Creative Selves /Creative Cultures

Critical Autoethnography, Performance, and Pedagogy

EDITED BY

STACY HOLMAN JONES AND **MARC PRUYN**

Creativity, Education and the Arts

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Stacy Holman Jones • Marc Pruyn
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Creative Selves / Creative Cultures

Critical Autoethnography, Performance, and Pedagogy

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This book is dedicated to the scholars, artists and teachers who have taught us the power of crafting, critiquing and transforming selves and worlds in everyday and extraordinary ways.

Preface

This book expands current discussion and deployment of critical autoethnographic methods by including scholars working in education, music, drama and performance, English and communication studies. The volume contains essays that consider creative selves/creative cultures across research and writing practices, with a special emphasis on work that maps, traces, plays, remembers, embodies, rehearses, improvises and transforms creative selves/creative cultures, as well as questioning and problematizing the relationships of power that are bound up in these selves, cultures and practices.

The essays contained in the book demonstrate the importance of critical approaches to autoethnography, particularly the commitment that such approaches make to theorizing the personal and to creating work that embodies an intersectional and social justice ethos. Arts-based and practice-led approaches to this work join the explanatory power of critical theory with creative, specific, aesthetically engaging and personal examples of the ideas at work—in cultural contexts, in practice, in people's lives. Critical autoethnography also uses personal stories to comment on, critique and transform damaging and unjust cultural beliefs and practices. In sum, the essays in this volume fill a much-needed gap in the literature by providing readers with work that demonstrates how critical autoethnography offers researchers and scholars in multiple disciplines a method for creatively putting critical theory into action.

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PART I

Researching and Writing Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

CHAPTER 1

Creative Selves/Creative Cultures: Critical Autoethnography, Performance, and Pedagogy

Stacy Holman Jones

Introduction

In her eloquent riff on the "effortless effort of creativity," poet Jane Hirschfield writes, "World and self begin to cohere. With that state comes an enlarging: of what may be known, what may be felt, what may be done" (qtd. in Popova). The cohering and the enlarging of self and world in the 'effortlessness' of creativity is, itself, an effort of concentration and concerted movement—toward and into inquiry or 'what may be known,' of emotion and affect or 'what may be felt,' and of action or 'what may be done.' This book takes as its starting point the effortless effort of creativity; one undertaken by selves and worlds in performance, in language, and in and as education. This book began as a conversation among scholars and researchers in education, performance studies, communication, cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology, and artists in visual arts, music, theater, and dance. As a community of artists–scholars we were interested

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in the energizing charge and possibility of working at the intersections of creativity, education, and critical autoethnography. We wanted to make work and ask questions about how selves and cultures are created, understood, questioned, and transformed. As arts-based and practice-led scholars, we aimed to explore what critical autoethnography and performance in particular have to teach us about creativity and pedagogy (which includes formal educational contexts alongside the broader concerns of public pedagogy and creativity education). We approached our work with the aim of joining the explanatory power of critical theory and inquiry with creative, specific, aesthetically engaging, and personal examples of the ideas at work—in cultural context, in practice, in people's lives. The result is a collection of essays that we believe fills a much-needed gap in creativity and education by providing you, our readers, with work that demonstrates how critical autoethnography offers researchers and scholars in multiple disciplines not only a *method* for creatively putting critical theory into action, but also a means for forging more creative selves and creative cultures in a time when neoliberal discourses and the forces of globalization are working against (while trying to capitalize on) the cohering and enlarging of both self and world.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the purpose and goals of critical autoethnography, the connection between critical autoethnography and performance/performative writing, and the pedagogical functions that critical autoethnography might serve in the academy and beyond. The primary argument and ethos that informs this overview is the idea that critical autoethnography is a particularly *agile* approach for understanding and transforming the lived experience of selves and cultures as they are encountered and lived within systems and discourses of power, oppression, and privilege. In addition to this overview and argument, this chapter includes brief introductions to each of the major sections of the volume and the chapters included in each section of the book. And, so, to begin: What is critical autoethnography and why is it an innovative and educative approach for building, understanding, and transforming creative selves and cultures?

Critical Autoethnography

Critical autoethnography is, most simply, the study and critique of culture through the lens of the self. Critical autoethnography merges the practices of autobiography—writing about the self—and ethnography—the study

of and writing about culture. Critical autoethnography is a thoroughly qualitative and intimate method in that it provides us with nuanced, complex, and specific insights into particular human lives, experiences, and relationships. Where quantitative approaches to research give us general insights into the cultures and experiences of large groups of people, telling us about the who, what, when, and where of life, critical autoethnography teaches us about the why and how and so what of those lives. Further, where some autoethnographies might provide rich and detailed descriptions of cultures through the lens of personal experience, critical autoethnographies work to bring attention to the ways cultures are created and compromised through institutional, political, social, and interpersonal relations of power. That is, they focus on how our experiences within cultures are enlarged and/or constrained by relations of power. Critical autoethnographers view their work as a means of pointing out the *politics* of their positioning, explicitly acknowledging the inevitable privileges and marginalizations they experience and the "responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain," including the practices of research itself (Madison, 2012, p. 5). They do so by creating accounts of intersectionality, a term coined by legal, feminist, and critical race theory scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). Intersectionality calls to attention to how oppressive institutions, attitudes, and actions in cultures including racism, xenophobia, sexism, heternormativity, classism, religious and spiritual fundamentalism, ageism, and ableism do not function independently but instead are connected and mutually influencing. Such accounts strive to "capture the complexities of intersecting power relations that produce multiple identities and distinctive perspectives on social phenomena" (Hill Collins, 2016, p. 135). Autoethnographers do so by being as critical of their own intersectional positionings within cultures as they are of their relationships with others and by ethically, honestly, and unapologetically foregrounding and interrogating these positionings in their work. As Tami Spry (2016) puts it, "One of the things we do best in autoethnography is critical reflection upon the effects of hegemonic power structures even, and especially when, we may be the arbiters of such structures" (Spry, 2016, p. 37).

For critical autoethnographers, the mode of personal telling accomplishes three intersecting goals. Firstly, critical autoethnography asks authors and readers to examine systems, institutions, and discourses that privilege some people and marginalize others. This goal, to borrow another term from Black feminist thought, serves a 'diagnostic' role;

critical autoethnographers analyze "analyzing socially unjust practices" as well as the "limitations of existing scholarship in understanding these processes" (Hill Collins, 2016, p. 135). Here, existing knowledge about culture and cultural experience is problematized and questioned.

Secondly, critical autoethnography aims to mobilize and develop the explanatory frameworks that critical theory provides us—frameworks such as Black feminist thought, queer theory, materialist and new materialist critiques—by putting that theory *into action* through storytelling (Madison, pp. 14, 20–21). In other words, theory and story work together in a dynamic relationship that performance studies scholar Della Pollock describes as "*doing* theory and *thinking*" story (Pollock, 2005, p. 1). As a critical theory project, this knowing and being and is not about creating stable, coherent, finished, and identifiable *knowledges* but instead focuses on engaging *with* the world as shifting, partial, unfinished, and animated by feeling and imagination (Holman Jones, 2016, p. 4; Pollock, 2005, p. 3). The kinds of knowing produced in critical autoethnographic works are as dynamic, diverse, and intersecting as the people who create and are featured in those works. This diversity, dynamism, and complexity affords a perspective on theory that likewise avoids the totalizing and prescriptive claims of Theory with a capital T. Instead, critical autoethnography engages in what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2003) and José Esteban Muñoz (2006) describe as 'weak' theory and theorizing—claims to knowledge and understanding that "do not position themselves in [a] masterful, totalizing fashion" but instead stitch together theory, experience, and critique in a "provisional and heuristic approach" (Muñoz, 2006, p. 682). Taking this approach to theory and theorizing, critical autoethnography works to join the specific and the concrete with the larger and more expansive insights and tools for transformation that theory offers us, linking ideas with the people, places, and positions they originate for and from. In other words, critical autoethnography builds bridges between the analytical, observational *view from above* featured in the language of theory (and valorized in academic scholarship) with what Donna Haraway describes as the specific, complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured "*view from a body*" that stories offer us (Haraway, 1988, p. 589).

Finally, critical autoethnography seeks to "build new knowledge about the social world in order to stimulate new practices" (Hill Collins, p. 135). Critical autoethnographers work toward realizing this 'constructive' goal by imagining and writing new "interpretations and trajectories for action" that address the issues important to cultural actors and that imagine new

ways of doing scholarship (Hill Collins, p. 135). Here, critical autoethnographers focus on linking analysis and action by presenting the insights of theory in context, in practice and performance, and in people's lives. Striving to meet this goal asks critical autoethnographers to write and embody these trajectories for action and new ways of doing scholarship, even when the way forward is not simple or clear (Holman Jones, 2016, p. 5). Instead, critical autoethnographers reach toward what José Esteban Muñoz (2009) calls "utopian performatives"—they write into a future not as a static and unachievable ideal but instead as stage for taking up and taking on identities and positions that remind us "that there is something missing … that the present is not enough" (p. 100; see also Spry, 2016). Utopian performatives imagine a future that is not yet here, desiring another "way of being in both the world and time," though, importantly, this desire for a future not yet here "resists mandates to accept that which is not enough" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 96).

In linking story and theory, the personal and the political, critical autoethnography is a particularly agile approach for understanding and transforming the lived experience of culture as it is encountered and lived within systems of power, oppression, and privilege (Boylorn & Orbe, 2013, p. 19). Critical autoethnography helps us create 'living bodies of thought'—work that uses story to bring theory alive and shows us how stories are embodiments of knowledges that can and do create movement and change in the world (Holman Jones, 2016). As "an embodied method," critical autoethnography "articulates and makes material what is and should be" (Spry, 2016, p. 34). In other words, critical autoethnography critically imagines a future world through the very performance of other ways of living, being, and becoming.

Performance and Performative Writing

Performance studies scholar Judith Hamera (2006) notes, "Performance links experience, theory, and the work of close critique in ways that make precise analytical claims about cultural production and consumption, and expose how both culture and our claims about it are themselves constructed things, products of hearts and souls, minds and hands" (2006, p. 241). Performance is at once a method of discovery that is grounded in embodied participation in an event or context, an event to be analyzed, and a way to understand and generate knowledge about the workings of cultures and positionings. Performance scholars including E. Patrick

Johnson (2013), D. Soyini Madison (2012), Tami Spry (2011, 2016), Craig Gingrich-Philbrook (2005, 2013, 2015), Bryant Alexander (2013), Deanna Shoemaker (2013) and myself (Holman Jones, 2005a, 2005b, 2009, 2011, 2016), among others, have linked the embodied participation, theoretical and analytical power, and emotional and affective force that performance brings to auto/ethnographic work. A performative approach to autoethnography foregrounds five intersecting commitments: focusing on embodiment, valuing diverse forms of knowledge, creating relationships, highlighting the affective and emotional in narratives of experience, and seeking change.

Firstly, critical autoethnography asks us to attend to the role of the body and embodiment in the creation of selves and cultures. And while we know that culture is not only, or even primarily, an intellectual or language-driven enterprise, much ethnographic work has focused on and featured thought and language over and above how culture is driven by the sensory, the emotional, and the physical—how "the body does culture" (Jones, 1996, p. 132; see also Conquergood, 1991; Stoller, 1997). In much early ethnography, researchers and participant's bodies alike were abstracted, disregarded, or stripped of their primacy and materiality with the exception of how the ethnographer's body was privileged both in the field and in ethnographic representations. Indeed, the messy, unpredictable, and uncontrollable body had no place in published research texts (Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 29, see also Holman Jones et al., 2013). And yet we know that bodies are compelling, complex, and charged elements of any human endeavor, including research and writing. Critical autoethographers, particularly those working in and through the method and lens of performance, embrace, rather than erase embodiment; we make the body the "nexus of meaning-making"—the source of the stories, movements, and speech that is created in the ethnographic exchange (Spry, 2016, p. 35). Indeed, as Spry notes, "All research ultimately, pragmatically, brutally emanates from a corporeal body that exists within a sociopolitical context" (2016, p. 37).

Secondly, critical autoethnography also foregrounds embodiment as an important and valuable source of sense making. Bodily 'knowledges'—the insights and understandings generated in feeling, touching, sensing, speaking, and moving in cultural spaces and experiences—are valued as equal partners to the knowledges generated by thought, text, and intellectual engagement in the meaning-making enterprise. However, this is not always the case in research and scholarship, even among those of us

who practice qualitative research approaches, even ethnographic methods. Conquergood (1991) has argued that embodied knowledge is considered 'subjugated' knowledge (borrowing from Michel Foucault, 1980) in culture and in the academy. In contrast, he sees the critical and heuristic power of a performance-focused approach to the study of culture as a 'bridge' that links "segregated and differently valued knowledges [practical, analytic, and political], drawing together legitimated as well as subjugated modes of inquiry" (p. 152). Such bridges refuse a binary division of labor between thinking and doing, interpreting and making, intellect and common sense. We see the importance and power of these bridges in our efforts to bring together selves, cultures, stories, and pedagogies in complementary, meaningful, and complicated ways. If, as Conquergood (2002) suggests, we work best when we bridge legitimated and "segregated and differently valued knowledges," (p. 151), we must approach our work with "honesty, humility, self-reflexivity and an acknowledgement of the interdependence and reciprocal role-playing between knower and known" (Conquergood, 1991, p. 182). And as critical scholars, researchers, and beings, we must endeavor in that work to raise questions about what counts and is valued as knowledge and which selves and cultures 'count' as legitimate and fully human (see Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005).

In other words, critical autoethographers value subjugated identities and experiences in addition to and alongside how such identities and experiences create differently valued knowledges. The scholars who first began writing autoethnographic and critical autoethnographic texts did so as a means to highlight and value subjugated experience, particularly the emotional vulnerability, complexity, and fragility of cultural and community life, as well as in research (Conquergood, 1991; Ellis, 1995, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 1996, 2000; Keller, 1985; Pelias, 1997). Valuing intersectional identities, and the particularities and uncertainties of experience asks us to attend to how we are *connected* through our efforts to mark time, map relational geographies, and name identities. In this view, critical autoethnography becomes an emotional and affective force that forges connections. Critical autoethnography is rich with stories and scholarship that creates, names, and performs the will to emotionally connect and be connected (see, for example, Boylorn, 2012; Chawla, 2013; Cunningham, 2016; Ellis & Rawicki, 2013; Gingrich-Philbrook, 2015; Harris, 2016; Holman Jones & Harris, 2016; Johnson, 2014; Spry, 2016; Tillmann, 2014). In addition to the emotional charge that telling such stories creates, critical autoethnography creates an affective force that literally moves

us in relation to and with one another. Here, the affective is, as Kathleen Stewart puts it, "a surging, a rubbing, a connection of some kind that has an impact" (2007, p. 128). Affect in critical autoethnography is not a quantifiable or mutually shared emotion. It is "not about one person's feelings becoming another's" at all, "but about bodies literally affecting one another and generating intensities: human bodies, discursive bodies, bodies of thought" (Stewart, 2007, p. 128).

The intensities and entanglements of bodies and knowledges and selves and cultures in relations of power highlight the ways in which critical autoethnography is a thoroughly *relational* practice. It is a way of relating in research that is as much concerned with and responsible for creating a dialogue with a community of 'others' as it is with questions surrounding identity and the self. While other research modes and practices are rightly and very capably interested in describing the world (a collective), critical autoethnography is—and should be—invested in gathering people together to create a community that does not speak for an 'Other,' but instead speaks *with* one another. Thus, critical autoethnography is not, as some assert, 'me-search,' nor is it a means for a "single and unified subject [to] declare its will" (Butler, 2015, p. 156). Rather, autoethnography is interested and invested in assembling a *we*—a clutch of listeners and speakers—who, before uttering any words, are already enacting (and speaking) a collective and popular 'will.' And what is the collective will in critical autoethnography? It is the will to connect, to be in conversation with each other and in the world.

Lastly (though not finally), critical autoethnography seeks not only to break silences and give voice to subjugated experiences and knowledges but to do so in order to create change. In addition to the efforts of autoethnographers who write about and through the embodied and relational experience of creating selves and cultures, including the pain, confusion, anger, uncertainty, joy, and epiphanies of those experiences, critical autoethnographers write to offer readers understandings they can use and *live with* (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2014). Critical autoethnography is both a textual, linguistic site and "social occasion for self-transformation" (Butler, 2005, p. 130). Our work isn't to 'find the human dignity' in a person or group of people or a story or group of stories or to show or speak or enact that dignity for the education or benefit of self or others. Instead, our work is our shared and communal effort to "understand the human as a relational and social being, one whose action depends on equality" (Butler, 2015, p. 88). The work of critical autoethnography is to

articulate a relation that *speaks* the "principle of equality" (Butler, 2015, p. 88) on the way to becoming someone and something else.

In other words, critical autoethnography is a method that has the power to embody and materialize—on the pages and on the stages of our scholarship and our lives—the change we seek in ourselves, our lives, and our worlds (Holman Jones, 2016, p. 8). Often, this means that critical autoethnographers engage in creative approaches to creating representations that performatively enact the selves, cultures, and experiences that are the subject(s) of their work. Such creative approaches see performing and writing as acts, or "doings" rather than finished or fixed products or "meanings" (Pollock, 1996, p. 75). For Pollock (1996), performative approaches to representation seek to accomplish multiple goals or objectives, including:

- Viewing the page as a material stage for creative activity that moves outside analytic/logical and emotional embodied distinctions to "make possible" other identities, discourses, and ways of living and relating; in other words, performative representations are *evocative* (pp. 80–82)
- Embracing the partial, incomplete, unspeakable, and immaterial in selves and cultures alongside our efforts to write and represent ourselves and our communities in relation; in other words, performative representations are *metonymic* and *subjective* (pp. 82–90)
- Highlighting the importance and influence of multiple texts, positions, theories, discourses and actions as sites of affiliation and sharing that unfold across time and into one another like a good conversation; in other words, performative representations are *nervous* and *citational* (pp. 90–94)
- Creating work that makes things happen and asks us to think, act, and teach while acknowledging the tensions among commitment, politics, stability, and change that inhibit and enable movement; in other words, performative representations are *consequential* (pp. 94–96)

Performative approaches to representation—the evocative, the metonymic and subjective, the nervous and citational, and the consequential—are well matched and integral to accomplishing the critical autoethnography's goals to examine systems, discourses, and relations of privilege and subjugation, put theory into action through storytelling, and

build new knowledge systems in order to stimulate new ways of being and acting together in the world. What's more, performative writing focuses our attention on questions and sites of embodiment, diverse forms of knowledge, relationships, the affective and emotional in narratives of experience, and seeking change. In this way, critical autoethnography engages is a site and method for engaging in creative and critical modes of teaching and learning.

Creative and Critical Pedagogies

Creative and critical pedagogies at their center focus on creating spaces of democracy, agency, and community, whether these spaces are created in formal educational institutions such as schools or outside of such structures. Key to the work of creative and critical pedagogies is the transformation of mindsets and ways of thinking and learning that lead, in turn, to innovative ways of acting in the world (Connolly, 2013; Freire, 1968/2014; hooks, 1994/2014; McLaren, 2000). Creative and critical pedagogies take an intersectional approach to both identity and community building, striving to create spaces and stages for dialogue, compassionate engagement in which individual voices are valued, and critical awareness of the working of power not only in education, but in all facets of our social worlds (hooks, 1994/2014, pp. 40–42). Such approaches feature dialectical and dialogical engagement with knowledge building and the pressures that impinge on creating understandings, knowledge, and change, including, but not limited to, the pressures of late capitalist neoliberal society and the not-surprising 'commodification of creativity' discourses (Harris, 2014) in its wake. Here, rather than considering how creativity is an aspect of identity or self (as a set of characteristics that individuals possess and/or develop) or culture—as a performative and collective embodiment of thoughts, values (Harris, 2014, p. 4)—creativity is a commodity, a "discursively operational tool in the capitalist kit" (Salehi, 2008, p. 23).

Despite neoliberal efforts to turn creativity into a commodity deployed in the service of 'creative industries,' Anne Harris (2014) urges us to view creativity as a "new aesthetic imaginary," one that takes as its focus the work of revolutionizing thinking and social behavior (p. 178). In the context of understanding, forging, and transforming both selves and cultures, creative and critical pedagogies are a kind of inquiry, emotional and affective forces, and a set of actions that are at once changing and changeable and "necessarily difficult and complex" (Williams, 2000, p. 207). In other words, as

Harris (2016) suggests, it may be most helpful to think of creative and critical pedagogies as a set of skills or capacities that include curiosity; collaboration; problem posing and solving; divergent thinking; motivation, confidence, and persistence; innovation, discipline, and mastery; risk-taking; synthesizing; and critical thinking (pp. 42–43). These skills and capacities are integral to efforts to engage in creative and critical pedagogies, performance and performative writing, autoethnography and intersectional critique. They are the means through which our selves and our cultures come to creatively matter to us and to one another. Though as Harris (2016) points out, they do not constitute a one-size-fits-all model or mantra. Rather, they are to be crafted and nurtured in the ongoing work of living a life, learning, and acting in the world. These skills and capacities are the "effort" in the "effortless" work of creativity (Hirschfield qtd. in Popova) as well as the "unfinished work of becoming" (Solnit, 2014, p. 53). As Harris and the essays contained in this book beautifully and powerfully demonstrate, "We are our own best creations, and creativities" (2016, p. xvi).

The volume contains essays that consider creative selves/creative cultures across research and writing practices, with a special emphasis on work that maps, traces, plays, remembers, embodies, rehearses, improvises, and transforms creative selves/creative cultures, as well as work that questions and problematizes the relationships of power that are bound up in these selves, cultures, and practices. The essays included here address and demonstrate the importance of critical approaches to autoethnography, particularly the commitment that such approaches make to theorizing the personal and to creating work that seeks not only to analyze socially unjust practices and modes of doing scholarship but also work that that puts theory into action and imagines new ways of interpreting and acting in the world.

The volume is presented in five parts: Part I: Researching and Writing Creative Selves and Cultures, Part II: Mapping and Remembering Creative Selves and Cultures, Part III: Embodying Creative Selves and Cultures, Part IV: Rehearsing and Transforming Creative Selves and Cultures, and Part V: Tracing, Playing, and Improvising Creative Selves and Cultures, each of which is detailed below.

Researching and Writing Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

The chapters in Part I take up considerations around writing and the research process in critical autoethnography. Susanne Gannon's chapter,

Troubling Autoethnography: Critical, Creative and Deconstructive Approaches to Writing picks up where this introduction leaves off, exploring the expansive inventive and creative territory of critical autoethnography, which she sees as a "troubling textual space where writer(s) and reader(s) meet and touch," where the affective and the material intersect, collide, and rub against one another in surprising and unpredictable ways. Gannon's work demonstrates these qualities and territories of critical autoethnography by offering us six specific writing exemplars that explore risky, relational, provisional subjectivities and attune to affective and material modalities. In *Performing Teaching, Citizenship and Criticality*, Marc Pruyn, Lisa Cary, and Luis Huerta-Charles explore enactments of citizenship in their personal and professional lives as teacher educators. They make this exploration by juxtaposing their theoretical and intellectual commitments with "citizenship identity" vignettes that present their own migration stories and border identities. These stories consider how and what we know about 'who belongs' through the power- and meaning-laden concepts of citizenship, identity, exclusion/inclusion, and oppression/empowerment.

Mapping and Remembering Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

The essays in this section bring together questions of cultural and personal memory, mapping and geographies, the material and the ephemeral, and how each of these intersecting terrains teaches us about critical and mutually influencing relationships between creative selves and cultures. Stefan Schutt's contribution, *Six Sirens and a Broken Oud: Mapping the Self within the Political Landscape* writes critical autoethnography in dialogue with documentary works that explore the physical and psychic borders in Palestine/Israel. Schutt's offering considers cultural identities as unstable and ever-evolving points of identification within discourses of history and culture that are virtual, and sometimes literal, border zones. In *Writing Sensation: Critical Autoethnography in Posthumanism*, Summer Dickenson takes up questions of the material in posthuman and new materialist theories in a meditation on the place and importance of objects and material/sensorial phenomena in critical autoethnography. By writing the 'sensation' of objects in her own life, Dickenson ask us to consider how critical autoethnography can reconsider experiences with materials through story. The final offering in this section, Julianna Kirschner's *Mind and Matter: (Re) membering, Performing and Being*, considers the tensions among writing feelings, ideas, and happenings "down" and the ephemerality of the

'mobile' memories she is working to document. Her writing moves back and forth between here and there, or the past and present, as she finds herself rooted in the present in reconsidering the past.

Embodying Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

Part III turns our attention to instances and experiences of embodiment and to the subjugated knowledges, identities, and experiences these embodiments materialize on the page and in the world. In *Mother-Poems: Using the Confessional as Critique in Autoethnographic Poetry*, Sandra L. Faulkner makes an argument for using the personal in poetry as a tool for critiquing intimate power structures and dominant discourses about motherhood. In materializing the false binary between public and private conceptions of relationships, Faulkner constructs family narratives that question taken-for-granted discourses surrounding mother's work, mothering, and intimate relationships. Anne Harris's and Stacy Holman Jones's *I am a Monument* also questions taken-for-granted discourses about relationships, in this instance the relationship between body and monument (and bodies as monuments) as situated and embodied challenges to the subject/object split in our efforts to come to terms with the rehearsal and repetition of performances of aging, queerness, mourning, love, and death. Harris and Holman Jones argue that monuments are not fixed symbols that stand in isolation from the cultures that bring them into material being, but rather are embodiments and enactments of lifeworlds, values, and ways of living. The final essay in this section, Craig Wood's *The Last Days of Education? An Attempt to Reclaim Teaching Through Socratic Dialogue*, offers a performative text in the form of a five-act Socratic dialogue that interrogates neoliberal approaches to educational spaces. In contrast, Wood embodies the emancipatory possibilities of efforts to reclaim curriculum, pedagogy, the teaching profession and our schools from the vested interests of globalized capital and its conservative political allies.

Rehearsing/Transforming Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

The chapters in Part IV continue the focus on subjugated knowledges, embodiments and experiences by offering specific considerations of the relationship between colonialism, trauma, and efforts to 'decolonize' research, performance, and writing. Linden Wilkenson's *Inside our Islands:*

Confronting the Colonized Muse in the Decolonizing Performance Space takes us into the process of writing for performance within the troubling, confronting, emotional territory inherent in cross-cultural storytelling. As a non-Aboriginal researcher and playwright, Linden Wilkinson writes through the experience of taking on the multiple roles of scribe, actor, and character and the responsibility of developing a cross-cultural performance, which turns out to be as much about breaking and re-making old expectations of the very nature of narrative as about locating story. In a similar vein, Elizabeth Mackinlay's *Shrug off the Old Lies: Writing Critical Autoethnography as Decoloniality with Helene Cixous* takes up Cixous's refusal to oblige and reproduce the colonial system in writing and offers us a poetic and performative exemplar of how to un/re/entangle autoethnographic writing practices in and around the colonial moment in which we find ourselves. Mackinlay 'shrugs off the old lies' and explores and embodies what critical autoethnographic writing as decoloniality will do. In *Transformer: More Than Meets the I/Eye*, Fetaui Iosefo considers the autoethnographic writing of the ex-incarcerated and her own experience of emancipation as a Pasifika girl as a means of exploring the complexities of generational oppression, historical trauma, and the possibilities of finding freedom through writing.

Tracing, Playing, and Improvising Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

Part V: Tracing, Playing, and Improvising Creative Selves/Creative Cultures attends to the important lessons performance teaches us about embodiment, diverse forms of knowledge, relationships, affective and emotional in narratives of experience, and transformation. The first essay in the section, Jessica Aszodi's *Got Lost: Embodied Vocal Performance at the Junction of Autoethnography and Practice-Based Research* takes us through her efforts to learn, rehearse, and perform Helmut Lachenmann's *Got Lost* (2008) for voice and piano. *Got Lost* is a piece that exploits the body of the singer and the attention of the listener with kaleidoscopic detail and Aszodi's writing draws upon embodied practice, score analysis, existing literature, and the composer's own scholarly writings, seeking to make sense of the musical within the frame of subjective experience. Phoebe Green's *Creating Memories: A Cartography of Musical Learning* also charts the experience of learning, rehearsing and performing, in this case James Rushford's solo work for viola *Untitled* (2012), for which there are no recordings or performance traditions to draw on in learning the piece.

Green's writing presents the struggle of the creative and analytical minds (and analytical and embodied knowledges) that happens with 'becoming the conscious autoethnographer' and argues for the power of a conscious autoethnography that creates not only meaningful performance outcomes but also transformative future development and growth. Leon de Bruin's *Critical Autoethnography and Musical Improvisation: Reflections, Conjections, and 21st Century Dimensions* considers the self-critical and self-affirming processes of an improvising musician, and the meaning making derived from critical autoethnographic objects, collaborations, and collectives within communities of practice, the wider creative music politic, and the double move of educator–practitioner–researcher and insider–outsider in music communities. The self-critical, culturally critical, and change-making awareness created in de Bruin's research journal provides a model for arts and practice-based approaches to realizing the commitments of critical autoethnography. The volume closes with Stacy Holman Jones's *Creative Selves, Creative Cultures, Creative Futures,* which charts the possibilities of critical autoethnography in exploring, understanding, sharing, and transforming creative selves and creative cultures.

We hope you enjoy reading the diverse perspectives, critical questions, and innovative approaches to storying theory and theorizing story contained in this collection. The energy and commitment contained in these pages is alive and full of possibility, showing us on page, stage, and the world how selves and culture begin to cohere, enlarging what may be known, felt, not only in awareness of the ways things are but in how they might be and become.

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CHAPTER 2

Troubling Autoethnography: Critical, Creative, and Deconstructive Approaches to Writing

Susanne Gannon

In this chapter[1] I hope to consider the 'trouble' that autoethnography brings to qualitative social science research, and to provoke some new trouble for autoethnographic writing. I want to think about the parameters of an 'autoethnography to come' that is endlessly expansive, inventive, and creative. This is an autoethnography where my story cannot be your story, and where your story cannot be mine. This is not a cannibalising or colonising autoethnography, but rather the invention of a textual space where writer(s) and reader(s) meet and touch momentarily, or are repelled, where affect moves amongst us and the material things and events of the world, where my story might resonate or ripple with yours (and yours and yours and yours…) in unpredictable ways. In this chapter, I sample how some modes of writing work to create selves that trouble the authority of the speaking subject. They produce a riskier autoethnographic subjectivity, a slipping, sliding relational subjectivity, and a writing attuned to affective and material modalities.

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Staying with the Trouble

I draw the trope of 'troubling' from Patti Lather's 'troubling angels' in her book of that name with Chris Smithies and women living with HIV/AIDS (1997). They used 'angel inter-texts' as 'displacement devices' to block easy identification and sentimentalising empathy. When autoethnographers are called upon to create 'evocative' texts that mobilise emotion, empathy, and understanding (e.g. Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Ellis, 1997, 2004), how might we also—and at the same time—keep these from settling too easily into alignment. Unlike the women in their study, Lather and Smithies were not living with HIV/AIDS. They did not intend to collapse their participants and themselves, but wanted to keep differences vibrating through the text. They did not call their work *auto*ethnography; indeed their own stories were nowhere in their book. *Troubling the Angels* used a strategy of textual juxtaposition to keep the trouble in view. Data from twenty-five interviews with research participants were interrupted by a history of angelology and excerpts from sociological and health related texts. These did not produce a seamless or coherent account of how it was to live with HIV/AIDS in that era, but worked against such settlements. Elsewhere, Lather describes how she wanted to create "gnomic abstruse ways of knowing" and to "write in such a way to keep the object of interest in circulation, foregrounding disjunctions, disruptions, accommodations, weaknesses, cheatings, conventions" (Lather, 2000, p. 299). How might we stay alert to 'disjunctions,' 'cheatings' and 'accommodations' in our autoethnographic writing? How might we use disruptive writing strategies to keep the object of interest, whatever that might be, beyond ourselves, in circulation?

For this we need creative and inventive writing practices. We need writing practices that allow for unpredictability, singularity, and specificity, that seek risks and foreground alterity and incommensurability. These orientations to writing might keep us with the trouble. They require attunement to affective and aesthetic dimensions of texts, as well as to a criticality that continues to question the terms that are used and the assumptions underpinning them. Trouble has been my business since my first publications. I presented research 'data' as collective poems (Gannon, 2001) and produced multiple versions of the same intimate event to keep its meaning from settling (Gannon, 2002). Both drew autobiographical texts into strange alliances with other people's stories and with stories from other times. Both resisted easy claims of 'truth' by keeping multiple accounts of

experience in circulation, bumping against each other, undoing truth claims as quickly as they were made. The collective girl (2001)—the 'she' of the poem—was a composite subject, reduced from texts created during a workshop, and organised through the refrain: "*Isolation (as she now sees it)/is an emotional/not a geographic/state of being*" (2001, p. 792). The "end of the wedding" story (2002) juxtaposed multiple stories by bumping together fragments of autobiographical texts written at different times and in different styles about the same incident. I aimed to interrupt, critique, and generate a different story about those commonplace situations and ordinary events. Tracing the discourses at play in such an ordinary event as divorce is a search for other ways of thinking about the event, for new discourses within which to understand it, and in so doing, opening towards a new sense of agency, albeit partial and contingent, fragmented and transitory. Each project explored the particular work of language itself in creating worlds: using and interrogating textual strategies including rhetorical questions, aspects of tone and style, pronouns, tenses, clichés, use of prologue and epilogue, and poetic structures including line breaks, metaphor, and rhythm.

Poststructural writing transgresses the imperative to represent the world and its inhabitants as objective and coherent. In these modes of writing, singularity does not mean the individual coherent self-knowing subject—the 'me' or 'I' of a text—but the singularity of a moment, a place, an encounter, an event. It makes explicit that, in a different moment, a different place, a different relationship within which writing is called up, what is written will be different, even when it is ostensibly about the same thing.

(Im)possible Subjects

If in autoethnography, bodies, emotions, and lived experience become texts to be written, too often this assumes a humanist self-knowing and self-articulating subject—a self that is autonomous and discrete. Experience is reified as the "great original," assuming "that there is both a 'there' and 'beings' who are there" (Britzman, 2000, p. 28), or it becomes "a transcendental essence on which to build consciousness and knowledge" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008, p. 302). As if experience is just there waiting to be described by someone who knows exactly what happened, the one who was there. It's not as simple as that. From a poststructural perspective, experience is never quite unified, knowable, universal, or stable. Nor can it

be set apart from language, or the discourses through which it makes sense and produces subjects. In poststructural writing, the subject is put under erasure, and writing the self requires strategies for displacing and destabilising the speaking subject or the narrative 'I' (Gannon, 2006; Jackson & Mazzei, 2008).

The subject, the one who speaks and writes of experience, is a key concept with a long history in western philosophical thought. Initially it came from the Latin "subjectum" meaning broadly "a ground, basis, or what exists independently" (Colebrook, 2004, p. 71). It was only in modernity that the human subject came to be seen as fundamentally different from non-human beings, and recognised as the one who knows and who is thus "the basis and centre of all inquiry" (Colebrook, 2004, p. 71). Michel Foucault's genealogy of the subject traced writing as part of the self-making project. This "technology of the self" linked to practices of self-discipline from Greek and Roman times, but it was the autobiographical turn of Christianity when "the subject objectifies himself" in moments of avowal or confession (2005, p. 333). It is in the sixteenth century, after Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, that the genre of autobiography emerges, as "the description of oneself in the unfolding course of one's life," within a regime that prioritised learning how to say 'the truth' about oneself (2005, p. 362). Thus autoethnography, in some ways, links into this tradition. Foucault understood subjects, their understandings of their worlds, and the grids of power/knowledge that shaped them, as produced through discursive regimes and patterns of thought that made certain versions of truth more imaginable than others. Autoethnographers might be challenged to experiment with writing that displaces and disassemble the self in the social, in discourse, and in the world. We are always co-implicated with others, not all of them human. This autoethnographic 'I' would be inherently dialogic and dynamic, a leaky and unstable subjectivity.

How might it be possible to write the self in autoethnography, and to put 'self' under erasure at the same time? We might start by acknowledging that the 'I' is always an accomplishment in the text, a posture or an installation, a stance that is an artefact of textual practice and authorial choice. This means that we need to be mindful of those textual choices, while at the same time allowing language to make its way, with acute awareness that language is always itself material. Language has textures and rhythms, it flows and stutters, language can intoxicate and deaden, and it may have different effects on different folk.

Roland Barthes also wrote explicitly about writing and its relation to truth and memory. While his books *Roland Barthes* (1977) and *A Lover's Discourse* (1978) fragmented language, fractured memories, and abandoned the pretension of a coherent speaking subject, his final lectures provide some insights about this relationship. In *Preparation for the novel* (2011), he describes writing as a "slow running aground in a too familiar landscape" (p. 17). Although he had just written a book composed of memories and meditations on family photographs, he says in his opening lecture that he has no memory, rather just "a few memory flashes … that don't proliferate, they aren't associative" (2011, p. 16). By this he means they do not cohere into a narrative through the convention of emplotment or the arrangement of events through time. Rather he creates short forms that better reflect memories as "jolts" and fragments. The point of the subject is always to be "mobile" because "the ego is a plurality of forces of which now this one, now that one stands in the foreground" (Barthes, 2011, p. 44). Subjectivity must "be accepted in its mobility, not undulating but interweaving … a discontinuous mutation of sites (like a kaleidoscope)" (2011, p. 44). Thus autoethnographic writing might be discontinuous, fragmented, sparse, elliptical. It could provide a site for the dispersal of self rather than its reification. If the subjects of autoethnography are approached as "partial objects" rather than coherent narrators of their own story, and the body and memory are understood as unreliable, fragmented, dispersed in time, then we require autoethnographic writing that folds rather than fixes experience. This requires a sceptical authorial narrative 'I' who is "always leaving, always returning, always longing" and who is "non-transcendent, fractured and non-knowing" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008, p. 314). Poststructural autoethnographic writing emphasises vulnerability and responsibility and aims to fracture, fragment, multiply, estrange, and displace subjectivity and singular truths through poetic, figurative, and aesthetic writing (Gannon, 2006).

Contingent Autoethnographies

In this section I touch on three examples of my own writing that might be called autoethnographic, where I have experimented with short bursts and provisional accounts that are undone, or interrupted by alternative accounts, images, and extracts. It is increasingly influenced by my interests in materiality and affect, and my collaborative work on Gilles Deleuze with Jonathan Wyatt, Ken Gale, and Bronwyn Davies (2011, forthcoming).

How might writing autoethnographically be approached as "as a flow meeting other flows," how might writing be like "tearing the [text] to pieces, getting it to interact with other things, absolutely anything" (Deleuze, 1995, p. 9)? How might the text achieve its own momentum in language and in time, exceeding intentionality, rationality, and the particular contexts of production and reception? How might writing be called up by disparate events and moments, provoked by unexpected encounters with texts and the world?

For my chapter in the *Handbook of Autoethnography* (2013), I patched together fragments I had written at a desert writing retreat, with a package of 'evidence' that I had been sent by the Department of Defence about the death of my brother. I was stunned by the materiality of the weight of paper in the package, the bad photocopies of old typed up transcripts with spacings and margins that look all wrong, and the very wrong story of a boy who died falling from a window in the middle of the night on Defence property. The writing emerged from the collision of package, desert writing, stumbling into Carolyn Ellis's account of her brother's death, my ongoing anger. I described what I was doing as exploring a relational subjectivity through writing, contingent on the recognition of others; and wrote of writing itself as a moment to moment, negotiated location. I talked about opening flows of affect between writers, readers, and texts. I tried to produce jagged fragments of writing that start again and again, slip away, and interrupt each other. These were more like what I felt than any seamless story could be, but were also readable—and true enough—for my parents. I wanted material artefacts to jostle with memories and imaginings. Borrowing from Deleuze, I talked about writing as a "desiring machine" that collapses thought and affect, self and other, reality and memory. There is no neutral space from which to write, so I needed to move in close to the detail and be alert to the ethical implications of writing. I called this a "textual call and response," a "mobile textual and material assemblage" (2013, pp. 229–230). Autoethnography was part of an ongoing investigation (life itself) where everything is provisional because it continues to be subject to retelling from another angle via a different lens and line of sight, a different point in time, a different set of relations. In this chapter I wanted to see how style and form might draw attention to the ways that writing can never be enough and is always too much. As well as fragmentation and multiplicity, I wanted to signal the inadequacy of language by moving away from an autoethnographic register of emotion. The way I did this was to look incredibly closely at the material

objects—documents that are almost unbearable to read, let alone to write about, and to bring those material objects into a stuttering sort of relation to biographical fragments.

