively into the arenas of understanding that Gadamer brings to light, in ways that permit me to deepen understanding of self, others and the world. To do this, I have allowed myself to be vulnerable to the risks of change-making—gathering courage to become real, to find my true face, so to speak.

In the lifeworld of my thesis, I am an islander who traverses her island twice, once in memory and once in the present, and drives upon roads overlaid upon pathways trodden by the island's first people nearly forty thousand years ago. I acknowledge the eons of memory that have been laid down as islanders walk, ride and drive through lands shaped by the song-lines and oral history of the First Peoples, the peoples who called the island Trowutta, now Tasmania. My historicity evolves from the *lacuna* I experience between my lived experience, my memories, and the traditions I have



inherited from my ancestry, family and society, and that of the island I inhabit—a rugged place encircled by merciless winds, winds that carry the echoes of indigenous songs. In my thesis I orient my direction willingly towards what would otherwise remain unknown to me as I learn to practise interpretive questioning, thinking and writing so that I might inhabit what Gadamer calls a “true locus” for understanding (2004, p. 295).

From the lifeworlds of isolated schools in the most southern aspects of the island, I draw narratives that lead to enlightening and illustrating ways of belonging and becoming as a teacher coming to know about her intelligent vocation. The narratives show that when teachers are prepared to open up welcoming spaces for children to step into, when they take a risk to gamble their voices and show their faces clearly to one another, teacher and student can together experience the joy of meeting each other in the real spaces of their lifeworlds. In this first moment of real meeting, the teacher dwells in a place of mindful wisdom as she navigates this unique relationship, laying her assumptions and prejudices aside, looking at things with fresh eyes. And all the while, underneath every word, every breath passing both their hearts, is the desire to reach an accord. Underneath every silence, every gesture, the teacher is practising genuine dialogue with the child.

Whilst writing my inquiry, my text shifts from simply reflecting about the relationships as productions of narratives that are occurring around me and my colleagues. I unfold deep awareness that I must draw up from what might only be perceived unconsciously into something that is consciously interpreted and understood. The central question of my thesis becomes clear. “In what ways then might I as a researcher discover and develop a hermeneutic orientation towards self-understanding that would contribute to pedagogies of teaching practice?” I find I must set in train Robert Sokolowski’s notion of intentionality for my thesis. In what ways can I develop a conscious relationship to the subject of my study (2000, p. 8)? In seeking these ways I render myself consciously open to the unknown and the

possibilities for interpretation that each narrative offers. My interpretive work comes to resonate with Paul Ricoeur's notions of a hermeneutics of faith and a hermeneutics of suspicion so clearly outlined by Ruthellen Josselson (2013). Interpreting might be an act that results in restoration through coming to understand something and finding accord with it. Or it might conjure disbelief because we have not seen something before until it becomes apparent through deep questioning.

Through golden motes of memory, some large, others fragmentary, I orient and weave the questions of my unfolding inquiry, as I search for truths in my life, recognising that my writing is constantly being rewritten and re-imagined as I live through my experience, consciously aware of the past that always lies before us (Lederach, 2005; van Manen, 2013).

The journey of the thesis traverses many narratives yet it is ultimately philosophical in its ending. I finish with reflections I wish other educators to share, understand and find worthy of applying in their lifeworlds. I call my reader to witness that our life's journey constantly begins and ends, we are dying and being reborn moment to moment, our memories reverberating through time as essential threads of our character. Our history begins in the trusting cradle of our nested places, as we seek to know ourselves, to understand our acting and doing, to find our ontological self-confidence, to decide who we are in the world and why we matter. And beneath all this, we are interpreting. To interpret is to understand (Gadamer, 2004). We are *Dasein*, being, *Miteinander*, being-with-one-another, existing within our relationships with self, other and the world.

## The Unspeaking Centre

She who reconciles the ill-matched threads  
of her life, and weaves them gratefully  
into a single cloth —  
it's she who drives the loudmouths from the hall  
and clears it for a different celebration

where the one guest is you.  
In the softness of evening  
it's you she receives.

You are the partner of her loneliness,  
the unspeaking centre of her monologues.  
With each disclosure you encompass more  
and she stretches beyond what limits her,  
to hold you.

*The Book of Hours I, 17*

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875 – 1926)

## Finding my Face

This inquiry narrates my story of how I became myself in a series of eliding moments and pivotal events. It is a story of how I came to speak my life in my own way and in my own time—of how I came to be aware of the past that lies before us, unspooling, a living ribbon that traces our journey in the world (Lederach, 2005). We are our past and we walk backwards into our futures. It has taken me the 10 years of this writing to come to an imperfect understanding of this and how deeply this idea permeates our relationships. Ten years of this writing, also, to come to a place where I can embody my intelligent vocation and permit myself to dwell in a place of vulnerability, where to take a risk is to open a space for dialogue and an understanding of another.

The title of this inquiry and a through-line in my writing is the idea of finding our faces as humans and educators. C. S. Lewis' book *Till We Have Faces*, a retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, provided me with the metaphor to understand and articulate my own lived experiences, within the classroom and in my wider life. Lewis' retelling of the myth from the point of view of Psyche's older sister illuminates how painful the journey to self-understanding can be, but also how necessary this journey is if we wish to present who we really are to the world. The very title of the book gestures to a need to discover the essence of one's being and strip away all of the illusions about oneself before we can glimpse our transcendence. Orual is Psyche's older sister, a queen who lives her whole life believing she is ugly. In Orual and Psyche's world, gods are real and walk amongst mortals. It is a god, Cupid, who steals Psyche from Orual's adoring care. Orual's rage against the gods is the beginning half of the novel, a litany of complaints against their indifference.

When Orual is brought to the court of the gods in a vision and reads aloud a version of her complaint that makes her own jealousy and cruelty clear, she realises her voice sounds strange because she's hearing her true voice—and thus speaking the truth of her life. She finally understands that the gods have remained silent her whole life because she did not know herself. In other words, she had no face, so the gods could not waste their time interacting with a dumb, faceless mortal who did not comprehend her own words (Lewis, 1956, pp. 290-294). Orual experiences this epiphany as a question and asks, “How can they [the gods] meet us face to face till we have faces?” (p. 294). For Lewis, the goal of human life is not so much to be perfectly good, but to recognise one's own faults. For me, this question brought to mind the faces of the children I teach—how can I meet children face to face if they do not yet have faces? How do we meet someone who does not know themselves yet? I wonder if a possible way is to meet the child where he is in the world at that moment, welcoming him into a space created through language.

I discover that it is in the relationship between teacher and student that multiple possibilities are closest to the surface of every interaction, they are an intangible aspect of classroom practice. I search after ways to describe the pedagogical relationship, reflecting on how we perceive and feel this relationship in a classroom. I narrate relationships that slip away, despite the best efforts of the teacher and her confidence that she already had them securely in hand, and pose ideas regarding individual history, traditions and prejudices. Hans-Georg Gadamer's notions about *Dasein*, being, and *Miteinander*, being-with-one-another, underpin my thinking as I endeavour to better understand how to interpret a student's behaviour as we develop a pedagogical relationship. The idea of being-with-another—opening up spaces for dialogue—poses ethical questions of responsibility and care for another, holding them in esteem and honouring their lifeworld, their individual history. Alongside my care for another is care for myself, holding myself in esteem and honour as I honour another. Sharon Todd's idea of “bringing more than I contain” (2001, p. 431) resonates with my narratives of

classroom practice as I attend to the idea of dwelling with another in a common space created through language.

This inquiry explores how I find my face as a person and an educator. Through my wonderings about my teacher practice, I write a reflective, phenomenological narrative of my work as a classroom teacher and school leader. This narrative delves into ideas that have shaped my thinking, opened up other possibilities, puzzled and perplexed me. As I search for my face, I am drawn to what Evgenia Cherkasova terms “thinking otherwise” (2004, p. 205)—turning towards the notion that events have multiple possibilities and focussing a mindful attention to events unfolding before me. My wondering leads me towards an interpretive understanding of my world, particularly Gadamer’s notion of *Dasein* (being) as being with others (*Miteinander*) and his idea of a “fusion of horizons” arrived at through dialogue (2004, p. 305). Accordingly, questions of method are put aside, and attention is given instead to the unfolding and enfolding of experience as it occurs through time. Inspired by Laurel Richardson’s notion of writing as a method of inquiry (1998, p. 923), I write to become more real to myself and others, to speak my life in my own way. As I write over time, I find myself returning and rediscovering ideas, recognising that experience is never final and a Self is never finished—everything is always in a vibrant, vivid process of becoming.

Writing for me is a way to inquire into my unfinished-ness as a person. Moreover, “writing is a lifeline, a way into and through the questions and mysteries that hover at the edges of my consciousness”, just as Christopher Poulos suggests in *Accidental ethnography: An inquiry into family secrecy* (2009, p. 12). I write to come to an understanding about something that is a source of fascination, intrigue and puzzlement to me—our relationships with others, particularly the pedagogical relationship between teacher and student. I write to unravel the criss-crossing threads of lifeworlds, my own and those of others. I wish to do no harm to those whose lifeworlds intertwine with mine—so all my narrative unravellings use pseudonyms for the protagonists,

in the spirit of peaceable speech, honourable listening and “intelligent charity” (Owens, 2019, p. 12). I honour those who appear in my narratives by crafting rich textural writing that does justice to the lived experience we have shared. It is my hope that these rich pieces of writing honour our shared experience in ethical and aesthetic ways.

My writing shifts from a text about relationships towards a way of relating in and of itself. I piece together golden motes of memory, some large, others fragmentary, as I search for truths in my life, recognising that my writing is constantly being rewritten and re-imagined “because it is always an interpretation...a selective and imaginative activity” as Dennis Sumara says in *Private Readings in Public* (1996, p. 123). Interpretive writing like this “requires that an inquirer moves from an approach to research as “telling” to one of “listening” (Sumara, 1996, p. 127) and this writing moves recursively from telling to listening as I move myself towards becoming an honourable listener in the world. I take seriously the mutability of time as I choose my words carefully, attempting to write a living and colourful text that invites my reader to engage with multiple ways of knowing. I wish to draw my reader’s attention to ways that we constantly renegotiate knowing and understanding ourselves through our encounters with others.

As I searched for my face, I was drawn towards thinking otherwise, asking—What if? How? Why? Questioning and thinking otherwise unfurls spaces for ideas to emerge that might be strange and unexpected. Narratives are recollected and retold with an emphasis on opportunities for deep insight, narratives are sought that amplify and give meaning to ideas that are rediscovered and iterated in differing contexts throughout the text. They become anticipatory and celebratory, staying vibrant instead of reified or theorised. A to-and-fro motion between the ideas opened up within the written text and the narratives unfold notions regarding the ethics of responsible living—epiphanic moments that open my eyes to deeper, more resonant ways of being in the world.

Searching after ideas gives a transforming way into insights about my commitment to some life practices, an intuitive grasp of an ideal way to live in the world and find my face. I realise that I cannot box up my face and hand it to another, like a parcel—instead my face is undergoing a transfigurative adjustment as I move through the world in time. Cherkasova says, “Our lives emerge from the choices we make, choices we avoid making and choices we are altogether unaware of” (2004, p. 202) and the choice I make to think otherwise, to sideshadow a multiple falling together of possibilities (p. 202) enables my text to speak my embodiment in the world.

My practice of vocative writing where I strive for my text to be addressive and inclusive of our whole embodied beings means that I search for the potentiality of meanings within words as they emerge in narratives, anecdotes, fragments, metaphors, allusions to literature, art and myth. To evoke and provoke questioning, I delve into my texts to reveal etymological meanings of words and invoke their possibilities for amplifying their meaning and my interpreting. Such delvings offer places for ideas to come together and nest inside each other, rather than to be expressed in hierarchical terms. This leads me to narrate in the philological ways that fuse phenomenological reflection with poetic and literary forms in my striving to write richly (van Manen, 2014, pp. 240-296). The historical meaning of ‘philology’ comes from the Greek, ‘love of learning’ and a philological approach, which orients me towards the things themselves, resonates with my passion for ideas and the words I use to ascribe meaning to them.

As I practise writing in an evocative way, I become aware of the language we use to describe and proscribe our thoughts. I wonder about those children in my care who lack a sense of themselves in the world, they are without faces, nursing instead a naked consciousness. Narrating lived experience is a narration of and about language. Sumara says, “Truth as un-concealment does not emerge directly through the human subject, but through the language that is spoken” (1996, p. 119). This recalls to me Gadamer’s idea



that a being is understood through language, language is inextricable from relations between persons and their world. It cannot be suspended. Language and world exist in an ever-evolving, mutually specifying, ecological existence (p. 119).

Writing lived experience as an ongoing conversation opens up opportunities to discern multiple realities, listening for other voices and waiting for those voices to speak when they are ready. This ongoing conversation is also an invitation to view my narratives as an interruption to the current discourse about teaching practice, a way to understand the human condition and as a co-participation in the act of interpreting by my reader. I use ‘we’ deliberately to articulate this invitation to my reader.

This thesis begins with an exploration of writers and thinkers as I orient myself for research. I use the metaphor of a lantern to cast light upon my explorations and my initial encounter with Gadamer, his ideas of *Dasein* and *Miteinander* and what the term “fusion of horizons” might mean. I ponder on the unfolding of hermeneutics, why hermeneutics might be relevant to an educational inquiry, and begin to explore how a hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry might deepen our understandings of pedagogy and educational relationships. I wonder if an unfinished Self is one that is constantly in flux, perhaps only accessible by interpretation and what this means for teachers in a classroom. I draw on the work of Robert Sokolowski and Charles Taylor as I inquire into how perceiving, remembering and imagining might interweave in the formation of an unfinished Self and how we change as we move through Time and Space.

These ideas transform, reform and conflate with notions about perceiving, interpreting and understanding as I unfold the *lacunae*, or gaps, between what we see and what we understand. Through expressive, experiential narratives informed by Les Todres’ ideas about embodied inquiry, my lived experience is made vividly present. Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts about perception

give rise to narratives that attempt to capture the mystery, complexity and immediacy of classroom life. The elusive and sometimes problematic aspects of teaching and learning are unfurled, with Joe Kincheloe's writings about *bricolage* (2001, p. 679) providing a possible way to negotiate the manifold of appearances that arise.

The role of language in negotiating common understandings is foregrounded in narratives about my own life, in which wonderings about language proscribing and describing thought are brought into presence and a return to Gadamer's thinking on the subject returns us to a nesting of ideas. I also inquire into David Bohm's notions about dialogue, in particular, his idea of dialogue as "speaking through the meaning of the word" (1980, p. 5). In the possible conflation of Bohm's and Gadamer's thinking, I speculate about individual language emitting from the whole person, that "we speak our lives" (Lederach, 2005, p. 130) not only with what we say with our tongues, but the way we hold our physical bodies in space, wondering about the implications that these ideas have for teachers in a classroom.

Ideas about remembering find another iteration in narratives about my experiences as an island dweller, an islander who lives on the southern rim of the world. Tasmania's recorded history is relatively short compared to other places in the world, barely 200 years. This historical shortness places Tasmania in the midst of an oral storytelling tradition, where "the past lies before us" (Lederach, 2005, p. 131). This oral tradition, coupled with the fact that the harsh physical environment of the island demands a response from individuals, informs my notions about the Tasmanian landscape and its inhabitants being fused in dynamic ever-changing circular relationships. I search for answers to the question, 'Does landscape equal mindscape and what might this mean for education in Tasmania?' I ponder and wonder about a possible movement of education away from the historical tradition focussing on the liberal arts towards a pedagogy of teacher and child, a pedagogy of particular places, a pedagogy that makes the teacher a

psychologist as well as an educator. We return to Todd's idea of bringing more than I contain as I narrate and reflect upon my experiences in a remote school on this remote island.

At the beginning of this writing journey, when I was swept up in a maelstrom of ideas and possible directions that my writing might take, I had a conversation with my supervisor. He was wise in the ways of writing and thinking. He listened to my torrent of descriptions about all the ways of thinking about education and philosophy. When I paused for breath, he said, "Often when writing these inquiries, we find a philosopher that we fall in love with, that speaks to us in a way that no other philosopher does. Find someone to fall in love with and you will have your start". I dipped into a philosopher here and dabbled in ideas there, until I found a word, 'hermeneutics'—the theory of interpretation and a name, Hans-Georg Gadamer. I bought Gadamer's book *Truth and Method* and began reading. Although sometimes Gadamer's prose was dense and demanding of me as a reader, as I began to understand his ideas, I felt I had come home. I had found a way to understand the world and my place in it—a way to explain my practice as an educator. One of Gadamer's central ideas, *Miteinander*, or 'being-with-one-another', was a wind that enabled my thinking to take flight.

I followed Gadamer's idea of being and his idea that all understanding is self-understanding, that we have a capacity for communion with others through dialogue and our self-understanding opens up spaces for solidarity with others. Gadamer raised another idea, our being in the world is essentially relational, when we seek to understand we are seeking to understand ourselves in our being-with-one-another, *Miteinander*. When I read other philosophers, like Taylor, Sokolowski and Bohm—whose ideas resonate with Gadamer's—I can come to a deeper understanding of myself and also the wider world. I read deeply rather than widely, burrowing into my reading and giving time for ideas to percolate through my mind. The notion of focussing on ideas deeply and reflecting on them over time became

explicated in my teaching practice. In my classroom, I try to teach deeply, focussing on building students' skills of inquiry, using the language that is in their hearts and heads to meet them where they are in the world.

This thesis finds its focus in Gadamer's work and although Gallagher has spoken about Gadamer's ideas in connection with the broader area of education, I have not found many teacher-education writings that draw upon Gadamer's ideas of *Dasein*, *Miteinander* and a "fusion of horizons". I bring Gadamer to sit alongside me in a classroom as I develop pedagogical relationships that foreground interpretation and imagination to reach common understandings through the medium of language. Gadamer's work gives access to a depth of understanding that I do not find in other contemporary teacher-educators leading me deeper into the capacity for self-understanding, allowing myself space to be brave enough to be vulnerable. This vulnerability provides a space for becoming real, to find my face. Gadamer's thinking enriches my wondering of what one might mean by a "hermeneutics of relationship" and the importance of this to an educational setting.

The study of the lived experience of being human is crucial if one is to be able to engage with another. The online Oxford English Dictionary defines 'phenomenology' as "an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience", from the Greek *phainomenon*, "thing appearing to view" ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/phenomenon](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/phenomenon)). A pedagogical relationship, according to van Manen, requires constant consciousness, awareness and sensitivity towards the thing appearing to view, towards the phenomenon of the relationship itself, as a transcendent whole, distinct from the participants in it. Balanced with this sensitivity to the present unfolding before us is the awareness of all that has gone before, the weight of history. Gadamer is explicit on this point. If only our history determines what is "worth inquiring about" we "more or less forget what is really there – in fact,

we miss the whole truth of the phenomenon – when we take its immediate appearance as the whole truth” (2004, p. 300). It seems then that to inquire in an interpretive, phenomenological way is to narrate the present and the past all at once, habitually living inside a gap between past and present of which we might yet be unaware, in a pool of experience that we have not yet learned to see and embrace.

To become aware of this gap, this *lacuna*, might be to become aware of the tension that exists in a mindful balancing of now and then. *Lacunae* appear often in my lived experience in the classroom. There are gaps between past and present, known and unknown, seen and unseen. I recall one of the most poignant pages in Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Lacuna* (2009) described this way in Liesl Schillinger’s article in the Sunday Book Review in the New York Times (2009), “Barbara Kingsolver’s Artists and Idols”,

A skinny young boy holds his breath and dives into the mouth of an underwater cave—a *lacuna*—swimming toward pale blue light as his lungs scream for oxygen. He emerges, gasping, in a ghostly cenote, a sinkhole in the Mexican jungle fringed with broken coral, wedged with human bones: a place of sacrifice and buried remembrance. When the tide rushes out, it will take the boy with it, “dragging a coward explorer back from the secret place, sucking him out through the tunnel and spitting him into the open sea.” He’ll paddle to shore and walk home, obsessed forever after by hidden passages that contain deeper meanings—meanings that only art may recapture. He’ll acquire a notebook and fill it with stories and memories; when it’s full, he’ll begin another and then another. But were he to consign these notebooks to the scrapheap, how would their mysteries be known? Who dares plunge into the wreckage of a discarded history, not knowing the risks of retrieval?

In this thesis teacher and student plunge into *lacunae* under the surfaces of whirling educational courses—we scream for oxygen to fill our lungs clean and clear with understanding, we gasp in incredulity in moments of violence and inexplicable trauma, we reach ever towards that which is sacred and

buried within one another under the morass of educational structures, strictures, censures, blame and disparagement, we seek possibilities that we somehow hope to find there, possibilities of praise and freedom and expansion. I have my notebook filled with stories and memories and I refrain from trashing them, rather I hold them sacred for all the secrets and mysteries I might uncover in acts of writing and unfolding this thesis. As I dare to plunge into what might have been “discarded history” I teach, train myself to address and learn the “risks”—ethical and perhaps dangerous—“of retrieval”.

To take such a vocative approach to the inquiry opens opportunities to narrate experiences where I have listened to others telling their lives in their own way, as authorities in their lives, and representing these voices in written text. This text will always be sitting in the to-and-fro space between what is told and what is heard. In these narratives I reveal myself, just as Orual does in her story, because I bring my memory, my history and my essential thread of character directly to the writing. My uniquely structured inner world that makes me into myself gives the writing an authenticity—if I participate in authentic relationships, how could this be otherwise? My Self becomes a touchstone for making relationships and creating interpretations throughout this process of writing and inquiring.

In my narratives, I am the touchstone, the common voice, the vocative thread that is a valuable asset in creating interpretations, opening up welcoming dialogic spaces for others to step into and allowing them to speak their lives. Our voices reveal the complexities of our inner lives and in the act of writing, imagination transfigures perception and memory, giving rise to a poetic joining of mind with heart and soul, a sensitive reverberating thread responding to lived experience. Time, place and memory are motifs embedded in my writing, where I attempt to create a space between reader and writer that resonates and reverberates with poetic sensibility. This sensitivity, my being dwelling alongside and within lived events is central to the way I interpret and write. My writing is a composition within many

compositions, layered like the parts of a whole. It is a never-ending journey that unfolds organically and does not seek to discover endpoints, satisfied to remain unfinished with not all questions answered, a story without an accomplishment.

I endeavour to articulate a concept of Self that is inseparable from my place in the world, my memory, my imagination and my courage. My determination to speak my truth with integrity, to tell a story that may not be welcome in the world, is carried on the breath that arises from my centre and passes my heart to uplift my voice. My engagement with thinking otherwise, sideshadowing possibilities, opens up space for aspiring questions that may yield unique and unexpected answers. I find myself spiralling back to thoughts from the past, I repeatedly meet myself on the path of ideas and imagination as I try to uncover deeply hidden connections of belonging, being and becoming. This world of possibilities, of sideshadows, is imaginative and philosophical simultaneously, it insists that what is and what might be are intertwined in our lived experience (Cherkasova, 2004, p. 206). Meeting myself in the spiral of ideas gives rise to surprise, a jolt of unexpected recognition as I move from being strange to myself towards the comforting familiarity of myself as I am in this moment. My writing changes throughout this thesis, moving to-and-fro, a recursive pattern of abstractions and lived experience.

The story of finding my face traces the pattern of my days, the susurrations of my daily life, the epiphanic moments where I stood outside myself and all the elisions in between. In tracing my daily patterns, my interruption to the thoughts of others about teaching practice, I hope to open up an array of entry points into my research, an open invitation for my reader to join my explorations as I use the pronoun 'we'. My writing iterates my particular journey, and it must appeal to others in the sideshadows of their journeys, journeys like mine that occur in similar pedagogical settings, journeys that evoke occasions for puzzlement, imagination and wonder.

# Chapter 1

## Orienting Myself for Research



Florence, Italy (M. Waldock, 2008)

*One day [the Greek philosopher] Diogenes was reported to have gone about the city in clear daylight with a lit lantern looking about as if he had lost something. When people came up to ask what he was trying to find he answered: "Even with a lamp in broad daylight I cannot find a real human being," and when people pointed to themselves he chased them with a stick, shouting "it is real human beings I want".*

van Manen, 1990, p. 5

*Whoever is searching for the human being must first find the lantern.*

Nietzsche, in van Manen, 1990, p. 4

I taught for many years with my eyes wide shut. I prepared lessons, assessed tasks and worked with children without being truly mindful of what I was really teaching when I was in front of students in a classroom. I may have



continued this way, until an email found its way to my inbox inviting me to take up further study. I accepted the invitation immediately, launching myself enthusiastically and fearlessly into a life of the mind like an acrobat from a cannon. I pressed 'send', closed the email window and hurriedly returned to my class, the moment forgotten almost as soon as it had occurred. On such moments can a life pivot. The world changed when I made that decision to explore, examine and question my professional life more closely.

Embarking upon postgraduate study set me on another path that began as a parallel one to my classroom life, but soon became tightly interwoven with it. My passion for teaching became entwined with a new enthusiasm for learning. Not simply learning but engaging with thinkers from the past through the medium of their writing and reflecting on how their ideas resonated with my teaching practice. My profession was illuminated in a completely different way, lit by the words of other thinkers writing about education and its purpose. What had begun as a concurrent interest was translated into a coherent interest, as I connected the words of thinkers with my pedagogical practice to explicate deeper meanings.

In this chapter, van Manen's work *Researching Lived Experience* (1990) offers me ways to explore and narrate my life. van Manen's words and that of other philosophers shed light on things previously unnoticed, in sideshadows as other possibilities (Cherkasova, 2004). I wanted to engage fully with both my lived experience and the thoughts of others, who through their discourse give articulation to my becoming, to finding my face in the world. Thinking metaphorically, I saw that the idea of a lantern could provide a way to initiate and unfold my purpose in writing my thesis and the philosophical ideas that provide an intellectual framework for my research.

## Lighting a possible course

What were Diogenes and Nietzsche meaning by the word ‘lantern’?

Examining the thing that is a lantern gives us a sense of its metaphorical possibilities. Literally, a ‘lantern’ is defined as “a lamp with a transparent case protecting the flame or electric bulb” and “the light chamber at the top of a lighthouse” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lantern](http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lantern)). Historically, lanterns contained fuel, beginning with candles and later a wick dipped in kerosene or oil, lit by an individual, who covered the flame with a transparent casing to protect it from draughts and kept the flame burning until she extinguished it. Lanterns illuminate what an individual cannot see for herself, they might even *enhance* the vision of the user, allowing her to see things that before were obscured. But the impetus rests with the individual—she must physically light the flame within the transparent chamber for the lantern to be effective or, in the case of the magic lantern, imagine what she might project through it.

The emphasis on the individual providing the impetus is also true if we adopt the idea of the lantern as a means of revealing our personal ‘shadow places’, things we have not yet recognised or that have been obscured from our perception during our everyday existence. Should each individual make a conscious decision to hold a lantern up to her inner Self, her means of doing so may vary from another’s. Nietzsche seems to be alluding to this—one lantern might shine upon all human beings or one might hold a unique lantern for self-illumination.

I am drawn to Yvonne Sliep’s essay “We Compose Our Own Requiem” in *Creative Approaches to Research*, where she says, “my writing works best when I am flipped over and my shadows spill out” (2012, p. 64). As I use various methodological lenses to examine my lived experience, my personal shadow places reveal themselves. Sliep draws my attention to the idea that in education, teachers cannot always separate the personal from the professional, that our ideas, traditions and ideologies influence how we stand

in our work (p. 64). My writing calls forth and elucidates tensions that attune me to the details of others' lived experiences and "provide gateways to deeper understanding" (p. 65).

I began to realise that it is through relationships that I emplot meaning about what van Manen refers to as a "lifeworld". The idea of the lifeworld is essentially the world of lived experience. That is, it is the everyday world in which we live and experience naturally and pre-reflectively, through our daily interactions and activities (1990, p. 2). My lifeworld revolves upon my relationships not only with other people but also with my island home. Student engagement is important to me because people and my relationships with them are important. I wonder, perhaps developing relationships of care is an important aspiration for classroom life and for life in the wider world. And so the original impetus for my research is to explore the nature of relationships between people and between people and their Place, places that nourish human wellbeing. I capitalise the word 'place' in this context because I wish to emphasise the specific place where we feel most 'at home', the place that generates a sense of belonging. This notion of Place recurs as I disclose ways that our Self experiences consciousness of being in both private and public spheres.

The flame thus kindled leads me to focus on relationships in the classroom, particularly those between teacher and student. What might be the lantern, the magnifier of ideas and what lens could I use to illuminate them? My search leads me to the work of Gadamer and his thinking about the role of interpretation in living a mindful and reflective life. Gadamer's writings and ideas resonate with my lived experience, in particular his notion of a "fusion of horizons" (2004, p. 305) helping me towards an understanding of others and one's Self. For Gadamer a horizon is "everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (p. 301). He does not seem to mean this literally, as if an individual is standing on a hillside peering out from under the shade of his hand, rather suggesting a metaphorical "seeing" that permits

the individual “to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion” (p. 304). To acquire a horizon means becoming aware that we do not exist in isolation, spontaneously engendered from the ether, but as a sum of all our history. An individual’s history is intertwined with our consciousness and informs our choices about what is important. “We are always already affected by history. It determines in advance what seems to us worth inquiring about and what will appear as an object of investigation” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 300).

In the original German, the word for “fusion of horizons” is *horizontverschmelzung*, with a literal translation of “horizon melting”. Sumara echoes Gadamer’s idea of a “fusion” of horizons and the time it may take to see better and in truer proportion when he says, “Interpretation must be like the horizon of a prairie field and the vast blue sky that meets it. It must be discernible and, at the same time, ungraspable in its vastness” (1996, p. 118). As I narrate my lived experience, looking beyond what is close at hand to see it more truly, I do my best to allow my prejudices and assumptions to melt away, illuminating the others in my lifeworld who, for a short time, share my space. My voice asks, poses the possibility, that someone who has lived through an experience can make a contribution to a field of study by orienting themselves towards the unknown. I follow others who “advocate that a social scientist who has lived through an experience can make a strong contribution to the field while reducing the risk of silencing the representation of others in that field” (Ellis 1991; Clandinin & Connely, 1994; Clough, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Wall, 2006). As I cast aside my prejudices and assumptions, the others in my lifeworld become as understandings to me that permeate my lifeworld with new meanings.

My inquiry attempts to uncover the essential structures and meanings of my particular lived experience as I experience it, working my way towards a deeper understanding of my embodiment in the world. Writing as a lifeline,

to uncover mysteries that hover at the edge of perception, discernible and yet ungraspable, gives rise to the pursuit of meaning. My passion for ideas and words, brought forth in my writing, attempts to shape possibilities that are sensed, endeavours to articulate the thing itself, the lived experience. I follow the work of Frances Rapport and Graham Harthill, in particular their essay “Crossing Disciplines with Ethnographic Poetic Representation” as they speak about “sense-making [being] developed iteratively”. This inquiry is an iterative sense-making activity, where lifeworld narratives are interpreted poetically and re-presented “according to research scenarios inherent within them”. Each narrative has been carefully chosen to amplify wonderings and ideas brought forth in my explorations of other thinkers (2012, pp. 11-25).

Wendy Kohli, in her essay within the book *A Light in Dark Times; Maxine Greene and the Unfinished Conversation* (1998), talks about Maxine Greene as a philosopher of and for freedom. Kohli speaks of Greene as being situated within her thinking at the same time as she is concentrating on becoming, so through-lines that make their way across Greene’s writing over time change their meaning according to who and where Greene is in Space and Time (1998, pp. 11-12). Greene’s writing is “invigorated” by her lived experience (pp. 11-12) and she has decided what kind of philosopher she wishes to be— one who is not constrained by particular theories and abstractions, although she recognises their value to inquiry, rather a philosopher who attends to the things themselves, the events as they arise in her lifeworld (pp. 12-13).

As I write, I realise that I too am seeking the philosopher I wish to be. The impetus for my inquiry to be about relationships inside and outside the classroom is what I deem worthy as the subject and object of my investigation. My exploration of this idea of relationships begins with thinking about myself, hermeneutically and philosophically reflecting on my lifeworld as it is in this moment, then reaching out to the others whose lifeworlds intertwine with mine. Kohli quotes from Greene’s essay “What counts as philosophy of education?” in *Critical Conversations in Philosophy of*

*Education*, to emphasise Greene's own rendering of what it means to be a philosopher of education.

Thought, the pursuit of meaning, freedom and concern: there is no final summing up the themes of what counts as Philosophy of Education. Passion should infuse all these: the passion of sensed possibility and, yes, the passion of poetry and the several arts. Thinking of ourselves as subjects reaching out to others and attending to the shapes and sounds of things, we may resist the anaesthetic in our lives and the drawing back to anchorage. We have to know about our lives, clarify our situations if we are to understand the world from our shared standpoints, our standpoints as philosophers of education ready to commit ourselves to small transformations as we heed the stories, the multiplex stories, as cautiously as we transform. (1995, p. 21)

I wish for my writing to follow Greene, to be both methodology and lifeline, to be infused with the passion of sensed possibility as I seek to know my own life before reaching out to others. In delving into my history, the memories that give shape to my lived experience, I may move towards a deeper understanding of my situated-ness in the world.

As I heed the multiplex stories brought forth in my writing, hearkening to their meanings and their potential for transformation, I bring imagination to bear in my interpretations. I re-present my narratives to make sense of the human condition, foregrounding the lifeworlds of myself as storyteller and listener while inviting my reader to enter into the act of interpretive understanding (Rapport & Hartill, 2010; Richardson, 2000; Gunn, 1982; Richardson, 2002). Rapport and Harthill say,

Research conversations are open-ended, often lengthy, and consequently non-directive approaches to data capture that enable storytellers to present their life stories, including autobiographical detail, and health and illness tales, in highly personalised, individual ways. (2012, p. 19)

I allow words and stories to speak for themselves as I think within the medium I have chosen to use, my writing. Within the spill of words, I reflect and ponder what an interpretive embodiment in the world might mean for me, my history, and the histories of those whose lifeworlds intersect with mine. My chosen narratives, amplifying and expanding upon my lived experience, focus upon a recursive movement from telling to listening. I move away from attempting to take charge of my narrative subjects, exploring through my writing ways in which I can more fully engage with another, translating their experiences and evoking potential for open-ended connections between things (Rothenberg, 1999; Kendall & Murray, 2005 cited in Rapport, 2012, p. 20). This amplification of my lived experience “allows the reader to arrive at their own understanding of a piece of poetics, or to receive multiple interpretations of a piece, without excessive researcher influence” (Rapport & Sparkes, 2009, cited in Rapport & Harthill, 2012, p. 20). As I engage in this to-and-fro conversation with my reader, writing recursively may allow us to arrive at more complex, nuanced and thoughtful conclusions. Crafting my narratives in this way opens up possibilities for my reader to reflect on what I, as a storyteller, have myself reflected upon.

In the writing of my narratives I draw upon Ivan A. Brady’s essay “Poetics for a Planet: Discourse on some problems of being-in-place”. Brady talks about the possibilities inherent in crafting narratives of lived experience in a poetic way, “when the writer discloses the universal through the particular, she moves the discourse forward to what defines us all – what we share as humans” (2005, p. 998). Brady’s notion of being-in-place illuminates further the idea of an embodied understanding, allowing me as a writer to clear an imaginative space that is my own. This clearing of space offers different ways of knowing—an interpretive capacity to compose my lifeworld as I live amidst the worlds of others—as I consciously open up opportunities to write common spaces through language. Brady also urges us to render as exact a statement of lived experience as we can, “as clearly and accurately as possible through our sense of ‘Being-in-Place’ guided by histories that appear to contextualise the material best” (2005, p. 998).

I am not the only individual with history in a classroom—my students also bring with them their histories and as they and I develop a pedagogical relationship, more of our histories reveal themselves to us. Through conversation and the creation of a common language, each of us reveals ourselves to the other and we begin to experience a fuller, more resonant understanding, a “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 305). This growing understanding is not a static entity, rather a fluid melting, a falling together of possibilities. I wish to explore this fluid falling and pursue a pathway my questions lead towards. Might we describe a pedagogical relationship as an interpretive one—one where the onus is on the teacher, acting *in loco parentis*, laying aside her pre-judgements, assumptions and prejudices in order to maintain an awareness of the student as a vastly different and very impressionable Other?

The intentionality of my thesis then becomes bound to my most poignant research question. In what ways might I as a researcher discover and develop a hermeneutic, interpretive orientation towards self-understanding that would contribute to pedagogies of teaching practice? I set in train Robert Sokolowski’s notion of intentionality. In his *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000) Sokolowski draws the word ‘intentionality’ from a phenomenological tradition. He says we have to understand the word intentionality to have a “primarily mental or cognitive” meaning and not the practical meaning of “intentions” as such. He says, “In phenomenology intending means the conscious relationship we have to an object” (p. 8). And so, I continuously return to my question, in what ways might I develop a conscious relationship to the subject of my study (p. 8)? Gadamer’s thinking about interpretation becomes one lens through which I begin to view my teaching practice and my lived experience. Another lens appears to me when I learn to study lived experience through a practice of phenomenology and apprehend the notion of a constant unfolding of understanding with a focus on lived experience. Gadamer’s thinking provides the *why*—relationships are often highly interpretive, and it is through our relationships with others that we come to understand the world. van Manen provides the *how*—to mindfully narrate my



lived experience based on consciousness. We can see this why and how as two facets of the same lens, shining a light on the shadow places of my consciousness, illuminating a way to explore relationships in the classroom. To follow Nietzsche's exhortation to "find the human being" or to put it another way, in order to "understand the lived structures of meanings" (van Manen, 1992, p. 4) this inquiry begins with me, extends to my Place and then to my experiences as an educator.

### Relating lived experience as a "breathing of meaning"

van Manen writes, "a human being is not just something you automatically are, it is also something you must try to be" and he follows this with, "research is a caring act: we want to know that which is most essential to being. To care is to serve and to share our being with the one we love" (1990, p. 5). Relationships are a facet of human existence that are essential to our being in the world, something that defines our unique humanity. I believe it is through relationships that we grow in empathy and understanding. In relationships, where caring is central to our interaction, we share our being with the one we love. It is through others that we glimpse something universal, something beyond what we perceive. Our conversations with others give rise to a feeling we are not alone, that we matter. Relating with others, entering into a conversation with another, brings us to an understanding of our individual embodiment in the world.

As I narrate my lived experiences, constituting my lifeworld as I live amidst the worlds of others, I come closer to van Manen's comment that "lived experience is the breathing of meaning" (1990, p. 36). As I am guided by my history to narrate the history of those others whose lives intertwine, however briefly, with mine, I let the stories breathe, shaping them carefully in the hope of foregrounding a greater empathic understanding. I invite my reader to share in such shaping by using the pronoun 'we' to describe the

shared journey that I as a writer take with you as a reader. As we let the stories breathe, we may be moving closer to an essence of life, our breathing stories giving us a way to say that lived experiences breathe *into* meaning—as we animate the events of our lives with meaning, we breathe life into them. Breathing into meaning, animating the events of my lived experience through poetic storytelling, allows me as a writer to be “lifted out of a position of solitary idiosyncrasy towards a fuller and more rounded engagement with the human condition” (Rapport & Harthill, 2012, p. 22). Writing in this autoethnographic, interpretive way offers up occasions to illuminate shadow places of mystery, where being and knowing meet as form of embodiment.

My research is an act of caring on my behalf towards all the students in my care. This care and love is akin to the notion of altruism that comes from unselfish love and concern towards all humankind. There lies a deeper emotional resonance behind the legal principle *in loco parentis*. When the students are in my classroom, I act in place of their parents to guide them, keep them safe and care for them.

In accepting the underlying principle of *in loco parentis* to be a form of altruism, as van Manen suggests, how does this love manifest in a pedagogical relationship? As an educator, I believe that I express this universal idea through my attention to the particular circumstances of my profession, that is, I embody my love for humankind and my desire to serve society by developing strong pedagogical relationships with particular students or groups of students. “Pedagogy announces itself not as entity, behaviour, feeling or emotion but *through* them” says van Manen (1990, p. 50). As I open spaces where children feel safe and comfortable, I may act in the place of a parent, with the classroom becoming a home of sorts.

The notion of creating a home of sorts for children, a safe habitat, may mean using language that welcomes the child. There are links between the words ‘home’ and ‘habitat’, with the word ‘habitat’ coming from the Latin

root *habitare*, meaning “to dwell”

[en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/habitat](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/habitat)). For me to create a safe habitat for the children in my care, I may need to be attentive to changing circumstances while also having an end in view. To open safe spaces for children, the teacher sits in a tension between the right-now and the later-on. The teacher orients herself towards an endpoint without knowing how she will get there. This idea of having an end in view was described by the Greeks as *τέλος*, *telos*, with a meaning of an end, purpose or goal. Gadamer draws on a teleological perspective in his discussions about history and language, his ideas that language describes what is, what is past and what is to come (2004, pp.197-200, p. 454). This idea of *telos* enables me as a teacher to maintain a possible endpoint in mind while creating a space in the present where children feel comfortable to foreground their uniqueness. A teleological perspective allows the teacher to see a possible end of the road—the ending of the time for a teacher and student to work together in a particular classroom, while still enabling mindful detours from the path where we might pause to inhale our present.

Creating such a lived space in the classroom “is a category for inquiring into the ways we experience the affairs of our day to day existence; in addition, it helps us uncover more fundamental meaning dimensions of everyday life” (van Manen, 1990, p. 103). Inquiring into the things themselves—events as they unfold—gives rise to an unfurling of lifeworlds. As I meet the child in the classroom, creating a safe habitat for him, he may reveal something fundamental of himself to me. We can see in the idea of a lifeworld as a world of someone’s immediate lived experience an echo of Gadamer’s thoughts regarding the “fusion of horizons”. van Manen states, “the best way to enter a person’s lifeworld is to participate in it” (1990, p. 69), alluding to Gadamer’s idea of a “third space” (2004, p. 283) that has its own horizon of understanding and where lifeworlds come together to create a relationship that transforms into its own entity, its Self.

van Manen is not referring to simplistic detached observation of children but a willingness to assume a relationship through play, instruction or similar that allows the teacher to enter the child's lifeworld, with its own historicity and traditions, while retaining an awareness of arising pedagogical situations that offer opportunities for making meaning through reflection. To enter a child's lifeworld through any of the means described above is to enter ultimately through conversation, allowing me as the teacher to open up my life to the child, leading us towards "dwell(ing) together as a genuine we" (van Manen, 1990, p. 108). van Manen states that the opposite of 'we-ness' is indifference on behalf of the adult, whether parent or teacher, "a failure to recognise the other human being in a genuine encounter or personal relation" (p. 108).

Regina Heß, in her essay "Poetic Embodied Interpretation of Re-search Findings: An Evocative Approach to Social Sciences Methods" permits me to see genuine encounters with students as embracing a relational process of parts and wholes. Through our physical bodies carrying our experiences and the language we use to articulate ourselves to ourselves, my students and I intertwine and transform each other (2012, p. 26). Heß calls this "a general structure of interrelatedness" (p. 28), which gives rise to an embodied understanding focussing on how we communicate with another through implicit and spoken language. Heß draws on Gadamer's work, in particular what she calls the "unique yet shared interpretive body-based hermeneutical phenomenology" of Gadamer's notions of being-with-another through the medium of language (Gadamer, 1960/2004/2010 in Heß, 2012, pp. 27-28). Through language the delicate nature of the pedagogical relationship can be exposed, as teacher and student move back and forth between words that describe what is happening in our lifeworlds and words that communicate our feelings and understandings of our shared present. As we talk together, we accommodate what Heß terms "dissonances within harmonies", leading both towards shared meanings and understandings (2012, pp. 28,30).

Bearing in mind the delicate nature of a pedagogical relationship, how far can or should I, as the caring and mindful adult in the relationship, 'open up' my life to a child in my care? There seems to be a clue in the notion of conversation—through question, answer and active listening, I meet the child where *they* are. As the adult, at the outset I actively engage in a relationship with a child, assuming the mantle of willingness by being responsive to the child in informal situations, listening to their conversation and asking questions about the topics they relate. In the classroom, I actively listen as they explain their approach to classroom tasks and again, through the means of question-and-answer, I am able to guide their thinking as they simultaneously guide mine.

### Intersubjectivity and being-with-one-another

The initial spark or impetus of puzzlement regarding relationships and the lantern of interpretative phenomenology used to focus upon them means that my inquiry will centre on personal interpretations about my classroom experiences. Gadamer uses the word 'hermeneutics' when discussing interpretation (2004). The word derives from the Greek *hermeneuin*, meaning "to interpret" ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hermeneutics](http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hermeneutics)) and seems to have its primary source in the Greek god Hermes, the bringer of messages upon his winged sandals who moved between men and the gods on Mt Olympus. Hermeneutics as a branch of knowledge developed as scholars needed to interpret legal or sacred texts. For Gadamer, understanding is also hermeneutical in nature. Gadamer drew upon the work of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger to come to his idea of hermeneutical understanding arrived at through language and in relationship to others. Gadamer's notion of being-with-one-another, *Miteinander* (1960/2000/2004) informs and intertwines with his notion of a "fusion of horizons" (2004, p. 305).

Gadamer clearly explains this hermeneutics of *Dasein* to Ricardo Dottori very early when he meets with him in conversation, in *A Century of Philosophy: Hans Georg-Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dottori* (2006),

Dottori: But didn't Heidegger spoke of *being with*, [*Mit-sein*], that is, being-there-with-the-other, [*Mit-den-anderin-da-zu-sein*], and the conscience as excellent modes of human *Dasein* or structures of human existence? Didn't these structures or these phenomena have something to do with a fundamental experience of the Thou?

Gadamer: *Mit-sein* becomes only really tenable with the other...what I have gradually developed is not *Mit-sein* but *Miteinander* ["with one another"]. *Mit-sein*, for Heidegger, was a concession that he had to make, but one he never got really behind. Indeed, even as he was developing the idea, he wasn't even talking about the other at all. *Mit-sein* is, as it were, an assertion about *Dasein*, which must naturally take *Mit-sein* for granted...*Mitsein* is in truth a very weak idea of the other, more a "letting the other be" than an authentic "being-interested-in-him". (pp. 22-23)

And this is how I come to understand the pedagogical relationship that I attend to with others. As I hermeneutically take deep interest in the others who appear in my lifeworld, I offer myself through dialogue, hoping to enter a space where individual horizons can melt away, blossoming into a shared common ground of understanding.

Gadamer acknowledges phenomenology, the attendance to things themselves through perception, as an important part of his own thinking about interpretation and understanding (1963/1976). Gadamer's essay "The Phenomenological Movement" examines Husserl's ideas in depth, illuminating the differences between phenomenology and interpretive understanding. For Gadamer, Husserl's focus on intuition, "the concrete givenness of what is perceived" as "the ideal of knowledge" (1976, p. 152) did not address our relationships with others as essential to our continuous formation of identity. Gadamer points out that Husserl's focus on an inner world, a being within, as a way of describing lived experience becomes paradoxical as "it is a method dealing with that which has no foundation...it

must first create its ground for itself” (p. 160). Gadamer describes this dilemma further,

The dilemma was that factual human Dasein could be illuminated by phenomenological research only as an *eidos*, an essence. In its uniqueness, finitude and historicity, however, human Dasein would preferably be recognised not as an instance of *eidos* but rather as itself the most real factor of all. In this *aporia*, Husserl and the phenomenological investigation in general was to encounter its own limit, finitude and historicity. (1976, p. 135)

Gadamer’s idea of *Miteinander*, being-with-one-another, departs from Husserl’s concentration on what Gadamer terms the transcendental and the intuitive (pp. 137-140) and moves towards a choice and commitment to “the possibilities that are available at any time...the boundary situation” (p. 137), where individuals are guided by their interpretive understanding of themselves, rather than objectified knowledge.

Gadamer goes on to describe these boundary situations further,

One has to undergo such extreme situations of decision and choice in his own existence, and precisely how one faces up to them, how one acts...brings out...what he himself really is. [It is] the illumination of existence as it occurs for the individual in boundary situations. (p. 138)

As I situate my narrative inquiry in the qualitative domain, I follow this commitment to available possibilities, writing descriptions of events in my life world that illuminate the human condition and offer opportunities to make sense of the day-to-day lived experience of myself and others. I term situations of decision and choice ‘epiphanic moments’, calling forth a notion of simultaneous illumination and transfiguration in the continuous formation of my identity within the relationships of Time, Place and Other.

Gadamer's phenomenological hermeneutics, his ideas of *Miteinander* and a "fusion of horizons", guide me through my sense-making of what it is like to be a multiply-positioned self. Gadamer metaphorically stands beside me in a dynamic dialogical space for inquiring into the inner world of human beings. As a teacher, I move beyond an attendance to the things themselves, beyond an intuitive stance, to an open place of interpretation navigated through dialogue with others. For Husserl, "the ideal of knowledge was intuition, the concrete givenness of what is perceived" (1976, p. 152) and this intuition "embraces our entire intentional life" as human beings (p. 154). For Husserl, we are one human community and Gadamer differs on this point. Gadamer asks us to look at "what is co-intended" between others, how my being differs from another's and how, through dialogue that strives to reach an accord, I and a very different Other arrive at co-intentions, common meanings and understandings created in conversation. Gadamer uses the terms 'Thou' and 'We' as he suggests avenues of thought for a move away from a concentration on one human community that embraces our intentions.

