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Greetings from **The Centre for Arts-informed Research**, located within the Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counseling Psychology at OISE/University of Toronto. We are a community of faculty and graduate students with a shared commitment to exploring, articulating, and supporting ways of bringing together art and social science research. In Lori Neilsen’s words, we are ‘scholartists’ engaged in ‘scholartistry’.

This is issue of **arts-informed**, marks the beginning of a transformation of our newsletter, and contains a collage of ‘scholartistry’, from short stories to essays, and poetry. Also included are notes on the Centre’s events, updates on members’ activities, and calls for contributions to our journal and book series. It has been an honour to pull this all together and be a part of the beginning of an ongoing dialogue among ‘scholartists’ working on the edge and engendering a world of possibilities for scholarly research and representation.

Over the years the Centre has sponsored works-in-progress, discussions, gallery exhibits, performances, seminar talks, and conference presentations. One of our intentions is to provide a context for promoting exciting, innovative, ‘scholartistry’ that forges new shapes of academic discourse. We welcome new ‘scholartists’ to our community. If what we are doing strikes a chord with you and you would like to be involved in some way, contact Ardra Cole: acole@oise.utoronto.ca

Our website is another way of finding out more about **The Centre for Arts-informed Research** at OISE/UT: [http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~aresearch](http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~aresearch)
As he pulled into the school parking lot, Mr. Gregson sometimes wondered if this was what it felt like to be a member of German SS. As a beginner, he was struggling to gain a sense of competence and confidence in the craft of teaching. He had hoped to assist his students so that they had a smoother path through adolescence than he had had, and to excite them with the joy of learning. Instead he felt he was a policeman representing an authoritarian regime of which the population was becoming resentful and rebellious. While the challenges of learning the curriculum and preparing teaching materials loomed large, making the transition from a being a student to establishing an identity as an adult, a man, and a teacher were even larger. These personal challenges, made greater by the need to set up house, make friends, and establish oneself in a new city, were distractions from a focus on teaching.

The most compelling challenge of all was to find a way to get students to sit quietly in their desks so that he could teach a lesson. He was worried about what senior colleagues thought of him and his poor attempts at classroom management. He felt an enormous gulf between himself and his students. He had never imagined students who were not motivated by good marks and positive regard by teachers, and while he had sometimes been rambunctious at school, his disrespect never knew such wide latitude as he now encountered. His professional life was a struggle: He did not understand his students; he was assigned classes in disciplines in which he was neither educated nor trained; he was working with an academic curriculum which felt alienated most of his students. His personal life was in a state of upheaval: in addition to the struggles associated with relocation, he was challenged by ever growing doubts about his sexual orientation. The matter has been suppressed for years but with the upheavals he was experiencing, this Pandora box had also sprung open. The uncertainties in his life led to a sense of fear and vulnerability so that he was distant with students, afraid and threatened by them, which made rapport unlikely. Mr. Gregson found himself to be at war with his students, and he was losing.

It did not take long for the dream to sour. His mistakes began on the first day of classes. He encouraged familiarity by introducing himself by his first name, and when calling the roll in order to get to know his students, Mr. Gregson was embarrassed after mispronouncing a name, and humiliated when students laughed at him. He tried to gain control by raising his voice and soon had the loudest class in the school, characterized by rowdy students and a defensive, shouting teacher. In frustration he resorted to assigning transcription and was amazed to find that the class would settle when asked to do this task. He felt that he had been taught very little in his teaching diploma, and nothing that prepared him for his current situation. He did recall that teachers should stimulate intrinsic motivation to learn in their students. Mr. Gregson was distressed and found it difficult to prepare lessons as he could not concentrate.

Overwhelmed by feelings of failure he started going to bars after work. He learned to ignore being sworn at in class and knew better than to order a student to perform a task. In his school of hard knocks, he was taught instead to make requests. Other professional humiliations awaited him when students corrected his mistakes in the unfamiliar subjects he was teaching. He asked an experienced teacher unconnected with the school for advice and was counseled with the home truth that he was a kid trying to teach kids. Then it turned personal. In an attempt to control a noisy class he asked a student to stand with her back to the class at the front of the room. When order was restored, he allowed the student to return to her seat, only to find an epitaph of her punishment on the chalkboard: “Mr. Gregson is a fag”.