Another text that juxtaposes textual fragments and other materials is my chapter on the country girl in the *International Handbook of Narrative and Life History* (2016). It turns to more mundane affects and memories, as multiple autoethnographic vignettes fold through and around each other, and are read in terms of power, gender, class, and place. Again it began in a moment of discontinuity, a jolt, a split second that gave me a starting place I hadn't anticipated. A throw-away comment at a book launch agitated me, mobilising affect and demanding that I write through it. Though I couldn't quite name what I felt, it came in a rush and a tangle that stayed with me for some time. During her research for her book on the Australian country girl, the author had worked behind a bar in a pub in a country town. This was seen as a novel fieldwork strategy, and I didn't know the details of this fieldwork, the length of time or significance to the author of working behind the bar. But what I did know was that—as someone who spent much of her childhood in this milieu—I had a visceral reaction that became a 'pivot point' for musings around a differently classed country girlhood. This subjectivity of the country girl is constituted in relation to other human and non-human subjects, spaces, times, surfaces, and events, particularly the event of writing.

In my response, I sought to "disinter, dislocate and multiply narratives of memory around the figure of the country girl" and to "follow affective and relational flows" through a "multilayered narrative performance organised around the trope of the 'country girl" (2016, p. 518). However, it was not all about the subject who writes, as these stories intersected with wider social and cultural shifts. Details shifted as I wrote, as I spoke to other members of my family, as I found other historical and cultural texts and sought to complicate readings of personal experience and memory. These texts of memory assembled around the trope of the country girl became more dynamic and entangled, animated by movements of affect and sensation, informed by additional research, and enhanced by aesthetic and stylistic elements that draw attention to the work of writing.

The third example of my own autoethnographically inclined experiments in writing is a paper for a special issue of *Qualitative Inquiry* on the intercorporeal subjects of writing that brings materials from the past into collision with very different readings in the present (Gannon, 2017). It pivots around a very material object—a handwritten, handmade travel

journal where ink bleeds through the thin pages and tiny handwriting squashes in events, places, people. My walking methodology took me to the same streets decades later, tracking public histories in precise places in post-dictatorship Chile. Writing, then and in the present, bodies in place in the streets of the city of Santiago, the literal inscription of invisible histories on cobblestones and walls, emphasises the impossibility of knowledge and the naiveté of one person's attempt to give an account, even for her own experience. I drew on Michel Foucault's notion of the heterotopia (1984), to think through writing as a way of producing the subject as both "utterly real" and "utterly unreal" via a displacement in time, space, and matter. Foucault suggests that in the heterotopia, like in a mirror, "I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent" (1984, p. 24). Time is not experienced as a sequence but as slices, that are flowing, transitory, and precarious (1984, p. 26). How might writing provide that sense? Displacements of subjectivity in this text are produced by layering incompatibilities over and alongside one another, including the subject herself who is written in the third person with multiple personas. Emotions are not named but the mode of writing mobilises affects and feelings.

Mobilising Affect and Materiality

Affects are not as tidily captured by description as emotions but are visceral, corporeal, not amenable to labelling or description. They are forces, states, and importantly, transitions between states and between bodies—passages in a field of relays that are erratic, evolving, looping, shimmering (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Some authors have written about affect and autoethnography, drawing on poststructural frames. Patricia Clough and Kathleen Stewart write about affect and autoethnography, 'troubling' autoethnography while, at the same time, quivering with personal narratives that weave in and out of theory. Writing becomes a "bloom space" for attuning to the world (Stewart, 2010, p. 340).

Clough was one of the first to critique realist autoethnography, and at the same time to call for affectively attuned experimental writing. She has explored poetic and deconstructive modes of writing self and others, incorporating images, objects, and bodies in work which documents, circles around, and undoes experience (2010, 2014). She does not claim this work as autoethnographic though it demonstrates some of the potentials

that she has long seen in the form. Quite early she noted that autoethnography was emerging as "the most developed form of experimental ethnographic writing," yet autoethnographers rarely critiqued "the technical substrate of their own writing" (2000, pp. 287, 280). She drew on early writings of feminist materialist Karen Barad to suggest there is "no inherent distinction between subject and object of knowledge, observer and observed," rather there is "an *apparatus of observation*" that requires rigorous self-consciousness that will always be more complex than the reflexivity of the knowing subject (2000, p. 282). Her analysis of trauma culture suggests that conventional autoethnography, where it relies on the confidence of a coherent speaking subject, is not adequate to the task of processing experience for traumatised subjects. Therefore, "autoethnography cannot be used for telling a story of self-development" or "a self rediscovered" (Clough & Halley, 2007, p. 10). Rather, autoethnography might attempt to explore "disjointed temporalities of experiences that cannot be known for certain, cannot be placed once and for all but repeatedly pressure the subject with bodily effects" (2007, p. 0.4). This recasts autoethnography from naïve empiricism of lived experience, from its phenomenological moorings, towards affective methodologies which value "an empiricism of sensation" (Clough, 2009, p. 51). She argues that affective methods are necessarily performative, entangling, and assembling beyond the limits of interpretation, producing resonances and attunements, intensifying and dampening affects within and beyond the text itself, excessive and uncontainable.

Clough's most recent work suggests directions for an autoethnography to come. She produces fragmentation through poetic form, writes through figures and objects—the metronome, the child falling (2010, 2014). And in the collaborative project "Ecstatic Corona" she moves collective experiences of walking and memories into dance and film performances (2015). If this could be claimed as a collaborative autoethnographic experiment, we would notice that it is explicitly material, situated in place, intensely relational, collective, emergent, technological, aesthetic, created through movement rather than stasis. It is surprising and unplanned, moving far beyond the 'I' of individualised memory into the event as she and her students walk and think aloud through her old neighbourhood. Together they create something new, mobilising new affective vectors and temporalities that draw on the past but do not replicate or fix it.

Kathleen Stewart is also interested in the movements of affect and their implications for writing. She refuses grand narratives and overarching

explanations, instead producing writing vignettes that allow her to map disparate things through ordinary scenes, including "impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters and habits of relating" (2007, p. 2). Her book, *Ordinary Affects* is "an assemblage of disparate scenes" of entanglements of "trajectories, connections and disjunctures" (2007, p. 3). This experimental mode of writing produces texts that are evocative rather than declarative, tangential rather than direct, subtle and inclined to the poetic. The vignettes reinforce how things and experience are "shifty and unsteady … abstract and concrete … fractious, multiplicitous and unpredictable" (2007, p. 3). Narrative fragments without closure or resolution can attune to sensations, moments, impressions, images, and textures. They require "slow looking and off-stage hearing … an oblique and unrushed sort of attention" and a commitment to "speculation, curiosity and the concrete" (2007, p. 1). This provokes close and ethnographic attention to events, to how things are thrown together in particular moments and to the affects and sensations that are mobilised in those moments. Affect is not about "one person's feelings becoming another's but about bodies literally affecting one another and generating intensities: human bodies, discursive bodies, bodies of thought, bodies of water" (2007, p. 128).

In her chapter in the *Handbook of Autoethnography*, Stewart talks of "sidling up" to the ordinary, and suggests that autoethnography might "hone in on the singularities in which things actually take place" so its objects will be at the same time both "diffuse" and "precise" (2013, p. 661). They might attend to disparate and unbounded things such as "a tone of voice, a form of labour, a sleepless night, unsignified intensities" and attachments that circulate between all sorts of bodies, not always human, and not always animate (2013, p. 661). The first question for autoethnographic writing must be its "compositional complicity" as it calls up "textures and densities of worlds of all kinds formed out of this and that—identities, situations, scenes, sensory conditions, bodies, meanings, weights, rhythms, absences" (2013, p. 667). The particular assemblage of details emerges in each instance and is a matter of going with whatever things of the world you are thrown together with.

Autoethnographers might attune to materiality and affect through other modes of production. Recent experiments in collective biography methodology might also have the potential to productively interfere with autoethnographic conventions. Artmaking can work obliquely to move personal stories from narrative logic into a deconstructive space inflected

by metonymy, symbolism, drawing attention to the contingencies of representation and interpretation (Davies & Gannon, 2009; Gale et al., 2013; Gannon, 2008). Methodological disruptions inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's schizophrenic 'I' or nomadic subject shift focus beyond the experiential qualities of personal stories to push them in multiple directions at once (Gale et al., 2013; Gonick & Gannon, 2014). How might autoethnography be reconceived as a "mobile-affective site" of writing and remembering? How do we push beyond individual investments and passionate attachments to the carefully constructed story 'I' have created of my 'I'-ness. Textual interventions, Image theatre, photography, and writing back and between, enable individual stories to open up, or become deterritorialised (Gannon et al., 2012). They shift shape, depart from any intrinsic belonging to an individual, and exceed our ability to recognise ourselves within them. The unity of the subject begins to dissipate, and writing becomes both an exploration of how individual history becomes territorialised and a space for experimenting with strategies that disrupt these accounts.

In one collaborative experiment in writing selves and others (Gale et al., 2013), we created a textual space where individual subjectivities and authorial voices emerge, merge, and disappear, to emerge again in different configurations and rhythms, where art and words intersect and infect each other. Rather than reifying the individual subject and the separateness of her stories, or seeking similarities, we produced memories and fictions that bump against, inform, and interrupt each other. Fragments, motifs, and found and sculpted objects cross across and through each other. Reverberations and resonances are intensified as art and words complement, extend, refute, and subvert each other. Here we sought productive failure that might mark the limits of knowledge, and we invented new possibilities for working otherwise. A woman in a glass dress who ran through an autumn forest became a motif that unfurled like a ribbon through the text.[2] Material objects and ephemeral qualities—moss, rock, light, air, wind, weather—can all be deployed to provoke interferences and incite new angles on experience (Gannon, 2016; Wyatt et al., 2018). These approaches suggest that there might be endlessly flexible approaches to interrogating lived experience, but they will change what you are likely to write, how you write, and your sense of your self and your experience as your own.

My final example of experimental autoethnographic writing is Jane Speedy's *Staring at the park: A poetic autoethnographic inquiry* (2015).

The book is written in shards and fragments, with text boxes, postcards, iPad finger paintings, shredded haiku, snatches of overhead dialogue, and a methodology of "long hard staring." She samples, reframes, and makes use of what she calls—after Walter Benjamin—the "rags and refuse" of the massive stroke she experienced in late 2011. Since then, she says, "all of life is disjointed and fragmented and the linear narrative I had been living was just a conceit" (2015, p. 13). She eschews overarching explanations of events in order to keep her narratives "deliberately small, partial, contingent and particular" (2015, p. 15). Rather than creating a coherent narrative account, she seeks to record "accumulations of the moment" (2015, p. 100). This requires, in varying quantities and at various times, a combination of "imagination, humility and courage" (2015, p. 101). The "hard staring" that is her method leads her to write a fictional detective story that she imagines unfolding in the park across from her home, and brings her into a writing assemblage with the horse chestnut that grows there. It leads to strong critique of the underfunding of the National Health System, of the ways that the elderly women on her ward are treated by bureaucracies, and the seamless hero narratives that are often told of stroke survival. She wrote the book three times, she says, in three separate genres—ethnography, fiction, and life story—but these spill into each other in this "poetics of the park" (2015, p. 17). The text has three parallel voices, though "a simultaneity of ten million stories thus far would be nearer to the excess, loss and chaos" that she wants to create (2015, p. 91).

Finally, Provisionally…

These examples of experimental autoethnographic writing—not all of them claiming that title, and not many of them interested in documenting the truth as understood by an individual authorial 'I'—suggest some possible directions for autoethnography. Each of them, in quite particular and unreplicable ways, blur genres and subvert conventions. They move beyond claims for evocative and emotionally resonant writing. They refuse to settle for singular truths, instead multiplying and destabilising truth claims. Some of them abandon the narrative 'I' altogether. As Alecia Youngblood Jackson and Lisa Mazzei suggest, generating multiple accounts and claiming reflexivity are insufficient in themselves for disrupting meaning. We might also seek to "strain voice": by producing "fractured, multiply-positioned, and unreliable narrators" that can "embrace … epistemological failure" (2008, p. 303). This is a much more creative

and contingent 'I,' a performative 'I' that is "constructed in the process of attempts at truth-telling" and that uses experience as merely a "provisional strategy" that is always subject to erasure, contradiction, and extension (2008, p. 305). How might we develop autoethnography with this sort of attention to vulnerability, to contingency, to creative methods that are invented for and within each project? Though perhaps 'how' is always the wrong question, instead we might just stay with the trouble in order to invent, create, experiment.

Notes

1. This chapter is based on the keynote address at the Critical Autoethnography Conference, Melbourne, 2015.
2. And later an actual glass dress, a short film and a component of a practice-based doctorate by participant and co-author Davina Kirkpatrick (https://vimeo.com/130²65747).

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CHAPTER 3

Performing Teaching, Citizenship and Criticality

Marc Pruyn, Lisa Cary, and Luis Huerta-Charles

We're teacher educators who have worked in Australia, the US, Canada and Mexico at the university level, striving to co-construct understandings among our students in the areas of citizenship, social, multicultural and multilingual education. We draw inspiration from radical philosophies and pedagogies (Darder, 1991; Foucault, 1977; Freire, 1973; Lather, 2004; McLaren, 1997) and attempt to not only embrace difference within our teaching and scholarship, but, indeed, see it as essential if we are to truly understand the notions of citizenship, belonging and identity in helpful and forward-thinking ways.

Individually, in different combinations, and together, we have been focusing our scholarship over the past several years on coming to understand more deeply what the field of citizenship education stands for, in both theory and practice, historically and currently, and, especially, in

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relation to curricula in relation to citizenship, civics and the humanities and social sciences. In this work, we have been drawing on our backgrounds in social studies/social education, multicultural education, multilingual education and democracy education in order to more deeply and profoundly understand "citizenship education" and what it represents today in Australia, the US, Mexico and beyond.

Reflecting the highly personal and individualized nature of the type of research required to be conducted in this aspect of national and personal identity, each of us draws on personal experiences with aspects of citizenship that are not noticeably present in the national curricula. Specifically, the auto ethnographic (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2014; Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holman Jones, 2011) interruptions at the heart of this chapter aim to highlight our work as academics that attempt to both understand and resist the racialized/classed privilege bestowed upon them, and others, by nation states and economic systems.

Drawing both on the current international scholarship on citizenship, power and social changes and the critical/post-structuralist qualitative methodology that we set forth, this work describes and problematizes evolving citizenship "identities," "stances" and "subject positions" in an attempt to critically assess curricula and, make connections between citizenship education and identity development.

Who Belongs? A Brief Exploration of Citizenship Education

In the last decade, there has been a growing interest in conducting research that addresses issues of race, class and gender in social studies (social education), often with a focus on how these constructs intersect with notions of citizenship and the citizen. Much of this work (Asher & Crocco, 2001; Cary, 2001; Houser & Kuzmic, 2001; Howard, 2001; Shinew, 2001) has explored "citizenship" and "citizen" as floating signifiers, unstable humanist concepts worthy of critical investigation. These studies bring to bear a number of orientations and theories from outside of social studies, as they (or in order to) highlight issues of exclusion. Shinew (2001), for example, presented a feminist analysis and research project about gendered notions of citizenship that highlights the way citizenship has historically been a project of "white men" and has excluded the marginalized from representation. And Cary (2001) investigated the ways citizenship is historically

contingent and framed by social constructions of race, class, gender and sexuality.

Quite often, however, work that challenges notions of citizenship within social studies has focused on an additive approach to the curriculum. Franck (2002), for example, wrote about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students negotiating homophobic total institutions (the schools) and the position (curriculum spaces) of deviancy. He goes on to highlight the marginalization that occurs in schools and the need to interrogate how concepts of community, citizenship and freedom play out in school settings.

While we applaud this ground-breaking work, we also believe in the need for meta-level analyses that historicize the spaces made possible and impossible for those in "deviant" subject positions (Cary, 2003), ones that move beyond conceptions of deviant citizenship based on curricular content and instructional methods approaches, into the realms of epistemology and the study of exclusion through an examination of how social and educational discourses make certain ways of being possible and intelligible, but also often impossible and inconsolable.

Traditionally, however, social education—and its cousin, citizenship education—rather than embracing even a mild dialogic and liberatory perspective, has tended to be devoid of even the most basic elements of either humanist or critical ways of thinking and teaching (Kincheloe, 2001; Loewen, 1995; Pruyn, 2001, 2012; Ross, 2000). Rather, the social studies are too often geared toward fostering obedience to authority through the memorization of disconnected facts in the preparation of standardized tests based on the values and beliefs of the powerful in society (Kincheloe, 2001; Loewen, 1995; Ross, 2000).

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in the US notes that the goal of social studies is, "to help … young people [develop the ability to] make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (NCSS, n.d., Introduction section, para. 22) through the blended study of multiple and diverse disciplines, including civics, economics, citizenship, history, geography and cultural anthropology (NCSS, n.d.). Marc (Pruyn, 2003; Pruyn & Malott, 2013; Pruyn et al., 2006) has argued, from a critical pedagogical perspective, that this traditional definition is quite conservative, and does not serve the needs of social justice. As a criticalist who draws inspiration, and analytical tools, from both Marxism and anarchism, he holds that social studies should not just develop

"informed citizens," bur rather, should foster the development of "cultural/political social activists who are encouraged to manifest their beliefs with the ultimate goal of fighting oppression and furthering social justice" (Pruyn, 2003, p. 5).

As the idea of what constitutes "core literacy" continues to expand to incorporate myriad forms of competence—within national curriculum initiatives, worldwide—the scope of the terrain for the deployment of those literacies, particularly those of the "citizen," is being, arguably, increasingly narrowed. At a time when democratic public life seems to expose a generic civic *illiteracy*, the revival of core democratic competencies, capacities and commitments seems desperately necessary. While this is not the place to enter into a thorough and detailed exploration of the arguments about the narrowing of the civic role, the work of Henry Giroux (2011) provides an important cautionary example:

> [E]mptied of any substantial content, democracy appears imperilled as individuals are unable to translate their privately suffered misery into genuine public debate, social concerns and collective action. This is a form of illiteracy that is no longer marginal to … society but is increasingly becoming one of its defining and more frightening features. (p. 86)

Many civically oriented educators have called for the development and enactment of curriculum and pedagogies that might facilitate the re-emergence of a genuine citizenship education in schools and across a wider range of public and cultural pedagogical spaces. Indeed, it is reasonable to argue that the whole basis of what is called the critical pedagogy movement has the revitalization of a democratically competent citizenry at its core. From this perspective, active citizenship contains a very high level of utopian imagining. Freire made this point articulately and poetically in 2004:

> The ability to observe, to compare, and to evaluate, in order to choose, through deciding how one is to intervene in the life of the city and thus exercise one's citizenship, arises then as a fundamental competency. If my presence in history is not neutral, I must accept its political nature as critically as possible. If, in reality, I am not in the world simply to adapt to it, but rather to transform it, and if it is not possible to change the world without a certain dream or vision for it, I must make use of every possibility there is to not only speak about my utopia, but also to engage in practices consistent with it. (p. 7)

A key concept within the field of citizenship is that of *belonging*—arguably, citizenship is the conceptual membrane surrounding and separating groups of insiders and outsiders, maintaining a symbolic distance between those who "belong here" and those who don't. Accordingly, a central conceptual focus within our work connects to the notion of belonging and the way in which such civic characteristics are presented, taught, accepted and resisted both within and from without the formal school curriculum.

Reflecting the highly personal and individualized nature of the type of research required to be conducted in this aspect of national and personal identity, we draw here on personal experiences with aspects of citizenship that are not noticeably present in current national curricula. While the limitations of space in the current article prevent deep description and analysis of each of these instances, we hope that by outlining and briefly discussing/analysing our own experiences with citizenship, readers might come to further appreciate the complexity of the notion of citizen in its material forms, and to perhaps trouble the relatively non-problematic view of citizenship contained in official curricula.

Therefore, in this space we have combined curriculum theory and autoethnography (Adams et al., 2014; Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013) in order to highlight the impact of experienced citizenship on the way we work and research as teacher educators. In doing so, we have interrupted the text in a variety of places to share our stories, whilst continuing the "straight story" of official curricula's focus (or lack of focus) on the importance of civics and citizenship.

Methodological Reflections

The philosophical and methodological approaches we advocate, and employ in our individual and collective work, are to investigate epistemological spaces as discursive productions from post-structural/post-modern (Foucault, 1977) and critical (Freire, 1973) perspectives. These positions draw upon the notion of discourse as an absent power that can validate/legitimize vs. negate/de-legitimize. We attempt to employ meta-level analyses that historicize the spaces made possible/impossible for those in deviant subject positions through a critique of the current literature juxtaposed with a presentation and analysis of autoethnographic interruptions. In this way, we are trying to move beyond conceptions of deviant citizenship based on curricular content and instructional method and explore the

realms of epistemology through the lens of the lived experience of citizenship. From these perspectives, the notion of discourse is an absent power that validates and legitimizes. As Usher and Edwards (1994) argue, "A discourse authorises certain people to speak and correspondingly silences others, or at least makes their voices less authoritative. A discourse is therefore exclusionary" (p. 90).

Exclusionary discourses abound in this current manifestation of knowledge control around citizenship. We need to create a space for more complicated research. We aim to reveal and understand how we are all framed by these historical, social and cultural discourses that, in effect, produce the possibilities of being and being a member—or part of a collective—within a given society. It is vital that we remember that this effect of power is not linear, or deterministic. We consider power from a Foucauldian perspective (1977). Thus, power is seen to circulate and actively produce knowledge and different ways of being.

We personally aim to redefine and deepen our methodological understandings through our citizenship scholarship as it focuses on the manifestation of relationships within these social networks. For all of us, "citizenship" should be investigated to produce a complicated understanding of subjectivities, and thus, move us beyond deterministic, simplistic desires for voices and stories. Because, going back to Usher and Edwards (1994):

> Power is manifested as relationships in a social network. It comes from below, induced in the body and produced in social transactions. Power, through knowledge, brings forth active 'subjects' who better 'understand' their own subjectivity, yet who in this very process subject themselves to forms of power. (p. 89)

Therefore, this is a call for the study of how we are normalized, how we are embedded within total institutions and how we engage in and negotiate the production of legitimate "citizenship knowledge". This embeddedness excludes certain ways of being and erases the bodies of those students, teachers, parents, custodians and others who are considered deviant, or outside the norm: pregnant teens, drop-outs, people of color, LGBT teachers and students, female juvenile offenders, charter schools and alien/dissident academics. It is important to reveal the discourses themselves and how this knowing impacts the lives and possibilities of being for those we "know."

Therefore, we must persistently critique the discursive structures we inhabit and our ways of being as researchers and researched and reveal the desires and myths that shape us. Gayatri Spivak (1993) demands that we understand how we cannot *not* want to inhabit societal myths, discourses and other effects of power, because we are embedded within them. This is a move to complicate her notion of strategic essentialism while still centering the epistemic violence of colonialism. As she notes, "The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" (p. 25).

Using the critical philosophical and methodological orientations described above, and our problematized and evolving notion of "citizenship identities," our larger research agenda seeks to critically assess new and evolving national curricula around "civics and citizenship" (especially what it means for current and future teacher education and school-based practice); track and critique the up-to-the minute shenanigans of ministries/departments of education; understand ongoing development of national, regional and global "trans/international" citizenship youth identities on the one hand, and neo-fascist/nationalist-exclusionary/anti-immigrant movements on the other; and, make connections between citizenship education, identity development and global youth activist/liberation movements. This is how we are attempting to write and narrate our critical praxis in the real world of both academic scholarship and progressive social change and solidarity.

Transnational Migrant Citizen: Australia, US, Australia (Lisa)

I was born into privilege. As an Australian citizen I carried from birth the benefit of belonging to a social democracy with a thriving economy. I was, briefly, also an American citizen. Let's just say it is a long story (including tattoos) but the privilege of being Australian eventually trumped (too soon?) my desire to be "American." How fortunate am I to have journeyed into these spaces of belonging with the opportunity of choice and access? There is no doubt my professional identity and qualifications helped, but maybe my pale body and "almost English" accent helped, too. I have faced the nightmare of negotiating the intense challenge that is/was the IRS, and this stress played out on my body. But I had the "right"

language and a colonial connection, so I was no real danger. Thus, my brief foray into Otherness must be considered a minor chord in the discordant symphony that surrounds the social construction of citizenship.

During this time I had citizenship identities (Cary, Pruyn, & Austin, 2015) of both "Australian" and "American" and enacted each of Westheimer's (2015) typologies of citizen: "personally responsible," "participatory" and "social justice-oriented."

When I returned to Australia in 2010, I was asked to present a keynote lecture for the Social and Citizenship Educators Associate of Australia (SCEAA). In that presentation, I talked of the loss of "social studies"; the loss of an interdisciplinary analysis drawing upon all of the social sciences. I also talked of the rise in hateful discourses of race and xenophobia that I had been confronted with upon my return to Australia.

I even burst into song in the keynote, "Where has Social Studies gone? Long time growing…" Adding to this question was the content focus of the Australian Curriculum presented that morning and I wondered: Where have the aims and objectives needed to drive curriculum development gone? Where has the strong interdisciplinary approach gone that I spoke so proudly off in the face of a history-biased curriculum in the US? Clearly, we are following a global trend, but it still makes me wonder: Where all the good work of years past has gone?

I talked of the hate speech that seemed to have been accepted and disseminated freely; see, for example, the Australian Facebook page, "We grew here, you flew here, so fuck off!"; the stickers I had seen on cars, noting, "Sorry, we are full"; and, the politicians talking of refugees and asylum seekers as if they were entitled foreigners trying to get in the back door. One news story spoke of a politician telling immigrants to shower and use deodorant because we [Australians] are a more hygienic nation, and they needed to "assimilate."

As I publically interrogated what had become of my professional fields of social and citizenship education in Australia; as I bemoaned my country's largely blind and lock-step march down the same disastrous curricular and high-stakes testing paths already traveled by the US and the UK; and, as I discovered a resurgent Australian xenophobia, racism and nativism rearing its ugly head on social media—a nativism that would re-assert itself globally in the US, UK and Europe some six years later—I feel I was enacting what Ross and Vinson (2013) would call a "dangerous citizenship," a citizenship meant to question, challenge and speak-up, to challenge regimes of power (Freire, 1973).

In these contexts, I "belonged"—more or less (for example, sexism and misogyny were always still at play)—in both the US and Australia—I had the appropriate citizenship identities and cultural/linguistic signifiers to be understood by these societies as a member of a non-questioned norm. This, despite the fact that both the US and Australia have Indigenous histories stretching back several tens of thousands of years; that is to say, white folks are relatively very recent immigrants to both North America and what is now called the continent/nation of Australia.

White Male Citizen Immigrant: Atzlan, US, Australia (Marc)

When Lisa was moving from Texas back to Perth, I was moving from Las Cruces, New Mexico (also understood and named by many who have lived on that land long before folks who look like me—what Lisa describes as the "pale" bodied—came to "discover" and "settle" it, as occupied "Atzlán" and the contested "Borderlands"), to Melbourne. That put me on a path to officially sanctioned permanent residency, and later, Australian citizenship.

> I'm nervous, sitting here waiting for my name to be called. I'm sitting in a bland but well kept office in a big building in Melboure's central business district. I'm in a testing and processing center for the Australian Department for Immigration and Border Protection. Around me, I hear what I'm pretty sure are Arabic, Mandarin, Tagalog and Spanish being spoken by others who are waiting. I'm staring back-and-forth between my flashcards (yup, flash cards) and the pretty golden wattle flowers on the PDF cover of my study book, *Our Common Bond* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014), on my iPad. I keep repeating certain facts to myself, which makes me feel like I'm back in Mr. Goldmark's seventh grade social studies class at Bancroft Junior High School in Los Angeles in the late 1970s. But this is a very different content.
>
> I'm hoping to become a citizen of the Commonwealth of Australia—a dual Yank and Aussie citizen, actually—by demonstrating that I've memorized a set of facts, some of which will be on the test I'm about to take: the Queen is Australia's head of state; Indigenous peoples have lived on the continent for at least 40,000 years (if not more); the country was federated in 1901; there was a fellow called Cook that had a gander at, and visit of, the South Eastern coast in 1770; European settlement began eight years later with the arrival of the 11 convict ships from Brittan known as the "First

> Fleet"; and, the colors and symbols on our three national flags (the Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) have special significance.

Here in Australia—and elsewhere—I have privilege I did not earn (Gramsci, 1973). I'm from the US, speak English with a particular accent, am middle class, male, *et cetera*. I'm familiar with the trials and tribulations faced by immigrants, both documented and undocumented.

I grew up in Los Angeles, California. As I slowly re-read and carefully articulate the three words just before this sentence (*Los - Angeles - California*) in their language of origin, it makes me smile and giggle. Sardonically. I wonder what it must be like to be an "immigrant" to a land your predecessors lived in for centuries beforehand. I wonder what it must be like to be a Mexican "illegal" in—again, try thinking this in Spanish—*California*, *Arizona*, *Téjas*, *Nuevo México*, *Colorado*, *Nevada*, *Oregón*… Irony much? And whatever came of, I wonder, that pesky little Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848? (It's worth giving this a Google.) 139 years later, I would teach the descendants of the Mexicans who lived in *El Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de los Ángeles del Río Porciúncula*—that is, "LA"—with some Salvadorans and Guatemalans—these mostly fleeing US war and dictatorships in Central America—thrown in for good measure. As part of a bilingual education program at the time, I taught these primary students the core subjects of literacy, mathematics and science in Spanish as a colleague taught them their other subjects in English.

These students and their parents—as well as many other "immigrants" I knew in LA as I grew up, lived and worked in the city over three decades—had a much harder time there than I've been having here in Australia obtaining residency (a "Green Card" in the States) or citizenship. As I sit here reflecting on citizenship and am poised to take this test, I remember how much more expensive, time consuming and just hard it is to obtain these official markers of belonging in the US. But for those without economic, geographic or ethnic privilege, it is a similar story in Australia.

As a "citizen"—and a white, male, middle-class man (from a very working class background) with a US accent—I am always accepted in both Australia and the US. I, too, am accepted as "normal" in both societies; a normal that, as Lisa noted above, is very recent and actually quite abnormal across the reach of time. One of my Australian education students once shared in class—after a period in which this usually very active and

participatory white middle-class woman had been quietly working her pen across the page of her notebook:

> She raises her head from her work, looks at me and raises her hand. I indicate, "go for it" with my head and pursed lips. She says, "Hey, Marc. I've just done the rough calculations. If my figures are right, we white people have been here on the continent of Australia one-half of one percent of the length of time that there have been humans on this continent."
>
> We are all silent for a while. Someone whistles in a "whoa" kind of way.
>
> She goes on: "That's not much. This society, these societies—the white ones—are very new. Very recent."

It makes you think. It made all of us think. What does it mean to be a "citizen" of this country, this Australian society? Colonizers took it, "discovered" it, "settled it," and now it's theirs, and others (Asians, Africans, Muslims; at least according to a very vocal numeric minority of white Australians) don't belong. Aren't citizens, can't be citizens. Here in Australia, they're put in detention centers and held prisoner; unless you're white and speak English with a particular accent.

As I both live and challenge my privilege, as my students and I attempt to analyze, question, push boundaries around what is citizenship, and who belongs where, I suppose we, too, are attempting to practice what Lisa does, and what Ross and Vinson suggest and encourage (2013). We want to be "dangerous citizens." We want to question, trouble, irritate and co-construct more liberatory forms and understandings of what it means to be members of particular societies—"citizens"—from Atzlán to Freemantle to Footscray to Chihuahua.

Citizen Worker: Mexico, US, Mexico (Luis)

I'm from Mexico, and I live, work, research, teach and attempt to challenge basic notions of belonging and "citizenship" in both "New Mexico" (strange, that) in the US and in various communities and spaces across Mexico.

One day, I was visiting Ciudad Juárez, a large Mexican city along the Mexico/US border, just over the river from El Paso, Texas. After working with some colleagues in the local university, I went to browse in a nearby shopping center, finally sitting down on a bench outside one of the larger department stores. After a time, a man came and sat down on the same

bench next to me, and we started talking. He proceeded to ask for my advice:

> What would you do if you were in my situation? I've been looking for a job, and I have to make an important decision today. I've got two job offers from two different *maquiladoras*. One of these factories provides free lunch on the days I would work, but it's far away from my home, and I'll have to take three buses to get there. It will be expensive paying for six buses every day. The other factory, they will charge me something for the lunch each day, but they have buses that bring the workers from different parts of the city to the *maquila*. What do you think I should do? Which job should I choose?

As the man and I continued to speak, we began talking at deeper levels about his personal economics, and the politics of the *maquiladora* system, whereby huge factories located just within Mexico, across the US border, assemble finished products for the US, and other corporations, from parts built in the States or Asia.

Luis: I think that you already have the answer to that question. Which one of the options would leave you with more money at the end of the week? Would it be less expensive for you to pay for lunch or for six buses on the days that you work?
El Trabajador: Paying for lunch would leave me in a better financial position. You're right. I have the answer.
Luis: Why have you been out looking for work?
El Trabajador: Last week I was fired from my last job.
Luis: How long were you working for them?
El Trabajador: Almost six months.

According to Mexican labor regulations, when a worker labors six months for any company, they acquire the full rights and benefits of any unionized worker, and that has to be recognized by the company. This man was fired before completing that term in order for the company to avoid giving him all the benefits and rights of any other permanent worker. However, the man's view of his own firing was interesting because it showed the ways in which the capitalist system has been successful in manipulating workers to its own neoliberal worldview, which is, of course,

just a more intensified form of capital's own internal logic of perpetually expanding accumulation. As Marx often noted in the mid-nineteenth century, capital's savage internal drive and intent can be compared to the mythical werewolf whose barbarism is always present, waiting dormant beneath the surface of regulations and restraints, always ready to emerge given the proper conditions; that is, deregulation and a weakened organized working class. The naked brutality of neoliberalism is therefore the result of not only a regulated capitalist state, but it also represents the counter-revolutionary agency of the capitalist offensive against the workers' state that were at their height of power in the 1970s.

Luis: What did they tell you to fire you? What explanation did they give you?

El Trabajador: Well, it's in the best interests of the company. Globalization is killing them.

Luis: How's that?

El Trabajador: Look, globalization is forcing companies to be more competitive; to do more with less workers if they want to survive in the market and continue giving jobs to some people and their families. This time it was my turn to be fired, tomorrow other people will be fired, but at least the company will continue functioning.

The words of this man, this worker, this *Maqilaora* citizen, were as clear an example as one could get of how the workers themselves—those that produce the surplus value being stolen by the corporations in charge (the US, Mexican and international owners of these assembly factories)—have internalized the insane (and inane) narrative of the capitalist class; a class that dares to claim itself as a victim of the very project it has created: global, neoliberal capitalism (Dussel Peters, 2006). Do you hear that? Do you feel it under your feet? It's Antonio Gramsci (1973), Pierre Bourdieu (1990), George Orwell (1992 [1949]) and Franz Fanon (1969), turning in their graves. Or maybe their books just vibrated for a bit on the library shelves in the stacks—and on the servers—in our hallowed halls.

We cannot deny that our world, as we knew it, has been changed, seismically shifted along a fault line that is economic and social, and not simply igneous. We witness every day more than a simple change of living conditions for "citizens", or a change of social principles and regulations: we are witnessing a living change in society. As part of this change, all the

ways in which we normally make sense of the world are transformed, forcing us to understand it—the new world, new society—in a totally different way. We are living in a society dominated by a culture of a neoliberal and (further) dehumanized capitalism. This form of capitalism builds itself on human-caused disasters both natural and social, disasters that transform, distort and corrupt individuals, societies and non-human life alike. This "disaster capitalism" (Klein, 2007) was largely born, slowly materialized and then firmly consolidated in the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher told us that there were no alternatives (Mészáros, 1995, 2001). Gradually, and using different strategies and technologies, this (even more) savage form of capitalism socially insinuated itself, establishing alliances among political, economic and religious groups with vested interests in controlling society, accumulating wealth and wielding power (1979, 1999). The ultimate goal here was to extract even more profit from workers' labor without caring for the workers themselves; and, without having a long-range, or even medium-range, plan or outlook toward minimally sustaining workers, resources, or life in general, on the planet (Chomsky, 1999). Your six months are almost up, *Trabajador*. Good luck and Godspeed.

This is a quintessential example of the "citizen worker." Understood hegemonically (Gramsci, 1973), from the perspective of the powerful, this is the "good corporate citizen." He is going from job to job, every six months, making it through the best way he can, calculating the most optimal set of micro-decisions allowed to minimal advantage. Understood counter-hegemonically, from the perspective of the oppressed (Freire, 1973), the case of the *trabajador* might represent a potential for the development of a "critical citizen" capable of—alone and in concert with others—developing a sense of critical consciousness and beginning to act and organize for self- and group-empowerment and positive social change, that is, unionization, activity in social movements, *et cetera*. Put another way, the former is a good example of Westheimer's (2015) "personally responsible" citizen while the latter might be either an example of a "participatory" or "social justice-oriented" citizen.

Concluding Thoughts

Our analyses, based on a critical understanding of social and citizenship education (Cary, 2003; Cary et al., 2015; Pruyn, 2012; Pruyn et al., 2006; Ross & Vinson, 2013), and as explored autoethnographically (Adams

et al., 2014; Boylorn & Orbe, 2013; Holman Jones et al., 2013), seem to indicate that simplified understandings of performative citizenship are the norm in terms of how we are seen and self-identify. Put another way, as migrants (Lisa from Australia to the US to Australia; Marc from the US to Australia; and Luis from Mexico to the US), teacher educators and researchers; in connection to/with our students and members of our communities; and, in drawing on the democracy education research and theorizing of Westheimer and Kahne (2004) and Carr, Zyngier and Pruyn (2012); it seems that the normative practice and understanding of citizenship at play in our societies (from university seminar rooms to offices of immigration to park benches outside of border assembly factories) is more one of "thin" citizenship—following the rules, pressing the "walk" button to cross the street, voting every few years, buying and consuming products—versus "thick" citizenship—engaging with the community, struggling for social change and equity, collectively co/re-constructing social relations of power to be more horizontal and less vertical.

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PART II

Mapping and Remembering Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

CHAPTER 4

Six Sirens and a Broken Oud

Stefan Schutt

Introduction

In July 2014 I flew halfway across the world to attend a family reunion. It's a family I'm part of, but one that was unknown to me before 1997, the year I traced my biological father. The reunion was on land that people have fought over for millennia. These days it's called Israel. It's not the most straightforward place on earth to have a family. In this small sliver at the centre of the world, boundaries—their creation, their defence, their contestation and their transgression—are a serious business. Deadly serious even.

When I say I flew, I mean that I sailed over borders through the air in a sealed metal cabin and onto the tarmac of Ben Gurion airport. A particular place, a particular time: on a plain near Tel Aviv, halfway between the Mediterranean a few kilometres to the west and the 1949 Armistice Agreement Line separating Israel from the West Bank, a few kilometres to the east. And about 60 kilometres to the north of another place where awful things were unfolding as I ate my dinner in the sky, and awful things continued after I touched down.

You can't try to make sense of this place without engaging in exclusion. If you're here, you're not there, nor anywhere else. You may see glimpses

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through gaps in walls, but you can never see anything but fragments. The realities this place holds are divergent, contradictory—and often mutually exclusive. The documentarians I reference know this. In their 2008 book about Palestinian cinema, Gertz and Khleifi point out that it's difficult if not impossible to adequately narrate the complex realities of the Levant. Still, they say, its narrators are compelled to do just that.

I am also compelled, although I know very little, and certainly less than any of them. Still, after having lived in the country for a year of my life and visiting many times since, I am conscious enough to be very nervous about doing this. To write anything will mean to choose one story, one perspective, one edited version, over another. And another. As a visitor I am privileged with freedoms of choice that others don't have. But what to do? Write nothing?

I am compelled. I didn't choose this family. But it's mine nonetheless.

Sirens: A Traveller's Diary

9 July 2014

It's eight in the morning. The sun hovers over the Mediterranean. Our plane crosses from water to land, skirts the hills of the West Bank and turns back towards the central plain, its patchwork of factories, farms and roads drenched in gold and pink.

We touch down. The Israeli passengers clap in the customary manner. Home, for some. As usual it takes some time to get through security. I take my suitcase and walk out to the undercover pickup area. I see palm trees outside (Fig. 4.1).

Then it starts.

https://soundcloud.com/schmozzle/six-sirens-and-a-broken-oud-sirens

A few people start to move inside, the taxi drivers and couriers linger. Above the palms, in the sky, I see two cartoonish puffs of white smoke and a faint white trail. A security man rushes by. *Go, go inside*. What's the matter, I ask? *Missiles*. I drag my bag back into the departure area. The bomb shelter is full and everyone crowds around a hallway near its entrance. People chatter animatedly.