The transcendental ego contains the "all of us" of human community, and the transcendental view of phenomenology in no way poses the question explicitly as to how the being of the thou and the we, beyond the ego's own world, is really constituted. (This is the problem of intersubjectivity.) (1976, p. 154)

Intersubjectivity is the locus of difference between Gadamer and Husserl. Humans are relational beings, defining themselves through their relationships with others and Gadamer's focus on arriving at co-intentions through dialogical conversations asks us to foreground the other, thou, and invite him into a conversation with the intention of creating common meanings in language. *Miteinander*, being-with-another, proffers a way for me to be with students in a classroom that is also a way of being interested in them, a way to encounter another in dialogue that might be an orientation for empathy in education.



## Understanding to provoke writing: writing to understand

Sean Wiebe, in his essay “The Poet and the Pea” argues “that understanding is less about knowing ourselves as a singular and stable self and more about the journey of not yet being a being” (2012, p. 35). Gadamer’s notion of *Miteinander* gives me insights into a positioning of myself as a human becoming oriented towards a different, impressionable other, as I embark upon the “empathetic work of provoking understanding” (p. 35). As I engage another through dialogue, I also embark upon a questioning dialogue with myself as both of us turn towards our becoming in the world. A hermeneutic orientation permits me to value another’s particularity, leading to a recognition of another’s wholeness, a noticing of those aspects of another that may always be before our eyes, yet their importance might be overlooked. The notion of *Miteinander* allows the uniqueness of the other to be present in conversations that bring the “texture of our strangeness” into view and provoke understanding through experience (2012, pp. 39, 45). A hermeneutic dialogue thus can bring us into a performance of ourselves—we reveal “who we are being to one another and how we become ourselves in relation to one another” (p. 45). My writing, descriptive processional narratives that move through Space and Time, shift recursively from telling, to an honourable listening, a hearkening towards my students and towards others. This shift suggests a radical change in communication within education, a change from teacher voice to student voice, a receptive orientation towards the other in dialogue of becoming human, a transformation in who we might be listening to and how such listening may enliven and enrich lived experience.

This idea of coming to an understanding through relationships to others finds an echo in van Manen who says, “Hermeneutic phenomenology is a philosophy of the personal, the individual, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the logos of other, the whole, the communal, the social” (1990, p. 7). van Manen also takes up Husserl’s idea of a lifeworld as the world of lived experience (1992, p. 2). Like

Gadamer, van Manen shapes the idea of a lifeworld to foreground notions of personal histories and how they may intertwine with another (1992). I find echoes of van Manen's thinking when Gadamer says,

this essential structure of the lifeworld reaches its decisive application: *It makes possible the clarification of the problems of historicism*. The relativity present in the concept of the lifeworld as such also appears in the multiplicity of historical worlds already given to us by historical knowledge in a fashion similar to the general world horizon of our present experience of the world. (1976, p. 161)

My narration of my teaching life is mindful of the different histories abutting my own, an evolving process, a hard-won spiral of insights and skills. I hold in my mind the question—can we know what life is like for something or someone else? As I narrate my own history, the writing may offer an array of entry points for my reader, an invitation to bring her own history to her reading of my writing. I offer my reader an invitation to look at the possible similarities and differences between my experience and hers, pointing to unexpected likenesses and un-likenesses through my writing.

As a researcher, I focus on writing evocatively, calling forth through deep descriptions the colour and flavour of my being in the world. These in-depth descriptive narratives form my interpretation and increase my understanding, allowing me to uncover and interpret hidden meanings of lived experience through my particular perspective (van Manen, 1996). Through narratives coupled with deep reflection, I come to understand that I am not always aware of my lifeworld until I reflect upon it. van Manen says, "Through reflection, a more explicit understanding of a person's worldview can emerge and this hermeneutic significance is most commonly expressed through language" (1996, p. 36). My personal experience reveals itself through my reflection on my lived situation, offering a way to highlight how personal stories are located in wider social narratives, extending an opportunity to my reader to look at a society in which my experiences are lived.

Megan Calver, in her essay “In Winter Look Patiently Around the Edges of Pools” speaks about the notion of equivalence as an invitation to look at “different facets of research in parallel” as a suggestion of relationship and a request of an audience to become actively involved.

When ‘like’ things group, they work together through their similarities and, equally importantly, through their differences to express more complex meanings in much the same way that we build a sentence from individual words. (2012, p. 55)

I foreground this as an invitation to my reader to look as I follow the thinking of Gadamer, van Manen and others. This invitation offers my reader an opportunity to explore the possible confluences between their and her own thinking, as well as the possible similarities and differences she might find between my lived experience and hers. This narrative is about me, yet not about me, as I move beyond surface likenesses to find ways to make unforeseen connections between otherwise separate positions. I turn my narrative gaze towards the very heart of things, looking long and hard into the deep face of the world, making complex meanings, turning the tables on similarity and difference.

I return to Sliep’s notions of transience as moving across Space and Time to heal wounds and come to an understanding of my altered becoming (2012, p. 62). I do not write to offer a map, implying that I have found a way for others to follow, instead I invite my reader to converge and diverge from my lived experience within the space of my writing as I narrate my own becoming and wonder out loud. I navigate through my writing a way of being that works for me in a classroom. This writing may assist others to chart their journey through pedagogical practice. I offer possible ways to share meaning as I find form for my thoughts through language, using the academic discourse available to me and opening up spaces for shared meaning as I delve into the language embedded in such discourses. Sliep says, “the personal is professional...we cannot separate our ideas and ideology from how we stand in our work” (p. 64). My writing is a tangible part of a whole story of lived experience, like a hand-drawn map that may make the most

sense to me, its creator, yet may also point towards possibilities of knowing for others.

Writing that focusses on parts and wholes echoes a strong idea underpinning hermeneutics—the notion of the relationship between part and whole. I am one educator in the world but writing about my experiences in the classroom may not only have resonance for me, a particular teacher, but may have resonance through the teaching profession as a whole and with the more universal idea of education itself. Narratives of my lived experience, a qualitative inquiry located within the human sciences, becomes for me a practice of what Heß terms “a practice of body-based hermeneutics that can contribute to a transformation of qualitative research through the creation of inclusive spaces and embodied dialogue” (2012, p. 32). It is a process of not-knowing and wonder that drives my writing, a desire to narrate one teaching life as a way to offer glimpses into the whole of teaching experience. I continue to ask my central inquiry question—in what ways might I as a researcher discover and develop a hermeneutic, interpretive orientation towards self-understanding that would contribute to pedagogies of teaching practice?

I reflect upon and analyse my existing interpretational practices in a specific institution, a primary school, in a specific place, the island of Tasmania. Gallagher, in his book *Hermeneutics in Education*, celebrates the place in which hermeneutics evolves with the term “local hermeneutics” and believes that it involves what he calls “meta-interpretation...an art akin to the Socratic art, an art because, for lack of any better method, the practitioner is forced to ask questions and learn as she goes” (1992, p. 336). Brady’s *Being-in-Place* and his notions about writing embodied inquiry as guided by the histories it describes recalls Gallagher’s idea of a local hermeneutics. My writing is anchored in a particular place, yet as I engage fluidly with my experiences, I may awake in my reader a *frisson* of recognition. In my endeavour to write interpretively yet also present an authentic and

trustworthy account of my research, I follow Lisa Whitehead, particularly her paper “Enhancing the Quality of Hermeneutic Research: Decision Trail” (2004). Whitehead describes a guiding principle for analysing data hermeneutically as entering into a hermeneutic circle,

engaging in a process of moving from the part to the whole, allowing emerging data to remain open to divergent interpretations and recognising the temporality of truth and the horizons of the interpreter and the text. (p. 515)

In the spirit of hermeneutic inquiry, I have continued to contemplate the meaning of my work, keeping open dialogical spaces with myself for re-interpreting and new understandings. I dwell within those spaces as I try to find my own part in relating to the others in my lifeworld without silencing them by my analysis. I write to honour the Being-in-Place of my participants, even as I constantly permit myself to honour my own being-in-the-world. The imagery of a shifting dialogical space, which we might term a ‘horizon’, is intrinsic to hermeneutic thought.

Gadamer uses the idea of a “hermeneutic circle” to describe what he terms “the circular movement of understanding” (2004, p. 292). The word ‘circle’ is not meant to be thought of as endlessly repetitious, although sometimes pedagogical relationships contain interactions that have many of the same elements, as both parents and educators, we can find ourselves uttering that well-worn phrase “how many times have I told you...?”—but rather as ever-expanding, embracing contexts that “throw more and more light upon the parts” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 59).

As I move across and beyond my perceptions so I can come to a knowing about my lived experience, an understanding of my multivocality as a subject and object of my writing, I come to many “boundary situations” (Gadamer, 1976, p. 138) where I am inside and outside of myself simultaneously. van Manen says, “a person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience”(1990, p. 11), yet what could be called the ‘epiphanic

moment', those boundary situations when we are shown to ourselves, when realisations occur simultaneously with experiences being lived through, which provide deep insights into our embodiment in the world. Those moments when Time is still, when we seem to stand outside of ourselves and see the world around us in a new way, lead to deeper understandings of ourselves and others. This epiphanic moment may be the result of "a heedful, mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to live a life" (van Manen, 1990, p. 12) and perhaps mindful orientation allows us to recognise these moments when they occur. Some of my most powerful epiphanies have arrived through the utterances of others—colleagues, friends and the students I teach.

To write phenomenologically is to narrate past and present all at once, narrating and interpreting events simultaneously from my standpoint, my horizon. My narration exists in a *lacuna* between the event and its interpretation, it is *my* narration and there will be many 'seems to be' and 'perhaps' in my writing because to create a phenomenological text implies a certain tentativeness, an allowing of other interpretations. I return to Greene's idea of the philosopher deciding who she herself wishes to be in her educational inquiries. I write to question, to wonder, to ponder and to illuminate my experiences as an educator-philosopher.

I endeavour to write evocatively, to paint a picture in my reader's mind, limning events in my lived experience. 'Limn' means to depict or describe in painting or words and derives from Latin *luminare*, "to make light" (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/limn>) and so returns the lantern metaphor. Spiralling around of word meanings and origins serves to summon poetic and evocative writing. "Writing and reading are the ways in which we sustain a conversational relation: a discourse about our pedagogic lives with children. Much depends, therefore on the quality of our language and writing" (van Manen, 1994, p. 111).

This inquiry depends much on anecdotes I have heard and remembered throughout my working life, anecdotes that provided me with epiphanic moments, allowing me to realise more fully the nature of myself and my profession. The anecdotes I choose give me words to describe the “unspeakable or ineffable in life”. They break my “epistemological or ontological silence” (van Manen, 1994, p. 111). Of course, I am aware that “truth has different meanings in different linguistic communities” (Gadamer, 1975, in van Manen, 1994, p. 114) but I write about my truth helped by these anecdotes that constitute an “attunement to lived experience” and have led to deep reflection. David Jardine, in *Ecological Pedagogy, Buddhist Pedagogy, Hermeneutic Pedagogy* says about his writing, “I set out for readers a gentle pedagogical demand on thinking, on memory formation and its ways” (2014, p. 130). And so I write to articulate my ways of being in the world gently, eventfully, in ways that emerge from memory and never seem finished.

### Epiphany: Balancing the present moment with past traditions and history

Writing phenomenologically begins with the questioning of our practices and ourselves. The impetus for beginning my inquiry was my questioning around student engagement and relationships and this section began with a question about what an interpretative, phenomenological lantern would illuminate about relationships. van Manen’s notion of the evasive nature of the Other illustrates an important idea of hermeneutics regarding the relationship between part and whole. He uses the word ‘evasive’ in its most literal sense, as something that is not fixed and cannot be easily pinned down without entering into a mindful dialogue. A mindful dialogue may begin with the questioning of ourselves and our reasons for being here in any given moment,

...the essence of the question is the opening up, and keeping open, of possibilities. But we can only do this if we keep ourselves open in such a way that in this abiding concern of our questioning we find ourselves deeply interested (inter-esse, to be or stand in the midst of something) in

that which makes the question possible in the first place. To truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the centre of our being. (van Manen, 1990, p. 43)

To inquire into teaching practice in this way highlights for me the tensions between epistemological concerns, “developing positivistic schema, paradigms, models or other categorical abstractions of knowledge” as van Manen (1990, p. 46) terms them. Schema in my context are characterised by departmental curriculum documents and assessment processes. These categorical abstractions offer a strong contrast with ontological notions about the development of a human being through education. As teachers, we confidently talk about selecting, planning and organising ‘learning opportunities’ but unless we take the time to develop relationships with the children in our care, we cannot know what it means for an individual child to ‘have a learning experience’ or when a child comes to understand something.

When I speak of the epiphanic moment, the occasion where an individual moment coalesces with reflection and meaning to create profound understandings about the fundamental nature of humanity, this moment can be seen as the still point in the dynamic circular movement of understanding, an instant where the hubbub of everyday life dies away long enough for larger meanings to be fleetingly revealed. These moments can often occur during times of quiet reflection but for me they often happen during my teaching practice. For me, to apprehend meaning is to live and teach in the present moment while I balance the weight of past traditions and history.

van Manen has similar notions,

The meaning of pedagogy needs to be found in the experience of pedagogy, because the lived experience of pedagogy is all that remains if presuppositions are suspended. And so we need to search everywhere in the lifeworld for lived-experience material that, upon reflective



examination, might yield something of its fundamental nature. (1990, p. 53)

Even to use the term ‘meaning’ has subjective connotations—the meanings I make are the sum of my lived experience to date, up to and including this moment, a moment I begin to subsume into my consciousness from the instant it occurs. My own lifeworld will influence the meanings I make in my educative practice. So, we “make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions and theories. We try to come to terms with our assumptions, not in order to forget them again, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay” (van Manen, 1990, p. 47). Much of this inquiry will be in the form of anecdotal narratives about my lived pedagogical experiences. Through particular incidents in my teaching life, moments when I have stepped into another’s experience, I find relevance to the universal human experience. The power of story is not only the relating of a particular life lived, but the meaning this one life has for the experience of humanity as a whole. The distinctions associated with exposing the dissonances among the harmonies, the contradictions of human experience, may embody the essence of interpretive research. A multivocal, multiple-meaning narrative draws upon emotion, empathy, conversation and literary allusion to offer potential interpretive insights into the phenomenon of lived experience.

“While biography is oriented to individual or private meaning, phenomenology is oriented to existential meaning”, says van Manen (1990, p. 72) and “phenomenology attempts to systematically develop a certain narrative that explicates themes while remaining true to the universal quality or essence of a certain type of experience” (p. 97). It seems that phenomenology also extrapolates upon experiences, transforming and transfiguring them in the light of imagination and reflection. The importance of constantly questioning my intentions as a writer hopefully allows my reader to ask similar questions leading to an “interpretative conversation wherein both partners, me as writer and you as reader, self-reflectively orient themselves to the interpersonal or collective ground that brings the

significance of the phenomenological question into view” (van Manen, 1990, p. 99).

A vital part of my narratives is the language I choose to use. Language is important, as without language, understanding cannot be reached (Gadamer, 2004, p. 385). It is not only the anecdotes I choose to narrate but *how* I choose to narrate them that leads to a collective ground between writer and reader. The language I use mediates between my experiences as writer and that of my reader, but only if a commonality develops first. Although language is the most important mediator between individuals as they experience the world, language itself is transliminal, it moves beyond the threshold of its original meaning to acquire more nuanced meanings that are not always related to its original etymology. Transliminality means literally going beyond the threshold and this word reflects the changing nature of language over time, moving beyond the etymological origins to a world of nuanced, fluid, individualised meanings. The words I write not only have a dictionary meaning but an interpretative meaning acquired over time and usage. I notice here that ‘transliminal’ has similarities to the word ‘limn’ discussed earlier, which means to depict with words, and offers a connection to my lantern metaphor.

Gadamer writes, “all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language that allows the object to come into view and yet is at the same time the interpreter’s own language” (2004, p. 390). He believes that the development of a conversational dialogue, of which question-and-answer is an intrinsic part, is fundamental to understanding in a hermeneutical, phenomenological sense (2004, pp. 385-484) and he also states, “in the form of writing, all tradition is contemporaneous with each present time. Moreover, it involves a unique co-existence of past and present” (p. 391), which alludes again to the dynamic, circular, part-whole interplay that is understanding.

This written text is a conversation, a piece of writing that, after it defines its terms, becomes something that expresses not only my experience but a commonality that moves towards a “fusion of horizons” between writer and reader. Language is so fundamental to my inquiry that, even though it closely entwines with this chapter concerning my purposes and ways of writing, it requires much further detailed exploration. In this writing, I explore my understandings of what language is, as well as conversational dialogue and its role in understanding.

### Memories that light perception

Still wondering why Diogenes has been waving his lantern around in daylight, I recall an experiment conducted by Albert Einstein. A true polymath, Einstein was deeply interested in everything and applied his thinking and imagination to all facets of the world around him. One of his great interests was Time and the perception of it. An epiphanic moment experienced while travelling on a train focussed Einstein’s thought regarding the perception of events. Einstein wondered if individuals experience Time differently depending on where they are in Space, as it seemed that Time passed differently while he sped along in a train compared to those who stood and watched it go by. He wondered some more and imagined the following experiment (1917). A flash of light is given off at the centre of the train car just as the two observers pass each other. The observer on board the train sees the front and back of the train car at fixed distances from the source of light and as such, according to this observer, the light will reach the front and back of the train car at the same time. The observer standing on the platform, on the other hand, sees the rear of the train car moving or catching up towards the point at which the flash was given off and the front of the train car moving away from it. As the speed of light is finite and the same in all directions for all observers, the light that is headed for the back of the train will have less distance to cover than the light that is headed for the front.

Thus, the flashes of light will strike the ends of the train car at different times. So Einstein posited that your perceptions of reality change depending on where you are.

It seems to me that it is just as fundamental to say that your perceptions of reality change depending on *how* you are, that is, perception is coloured by interpretation. Who among us has witnessed an incident or conducted a conversation on one occasion, only to return later in Time to find another's perception is very different from our own? I have found another idea to be also true—our interpretation alters between *our own* perceptions of a conversation or incident. We find that even though we might return to the same situation, the passing of Time has rendered it subtly different. When we return to our classroom after the weekend, my students and I are different people in the same context because who knows what may have happened to us all over the past two days? Family disputes, conversations that caused us to reflect and make changes, commitments that kept us constantly moving from one place to another all contribute to a fluidity in our fundamental Selves.

I wonder if Diogenes is on an altruistic quest to find a human being who is wise enough to question their reality and admit their unfinished-ness—one who, instead of pointing to his chest in a satisfied manner when asked if he is a real human being, shrugs his shoulders and looks uncertain. Perhaps if Diogenes had found someone who did that, he could use his lantern to illuminate a path for both of them to follow towards understanding— through our relationships with others we begin to understand ourselves. Gadamer says, “all understanding is self-understanding” (2004, p. 519) and perhaps for Diogenes, a real human being meant someone who could recognise what they didn't understand about themselves and others.

We as people are not static, but rather we are in a constant state of flux as we move through our environment and our relationships. Developing a conversational dialogue along Gadamerian lines offers an occasion where possibilities coalesce and disperse in a constant simultaneity, not only the dialogue itself but also within those participating in it. It is through dialogue of this kind that we recognise the transitive nature of consciousness and the constant interweaving of text, individual, and context, environment and relationships, to create a fluid Self, one that is always unfinished and responsive to a constantly changing environment. Our own perceptions of events change when we return to them after a period of time, sometimes due to the input of another's perceptions and interpretations colouring our own memories. As our fluid Selves move through Space and Time, our interpretive, relational experiences of being in the world with others give rise to a constant oscillation between perception, memory and imagination as we name and distil our becoming in the world.

A vital part of recognising what we don't understand is remembering those things we do. Memory allows an individual to reflect, to classify moments as past, present and future and to weave a personal narrative based on those moments. Humans are the only species to make memories in this way. We as humans do not only make individual memories, we make societal ones as well and these memories intertwine with our lived experience to create a unique individual. Memory is essential for understanding and memories colour perceptions and interpretations. Indeed, without memory there is no experience, which is essentially a word we use to describe our individual histories that we create through memory. Gallagher notes, "Understanding, even if in the form of sudden insight, does not develop from out of nowhere, without basis; its ground is always prepared in a past which we carry around with us" (1992, p. 91) and he goes on to say,

We always find ourselves with a past that does not simply follow behind, but goes in advance, defining the contexts by which we come to interpret the world. Despite that fact that traditions operate for the most

part 'behind our backs', they are already there, ahead of us, conditioning our interpretations. (p. 91)

This inquiry has its beginning with me, as I carry my lantern of phenomenological interpretation, seeking first to reveal from the dark my own shadow places. One of these shadow places emerges from the memories of my past that create this present and continue to shape my thoughts as I write into the next chapter.

## Chapter 2

### The Continuity of Memory: An Imagined Self

*The world about us would be desolate except for the world within us*

Wallace Stevens

*I live not in myself, but I become*

*Portion of that around me*

Byron

*There are no limits to the interior dialogue of the soul with itself.*

Hans-Georg Gadamer

A changeable day in October, with patches of sunlight bursting through grey sponges of cloud. I sat curled in the back of my grandparents' Kingswood, leaning against the door in a posture that would be impossible now that seatbelts are a legal requirement and have changed the way we sit in cars. My grandparents had recently decided that it might be unsafe for me to sit on the fold-down armrest in the front seat, so now I was desperately trying not to succumb to my first bout of carsickness. I was unsure as to the purpose of this drive, my grandmother had hinted at a surprise but the dull landscape rushing past the window seemed to hold no surprises I might enjoy, like a toy shop or somewhere that sold art supplies. The car had slowed down and my grandmother's head swivelled from side to side, searching for something. She pointed. "There! Turn there!"

My grandfather swung the big car into a dirt driveway barred by a stout wire gate. The track continued past the gate, hugging a row of enormous pine trees, up to what looked from here like a pile of stones. A big pile of stones. Suddenly a tall

grey man appeared from nowhere, striding slowly yet purposefully towards the gate. Everything he wore was shades of grey; from his battered felt hat to his sturdy elastic-sided boots, a study in grey. He unlocked and swung the gate inward, leaning on it as the car passed through and then stopped a short way along the track. My grandmother was winding down her window while I watched the grey man push the gate closed, but not lock it. My grandmother waited for the grey man to approach her side of the car, twisting slightly in her seat to watch him. "How are you?" she asked in what I thought of as her 'going out' voice. "Not bad, y' know", came the reply. "We won't be too long, just wanted a look around." She gestured with her voice towards me. "Brought our granddaughter with us." The grey man glanced in my window with grey eyes. I smiled a tight nervous smile. He looked back at my grandmother. "Just close the gate after you, I'll lock it later." He stepped back from the car. "Right-o", replied my grandmother cheerily, already winding up the window. The car moved on up the rise slowly away from the grey man's receding back as he strode over the paddocks.

The Kingswood was not designed to drive off-road, so the last part of the journey was rugged as the track abruptly ended and my grandfather negotiated the big car carefully around what now looked to be a ruined building. After turning off the motor, we could hear the constant sighing of the squally October winds as they rushed through the enormous pine trees. We got out, eyes on the ground to avoid cowpats and potholes, and gingerly picked our way close to the stones. "This is Honeywood", announced my grandmother, "where your great-grandmother was born and lived. All the family lived here, the five children and their parents". My grandfather, always a quiet man, said nothing but I thought he looked somewhat nonplussed by the whole scene. We walked around the building, through the gap in the walls that once held a door, into what once were two small rooms dominated by the tall chimney, stones blackened by years of smoke. I wondered aloud if there had been a house fire, if that had destroyed the building. "No, it just fell down, I think. Houses need to be lived in and maintained, otherwise they just crumble", said my grandmother, before turning to my grandfather crossly, "You'd think they would've tried to look after it, it won't be long before there's nothing left at all". I had no idea, either then or now, who 'they' were, and why they would maintain a building that obviously wasn't theirs, but ours. But why was our building on someone else's land? I did not find out until many years later that Honeywood was never ours in a sense, but simply a



tenant farmer's cottage that my forebears lived in until events took them elsewhere. So something that my grandmother was so attached to never really belonged to us at all.

I ran my hand over the remnants of a stone wall— not smooth, but rough round stones that looked to have been plucked from the surrounding landscape and jigsawed together to form a wall. More effort had been made with the chimney, I could see the stones had been cut and laid carefully, arching over a large hearth nearly big enough for me to crawl into. Mindful of not getting dirty (one of the greatest sins according to my family), I stuck my head into the hearth and looked up the chimney into darkness. There was no bright patch of sky, complete with pieces of cloud, just pitch-black dark. I pulled my head out quickly. Spatters of rain reached us, flicking through the pine branches. My grandfather turned on his heel immediately. “Rain; let’s go.” We hurried back to the car as the rain increased.

I begin to narrate my past, poetically revealing the human face behind academic discourse and expertise. I write my way into meaning, as I re-present an occasion from my history, a piece of my past that lies before me. I continue to follow Rapport and Harthill, narrating episodes from my lived experience and re-presenting their content according to the research scenarios inherent within them (2008, p. 311). I attempt to reflectively process, recover and express the way I live my life as I have lived it, permitting myself “to act in my practical life with greater thoughtfulness and tact” (van Manen, 2014, p. 20). I put my past in a different light through my writing, bringing it out into the open (Rapport & Harthill, 2012, p. 21) as I describe my self-formation through memory and imagination.

Humans are the only species who make meaning from memories. Our closest ape cousins use memory to find food or respond to common threats, but we are the only species who use memories to build scenarios about events that are yet to happen—to be teleological, or to have an end in view, seems to be an intrinsic part of our humanity. In the last chapter, I speak of how an

individual seems to be fluid—perhaps because of our teleological instincts we change our perceptions and interpretations over time. Memory gives rise to imagination, offering us the power to transfigure future scenarios, shaping them into desired outcomes or opportunities. We do not make memories without others—in my story, I relate impressionistic pieces of recollection interspersed with co-constructed memories arising from discussions with my grandmother that happened much later. It was she who remembered me pulling my head from the chimney—until she mentioned it, I had forgotten the black dark and my surprise at not seeing a square piece of sky at the top. This piecing together has become an entity of itself, woven from the impressions and interpretations of two perspectives.

Remembering and memory-making are not simply picturing something, although the words I use to describe my experience have a strong visual element. Memory, like the language used to describe it, seems to have both discursive and recursive elements that rely on other sensations in order to become fully experienced. In his book *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000) Sokolowski draws distinctions between perception, memory and imagination despite their strong common thread of intentionality (p. 67). Perception presents an object to us, usually a part from which we recognise the whole even if it we cannot perceive it. Memory, on the other hand, overlays our perceptions with elapsed time and we recognise an object or experience in both part and whole simultaneously as belonging in the past. Imagination deals with the future, we relive our past perceptions through memory to anticipate and plan what we might do. Sokolowski distinguishes between this anticipatory imagination and what he calls fantasy imagination and daydreaming (p. 73). Perception is a sensate activity whereas memory and imagination have a noetic quality due to the presence of Time—memory is Time past and imagination is Time future.

## World within and world without

In what ways might we be able to question Sokolowski's notions of imagination? Are there other relationships between these three states of being? It seems to me that all three are manifestations of the possible. Perception is a possible present, memory a possible past and imagination a possible future. Our interpretation of the possible allows us to make meanings that hold our truths as kernels of an unfinished, fluid Self. I capitalise the word 'Self' here to refer to an individual's experience, which to me is not only the outer, wayward life that others see but the inner wellsprings of a mind others may not know. A Self holds the world within and the world without simultaneously through interpretation.

Interpretation is a generative act— we purposefully engage in interpretation to bring forth other meanings through dialogue with oneself and others. Imagination, as a manifestation of the future possible, is also a generative act in which we purposefully engage. I wonder if Sokolowski, in the distinctions he draws between daydreaming and anticipatory imagination, accommodates the catalytic role that imagination plays in the formation of a Self. I believe that imagination allows us to *transfigure* our memories, enabling them to become not only a relived experience but an essential part of our unique individuality. One definition of transfiguration is to “transform into something more beautiful or elevated” and another is “a complete change of form or appearance to a more beautiful or spiritual state” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transfigure](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transfigure)). Although Sokolowski speaks about intentionality being present in both memory and imagination (2000, p. 72) he also equates imagination with “a sense of unreality” and speaks of it “skewing” memory (p. 72). Those moments that resonate across all the possibles to become moments out of Time, moments that I am terming ‘epiphanic’, allow us to see the world within and without simultaneously. Without the catalytic transfiguration that is imagination, these epiphanic moments could not occur in the same way. Imagination as a transfiguration

may give rise to empathising with and understanding another. Unless I can walk a mile in another's shoes through imagination, allowing me to empathise with their embodiment in the world, understanding is not possible.

Conversely, perception is a receptive act. We perceive the world around us in an essentially passive way, receiving stimuli through our physical body. There seems to be a *lacuna* between perception, memory and imagination. Within this *lacuna*, interpretation is generated and coalesces around the kernel of an individual's inner wellspring. I want to explore the idea of a *lacuna* further in the next chapter because it seems to me there is a deep interrelationship between the possible and interpretation. For now, though, let us return to our notion of an imagined Self. We are intentional teleological beings, we oscillate between memory and imagination, reliving the past and imagining the future simultaneously. We receive perceptions of the world, and we generate memories and imaginings in response to those perceptions. Sokolowski notes, "their [memory and imagination] way of being right and their way of being wrong are different from the ways of being right and wrong in perception" (2000, p. 69).

New dimensions of the Self are created through memory and imagination as we distinguish between the Self who is remembering and the Self as remembered, with each being subsumed into the other. Sokolowski says, "...my self is the identity constituted between myself now remembering and myself then remembered. My self, the self, is established precisely in that interplay that occurs between perception and memory" (2000, p. 70). This interplay may be a dwelling place of imagination and interpretation. Might Sokolowski's use of the word 'precise' imply pinpoint accuracy? I wonder if this word 'precise' can be applied to an interplay that seems to be essentially generative—memory perception and imagination happening every moment as we move through Time and Space in the world.

Sokolowski also talks about the displacement of the Self, which he believes is the facet of personality that allows us to be mindful of the present, past and future and understand them. He calls imagination “no-man’s land” implying it is a limbo space between two stronger entities. “We live in the immediacy of our surrounding world...but we also live in the world of the displaced self, the remembered or imagined or anticipated world” (2000, p. 75). It seems that Sokolowski’s “parallel tracks” of existence might not stay static and parallel—the tracks of memory and perception may constantly converge and diverge as the fluid, imagined Self passes through Time. Time is crucial to our embodiment in the world. If we are all travelling in Einstein’s train, we see how perception can change depending not just on where you are in the world, but also how you are in any given moment. The immediacy of the surrounding world is our situated-ness, where we find ourselves at this moment, while our memories and imagination permit spaces from the past and future to open, glimpses of what has gone before and what is to come. We dwell in Time and we are also constantly moving through Time, generating a manifest of appearances depending on where and who we are.

Paul Ricoeur writes about the imaginary, *l’imaginaire*, as a mediation between the prosaic and the spiritual life, enabling individuals to live a poetic existence. Ricoeur’s thoughts regarding the role of imagination in living a spiritual life bring us back to the notion of imagination transfiguring our perceptions and memories. Often the word ‘transfiguration’ occurs in spiritual or religious contexts, most notably in the Bible when Jesus and three of his disciples travel to a mountain to pray and Jesus begins to shine with rays of light. Although Ricoeur does not use the word ‘transfiguration’, his idea of imagination as mediation between the everyday and transcendent evokes a notion of an individual being forever changed by their imagination. The etymology of ‘transcendent’ means “to climb over” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transcendent](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transcendent)) and Ricoeur’s usage evokes the idea of our imagination as a way of climbing over and going beyond the everyday. As we weave between the threads of the words ‘transfiguration’, ‘transcendence’ and ‘imagination’, their similarities of

meaning begin to emerge and intertwine, knotted firmly by the ideas of perception and memory that anchor the palaces of the mind within to the world without.

Ricoeur, unlike Sokolowski, makes no distinction between involuntary imagination, which he terms 'daydreaming', and the deliberately imagined future. Memory is activated by context and the history in which an individual operates. Imagination is an integral part of constructing not only the future but remembering the past because for Ricoeur, "forgetting and memory are two sides of the same coin," says Alexandre Dessingue in his essay "Toward a Phenomenology of Memory and Forgetting" (2011). In the intentional retelling of a memory, imagination gains the same weight as memory because in the telling both memory and imagination coalesce to make meaning, not just for the teller but also for those listening (2011, p. 170). These intentional retellings reshape memories and enable a co-construction to occur, a "fusion of horizons" between teller and listener as memories are woven together through language.

Until I told my memory of visiting Honeywood to my grandmother and she remembered me sticking my head into the chimney, I had forgotten the rush of surprise I felt at the thick dark with no square of sky. Our individual memories of that visit were changed by our mutual recollection of it. I use the word 'recollection' here instead of the word 'reminisce', as we hermeneutically delve once more into etymology, we find that 'reminisce' derives from the Latin *reminisci*, "to remember" ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/reminiscence](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/reminiscence)) but recollection is from the medieval Italian *recolligere*, meaning "to gather again" ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/recollection](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/recollection)). My grandmother and I did not only reminisce, but recollected in the original sense of that word insofar as we gathered again our memories after a conversational retelling. Our recollection was possible through the oral-aural event that is language

and the implicit contract of spoken-and-heard that individuals enter into when they begin a conversation.

Underlying all language events is a willingness to communicate with another. Gadamer names this willingness as ‘consensus’ and believes it to be the foundation of communication—once we begin to communicate with others through language consensus is implicitly present. Even misunderstandings are consensual because without the “deeper accord” that exists between humanity then we could not even recognise misunderstandings when they occur (2004, p. 489). For Gadamer, consensus cannot be overthrown. The etymology of the word ‘consensus’ is problematic for me, as its meaning is “a general agreement” and there is no mention of shared meanings, although this could be seen as implicit in the words ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/consensus](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/consensus)). The other word that Gadamer uses when he speaks about consensus is the word ‘accord’ and this, to my mind, is much closer to his true notion as the word comes through the French *acorder* with its meaning to “be of one mind” and the word has its deeper roots in the Latin *cord*, meaning “heart” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/accord](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/accord)). We cannot communicate unless, literally, our heart is in it and we love others enough to seek an accord.

Within a classroom, language events allow teacher and student to begin to understand each other. Teachers make what Sokolowski calls “intellectual lists” as they plan their days with students and we might say these “are played off against the imaginative anticipation” (2000, p. 74). In a classroom there is enormous mental agility required when these intellectual plans diverge or disappear from the present. It is only through an ontological stance, which foregrounds the imagination that a teacher can fully enter the delicate present moment (2000, p. 76). The fragile present is a space where a teacher works constantly, a place she chooses to situate herself in, where intellectual plans go awry as momentary language events reshape student and

teacher understanding. Perceptions shift as language events proscribe and describe thoughts. Simultaneously with the shifting fragile present, memories are laid down to be recollected through reflection at a later time. The importance of reflection to mediate the past, present and future cannot be underestimated. In reflection we use language to recollect the past and reshape the future. It is through the vital act of reflection that imagination can transfigure memories into possible futures.

### Entirety and portions: The interweaving text of a Self

*No man ever steps in the same river twice for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.*

Heraclitus (535-475 BC)

We have seen that memory is vital to the formation of a Self, which might be described as the unique identity that distinguishes one individual from another. Each of us responds to the constant salient present while simultaneously imagining plans for the future and recollecting the past. These manifestations of the possible interweave and unmake themselves as we move through Time, punctuated by those epiphanic moments where essential meanings become illuminated for us. Marcel Proust's epic novel *In Search of Lost Time, À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913-1922) focusses attention on memory as a method to recapture lost time and he calls the epiphanic moment "involuntary memory". The most well-known example being when the narrator bites into a madeleine biscuit, the sensation and taste of which catapult him back into the past. Proust also uses memory in the last part of the novel when his narrator glances down at paving stones on a path and is then thrown back to his past, gaining a vantage point beyond Time where past, present and future coalesce and the narrator vows to begin writing his life in order to make meaning from it.



My writing brings me epiphanic moments as it unfolds into narratives when memories coalesce with the present and I can also glimpse how my future might change—it is writing that transforms my imagining of myself. One could say that it is an ‘aha!’ moment, for me there is more to it than that, an epiphanic moment is one where individuals resonate like a tuning fork to the larger world. We are inside and outside the moment simultaneously, seeing through the mind’s eye the synchronous events that led up to and away from the present moment. For Proust, the epiphanic moment begins with sensations and feelings that rush from the past to the present as he bites into the tiny morsel of madeleine, as he chews he begins to inquire into the origins of these feelings and sensations. For me, epiphanic moments have come through the utterances of others, colleagues, friends and students. Pondering on these moments and their importance to the act of reflection may be an essential step to understanding the formation of a Self.

The world within us and the world about us is our situation, our dwelling place. Perhaps how we choose to orient ourselves towards the world is our embodiment? Merleau-Ponty, the French philosopher who was influenced by Martin Heidegger, among others, would say that we are embodied not only because we possess a physical body but because our memories, perceptions and imagination are held within the physical body and inform how we interpret the world. Embodied perspectives hold that our engagement with the world is neither purely theoretical nor entirely cognitive—it is also emotional, practical and aesthetic (1945). We can see these interlocking ideas in the meaning of ‘embodiment’ as “a tangible or visible form of an idea, quality or feeling” and “the representation or expression of something in tangible form” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/embodiment](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/embodiment)). We come to know another not only by theorising or thinking about them but also by engaging with and appreciating them. All of these together comprise our embodied experience of another.

I endeavour to express the ideas of hermeneutics in my teaching practice, foregrounding the importance of conversation as I build pedagogical relationships. A hermeneutic understanding of Self might be vital for teachers as we build relationships with others and then work towards the powerful understandings of the theory-in-practice of pedagogy. I do not say ‘theory *and* practice’ because when teachers who place—as Taylor says in his book *Sources of the Self*—the “powerful and urgent cluster of demands that we recognise as moral and concern the respect for life, integrity and well-being, even flourishing, of others” (1989, p. 4) at the centre of their practice, there is a move away from the duality of body or mind, thinking or feeling towards a holistic interpretation that illuminates the student and teacher as living, feeling, thinking beings in the world—they enact theory-in-practice, a notion given voice by Paulo Freire in his work *Pedagogy for the Oppressed* (1970).

This interlacing of theory-in-practice provides a metaphorical lifeline as teachers and students negotiate the fragile present. Teachers who work from an embodied perspective may be more easily able to demonstrate limber thinking in response to the spontaneous events that characterise classroom life. These teachers are aware of their physical bodies both as an anchor and a balloon for their minds, the senses of sight, touch, hearing and smell bond them to the outside world and also inform their mind through perception and imagination, allowing these to float free in response to the sensations from the physical body. Such teachers are aware of students’ facial expressions, gestures, postures and lived experiences during classroom interactions and they adjust themselves in response. When viewed this way, teaching is an embodied activity requiring both intellectual rigor and logistical expertise simultaneously coupled with an ability to be teleological, to have an end in view.

Freire uses the term *praxis* to describe such embodied teaching. Freire defines *praxis* as “reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (1970, p. 126). A teacher immersed in *praxis* would bring their

theoretical thoughts to every decision as they make it—adapting their actions in a classroom to ensure they continue to encourage the learning their students are undertaking. The learner is not a passive receptacle of knowledge but an active participant who becomes “their own example” in the journey towards understanding (p. 54). If we return to Gadamer’s idea of a “fusion of horizons”, we could see the notion of *praxis* as situating the learning in a conversation between learner and teacher.

To teach in an embodied way seems to require a willingness to enter another person’s lifeworld. The onus is on the teacher, as the adult in a pedagogical relationship, to initiate this willingness by meeting the child where he currently is in his lived experience. Such teachers indicate willingness by being brave enough to be vulnerable as they enter a conversation to encourage learning and develop a relationship with the child. Such bravery and vulnerability imply a dedication to teaching as a profession that moves beyond employment and brings to my mind the idea of a vocation. A meaning of ‘vocation’ that resonates with our discussion is “a person's employment or main occupation, especially regarded as worthy and requiring dedication” and the etymological roots of the word are from the Latin *vocare*, “to call” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/vocation](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/vocation)).

John Paul Lederach in his book *The Moral Imagination* sees vocation as a mysterious risk that, when taken, allows an individual to “speak with their life” (2005, p. 165). For Lederach, ‘vocation’ means finding your voice, an etymological relation of the Latin root of vocation *vocare*, quoting Parker Palmer when he says, “Vocation is not a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am” (2005, p. 165). We can see here a confluence with Taylor’s ideas about an urgent cluster of moral demands. Lederach believes that voice or vocation “is the essence of being a person” (p. 166) and therefore inherently virtuous. Julia Annas’ work *Intelligent Virtue* (2011) takes up similar thoughts, seeing virtue as a unique blend of *techne* (skill) and

*phronesis* (practical wisdom). Gadamer was also concerned with *techne* and *phronesis*, how might these notions be evident in my classroom experience?

Annas believes that “the truly virtuous person, whose actions are based on understanding gained through experience and reflection, self-directed, and coming from a disposition which continually improves through active engagement with experience” (2011, p. 41) will go beyond simply doing the right thing, an action that she describes as learnt or expected by others, towards an unknown place where to take a virtuous action means to take a risk. Vocation is at the centre of such a mysterious place, as an individual stays “true to the deep voice” (Lederach, 2005, p. 167) and whose lived embodiment in the world keeps vocation “within eyesight and earshot, like the needle of a compass...provid[ing] a sense of location, place and direction” (p. 167). Unless we, as teachers, are prepared to take risks we will be unable to free our voice or call forth the voice of another through the medium of language. Lederach exhorts us to “engage the mystery of risk and vocation. We cannot listen and provide support to others as they find their voices if we ourselves see this only as a technique or the management of a process” (p. 169). This resonates with my experience as a teacher—I gamble my voice in search of another’s as I seek to free potential through the event that is language.

Teachers immersed in *praxis* as a situated conversation between themselves and the learner could be seen to metaphorically call forth the potential of their students as they work together to develop a common language and understanding through conversation. Teachers speak with their lives and answer the call of others’ lives to create shared meanings through dialogue. When spoken aloud, *vocare* echoes the verb *educare*, the etymological beginning of the word ‘education’. *Educare* means ‘to lead out of’ and the traditional layered meaning placed over that etymology by us as a society is the leading out of ignorance into knowledge. A hermeneutic reading of these two words draws us into metaphor, allowing us to see embodied teaching as

both *vocare* and *educare* simultaneously, one individual calling to another and leading them to realise their potential through the medium of language. Teachers who demonstrate this assiduity to their vocation may have asked themselves,

questions about how I am going to live my life which touch on the issue of what kind of life is worth living, or what kind of life would fulfil the promise implicit in my particular talents, or the demands incumbent on someone with my endowment, or what constitutes a rich, meaningful life – as against one concerned with secondary matters of trivia. (Taylor, 1989, p. 14)

Teachers who ask these questions of themselves while opening up possibilities for their students demonstrate their vulnerability and bravery together, encouraging their students to do the same. And in every unfolding moment all individuals within the conversation determine their historicity through memory and how they will foreground themselves over time, while the flux of an unfinished teleological Self happens in response to the salient present.

The fragile salient present can be a public space, open to scrutiny. Taylor suggests,

The very way we walk, move, gesture, speak is shaped from our earliest moments by our awareness that we appear before others, that we stand in public space, and that this space is potentially one of respect or contempt, of pride or shame. (1989, p. 15)

This seems to me to be especially true for teachers who are always on public display as they pursue the profession that fulfils the implicit promise of their particular talents. Teachers' vocations happen in the public space of a school, with all the attention that this garners from colleagues, parents and any other visitor that may pass by the classroom door or glance in the windows. Teachers are always on show before others, teachers often stand or sit in front of their students during a school day. In a metaphorical sense, teachers *are* their profession because the art of teaching does not lie outside the teacher but within them. Teachers and teaching are synonymous. It is as a teacher

changes their beliefs or their opinions about pedagogy that their teaching practice changes. That which lies within influences that which is without and vice versa in a dynamic to-and-fro that always remains unfinished. Again, we see the hermeneutic relationship between parts and whole as an individual responds to the world.

Simultaneously with this influence, the teacher is engaging with the learner who is undergoing their own dynamic to-and-fro. As each individual in a pedagogical relationship seeks to understand the other through language, common meanings are created and shared. Gallagher cites Ricoeur to express this idea, “It is thus the growth of the interpreter’s own understanding of himself that he pursues through his understanding of the other” (1992, p. 157). It seems to me that the pedagogical relationship is deeply hermeneutic as there is never a finishing point, only deepening understandings as the relationship moves via language through history, memory, perception, imagination and back again. “Every hermeneutic interpretation is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others” (p. 157). Gallagher’s comment brings us back again to Gadamer’s idea of a “fusion of horizons” and the central tenet of Gadamer’s thinking—that all understanding is Self-understanding.

Teaching is a public vocation that centres upon being with others. As teachers embody their vocation, applying theory-in-practice, they are grasping possibilities, both their own and their students’. When teaching is viewed as an embodied activity where teachers constantly strive towards *praxis* through the medium of language, hermeneutics seems to be the *sine qua non* of pedagogical relationships. Each individual in the pedagogical relationship continuously engages in interpretation of the other through perception, memory and imagination as they explore possibilities in dialogue. The individual response to this salient present is mediated through reflection after the event, becoming part of an individual’s historicity, because, as Gallagher puts it, “the self which gets understood is neither the self that stands prior to

the educational experience nor the self which stands at the end” (1992, p. 166). This seems to be an implicit argument for a fluid Self, not only are we teleological, always having an end in view, we are also unfinished individuals who respond to the present and change ourselves as a result.

We can say that memory, perception and imagination interweave to create a fluid Self that is always unfinished in its response to the salient present. This interweaving plait of a Self recollects a ‘text’ in its original etymology, the word has its beginnings in the word *texere*, meaning to weave, which then evolved into *textus*, literally a tissue woven together. This etymological meaning became the paradigm for hermeneutics, which had its origins in the interpretation of sacred woven texts. Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (2004) and Ricoeur in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981) view the text as central to hermeneutic theory insofar as all interpretation springs from it. What implications does it have if we reframe the idea of a text not as a literary object but as an individual, making humans the paradigm of interpretation rather than literary texts? Gallagher ponders on this in his chapter “Hermeneutical Possibilities” (1992, pp. 123-168) as he analyses both Gadamer’s and Ricoeur’s ideas about hermeneutical responses to texts and discusses the notion of distanciation as it occurs in both of the above works.

‘Distanciation’ refers to the stepping back of an individual from an idea or object of scrutiny, thereby allowing for and facilitating a critical attitude. The idea of distanciation could be essential for self-reflection and for reflective practice, for understanding ourselves and others. I do not wish to delve into the idea too deeply here as it merits deeper discussion and analysis. For now, I wish to refer to the idea of distanciation in the context of the formation of a Self, as Gallagher says,

Ricoeur contends that interpretation involves “the projection of our ownmost possibilities. For what must be interpreted in a text [Self] is a proposed world which I could inhabit and wherein I could project one of my ownmost possibilities”. Thus distanciation opens the text [Self] to an

“unlimited series of readings”, that is, to the unlimited possibilities of interpretation that come from reading. (1992, p. 131)

If we substitute the word ‘Self’ for the word ‘text’, as I have done by including the word in square brackets, there seems to be an allusion here to the idea of a fluid Self, always essentially unfinished because a Self is always open to the unlimited possibilities for interpretation that are generated from the wider world without and the inner world within an individual. Distanciation involves a projection of individual possibilities interwoven with the larger historical canvas in which an individual is situated (Gallagher, 1992, p. 129). In hermeneutical terms, a single text, Self, is always in flux in response to the context, the historical tradition, in which it is situated. This interplay between text and context is mediated through perception, memory and imagination, which are themselves mediated through reflection in a vibrant spiral that is constantly in a state of flux.

In a classroom, reflective practice can happen simultaneously with events as they unfold. Donald Schon discusses the idea of reflection-in-action in his book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983). In reflection-in-action, “doing and thinking are complementary. Doing extends thinking in the tests, moves, and probes of experimental action, and reflection feeds on doing and its results. Each feeds the other, and each sets boundaries for the other” (1983, p. 280). It seems to me that some teachers’ responses to their classroom experience when mediated through reflection are deeply hermeneutic because the reflection-on-action centres upon the interpretive acts of perception, memory and imagination. Such teachers not only reflect on action after events have occurred, but also as events happen, there is reflection occurring simultaneously with unfolding events. It could be said that reflection-*in*-action is to reflect on things and behaviours as they happen, whereas reflection-*on*-action is to analyse, review and evaluate a situation after it has occurred, and that when the *in* and *on* happen simultaneously may be in the occurrence of an epiphanic moment.