Mr. Gregson went on sick leave soon thereafter and then resigned his job. He returned to work for a short period in the interim, but fearing disorder, did not tell his students that he would be leaving. On his last day, as usual, his authority was challenged. A vivacious 9th grader stood on a desk then swung from the rafters. In the past, Mr. Gregson would have roared to try and restore order. Today he laughed. He was amazed to find that the student got down and the class settled. He taught his last class and left the school an utter failure, but having learned much more than he ever taught. ✫
Bad Intention

Liz deFreitas
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Martha orders first, then Agnes. The waiter returns to the counter and asks for two pints of beer. The cave-like tavern is dark and empty, although early afternoon light reaches in through the frosted front window and lights up the table top in front of them. Deeper into the tunnelled room the ceiling lights expose dirty corners and tarnished mirrors. The dark wood paneling appears ancient. Martha enjoys the quiet atmosphere and the marked absence of music and chatter. She always seeks out places in their off hours, as though doing so might disrupt the connection between time and place. She relishes the interlude of recovery and anticipation, the serene afternoon before evening comes and another night of revelry fills the space. The two rows of pool tables sit peacefully green beneath the hanging lamps. The waiter, still sleepy, yawns as he sips his coffee and counts the change in the cashier drawer.

“This is not an interview,” says Martha, looking across the table at Agnes. “I’m not here to gather information from you.” She stops to watch the waiter interact with the bartender. They rest their elbows on the bar and share a cigarette. She envies their casual, engaged familiarity. She longs for such easy intimacy. She longs to cultivate that same generous and playful moment between herself and Agnes. She dreams of moments bereft of information. Moments so thoroughly anchored in lived experience that no part of them could be detached and made an accessory. Moments of communication in which language is a medium for swimming and not a collection of tokens. If only she could stop narrating and feel the chewy spoken words of a grounded parole. If only she could forget language and really talk with Agnes. But even now, as she sits observing the other two, divesting her own moment through the imagining of a fuller experience elsewhere, she knows she is writing herself into an observational hole. She can feel the mortar hardening, the wall climbing. She is always the one who watches, the one who defines a border, and then strokes the image clean. The one who sets herself the task of witnessing others in their apparently unconscious act of belonging. She wonders if she can ever belong to an encounter with the kind of requisite conviction that makes it matter. She is only vaguely aware of Agnes watching her. But as she shifts her attention back to the woman across from her, she feels drawn into a different series of nested observations. Her thoughts tumult out of earlier frames and into the fuzzy light of another’s inspection. Agnes’s eyes are deep brown. Her look is vigilant, honest, and profoundly dubious. Martha perceives herself through the imagined gaze of Agnes. She construes her enigmatic self through a series of altering projections. She feels herself flitting between fixed images, each burdened by the premise of future dialogue. Talk, she thinks. Talk, she must. Not a monologue, not a discourse. No, she must be in need of something more urgent. A driver outside presses long and hard on his horn. Martha hears herself speaking, compassion in her voice, “I try not to be neutral,” she says, with conviction.

The waiter arrives with the two pints. The women remain silent as he sets the coasters down and then the beers. The shafts of bright sunlight are drawn through the pint glasses into the amber bitter ale. Agnes sips hers immediately. She feels safe now that they are off campus. Her story feels less like a burden and more like a position of personal history. She looks around the bar, sensing the instant flush to her cheeks from the alcohol. She feels playful and provocative for the first time in months. She watches Martha speak, suddenly conscious of the incredible lightness of their lives.

“Of course I have my own agenda,” says Martha, “I’m supposed to write a book. I’ve been paid to write a book. But I need to write something that questions the status quo. I need to...create a space that promotes liberation. You know.” She laughs nervously and sips her beer. She wants Agnes to know that her ambitions are genuine. She wants her to realize that their relationship is not formal and hierarchical. She is not the expert offering professional development. She is not there to tap Agnes for her anguish. That would be unfair. The person should never be used as a vehicle, the pain never an instrument. Her inquiry into forms of power and silence must tackle the structural framework of the school and community without exploiting any individuals for her own purposes. She is there to unpack the political infrastructure of the establishment, but she must ensure that the risks are also her own.
She wants Agnes to know that they are both in vulnerable places. “I am trying to create something that has serious social ramifications,” she proposes, still fumbling towards an understanding of what exactly she is risking in pursuing this research.