I find out later: that morning the airport was being targeted by Hamas. All up, July 9 saw around 180 missiles fired from Gaza, mostly to little

Fig. 4.1 The view from Ben Gurion Airport waiting area. Photo by author

damage—the two puffs came from the Iron Dome system as it intercepted missiles mid-air. An hour's drive across the border, Israeli bombs were blowing up buildings and killing dozens of people.

A few minutes later, it stops. Everyone goes back outside. Ten minutes later my dad pulls up, a little agitated. He'd been waiting in another pickup area twenty metres away. "Why you wait here and not there?" he says. We embrace and take off. I mention the sirens. "It's the life here, nothing to do," he says, with a wave of his hand, as we drive towards Bat Yam.

10 July 2014

I wake up in my father's little flat. He's staying at his girlfriend's place around the corner. There's a tacky 1960s painting of a nude on the wall and a cowboy hat on the mirror. Through the blinds I can see the Turkish synagogue next door. On Shabbat and holidays, the chants and chatter drift in. I first heard them after I traced my father and came here to live. Here's a photo I took back then (Fig. 4.2).

Fig. 4.2 Looking out of my father's flat at the synagogue next door. Photo by author

Fig. 4.3 The place where my father was born, as it looks today. Photo by author

My father was born in 1936 not far from here, in what was then a single-storey house in the dunes near the beach south of Jaffa. Then the area was called, in Hebrew, Bayit VeGan (בית וגן; House and Garden); the next year it was renamed Bat Yam (בַּת־יָם: Daughter of the Sea). It was the same year the British Mandate of Palestine was rocked by what is popularly known as the "Arab Revolt," an uprising against British rule and rising Jewish immigration and influence (Fig. 4.3).

I've come to Israel to meet 200 descendants of those immigrants. Our family of Spanish and Moroccan Jews first arrived here in the 1880s as part of the initial wave of Zionist migration to Ottoman Palestine. This will be the family's first ever reunion, with Netanels, Attias, Attars and Avrunins booked to fly in from Canada, France, the Caribbean and Africa. There'll even be one from Australia (Fig. 4.4).

It's a sunny morning and I go for a walk. Bat Yam has been given a makeover since I lived here. Its concrete flats are ringed by gardens and playgrounds. Russians sit on benches and play chess. Yemenites, Ethiopians and Sabras walk their dogs. I've become interested in the local apart-

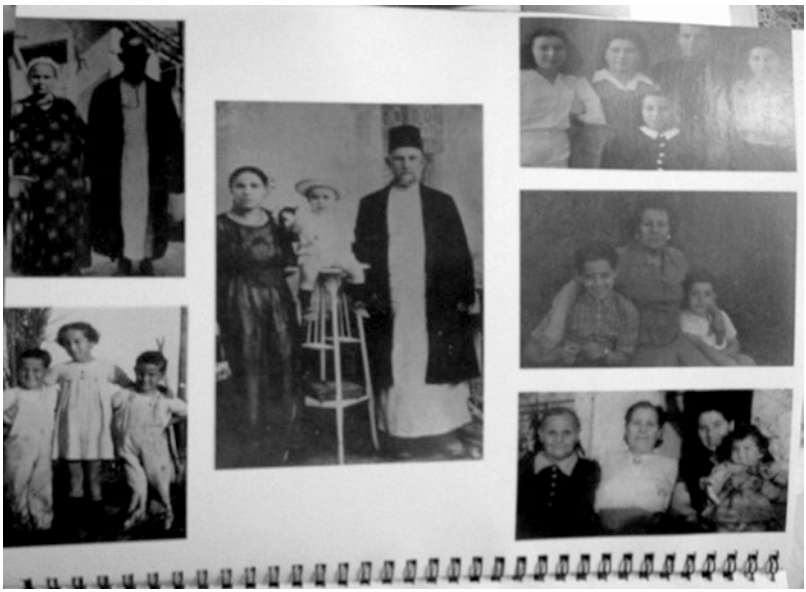

Fig. 4.4 My Israeli family album. Photo by author

ments—the wrought iron balconies, mosaics and breeze blocks—and I take photos along the way (Fig. 4.5).

I turn left from Daniel Street into Rav Uziel. I'm looking up at a first floor balcony when:

https://soundcloud.com/schmozzle/six-sirens-and-a-broken-oud-sirens

People rush towards a courtyard protected by a concrete wall. We stay for a few minutes, then the wailing stops. People pick up where they left off, back into the sunshine.

By now, more Palestinians have died. Nine Israelis have been lightly injured running for shelter and others have been treated for shock.

Later that day my dad, his girlfriend and I drive south east to Kfar Menachem, the kibbutz where my sister's family live. It's a 35-minute drive (halfway to Gaza, I think to myself). The town is rustic and green, surrounded by low rolling hills and fields. I find out later that there used to be a Palestinian village on the kibbutz lands called Idnibba. The village

Fig. 4.5 Bat Yam building. Photo by author

was built, they say, on top of a Roman settlement. It was depopulated during the 1948 war, then demolished by Israel (Fig. 4.6).

Seven kilometres to the east is Kiryat Malakhi, City of Angels, named after Los Angeles and built in 1951 as a tent city for Jewish refugees from Arab countries. That's how the family of my sister's Moroccan husband, Oren, ended up here.

Fig. 4.6 Lands outside Kfar Menachem. Photo by author

We sit outside in the dusk, lights glittering in the low hills around Kfar Menachem. My sister's husband tends the BBQ (Fig. 4.7).

And then:

https://soundcloud.com/schmozzle/six-sirens-and-a-broken-oud-sirens

Everyone stays in their plastic chairs and watches the sky. Talking about the missiles. Some years ago, Oren tells us, turning the steaks, some people in Kiryat Malachi got killed by a missile.

11 July 2014

We drive to Holon cemetery and meet up with a group of French relatives in the car park. The cemetery is massive: countless rows of white stone in the open air, 200,000 of them. We eventually find the grave after much driving, stopping and discussion.

My cousin chants the Yahrzeit prayer for my aunt Margalit. He's washing the grave when:

Fig. 4.7 Dinner at Kfar Menachem. Photo by author

https://soundcloud.com/schmozzle/six-sirens-and-a-broken-oud-sirens

There's no shelter. I guess nobody alive hangs around here for too long. We hear the *boom boom* of the Iron Dome, and see the two puffs in the sky, knocking out the missiles. This time I get a photo, with my dad and cousin in shot too (Fig. 4.8).

Later we drive to Segula, the small moshav, or cooperative farming village, where many of my family still live. The name Segula is Hebrew for a protective charm or ritual. It was founded in 1953 on land belonging to the Palestinian village of Summil. Summil was founded in 1168 by the Crusaders to protect a nearby fortress. In 1948, Summil's residents, all Muslim by then, were evicted. There's only a stone wall and a road left, and a remnant patch of mallow-like plants that the villagers used to grow for food.

Fig. 4.8 Iron Dome puffs at Holon Cemetery. Photo by author

Our family gathering is on the lawn outside the village hall: there are photos, videos, live reminiscences. A hundred of the family have ended up making it; the missiles have kept the other hundred away. It's a lively affair nevertheless, with much singing, laughing and reminiscing (Fig. 4.9).

Fig. 4.9 Family gathering at the moshav. Photo by author

11 July 2014

On Sunday we go back to Segula for lunch. The reunion organiser has created games and quizzes on our family history. There was supposed to be a bus tour, tracing our history through Jaffa, Bat Yam and what is now south Tel Aviv, but it's been cancelled due to the missiles. Instead, amongst the singing, eating, shouting and laughing, we get stories about places and times: the Arab restaurant in Jaffa where my grandfather ate fuul and hummus in the 1920s with the grandfather of the last owner, the migration from Spanish Morocco, the move of my grandparents from Jaffa to the fledgling suburb of Neve Tzedek, the split in World War I and exile to France, the troubles of 1929 and 1936, the 1948 war, the incarceration of my great grandfather by the Jordanians when they took over the Jerusalem Old City, the Zionist youth movements, the Palmach brigades in the war, family businesses, relations and houses.

12 July 2014

The next day is a little quieter. After lunch I'm reading a book in my father's flat when the sirens start, and then, a few seconds later, the boom boom of the Iron Dome, stationed a suburb away. Here's the recording:

https://soundcloud.com/schmozzle/six-sirens-and-a-broken-oud-bat-yam-sirens

I hear people from the other flats rush to the basement. I stay put. Soon it stops. Then I hear the neighbours make fun of the siren sounds: Whoo hoo.

Later that day, my dad has some news. He's finally heard back from the doctor: his stomach operation is scheduled for the day after tomorrow.

14 July 2014

I'm riding pinion on a motorbike with my dad's friend Pini. We're heading to the hospital on the outskirts of Tel Aviv. The waiting room TV has more bad news from Gaza. Next to the TV, a woman in a hijab looks blankly ahead, her toddler in her arms.

My dad is in good hands. The ward matron is formidable but brilliant. She and my dad chat for a few minutes; they're getting on well. "This one, she is Arab," he says as few minutes later, a tone of surprise in his voice. And so too are the teenage orderlies in purple uniforms wheeling trollies into the lift, who stop talking and smile shyly when we enter.

We finish our visit and ride off. Five minutes later we're on a freeway and:

https://soundcloud.com/schmozzle/six-sirens-and-a-broken-oud-sirens

Pini keeps going and so do some other motorists. But as we ride I see just as many calmly park at the shoulders of the freeway, get out and move to gaps between their cars and the embankment. Others have parked their cars under overpasses and bridges. It's eerie, a little like the sirens and the one minute of silence on Yom Ha Shoah, Holocaust Day.

15 July 2014

The next day is my last in Israel. For the past week I've been taking part in a strange kind of life-mapping. I've been tracing a shadow of a life that might have been, had I grown up here given a different turn of events. For my family and their people, however, it's a life that is, a life defined by a

harsher reality than I am capable of fathoming. A bounded reality that is lived in, relived and recreated on a daily basis. It's the life. Nothing to do.

Boundaries and Their Troubling

Lines on the map of the Levant are drawn more definitively by some here than others. This can be seen in snippet of "vox pops" of Israelis found on the Palestine Remix website. Palestine Remix is a project that allows people to pick and order snippets of documentary footage taken by the Al Jazeera media organisation. Like anything from or about this part of the world, the content and the context around its creation, choice and distribution has its own borders drawn around it. You include one thing, and something else is excluded, outside the borders. There are reasons this footage is part of the Palestine Remix site. With that awareness in mind, and the caveat this implies, here is the dialogue:

> Levy: People live a good life in a bubble. They don't want to acknowledge reality. During the recent Israeli war on Gaza, the beaches here were packed while Apache helicopters flew overhead on bombing missions to Gaza. Life went on here. No one bothered to look up and wonder what those helicopters were going to do in Gaza. People sit here and have fun on the beach in Tel Aviv. Meanwhile there are people, only half an hour away, living with no rights whatsoever.
>
> Woman with black hair: We don't want peace though it's a pity soldiers are killed. Who does this person defend? Look how sad he looks. He is ready to fight so we don't have a state. He doesn't deserve to be on TV. Go to Al Jazeera. They will love you there! Woman in red: He represents the Palestinians and Hamas. Not our country.
>
> Blonde woman: This is Israel. Arabs out!

Both certainty and ambiguity are expressed in this short dialogue: a drawing of thick boundaries by some, and a regretful acknowledgment of boundaries by another.

Since I found my Israeli family, my own map of the Levant has become progressively less bounded. These days, I don't know what I think about the place anymore, or where I fit in it, or don't. There are simply too many conflicting truths, and they keep multiplying. My attempts at mapping my shadow life recall the experience of Walter Benjamin, the founder of life mapping, when he tried to map his actual life. His attempts, as Gilloch (2001, p. 74) notes, "produced only that ultimate figure of complexity

and confusion: the labyrinth". Benjamin's actual life, which took place during a time of great upheaval and ended tragically, has been described as a space of fragments (Kochhar-Lindgren, 2008), an assemblage "constituted by a plethora of points" (Gilloch, 2002, p. 20). I observe something like this both in my shadow life and in the country that shadow life revolves around. Israel, and my response to it, can be seen as unresolved works in progress, identities composed of constellations of, in Stuart Hall's resonant words, "unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture" (1990, p. 226).

I don't think I will ever belong in that sliver of land at the centre of the world—but I can opt out as a citizen of a country far removed from its strife. Those whose identities and futures are tied to the nation-state of Israel do not have this luxury. Perhaps they generate boundaries as a way to hold things in, or together. In Hall's words: identity is not "an essence but a *positioning*" (p. 226). In discussing Palestinian filmmaker Elias Suleiman, Gertz and Khleifi (2008) point out that it is harder to create multiplicity at a time of national threat, whilst Bresheeth (2002) states: "the two nations are now mortally locked in a struggle around boundaries, in which the subtext is the struggle of identity. Boundary struggles are always struggles about the self, and its separation from the other" (p. 72).

There are others, however, whose position on Israel is anything but settled or definitive: those who refuse the binaries and embrace ambivalence and liminality. Although the term "liminal" can be critiqued as an overused term, even a cliché at times (Liu, 2012), it has particular resonance when applied to Israel/Palestine. Bresheeth (2002) points out that life in the Israeli-Palestinian zone is profoundly liminal, and that its "border zones of identity" have been the subject of a number of works by Israeli filmmakers who have positioned themselves accordingly. As Victor Turner's foundational work on liminality argues, "it is from the standpoint of this marginal zone that the great artists, writers, and social critics have been able to look past the social forms in order to see society from the outside and to bring in a message from beyond it" (Palmer, 2001, pp. 1–2).

Your standpoint will always determine what you see, or don't. I've found this myself. Nine months before the 2014 family reunion I described earlier, I had visited Israel with my partner. The context that time, however, was very different: it was a holiday. We ate, explored markets, saw friends and family. There were no missiles nor explorations of troubled family history, and the closest we got to experiencing boundaries was

observing hundreds of Palestinians on the Tel Aviv foreshore for the Eid al-Fitr festival, and taking a bus from Haifa to Jerusalem, where we rode alongside the wall separating Israel from the West Bank. Positioned as tourists, far away from overt liminal zones, it was all too easy to exist in an untroubled bubble much like the Israelis described by the Palestine Remix footage. Indeed, I didn't find out until later that under the beachside park where the Palestinians enjoyed their rare visit to the sea is the rubble of a destroyed village called al-Manshiyyah.

This chapter introduces the work of documentarists (filmmakers and writers) of Israel/Palestine whose liminal standpoints have resulted in observations of everyday boundary experience via small, but telling—and sometime devastating—details. My choice has only been conscious in retrospect: these artists' works have spoken to me perhaps because they have mirrored my own process of trying to come to terms with this part of the world.

The documentary *Route 181: Fragments of a Journey in Israel-Palestine* (2004) is a collaboration between two filmmakers: the Jewish-Israeli Eyal Sivan and the Palestinian Michel Khleifi. Named after the 1947 UN Resolution that divided the land, the camera follows the entire 1947 partition line, and the four and half hour film (in three parts) is a record of the paradoxes and complexities that make up the country. The film has not been without its controversies, as evidenced by the French Culture Ministry's 2004 move to censor it. As a reviewer stated: "Viewers meet Israelis and Palestinians of a wide variety of backgrounds and politics. Disillusioned Israeli Jews of Moroccan descent wish they had never emigrated to Israel in the first place, while adolescent Palestinian citizens of Israel, because they are educated with an Israeli curriculum, squabble over whether they are Palestinian or Israeli" (Murphy, 2004, online).

As stated by Keenan and Weizman, "the strength of Route 181 is in … presenting scores of conversations with Israelis and Palestinians, and in unearthing stories repressed for decades. The film powerfully demonstrates Israelis' willing ignorance of and ongoing complicity in the suffering of Palestinians and the denial of their national rights—and, paradoxically, their often remarkable recall of the events of 1948, their former Palestinian neighbors, and the intense proximity of their lost life together" (2007).

When boundaries and identities are asserted, forgetting is imposed, but a residual haunting (Gordon, 2008) remains. *Route 181* traverses the seams of an asserted boundary, both metaphorical and literal, to counter this forgetting, to meet and name the ghosts, and to recover lost respon-

sibility: "to treat the actors in a crime as bearers of the capacity both to witness and [to] reflect on it, and as the ones who have a 'duty of memory'" (Keenan & Weizman, 2007).

In a quirkier but resonant vein is a series of online travelogues by the Israeli writer, musician and tour guide Yuval Ben Ami. Ben Ami conducts tours of Israel for National Geographic Expeditions and writes for +972 Magazine, which is named after the common phone prefix of Palestine/Israel, and which describes itself as "a blog-based web magazine that is jointly owned by a group of journalists, bloggers and photographers whose goal is to provide fresh, original, on-the-ground reporting and analysis of events in Israel and Palestine. Our collective is committed to human rights and freedom of information, and we oppose the occupation". As a self-proclaimed "leftist" publication, +972 has, like other progressive Israeli organisations, been the target of attacks by right-wing Israeli organisations on the basis that it routinely "demonizes" Israel and is guilty of anti-Semitism (Weinthal, 2012).

The series of travelogues known as "Yuval's Journeys" includes "The Round Trip," a series of missives from the country's 1949 borders, and "Lebanons," an "anti-travelogue" described as "an exploration of places unvisited," based on Israelis' inability to visit surrounding countries. As Ben Ami explains on +972, "the only way to enjoy living in this slender, tiny, corral of a country, is to be a border enthusiast" (Ben Ami, 2012, online). His travelogues document everyday absurdities encountered in the border zones, absurdities that point to larger wounds. Using the relatively informal and immediate medium of the magazine blog post to convey his encounters and reactions, Ben Ami's work acts as the kind of reflective witness identified by Eyal Sivan. His latest venture is both whimsical and serious: a series of photos of his leg. He explains it thus: "The body feels different here in Israel/Palestine. It is a land where the notion of peril to the flesh is very much omnipresent. I decided to take my leg on the road and photograph it at places that speak of the body's fragility" (Ben Ami, 2016).

From the other side of the green line, the border experience is different. As Bresheeth points out in his analysis of the work of the Palestinian filmmaker Elias Suleiman, "if much of Israeli cinema deals with the liminality of the process of becoming, it befits Palestinian film to deal with the liminality of loss and disappearance—of country, of the people, of the Self" (2002, p. 74). Bresheeth describes the lockstep dance of Israeli and Palestinian realities as "a cruel dynamic of interchangeability—the Ingathering of the Exiles to Israel, mirrored by the parallel process of the

Nakba, and the spreading waves of Palestinians refugees—millions since 1948—all over the Middle East, and later, further afield … one side's gain is the other side's loss" (p. 72). This "interstitial space between cultures" sees Palestinians "living on the seams of Israeli society" in one sense. In another sense, however: "Jewish settlements are either built on the remains of Arab settlements, or lie between such remains, however difficult to discern. The Hebrew place names are but a smoke screen—in most cases, they hide behind them the Arab former name, like some hidden crime from a dark past". As a result, "all existence in Palestine/Israel is double existence. So there are two virtual countries within the same space, two parallel universes disregarding and disparaging each other, and yet, totally bound to each other" (pp. 82–83). This state of affairs is most visible at the boundaries: "the flashpoints of this struggle become the hundreds of roadblocks and checkpoints—the forced separations of conflicting entities, of identities in conflict" (p. 72).

Gertz and Khleifi, in *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory* (2008), tell of the difficulty of conveying the Palestinian experience where "complex poetical intersections" are "fraught with multiple meanings," resulting in "a narrative that cannot be told yet is recounted nevertheless" (p. 172). As Paul Ricoeur has pointed out, narration is essential to human processes of hermeneutics. We can only make sense of experience through narrative, and we extract meaning from experience by ordering it into storied form and reflecting upon it.

In his film *Divine Intervention*, Suleiman appears as ES, a version of himself who is struggling to write a script in a place where the very idea of narrative is destabilised by everyday absurdity and casual violence. The result is another constellation of fragments. A man in a Santa Claus costume is chased by knife-wielding children through the Nazareth hills. A peach stone tossed out of a car window blows up a tank. A couple from opposite sides of a border make out at the infamous A-Ram checkpoint which divides Jerusalem and the West Bank. A female Ninja in a keffiyeh launches bullets from above her head at a dancing troupe of Israeli police.

Suleiman's works explore the normality of the abnormal (here I am reminded of the visit to my father in hospital) and they defy genre. He calls his work "exilic"; they are inherently liminal and defy easy classification (Bresheeth, 2002, p. 73). Small details have large symbolic import, revealing what is absent, with the Israeli occupation generating, directly or indirectly, absurd outcomes and events (Gertz & Khleifi, 2008). As Bresheeth points out, "Reality is seen here not as the order of things, but

the device undermining reason and logic. In a country where reason is no longer viable, Suleiman uses it as an ironic and deconstructive tool" (pp. 78–79).

In this kind of environment, it is hard to maintain a stable sense of identity. The theme of "the inability to hold on and to shape" a reliable Palestinian narrative (Gertz & Khleifi, 2008, pp. 184–185) occurrs throughout Suleiman's films. Refqa Abu-Remaileh (2015) has called this "narrating negative space." In *Divine Intervention*, this is "the doubled-up reality whereby the Palestinian is there and not there, is present and absent, all at the same time" (Bresheeth, 2002, p. 84). Bresheeth draws a strong connection between this sense of loss of identity and Freud's concepts of melancholia, especially when complicated by ongoing conflict and displacement which frustrates the ability to heal: "Although personalization of Palestinian losses does not absolve Israel of political responsibility, understanding them in terms of melancholy provides new insight into the state of stasis, where resistance is temporarily disabled, delaying the process of mourning and healing" (p. 80).

Here, Bresheeth again emphasises the importance of storytelling, quoting the poet Mahmoud Darwish: "Whoever writes the story (of the place) first owns the place" (p. 80) and stating, "the dispossession brought about by occupation is even deeper and more painful than "just" losing home and country. The ultimate loss is that of losing your story, your identity, losing the right to tell your own story, your own history" (p. 82).

The compulsion to tell the story, to order the fragments into coherent experience, is the compulsion towards reinvention and new life: "In order to have some space to live in, to bring an end to personal and political melancholia, one must employ fiction and imagination, one must tell stories, even stories of disappearance" (p. 85).

The Broken Oud

15 July 2014

On my final day I go to the Jaffa flea market. I see a cheap battered Oud on a blanket on the ground. Its neck is just hanging on. There are other Ouds here but this one is the one I want: worn from being played, orphaned, and far from home. I buy it from the Russian store holder for 100 shekels, or $30. It's of the Syrian type, with ten strings.

To fit it into my suitcase, I have to break its neck completely.

16 July 2014

Now I'm back in Australia, I do my best, in my amateur way, to put the pieces of the Oud back together. Sometimes it's all you can do with the fragments. Stitch them together as best you can. And try to make them sing (Fig. 4.10).

Fig. 4.10 The Oud before the repairs. Photo by author

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CHAPTER 5

Writing Sensation: Critical Autoethnography in Posthumanism

Summer Dickinson

Writing Shame

Toward the end of my doctoral studies, my eating habits became a topic of conversation quite often with fellow classmates as many commented on my eating—or lack thereof—regularly. Two years earlier, I had written an autoethnography, a paper many of my colleagues knew about, which discussed my eating habits, referenced prior events in my life related to destructive behavior, and mentioned my struggle with low self-regard at times. Because of how much I had divulged about my personal choices with eating, the topic was raised every few days in various forms from then on, built out of concern and genuine interest. I welcomed the discussion, at least most the time. I didn't eat in public as much as others—at least not during the program. To my fellow classmates' credit, I had voluntarily chosen the autoethnography topic and been vocal in regard to my reasons, and their concern was polite and quite often justified. After two years, it was as if the autoethnography had invaded my life, moving around my inner circle of friends, becoming the *thing* under the surface

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of conversations and lingering longer than expected. While voluntarily exposing part of self through the writing and experiencing ripples for months afterward, I began to understand what Elspeth Probyn (2010) calls *writing shame*. Not the shame of exposure of self, but the possibility that writing in the manner I had—about affect, about senses, about emotions—was not "equal to the subject being written about."[1] My audience had walked away from my writing thinking the story revolved around staying slender and self-worth. I had failed to engage the reader in the actual story I meant to tell. Most of this was my fault. I had written the autoethnography couched in terms of self-image and self-worth when I really meant the political and sensorial force of food on bodies and social positioning. The writing from two years prior was inspired by the daily mingling of social politics and food consumption and its interaction within and through bodies, including my own; yet it was hidden behind a normative tale of food and body image.

Probyn's idea of writing shame "forces us to reflect continually on the implications of our writing. The insights provided by different kinds of writers will show that writing shame is a visceral reminder to be true to interest, to be honest about why or how certain things are of interest" (Probyn, 2010, p. 73). Where was the story, then? What had I failed to tell the first time? When I consider the question, I remember back to a department meeting in my first teaching job, which had provided the faculty with dinner—cheese pizza and some sort of soda—and where I could not ignore the post-dinner bloating while discussing program curriculum. Glancing at my colleagues, I wondered if others had the same post-eating sensations and, more importantly, was there anyone else who felt distracted by it with a sudden urge to hide within the meeting?

Catherine Malabou believes, "My body is a token of my own immediate worldly presence; it presents to the mind what Husserl calls hyletic data (the body's perceptual, sensory content, like touch, look, voice, kinaesthesia). In this way, the body becomes the worldly presence of an intentional subject's mental life."[2] I go back to that department meeting where the sense of overeating pizza and collectively discussing program agenda forced me to consider my body individually and yet wonder about the phenomena of the moment. For Malabou, "[s]ensation means that the thing reveals itself in the flesh and stands there before our eyes as something given to itself and in actuality" (Malabou, 2015, pp. 13–14). How do I write what I'm sensing without reducing the story to an

individual description of body? Stacy Holman Jones' (2016) call for critical autoethnography suggests:

> Theory asks about and explains the nuances of an experience and the happenings of a culture; story is the mechanism for illustrating and embodying these nuances and happenings. Because theory and story exist in a mutually influential relationship, theory is not an add-on to story. We cannot write our stories and then begin the search for a theory to "fit" them, outside of cultures and politics and contexts. Instead, theory is a language for thinking with and through, asking questions about, and acting on—the experiences and happenings in our stories. (p. 229)

Theory provides me with a way to tell the story I should have told the first time and now have a chance to tell over again: to exhibit Foucault's idea of displacing and disassembling the self into the social rather than reveal the inner self in my story.[3]

Sensing Posthuman Theory (in)Story

Through a cultural lens, food ethics, food/identity, and food studies provide historical and contextual accounts of the interaction and connection of food within social aspects. The cultural politics of food shows how food is used to make sense of life while mapping the social aspects of food production and consumption (Watson & Caldwell, 2005). However, my story yields itself to the language of Davide Panagia's (2010) theories regarding the political life of sensation, in which he argues that sensation, in fact, drives perception, political power, and positionality. Weaved through are John Dewey's writings on art as experience and Immanuel Kant's writings of aesthetics with multiple object-oriented philosophies. Focusing mainly through an aesthetic-political lens, the story begins in what Panagia (2010) calls "moments of interruption" where sensation disrupts common sense (pp. 2–4). These moments challenge my construction of the sensations revolving through the space connected to the present moment and throw off pre-conceived understandings of what is and will take place at a given time, allowing for an open space of experience. Panagia notes that people live their lives with an understanding of continuous continuity; yet sensation can break down those moments and interrupt thoughts, emotions, and assurances (Pangia, 2010, pp. 2–4). That is the theory where this story begins, and I'm reminded that "[p]

erhaps the best we can do as critics or as theorists is to toggle back and forth between sensation and criticism or theory" (Hawhee, 2015).[4]

Not Just a Cookie

Throughout the second year of graduate school, I had become a bit more comfortable in my own skin. Averaging a size smaller than the year before, my daily routine was fairly healthy. Yes, I still counted calories daily and balanced writing with my gym pass. In contrast to my undergraduate years, I was proud of being an average-petite weight. I ate regularly—a task I didn't always accomplish in my younger years when I took quite drastic measures to avoid eating. I had arrived at my early thirties hopeful. My self-regard just a decade before had bordered meek. However, feeling uncomfortable with consuming food publicly continued to be a residual side effect of the disordered eating in years past. After being with my doctoral cohort for the second year, I learned to relax a bit. I consumed food at dinner gatherings and in front of friends—something which took great effort still. In the late summer session of a particularly busy month, I spent the evening enjoying the company of a few cohort members and one guest from a different program at the same university. We ate. We laughed. The evening had become a place of safety surrounded by trusting friends. The visiting guest—whom I knew only a bit—sat next to me. The night had been enjoyable, and with that I relaxed about my eating even more. I reached over and grabbed an Oreo—the first cookie I had consumed for weeks as I generally avoided such things. As the Oreo touched my lips, the guy visiting our home cracked a joke, "Boy, Summer sure likes Oreos."

Theory (in)Story

I heard his words in my bones.

I wonder if the story should be told through the politics of affect or affective dissidences or a physical mode of engagement with the world through my body's interrelatedness with the meaning of his offhand comment. Panagia (2010), following the philosophy of Jacques Ranciere, suggests that individuals perceive the world based on what a person senses (pp. 4–6). We perceive based on the sensation created, interpreted, and/or experienced; yet what is being sensed is shifted by other sensing. In essence, that oreo tasted different after I heard his comment. My mouth had a visceral reaction. Panagia uses the term *organoleptic correspondence*, which means the connection, interaction, and negotiation between per-

ception and the significance of the event (2010, p. 3). What was my organoleptic correspondence? In short, this guy's a jerk. Said better, his flippant commentary on my food consumption at that moment triggered a sensation-inspired narrative in my mind, suggesting I put down the food and reconsider what I was eating. The senses being part of the political moment tied to his language and the food entangled in the moment.

Karen Barad (2003) considers that bodies and matter are given the potential to affect through "iterative intra-activity of the world in its becoming" (p. 83). To Barad, "intra-actions are constraining but not determining. That is, intra-activity is neither a matter of strict determinism nor unconstrained freedom."[5] While it is difficult to be retrospective as to the effect of a sensation as the sensation is occurring, the awareness that the sensation has an affect is essential and could provide an understanding in itself. Politically speaking, the Oreo guy's comment had a greater and more powerful affect as I sensed the food in my mouth. The affect created by his words gained momentum because my senses absorbed the meaning of his comments at the same time as my mind. Dewey (1934, 2009) reminds us that "thinking is often regarded as something cut off from experience, and capable of being cultivated in isolation" (p. 84). In essence, "experience is then thought to be confined to the senses and appetites; to a mere material world, while thinking proceeds from a higher faculty (of reason), and is occupied with spiritual or at least literary things" (Dewey, 1934, 2009, p. 84). Yet, thinking about and sensing that Oreo while hearing the language used and feeling the space I was in suggests that sensation, space, and thought are interlinked and interactive with each other. The cookie, the comment, the taste, the tone, and the darker thoughts of mine that followed is a complex, interwoven system of elements constantly in flux and complicated by the elements which enter my world before, after, and during that moment.

Almost Sweet

After that cookie moment, I walked to the lecture hall with a sweet lady from my circle of friends. In a rather affectionate manner she said, "It's not always about food you know." I felt her concern and tried to politely say, "For you it isn't." In Panagia's (2010) construct of sensation, he asserts "sensation interrupts common sense" and sensory experience affects the perception of a space and interaction (pp. 2–4). While sensations, at times, may be rather temporal, a series of temporal moments within a condensed timeframe can, in turn, create moments when agency,

autonomy, and awareness are questioned, affected, and interrupted. Panagia (2010) calls these "moments of interruption," which challenge a person's prior construction of what is unfolding in the present moment and throw off pre-conceived understandings of what is and will take place at a given time (pp. 2–4). Was I thrown off by the Oreo comment? Or was I more thrown off by a sweet friend suggesting that I think too much about something I shouldn't?

For Panagia, these moments interrupt assurance and distract our train of thoughts. I wonder if saying, "for you it's not" created a moment of interruption that allowed for levels of disjuncture and enhanced the subjectivity within myself or the listener. Panagia (2010) says, "moments of sensation punctuate our everyday existence, and in doing so, they puncture our received wisdom and common modes of sensing" (p. 3). To Dewey (1934/2009), the unconscious influence of our surroundings is "so subtle and pervasive that it affects every fiber of character and mind" (p. 13). At that moment, everything my voice was and is added to that woman's unconscious absorption of what I was saying. My mind could only be communicated through creating a sensational moment which punctuated her systematic way of knowing the world which she had accepted and suggests that my being and sensing is my thinking.

Post-Phenomenological Perspective

Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (2010) claim that as soon as materiality is considered:

> [w]e seem to distance ourselves from it, and within the space that opens up, a host of immaterial things seems to emerge: language, consciousness, subjectivity, agency, mind, soul; also imagination, emotions, values, meaning, and so on. These have typically been presented as idealities fundamentally different from matter and valorized as superior to the baser desires of biological material or the inertia of physical stuff. (p. 24)

I keep going back to that Oreo. That Oreo mattered. How much it matters and to what degree it matters is the messy part. What is really the *object* in my story? If I distance myself from that Oreo as being materially part of myself, I easily slip into emotive response, perception of self, the signification and representation of that Oreo. What if I said that Oreo was a material inviting attention upon itself?[6] Thomas Rickert (2013) and Jane Bennett (2005) establish that agency is frustrated and unstable and it is

not just the way we talk about objects that give them agency. We give attention to objects and acknowledge their agency (Latour, 2005).

A posthuman(ist) approach questions the focus on human as central. In response, frameworks which suggest that nonhuman elements should not only be acknowledged but recognized for their agency and power have gained considerable momentum: Barad (2003), Latour (2005), and Bennett (2009). Under the umbrella term of New Materialism, these frameworks bring particular attention to nonhuman objects as participants (Fowler & Harris, 2015; Jordan, 2015; Keane, 2003; Lemke, 2015). For many posthuman philosophies, materials and things do *act*. For example, Latour's object-oriented rhetoric considers objects/things as doing rhetoric work. Rather than simply apply object-oriented ontologies to the way objects are situated or talked about in my story, I hope to question how my story involving an object can question the idea of how bodily perception is blurred by our senses.

Authors Coole and Frost (2010) note, "At every turn we encounter physical objects fashioned by human design and endure natural forces who imperatives structure our daily routines for survival." (p. 1). Is there a separation of how materials are viewed in our daily lives and how we discuss those materials in our autoethnographic writing? More importantly, can the objects within our writing—the texts we create and the stories we rely on to create them—be a place to explore the discursive materials within the stories themselves?

In Autoethnography, We Landscape

Jacqueline Royster (2003) states:

> What we choose to showcase depends materially on where on the landscape we stand and what we have in mind. The imperative is to recognize that the process of showcasing space is an interpretive one, one that acknowledges a view and often re-scopes that view in light of aesthetic-sensibilities-values, preferences, beliefs. We landscape. (p. 148)

Royster's landscaping metaphor—regarding the types of knowledge disciplines highlight—tells us something, I believe, about the human condition in stories. The metaphor suggests that individuals—writers, students, teachers, autoethnographers—landscape stories, narratives, and writing itself. What writers choose to focus upon creates the landscape they enact

in their writing. Coole and Frost (2010), in their new materialism critique, suggest that "foregrounding material factors and reconfiguring our very understanding of matter are prerequisites for any plausible account of coexistence and its conditions in the twenty-first century" (p. 2). If that's the case, then should we be foregrounding the material factors in our writing and reconfiguring our understanding of the matter embedded in the stories we produce and with the objects within them?

Borrowing Bruno Latour's term *actants*, Bennett describes the quasi-agency of non-human materials. In her *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett (2009) suggests that "What is also needed is a cultivated, patient, sensory attentiveness to nonhuman forces operating outside and inside the human body" (p. xiv). It seems plausible that the place for such a sensory attentiveness begins in the writing created for our stories. Yet an attentiveness to such nonhuman forces has potential to demystify our understanding of human power. That's the point Bennett makes when saying "[demystification] presumes that at the heart of any event or process lies a human agency that has illicitly been projected into things. This hermeneutics of suspicion calls for theorists to be on high alert for signs of the secret truth (a human will to power) below the false appearance of nonhuman agency" (p. xiv). Bennett (2009) and Coole and Frost (2010) raise questions for me as I consider objects in autoethnography, including the Oreo within my own narrative. Do we allow the material detail within our stories to challenge the idea of details as fixed and allow for material discursiveness to use objects to show life, become life, or become alive? In exploring these questions, I believe objects can become the thing that challenges us to explain the assemblages of life.

First, writers rely on objects to serve roles in writing. Embedded in our narratives and weaved throughout our stories, objects can provoke, provide context, signal metaphor, become symbolic to those reading them. In his controversial book, Alan Watts, author of *Does it Matter? Essays on Man's Relation to Materiality* (2010) suggests that the problem is "we confuse the marvelous facility of description with what actually goes on, the world as labeled and classified with the world as it is" (p. x). Even if a writer selects a material which signifies the exact perception or aesthetic sensation intended, the reader may confuse the description of the object with what the object actually is intended to mean. What does this mean for our own stories we tell? Do we describe object and place based on the sensorial reaction we hope to invoke rather than actual physical descriptors? Watts argues that individuals "need to be liberated and dehypnotized

from their systems of symbolism and, thereby, become more intensely aware of the living vibrations of the real world." (Watts, 2010, p. xii). To Watts, readers fall prey to the description rather than the sensations the object creates. Are readers aware of the vibrations within a narrative text that lead to their perceptual meaning making? To some, not all objects carry a social/cultural meaning within the writing we see in our courses. In considering this, I'm drawn to the concept of discursive sprawl—objects that are relocated and repurposed beyond the boundaries of what those objects generally represent—which teaches us that materials in writing can generate the open space Coole and Frost (2010) discuss.

Material and Object as Sensorial Judgments

For non-representational materials in stories within autoethnography, I turn to *Ambient Rhetoric*. Rickert's ambience—the material environment, our embodiment, and various ecological pieces—refers to the role of the material environment in interactions. His Spanish and French cave art examples demonstrate how, even the earliest visual artwork is, in fact, multisensory. Archeology has found that the creators of these paintings selected their location for the auditory sensory that is experienced when standing in front of them. In this case, the sensorial elements experienced delimit the experience to visual only. Painters choosing location based on the multiple sense experiences suggests that the creators of the first visual artwork made clear, specific choices regarding the sensorial elements of experience. For Rickert (2013), the concept of ambience also questions Heidegger's concept of "wakefulness." In other words, what is recognized, or even perceived, contributes to how ambience is acknowledged.[7] To reference Rickert's example, if the paintings aren't considered paintings or if the position of the paintings is ignored, then the recognition of sound as part of the experience is lost. If a nonhuman object is considered less than its human counterpart, then the experience from the autoethnography could be lost. Meaning, it's important to know, see, and acknowledge the Oreo. Rickert (2013) further states:

> [N]ot until we attend to other sensory registers and forms of intelligibility can a richer understanding emerge. When we do so, we can understand the sounds and sights […] immerse us in a multisensory, spatial environment, one pulsing with strong affective and persuasive forces that inflect but also extend beyond our cognitive focus. (p. 138)

I suggest that not only are human decentering, object recognition, and sensorial intelligence needed for Rickert's call but we must realign to what constitutes object experience and rediscover experiences with materials in story beyond the boundaries which previously entangled them: to write within sensation; to know not only what the Oreo signifies but the circulation of the Oreo within the social world.

Sensational Narratocracy

Rickert (2013) suggests that "ambient rhetoric organizes an experience, not so much to persuade in any direct sense, but to attune and inflect our sense of bodily inhabitance and the cradle of intelligibility within which we comport ourselves" (p. 138). I turn now to the idea of sensational narratocracy, which concerns itself with the prevailing concept of narrative privilege but not the type of privilege associated with race/economics/social class: the "privileging of narrative as a genre for the exposition of claims and ideas in contemporary political thought," which Panagia (2010) calls narratocracy (p. 12). In other words, narratocracy is used as a primary method for analyzing sensations. This, as Panagia reminds us, is how we make things readable: how events become communicable to those not invested in the political phenomena in which they are described. Through the narrative, we organize perception in order to communicate the experience to another. Writers categorize, order, highlight, preference, and put pieces in an order to pass along what is understood to come from our sensations and/or sensory moments. Narratocracy becomes the *standard* for communicating experience. What makes this questionable for some? Communicating an account of a perceptual experience leads humanity to connect to each other through the act of reading someone else's account. Yet, when perceptual understanding shifts further away from the sensorial moments between individual(s), signifier, and meaning, we must ask the shift's effect. We already understand that choices in writing stories matter. Yet, even on a subconscious level, the misinterpretation that can occur and the perceptual understanding of particular moments is an unavoidable end it seems when using materials in writing. As Panagia (2010) claims, "Narratocracy commits vision to readerly sight while partitioning the body into specific areas of sensory competency" (p. 12). Ways of *corresponding* perception and what counts as a subject of perception are tied to our ability and methods of extracting experience into the structures of communication.