Viewed in this way, reflection becomes an extension of the generative acts of imagination and interpretation, although the generation is not infinite, but described and proscribed by the silent language of thought. We return to Sokolowski to describe it, “In this silent speech I am actively trying to come to terms with what I am living through in memory, imagination or anticipation; I am trying to get it clear and articulate it for myself” (1992, p. 144). This silent articulation is imaginative reflection and epiphanies become possible as we mediate our experiences in the world in this way.

Does analysing something so visceral as the epiphanic moment cheapen it or rob it of any importance? Perhaps it is when the epiphany ends that meaning begins. It is often only when we experience a moment such as this that our memories provide the meaning from the continuity of our lived embodiment in the world. If we did not seek to inquire more deeply, there would be no epiphany but simply a moment of glorious sensation unconnected to our teleology. Sokolowski’s distinctions between perception, memory and imagination coalesce in the epiphanic moment as all of these are experienced simultaneously, conferring on this moment its importance to our lives (1992, p. 144). In the piecing together of memory narrated at the beginning of this chapter, my epiphanic moment came not during the events but long after when I realised that a place so essential to my family’s sense of belonging did not really belong to them at all. Without my memories of the only time I visited Honeywood, my inquiry into what connects a person to a place and what the notion of belonging really means might not have begun.

This discussion about Self and indeed all the other narratives throughout this inquiry are what Taylor sees as the articulating of moral instincts (1989, p. 8) and my reactions implicitly reflect these. Taylor’s dense and at times almost mystical inquiry into how we make and unmake ourselves in a postmodern world has as one of its central ideas the affirmation of ordinary life, “the map of our moral worlds, however full of gaps, erasures and blurrings, is interesting enough” (p. 11). Taylor speaks of an individual’s

moral frameworks and how each of us chooses what to foreground in our lives. Taylor often calls these frameworks “inescapable” (p. 12) and contends that the experiences we choose to remember are the ones that reinforce our moral instincts. In this, Taylor’s writing echoes that of Gallagher, who returns us to the idea of recollection rather than reminiscence when he says, “recollection as giving an account of the reason why of something, means to gather parts together into a whole, things already known into a context that will make sense” (1992, pp. 195-6). As I write, I draw on my relationships of trust, attempting to bring forth truths in dialogue with my reader, encouraging her to re-collect memorial experiences from life. Rapport and Harthill say writing this way,

draws on the strength of relationships of trust and brings forth truths that might otherwise remain hidden in solipsism. It is reflexive, paying attention to ‘wider’ truths and relates the experience of the individual to the selves of another audience—society at large. (2012, p. 23)

We see this attention to wider truths in the recollection of my time at Honeywood and how this part of my experience was placed into my whole individual embodiment in the world, which in turn led me to undertake this particular inquiry. As I spoke with my grandmother, paying attention to the act of listening rather than listening for my turn to speak, our recollected memory-making became an exchange of gifts, a life moment that is deeply cherished.

Gallagher goes on to say, “recollection is not passive acceptance or reproduction but an active interchange or dialogue with traditions which actually form the context for learning” (1992, pp. 195-6). This active interchange occurs through perception, memory and imagination as the textual Self moves through Time and Space. A silent dialogue with tradition through the medium of language allows the Self to determine what issues are worth foregrounding according to moral instincts and the inescapable

frameworks we have made for ourselves. We return again to the notions discussed earlier about the salient present and how we determine if a particular life would suit our talents as we engage in the flowing interpretive event that is hermeneutics. Taylor's assertion that "moral philosophy has focussed on what it is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of a good life" (1983, p. 3) might have found its exception in Gadamerian hermeneutics with its focus on *Miteinander*, being-with-another, as a path to understanding.

Taylor, Gallagher and Gadamer's ideas echo and conflate. "Tradition is not the vindication of what has come down from the past but the further creation of moral and social life; it depends on being made conscious and freely carried on", says Gadamer (2004, p. 574), which reaffirms Gallagher's idea above—we cannot know 'where to?' unless we also understand 'where from?' Taylor phrases this idea, "You know what you are through what you have become" (1989, p. 15). Gallagher also mentions the distinction between "changeless meaning and fluctuating significance" (1992, p. 215), the latter of which I have termed the 'salient present'. Taylor might describe changeless meaning as an inescapable framework—and so the interpretative loop continues, always in flux and responding to perceptions, just like an individual who moves through a lifetime.

All these thinkers speak of the Self as existing temporally in the world, which brings back to my mind the narrative about Einstein and the train. Our interpretation changes according to where you are, the whole context, and also according to who you are, an individual textual Self, at any moment in Time. As I write, I am lifted out of a solitary position and into a richer engagement with human life. Rapport and Harthill speak of narrative inquiry as the hopeful creation of a shared space for both the writer and reader to share events and memories portrayed in unexpected ways, "viewing the events through the oddly-curved mirrors of time and place" (2012, p. 22).

## Travelling the curvature of Time in all directions

The passage of Time and its effects on an individual are integral to our understanding of ourselves and others. The word ‘later’ is an anagram of ‘alter’ and this coincidence points us to the passage of Time changing our memories and the meanings we make from them. We return to Sokolowski, who devotes a chapter of his work *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000) to temporality. Sokolowski describes three facets of temporality—world Time, which is the Time of the common space we all inhabit, measured by clocks and calendars, immanent Time, which is each individual’s private internal Time measured by the events of their conscious life and the last is the consciousness of that internal Time (pp. 130-1). This last facet of temporality echoes Einstein on his train—an individual’s consciousness of Time, the events of their life, determines their recognition of Time passing in the world around them. As we perceive Time affecting our inner and outer selves, we also perceive the world we inhabit changing through Time. World Time depends on our ability to recognise and name it as such, as “the noematic structure of world time depends on the noetic structures of internal time” (p. 132). Sokolowski expands this idea further,

the temporal flow of our conscious experiences is a condition for the appearing of the world and the things in it. The paradoxical relationship of the self as both a part of the world and the one who has a world comes to the fore again in regard to temporality: the internal flow of consciousness is nested within the processes going on in the world, but it also stands over against the world and provides for the noetic structures that allow the world to appear. (2000, p. 132)

Again, we see the constantly oscillating dynamic relationship between a textual Self and the larger world context. Individuals fold and unfold as they move through Time, responding to the present through perception and to the past through memory.

To speak this way is to perceive Time as linear, like watching a movie where one frame follows another to form a flickering whole, a sequential experience. Einstein on his train did not view Time as linear—our perception of Time changes depending on where we are as well as who we are at any given moment. This given moment is the whole, living, salient present and this given moment elides into the next, one moment trailing away as the next comes into presence (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 136). Time is not a carefully balanced equipoise between past and future, but a curved “saddleback” (p. 136). “If our experience of time were not like this we never would acquire a sense of past or future” (p. 136). This curvature of Time, with all moments fluidly eliding into past, present and future as they coalesce into a living present, resembles a curved line called an *ogee*. These s-shaped *ogees* have been colloquially called the ‘line of beauty’ and countless examples can be seen weaving through humanity, from architecture to the curve of a cheekbone (Figures 1 and 2).

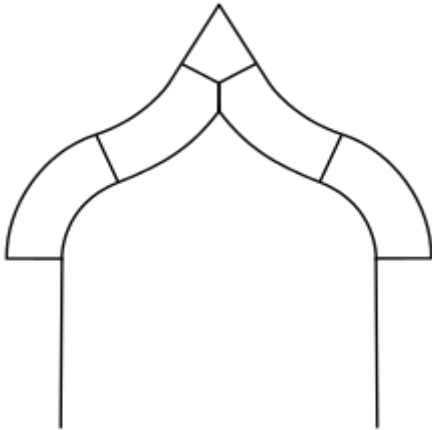


Figure 1



Figure 2

When *ogees* are twisted to form a spiral, allowing us to view them another way, they remind us of the DNA spiral within us all (Figure 3).



Figure 3

These interpretive explorations illuminate the idea that individuals are inextricably interwoven with Time in a wrestle for mastery that influences the way we perceive, anticipate and imagine the world.

Hannah Arendt also alludes to a curvature of Time in her work, *Life of the Mind* (1978). Arendt views memory as an organ of both the past and future. In recreating the past through memory, we tend to fictionalise it to some extent and the fictive element of memory could be seen as imagination. Following Arendt, imagination could also be seen as an organ of the past, as individuals create fluid narratives to make meaning from the world. We return to Gadamer, who says that memory provides “continuity, which alone gives content to one’s identity with oneself” (2004, p. 572) and that “our historical consciousness is always filled with a variety of voices in which the echo of the past is heard” (p. 285). Lederach echoes Gadamer by saying “memory is a collective act by which people and the past are kept alive, present among us” (2005, p. 136). Both see historical consciousness as linked with the idea of traditions being integral to understanding others and ourselves. “Being situated within an event of a tradition, a process of handing down, is a prior condition of understanding. Understanding proves to be an

event” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 308). This event of understanding is described and proscribed by language. We return to Lederach, who delves into the way indigenous peoples perceive Time and terms this viewpoint as “the past that lies before us” (2005, p. 132).

Time is not moving forwards, but dilating in an expansive present, patterns expanding into endless possibilities. Lederach narrates a story about his time as a peacekeeper, when an indigenous colleague speaks about Time,

This morning I understand that what we know, what we have seen, is the past. So it lies before us. What we cannot see, what we cannot know is the future...So the past we see before us. But we walk backwards into the future. (2005, p. 136)

Perhaps walking backwards into the future requires bravery, a sense of risk that we could term ‘vocation’? We see again the confluence of ideas that arises from hermeneutical exploration—a fluid, unfinished Self, pursuing a vocation that involves risk and mystery and responding to a salient present while wrestling within the curvature of Time. Although Lederach takes the idea of a curvature even further and sees Time as a circle where past and future are constantly “connected, like ends of a circle that meet and become seamless” (p. 136). Following Lederach, Time could be seen as a dynamic *ouroboros*. In mythology the *ouroboros* is the snake who constantly swallows its own tail, creating and destroying itself simultaneously. The dynamism of such a symbol is apt, as past elides into present and future with an elasticity that Einstein on his train might have recognised.

How do we reconcile this notion of circular elastic Time within ourselves and make sense of it? Perhaps by speaking our lives in narrative. Storying our lives enables us to discern patterns, imagine possibilities and bravely walk backwards towards many futures while the epiphanic moment allows us to see in our mind’s eye the *ouroboros* of Time in order to reflect upon it. Epiphanic moments are interwoven with our temporality as well as our teleology—it is through these moments that perception, memory and

imagination coalesce to transfigure our life's narrative by propelling us to a hitherto unthought-of future. Lederach says, "We live in a certain paradox as human beings precisely because we are beings that live by the meanings things have for us" and "the web of life is juxtaposed between these realities of time, between memory and potentiality. This is the place of narrative" (2005, p. 148). Occasionally the web of life is visible through the epiphanic moment, that still place where we stand outside of ourselves.

Gadamer believes that "understanding involves a moment of loss of self" (1962/1976, p. 51) and an epiphanic moment, a place of stillness, may give rise to what Gadamer terms "a boundary situation" that illuminates my existence (p. 138). These boundary situations, spaces of decision and choice in my life, are described in my narratives because, as Gadamer says, "how one faces up to them...brings out what [she] really is". As I seek to understand my profession, my understanding of myself flourishes as a reciprocal "happening", something I do not possess, rather something that grows and realises itself within the context of my teaching practice.

This place of stillness, where we are outside of ourselves yet deeply within ourselves simultaneously, gives rise to an association with concepts about our conscience. Arendt sees a conscience as that "which gives no positive prescriptions, but instead, tells me what I cannot do if I would remain friends with myself when I re-enter the two-in-one of thought where I must render an account of my actions to myself" (1978, p. 15). Arendt's notion of rendering an account of one's actions to oneself would seem to describe a kernel of being that engages in dialogue, that holds us accountable and that does not change in response to a salient present.

I am also reminded of the "still small voice of calm" as quoted in the Old Testament story of the Prophet Elijah, where God speaks to the prophet during his sojourn in a cave after Elijah's escape from assassination. This voice gives Elijah a life purpose. Our still small voice, which is in contrast to



messages contained in the whirlwind of public life, may speak to us in moments of quiet. Such a still small voice could be seen as our conscience. Sokolowski speaks of an individual's innermost being as "solitary confinement" (2000, p. 134). It may be what Taylor terms our "hypergoods"—living landmarks that help us to orient ourselves in the world (1989, pp. 63-73) and what Gadamer terms our aesthetic sensibilities—being able to respect what does not correspond to our own preferences or beliefs (2004, pp. 74-77)—that arise from this still small voice of conscience and grace. Aristotle called this voice the "unmoved mover" in *Book XI* of his *Metaphysics* and the poet and philosopher Jorge Luis Borges called the "god behind God" in his poem "Chess",

God moves the player, and he, the piece.

Which god behind God begets the plot

Of dust and time and dream and agonies? (1960)

Perhaps, to borrow Borges' terms, we are the god behind God for we beget and determine our own life's plot by choosing what we will foreground and how we will respond to the salient present while walking backwards into an unknown future all within the shifting *ouroboros* of Time.

Our embodiment in the world is perceived, remembered and imagined by us alone. But what if something happens to us, an event that breaks our narrative and stifles our voice so we cannot speak our life? Or as a teacher we are trying to engage another whose voice is stifled so that the teacher gambles her voice, takes risks and fails? My narrative about Honeywood at the beginning of this chapter is an example of what Lederach terms "the art of imagining the past" that then "develops a curiosity about the patterns, the cycles, and the story that repeats itself" (2005, p. 148). This curiosity is generative and seeks to make meaning from the narrative, while also understanding that a personal moral world is interesting enough. A traumatic event that breaks our life narrative quells our imagination and our broken narrative remains caught in the amber of memory.

I am reminded of the famous opening line from L. P. Hartley's *The Go-Between*, "the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there" (1953 p. 4). A man recollects his life and particularly one fateful summer when, as a young boy, he became unwittingly involved in events that led to the disgrace of one adult and the suicide of another. Forbidden to speak about the scandal, he feels he must not think of it either and since nearly everything reminds him of it, he shuts down his emotions, leaving room only for facts. He subsequently grows up to be an emotionally detached adult who is never able to establish intimate relationships. This novel shows how memory, so essential for the creation of Self, can also cause the Self to wither and how a traumatic event can hold a Self in stasis, unable to fully express what may be its essential nature—to constantly and fluidly oscillate between perception, memory and imagination. A traumatic event precludes us from "holding together both the past and the future" (Lederach, 2005, p. 149).

Within a classroom, where the onus is on the teacher to meet the student where they are in Space and Time, a student's traumatic event and broken life story puts a developing pedagogical relationship under great pressure. A teacher embodying theory-in-practice will attempt to engage the student by being vulnerable and gambling her voice only to be met with distrust, aggression or stony silence—the student refuses to engage. Embodied teachers who are altruistic and teleological will "seek to find and engage where the narrative has been broken" (Lederach, 2005, p. 148) because that is meeting the student where they are in Space and Time. With time, care and a constant willingness to engage, an embodied teacher may be able to develop a positive relationship to the student, albeit hesitant or tentative. This relationship may create a shared narrative that enables the student to find their voice and begin to speak their life. Lederach says, "Embracing the paradox of relationship in the present, the capacity to restory imagines both the past and the future and provides space for the narrative voice to create" (p. 149). In these classrooms where embodied teaching happens, one history butts against another within the larger context of tradition. The language event shapes the salient present where individuals use narrative to story and

create an ideal Self that responds and changes as it moves through the *ouroboros* of Time.

Each fluid Self is intertwined with and informed by minute contexts that elide into each other and can occasionally be glimpsed in those epiphanic moments when we stand far outside and deep inside ourselves simultaneously. Lederach says,

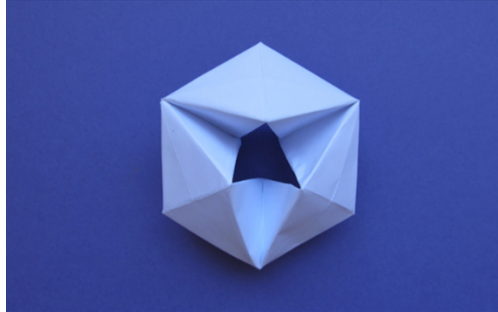
To live between memory and potentiality is to live permanently in a creative space, pregnant with the unexpected. But it is also to live in the permanency of risk, for the journey between what lies behind and what lies ahead is never fully comprehended nor ever controlled. (2005, p. 149)

My own fluid responsive Self has chosen the risky mysterious vocation called teaching as suitable for my particular talents. I am a teacher because I feel called to serve my community by guiding future citizens but I am also a teacher because I thrive on risk, tension and the rupture created in the expanding moment that is past, present and future. I have sought in this chapter to explore what Palmer terms “the seed of selfhood”, the unique knowledge of who I am, “the spiritual DNA...and encoded birthright knowledge of ...why [I am] here and how [I am] related to others” (2004, p.32).

As I begin to understand the seed of my selfhood, journeying towards becoming, I orient myself towards nurturing the seed of selfhood in my students as I meet them where they are in the world. I wrestle with the gaps between body and word, between our innermost Self, our ideal Self and our public Self as I continue to write my way into meaning in my next chapter.

## Chapter 3

### A Manifold of Appearances: The Self as a Flexagon



A hexagonal flexagon of paper

We are constantly making and unmaking ourselves in response to the salient present. We interweave with the curvature of Time, beings in flux and determined by memory, transfigured through imagination. We are textual beings, constantly weaving together and fraying apart as we move through Time. In this chapter I wonder—is there a continuous thread that weaves through an individual’s existence, remaining the same throughout a life? Is there an essential thread of character, where lines of past, present and future converge to create something unique? I recollect narratives from my lived experience to explore these ideas further. As a metaphor to illuminate my ideas I use the geometric figure of a flexagon.

In geometry, flexagons are flat models, usually constructed by folding strips of paper that can be flexed or folded in certain ways to reveal faces besides the two that were originally on the back and front. Flexagons initially present as two-dimensional objects with hidden faces that cannot be seen when the flexagon is first presented. It is through handling and manipulating it, a flexagon can reveal hidden faces to the viewer. The idea of changing the orientation of something to reveal something hidden reminds me of an

individual who changes through his experience as he responds to the salient present.

Sokolowski says a Self is a manifestation that “is both flexible and yet continuously the same throughout its conscious lifetime” (2000, p. 129). We are flexible and in flux simultaneously as we bend and flow through the curvature of Time. To be flexible implies a limber embodiment in the world, we accommodate circumstances that happen to us without a fundamental change in our nature. On the other hand, being in flux is being in a constant flow of ideas and perceptions, an accretion of change, meaning we respond to the salient present depending on who we are at any given moment. The tension between flexibility and flux seems to be an essential part of our teleological humanity. The following recollections may illuminate this tension further.

### You haven't changed a bit! The public Self across Time

I arrived at my new school, excited and nervous together. It was always like this when I changed schools, an uneasy mixture of excitement and trepidation. Would I enjoy this school as much as my past ones? Would I get along with colleagues? This particular school would end up a highlight of my educational practice, as well as the place where I would meet Campbell, who was to give me a lasting lesson. But I knew nothing of that when I lugged my boxes of teaching resources to the front doors, ready to unpack in my new classroom and to meet some of my colleagues before the school year began in a few days. I had been waiting to be posted to this school for the past couple of years, as it was one of the highest academically achieving schools in the state and situated in the shadow of the bridge arching over the wide river towards the city. The bridge pylons dominated the view from the floor to ceiling windows that made up one wall of my new classroom.

Boxes partially unpacked, mug in hand, I went in search of the staffroom to get myself a drink. Two people were fossicking through the cupboards when I entered, sorting chipped and dirty mugs and throwing them in the bin with gusto. As they looked up, I recognised them both as girls I had gone to primary school with 30 years before. There were mutual gasps all round as they recognised me as well. We said each other's names in unison, delighted smiles breaking across our faces, followed by the comment, "You haven't changed a bit!" But of course, we had. We were all 30 years older, not only in years but in experiences as well.

Yet during my time at that school, I began to think that perhaps we had grasped something essentially true in those first moments of recognition, in that hackneyed phrase implying we are all frozen in time, unchanging. I noticed that one of my primary school friends still walked with the same bustling gait, always organised and filled with sangfroid. The other one still loved a joke and skirted close to the boundaries of what was acceptable, always the first with a pithy comment or a salty turn of phrase. They would comment on my expressions being the same as they remembered and what they saw as my confidence, which I always felt was an act. I wondered why they couldn't see how much I had changed—how different I was to the girl from back then. But when I was with them, I saw myself through their eyes and for those times all that I was once I was again.

We move through Time in a public way, perceiving and reacting to people and places around us. We are held in the gazes of others, living in an open space inhabited by other public selves. This public Self is partly the way our physical body displaces the space around it, our gait as we move through our environment, and also our public reactions to the world. When my friends comment on my expressions being the same as 30 years before, the unique combination of facial features gives expressions a singular rarity. As we open up dialogical spaces for another to step into, we read the gestures and expressions of that other body to judge whether our offer of conversation will be accepted. The surprise and joy with which my friends and I greeted each other after so long coloured the conversation that followed and enabled our camaraderie to rekindle. We saw on each other's faces those expressions that

allowed us to step into spaces opened for us. If I had greeted the girls coolly and their responsive expressions had been wary, uneasy or aloof, conversation may have been stilted or not begun at all.

This public Self conforms to societal norms, it is our face of reasonableness. We move through public space and meet others in that space, all of us showing our reasoned faces to each other. Publicness is one of our 'I's, the part of us that straddles our outward environment and enters into the polite conversational gambits of greeting, enquiring after another's health, the vagaries of the weather and so on. When we have our public faces on, a 'hello' signals our presence to another in public space, we manifest ourselves into another's consciousness in a gentle, socially acceptable way. If we move beyond the public, being brave enough to become vulnerable to another through dialogue spoken over time, we reveal the hidden "large sphere of consciousness" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 119) of an inner Self that may be the wellspring nourishing our public life. Our public Self is our rational 'I' that may use empirical language like tools, reasons and truth as if they were things outside of us, belonging to themselves—stand-alone entities able to be examined.

In Chapter 2, I refer to Taylor's idea that in our awareness of the public space we might conceive of it as a possible space of pride or shame, respect or contempt (1989, p. 15). Our public Self seems to become attuned to the nuances of every public space we enter, the continuity of our memories bubbling up to meet our perceptions and responses to the salient present unfolding before us. Our public face is our flexible face, bending and adjusting to the world while the hidden accretion of change gathered from our perceptions and imagination accumulates in our sphere of consciousness. In a classroom, it is the teacher who may have become more adept at showing her public face to the world. She has lived longer, seen more than the children in her class. They show one face to the world, their faces are open to every perception the world offers them. When events in his life

become difficult, a child shows his sphere of consciousness on his face—he shows his confusion, or sadness, or anger at the world. The teacher accepts this hidden face as his public face, knowing that it is not a face of reasonableness because this comes with more lived time in the world. She welcomes the child into the learning community as he is with her face arranged into its publicness, arranged the way she thinks teachers ought to look—a smiling face and kind eyes. She is used to this, a reasoned and welcoming face, because this is the way she has been held in the gazes of others since she began her vocation.

When a child enters the classroom angry, confused or afraid it can become difficult for the teacher to remain reasoned and welcoming. The child's sadness and confusion—the nakedness of his consciousness—pushes into the public space between him and his teacher. His naked consciousness demands a response that may move teacher and student beyond the careful public space of reasonableness into a space where all prejudices and assumptions are laid aside, the space of dialogue. Within this space, it seems to be incumbent upon the teacher, as the adult and one who has power over the child, to remain aware of her public face. The teacher's vocation shows upon her face as she engages in dialogue with the child. Meanwhile, in her hidden sphere of consciousness she may be grappling with the difficulties that keeping her reasonable face entails.

Sometimes it is the teacher who is fragile and unsure of her place in the classroom, unable to arrange her reasonable public face to shield her fragile sphere of consciousness. From my lived experience, there is a narrative that portrays how this inability to arrange a public face may impact on a student.

There was a knock on my office door. As a new Principal, I was trying hard to ensure that I was approachable and having my office door always ajar hopefully gave that impression. So as soon as I heard the knock I answered, "Come in!" automatically. One of my teachers entered cautiously. "Hi, have you got a



minute?" I gestured to the chair next to me. "Sure, have a seat." She sat down, holding a piece of paper in her hand. "I got this today. From one of the Grade 7s." She held out the paper. On the page was a letter, written in many different coloured textas. The letter read, 'Dear Miss H, Why don't you like me? Also don't say you do because I know you don't, so you would be lying. So I do try my best but obviously it's not good enough for you and your standards. I'm not perfect like Jamie, Ashley, Jemima and the rest of the girls. I'm not one of your little angels like them. So here's to trying your best. xx' I looked up at the teacher. Her face was downcast. "I don't understand", she said, "I do like Emily. She works so hard. She is such a nice girl and always has something interesting to say when we have class discussions. How could she think I don't like her? And what do I do about it?" I waited, holding open a space for the teacher to step into, to speak her life in her own way and in her own time.

After a long silent moment, her face darkened and she said angrily, "I am a good teacher, so why would she think I don't like her? I mean, what have I ever done to make her think that? I ask her questions. I give her feedback on her work and she is saying she is not good enough for my standards! Where is her resilience? Perhaps we should ring her mother, ask if Emily wants to see a counsellor or something. Maybe there is something else wrong, something at home. What do you think?" I paused, steepling my fingers while I considered my response. Miss H was dedicated to planning lessons and she was working hard to develop relationships with her students. She was not young, having had many varied life experiences before she began teaching. But she was fragile, afraid to be vulnerable and stubborn in her belief that only she knew best within the classroom. Sometimes she hid behind a stern public face while at other times she was too revealing of thoughts that would have been best left hidden. She was unsure of her place within the classroom and this made the students unsure too. I could not tell her that. Instead I replied, "That's a good question. Why would Emily think you don't like her? How would she have come to such a conclusion?" Miss H threw up her hands. "I don't know! That's what I have come to you to ask!"

I thought some more. How could I help Miss H? Everything I could not say crowded my mind. To tell her she was unsure in the classroom and her public

face was inconsistent would not help Miss H to delve into the issue raised by Emily's letter. Miss H had come to me for answers but I had given her more questions. I hoped that those questions would prompt an inward searching from Miss H, perhaps a reflection on her teaching practice. I did not want to be a fixer of every problem—instead I hoped to give others the questions to unlock the answers for themselves. What was the conversational key that could unlock a dialogue between her and Emily? I thought of something I had read recently by Derrick Bell about listening and conversations. The exact words escaped me, but I hoped I grasped the sense of his comments as I said, "Tell me about some conversations you have had with Emily lately. What has she talked about with you?" Miss H looked blank. "I haven't talked to Emily much at all. Who has time for that?" I smiled. "I understand how everyone is pressed for time, but I think you should start there. Start by talking to Emily, see how she is travelling right now. Take your cue from her and talk about anything that interests her. Take your time, don't rush things, allow the conversations to grow over the next couple of weeks or so." I smiled encouragingly. "Let me know how you go." Miss H stared at me from her chair. "That's it? Just talk to her?" she said, sounding exasperated. I nodded. "Yes, just talk. Talk to Emily and listen to her answers. Really listen, not waiting for your turn to speak, but only listening. Read her face, her voice and see what she tells you." Miss H stood. Her face was thoughtful. "Should I tell Emily I have read her letter?" I gave what I hoped was a non-committal shrug. "It is up to you what you tell her. And she you. It is your conversation." Miss H left my office, leaving a trail of indignation behind her. I gazed out the window for a while. There was an elephant in the room, left unspoken by both of us. Emily had alluded to it in her letter and I wondered how much of a part it played in Emily's thinking. I wondered too how Miss H and I could name the elephant—broach what I expected to be a difficult topic, fraught with emotion. No answers appeared.

My impression of Miss H when I had visited her classroom and observed her teaching practice was that she was unsure of herself in the classroom. Her public face was not always reasonable but diluted by vagueness. It seemed that emotions and impulses bubbling to the surface caused vagueness that made the students uncertain about her motivations. Miss H's public face was too slippery, too diluted by emotions that resided more comfortably in her hidden sphere of consciousness. After my conversation with Miss H, I wandered out into the

playground to find Emily. We chatted about her family and the movies she had seen recently, supposedly inconsequential things. Across the playground Miss H. was striding purposefully towards the staffroom. Emily watched her go then said idly, "Miss H doesn't like me." I waited for a moment. "She never smiles at me. If she does, it doesn't go all the way to her eyes." Emily sighed. I patted her shoulder. "Perhaps you could talk to Miss H, tell her how you feel." Emily said, "I wrote her a letter. But I bet she threw it away." The bell rang and Emily ran off, giving me a flick of her hand in farewell. I watched her go and hoped that Miss H would find her courage and begin a conversation that allowed both her and Emily to be vulnerable. I hoped that spaces could be created for them to lay aside their prejudices and assumptions and walk a path together towards understanding.

"The life of reason is a public thing", says Sokolowski (2000, p. 119) and in that public space called the classroom, the teacher wears her public face of reasonableness. If her public face is slippery and diluted by vagueness, then she becomes uncertain of her place in the public sphere of reasoned life. Our public face is the outward manifold of our appearance, the face of the flexagon visible to others. It is the "dative of our manifestation" (p. 118). As we move through the curvature of Time, we become more adept at arranging our public face and speaking with a public voice. Simultaneously with our publicness evolves our sphere of consciousness, our fluid Self, responding to the salient present. The teacher who welcomes the learner into the public community of the classroom wearing her public face, understanding that the learner is still trying his public face on for size, perceives both the accidental and essential faces of the learner. She sees that he is only partly grown, that sometimes his expressions and actions belie his words or that he struggles to articulate his essence to others. The event of language is new for him, as is his lifeworld, so his public face is like a cheap suit—it touches him all over but fits him nowhere. Sokolowski describes the perception of the multi-faceted in this way,

that things can be distinguished into wholes and parts, that they can be perceived and pictured, that essentials and accidentals can be distinguished in them when they present themselves to us. (2000, pp. 114-5)

As the teacher comes to know the student, holding open dialogic spaces for him to step into in his own way and his own time, through conversation she gently touches and adjusts his public face in the same way as a chess player sometimes touches a chess piece—not to move the piece in a direction, only to adjust its place on the board ever so slightly. In the game of chess this gentle adjustment is termed *j'adoube*, literally, I touch, I adjust, and may occur when a player is thinking, contemplating, unsure of what his next move might be.

“Via another” says Gadamer, “a person becomes one with himself. The other, the friend, means much to the person, not because of the person’s need or lack, but for the sake of his own self-fulfilment” (1999, p. 138). The teacher can be like a mirror for the student, it might be possible that the student sees something of himself in his teacher, which might lead them to understand one another in that they see something in common with one another. They might “succeed in reciprocal co-perception” (p. 139).

A teacher might always be unsure of her next move in her dialogue with the student as they lay down their path towards understanding while they walk upon it. The gentle collisions of accidentals and essentials that take place in their interactions give rise to opportunities for each to gently adjust the public face of the other as both become teachers and learners in the “third space” created through the event of language. If the accidental collides with the essential more forcibly, there may be a moment when the teacher stands outside of Time and sees events in a new light—an epiphanic moment—and so might the student. And as Gadamer suggests, there is the possibility that “Friendship leads to an increase in [their] own feeling of life and to a confirmation of [their] own self-understanding” (p. 139).

Keeping a public face of reasonableness is not always easy, as teachers and learners are bombarded with an endless stream of perceptions, choices and stimuli in their environment. This stream may change their response to the

salient present as it trickles past a public face to the sphere of consciousness. Kenneth J. Gergen in his book *The Saturated Self* (2000) argues that we live in a world saturated with stimuli from social media, the internet and each other. He suggests that all this stimuli might call objectivity into question and wonders “if objective accounts of human personality are beyond possibility, then why continue the search for human essence? Whatever we are is beyond telling” (p. 82). Constant stimuli may erode our public face, seeping into our sphere of consciousness. The student who is still trying his public face on for size may find the bombardment of stimuli challenging to his equilibrium and the effort of holding his public face together may become increasingly difficult.

The teacher, more adept at showing her public face, keeps him welcomed by holding open dialogic spaces for him to step into. She does not search for his essence, recognising that such a search might intrude upon the student’s private sphere of consciousness. Instead, as accidentals and essentials collide and both adjust each other’s public faces, glimpses of something fundamental are seen. This something fundamental may be the hidden face of the flexible self, a face of the flexagon not always visible unless the circumstances are ripe. These glimpses of something fundamental are coloured by perception, history and memory as the teacher thinks to herself, “Ah, I remember! I have met someone like this before. He also behaved in that way. I wonder if...” and then she may welcome this student in a similar way to her previous one, holding open many dialogic spaces simultaneously so that the student can choose which one he will step into and begin to participate in the event of language with his teacher.

Glimpses of something fundamental perceived in another may be coloured by our mind’s eye—we see the essence of another through the memories and history of our mind, while also being simultaneously aware of our constantly shifting fluid responses to the eliding moments of the present. Our public faces are not fixed masks we don and doff in public and private spaces, rather

they grow and change as our hidden sphere of consciousness changes as an individual moves through the curvature of Time. Yet an essential thread of character seems to remain, a fundamental 'I' or a 'you' that we intuitively recognise when we exclaim, "You haven't changed a bit!" This instinctive recognition seems to go beyond seeing the physical body of another and point to the remembrance in our mind's eye of a particular kaleidoscopic Self, seen again after many years, seen at first through remembered bodily expressions and sensations and now seen again with a new embracing of relational memories and processes in a kind of poetic, embodied re-interpretation of the kind that Heß suggests (2012, p. 26). Our physical bodies carry our experiences towards us.

A teacher who welcomes students into a learning community, who allows herself to be vulnerable, who speaks her life through her vocation opens herself to possibilities. Her vulnerability allows her students to be the same and wear their lifeworld on their faces, exposing the shifting kaleidoscope glimpsed behind the public face of reasonableness. Everyone's true colours shine through.

Our public face, our face of reasonableness that participates in rational life is the face of the flexagon always visible to others. It is a flexible face that gives opinions in the language of "this" and "that", states and creates categories like "I suspect  $x$ " or "I know that  $y$ " and vouches for those opinions (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 123). Our hidden sphere of consciousness oscillates between perception, memory and imagination as it responds to the salient present. This hidden sphere of consciousness is our always unfinished private face, in a constant state of flux and characterised by the language of wondering, of hows and whys, ifs and maybes. Our public face may be our kingdom of physical reason while our hidden sphere of consciousness is our kingdom of metaphysical ends. Our Self is corporeal and ephemeral all at once, like the flexagon with outer faces visible to all yet able to be manipulated through Time and Space to reveal hidden faces unseen on first

viewing. As the teacher and student gently adjust each other's public faces, they participate in the artistry of teaching and learning. The artistry of teaching lies in the sharing of vulnerabilities and wounds that are written in the lifeworld of our faces.

### Render or receive? When the public and private face collide

In William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Cressida asks, "In kissing, do you render or receive?" (Act IV, Scene 5). This quote reminds me of the ambiguity in perception and interpretation. The artistry of adjusting another's public face could be seen as rendering and receiving change as teacher and student respond to the salient present through the event of language. Here I wish to deepen my understanding of my earlier narrative about Miss H and Emily, following Rapport and Harthill who suggest we as researchers develop our narratives, representing them iteratively in order to make sense of them.

At the time I was wondering if there was an elephant in the room, something obvious but unmentionable and now I wonder if this metaphorical elephant is at the heart of the misunderstanding between them. Emily says in her letter, "I'm not perfect like Jamie, Ashley, Jemima and the rest of the girls. I'm not one of your little angels like them". One of the girls that Emily names is Miss H's daughter, also a student in the class. Miss H is a caring mother, convinced that her daughter is the brightest and the best. Her talk about her children in the staffroom is a litany of accomplishments, her tone one of love and pride.

The love parents have for children is a well of visceral emotion, incomprehensible to those who are not parents. Once we parent children, our hidden sphere of consciousness becomes inextricably bound to theirs—we as parents dance and hover in the nimbus of our children's developing selves.

We melt in the warmth of our children's uncompromising affection and quail before their implacable demands. The altruistic love, the intelligent virtue and vocation teachers have for their students is a different feeling, just as powerful but intertwined with our intellect. As teachers we are acutely conscious of our responsibilities to open up spaces for students to step into, to welcome students to a community of learners. How could Miss H manage to quell the huge well of emotional subjectivity that comes with being a mother and teach her own child without prejudice?

I could not let this question lie. It niggled away in the corner of my mind until an opportunity arose after some weeks had gone by. Reports had been written and Miss H came back to my office to discuss them before they were sent home. I had proofread the Grade 7 reports and I noticed that while all the comments were succinct and mindful of each student's strengths, there was one that stood out. It was articulate and kind, demonstrating a deep understanding of the student's learning. "Jemima's report reads very well", I commented, attempting to open a dialogic space for Miss H. She smiled. "Well, that was so easy! Jemima is my child, after all. I know her through and through." I asked the question. "How do you find teaching your own child? Is it difficult for you?" She shook her head. "Oh no! Jemima and I design all the assessment tasks together so I know they will be engaging for the others. Without Jemima, I wouldn't know what a Grade 7 student looks like!" I said, as noncommittally as possible, "Ah". I tried again. "That's great that you and Jemima talk so much about school life, but on a deep level, a personal level, do you find yourself literally in two minds when you are teaching Jemima amongst her peers? One part of you as Jemima's mum and the other part as her teacher?" Miss H looked puzzled and did not answer. A long moment passed.

Finally she said, "I guess...perhaps...I think that I am really only teaching Jemima. You know, like an actor that only plays to one person in the audience. As long as she is engaged, I think I'm doing a good job". I nodded, listening. "So when you are teaching the class, do you make eye contact with any students?" "Yes, although it is easier with Jemima and her friends of course, because they all come round to our house regularly. Sometimes I do find it difficult to look at some students, those ones I know are challenging or who have given Jemima



and her friends a hard time in the playground or on social media.” I took a deep breath and squared up to the elephant. “So when Emily wrote you that letter a few weeks ago, maybe she had noticed that you were only directing your teaching at Jemima and her friends? Maybe she named those girls for that reason?” Miss H looked aghast. “Are you suggesting that I am favouring Jemima over all the others?” I looked at her steadily and waited. Miss H fidgeted and did not meet my eyes. Eventually I said, “I am wondering if perhaps only playing to one person in the audience makes everyone else feel left out”. Miss H’s face darkened. “You are casting doubts on my professionalism!” I shook my head. “No. I am asking questions and sharing some wonderings. I am asking because I found it difficult teaching in the same school where my children were, even though I did not actually teach them in a class. I am not casting aspersions or making accusations. I am raising possibilities.” Miss H rose silently and left my office.

I stared out the window for a long time after Miss H left. The shadows grew long and the sky turned to indigo. I turned the encounter over and over in my mind, attempting to discern hidden meanings beyond the manifold of outward appearances. I wondered if there was a way I could have left the question alone, accepted the situation as it was and existed cheek by jowl with the elephant. Did I lay aside my prejudices, leaving open a space for Miss H to step into? I was concerned that I had not met Miss H as an equal, instead taking an opportunity to speak my life rather than listening while she spoke hers. I could not, my still small voice whispered, I could not leave the question unasked.

When Miss H first showed me Emily’s letter I had tried to recall some words by Derrick Bell about listening and conversation. Bell’s work *Ethical Ambition* (2003) is a distilled and eloquent meditation on the difficulties and rewards of living an ethical life. Bell delves into those essential threads of character that he feels enable us to live lives of purpose and worth—courage, passion, relationships and humility. In his chapter about humility are the words I had tried to recall during my conversation with Miss H. Bell is speaking about how long it took him, in his career as a civil rights lawyer, to listen carefully to those who he was trying to help and he says,

And, in listening, we must not do them the injustice of failing to recognise, as we empathise, that somehow they survived as complete defiant beings. We must learn from their example, learn from those whom we would teach; be humble, and emulate them. (2003, p. 167)

I wondered if I had been humble enough in my last conversation with Miss H and if my wrestling with the issue of teaching one's own child had obscured my humility and appreciation for Miss H's position. Miss H did not choose to have her daughter in her class—small year group cohorts made it a necessity. Teaching her daughter was not a consideration in Miss H's plans to become a teacher and no one had prepared her for the prospect. Perhaps I had been too hasty, arrogantly rushing to ask my burning question rather than allowing the dialogue to unfold? There was a part of me, my private face, that was happy to have asked the question, raised the possibility of unknowing favouritism on Miss H's part, but another part of me felt that perhaps my public face had been compromised, that now Miss H would not see me as someone to provide professional guidance and support for her.

I had taken a risk to ask Miss H a question that I hoped would address the elephant of favouritism in the room. The matter of Miss H's uncertainty and unease in the classroom had been in my mind for some time. Bell talks about "taking action that will get the matter...out of your heart" (2003, p. 65) and asking the question did ease my mind and heart. I did not want Miss H to answer my question—the act of asking it, raising the possibility, opening up the opportunity for the question to hang in the air without the necessity of an answer, was enough. It was within that time of thought following Miss H's departure, in the slow dusk, I came to see my inability to steer clear of situations that challenged me ethically and caused me to reflect. I sought out situations that challenged my prejudices, forcing me to ask difficult questions of myself, and sometimes others, because it honoured my spirit. If I was not orienting myself to a reflective and ethically responsible posture as I lived in the world, I felt somehow I was lessening myself in my own regard.

Those teachers who speak their lives through their vocation have a strong ethical embodiment in the world. As they adjust the public faces of their students and allow themselves to be adjusted in return, there is a connection between their public and private faces. Bell terms a connection like this “kinetic” and wonders if it provides us with the “emotional fuel” needed to keep the threads of our fluid Self together, a “kinetic connection to the other elements of my character” (2003, p. 77). As teacher and student lay down the path as they walk upon it, as they find their public faces together, they may begin to recognise that our lifeworld faces, public and private, are “evolving with the experiences of life and learning” (p. 85). In Bell’s chapter exploring “Evolving Faith”, he speaks of early monotheistic religions “relieving the anxiety that humans felt with their selfhood and the uncertain limits of life” (pp. 89-90). Sometimes we may frighten ourselves with our capabilities and shortcomings. In those moments when the fear of ourselves is most acute, we might turn to our significant others to alleviate our fear and give us the courage through love to help us become more than we are. A learner in the classroom, with his ill-fitting public face and naked consciousness, is in a place of fear and it seems to be incumbent upon the teacher, with her vocation written upon her public face, to step into that place with him in order to welcome him to the community of learners. The teacher’s kinetic connection to her hidden sphere of consciousness and to her vocation is her altruism and her love of humanity, providing the emotional fuel to bring more than she contains (Todd, 2001) to the space she shares with her student.

Miss H turned a wary face to me when I next visited her classroom. She was subdued with the students, her public face closed. I arranged my face into what I hoped would be interpreted as an encouraging expression, open and smiling. Miss H’s daughter Jemima did not greet me when I said hello and I could tell from the way her eyes darted away from mine that her mother had told Jemima of our conversation. After chatting with other students for a time, I left the classroom, more troubled than before. I felt that my compulsion to ask a question of her mother had caused Jemima, a girl still arranging her public face, distress and anxiety. I felt a flash of anger that Miss H had compromised Jemima as one of her students in this way—Miss H’s disclosure of our conversation might have

forced Jemima to become privy to issues that should not concern her. I decided to let my impressions of Miss H's classroom of that day lie fallow for a time, poised for the right opportunity to begin a dialogue.

My disquiet remained as I left the classroom on my way to my last discussion with a teacher before reports went home. I had only a few moments to arrange my public face, clear my mind and still my thoughts as I walked back to my office. The conversation I was about to have was just as important as any disquiet I may feel after my encounter in Miss H's classroom. Willing myself to be present, to open spaces through language, I opened the door to my office.

Ms A was waiting patiently. She smiled as I entered. Ms A was gentle, softly spoken and attentive to students' needs in her classroom. She, like Miss H, had many life experiences to draw upon before she began teaching and also like Miss H, Ms A taught her own child. Ms A's public face in the classroom was calm and her interactions with students consistent. After a lengthy discussion about reports, I asked Ms A, "How did you feel writing Billy's report? Was it difficult for you?" Ms A smiled. "Could you tell that by reading it?" she asked. I smiled in return. "No, in fact I read it without registering the fact that Billy was your son." Ms A looked relieved. "I'm so pleased you said that, Billy's report was the most difficult one for me to write. I looked at all the work samples Billy submitted over and over to make sure I wasn't showing any favouritism. I wrote my report comment for Billy and asked Miss H to look over it to see if she could sense any favouritism." I managed not to let my mouth fall open in surprise. "Really? Was that helpful to you?" Ms A nodded. "Yes, very helpful. Miss H is very thorough, as you know, so she was able to give me some honest feedback. She thought my comment about Billy was very professional."

I nodded slowly. "Well that's great and I agree with Miss H, your comment about Billy is professional. How do you find teaching Billy? Are you literally in two minds, half as Billy's mum and the other half as his teacher?" Ms A nodded. "Yes, sometimes. Is that bad?" I shook my head. "No, not at all. It seems to me to be logical that you would find it difficult. I know I did when my children went to school where I was a teacher, even though I never actually taught them in a classroom." Ms A nodded. "I was dreading it, you know, starting the school year

with Billy in my class. I thought about it all through the holidays. In the end, I talked with Billy about it and he said “Don’t worry Mum, I get it. I can pretend you’re just another teacher.” We both laughed. “So how’s that going? The pretending?” I asked. Ms A smiled. “We never talk about school when we’re at home, his father helps him with any homework and Billy knows that if he has any questions about stuff we’ve done in class, he has to ask me while we’re both at school. He’s pretty good at all that. Occasionally he will say, “Mum, that activity we did today in class was so boring” and that’s when I know to change my plans, or look for something different, but usually he doesn’t say much at all about school”. I smiled. “So it’s easy then, keeping work and home life separate?” Ms A smiled back. “I wouldn’t say easy, it can be quite difficult at times and after each class I’m always thinking about how I spoke to the kids, hoping I didn’t treat Billy any differently or say something that the others could interpret as favouritism. But that’s okay, it’s all part of the job.” The bell rang for the end of lunchtime and Ms A jumped up. “I must get to class!” She hurried off, leaving me sitting alone.

Re-reading these narratives, I wonder if it is reflection that helps us to balance our public and private faces. Ms A speaks of how she is constantly reflecting upon her conversations and interactions with her students, aware of herself as being held in the gazes of others. Ms A refers to such reflection as being “all part of the job”. Ms A seems to honour her vocational public face by ensuring that Billy is comfortable with the shift that takes place when Ms A becomes his teacher. Ms A leaves spaces open for Billy to speak his own life while he is at home and when they are in the classroom together Ms A is aware of the publicness of the space, welcoming Billy into the community of learners in the same way as she does for all her students. Although Miss H attempts to arrange her public face into one of reasonableness, she does not seem to engage in the artistry of teaching, the mutual gentle adjustment of public faces that allows the lifeworld of her students to shine through. It seems that Miss H’s public and private faces are unbalanced, her public face prefaced over her private one, so that both faces are deflected. Perhaps such deflection leads to a fracturing of Self, a rupture in the fluid making and unmaking of ourselves through Time.

My interpretations, my wonderings about these two teachers are based on ethical principles that prompted me to ask myself the questions—what are these people (Miss H, Ms A, Billy, Emily, Jemima) going through? And how are my feelings affected when I hear how they speak their lives and tell their stories (Noddings, 1998, p. 161)? When we speak our lives and tell our stories, spaces are opened for the listener to step into and begin a dialogue that lays down the path as we walk upon it. Speaking our lives truthfully, with goodwill and faith, gives us the opportunity to expose our public and private faces to the fluid making and unmaking that is the unfinished Self. In those opened spaces of telling and listening, our public face of reasonableness fuses with our hidden private face to create something new. If we are humble, speaking our truth and listening without prejudice, then we may be forever changed by what we speak and hear.

We see on each other's faces those expressions that allow us to step into spaces opened for us. A teacher welcomes the child into the learning community as he is with her face arranged into its public-ness, arranged the way she thinks teachers ought to look, a smiling face and kind eyes. How difficult must it be for a teacher to do this when one of her students knows only her private face? And how difficult must it be for the student to see his mother wearing a detached public face? Maybe he feels discomfited. Perhaps he will have greater difficulty stepping into dialogic spaces held open for him because he feels that such spaces are a contrivance, a strategy rather than an authentic speaking of lives. It may be that the greatest challenge facing Miss H and Ms A is the same for all teachers—to be genuine, humble, authentic yet mindful of public space as being a space of pride or shame, depending on our actions within it. The awareness of public life as a space of rationality and reasonableness is challenged when the visceral, emotional, private face of parenthood collides with the altruistic, vocational, intellectual public face of teaching. When a student in her class is also her child, this collision may lead to a rupture in the teacher's idea of Self that causes difficulties in the way she relates to her students.