“Ramifications? Consequences?” asks Agnes, frustrated by Martha’s expression. She wrinkles her nose in disagreement, “If your ethics are based only on consequences, then utility will always be the measure of your justice. There are problems with that. Your consequences may upstage your intentions.” Agnes pauses and blinks twice, “Do you want them to?”

“No. Not at all. Perhaps the reverse. My intentions are extremely important, whether or not I achieve my goals. I don’t want to be judged solely by my achievements. I want to find value through everyday practice.”

“Again, practice may be far from your personal intentions. Everyday might begin with hope and end with despair. Wittgenstein’s practice was precisely that process of daily disenchantment.” Agnes’ pulse runs ahead of her. She feels the elastic moistening of the skin on her temples. She is agitated by the unbidden return of an all too familiar skeptical stance. Her mind, still raw from the first months at Charlton, limps through these playful thoughts. It is almost as if she had forgotten her passion for subversion. It comes to her now like a lost child having found her home. She surrenders to the indisputable pleasure of playful reflection, suddenly seeing herself from an entirely different perspective. Her eyes quiver as they move back and forth between the dark room and the bright window. The quiet serene tavern, an atmosphere so unexpected, fuels her almost jubilant composure. The classroom and all its associated turmoil shrinks to a tiny speck floating in the light beam.

“What do you mean?”

“Look at me in the classroom. I live that contradiction every day.”

“Could it be nothing more than compromise? Or is it something else?” Martha hopes that she doesn’t sound accusational. She is asking more for herself than for Agnes’ sake.

“Don’t ask me. I’m just learning. But don’t you think it would be a little scary if your beliefs were always synchronous with your practice? A kind of soma-induced solipsistic world where dissonance was never experienced? A world where success was the measure of goodness?”

“Like it is at Charlton?”

“Yes, exactly. And that’s precisely my problem. I observe it, I name it. And then what?”

“Then you make the changes you need to make.”

“You see that’s where it falls apart for me. What should my actions be?”

Agnes rises from the table and picks up her beer, “Come on. We’ll play pool.” Martha follows Agnes to the pool tables. They select cues. The balls are already stacked and triangulated. Martha chalks her cue and breaks. The break sends balls in all directions. Spinning stripes and solids scatter in a mostly Newtonian event. They ricochet off the felted edges and collide into each other. A handful of clumps accumulate, and the others roll into isolation. Finally a striped one sinks in the near left pocket. “Stripes you are,” says Agnes. She stands with her legs apart spinning her cue like a top while she waits for her turn. She moves to the table with obvious concentration. The hanging lamp alights the top of her head with gleaming intensity. She stretches her torso across the table, lines up the white ball, and practices the shot once or twice before hitting it. The white ball grazes the other and sends it slowly towards the pocket, but it stops just at the lip.

“You see my point? My best intentions laid to waste?” asks Agnes, as she circles the table, her voice now resolute. “In the classroom, somehow, those intentions feel even more thwarted. I hold strong beliefs about mathematics. About what it is and where it comes from. I’m trying to integrate them into my classroom. I really am. But it never seems to work.”

Martha takes her turn and sinks a ball. “Take the time you need,” she says, surprised by her accidental pool playing skills.
“And then, when you’re ready, push the envelope.”
It seems to Agnes as though all her solid balls are now blocked by stripes, and she stands with her cue at her side, searching for possible angles and reflections. She takes a long shot and sinks the white ball.

“I’m serious. Really. It’s not just that I’m bad at pool. I really do have difficulty with this concept of intention.”

“You’re too hard on yourself. Relax, pursue some of your ideas. See them into action. What’s the worst that can happen?” Martha is amazed by her own advice. The words, the tone, and the intent, all feel genuine, and yet this is the very advice she herself needs to hear. These are the words she longs to believe. And suddenly she realizes that she is living one of those moments of which Agnes spoke, when the divide between belief and action opens further and dissonance floods the conscious mind. It’s not a simple case of hypocrisy. It’s not a personal propensity towards torpid indifference. The experience transcends the individual and encompasses a cultural pathology, a convulsive and fragmented sense of self shared by all participants to a lesser or greater degree. The longer she pauses to reflect on the vagaries of her will and the intimate and multiplied difference that shudders within, the more conscious she becomes of the place she occupies so tentatively.