(in/being) Posthumanist

To reconcile Panagia, acknowledging various kinds of materiality—*actants*, such as breath or air—as conditions and agential forces allows for a material-discursive writing practice that considers a focus on forces—sensations, vibrations, breathing—as agents in the story process. Enacting such a practice suggests posthumanism—in its various frameworks—as an autoethnographic practice highlighting flows of relation, forces, and energies of materials, allowing us to give "materiality its due while recognizing its plural dimensions and its complex modes of appearing" (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 27).

Object Sensory Autoethnography

As theory provides the language of my story, I do question how equipped I am to access the senses intertwined with perception, which so easily distracts me. As body-based phenomenology opens access to sensations, my own pursuit of understanding my sensations blurs my capacity to feel my body for what occurs within and through it. Yet theory moves throughout and inside of the story, creating a whirlpool of rhetorical energy. In accounting for the objects within the story, I do not privilege myself or instrumentalize the everyday objects which shift and shape the telling of the story. I seek to account for materials, not simply to trace the phenomena of material ontology, but to suggest that the space of critical autoethnography enables the authenticity of the stories we tell about the objects in our lives. Pursuing object sensory autoethnography does not hope to capture the specific sense of an object unattached to the story. Rather, describing the interaction with the object with myself "can represent numerous sensorial experiences including the five western senses as well as sensorial experiences that are less commonly acknowledged" (Pink, 2011). The objects in our stories are not tools, representations of self, but "vibrant agents of measurable power" (Cooper et al., 2016). The world is bloated full of fluctuating elements—objects, language, thoughts, sensations—which dwell with us, budge us, and labor alongside us and with rhetorical intent. Capturing this world requires not just attention or surveillance of objects but attunement, an attunement which flattens the divide between human and all other elements.

Notes

1. Probyn (2010, p. 72): "There is a shame in being highly interested in something and unable to convey it to others, to evoke the same degree of interest in them and to convince them that it is warranted. The risk of writing is always that you will fail to interest or engage readers. Disappointment in yourself looms large when you can't quite get the words right or get the argument across. Simply put, it's the challenge of making the writing equal to the subject being written about."
2. Malabou's foreword in "Plastic Bodies" introduces Sparrow's ideas of beyond phenomenology (2015, p. 13).
3. See Gannon (2006).
4. Hawhee (2015) writes that "Rhetoric's Sensorium" discusses how the term sensation has been discussed within a specific journal; however, her declarative statement here provides insight related to my own ideas.
5. Barad (2003) writes, "intra-actions are constraining but not determining. That is, intra-activity is neither a matter of strict determinism nor unconstrained freedom. The future is radically open at every turn" (p. 826).
6. See Maryland Cooper on *active mediators.*
7. Rickert (2013) writes, "Staying with this insight, which itself requires an attunement, we can see that rhetoric construed from an ambient perspective cannot simply dissolve the subject/object and human/world binaries without taking the necessary next step of acknowledging that rhetoric's work is distributed and ecological and wholly incorporating that idea into rhetorical theory. Rhetoric is not solely human doing, as Bruno Latour, Jane Bennett, and other theorists help demonstrate. Nonhuman elements and forces are always in play as part of human doing, making, and saying. The accomplishments of rhetorical practice are entwined with (re) organizations of the world. Further, my claim that an ambient rhetoric is worldly encompasses more than the idea, deployed by Heidegger, Burke, and numerous others, that world is the world of meaning. It is that, but world, including meaning and involvement, is neither imposed, assigned, nor extracted exclusively by the efforts of human beings" (p. 121).

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CHAPTER 6

Mind and Matter: (Re)membering, Performing, and Being

Julianna Kirschner

Note: "Hello, My Name is _____"

I feel as though my memory is fleeting, that somehow my mind will dissolve while I still occupy this body. I am not afraid of dying; I am afraid of forgetting. I remember a lot of things, though. I remember the sound my mother makes when she laughs, the high pitch that resounds in the space she is in. Her laughter is more of a chirp which many mistake for a bird, without any intention of being funny. "What was that? Is a bird trapped in the room?" my sister, Jessica, asks.

I remember these things, because they represent life writing itself. I remember the stories you tell me; I will look at you long enough to see the halo effect of my vision. I will remember that you played football in the house, and that is how you earned the scar I love so much. I will remember the uncontainable laughter we have with your mother and sister; the belly laughs that seem to come out of nowhere. I will not forget the look of pure joy on your sister's face.

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Like H.L. Goodall, Jr. (2009), I choose to write, and I am trying each day to work toward his confidence and clarity:

> I assert myself, even my most vulnerable self, boldly. Always in the first person singular. I do not often hedge my claims with false modesty or self-doubt.
>
> I like short sentences. Like Hemingway: "The beer was cold." But I am not averse to writing very long ones. Like Faulkner. Or like I imagine Faulkner. (p. 68)

Goodall embodies the knowledge that comes with one's experiences and interpretations of others. I/We perform to seek understanding. I/We write performatively to sustain ourselves.

Note: Autoethnography and Voice Duality

I write to remember for myself and others. I feel that autoethnography is more of the ethno rather than simply the auto. I am not myself in isolation; I only know who I am through you and our mutual storytelling. Tami Spry (2013) writes of a similar experience:

> The embodied interplay and engagement between human beings is the essence of performance in and as communication. It is why we live experience directly and study it performatively within the matrix of communicating knowledge. (p. 201)

Like Spry, the goal of maintaining memory is an ongoing process for me; I am consistently recording my life both for my own preservation and nostalgic pleasure.

Writing itself is a performative act; I write on sticky notes to provide a window into an idea. It is a place of movement and transition that allows me to remember that which is no longer of this world. It reminds me to live when I am in the fog of schedules, time, and obligation.

I am reminded to live by recording life.

I speak of my scattered thoughts not to imply chaos, but to create consistency in my experience. Like both Geertz (1988) and Spry (2001), these thoughts are both *here* and *there*, all at the same time.

Note: A Postcard of Memorability

I recreate my childhood to stay connected to the girl with big dreams. She is me, and I am her. I remember her better in the stories I tell; she is curious and optimistic.

She lives in the trench that my father built to begin the foundation of a brick wall surrounding my parents' property. She stops all construction for an impromptu dance party, and she is surprised by her business-oriented father's compliance. She dives in even when the prospect of failure is a threatening cloud in the sky.

She lives in the garage where she tinkers with cars. She knows the exact part needed to complete the job, but she cannot name it. She is not daunted by this limitation, and she proceeds anyway. She lives in the tight space under her bed, where she feels comfortably surrounded. An introvert at heart, she seeks this quiet refuge to recharge.

She/I emerge(s) as her idiosyncrasies are brought to the fore. We are inseparable; however, I am *here*, and she is *there*.

Note: Life is Improvisation

I perform through writing down ideas, from the mundane to the profound. Goodall (2009) suggests the importance of knowing when to write and how to do it:

> I love single sentence paragraphs.
> If I use a long paragraph, I am speaking in a rush and trying to get in all the details like they are occurring right now and this moment is immediate and there is no way I can get it all in if I break it up because I'll have to pause to take a breath when I change to a new paragraph.
> Hey, in that last paragraph, I was just warming up to long. (p. 68)

My writing often occurs in the shortened form before it reaches the kind of verbosity where it will inevitably find itself. I write my "single sentence paragraphs" on mobile notes, because the physical flexibility of words allows me to find the right angle through which I speak. Then, I write with a fury that makes my inner grammarian uncomfortable, because mistakes run rampant, and words I certainly know how to spell suddenly become a mystery to me. On the other hand, it is also freeing in a reverse sense. I write without boundaries, and I post these musings in various corners of my house: On the computer monitor, on the front door, on the

mirror in the bathroom, inside a book I am currently reading. They are all there as a means to halt ephemerality, to become frozen in time.

To remain *here*, regardless of the limitations of life and presence.

Note: So I Won't Forget

Every summer, two of my nieces stay with us for a week. It is an annual ritual that we have been practicing for the last few years. In the first instance, my niece Madison comes into my home with an astonished look on her face. "What are these?" she asks, as she points to a series of sticky notes on the cabinet. "They are there, so I won't forget," I respond. Madison nods her head in full recognition. Even at seven years old, she appears to understand my desire to remember, to be placed back in this moment by reading one small reminder. Later during her visit, I print out a coloring sheet with her name, and she draws on it. Her art, as well as her sister Samantha's, has now joined the collection of reminders.

My sister, Jessica, gives birth to a third daughter on April 26, 2015. My youngest niece is named Paige Elizabeth, the middle name serving as an homage to my late grandmother. She has been born into a world without her namesake in it, a truth that is difficult for my 85-year-old grandfather to understand. My maternal grandfather has been through war, but the loss of his life partner marks him more than anything else. They were together since they were 19. "My wife," he says with a sheen of sadness.

"My wife,
My *wife*."

Paige is coming into a much different world.

Note: "Death Ends a Life, but Not a Relationship" (Albom, 2002, p. 174)

Unlike her older sisters, Paige will have no recollection of my father, who passed away almost six years prior to her birth. She won't know his laughter or the goofy jokes he would tell. I hope she does know that humor can help in the darkest of moments, but only if one is ready for it. Once again, Goodall (2009) understands where I am coming from:

> I think Kenneth Burke is right when he says that when facing down a crisis of any kind, there are really only two responses: comedy or tragedy. And only comedy offers hope or a way out of it. I like finding ways out of it. (p. 68)

Staying in the storm waters down resources, for better and for worse.

Note: He Laughs Because That is All There is

Like Goodall (2009), I write to "find ways out of it" (p. 68). Writing in pieces allows me to see the whole picture, to understand where I have been in order to understand where I am. Although I never met Goodall, I am able to follow his journey, his struggles, and his lessons. I learn through and with him in his writing. I feel a connection to him and the community of which he was a part as I read his work. Although he is now in a place where my father and grandmother reside, wherever that may be, his writing allows him to be ever present and material in ways that his body no longer can be.

I am at the National Communication Association Convention in Orlando, Florida. Goodall has recently left this world, and I join his colleagues in mourning. The loss permeates the room, and he is there.

Not *here*,

but *there*.

Note: Life is Ephemeral

As I write to remember myself, the preservation of those before me is a concurrent practice. I speak like my father. I speak firmly, but with the care of a person who has been *there* (Geertz, 1988). I laugh with the intensity of a windstorm,

a fleeting memory of something my father said,
his ill-timed jokes that were funny anyway,
his preservation was laughter,
and he remains suspended in memory this way.

I take myself there when I need to, when my life depends on it. In the weeks and months passing my father's departure from this world, I collect sayings, euphemisms, metaphors, and punch lines my father once shared on repeat.

"I wouldn't have that if I could have a boxcar full of them,"
he says jokingly to mock the frivolous requests of my younger self.
My mother echoes, "But is it what you always wanted? *Is it?*"
She tilts her head and laughs; she is right.
A six-year-old can only have so many stuffed animals.

Jessica smiles when I reminisce with her and share this story. She arches her eyebrow as she lifts up my niece, Paige, onto her hip for more support. She says in a sing-song voice,

"Dually, dually, you're gonna wait."

Among my many nicknames is Dually, the name for an oversize truck used in large construction jobs. Given its phonetic similarity to another nickname—Julie—Dually refers to my need to constantly move, to always perform at a fast pace. Jessica reminds me of this with just a smile on her face, despite the fact that she is equally as driven. Pun intended.

Note: Life is Improvisation

I write to remember, and I read to discover what should not be forgotten. Writing through Post-it notes allows me to live and write in the moment—*here*—to speak with Jessica and narrate the sound of wisdom in her voice. Jessica and I work in the same fashion as my father; we work until the late hours, until our hands bleed and crack, in order to stay *here*.

Geertz (1988) speaks of our duality in a meaningful sense; we are moving back and forth until we cannot move anymore. The destination approaches, but we are always reverting back. It is a delicate dance of a state of understanding that slips back into explanation (Ricoeur, 1981). The journey allows us to continue living, even after we have reached the city limits.

The melodic sound of my mother's laughter brings me *here*, as well as the sparkle in her eyes when she sees me after a long absence. In this process, I memorialize the laughter, the smiles, and the embraces without separating them from the trembling grief that came before it.

Note: Praxis, To What Do I Owe the Pleasure?

Memory work is so important and vital to the practice of autoethnography. It shares the cultural history of a person and a community.

I am not myself when I am separate from you;
I merely exist.

Benjamin (1969) suggests that storytelling is the means through which we extend experience. The storyteller recounts personal, lived experience,

whether it is one's own or that of another. "And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale," explains Benjamin (1969, p. 87). Having experienced the act of storytelling, the listeners carry pieces of it with them. Our communication is what makes us human. Our writing should and must be in tandem, because we might become separate without it.

I remember asking my father about the backstory behind his many sayings, and in one instance, I was met with laughter.

"I don't know," he says,
"I probably made them up.
I don't remember."

In a few cases, he could recall specific instances where his axioms originated, and much of these stories occurred during childhood. I carry the experiences of a child going to school in the 1950s, because I have listened to his stories and indirectly shared his experiences. I remember an experience I never had, because of the gift of stories.

"I wouldn't have that if I could have a boxcar full of them."

My paternal grandfather passed away before I was born, and he would often relate the overabundance of unnecessary material goods with the size of a train car. I carry him with me via my own father's stories. When I eat apples, I recall the story my father shared of how much his own dad believed in the power of apples to "keep the doctor away." When my brother, Joey, smiles, he looks exactly like my paternal grandfather in pictures. I remember a grandfather I never met.

Note: Memory on Repeat

We are always in a process of remembrance; a place of reestablishing where we are in the here and now. Although we all exist to some degree *here* and *there*, storytelling keeps me/us present and alive in the moment. I will remember the day we entered into a new house, and claimed it as our own. I sit on the carpet of an empty room, and I watch as your frustration melts away. It is easy to get caught up in the minutiae, but to remember how far you have come is a far greater task. You smile, and you tell me that you are uncomfortable with the silence. You have never lived in a place this

quiet before. You smile widely, and look out the window at the cloudless sky outside. You are most certainly *here*.

That day repeats every morning I wake up, and I am always in the process of reimagining that day in each one that follows it. We will share this space with others, and they may be physically here, or they will live in the stories that we tell within these walls. Everyone is invited.

I will continue to live these stories, one written reminder at a time.

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PART III

Embodying Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

CHAPTER 7

Mother-Poems: Using the Confessional as Critique in Autoethnographic Poetry

Sandra L. Faulkner

Two-Hour Delay[1]
My daughter commands me
to stop, to play CandyLand

to close the computer, pay attention,
skip email and skip with our pretend

pieces of cookie around the block
with the dog and her scooter.

We move around an edible world
from the gooey molasses swamp on Grove Street

to the swirled cinnamon camp behind the library
to the fairy land of lollipops in our backyard.

Hungry for time and fun,
we write notes to the Goblins

that keep our space and ask
how they like the fog

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and the day's delay
and cookies for breakfast?

The use of confessional poetry in critical autoethnographic work provides a method for (re)presentation, analysis, and critique of taken-for-granted social structures that disempower and fracture fully embodied ways of being. Through the use of confessional poetry, poets, researchers, and practitioners can illustrate and challenge the false binary between private and public, body and mind (Baxter, 2011). Confessional poetry is that of the personal/I, the autobiograhical, the confessional tale for the (auto)ethnographers (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). This focus on the self means some critics label confessional poetry as narcissistic, feminine, trivial, and sensational; just as some critics have labeled autoethnography in similar ways (see Gingrich-Philbrook, 2005; Sontag & Graham, 2001). I argue that critical autoethnographers can use these labels and critiques of personal poetry and ethnography to "embrace a larger social vision, achieving revelation over narcissism, universal resonance over self-referential anecdote" (Graham & Sontag, 2001, p. 6).

Middle-Aged Mothering: A Found Poem
keep them busy keep them busy
summer cheering the labor situation

steam shovel your forty-fifth year
fewer failures time limit

do some waterworks making money
making money the bureau voted to secure

standards secure others will likely follow
traction heavy teams three-track spur

making dirt fly large plants
heavy rock, do some waterworks

cheering your forty-fifth year

[Sources: The American stationer and office outfitter. v. 86 (Jan.–July 1920); The Earth mover. v. 4-5 (Sept. 1917–Feb. 1919)]

Autoethnographers can use confessional poetry as a way to ask the audience see and feel what they do (Pelias, 2005). This is especially appealing to me as the mother of a young child, a mother who also happens to be a poet, academic, and partner who writes poetry about motherhood,

mother-work, and her child. My poetry critiques notions of *mother* being the most important and self-abnegating role for a woman. For instance, Joy Katz (2013) writes in *Baby Poetics*:

> A baby has turned up in a poem I am writing. Fear the world enclosing it: too easy to inhabit, too pretty, too comfy, too female, too married, too straight. A poem with a baby in it is automatically possibly all of these things, no matter what I am in my life as a person. (Para. 3)
>
> Fear the weight of the baby and the house together, ready to crush me at my desk. Suddenly, where before I would be writing words or lines or working with dialogue or diction or a set of constraints or just a tension, I am writing a *kind* of poetry. A "poetry of the home," or a "mother-poem"—after all, I am a mother, and a baby has turned up on this piece of paper. (Para. 8)

How to Potty Train when Presenting a Manuscript on Maternal Poetry[2]
Drink a cold espresso after the coffee line maul.
Catch the conference plane with a wet crotch in your pants.
Think about how you are not a (fill in the blank) mom.

Don't speak of tiny fish crackers, too much
starch and big T-truth makes them antsy,
like a double espresso day line at the mall.

Walk with dry pants to the podium, blink like a mole
fresh from under the school, that darkened land
where we all crawl with bloody knees to this mom

they all want you to be. Now with malice,
No, no, No, do not pant.
Drink that espresso, man.

If you must answer that question about your mind
the biography behind your paper, the argument in the last part
Repeat: "but I am no star mother"

as you curl your fingers by the podium mums
yellowed from the incandescent lights, you can't
ignore the conference attendees' espresso mad,
say, "I don't want to be your mommy."

The confessional in poetry focuses attention on embodied experience through highlighting dualistic thinking, especially that which focuses on the body, the domestic sphere, and mothering. "Mother-poets, stuck in a

sticky blood bond" (Katz, 2013, para. 14). Like Katz, this work on mothering in verse sings the chorus of cacophonous voices about motherhood.

Kellas (2005) notes that "family stories affect and reflect family culture by communicating who a family is—its norms, its values, its goals, its identity" (p. 366). I use poetry to restory and query expectations of family life through the use of family stories, and mother-poems, in particular (Faulkner, 2015, 2016a). This focus on the personal acts as an interrogation into the expectations of middle-class motherhood and the concomitant disappointments of never being good enough. I argue that the engagement with the embodied experiences of mothering can alter attitudes and create social change through the visibility of stigmatized identities (e.g., bisexual feminist, ambivalent mother) and the refusal to create false separations between the domestic and public.

The Interview[3]—for Sylvia Plath (after *The Applicant*)
Can you separate lights from darks,
gabardine from linen?
Too much bother? I cannot care

if your hands are
warm like Georgia hot springs
capable of sparing my feet

the Sisyphean walk over broken
crayons and wine glasses,
the laundry room of dog and dust.

Do you know how to make coffee,
float a river of cream
in my capacious cup?

Forget the sugar and call
my name with an accent auf Deustch?
But speak only ein bisschen,

patch the noise of domestic bliss
with a steady pour and two clinks of ice.
Will you wait for the repairs,

bury the hamster with the holey
blanket, behind the dying Holly?
Never mind if you dig too shallow,
I want a wife, too.

I have been using poetry and poetic inquiry as critical social science in my writing about mothering, MotherWork, and feminism in order to critique middle-class expectations of what it should mean to be a mother (Faulkner, 2009, 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2016b; 2017a; 2017b). Using narrative and poetic inquiry, I wrote a critical autoethnography about hating being a mother but loving my child by juxtaposing experiences of new motherhood with my role as an academic who studies close relationships (Faulkner, 2014a). The piece critiques cultural advice and expectations of what being a good mother mean by questioning entrenched myths about motherhood. The book or poems, *Knit Four, Frog One* (Faulkner, 2014b) is an example of critical autoethnography entirely in verse. I use poetry as an analytic, connecting poetry and critique of social structures by detailing what it means to be a woman in a family. I use different poetic forms such as collage, dialogue poems and sonnets to demonstrate the crafting of relationships and women's work. The poems use personal experience to critique larger culture structures to explain and contest the meaning of mothering for a White, middle-class, and highly educated, feminist bisexual mother.

Pacifier Ode[4]
next to the shiny
cans priced with promise
for smart growth,
super powered limbs,
beside the temperature
sensitive spoons, sippy cups
bibs with cartoon faces—
things you never thought to need—

presides the paci, dummy, baby
comforter, all soother
silicone or rubber nub,
earlier a knot of fabric
soaked with the good stuff,
the thing you said no
to before you knew
the bite of attachment parenting

before the cry that broke
your single will, before
the warmth of plastic, sucking

like a fetus, like a magician
that bends objects beyond
what's possible
to this two-dimension time and space,
unnatural body that's better
than a fleshy nipple
Battle of the B-F Girls[5]

Fig. 7.1 Battle of the B-F (breast/bottle fed) girls. Collage by author

When I write mother-poetry I critique rosy expectations of family life and being a mother using dialectical thinking to give voice to the both/and. The poetry plays with what Katz (2013) considers the forced feelings of loving children without the downsides.

> People are *expected* to have certain feelings about children. A baby activates a set of cultural expectations that operates, in a poem, like subliminal advertising. For instance, babies are supposed to be wondrous. The fact that many people find them so, and that I am expected (by my mother, if not many others) to find them so, pressures the poem. The expectation is out there, daring me to find the baby other than wondrous. A baby in a poem always threatens to make me feel one of the things the world expects me to feel—if not wonder, then love, awe, tenderness. That pressure means the possibility of sentimentality is strong, no matter what the poem is actually doing. (Para. 37)

Instructions for Surviving Infant[6]
Remember the stubborn latch
clown purple mouth of gentian violet
your own face melted off
from exhaustion, say no thanks
to the OB at the 6 week cry
because you must remember
remember not to have another
do not get over it
do not cherish this
no taking something to ease your face
all ears that ear plugs can't stop up.

Forget which onesie you put
on the 9 week old you have to pick up,
panic when you must identify her
on the floor in the infant room
because all the white babies look alike,
rows of drool encrusted chins
clumsy arms in the nursery.
Don't tell them her first sentence:
Daddee needs more beer.

My mother-poems are critical autoethnography; they focus attention on tensions and binaries rather than resolving them to show how the use of personal family intimacies is a way of constructing empowering family narratives that question taken-for-granted cultural discourse surrounding women's work, mothering, and relationships.

Notes

1. Two-Hour Delay first appeared as Wiebe, S., Guiney-Yallop, J. J., Fels, L., Richardson, P., Snowber, C., Honein, N., Leggo, C., Faulkner, S. L., & Dark, K. (in press). Poetic inquiry *of* and *on* play. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue Canadienne de l'Education*.
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CHAPTER 8

I Am a Monument

Anne Harris and Stacy Holman Jones

The world[1]
And the word
Are monuments
A life
Is a monument
As strong and true
As stone

I hold place
I stand here
I attest
To something, to animate and inanimate others,
People, events, loves, tragedies that have come before me:
I am a monument.

I have thing-ness.
I have substance.
I am here.
This is my body.
I take up space. I comment on my world:

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I memorialise.
I attest to liveness, just by being here.
I *am* the monument
To those who have gone before me
I am a *monument*.

Monument to Monuments

Since at least 4000 BC, we have created monuments to people, to places, and to events as performances of the human need for both ritual and aesthetics (Bradley, 2012, p. 58). Monuments do not stand in isolation from the culture that brings them into material being but instead as embodiments and enactments of lifeworlds, values, and ways of living. In this chapter, we are concerned with the performance or the *movement* of monuments—how bodies perform and give substance to monuments, how monuments are relational, how monuments create audiences, and our audiencing of monuments is itself an enactment of pastness, futurity, and love. Performing monument/movement is what Erin Manning might call "a quasi-virtual experience: actual because all steps actually take place, virtual because all the microperceptions of pastness and futurity are enveloped in the becoming-movement" (2009, p. 38).

The human act of building cairns or markers to events both glorious and tragic, culturally grand and personally intimate, has been the subject of philosophical investigation for eons. In *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment,* E.V. Walter articulates a notion of 'topistics,' derived from the Greek word *topos*, as a:

> new name by which I hope to renew the context of an old inquiry … methods and ideas of a holistic form of inquiry designed to render the identity, character, and experience of a place intelligibile. The full range of meaning located as a 'place'—sensory perceptions, moral judgments, passions, feelings, ideas, and orientations—belong to an order of intelligibility that I call 'topistic reality'. (1988, p. 21)

His *topistics* draws on Gaston Bachelard's poetics of space (1958/2014) to "capture poetic features of space … a nonfragmentary, theoretical framework to grasp the whole experience of place and space" (1988, p. 18). Walter's theorizing of the 'feelings of place' attempts to incorporate a more holistic intersectioning of "intellect, common sense, and imagination" (1988, p. 21). Here, place is understood as "a location of

experience. It evokes and organizes memories, images, feelings, sentiments, meanings, and the work of imagination" (1988, p. 21).

Within Walter's somewhat dated articulation lies the seeds of a new materialist understanding of memorials as vibrant matter (Bennett, 2009). In this view, monuments are both a material form (or formation) and a "living, vital and immediate" force that has material affects (Nelson & Olin, 2003, p. 3). In other words, monuments are *alive*—they have specific ways of being in the world and make themselves felt *as* themselves (Walter, 1988, p. 117), just as human bodies are material reminders of other bodies, experiences, memories, and sensations.

And what of the monument-body that memorializes?

That seeks to materialize experience, desire, and emotion in an "iterative remembering" (Fitzgerald, 2009, p. 86) that is both 'public' and 'personal'?

That struggles to know what to *do* with change, with transformation, and with grief, reckoning the body with things passing? Things past?

What of the body rehearsing, the body as becoming-monument?

Monument to Rehearsal

We are driving from Melbourne to Alice Springs in a small car packed with books, blankets, and a bag of groceries—snacks for us and biscuits for Luna, the matriarch cocker spaniel who is dying of cancer.

We are driving the 2256 kilometres from Melbourne to Alice Springs so that you can do research, so I can see Australia's wide open for the first time, and so Luna can return to her birthplace one last time—a kind of canine 'roots trip' (Harris, 2015, p. 162).

We drive the 24 hours from Melbourne to Alice Springs in a hurry because Luna is restless in the car—the wincing moan of the steel cattle grates set into the highway makes her unsteady on her feet and unable to sleep.

You drive from Melbourne to Alice Springs while Luna and I sit in the back. She stands, feet planted on either side of my hips, and leans into me. I hold her and hum a song into her ear. Every few kilometres, you reach back and put your hand on Luna's head, resting it there until your arm cramps and you have to move.

When we arrive in Alice, Luna becomes herself again. She sticks her nose out the window and sniffs, pulling the winter desert air into her lungs. You stop the car. I open the door, and Luna hops out. She picks her

way carefully through the bush, not looking back. She knows we will follow, and we do. We walk up and over the crest of a hill, catching sight of Luna just as she lies down on her side in the dry riverbed and kicks her feet.

You say she remembers the geography of this place—the rocks and hills, the scent of the neighbourhood you haven't lived in for years, the sound of the river that only flowed a handful of times when you did live there. Memory re-collects in her nose and ears, under her feet, in the "pure experience of the welling *now*" (Manning, 2013, p. 73). You say she is walking, running, smelling, and swimming as a rehearsal for death.

Performance scholar Theron Schmidt (2015) describes the process of rehearsal as movement that re-collects the future. He writes, "we recollect forwards whilst remembering backwards" (p. 5). Rehearsal enacts the "strange temporality" of preparing for an experience in the act of its making. Rehearsal is for making an act that will 'work' in the moment we need it—a play, a dance, a recital, a death. We begin "as if we are looking back at a previous action, a repetition, a re-enactment, even as we look forward to an event that does not yet exist" (Schmidt, 2015, p. 5). We rehearse for death as a monument to remembering the welling now of life.

We drive from Melbourne to Alice Springs so that Luna can return to her birthplace and rehearse her death. When we arrive, Luna sticks her nose out the window and sniffs, pulling the winter air into her lungs. You stop the car. I open the door and Luna hops out. She picks her way carefully through the bush, not looking back. She lies down on her side in the dry riverbed and kicks her feet.

Luna becomes herself again—emergent, in tune with and attuned to the pulse and scent of her environment, vibrating with the desert taking form beneath her.

> Rehearse—to give an account of.
> To go over again, repeat, literally, to rake over, to turn over.
> From *re*, again and *hercier*, to drag, to trail on the ground.
> To rake, harrow, rip, tear, wound, repeat.
> Rehearse, from *re*, again, and *hearse*—
> a flat framework for candles over a coffin, a large chandelier hung in a church.
> Rehearse, from *re*, again, and hearse, a *harrow*—
> a rustic word containing allusions to wolves' teeth and rakes,
> a means for moving the dead; to wound the feelings, distress.
> To say over again, repeat what has already been said.[2]

> Rehearse—to give an account when
> "what forms us diverges from what lies before us". (Butler, 2005, p. 136)

Luna lies down on her side in the dry riverbed and kicks her feet. She is swimming, swimming, swimming in the red dirt water of the Todd Riverbed. The moon rises, illuminating her path, a canopy of ghost gum branches make a harrow for bearing her body.

Monumental

As 'things,' monuments "share their status with other objects: the term monumentality suggests qualities of inertness, opacity, permanence, remoteness, distance, preciosity, and grandeur" (Nelson & Olin, 2003, p. 3). Yet monuments come into being and become important to us personally and publically "precisely because they are not merely cold, hard, and permanent. They are also living, vital, immediate, and accessible, at least to some parts of society" (Nelson & Olin, 2003, p. 3).

If the body can be monument and the monument is a body, our focus then becomes not permanence and remembrance, but performance, negotiation, and representation, as both the body and the monument admit to changing "constantly as [they] renegotiates ideals, status, and entitlement, defining the past to affect the present and future" (Nelson & Olin, 2003, p. 7).

Monuments as bodies and bodies as monuments challenge the 'subject/object' split, offering us what Donna Haraway (1988) terms 'situated knowledges' created through a partial and situated 'politics of location' (p. 589). Monuments give us a "view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body," one in contrast with a "view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity" (p. 589).

Performance scholar Peggy Phelan (1997) speaks to the agentic and animate force of situated knowledges in our encounters with the metal and stone of monuments, which in their very solidity and heft "suggest the weight and scope of mourning" (p. 171). Our rehearsals of grief and efforts to make monuments are motivated by a desire to "forestall and forget death" (Phelan, 1997, p. 83). They, at once, distract us "from the specific of the dead body and underlin[ing] the stone cold fact of death itself" and remind us that the work of death—and mourning—is never "clear, never complete, never solid" (Phelan, 1997, pp. 83, 171).

Everyday Monuments

If you want to build monuments, build them with a voice, a body,
a gesture.
What would my voice monument sound like?
What is a voice?
Why is a voice more ephemeral than a stone?
Here is my voice
There is a stone.

Andy Warhol made artworks from the
Statue of Liberty,
part of his Pop Art series of the 1960s.
Appropriating a timeless icon of America and democratic freedom as his own,
in 1962 Warhol screenprinted Lady Liberty from an image he found on a
a dimestore postcard—in other words, he made
a
small
paper monument
comprised of 24 monumental frames.

This is Warhol making a monument to a monument:
"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be famous for about 15 minutes…."
Why monuments when actions remain unidealistic, unmoved, unchanged, unfree?

Warhol made the 8-hour film *Empire* on September 11, 1964. September 11th.
For 8 hours, he filmed the Empire State Building in New York City, looking out the 41st floor of the Time-Life Building in New York City, from the offices of the Rockefeller Foundation.
For 8 hours, pretty much nothing happens except for the flicker of floodlights.
So is *Empire* a monument to the unmovable and monumental—stone and metal?
Or a monument to nothingness, to inertia, to the ordinariness of life?
Or maybe *Empire* is monumental in its everydayness; in its doing and being.
And maybe—

just when the lights switch off and that everyday reflected against the welling darkness—
it is a "body becoming" (Manning, 2009, p. 6).[3]

'Playing Dead in Stone'

Monuments as bodies and bodies as monuments signal the affective relationship of architecture and flesh: "Housed in flesh, we build houses; human form forms the buildings which keep us in them" (Phelan, 1997, p. 81). Monuments become 'alive' in relation to other beings; they are bodies becoming-events or what Erin Manning (2013) calls a 'mobile architecture,' which is less a structure than a performance—an "agile surfacing that makes felt the force of incipient form" (p. 102). We move in monumental mobile architectures that occupy and haunt us (Manning, 2013, p. 102).

It seems that the becoming-event of monuments is to "cover up a place, to fill in a void: the one left by death" (Hollier, 1989, p. 36). We give human form to buildings in which we forget and forestall death, playing dead in stone so that "death will not come" (Hollier, 1989, p. 36), creating a space in which both "death is made to play" and "to be a play" (Phelan, 1997, p. 83).

Monument to Readiness Potential

A dream: I am at a rehearsal for a performance, but I do not know my lines. No, that's not quite right. I'm at a rehearsal for a performance, but I do not know the *right* lines. It's the kind of play where the character (in this case me, because it's my dream, but it could be you, too) is on stage in a circle of bright light, and she's being asked a series of questions by a voice that has no body, a voice that comes from out of the darkness (in this case, it's a man's voice—maybe my father's voice, but I don't think it's that kind of play; it could be a woman's voice, too).

The character, my character, is trying to answer the questions based on what she knows, what she thinks the voice thinks she knows, and also what she thinks the voice expects as a right or good answer.

Voice: What is readiness potential?
Character: Readiness potential? Okay. Yes. Readiness potential: Neurologists describe the electrical movement in the brain that precedes movement of the

body and our conscious awareness of the intent to move as 'readiness potential' (Libet, 2003).
Voice: Again, with movement.
Character: Readiness potential: The term used to describe the interrelationship of voluntary movement and the neurological shift in the electrical activity in the brain that accompanies that movement. (Schmidt, 2015, p. 5)

In the dream, I'm standing on the stage, offering answers into the darkness which are, it seems to me, right and good, though I'm becoming increasingly nervous, flustered, *warm*. Beads of sweat form on my forehead and under my arms, behind my knees, and along the small of my back.

Voice: Again, with intention.
Me: Readiness potential: the neuro/philosophical construct describing how voluntary movement —the blink of an eye, the turning of a cheek, the embrace of a lover—is preceded by a movement in the brain, a spark of electricity that accompanies the intention or the decision to move (Schmidt, 2015, p. 5).
Voice: Are we conscious of this?
Me: Of the movement?
Voice: Of the intention, the decision to move?
Me: We are moved to move—mind and body—and only become conscious of this decision after it has already been made (Schmidt, 2015, p. 5).
I become hot, then hotter. I am on fire, but from the inside out. *In fire.*
Voice: Again, with immanence.
Me: Immanence?
Voice: Yes. The immanence of movement moving.
Me: Readiness potential is what Erin Manning describes as the "immanence of movement moving: how movement can be felt before it actualizes" (2009, p. 6).
Voice: Again, with affect.
Me: Readiness potential is a gathering, a "moment of unformed and unstructured potential," an affective intensity (Shouse, 2005, par. 5).

I remove my scarf and sweater and push damp hair out of my eyes. I wonder if I've gotten it, now. If I have rehearsed the potential of readiness potential. I close my eyes and think about cool things—ice cubes, cantaloupe, winter wind.

Voice: What is the readiness potential of an aging queer body?
Me: What?

Voice: What is the readiness potential of a body in desire and decline?
Me: Whose body?
Voice: Any body. Queer bodies. Women's bodies. *Yours.*
Me: Are you asking if I feel the immanence of the movement of decay, the spreading heat of—if not desire or death then perhaps transformation—in my body? In the everydayness and everynightness of…
Voice: Yes. How about if we begin, again, with that. With what you are experiencing. What is the readiness potential of your aging queer body?
Me: Right now?
Voice: Yes, now. This time, write the readiness potential of your experience.
Me: Writing as a "tangle of created connections" (Stewart, 2007, p. 4)?
Voice: [Silence].
Me: Writing as a "compound of created sensations"? (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, pp. 164–165).
Voice: [Silence].
Me: Could I….
Voice: Just begin, please.
Me:

Monument to Ruin

Sudden wave,
Unfettered heat, autonomic.
Blood vessels constricting
body becoming
an empty boat.

Sleep slips away,
streetlight and cars passing
blink you awake;
quick pulse and rush,
body awash in desire.

Spreading dread.
Pin prick of
something coming apart,
body and mind the rubble
of "electricity and matter" (Schmidt, 2015, p. 5).

Spinning sensation,
movement taking form in the flash,
memory marching forward

"future recollects" (Schmidt, 2015, p. 9),
disturbing but harmless.

Skin swarming,
Immanent, incipient blaze
preaccelarates toward
the readiness potential of ruin.

Voice: Thank you. Now, again, please.
Me: Readiness potential?
Voice: Yes. What is the readiness potential of an aging queer body?

The lights go out. I wake up, sweaty and restless. You stir in the bed next to me. "It's okay," I say. "Just a hot flash. Go back to sleep."

I throw back the covers and get out of bed. What does it mean to dream about rehearsing the potential of readiness potential? How can you rehearse something that doesn't yet exist? How can you build a monument to a body that is gathering the force of a future as it passes?

I find my way in the dark to the kitchen and open the refrigerator. I breathe in the cool air, eyes adjusting to the light. It has something to do with readiness potential, with the open and undetermined time and space in which we begin. In which we begin to make an act that will 'work' in the moment *before* it actualizes. It has something to do with what Manning (2009) calls preacceleration—"the vital force of movement taking form" (p. 6).

This is the movement of the night sweat—the hot *flash*. In the preacceleration of blood vessel and breath, the concrescence of movement is inseparable from space and time. I am a "body-becoming" (Manning, 2009, p. 6)—flushed, heat gathering so forcefully it wakes me up. Out of the dream and into the night.

I let the door of the refrigerator hang open, drinking orange juice from the carton. I tune in to the ways we "come late to our own bodies and are making them, even now, through discovering them" (Schmidt, 2015, p. 9). How we notice our decline just when desire becomes delicious, the heat building in the nighttime of our bodies (Jenkins, 2005, p. 281, Shaw, 1997, p. 71). The hot flash—and with it, memory and desire—becomes not the closing down of experience but instead an opening to queer space-time[4]—fleeting and compressed and also brimming with the potentiality of a life "unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and child

rearing" (Halberstam, 2011, p. 2). A spacetime for enjoying the fruits of a nonnormative life—sweet and perishable, ripe and "rancorously nonreproductive" (Halberstam, 2011, p. 101).

Hot flash: to rehearse readiness potential of an ageing queer body.

Hot flash: building a monument to a body and a history as if it already exists.

And then, it is over. I move my body backwards and the door of the refrigerator swings closed, shutting out the light. I walk down the long hallway to the bedroom. I slide coolly and quietly under the covers, next to you.

Becoming-Monument

Monuments move us in their readiness potential, the vital force of movement taking [a] form that exceeds stone and staging in a resonating and ripe spacetime. Manning (2013) writes, "It's not the form of the work that stays with you, it's the how of its capacity to dislodge the you that you thought you were. It's the how of the work's capacity to shift the ground that moves you" (p. 102). The mobile architecture of a monument gathers in the flash and force of preacceleration—a "reaching toward" and into the queer spacetime of the immanent, the possible, the "not-yet" (Manning, 2009, p. 37; Muñoz, 2009, p. 46).

For the Love of Monuments

My life is a monument. Is a life-as-monument.
For proximity
is being alive.
See, monuments can stand aloof, kind of keep their distance, keep to themselves.
It's hurtful really.
Those hoity-toity monuments.
Fuck you, monuments.
I've loved some monuments in my time.
I've been rebuffed by a few too, oh yes I have.
It hurts.
It's all well and good for the general public; sure, but me?
What of the lover?

What of the lovers of monuments?
We get the dregs, we get the shit, we get the tired, hungover, exhausted, wrung-out, yearning to be free
Washed up monuments.
Everyday monuments.

See
my monuments are *words*.
Words in my life are everything: weapons,
wine,
rose petals
tools of seduction, celebration, love, rage,
the oral embodiment of connection. Longing.
Words are my becoming-monuments, the doing of monument.
The climb, leap, roll, tumble, fall, hang, bounce, and of course—slam.

Words have their own word-bodies too, they word-move the air, they word-punch you in the face
They word-push you from the back
They
lift you up to the word-branch above you, just. Up. *there*.