As we interweave with the curvature of Time being both in flux and also determined by memory, we constantly make and unmake ourselves. Our public faces, the outer faces of the flexagon, are manipulated by Time, while our private faces, our hidden spheres of consciousness, oscillate between perception, memory and imagination. We engage in reflection about our lived experience and our reflections may then be transfigured through empathetic imagination. If there is an essential thread of character, it may be the way we speak our lives to the world, how we allow our private face to shape our public one. When we gently adjust a student's public face and allow him to adjust ours, we allow ourselves to become vulnerable. If there is an essential thread of character it may be our authentic, genuine truth-telling to the world that would show on all our faces—private, public, hidden, reasonable. Our authenticity and our true colours are one and the same.

In this chapter I have explored notions of the inner and outer Self using the metaphor of a flexagon. Wonderful kaleidoscopic faces that our minds have built converge in lines of past, present and future to create something unique. We do not exist in isolation from one another, we exist in relation to others, to those we love, whether they be family, friends or our students (Bell, 2003, p. 95). As we engage with others through the event of language, gaps appear that may be unexpected. Sometimes our interactions with others confound us, we doubt ourselves and cannot always lay down a path to walk on through dialogue. Such unexpected gaps are the subject of my next chapter.

## Chapter 4

### *Lacunae: Perception, Interpretation, Understanding*



Reflections at Cradle Mountain, Tasmania (M. Waldock, 2011)

Once upon a time there was a young couple, very much in love, who did what most young couples since the beginning of time have done—they got married and set up their own home. One night the young man returned home from work at the same time as his wife and volunteered to help with the dinner. “We’re having roast chicken”, said the young wife. “Can you prepare the chicken while I peel the vegetables?” “Of course”, the young man gamely replied and set to work.

After divesting the chicken of its plastic wrapping, he found himself at a loss. Dimly he remembered his mother preparing chickens for roasting. He seemed to recall rituals involving special baking dishes and other arcane equipment. He glanced over at his wife. She was confronting the vegetables with much gusto and he didn’t wish to interrupt. Moreover, he realised that preparing the chicken was something he wanted to do well so he did not disappoint his new wife.



Discreet searching of the kitchen eventually yielded what looked to be a suitable baking dish, some mixed herbs and a packet of things labelled 'Oven Bags'. A short wrestle with the bird gave way to what the young man considered a very good result—the chicken was bagged and lay serenely in the baking dish. The young man's satisfaction was interrupted by a shriek from his wife. "What on earth are you doing? That's not the way to cook a chicken!" His wife huffed in annoyance. "Look", she explained as she grabbed the hapless bird, "you separate the legs and wings from the chicken and cook them later". The chicken now lay re-bagged, somewhat less resplendently, in the baking dish. "That's the right way to cook a chicken", the young wife said, sounding pleased with herself. "My mother always does it that way." The young man wisely said nothing and retired from the kitchen.

During the following months, the young man had occasion to observe that his mother-in-law did indeed cook a chicken in the same way, separating the legs and wings from the bird and putting them aside for later use. The young man inquired respectfully as to her reasons. "This is the right way to cook a chicken. My mother always did it this way", she replied firmly, in a tone that brooked no argument. So the young man bided his time until Christmas, when his wife's grandmother was visiting the house for the festive season. After a lunch, which included another amputated bird, the young man explained his puzzlement and asked the old lady about her reasons for cooking a chicken that way. The old lady raised the fleshy pads where her eyebrows used to be and replied, "It was the only way I could fit a chicken into my little old oven".

This anecdote, told one lunchtime in a school staffroom, illuminates for me how interpretation can determine the choices an individual makes. In the story, there appears to be a gap between what is presented and how it is interpreted. The young husband perceives his wife preparing the chicken minus its legs and wings, but he doesn't understand why the bird must be cooked in that way. In the gap, between his perception and understanding, is his interpretation that it is important to his wife that the chicken be cooked in what she terms "the right way" and his wish not to disappoint her follows from this. We see the story unfold from the perspective of the husband and

can only imagine what the narrative would look like from the wife's perspective, or the mother-in-law's, or the grandmother's. The young wife is adamant that a chicken should be cooked in one way, much to her husband's mystification. As the young husband observes and inquires over time, he discovers that saving the legs and wings of the chicken was a method born of necessity. The grandmother cooked a chicken in that particular way because she was unable to fit a large bird into a small oven.

The gaps between perception and understanding and more importantly how we interpret these gaps constitute the focus of this chapter. Wiebe helps me to continue my journey of “not yet being a being” (2012, p. 35) and reminds me that an attendance to the things themselves allows the missing, the gap, to be noticed. What is unseen is essential to an individual and how they wish to be valued in the world (p. 43). Wiebe says, “Articulating the possibility of a missing signifier is to notice that there is more to the possible reality of a person than his/her role or category implies” (p. 43). Our relationships to others inhabit a tension between how we might represent ourselves and that which we find inexpressible within us. We can seek to overcome such a tension through interpreting our public and private faces.

### Embracing gaps

A word used to describe gaps is *lacunae*. The word, *lacuna* is defined as a gap or missing portion and comes from the Latin, ‘pool’ ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lacuna](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/lacuna)). This etymology may provide a metaphor for us to explore *lacunae* between individuals. A pool is to vision what an echo is to sound—the initial image is reflected back to the viewer in the same way as an echo sends back a copy of an initial sound. I observe my reflection in a pool of water, what I perceive is not an exact replica of myself, as there are distortions and changes to my image due to the interplay of light

and water, as an original sound distorts as it ricochets between solid objects and is returned as an echo. First, I perceive an image, then after some moments I interpret this to be my reflection. After further consideration, the understanding occurs that my image is distorted due to the water. Even looking in a mirror does not give an image that is undistorted, as the reflected image is reversed to the viewer. Young children do not perceive their mirror image to be a distortion—if an adult holds a young child up to a mirror, they will often stretch out their hand in wonder to touch the other child they see reflected there. If someone gazes into a pool or body of water, it seems as if there are three aspects—the viewer, the reflections and the lacuna that is filled with an interpretation.

*Lacuna* is another word for the gap between what an individual perceives and how they interpret this perception. His subsequent understanding is shaped by his interpretation. We can not necessarily equate the idea of a gap with the idea of nothingness, a gap is nothing and something simultaneously, it has a presence even though it is absent. The young husband fills the *lacuna* between his perception and understanding with an interpretation regarding how important it was to his wife to prepare a chicken in a particular way. This interaction between the husband and wife describes three aspects of our relationships with others, the perception of an unfamiliar other that needs to be explored, the individual who interprets the unfamiliar other and the mutual understanding that can be reached between them through conversation. The *lacuna* inhabits the space between perception, interpretation and understanding.

We return to Gadamer's notions about horizons (2004, p. 301) to describe how an individual interacts with others. Gadamer defines an individual's horizon as "the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (p. 301). An individual's vantage point for Gadamer is not a physical position, rather the moment in time when one individual comes into contact with another, bringing with them an

“historically effected consciousness” (p. 301) or, if we use the terms in our story above, notions about what constitutes the ‘right way’. In our beginning story we could say that the young couple brought to the relationship their own horizon that had been shaped by everything they had experienced until that moment in time. The young wife has observed her mother and grandmother cooking a chicken in a certain way and interpreted that method as correct. The young husband has limited experience of preparing food, but he interprets the importance of cooking the chicken and not disappointing his wife. The young couple appear stuck in a situation where understanding is not possible. Their perception and interpretation of the right way to cook a chicken is very different—in their interaction we can see me and you, but no we.

How do we begin to understand another? So far, we have the young couple interpreting each other’s actions and in one way this is true, yet in another way this may not be correct. We could easily substitute the word ‘interpret’ above with the word ‘assumption’—the young wife assumes her mother’s and grandmother’s cooking methods were correct, the young husband assumes that cooking the chicken is important to his wife. Simply filling a *lacuna* with an assumption is not necessarily enough, as the experiences of the young husband demonstrate. The young wife and her mother are participating in a tradition, “a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 291).

In this story, the transmission is the cooking method and the mediation is the cultural idea that our elders know best, so a method born of necessity becomes a tradition through this mediation. Traditions and cultural mores are an integral part of an individual’s horizon. As an individual brings his historically effected consciousness to his interactions with another, he needs to see beyond his traditions rather than become focussed only on what is nearby, or can be perceived (Gadamer, 2004, p. 301). Gadamer believes that an important conduit to understanding is conversation.

In a conversation, when we have discovered the other person's standpoint and horizon, his ideas become intelligible to us without our necessarily having to agree with him. (p. 302)

The young husband discovers his wife's standpoint, as well as her traditions, when he speaks with her grandmother. He asks the grandmother a question that gives rise to new perceptions and understandings. As Gadamer says, "an element in the act of understanding is...finding the right questions to ask" (p. 301). A question opens up possibilities and begins a conversation, and a question leads to more questions and so possibilities once opened stay open infinitely. Answers usually follow questions and so begins a conversation. We could say that assumptions close off a dialogue, while questions open it. Gallagher says,

The structure of questioning is such that it opens up both the interpreted object and the interpreter. As long as the question remains, the dialogue never achieves final closure. (1992, p. 145)

### Perceptions and prejudices: Struggling for the foreground

We note that everything begins with what we perceive, what is available to our sensate being at any given moment. In the previous chapter we speak of individuals moving through the curvature of Time as they make and unmake themselves. To every perception we bring our history and what Gadamer has termed "our prejudices" (2004, p. 241). I use the word 'assumption' to describe how the young husband fills the *lacunae* in his understanding of the right way to cook a chicken—the young man's history shapes any assumption he makes. All the participants in our initial story stand in a unique relationship to the world, shaped and shaping the endless flow of history. Gallagher says, "interpretation is based, to some extent, on individual experience, but such experience is embedded in traditions which find their way into interpretation in the form of authoritative prejudices" (1992, p. 89). Prejudices are an important part of our historical involvement with the world

and everything we perceive is coloured by them. Gadamer uses the word 'prejudice' in its literal sense, as before judgment, a pre-judgement that informs a person's history and tradition. As he says, "In fact, history does not belong to us; we belong to it... That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgements, constitute the historical reality of his being" (2004, p. 278).

Before assumptions, interpretations or understandings can be made or reached, it seems that our prejudices struggle with our perceptions in the foreground of our being. Looking at our reflection in a pool of water is more than a perception, as our experience tells us firstly that we are looking at ourselves and secondly that we are looking into a body of water. The particular perceptions of an individual encompass a historical understanding of the whole temporal realm in which he is situated. This constant struggle between perception and prejudice as we respond to the salient present is an integral part of our physical body.

Merleau-Ponty, in his work *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) focusses his attention on perceptions as part of our embodiment, believing that structures are lived rather than abstractly known and so our perceptions through the sensate body are an active search for significance rather than a passive apprehension. For Merleau-Ponty, our perceptions are like a fold in the world of our consciousness where abstract knowledge is overshadowed by our physical embodiment. It seems that our prejudices may inhabit this fold in our consciousness as they inextricably struggle with perception, propelling us towards interpretation and understanding. Chris Lawn explores these ideas in his book *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (2006), alluding to the idea that perceptions and prejudices belong to our physical embodiment when he notes,

The point being driven at here is that judgements are made possible not by an abstract and neutral reason but a set of pre-reflective

involvements with the world that stand behind judgements and in fact make them possible. (p. 38)

Our perceptions and prejudices are a part of the particular physical aspects of our lifeworld, while our judgments and our traditions are part of the universal abstract curvature of Time and history.

We could say that every individual moves from concrete experiences to abstract generalisations on the path to understanding. I begin a dialogue about the unfinished Self and how things can change depending on how we are as well as who we are at any given moment. The appearance of something into our perceptive field is always accompanied by a physical response that tells us about our relationship to it. Our young man's emotional response to the chicken awaiting preparation for cooking is initially one of eagerness fuelled by his desire to be helpful. These responses are dependent on how he is feeling at the time—our mood determines our interpretation and our understanding. If the young husband is feeling bored, irritated, or otherwise troubled by the ennui of life, he may not offer to help with the chicken at all and may not notice the unusual way his wife prepares it.

Gadamer discusses perception in conjunction with aesthetics (2004, pp. 77-80) and believes that perception and aesthetic understanding are intertwined, as both perceive truth before it becomes abstract knowledge. Following the etymological trail of the word 'aesthetic' we find it comes from the Greek *aisthētikos*, from *aisthēta*, perceptible things, from *aisthēsthai*, perceive. Our present sense of aesthetic as an appreciation of and concerned with beauty was coined in German in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and adopted into English in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gadamer wishes to return our thinking to the original meaning of this word, just as he does with 'prejudice'. In doing so, Gadamer's thinking echoes Merleau-Ponty's ideas about the importance of perception. Gadamer uses perception, or aesthetics, as a beginning point for more abstract understanding, while Merleau-Ponty may see physical perception and intellectual understanding as inextricably intertwined.

Sometimes both of these ideas resonate with lived experience, sometimes one more than the other and sometimes neither seem relevant to where an individual is in Space and Time. “Our prejudices are not purely ontological, but are produced by a history that is precisely embedded in tradition”, says Lawn (2011, p. 81), and a closer look at tradition is essential as we explore the mystery of interpretation.

### Tradition and interpretation: Beyond the visual echo

Our perceptions struggle with our prejudices at the forefront of our experience, informed by tradition. Returning to the analogy of a pool of water, perceptions are the visual echo, the first encounter of the unfamiliar. Our histories are embedded within tradition, in our notions about what constitutes the right way. Sarah Bakewell, in her book *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being and Apricot Cocktails* reflects Merleau-Ponty when she calls perception the “synaesthetic swirl of appetite and experience” (2017, p. 232). As individuals move beyond this swirl of living and acting, our interpretations are underpinned by traditions. Our traditions are an intimate part of our embodiment in the world and our interpretations reflect this intimacy through our perceptions, informing the language we use to describe our experiences.

Gallagher discusses tradition as a constraint to interpretation, insofar as an individual cannot escape either her prejudices or traditions as she interprets another (1992, pp. 81-122). He remarks, “The process of tradition is, in effect, within us...The attempt to step outside the process of tradition would be like trying to step outside our own skins” (p. 87). The young couple bring their historically effected consciousness to their interactions as they partake of each other’s traditions about cooking a chicken. Every unfinished Self continually responds to the salient present, imbuing it with meaning and understanding



over time. Significance and meaning are engaged in a constant to-and-fro movement—sometimes significance is foregrounded and at other times meaning. We might view temporality as a constraint to interpretation, although individuals might elide from past to present to future constantly while focussing on the *telos*, the end in view, transcending passivity and actively exploring meaning.

Significance and meaning are not static but dynamic, interpretation becomes the application of significance and meaning to events as they occur. Gallagher notes, “If anything, application always colours meaning with significance” (1992, p. 228). Imbuing an event or object with significance intertwines with our prejudices and constrains our relationship with tradition. Gallagher says, “Significance is always biased because the interpreter is always constrained by her anterior relation with a particular tradition” (p. 246). The young couple choose what to imbue with significance as they attempt to cook a chicken the right way. They are inside what Gabriel Marcel calls a mystery. “A mystery is something that involves the person in such a way that the person cannot step outside of it in order to see it in an objective manner” (1971, in Gallagher, 1992, p. 152). Cooking the chicken the right way begins as a problem for the young husband because it is a situation he can detach himself from and view externally. As the situation evolves both he and his wife become inextricably immersed in ambiguity. Ambiguity is the *sine qua non* of a mystery. Mysterious things have a simultaneous presence and absence—a mystery is a gap, or *lacuna*, in our understanding. It is in mystery that *lacunae* might be most evident, intuited in its absence or presence.

In a pedagogical relationship, the teacher and student are a mystery to each other that both seek to overcome through language. Both find themselves in the unfamiliar situation of a different classroom with different students and each will bring to this situation his historically effected consciousness. Gadamer notes, “Hence essential to the concept of situation is

the concept of horizon” (2004, p. 301). The teacher may have an awareness of herself as an unfinished spark in the flow of history, unlike the child who is swept up in the swirl of living and acting immediately in the present. Within the teacher-student relationship temporality plays an important role—the teacher is an adult who has been longer in the world than the child who dwells in a sensate place of wonder at the new. In a pedagogical relationship, this temporal distance, a *lacuna* of Time, can be productive as it supports the situation and provides a continuity of tradition from which to begin understanding another (pp. 296-298). As the teacher extends a welcome to the child, meeting him where he is in the world, acknowledging his differences, she might seek to open a conversational space by asking a question. Following Bohm, a question’s essence of openness to possibilities suspends judgments and prejudices (1996, p. 15), and allows the child to begin to participate in the historical tradition of learning.

The teacher’s historical consciousness is active as she seeks the right question to ask. As the child answers, he opens himself to the continuity of customs that education offers. “In learning, the student’s own possibilities are at stake”, comments Gallagher (1992, p. 164) and this is true for the teacher as well. Learning is a productive creative process, involving assimilation rather than accommodation. Learning might be seen as a “fusion of horizons” (2004, p. 305). As the teacher and student enter into a dialogue where judgments are suspended, where the past and present is narrated all at once, the teacher can “discover where he [the student] is coming from and his horizon” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 302). The dialogue of question-and-answer gives the teacher and student a possible path over the abyss of unknowing towards understanding.

During this dialogue the teacher and student become metaphorical mirrors, each reflecting the other’s understanding and learning about herself. Gadamer says, “encounters in the mirror of a friend are, as always, not experienced as a demand, but rather as a fulfilment” (1999, p.139).

Gadamer's idea of *Miteinander* arises again as teacher and student enter into a welcoming space of conversation where both are learning together. As trust develops between teacher and student, both begin to realise themselves as themselves, teacher and student moving together towards becoming beings, "self-forming commonalities in which [each] begins to feel and recognise [oneself]" (p. 139). The interweaving of two textual Selves in conversation, says Gadamer, "signifies a real embedding in...communal human life" (p. 139).

Gallagher notes that, educationally, "practice and habituation are also the ways into the art of questioning. Questioning is more a habit, disposition, or practice than a passion or action" (1992, p. 163). This returns us to the word 'habit' as a dwelling-place, a situated-ness, a place where we feel comfortable. If we use this etymology in our interpretation of the practice of questioning, if a teacher practises the art of questioning until it becomes a habit, she is literally living the questions. Like Lederach's exhortation to speak our lives, living the questions may mean being in a constant, active state of curiosity about who we are and the world around us.

In this active state of curiosity and mindfulness, the habit of questioning can be transfigured into a passion through imaginative reflection, which mediates the past and present. Dialogues are more than the batting back and forth of question-and-answer—they allow participants to move towards common understandings through the event of language. Bohm, in his thoughtful meditative work *On Dialogue* (1996) talks about dialogue as a flowing stream of common meanings entered when all assumptions and prejudices are set aside (pp. 6-47). Bohm reinterprets the definition of dialogue as "speaking through the meaning of the word" (p. 6) and believes that this way of looking at dialogue, where language is foregrounded in order to find commonalities with others, allows for new understandings to be reached and is "the 'glue' or 'cement' that holds people and societies together" (1996, p. 6). For me, Bohm's thinking about dialogue finds echoes

in Gadamer's notion of language as a historically mediated event that allows us to understand another's point of view without having to agree with him. Bohm too talks about assumptions and prejudices being articulated and then set aside in order to delve into the thinking behind them (p. 9).

For a teacher and student, entering into a dialogue of this kind calls for an active engagement with speaking and listening. Listening is crucial for the teacher as she discovers more about the student, meeting him where he is in his lifeworld. The onus is on the teacher to listen actively to her student as he speaks his life and narrates his assumptions and prejudices about the world. Listening in this way may mean suspending the swirl of living and acting. It may mean dwelling within yourself while focussing on the other, recognising your assumptions and prejudices as they arise, consciously setting them to one side so you can more freely enter the flow of meaning that is generated by the dialogue. Those teachers who gather all they can through their eyes and ears and encourage their students to do the same might generate a flow of meanings in classrooms.

The young husband shows beginnings of a dialogue when he questions assumptions about cooking a chicken by asking a question, but when the answer is given, he does not delve more deeply by continuing to ask. The story illustrates an important facet of dialogue—dialogue requires sustained amounts of time. The young couple feels the constraints of Time as they prepare the chicken after a day at work, just as teachers are aware of the constraints of Time as they attempt to meet curriculum delivery goals and departmental requirements. An active dialogue could be viewed as a time out of Time, a suspended non-prejudicial space held in place by common meanings and supported by language. Those teachers who choose to fully inhabit this suspended space beyond the swirl of the moment might have already entered into a dialogue with themselves. They might have explored their assumptions and prejudices, setting them aside in order to question

them more deeply. This self-reflection brings perception, imagination and tradition together, illuminating the *lacunae* within the individual.

### Inside the echoes: Reflection and understanding

“It is possible for one person to have a dialogue within themselves if the spirit of dialogue is present”, says Bohm (1996, p. 6). This spirit of dialogue allows a teacher to reflect on her teaching practice, understanding herself as an ever-changing spark in the continuity of history. Assumptions and prejudices, suggests Bohm, must be looked past to develop understanding beyond them.

If I say I am going to look into my mind but I don't consider my assumptions, then the picture is wrong because the assumptions are looking. That is a common problem of introspection. You say, “I am going to look at myself inwardly”, but the assumptions are not looked at – the assumptions are looking. (Bohm, 1996, p. 70)

Although we cannot fully abandon our assumptions and prejudices because they are part of our historical consciousness, we recognise them for what they are, we see their shape and allow them to change with circumstances. Realising that amputating a chicken in order to fit it into a tiny oven for cooking was a necessity rather than a choice could begin such a process of recognition for the young wife and her mother. Our notions about what constitutes the right way to live in the world are like a hall of mirrors, reflecting and sometimes distorting our perceptions of our situation. These distorted reflections can lead to more ambiguities as our unfinished selves move through Time. Our assumptions lend their weight to the colour of our conversations, our dialogues. It seems all the more important for teachers to understand that educational conversations need to be truthful, that is, they need to reflect the real situation of the participants—how they live and what they believe (Gallagher, 1992, p. 271). These situations do not disappear in dialogues, rather they appear as fully as possible and are gently put aside—the path being laid down in language. The situations are put aside, this does not

mean they are dismissed, rather they are suspended and allowed to unfold alongside our awareness of the unfamiliar.

Teachers who have an awareness of themselves as beings within the flow of history and recognise their prejudices and assumptions begin to distance themselves from the object of scrutiny, attempting to see it more clearly. This process of distancing creates a tensile gap between the observer and the observed. The teacher enters this process by actively reflecting on her experience, focussing attention on the unfamiliar object. Distancing begins with an awareness of the unfamiliar, which offers an opportunity for interpretation. As she lays aside her assumptions and prejudices, a teacher can begin to explore the unfamiliar situation through the recollection of her perceptions. Perceptions of a situation become coloured by imagination, opening up possibilities hitherto unseen and allowing the object of interpretation, the student, to speak his life, to have a say about his situation (Gallagher, 1992, p. 181). Exercising the imagination opens up both the interpreter and the interpreted in a flowering of empathy that offers opportunities for transcendence, for both to go beyond themselves towards a common understanding.

Within the classroom, a reflective teacher is aware of that tensile gap between her familiar historical situation and the students' unfamiliar one. Such a teacher encourages students not simply to reproduce her understandings, instead, using questions to hold open dialogues, she allows new interpretations and understandings to be generated. Learning becomes a productive falling together of possibilities—an occasion revealed through the event of language (Davis & Sumara, 1997, pp. 105-125). Gallagher says, “As a teacher, she goes beyond her own horizon and attempts to penetrate the student's horizon. The presentation is designed with transcendence as one of its means and ends” (1992, p. 143). Acting transcendentally is acting in good faith, with humility, regard and responsibility for Self and Other. Teacher and student become complicit in an occasion that is both historically situated and

freshly original. A dialogue becomes generated in good faith, as both learn to speak their lives towards creating a learning environment centred upon a tacit willingness to listen to the other as they walk the path together towards shared meanings.

A generative, creative dialogue between teacher and student, both speaking their lives, is scaffolded by imagination and transcendence. Teaching and learning become an enterprise that encompasses past and present, going beyond them to create something new. “Something new emerges, not as a product of a technically controlled process, but as a result of the tension or distancing between interpreter and interpreted”, comments Gallagher (1992, p. 184). This willingness to dwell within the *lacuna* created through dialogue makes space for the process of teaching and learning to flower, constantly being mediated between past and present. The bringing forth of something new through speaking together in good faith becomes poetic, a lyrical unfurling of ideas that take on a life of their own. *Poiesis* is an ancient Greek word that means “creative production, especially of a work of art” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/poiesis](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/poiesis)) from which comes the word, poetry. When teaching and learning create something new, an instance of something poetic occurs. The artful holding open of possibilities allows for a new aesthetic where the conversation is becoming something in and of itself.

Thomas M. Alexander, in his essay “Eros and Understanding: Gadamer’s Aesthetic Ontology of the Community” (1997) speaks about the creativity of poetic communities. His discussion of hermeneutics as an ontology of community recognises the notion of *agape* as a motivating force to create a community. *Agape* is another ancient Greek word meaning “brotherly love” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/agape](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/agape)) and Alexander sees *agape* as forming the “fundamental dynamism in any relationship between teacher and student, which, as we have seen, is essential to our existence as social, mortal beings” (1997, pp. 334-5). In the first chapter I raise the notion of altruism as

a motivating force for teaching. 'Altruism' is defined as disinterested and selfless concern for the wellbeing of others ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/altruism](http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/altruism)). Altruism and *agape* are present in the relationship between teacher and student because they are oriented towards the other. Altruism is present in a teacher's vocation—the sense of a calling within her that seeks to call forth the potential of others. *Agape* manifests in the relationship between the teacher and individual students. Perhaps a sense of altruism propels the teacher into the classroom and *agape* impels her to open dialogues with the students. Altruism and *agape* are linked through their orientation towards creativity and the pursuit of the beautiful. Viewed this way, education is a poetic act, *poiesis* is bringing something new into being. Gallagher sees education as poetic in its generative creativity (1992, p. 184). The teacher exercises an ethical imagination to gently brush the student's lifeworld without violating his sense of self as they engage with each other to create something new through dialogue.

Our human capacity for understanding is shaped by our willingness to be open to being-with-one-another. As we experience meaning making through this openness, we speak words that another understands because common meanings have been generated through dialogue. Fluid, occasional, eventful language describes fluid thought and over time this fluidity brings meanings into being that are proscribed by the dialogical conversation. The teacher who is brave enough to expose her vulnerability by speaking her life takes a risk and allows herself to give into the temptation to become involved with the unfamiliar Other, the student. Alexander says,

By a faith in the other, which exhibits trust and good will, we not only in fact become open to the other, but create the conditions whereby the other can be open to us, and thereby establish the genuine possibility for growth and transformation and that fusion of horizons which we seek. (1997, p. 331)

When we speak with another in good faith, with good will and with our hearts, our inner being illuminates, a presence that allows beauty to manifest. Our history and lifeworld are written on our faces.



When a teacher imaginatively projects herself into the point of view of the student, she invites the student to give into the temptation to learn from her and she hopes that her risk will bring forth a willingness to enter into a dialogue. This “mutual social imagination” (1997, p. 335) as Alexander calls it, illuminates the importance of others in our search for our understanding of ourselves and our place in a tradition. Through mindful conversation when teacher and student are fully present, together they create glimpses of the curvature of Time as enfolding moments of harmony and lucidity. The beauty created by this unfurled dialogue leaves no participant immune to its effects, as to the eyes of all the beholders beauty shines forth when mind touches mind through the momentary event of language.

The student is the unfamiliar other, alone and unknown in his ignorance of the mores of the classroom community and tradition in which he finds himself. The teacher who invites the student into the learning community, embracing him as if he were already a member, begins a process of transformation for both. The student is embraced and welcomed through the fluid event of language spoken in dialogue. “The child is gradually made a member of the community: a self who has a history, speaks a language, understands traditions” (Alexander, 1997, p. 336). As the child feels himself welcomed, he may take up the opportunity to imagine himself as a teacher as well as a learner, as the teacher has already done when she has taken the risk of beginning a conversation. As he allows himself to engage in the dynamism of dialogue, the student enters the lifeworld of the teacher and this imaginative transcendence gives the conversation a space of its own.

A gamble from the teacher opens up a space for a conversation to begin. The conversation takes up what Gadamer refers to as “the third space” (2004, p. 336) between the participants and we point towards this idea when we say to another, “Well, that was a great conversation,” as an event that happens to us. An open, rich dialogue where assumptions and prejudices are laid aside is generated by us then moves beyond us to create something new. In a

classroom, the teacher gambles her voice to speak her life in good faith to the student who then allows his voice to step into the space held open for him by the conversational gambit of questioning. These dialogues overlap, interweave and underlay a developing pedagogical relationship—without them, the teacher and student are closed husks to each other, unable to move into presence to create a third space of conversation.

If either the teacher or the student refuses to engage in dialogue, then the other is left with a *lacuna* of silence. A teacher may scramble to fill this silence with her own prejudices and assumptions, drawing comparisons with other students she has known or attempting to predict the student's actions by observing him in the classroom. This approach may lose sight of the teleological orientation of teaching, focussing on perception without imagination. Conversations take time to flower and ideas to come to fruition—the teacher who waits for the student to reveal himself through language has shown she accepts his vulnerability, which invites him to have a say about his life in his own way and in his own time.

The student does not always engage in reflection, his life is lived in the constant present, an unfinished Self eliding from moment to moment. The teacher moves into reflection on action to understand the consequences of her dialogue with the student, attempting to discern a *telos* that might welcome the student to a learning community. The flowering of dialogue over time enables the student to begin understanding the consequences of conversation, leading him to reflect on his experiences in the learning community. As he reflects, the student begins to see himself as a teacher who has an opportunity to consciously direct his own learning, collaborating alongside his teacher who is also learning, as both participate in conversation. Gallagher says,

Genuine dialogue, communication that leads to emancipation, is based upon a transcendental word; a word free from real distortion and under the control of critical speakers who use it to dominate, not other speakers, but the world. (1992, p. 259)

As teacher and student engage in active reflection, they become critical of themselves, recognising their assumptions and prejudices in order to lay them aside, making a choice to turn towards shared meaning making. “The critical thinking or reflection of problem posing takes place within a framework of dialogue between teacher and student” (p. 258).

Holding open possibilities through questions tacitly recognises the *lacunae* implicit in our interactions with others. The moment we turn inward to reflect upon our conversations transforms them into objects and a distance is created. van Manen says,

All recollections of experiences, reflections on experiences, descriptions of experiences, taped interviews about experiences or transcribed conversations about experiences are already transformations of those experiences. Even life captured on magnetic or light-sensitive tape is already transformed the moment it is captured. (1991, p. 54)

*Lacunae* are ever-present through-lines in our conversations and embodiment in the world. We engage in rich dialogue with others, providing opportunities to create shared understandings, while engaging in a reflective dialogue with ourselves to create opportunities for self-understanding. There might always be *lacunae* in the silences between words. Even though the teacher speaks her life in good faith with her heart and encourages her student to do the same, the fluidity of our unfinished Selves may give rise to a shifting landscape of silences between the words as we respond to the salient present.

In this text I use many metaphors as an attempt to point us beyond the tacit towards the implicit place, the *lacuna*, where language is silent (van Manen, 1991, p. 49). Metaphors can shape language in original ways, encouraging our imaginations to transfigure our perceptions. This transfiguration takes place during reflection on action, reflection that happens after the event, but our experiences may already be transformed through reflection in action, which happens as each moment unfurls. *Lacunae* are present everywhere and dialogue becomes a vital bridge towards

interpretation while reflection is a way to begin our journey towards understanding ourselves and others. “By way of metaphor, language can take us beyond the content of the metaphor toward the original region where language speaks through silence” (van Manen, 1992, p. 49). Metaphor take us into the realm of the imagination where, as Arendt suggests, according to Elizabeth Young-Bruehl,

Imagination is like a virtuoso servant, assisting thinking, willing, and judging to step back from or recoil from the world: it also sets images or objects before the will for choosing or deciding upon. (2006, Loc. 1530 of 2111)

Metaphors and imagination empower understanding.

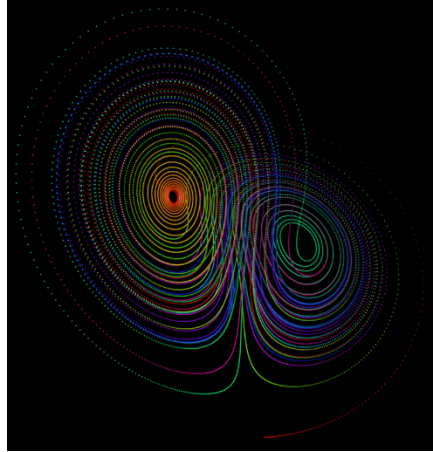
Language is in the *lacunae* as well as the words and when we enter a dialogue with another we speak with the whole person—their gestures, expressions and their silences. Like Hartley’s novel we are different countries to each other, there is no map for one to come to know another, we lay down the path as we walk towards common understandings through a dialogue emerging out of a willingness to lay prejudices aside. This willingness is not passive, waiting for the beat of the conversation to arrive, rather an active orientation towards understanding. The dynamic situation of a dialogue that seeks to engage our history becomes an interplay of forces that does not allow us to settle into an easy position. We may not be entitled to opinions that come to us through prejudice and assumption, opinions may not be laurels to rest upon—we may only be entitled to what we can respectfully argue for. Making ourselves vulnerable and speaking our lives in good faith opens the opportunity for us to begin to understand another without having to agree with him.

Every person needs his own interpretation, special and unique, arrived at through dialogue with himself and others. We bring our traditions and history to every interaction with another and through reflection, thinking about thinking, we open ourselves to the opportunity for imagination to

transfigure our perceptions. For the teacher who speaks her life in good faith and holds open dialogue through questioning, there exists the possibility of the student having a say about his life in his own way and in his own time, stepping into the dialogue and seeing himself as a teacher as well as a learner. Despite this, sometimes there continues to exist an irresolvable gap between teacher and student, an impasse that cannot be bridged through dialogue—the puzzlement of which I explore in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

### A Path through Fog and Quicksand: *Aporia* and *Bricolage*



A Lorenz Attractor

Inquiring into pedagogical relationships I explore the ways that language, perception and imagination transfigure interactions to create a metaphorical third space in a conversation. In that space we may speak of our own lives in our own way and in our own time, of the ways that memory and imagination coalesce to form an individual who is in a constant state of flux, and of an unfinished Self that responds to the salient present while laying down a historically effected consciousness. Hermeneutics coupled with a phenomenological mindfulness has given me an ontological compass to orient myself to my inquiry. I recount memories that encapsulate an epiphanic moment as narratives emanate from my classroom experience and I unpack them in the light of notions about a constantly changing, mindful Self.

I continue my unpacking in this chapter. This time my questions are these. What happens when our ontological compass goes awry? When everything

you attempt as an educator goes terribly wrong? When you cannot create a third space with a child or lay down the path as you both walk upon it? Sometimes a hermeneutic approach has seemed to fail, I have been cut adrift from my compass. I have felt as though I was flailing in quicksand, sinking ever more deeply into a morass of misunderstandings. It is time for me to tell the story of 9-year-old Campbell, using the comments I write in my teacher's diary as events unfold.

May

8<sup>th</sup>

I have a new student who started today. His name is Campbell. He is tall and large, with a thick brush of black hair. Campbell needs a fresh start after being involved in bullying at his other school, a Catholic primary school over the river. That is all the information I know at this stage. The other children made sure he was included during the swimming program and he seemed happy to chat with them and me.

15<sup>th</sup>

I met Campbell's mum Tanya today. She told me that she and Campbell's father are divorced, and she has a new partner. Campbell's father doesn't want Campbell to visit anymore after some incidents involving violence. I ask Tanya to elaborate, but she dismisses the idea as an invention of Campbell's father to avoid paying child support. Later Campbell tells me he is the youngest of three siblings and his older brother and sister both live with his father and his new partner. He reads to me from a book written for 6-year-olds, haltingly and shyly, in a soft voice and with his head down. It seems he cannot manage anything more complicated yet.

26<sup>th</sup>

My principal comes to my room after school to tell me about a meeting she has just had with Campbell's dad, Andrew and his partner Prue. Andrew is keen to be involved with Campbell's education. Andrew says that Tanya's new partner is violent and that is why the other children live with him. Campbell has been

physically aggressive towards his siblings and prefers to live with his mum full time. Andrew is worried about Campbell's welfare and asks the school to keep him informed of any incidents. After hearing this, I have to tell the principal about Campbell hurting another student in the playground at lunchtime. I dealt with this incident by engaging in a conversation with Campbell and the other student and Campbell had apologised. After discussion with my principal, we agree that due to our zero-tolerance policy on physical violence, Campbell is to have a behaviour contract to act as a reinforcement for positive behaviour. I agree to speak to Tanya and Campbell about this tomorrow morning.

27<sup>th</sup>

My discussion with Tanya and Campbell is positive and Campbell helps me to devise his behaviour contract. He has two goals, keeping his hands and feet to himself in all areas and using the right words at the right time. Campbell works beautifully throughout the day and comes back in from the playground smiling and relaxed. The other children report that they all played together harmoniously.

June

12<sup>th</sup>

Campbell returns to school today after an absence of a week due to illness. He is restless during class time and gets into a verbal argument in the playground. Campbell continues to initiate positive interactions with myself and other adults, his language and demeanour suggesting to me that he is working hard to build rapport. After a verbal altercation with another student this afternoon, I help him move his books to an individual desk away from the other children, as Campbell says that he wants to try working away from other children so that he can focus on his work. The other students commend him for this idea and still make room for him when we sit on the mat before home time.

22<sup>nd</sup>

Tanya comes in with Campbell this morning, as he has been away for three days. She explains that she was anxious about driving Campbell to school as the weather has been wet and very cold this winter. Tanya says that Campbell really



enjoys coming to school and he nods vigorously, smiling. She is happy with his progress, despite the fact that the school office rang on May 26<sup>th</sup> and Campbell had to be taken home as he was unable to be calmed down after the playground altercation. During the next week, Campbell shows erratic behaviour—pacing around like a caged beast, interspersed with periods of intense concentration. I am concerned about another violent incident.

## July

25<sup>th</sup>

School has resumed this week after a two-week holiday and so far, no sign of Campbell. When he returns today, a Friday, Tanya takes me aside and explains Campbell has not been taking his Ritalin. She was trying to give Campbell more responsibility at home before the new baby is due in February and so had trusted him to take his medication regularly. But it seems he has not done so for six weeks. I am secretly relieved to find a possible explanation for his behaviour in late June and after Tanya tells me that she has resumed responsibility for administering the medication, I am hopeful that we can avoid any future incidents. Tanya also mentions that she may be late to pick Campbell up because she is due at a court hearing regarding an Apprehended Violence Order against her current partner.

31<sup>st</sup>

Campbell physically attacks another student in the playground during an argument about soccer rules. He is defiant and will not respond to any adult, even me, when questioned about his behaviour. Tanya is called and she comes to collect him. He is suspended from school for two days.

## August

15<sup>th</sup>

The past two weeks have been very difficult for Campbell and for me. Nearly every day there is a physically violent incident in the classroom or playground

and now the parents of other students are coming into the classroom to complain about his behaviour. Campbell can no longer be trusted to play with the other children at break times, so he and I spend the time together reading, drawing or playing on the computer. During these times Campbell is relaxed and talkative. After an afternoon of discussion, Campbell restates his coping strategies written as part of his behaviour contract and requests to try again outside in the playground. Tanya is keen for this to happen also. It is agreed that Campbell can go outside with the other children for half of lunch each day.

20<sup>th</sup>

Campbell has enjoyed the last five days and showed responsiveness to gentle reminders regarding his behaviour. At the end of the week he goes home with his behaviour contract covered with stickers and a huge smile. I am delighted for him but I also think of Campbell's reactions to our visiting speaker this week. She was focussing on emotions and asked the class to make facial expressions that indicated happiness, sadness, anger and so on. I watched Campbell carefully during this discussion and noticed that his expressions for angry and afraid are identical. I feel that I have noticed something crucial to his behaviour but I am unsure yet how to use my observations to help him.

27<sup>th</sup>

After such a great week last week, this week has been all negative for Campbell. He has had to be excluded from the playground after he punched another student, cutting open the other child's lip. This student is now afraid to come to school. After the other child's mother spoke about the incident on social media, parents have been calling the school all day. I sit with Campbell again during break times, talking about his coping strategies and role-playing possible scenarios that he might encounter outside. Within the classroom, he is trying hard to complete all tasks and work in groups with other students, but they are uneasy in his presence. When the class meets together on the mat, Campbell sits behind all the others and nobody gestures to him to move into the group. I am so sad for him I could cry.

29<sup>th</sup>

My principal has been in meetings with parents all day. She has taken the decision to move Campbell into another class with older students who will not be as physically intimidated by him. I will still provide his class work and assess it, but he will be in another room. I am not happy about this, as I feel that this will further exclude Campbell from his age group and give him an infamy that will not be helpful to his already low self-esteem. My principal is adamant, and I have little choice but to agree. Tanya has agreed and the new arrangement starts this following Monday.

For a moment I step out of my narrative, as it occurs to me to think about what the term ‘bad faith’ might mean and its relationship to ‘good faith’. I speak of good faith in the previous chapter as an orientation expressed by me towards goodwill, finding an accord, when I enter a conversation with another. When I find myself in situations where I might be denied this choice and I am subjected to passive decisions by others who are detached from the intimate kinds of responsibility that genuine conversations require, I encounter bad faith. Bakewell understands Sartre’s notions of good faith “...for each of us—for me—to be in good faith means not making excuses for myself” (2016, p. 156). For me, this is how I must be in my relationship with Campbell—I actively and honourably portray my job, history, family and my intelligent vocation, always opening up spaces for him to portray his.

There is another transformative understanding here for me, as I seek to understand myself in this inquiry, and it is Gadamer who leads me in this thinking. Georgia Warnke explains the German terms *Erlebnis*, lived experience, and *Erfahrung*, scientific experience. Scientific experience in the natural sciences comes from procedures and results repeated and confirmed. Warnke throws light upon what Gadamer notes as *Erfahrung*, a “learning experience”,

An experience that in a sense cannot be repeated and serves to negate our previous views. Indeed, what we learn through experience in this sense involves such a radical transformation of our views that we cannot

go back to them to re-experience the experience of their negation. What we experience is the error, or partiality of our previous views and we experience this in such a way that we are now too experienced...to relive the experience of believing in them. (Warnke, 1987, p. 26)

In my disappointment over the lack of support and the *status quo* approach of the Principal and the school leadership team, I was to learn and understand just that—I could not return to old ways of thinking about Campbell. My lived experience with Campbell was to radically transform my thinking and being. I was to learn through experience.

## August

30<sup>th</sup>

Campbell responds to another student's comment by threatening him with scissors. I have to remove him from the room immediately. Tanya is called and comes to collect him. She is distraught, coming into the classroom and apologising for Campbell's behaviour. Campbell also comes in and apologises to the other student in front of the whole class because he wishes to make it okay. He will return to school on Monday and move straight into his new room.

## September

2<sup>nd</sup>

Campbell is early to school today, ready to move into his new room. He brings me a bunch of garden flowers he picked himself. I help him carry his things to the other classroom. Campbell is smiling and his body language seems relaxed, a contrast to the past week. He seems determined to be hopeful so I will be as well. When I visit the room to check on his task progress, he shows me two pieces of completed work. Since his academic struggle has been an ongoing source of frustration for him, I praise him enthusiastically and draw a smiley face on his behaviour contract.

16<sup>th</sup>

Everything seems to be going well so far. Campbell's other teacher decides she would rather set him tasks to complete to minimise interruptions. There is a reference to Campbell's lack of academic progress. By interruptions I presume she means me coming in to check on Campbell. The other teacher is part of the leadership team within the school and this arrangement must have been discussed in leadership team meetings as my principal relays this decision to me before school begins. I do not want to lose contact with Campbell, but the now-previous arrangement was emotionally very draining for me, so I do not have the strength to fight the decision.

20<sup>th</sup>

I hear from another staff member that Campbell has threatened another student in his new class. I visit the room just before recess to reinforce Campbell's behaviour contract, but he says he no longer uses it. The other teacher explains that she feels it is unnecessary now that Campbell has been moved into her class. I mention the threatening incident and she denies it ever occurred. Campbell hangs his head when I look at him.

25<sup>th</sup>

It is the last day of term. The principal calls a staff meeting and informs all staff that Campbell has again physically assaulted another student and consequently she has spoken to Tanya and requested that Campbell attend a school nearer to his new home. Tanya had been driving 45 minutes each way to drop Campbell off and pick him up each day. The other school is only a 10-minute drive from Campbell's home. All his school equipment has been packed up and posted to the other school. There is no opportunity to say goodbye, as Campbell is currently suspended after the latest incident. My principal says sadly, "I feel we failed Campbell", and I can only agree.

October

30th

Early into the new term, I contact the other school by phone to see how Campbell is settling in. I am told that everything is fine and he is enjoying school. I offer my contact details in case his current teacher wishes to contact me, but they are politely and firmly refused. My principal visits my classroom after school that day and mentions that it is best to “let things go” regarding Campbell and focus on finishing the year well with the rest of my class. I am so appalled by what I perceive as this banality and by the intimation that part of Campbell's issues were my fault, that I do not know how to respond, once again saying nothing. I have heard no more of Campbell since.

### *Lacuna and aporia*

Campbell lacks the experience and the linguistic tools to articulate his perceptions and emotions. Despite our many conversations, language is unable to bridge the many *lacunae* between Campbell's and my perceptions about situations that occurred at school. We cannot come to a common understanding about Campbell's effect on his peers because although using role play Campbell can imagine scenarios that he might encounter in the playground, he appears unable to reflect on his actions and their effect on his peers, particularly the incidents involving physical violence. Campbell is able to recite the school's rules regarding behaviour when he is alone with me in the classroom and can answer questions about which of his coping strategies to use but when a situation arises that he cannot control, or that we have not specifically discussed, Campbell's first reaction is physical violence. Campbell cannot seem to speak his own life, despite being given the time to do so. Although I attempt to open up space for Campbell, using the gambit of questioning, Campbell appears unable to step into the space left open for him and is unable to see himself as either a learner or a teacher.

Campbell's physical violence towards his peers leads to his isolation within the classroom and the school. When I Google the word 'violence', the following definition appears, "Violence, n. from Latin *violentia* vehemence, impetuosity and *violentus* 'vehemence, forcible,' probably related to *violare* (see violation)" (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/violence>).

Intrigued, I click on the word 'violation' and find "Violation, n. from Latin *violatus* treat with violence, dishonour"

(<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/violation>). The words that interest me most in these definitions are 'impetuosity' and 'dishonour'.

Campbell seems to exhibit very little forethought before he becomes violent with others, often he can only recount his movements before and after an incident occurring but seemingly remember nothing of the incident itself. My idea of 'impetuous' is to act without thought or care—to act on an impulse. Continued delving brings up synonyms for 'vehemence', which include "forcefulness, violence and rashness"

(<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/vehemence>).

All these words—violence, vehemence and impetuosity—interlock like pieces of a puzzle, each word adding a part to the whole interpretation of notions about violence. These nuanced meanings apply both to Campbell, a particular individual, and the universal societal idea of violence. Violence could be seen as impulsive, impetuous and forceful. My desire to open up a dialogue with Campbell that gives us both an opportunity to speak in good faith is hampered by Campbell's entry into a space where violence seems the only option available to him. In the interpretation of the interlocking words used to create a meaning for a notion such as violence, we see the dynamic, synergistic relationship between parts and whole that is characteristic of hermeneutic interpretation. The other word that piques my interest as I explore etymologies is 'dishonour'. Does Campbell treat his peers with dishonour?

Despite my care in building a relationship with Campbell and his responsiveness to that care, his violence towards others keeps shattering our relationship. Physical violence of any kind seems to create an *aporia* of fear and distance, making it almost impossible to form relationships because the violence exists. An *aporia* describes something impassable, as the etymology tells us, the word is from the Greek “*aporos* impassable, from *a-* ‘without’ and *poros* passage” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/aporia>). Another word with a similar etymology, but this time from French, is “*impasse* from *im-*[expressing negation] and the stem of *passer* to pass” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/impasse>). My relationship with Campbell begins with *lacunae* caused by unfamiliarity and a disparity of linguistic skills. We are unable to articulate our perceptions to the other. As hard as we both try to find a common language, it proves elusive. The *lacunae* spread and deepen with each incidence of violence until we are confronted with an *aporia*, an impassable breach in our relationship with each other. This *aporia* ripples out to envelop other staff members and Campbell’s peers. Everyone in the school has an opinion about violence and when confronted by physical violence each individual attempts to negotiate the *impasse* by defaulting to their habitual response, a response that seems intertwined with emotions. Opinions about violence are shields to hide behind, places to dwell in as we struggle to navigate a path forward.