She spontaneously decides to share whatever feeling at that moment is the most accessible and most raw. The decision is barely conscious. It seems to tap a pre-cerebral compassion. She owes Agnes this minor act of exposure.

“Let me tell you about a nightmare I had last night.” Martha touches Agnes’ arm. “First of all, you should know that I hate skating. I have weak ankles, and my feet always freeze.” She sips from her drink, and continues. “There I am in my dream, skating. In those stupid girl skates. No ankle support. No jagged edge for breaking. Tons of lace and white leather. And I’m wobbling along on these blades with no sense of direction.”

“That’s easy,” says Agnes, as though being asked to explain. “Slippery surfaces are emblems of modernist thought, of giant systems in which smoothness is the ideal. Wittgenstein wrote about the slippery ice of ideal conditions. We need friction in order to walk. We need rough ground.”

“Oh,” deflated Martha. “Is that all?”
Releasing The Chrysalis: The Reconstruction of Teacher Identity Through Arts-Based Narrative and Inquiry

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To grow, become, change, and evolve as a person, is a natural, on-going process. Rarely stopping to examine our identity, we push foreword with little reflection as to how or why we became who we are. However, pre-service teachers are expected to practice and theorize within the school context, often without reflecting upon what their integral selves contribute to the educative experience.

Teacher identity is layered in complexity, well wrapped within perceptions of past experience. While some layers emerge clearly, others remain vague recollections submerged in the subconscious. Like the metamorphic shedding of a cocoon, revealing teacher identity can be an intense and sometimes painful process. Questions arise imploring the use of new methodologies in the search for uncovering teacher identity. How do we bring experiences from the past, which have critically impacted teacher identity into an authentic re-examination within the present? Furthermore, how do we facilitate the processing of present school experience in ways that continue to shed light on evolving teacher identity? This essay examines arts-based narrative and inquiry as a way to examine and reveal teacher identity within a semester-long Professional Development School’s multi-age cohort of eighteen practicing elementary school teachers.

Reconstructing identity through arts-based inquiries involves deep reflexivity throughout time, place and experience, retracing moments in the past to illuminate present self (Cole & Knowles 2000; Diamond & Mullen 1999; Mitchell & Weber 1999). Never a certain quest with a definite destination, its value lies in the power of auto-reflexive arts-based inquiry to be transformative (Diamond 1997). Although there are a wide range of arts-based inquiries available as alternative ways of approaching the construction of self, this study encourages pre-service teachers to encounter and interpret identity through visual and poetic lenses, using the mediums of collage, chalk pastel, poetry and painting.

Quilting/Collaging Identity

Free from conventional constraints of thought, the act of creating art cultivates an “unconstructed” awareness, loosening viewpoint and opening up new ways of seeing. Not only in creating art, but in viewing and responding to artwork, conditioned habitual ways of seeing are challenged to see beyond. Looking back on past influences of a lifetime is like quilting identity; quilts metaphorically represent a sense of history, pieces of the past, the concept of unity or coming together using the medium of multiple fabrics, notions or threads in an effort to construct a whole. To elicit a rich bricolage of understandings of how past experiences have drawn these teachers-to-be into the teaching profession, the first arts-based project engaged students in creating paper quilt squares using collage to depict fragments of influence shaping teacher identity. As Mc Dermott (2002) observes, collage allows pre-service teachers to explore “emergent and relational meanings” (p.65). Although initially uneasy about creating pictorial autobiographies, a nurturing and accepting environment eased fears, and facilitated the emergence of their artistic voices (Bayles & Orland 1993). Through modeling, the pre-service teachers were guided on this arts-based journey, de-emphasizing technical expertise as Cole & Knowles (2000) advise, and recapturing experience through the act of creating art.

Quilting/collaging identity enabled students to introduce pieces of themselves, revealing people, places, and experiences that inspired them in a passion for teaching. As visual points of departure, the quilts initiated narratives clarifying past influences and interests, offering an alternative way of reasoning about choice of profession. The narratives united the cohort as a collegial community, weaving pasts into presents, and creating a more focused sense of individual as well as collective identity.