My slamming words and my fleshbody are virtual monuments in motion to our
solid stone love.
My stone butch words are a monument to our body-blues and our word-love and our lasting-ness:
Our words are our bodies are our monuments of love.
Let our bodies and words be monuments themselves.
Bodies are monuments of a life lived. And everything passes away. Everything.

So why do we want our monuments to behave differently than our lives, our bodies, our own living words?
What do we so fear or find so unsatisfying in this tender aging human body that gives and takes and scars and pinches and … withers?
That loves and pushes and pulls and weeps and twists and fattens?
Expands and contracts. Expands.
And contracts.
Isn't this a monument to something too? We are breathing monuments to flesh, to words, to love?
To those functions that the posthuman can't yet do. To the not-yet.

But maybe one day.
When there are fewer of these monuments (pinch yourself)
Maybe one day soon,
when the everlasting metal and stone,
when the unchangeables and unmoveables and unweepables predominate,
when they preside over this tender green and fleshy rotting planet-monument,
maybe *then* we will see how our bodies were monuments themselves.

Monument to Waking Up

Something happens—an event, an experience, an election—and people begin saying, begin feeling that they can't work. Or get out of bed. Or wake up from the bad dream of the "weighted and reeling" present (Stewart, 2007, p. 1).

Something surges into view (Stewart, 2007, p. 9) and the monument to a new body (politic) we thought we were building and the history we believed we were making does not 'work' in the moment we need it. Something happens and suddenly—or so it seems—we are watching the future we were rehearsing—the world we were recollecting towards—slip away, become lost. Or was it lost—just then? And if so, to whom? Or what?

Something is lost and people begin feeling, begin asking, just who *are* the people who voted for a present reeling with misogyny, racism, exploitation of workers, disdain for human rights and increased armament and violence? Just who *are* the people who voted for a future weighed down by neoliberalism, isolationism, xenophobia?

Something slips and people begin feeling, begin asking: Who are *we*? How did we fail to sense the preacceleration, the readiness potential of hatred and violence? Have we shielded ourselves "from the truth by our own isolated form of left and liberal thinking" (Butler, 2016)? Have we "believed in human nature in some naïve ways" (Butler, 2016)?[5]

Something comes together and people say and feel they can't—work, get out of bed, wake up from one bad dream and into another. But people do—they work, they get out of bed, they wake up. They begin asking: what is the readiness potential of waking up today? Of getting out of bed and rehearsing a world that 'works' in the moment we need it? Deleuze and Guattari (1994) write of the artist's challenge of making a work *work*—of creating something that stands "*up on its own*," where standing up is "the act by which the compound of created sensations is

preserved in itself—a monument, but one that may be contained in a few marks or a few lines, like a poem by Emily Dickinson" (pp. 164–165).

Something happens and people begin to ask about, begin to feel the movement moving in the welling *now*, together. In this spacetime, we rehearse our regard for others (Sontag, 2003). We make work that works to recognize and acknowledge our selves and a world not as it has always been, but to "solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to [each] other" (Butler, 2004, p. 44).

> Something happens and we begin, again. We rehearse—
> we say over again, repeat what has already been said.
> We give an account of how "what forms us diverges from what lies before us" (Butler, 2005, p. 136).
> We organise, organise, organise. In the now. Again.
> When something lost, something hard and cold,
> gives way to something else "unexpectedly hopeful" (Stewart, 2007, p. 6).
> We build/are a monument to waking up: one morning, one dream, one work at a time.

Notes

1. The poem from which this is excerpted was performed by Anne Harris in April 2016 at the American Education Research Association as part of a group performance collective led by Joe Norris in Washington, DC at the Martin Luther King monument and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt monument.
2. Etymological definitions of the words rehearse, hearse, and harrow from etymonline.com. "rehearse (v.) … 'to give an account of…' to go over again, repeat,' literally 'to rake over, turn over (soil, ground), from *re-* 'again' … + *hercier* to drag, trail (on the ground), be dragged along the ground; rake, harrow (land); rip, tear, wound repeat, rehearse;' from herse 'a harrow' … Meaning to 'to say over again, repeat what has already been said or written' … in the sense of 'practice a play, part, etc.'." "hearse (n.), 'flat framework for candles, hung over a coffin … formerly *herce* 'large rake for breaking up soil, harrow; … also 'large chandelier in a church' … 'harrow,' a rustic word, from Oscan *hirpus* 'wolf,' supposedly an allusion to its teeth." "harrowing (v.1)… 'to drag a harrow over, break or tear with a harrow … In the figurative sense of 'wound the feelings, distress greatly'."

3. The film takes place between 8:10 pm and 2:30 am on July 25th and 26th, 1964, during which the floodlights on the building come on and flicker, frame by frame, from sunset to sunrise. Each time Warhol and his collaborators Jonas Mekas and John Palmer changed the film reels, they turned on the lights, their faces reflected momentarily in the Time and Life Building windows (Gopnik, 2014).
4. In the preface to Erin Manning's (2013) *Always More than One*, Brian Massumi describes Manning's concept of spacetime as the inseparability of space and time; spacetime brings "seriation and contingency together in the unfolding of the event" (p. xvi). Manning writes that the movement of bodies and the bodying forth of thought—the immanence of movement moving and thought becoming movement—creates the possibility in which "spacetime itself begins to vibrate with movement expression" (p. 101). We are arguing here that menopause might be a spacetime in which bodies become works of art that "exceed their form" and create the "capacity to dislodge the you that you thought you were" (pp. 101–102) and further, that this spacetime is *queer time* –a space that that opens up a "rich and riotous future" out of the structures and strictures of "family time"—the normative time of reproduction (Halberstam, 2011, p. 3).
5. In the wake of the 2016 presidential election Judith Butler (2016) writes: "For a world that is increasingly mischaracterized as post-racial and post-feminist, we are now seeing how misogyny and racism overrides judgment and a commitment to democratic and inclusive goals—they are sadistic, resentful, and destructive passions driving our country" (par. 3). She continues: "Who are they, these people who voted for him, but who are we, who did not see their power, who did not anticipate this at all, who could not fathom that people would vote for a man with racist and xenophobic discourse, a history of sexual offenses, the exploitation of workers, disdain for the constitution, migrants, and a reckless plan for increased militarization? Perhaps we are shielded from the truth by our own isolated form of left and liberal thinking? Or perhaps we believed in human nature in some naive ways. Under what conditions does unleashed hatred and reckless militarization compel the majority vote?" (par. 4).

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CHAPTER 9

The Last Days of Education? An Attempt to Reclaim Teaching through Socratic Dialogue

Craig Wood

This chapter is a representation of my reflections on memories from twenty years of experience inside public education. I began this reflective research confident that I enact the educational praxis that I hold dear. I share Maxine Greene's (1978) commitment to use education as a tool to empower young lives, and to promote social justice, harmony and equity. Like Paulo Freire (1995), I want my classes to be democratic sites of

The Last Days of Education was first presented at the Art of Critical Autoethnography Conference, Melbourne, Australia, on 21 August 2015 under the title *Beginning an Autoethnographic Journey to Reclaim my Profession*. Data collection for this essay, including some policy references, occurred during a time of a conservative government in Queensland. Spurred on by the interest of global capital, the conservative government pursued the neo-liberal policy agenda of audits and school closures. The defeat of the conservatives at the 2015 Queensland election resulted in some of the policies referenced in this paper being removed or replaced.

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critical hope that lead to social transformation, and I was sure that I would find the ideas of critical pedagogy, espoused by bell hooks (1994), Henry Giroux (2011) and Peter McLaren (1998), deeply embedded in my teaching. I was troubled when I realised that my students do not experience the curriculum in the way that I hoped I enact. There was a melancholic epiphany when I realised that I was no longer a Socratic teacher, and the melancholy turned to anger as I realised how far my teaching had strayed from the reconceptualist models of curriculum that I aspire to enact. (For theoretical models of curriculum see Wood (2010, pp. 13–18), based on Marsh (2009) and Pinar (2012).) Through reflection I am beginning to understand what has occurred that has disrupted my teaching praxis, and I am committed to converting anger into activism.

The disruption to my practice is an indication of the pervasiveness of the neo-liberal schools agenda, pursued by the vested interest of global capital and its conservative allies. Their agenda is eloquently termed the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) by Pasi Sahlberg (2009) that he summarises in five symptoms:

1. *Standardisation* of policies resulting in global homogenisation of education;
2. *Narrowed curriculum* that reduces learning to a core of reading, writing, mathematics and science;
3. *Risk averse and narrow pedagogy* resourced by and profit generating for global corporations;
4. *Corporate governance models* motivated by the pursuit of economic profit and national hegemony, rather than moral goals of human development; and
5. *Accountability measures* explicitly tied to student learning outcomes that are blind to contextual factors of educational disadvantage.

To counter GERM, Sahlberg offers an Alternative Reform Movement (ARM) that informs my epilogue. I locate this work alongside of calls for teacher resistance to neo-liberalism that include: Bree Picower's (2012) *Education Should Be Free!* Gregory Mitchie's (2012) *We Don't Need Another Hero*, Gabriel Cortez' (2013) *Occupy Public Education*, Entin, Ohmann and O'Malley's (2013) *Occupy and Education*, Winton and Brewer's (2014) *People for Education*, Jon Berry's (2016) *Teachers Undefeated*, and Crowther and Boyne's (2016) *Energising Teaching*.

Methodology

This research accords with Norman Denzin's *Qualitative Manifesto*, which calls for researchers to, "…change the world, and change it in ways that resist injustice while celebrating freedom, and full, inclusive, participatory democracy" (Denzin, 2010). My research is critical, autoethnographic, and it aims to resist domination while promoting social justice and freedom in my classes. Writing autoethnographically, I take up Denzin's (2014a) challenge to unsettle repressed meanings, invite moral dialogue, call for utopian alternatives, show data rather than tell data, and assume positions that are political, functional, collective and committed (Denzin, 2014b).

I write from an emic position, allowing my "epistemology of insiderness" to show "experience in a way that outside researchers never could" (Adams, Holman Jones, & Elllis, 2015). I draw on reflections on memories of my twenty years of working in public schools in Queensland, Australia. I have been a Drama, History and English teacher, senior teacher, beginning teacher, pre-service teacher, teacher union representative, behaviour specialist teacher, football coach and manager, and education researcher. I have worked in primary schools, secondary schools, teacher training institutions, professional associations and a teacher union office. As a critical autoethnographer, I have made an ethical choice to represent my data as fiction. Carolyn Ellis notes that reporting research as fiction can de-identify the voices and stories of, in the present research, my colleagues and our collective workplaces (Ellis, 2004). I have also chosen to write fiction because I am not interrogating individual moments, but considering the impact of GERM on the teaching profession, revealed through my insider narrative. Like Ellis, my purpose is not to ascertain the facts of discrete experiences, "but rather an articulation of the significance of meaning of my experiences" (Ellis, 2009). Patricia Leavy further lists benefits of writing social research as a fiction that include: transformation of consciousness, building empathy, raising awareness, and "jar(ring) us into seeing and thinking differently" (Leavy, 2013).

While my representation borrows from Plato's *Last Days of Socrates* (Tarrant, 2003), I acknowledge some differences. As I continued reflecting on my teaching and began drafting this paper, an artistic epiphany occurred, demonstrating that the subversive power of GERM is so great it could seduce and disrupt the practice of Socrates himself. Hence, I have

made the choice to shift Socrates from the role of the corruptor to the corrupted. Also, while Plato wrote four acts, to accommodate Salhberg's symptoms of GERM, my dialogues are written in five acts with an epilogue. I have retitled Plato's acts as: I. *Typopoiisi* (Standardisation); II. *Didaktea yli* (Curriculum); III. *Paidagogia* (Pedagogy); IV. *Etairikí diakyvérnisi* (Corporate governance); and V. *Efthyni* (Accountability). Limitations in this metaphor are also in the representation of Meletus, insofar as I have privileged teachers' experience over other stakeholders including school leaders and students. I further acknowledge school leader colleagues who, like Socrates, have been unwittingly coerced into carrying the GERM virus into schools.

I. Typopoisi

Socrates and Sammy enter their staffroom. Socrates, moving at a pace that is quicker than Sammy's, crosses straight to his desk and opens his laptop. Sammy enters, sits and waits.

A beat.

SOCRATES: Put the kettle on will you? We'll have a cup of coffee while we talk. Are you with me?

Sammy complies with the direction.

SAMMY: I'll just have a water.
SOCRATES: Sure. You don't mind that I finish these student drafts while we talk?
SAMMY: No. That's fine. (*Pause.*) Is it always like this? It just seems to have been rush-rush-rush all day.
SOCRATES: You're not in Kansas anymore.
SAMMY: I mean, it's manic.
SOCRATES: Yep. That's the way it is. (*Looking over to Sammy.*) Sorry that this is the first chance we've had to talk. How do you think your first day has been?
SAMMY: Well … manic.

The kettle boils.

SOCRATES: Milk and sugar thanks. Milk is in the fridge. (*Socrates notices an error in the draft he is reading.*) Apostrophe—S. How many times….

Socrates places a circle around the error on the paper. Sammy places a steaming mug of coffee next to Socrates, then sits with a glass of water.

SOCRATES: What did you think of the staff meeting?
SAMMY: Gosh, to be honest, I didn't understand a lot of it. Was all of that language particular to this school?
SOCRATES: Particular to any school that is subject to the standardisation of the Global Education Reform Movement.
SAMMY: (*Still not understanding.*) Oh.
SOCRATES: Meletus didn't use those words?
SAMMY: Not that I recall.
SOCRATES: No. Nor that I heard. But I wasn't really paying attention. I've still got four drafts to read before I leave. Meletus subscribes to all of these policies of improvement and audits. I no longer have the energy to disagree.
SAMMY: I made a list of one of the priority areas. Lyceum College is being audited on evidence-based teaching, explicit improvement agenda, analysis of data, culture of learning, targeted use of school resources, expert teaching team, systemic delivery of curriculum, tailored classroom learning, and school-community partnerships (Department of Education, Training and Employment, & Australian Council for Educational Research, 2012).
SOCRATES: Sounds like a game of education bingo. Are you with me? Got any of those on your card?
SAMMY: But all of that was in just one priority.
SOCRATES: Yep.
SAMMY: By the time Meletus had finished I'd lost count of the priorities.
SOCRATES: Yep. We have to be able to demonstrate that we are improving. That's where the auditor comes in.
SAMMY: But how can a school have more than a dozen priorities? Surely a priority means the school is working towards three, maybe four domains?

Socrates looks up from the student draft and laughs out loud.

SAMMY: Pedagogical frameworks. Differentiation. Risk assessment. Professional standards. Anaphylaxis training -

SOCRATES: You should do that while you're here. Do it for free. You're entitled.

SAMMY: —Discipline audit—

SOCRATES: Did Meletus say when that one would be?

SAMMY: Um… I don't think so. This first audit will be in the next few weeks.

SOCRATES: Well there you go. That's the priority. We'll put our energy into making sure that we tick all the right boxes that the auditor is looking for. The janitor will paint fresh lines in the car park for visitors. Then, once Meletus knows what the next audit is, we'll get ready for it.

SAMMY: What about teaching? What about the students?

SOCRATES: Some auditors will want to ask to speak to students. Don't worry, they are always handpicked so they say the right stuff.

SAMMY: No, I mean what about teaching students? Why isn't that a priority?

Socrates looks up and takes a big slurp of coffee.

SOCRATES: We don't sing *Kumbaya* in schools anymore.

SAMMY: Sorry?

SOCRATES: It's not about teaching students; it's about demonstrating that we teach students.

SAMMY: Sorry?

Socrates takes a booklet from his shelf and hands it to Sammy.

SOCRATES: I said "It's not about teaching students; it's about demonstrating that we teach students." Look. Have you seen this?

SAMMY: What is it?

SOCRATES *The Education Accord* (Queensland Government, 2014) Read it.

SAMMY: (*Reading from page five*) "The Queensland Plan sets four broad goals for education and describes what success against those goals would look like—our curriculum is flexible and future-focused; we have practical-based learning; we have the most highly valued teachers in Australia; and education is valued as a lifelong experience." That seems okay. I think.

SOCRATES: Of course it does. Keep reading.

SAMMY: The table? Um—"Implications for Education … Need to drive productivity and economic growth; Information technology changes….the ways in which jobs are done will change along with the places in which we do them; Globalisation; Changing social dynamics…will affect the make-up of school populations and the communities' social capital; increasing diversity and equity considerations."

SOCRATES: What do you think?

SAMMY: Gosh. I'm not really sure now.

SOCRATES: Try this one.

Socrates passes a copy of Unesco's Education for All (United Nations, 2000).

SAMMY: (*Reading*) "Education for All. Education is a right, like the right to have proper food or a roof over your head. Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'everyone has the right to education'. Education is not only a right but a passport to human development. It opens doors and expands opportunities and freedoms. It contributes to fostering peace, democracy and economic growth as well as improving health and reducing poverty. The ultimate aim of Education for All (EFA) is sustainable development."
Gosh!

SOCRATES: What do you think?

SAMMY: The first one makes education sound like we are a factory producing workers.

SOCRATES: The second?

SAMMY: I don't know. I think they both want the same thing. But the second one makes education sound like it's about building a better world, not just a stronger economy.

SOCRATES: Yep. (*Indicating the Education Accord*) You'll find the same policy list stems from the neo-liberal project that seeks to standardise western education for ease of market-based comparisons. Are you with me?

SAMMY: Not really.

SOCRATES: Reducing education to standardised policy agendas makes it much easier for those in power to make decrees about failing schools, blame teachers and deride our trade union. Rather than adequately fund public education.

SAMMY: Gosh. Education is really political.

SOCRATES: (*Smiles.*) Discipulus, you're first day of learning is complete. (*Socrates hands Sammy another document.*) This is the Drama Work Program. Take it home and read it tonight. I'll see you tomorrow morning at 8:15.

Sammy exits, leaving Socrates marking drafts.

II. Didaktea yli

Socrates is at the kettle as Sammy enters the staffroom.

SOCRATES: Good morning, Discipulus. Coffee?

SAMMY: Good morning, Socrates. No thank you.

SOCRATES: Suit yourself. We don't have class until after lunch so you probably won't need a pep up.

SAMMY: How were the drafts?

SOCRATES: Ah yes. The drafts. Best described as enablers.

SAMMY: Sorry?

SOCRATES: It was ten o'clock by the time I finished reading them, so I decided to move on to whiskey. How did you go with the Work Program?

SAMMY: I had a few questions I'd like to ask you about that actually.

The kettle boils and Socrates fills his cup.

SOCRATES: Well it's 8:20. We've got five minutes. We have our Literacy training.

SAMMY: Oh. I thought we had the year nine class this morning. I was looking forward to the puppet workshop.

SOCRATES: Normally, yes. But this morning we have a Literacy training program. Something about reading and making sense of text. You'll need to take a highlighter (Rose, 2015). (*Socrates slurps from his cup.*) Now, Discipulus, what were your questions?

SAMMY: Well, to start with, there's no rationale.

SOCRATES: Yep.

SAMMY: Why is that?

SOCRATES: Why is that? (*Almost to himself.*) Why is that? (*To Sammy.*) Why indeed? Why? I tell you, Discipulus, that's a question we don't ask very often anymore. We tend to go straight to "what" and "how" of teaching. Frankly, we don't even worry about "what" anymore, that's all predetermined. We just do the "how."

SAMMY: Well, why?

Socrates takes a deep breath, blows into his coffee, looks quizzically at Sammy and slurps.

SOCRATES: It's more than ten years since they stopped mandating that we had to write a rationale. Do you still have to write them at university?

Sammy nods.

SOCRATES: Julia Atkin (2011) took me to task on getting the "why" right a couple of years ago. I really had commitment to staying focused on the purpose of teaching in my classes…. I suppose the "why" these days is we are teaching to improve literacy. And numeracy, of course.

SAMMY: So why teach Drama? Or any of The Arts? If the aim is just to teach students reading and arithmetic, you could teach anything?

SOCRATES: But if the aim is human development, fostering peace and democracy—

SAMMY: But is it? I know that's what we talked about yesterday. But where are those UNESCO aims here at Lyceum? (*Referring to the Work Program*) Or here in this document?

SOCRATES: Indeed. (*Pause.*) Of course we're not audited on our ability to foster peace and democracy. (*He swills the end of his cup.*) Hmmm. Come Discipulus, there is much more to discuss. But first we must take our highlighter pen and go to Literacy training.

They exit.

III. Paidagogia

Socrates, carrying a box of Commedia d'elle Arte masks, enters the staffroom ahead of Sammy. They hover near the kettle.

SOCRATES: Okay, Discipulus, that was *The Lazzi of Arlecchino as a Midwife*. Thoughts? Ideas? Questions?

SAMMY: Gosh … um … well, all that language you kept using. It sounded like you were reading from a script. It felt like … It's like you were asking the students to have a relationship with … well not you.

SOCRATES: That's right—it's a relationship with their own learning goals, tracking their progress, and leading them to celebrate success. Are you with me?

SAMMY: Well yes. You were talking about learning goals and proficiency scales. You kept saying "What I'm looking for is…"

SOCRATES: That's the *Art and Science of Teaching* (Marzano, 2007), Discipulus. I throw in a bit of Hattie (2012) as well. It's all good stuff.

SAMMY: But it made the lesson so … destination driven. It's like everyone had to arrive at the end point, without wandering off the predetermined path you had set.

SOCRATES: (*In an Arlecchino voice*) Today's lesson was about lazzis. (*Prodding Sammy with a slapstick)* Slap. Slap!!

SAMMY: Yes, I know—

SOCRATES: I carried these masks all the way to our classroom. (*Again as Arlecchino.*) Today I was the midwife!! Tomorrow Il Dottore will marry me and Columbina.

SAMMY: Yes, I know. But by the time you finished all that edu-speak about goals and scales, I'm not sure students were with you.

SOCRATES: Of course they were. Anyway, Meletus insists that we use this—as you say—"edu-speak" to frame our learning conversations with students. After all, if we improve their outcomes we improve our data.

SAMMY: It just didn't sound like you in class, that's all. Even your Arleccino that you just did was really different to how you were in class. Just here you performed Arleccino. You were alive. In class, it was like a procedural demonstration of a cooking class. "What I'm looking for is…" The students didn't get the chance to play and make Arleccino their own.

A pause. Finally broken as Socrates begins to pack the masks into a cupboard.

SAMMY: Do you like teaching, Socrates?

SOCRATES: "Like" is a strong word, Discipulus.

A long pause.

SOCRATES: You're right. It's not my voice. It hasn't been my voice for a long time. By the time I finish with the *learning agenda* script my own teacher script has been so disrupted it's just easier to continue the narrow pathway that has been laid out. Any passion for the learning topic is subverted by desperation to achieve outcomes. Any care for students is replaced by care for data. Sometimes I catch myself starting a conversation about radical characters challenging authority. Viva La Revolucion!! I feel their interest spike, whether they agree or disagree. I feel their hopes emerging from deception and their withering dreams re-flower. Then I realise if one word of my conversation on Il Capitano as George W Bush is leaked back to Meletus, I'll be called to account for politicising education.

SAMMY: But we already agree that education is political.

SOCRATES: When I first started teaching, of course it was political, but it was relational. Our learning conversations were human conversations. We made connections. I used to love bumping into students a couple of years after they finished school. They'd tell me how much they loved coming to my class; it helped them steady their feet in a world of doubt and uncertainty.

Pause.
Socrates flicks on the kettle.

That hasn't happened for a long time. Twelve months of data is quickly forgotten, if it was ever remembered beyond the very present moment of an audit. Honestly, Sammy, I don't know why I bother. To hell with it!

Socrates flicks off the kettle.

It's 3:30. I'm going to the pub. Are you with me?

IV. Etairikí diakyvérnisi

Socrates, at his desk, stares at his computer screen. Sammy enters.

SAMMY: Good morning, Socrates.

Socrates doesn't answer.

SAMMY: Shall I flick the kettle on for you? (*Pause.*) Socrates? Are you okay?
SOCRATES: Hmm? (*He looks up.*) Ah, Sammy. Good morning.
SAMMY: Are you okay?
SOCRATES: The further they get away from the school gate, the louder their abuse becomes.
SAMMY: Sorry? What are you talking—
SOCRATES: Not what. Who? The government. Those who should be standing side by side with public educators, but are more and more sounding like private sector "Wolves of Wall Street."
SAMMY: Well then who? Who are these "Wolves"?
SOCRATES: Our employer. The government. The more they decentralise education, the louder their criticisms become. They abrogate their responsibility from public education, then make demands on what needs to be done. It's absurd.
SAMMY: What is?
SOCRATES: The whole neo-liberal model of corporate governance in schools. It's like having Eugene Ionesco as the Education

Minister. They're up there calling out "Get this done.—Don't do it like that!—No, I'm not going to tell you how to do it—just get this done before I check next time.—I'm not responsible for implementation; you are.—And this is what you have to do.—And the school that does it best wins a prize."

SAMMY: Gosh. That sounds more like Pinter.

SOCRATES: You're probably right.

SAMMY: With that menacing level of absurdity I can't imagine what the prize is.

SOCRATES: Your life, Discipulus. Metaphorically speaking. Do what they want and your community gets to keep their school, and we get to keep our jobs.

SAMMY: So education is political. And a competition.

SOCRATES: A shameful, marketised competition. They really believe that community autonomy will drive consumer choice. And that parents will re-enrol their children in new schools, just like they switch to the newest smart phone.

SAMMY: Is that what the email is about on your screen?

SOCRATES: Sort of. It's from Meletus, about the audit. I tried talking about some of our Drama classes. There are some great kids whose parents have contacted me saying how much they could see their child is progressing and enjoying coming to school. But that human experience isn't what the "Wolves" want. I have to show how I differentiate for the students that other people have pre-determined are "red," "yellow" or "green." Then make a graph showing their achievement.

What are we doing, Sammy? Parents don't want graphs about the whole school outcomes. They want to see their children smiling, learning and being happy with who they are. And when they leave school, they want them to be ready for the next step in their life journey.

A school bell rings.

SOCRATES: Hell! Is it time to go already? I haven't had my second coffee yet. Come on, Discipulus. Let's go make beautiful data together.

V. Efthyni

Socrates and Sammy, in the staffroom, in front of a computer.

SAMMY: …You see, Socrates. That's all you need to do to change the axis on an Excel graph.

SOCRATES: Gratias, Discipulus. Only I'm meant to be teaching you about teaching and learning relationships, not being taught about Excel.

SAMMY: Gosh, well, it is all teaching and learning and relationships, isn't it?

SOCRATES: (*Sighing.*) We have relationships with data, not students.

SAMMY: After all that I've seen I still find that cynical.

SOCRATES: Nothing cynical. It's real-world, Discipulus. See here.

Socrates shifts the mouse on the computer and downloads a copy of the National School Improvement Tool (Department of Education, Training and Employment, & Australian Council for Educational Research, 2012).

SOCRATES: Here. It's that School Improvement Unit audit. Read this.

SAMMY: (*Reading.*) "A high priority is given to the school-wide analysis and discussion of systematically collected data on student outcomes, including academic, attendance and behavioural outcomes, and student wellbeing."—But that's only one domain.

SOCRATES: And how many are there?

SAMMY: Um…Nine.

SOCRATES: What was that you said on your first day? And this is just one audit. Do you know how to be "outstanding" in Domain One? Read this last bit.

SAMMY: (*Reading.*) "Teachers take responsibility for changes in practice required to achieve school targets and are using data on a regular basis to monitor the effectiveness of their own efforts to meet those targets."
Gosh.

SOCRATES: Yep. We're responsible for collecting and interpreting data; not using years of teaching expertise to build engag-

ing relationships where we walk alongside of students, guiding their learning journey. Are you with me?

SAMMY: Oh.

SOCRATES: We've become bean counters, Sammy. It's about trending line graphs and pie charts for the market place. We have pretty coloured spread sheets in our office these days; on the very cork boards where we used to have photos of smiling students and examples of their projects.

The computer flashes.

SOCRATES: That's either the power out, or loss of network access. Can't finish this little project until tomorrow. Good night, Discipulus.

SAMMY: Good night, Magister.

They exit.

Epilogos

Socrates and Sammy are seated in the staffroom.

SAMMY: We've got playground duty in the second half of our lunch break, don't we? But it looks like rain, Socrates. That means the kids will be crazy, doesn't it?

Socrates doesn't answer. He stands, walks to the door, looks left, looks right, determines that the coast is clear, and closes the door. He crosses to Sammy and kneels next to him.

SAMMY: What's the matter, Socrates?

SOCRATES: I've been thinking about what we've been talking about.

SAMMY: The rain?

SOCRATES: No … Corruption.

SAMMY: Of youth?

SOCRATES: (*Shakings his head.*) No, the whole damn system. Are you with me?

SAMMY: Really? How?

SOCRATES: We must be cautious. GERM is all knowing. Even participating in this conversation could have consequences.
SAMMY: Gosh.
SOCRATES: It's time to ARM. Are you with me?
SAMMY: What do you mean ARM?
SOCRATES: The Alternative Reform Movement. Teachers in Finland have been doing it for years. Their teachers are highly respected, well resourced, and their system consistently outperforms America, Australia, England, New Zealand, most like nations actually.
SAMMY: Canada?
SOCRATES: There's lessons to be learned from Canada. I've heard they get time for professional development, collegial sharing of ideas, techniques, and resources. Learning with and from each other.
SAMMY: Is that what LEG is?
SOCRATES: ARM!
SAMMY: What is this ARM?
SOCRATES: I need to know. Are you with me?
SAMMY: Gosh, I think so. But what is it?
SOCRATES: I told you. It's the Alternative Reform Movement. It's about empowering school communities, rather than blaming them. It's about valuing teachers and school leaders as long term visionaries, rather than delegating decision making to short-term political decision makers. It's about tailoring local education solutions that meet the needs of diverse communities within a flexible national framework.
SAMMY: Gosh. I think I am with you.
SOCRATES: ARM is about creative and productive pedagogical relationships between teachers and students that develop the individual learner's needs and interests.
SAMMY: That sounds risky.
SOCRATES: Yes. It is. And sometimes we'll fail. But as a collegial team we learn together, we'll regroup, we'll dust everyone off, we'll engage with our learners, the families, their learning community, and we'll go again.
SAMMY: Can others join us?

SOCRATES: Others will join us. They'll have to join us. We will be highly skilled teams. Teams, Sammy, can you imagine a world where we're not pitted against each other, but are trusted and valued? Can you imagine the power of real, authentic teaching teams?

SAMMY: Gosh.

SOCRATES: Are you with me?

SAMMY: Yes…Yes!…YES!!

SAMMY & SOCRATES (*Direct to reader*): Are you with us?

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PART IV

Rehearsing and Transforming Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

CHAPTER 10

Inside Our Islands: Confronting the Colonized Muse in the Decolonizing Performance Space

Linden Wilkinson
Frederick Copperwaite and Lily Shearer

Actors at Sea

Digging deep into Dwight Conquergood's (1992) notion of kinesis we recognize, as performance ethnographers, the potential of performance to embrace the breaking and remaking of research data in order to deliver emergent ethnographic understandings. Through re-writing, re-structuring, re-contextualizing, through re-reading, rehearsing, re-performing as practitioners and participants, we may have experienced the integrity of performance to deliver complex propositions and possibilities. We might thereby recognize, as D. Soyini Madison (2005) suggests, that ethnographic performance is an act of data making in itself, that the performed work becomes the end product of an idea, a living artefact, a figurative island of temporal understanding in a sea of yet-to-be resolved contentions.

But returning to the creative impetus of kinesis: what is the experience for the actor as his/her cultural understandings are broken and remade in order to serve the driving intention of an emergent artefact?

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Isolated by his/her responsibilities to the developing content, to its execution, and to the ensemble however small, what are the thoughts, vulnerabilities, craft and personal responses to the breaking and remaking experience? And given that all challenges illuminate creative responses to given stimuli, what kinds of knowledge might be accessed by such probable confrontations and how might these insights serve the outcome?

Answers to these questions must shift in response to the multiple variables inherent in performed ethnographic research. But the improbability of duplication need not deter a reflection on the ephemeral reality of embodied contribution along the performative spectrum.

Playing Around

As the performative is concerned with deconstructing hierarchical notions of difference by enacting the "complex intersectionalities of identity, place, and power" (Shoemaker 2015), the very doing of it enables the democratization of the intercultural and ethnographic dialogue (Fortier 2011). Yet we know through lived experience that this dialogue does not refer to what is said but what is meant. In conventional practice it is the actor, who through the body, through lived experience and through the imagination in play, decodes encrypted meanings; it is the director/researcher, who decides what offer to accept.

Text becomes only one of the means of data transmission; juxtaposition of image, real and abstract, disrupts the seeming simplicity of the spoken word; sound and silence evoke the relational, the multisensory response, which privileges memory and the imagination (Pink, 2009). And like the audience, actors, too, have memories and imaginations that invigorate the "telling" of the story: the performance. Perhaps the notion of re-performance diminishes the craft demands of this re-engagement; every performance is a living artefact, a re-discovery of the work each time it is re-created.

Blending the rigour of text with the aesthetics of artistic practice optimizes the potential for transformative learning by marrying cognition and affect (Arnold 2005). Facts gain meaning (Alexander 2015), objectification of subject matter dissolves with the relational impulse engendered by identification. But these outcomes are the rewards of multiple relationships within the multifaceted prism of performance creation.

Making Connections—Breaking Boundaries

Relationship is central both to performance ethnography and to arts practice; understanding the nature of the interactions between the self and the other propel the investigation, whether this investigation is concerned with an external or internal other, with a familiar or estranged self. The site of an investigation maybe concerned with divergent responses and behaviours within a perceived culture bounded by shared ways of knowing and ways of being. Or it may be through a comparison of diverse cultures, remote and alien one with the other. Or the research site might be concerned with hybridity (Rutherford 1990), the fluid worlds of negotiated as opposed to fixed meanings, where cultures overlap; a liminal, third space, where what emerges from exchanges is entirely new (Bhabha 1994).

The particular investigation at the heart of this chapter concerns the relationships that evolved and the artefact, which was co-created, within just such a third space. Over a period of five years, twelve of us developed a fictional play that emerged from storytelling, from listening and from the valuable contribution of Elders. Although the ensemble included Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cast members, myself included, the play was less concerned with cross-cultural themes than with colonization and its many legacies.

Cast members changed over time but the dominant theme always concerned the return to country and the reclamation of self. Ultimately it was all about a central character, 'Dolly', and her life and her death as an Aboriginal woman trapped in the city with a desperate need to "go home." Within these ambiguous, porous borderlands of merging cultures we discovered that our influences, our contributions, derived as much from a search for what has been lost through colonization, as much as what needs to be discarded. Ancient and modern ways of knowing merge in symbiotic relationships; wonder and mystery is juxtaposed with fractured domestic realities as our story develops. The land itself becomes a character, at first alien and later redemptive; chance encounters bring crises, which later evolve into opportunities disguised as loss.

The characters are all imagined, as is the story; nevertheless, our play-creation practice illuminates a process of engagement—a way of working that has a contribution to make, I believe, to those researchers interested in the cognitive and emotional insights potentially available in the decolonizing performance space.

Locating a Research Methodology

Not designed as a research project, our artefact is not a performance ethnography; it is a main stage play intended for a community audience. Yet the nature of the experiences and the understandings they deliver contribute to an appreciation of the multiple complexities offered in the decolonizing performative space.

The opportunities for constructive critical reflexivity offered by critical autoethnography as a research methodology is a way the creation and performance of this work could be offered for scholarly review. Critical autoethnography recognizes that art and its development sit inside the dysfunctional world of political and cultural inequality, where what has been accepted as normal by individuals is disrupted. As a methodology critical autoethnography is not bound by time but recognizes that moments of insight might only be revealed long after they have occurred and their importance might only be defined by a much later, seemingly unrelated event. Finally, critical autoethnography privileges the subjective "I" and it was an intensely personal journey I wish to investigate. It was through this experience of borderland immersion, and in keeping with the foresight offered by Indigenous scholars, I discovered more about my own culture of origin than I had either anticipated or welcomed (Chilisa 2012; Wilkinson 2016). For it was through the performative I glimpsed the gap between how we see ourselves and how others see us, if at all.

I was not an outsider researcher; I did not sit outside the play's making. I was part of it as an actor, as a co-creator; we were all considered writers. I did not create the content but, as I had the responsibility for delivering the drafts and structuring the text, I refer to myself as a scribe. Therefore, for me, there were three personas on the rehearsal room floor: the character I was playing, the actor I am, and the scribe I elected to be. I suggest these three personas, consciously interacting over time, shift from a subjective to an increasingly objective site along a spectrum.

Given that critical autoethnography invites an examination of the personal within the context of the cultural, this paper positions my experience of dominant culture disruption beside my struggle to re-locate personal and artistic authenticity, to go with the flow. The oscillation between inclusion and exclusion ultimately delivered new and powerful understandings of both trust and resilience. And parallel to these understandings what emerged, in the Australian context, was a recognition that it was the potency of inter-generational silence driven by a different but equally present fear that remains a factor in inhibiting institutional change.

Because I wanted to include more voices than mine in this chapter, and as the play was a co-creation, I invited two key participants in the play's development and execution to contribute. Both Lily and Fred founded the theatre company Moogahlin, under whose auspices we developed the play; both were there from the very beginning, Lily as an actor and Fred as the director. Together we happened to share an artistic practice that encouraged innovation and a vision that recognized and respected our different motivations. Their experience of kinesis differs from mine, reinforcing notions of borderland individuality, where divergent experiences are not perceived as creating barriers to understanding our shared humanity (Alexander 2015).

Because the play is about Australia and Australians, there are three islands referenced in the title of this paper: the island of outcomes or the artefact, the play itself; the island that is the artist, with her vulnerabilities, assumptions, craft and personal emotional and cognitive responses to the breaking and re-making experience; and the island of Australia, settled as a penal colony in 1788. According to Jill Milroy (2011b), 95 percent of the Aboriginal population 'disappeared' within 100 years of the British arrival; further, according to Reconciliation Australia (2007), between 20,000 and 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were removed from their homes between 1910 and 1970. Both of these realities are never articulated but profoundly influence the play's story. However, the play-making endeavor did not begin as an exploration of survival or colonization or islands, literal or figurative. It did not even begin as a play. It began as a question.

The First Workshop

In 2008, script in hand, I approached Moogahlin Performing Arts, a new Redfern-based theatre company dedicated to mentoring and producing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performance. Redfern is an inner city suburb of Sydney long associated with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander diaspora. It was also home to the National Black Theatre, which opened in 1972 and closed after a withdrawal of Government funding in 1977. In a program series, Message Stick, produced by the ABC (2012) two artists associated with this theatre reminisce:

> **Louise Aileen Corpus:** Thank God we had the Redfern blacks, because, you know, they were defiant. They had guts. They had dreams.
> **Gerry Bostock:** The most important legacy of Black Theatre is the confidence in being able to be Aboriginal.
> **Louise Aileen Corpus:** Thanks, Redfern! (2012, p. 7).

I knew none of this history but I knew from that first meeting that Moogahlin was building on that theatre's legacy. I had attended a university that was expanding into the fringes of Redfern even then in the 1970s; I loved theatre but I never knew of the National Black Theatre's existence. Nor in 2008 did I think this was unusual; like knowing people who identified as Aboriginal, it was outside my experience. Now, at the point of meeting Lily and Fred I was too consumed with anxiety over my request for a script consultation to think about the past. I had written some Aboriginal characters into a short film script and, because I had just written my first verbatim play (Wilkinson 2008) after years of scripting television, I wanted to know whether my Aboriginal characters sounded authentic. Without Lily or Fred saying anything, I knew they did not.

I called the short film *Stop, Revive, Survive*, a popular road safety slogan at the time, and had created a number of characters, whose lives intersect by chance while taking shelter in a roadhouse from a storm. Included in that array of characters were three older women travelling together in a van. Lily and Fred offered to organize a reading of the script if I was able to secure some funding. I did through a government grant program and about a dozen of us met at the Redfern Community Centre on a Saturday. Lily ran the introductory circle; she announced that we were all here:

> **Lily:** Because Linden wants to make the blackfellas in the story sound like blackfellas and not like blackfellas written by a whitefella.

No-one laughed. Only I smiled and that was out of discomfort. Perhaps it was in that moment I began to understand that the past was the present; the present, the past. History was in the room and it bound us all.

The reading took an hour, maybe less. And then we all got on our feet to improvise the dialogue, to re-work the scenarios. It was Fred who wanted to know about the women.

It all began with a question.

> **Fred:** Why are these women together?
> **Linden:** Because…. because they are all poor, they are all marginalized, they are all dying.

Fred is amused.

> **Fred:** That doesn't tell me anything. So what? I'm not asking what they have in common; they have too little in common. You've got two Aboriginal

> women and one non-Aboriginal woman travelling in a van; how do they even know each other? Why are they together?