Our habits are a crucial part of our lived embodiment in the world, metaphorical dwelling places where we may feel safe. Some of the school staff immediately, habitually, retreat from Campbell’s violent actions, allowing their emotions of fear to create a distance that propels them into an *aporia*. These staff members use phrases to me such as “I just can’t relate to Campbell” or “I can’t talk to Campbell—can you come and deal with it”, whatever the latest incident is. I attempt to explain repeatedly about Campbell’s difficulty articulating and regulating his emotions, staff eventually stop trying to initiate conversations with him while on playground duty, preferring to simply watch him from a distance and call for support if he becomes violent. After a month or so of explanations, I begin to feel adrift



and alone, seemingly unable to make my voice heard or my meaning clear. *Lacunae* begin to blossom between my colleagues and myself, tendrils of misunderstanding curling through our conversations, until our perceptions are opposed and no amount of talking can bridge the gaps in our understanding of Campbell's situation. An *aporia* appears amongst us.

The language I use to describe *lacunae* and *aporia* is organic—"rippled", "burgeoned" and "tendrils" suggest plants or perhaps water. These words capture something about *aporiae*—metaphorically speaking—*aporiae* do not suddenly open up like a fissure beneath one's feet, instead arising stealthily like a damp fog, obscuring one's metaphorical view and clouding judgement. When our view of the world is clouded and shrouded by doubt, our voice falters and we find it difficult to speak our lives in good faith. The *aporia* between my colleagues and I begins in just such a way as does the *aporia* between Campbell and myself. Campbell and I develop a positive initial rapport, he seems eager to tell me more about himself through conversation. Our conversations are our relationship and initially there is a mutual exchange of ideas insofar as that is possible or appropriate between teacher and student. With each violent incident, Campbell becomes more closed off from me and despite my efforts to engage him in conversation, there comes a point in September where only glimpses of the child I first met in May can be discerned. During those four months my relationships with my colleagues become obscured by misunderstandings as the *aporetic* fog shrouds us all in doubt and perplexity about how to build a relationship with Campbell.

Meanwhile, some of Campbell's peers and other students within the school attempt to leap the impassable gap rather than withdraw through fear. Many do this by meeting Campbell's violence with their own. This particular school has had very little experience with any sort of physical violence partly because the school catchment area is affluent, with parents resolutely middle class in their viewpoints. This perhaps offers an explanation for the school community's lack of sympathy or understanding when it comes to Campbell.

On those occasions when parents come to the classroom or the school office to complain about Campbell, it becomes evident during the conversations that the violent reaction of their own child towards Campbell has made them more anxious than Campbell's actions, which originally precipitated the particular incident. More *lacunae* begin to blossom between fearful, anxious parents and angry, indignant children who feel aggrieved enough by Campbell's physical aggression to physically retaliate. *Lacunae* also open between students as they choose to deal with Campbell's aggression in differing ways. As had happened with the staff, I also begin to feel the tendrils of misunderstanding insinuate their way into my interactions with the rest of my class. Some students cannot understand why I persist in my efforts to include Campbell in the class group when he hurts them, and I am their teacher too.

The question I pose earlier returns here—does Campbell treat his peers with dishonour? The word 'dishonour' arises through the definition of 'violate' mentioned above. Does Campbell violate other students with his aggression? A return to Google throws up one definition of dishonour as “a failure to observe or respect” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dishonour>). This idea resonates with my experiences with Campbell. When consumed by the maelstrom of emotions that drives his violence, Campbell seems to literally fail to observe those students around him, focussing all his attention on one or two whom he perceives to be in the wrong. When other students try to reason or remonstrate with him either in the playground or classroom, Campbell only becomes angrier and displays an increased determination to physically confront others. Campbell's anger narrows his vision and he is cut adrift from his peers.

In my diary entries, I speak of an epiphanic moment concerning Campbell and his identical facial expressions for anger and fear. Reflection on this epiphanic moment leads me to ponder on emotions of anger and fear and

also the notion of intent as it relates to dishonour. If Campbell is not angry but afraid and his violation of others arises from fear, how intentional is that violation? Technically, Campbell does treat his peers with dishonour as he fails to observe or respect their personal space or their opinions. Perhaps this violation is unintentional, as there seems to be no conscious, controlled decision on Campbell's part. Despite our repeated role plays in the classroom during lunch breaks, Campbell cannot use the coping strategies that we have rehearsed if the situation is not exactly as we have practised, leaving him only with physical violence and violation.

Viewing the situation with hindsight, the *lacunae* and *aporiae* that are burgeoning between Campbell and the rest of the staff and students, between me and my colleagues, and ultimately between Campbell and myself centre on this notion of intent. My perception is that Campbell's actions are impulsive rather than intentional in nature and therefore ultimately spring not from malice or anger but from fear. My colleagues' perception centres on Campbell's repetition of similar acts of physical violence, which they seem to think signifies intent. Does repetition of similar behaviours signify intent? Or are Campbell's acts of violence a tic that he can't control, acts that make him feel less afraid? For me, Campbell's violence is initially a small part of my perception of him, a part that we would work together to change. Our conversations within the classroom are our relationship, coloured by a willingness to find a common ground. My perception of Campbell is essentially compassionate, as I gain a knowledge and appreciation of his lifeworld through our conversations. Other staff members do not share that perception and despite my articulations regarding Campbell's impulsivity, the repetition of his physical violence is the cankerous centre of the *aporia* amongst us.

It seems that perhaps the only way to go beyond an *aporia* as a teacher is to transcend it through compassion and an ironic viewpoint that acknowledges Campbell's birth into intransigent circumstances, circumstances that include

bitterly divorced parents, step-parents and a new half-sibling to come. Which leads me to ask yet another question—if we, as adults and educators, accept that Campbell’s oppressive violence and violation of others highlights his own oppression due to his circumstances, can we forgive him? As adults, do we miss an opportunity to liberate Campbell from his oppression of others? On the other hand, how far should forgiveness extend? How can we draw the line as educators without inflicting hurt and injury on too many?

Gadamer’s notions about history and tradition (2004, pp. 305-335) find resonance here. We have explored Gadamer’s belief that understanding is just as much historical as it is linguistic or ontological. Campbell’s concrete historical existence determines his understanding of the world just as mine does and although Campbell lacks tools with which to conceptually leap the *aporia*, I can attempt to transcend it because of my history as an educator and an adult. Compassion and irony can only be gained and explicitly named through life experience. My lifeworld encompasses such ideas because I have had the time to acquire them, unlike Campbell. I am aware of my historical condition and conditioning, even though Campbell is unaware of his. It is Campbell’s history that I seek to affect through a positive and ethical relationship centred on conversation. Precisely because of my embodiment as a dialogical ethical being, it becomes clear that to do justice to the demands of Campbell as another it is necessary to become open to him, allowing him to affect my history simultaneously. The means of this openness is a dialogue centred upon question-and-answer. At first Campbell attempts to step into the space my questions hold open for him but as time passes and more violent incidents occur, Campbell becomes unwilling or unable to be welcomed into the community of learners in the classroom.

Campbell’s individual history meets the larger tradition of school expectations. One way to view tradition is as a transmission of customs or beliefs, a passing on of cultural memes from one generation to another. Schools are early environments for this transmission to occur. Traditions

expressed as customs are based on human experience and it is from here that traditions derive their authority (Gallagher, 1992, p. 89). Traditions are not static entities and are open to interpretation. This is particularly true of educational traditions, which are often in a state of flux because educational traditions are fundamental to the process of human renewal (p. 92).

Traditions that transmit customs and beliefs may be an essential condition of the educational process. Gadamer's ideas about tradition place emphasis on tradition as a living force that enters all understanding. Gallagher refers to the notion of tradition as a living force in this way, "The attempt to step outside of the process of tradition would be like trying to step outside of our own skins" (p. 87). History and tradition are inextricably intertwined, the individual unfinished Self, a text, entwining with the living past in the present that is tradition, itself the larger context. "Despite the fact that traditions operate for the most part 'behind our backs', they are already there, ahead of us, conditioning our interpretations" (p. 91). History or tradition, past or present, text or context, part or whole—the vibrant synergy of hermeneutic interpretation can again be seen in these relationships.

Traditions are embodied in language and we have begun to explore the linguistic event that describes and proscribes our thinking in the previous chapter—how our worldview is coloured and influenced by the language we use to describe it. Another aspect of our traditions expressed and inherited through language are our prejudices. Prejudices allow individuals to express through language a worldview that is partial, distorted and tendentious but these prejudices need not be static or fixed, according to Gadamer (2004, pp. 315-320). It is tradition and history that come to bear upon prejudices in the present and as a result tradition, history and prejudice are all changed. In Campbell's case, although this dynamic change has begun to occur between he and I, in the larger school context prejudices remain fixed, and fixated, upon the incidents of physical violence and the vexed question of Campbell's intent. The idea of tradition as a living force that views subjects and objects as parts of a larger whole is nowhere in evidence. Instead, we become part of a

static prejudicial tradition that separates us as subjects from each other and focusses on the object, in this case physical violence and violation of others.

The etymology of the word ‘tradition’ throws up another intriguing possibility—not only does the Latin root of tradition, *tradere*, mean ‘to deliver’ it also means ‘to betray’. Perhaps in Campbell’s case it can be said the delivery of the traditions and prejudices of school betray his individual history. Over time Campbell ceases to become an embodied subject and becomes instead an objectified instrument of violence. Colleagues use phrases such as “I can’t deal with it (a particular incident)” and “I can’t deal with him (Campbell himself)” interchangeably, seemingly unaware of the telling distinction they are making. Campbell is unhappy, lonely and abandoned by so many adults and a whole school. He is desolate in every sense of the word. The constantly falling together of possibilities that is a school playground provides Campbell with an occasion to impulsively step into a place of desolation—physical violence. Campbell exhibits violence towards others, but I wonder upon reflection if it was us, as adults, who are guilty of violation—we treat Campbell with dishonour, giving him no opportunity to overcome his history and traditions. He is like a person flailing in quicksand calling for help in a foreign language. While we, the educators, are shrouded by *aporetic* doubt and perplexity. These doubts around questions of intent bind us in the habits of prejudices and traditions and we struggle to find the message beyond the actions that alienate us from Campbell.

### [A possible path: \*Bricolage\* in the classroom](#)

As we enquire into the relationship between Campbell and myself, we unwrap layers of meaning relating to intention, violence, history and tradition. These notions enable us to offer possible answers to questions about what is happening to Campbell, his peers and the school community during

his time in my class. I speak of how our relationship develops through conversation and now I wish to focus attention on how I manage Campbell's behaviour day to day. My hermeneutic embodiment in the world offers me the opportunity to speak my life in good faith, following my vocation. I do not only wish to *manage* Campbell's behaviour—I wish to *understand* it. To understand a child's behaviour is another step to understanding his lifeworld, another step towards meeting the child where he is. It seems that if I wish to understand Campbell's behaviour, I need to move beyond an approach to behaviour management that implies a one size fits all methodology and doesn't account for situations and individuals who are always in flux. When Campbell is a member of my class, I find that no one behaviour management strategy is effective consistently, a phrase or activity that works on Monday has the opposite effect on Tuesday. Because Campbell is impulsive and sometimes volatile, I need to be limber and agile in my thinking to understand his behaviour and mitigate any negative consequences.

Joe Kincheloe in his paper "Describing the *Bricolage*" (2001) states,

The French word, *bricoleur*, describes a handyman or handy woman who makes use of the tools available to complete a task. Some connotations of the term involve trickery and cunning and remind me of the chicanery of Hermes, in particular his ambiguity concerning the messages of the Gods. If hermeneutics came to connote the ambiguity and slipperiness of textual meaning, then *bricolage* can also imply the fictive and imaginative elements of the presentation of all formal research. (p. 2)

To borrow Kincheloe's phrase, my available tools are phrases and ideas built up over many years as a classroom teacher, years spent observing, conversing and attempting to understand children. My hermeneutical embodiment in the world means that I always search for similarities between myself and the children in my care—points of contact from which to develop a common understanding. Another of Kincheloe's descriptions of *bricolage* is "the assembly of mythic elements, motifs, allusions, characterisations, allegorical bits and pieces, narrative techniques and other stock materials to form stories

that are nevertheless new and particularised for the local context” (2001, p. 4).

This idea of an ontologically-oriented narrative is close to my own educational practice as I search for interconnections between Campbell and myself, building upon the initial fragile bond of rapport towards shared understandings. I read everything from positivist behaviour theory to Proust to science fiction during the time Campbell is with me, gleaning bits and pieces that resonate with me or that I imagine would resonate with him. I read Campbell’s background file from cover to cover, searching for a reason that he might be taking Ritalin, finding only reports from his previous school but nothing that speaks of a medical diagnosis that might mediate the school’s prejudice. All these stock materials help me begin a way to interact with Campbell that encompasses his lifeworld and holds open dialogical spaces for him to step into if he wishes, within the very specific local context of the classroom. Throughout, I am interpreting everything I see and read, constantly tinkering with activities I plan or phrases I have been about to use, with the aim to bring Campbell and I closer to a common, shared understanding. Hermeneutics and *bricolage* become intertwined inquiry practices, each informing the other—parts of a whole interpretive process. For me, as for Kincheloe, *bricolage* seems to be a transfigurative, imaginative act that “signifies interdisciplinarity” (2001, p. 5).

During my extensive reading, trying to clear the fog of doubt that surrounds me, I come across the acronym VUCA. The American military have coined this acronym for situations they commonly encounter during their professional lives. They term them ‘VUCA situations’ because they are volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. This terminology began to be used in the 1990s and continues to be used to the present day. In the military context, ‘volatile’ refers to the speed and dynamics of change, ‘uncertain’ to the lack of predictability and prospects for surprise, ‘complex’ to the multiplicity of issues that surround a situation and ‘ambiguous’ refers to the



haziness of reality and the potential for misreads that arise in any situation (Stiehm & Townsend, 2002, p. 6). This acronym resonates in my relationship with Campbell as his interactions with others can rapidly change and spiral out of control and there is usually no way to predict the triggers that precipitate such behaviour. Campbell's family life is complex and his circumstances intransigent, which means that he is often unable to speak about his emotions or reflect on his behaviour, as he doesn't have the linguistic expertise to articulate his inner thoughts. Campbell's volatility opens an *aporia* that means the other students and staff are always in a hazy reality, misreading Campbell's actions and motives.

Expanding and exploring the acronym this way allows us to see general similarities with any classroom as well as the particular similarities in my interactions with Campbell. Teachers who are living their vocation and speaking their lives in good faith, being brave enough to show their vulnerability, could be seen to be placing themselves in VUCA situations every time they enter a classroom. Entering another's lifeworld, particularly that of a child, is an uncertain and tentative event, open to misunderstandings as well as possibilities for dialogue. Teachers impact upon the lifeworlds of many students each day and sometimes that impact is not positive.

If we accept that teachers are commonly in such complex situations as the ones that the VUCA acronym describes, then *bricolage* seems to be a singularly apposite and pertinent idea for the classroom. Recalling to my lantern metaphor from the first chapter, *bricolage* might be an appropriate lantern to illuminate the questions that arise in an uncertain and ambiguous classroom. In Calver's words about patience in writing, I sense that *bricolage* "might be understood as a long game of skill applied to a situation of chance" (2012, p. 52). *Bricolage* is more than an idea—it is a rigorous process that leads to new ontological insights, a notion that accounts for the "inseparability of knower and known" (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 5). As teachers employ a wide range of disciplinary practices and strategies to create opportunities based on

their embodiment and traditions, they become empowered to ask “compelling questions of other disciplines [they] encounter” (p. 5).

Emmanuel Levinas speaks of teaching as “coming from the exterior” (in Gallagher, 1991, p. 189) and not being reducible to *maieutics*—*maieutics* being the Socratic practice of question-and-answer where one is a midwife to the truth, the word itself coming from the ancient Greek word *maia* for ‘midwife’ (p. 189). For me, *maieutics*, the banter of question-and-answer, is where a pedagogical relationship starts, where the openness to another begins and it seems that the initial openness is the responsibility of the teacher, acting as a model for the student.

In *Entre nous: Thinking-of-the-other* (1998) Levinas asks the question, “Is our relation with the other a *letting be*?” (p. 6). He suggests that we may not at first understand the person to whom we speak, that once we address another through a question we immediately begin a path to understanding him. Levinas says,

To understand a person is already to speak to him. To posit the existence of the other by letting him be is already to have accepted that existence, to have taken into account. “To have accepted,” and “to have taken into account” do not come down to an understanding, a letting be. Speech delineates an original relation. The point is to see the function of language not as subordinate to the *consciousness* we have of the presence of the other, or of his proximity, or of our community with him, but as a condition of that conscious realization. (1998, p. 6)

The teacher initiates the relationship through question-and-answer, thereby meeting the child where they are in the world rather than the other way around. This onus on an individual to initiate openness is peculiar to the teaching relationship because other relationships between individuals do not place one on a higher, ethical pedestal over the other. I ask questions of other disciplines to enable me not only to hold open spaces in dialogue for students

to enter, but to articulate my vocation so I can speak my life in good faith in my own way and my own time while allowing the students to do the same. Asking myself moral and ethical questions about forgiveness, violation and dishonour are the impetus for my reflection-on-action as I look for ways to bridge the *lacunae* of understanding between me and Campbell.

Before Campbell came into my professional life, my focus had been on discovering and restoring meaning to my relationships with students. Ruthellen Josselson, in her article “Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Hermeneutics of Faith” makes a distinction between Ricoeur’s term “hermeneutics of suspicion” and a “hermeneutics of faith” (Josselson, 2004, p. 1). Decoding disguised meanings is the “hermeneutics of suspicion” while discovering and restoring meaning constitutes the “hermeneutics of faith” (p. 1). As a teacher, faith and suspicion exist in the pedagogical relationship simultaneously and synergistically, each supporting and informing the other. This is certainly true of my interactions with Campbell. A “hermeneutics of suspicion” allows differing analytical frames of disciplines to be employed by the teacher (p. 4). For Campbell, this meant that I am constantly searching my ‘*bricoleur’s* toolbox’ for just the right strategy, language or task that might free us from our mutual misunderstandings. This intellectual expenditure is characteristic of the *bricolage*, which always provides

a new angle of analysis, a multidimensional perspective on a cultural phenomenon...Such diversity frames research orientations as particular socially constructed perspectives – not sacrosanct pathways to the truth. (Kincheloe, 2001, p. 15)

*Bricolage* gives another dimension to the notion raised by Sumara about the teacher-student relationship, which he likens to laying down a path as we walk upon it (1996). Walking a path in this way means laying aside assumptions and prejudices and being open to all possibilities as they are mediated through Time by linguistic events. The multidimensional and multivocal aspects of *bricolage* enable teacher and student to navigate a

constantly changing pathway that suits them both. Campbell does not fit into the curriculum neatly—the how of his grade level simply isn't what he needs on his learning journey so the skill of teaching outside the curriculum is required, both of us working in the liminal spaces to create conceptual montages that Campbell can make meaning from. By teaching in this way, the notion of the *bricoleur* is exemplified.

The delicacy of engaging students in their interests, in offering them interpretations or theories of their experiences, in providing for them a structure through which they might think themselves in relation to the world. (Kincheloe, 2001 p. 16)

*Bricolage* allows for a hermeneutics of difference to come into play in an eclectic grasping of disparate ideas that can be conglomerated into a whole. All my questions and answers, strategies and opportunities, perceptions and interpretations represent my seeking empathetically common ground for growing mutual understanding having recognised the essential differences between us, one from another. Reflecting on my practice with this orientation illuminates for me the flowing synergy between the hermeneutics of faith and suspicion. Without faith, there would only be suspicion as every interaction is dissected and decoded in an exhausting search for difference. Faith enables us to accept similarities and show empathy—we accept another's point of view without having to agree with him. The “hermeneutics of suspicion” is required to discern meanings that can be hidden beneath the surface of every interaction, such as Campbell's identical facial expressions for fear and anger, which may then be more deeply understood through reflection and the “hermeneutics of faith”.

Peter McLaren suggests, “All experiences need to be interrogated for their ideological assumptions and effects, regardless of who articulates them or from where they are lived or spoken” (in Kincheloe, 2001, p. 12). I attempt in previous chapters to interrogate my history and traditions and their ideological origins and influences. In this chapter I turn a critical eye towards

their effect on my own educational practice. The complex relationships between ideologies, material realities and human perceptions cannot be set aside easily. *Lacunae* are essential features of material realities, ideological assumptions and human perceptions, complex, interdependent and constantly changing.

An image to illustrate this idea is a Lorenz attractor. There is an image of one placed at the beginning of this chapter. The Lorenz attractor was first studied in 1963 by meteorologist, Ed Lorenz. It was derived from a simplified model of convection in the Earth's atmosphere. The attractor is expressed as three coupled differential equations which, when constantly run through a computer or plotted on a graph, produce unique patterns of astounding complexity. These patterns have no limit and do not stay steady, but instead are an example of deterministic chaos.

As with other chaotic systems, such as VUCA situations, the Lorenz attractor is sensitive to the initial conditions and the two initial states, no matter how close, will diverge sooner rather than later. The image of the Lorenz attractor at the beginning of this chapter illustrates one such unique pattern. When I first saw them, these patterns reminded me of relationships—dynamic, finely balanced between two individuals and also poised between purpose and chaos, yet most of the time never devolving into that state. Even during those times when Campbell's and my relationship is deeply fractured and the *aporetic* fog shrouds us both, the relationship retains its purpose. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that our relationship retains its purpose to the *two of us*, because Campbell's repeated acts of violence are ripples of chaos that cause great unease to others. The Lorenz attractor might describe a relationship between two individuals. My relationship with the other 28 children in my class is also its own Lorenz attractor, a unique and astonishingly complex pattern poised between purpose and chaos. The Lorenz attractor has no limit to the patterns it generates just as there are no limits to how a relationship will progress if spaces are held open through

dialogue. Each classroom is not only a VUCA situation, full of volatile ambiguity, but a dynamic interplay of a wide variety of entities from which arise endless unresolved contradictions.

### Occlusion and illumination: *Bricolage*, *lacunae* and *aporiae* through another lens

*Bricolage* serves philosophical research—it permits the researcher multivocal results of humans' desire to understand, to know themselves and their world. As *bricoleurs* study the subjective meanings that human beings make from their lived experience they use philosophical modes of inquiry to scaffold understanding. Necessary to the education of the *bricoleur* are socio-theoretical and hermeneutical understandings—with the benefit of hermeneutics, *bricoleurs* are empowered to gather data through dialogue that enables a synergy to arise and moves both parties to a more sophisticated level of meaning making. *Bricolage* becomes more than recognising inward stirrings of intuition or conscience. It allows for flow into “the full stream of self-forming commonalities in which one begins to feel and recognise oneself. What is thus communicated...is a real embedding in the texture of communal human life” (Gadamer, 1999, p. 139).

In a hermeneutical phenomenological orientation, the elasticity of Time is explored to its fullest reaches, meaning that relationships can take all the time needed to ripen and deepen. Between Campbell and me, Time is not elastic, but finite, broken into chunks that does not allow conversations to flow to a conclusion, or thoughts to conflate towards a common understanding. Campbell has continued absences from school that vary in length from two days to two weeks. When Campbell returns to the classroom, the rapport we had begun to build is ruptured as the world of the classroom has moved on since he was last a part of its community. These finite slices of Time are a factor in the blocked pathways to understanding that Campbell and I

experience, despite my constant attempts to navigate a pathway using *bricolage* as my method. Chunks of disparate Time conspire to block understanding, casting everything that has gone before into shadows of doubt.

I return to light as a metaphor for the last section of this chapter. Throughout this inquiry, the notions surrounding illumination have been explored. The heading for this section uses another word pertaining to light, 'occlusion'. This word is most commonly used in medicine, where it refers to the closing up or blockage of a blood vessel, but when referring to light, ambient occlusion is a shading and rendering technique used to calculate how exposed each point is to ambient lighting. Occlusion in this sense is most commonly used in computer graphics, where set designers create computer-generated models of backgrounds for television and film. If a part of the computer model is occluded, it is in shadow or darkness, hidden from the light.

The *aporetic* fog that shrouded my interactions with Campbell occluded my understanding of his intentions and motivations for violence. This *aporetic* fog dovetails with finite time-chunks to occlude deep understandings of Campbell's motivation, when my colleagues or other children describe an incident of violence, on a surface level I can understand the events described. On a deeper phenomenological level, Campbell's underlying intent is a mystery to me—I am managing Campbell's behaviour but not understanding it. Every attempt to interpret his actions seems to bring me towards the metaphorical edge of the ever-growing *aporia*. The gap between these understandings is another *lacuna* in this situation as is the rupture made in Campbell's case when evidence overlays pedagogy and becomes an *aporia*. My embodiment as an educator, allowing students to have a say about their lives in their own way and in their own time, crashes against the evidence of Campbell's violent actions towards others and his growing anger and frustration. I ask my colleagues to give Campbell time to settle, to find his

place in this new community of learners, this new lifeworld. But giving Campbell time sometimes means that other students bear the brunt of his impulsive violations.

Although I embrace multiple perspectives as a *bricoleur* and a hermeneut, not all perspectives are equally valued and as I reflect on my experiences with Campbell, I wonder if this is not where the true *aporia* lies. I focus on developing a relationship with Campbell, engaging him in conversation with myself and his peers. I do this because I value relationships above all else and conversations manifest relationships. Campbell and I are not outside the *aporia*, but inside it. My colleagues and Campbell's peers see a different whole to the one I perceive, my version of the whole is the gradual movement towards a "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 2004, p. 305) between myself and Campbell. What I lose sight of is the whole of the material world, where timeframes, curriculum achievement standards and economics matter. I do not even consider assessing Campbell in the same way I assess the other students in my class. I try to view Campbell and my time together as without limits—it takes as long as is necessary to develop our common understandings. But those time-chunks keep truncating our conversations and the longer, but still constrained, frame of one year in one class keeps intruding. As all my relationships become shrouded in *aporetic* doubt, the elastic of Time begins to snap back on me in confronting ways, such as when Campbell is moved into another class. Gaps in perception become evident on this occasion, as veiled references are made to a lack of progress on Campbell's part. To my mind, Campbell has made great progress in his relationships with others, but his lack of academic progress is foregrounded and cited as a reason to move him elsewhere.

My hermeneutical sights are focussed on one child, only our relationship illuminated. My Principal's focus is on the societal structures of a school that shapes our culture and ideas. She sees more clearly the whole, my sight is clear only for one part—my relationship with Campbell and how to enable



him to step into the welcoming space of a learning community. The bigger picture of a school as an acculturation space is occluded from my view. After Campbell left the school, I pick up the threads of my relationship with all the other students and to all outward intents and purposes classroom life goes on as before. Campbell and the issues we had trying to develop a meaningful pedagogical relationship, remain with me, a salutary lesson in how the structure of a school, its traditions and history, does not suit every child all the time. When a child tries to speak his own life in his own way and his voice is dissonant from other voices in the learning community, a teacher who is also a *bricoleur* takes a leap of faith to listen to that voice and then creates a space for the child with the dissonant voice to step into. The demands of teaching call upon teachers to be active speakers of their lives, to step into spaces created through dialogue, showing courage by being vulnerable in the classroom.

History, traditions and prejudices impact upon a fluid Self as it responds to the salient present. Opening spaces for imagination to transfigure our understanding happens not only in our dialogues with others but in our responses to our lived environment that is, in the event of language. Hermeneutically, I explore this event of language in my next chapter.

## Chapter 6

### The Medium is the Message: The Role of Language in Interpretation

*The medium is the message*

Marshall McLuhan, 1964

*Language is like a cracked kettle on which we tap crude rhythms for bears*

*to dance to, while we long to make music that will melt the stars.*

Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, 1856

#### A cracked kettle: Demented language

My grandfather was always a quiet man. He spoke quietly and carefully, moved slowly and purposefully and his anger was a long fuse. He believed that being unwell was a sign of weakness and so did not tell anyone of the headaches that made him dizzy. They were just headaches, he thought, take some aspirin and drink some tea. Rest a bit. He tried this for weeks, until he awoke one morning unable to remember anyone's name.

My grandmother rang us early. "Something's the matter with Dad", she said without preamble, her voice carrying clearly down the line. My grandparents always called each other Mum and Dad rather than their Christian names. "What is he doing?" asked my mother. "Talking nonsense, he doesn't know who I am." I was 10 and felt that sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. I knew it was serious. By the time my mother had hung up after the short conversation with my grandmother, I was dressed and holding my baby sister, ready to put her in the car seat. We made the five-minute drive to my grandparent's house in silence.

Our local GP came quickly to the house and made a diagnosis. “A massive stroke, he is lucky to be alive”, he pronounced in his deep Scottish burr. He called an ambulance and they took my grandfather to hospital, sirens blaring. Before he left, the doctor took my mother aside. “Your father survived because he was so physically fit. He should make a good recovery. But this will affect his brain permanently, particularly later in life. There is a good chance he will suffer some form of dementia.” I listened carefully. My grandfather had smiled in recognition when my mother and I arrived at his house. Later, he had patted my head as I stood next to the ambulance while they loaded him in. But he hadn’t said a word. I was used to that, didn’t think it strange. He was a quiet man. I was 10 and I didn’t know then that my grandfather would not say my name again for 30 years.

They did not let me see him for three weeks. Three weeks of evasions and excuses that left me puzzled and afraid. I did not learn until much later that he had recognised none of his family in the aftermath of the stroke, which had made him puzzled and afraid too. When finally I was allowed to see him, his memory of me showed on his face. “There you are”, he said. “Why haven’t you been to see me before?” I was so relieved I burst into tears. “You remember me, Fa.” He was bemused. “Of course, I know you”, he said firmly.

Despite weeks of ‘cognitive therapy’, my grandfather did not regain all he had lost. He had the most trouble with names, and although he recognised us as his family members, he was often unsure of our relationship to him and also to one another. Were we daughters or granddaughters, cousins or nephews? Who was whose mother? He substituted one word for another with a similar meaning—‘gate’ for ‘door’ and ‘coat’ for ‘cardigan’ among many others. Whole phrases were different too—on meeting old friends, he would often say “Can you catch me?” which really meant “Are you about my age?” Thirty years of practice made deciphering his meaning easy. But his personality remained—he was still a quiet man.

The Scottish doctor was right, my grandfather did develop dementia. Vascular dementia, to be precise, which is unlike Alzheimer’s Disease or other forms of dementia insofar as it proceeds in a ‘stepwise fashion’. This means that there are

long periods where there is no decline, plateaus where all stays steady, and then suddenly there will be a drop in cognitive function. There are many sites on the internet that explain all this. I think I read them all during the last few years of my grandfather's life. At the time, I thought I wanted to know what to expect at the end. Looking back now, I think I was searching for my name, hoping I would hear it again.

By this time, my grandfather was 93. He had buried his wife 12 years before and had lived alone ever since. He was still a quiet man, still moving slowly and purposefully, still speaking carefully. He liked to watch the clouds scudding across the sky on windy days, and I watched them with him when I could. His short-term memory was poor, although he remembered his childhood quite well.

The final decline was swift. My mother rang me at work, and I raced to the hospital. My grandfather was delirious, suffering a high fever brought on by an infection. We sat with him for nine hours in the emergency department until he could be admitted to a ward. My grandfather was mumbling, picking at his clothes, trying to take things from imaginary shelves. In his lucid moments, I could see he was afraid. I had never seen him afraid before, and it broke my heart.

Eventually, a young Canadian intern swished the curtains aside with gusto and bounded up to take my grandfather's pulse. "Hello Stuart", she said brightly, gripping his wrist. My grandfather eyed her warily but said nothing. I was standing on the other side of the narrow bed, holding his hand. "Can you tell me who this is?" she asked, gesturing towards me. No, he can't, I thought. For 30 years he had called me 'my friend'. I looked down at my grandfather and smiled reassuringly. He looked back at me carefully, and I could see him trying desperately to remember. Then he smiled. "That's Michelle", he said, pleased. In all the long days of sorrow that were to follow, I took comfort from that one word, a poignant reduction not spoken for 30 years. He had truly remembered me at last.

My inquiry is thinking in the medium I choose to use, thinking in language that is both poetic and academic. I present a narrative from my lived experience according to the research scenarios inherent within it (Rapport, 2012, pp. 11-25), allowing me to arrive at more complex and nuanced conclusions (Richardson, 2002). I move further towards experiential truths in this chapter as I focus on dialogue between myself and others. My cathartic experience with my grandfather, learning to negotiate our relationship as a series of beginnings, of fractured phrases and highly contextualised meanings, leads me to ponder upon the nature of language as an overlapping, unifying engagement that opens up the wholeness of life.

As humans, we give much credence to names—naming things allows us to contain them, compartmentalise their qualities into something more familiar. Naming things is part of our public-ness, the reasoned sphere of life, our rational selves. Gadamer says,

In the earliest times the intimate unity of the word and the thing was so obvious that the true name was considered to be part of the bearer of the name...a name is what it is because it is what someone is called and what he answers to...it seems to belong to his being. (2004, p. 406)

And Levinas suggests that when we address the other, in a bond of relation, our address is “his invocation”, something that is not necessarily preceded by understanding. Levinas continues,

What distinguishes thought directed toward a thing from a bond with a person is that in [that person] a vocative is uttered: what is named is at the same time what is called. (1998, p. 7)

I remember my family waiting for our GP to arrive, not willing to voice our suspicions until he had made his diagnosis. Once named, the problem had a shape that allowed us to access what we already knew about strokes and what this might mean for us. For the 30 years we lived with the aftermath of the incident described above, I had many opportunities to think about language—how it works, how what we say is not always what we mean and

how this might apply to the students in my care. What are the conversational keys teachers might use that would welcome students into the community of learners? Simplifying classroom language may change its meaning and its intention. Speaking our lives in our own way requires both speaker and listener to understand the medium of the message, to step into dialogic spaces created through language and to participate in language's event.

My grandfather's gradual succumbing to dementia led me to explore the meaning of the word. The word 'dementia' comes from the Latin *demens* meaning out of one's mind and another form of the word is 'demented', with an informal meaning of "behaving irrationally due to anger, distress or excitement" (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/demented>). As technologies like Facebook, Twitter and the internet today seem to claim common platforms for our language, there may arise an uneasy irrationality. We find ourselves typing tirades and naked opinions laced with prejudices and assumptions fuelled by anger, distress or excitement. Language, always possessing a certain fluidity, seems to be changing faster than some of us can keep up with. As language fluidly changes meanings over time, the part that memory plays in the language event also changes. Our vocabulary ebbs and flows to keep pace with the tidal flow of language. Words that meant one thing during our childhood now mean something else—figurative idioms and phrases snap and swell with attributed meanings as the passing parade of current affairs seems to swallow language up and spit it out. Parts of language lose their original meanings while other linguistic events are foregrounded. Words are jumbled together—'fake news', 'political spill' and 'random person' are a few examples. The fluidity of language mirrors the textual, fluid Self as it moves through the curvature of Time and responds to the salient present.

As teachers in the classroom, we experience the twisting of language into knots that we have to unravel. Words such as 'proficiency', 'capability' and 'standard' are given new meanings as they are slotted into unfamiliar

contexts. This torsion of language into contexts that are in many ways artificial, gives rise to a tension between the teacher and student who wish to speak their lives in their own way and in their own time. This twisted language seems to be in contrast with using language that has been arrived at through the opening of dialogic spaces and is threaded with common understandings. Dialogue allows ambiguity, welcomes complexity and nourishes multiple stories as it pays attention to the act of listening to another honourably (Bohm, 1996; Rapport & Harthill, 2012).

The teacher, wearing her public face, greets the naked consciousness of the child and provides a still calm point in the community of learners where “the whole of spoken language surrounding the child”, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, “snaps him up like a whirlwind” (1964, cited in Bakewell, 2017, p. 232). This whirlwind of spoken language, gyring around the child, may seem to him irrational, full of anger and excitement. The constant barrage of sound may send his consciousness reeling under its bombardment. The susurrations of classroom chatter can upend the equilibrium of some children—it literally sends them out of their minds.

Kyle is a small boy for his age. He moves jerkily through the classroom with downcast eyes. Every morning when he enters the classroom, his body tenses as if expecting a blow. Kyle sits behind all the other children, his eyes darting from side to side. His class teachers report that he seems to have trouble listening and that classroom instructions have to be repeated many times. Kyle works intently when the classroom is quiet, finishing his tasks quickly. During classroom discussions Kyle’s eyes become glassy and unfocussed and he often says something inappropriate or physically pushes other children away, out of his space.

Kyle has difficulties in the playground too. He and his friends run helter-skelter across the oval, playing ‘chasings’. Suddenly Kyle becomes angry and grabs a classmate, throwing him to the ground. Attempts by the other children to remonstrate with him only fuel his anger, causing him to shout and scream with

fury. Then Kyle runs away from adults and children alike, flinging himself against walls and doors all the while still screaming with anger. These outbursts become more frequent as the school year progresses.

One day Kyle enters the classroom after such an incident, sweating and red with fury. The other children come in chattering to each other before taking books from the classroom shelves and settling themselves to read. Kyle puts his hands over his ears. "The pages! I can hear the pages!" he shouts. "Like when I'm outside, I can hear the wind, too many people saying my name! Everyone is always saying my name!" He becomes more agitated, paces back and forth. "All the time! Everyone talking all the time!" Kyle holds his head in his hands, shakes it side to side. "Too much noise!" he screams. By now the classroom is silent as the other children watch Kyle, aghast at his behaviour. Kyle's teacher messages me for assistance via her mobile phone and when I arrive, Kyle is still pacing up and down with his hands over his ears. Now he is crying, his mouth a rictus of anguish. The text message from Kyle's teacher reads, 'Kyle v angry and screaming there is too much noise'. I have brought some large fluffy earmuffs with me. I catch Kyle's eye and gesture to the earmuffs in my hand. Kyle takes them and puts them on immediately, his face smoothing out, suffusing with relief. He gives me a 'thumbs up' and moves to the bookshelves to choose a book. He likes those earmuffs so much that I leave them with him and later buy another pair to have on hand, just in case I meet another child like Kyle.

Kyle seems to be bombarded with the constant chatter of the classroom—his naked consciousness violated by noise. Is he unable to participate in the public sphere of reasoned life or to be welcomed into the community of learners because he is unable to articulate his perceptions and emotions regarding noise? Even though his teacher opens dialogic spaces for Kyle to step into, does the endless murmuring of background noise upend his equilibrium so that he is unable to step into those spaces opened for him? Perhaps Kyle could not participate in the event of language when his private face was so exposed by his anguish at too much noise. After the incident with the earmuffs, Kyle's classroom teacher spoke to Kyle's grandparents and discovered that Kyle was also very sensitive to noise at home. One of Kyle's



older siblings reported that when Kyle was a toddler, firecrackers had been set off in a circle around him, causing him great distress. She said that Kyle didn't like bright lights either, that his reaction to bright lights was much the same as his reaction to too much noise.

Memory is a key to understanding our experience of consciousness, learning and sense of identity. When my grandfather's memory was impaired, his ability to re-learn old concepts and aspects of his personality changed. Memory might be seen as glue that holds us in the present moment, allowing us to reflect on the past and plan for the future. The continuity of my grandfather's memory had been disrupted, upended, forever changed by the stroke that kidnapped my name. Might Kyle be like my grandfather—snapped up in the whirlwind of language surrounding him, unable to make sense of what is being said because he is unable to find the threads of his memory? Neither my grandfather nor Kyle can speak his life. The lifeworld written on my grandfather's face became harder to read. Our conversations with him became a jumble of threads, with half-finished thoughts and truncated phrases. Sitting with my grandfather, watching the clouds scudding across the sky, seemed to open a window in his mind and a favourite conversation could begin.

"No two the same", he said, gesturing at the clouds. I smiled. This was the usual opening of a conversation that was about my grandfather's fascination with the human face. "That's because the wind blows the clouds, Fa. The clouds are vapour and the wind changes their shape as they blow across the sky." He nodded, smiling. He remembered this conversation too. It showed on his face. "No two the same. Even dogs, animals, they all look the same...furry, whiskers, y'know." I waited. "But people...always different. Even twins, not exactly the same." He placed his hand in the middle of his face. "Twins, like a mirror, but not the same. Even the Chinese, they all look the same, but then you look closer and...no two the same. Amazing, that."

Conversations like this seem to happen in a transfigurative space, where language moves from its etymological origins to more fluid, nuanced, individualised meanings. Conversations with my grandfather became occasions of sympathy and interpretation through the medium of a co-constructed common language. Gadamer also talks about language as the medium of interpretation and sympathy rather than empathy (2004, p. 385). During our talks together, prejudice and assumptions are laid aside as my grandfather and I move towards a shared understanding, trying to speak our lived experiences in the world as we make shared memories. Gadamer sees conversations like this as an occasion, a falling together of possibilities. Such a conversation is not conducted, insofar as it is not planned or trammelled into a specific course, but is a fluid, boundless dialogue full of open possible spaces mediated through the event of language (p. 385).

A conversation may consist not only in the spoken words but also in the spaces between them—as we lead through the words, we speak to another, we are also led by the listening that we do. “No one knows in advance what will ‘come out’ of a conversation. Understanding or its failure is like an event that happens to us”, comments Gadamer, going on to say, with uncharacteristic firmness, “that this whole process is verbal” (2004, p. 385). Bell speaks about the act of listening as an honouring of another, how those who speak must also be humble enough to listen. How might this idea of honourable listening align with Gadamer’s notion about a conversation being exclusively verbal? What might such honourable listening look like?

Gallagher uses the term “hermeneutical listening” (1992, p. 122) to describe a listening that is also learning, and he sees it as an essential part of language. For me, “hermeneutical listening” holds all the tensions between our traditions, interpretations and perceptions in our head simultaneously, acknowledging them before consciously laying them aside. This listening happens in our hidden sphere of consciousness, our private face, while our public face engages in the spoken word, the batting back and forth of phrases

that may lead to common understandings. If, as Gallagher says, “language allows me to confront the unfamiliar” (p. 105) perhaps it is in the spaces between the words, in honourable listening, that we can begin to make sense of the unfamiliar confrontation that has occurred in the event of spoken language.

Any conversation may be seen as a mediation between past and present—as we engage in dialogue with another, our individual history hovers behind our words. Participants in a dialogue who are honourable listeners and reasoned speakers may become mediums for a process of effecting change, creating a unique space of conversation filled with the salient event of language. Language exists only in the salient present, provoking a response that is a response to the past—words disappear the moment they are uttered, our memory transforms them into dialogue. Gallagher, like others, uses the word ‘transform’ when he speaks about the relation between past and present (1992, p. 95). In any dialogue, as we lay our prejudices and assumptions aside, we also suspend our history.

A teacher who is reflective, who understands her part in the tradition of teaching and learning, suspends her history as she prepares to meet the child where he is in the world at that moment. She opens dialogic spaces for him to step into, aware that there are a myriad of paths that the dialogue could follow and that endless possibilities are part of the tradition of education. Such a teacher allows the tradition of education to work through her, recognising that without the public sphere of reasoned life that is the classroom, the student could not be welcomed into a community of learners. Gallagher comments that this reflective awareness is

...especially critical for the teacher because, if she fails to remain open to and aware of the effective force of tradition, she runs the risk of being captivated by dogmatic interpretations and closing off the possibility of learning in both herself and her students. (1992, p. 95)

I wonder if we might use the word ‘transfigure’ to amplify the meaning of ‘transform’ when we talk about the mediation between past and present? Earlier, I speak of the conversations between my grandfather and myself as moving into transfigurative spaces threaded with sympathy and interpretation. In a classroom, if a teacher remains open to traditions while also meeting the child where they are, allowing him to speak his life in his own way and his own time, perhaps the word transfigure might better describe the artistry of teaching. Transfigure means to “transform into something more beautiful or elevated” and an exploration of the word’s etymology illuminates its history as a composite word made from *trans*, meaning to bring across, and *figura*, a figure (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/transfigure>).

This word, transfigure, might be closely related in meaning to mediation that happens when a teacher and student engage in a dialogue that exposes the lifeworlds that their faces disclose. For me, transfigure illuminates the possibility that when we engage in a dialogue, we may be able to bring ourselves across with all our suspended history into a space where we can walk in another’s shoes, search for an accord about something, and move towards the common understandings that Gadamer termed a “fusion of horizons” (2004, p. 305). “Reaching an understanding” says Gadamer, “is...always: reaching an understanding about something” (2004, p. 168).

In a classroom, the teacher may select her language carefully, allowing the tradition of education to work through her, as she welcomes the child to the public space. She might suspend her judgements behind her public face and let language flow, opening spaces for the child to step into. This flow of language that nourishes dialogue is the reasoned space, the reality of the classroom. Gallagher remarks, “To engage ourselves with reality is to engage in a dialogue; to learn is to engage the language that surrounds us” (1992, p. 116). A child like Kyle may not be able to engage with the language that surrounds him if the constant chatter upends his equilibrium, if his language

is one of fear and he is unable to enter into a dialogue. My grandfather's loss of memory led to truncated conversations and he found it difficult to engage in any conversation when there were many voices in a room. I wonder—if educational experience is always linguistic experience, what implications does this have for those who speak a different language rather than the dominant one of the classroom? Kyle speaks a different language to the one used in his classroom, his language appears to foreground gesture and silence over verbal interaction. His face shows relief when he is able to block out the noise of those around him and settle to completing his tasks. How can teachers listen honourably to those students who prefer silence to speech, gesture to spoken word?

Behind and beyond these questions is a wondering about what language is. Language seems to be more than the sum of its parts, it may be spoken and silent, and it exists both in the reasoned public space and the hidden sphere of consciousness. We have already read Gadamer's comment that the whole process of understanding is verbal, and he goes on to suggest that it is in speaking that language communicates what is true—the locus of language is the spoken word (2004, p. 411). Perhaps language manifests itself through the whole individual, his gestures, gait and the unique way his body displaces the air around him as he moves through Space and Time. As teacher and student gently adjust each other's public faces, they may do so not only through spoken dialogue but accompanied by the expressions and body language that signify care and respect. Kyle's mental distress is written on his body, in the tension of his limbs and the rictus of anguish on his face. I read his expression and his bearing then adjust my public posture accordingly. When I spoke with my grandfather, he attempted with his gestures to demonstrate the words he had lost. These "extralinguistic" features, as Gadamer terms them (2004, p. 413), appear to comprise an individual's unique language, offering a glimpse into the essence of his character.

Spoken language may be an abstraction that disappears into the air around us, yet the ephemerality of spoken words belies their ability to wound another, to sever ties and to kill relationships. Technologies that claim to be common platforms for language seem to use words, both spoken and written, to pierce our fragile public faces and wound our private Selves. When we find ourselves firing off opinions and closing off spaces for dialogue rather than opening them, perhaps it is time to re-orient ourselves towards the creation of shared meanings and understandings for, as Gadamer points out, our linguistic incarnation is not different from the mind that conceives it (2004, p. 414). We may debase and elevate ourselves by the words we speak, our opinions and beliefs seem to move through our bodies like blood through our veins. If a teacher no longer strives to search for shared meanings with her students, if she becomes captivated by dogmatic interpretations, using language that does not meet the child where they are or does not allow the child to speak his life, she may lose her sense of intelligent vocation as she can no longer see the past that lies before her—tradition and history no longer work through her to inform her relationship with the child. A kind of ossifying may occur and harden language and its public faces. Spoken words may become crude rhythms that mystify and perplex teacher and student, a cracked kettle of demented language.

### *The verbum interius: A way to melt the stars?*

By language we speak, by gesture or by our silence we may elevate, mediate or debase ourselves. Our being-in-the-world, our incarnation, is linguistic and as one with the mind that conceives it. Language can be viewed as another example of the interpretive part-whole relationship, for language is only a part of our whole fluid Self yet it does describe and proscribe our thoughts and our embodiment in the world. We see ourselves with our eyes using a mirror and language mirrors our thoughts, legitimising the things we see about us to have a place in the publicness of reasoned life and our private

sphere of consciousness simultaneously. Gadamer speaks of language rising along with thought, recollected through memory and then “the real movement of thought now begins: the mind hurries from one thing to the other, turns this way and that, considering this and that, and seeks the perfect expression of its thoughts” (2004, p. 424) through the naming of something in language.

It might be easy to stop with the naming of something, to say perhaps a name is all there is to a thing, a thought, an idea. To do so, to both begin and end with one word, one name, effectively puts a stopper in thought. When the doctor told my family that my grandfather had suffered a stroke, the word named and shaped an event, the word was a beginning step of my family’s journey into what the word ‘stroke’ meant for us. The word stroke began our thinking, it lay a possible path to journey along, and the adults recollected through memory what that word had meant for others in the past and what it might mean for us in the present. We used that word to make meaning from a life-changing event—the word stroke did not signify the end of a journey for us. Naming what had happened provided an impetus to begin our understanding. Perhaps my wonderings here are about differences between words and labels? One definition of ‘label’ is a classifying phrase or name applied to a person or thing, especially one that is inaccurate or restrictive (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/label>) and using language with the intent to label stops the flow of thought and closes off spaces for dialogue. The process of composing a life as a fluid Self means we are always in the midst of our experiences, so labelling someone as “a student” places him into a category, a limited space that is stable and fixed (Wiebe, 2012, p. 34). Such categorising does not take into account the student’s uniqueness, his fluid Self and naked consciousness.