Jennifer’s quilt (see FIG 1) is an intricate traditional quilt pattern stitched with words representing a spiritual aspect in her teacher identity. Her narrative presentation detailed the significance behind the powerful abstract concepts she chose to portray: “Strength, Knowledge, Dreams, Peace.”
Figure 1

The ribbons running across the quilt are labeled with personal attributes, interests, strengths, goals and bits of history that make up my individuality. Inevitably, they shape my teaching, adding authenticity and ownership to my practice.
– Jennifer

Barbara used the image of a traditional pieced quilt to separate what is important to her teaching identity. Vivid imagery initiated narrative clarifying the importance of family and daily activities, supporting her efforts and love of children within the teaching profession. The diversity found in the quilt squares reflected differences in learning styles and approaches toward education and the teaching within the cohort, establishing individuality previously unvoiced.

**Recovering/Re-Discovering Past Influences of Positive and Negative Role Models Upon Teacher Identity**

Still buried within memory are those lived experiences impacting teacher identity. Images of past teachers inform present beliefs about what is and what is not a “good” teacher. Now, many years later, the pre-service teachers resurrect images of both positive and negative teacher role models through the medium of pastel-chalk drawings. Through the emergence of these portraits from the past, the very phrases doled out in childhood classrooms, surface (see FIG 2). As Dewey (1934) observed, art directs past experience into the critical reexamination of the now. The pre-service teachers’ narratives reinforce Mitchell & Weber’s (1999) assertion that memory work raises conscious awareness of deep former influences on present teaching style, methodology and philosophy.

Furthermore, they commented on how the act of drawing aided in re-activating memory, underscoring what Claggett & Brown (1992) see as the potency behind the use of graphic strategies to advance understanding and stimulate metaphorical thought.

![Figure 2](image)

The inter-textual dimension of arts-based inquiry allows a cathartic purging of bad memories, deepening understanding of what not to become, while reinforcing desirable identity.

**Crystallizing Present Vision Through Poetry and Painting**

As a goal of the Professional Development School Program, students were encouraged to become acquainted with the socio-cultural environment residing within the context of the school culture. The cohort worked within a community of students with diverse cultural, socio-economic, linguistic, emotional and learning needs. To provide a deeper understanding of their students, the bridge between school and community was crossed through a community tour, cultivating appreciation for how the culture of community intersects with the social spaces of schooling. Looking outward to the community, a profound inner vision was secured through arts-based multi-modal forms of interpretation.

Prior to the community tour, poetry served as a verbal synthesis of inquiry, inspiring students to make connections between school, child and community.
As through art, creating poetry involves a departure from a strict adherence to conventional ways of thinking, blending imaginative flights of fancy with reality, often leaping to profound insights. These leaps of thought brought forth metaphors conducive to image making: Tony’s poem compares the city to a brain, David’s poem demonstrated an acute awareness of the growing diversity apparent in the landscape, and Barbara’s poem questioned issues of safety, while visually mapping the terrain.

Extending their reflections of the community through painting in a studio/workshop environment, as advocated by arts-based literacy pioneers (e.g. Chancer & Zodrow 1997; Ernst 1994, 1997; Rief 1999), the pre-service teachers experienced an interplay of reading, writing and reflection, while re-processing experience through painting. Artist Paul Klee was introduced as a model, demonstrating the use of complex signs and symbols in a poetic combination of abstraction and reality. The Klee examples subtly evoke people, place and community in playful allusions of color, shape, line and symbol. The potential for art to provide vision was emphasized, as students were encouraged to likewise paint their newly formed concept of community.

Complementing verbal processing of experience, painting provokes new perspectives and possibilities. Greene (1995), encourages use of imagination in an educational quest to “awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (p. 29). Although using art to elicit understanding regarding educational practice is not always condoned (Cole & Knowles 2000; Eisner 1998; Grumet 1995), the flurry of activity and excitement among the cohort while painting confirms the potential for arts-based inquiries to forge authentic engagement. As demonstrated by Lacy (2002), parallels between Buddhism and engagement with art can be drawn as students become absorbed in the moment, making meaning through art. While reflecting upon the past or in making future predictions, this contemplative and mindful inquiry involves a critical search for meaning in the now. A present-centered consciousness disengages memory of the past or concern for the future, creating a liminal space for new understandings.

The insights offered during the painting presentations exhibit deep reflection. David delineated reasons behind the use of line, offering a clearer understanding of the normative divisions implicit within the community, pointing to color and line as representing borders separating “Others” (See Fig 3).