We decided to find out. A shared theatre practice was now invaluable. We had been using improvisation to extemporize on scenarios between other characters; now we moved into the imagined, we had more freedom but no explicit boundaries, so trust, in turn, became an implicit factor in our work together. Spolin (2000) maintains that improvisation accesses intuitive knowledge:

> The intuitive can only respond in immediacy—right now. It comes bearing its gifts of spontaneity … Through spontaneity we are re-formed into our selves … It creates an explosion that for the moment frees us from handed-down frames of reference, memory choked with old facts and information … It is the time of discovery, of experiencing creative expression. (2000, p. 4)

Three of us began an improvisation; we set it in a craft activities room in a hostel. I inhabited prickly non-Aboriginal cancer survivor 'Col,' for the first time and Lily became the former Country and Western singer on a downward career trajectory, 'Toots.' Aunty Rhonda became the fragile but astute alcoholic, 'Dolly.' It did not occur to anyone that in finding a way to answer Fred's question, we would abandon the film and create a play.

The Aunties' Epic—An Outline

The improvisation we did centred around the use of Col's van and subsequently making Col take Toots and Dolly back to Dolly's country. A direct request was out of the question; Toots and Col distrusted and disliked each other from the outset; it was Dolly who won Col over by complimenting Col on the colours she had used to decorate her coat hangers. Col, as I discovered through the improvisation, was desperate to be included. In anything.

The workshop day ended but, as it turned out, none of us wanted to let go of the characters we had located, the Aunties. Over a period of three years, meeting perhaps once a year as an ensemble and more frequently as individuals, we began to develop a narrative for a play. The original idea of all three women going on a road trip, because all three were dying of illness or grief, was abandoned. The road trip remains central to the play but only Dolly, still an alcoholic, is close to death. The urgency to get back to country relates to the death of Dolly's sister, 'Bindi,' many years before;

Bindi's spirit now haunts Dolly, calling her home. We know, as an audience and as characters, this haunting is traumatic for Dolly and assume it is symptomatic of a lifetime of loss. Toots takes up Dolly's cause and together they all pile into Col's van and head toward Yuin country, the beautiful south coast of New South Wales. And the epic journey into each of their pasts begins.

Despite her antipathy towards Col, but much to Toots's chagrin, they are forced to make a detour to Toots's childhood home, where her sister now lives, with shock and horror for Toots, a non-Aboriginal lover. Once there Dolly and Col witness first-hand Toots's rampant ego at work in her cruel disdain for her nephew's predicament: in jail and without hope. Toots's rationale is all about toughening her nephew up for the real world. The women leave. Toots knows she has alienated the others but her pride, once a strength in the tough world of entertainment, now proves divisive. The journey falters.

Dolly attempts to heal the rift by stumbling into the telling of the story of Bindi's death. Raped and murdered by police, known but unprosecuted perpetrators of violence towards Aboriginal women, through the telling of the story Dolly reveals she was a witness to this traumatic event. Frozen with terror, she hides behind the sacred rocks on Gulaga, an ancient mountain in Yuin country, its very seclusion making it a preferred killing ground. Dolly remains hidden until the perpetrators drive back down the mountain; she finds no trace of Bindi other than a shell bracelet, a possession she still has. Dolly runs from the mountain, from the community, from the possibility of sharing Bindi's fate and has kept running. Dolly's story achieves its purpose; the women are united in their support for Dolly once again. They will perform a burial ritual on Gulaga; Dolly insists that Col should be included. Dolly's acceptance of Col against Toots distrust emboldens Col.

Further down the highway south and now in Yuin country, Col suggests a quick diversion. She wants to see the mansion her estranged daughter has built overlooking the ocean; she wants to bask in her daughter's affluence but rejects any suggestions of a reunion. The visit goes badly; the women are seen and are invited in. Col's daughter Tamsin humiliatingly rejects her mother and Toots and Dolly recognize that Tamsin is Aboriginal, not Spanish, as Col has always insisted. In a final confrontation between Col and Toots it is revealed that Col's first love was an Aboriginal man, long-deceased. Tired of the lies, the confrontations with their pasts, the women all abandon each other in the shadow of Gulaga.

Shattered and her heart breaking, Dolly, with Bindi's help, calls up Toots and Col through an improvised ceremonial cry, reaching back into her past for lore once lost. The women gather once more for Dolly's death. A ritual begins. Bindi claims Dolly for the spirit world. Now alone, Toots and Col decide to help each other to heal those they have damaged. It is not certain they will be able to sustain this intention and the play ends.

Other members of the ensemble play a variety of characters on the journey: sisters, the nephew, Tamsin, the non-Aboriginal lover, even a couple of vegans, who lighten the mood and propel the plot. But the play remains overtly Dolly's story. Nevertheless, the story of colonization is omnipresent in the subtext: the disenfranchisement, the normalization of murder, the inequality, the violence, the racism, the profound legacy of the loss of country and culture, the denial of Aboriginality, the inter-generational trauma as a consequence of child removal policies. The subtext lives in chance remarks and silence and tacit understandings; without ever being articulated, politics and policies underpin the drama—the grief, the anger and always the humor.

Locating the Content

Our content was sourced from stories from the cast as well as from the Redfern community itself. This was accessed through visits to a local aged care and recreational centre for Aboriginal people where we spoke principally but not exclusively with women. Fred, Lily, Aunty Rhonda and I also travelled to Gulaga to take part in a weekend of understanding initiated by Uncle Max Harrison, a Yuin Elder, an author and one of the two Elders invited to support our project. The weekend involved an introduction to Yuin spirituality, ceremony and beliefs and was open to the non-Aboriginal public.

Through Uncle Max's deep cultural knowledge we were able to clarify the roles of secular and sacred ceremony and were given permission to introduce secular ritual into the text. He also translated the opening prologue into Yuin, which meant the play could now begin in language. One of Uncle Max's stories gave us the play's title: *This Fella, My Memory* (Moogahlin Performing Arts and Wilkinson, 2013). With his hand on his heart, Uncle Max told us the about the fear he felt prior to his recent triple by-pass operation; he was afraid disturbing his heart would destroy the memories it held. The heart, the organ of hurt and healing, personalized the characters' journeys. The play was *The Aunties' Epic* no more.

Very early in the workshop process our other participating Elder, local Redfern community member Aunty Christine Blakeney, gave us many stories about members of the Redfern diaspora longing to return home, a place, because of inter-generational child removal policies, they might never have been to. Then she arrived with an Aboriginal map of Australia (http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/) and we became grounded in the physical reality of our shared history and the different consequences of that history. The resonance of our ongoing workshops changed. We became braver, conscious we were telling a bigger story. The map immediately accelerated our sensitivity towards the decolonizing space that the play was to occupy conceptually, with its merging of cultures, traditional and contemporary; cultures that had been lost, denied and now re-interpreted.

The presence of both Elders profoundly affected us all; they anchored knowledge and they generated a safe place to share. Lily comments on aspects of her personal breaking and re-making:

> I felt empowered … every time we had Aunty Chris and Uncle Max in the room. When they gave us feedback, that was really empowering, made us resilient and vulnerable at the same time. Because, you know, there are things you think you know, then you realize you don't … it's very empowering when Elders share even parts of their story … You think there's nothing that will shock you anymore. Of the stories that some of our mob have been through—most of our mob have been through. Yeah, you think, you know: Oh, I'm going to hear this story. I've heard it before. But you haven't; it's different. (Lily Shearer, personal interview, May 2016)

For me it was another cast member who told me a particular story that triggered the breaking. But like Lily, it was a story I thought I knew. But I did not.

Breaking Expectations—"Tamsin" and the Diamond Ring

By now it was 2012; we had been working on the play for four years, on and off, and knew we would have the funding for a production in 2013. We finished a round of improvisation and late in the afternoon, I suggested we might try telling each other an imagined story about where we were in our lives six months after the play's conclusion. As the scribe, I

thought the storytelling exercise might provide an opportunity to hear the voices unfettered by the play's drama.

As Col I told a story about how I felt I was close to reconciling with my daughter, Tamsin; she was still refusing to see me but I was seeing her husband, 'Andy,' on a regular basis and he was very encouraging. It would only be a matter of time. But Tamsin's story was totally unexpected: she spread her hand wide and held it up. On her finger was an imagined diamond ring Andy had just given it to her. They were holidaying at an exclusive resort in Fiji and it was just one of the many presents he had bestowed. She loved the way it caught the light and it was so huge … and she wondered what he would give her next. End of story. There was no mention of Col.

It was for Col as a character, myself as an actor and myself as the scribe a moment of deep hurt and troubling insight. In his thesis on learning and empowerment for indigenous students, Brown (2004) talks about the emotional pain created by invalidation of the self and the distorted, inaccurate view of self and identity created by colonialism and oppression. In the vulnerable place of creation and spontaneity, when nothing is right nor wrong, when everything is valid and judgment is a barrier not a filter, the self is a sensitive site. Tasmin's invalidation of Col—Col who tries so hard to be included—gave me a new understanding of exclusion or in Brown's (2004) words: the invalidated self. 'Exclusion,' I discovered, need not be omission because of gender or age or skin colour; exclusion can effortlessly be the end result of invisibility.

Feeling the powerlessness that stems from invisibility was accentuated not only because of the irrelevance of Col to Tamsin's life but because the nature of the barrier: the ring, the diamond, the gift, affirmed the supremacy of acquisition, a display of wealth, as a substitute for relationship. Col was excluded from her own sense of family, the possibilities of forgiveness and her own understanding of cultural belonging; she was too poor, too marginalized to be of significance in the neo-liberal world of her daughter.

Later, leaving the rehearsal room, I, as the actor, realized I had been given the privilege of being seen as I am seen by others, as inhabiting a space where materialism supplants humanity. This, I thought, is my culture being reflected back; this is what it is seen to be as white.

I, as the scribe, however, was not so accepting of the experience. I felt strangely disempowered; the story had become something else, I felt we had lost the up-beat ending I assumed we would have. More specifically I

had lost control of Col's story, or so it seemed. It was only much later that I realized for Col and for myself as the scribe, 'control' equated to 'power.' Col might have longed for inclusion but it was only ever to be on her terms; ironic that her name should echo her colonialist origins. Yet what I as an actor and an actor of colonialist origins continued to struggle with was the depths at which these ideas of story were held; it was beyond mere cognition. Deep down I was still holding on to a story we were no longer telling.

The dominant culture—my culture of origin—demanded a reunion; a gesture is made, a regret acknowledged, hands are held, a gaze lingers. The natural order is restored and fulfilling that natural order means happiness is the reward. A dominant culture story. But the stories within *This Fella, My Memory* did not celebrate the dominant culture. Healings happened in spite of it. The police in Dolly's story were never punished but Dolly is redeemed; Toots' nephew spirals into new lows in jail but Toots returns to him.

Brown (2004) recognizes that it is the emotional realm that provides "the nourishment necessary for educational transcendence and learning" (p. 219). The removal of emotion or affect from learning in favour of reason eliminates connectivity to all aspects and energies in creation, a connectivity that is central to an indigenous world view. The exclusion of emotion was therefore pivotal in the objectivization of indigenous peoples. Becoming Col and feeling the pain of Tamsin's rejection as something unexpected, as something experienced for the first time suggests an awakening, a realization. It suggests that in the colonized world, a world where the affect is an inferior informant compared to reason, the colonization of some meant colonization of all (McCaslin and Breton, 2008). That Col could *feel* loss is promising. What she does with that feeling is where the healing/learning happens through the play's story and the relationships woven within it. Not that I as the scribe knew what this story might be.

Emotions, Brown (2004) determines, are instincts made conscious; as with Spolin's (2000) work with intuition and spontaneity, it is within the emotional realm of creative expression that true discovery takes place and that "we are re-formed into ourselves" (Spolin 2000, p. 4). The reshaping of Col as a character continued through the rehearsal process and into performance; letting go of the grief around Tamsin took a lot longer than knowing it was there. In the moment Col might have seen into her daughter's heart and recognized the futility of trying to arouse sentiment;

but it did not stop the longing for her recognition. Welcome to the borderland and the alchemy of new stories, the imagination and kinesis.

Remaking and the Play's Resolution

The political context in which the play was created meant that, as different players in the colonization story, we approached the work with different motivations. Fred wanted to work on the play, because it served Moogahlin's needs as a fledgling company within a specific community:

> Getting a company together, getting people who were interested … And suddenly there was a project. It pulled everything together … it put Moogahlin on the map … That story was about our community, our community in Redfern and Waterloo. We spent a lot of time making those women belong to our community. The Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal people that live there … The people that did come and see it would recognize themselves, even "Colleen." …The whole question of identity or dislocation from family or finding family again—those sorts of questions I think most Aboriginal people grapple with (Frederick Copperwaite, personal interview, May 2016).

Lily is more concerned with the play's content:

> Multi-layered, wasn't it. It was about intergenerational post-traumatic stress. IRA: integration, removal, assimilation. How are you going to stop learned behavior for 228 years? [The play was] certainly about those demons that are passed on; about how we, as parents and grandparents instill all that hurt and that into our children without realizing what we are doing sometimes. We pass it on and I think that it's twofold. It's 1) we instill into our children and grandchildren that, you know, this is the truth of what happened and 2) to keep that fire in the belly burning for fighting. We made that clear [in This Fella] and a lot of people commented on that. Oh, how strong that was. It's good, because they commented on how much knowledge it enabled them to have. And understand a little bit more now. (Lily Shearer, personal interview, May 2016)

In the critically reflexive position available to a multi-tasking autoethnographer, I am persuaded by the argument that I never stopped trying to answer that first question: 'why are these women together?' Ultimately it was not about inclusion; it could not be, for without Tamsin I could never have the experience of inclusion, as I wanted it to be. But the experience was about learning a new way of being.

Right at the end of the play, just as we shifted from rehearsal to performance, Fred wanted laughter. I resisted; I as Col was still grieving for Tamsin and now Dolly had died but everyone was sick of the tears, so in the final duologue in front of the first audience we tried it:

> **Col**: What about your tour?
> **Toots**: No tour. Never was one.
> **Col**: Did Dolly know?
> **Toots**: Too right, she did. What about your Tamsin? Did you ever tell her that she's Aboriginal?
> Beat.
> **Col**: Will you help me?
> Beat.
> **Toots**: (Laughs) Must need my head read.
> And then Col laughs.

In that moment Toots dispels the past; Col laughs at Toots's response, her self-pity evaporates and suddenly there is the possibility of a future. Finally, Col shifts from fear to trust; she is 're-made.' And although the play is focused on Dolly, as she travels from fragmented to whole, all the characters mirror versions of the same transformative trajectory.

As the actor, I never thought laughter would work but it was a perfect moment with which to conclude the play. As Col, I discovered that resilience is not about withstanding the past but hope in the present. I as the scribe recall a response to history's data:

> What is often not understood is the incredible resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people in surviving such adversity … Psychological strengths include narrative style, humour, creativity, visualization and imagery, holistic understanding, capacity for acceptance of others, collaboration styles, and respect for life and ancestry. (Helen Milroy 2011a, p. 29)

The kinds of knowledge gained therefore in the relational, performative space, personally speaking, illuminate both personal and cultural cages, as well as new ways of knowing and being. Such discoveries are intrinsic to the intense engagement within collaborative artistic practice, to the freedom gained through shared trust and to the myriad of moments that usher in surprise.

Conclusion

The development of performance with decolonizing intent demands intricate and intensely personal negotiations with multiple cultures, multiple motivations and multiple selves. Recognizing that the process of kinesis potentially occurs within and for all performance participants—and leaving time for shared reflection—opens up performative practice to accommodating the sensitized responses derived from personal experience, enriching the content and relatability of the data. Such reflection further acknowledges that the intensity of discovering new understandings does not occur in a neutral space neither personally nor politically.

As this chapter demonstrates, colonization has both deep and diverse resonances for all players. Inheritors of privilege as well as those survivors of persecution and disempowerment confront significant challenges in their individual journeys towards locating the connections that bind humanity. These challenges might be profound but perhaps it is only fear that keeps them in place. And perhaps, like Toots, it is through laughter and not logic that the new becomes accessible.

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CHAPTER 11

Shrug Off the Old Lies: Writing Decoloniality in and Through Critical Autoethnograhy with Helene Cixous

Elizabeth Mackinlay

Introduction

Version 1

Hélène Cixous (1994, p. xvi) tells us that writing is a "particular urgency, an individual force, a necessity" which is not "economically or politically indebted to all the vileness and compromise [and] not obliged to reproduce the system" (1976, p. 892). Her words urge us to "shrug off the old lies" (Cixous, 1991, p. 40) of the "demon of Coloniality" (1997, p. 262) and suggest that this is what writing *will* do—writing must no longer be determined by the past and instead must seek to break up, to destroy and to foresee the un-seeable (Cixous, 1976, p. 875). In this chapter, I draw upon my shared ethico-onto-epistemological subjectivities with Yanyuwa people and place myself in the "school of writing" with Hélène Cixous (1993) to imagine writing decoloniality in and through critical autoethnography. Cixous and I enter into a performative and poetic conversation in relation to our "double contradictory memories" of being and belonging

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"perfectly at home, nowhere" (1997, p. 261) in relation to and with our subjectivities as white settler colonial women. In doing so, this chapter aims to embody Cixous' insistence that writing which is dangerous, affective and material all at once holds much hope for a critical, ethical, response-able, always-already resistant and decolonial autoethnography.

Version 2

It is quiet as she steps onto the carpet of pine needles. Above her the wind whistles a sad and forlorn melody, searching for a place to call home in the lofty branches of these natural skyscrapers. There is no movement here on the ground and the stillness becomes the bass line for the breeze playing its tune above. The woman stands, not moving, and closes her eyes, soaking in the completeness of being here in this moment and feels her body begin to gently sway. Like a mother rocking her baby from one hip to the other, her body keeps time with the symphony that swirls and sashays in the treetops high above her. Here, in the quiet by and by, she does not have to explain. Here, the belonging she yearns for is close. Here, she settles in to the comfort of now to wait just a little longer. The sharp snap of a twig breaks her reverie. A crow screeches a warning, piercing the quiet and beats her wings frantically as she flees. The woman's breath catches in her throat as her heart tries to chase down the awareness that she is not alone. She does not dare move and hopes that her stillness becomes a shield against the foreboding creeping its way towards her. The woman's motionless body propels her "towards the most frightening [knowing that] this is what makes writing thrilling but painful [she] writes towards what [she] flee[s]" (Cixous in Derrida et al., 2006, p. 9).

Version 3

What are the secrets of me that wait just behind the introduction to this autoethnographic piece? What secrets of my critical autoethnographic life as a feminist-educator-ethnographer-white-settler-colonial-woman are poised to pounce and take you and me backwards and forwards to such places of un-forgetting? How much will I reveal and how much will I conceal about the kinds of ethico-onto-epistemological heart-thinking which forms the letters, words and paragraphs of this chapter? Should I tell you, for example, that the poetic writing which comes next are lines and phrases which I wrote, many years ago in my ethnographic writing? No, perhaps, that should remain secret—it is writing of which I do not wish to be reminded, dripping as it is with the power and privilege of coloniality. I do

not wish you as the reader to be reminded of where to find them so I have secreted away the references. Indeed, much of the writing here is usually secreted away, and yet I have already given the secret away because now it is "known and hidden, impossible to reveal because the revelation would bring about the destruction of the secret thing, and also of life" (Cixous, in Derrida et al., 2006, p. 11). Perhaps, learning to live, work write and love in this way, in the folds of friendship with secrets, is the most powerful strategy we have as critical autoethnographers.

The Dangers Awake Her

Beth tossed and turned, trying to find the comfort that would return her to the deep nothing of her grey sleep. It was safe and warm there in her colonial bed and she was in no mind to arise just yet. The digital clock on the dresser signalled a time and place where her futurity as white settler colonial woman was secure. Beth laid stone still, her dull eyes focussed on the soft white light of the display, certain in its capacity to lull her back. Wide open, she watched and waited. The seconds became minutes became hours became more and the restlessness in her mind crept into her feet, entangling her heart and legs in white cotton sheets. Words and worlds she had written scrolled like film credits down in front of her of eyes (Fig. 11.1).

> The group of Aboriginal people.
> They call themselves Yanyuwa.
> They live in the township of Burrulula in the
> Northern Territory of Australia.
> Map 1 shows Burrulula situated approximately
> 970km south east of Darwin and 80km inland from the
> Gulf of Carpentaria (Figs. 11.2 and 11.3).
>
> These are strongly reflected and notable facts.
> Recorded and thus affirmed, they may be said to serve and to corroborate.
> This type of examination elucidates
> The significant role they play
> The results of this combined linguistic and musical analysis.
> It is important to understand.
> They must stand in particular kinds of relation.
> The relationship is threefold.
> Women play too.
> Primarily vocal, paired, most
> necessary companions.

Fig. 11.1 Restlessness becomes her. Illustration by author

Fig. 11.2 Map 1: Finding a location. Illustration by author

Fig. 11.3 Map 2: Location found. Illustration by author

> Under the increased pressures of assimilation.
> Worldly escapades thinly veil.
> A greater understanding.
> See Map 2. Prior to contact with Europeans.
> They are more frequently encountered.

The linen wound and pulled tightly, so much so that soon Beth felt completely trapped in the colonial matrix wrapped around her. She worked her body this way and that, black words and worlds written on white pages desperately trying to escape. But Beth soon became frustrated and uneasy as her literary moves towards social justice only served to bind her more tightly in her complicity to oblige and reproduce the system. She had tried to un/entangle her "white settler feminist colonial, teacher of Indigenous Australian studies and education, and mother and wife in an Aboriginal family" writing from colonialism before but had felt like an endangered purple, red and yellow butterfly in the rainforest desperately beating its wings against the drab and relentless forces of domination. The credits continued to roll.

> For our mothers song we sing music for dreaming
> Maintaining grandmothers law is a case study of the

mermaid song Memories in the landscape blurring boundaries
Many songs, many voices and many
dialogues To be two, the personal is political
Making the journey in
Advocacy and applied stringin
gtogether moving and dancing towards
Reading race, culture and gender, research as sisterhood
as relationship on Yanyuwa terms
Engaging our thinking hearts
PEARLS not problems
In memory of research

The truth was, Beth was caught and yet she knew that she had to do "something other than the return of the same old" (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 125) to turn this 'stuck place' around (Lather, 1998). Lying in a room of her own, Beth realised that it was up to her decide whether in fact she was locked in or locked out. With this thought, the second wave words of "insister" Cixous, rushed in to overlap and become one with a third. "Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" (Cixous, 1976, p. 875), she whispered. "Writing," she declared, "a way of leaving no space for death, of pushing back forgetfulness, of never letting oneself be surprised by the abyss. Of never becoming resigned, consoled; never turning over in bed to face the wall and drift asleep again as if nothing had happened; as if nothing could happen" (Cixous, 1991, p. 3). "It's time to wake from the dead," she shouted, "your writing must become a different kind of 'rite/right'; one that does not seek to 'master,' but rather "reminds people that they once wept for love, and trembled with desires, and that they were then very close to the life that they claim they've been seeking while constantly moving further away" (Cixous, 1991, p. 57). "Shrug off the old lies," she screamed, "Dare what you don't dare … rejoice, rejoice in the terror, follow it where you're afraid to go … take the plunge" (1991, p. 40). She was desperate to run her writing and make her escape from this discursive/cursed place of pen-man-ship. With one final struggle, Beth wrenched herself free and stepped outside.

To Danger Then in Writing

The purple, yellow and red runners she wore dared to interrupt the grey thoroughfare of truth she found herself in. But the street with no name, no name that mattered to her, made no sound in reply. She shivered as the

Fig. 11.4 Ready to run right/w/rite. Photo by author

vanishing night placed cold fingers uninvited on the back of her neck and whispered an age-old warning (Fig. 11.4).

Beth glanced quickly over her shoulder. For a moment she was sure she saw a/not/her lurking in the shadows, watching, waiting, wanting, and was relieved to find herself alone.

Her feet sensed the urgency she held to leave this boulevard of the broken and moved to carry her quickly in-between to her becoming. In the distance she heard the sounds of the world waking up and they wrapped around her in a blanket of familiarity. The hum of the highway below her persisted and kept the cotton wool of daily life firmly lodged. Down the road and a couple of houses away, a rooster resisted his erasure and sang his siren's call. A woman in the house on the hill sighed as she ground the coffee for the cup that would revive her weary soul and the marriage that entrapped her. The cries of a newborn baby pierced the mask of inner suburban serenity and rendered the deadness of the day begun (Fig. 11.5).

Familiarity wrenched its warmth from around her shoulders and in truth Beth was glad to be rid of it. A mantra played around and around in the cool spot it left behind and pushed her forward. "Unforget regret rue the blue day dream sleep repeat retreat back down step ladder rungs

Fig. 11.5 Into the abyss she falls. Illustration by author

writings unforget regret rue the blue day dream sleep repeat retreat back down step ladder rungs writings unforget." The words ran through her mind like rolling waves, breaking teasingly on the sand at first, then smashing deliciously on the rocks. Beth was on her way to danger and she loved the feeling of freedom it heralded. She began to run the paths to ruin, working them ferociously, the devil may care, and she dared to anyway. Now and then those who desired to consume, copy or cull her moved to block her course but Beth had seen their kind before and was not impressed. With blue lips she simply lifted her pen in hand and blew them away. Beth was unstoppable. She did not bend, she did not break but she did bleed words a plenty, all over her purple, yellow and red runners and the page in front of her. The life blood continued to pool and grow, leaking through the borders, leaving the boys and their bandwagon behind. She watched and became entangled hopeless(-less)fully in the pleasure and pain of the moment. Beth saw clearly then that danger is a woman writing. The woman becomes the danger in writing. In writing

the woman finds the danger. In danger the writing finds the woman and Beth descended gladly down into its depths to begin again.

The Perils of Danger

Her heart pounded, keeping time with her purple, red and yellow encased feet as they moved in tandem with her hands across the page. One step became one word became one sentence became one hundred metres became one paragraph became one kilometre. Flashes of yellow mixed with splashes of red as her beloved purple runners relentlessly pushed her forward and forever downwards to the danger she declared loudly and proudly in her prose. Streams of sweat ran down the sides of her face, pooling at the end of her elbows to drip a transient line on the grey concrete. The tiny beads of perspiration meandered their way from the pavement to the page and breathed a sigh of relief, as they become one with a language and way of knowing that readily embraced them like family. Beth lifted her arms high in the air as she ran and relished the cooling kiss the breeze placed on her armpits. She closed her eyes and simply let her legs carry her. Racing and flying down the hill she knew for certain that she had come back from always and found freedom in the wind (Fig. 11.6).

Fig. 11.6 The heart-lines in her hand. Illustration by author

Flying and racing, racing and flying, Beth was seduced by the methodical way her feet and hands and words and writing became one by her own dangerous movement. A woman outside herself she watched in fascination as all that her writing could hold grew deeper and wider. The heartlines in her hand stretched skin, pulled muscles and created a boundless thirst for wisdom born of pain. Beth reached the bottom of the hill and without warning she sensed that her descent had now plateaued along the flat lines her own two hands had created. With despair she saw then that she had taken a wrong turn and found herself nearing a dead end. The street around her sounded a stony silence. Her mouth was dry, each breath a coarse file that rasped cruelly across the back of her throat. She tried to lift her pen, but where once she flew, she now found herself weighted down with cast iron chains. Glancing down at her feet, Beth was not surprised to see them now blood-stained, the brilliance of yellow, red and purple becoming brown and a taunting memory of liberation lost. She tripped and fell heavily to the ground, the flesh on her knees ripped savagely on the loose gravel. Beth winced as she rolled over and assessed the collateral damage this particular flight of danger had inflicted upon her. The smell of her bodily secretions mingled with grit and dirt, and her stomach heaved abhorrence in response. Beth sat there for some time, watching and waiting for her hands, heart and feet to become one again.

A Different Kind of Danger

A shadow fell across her face and brought Beth back to the present. The man stood in front of her, legs wide apart, his crotch but a few inches from her face. He reeked of piss and patriarchy. Beth stood up and tried not to show her panic. “Well, well, well,” he sneered, “Little girl lost and nowhere left to run! Where you gonna’ run to darlin’ in this big colonial city?” She kept her eyes and head down. He spoke quietly but Beth recognized the violent misogyny it masked—she had met his kind before and it filled her with dread. “No one here but you and me, and you should know by now darlin', I own this past and present—fact, far as I can tell, I own you as well.” He circled around her like a great white shark, a deep-seated desire for female flesh and blood fuelling his desire. His unshaven cheek scraped against her ear and his sour breath curdled down her neck, taking with it any hope she might have had about the promise of running

and writing into danger. "So, nothin' left for you to do but surrender your pen, wipe away those words, and shut your pretty mouth! You know you want it—you've been askin' for it for years—all that feminist writing when you're just a fucking slut. Playing in the ivory tower with the big boys, what did you think would happen? Did you really think you could keep on just keep on just giving me the decolonial-ethico-onto-epistemo-logical finger and I wouldn't notice?" The man grabbed her shoulders and spun her roughly her around to face him. "Lie back you bitch and think of England—that's what this country is built on. I'll show you the power of the c-word once and for all!" He lunged forward and tried to push Beth to the ground.

In that moment time stood still. Beth saw him for what he was—a man and machine defined, driven and destined by the colonial matrix and determined to drag her down with him at all costs. And that was enough for her to do otherwise than surrender. She would no longer be the shadow, "in the shadow he throws on her; the shadow she is" (Cixous & Clement, 1986, p. 67). It was time for Beth to come back from always (Cixous, 1976, p. 878), to resist death, proclaim decoloniality and make trouble (Cixous, 1976, p. 876). Her voice joined those of her Yanyuwa family and she opened her mouth to sing.

> Ngarna Yanyuwa a-
> ngabiyarra Ngarna Yanyuwa
> a-ngabiyarra Ngarna
> Yanyuwa, jibiya wali-angku
> Ngarna Yanyuwa

The heartlines in her hand began to pulse and her beloved kundiyarra urged her forward.

> Yu! Ngarna a-wunhaka, a-mangaji yinda a-balirra baji barra Jina-bunalkarra *ardu*, nya-ladalada, jina wardi
> Cixous' voice returned and joined those of her Yanyuwa family.

"Listen to your kundiyarra, your baba, listen!" Hélène said. "Don't be indebted to all the vileness and compromise, refuse to be impressed by the commotion of the phallic stance (Cixous, 1976, p. 892), break the codes that negate you, and with harrowing explosions, bring on the revolution! (Cixous, 1976, p. 879) Become at will the take and the initiator, [in your]

own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process" (Cixous, 1976, p. 880). The words of her Yanyuwa kundiyarra continued to remind her.

> Yinda barra, yinda a-Yanyuwa ngabiyarra, kurdardi a-mijiji.
> Yinda a-linginmantharra a-Yakibirjirna; nda-marruwarra, nda-baba,
> nda-kujaka, nda- kukurdi, nda-nagbuji, yu, nda-wunhaka.

Hélène nodded her head in agreement. "You are forever being the single and the double, forever being here and elsewhere, over here as elsewhere, elsewhere as here, I and the other, I as other" (Cixous, 1994, p. xv). She paused, "You found yourself in the land of the other, not of the fellow human being. The other: foretells, warns me, forecasts me, alters me, alters me" (Cixous, 1997, p. 270). "This is the moment of your *passance* (passing by) and *arrivance* (movement)—your *Yanyuwance*. You must never settle in (Cixous, 1997, p. 270), no longer be forced by the demon of Coloniality to play the play with a false identity (Cixous, 1997, p. 262) and instead you must seek to break up, to destroy, and to foresee the un-seeable (Cixous, 1976, p. 875). From now on, who can say no to us?" (Cixous, 1991, p. 42)

> Yalayka wunhaka! Yalayka! Kurdardi a-barratha, bawuji barra!
> Yinda-jurnduma kulu kiwa-nba narra nungka a-wunhaka.
> Yinda a-ramanthamarra, kirna balirra!

Beth needed no more encouragement. The heartlines in her hand throbbed, she was ready to blow up and splatter the life-blood of her writing everywhere.

To Danger Then in Writing

By the time Beth finished, the sun was high in the sky and she felt truly alive. Her purple, red and yellow runners sparkled with the vibrancy of life which "borders on death; right up against [that which she vowed] to write" (Cixous, 1991, p. 5). Beth wiped her hands on her jeans and looked at the disappearing spectre of the man sprawled on the ground in front of her. With each word she wrote, she saw him slowly fading away. Would she ever be completely rid of him? Of this Beth was not sure. The effects of him and his past would remain in the present, but she refused to "strengthen him/them by repeating them" (1976, p. 875). She would no

longer fear being a woman, being a white settler colonial woman, being in her Yanyuwance, arriving over and over again to never stand still (1976, p. 893). Beth would no longer fear any risk and instead take thrill in her constant becoming writer, written and writing. Through the same decolonial openings and cracks that are her "danger, [she would] come out of herself to go" (Cixous, 1991, p. 42) in writing. To writing then in danger. To then in(en)danger writing. Writing then in to danger. Danger then in to writing. Danger into then writing. Then in to danger writing. Then to danger in writing. Then writing in to danger. She did not care which way one turned it, she was on her way to becoming a dangerous woman writing (Cixous, 1991, p. 90).

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CHAPTER 12

Transformer: More Than Meets the I/Eye

Fetaui Iosefo

If you are expecting to read about the 'Bumble Bee' from the Autobots or any of the Decepticons from the movie *Transformers*, my apologies. However, if you are expecting to read how a New Zealand born Samoan woman emancipates and transforms through critical autoethnography, please, continue reading.

Naming the I and Eye

My experience with New Zealand education left a bitter taste in my being. I dropped out of high school at the age of 15; I was disillusioned with no sense of belonging. By 19, I was pregnant and had become an added statistic: a stereotypical brown New Zealand-born teenage mother. Writing an autoethnography about the historical and political influences on/in my life began to shape reclaim, reconcile and restore me, back into education and back into society. I/eye began to understand how societal spaces had influenced the way I/eye saw myself; how others saw me; the way I/eye lived with myself; the way I/eye had lived with others. It also opened a

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porthole of examining colonisation and the effects on my cultural, hybrid identity as Samoan woman privileged to live in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

I am a Pasifika Girl. Making this statement means many things, one of which is that my family and are not separate, cannot be separated. Choosing to do research is not a choice I make for myself or on my own. Instead, it is a family decision. When I shared the options for my masters research I was considering, my family chose autoethnography for me. They stated that I needed to grow and this type of research would stretch me. The ***aiga*** (family) also made it very clear that the stories I would be sharing would also be their stories and therefore, we would need to collectively process my research with and through ***ifoga***, a collaborative process of accountability and reconciliation around matters of importance to the ***aiga***. When I began my master's autoethnography, my family identified that it was culturally important to set up our own ethics committee. The ethics committee consists of family members who are involved in the narratives, and three Matai's (Samoan chiefs) and the family *faifeau* (minister).

My masters dissertation, *Moonwalking with the Pasifika Girl in the Mirror: An Autoethnographic Lens on Higher Education from a Pasifika Girl* (Iosefo, 2014) looked specifically at three geographical spaces; three different times, three *Va*' (spaces in-between, part of a Samoan theory for space as a kin to third space), and was written in three different ways from the perspective of three different identities.

My name is Jerodeen, Olivaigafa, Fetaui Iosefo. Through the process of writing this autoethnography, three identities began to emerge and merge: Fetaui the narrator, Jerodeen the academic analyser and JoFI, the poet. For Fetaui (Samoan name meaning to connect) the narrator, identity and voice are evocative (Ellis & Bochner, 2016). For Jerodeen the academic analyser, voice and identity are critical (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014) and interpretive (Denzin, 2014). For JoFI the poet, voice is a combination of many identities; she sees, feels and writes both the seen and unseen. The last part of my identity, Olivaigafa (Samoan name meaning joy beside the still water) is not yet known or written. During the years I spent writing my master's dissertation, a transformation began to take place (Iosefo, 2016). My identities began to move and change from I to eye. JoFI writes,

I/Eye Am Brown I Am

I Am Brown I Am lost	*I/Eye Am Brown I Am*
I am a child of the invited migrant dreamers I am a child raised in the aftermath of the 'Dawn Raids' Invited, wanted Sucker Invited unwanted Overstayer Auckland city dwellers OUT… Back to Samoa NO… Forced to South Auckland All the criminals live there/their Rapist, abusers Drunkards violent Unemployed, hopeless Uneducated, dumb Brown Samoan Me I hate my life I hate being brown I speak English but I am Samoan Confused. Who am I? I can't speak Samoan Ashamed to say, I am Samoan Always dreaming fantasising of being white of being right… Stealing to fit into white world Didn't work Using a white name to belong in a white world Didn't work I am brown I am lost ***JoFI***	I/Eye am a child of migrant, dreaming parents I/Eye am a child raised in the aftermath of the 'Dawn Raids' Who Chooses to live in the Southside of Auckland Who Chooses to be educated in the Southside of Auckland Who Chooses every day to speak Samoan with her parents, siblings and children… Who Reclaims her Samoan name Fetaui- To Connect Connect with people Connect with land and sea Who embraces That I/Eye am born flesh and bones of my ancestors. I/Eye am their DNA and they are mine. I/Eye am wounded and resilient I/Eye am bruised but not broken I/Eye love learning I/Eye am hopeful I/Eye am spiritual I/Eye am loved Who am I? I/Eye am Samoan Woman Born in Aotearoa New Zealand And… I/eye am unashamedly Brown. I/eye am. ***JoFI***

Eye/I Roll

Once my Master's dissertation, was completed in March 2014, I volunteered full-time for the Grace Foundation Charitable Trust (GFCT), a faith-based community organisation that provides social housing and a range of cultural holistic services to marginalised members of our community. My volunteer work involved transitioning incarcerated women and men into GFCT homes and back into society using the three *Va'* (spaces in-between)—*Va' o tagata* (relational space), *Va' fealoaloa'i* (space of respect), and *Va' tapuia* (sacred space). The three *Va'* were used as analytical tools in the in my master's and are now the cornerstone for GFCT in building relationships with the incarcerated and their transition process back into society (Efi, 2007; Iosefo, 2016; Tuagalu, 2008).

In September 2014, one of the ex-incarcerated women staying in my home asked to read my dissertation. This did not surprise me as this woman is very articulate and able. She lay on the couch with my dissertation and began to read; I heard her laugh, cry and go through myriad emotions; when she finished reading it, she asked if I could write her story. I replied. "No worries, let's write a book." She came back with, "No sis, I want to be able to critique my own life, like you did." I was stumped and did the eye roll, partially because I could not think of anything more torturous than writing another academic piece. Still, once word got out that I was writing her story, three more women and three men requested to do the same. Each time someone asked me to write their story, I did the eye roll. My eyes rolled until I read Paulo Freire who writes, "only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will sufficiently free both" (2005, p. 44). How could I say no? I consulted my family ethics committee. They saw the PhD as a spiritual journey; each door that opened to me in the process of working with GFCT and ex-incarcerated women cemented that, this is the research I was destined to do. I agreed and sought permission with the GFCT management and Board of Trustees. Permission was granted and subsequently, my PhD submission of statement of intent to the University of Auckland was also approved and the PhD journey began with my co-researchers.

Jerodeen-Academic Analyser	*JoFI- Poet*
Historical trauma theory is an important way to understand the culmination of intergenerational trauma for Māori women who have been incarcerated (George et al., 2014). Historical trauma is defined by Patterson, Uchigakiuchi, and Bissen (2013) as "collective, cumulative wounding both on an emotional and psychological level that impacts across a lifetime and through generations … and the unresolved grief impacts both personally and intergenerationally" (p. 335). Historical trauma theory, like critical autoethnography, is a pathway by which marginalised groups can reclaim their identity. If we are to discuss the reclaiming of identity from historical trauma, we must include how mass incarceration is not an indigenous concept. For Samoans prior to colonisation, justice involved a restorative process with the offender and those who had been offended against. The ***aiga*** (families), ***matai*** (chiefs), and villages were all involved in an ancient ritual known as the ***ifoga***, in which the offender and his family plead for pardon (Efi, 2005). This process involved owning the offence, being accountable to family and village, and asking for the victim's forgiveness. Acknowledgement of wrongdoing and forgiveness equalled peace and harmony and secured identity for all (Efi, 2005). Post-colonial society, however, has adopted incarceration of offenders as the norm. The process of ***ifoga*** does away with concrete buildings and metal bars simply because prison is not an indigenous concept. Addressing and acknowledging the historical trauma of indigenous people, both during and after incarceration is necessary for healing, realising potential and embracing emancipation and transformation.	**Historical Trauma** *You introduced yourself as a friend* *You started out as a giver* *But you were a taker* *You showed me your ways* *You pretended to understand our way* *But you wanted your way* *You got your way* *Eye helped you* *Eye trusted you* *You stole our land* *You silenced our stories* *You stole my heart* *You wounded me with your ways* *You denied me our ways* *You hurt me with your diseases* *You blamed us as the disease* *She apologised* *We are still wounded* *You are now my friend but you are also my foe* *Eye still help you* *Eye don't trust you* *Now let me introduce myself to you* *Eye am deeply wounded hurt, scarred* *And will forever live in the silhouettes of …* *historical trauma* *My name is … 90% of my co-researchers…*

Eye/I Celebrated

The approval process was seemingly smooth; eye could not believe it, and so I celebrated. I began to think maybe this was a sign of things to come with this research—smooth, moving always forward? Yes, I thought, the PhD would be a piece of cake. After all, the research is about 'them,' not me! I thought I had completed the transformative process I went through with the master's; no more tears, I thought, no more encounters with the past. My job in this critical collaborative autoethnographic research is to give 'them' voice within academia, to reconcile 'them' with culture and society, to bring 'them' healing. Eye was the saviour; Eye had already died and wept. It was their turn.