In a classroom the language of labels and categories may keep teacher and student closed off from one another, unable to meet each other where they are. Labelling may twist words into unfamiliar shapes and contexts, leading

to a bogging down in dogmatic interpretations and a turning away from conversation into a demonstration of what Gadamer calls “compelling proofs” (1997, p. 290). Gadamer alludes to the dangers of labelling when he speaks about using what he calls “technical terms” and says,

In contrast to the living meaning of the words in spoken language...a technical term is a word that has become ossified. Using a word as a technical term is an act of violence against language. (2004, p. 415)

Labels are complete, finite ways of naming—they close off spaces for dialogue, leaving no room for the making of living meaning through spoken language.

Being mindful of the spoken word as incomplete, as a constantly unfolding beginning rather than a static ending, we may see that the language of things does not truly describe their substance. Unfolding language extends everything within human experience in the process of human becoming. Our dialogues with ourselves and with one another, a shifting formation of how we are othered to our world, encompasses everything about us. Our world is more than we can contain, and we attempt to use language that might bring about an emergence of our presence in our relationships with one another. We struggle together to reach an understanding of our Self and others, seeking interpretive ways to address each other as living becomings (Wiebe, 2012, p. 37).

In a classroom, a teacher who opens up dialogic spaces and allows the student to speak his life in his own way may initiate a “linguistic becoming” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 290) in the child as she opens spaces through questioning and welcomes him into the community of learners. As the teacher allows the child to speak his life, the eventfulness of such a “linguistic becoming” is nourished. This eventfulness centres on the spoken words between teacher and student, yet a “linguistic becoming” may also be the evolution of the child’s capacity to become part of the tradition of teaching and learning. As the child builds his capacity to step into the tradition of teaching and learning,



there might be a change in his body, his gestures, he may learn when to stay silent and let others step into speaking spaces he has left open for them.

A linguistic becoming, stepping into open spaces of conversations, may offer entry into places where teacher and student can “feel the texture of their strangeness” (Wiebe, 2012, p. 39). As teacher and student move towards shared meanings, their dialogue may not make any attempt to synthesise difference or disagreement, instead their gentle adjusting of each other’s public faces through conversation allows each “the freedom to reveal their expressive potential and to be surprised by what emerges from the exchange” (p. 39). This valuing of difference, a dissonance within the harmony of dialogue (Heß, 2012, p. 30), has the capacity to open up history and context, offering the student possibilities to see himself within the historical context of teaching and learning. In their initial encounters, teacher and student feel the texture of their strangeness as their relationship brims with gaps of unknowing, *lacunae* of possibility. Through the event of language, teacher and student come to a better knowing of each other’s textural uniqueness as they orient themselves towards understanding.

If our beliefs and opinions flow like blood through our veins, perhaps there is an inner word that expresses an essential thread of character. It was St. Augustine who first wrote about the *verbum interius*, the inner word that comes from God and is in effect our conscience, the still small voice of calm that we speak about in connection with the formation of a fluid, unfinished Self. It is the still small voice of calm that speaks to the prophet Elijah during his exile in the desert cave and it is this voice that can give rise to the epiphanic moment when we stand outside of the salient present and are aware of ourselves moving through the *ouroboros* of Time. For whatever can be sensed, or felt, or thought, or dreamed, there is language. The flow of language, the spill of words, has the capacity to overflow as it describes the human condition. Wiebe says, “In dialogue, the interlocutors try to express a

way of feeling, not so much what he/she feels, but the experience of time felt like this, time felt in relation to one another” (2012, p. 41).

John Arthos, in his book *The Inner Word in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics* (2009), meditates on Gadamer’s ideas about the *verbum interius*. Arthos talks about language never ceasing to re-invent itself, in a recursive movement between word and thought. Arthos interprets Gadamer’s ideas about the inner word as an “intimate unity between thought and speech” and with Gadamer he believes that this is the “essential mystery of language” (2009, p. 358). Arthos alludes to ideas about permitting traditions to work through us in our pedagogical relationships and the initiation by a teacher of a “linguistic becoming” in the student by opening up spaces through questioning (p. 353). Arthos points to the idea of language bringing more than we can contain when he says,

The facticity of language is like a fly caught in the spider’s web that vibrates the whole. The event of speech sets the web vibrating at every point of anticipation and recollection, and in every possibility, even that which cannot be yet expressed. This is the uncanny capacity of language to extend the birthright of everything that is within human experience. (2009, p. 353)

Arthos poses the idea that “the best that individual consciousness can do is to become aware of its working relation to the panorama of history” (2009, p. 353). As we speak our lives in our own way, telling ourselves and others our narrative history, we have the opportunity to become part of the whole narrative history of humanity. Our recollections and memories give an account of the reason why we are who we are in the world and from where our public face might arise. My grandmother and I recollected our time together at Honeywood through the oral-aural event of language, entering into the implicit contract of spoken-and-heard that is a conversation. The immanence of language expressed through recollections and memory courses through our blood, seeking to explore the constant fruition of everyday life,

the individual response to the salient present. Arthos says, “The word...as an historical agency that flows out through time and culture...is a model of human-being-in-the-world” (p. 355).

In a classroom, the teacher meets the child, the teacher wearing her public face and the child his naked consciousness. The teacher encourages the student’s “linguistic becoming” and welcomes him into her community of learners. She opens the possibility for dialogue with her student and enters into a contract of spoken-and-heard, spoken lives and honourable listening, that might reflect the doubling of human nature—our public and private faces are like the convex and concave sides of a curve, an *ogee* expressed through, as Arthos puts it, “words that are always between their own presence and absence in an inspir(al)ing journey” (2009, p. 356).

Every history, every culture, hovers behind the teacher and student as they explore the spaces of dialogue, seeking to create shared meanings and understandings. As teacher and student gently adjust each other’s public faces over time, they may begin to see a shared past that lies before them, a culture that is pliant and infinitely formable. Through the unfolding spill of words in conversation, teacher and student explore the similarities and differences of their perspective histories. The teacher, wearing her public face and attending to the thing itself, the conversation with her student, turns the conversation into an occasion through an interpretive approach to dialogue, an approach taking into account that “as the nature of experience is expressed through dialogue, so the self is becoming human through dialogue” (Wiebe, 2012, p. 44).

Through their conversation, teacher and student may begin to glimpse a cycle of emanation and return implicit in their particular shared contract of spoken life and honourable listening that carries the whole language along with it. As they attempt to lay aside prejudices and assumptions, laying down a path towards shared meaning as they walk upon it, the dialogue may

enliven them and deepen their understanding. It is this enlivening of the person in the event, the dialogue, which may be an important part of the idea of the *verbum interius*.

Elijah hears the still, small voice of calm, the *verbum interius*, feels its resonance and is enlivened by it to see clearly the past that lays before him, to glimpse the weight of meaning behind the words. If a teacher's embodiment in the world is one of altruism, of *caritas*, she may show her public face as one that expresses an intelligent, virtuous vocation through the event of language. Such an embodiment would recognise Arthos' interpretation that

the word is the expression of the whole experience of the person, and more than this, of the community behind the person, and of its history stretching backward and forward into the oblivion of time and infinite possibility. (2009, p. 359)

The notion of altruism, the concern for the wellbeing of others and its importance for teaching, and *agape*, brotherly love, are behind the interactions a teacher has with her students. Altruism propels a particular teacher into her vocational public life and *agape* fuels her desire to exercise her ethical imagination and gently adjust her students' public faces through the event of language. Now I introduce another word—*caritas*—into my wonderings. *Caritas* is defined as “Christian love of humankind, charity” ([en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/caritas](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/caritas)) and brings with it all the weighted history of Roman Catholicism. There is a close relationship of meaning between *caritas* and *agape*—both are concerned with a love for one's peers and humankind in general. How might *caritas* and *agape* align with the *verbum interius*?

The notion of *caritas* comes to us through St. Augustine who sees *caritas* as an “epistemology of faith” and “the focus of Christian philosophy”, says Bryant K. Owens in *Love in Interpretation: The Value of Augustine's Hermeneutic in an Age of Secular Epistemology* (2019). Owens defines *caritas* as “the spirit of

interpretation central to St. Augustine's thought", terming it "intelligent charity" (p. 12). Perhaps a teacher, exercising her intelligent vocation, also has an orientation towards "intelligent charity"? Owens raises the idea that Gadamer's ideas of *Dasein* and *Miteinander* have within them an a priori orientation towards care, as seeking to be with another presupposes a degree of care towards him (p. 26). My earlier thoughts about altruism and *agape* find an echo and resonance here. As a teacher orients herself in the world, finding a meaningful dwelling place in an altruistic expression of her profession, she gently adjusts her students' public faces with a charitable, respectful touch.

Owens connects Gadamer with St. Augustine throughout his work, particularly the *verbum interius*. "Gadamer expands the *verbum interius* as the universality of hermeneutics in community of understanding one another through shared conversations" (2019, p. 27) creating space for the union of thought and word as an occasion arising in the mind, rather than St. Augustine's notion of the *verbum interius* arising from God. Teleological humanism may be seen as Gadamer's own tradition and history, and it is this orientation that informs his idea of the *verbum*, the 'word', as something that joins "the word as the bearer of history and culture with the word as the product of judgement in the mind" (Arthos, 2009, p. 356). It may be that this idea of the word as a pivot point between our intellect and the world is one of Gadamer's unique contributions to our interpretation of lived experience. The interacting performance of intellect, word and world is a balance that can bring forth rich and enlivening meanings when we engage in dialogue.

To engage with another in genuine dialogue is to be aware of our assumptions and the weight of our history, making a conscious effort to recognise our prejudices and then lay them aside as we move towards shared meaning making. We lay aside our assumptions using our intellect, our capacity for transfigurative imaginative reflection, yet in a teacher's conversations with her students she brings more than her intellect to the dialogue. She speaks her life and theirs with respect and sincerity, making a

conscious choice to seek an accord with a child. Such a teacher begins her vocation because of her altruistic orientation in the world and she arranges her public face accordingly. As she strives to connect with a child, to hold open conversational spaces for him to step into, she becomes aware that meeting the child in his current situation is more than she can contain.

The teacher may realise that this child cannot step into spaces held open for him, instead his equilibrium is upended and his naked consciousness trembles as it is exposed to the world. In such moments of angst and difficulty, a teacher who sees herself as a vocational educator may choose, as van Manen puts it, to show “a willingness to live the language of life more deeply, to become truly who we are when we refer to ourselves, for example, as teachers or parents” (1996, p. 59). Such a teacher steps carefully and deliberately into a place of vulnerability, bravely risking her public face by exposing her private one. If the risk is taken to make herself vulnerable, perhaps her student may begin to connect with the conversation.

Altruism and *agape* are present in the teacher’s intelligent vocational engagement with her student, in her intellectual focus on a dialogue. In her willingness to seek consensus, to find an accord with her student, the teacher must confront exposing her private face, making herself vulnerable so that her student might feel safe. We have seen that, for Gadamer, consensus cannot be overthrown, that all communication begins with a willingness to find common ground. The other word Gadamer uses when he speaks about consensus is ‘accord’, its etymological kernel meaning ‘from the heart’. It is in the moment when the teacher moves away from intellect and begins to speak her life from her heart that the possibility of a truth being brought forth is foregrounded and with this truth comes the opportunity for both the teacher and her student to expand their understanding, perhaps their very being. The teacher chooses *caritas* out of her desire to speak her truth, and this choice places the demand upon her to deliberately exercise her will, to infuse *caritas* with the *verbum interius*, her still small voice of calm, so that her lifeworld is

written on her face, giving rise to an occasion where the student may feel safe enough to step into welcoming spaces held open for him.

Entering into a conversation where vulnerability and *caritas* are foregrounded can allow for every possibility to be explored in the event that is language. van Manen says,

It is pedagogically important for the child's growth and learning that the child knows that he or she means something 'special' for his or her teacher. The experience of being a teacher manifests itself in having children on one's mind and wondering what one may expect to become of them. (1992, p. 57)

It is through the relationship developed in language, in spoken word and honourable listening, that a child may come to know that he is special to his teacher. Gadamer says that we are our conversations—this does not diminish us, rather it allows our immanence to be recognised and to flourish. A teacher's conscience, her *verbum interius*, and her orientation towards *caritas* may give rise to a multiplicity of opportunities for dialogue with her students. Such dialogues might open spaces for everyone to speak their lives with their whole person, every person speaking in language that connects their unique being with the whole tradition of teaching and learning.

It seems that there will always be a tension between the medium of language and the messages we wish to convey with it. If the teacher engages in dialogue with a commitment to explore common understandings, to seek an accord with her students, then the tension becomes a creative, productive opportunity to bring something new into being. The spoken word has infinite possibilities that give rise to openness of meanings, endless points of view and ever-richer interpretations. A teacher who glimpses the infinite, manifold and variegated nature of the classroom and the world begins to discern that the *verbum interius* and *caritas* are integral to each other, nourishing the falling together of possibilities that might lead to a superabundance—an illimitable

interchange of spoken words and honourable listening infused with respect,  
sincerity and love.



## Chapter 7

### Twisted Words: The Professor and Little Bo Peep

#### The Professor: Between written and spoken words

The room was buzzing. We were all gathered to hear him speak, a professor whose work was hailed as ‘The Big Thing’ in education. When he arrived, he was dressed casually, open shirt and loose trousers. He sauntered to the podium to begin, stopping briefly to chat with his many assistants, all of whom seemed to be young women, about matters that made him smile but made them look very serious indeed. I thought of the song lyric by Carly Simon, “You walked into the party like you were walking onto a yacht.” He appeared very sure of himself, this professor.

I had read the Professor’s work and thought it could be valuable to students, especially those who struggled with the demands of school. The Professor’s emphasis on explicit teaching, explaining to students exactly what was expected of them in the classroom, resonated with my teaching practice—students who understood the task before them were more likely to step into dialogical spaces created for them by their teacher because they had more confidence, they felt safer within the learning community. The Professor’s focus on a specifically named purpose for the lesson and a clear outline of what success looked like for a student might open a space to begin a dialogue. I settled myself in my chair, eager to hear what the Professor would say to me and the 500 other people hushed and waiting for his first word.

“Class sizes!” the Professor thundered, fixing us all with a stern gaze. “Class sizes make no difference to student outcomes! None!” He eyed us beadily. “Growth Mindset! Nonsense! Nothing to do with how students will achieve in the classroom! How do I know? Because I have analysed over eight hundred studies of student progress and achievement! Here’s what works...” and with a casual

flash of his laser pointer, a large screen illuminated behind him. Over two hundred and fifty aspects of school life and their corresponding effects on student progress streamed across the Professor's face, making him look like a prisoner of his own numbers, before he stepped neatly to one side.

The Professor spoke all day, in three 90-minute sessions, combining the zeal of a Victorian-era preacher with the suave charm of a talk show host. The screen with the 250 statistics hovered behind him. Not one item of data spoke about a child's wellbeing, or how a child such as Campbell who violates others with his impulsive acts becomes disillusioned with school as a place that dishonours him. Teacher and student relationships were placed very high on the list, in the top 10 of the 250. But they were not number one. And in the midst of my growing disappointment at the Professor's shift away from humanity towards statistics, I realised that any list would be flawed for me unless relationships were at the very top.

Language has the capacity to be an event that can carry us anywhere we choose to venture, a constant unfolding and enfolding recursive celebration of our humanity. The implicit contract of spoken-and-heard, oral and aural, that we enter into when we begin a dialogue places upon us the ethical responsibility of speaking and listening in a way that honours another. We speak our lives and meet another where they are in their lifeworld, laying our prejudices aside and narrating our past and present simultaneously as they lie before us.

I continue to re-present narratives from my lived experience according to the research scenarios within them. I went to hear the Professor speak, ready to uphold my part in the implicit contract of spoken and heard, ready to lay my prejudices aside and honourably listen to the Professor's ideas conveyed through his spoken words. I wanted his words to draw me in, to give me encouragement—in short, I wished for inspiration. When I read the Professor's book, his written words had appeared humble, careful, disclaiming any absolute knowledge, instead making suggestions about the

possible meanings of all the data he had collated. I was seduced by his attentiveness to possibilities, his modesty as he carefully put forward his propositions about how aspects of school life can affect student learning, and his focus on the student at the centre of teaching and learning.

As the Professor spoke, I began to feel uneasy and my previous understandings of the Professor's work became unsteady. The signs and resonances I thought I had discovered and explored in his written text grew tremulous. The longer he spoke, the more I wondered—in my eagerness to find common ground—did I overlay my experience and obscure the Professor's intent? Are all textual interpretations of equal value? I thought I had found the Professor's private face when I read his work but the public face he showed when he spoke to the hushed room was very different. I continued my attempts at listening honourably, trying to reconcile the Professor's voice speaking now with the voice I thought I had discerned through his written words. But my mind kept wandering, straying into questions—how do I decide which of the Professor's voices is his true voice? Can we ever trust that we have found someone's true voice?

The Professor spoke on and I began to realise that while I had come to listen to him ready to enter into a contract of spoken and heard, he had entered a contract of telling. Perhaps the Professor was not trusting us to enter into a conversational contract with him, although he did pause intermittently to take questions, because he may not be searching for consensus or accord. The Professor's bold oratory seemed to me to be concealing his private face behind an invited public one. I emerged from his day-long talk into a mellifluous grey dusk feeling heavy and fatigued. I walked the winter streets and wondered how my students would react if I spent all day telling rather than opening up conversational spaces for them to step into. Does such monological telling harden our public faces into masks and make no room for our private face to emerge? Teacher and student might become prisoners of their assumptions, trapped in their prejudices and

traditions. We would be concealed from each other, unable to speak our lives in an authentic way.

Gallagher deals with the idea of conversation containing risks in his book *Hermeneutics and Education* (1992, p. 307) in the chapter “Radical Hermeneutics and Educational Theory”. A through-line in this chapter is the idea of play, a plurality of meanings that enfold and unfold through every conversation, as our beings are held within language (p. 279-80), and through possibilities open to find our public face. If a teacher and student open themselves to each other, gently adjusting each other’s public face, the artistry of teaching and learning is foregrounded. An interpretive conversation becomes productive, as neither teacher nor student reproduce each other’s spoken words. The teacher acquiesces to traditions and history working through her to offer the student an opportunity to step into the larger community of teaching and learning.

The student may begin to approach his understanding of this larger community in the place where he is, where his naked consciousness finds itself at this moment in time. Might the only place we know ourselves to be, be our hidden sphere of consciousness, our *verbum interius*? Listening to the Professor, feeling increasingly uneasy and my understanding of his work becoming tremulous, I began to turn inward, to ask myself questions about my intent when I read his written words now, as I focus on myself as a signifying reader and wonder whether my signifying has altered the significance of the Professor’s text. I am faced with what Gallagher calls “the indeterminacy of interpretation” (p. 283).

For some weeks afterwards, the Professor’s telling percolated through my mind. I revisited his book, resolving to begin it afresh, recognising and laying aside my eagerness to find resonance with the Professor. I felt myself to be indeterminate, unfinished and my thoughts unformed. I began reading from where I found myself, a place of indeterminacy, a space where there were no

finished meanings. Yet I found I could not read the Professor's written words without his spoken telling skittering through my awareness, like a poorly tuned radio. I put down the book, frustrated with my attempts to be mindful, to be aware only of the moment before me. Outside my office window, a blue wren alighted on the sill. The bird was close enough for me to see the light in its black eyes, the sun glinting off the brilliant blue feathers on its head. I smiled into the tiny black eyes like an old friend, blue wrens being one of my favourite birds. And for a long moment I stood outside myself, becoming aware of a meaning beyond meaning.

I like blue wrens as a species of bird, yet at that moment this particular wren was a mystery to me, another consciousness brushing against my own. I had no way of knowing if I had ever seen this wren before or would see it again. I saw this wren with the overlay of memory, with my past laying before me. All the wrens I had ever seen were here, now, in this wren on the windowsill. This wren has done nothing in and of itself that makes me smile in recognition, it is my recollection of all the times I have seen blue wrens before and my happiness at seeing them that gives rise to my smile. Perhaps a kernel of tension about "indeterminacy of interpretation" lies here, in this *lacuna* between past and present? The constant oscillation of a fluid Self between perception, memory and imagination leads to a play of unfolding and enfolding meanings. Gallagher says,

play is not one form of experience among others; it is the principle of every experience, "the play of the world". Interpretation itself is a way of situating ourselves with the abyss—the play of indeterminate meanings. (1992, p. 284)

Unless I enable my past listening of the Professor's telling to speak through me as memory, might I be closing off something of significance as I now read his words? How can I put aside old thoughts that prevail if I turn away from them? Bohm reminds me—if I turn away from those old thoughts and do not recognise their existence, even if I reflect upon my reading, perhaps "the assumptions are doing the looking" (1996, p. 70)?

These old thoughts, recollections, may be the prejudices and assumptions to be laid aside before I can step into any space the Professor has opened in his text. My personal signifiers, my individual part of the thinking and conversation with the Professor, might need to be put to one side, in order to see the whole in a better way, in truer proportion. Doing so may give rise to the existence of possibilities, an opening towards the unfolding-enfolding nature of play. We might also acknowledge in such an orientation towards enfoldment that all conversations are imperfect. My conversation with the Professor's text is entwined with my fluid Self and will always remain unfinished. Similarly, those conversations I have with my students in the classroom will always remain unfinished, and it may be up to me to recognise and acknowledge this unfinishedness, this "ambiguous imperfect conversation" (Gallagher, 1992, p. 288) as perfect.

In our conversations, my students and I endeavour to open up dialogical spaces for each other, gently adjusting our public faces as we speak truths that will set us free, enable us to find that face that reveals our essential thread of character to the other. Until we have faces that transcend how we are in any given moment, those faces that may reveal our essential thread of character, we cannot appreciate the vast "plurality of fictions" (p. 285), a nourishing wellspring that "overflows into the streets, houses and workplaces of everyday human existence" (p. 285). If I approach my students as an unfinished becoming and expect them also to be in the process of becoming, of finding their face, then my teaching practice begins to orient itself towards the Self as a whole—body, mind, soul and spirit.

Sarah K. Mackenzie, in her essay "Whispered (Im)Perfection: Poetry as Relational Reverberation" speaks about her teaching practice centring on the Self, allowing herself "to be imperfect and whole" (2012, p. 88). Mackenzie discusses her teaching practice as emerging from a greater acceptance of herself as an imperfect practitioner and as she allows herself to be more present in her relationships with students, she lays aside her expectations of

perfection. She says, “I have begun to accept myself, and my students, as multi-faceted beings who are imperfect, unpredictable and wonderful” (p. 89). Like Mackenzie, as I seek to connect with my students, offering what I have rather than worrying about what I should be doing, I find myself moving into presence, entering a mindful arena of possibilities. The fluidity of lived experience, situated in relationships, offers rich ground for interpretive, expressive interactions through the event of language. Mackenzie says,

Our experiences are a reflection of our imperfection, but they are also an expression of ourselves as living beings—imperfect and beautiful, negotiating within an unpredictable and amazing world. Moving beyond certainty and silence, to share ourselves, our experiences warts and all, is an act of love as we reach out to another in acceptance, moving toward possibility. (2012, p. 102)

The Japanese have a term for appreciating the beauty in the imperfection, impermanence and incompleteness of life. This term is *wabi-sabi*. It recognises that all facets of life are transient, will pass away, even those thoughts or ideas that may be of significance to us in the salient present will elide into the curvature of Time and might be forgotten, or their significance may fade into memory—signifiers that may become part of our private faces. In a classroom where everyone is welcomed into a community of learners, there are always constraints, imbalances in power and an “undoing of the positions of others” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 290). These constraints may be unintentional, contained in the gestures and the silences between words of both teacher and student. Even a teacher who speaks her life in her own way and in her own time and allows her students to do the same does so alongside the risk of conversation that gives rise to the unintended making of meanings. What we think we are teaching is not always what children are learning—the classroom is “open to a plurality of indeterminate interpretations” (p. 291). Does our imagination open up a space for us to transcend conversational constraints? In my teaching life, my imagination gives me a possible window into another’s mind and heart, as it foregrounds possibilities and similarities between myself and my students.

Through the conversational gambit of question-and-answer I seek to open up multiple spaces for my students to step into, according to who they are at any time. I attempt to question assumptions, honourably listen to speech and silence and take responsibility for mindfully avoiding telling, when I might close off ideas and signifiers for my students, instead I speak to wonder, puzzle and prod questions and dialogue. I begin in that new place where I find myself, every day meeting the students in the new place they have found themselves in today. I endeavour to be intelligently virtuous and begin a process of “a new questioning relation to language and tradition and a new way of taking responsibility” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 293).

This new way of taking responsibility focuses on the way I speak to my students, without judgement, rancour or impatience yet with kindness, care and peace. This speech does not close off possibilities, rather it makes space for possibilities to flourish, spiralling out and returning to a question or wondering. An approach to conversation like this illustrates “the effects of undecidability”, allowing us to explore “the outer limits of authority” (p. 293) as any power imbalance shifts towards the centre and the event of conversational language situates itself in a discursive and recursive space. Embracing “undecidability” could also be seen as embracing the idea of *wabi-sabi*, of perfect imperfection.

### Little Bo-Peep: Not all words are equal

As we embrace the indeterminacy of interpretation, using language to question and wonder rather than declaim and label, there may be continual encounters with language events that upset our equilibrium, that cause us to question and displace where we find ourselves. Words may be spoken, and we might question their appropriateness for a situation or a particular



dialogue. In the following narrative, as in my experience with the Professor's telling, I am brought face to face with my assumptions and prejudices.

During the early years of my teaching life I taught in a small urban primary school in a low socio-economic area. I never realised how middle-class I was, what a charmed life I led, until I saw downtrodden mothers carrying mewling filthy babies in one arm while dragging their older child by the hand and felt my lip curl involuntarily with revulsion. The harrowing stories of neglect, the endless hunger of want and the paucity of love in the lives of the families in that community have stayed with me, made me realise how important it is for a teacher to arrange her public face of welcome for those who do not recognise the gift of welcome because no one has ever welcomed them anywhere before.

My role was that of Drama teacher. For the first two months, I intermittently explained that 'Drama' was the activities and games we played during class time, rather than my name. After a while, though, 'Mrs Drama' seemed to be a good fit and my new name stuck. Even today, when I see students from that time, they greet me with "How are you, Mrs Drama?" When this happens, my student and I smile, recognising the humour in my other name. This language, my other name is a shorthand, a code to conjure up memories of that time spent together in the classroom. If we both smile long enough at each other, sometimes they will say, "Do you remember when Kadisha acted out Little Bo Peep?" and when I nod, our shared history, like an elastic thread, snaps back and brings us closer together.

Kadisha's version of the nursery rhyme "Little Bo Peep" still makes me smile all these years later. One lesson, after spending time reading nursery rhymes to Kadisha's class, I asked the students to form groups and act out a nursery rhyme. Each group were also asked not to tell their peers which nursery rhyme they had chosen, to see if we could all guess from the acting alone. Kadisha's group was small, only her and two other girls, so when they took their initial places on the stage members of the audience were already narrowing the field of possible nursery rhymes that featured only three participants. Kadisha walked off to one side of the stage while the other two little girls went to the other side and sat on their haunches with their arms straight in front of their bodies and their hands flat on the floor, in a posture that children commonly use to denote that

they are pretending to be an animal of some kind. These two sat very still, immaculate in their uniforms with blue and yellow ribbons in their hair. Meanwhile Kadisha walked all around the stage with her hand shading her eyes, in the classic posture of someone searching for something. Suddenly her eyes alighted on the two little girls still sitting motionless on their haunches. “Found you, you bastards!” she cried, whereupon the two little girls said “Baaa!” very loudly. They then stood up, turned their backs to the audience and put their hands above their bottoms, miming wagging tails. All three girls then faced the audience and Kadisha announced “And that was Little Bo Peep!” The girls bowed politely while the other students applauded enthusiastically.

Kadisha did not intentionally use bad language, she used language that she had heard and understood. The word ‘bastard’ appeared to signify nothing for her except an exclamation of finding a way to express her surprise and delight at seeing her sheep. This was my interpretation of her reaction when I mentioned to her after the rest of the class had left that perhaps she could have used nice words when she found her sheep. Her look of incomprehension left me wondering—what are nice words, and who decides which words are nice? In the years since that moment with Kadisha, I have attempted to open up dialogic spaces for my students and in doing so, I have had to consciously lay aside my assumptions about swear words and nice language so that I can welcome the student into the community of learners and meet him in the place he finds himself at this moment in time.

A student like Campbell, who is violent and violates others, or Kyle, whose equilibrium is upended by the constant chatter of the classroom, may use language that is confronting, or violent, or obscene as they try to find their place in the stratified terrain of the classroom that is also undergoing continual displacement (Gallagher, 1992, p. 295). Both Campbell and Kyle sometimes used obscene language to convey anger, fear, or unease in an environment where they may have felt displaced, unable to articulate their emotions except through extreme language. During my interactions with Campbell and Kyle, I keenly felt the tension between the societal expectation

of what a classroom should be and my desire to open multiple spaces for these boys to step into. How could I live up to my ideals of an ethical, virtuous vocation if the emphasis in my school was on normalising and subtle coercion to achieve compliance?

As a teacher who seeks to speak her life in her own way and whose lifeworld shows on her face, I find it difficult to coerce students who are already marginalised to conform. Should an ethical person even attempt to normalise a naked consciousness, the ill-fitting public face of a child in distress? If I believe in meeting the child where he is, in the place he finds himself, by opening up a space for him to step into, then a tension may arise between the expectations of schooling and the endless free play of ideas through conversation. As we cast aside any prejudices about what type of language is nice, or appropriate for a school context, then we might come to an unfolding of thoughts through the “world-creating capacity of language” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 294). When striving to welcome a child into a community of learners when that child may be afraid, or angry at the world, might give rise to an unwillingness on the part of the teacher to “settle into an easy position; the play of forces will not allow it” (p. 296). This teacher would hear beyond the extreme language, read the child’s body and face, attempting to meet the child where they are.

The notion of letting the child speak his own life in his own time and meeting him where he is in the world has kind, caring language as a focus. Gallagher cites Roland Barthes’ suggestion of pedagogy as “peaceable speech, which never judges, subjects, intimidates or advocates a cause” (Barthes, 1982, pp. 380, 402 in Gallagher, 1992, p. 300). Peaceable speech is akin to those conversations that seek to reach an accord, trusting dialogue that strives towards consensus. Trust in conversation happens when the teacher enables the student to speak his life in his own way using the language he knows. As the teacher helps to reveal the student to himself, giving space to imagination so that both can find their faces, she might show

him that his ideas are part of a larger tradition and history. If this occurs, his language may change from the extremity of anger and fear to peaceable speech underpinned with kindness and respect for others and himself. I have often wondered about the possible link I perceive between the confronting way some children speak and their self-image—perhaps because these children think so little of themselves, they are unable to value others. How can these children, whose habitat may be a place of mistrust and anger, know what respectful, peaceable speech sounds like?

The idea of peaceable speech seems to resonate with the etymology of education itself, with its meaning to lead out or bring forth. If a teacher speaks peaceably and listens honourably to her students, opening spaces for questioning, enabling the students' latent potential for constructing meaning from their world, then the community of learners is enriched because everyone has access to a common classroom language pieced together by the community of learners, which includes the teacher. The students may be led away from confronting, extreme language towards respectful, kind words that bring forth students' capacity to question, wonder, puzzle and imagine. The teacher can then take on an equal role to her students—as another querent searching for meaning, rather than as one who shows, presents, or points out information. If both teacher and student are querents—learners seeking meaning—then questions might be kept open as a play of differing meanings, individual signifiers, emerge from the dialogue, providing the community of learners with openings to actively interpret the various meanings that lie before them.

### Play of indeterminacy: Negotiated meanings

Peaceable speech and honourable listening could be seen as productive insofar as they give rise to a questioning dialogue that keeps “the play of heterogeneous meaning alive” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 301). Because no single

meaning is foregrounded or privileged and everything remains open, everyone in the community of learners has an opportunity to participate in the dialogue using the language they know. As the teacher helps to reveal the student to himself, as she shows him how his ideas and thoughts arise from the place where he is at this moment, he may begin to discern the reality of how he lives and who he is—he may be set free to see his face. A student who deepens his understanding of the effects of history and tradition upon his public and private face may step with increased confidence into the conversational openings created for him by his teacher. He begins to engage in the artistry of teaching and learning as he and his teacher gently adjust the other's public face. A dialogue of peaceable, productive, poetic speech allows the unfolding of imaginative tendrils that frees all participants in the dialogue to see their faces.

An unfolding dialogue like this has a fluidity, an aspect that Gadamer describes as “a to and fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end” (2004, p. 103). Gadamer explores a to-and-fro movement in language, wondering if language might be a never-ending game, which can be engaged in repeatedly yet remains freshly original on each occasion (2004, pp. 104, 301). In a spacious dialogue, teacher and student have their own individual horizon of meaning, the place where they find themselves right now, and these individual places of meaning are laid aside as shared meanings are negotiated through conversation. The student's horizon becomes fused with his teacher's through conversation, a “fusion of horizons” that has its ground in poetic words and honourable listening (Gadamer, 2004, pp. 301-306). Poetic words enable speech to stand forth, taking on a life of its own. Words that stand before the speakers in this way can give rise to a mindfulness where the speakers' focus is on the medium rather than the message. Speaking poetically, the teacher and student may find their faces and the artistry of teaching may find its fullest expression as poetic words stand forth in conversation.

In the unfolding and enfolding of poetic speech and honourable listening in dialogue, in the entering into of an implicit contract of spoken-and-heard, the teacher's and student's lifeworlds engage each other. The teacher invites her student to join the community of learners, opening up dialogic spaces for him to step into, allowing tradition and history to work through her to acculturate the student into the society they both find themselves in. Such a dialogue, with its shared meanings, strives towards a common understanding, yet perhaps there will always be meanings that remain undisclosed? In my readings of the Professor's written work and my attempt to honourably listen to his telling during the day I travelled to hear him speak, there are meanings that remain elusive. Might these meanings that lie undisclosed, unseen in our private spheres of consciousness, be an intrinsic part of our essential threads of character? "Man becomes what he is through what he does and how he behaves — i.e. he behaves in a certain way because of what he has become," says Gadamer (2004, p. 311). On our way to being a human becoming, there may be an accretion of tradition and memory that forms a kernel of our Self, in which might lie undisclosed meanings that remain elusive and unresolved.

The teacher, wearing her welcoming public face, holding within an accretion of tradition and memory as yet undisclosed, meets the student, wearing his ill-fitting public face and nursing his naked consciousness. The place that both find themselves in at this moment is a classroom and the teacher becomes a vessel for tradition and history to flow through so that she might begin a conversation with her student. She attempts to meet the student where he is in the world at this time, perhaps using the gambit of question-and-answer, encouraging him to engage in dialogue. "The game of conversation itself produces and establishes knowledge", says Gallagher (1992, p. 312), as teacher and student reveal themselves to themselves in a journey towards shared meanings.

My conversation with Kadisha reveals my assumptions about what words were nice and her incomprehension reveals her lifeworld and how she used

the words she knows to express the finding of her sheep. Producing knowledge through conversation, establishing connections to another, “is always tentative and temporary, the product of a social process (the conversation) which changes” (Gallagher, 1992, p. 312) and although a teacher might have a plan in mind, an end in view, through conversation with her student she might adapt her plan as the student adjusts her thinking with his responses and comments. The teacher does not seek to control the dialogue, foregrounding some ideas and shadowing others, rather she strives to hold open multiple dialogic spaces using skills she has gained through repetition and a poetic sensibility that allows her to relinquish explicit control and celebrate the occasion of conversation.

### *J'adoube*: Risk and ambiguity in conversation

I return to the notion of the chess term *j'adoube* as a description of the adjustment that teacher and student make to one another's public faces as they engage in the process of teaching and learning. *J'adoube*, with its literal meaning of ‘I touch’, ‘I adjust’, finds a resonance in the teacher who relinquishes explicit control of a conversation and enables tradition to work through her as she manifests a dialogue with her student. Such a teacher situates herself on the razor edge of possibility, a place of risk, clearing her mind to focus on the conversation happening right now, a conversation that may become fraught with emotion, or be disturbing, or otherwise unexpected. As the student reveals himself inside the dialogue, he may begin to grasp his place in the panoply of tradition and history, attempting to reconcile the place he finds himself in right now with all the places in history that have gone before and are coming after.

If I, as a teacher, situate myself on the edge of the probable, engaging my student in conversation, I am maintaining an awareness that this

conversation is unique, abnormal and strange—unique in the sense that this conversation has never been had before now and while the conversation may be recollected, my student and I will be unable to exactly reproduce it. It is abnormal insofar as we may share ideas that are nonsensical or revolutionary as we search together for shared meanings that are new and these shared meanings may be considered strange or outside conventional boundaries. This unique conversation is begun in a classroom, with my student wearing his ill-fitting public face and nursing his naked consciousness. I clear my mind, take a deep breath, and begin the conversation with a question.

Such mindfulness on my part may enable the conversation to embrace strangeness and produce something original. In this way the conversation is akin to my experience with the blue wren on the windowsill—it is completely new, although similar to the past. As my student and I participate in the language event that is dialogue, we may sense the play of indeterminacy, the ambiguity of meanings, “the play of language itself, which addresses us, proposes and withdraws, asks and fulfils itself in the answer” (Gadamer, 1987, p. 490, in Gallagher, 1992, p. 311). My student and I become immersed in a constant present that flows alongside, within and around us as we speak peaceably and listen honourably to each other. As Gadamer says,

Once again we discover that the person who is understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart and remains unaffected but rather he thinks along with the other from the perspective of a specific bond of belonging, as if he too were affected. (2004, p. 320)

Our immersion in a constant present, with me clearing my mind and creating openness for history to work through while my student glimpses his place in the wider world, enriches our unique relationship as teacher and student. Allowing tradition and history to work through me, attempting to consciously orientate myself towards a particular end, aware that I may have to alter, adapt or discard this end as the conversation takes its shape, gives rise to an almost painful knowing of *wabi-sabi*, perfect imperfection. The pain



arises from relinquishing solipsistic thoughts of superiority and recognising myself as an equal querant in a journey towards shared meanings, a journey where there are no teachers, only learners.

This giving up of superiority enables me to meet my student where is at this moment in time, as one who is unaware of his place in the procession of history and who may be ignorant of conversational conventions. Like Kadisha, who used the words she knew to express her delight at finding her sheep, or the Professor's thundering pronouncements, my student uses the language he knows, whether obscene, truncated, angry or afraid, to describe and proscribe his thoughts and his lifeworld. I listen honourably to this student, speak peaceably to him, endeavouring to orient myself in a place of mindful wisdom.

Gadamer, following Aristotle, speaks about the idea of *phronesis*. In the chapter from *Truth and Method* entitled "Elements of a Theory of Hermeneutic Experience", Gadamer discusses how Aristotelian ethics might impact how we interpret ourselves and others through conversation—how engaging in one conversation may be viewed as engaging with tradition and history (2004, p. 310). Each situation in which we find ourselves is unique, yet also informed by what has gone before, we interpret another from our personal standpoint, and we come to understand another from our own context (p. 318). *Phronesis* may be more than a knowing, it is our experience of another—their expressions, gestures and silences—that offers an opportunity to lay aside our prejudices so as to encounter the new, to produce an original dialogue never heard before (pp. 316-20). This original, productive dialogue arrived at through peaceable speech and honourable listening, strives to reach an accord.

We return to the etymology of the word 'accord', with its meaning, from the heart. Dialogue may not flourish unless everyone involved speaks from

the heart and makes space for goodwill as they seek consensus. Gadamer says,

Both the person asking for advice and person giving it assume that they are bound together in friendship. Only friends can advise each other or, to put it another way, only a piece of advice that is meant in a friendly way has meaning for the person advised. (2004, p. 320)

In a classroom, the teacher welcomes the learner into a community, opening a space for goodwill. The teacher wears her welcoming public face and through the conversational gambit of question-and-answer, creates opportunities for the child to speak his life. When Campbell joined my class, I arranged my welcoming public face and began a conversation using question-and-answer. I asked Campbell about his family, pets, hobbies, taking time to mindfully listen to his replies. Campbell's move towards violence and his frequent absences from school closed off our conversations, making an accord difficult. Campbell's violations of others, his acts of impetuosity, became increasingly random and I could no longer discern how to respond. My public face and the reasoned sphere of public life fiercely abutted Campbell's desolation in the playground and classroom.

My hidden sphere of consciousness, the still small voice of calm, could no longer guide my actions or speak my words. My intuition, the place of mindful wisdom, was of no use to me when faced with Campbell's repeated violence towards others. Campbell did not seem to view me as someone who offered friendly advice, as Gadamer puts it, instead he appeared to shun my attempts to guide and reassure him. When I tried to speak to him about his behaviour in the playground or the classroom, Campbell often would avoid looking into my face and hunch his shoulders, turning his body inward on itself. Sometimes he turned his whole body away from me and refused to speak. Campbell was no longer trying to engage in a conversation or seek an accord—his heart wasn't in it.

In my interactions with Campbell, the place where I found myself constantly shifted and I could no longer discern how to open up spaces for Campbell to step into. Neither of us could seem to speak our lives as we were enveloped in the burgeoning *aporiae* of misunderstandings and violations. Might there still be a space for discourse and dialogue in the midst of an *aporia*? What might such a conversation look like? When I walked into Kyle's classroom in response to the text message from his teacher, Kyle's upended equilibrium and mental anguish showed on his face and through the tension in his body. Kyle's anger and violent physicality had opened an *aporia* between himself and those around him—he was unable to articulate the source of his anguish. I began a conversation with Kyle, not through verbal question-and-answer, instead I honourably listened to what his body was telling me, hearing his lament about too much noise. I attempted to step into the place where Kyle had found himself, to be alongside him, trying to find starting points for a common language. When I went back to my office to retrieve the earmuffs, I did not know if they would help or hinder Kyle, my actions were an attempt to ameliorate his distress. Once he had put the earmuffs on, the relief suffusing and smoothing his face, I could step back and reflect on what had just gone before.

Why did I think earmuffs would work for Kyle? Had something like this happened before to remind me? After Kyle had settled down to read, I wandered back to my office, deep in recollective thought. The earmuffs were soft, made of fur fabric, they not only blocked out noise but felt pleasant to the touch—these musings opened my mind to a recollection of another young boy who had been sensitive to noise. I had encountered Hamish years before—at the same school where Kadisha had used the words she knew to find her sheep. Hamish did not come to my Drama classes very often and when he did come, he would not participate, instead he would watch the other children intently. Hamish always wore large blue fur fabric earmuffs to my class. I discovered from his class teacher that Hamish had been hit around the side of the head so hard by his father that he had permanent hearing damage. Some frequencies of sound were painful to Hamish and his class

teacher had bought some earmuffs for him so that he could relax in the classroom and focus on his class tasks.

Hamish's teacher was very experienced and wise in her ways of relating to the children in her class. As I sat down in my office chair, still musing on Kyle, I recollected the words she had said to me in the staffroom during one recess, "Always have some earmuffs amongst your teaching things, you never know when they will come in handy". At the time, I had smiled and nodded, not really believing that earmuffs would ever be helpful to me in a classroom. I bought some anyway and carried them with me from school to school, using them only rarely.

Had the memory of Hamish bubbled beneath and through the surface of my thought, allowing me to intuitively search out earmuffs for Kyle? Earlier in this writing, I explored the idea of a Self that oscillates between memory and imagination, reliving the past and imagining the future simultaneously. When I attempted to step inside Kyle's distress, to be alongside him, I was mindfully responding to my perception of his discomfort. Kyle's angst was written on his face, delineated by his body, and my imagining of his feelings opened a possible way to alleviate the discomfort by retrieving the earmuffs. The stress that Kyle was under demanded a response from me that stemmed from my highest being, perhaps my intentional teleological Self, enabling me to reach beyond the *aporia*, the impasse where we both found ourselves.

When I watched Kyle put on the earmuffs and his stress dissolve, I was also watching the *aporia* melt away. Kyle's relief and my happiness at being able to help him gave this event an air of celebration. The dialogue that Kyle and I participated in, where my honourable listening and mindful wisdom tried to discern a space to step into, was one of incommensurable possibilities. Like my experience with the blue wren, my dialogue with Kyle was unique and strange, unable to be measured or compared with anything else, yet the

memories bubbling beneath my consciousness opened a space in my inner dialogue for me to imaginatively step into and provide the earmuffs for Kyle.

As I, teacher, enter into a dialogue with my student, I clear my mind and focus on the opening of dialogical spaces, becoming inside the conversation, aware of its uniqueness and imperfections. I take risks, posing questions or giving responses that might be surprising and encourage wonderings. With any risk, there can be an ambiguity, an indeterminacy of meanings, which may be recognised and celebrated with mindful wisdom. As I relinquish any notions of control, orienting myself as an equal querant in the dialogue, my attempts at mindful wisdom, *phronesis*, enable both my student and I to enter into an artful, productive conversation that offers opportunities for shared meanings to develop.

On the last day of the school year Kyle came to find me, swinging the earmuffs on one finger. "Hi, Miss. I've come to say goodbye", he began, then paused. His eyes were lowered, as usual, and I cleared my mind, waiting. Kyle looked at me through his lashes. "Can I keep the earmuffs?" he asked. "Yes, you may", I smiled, "do you like them?" Kyle's eyes met mine. "Yeah, they're really good for keeping out the noise. I wanted to take them on the bus today." I nodded. "Good idea. Have a good holiday, Kyle." As I spoke, Kyle was jiggling, ready to leave. "Thanks, Miss!" He ran off to collect his bag ready to catch the bus home while I made my way to the front office to collect the bus duty folder. Outside in the car park, from the corner of my eye, I watched Kyle run towards the bus with his bag over his shoulder, clutching his earmuffs in one hand. He climbed aboard as I busied myself with supervising the rest of the students, nearly the whole student body, as they boarded the buses ready for the long summer break. I caught sight of Kyle again as the buses pulled out of the car park, sitting by the bus window wearing his earmuffs. He gave me a big smile and a 'thumbs up'. I waved to him as the bus turned the corner, out of sight.

The risk I took when I gave Kyle the earmuffs in the midst of his *aporia* was made possible by an orientation of mindful wisdom, a clearing of the

mind that enabled me to respond to the salient present. Opening myself to possibilities by creating spaces for dialogue, honourable listening and poetic speech gave rise to a moment where imagination, memory and personal history came together, empowering me to take a risk. Recognising and celebrating the poetic, creative, peaceable difference between me and Kyle invested him with enough personal power to come and find me, asking to keep the earmuffs. Kyle was becoming brave enough to expose his vulnerabilities and speak his life in his own way and our encounters might be seen as a gentle adjustment of each other's public faces.

Wiebe comments, "A first step toward empathetic articulation is a puncture through the façade...with a view to disrupting the projections of a...category of self" (2012, p. 43). My finding of the earmuffs for Kyle, puncturing his distress within his *aporia*, showed him that I saw him as he truly was in the world and was prepared to take a risk to help him. In my conversations with Kyle and with my grandfather, I let go of previous expectations and oriented myself towards a patient openness that did not take continuity for granted. I learnt care and took time to open up spaces of conversation that might not be filled immediately, or at all. Within Kyle's distress and my grandfather's loss of memory, we learnt to piece together a relationship through the fractures of our mutual language. My memories, my continuity of Self, held our fractured time gently, celebrating the imperfect.

We may speak of our ideas, our memories, our individual histories as we move towards a "fusion of horizons" in the event of language. Within every conversation a teacher has with her students there is an element of risk, of poetic strangeness, of imperfect ambiguity. As the conversation enfolds and unfolds, carrying all the history and tradition of the ages as well as the situated-ness of right now, the teacher clears her mind, exercises her mindful wisdom and gambles her voice to call forth the invocation of her students. Beneath her calling forth of other voices is her *verbum interius*, her intelligent vocation, her *caritas*, her "intelligent charity"—her love.

## Chapter 8

### The Otherland: Belonging and Displacement on an Island



Tasmanian coastline at Cape Raoul, Tasman Peninsula (Creative Commons)

Typing the word ‘Tasmania’ into Google Earth, watching the virtual world spinning and orienting itself to a deserted part of the Southern Ocean, offers a view of Tasmania as a triangular scrap of land torn from larger Australia like the jagged corner of a blanket. Zooming in with my touchpad for closer inspection, the coastline seems frayed with innumerable bays and promontories. Zooming in closer still, small clusters of civilisation can be seen cuddling the coast, but there seems scant evidence of life in the rugged and lonely heartland. The island looks to be a quiet corner of the world floating serenely on the windswept ocean sheltered by the big island of Australia.

Except that’s wrong.

As an inhabitant of this jagged island nestled in a corner of the world, my experience is that nothing about this place is serene. Looking at the view of Tasmania on my computer screen through the lens of memory and lived experience, the island appears to sulk in the windswept ocean, a surly child

with its metaphorical arms folded, waiting to be impressed. This island child is taciturn, cautious and reticent to reveal its innermost Self. All those promontories appear fierce rather than benignly frayed, exuding a ‘keep away’ feeling, enfolding the gentler terrain within. Every time I see a map of my island, I think of the final line from Wilfred Owen’s poem “Anthem for Doomed Youth” (1917), “and each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds”. Every dusk is slow here, from the long greenish-blue twilights of a high summer sky to the viscous ruby-red rays of a midwinter afternoon, when the sun barely manages to rise in the sky and its rays slant across the city streets, low-slung lasers striking sandstone cornices.