Seemingly simplistic paintings, rendered deep significance as she referred to color and shape as students referred to colour and shape as symbolic metaphors, forming her understandings of the link among community, school and students. Barb’s narrative explained her painting (see FIG 4) as a visual question concerning school/community safety issues. These examples illustrate Barry’s (2002) concept of art as a form of symbolic constructivism useful for revealing new knowledge in education.

Final Reflections

Arts-based narrative and inquiry can be quite revelatory in uncovering pre-service teacher identity. The pre-service teachers displayed an un-foreseen confidence in their ability to clearly express or translate experience through the arts, revealing the transformative power behind this methodology. The following comments from participants offer a glimpse of its potential to expose a newly cultivated sense of critical self-awareness.
“The arts really helped me understand my teaching and who I am as a teacher – Working within the arts this semester made me reflect on the teacher that I am and the teacher that I would like to be.” – David

“Arts activities helped me bring up memories and emotions that words just can’t express. It was very helpful to look beyond paper, journal or e-mail entries. The arts helped me bring a deeper sense of who and what I am.” – Lindsay

“I often look at the world through artistic eyes but am not given a license to express myself this way. The arts helped me to look upon the past through artistic eyes as I worked through memories about who I am as a teacher.” – Jennifer

As a relatively new methodology, arts-based inquiries embrace new ways of thinking about teacher identity. Through arts-based narrative and inquiry, the pre-service teachers gained a “whole vision” of themselves as teachers in the making. Through absorption in the joyful process of creating art they became “lost” in the moment, intensely engaged in what Csikszentmihalyi (1996) has termed the “flow” of their own learning. Through intensive momentary engagement, they have “found” new ways of looking at themselves as teachers. Nearer to the identity they only once imagined, they have been shown a new way of seeing, forming a new vision of themselves as teachers in the metamorphic process of becoming.

References

The Alzheimer's Project

Ardra Cole  _  Maura McIntyre

April 4 – April 30, 2002
Opening April 11, 5:30 – 7pm
CBC Broadcast Centre
205 Wellington St. West
Toronto, Ontario

May 5 – May 15, 2003
Opening May 5, 5:30 – 7pm
City Hall Rotunda
Sudbury, Ontario

May 26 – June 3, 2003
Opening May 26, 5:30 – 7pm
Pier 21 Historic Site
1055 Marginal Road
Halifax, Nova Scotia

January 2004
Victoria, British Columbia
TBA

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Some people might say that we see with our eyes, I say we see with our hearts. Some say we know with our minds, I believe we know with our souls. This essay explores the relationship between arts-based inquiry and the inner life of the inquirer herself, those cross roads where mind, heart and (perhaps) soul intersect. I consider how the process of using art and aesthetics as both an inquiry methodology and way to represent what we understand about the world around us, corresponds to transformation of “self.” Working from within, arts-based inquiry might be best understood as “alchemy” of transformation.

Brief History of Western Alchemy
Alchemy is typically known as a medieval science of transforming base metals into gold. However, research exemplified by the writings of Carl Jung (1968) suggests that the science was rather a metaphor for a spiritual transformation of the alchemist herself. To use metaphor is to engage with the world through a language of the ineffable. Metaphor according to Ann Bogart (2001) “is that which is carried above the literalness of life. Art is metaphor and metaphor is transformation” (p. 57). The final product of the alchemical process is not literally gold but rather, an “opus magnus,” or “Philosopher’s Stone,” two terms that signify a metaphorical change within the alchemist. Jung (1968) argues that through a surrender of self as a “substance” in the alchemical, the individual is able to bridge gaps between inner and outer, and to create the gold or opus magnus of her work, which is transformation of the self.

While there are many chemical substances referred to in the work of the alchemist the two I focus on for my own work are mercury and sulfur. Mercury represents “spirit or mind” (Briggs, 1990, p. 178) and Sulfur acts as “the chemical that embodies passion, the heat of the spirit, the flame of absorption-sweat” (p.200).

A mixture, of these and other substances, called the prima materia, are placed under great heat and pressure, which “change biology into metaphors that imagine the fire we cannot see”. This process causes form and substance to become a swirling liquid mass, which “transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary” (Highwater, 1994, p.117).