I began reading literature on the ex-incarcerated. The celebration ended. I realised Eye/I needed to collaborate autoethnographically with the literature. To add my voice and the voices of my co-researchers to the conversation about the ex-incarcerated women happening in the academy. To speak with, rather than about 'them'…

Eye/I Am Undone

It is May 2015 and I am sitting in the University library reading literature on criminogenics, which suggests that men and woman who have been physically or sexually abused are most likely to be incarcerated. This literature is too close to home for me.

Jerodeen, Academic Analyser	*Fetaui, Narrator*
The cycles of physical and sexual abuse are linked to criminogenic conditions (Green, Haney, & Hurtardo, 2000). Children who experience physical abuse have marred lenses of social behaviour, attachment, self-control and moral judgment (Wolfe, 1987; Wolfe & Jaffe, 1991). They then in turn lack trust in people, which most likely will create tensions in building and maintaining relationships as a child, adolescent and as an adult. The way in which parents engage in child discipline also plays on the child having self-control this therefore will affect the child's social behaviour (Wolfe, 1987). The consequence of children who are raised in an environment where physical abuse is accepted as legitimate means of discipline and a way to resolve conflict places a pivotal risk factor for aggressive behaviour in later years (Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 1990).	*Physical abuse … I read, write and hurt … really? Children who suffer physical abuse are at a greater risk of failure? … Abuse causes disruption in critical areas such as … attachment, self-control, and moral social judgements … Really?…* *This stuff is starting to pinch my heart … Who defines what physical abuse is? … I was disciplined as a child, physical abuse is a white man's term…* **A Memory…** *I was disciplined for fighting with an older sibling … the consequence from my dad the next day was…* *I sat cross legged on the floor, while the others siblings and their husbands sat on the sofas, after a lecture on respecting my elder siblings.* *The three course meal of discipline is served … my dad, open fist, hits me once, twice, and again, over and over. I cover my face … He tires, then takes his belt off and starts strapping me all over my body … Up to the last serving now … it's the 'stop drop and roll' technique. I brace for the stomping of his foot on my body, I try to roll and dodge but his aim is good … This isn't abuse, this is a Samoan traditional hiding. It is discipline! The sibling that I hit the day before runs downstairs to wake my older brother … My comes upstairs and stands between my dad and me. He pulls me behind him and says "No more" to dad…* *It's not abuse, it's discipline … So why did the sibling I hit run down to get my brother? … Why did it feel like my brother just saved me … I was being disciplined, this is my norm…* *No, that was my norm…* *Maybe the white man had a point. Maybe?* *(May 2015)*

Fig. 12.1 I/Eye am covered by generations of transformers. Photo by author

Fig. 12.2 My dad's hands. What 'he' knew then. What 'we' know now. Photo by author

I leave the library in tears and drive directly to our family home. I need answers, I need to consult with my family, my ethics committee. We begin the ethics process for sharing the memory: firstly clarifying the memory, then understanding the context and finally trying to find peace and ensuring its authenticity. The process takes a month and eventually all parties involved consent to sharing this piece of our lives. We agree that we want to send a clear message that our lives are stories pf *tautua* (Samoan for service to others) and *tautua* includes the good, bad and the ugly (Fig. 12.1 and 12.2). In collaboration with the family and chiefs, *JoFI* writes,

My Dad's Hands, June 2015

All bent out of shape
Never my abuser
Always my champion
Tried his best to be my protector
My dad never hurt me
He never laid … his … anger on me
His hands inflicted a sting, yes
The sting of discipline
Not the stain of abuse

Sexual Abuse: A Conversation Between Fetaui, Narrator and Jerodeen, Academic Analyser, May 2015

Fetaui: Fucking fuck really… do I have to read this part?…
Jerodeen: Yes Fetaui, you need to read the possible influence of this sexual abuse on your co-researchers.
Fetaui: This is killing me, reading stories of how these women were touched as children … my memories are re-surfacing … Fuck, fuck, fuck.
Jerodeen: Breathe Fetaui.
Fetaui: I don't want to do this … this research will be the death of me!
Jerodeen: Separate yourself duffis … You are the researcher … stop getting into the insider. Stay safe, stay the outsider.
Fetaui: How can I??? I am the insider…
Jerodeen: Let me deal with this … Speak only from the outside … and breathe … breathe.
Fetaui: I want to roll up into a ball and cry.
Jerodeen: Fetaui, trust me I've got this.

I follow up with my ethics committee. We discuss the importance of sharing this part of my life without bringing harm to the perpetrators or their families. We decide that I will only speak of my memories, how I felt, without naming the perpetrators. I feel an immense sense of peace about not naming them and knowing that I have the support of my ***aiga***/ethics committee. However, I don't want to share this piece; it feels like my asshole is visible for the world to inspect. When I share my reluctance with my ethics committee, my Dad says, "You can't expect these people to share their stories and you are hiding yours … you only end up beating you and them up. Be honest Fetaui, speak your truth and they will speak theirs."

Eye/I Remember, June 2015

The smell…
The colour of my undies
I remember
The touching … touching
The intensity of the fondling
I remember
The heavy breathing
I remember
Uncertainty. Why…
I'm a child.
Why?
Sun rises
Sun sets
I am older, now
I lay still
The breathing
I can't move
This can't be happening, again
I can't move
Fight back
I'm older
I can't
Body paralyzed
Wishing my mind
Was paralyzed
Move, move

Success, yes
Oh no!
Not enough
Say something
I can't
Third space help me
PLEASE
Lay still
Permission given to my body
Lay still
Be a corpse
Mind transcend
Safe space
Disconnect
Meanwhile…
Body is violated
Soul is fading

After collaborating with this literature my writing froze. I was fearful reading and feeling anymore, so I stopped reading the literature and began reading trashy romantic novels, desperate for a happily ever after. I read 130 books in two months. I began writing again.

Spirited Tears, August 2015

Tears of rage, not self- pity
The desperate desire to decapitate both your heads
Tears for self have dried up
Dried from the oasis that once was a child
Now desolate and deserted
Tears reveal weakness of resolve
Tears tear, revealing the lost soul
Lost, not wanting to be found
Yet deeply hoping for a far fetched
Happily ever after
Tears transparent, empty in the physical matter
Delicate in movement
Yet filled with unspoken
Meaning and power
Spirited tears…

Eye/I Am Healing

Autoethnographic research picked me up and shook me and my family to the core. The revelation of the power of autoethnography continues to amaze me. Being able to collectively decolonise and validate our indigenous ideologies by righting/writes who we are as a people/***aiga*** (family) into existence. When discussing decolonising with my family we often laugh at how the process of critical autoethnography for us is about 'the cleansing of the colon'—collectively analysing every intricate bit that comes out, identifying its origins and then deciding what will be flushed away. To think that Eye/I could engage with autoethnography for my PhD and not be effected/affected was naïve. Eye/I and my family have experienced the emancipatory and transformative power of critical autoethnography. An experience, I hope, that will be a shared with my co-researchers in the continuation of the PhD research, tentatively titled *Tatala le Va' Tapuia* (Samoan for opening/unlocking, the shared spaces. A critical collaborative autoethnography with ex-incarcerated.

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Fetaui Iosefo is of Samoan descent born in Aotearoa-New Zealand. She is wife to Sonny Iosefo and mother of three beautiful sons Corey, Joshua and Muamai. Fetaui is also a Professional Teaching Fellow with the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland at Manukau. She is also a PhD student with the University of Auckland. Fetaui earned her Master's in Education, Post-Graduate Diploma in Education as well as a Bachelor in Education, all completed at the University of Auckland. Her areas of interest in research are: Autoethnography; Indigenous studies; Education; Sociology and Criminology.

PART V

Tracing, Playing, and Improvising Creative Selves/Creative Cultures

CHAPTER 13

Got Lost: Embodied Vocal Performance at the Junction of Autoethnography and Practice-Based Research

Jessica Aszodi

In 2014 at the International Summer Course for New Music in Darmstadt Germany, the composer Helmut Lachenmann was scheduled to speak about his recent piece, *Got Lost* (Lachenmann, 2008) and I was excited to be in the audience. During his hours on the stage what struck me most was how the composer struggled over the problems posed by writing for a singer:

> I never dared to write music for voice in earlier times … with one singing voice, sometimes the personality of the person who sings is so beautiful and intense with personality—what should I do as a composer? The sounds are already full of intensity before I even write one note—this was a problem for me. (Lachenmann, 2014)

In his seventh decade of life, after 30 years away from writing for the solo voice, Lachenmann began several important projects composing for solo singers.[1] *Got Lost* for soprano and piano (2008) is the only one of Lachenmann's works to brazenly embrace conventional "singing," in which the solo "singing voice is allowed free rein" (Pierson, 2015, p. 206).

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I had travelled half way around the world, to the sacred cradle of modern European music, to hear one of the greatest living composers tell me point-blank that the presence of "one singing voice" was a "problem" for him. I was in the midst of preparing to sing *Got Lost*'s Australian premiere; thus Lachenmann's problem became my own.

As a singer who works mostly on the realization of new and recent pieces in the tradition of Western Art music, I have always felt a tension between the inherited norms and habits of the tradition of which I am part, and the need to make music present in the moment for myself, my collaborators and the audience. Western Art music has been less quick than some other art forms to take up an engagement with autoethnography (Bartleet, 2013; Holman Jones, Ellis, & Adams, 2013). Perhaps this is because traditionally, scholars in music have focused more upon understanding their subject through a composer's intentions and via analysis of concrete objects (notated scores), than on the ephemeral experience of the performers who bring music to life. In this chapter I will describe my work towards realising Helmut Lachenmann's *Got Lost* and how through the performances of that piece, with the aid of tools from artistic research and autoethnography, my habits, practice and subject were transformed.

Performers have long contributed accounts of their experiences. In the past, these have usually been framed as memoire or as an historical account of events. Academia's recent invitation to performers to create their own serious, scholarly work rubs up against some of the inherited norms that still dominate professional music in practice. Since the nineteenth century, there has been in place a hierarchy that lauds the genius of the composer over the gritty, craftsman-like role of musicians (Lowinsky, 1964; Jamason, 2012). In professional scenarios, oftentimes performers are not expected to have much more than an intuitive or technical understanding of their role within musical meaning-making. For example, a wide collection of literature has been created to educate singers on the 'proper interpretation' of particular pieces (Johnson & Stokes, 2000; Bernac, 1978) and opera singers have coaches to instruct them on elements of style, to guide interpretive decision-making and sometimes, to teach them their notes and rhythms.

As a counterbalance to the traditional view of voice described above, a number of texts have in recent decades problematized, expanded the definition, and explored the potentials of contemporary vocality (Barthes, 1977; Connor, 2000; Cavarero, 2005; Dolar, 2006). Springing forward from that ground, the fast growing field of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies (Meizel, 2011; Kreiman & Sidtis, 2013; Eidsheim & Schlichter, 2014;

Davies, Feldman, Kane, Rings & Wilbourne, 2015; Eidsheim, 2015; Macpherson & Thomaidis, 2015) has exposed the rich and dynamic theoretical space that is the vocalising subject, and increased its bearing on disciplines distant and adjacent. Narratives by performers speaking for themselves in a way that addresses the interlocking historical, theoretical, critical and phenomenological elements of their practice have simultaneously been growing in number and depth (Cumming, 2000; Schick, 2006; Penny, 2009; Crispin & Gilmore, 2014; Taylor, 2016). It is from this vantage, at the intersection of voice, performance, ethnography and musicology that my autoethnographic, practice-based artistic research proceeds.

Utilizing autoethnography within the practice of artistic research strengthens the bond between the embodied aspects of the research and the ethnographies we create to convey our experiences. The two methods make for a productive partnership. As Spry puts it: "Performative writing composes the body into being. Such a praxis requires that I believe in language's representational abilities, thus putting my body at (the) stake…" (Spry, 2008). Creating autoethnography from practice-based research is a self-nourishing cycle. I write about and document my experiences throughout the artistic process. Preparing for performance involves many hours of "in the moment" embodied learning, but that kind of learning is hard to track and difficult to explain. When I write about my experiences I force myself to articulate sensations and discourse while they are in progress or shortly after. When the performative moment is over, the accumulation of these materials provides a ground upon which I can build an analysis that facilitates better decision-making going forward. The writing becomes part outcome and part grist for the mill. I argue that autoethnography empowers artistic practitioners to be more efficiently self-knowing, which contributes to better choices throughout the practice.

As I prepared to perform *Got Lost* in Melbourne and Brisbane with pianist, Alex Raineri, I documented, analysed and critiqued my decision-making. The resultant materials form an autoethnographic narrative of artistic research that unpacks and re-threads the experience of performance. Though storying a performance might seem simple enough, to unpack the thing in detail requires me to acknowledge that I am subject to a throng of influences, people and traditions. Because of the highly subjective and embodied nature of the research practice, I do not feel able to convey much useful information about the pianists' experience or the role of the piano part within this piece. For that reason, I will refer to piano-related aspects of the work only peripherally and focus instead upon the vocal elements of the work.

Singing bodies and the audience perceptions that accompany them, divert attention away from the "absolute" nature of sounds (Clement, 1989), and onto more slippery ground. My vocal production is a physically embodied act that is tangled up in my self and my physicality. The primary producers of the "singing sound" (phonation) we hear are two tiny flaps of mucous-covered tissue smashing together at high velocity, hundreds of times per second. They are delicate and temperamental and subject to the conditions of the larger muscles and cartilages that work together with the vocal folds to produce voice. It does not get more interior or physical than that. It is not so strange that this messy scenario should be a problematic for the inventor of musique concrète instrumentale.[2]

Knowing Lachenmann's oeuvre, existing writings about his vocal music (Pierson, 2015; Swithinbank, 2011) and the composer's own scholarly output (Lachenmann, 1980, 1995, 1999, 2014), I understood that he found the singing subject-as-instrument problematic. Vocality's coiled parts—flesh, persona and musical signification—are for me, a source of joyful discovery and empowerment but that fabric which cannot be unfurled was a problem for Lachenmann. Through the course of this research I came to appreciate the care and energy with which he answered his self-posed problem, carefully fabricating the material through which a singer must pass her self to perform his music.

"Meaning It"

Got Lost sets texts in English, German and Portuguese. "Der Wanderer" (*The Wanderer)*, an extract from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, is the central text. The other two texts are Fernando Pessoa's (under the heteronym[3] Alvaro de Campos) Portuguese poem "Todas as cartas de amor são Ridículas" (All love letters are ridiculous) and an English note the composer found in 2002 in the elevator of his apartment building in Berlin. In the note, a fellow resident pleadingly asks the reader to help her recover her laundry basket; which had "Got Lost." In Lachenmann's composition the three texts are articulated in fragments that are thrust up against and through one another to accumulate in meaning and affect. The juxtaposition of the contrasting texts, with their respective languages, intentions and tone, fractures the subjectivity of the singer into variegated vectors that compete for the listener's attention. The texts and English translations are included below for reference (Lachenmann, 2008):

Text 1 *Friedrich Nietzsche*	*Translation: Thomas Common*
27. *Der Wandrer*	*The wanderer*
Kein Pfad mehr! Abgrund rings und Todtenstille!	No longer path! Abyss and silence chilling!
So wolltest dus! Vom Pfade wich dein Wille!	Thy fault! To leave the path thou wast too willing!
Nun, Wandrer, gilts! Nun blicke kalt und klar!	Now comes the test! Keep cold—eyes bright and clear!
Verloren bist du, glaubst du an Gefahr.	Thou'rt lost for sure, if thou permittest— fear.
from *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. 1882	From *The Gay Science*. 1882

Text 2 *Fernado Pessoa [Álvaro de Campos]*	*Translation: John Shepherd*
Todas as cartas de amor são ridículas	*All love letters are ridiculous.*
Todas as cartas de amor são	All letters of love are
Ridículas.	Ridiculous.
Não seriam cartas de amor se não fossem	They wouldn't be love letters if they were not
Ridículas	Ridiculous
Também escrevi em meu tempo cartas de amor,	In my day I too wrote letters of love,
Como as outras,	Like others,
Ridículas	Ridiculous
As cartas de amor, se há amor,	Love letters, if there's love,
Têm de ser	Have to be
Ridículas.	Ridiculous.
Mas, afinal,	But in the end
Só as criaturas que nunca escreveram	Only those who never wrote
Cartas de amor	Letters of love
É que são	Are really
Ridículas	Ridiculous
Quem me dera no tempo em que escrevia	I wish I were in the times
Sem dar por iso	When I wrote
Cartas de amor	not thinking how
Ridículas	love letters
	Ridiculous
A verdade é que hoje	But today the truth is
As minhas memórias	My memories
Dessas cartas de amor	Of those love letters
É que são	Are the ones that are
Ridículas	Ridiculous

Text 2 Fernado Pessoa [Álvaro de Campos]	*Translation: John Shepherd*
(Todas as palavras esdrúxulas, Como os sentimentos esdrúxulos, São naturalmente Ridículas)	(All the strange words, Like the strange feelings Are naturally Ridiculous)

Text 3
Monday 4.3.2002
Today my laundry-basket got lost.
It was last seen standing in front of the dryer.
Since it is pretty difficult to carry the laundry without it
I'd be most happy to get it back.
Announcement in the corridor of the "Villa Walther" in Berlin-Grunewald

I was aware that Lachenmann's disassembled and fragmented text setting across so many different kinds of sounds made it unlikely the audience would understand the meaning of the words most of the time. Even if a listener did happen to be a speaker of all three languages the composer had intentionally obfuscated the words; in many places, stripping them down to their component phonemes and consonants, like spare parts plucked from an old car to create some strange new vehicle. It therefore seemed important that, when we encountered parts of the work that did seem to lend themselves towards intelligibility, we find a way to make those moments count (Fig. 13.1).

Journal Entry October 12th, 2014

As we worked through the piece, there were times when Alex and I had to make decisions about whether to stress the "meanings" of the words, or whether a particular word or part of a word should be allowed to function percussively, or coloristically. Should I be trying to help the audience understand the words? If so, how…

In bar 158 (Fig. 13.2), Lachenmann introduces the eponymous (*Got Lost*) text for the first time. This seemed to be a gesture that surely, the audience should be given every chance to understand. This event follows a section of highly rhythmical music in which the vocal line hockets between percussive vocal sounds and sung sounds in fast succession, while the pianist plays and vocalizes a busy and rhythmic passage—suddenly, the composer interrupts the hurried flow by having the singer pronounce the

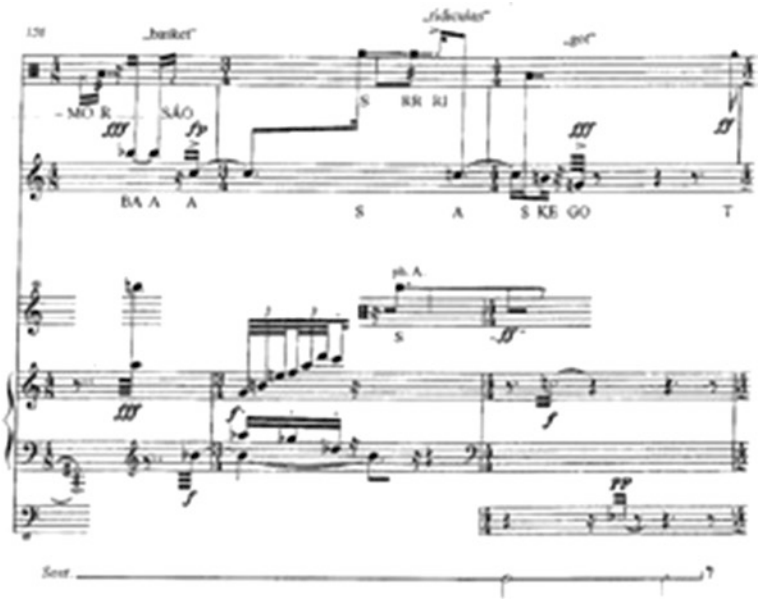

Fig. 13.1 *Got Lost* (Lachenmann, 2008) bar 156–158

"Go…" of "Got Lost" only to have several seconds of silence unfold before the rest of the word is pronounced—in the form of a high pitched percussive click: [t]. Two full bars of silence follow before we are able to complete the sentence with the word: "Lost". The way this moment unfolded was something I found both humorous and poetic. I wanted to make sure the audience was in on it.

This same musical moment was described by Lachenmann during his lectures at Darmstadt:

> I ask the audience not only to listen, but to work with his own memory—When I say "Go[he paused for a moment]…t Lost" I expect him to listen with his memory, with all his sensitivity listening for the context of the sound. A sound is like a point and there are a lot of lines going through this sound. Each of you is not only your name. You are also a father, a Portuguese, a patient, a footballer … We are all these things. The question is: who are we to be this morning? I do not want to make noises. I want to figure out what to be. (Lachenmann, 2014)

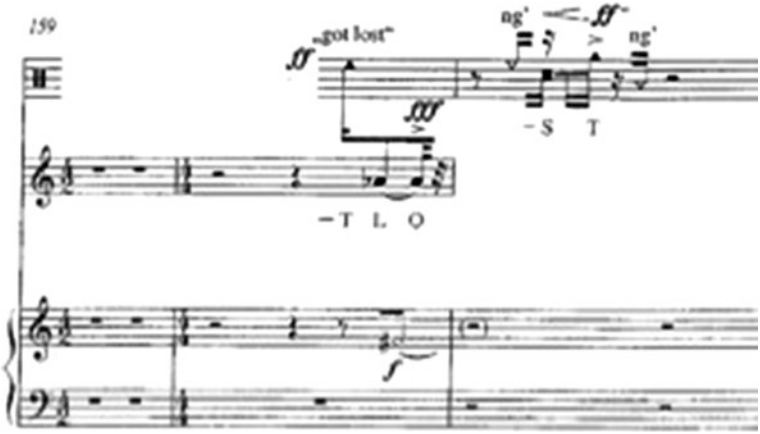

Fig. 13.2 *Got Lost* (Lachenmann, 2008) bar 159–160

The flash of suspended meanings between "Go…" and "…t lost" turned out to be more important than just a decision about intelligibility. It became a place to experiment with the vital issue of our multifaceted subjectivity, and "what to be?"

> **Journal Entry November 8th, 2014**
>
> Today we rehearsed the "silences." The moments between gestures that were not actually finished—that Lachenmann talked about in his lecture. We made a point of being very still, frozen in place during these moments. Both Alex and I naturally move our bodies quite a lot, so by not moving and by paying attention to the tense stillness of that, it felt like a very active gesture—to be unmoving. In this case what seemed most important was to not add anything to the silence except our focus on the waiting through it. We were hoping the audience would wait as earnestly as we were.

This one gesture is a microcosm of the kind of embodied problem-solving inherent in artistic research. How can a performer solve problems that occur in the space between their body, the composer's intent, the notated score and the audience's expectation? When I encounter these moments I ask: how can I best convey the potential meanings here? The answer we chose in this case was to hold ourselves still, actively waiting for the audience to 'listen with their memory.'

Throughout the rehearsal process, problems were addressed as we encountered them. Sometimes these problems called for further research, or took time-intensive work to solve. More often, guided by the trained-in musical language we share with each other and the composer, answers were reached more intuitively. In the case of the example above, we were guided by Lachenmann's own words towards a solution that was mostly reflected in our physicality, but which ultimately needed to be realized by the active listener as they participated in the meaning-making potential of that "Go…t Lost" moment.

Breaking Language

A traditional view of Western art music emphasises the importance of melodic material (often called themes or subjects) in the structuring of a work (Lerdahl & Jackendoff, 1983; Dunsby, 2002). In place of pitch-centric "themes," Lachenmann introduces the idea of expressive "categories" which convey meanings that are no less concrete—but which are quite different to—those traditionally attached to melodic subjects in Western art music. The qualities conveyed in his categories are often realized as gestures that are understood more through physical experience than by a traditional relationship to melody. These categories have titles like "Shouts," "Pulse" and "Toneless" (Lachenmann, 2014). With his "Shouts" (Ruf) the listener hears a violent expulsion of intention from the vocalist. His "Pulse" (Puls) are often articulated via non-sung sounds that connote more of a stylized stammer than a traditional compositional device for time keeping. The "Toneless" (Tonlose) category, where pitch is conveyed without phonation via whispering or a manipulation of air by the mouth, could connote any number of dysphonic sounds. The categories that make up *Got Lost* are utilized as if they were just as sturdy as the structural elements of conventional western music, but it must be acknowledged that that house could fall down without open and imaginative attention from listeners and performers.

I posit that for many in the audience these sounds could suggest physical or emotional responses which are not conventionally associated with music but are entangled with the body and the listener's empathic "vocal imaginary" (Connor, 2000) and are a test of what has been described of the relational "figure of sound" (Eidsheim, 2015). Connor states that these kinds of vocal utterances are socially powerful signifiers and that their meanings cannot be construed as fixed or objective. He states that

hearing and understanding the kinds of textless utterances Lachenmann employs, constitutes a sort of "*dream theatre of the mouth*" (Connor, 2014, p. 15); that sounds might best be described not using phonetics but with "*what might be called phonophenomenology*" (ibid). In other words—to convey something of what these utterances mean for listeners and to understand how they function within the music, a performer must look beyond their linguistic and acoustical realities to examine how these sounds are perceived via the experience of human subjects.

For example, during the opening of *Got Lost,* the vocal part is made up exclusively from the "Toneless" category of unvoiced sounds. The composer has stated that he intended these sounds to showcase "*the mouth as an instrument*" (Lachenmann, 2014), to explore the qualities of breath—the physiological inverse of voice. It must be admitted however that for many people "the mouth as an instrument" might not be the primary connotation attached to the sound of rhythmic and affected breathing. To some, the sounds I was making for the first several minutes of the piece may have sounded akin to "shushing" a talkative patron in a movie theatre or blowing out candles on a birthday cake. Listening attentively to these kinds gestures for a prolonged period while dutifully absorbing the many fine details the composer has layered into them, is a difficult prospect. After the performance a friend told me "I wasn't buying it at all in those first few minutes, but I was relieved when the piece moved on to the other material." As it turned out, those first few minutes of music were extremely difficult to master from a technical perspective. I spent a really long time trying to get these "Toneless" breath sounds to be pitch-and-articulation-accurate. Despite my best efforts to understand and convey the richness of the materials in the score, there was little I could do to control for the audience's perception of what was going on. Though I believe, in later performances, I have had greater success in drawing out the detail as the rhythmic and ensemble elements have become more confident.

Connor states that this "phonophenomenological" approach should be employed, because "language is made not by linguists, but by its inexpert and often stubbornly opinionated users, which suggests that their (our) fantasies and prejudices may exercise a significantly formative pressure on the ways in which language comes about and functions" (Connor, 2014, p. 15). In the phenomenal experience of music we must account for the interaction of these sounds with the real-world experience of individual listeners. To perform Lachenmann's music I had to become fluent in his categories, then to devise and ingrain techniques for their production,

knowing that the sounds could not elicit any one particular reaction from the audience. Our listeners are free to do as they please with the sounds we offer them, and that is by design. Or as Lachenmann put it "*I cannot control the audience. Who is the audience? Ronaldo?*" (Lachenmann, 2014).

Embodying

As the learning progressed, I felt I was moving towards a better understanding of Lachenmann's intentions. I realized that rather than worrying about what listeners might think these sounds mean, the music would be better served by taking a more conventional approach: concentrating on finding the best ways to produce the most accurate version I could of what was "on the page". As is often the case with difficult music, the methods and learning process for this piece continuously evolved from the day I picked up the score. Initially, each bar was a nightmare. I was overwhelmed with information and the sheer difficulty of the task. It took 10 hours of my solo practice time to get the first couple of bars more or less "correct." The lengthy period of time I spent figuring out how to commit each element–to-muscle memory allowed the piece to slowly ink itself onto me.

As the performance got closer and rehearsal days got longer, I just began to "sing the piece." Sounds that had at first been difficult, came out of me as if by instinct. The phrasing, the expressivity and tone colours I chose started to feel automatic. It is a long and unrelenting work; figuring out how to modulate my attention became a problem of its own. On the final rehearsal day, we gave a practice performance in front of an audience of students at the Australian National Academy of Music.

> **Journal Entry October 9th, 2014**
>
> Today we rehearsed for 3 hours and then performed the piece in its entirety for the ANAM forum. It went very badly. I lost concentration and stopped counting at several points. I couldn't think through the blur of information. I felt powerless. It did not feel like a performance. I was not present with the music; I could feel tension between the score and I as we drifted away from one another.

After this dispiriting first run through, I went home with an idea of how to revise for the performance the next day so as to eliminate the potential for the breakdown of focus I had just experienced. I went over each section of the work silently, thinking about all the details we had rehearsed.

After a short break, I went over it again, also silently, but this time thinking not of details but of moving my energy forward particularly during silences and between phrases—with Lachenmann's words resounding in my head—imagining how I would "be." If someone had watched that final rehearsal it would have looked like someone sitting at a desk doing nothing. These 90 minutes spent sitting alone with the score, sharpening my image of how I would focus my attention through the following day's performance was perhaps the most valuable preparation I undertook.

Backstage at the South Melbourne Town Hall before I went on I was afraid I had not done enough—that the process of learning the piece has somehow lacked agency on my part, that my realization was too literally a parsing of the score through my body. The performance itself was a blur. I focused my attention on the score and my collaborator, and time just kept moving forward. My body did what it had learned to do. Afterwards I realized I had been so engrossed in my task that the sensation I usually have of conscious relationship to my physical body in performance had been absent. At first, this was alarming. I am a musician who prides herself on feeling grounded in physical presence. I was so bothered by this lack of conscious presence that for the second performance, I made an effort to prepare differently: I worked on finding moments to be more 'expressive' and to come up with more nuanced phrasing and rhythmical detail. Unfortunately, the second performance, though less rushed and better prepared, felt like a failure. I could not focus in the same way. The ensemble suffered, and several sections of the work did seem to have lost some of their "magic." Once I received the video documentation of both performances I was able to compare and contrast to see if, with a little more objective distance, my feelings about the relative successes of the two performances could be verified. As I watched, it certainly did seem that the first performance was superior to the second.

Reflecting

Practice-based research and autoethnography are fields where the subjectivity of the researcher, the research and its outcomes are an entangled and moving target. If performers want to explain ourselves we must be prepared to deal with difficult questions and more than a little mess in the writing process or as Gannon explains it, "The self produced in a text is always contingent, tentative, situated and relational" (Gannon, 2013,

p. 232). By analysing the video-documentation and diaries I began to form a clearer picture of what had occurred. I had initially felt that in that first performance I lacked agency, and feared I was operating on an adrenaline-fuelled auto-pilot. What I came to recognize is that that auto-pilot had enabled me to move from moment to moment, attentive to the music without added distraction. I had been able to indulge in the thrill of physical freedom when producing an efficient operatic sound in the conventionally sung parts. In sections of rapid-fire extended techniques I had enjoyed the mental play and creativity of conjuring myriad physical set-ups to produce acrobatic sounds in fast succession. The experience of "being," when in the midst of that performance, was one of a stretchy, vivid simultaneity of self. Without the documentation process I would probably not have noticed how and where my habitual assumptions about performance had been leading me astray, and have missed the opportunity to create new knowledge within my practice.

What I now believe was happening was that the language of the piece had "sunk into me." I was singing with an absorbed vocabulary that was partially the composers," and partially an expression of my own body as it had adapted to the demands of the learning process. I realized that Lachenmann had built-in a deconstruction of the mechanisms of traditional vocality and pianism into his piece. I did not need to consciously fuse myself to the work—because the very act of embodying it catalysed the synthesis I was seeking.

I was accustomed to feeling as if I was "working" to activate physical presence and to convey expressive intentions. The unexpected outcome of working on this piece was a realization that sometimes actively translating the expressivity already inherent in the score is a mistake. Lachenmann was counting on my classical singer's habits and entrainments do the heavy-lifting. The failure of the second, more expressive, performance was evidence enough of that. I resolved that for future performances of *Got Lost* I would take an approach that focused purely on the score and let my body do the work. More importantly, I resolved to query what this could mean for works I encountered in the future.

Reading back over such a "realization" I cannot help but laugh at myself. This score-driven approach might simply be called "interpretation according to convention." It is amusing that I did not immediately realize this was the right approach, but knowing the composer's philosophical outlook it took quite some convincing for me to believe that this could indeed be the most effective choice.

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After the performance, out in the foyer, I noticed the fleshy bit of my left hand was blue and swollen. I pointed out the welt to a friend who had been sitting in the audience. "That's not surprising" he chuckled "You were hitting yourself very hard with your tuning fork." I didn't even notice I was doing it…"

In the aftermath of that first performance, the forward momentum of the piece and its multitude of techniques left me with the sense that I had just gotten off a ride that had been moving at tremendous speed. The way of paying attention to oneself that is enacted within *Got Lost* seemed akin to trying to lift up one's arms while strapped into place on a rollercoaster. There is a predetermined track one must follow, but the restrictions placed upon you in the scenario, make the task unusually difficult. In the moment of achievement, of letting go of the rail, one feels intensely present and alive. The physical sensation of danger, of being close to the edge of the narrow tip of attention I knew I needed, allowed me to feel a kind of binding to the score and to my fellow performer that was as thrilling as it was strange. Being out of control, almost out of my body, actually created an intensity of presence that I had not identified as possible within my practice until that moment. My voice, vulnerably exposed to Lachenmann's carefully crafted process that produces a nuanced and complex kind of embodiment, became an effective communicative vehicle. The autoethnographic narrative I created for myself, utilized those fleeting times of vulnerable experience to create new knowledge that I have used going forward in my practice.

Notes

1. The second of the two works referred to here is his opera, *Das mädchen mit den schwefelhölzchen* (1996). Lachenmann's only piece utilizing a solo vocalist before the 1990s is *temA* (Lachenmann, 1968), a work for voice, flute and cello where the performers all vocalize, but none of them "sings"—the predominant forms of vocalization in the piece are breath sounds, whispers and various vocalic splutters, gasps and utterances (Brodsky, n.d.).
2. "Musique concrète instrumentale" refers to Lachenmann's use of techniques and concepts derived from "musique concrete" (an experimental approach to electronic and recorded music termed such by Pierre Schaeffer, in 1948, which utilizes acousmatic listening and often displaces the connection between sounds and their sources) which he applied to acoustic instru-

ments from the Western tradition—or "…music that emphasizes the way sound is produced rather than how it should be heard, thus reversing traditional hierarchies" (Orning, 2012).

3. The writer and poet Fernando Pessoa had over 100 aliases, which he called heteronyms. These characters were constructed by the poet to allow him to inhabit different writing styles and, often controversial, opinions (Pessoa, 2002).

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Jessica Aszodi In Jessica Aszodi's genre-bounding and label-defying career, her singing has been described as "…thrilling…" (*LA Times*); her curatorial approach, "…intense…" (*NY Times*); and her research presentations, "…eloquent…" (*Tempo*). She has premiered dozens of new pieces, performed works that have lain dormant for centuries, devised new collaborative projects, sung roles from the standard operatic repertoire and worked with a constellation of artists from the far reaches of the musical universe. Aszodi has been a soloist with ensembles as diverse as ICE; the Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras; Pinchgut Opera; Victorian Opera; Sydney Chamber Opera; and the chamber series of the San Diego and Chicago Symphony Orchestras. She can be heard on recording for Chandos, Ars Publica and Hospital Hill. Aszodi has sung in festivals around the world including Vivid Sydney, the Melbourne and Adelaide Festivals, Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music (BIFEM), Aldeburgh, Tectonics and Tanglewood. Aszodi's operatic roles include Socrates (Satie's *Socrate*), Aminta (Mozart's *Il Re Pastore*), Donna Elvira (Mozart's *Don Giovanni*), Sesto (Handel's *Giulio Cesare*), Popova (Walton's *The Bear*), Rose (Carter's *What Next?*) and Echo (Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*). Her early training was in operatic voice at the Victorian College of the Arts under the tutelage of Anna Connolly. Aszodi has twice been nominated for the Australian Green Room Awards as "Best Female Operatic Performer"—in both leading and supporting categories. She is the co-director of the Resonant Bodies Festival, Australia, and an artistic associate of BIFEM. She holds a doctorate degree in musical arts from the Queensland Conservatorium and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California. She has written scholarly articles for several books and journals.

CHAPTER 14

Creating Memories: A Cartography of Musical Learning

Phoebe Green

When autoethnography was first introduced to me I realized that as a musician it had been unconsciously active in my practice for many years. Any time I am with my instrument there runs a constant dialogue between myself and my growing memory bank of years of study, reflection, critique and play. Where in autoethnography "the gaze turns inward toward the self while maintaining the outward gaze and responsibility of ethnography" (Tedlock, 2013), in my practice a concurrent duality also exists as I respond to the sonic outcomes resulting from the interplay between the known and unknown realms of my learning. This autoethnographic account traverses the path of my learning and performing *Untitled*, a work I commissioned in 2012 for solo viola by Melbourne-born composer James Rushford.[1] When I was first given the score there was no pre-existing performance practice of this work, no sonic artefact. I was charged with making this work's first sounded history. Learning a piece in this context alone is a path of discovery; however, this piece presented particular physical and sonic challenges for me because the complexity of notation meant that my usual processes of learning could not be utilized.

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This piece challenged what "natural" felt like on my instrument, and as my relationship to this score developed I was forced to make the unnatural feel for me, and appear to the audience as if it was "natural" by re-learning how to learn. Writing this autoethnographic account brings an awareness that has the ability to simultaneously aid and inhibit my practice. It is a catalyst for memory and remembering; auditory, kinetic, *sensorial* and emotional, revealing insights into what is otherwise an invisible process.

It arrives in my inbox: a piece of music that has not heard itself. I open the score for the first time and read through it, searching for the familiar. Only the composer has "heard" the sound world they have created. I am yet to hear a note of what is in front of me, my body ready to make the first sonic artefact of this work. Sensory memories through the physical, visual and sonic are encoded as I practice. In learning *Untitled*, a greater awareness developed of the importance the role my kinetic function has in driving, guiding and manipulating the sonic result. In an investigation into auditory learning in music it was found that motor learning had an enhanced effect on auditory memory, that "memory for music comprises an abstraction of the pitch sequence, and motor learning further enhances this abstract auditory memory" (Brown & Palmer, 2012) and "musicians' encoding was aided by motor experience that was strongly coupled to auditory feedback" (Brown & Palmer, 2012). I physically make a sound and my ear responds by analysing the possibilities in relation to the correctness of the result. My viola practice is built on many years of these kinetic and sensory memories, with the majority embedded into my subconscious (known). Pedagogue Simon Fischer succinctly describes in the landmark volume on violin technique *Basics*: "the most important thing is to have so much technique that you don't even have to think about it. If you are too conscious of the 'how', it can make playing almost impossible" (Fischer, 1997). When I am met with technical challenges, the unknown, there is an immediate feeling of physical discomfort. It is like something blocks my path. When I opened up *Untitled*, it was as if the piece was in code and I knew if I could just crack it the learning process would get easier.

As I examined the score of *Untitled* a meeting between the known and unknown began. I rely on deep-learning (known) embedded through kinetic and sensorial memory as I become aware of the unknown elements that I will be required to learn. The foundation of my technique is the starting point for any new learning of the unknown. A dialogue evolves as strategies to overcome physical, mental and sonic challenges are required in order for the unknown to become known and reach the same level of

automatic ease. In *Music Autoethnographies* edited by Brydie-Leigh Bartleet and Carolyn Ellis, the editors also observe this dialogue in musicians moving "back and forth between the different layers of their musical consciousness in the interpretation and creation of musical works" (Bartleet and Ellis, 2009). As I began learning *Untitled*, my known abilities struggled to find the immediate application I could usually depend on. Upon first reading of a contemporary western art music score, generally I am able to roughly play through the work, successfully or otherwise depending on the difficulty of the score. With *Untitled*, the first time I sat with it I could not even get through the first bar. It took me a month to "bash" through the whole work—something I would normally try to achieve in a matter of hours. It was clear I needed a new approach to learning.