Tasmania is planted in the midst of wild winds, called the ‘Roaring Forties’, which ride roughshod around the world in the southern latitudes between 40 and 44 degrees. There is little landmass at these latitudes to arrest the winds’ furious circumpolar race, so the wind becomes another inhabitant of the island, whirling and eddying from west to east in gusts up to 200 kilometres per hour. Tasmania’s landscapes recall the snowy peaks of Austria, the temperate coastline of Spain and the gentle green hills of Southern England—the landscapes are reminiscent of everywhere yet there is nowhere else like Tasmania on Earth. Living as we do, in such a unique, insulated environment gives me to wonder—who are we, us islanders, and how do we see the world? Does landscape equal mindscape and how might this manifest in a classroom?

In this chapter I return to notions of teacher and student artfully adjusting each other’s public faces as they participate in a common dialogue, dwelling together in the event of language. As this adjustment occurs, both teacher and student are moored to their individual histories, tied to a tangible place of belonging. I wonder if, as we find ourselves participating more and more in the demented language of the internet, that we might be losing our sense of knowledge and affection for a specific place. Does something within us become unmoored if our ties to a particular place are broken? Our



understanding of ourselves may be displaced as we spend more time in a virtual world rather than a tangible landscape, for as we move through the curvature of Time and constantly make, re-make and un-make ourselves, we are also situated somewhere and this situated-ness may be an essential thread of our character.

I retell my experience in a rural school, in a community that has become increasingly impoverished, a far-flung colony that has insulated itself from the wider world. I explore the idea of a homeland and what this might mean to teachers and students, if our minds are rooted in a place that we call home. I return to Brady's idea of "being-in-Place" (2005, p. 998) and explore what that means for me and my teaching practice. My hermeneutical orientation is local, highly contextualised and interpretive so that I can find myself in the words and "through this, experience homecoming" (Wainwright & Rapport, 2007, p. 8 in Heß, 2012, p. 32). I continue practising "body-based hermeneutics" to create spaces of embodied dialogue about my lived experience (p. 32).

David W. Orr, in his Foreword to David Hutchinson's *A Natural History of Place in Education* (2004), raises the notion of "wayfinders" and "homecomers" (p. ix) as those of us who search for new places, finding new ways to flourish, and those who find connections for themselves in certain places. "Homecomers" find connections that fulfil a "deep need to find their place and dig in" (p. ix) and these "homecomers" may begin to "sense the reciprocal and intimate relationship between head, hands, heart, and place" (p. ix).

## Once in memory: Traversing my island

My island is a place imbued with emotions, a place where I reside, work, and a place I travel through and around. It is both familiar and strange, familiar because I have lived here all my life and strange because the island has the capacity to intrigue me. There are nested places within my island that have been prominent in my history, nested places that formed my childhood.

These nested places may have a reality that belongs only to them, an identity of character that opens a space for emotional connection (Hutchinson, 2004, p. 17). Honeywood was a nested place, recollected in shared memory and given a unique reality in familial-shared history. A nested place is given significance in a history, a semiotic foregrounding that may identify a space. Hutchinson says, “Place can be understood as an individually constructed reality—a reality informed by the unique experiences, histories, motives, and goals that each of us brings to the spaces with which we identify” (p. 11).

We return to Gadamer, who says, “an individual is never simply an individual because he is always in understanding with others” (2004, p. 303). Gadamer is speaking here of interactions between people, yet I wonder if our imaginations might transfigure this into an understanding between an individual and their nested places as well? How might such an understanding be embodied in the individual? We inhabit a place, which may be more than physically filling a space because we have an intention to dwell within, giving meanings and significance to our environment, acceding to our places as they shape our consciousness. Viewed in this way, place might be another participant in a dialogue that opens up spaces yet also constrains us.

I was a teenager when I first read about the idea of a spiritual home, a place where one feels truly content. Some accounts spoke of how we may have lived in a place in past lives and when we return our souls remember, allowing our bodies to feel at ease. The romance of the idea appealed to me then and despite

the fact that I grew older, a wisp of that romance still lingered. I wanted to feel a place in which my soul had a part.

My family had cousins all over Tasmania and we would travel by car to see them—driving over winding roads to the rugged West Coast, where the landscape hulked and glowered through the car windows or following the highway that overlaid paths made by the indigenous inhabitants 40,000 years before to reach Launceston. Occasionally we even drove through the twisting Elephant Pass to reach the tiny hamlet of St Mary's, the home of even more cousins. We stopped for picnics by the side of the coast roads, where always and everywhere was the endless susurrant of the sea. Even today I travel these roads twice, once in the present and once in memory, whenever I drive them. Towns and stopping points along the route are coloured by memories of trips made in my childhood. Passing by houses that used to home long-gone cousins brings a shiver of nostalgia. I still didn't feel it though, the connection to my island, until I travelled to the opposite side of the world.

It was the trip of a lifetime for us. Our children were old enough to remember the places we would be visiting but young enough for the trip to still be an exciting adventure. My husband and I had planned the route meticulously as he would be driving us around Europe, beginning in Paris and looping along the Mediterranean Coast with detours through Italy, Austria and the Czech Republic before dropping the hire car in Frankfurt and flying to Egypt. I still take out the memories from that trip, relishing them like golden rosary beads, 10 years later. We had a glorious time, every day more wonderful than the last. And I waited for the frisson of knowing that might occur when I came across my spiritual home. I thought it would surely happen in Venice, that most wonderful City of Dreams and a place I had dreamed of visiting during the long car rides to visit cousins.

When I glimpsed Venice from the ferry taking us across the lagoon, I was rapt by the colour of the water, a colour found nowhere else and the glittering dome of St. Mark's Cathedral reflecting the autumn sun. I leapt out of the ferry with my suitcase, planting my feet firmly on the cobbles, waiting for the thrill of revelation. Nothing. I adored Venice, as I had expected, and every day we spent there was

like every Christmas and birthday I'd ever had. But in the end, it was easy to say goodbye, because another wonderful place was lying in wait for us.

I was enamoured of Salzburg, enraptured by Prague, and Egypt was another level of delight for us all. The frisson of knowing, of finding my spiritual home, was nowhere to be found—not in the square watching Prague's unique town clock or walking along the main street in Salzburg or feeling the humid air press on my skin inside the Great Pyramid. We clambered aboard our flight back to Melbourne elated and exhausted, flying through a night and a day to arrive at Tullamarine Airport in the early morning. We had more hand luggage than we had hands and after a final loading of souvenirs into the overhead lockers, we headed back to Tasmania. I had a window seat and was beyond sleep, so I watched the clouds and thought of my grandfather watching them too and all the things I had to tell him about our trip. Then I looked down, seeing the northern coastline of Tasmania come into view through the window. And I felt it, goosebumps of knowing, of coming home to the place where my soul lives. "Oh", I exclaimed, "My home! I am home".

My recollection of traversing my island in memory and my feelings on returning to it after a journey follows Gallagher's notion of recollection as "giving an account of the reason why" (1992, p. 195). My memories are regathered, recollected, into a narrative that helps to unfurl my understandings about my experience of place. My narrative recollection foregrounds a specific embodiment, an individual meaning, of what it means to me to be an islander. I wonder—what parts of my personal history, in the context of cultural history, are significant? Gallagher has implications for an experience of island-ness when he says,

Just as I might say that this is my country, or that I am an American, without meaning that this country belongs only to me or that I am the only American, so I could say that this is my experience, and when I understand it I understand myself, without implying that this experience is totally unique to me or that in understanding myself I do not understand others. The past experience I live and depend on in my

present learning is larger than my own personal experience; it is, in fact, the experience of traditions which belongs to all learners. (p. 94)

From this, perhaps every experience is potentially significant, and nothing is neutral when I interpret my nested places. As I move through Space and Time, my interpretation of my island will be in a constant state of flux because I myself am constantly changing. Time allows us to contextualise meanings of place—bestow semiotic significance on our nested places and yield to the ongoing cyclical progression of experience where one moment elides into the next. As I bestow significance on places, I begin to think of them with a mythic sensibility, my places become touchstones of meaning that shape my history and experience of the world. In this, my wonderings about place are an echo to Gadamer’s ideas about historicity, where “understanding is to be thought of as less than a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission where the past and the present are constantly mediated” (2004, p. 290). I ask questions to understand myself, my island experience, because questions are linguistic events that can give rise to mindful wisdom as I reflect on the way I orient myself in the world (Gallagher, 1992, p. 5).

From reflection on my orientation in the world through recollection I may begin to understand why my nested places are significant, why my embodiment in the world is one way, the way of immersion in language, ideas and openness to possibilities, and not another in which I might close myself off from wonderings and puzzlements. I may begin to understand why some learnings capture my attention, learnings that create spaces for language events and resonate, evoking images, memories and emotions within me. In a classroom, I meet the child where he is in the world and allow him to speak his own life in his own way and his own time. I permit him to adjust my public face as I gently adjust his. The learnings we undertake together arise from talk about our lives, connections we forge as we create common meanings through shared language events. As I inquire into my island-ness, I also express an intention to orient myself from known parts to an unknown whole. My experiences are known parts, experiences of nested places like

Honeywood to which I have given a semiotic significance. As I inquire into these places I carefully move towards an understanding of a possible whole experience of my island and island-ness.

To understand my island-ness more richly, I may need to move back from the focus of inquiry. As I begin to understand island-ness, I take a step back from my own experience, trying to view it objectively from my present standpoint at this moment in time. Looking out of the airplane window and viewing Tasmania's northern coastline—those innumerable fierce promontories that say 'keep away'—as I returned from overseas, led to a powerful knowing, an epiphanic moment when I stood out of Time and looked in upon myself. I was present inside and outside simultaneously, reflecting on experiences of the immediate past and attentive to the eliding moments of the present. In a sense of being, in this attitude of mindfulness, I saw my island as myself—not static or wedged in Time, but in a constant state of flux coloured by age and circumstance. I am a privileged islander, as I am white and employed. My individual history has been relatively calm compared to other islanders, often those who are indigenous and unemployed. I have lived in my island's capital city all my life—my history is responding to that built environment. How would my interpretation of my island change if I was born into different circumstances? If I was a young person faced with a myriad of unknowns rather than a middle-aged professional?

I change quickly compared to my island, one brief lifetime in the midst of geological eons, interpreting historical events through the lens of my unique experience. To inquire into my island, I need to set my assumptions aside, otherwise they will be doing the looking and the inquiring (Bohm, 1992, p. 11). My assumptions are coloured by my privilege, my colour and the material situation I find myself in.

This distancing between me, as interpreter, and my interpreted island may significantly impact upon my understanding. Tasmania stands still as a physical geological entity yet is in a constant confrontation with changing historical circumstances as generations of islanders arise, flourish and pass away. I traverse my island twice, once in memory and once in the present. Eons of memory are laid down as we islanders walk, ride and drive through lands shaped by the song-lines and oral history of the First Peoples, the peoples who called the island Trowutta. My changing history guides my interpretation, which sits in a *lacuna* between my history and that of my island, a rugged place encircled by merciless winds, winds that carry the echoes of indigenous songs. It seems that my interpretation, my orientation towards an unknown whole, may inhabit what Gadamer thinks of as a tension or “true locus” (2004, p. 295), the intermediate position in which interpretation dwells in its enfolding and unfolding potential.

### The *heimat*: The imagined homeland

My changing history, guiding my interpretation, depends on who I am in any given moment, as my textual Self, always in flux, re-makes and un-makes itself while moving through the curvature of Time. My shifting Self reflects the changing history of my island, which may seem to be less in flux than many other places in the world due to its geographic isolation, yet the obvious flux in mainstream culture, the individual cultural values and social mores we orient ourselves towards, which intertwine with the larger events of history, also touches this frayed scrap of land at the bottom of the world (Gallagher, 1992, p. 215).

My interpretation of my island is authentic, its genuineness situated at this moment in time, in the same way as my coming to an understanding with my student is genuine. In my classroom, I pass on a historical understanding, recognising that this understanding may not be the same from one generation

to the next (Gallagher, 1992, p. 265). My situated-ness, my dwelling in a particular place at a particular moment, unfurls and opens possibilities of dialogue between myself and my student about our island and the nested places on which we each bestow semiotic significance. Hutchinson says, “knowledge and values are contextual, evolving and changing over time, individually and culturally constructed by adults and children alike” (2004, p. 37). As we gently adjust each other’s public faces through the language event of questioning, the exploration of each other’s nested places may enrich our perception of our shared island. Imagination may transfigure our island into a home, a place of belonging and recollected memories, evoked through a conversation between teacher and student about those places that are special to us. As we recollect our experiences, teacher and student become “wayfinders” and “homecomers”, finding new ways to flourish and discovering possible connections between heads, hearts and places.

A nested place invested with significance, intertwined with our sense of Self, brings to my mind the ideas evoked by the German word *heimat*. *Heimat* is often expressed in English as ‘home’ or ‘homeland’ but this simple translation fails to capture the deeper nuances beyond the word. Ina-Maria Greverus, in her book *In Search of Homeland* (1979) talks about *heimat* as a focus on our concept of Self. Greverus talks about *heimat* as an “idyllic world” (p. 13), which can only be found within the trinity of community, space and tradition, because it is only within an idyllic world, an imagined place of individual significance, that our human desires for identity, safety and “an active designing of life can be pleased” (p. 13).

We are moored to our place by birth—the place where we are born has a significance for us. The place where we spend our earliest experiences, lay down our earliest memories and learn our first words gives us a mooring in the world. As we learn to belong and find our faces, responding to events as we move through the curvature of Time, we assign significance to those places that live in our memories, places that enable us to flourish and find our



face. We feel a connection to those places and see them in our memory, even though the physical place may have changed over time. In our contemporary and increasingly global culture we might regard any attempt to reconnect with a personal or cultural point of origin as nostalgic. We find ourselves much more in a world of shifting flexible frameworks in which our origins, bonds, traditions, sentiments and dreams exist alongside other stories, other fragments of memory and traces of Time. My nested place of Honeywood is significant in my imagination and experience, to another eye Honeywood is a pile of sandstone heaped near tall whispering pine trees, of little interest or significance.

The outer landscape I perceive is shaped by the language generated within me to describe what I see. The topography of my *heimat* may belong only to me, as I situate myself on my island at any given moment in time. Hutchinson says, “Aristotle used the term *topos* to refer to feelings of belongingness that are evoked by the “where” dimension of a person’s relationship to the physical environment” (2004, p. 11). My feelings of belonging, my *topos*, are described and proscribed by the language I use to think, talk and write about my imagined *heimat*—my inner topography, my mindscape, is shaped by words. We return to Arthos’ idea of words extending the birthright of everything within human experience (2009, p. 353). As I describe my place, my *topos*, the words I choose offer a description of a place that is both real and imagined—my perception, memory and imagination colour my words. The word as a pivot point between our intellect and the world arises again in this context of place. The interacting performance of intellect, word and world is a balance that can bring forth rich and enlivening meanings when we engage in dialogue with ourselves about our nested places. Our words give an idea of the actuality and potentiality of a place—words exist in an immanent space that may also be occupied by imagination and memory. This immanent space of word, imagination and memory nourishes interpretation—in this space dwells Gadamer’s “true locus” that may shape our understanding of ourselves and our place (2004, p. 295).

Taking a step in another direction, attempting to distance myself from my island, I become aware of its indifference to me and my concerns. I can use as many words as I wish to describe my relationship to my place, yet my place remains ruled by the vagaries of nature. My island will continue to be shaped by wind and water, its coastline constantly eroding and re-forming, always in a state of flux just as I myself am constantly in a state of flux as I move through the curvature of Time. The idea of a shifting coastline becomes a metaphor for our shifting selves. Our memories, perceptions and history are islands of recollection that we return to as we continue to re-orient ourselves in the world, just as Tasmania is not one island, but an archipelago of over three hundred islands. Our many islands of recollection could be seen as our own personal archipelago of memory, floating in the wine-dark sea of our lived experience. Yet my island still remains indifferent to all my word-thoughts. It exists beyond my relationship to it.

My willingness to love my island, which does not and cannot love me in return, imbues my perceptions of my place. I watch, dismayed, as mainlanders from the big island of Australia arrive and try to reshape the island into the place they have left behind. We may be all searching for a place of belonging, a last chance for a nested place that might return the love we bestow on it, a refuge for our fragile humanity. Like W.H. Auden's elegiac poem "The More Loving One" in *Homage to Clio* about the love humans have for an indifferent universe, we express our love for our nested places even though they do not return that love. "If equal affection cannot be/Let the more loving one be me", says Auden (1960, p. 37). His words illuminate how the memory of our nested places sustain and nourish us when we may move into a space where we feel displaced, unmoored from the familiar haunts that comprise our lived environment. Maria Popova, in her article about Auden's poem on the Brainpickings.org website, comments,

Auden saw history—this selective set of remembrances constructed by human intention and choice—as both counterpart and antipode to nature, in which events unfold free of intent, governed by chance and the impartial physical laws of the universe. (2019)

In their indifference to us, our places offer teachings about what it means to be human, to dwell, to nest, to see and remember. My island's sublime indifference to my humanity alters my perceptions of who I am and how I move through Time in the world. Barry Lopez, in his book *About This Life: Journeys on the Threshold of Memory* (2011) describes this when he says,

...over the years one comes to measure a place...not just for the beauty it may give, the balminess of its breezes, the insouciance and relaxation it encourages, the sublime pleasures it offers but for what it teaches. The way in which it alters our perception of the human. It is not so much that you want to return to indifferent or difficult places but that you want not to forget. (p. 72)

## Reflections on a district school

I present another reflective narrative according to the research scenarios inherent within it. I continue to write to understand my relationship with my Self and my narratives come forward to address the others in my lifeworld and my reader. My writing is entwined with my relationships, with others who I hope can hear and understand. In this narrative, I attempt to speak about the complexities that lie between Self and others, as well as between the Self and the natural world. Through my continuing attendance to the things themselves, I become aware of these complexities, and my conscious orientation towards an interpretive embodiment opens up a field where I might make meaning from the mysteries of human being-in-place.

I had made a commitment for three years. Three years in a remote District School in the farthest south-eastern corner of Tasmania, on a peninsula joined to the main island by a slender thread of land only 250 metres across at its narrowest point. A peninsula steeped in Tasmania's convict history, a litany of misery so shameful and shocking that for many years islanders refused to acknowledge it, turned their collective backs on the sadness and

closed their eyes to the sandstone ruins of prison and hospital, allowing the buildings to be destroyed by fire and to become overrun with wilderness.

The sandstone ruins also bore witness to the worst massacre in Australia's history, with a lone gunman killing 35 people and injuring another 23. The folded, rugged topography of the site and its isolation became menacing, the long shadows on the day sinister, as one young man walked purposefully across the grass with his shotgun. The peninsula community was violated and left bereft by the happenings that day—an emotional wounding that seemed unable to fully heal. My three-year commitment to the school began near the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the massacre, when wounds began to re-open and sadness to suppurate.

The school was situated in one of the small villages on the peninsula, a village given its name by the first peoples who lived on the shores of the calm shallow bay. Unlike suburban schools, the isolation of the peninsula meant that this school had students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, from five years of age to 18 years of age, located on the same campus. In Tasmania, this type of school is called a District School, as it draws its students from across the whole of a district, in this case the peninsula. During my time at the school, I sought to engage the wider community in dialogue about how they wanted their school to be, how we could lay down a path as we walked together, developing a common language for teaching and learning that embraced the unique place where we were all situated. I became aware that there were two communities, people who had lived on the peninsula for generations, farming the land and walking the song-lines of the First Peoples, and other people who had moved from urban centres, seemingly fleeing from places and a system that might have made them feel marginalised and without agency over their lives.

Those who fled a system—displaced themselves—found an enfolding topography of wooded hills, shaded gullies and difficult to find tracks criss-

crossing dense bushland. I wondered—is such an enfolded place one where they might find refuge, a place where they can belong? The peninsula is one of the harshest parts of the island, a topographical terminus—literally and metaphorically, a person can flee no further without consigning themselves to the roiling waves that beat continuously against the sheer cliffs. In what ways might someone who chooses to displace herself, to remove herself from places of memorial significance, find another relationship with this landscape? Might this isolated place offer volition over her life, the opportunity to become an agent of her fate, a freedom to be who she is without censure? When I spoke with these “wayfinders”, these people who had searched for a new place to flourish, their anger at a system they believed oppressed them, trammelled them into living in a way they did not wish, was genuine and so was their need to find another place, a place of refuge and escape. They wished to be engaged with their child’s learning, but they were reluctant to engage with an institution such as a school, a place they saw as another symbol of an oppressive system that dictated how they should live their lives.

My individual history abutted the history of these “wayfinders”, confronted all my prejudices about how parents can be involved with a child’s learning. I made a conscious choice and effort to suspend my assumptions on what their truth might be—if marijuana or alcohol makes them feel generous and loving, offering freedom to enjoy socialising, then who am I to question such a truth? This question led me to wonder—how do we respond to these kinds of truths that might be alien to us? We can hardly object to such truths if we as teachers wish to remain open to the children living with different sets of values and understandings. If we as teachers wish to meet the child where he is and allow him to speak his life in his own way, we might be faced with values that challenge and provoke us. In what ways might I imagine what displaced children value?

I am confronted here with a hermeneutical problem in the world. How do I, as a teacher-philosopher, respond to alien traditions, or to no traditions at all? Gadamer says,

The hermeneutical problem only emerges clearly when there is no powerful tradition present to absorb one's own attitude into itself and when one is aware of confronting an alien tradition to which [she] has never belonged. (1976, p. 46)

It is here, in a boundary situation, where the teacher's traditions collide with her students that she must seek to understand *through* difference, permitting the foreignness of another to unfurl within conversation. The foreignness of the other is allowed to speak its unfinished becoming. "Hermeneutics", says Gadamer,

presupposed the foreignness of the content to be understood and thus made its task the overcoming of this foreignness by gaining understanding. (1976, p. 47)

I return to notions about altruism, concern for the wellbeing of others and its importance for teaching. Confronted by alien truths voiced through alien traditions, it may become important for the teacher to exercise her intelligent vocation, a vocation propelled by altruism, to enable students and parents to step into spaces that are without judgement. When my history abuts another's, with attendant possibilities for ruptures and misunderstandings, the notion that altruism and *agape* are behind the interactions I have with students and their parents may need to be consciously foregrounded and an effort made to lay prejudices aside so that dialogical spaces can be opened. Altruism and *agape* give rise to the exercise of my ethical imagination, enabling me to meet parents and students where they are and to speak their lives in their own way.

In the ideas of Annas, in taking a risk as we pass beyond doing what we believe to be the right thing into an uncharted space, we move into a space of mystery that exhorts us to stay true to our deep voice of vocation (2011, p.

41). I gambled my voice and my vocation, revealing my face to students and parents, creating spaces for dialogue to arise over time. I thought of Lederach and kept my beliefs about my vocation as a compass needle to guide me through the sometimes difficult and fraught interactions with parents and their children, providing me with a sense of location, place and direction (2005, p. 167). Keeping these ideas at the forefront of my mind, maintaining a confidence in my own agency, provided a nested place of ontological, embodied significance as I carefully navigated my way through conversations with people who seemed to have no sense of belonging anywhere.

As the years passed, I continued to draw strength from my vocational intelligence, knowing I was attempting to do good in the world. Relationships with children and parents developed a trusting common language, as we worked together to find our courage to grow the children in our care. I began to feel a sense of belonging in these conversations when parents spoke their lives in good faith, trusting me to be an honourable listener who was willing to lay prejudices and assumptions aside. Although each conversation was unique with a weight and colour all its own, I began to discern a thread of dissonance—the jangling disharmony of people who felt marginalised, powerless and without agency in the world. The adults I spoke to manifested this in angry tirades against the government, or the local council, or sometimes the school. Occasionally, their tirades were directed at me, particularly in the early days of my posting, as someone whom they saw as trying to impose sanctions on their choices about how they lived their life. I wondered—how can children develop their sense of agency if parents are struggling to maintain their sense of self? I observed the behaviour of the children while they were at school and noticed that many of their actions seemed aimed at gaining attention from adults. I saw behaviours that were impulsive, or distracted, or defiant.

The parents' conversations of dissonance seemed to indicate a restless discontent with life. I heard stories of dis-ease and felt a lack of harmony

within each person that did not allow dignity and contentment with lived experience nor circumstance to manifest and flourish. The impulsive, distracted behaviours I saw in their children at the school seemed to show an inability to navigate the complex interpersonal experience of the world and to mediate this experience through language. John Russon, in his essay “The Virtues of Agency: A Phenomenology of Confidence, Courage and Creativity” raises the idea that agency in the world “is not naturally occurring, but is achieved...and ethical agency is fundamentally a matter of undamaged development, itself predicated upon proper care” (2015, p. 166). Russon explores the idea that a child cannot develop an “ontological self-confidence, recognising herself to be a real and worthy being in her own right” if her upbringing does not offer opportunities to develop a sense of confidence in her own reality (p. 166). Through her very earliest experiences, the child develops a sense of belonging, being and becoming, understanding that she can shape her world by her actions and her will. How do children who may not have experienced proper care experience agency? Are they agent-less? If parents are always struggling against the world, lacking trust in their place, how can they foster agency in their children?

Recalling Auden, when I was faced with the indifference of the miserable landscape of the peninsula and the dissonances of the community, I decided to let the more loving one be me. I kept my vocational compass at the forefront of my mind—I cleared my head of distractions so I could attempt to orient myself towards a place of mindful wisdom and opened up welcoming spaces for each child to step into as they nursed their naked consciousness. I hoped, as I engaged in the artistry of teaching, allowing each child to gently adjust my public face as I adjusted theirs, that I might be enabling the nativity of ontological self-confidence, that these children would be able to become real. I also hoped that they would learn how to be free, that each child might step into the welcoming space opened for them and begin to develop their sense of agency, as one who acts, who does, who moves through the world as a unique person. I recognised that to offer these children a sense of agency might enable their caregivers to aspire to freedom, to trust in their place in the



world and come home to themselves. The members of this community, like Kyle and Campbell, felt violated, upended by circumstance and they had willingly stepped into a place of desolation, maybe as a way to find equilibrium. My experiences with Kyle and Campbell resonate in Russon's words,

...an underdeveloped ability to trust in one's secure place in the world leaves one always struggling at a point "before" engagement with the actual, so to speak; one is not yet fully acting in the world, for one is always engaged, rather, with the prior issue of struggling against the world to establish a secure sense of self-possession. (2015, p. 175)

Both Campbell and Kyle had home lives that were difficult, places that were dissonant and fraught with conflict. These boys could not engage with the world because they did not know who they were and where they belonged.

As I continued to move through the curvature of Time, travelling down to the peninsula early on a Monday morning and then returning home to my family on Friday afternoons, I began to feel myself displaced. Like other members of the peninsula community, I had deliberately moved away from the nested places of my childhood and adolescence. Although I had traversed the peninsula in memory, recollecting visits with my family, before I accepted the posting, I was unprepared for the dislocation I experienced when I became more a part of the community. During thick dark nights in the Spartan confines of the school accommodation, reading Simone de Beauvoir's *The Prime of Life*, I came across the French word *dépaysement*, with its translation of being "without country" (1960, p. 220). The word reflected my sense of disorientation at leaving my familiar places to voyage to somewhere unfamiliar. But I was still on my island—how could I feel so displaced? I had chosen *dépaysement* willingly and initially I experienced being without country as exhilarating, a freedom to return to my habits of young single life. I was a traveller in an unknown land. Now, after nearly three years, the feeling of every synapse firing with anticipation, anxiety and excitement had dulled and I felt exiled, bound to circumstances that were billowing beyond what I had imagined. I realised I was no "wayfinder",

instead I was a “homecomer” who flourished by putting down roots in one place.

My roots were near the nested places of my childhood, in the home I had made with my family. Even though I travelled overseas, experiencing the giddy exhilaration of *dépaysement*, a traveller in an unknown land, I always knew I was coming home to my island, returning to myself and the meanings I had made in the world. Being at home with my family only at weekends was not long enough to nourish my roots, to replenish myself. I came to new understandings of Gadamer’s *Dasein* and *Miteinander*, being-with-one-another, as being with oneself and being with other lifeworlds. I was unable to make contact with my family and my nested places, I became aware of myself inside the fullness of my lifeworld, the situations I had chosen to place myself in and the richness of my history. With this acute consciousness of Self came an awareness of the many lifeworlds that abutted mine, occasions for mediating the world through the event of language. One Monday morning, I took part in 15 conversations between my open car door in the carpark and arriving in my office. Every one of those conversations was important and occurred at the necessary moment in time. I sank into my office chair, my mind reeling, thoughts spiralling like water down a drain. Who am I to all these others, I thought, and why do they think I can help?

Unfurling conversations gave rise to a new interpretation of my agency, my acting and doing. I was myself, yet simultaneously I was not at home with myself, I was a stranger to myself. The calm school leader who was constantly on hand to support others to find their face was a stranger to me, yet it was me, the me who relished the role of helping and leading others. I felt a sense of *dépaysement* within myself, an alien-ness of being at the same time as I felt that I had stepped into the place that revealed who I really was. Being disconnected from those places I had grown up with and invested with semiotic significance permitted me to find my authentic face, to become real to myself. Exploring my sense of inner *dépaysement* allowed me to discover, in

Lewis' words, "the spears and waterspouts of truth" (1956, p. 132). If we discover our authentic face, then we have a door to understand our naked consciousness. In the *dépaysement* of our being, we may recognise something intrinsic about the human condition, which is that we are strangers to ourselves, extraordinary in our ordinariness. The initial indifference of the peninsula community to my public face, occasions when others saw straight through me, had made me afraid of myself and given me to wonder who I was. The differences in lifeworlds, in history and tradition, bloom into anxieties about our alien-ness to each other.

I feel I have been thrown into other people's lives, cast adrift in situations that have no beginning or ending—yet they are situations that seem to require continuance. I return to Warnke, in her essay "Hermeneutics, Politics and Ethics" (2002) to describe the place I find myself,

For Gadamer, following Heidegger, the hermeneutic situation signals the way in which, as human beings, we are "thrown" into a history or set of stories that we did not start and cannot finish, but which we must continue one way or another. We must always act in one way or another, because no acting or acting to end the necessity of continuing to act is itself a form of action. Yet, in order to determine how to act, we must also understand ourselves and the set of stories in which we find ourselves. If we have to act, we have to understand, in some better or worse way, who and where we are and where we want to be. (p. 79)

I begin to glimpse a notion about acting ethically towards myself, deciding where I want to be in the world to nourish myself and re-orient my being to vocational agency.

As the three years of my commitment drew to an end, conversations began with colleagues about how I could stay at the school, how the school could accommodate my position for an extended length of time. One midwinter afternoon I returned to the school accommodation where I spent my weekdays, collapsed into a chair and stared through the window at the leaden

sky. I thought, I am exhausted, drained, emptied. How can I prepare the school community for my departure? How do I ethically and responsibly step back from this situation? The strangeness of myself to myself had blossomed into feelings of unravelling, propelling towards a dissolution of my centre. I felt I was losing my agency—I could no longer predict how I would act or what I would do in any situation. Looking through the window at the glowering hills surrounding the school, I remembered this poem by Tasmanian author Christopher Koch.

***Winter Midday***

*In the cold grey day's unmoving*

*Dish, the landscape keeps as still*

*As a bird on a wire,*

*Making uneasy movements only.*

*I send my glance like water*

*Across the scene's dry cold,*

*To find the houses stark as teeth*

*In a paddock-lying, skeleton jaw,*

*And am sad for the chilled leaves*

*On bushes in a steel sky's hold.*

*Unmoving in the air's lead look*

*The spine-frozen roads and a fence-post*

*Rooted to the hill are quite half-witted*

*Under the heavy load*

*Of sky that is everywhere; over houses*

*And fences, and above the railway line down there*

*Where it meets the steel stare with a steel stare.*

(First published in The Bulletin newspaper, June 1952)

The question arose within me—how do I ethically show responsibility towards myself so that I come to as little harm as possible? I was exhausted, right through to marrow in my bones, my Self unravelling. I searched for a word to describe my state and found another French word—*épuisée*, with its literal translation of exhausted. Unfolding other meanings led me to the words ‘emptied’, ‘drained’. Inside the word *épuisée* is the smaller word *puit*, which means a pit from which springs the water of life. My inner pit, the deep part of myself that nourished my ontological self-confidence, had been drained by my experiences at the school. I knew I could not stay beyond the end of the year. My sense of agency, my responsibility and ethics towards myself, permitted me to give myself the freedom of choice to leave this place. I saw that I had been vigilant to the displacement of others, focussing on opening welcoming spaces for the community to step into, while neglecting my own feelings of displacement. I had embodied my intelligent vocation and taken the risk to make myself vulnerable, orienting myself towards the other, allowing them to speak their own lives in their own way. We had laid down a path while we walked, laying our prejudices and assumptions aside, entering into a dialogue that foregrounded our commonalities. If I have taken the risks to make myself vulnerable in this way, then might I also show responsibility towards myself by returning to the people and places that nourish my sense of wellbeing?

The last weeks of my time at the school passed in a flurry of activity. During those weeks I shared with a high school class the beginning of this writing about my island. I sat with a boy who was finding the task of writing about his community challenging. He read my writing and sat silently for a while. I waited. At last he turned to me and said, “You love your place too. I love it here”. I nodded, agreeing with him. “You left your family to come down here and teach us”, he continued, “and that has been really good. I

think that your family might want you back now. Thanks for everything you have done for us". The class, quiet as mice up until this moment, erupted into applause. I smiled my thanks, unable to speak. Another student said, "You've got puddles in your eyes, Miss." And I did.

## Chapter 9

### Becoming Real

*He said, "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or who have sharp edges, or have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."*

Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, 1922

This chapter continues to unfold my wonderings through narratives I gathered during my time at a District School. These narratives re-present notions I have been exploring about language, embodied vocation, speaking our lives in our own way and the past lying before us. I try to tell them as I experienced them—their enfolding of unfinished-ness and difficulty, while also unfurling hope and possibility. Three stories opened up spaces of puzzlement for me and were catalysts for self-reflection. All of these narratives permitted me to find my face and hold fast to my essential thread of character despite feeling myself unravelling, propelling towards dissolution.

Andrew Fuyarchuk, in his essay “The Inner Word and the Universality of Gadamer’s Hermeneutics” explores the centrality of lived experience in Gadamer’s hermeneutics. He suggests,

Phenomenology is a method of acquiring knowledge that purports to save experience, or “the life-world” from the reductions of causal explanations advanced by the natural sciences. For Gadamer, the key to a phenomenological description of reality is not a denial of the ways in

which consciousness is historically effected...but rather a recognition of that influence. (2017, p. 3)

My stories reveal what has become conscious to me as historically effected, and their inherent complexity within the context of the socially constituted classroom cannot be saved by denying their intensity. Their lifeworld must be upheld by recognising the social influences of each protagonist's historical consciousness. When each protagonist recognises the effect that the past that lies before her might guide her, she might come to embrace a sense of her own agency.

A thread that weaves these stories into kinship is the notion of agency. Our agency is our acting and doing in the world and these stories trace patterns of agency in a school setting, unfolding related wonderings about freedom, responsibility and ontological self-confidence. These stories were signposts towards what Russon calls "a summons to action...the world of our experience summons us to be agents" (2015, p. 165). As I experienced these stories, directly through living them or indirectly as an honourable listener, I felt summoned to action, to show my authentic face and become real in my intelligent embodied vocation. We return to Freire's definition of *praxis* as "reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed" (1970, p. 126), my living of these stories was an immersion in *praxis*, where I brought my theories and my history to every decision as I made it. I was an active participant who became my own example in a journey towards understanding others and myself.

### Sheena: More than I can be

*The phone rang. "Hello, it's Kristy here from Child and Family Services. We need to come and collect Sheena today." I was mystified. Collect Sheena? I wondered, what on earth for? After a traumatic few months with an alcoholic mother, Sheena was now attending school regularly and contributing more freely*



to class discussions. Sheena had told me how much she and her little sister Zoe liked living with Nan. She had just turned six. "Hi Kristy, can I ask why you want to collect Sheena today?" "Well, Nan contacted us and said that she and her husband are unable to look after Sheena and Zoe anymore. The Nan has a leg injury and her husband also has mobility issues, so the constant physical movement required to look after the girls has just proved too much." "Ah, right. Any chance the girls can return to Mum's care?" I asked hopefully.

"Unfortunately, not. The court has made the girls wards of the state. I will forward you a copy of the Care and Protection Order." I heard the gentle ping of an incoming email. "Thanks for that. So, you will need to come down this afternoon and talk to Sheena?" "Yes please, we should get to the school at around lunchtime. Is that ok?" I thought for a moment. "Could you get here just before lunch, so that Sheena doesn't have to walk past all the other children playing outside?" "Yes, sure, at what time then?" "12:15 should be fine." "No worries, we'll see you soon." "Ok", I hung up. It was only after I'd read through the court order that I wondered, does Kristy even know what Sheena looks like? Who she is?

Lunchtime came and went, with no sign of Kristy. It was after two o'clock when two young women clambered out of a 4WD in the car park. They walked slowly towards the front office. "Hi, I'm Kristy and this is Amira." I smiled. "Hello. Welcome to our school." "This case has just been assigned to me and Amira is shadowing me this week as she has just started with us." Amira smiled shyly. Close up, both workers were impossibly young, with fresh unlined faces that did not look ready to bear the travails of the career they had chosen. Child and Family Services saw families in extremis, crumpling under the burdens of straightened circumstances, family violence and a thousand shades of abuse. "Ah, right. Well, how do you wish to proceed?" "We usually come and just collect the child from the classroom...you come with us, of course", Kristy added hurriedly. "Ok, and what will happen to Sheena after you collect her from her classroom?" "We'll explain to her that she can't live with Nan anymore and that we are taking her to a new home", recited Kristy quickly. "Right," I answered as we began walking towards the classrooms. "Where will the girls be placed once they leave their grandparents'?"

*There was a pause as Kristy and Amira exchanged glances. "Well...we don't have a placement for them as yet. We are hoping that the office can sort something out and let us know during the drive back to town so we can take the girls straight to their new home." This made me feel very uneasy, and I attempted to arrange my face along conventional lines to disguise my disquiet. As we walked, I questioned the girls further. "Is it possible for us, that is, the staff, to investigate a placement for Sheena and Zoe?" I asked. Kristy's face lit up. "That would be great. It would be better for Sheena if she could stay at the school with all her friends." I nodded. I rang one of our Teacher Assistants on my mobile. "Could your daughter take on Sheena and Zoe?" Gaynor rang to inquire. Meanwhile we continued walking and I met another Teacher Assistant. "Kathy, do you feel able to take on Sheena and Zoe?" My inquiries started to become complicated. Kathy did not want interference by grandparents visiting while she cared for Sheena and Zoe. At this stage, Gaynor rang back and said that her daughter was unable to take on any more foster children. I was out of options to keep the girls with us.*

*"Here we are. Would you like me to fetch Sheena so you can meet her?" I crept into the classroom. Sheena was sitting in the home corner, playing quietly on her own. She was always quiet. I gave her a little wave when she looked up and saw me, then I moved quickly over to let her class teacher know that she was being collected. I walked over to Sheena, who looked up and smiled when she saw me coming. "Hi Sheena, how are you today?" Sheena nodded and did not respond. I held out my hand to her. "You are being picked up early today, Sheena. Can you show me your bag?" Sheena got up obediently, carefully packing away the dolls she had been playing with, took my hand and led me over to the bag area. She picked up her backpack and allowed me to lead her out of the classroom, where Kristy and Amira were waiting.*

*"Hi Sheena", said Kristy brightly. "Do you remember me? We have seen each other before, haven't we?" Sheena's hand tightened in mine. She looked at Kristy and gave a small, hesitant smile. Kristy's brittle voice sang, "This is Amira. She is helping out today. Amira, this is Sheena". Amira only leant down so her face was level with Sheena's. She could have crouched down, I thought. "Hi Sheena! It's so nice to meet you today!" Sheena was nodding and smiling in*

silence. Her hand was gripping mine as tightly as a small child could. Kristy said, "We're going to drive you to Nan and Pop's place, is that OK?" More nodding from Sheena. We began to walk away from the classroom, to the front office. Sheena told me about her new sneakers, which lit up when she jumped or hopped. She let go of my hand for a moment to demonstrate the flashing lights, but quickly grabbed it again. We chatted about Nan, Pop, Zoe and Sheena's older sister, Paige, a previous student of ours. It was a fairly long walk back to the front office and Sheena was looking much more relaxed when we arrived. She wiggled her hand in mine. "Can I go to the toilet, please?" I nodded and she trotted off to the toilets.

Kristy stepped closer to me. "Ah...I've been thinking...seeing as you know Sheena better than we do...perhaps it might be better coming from you." I knew what she meant immediately. No...no...no... I thought, I cannot tell Sheena that she is not staying with Nan and Pop. I stared at Kristy. Did she realise the enormity of what she was asking? The huge cloud of negative emotions that would overwhelm Sheena when she learnt that she and Zoe were going to stay with strangers? Kristy scabbled to explain. "It's just that you could be a comfort to Sheena, she might not be as upset if you explain what is happening. Sometimes children become very distressed when a Child and Family Services worker delivers bad news like this." I was still staring at Kristy when I felt a small hand slip into mine and looked down to see that Sheena had returned.

Kristy seized the moment. "Mrs Waldock is going to have a quick chat to you and then we will give you a ride to Nan and Pop's." Kristy and Amira beat a very quick retreat through the front doors and outside to the waiting 4WD. Sheena looked up at me trustingly. My fury at Kristy must have shown on my face, because then Sheena bit her lip with worry. I smiled. "It's ok Sheena, we will have a quick chat and then go out to the car." I guided Sheena into a meeting room, away from prying eyes and settled her into a soft chair. I sat opposite her, keeping hold of her small sticky hand. "Sheena, sweetheart", I began, "you have been living with Nan and Pop while Mum's been sick". "Zoe too", she interrupted. "Yes, Zoe too. Nan and Pop are getting old. Nan has a sore leg and Pop is in a wheelchair, isn't he?" She nodded, still biting her lip. "Nan and Pop love you and Zoe, but they are having trouble looking after you. They are worried that they won't be able to keep you and Zoe safe...If Zoe ran across the road, Nan and

*Pop wouldn't be able to run after her quickly enough and Zoe might have an accident." I had no idea if this was the right thing to say. I wondered if there was a protocol for telling a child that they were to be placed in a foster home. Sheena was biting her lip harder now, looking at me with wary eyes. "Because Nan and Pop were so worried about keeping you and Zoe safe, they rang up Kristy and she has come to take you and Zoe to a new family who can look after you, keep you safe." Her eyes filled with tears.*

*"Not Mum? We are not going back to Mum's?" "No, sweet, Mum is still sick, and she can't look after you either." Sheena looked away from me, a big tear trickling down her cheek. She pulled her hand away from mine. "I want to go back to Mum's", she said stubbornly. "I'm sorry, sweet, that can't happen right now", I said, trying to stay calm, "but you and Zoe will still be able to see Mum, Nan and Pop if you want to". Her shoulders drooped. "Will I still be going to this school?" she asked. "No, because your new family will live too far away to bring you to school every day. I'm sorry, Sheena", I said sadly. She gave a little sob and more tears rolled down her pale cheeks. I held my arms open and she came to me, laying her head on my shoulder. I hugged her. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. There is nothing I can do", I whispered. "You and Zoe are going to be okay, Sheena. I know it is not the same as being with Nan and Pop, but it will be okay." I found a tissue and wiped her tears. "We have to go now", I said, looking into her tear-stained face. "Kristy and Amira are waiting for us. They will take you to Zoe."*

What else could I have said to Sheena? I will never forget her little white face looking out of the window as the car pulled away. It had been an impossible dilemma for me. Was I to tell her the truth, that Kristy had no idea where they would be taking her and Zoe? In my retelling of this story, it is clear that my past continues to haunt my present, illuminating the idea that almost every moment of every day a teacher may have to make an ethical decision in the heat of the moment, with consequences rippling into the forever of the lived experience. I am brought back to myself, asking myself why I would want to help others and the complex question for educators of what 'help' looks like.

There seems to be an intrinsic moral wrongness about telling Sheena that everything was going to be okay, saying this may be a kind of violence done by me towards this child. Todd's individuals "learning to become" are children who in the beginning of the process of becoming are vulnerable to the potentiality of violence (2001, p. 434). My telling Sheena she would be okay, while knowing that this might not be true, may be a hidden violence of the kind that Todd refers to, my telling covered the lying that may have been a constant in Sheena's life. Perhaps Sheena's silences were her response to constant lies? An outward sign of the violence already visited upon her?

Sheena's life had been ruptured by her mother's alcohol abuse and now by her departure from her grandparent's house. Sheena's initial silences and later her desire to return to her mother's care shows that she is intelligent enough to perceive the real, she has realised that to engage with the world is a risky business. "Staying in a room alone, meeting strangers...for the growing child, these situations demand courage in order to be navigated well", says Russon (2015, p. 172) and for Sheena, through her survival instinct, this situation may open possibilities of agency. My best hope for Sheena is that she comes to a sense of herself as someone who can cope with challenging situations and can support Zoe to develop this also. She may re-see herself as a blameless participant in a violent act, opening a possibility for her to grow into her strength, her courage to be a confident agent in the world.

My reflection on this incident led me to wonderings about the abuse of power in a pedagogical situation. My embodiment as a teacher is a commitment to meet the child where they are in the world, to accept any invitation to enter the child's lifeworld. A situation like the one that Sheena and I experienced is a travesty of teachers acting *in loco parentis*, as teachers gamble their ethical vocation and their relationship to the child by lying as I did to Sheena. My moral rupture began when I spoke on the phone with Kristy and she told me the news that Sheena would be relocating, away from the community who had known her since she was born. My sadness to tell

Sheena the truth, that I had no idea what would happen to her, was done within a system made by laws that are indifferent to human emotions. I was powerless to make a difference as a caring person, a significant other, in Sheena's life, as we both found ourselves at the mercy of a system that acts too quickly for the child and the relatives to adjust themselves from a place of belonging to one of displacement.

Sheena was a vulnerable child, nursing her naked consciousness, who was placed in a situation beyond her capacity. The situation of unexpectedly finding out that you will not be returning to your home would be difficult for adults, most of whom have a sense of agency and an apprehension of their worth in the world, yet was there not an expectation by Kristy that Sheena would cope in such a situation? To enact violence on a child in this way shows a system that thinks less of the child's being and possibility of becoming—as caregivers, we take away the child's ability to learn how to be free, we nullify their “apprenticeship of freedom,” a phrase de Beauvoir uses in her work *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1976, p. 37). If teachers wish to practise an assiduity to their vocation, then there may be an onus on the teacher to see the child as more than she can be, because “the child on her own cannot confirm her own worth, her own agency” (Russon, 2015, p.170). A teacher and student who find themselves in a situation like the one that Sheena and I found ourselves in, are spiralling towards ethical harm. Ethically harmful situations erode our basic sense that we are real and that we matter in the world, as we cannot support ourselves in a situation like this, one that offers no confirmation of the future. In the days after watching Sheena being driven away, I wondered—how much ethical harm are teachers and children expected to bear? In the face of a system seemingly indifferent to a child's becoming Self, I can let the more loving one be me, acknowledging the challenges and difficulties I will encounter by making such a choice.

## Liam: Freedom and responsibility

“Have you heard about Liam?” one of my colleagues asked as I entered the staff room on Monday following the Easter break. Liam was a 10-year-old student who struggled with the demands of school. Liam was quiet, gentle and loved the animals on the school farm. His family had lost their home in a bushfire two years ago and the family had bought land and built another house. Liam had two brothers, one older and the other younger. All this information flashed through my head when I heard Liam’s name, an inventory of his circumstances. “No”, I replied, “has something happened?” My colleague nodded. “He’s had an accident while using the lawnmower and lost some of his fingers.” My mouth dropped open. “Do we know how it happened?” My colleague shook her head. “No, but both of his brothers are here today, perhaps they can tell us.” I decided to ring Liam’s parents first to see how Liam was faring. I went into my office and sat down, still turning over the news in my mind. How would Liam, already ostracised by other students because of his academic struggles, cope with this life-changing event?

Repeated attempts to contact Liam’s parents by phone were unsuccessful and I asked the office staff to keep trying. I went to find Tobey, Liam’s older brother, to see how the accident had impacted upon him and attempt to gain more information about what had happened to Liam. Tobey raced over to me as soon as I entered his classroom. “Mrs Waldock! Did you hear about Liam?” he asked excitedly. “I heard he had an accident with a lawnmower, is that right?” Tobey nodded. “We had to call the ambulance and everything. Liam spent the whole weekend in hospital.” Tobey seemed excited at the idea that an ambulance had come to his house. “Is Liam still in hospital?” Tobey shook his head. “No, he came home yesterday. Mum and Dad said he can stay home this week.” I nodded. “That sounds like a good idea. I tried ringing your place earlier but there was no answer, perhaps Mum and Dad have gone out somewhere?” Tobey looked surprised, then shook his head. “Nah. They’re asleep, I reckon.” I glanced at my watch—10.45am. Tobey saw me and said, “Usually Mum or Dad get up about lunchtime.” “Oh, ok, I will try ringing them later then”, I replied. I looked at Tobey again. “Were you at home when Liam had his accident?” Tobey nodded

and tapped his chest. “I pulled him away from the mower. His hand was covered in blood and his fingers were laying on the ground near the mower!”