Alchemy as Inquiry
Alchemy parallels the transformative ideals and creative experiences of many arts-informed and self-reflective inquiry practices (Diamond & Mullen, 1999; Finley, 1998; Mullen, 1999; Paley, 1995; Pinar, 1978/1994). In inquiry, I suggest that sulfur acts metaphorically as the passion we ought to have in our inquiry experiences, while mercury serves as the agent reminding us to remain unfixed and fluid as we engage with multiple interpretations of reality.

To be an alchemist as inquirer, one uses metaphor to illuminate our inarticulate relationships to the world through a journey of the mind and soul, as well as the body. Using metaphor “enables us to cross divides, to make connections between ourselves and others, and to look through their eyes” (Greene, 1997, p. 6). We forge visions rather than findings, thus inviting other readers to tap into their own creative reserves and draw out new ways of seeing the world. Our research, in essence becomes “an act of passion, driven by the hope of somehow capturing the illusive power of (our) visions” (Highwater, 1994, p. 4).

By elevating “art to the status of a sacred practice” (Highwater, 1994, p.22) alchemy gives the worlds of our dreams, thoughts, memories, and visions a language where they can be physically embodied in our daily outward reality, and correspond with our external reality world. In this sense, the key purpose to being a researcher as alchemist is to find meaning through “revelations rather than observation” (Highwater, 1994, p.22).

The Study
The following narrative entitled “The Spiral of the Shell,” emerged as part of a study I was conducting as a doctoral student into the roles that art plays in education. I focused specifically on one particular alternative private school that grounds learning in artistic and spiritual practices. The aim of the original study was to address how various artistic activities (music, drama, dance, visual art) and forms of expression increase student learning and to consider those skills or aspects of human development the arts help build. It was from this study and the writing of my narrative that my thoughts on “researcher as alchemist” were born.
Metaphor became the starting point for my own transformation in this inquiry journey. It began with a metaphor introduced by one of the four teacher-participants I interviewed, who I will call “Frank.” He reflected on how he uses metaphor to encourage his students to “see” the world differently. He states:
I come in with a spiral shell and for a while each of them simply observes the shell, and for five minutes they quietly look at it. Because poetics has very much to do with keen observation … then out of the observation they have to bring out a simile from their own creative imagination. So they might come up with, “The spiral of the shell is like the journey of life.”

My professor of the Qualitative Analysis course for which this study was originally done asked each of us to consider: “How have you changed as the result of this study?” The “The Spiral of the Shell” is my answer to that question. The words of the four teachers I interviewed stand alone and are placed in italics, center-page, as a way of dancing between time and space. “The Spiral of the Shell” uses elements of visual space, verbal rhythm, and metaphor to render a mental watercolor of words, blurring the edges between my personal history and my research.

The “Spiral of the Shell”
1. It’s the day before Thanksgiving. I sit before my computer pounding away on the keys. It’s two a.m.—God, how many cigarettes have I smoked already? I am beyond the point of exhaustion. I am determined to finish my Qualitative Analysis study before I leave for my mother’s house. I want to “not bring it with me” while I am on “vacation.”

The school director’s words keep ringing in my ears, echoing in the darkness of my subconscious:

“It will emerge through serendipity.”

I shut the computer off. I am drained. The last few weeks have consumed me. My smoking has doubled and I have lost ten pounds. As a first year doctoral student I had promised myself that this would not happen to me. But here I am, with three weeks left to drain the last of my weak resources into cogent thoughts which I am supposed to hand in to be “graded.” My life has become a performance and I have had no time rehearse.

“Education does not occur from the outside alone”

What am I doing here again?

2. Away from the world of my academic pursuits. Home. Hilton Head, SC. The place where I first came to visit when I was eight years old. I fell in love with it. I would spend the next ten years revisiting this island. I would live here for four years of my adult life. This place serves as a signpost for some of the most significant events in my life.

“The spiral of the shell is like the journey of life”

That was what Frank had said.

3. Driving toward the beach with the dog I retell him stories about this place and that. “Oh … they got rid of the theater space!!! I ran lights there for Pat.” Doing theater saved my sanity after the divorce. It gave me back a part of myself I thought I had lost.

“I thought art needed a higher purpose”

The smell of the ocean comes rushing up into my nostrils and I absorb it into my pores. It races up my spine and I know something that I cannot name but have known all of my life. Some secret I cannot put my finger on. Before I was born, my birth mother, who had to give me up for adoption when I was six-weeks old, supposedly used to take long walks on the beach with my biological father. She was only seventeen years old at the time.