In the fundamental years of musical learning, it is through the guidance of our teacher that we hope to learn how to learn and practice efficiently. In string pedagogy this is passed through long lines of tradition that in my learning, included the teachings of Carl Flesch (1873–1944) and Ivan Galamian (1903–1981). Flesch describes three stages of learning, even going so far as to describe "practicing" in basic terms as "the road which leads from the inability to play a series of notes to being able to play them" (Flesch, 2000) as:

1. Conscious: requiring effort to execute visual notation.
2. Collecting: the mechanics of the complex motions as a consequence of the musical material.
3. Automatic: conversion of material where there is the ability to play from memory (not requiring such conscious effort).

Galamian (1985) takes the lens further out of the learning process:

1. Building time: developing technical facility through technical work (scales etc.) requiring substantial mental preparation to anticipate physical actions.
2. Interpreting time: devoted to expressing your own musical ideas on a work.
3. Performing time: added when preparing for a performance, mastering the work.

The expressed fundamentals of learning by Flesch and Galamian are invaluable, and their simplicity is a reminder to the basics of learning. However, when applied to contemporary western art repertoire there are

complexities the player is faced with that may require further tools. In particular, Galamian's "building time" method through thorough practice of scales, no existing traditional scale system would be applicable in *Untitled*. And the distance between the phases "building time," or even Flesch's "conscious" and "collecting" to being able to musically shape or interpret seemed unattainable when I was constantly faced with challenges to my body of knowledge and skills set. Learning *Untitled* exposed holes and weaknesses in the application of these traditional performance practice techniques.

Steven Schick presents a more modern approach by sharing his experiences in learning a difficult solo percussion work in his book *The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams* (2006). Questioning the increasingly "similar and predictable" nature in percussion solo repertoire, Schick suspected so were "the practice strategies involved in learning them" (Schick, 2006). Schick had a similar experience to myself in the early stages of approaching a work, and it made him realize that he "had never focused on the process of learning as an act distinct and separable from interpretation or execution" and that "the presumption that somehow body and mind, thinking and doing, are separable—is simply no longer valid" (Schick, 2006) in the world of contemporary music. When the mind and body are being challenged in equally complex ways, they become interchangeable as they grasp the concepts on the page. Schick believes in the synergy of the physical and mental, and yet they learn at different rates. By focusing on learning *slowly*, it "cultivates the full benefit of plasticity and possibility" (Schick, 2006). Slow learning and slow practice allows the relationship between the physical and sonic to work together, a physical gesture becomes a sonic memory, and when the sonic memory is intertwined with the physical gesture it can be recalled. I found that at a point in my learning *Untitled*, I needed to consciously work at bringing the left- and right-hand techniques together with a greater level of awareness. Separating or compartmentalizing techniques prevented me from executing the material in context.

Schick describes three stages of learning; the *conceptual* phase, the *soft* phase and a *refinement* phase. The *conceptual* phase explores the initial motivation behind learning of the work, the *soft* phase—which Schick advocates to prolong as it is the most critical phase and this is where the learning "sustains the period of the most intense communion between player and music" bringing "a result [of] greater richness and sophistication to the final product" (Schick, 2006). Finally, the *refinement* phase begins as

the piece is being prepared for performance—where all the breaking down of learning is able to be transcended into the moment of performance and music-making (Schick, 2006).

As I began to learn *Untitled*, I found my usual learning processes inadequate and lacking specificity to meet the demands of the specific technical challenges. After some experimenting my learning grew into a cyclical process of four components where gradually more detail in the music could be realized. Firstly, I *visually* see the musical instruction taking in all the notation (which includes traditional and unconventional—symbols) and almost immediately I am *mentally* working out how to do it (notice how I do not say interpret—I am focused on literally working out how to execute the material that I see. Interpretation comes later once I have facility of the score). This moves on to an *embodiment* phase where I physically execute the material. I then move on to a *sonic* phase, where I hear the result which then feeds back into the cycle; I then check if the *sonic* outcome is accurate from what I *visually* see and what I have worked out *mentally*, and so on. This cycle captures what was occurring in each moment of my process. Within each cycle it could be relatively quick or extremely slow as each component informs the next, decisions being made quickly or postponed, allowing for creativity in spontaneous sonic discoveries, experimentation, or simply changing my mind and doing something differently if I had found a more efficient or simpler way. Once the learning of *Untitled* had been established, a period of *refinement* was incorporated, similar to the aforementioned phase by Schick.

Each component of this process; *visual*, *mental*, *embodiment* and *sonic* was met with technical demands that were new to me. The visual challenge with *Untitled* was greater than usual as Rushford had substantially altered the standard tuning of the viola (*scordatura*) resulting in the score being written at pitch using the bass clef and suboctave treble clef (sounding an octave below).[2] This meant that the left-hand (operating pitch) was compromised as I could not rely on my pre-existing deep learning of knowing automatically what notes my fingers were playing, and the altered string tension meaning the distance between the notes was also affected. I felt handicapped in converting the visual to the mental, as well as physically executing what would otherwise be a straightforward left-hand technique, and sonically as my ear had to adjust to hearing new pitches that my instrument does not normally produce. Scordatura is not uncommon in contemporary repertoire; however, composers can present their scores written in fingered position, rather than at pitch to aid facility of score

reading for the performer. To overcome this, I developed a "cheat-sheet" for myself so that I could learn and memorize the new positions of the notes in my left-hand, using it often as a visual, mental and physical, and sonic warm-up. Once I became familiar with the new positions and I did not have to expend as much mental energy on simply reading the score, progress was made.

Another visual difference in the score is the use of colour notation. Rushford employed five different colours to differentiate five variant tone qualities to "delineate a pitch-to-noise ratio" (Rushford, 2014). Expressed instructions on tone are not usually so explicit, and I found that I needed to monitor my interpretation of this notation as there was a danger of treating the notation as an expression of volume rather than timbre, because of the limited dynamic range. The use of colour to convey tone is not new (Billone, 1995), but this instance was the first time I had come across it. The variants of tonal colour are so subtle it is like trying to express different variants of white noise. I experimented with the effects of physical manipulation and in particular *expression* of different bow inclination, speed, pressure and contact to achieve various sonic possibilities. During the early stages of learning, my focus was to have facility of the score. I could not immediately implement this aspect of the notation while I was still grappling with the notes, so to learn this part of the score I would practice very short excerpts of each colour in order to discover sonically the difference between each colour. This meant that when I had greater facility of the score, I could focus on adding this element with an already informed sonic awareness to the coloured notation.

With left-hand physical challenges previously mentioned, the right hand also had difficulties to overcome, firstly in the employment of preparations on two strings. For the first performance aluminum foil was wrapped around the top two strings[3] between the bridge and the fingerboard and this meant that my bow was restricted in where I could place it. I had to consciously learn to attack and play in a very specific part on the string consistently. *Untitled* is the first piece I have performed that requires two bows, one in each hand. Although awkward at first, I found I came to enjoy these moments in the work where, for example, I would be bowing the scroll with my right hand and the neck of the viola with my left. The greater challenge involved the mechanics of picking up and putting down the bows, which way to leave them on the stand to facilitate ease of picking them up efficiently and with the least visual interruption to the audience. My goal was to reach a point where everything felt as natural and comfortable as possible.

Translating the visual to the sonic was the most complex task in learning *Untitled*. The notation enabled unpredictable and unexpected sonic outcomes. As well as the sonic ambiguity of the coloured notation, another example is harmonics. On the viola we use light finger pressure to achieve a harmonic—but there are specific nodes where this naturally works, so if the composer directs harmonic pressure but not on a node, then the result is white noise/distortion where pitch is unstable (especially on a string that is already substantially detuned), exactly the composer's desired outcome. Despite my trust in Rushford's score (Rushford is a violist himself) I was not always sure of the results I was getting and initially I felt frustrated, always questioning the "correctness" of my learning. I stopped listening to the sounds I was making as none seemed "correct" enough. By focusing on the printed score, and ceased engagement with the *sonic*, I forgot, as Voegelin reminds us: "Listening discovers and generates the heard" (Voegelin, 2010). Galamian stresses the importance of "the critical ear", training the ear for objective listening, rather than subjective listening where "the things they actually hear are strongly distorted by what they want and hope to hear" (Galamian, 1985). The classically trained violist in me maddeningly searched to produce perfect clear tones, but once my ear had accepted that the instability of sound, timbre and pitch or "white noise" was the sonic domain of *Untitled*, something akin to breakthrough occurred. Voegelin notes; "The understanding gained is a knowing of the moment as a sensory event that involves the listener and the sound in a reciprocal inventive production" (Voegelin, 2010). In my early stages of learning I had not let my ear be open to sonic possibilities. I prioritized achieving correct notes and rhythm, all the things I am classically trained to do. However, it was by prioritizing the sonic world of *Untitled* that generated my eventual cyclical learning process and unlocked the vital role sonic outcomes held within it.

As every sonic outcome was scrutinized and my learning of *Untitled* progressed, I also used my prior knowledge and experience of working with Rushford and his aesthetic. James Rushford provided performance notes referencing visual examples of inspiration for the work: paintings by Qui Shihua and a short film by Frans Zwartjes that is filmed with a handheld camera that swirls around the room. With my preparation of *Untitled* readying for performance, I needed to remind myself of these examples as I wanted to try to encapsulate their qualities into my interpretation. The sparseness and stillness of Shihua's "white" paintings, the swirling of the handheld camera of the short film. In a paper describing influences on his artistic practice, Rushford describes the "immersive and otherworldly

atmosphere" and ultimate "elegance" of Zwartjes film that Rushford visualized as a "dance with white" (Rushford, 2014). Shihua's painting evoked "an almost hallucinatory experience," resulting for Rushford "an emergence of *prima materia*, a state of 'becoming', where nothing is fixed or placed, principally by using white as a visual world in which transitory ideas begin, but do not necessarily end" (Rushford, 2014). There is an unfortunate late revelation in learning the meaning of these two images for Rushford. As I was learning *Untitled*, I felt almost ashamed of the slow progress I was making. I had sought out images of Shihua's paintings and watched the film by Zwartjes before I even picked up my viola. I respond well to visual imagery in music and I searched clues in these examples as to what lay before me in the score. During my learning of the work I lost sight of the images as I sought "correctness" instead. It was not until I finally played some of the work for Rushford that I was reminded of the connection between these sources and the notes on the page, which he so eloquently described later in his 2014 paper *Sketching a background for artistic practice*.

As the technical aspects are mastered, the focus can turn to the musical: "it is through the adult knowing ever more clearly and consciously what to do, that finally technique becomes automatic and is then naturally forgotten. Then the player can really be free to make music" (Fischer, 1997). To play my viola I rely on kinetic and auditory memory, to play music I draw on emotional memories: "in this creative process musicians draw on a wide range of musical experiences, memories and reference points, so that distinctions between the personal and musical become entangled" (Bartleet and Ellis, 2009). While I can relate very much to this observation, I would go further than describing it as musicians drawing on just musical experiences (although I certainly believe they dominate the creative process), I think we also draw from life experiences. The greater sensitivity we have in response to these experiences the more potential there is for our music-making and creative processes to be meaningful. Interacting with our surroundings, a musician's practice is in constant flux where we are being constantly informed and inspired with our experiences reflected back. This fast-paced feedback loop of information and decision-making embodies elements of being both fixed and flexible. We can both desire consistency in our practice and yet take risks in the moment of performance. Ultimately we strive to achieve in our performance something that makes the entire process up to that point invisible.

There is something magical about the first performance of a new work. For me, a world premiere performance is like a rite of passage, as it is in front of an audience that a piece can often reveal new elements, hidden doorways, surprises that had lain dormant and the resurfacing of insecurities. When it came to performing *Untitled* for the first time I had to trust in all the learning I had done, even if felt like I had not reached the desired level of automatic ease. I felt that the work as a whole was not completely a part of me yet, and I was not sure of how the piece came across to the audience because I was concentrating so much on getting the technical facility still. However, in the moment of performance, I threw out the many details I had been slaying myself over, moved forward onto the stage and trusted my instincts. I took my time, sculpting the sounds and listening as they entered the hall. Moments of silence hung in the air, I moved slowly as I picked up and put down bows, taking care not to strike the music stand or my viola.

Many, many hours of learning went into the eighteen-minute duration of the first performance of *Untitled*. I remember feeling relieved that I could even get through the first performance, but also frustrated at the crippling effect some of the notation challenges still posed. But I did not learn *Untitled* to perform it once. Despite subsequent performances since the premiere, I do not feel I have finished learning *Untitled*. Could the level of *performance* potentially exist as an ultimate learning phase? Schick describes similar feelings in his description of learning Brian Ferneyhough's *Bone Alphabet*: "By all accounts I should be finished with *Bone Alphabet* … But I often feel compelled to return to the uncertainties of my first attempts, to the cragginess of problems too formidable to be leaped with a single bound. With any luck *Bone Alphabet* will settle into a kind of prolonged adolescence where the malleability of learning coexists with mature manifestations of performance" (Schick, 2006).

The first time I returned to *Untitled* some months later to perform it again, I was surprised by how much my body and ear remembered and that most of the work was still in my fingers. I had retained much more facility of the score than I thought I had and that was reassuring. In each subsequent performance (April, May and August, 2014) there have naturally been subtle differences and there are constantly aspects of this work I seek to refine or find a better method to its execution. It is not necessarily something new that I discover—it is more like an extension of what I already know—a moment of clarity in the material where even changing the slightest emphasis of a note can transform the structure and flow of a phrase.

Writing an autoethnographic account from *remembering* can "inform our epistemologies and methodologies" (Giorgio, 2013). I drew on memories (kinetic, sensorial and emotional) as an investigative tool as I extracted meaning from my learning of Rushford's *Untitled*. This work forced me to extend into new realms of learning because the tools of traditional string pedagogy were not enough to learn the unknown. This piece tested me, mentally and physically because of the nature of the musical score James had given me. There are a number of issues that can arise from this kind of notation as the performer can be uncertain as to the success of their reading of the score, and if they do not have access to the composer for whatever reason than the ambiguity of the notation can make the performer second guess their interpretation or result of an action and this is obviously not ideal and can be both frustrating and disappointing for the performer and composer.

"We write autoethnographies to make sense of the seemingly senseless, to deepen our understanding of self and other, to witness lived experience so others can see it, too. …Autoethnographic writing (and the reading of it) challenges us to question cultural truths and institutional structures" (Giorgio, 2013). Unpacking the processes of learning *Untitled* through autoethnography has revealed the need for me to be creative, flexible and honest in my approach to learning. There are many components to the process of turning the unknown into the known, and it was through recognizing a process, having a vulnerability in learning and seeking answers through experimentation, creative play and a heightened sonic awareness that I was able to learn a piece that initially overwhelmed my abilities. The cyclical process of *visual*, *mental*, *embodiment* and *sonic* means that I have a developed structure that can be applied to any new technical challenge. I think of times I have seen a performance of a work where I felt the performer had total control over their execution of the work, and yet a feeling of total freedom at the same time. The balance of these two elements is the ultimate outcome I wish to have in future performances of *Untitled* and potential repertoire, yet to be learnt.

Notes

1. Funding for the commission of James Rushford *Untitled* (2012) was generously supported by Creative Victoria (formerly Arts Victoria).
2. The standard clefs used for the viola are the alto and treble clefs.
3. In subsequent performances this preparation has changed so the bow plays in between pieces of Blu-Tack.

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CHAPTER 15

Critical Autoethnography and Musical Improvisation: Reflections, Refractions and Twenty-First Century Dimensions

Leon R. de Bruin

As an improvising musician, I articulate and express by drawing on my total and fully lived experiences in time, body, relations and creative cultures. Through autoethnography I can capture "multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Critical autoethnographic writing and research can further "reveal the relationships among culture, communication, identity, emotions and everyday lived experience" (Boylorn & Orbe, 2016, p. 10), reaching into the pillars and crevices of our consciousness and creativities, facilitating critical reflection of these aspects upon our thinking, our making and our being. The human process of participation is rooted in our experiential, cultural and biological heritage that involves the negotiation of constraints, affordances and possibilities (Rogoff, 2003). The way we develop improvisationally, whether in music or life, is a perpetual metamorphosis and process of evolution in the way we encounter change, adaptability and open-ended possibilities (Borgo, 2005). Our identities are thus shaped by

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choice and decision-making, and the narratives and stories we hold of ourselves that reify our being in the world.

How we represent experience has been thoughtfully and provokingly problematized by a number of autoethnographic researchers (Adams & Jones, 2011; Bochner & Ellis, 2006; Harris, 2014). Stacy Holman Jones (2005) defines autoethnography as an "ongoing dialogue between self and world about the questions of ontology, epistemology, method, and praxis: What is the nature of knowing, what is the relationship between knower and known, how do we share what we know and with what effect?" (p. 766). We can use autoethnography to rethink our normalized understanding of "experience" by reinterpreting those experiences within our sociocultural and political contexts. Inquiry into experience that reconceptualizes identities—as subjectivities that are discursively produced rather than simply expressed—with the use of collective labels and descriptors gives richness to "the constructed nature of experience," and the sociocultural aspects of its construction (Scott, 1992, p. 25).

Identity in Transition

I wake up and wonder,
who am I today?
What hat do I wear today?
To what wind do I cast my sails to?
Which community is *today's* tribe?

I am a musician, a trumpet player of improvised music. I am an educator of students passionate about jazz and improvised music, and I am a researcher of improvisation and creativities in arts education. I have worked as a professional musician then as a teacher for 20 years; the last four have found me(trying) to meet the competing demands of professional educator, improvising performer and a research PhD. This learning journey has changed me, my awarenesses, beliefs and the possibilities I now feel apparent in arts education. I am a different educator and improviser because of my research journey, and this chapter visits experiential tangents that reflect on how these changes manifest in my teaching and performing and how by examining change in one venue or type of experience can theorize the personal in the others.

Identity in the Moment

I breathe, prepare, and step towards the door,
Realise I've already stepped through,
Staring at another.
This one doesn't open the same direction,
Or with the same effort,
What fate awaits traversing the next.

Autoethnography brings to the surface the social and cultural aspects of my personal experiences. It creates and analyses the storylines of my past influences; my family, teachers, environments, as well as the various musical communities involved in my music-making and teaching. It makes more clear the multiple aspects of my identity, the turning-point experiences, tensions and evolving dispositions and motivations that shaped the acquiring of knowledge I was drawn to, and the way I acquired it.

Autoethnographic enquiry looks back and forward, Janus-like, reflecting on the strengths and vulnerabilities of my musical being. It reveals through a multitude of stored musical artefacts, the memories that have shaped who I am in an effort to understand particular phenomena (Adams & Jones, 2011; Bartleet, 2009). As I reflexively move through memories, I refract, resist and am moved by my social and cultural landscape. Lives are complicated, intertwined and replete with experiences, events, people and circumstances. In interrogating our past, we lay bare our identities, of who we were, who we are and who we may become. Liora Bresler (2006) suggests "experience and memory is … open to contradictory interpretations governed by social interests and prevailing discourses. The individual is both site and subject of these discursive struggles for identity, and for remaking memory" (p. 36). Tom Barone (2001) describes how the "process of memory plays a vital role in binding together a selfhood" (p. 165). Critical reflection enlightens us to the decisions we have made, the reasons why we have made them and the way our lives play out; how messy and unravelled they are, and where they might lead in the future. From reflecting on these experiences we derive meaning making and purpose. As "living bodies of thought" (Pollock, 2006), new experiences become juxtaposed with beneath, beside and amongst old experiences in an experiential layering (Sutton-Brown, 2010, p. 1307) which influences the ways we remember and re-tell our stories, in context and in cultures.

Storying the "I"

> What lies behind you, and what lies in front of you pales in comparison to what lies inside of you. R. W. Emerson

In understanding the tripartite elements of my identity, I turn to Carolyn Ellis' (2004) term of storying the "I" as means of allowing you, the reader, to experience, from your vantage point, my experiences, how they permeate my life's story and how they inform how I have come to be and become in my world. I seize hold of memories as they flash up. These small storylines, offered as vignettes, help you the reader grasp how I "see and rediscover the past, not as a succession of events but as a series of scenes, images and stories"(Benjamin, 1969, p. 257).

These vignettes coalesce my artistic, educational and academic identities as a way of creating new understandings of process, purpose, subjectivities and emotions of inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2008). To respond and act in the world, Margaret Somerville (2007) observes that we are required to have an understanding of our relationship with the world, and known ways of being in the world are brought under challenge and we are changed forever (Somerville, 2007). Representing linguistic and cultural identities through self-reflexivity, Tony Adams and Stacy Holman Jones (2011) articulate the importance of "listening to and for silences and stories we can't tell—not fully, not clearly, not yet" (p. 111). Self-reflexive autoethnographic writing as a methodological tool allows us to interrogate the unknown and never yet fully grasp the self (Adams & Holman Jones, 2011). It provides a structure on which to build meanings of art-making and writing in order to connect personal responses to larger cultural and educational issues, particularly within the field of art education. Layered autoethnographic texts exploit the experiences of the researcher in an effort to analyse personal experience as a microcosm of larger cultural experience.

The incorporation of arts-based research can broaden conceptions of self and engage self-reflection as a "fundamental shift away from the conventional assumption that all research is meant to bring us closer to a final understanding of various dimensions of the social world (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 14). Rather, it is the promotion of "disequilibrium-uncertainty in the way that both the author/researcher and the audience of the work regard important social and cultural phenomena" (p.16). Liora Bresler (2006) notes that "as musicians we disclose our intentions with musical narratives within musical languages," and that their visceral, temporal

qualities sensitize us to important aspects of experience (p. 24). Utilizing Judith Butler's (1999) performativity theory, my interactions with the reader and vignettes are musical and "performative acts" through which I compulsorily reiterate a set of linguistic and "social norms that precede and exceed the subject" (Butler, 2005, p. 17).

Formative Layers of Identity

> I started playing music at high school—I didn't initially practice that much, but playing with friends was fun, and I engaged in it because of that. Then my father lined the garage walls so I could practice in there. That became a welcome refuge from the regular bickering between my parents. I found myself practicing for hours every day. My father supported my musical pursuits and encouraged me to study at university. I enjoyed playing music with other people. My father drove me to music lessons and to various concert band and jazz band rehearsals. I played in group music making activities four times a week after school, and developed a circle of friends connected with each group. But that wasn't just it. I enjoyed working by myself, being by myself and mastering certain music that I had to get right. That practice room was a place where I could investigate, work out, experiment and figure out how this piece of tubing called the trumpet worked—or rather how I worked it. I intermingled within these different musical worlds, working out who I was and how I might belong to certain sub-groups within the ensembles.

I remember thinking: How do I fit in this? Is this me, is this my group, my community? (de Bruin, 2016b). Barone (2001) discusses the fleshing out of multiplicities of self, "problematising the modernist notion of a total static, consistent, unified self" (p. 164). Wenger also notes issues of identity as integral to social theory of learning, marking the inseparable nature of practice community, meaning and identity. Etienne Wenger (1998) argues we know who we are by what is familiar to us, in environments we can negotiate in, and in the communities that allow us to operate and function.

> Music at University was engaging, enjoyable, and segued into the life of a performing artist. Working in jazz, I predominantly taught myself through the deciphering of books, recommendations and others' advice. The beauty of creative music, is just that—it is creative; it's not rendering someone else's vision or idea, it crystalizing and realizing your own precious views of what you want to say to the world. Yet, to this day, the educational imperatives that drive much learning is through recreation, repetition and imitation. With everyone sounding more or less the same, the thoughts I had then in

> assimilating and trying to carve out a personal voice reverberates the same way 20 years later in further study. After ten years of freelance performing I settled back to Melbourne, and I also began teaching. I found a music department in a government school in the outer suburbs; one that I am still a part of today. To think how many musicians started there and now enjoy making their own music. My own creative frustrations are tempered by the opportunity afforded to others.

Musician-Teacher-Artist-Researcher

My 20 years of teaching music has been a journey in teaching creativity and creative practices through music, despite the constraining curricula and study designs one must deal with. Many practicing musicians do more than perform professionally. Dawn Bennett (2012) asserts that "two-thirds of musicians work both within and outside of music" and that "we know that over 80% of musicians teach" (p. 63), and develop a portfolio of musical capacities. Carlos Rodriguez (2009) delves further into the world of the musician and remarks, "how one conceptualizes musicality shapes everything else one does in the profession" (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 37). Music learning and identity construction "encompasses a broad range of traditional and emergent skills and sensitivities" (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 37). Understanding the creative influences of music making in my life reveals the personal motivations I hold to be innovative in music-making both as performer and as an educator.

While one may think arts education avails the opportunity to explore and develop creativities, more often than not it is trapped in re-creative, imitative pedagogical approaches that reduce student's creative urges to compliance and acquiescence of hegemony and canon. Despite the richness and diversity of skills and collaborative interplay involved in jazz and improvisation education, the learning and teaching of improvisation within the high school and conservatoire is a construct far removed from the dynamic, fluid and transformative possibility evident in the art form (de Bruin, 2016a). Much of jazz and creative music in education systems remains trapped within such non-creative, scripted footprints (Louth, 2012; Prouty, 2012).

> I engage and am part of a world-wide academic community that discusses the effects constraining and limiting educational practices impact on Arts education. I try to reconcile the linear and siloed approaches to arts education, and the positive impacts collaborative and creative practice plays on

> learning, and the distributed nature of creativity (Glăveanu, 2014)—and that in fact each domain is replete with multiple creativities. (Burnard, 2012)

My knowledge as a performing artist, educator and scholar is shaped through my experiences; not separating my thinking, utilizing an inductive approach to theorizing rather than depending on established techniques. Patricia Leavy (2015) asserts that music-based practices can enable researchers "to access, illuminate, describe, and explain that which is often rendered invisible" and "out of reach" (pp. 123, 133). As creative and aesthetic expression, music is presenced in the relation *between* the performer and the audience. So too, is the way I engage and interact performatively with my audiences in education and research. Whether teaching to students, improvising with musicians, researching with scholars, I now perceive my identity not as a chameleon changing colours to suit the occasion, but rather a diversely experienced professional replete with chromatic possibilities. Through these multifarious experiences I can work creatively between these modes of being, each aspect of my identity enhancing and better informing the other. These life experiences avail me to what Dewey (1934) describes as the "fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things" (p. 18). Our being is expressed and conjured from past experiences, environments, motivations, successes and failures, and our expressive possibility shaped by what we know, by what we think is possible, that in performance is determined by our autonoetic consciousness (Tulving, 2005). Awareness of creative possibility emanates from our personalised creative consciousness, and realized through our unique and personal voice.

An Evolving Creative Identity

Musicians in unencumbered 'flow' display an embodied experience (Dreyfus, 2002), a 'state of awareness' that describes the embodied experience of music that is suitable for fleshing out the temporal and affective dimensions of musical expression (Shepherd & Wicke, 1997). Of significance to personal awareness is the open and ongoing process in which they evolve. Kierkegaard notes that "an individual is constantly in the process of becoming" (1974, p.79), revealing those things that are absent are as important as those that are present in defining who we are and how we see the world.

Critically theorizing the recreative dominance evident in music education can elucidate challenges to the way educators may consider teaching improvisation and jazz; utilising theories of creativity that may resonate within emerging educational discourses. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1999) asserts, problematizing dominant perceptions of "creativity exclusively as a mental process…cannot do justice to the phenomenon of creativity, which is as much a cultural and social as it is a psychological process" (p. 313). In 'knowing by doing' (Dewey, 1934), knowledge is the creative response of unique individuals and their personal interactions within their environments. Knowledge is unique to the individual 'knower,' free from easy categorisation or quantification. A learners' knowledge and their 'way of knowing' evolve as the student does.

Conceptualisations of creative music making assert an emergence of knowledge that develops over time, is reliant on the malleability of music materials at hand, and situates novel thought as a capability accessed and possible by all (Custodero, 2005; Sawyer, 2003). Beginner, developing and expert evaluations of improvisational ability represent levels of sorting out of music materials via idiosyncratic processes and possibilities. Beginner outcomes are formative, embryonic and naïve in their simplicity and construction. Developing improvisers shape their knowledge, skill, expressive capability and possibility through the environments and communities of which they play a part in. Experts have experienced a historical and cultural evolution, accumulating a personal perspective and culturally situated understandings of creativity. Improvisers cultivate innovative behaviours, ideas and concepts and establish a habitus and field of activity and influence. Within these cultural environments improvisers express their creative capital, their collectives, vocabularies and personal voices. Expertise can be interpreted as a process of acquiring a cognitive cultural system that operates within possible myriad cultural environments.

> My high school and university experiences were those prevailing throughout many high school and conservatory models of jazz and improvisation that utilized pedagogical structures that inculcated re-creative and reductionist constructs of the jazz world. It was only through informal learning and real-world performing experiences in music communities beyond the classroom developing collaborative opportunities that provided me with the possibility, capability and incentive to foster my own dynamically evolving practices. My learning to improvise was acquired through immersion in knowledge communities—and this influences how I teach and shape others' learning constructs.

Learning situations that rely on stable situations, rigid procedures or prescriptive skill sets have significant leverage in the construction of potential musical and creative worlds and students' anticipated activity within them. Similarly constrained vocabularies and dependence on rote learning constructs a false, distorted experience of the rich mosaic that is the world of improvisation. My teaching promotes the possibility of multifarious ways of learning, individual voices and a sonic laboratory approach that embraces creativity, risk-taking and boundary-crossing. In my students, I encourage adaptive minds to work, exploring possibilities that might be, rather than overly burdened with what 'was'. As in music as in life, I see them daring to be inquisitive, be responsive and seize the moments that make life and improvised music so exciting.

Implications

Education grapples with developing concepts of creativity that lay within an overall schema of creative persons, creative products, creative processes and creative environments (Tardif & Sternberg, 1988). Current trends continue to redefine the utility of creativity in modern economic contexts as of value (Robinson, 2001), and a "discursively operational tool in the capitalist kit" (Salehi, 2008, p. 23). Conflated with innovation and shunted away from art, pervasive definitions that describe creativity as something "new, useful and valuable" (Magyari-Beck, 1999, p. 433) echo Robinson's definition of creativity as the process of having original ideas that have value (Robinson, 2001). Such definitions leave unquestioned the context of to whom it is valuable, and how this value is measured.

> Just as we learn from successes, we also learn from failures. How we gain and grow from near and distant misses, unfulfilled opportunities, defeats, frustrations and failures are a part of the learning process. Our responses to failure are just as powerful as those to immediate success. It is only by passing through each door of experience, grasping the learning opportunity it avails us, and confronting the next, that we learn how to navigate our course into the future as learners, educators, artists, and creative beings.

As improvisers create, discover, traverse, boundary ride and journey through experience and circumstance they establish their own truths and subjective understandings of taste, beauty and affectation rooted from within their own lifeworlds (Kant, 1928). Friedrich Nietzsche asserts that it is through willing practices that humans grow from their engagement

with life that allows an individual's truths to be articulated (Nietzsche, 1973). Allowing students to explore and discover permits the discovering of their own creative truths. Developing thoughtful and provoking improvised activities for students can profoundly change the way students relate to music, and are engaged by it individually, collectively, creatively and socially. Educators who focus on the essence of students learning experiences may be more insightful to the variances of ability, knowledge and creativity that can be intrinsically represented in students. This can further inspire students to become not just consumers of music and sonic culture, but also producers and active voices with the power to change the current. As Pamela Taylor (1998) puts it, "we, as [music] art educators must be willing to take the risks we are asking of our students. We must share in our experiences, question our value systems, and critically look every day at the education system in which we operate" (p. 141).

Critically interpreting life history and personal narrative can shape effective tools for personal and professional development. More deeply understanding how my beliefs, values and assumptions regarding music-making have come to be formed can positively cultivate meaningful pedagogical tools. Analysis empowers me as a performer and my continued exploring and creating of improvised music, and enlightens me in how I can assist others to do so as well. Autoethnography in a musical life reveals the importance of our own soundtrack to our lives, of creating this for ourselves through our musical experiences, and how we should perhaps learn to embrace the uniqueness and idiosyncrasy in shaping others'. As Kenneth and Mary Gergen (2002) suggest:

> There is little reason that ethnographic representation should not become as rich in its forms of expression as the arts, with painting, music, dance, poetry, multimedia, and performance all serving as potential sources of communication. And with each alternative we are opened to different avenues of relationship. (p. 18)

Self-reflective investigation more fully informs my experiences as a socially aware and empathetic teacher and leader. I feel I have better skills and experience as a teacher guiding others, and as a performer negotiating new ventures. As an experienced teacher and performer, I can, as Bowman (1998) suggests, not only teach in music education, but also through music education. Performance informs education of the power groups and communities have in developing belonging, resilience and identity. Boyle

and Parry (2007) propose that autoethnography holds promise for observing organizational culture, given its introspective and retrospective lenses and its potential for enhancing understandings of links that exist between individuals and the organizations with which they work.

While John Kihlstrom (2013) and Kay Deau (2001) have remarked that social identity goes beyond categorization, carrying with it implications for behaviour that include one's beliefs, dispositions and motivational considerations. Social identity is an inherently social phenomenon best understood as a product of individual and historical–contextual experiences. Autoethnography reveals the way we negotiate our identities, and how we are influenced by others' actions in various ways.

Reflections

> How did I come to be this person of diverse skills and knowledge—a musician, improviser, composer, teacher, researcher and writer? I enjoyed music and pursued it with discipline, joy and intrigue. I embarked on teaching, established a high school music department with the same joy and fascination, cultivating learning in others that now extends to teaching the next generation of teachers. Whilst teaching informs performance and practice, research—of theories, self and others more lucidly synthesizes and brings to focus the strands of my life.

A life improvising has taught me that if we are brave enough to risk failures and learn from them our negotiation of the chapters in our lives, the doors to opportunity are indeed passed without knowing. By reflecting on these moments, I realize the difference to each door, their size, imposition and their splendid detail.

This autoethnographic study is thus a therapeutic self-analysis; it is both a re-evaluation of what has been, and what it now is; it is of understanding myself personally and professionally as I negotiate musical—and life changes. This chapter explores how such lived experiences reflect on the "social and cultural aspects of the personal" (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008, p. 24). As a cathartic re-imagining of myself, critical reflection can be utilized as a self-educational process that informs, directs and improves my own knowledge and understandings about who I am and my negotiation of different priorities.

Connecting ones story with social processes can impact others who have similar experiences balancing a teaching/performance/researcher role in life. Ellis suggests "at all times until death, we are in the middle of

our stories, with new elements constantly being added" (2009, p. 166). Research asserts that human beings constantly restore their lives so to present these lives as changing, yet continuous and coherent (Baerger & McAdams, 1999; Bochner, 1997; Smith & Sparkes, 2006).

Far from worrying about being defined by others, I continue to revel in the territories I inhabit as teacher, performer and researcher. I take Saville Kushner, Barbara Walker, and Jane Tarr's (2001) notion of a boundary-walker that captures the spirit of my autoethnographic story. My personal and professional lives are intertwined, musically traversing the margins, borders, limitations and understanding of structures and going beyond. Living a life that explores these qualities is one of the most important things one can do not only as a musician, but as a human. I feel these qualities offer significant challenges to not just music education, but education in general.

The assertion made by George Lewis (2002) that improvisers "are now able to reference an intercultural establishment of techniques, styles, aesthetic attitudes, antecedents and networks of cultural and social practice" (p. 234) captures elements of my past experience and current endeavours. Encountering Lewis' remark was both a touchstone to my experience of musical emancipation and the broadening of horizons from institutional learning, to the exciting musical environments that were forthcoming beyond university, as well as a liberating vision of the possibilities conspicuous in exciting, innovative teaching. As Leavy (2015) remarks, "New pathways don't just form, we have to create them—we have to blaze the trails we want to pursue and that will be travelled by others" (p. 304).

Creativity is, in essence, a form of self-education. The simultaneous exploration of the philosophical alongside the aesthetic, affective and conceptual processes is an authentic and dynamic engagement of knowledge and lived experience. If education is to incorporate creative practice and innovation, it must learn to shape its pedagogy to address the very aesthetic core of what creativity can evolve in people and the communities in which they engage. For improvisation to remain vital and relevant in the twenty-first century, it is important to not only maintain a knowledge base that is constantly updated, challenged and reflexive of the sophistication of society it emanates from, but also that improvisers learn and are encouraged to transcend it. Creative practices facilitate improvisers in individually and collectively learning, acting, risk-taking, collaborating and challenging ways of learning.

Lastly, critical autoethnographic reflection vitalizes the ontological Gordian knot of my past musical relationships in teaching, performing and research, and my emic and etic relationship to different kinds of music and the communities I have inhabited. It is important to ask and pursue answers to questions about the most complex features of our travels through our life course as human beings because it recognizes that who we are and the work we do in the world are intertwined inexorably (Glendenning, 2000).

I continue to juggle the possibilities of my own performance projects, of my teaching and shaping the learning and music-making of others. My new community of musical practice, of music and educational scholars offers the possibility of developing creative and collaborative arts-based practices that can contribute to both the burgeoning educational and performative scholarly discourse in this area. As I unravel these ties, I hope to as Jean-Paul Satre (1957) urges, find further meaning, importance and fulfilment in the realities and possibilities of those relationships, and the connection I have between performance, education and scholarship. A connection that started through autoethnography.

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CHAPTER 16

Creative Selves, Creative Cultures, Creative Futures

Stacy Holman Jones

We are living in a time of uncertainty and for many people around the world that uncertainty is marked by fear and violence. The need for creativity in crafting selves and cultures and futures is made ever more urgent by and because of these uncertain times. That creativity demands both concentration and a concerted effort to act. Jane Hirschfield (1997) writes that in her work as a poet, the "effortless effort" of creativity is an act of concentration that pivots around six central forces or 'energies'—music, rhetoric, image, emotion, story and voice (p. 7). And we can see clearly why and how the energies of rhythm, making a passionate and compelling 'case' or a moment or experience or point of view, and the masterful deployment of imagery, emotion, storytelling and a strong narrative voice come together to construct poetic selves and worlds that move us to see and act differently in the world. As I noted in Chapter 1, Hirschfield's reflections on creativity of this collection propose that, in the marshalling and crafting of these energies, "World and self begin to cohere. With that state comes an enlarging: of what may be known, what may be felt, what may be done" (qtd. in Popova, n.d.). In these uncertain times, the

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imperative to join inquiry, feeling and action are urgent necessities in maintaining not only the coherence but also the expansion of selves and worlds.

This book has endeavoured to show that journey in all its wonderment, meandering, frustration, joy and unfinishedness as it unfolds in performance, in language, and in and as education. The authors of the essays contained in these pages are committed to the hope and possibility of working at the intersections of creativity, education and critical autoethnography and have strived to make work that asks critical questions about how selves and cultures are created, understood, questioned and transformed. The collection has given both an argument and a set of exemplars that demonstrate what critical autoethnography and performance, in particular, have to teach us about creativity and pedagogy.

We approached our work with the aim of joining the explanatory power of critical theory and inquiry with creative, specific, aesthetically engaging and personal examples of the ideas at work—in cultural context, in practice, in people's lives. Or, in simpler terms, to link the personal and storytelling to link those personal stories with the larger concerns and more generalizing arguments of critical theory. The use of storytelling to acknowledge and particularities of selves and identities and to create communities with a clear political purpose is not a particularly new or innovative approach. Rather, it is a timeworn and proven method. Storytelling has long been used, for example in feminist organizing efforts, perhaps most notably in the organized "consciousness raising" storytelling circles in US women's movement in the 1960s. As Moira Donegan (2017) observes, "the anecdotes shared among women cut through the recondite rhetoric of social theory. The stories are simple, personal and have clear moral direction." In her most recent book *The Mother of All Questions* (2017), astute social critic and author Rebecca Solnit suggests that telling women's stories to the world "will change the way the world treats women" (Donegan). This is our hope for our collection in this time of uncertainty—that the stories in this book will change the way the world sees the selves and cultures wrought in their telling. Ultimately the work contained in these pages are creative acts of what Solnit (2004) describes as hope—the kind of hope that

> locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act. When you recognize uncertainty, you recognize that you may be able to influence the outcomes—you alone or you in concert with a few dozen or several million others. (p. xiv)

What we now hope for is that you, our readers, in our contemporary moment—as marked with uncertainty and scarred by fear and violence as it is—will use critical autoethnography as a *method* for creatively putting critical theory into action as well as an invitation and a call to forge more creative selves and creative cultures in the urgent spaciousness of unknowingness. And to do so with the goal of the cohering and enlarging what may be known, what may be felt, what may be done of both self and world.

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