By now, the classroom was quiet enough to hear a pin drop, as every child held their breath so as to listen to Tobey. I patted his shoulder. “C’mon, let’s go for a walk and you can tell me all about it.” We left the classroom and headed towards the playground. Tobey asked, “Can we get Monty from his classroom? He was outside when it happened.” Monty was the youngest of the three brothers. “Sure, let’s get Monty on our way past his classroom”, I answered, which we did. Monty was small for his six years, with a faraway look in his eyes. Sometimes Monty took a long time to answer questions, as if he was trying to work out the answer that would be the most pleasing to the questioner. “Hi, mate”, I said gently. “Liam had an accident during the break, is that right?” Monty looked from Tobey to me, then nodded, eyes wide. “Tobey and I are going to have a walk and a talk about it. Tobey thought you might like to come too. Is that ok with you?” Monty nodded eagerly, so the three of us set off in the direction of the playground.

For the next hour or so the three of us walked and talked, stopping occasionally so that the boys could swing, or jump, or chase each other around the play equipment. And they told me the story of Liam and the lawnmower, which, in a nutshell, goes like this.

Liam was outside playing a game on his own with sticks. Perhaps he was making a fort, or a ramp for his Matchbox cars, we don’t know. Liam looked around for Tobey and Monty, but they were playing right over by the dam and Liam was a bit afraid of the water, so he didn’t want to go over there. Besides, when the three boys were together, they often fought and argued, and Liam wanted to be quiet today. Liam left his game of sticks and went inside to get a drink. His Mum and Dad were there, watching the football with some of their friends. Everyone had had a lot of beer, Liam knew this because he could smell it. So he quickly drank his drink and went back outside.

We don’t know why Liam decided to mow the grass, maybe he wanted to be helpful or give Mum and Dad a surprise—he liked to do that sometimes. Liam dragged the big mower out of the shed and pushed it over to the grass. He



managed to get it started and mowed all the grass at the front of his house. Liam was tired out, so he turned the mower off and reached underneath to get any grass clippings out, like his Dad did. But Liam was too fast, and the mower blades hadn't stopped turning yet, so that when he put his hand under, the blades cut off three fingertips of his right hand. Liam screamed and the other boys ran over. Tobey pulled Liam away from the mower and he could see Liam's right hand covered with blood, as well as his fingertips lying on the freshly mown grass nearby. "Monty!" yelled Tobey, "Go and pick up Liam's fingers!"

Monty stood stock still, looking at all the blood running down Liam's hand, dripping onto the grass. Liam was not screaming now he was staring at his hand. "Monty!" yelled Tobey again, "Get over there and pick up Liam's fingers!" Monty got angry. "No! You do it!" Tobey and Monty kept bickering over who was going to pick up the fingers while Liam, still silently staring at his bloodied hand, sank down onto the grass. Meanwhile, the family dog Ralph came over to see what all the fuss was about. Ralph didn't want to come too close to the two boys shouting at each other, so he sniffed all around and found Liam's three fingertips lying in the grass. And he ate them. Monty caught sight of Ralph chewing something over Tobey's shoulder. He pointed. "Ralph ate Liam's fingers!" Tobey swung round to see Ralph's bloody muzzle. "Oh, shit. Let's get Mum and Dad."

The next week Liam returned to school, nursing his bandaged hand. He tried to write using his left hand, often showing signs of frustration at his lack of progress. Three weeks after his accident, he came to my office early one morning. The bandage on his hand was dirty and falling off. I could see that Liam had tried to keep the bandage on his hand using Band Aids, but now the bandage was a tangled mess. "Hi Liam, how are you going today?" I smiled. Liam smiled back and handed me a folded scrap of paper. I opened it to see a note from Liam's mother. "Could someone please re-bandage Liam's hand? We are too tired [smiley face]. Thanks Karen." I put the note carefully down on my desk and turned to Liam, stretching my hand towards him. "I think we might need a new bandage, mate." Liam put his bandaged hand in mine and I gently extricated it from the filthy wrappings. His hand lay exposed in my palm and for the first time, I could see his injury. The injured fingers were swollen and red, their ends puckered where the stitches had been. Some parts of the scars were open gashes. "Is your hand sore, Liam? Your fingers look a bit red", I said

quietly. “Yeah, a bit sore still. Mum and Dad haven’t had time to put any new bandages on.” I bent closely over his hand so he could not see my shocked expression. “Ah, ok. So, these are the bandages the hospital put on when they took your stitches out?” Liam nodded. “The hospital gave us some ointment too, but we lost it somewhere.”

As I kept looking at Liam’s maimed hand resting in mine, I recalled Sharon Todd’s phrase, “bringing more than I contain” and I knew I wouldn’t be able to bandage Liam’s hand without emotion, without weeping for his pain and the ongoing struggles he would have, without becoming angry at Liam’s parents and judging them. Liam did not want my tears or my anger, but this task was beyond me. I gently moved Liam’s swollen hand to his opposite shoulder, raising it to hopefully alleviate the throbbing. “Well, mate, I am no expert in bandaging hands, but Miss M [another staff member] works for the ambulance as a volunteer. I bet she could do a fantastic job. Let’s go and see where she is.” As we walked towards Miss M’s office, I said to Liam, smiling, “No more lawn mowing for you for a while, mate”. Liam looked up at me. “We can’t mow the lawn anymore anyway. After my accident, Dad was so angry he smashed up the mower with a hammer.”

Looking at Liam’s hand resting in my palm, I was overwhelmed with an understanding of my responsibility towards Liam and all the other children in my care. As teachers act *in loco parentis* to children over time, they might begin to comprehend the weight of responsibility their intelligent vocation brings. Such comprehension may give rise to a vertigo of the mind, a dizzying realisation that this vocation I have chosen has the potential to push me into an abyss of despair and anxiety. We return to the word *épuiŕee* to describe such feelings of despair—we are drained and exhausted by the weight of our responsibility. As I comprehended my responsibility to care for Liam’s injury, I also apprehended my freedom in the world (de Beauvoir, 1967). I am free to make, re-make and un-make myself at any moment, I have confidence in my agency and my embodied vocation. I discern that my freedom is situational, that it exists within a place and time and is influenced by my remembered history. I bent low over Liam’s hand, forcing myself to look at his injury and

steeling myself to help him. I was a leader at my school, exercising the courage and creativity of my agency in the world, attempting to embody virtue in agency as a leader.

Walking with Liam to find Miss M, I wondered if perhaps it was the comprehension of responsibility that led young teachers to leave the profession? Perhaps we, as teachers, cannot truly meet the child where they are unless we have an apprehension of our freedom? Liam walked beside me quietly, he had not cried or whimpered when I took off his bandages. He had been uncomplaining in the face of such an enormous change to his life. I wondered, was Liam taking responsibility for his injuries? Liam had not blamed his parents for his accident and spoke of them with love, he had nested places that were significant for him, holding memories of special times with his parents and brothers. In contrast to Sheena, Child and Family Services had decided not to intervene in the family's life, believing there was enough evidence to suggest that the three boys would be better to stay within their familiar place with their parents—so I was told when I rang them to report the conversation that had taken place between myself, Tobey and Monty about Liam's accident, a mandatory requirement of an educational system that constrains all of us—Liam, his family, Child and Family Services, and me.

Liam sat patiently while Miss M re-bandaged his hand. He gave her a shy smile when she was finished and listened while she described how to care for his hand—where to get more bandages, what sort of ointment to use, when to return to visit the local doctor for a check-up. I walked Liam back to class, waved him goodbye and returned the way I had come, past Miss M's office. She was on her mobile phone, her voice harsh. "You need to look after your boys better than this, Karen, or they will be taken from you. I had to re-bandage Liam's hand today after you sent him to school with that ridiculous note. That is not okay." There was a pause as Miss M listened. "Don't give me any excuses, Karen. I have told Liam what to do to look after his hand

from now on. I will be checking up on him and if things aren't done right, I will be ringing Child and Family Services. Do you understand? Right." Miss M hung up and saw me outside her door. She gave me a grin. "I taught Karen, Liam's mum, when she was a student here at school. I've been in this community for a long time, so I can give someone a piece of my mind and they will accept it." I grinned back and kept walking, thinking of Russon's idea that to become an agent, a Self, in the world, the child must be able to rest trustingly in the support of his caregivers. Perhaps Liam's parents will be able to offer him an apprenticeship of freedom, an opportunity for Liam to become conscious of himself as someone who acts with confidence and courage. As Russon says,

What counts as success, then, in the child's navigation of the inherently interpersonal fabric of its experience of self-others-world, is substantially defined by the attitude—the will—of the significant other(s). (2015, p. 170)

### Alison: Three cups of tea

*Alison was a parent at school. She had two daughters who she worried about a lot, calling the school with concerns about how her girls were being treated by other kids, or if her girls were making acceptable progress with their schoolwork. I thought both of her girls were nice enough, perhaps a little over sensitive to the slings and arrows of playground banter, otherwise two calm dependable girls moving unobtrusively through school life. Alison was still worried, though, and I became her main point of contact to talk over her concerns. After two or three phone conversations, I invited Alison to come into school and have a face-to-face chat. When I first saw Alison, I was reminded of a dolorous dormouse. Alison's eyes were down-cast and her small hands were clasped in front of her plump teardrop-shaped body. "Alison, hi!" I chirped. "Come on through." I ushered her through the office doors into the Administration area. The school had recently installed a coffee machine and I persuaded Alison to accept a cappuccino. We found a comfortable space, sipped our coffees and talked about*

*her girls' progress at school, how they sometimes had a hard time fitting in, how the younger girl sometimes cried before she came to school because she didn't want to be there. I said I would keep an eye on both girls and suggested the younger daughter join our community mentor program. Alison seemed pleased that "something was going to happen" and, coffees finished, we parted.*

*The next conversation with Alison came at the end of my first year at the school. Parents had been invited to celebrate the community mentor program and Alison joined other parents to chat with the community mentors and share a morning tea. Alison came along with her parents, the girls' grandparents, looking more forlorn than before. Her younger daughter, along with the other mentored students, had helped to prepare the morning tea and was bustling around the school kitchen, holding a plate of scones. As I came in, I caught sight of Alison sitting with her parents and moved towards her. "Hello Alison, how are you?" She gave me a small smile. "Not so good, I'm afraid, we're going through a bit of a hard time at home at the moment." I sat down beside her. "I'm really sorry to hear that. Is there anything the school can do to support you and your family?" Alison looked down and sideways, her head tilted slightly. I recognised that this was a habitual gesture and one shared by her daughters. Alison gave a heavy sigh. "No, I don't think so. I'm lucky to have Mum and Dad living so close." I smiled at the two older people sitting next to Alison, introducing myself and repeating my offer of support. I rose, knowing I had to be somewhere else. I leant down and squeezed Alison's hand, which lay curled in her lap, pale as a doll's. "Please let me know if I can help in any way at all. You are welcome to give me a phone call or send a note with one of the girls." She looked into my face briefly, then away, giving me another of her small smiles. "Thank you very much. I will call you if I need to." I nodded, smiled and squeezed her hand gently before heading outside to the playground. I reckon I will hear from Alison in the next couple of days, I thought as I walked across the oval.*

*But I did not hear from Alison in the next few days, or weeks, in fact it was a little over six months before Alison rang and asked to speak to me. Her call was put through to my office and when I answered, there was steel in her voice. "Michelle", she said firmly, "Can I come and speak with you about what has been happening at our house?" "Absolutely, Alison. When would be a convenient time for you to come in?" "Can I come this afternoon please?" "Yes, of course. Come*

*in after school, I'll be here. Just ask someone at the front office to give me a ring. Is that ok?" "Yes, thank you so much. Sorry for any inconvenience." "There is no inconvenience Alison, I'll see you this afternoon." I hung up the phone and pondered about the change in Alison's voice—I had heard firmness in her tones, and urgency. What has happened? I wondered.*

*When I opened the door to the school foyer that afternoon, Alison was waiting. She was thinner, standing tall with eyes that looked directly into mine. I felt an upsurge of happiness at this change in demeanour. "Hi, Alison", I said warmly. "Come on in. Let's get a coffee and have a chat." Once again, we helped ourselves to coffees from the machine and sat down in comfortable chairs. Alison moved decisively, choosing her coffee and chair with confidence. What a change from the first time we met, I thought. We faced each other, deep in our chairs, and I asked, "So what brings you here Alison? How can I help you today?" Alison looked into my face, raising her chin slightly. "I wanted to tell you about what's been happening in our family." I nodded encouragingly and leant back into my chair. "Go ahead, Alison." This is the story that Alison told.*

Alison's husband Ricky had been suffering from depression for some time. Medication was only of limited help and when Ricky had an injury at work, an injury that meant he could not work again, his feelings of helplessness began to spiral out of control. At first Alison thought Ricky was "just a bit down" and with support things would return to normal. But Ricky became more and more withdrawn, when he was told he would be unable to work again, having now to support his family on a disability pension, it was the beginning of the end. Alison was now Ricky's full-time carer, as his mobility was limited. Ricky grew more withdrawn, going for days without speaking to Alison or the girls.

One evening the older daughter, 15 years old, made a glib, backhanded remark, the way teenage girls do, about Ricky not moving from the couch. Ricky got up, went to the cupboard, got out his shotgun and shoved the muzzle underneath the girl's chin. "I could kill you right now", he said quietly, menacingly. Alison screamed and tried to pull Ricky away, whereupon he hit Alison with the butt of the gun, knocking her to the ground. Somehow Alison still managed to wrestle the gun away from Ricky, who disappeared out of the back door and into the

night. Time went past, Alison didn't know how much, later she looked up and her daughter was still sitting, frozen in the same position as she had been, her chin slightly raised so Alison could see the angry red indentation the gun's muzzle had made. Alison noticed the gun lying on the kitchen floor and she nudged it further away with her foot. The younger daughter had crept out from her room to sit next to her sister, holding her hand. Alison moved as if in a dream towards the phone and rang the police.

The police confiscated all the firearms at the house and charged Ricky with various offences. Ricky went to prison for six months and during that time Alison had no income to support herself or the girls. Ricky's disability pension and Alison's carer's pension were terminated when Ricky went to prison. Alison got a part-time job at the local supermarket and the older daughter also got a job at the local hotel as a cleaner. Ricky underwent a rehabilitation program while he was in prison. He sent Alison an email asking to see her and the girls. Ricky wants to come home when his sentence is over, and Alison wants that too.

At this point Alison paused and looked out of the window at another slow Tasmanian dusk. The shadows from the eucalypts outside scored her face and she said, "I want Ricky to come home but I told him never again. Never again would he hurt me or the girls. I won't go through this a second time." I nodded and patted her forearm gently. I waited for Alison to speak again, in her own way and her own time. "I thought I would never be able to deal with the lawyers and the courts when Ricky was sentenced. But I did. I never thought I would be able to go and ask for a job, because I had no skills except for looking after my family. But I got a job and my girl got a job too. There were times when I wanted to curl up underneath the kitchen table and not come out...I did, though, I came out and went to work, looked after the girls, I spoke to the lawyers and went to visit Ricky in prison even though the girls refused to see him. I want Ricky to come home and for us to be a family but I am different now. I have done things I could not do before... so never again. He will not do that to me again." "You have been so brave, Alison," I said, "so brave and you have shown your girls how to be brave too. That is a wonderful thing to have done, to have been brave like that, when everything was so difficult. I am in awe of you!" We smiled at each other. "Thank you for coming in to tell me all this, Alison. I'm sure it wasn't easy."

“I wanted to let you and the school know, but I don’t want everyone to know, just the girls’ teachers please.” “Of course, perhaps I could let our Social Worker know as well? In case the girls need some support over the next few months?” Alison nodded firmly. I was again struck by the difference from the shy dolorous dormouse I had first met. As she told me her story, Alison’s eyes were flashing with anger, hurt and regret. I saw as well, a steely resolve and a hard-won confidence. Those clear eyes were on me now. “I also came to thank you for everything you have done for me”, Alison said. I opened my mouth to speak, to deny, but Alison gestured me to silence. “You have always taken my phone calls, sat and talked with me, made me coffees. You looked into my eyes and I felt you cared. You are confident when you talk with people. That helped me when I had to talk to lawyers and counsellors and stuff. Thank you for everything.” We were both crying. When Alison went to leave, we hugged each other goodbye wordlessly.

I was an honourable listener as Alison spoke her life in her own way and in her own time and I have attempted to continue that honouring as I represent her voice in written text. Alison’s voice, as with all the other voices in this chapter, speak patterns of loss, yet Alison’s voice, and indirectly the voices of her daughters, also evoke a regaining of courage. As I reflected on my interactions with Alison over the three years I spent at the District School, I was reminded of a saying told to Greg Mortenson in his book *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace One School at a Time*, “The first time you share tea with [someone], you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honoured guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family” (2006, p. 150). It foregrounded in my memory the time it takes to enter and engage in a dialogue with another and how dialogical spaces need to remain open for others to step into. In Alison’s last conversation with me I heard a courage, a truth-telling that was potentially disruptive to my perception of who Alison was in the world and troubling to my sense of agency. I felt I was being called to be “maximally ethical, as when we experience another person in distress as commanding our compassion and support” (Russon, 2015, p. 165).



Alison found herself within herself, gradually appropriating her physical body, situating herself within a place and becoming an agent of her own life. Alison stands now at the centre of her world, rather than at the edges of it. She has established herself in the world as one who acts and does—alongside this she has established her life with others. When I first met Alison, she tried to make herself small by looking downwards and clasping her hands before her. In our last meeting she stood tall in the world, eyes straight ahead and with a clear, far-reaching gaze. Alison spoke her life by telling all her heart, compelling me to listen with my heart, holding her story in esteem. In this conversation, we unconsciously sought an accord with each other. We recall that the word ‘accord’ has its roots in the French word, *accorder* with its meaning to be of one mind and the word has its deeper roots in the Latin *cord*, meaning heart. Alison and I communicated courageously, with our hearts as well as our minds. Listening to the silences, I feel between our lived experiences, I hear a resonance between our voices. This way of listening may open into a “third space” between our voices, as we enter into a conversation about what we recall, what we know and what we do not understand.

Alison’s voice, riding on the breath as it passes the heart, may be a powerful way for Alison to recover her memory of a courageous earlier Self. Her voice carried every nuance of feeling so that I, her listener, entered her story moment by moment with her. Like Liam and Sheena, Alison showed the courage of someone who thought themselves ordinary, insignificant in the world. Yet the recovery, the re-finding, of courage in Alison was nothing short of extraordinary because she gave voice to the unspeakable. In her story I heard the echoes of Sheena and Liam’s stories—the violation of our nested places, giving rise to a *dépaysement* of our being, when we become strangers in a foreign land that was once a dear and familiar place. Alison described frozen moments in time after Ricky threatened his daughter, returning to herself to see the angry red indentation of the gun’s muzzle under her daughter’s chin. When she was at her most threatened, she had an instinct to act, to be called to action for her children by making the phone call to the

police. Alison was called to ethical action by her circumstances—she knew right from wrong and acted accordingly. Through our conversations, I was witness to Alison moving from a fragmentary and muffled presence in the world, with a loss of embodied feelings and agency, to her flourishing as a virtuous agent in her own life. When I called Alison “brave”, I was in awe of her recovery of voice and courage, her decision to live whole and to speak again in the world with hope (Marcel, 1951).

By making Time and Space for Alison, I was perhaps calling her voice and courage forth. As I listened and celebrated her voice, orienting myself towards mindful wisdom, I exercised my intelligent vocation. I recall the etymology of the word ‘vocation’, with its roots in the Latin, *vocare*, meaning to call. My vocation called forth Alison’s voice, allowing it to become clear and flourish in the world. Alison’s telling of her story enabled her to become real and her acknowledgement of my part in her becoming was the steadying force that held my centre. Through Alison, Liam and Sheena, I became real too, an agent in my own life, who, in Russon’s words,

...experiences the world as calling on her creativity to realise “what is called for”, where the world itself does not provide an easy answer to what that is. This agent is an agent of conscience, who realises that she is responsible to the world, that her creativity is required in determining what that responsibility involves, and who has the strength of will to stand behind that recognition. In short, it is the virtues of agency that allow us to receive the call of the good. (2015, p. 176)

## Until We Have Faces

*They walked on, thinking of This and That, and by-and-by they came to an enchanted place at the very top of the Forest called Galleon's Lap...Sitting there they could see the whole world spread out until it reached the sky and whatever there was all the world over was with them in Galleon's Lap...Still with his eyes on the world, Christopher Robin put out a hand and felt for Pooh's paw. "Pooh", said Christopher Robin earnestly, "if I—if I'm not quite..." he stopped and tried again. "Pooh, whatever happens, you will understand, won't you?"*

*"Understand what?"*

*"Oh nothing." He laughed and jumped to his feet. "Come on!"*

*"Where?" said Pooh.*

*"Anywhere", said Christopher Robin.*

A. A. Milne, *The House at Pooh Corner*, 1928, p. 198

*We shall not cease from exploration*

*And the end of all our exploring*

*Will be to arrive where we started*

*And know the place for the first time.*

T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 1943

Orual questioned the gods, how can we meet someone face to face until we have faces? This thesis has shown ways to open up spaces for another to step into using welcoming words, adjusting our public face into one of honourable listening and preparing to wait until another is ready to speak their life in their own way and their own time. If we arise from a trusting place, a nested place with memorial significance, might we be able to give of ourselves more readily, with more compassion and grace? Like Pooh and Christopher Robin,

we might be more willing to go anywhere with another if we trust each other enough to reveal our naked faces.

I have told the story of finding my face, yet I have also told other stories, the stories of others who have crossed the unspooling ribbon of my past. For a time, Liam, Alison, Sheena and I had a common past that lay before us and we walked backwards together into an unknown future. As I write my perceptions of their lifeworlds, I am trying to capture their resonance, their spirit. Campbell and Kyle, upended by a world where they had no agency, challenged me to be honourable as I wrote about our shared past. As the writing unfurled onto the page, telling those moments when our histories abutted each other's, I began to understand another dimension of myself. As Poulos says, writing to understand ourselves and others

...is a way to move toward evoking, describing, invoking, transcribing, inscribing, representing, playing with, building on, enjoining and enjoying the “who’s” of our lifeworlds. (2013, p. 475)

This writing has also been narrating a sense of occasion, the falling together of possibilities that are present in every relational interaction with others. Sometimes the briefest elision of Time has become an occasion to ponder, while at other times a story has taken years to unfold, to make its meaning manifest in my life, as Jardine says, “it has taken years to become what it was” (2014, p. 130). I have chosen to foreground some events, yet there are events not told that are kept in mind, held in ambiguity, as some happenings are preserved, and others are recessed. Memory is important in my writing, but “memory is not memory of anything and everything” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 16) rather a narrative of those events that awakened something in me, a puzzlement, an intriguing clearing of assumptions and prejudices carried within me. This clearing opened out into the compressed vastness of an epiphanic moment, where I stood outside and inside myself simultaneously, experiencing a “fusion of horizons” with myself. I looked

“there and then and long and hard into the deep face of the world” (Jardine, 2014, p. 128).

This inquiry has been spiralling around a central question—In what ways might I as a researcher discover and develop a hermeneutic orientation towards self-understanding that would contribute to pedagogies of teaching practice? My writing has been sense-making developed iteratively as well as intentionally, as I narrate my lifeworlds and those of others, re-presenting them to my reader according to the research scenarios inherent within them (Rapport & Harthill, 2012, p. 13). I have invited my reader to explore the array of possibilities put forth towards the truth of things and participate in acts of knowing and meaning making. I have hoped to create a space for my reader to share in my narratives in expected and unexpected ways, as my writing attempts to give shape to a greater empathetic understanding.

My writing gives voice to the “general structure of interrelatedness” between the implicit, the felt sense, and language that can be called embodied understanding (Heß, 2012, p. 28). I have written to become real, to see myself, to bring forth a world of significance as I write and read my words and those of the philosophers that guided my journey. Rollo May, in his book *The Cry of Myth* (1991) says, “Myths are essential to the process of keeping our souls alive” (p. 22) and writing with a *telos* of self-understanding may imbue my narratives with a mythic quality, a colour and warmth, using metaphors and language that are important to me in my world (p. 25). Gadamer says, “myth is obviously and intimately akin to thinking consciousness” (1976, p. 51) and goes on to say that we ask the wrong question if we talk of myths as being believed, inviting us rather to focus on “the ability of myth to change and its openness for ever new interpretations” (p. 51). I write my myths to nourish myself and to reflect upon those events that depleted my sense of Self—I have recollected, recalled and meditated upon events that made a difference to my embodiment in the world. In honourably listening to all the voices in my lifeworld, entering into a

relationship with them, my interpretations emerged from within our conversations, as I came to hear the words that were important in their lives.

Within the writing is a hearkening, a listening that is more than absorbing sound, rather it is an attention to the speaker's past and present. If we hearken to others, attending to the whole person as they give voice to themselves as they are in this moment, we hear with our heart. A hearkening attends to the breath as it passes the heart and uplifts the voice, listening with mindful wisdom, seeking to reach an accord with its deep meaning to be of one mind and heart. Listening and speaking with our hearts as well as our minds may mean that for a short time, we belong to each other's lives. As we begin to understand another and ourselves simultaneously through the language event of conversation, our lives become vividly present to each other's eyes. We find our faces in conversations, perhaps glimpsing something more, the transcendence of our lived experiences shared as an unspooling of the past lying before us. We enter into a shared dialogue, keeping some things in mind, laying down the path as we walk and opening ourselves to happenstance "the great lack of assurance that underwrites pedagogy at its best" (Jardine, 2014, p. 131).

In attending to the intentionality of my thesis, I have developed a conscious relationship with the life I have experienced, I have narrated my lived experience in phenomenological ways leading me to metaphors to describe my perceptions of the world. In this consciousness I move towards an understanding of how a hermeneutic embodiment of Self might contribute to pedagogy. I circle fluidly through perception, memory and imagination in ever-widening gyres. I spiral, attending to my temporal being in the world, interweaving an interpretive stance towards myself and others, unfurling the shared spaces between myself and others through dialogue. From an attendance to the things themselves to an apprehension of myself (*Dasein*) in Time and Space, I consciously orient myself towards Gadamer's notion of *Dasein* not as *Mit-sein*, being with but *Miteinander*, being-with-one-another. As

I hermeneutically relate to others in my lifeworld, I offer myself through dialogue, hoping to enter into a space where individual horizons can blossom into a shared common ground of understanding.

And this is how I come to understand the pedagogical relationship that I attend to with others. As I hermeneutically take deep interest in the others who appear in my lifeworld, I offer myself through dialogue, hoping to enter a space where individual horizons can melt away, and give rise to a blossoming, a shared common ground of understanding.

My narratives have opened ways to inquire into pedagogical relationships, to see what may not be obvious, iterations of keeping things in mind while attending to the manifold of appearances arising within conversations. They are like “hermeneutic windows” (Sumara, 1996) through which I can see what is real, what I might not have seen before, suspecting there is something new to understand, to interpret and re-interpret, to eventually apprehend the lifeworlds, the historicity of others as they might relate to my own, and teach me fidelity towards my hermeneutics of self-understanding. And so, I arrive in praise of Gadamer’s notion of dialogically coming to a “fusion of horizons” between Self, others and the world as a path towards consensus, accord and solidarity as we live together in the world. And so, my narratives might call forth possibilities for teachers and students to step into new ways of being and understanding as they participate together, dialogically and mutually ready to adjust each other’s public face.

In his conversation with Dottori, Gadamer explains his sense of tolerance, one being with other, and gives us the example of Maria Theresa of Hapsburg’s Edict of Tolerance for the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the century of enlightenment. The edict was based on honouring the strength of each and all of European religions in their awareness of their own cultures, to neither fear nor reject minorities, but accept them. “For”, Gadamer says,

...we have the underlying certainty that our own integrity cannot be minimised in mutual conversation—but neither will it simply dominate. It can serve instead, as a basis for mutual understanding and respect. What essentially holds society together is this conversation itself. (2000, p. 116)

I offer my thesis not as a voyeuristic peek into the lives of others, rather as a narration that seeks to interrupt discourses about teaching practice and open up possibilities and tolerance for change towards mutual understanding amongst the diverse beliefs, theories and practices that write the lifeworlds of educators world-wide. My writing offers a way to illuminate ways to change how we are in the world and why we matter.

Sometimes I felt the view from my “hermeneutic window” was blurred, coloured by assumptions that were doing the looking, blinding me to the lived experience. At such times, I had to clear my mind, becoming still and present to myself, recognising that I was not an observer, I was complicit in these narratives. My complicity with the others whose lives intertwine with mine arises when I open up welcoming spaces through questioning, seeking to meet the other where he is at this moment. I enter already existing places and interact with people who, like me, are on a journey to become real. I enter the lived experience of the children in my care, their families, their community, their nested places of special significance. Our shared experience is organic, arising untrammelled by conventions about what we ought to say, or do. I speak my life, foregrounding my intelligent vocation and my public face, gently adjusting the ill-fitting public faces of the children in my care and allowing them to adjust mine in return. I realise that who we think we are is in flux as we find our faces and those things we think we know are inextricable from our relationships with others. Our relations with others develop our ontological self-confidence, our sense of agency, who we are and how we will be, as we travel the curvature of Time to deepen our understanding of what being there means.



Looking through a “hermeneutic window” might mean using our imagination to help us see another as they are now and as they wish to be. If our view through the window is blurred or obscured, if obfuscations are present, perhaps it is the epiphanic moment that clears the window, enabling us to see a situation with new eyes and a fresh understanding. It is this clearing that allows us to belong to each other’s lives and inherit our histories through conversation. In Gadamer’s words,

...the totality of a lived context has entered into and is present in the thing. And we belong to it as well. Our orientation to it is always something like our orientation to an inheritance that this thing belongs to, be it from a stranger’s life or from our own. (1994, p. 192)

In our belonging to the lives of others, we are more than being (*Dasein*), rather we are *Miteinander*, being-with-one-another. *Miteinander* is about our relationships, about meeting others where they are in the world and drawing them into our lifeworld. Our being-with-another permits space for an “increase in being” (Gadamer, 2004, p. 42) as conversations intersect, interweave and criss-cross—through conversation, we become more than we were and emerge as who we are, we “slowly become who [we] have become” (Jardine, 2014, p. 129). As we engage in these rich conversations with others, speaking our lives on the uplifted breath that passes the heart, we experience the joyous recognition of knowing more, of knowing something that has arisen out of our lives in this moment, this conversation with another (p. 128). We are addressed by this familiar-unfamiliar knowing as a beginning to understanding as something reveals itself to us (Gadamer, 2004, p. 300). Gadamer sees this revealing as essential to our human becoming.

The essence of the realisation of life is still being at one with another, whether the otherness of things or other people. This is true of seeing and perceiving, thinking and knowing. (1999, p. 138)

As I opened welcoming, dialogical spaces for the children in my care to step into, on rare occasions I witnessed this joy of knowing more written on

their faces as our conversations revealed themselves to themselves, as something from their experience burst forth and connected with the topic being discussed. These ‘aha!’ moments, golden motes of Time, became touchstones of our relationship, our common meanings in the past that lay before us. Jardine says, “The pedagogy of this is important and almost intractable” (2014, p. 128).

My narratives, “hermeneutic windows” into ways of belonging and becoming, offer a way to illuminate what I deeply know about my intelligent vocation—unless teachers are prepared to open up welcoming spaces for children to step into, neither teacher or student will ever experience the joy of knowing more. When I first began to read Gadamer’s work, when I came home in my heart to his words, my epiphanic moment was this—we cannot educate children unless we, as teachers, take a risk to gamble our voice, choose to be vulnerable and *meet the child where they are in the world*. Taking a risk for the teacher may mean listening to her still small voice of calm, her *verbum interius*, as she relates to this child in a new way, different from all the other children in her care. She dwells in a place of mindful wisdom as she navigates this unique relationship, laying her assumptions and prejudices aside, looking at things with fresh eyes. And all the while, underneath every word, every breath passing both their hearts, is the desire to reach an accord. And, too, underneath every word, every silence, every gesture, the teacher is practising her interpretation of this relationship with this child. The teacher clears away her history to practise her interpretation of this new, strange and original thing, this relationship.

Meeting the child where they are takes time. This new, strange relationship is something original being brought into the world, a poetic creation that dissolves like smoke in the air yet lingers in the memories of teacher and student. Narratives of my lived experience attempt to capture traces of this poetic originality. Elizabeth I, Queen of England from 1558 to 1603, wanted to unite her people under a common prayer book. The deep religious divide

between Catholic and Protestant that had begun in her father's reign threatened to rupture her kingdom. Like Maria-Theresa and her Edict of Tolerance, Elizabeth did not want to impose ways of interpreting this prayer book upon her subjects. In conversation with her clergy, Elizabeth said, "I would not open windows into men's souls". This evocative, expressive comment describes Elizabeth's unwillingness to persecute people based on their interpretation of texts, she does not see nor wants to control what goes on in the minds and souls of her subjects (Collinson, 2004). Perhaps Elizabeth glimpsed the idea that interpretation is based in the heart as well as the mind, that when we interpret, we permit something to awaken within us, we open ourselves to manifestations of possibility. Like Queen Elizabeth, the teacher does not seek to control the way a relationship grows with her student—she does not violate the child by firing barrages of questions at him, or not seeing him as he is at this moment. In a trusting pedagogical relationship, both teacher and student take a risk to open a window into their life, allowing the other to carefully enter only as far as they both see fit, negotiating common dwelling spaces through the event of language.

I continue my journey of hearkening, of listening honourably to the voices of others as they speak their lives on their uplifted breath. Greene speaks of the individual deciding who they are as philosophers of education and not letting others decide for them (Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 18). I have attended to the sight and sound of things, the falling together of endless possibilities, to shape this inquiry. Along the way, my reading-burrowing has given rise to opportunities to take heed of my own life, my own becoming. I have explored my inner workings and come to know myself as if for the first time. Greene's conversation with her students gives us this,

The point I want to make has to do with narratives. To me, a good narrative, a real authentic narrative, is really an effort to dig down and shape what you find in your life, in your history. Not just babble or write it down for catharsis, but give it a shape so it will be understood by somebody else... What's important is what in each of us is seeking expression and what's different about us is what we have at hand to give

it expression. I think what we try to do with kids is help them with that expression. (Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 22)

I follow Greene's ideas about narratives in my writing, my inquiry has been giving shape to my life as I narrate my encounters with others and our shared relationships. I have sought deeper meaning for the motifs, memories and people who have given my life its unique music, the original note of my reverberating life-thread as I move through Space and Time. I hearken, I listen and hark back to what has gone before, as I speak from my mind and heart to find an accord with others. My vocational life has been a constant endeavour to meet children where they are and through gently opening up dialogical spaces for them to step into, helping them to find their expression, their agency, their sense of themselves in the world.

Through inquiring-writing, I have met myself spiralling towards myself as I walk an unseen path. This turning and returning has not only happened in my inner life but also my outer life. Over the course of my career I have returned to the same schools once, twice, or three times with breaks of years in between. Although I have been a teacher and school leader for nearly 25 years, during that time I have worked in six different schools, returning to schools in different roles over the course of those years. I have entered the same buildings countless times and each time is like the first time, just as when I re-enter classrooms and meet students again whom I have not seen for some years, I meet them for the first time. Certain places seem to have called me back over the years, I walk down hallways and catch sideways glimpses of myself as a much younger teacher, teaching with my eyes wide shut, or as a teacher who had begun her interpretative, philosophical journey and was starry-eyed in her excitement for Gadamer's ideas about being-with-one-another. All of those teachers are me, yet not me, me as I might become. They exist in real Time and in my memory, they are iterations of myself, they are my ending and beginning.

It was another queen, Mary Queen of Scots, cousin to Queen Elizabeth, who allegedly coined the phrase “In my end is my beginning” as she walked towards the Great Hall at Fotheringhay Castle for her execution in 1587 (Fraser, 2018). That phrase has wandered through my mind often as I meet myself on the spiralling inquiry that has manifested itself as this writing. We countlessly end and begin in our life’s journey, dying and being reborn moment to moment, our memories reverberating through Time as an essential thread of our character. Our history begins in the trusting cradle of our nested places, which are a glowing touchstone of memory, as we seek to know ourselves, to understand our acting and doing, to find our ontological self-confidence, to decide who we are in the world and why we matter. Gadamer says, “Interpretation belongs to the essential unity of understanding” (1976, p. 57) and we are interpreting everything all the time as we exist within our relationships—with the world, with others and with ourselves.

I look out of my window. On this mild autumn day young people, students enjoying a moment of freedom before the afternoon ends, are kicking a football in the sun. I am still setting up my office as I return again to a school where I have taught before. This time around, I will lead teaching and learning across three schools, all places where I have taught before. Plans for this leadership, my future, are laid on my desk, huge pieces of paper covered with symbols like blueprints, operations to be performed for the next two years. Yet like Pooh and Christopher Robin, those young people, their jumpers discarded on the edge of the grass, can go anywhere. If I am lucky enough, prepared to meet them where they are in the world, they might let me share their journey. We might have a shared unspooling of past where we create spaces of communal meaning through conversation as we walk backwards into the future. I hope so. I really hope so.

*I live my life in growing orbits,  
which move out over the things of the world.*

*Perhaps I can never achieve the last,  
but that will be my attempt.*

*I am circling around God, around the ancient tower,  
and I have been circling for a thousand years,  
and I still do not know if I am a falcon, or a storm,  
or a great song.*

*The Book of Hours, Rainer Maria Rilke, 1905/1972 p. 11*

## References

- Alexander, T. M. (1997). *Eros and Understanding: Gadamer's Aesthetic Ontology of the Community*. In L. E. Hahn (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Chicago & Lasalle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Alexander, T. M. (2013). *The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press.
- Annas, J. (2013). *Intelligent Virtue* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Arthos, J. (2009). *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Bacon, C. K. (2015). *A Pedagogy for the Oppressor: Re-envisioning Freire and Critical Pedagogy in Contexts of Privilege*. In M. Kappen, M. S. Selvaraj & S. T. Baskaran (Eds.), *Revisoning Paradigms: Essays in Honour of David Selvaraj* (pp. 226- 237). Bangalore, India: Visthar.
- Bakewell, S. (2017). *At the Existentialist Café*. London: Vintage.
- Baldwin, T. (Ed.). (2003). *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*. New York, NY: Routledge. Retrieved from Questia.
- Black, C. (2017). *A Thousand Rivers: What the Modern World has Forgotten about Children and Learning* (Essay). Retrieved from <http://carolblack.org/a-thousand-rivers/>
- Beauvoir, S. (1960). *The Prime of Life* (1st ed.). London: Penguin.
- Bohm, D. (1996). *On Dialogue*. London: Routledge.
- Boyce, J. (2008). *Van Diemen's Land*. Melbourne, VIC: Black Inc.
- Barrows, A. & Macey, J. (1996). *Rilke's Book of Hours*. New York, NY: The Berkley Publishing Group.
- Brady, I. (2005). *Poetics for a Planet: Discourse on Some Problems of Being-in-Place*. In Y.S. Lincoln and N.K. Denzin (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 979-1027. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Calver, M. (2012) *In Winter Look Patiently around the Edges of Pools: Re-writings between Art and Social Science*, in *Creative Approaches to Research*, vol. 5, no.2, pp. 47-57.
- Carel, H., & Gamez, D. (2004). *What Philosophy Is*. London: Continuum.

- Collinson, P. (2004). Elizabeth I. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Retrieved from <https://www.oxforddnb.com> on March 30, 2019.
- Conrad, P. (2009). *Islands*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Davidson, D. (1997). Gadamer and Plato's Philebus. In L.E Hahn (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Chicago & Lasalle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (1998). *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (1st ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dessingué, A. (2011). Towards a Phenomenology of Memory and Forgetting. *Études Ricoeuriennes / Ricoeur Studies*, 2(1), 168-178. doi: 10.5195/errs.2011.42
- Di Cesare, D. (2012). *Utopia of Understanding: Between Babel and Auschwitz*. Albany, NY: State University of New York. Kindle Edition., Retrieved from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).
- Di Cesare, D. (2013). *Gadamer: A Philosophical Portrait* (N. Keane, Trans.). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Dostal, R. (2010). *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finlay, L. (2006). Dancing Between Embodied Empathy and Phenomenological Reflection. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 6(sup1), 1-11. doi: 10.1080/20797222.2006.11433930
- Finlay, L. (2012). 'Writing the Pain': Engaging First-Person Phenomenological Accounts. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 12(sup2), 1-9. doi: 10.2989/ipjp.2012.12.1.5.1113
- Fraser, A. (2018). *Mary Queen of Scots*. London: Weidenfield & Nicolson.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum
- Gadamer, H. (1975/2004). *Truth and Method* (3rd ed.). London: Continuum Publishing Group.
- Gadamer, H-G. (1976). *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (D.E. Linge, Trans. & Ed.). Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA.: University of California Press.
- Gadamer, H. (1994). *Heidegger's ways*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Gadamer, H. (1996). *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age* (J. Gaiger & N. Walker, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.



- Gadamer, H. (1999). *Hermeneutics, Religion & Ethics* (J. Weinsheimer, Trans.). New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Gadamer, H. (2001). *The Beginning of Philosophy*. New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
- Gadamer, H-G & Dottori, R. (2006). *A Century of Philosophy: Hans Georg Gadamer in Conversation with Riccardo Dottori*. (R. Coltman & S. Koepke, Trans.). New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.
- Gallagher, S. (1992). *Hermeneutics and Education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Gergen, K. J. (2000). *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life*. New York, NY: Basic Books. Retrieved from Questia.
- Grondin, J. (2017). *The Medium of Language and its Openness to Reality*. In Sabah ulkesi, 52, 70-73 (published in Turkish). Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/34225372/The\\_Medium\\_of\\_Language\\_and\\_its\\_Openness\\_to\\_Reality](http://www.academia.edu/34225372/The_Medium_of_Language_and_its_Openness_to_Reality)
- Greverus, I. (1979). *In search of homeland* (Volume 189 of Beck's Black Series). Munich: CH Beck.
- Gunn, J.V. (1982). *Autobiography: Toward a Poetics of Experience*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Henricksen, Noel (2003). *Island and otherland: Christopher Koch and his books*. Burwood, VIC: Educare.
- Hermberg, K., & Gyllenhammer, P. (2013). *Phenomenology and virtue ethics* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Continuum.
- Heß, R.U. (2012). *Poetic Embodied Interpretation of Re-Search Findings: An Evocative Approach to Social Sciences Methods*, in *Creative Approaches to Research*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp.26-33.
- Honoré, C. (2009). *In Praise of Slowness*. Pymble, NSW: HarperCollins ebooks.
- Hutchison, D., & Orr, D. (2004). *A Natural History of Place in Education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Jaspers, K. (1966). *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy* (R. Manheim, Trans.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Retrieved from Questia.

- Kearney, R. (1998). *Vive L'Imagination!* In *Poetics of Imagining: Modern to Post-Modern*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press. Retrieved from Questia
- Kearney, R. (2016). *Narrative Imagination and Catharsis*. Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/34439052/Narrative\\_Imagination\\_and\\_Catharsis](http://www.academia.edu/34439052/Narrative_Imagination_and_Catharsis)
- Kincheloe, J. (2005). On to the Next Level: Continuing the Conceptualization of the Bricolage. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(3), 323-350. doi: 10.1177/1077800405275056
- Kincheloe, J. (2001). Describing the Bricolage: Conceptualizing a New Rigor in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 7(6), 679-692. doi: 10.1177/107780040100700601
- Kingsolver, B. (2009). *The Lacuna*. [Solon, Ohio]: Playaway Digital Audio.
- Koch, C. (1954). "The Boy Who Dreamed the Country Night". In L. A. Murray (Ed.), *The New Oxford Book of Australian Verse* (p. 268). Melbourne University Press (1986).
- Laverty, S. (2003). Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* (pp. 21 – 35).
- Lawn, C. (2006). *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (The Guides for the Perplexed Series). Great Britain: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.
- Lawn, C., & Keane, N. (2011). *The Gadamer Dictionary*. Great Britain: Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.
- Lederach, J. (2010). *The Moral Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, C. (1956). *Till We Have Faces*. London: Geoffrey Bles Publishing.
- Marcel, G. (1978). *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. University of Virginia: Peter Smith.
- MacKenzie, Sarah K. (2012) *Whispered (Im)Perfection: Poetry as Relational Reverberation in Creative Approaches to Research*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 86-104.
- May, R. (2011). *The Cry for Myth*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Milne, A., & Shepard, E. (1928). *The House at Pooh Corner*. London: Methuen.
- Mortenson, G. & Relin, D. O. (2006). *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace One School at a Time*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.

- Mitchell, C., Weber, S., & Reilly-Scanlon, K. O. (Eds.). (2005). *Just Who Do We Think We Are?: Methodologies for Autobiography and Self-Study in Teaching*. London: Routledge Falmer. Retrieved from Questia.
- Palmer, P. (2004). *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass
- Palmer, R. (1997). Ritual, Rightness, and Truth in Two Late Works of Hans-Georg Gadamer. In L. E. Hahn (Ed.), *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Chicago & Lasalle, IL: Open Court Publishing Company.
- Petitmengin, C. (2007). Towards the source of thoughts: The gestural and transmodal dimension of lived experience. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 14(3), 54-82.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. Retrieved from Questia.
- Popova, M. (2019). *The More Loving One: Astrophysicist Janna Levin Reads W.H. Auden's Sublime Ode to Our Unrequited Love for the Universe*. Retrieved from <https://www.brainpickings.org/>
- Rapport, F. (2008). The Poetry of Holocaust Survivor Testimony: Towards a New Performative Social Science. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research (FQS)*, 9(2), Article 28. Retrieved from <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/311/682>
- Rapport, F & Harthill, G. (2010). Poetics of Memory: In Defence of Literary Experimentation with Holocaust Survivor Testimony. *Anthropology and Humanism*, 35(1), 20-37.
- Rapport, F. & Harthill, G. (2012). Crossing Disciplines with Ethnographic Representation. *Creative Approaches to Research*, vol. 5, no.2, pp. 11-25.
- Rogers, A. (1993). Voice, Play, and a Practice of Ordinary Courage in Girls' and Women's Lives. *Harvard Educational Review*, 63(3), 265-296. doi: 10.17763/haer.63.3.9141184q0j872407
- Richardson, L. (1997). *Fields of Play: Constructing an Academic Life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Richardson, L. (1998). Writing: A Method of Inquiry. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (1st ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Richardson, L. (2002). Poetic Representations of Interviews. In J. Gubrium & J. Holstein (Eds.), *Sage Handbook of Interview Research*, (pp. 877-892). London: Sage.

- Schillinger, L. (2009). Barbara Kingsolver's Artists and Idols. Sunday Book Review, New York Times.
- Seidel, J., & Jardine, D. (2014). Ecological pedagogy, Buddhist pedagogy, Hermeneutic Pedagogy. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Sheldrake, R. Presence of the Past, The: Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions Bear and Company.
- Sikkema, M. (2012). The Meeting from Heart to Heart: The Essence of Transformative Experiences. Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology, 12(sup2), 1-9. doi: 10.2989/ipjp.2012.12.1.8.1116
- Sliep, Y. (2012). We Compose Our Own Requiem: An Autoethnographic Study of Mourning, in Creative Approaches to Research, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 61-85.
- Sokolowski, R. (2010). Phenomenology of the Human Person (1st ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sokolowski, R. (2008). Introduction to Phenomenology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- St. Pierre, E. (2017). Writing Post Qualitative Inquiry. Qualitative Inquiry, 24(9), 603-608. doi: 10.1177/1077800417734567
- Sumara, D. (1996). Private readings in Public. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Taylor, C. (1989). Sources of the Self (1st ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Todd, S. (2001). 'Bringing more than I contain': ethics, curriculum and the pedagogical demand for altered egos. Journal Of Curriculum Studies, 33(4), 431-450. doi: 10.1080/00220270117005
- Todres, L. (2011). Embodied enquiry (2nd ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- van Manen, M. (1990). Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for Action Sensitive Pedagogy. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- van Manen, M. (1997). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research. Sage Publishing, London.
- van Manen, M. (2014). Phenomenology of Practice. CA: Left Coast Press Inc.
- van Manen, M. (2016). The Tact of Teaching. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

- Warnke, G. (1997). *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Warnke, G. (2010). *Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics*. In R. Dostal, (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (pp. 79-102). Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Whitehead, L. (2004). *Enhancing the Quality of Hermeneutic Research: Decision Trail*. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 45 (5), 512 – 518.
- Wiebe, S. (2012). *The Poet and the Pea: Poems Staged in Menippean Dialogue to Explore Empathy in Education*, in *Creative Approaches to Research*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp.34-46.
- Williams, M., & Nicholson, W. (1922). *The Velveteen Rabbit*. London: George H. Doran Company.
- Young-Bruehl, E. (2006). *Why Arendt matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Kindle Edition.