“And you know something is being touched in the heart and soul of that child.”

I can feel my feet finally separated from the weight of my shoes, crunching small grains of sand underneath. We walk making small talk. My mind is full past recollections. Too many to count … and they ebb and flow with the rhythm of the small tide that laps at my ankles. I feel like I can breath for the first time in weeks.

“There is a way that out of them … these little doors open inside”

4. Everything seems new even though it overlaps with the forms of past moments, which have led me to this moment, here and now. They have not disappeared but have moved from the concrete to the ethereal. Time and space cannot be linear. They are layered. In between the lines lies the essence. Somewhere between the present and oblivion is the form of our lives.

“They’ll interweave and intertwine in such a deep way”

“The spiral of the shell is like the journey of life”

5. John stops to pick up a few shells. My first thought is “Damn tourists. You always tell them apart because they stop to gather shells.” I look down to notice a broken shell halfway crushed down into the sand. Franks words, “a partial form,” resonate in my head. I too begin to bend over and pick them up.
One by one, I squash them into my back pocket. Somehow the sensation of sand under my nails and salt water tangling my hair gives me the feeling of freedom. I am standing at one fleeting heartbeat in the span of my life. I am drawn to the broken shells. The fractures on the outer layer give me a view into the spine, the inner workings that brought the outer into being. And in a moment I can “see” the picture of all that has happened before me, here in this place, as the partial form, which has brought me to this present unfolding in my life. My memories are an inner labyrinth that forge a definitive outer form from the myriad of possibilities that swirl around each of us every second of every day, making order out of chaos. The dreamy childhood recollections of Christmas lights at Harbor Town, the fight with my sister when I was 18, moving down here in hopes of making a doomed marriage work, sitting up at the hospital until all hours next to my father’s bed, finding my own life, getting a tattoo, the military funeral playing taps, four years of teaching, and the discovery that art keeps my soul alive.

Conclusion

Art speaks to the soul and allows us to face the task ahead by bringing forth the vital life force elements stuffed between the cracks of concrete forged by dead and static theory. Unlike scientific methods of observation that “murder to dissect” (Wordsworth, 1888) in order to “know,” alchemical approaches to observation draw on the “soul” or “spirit” of the artist “within” to comprehend and to express more tacit and intuitive forms of knowing. As alchemists, inquirers use art to, as one teacher in the study says, give us the “strength and knowledge to work our most inner selves.”

As an “inner-active” art form, alchemy brings the language of understanding needed to anchor the journey where literal meaning cannot be exacted, to try renders us speechless, saying everything but what needs to be said, seen, or heard. We have to some extent marginalized the very voices of creative inspiration we crave in order to bring forth new and necessary possibilities, simply because we cannot weigh and measure them first. Often those voices come knocking at our door, uninvited, and yet they are critical to our very existence. We arm ourselves with the passion of Sulfur and the fluidity of Mercury to produce a faith in the fire of dark chaos that forges the prima material, cutting us loose from the anchors of absolute knowledges and singular visions. Rather than maintaining a stance of aloof "objective" observation, “it is learning which engages the passions and imagination in which [to quote Dewey] the individual ‘does not remain a cold spectator!’” (Davis, 1997, p.287). When we “do” inquiry with a passion, our spines tingle and our hearts race and we are completely immersed in the moment and our senses heightened.

What I’ve been discovering of late is that not only do passion and art serve us in helping to better comprehend and express the essence of what we seek in our theories and practice, but that both can become art forms in their own right. Inquiry as alchemy becomes a distinct art form that reveals the sacred acts of living, representing through inner and outer aesthetic forms, who we might become and where we are going next.

References


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Has taken place. For further information please contact Maura McIntyre at: mm McIntyre@oise.utoronto.ca
Refusing to be Tarnished: Alchemy and Professional Transformation


*Margie Buttignol Ph.D.*
Independent Scholar, Toronto Catholic District School Board

In this essay book review, I examine my current state of professional development through the alchemical framework provided by M. E. Warlick's book *The Philosopher's Stones. Let the Magic of Alchemy Transform Your Life*. Dr. Warlick is an Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Denver, Colorado. She has written *The Philosopher's Stones* to present her academic inquiry and inner interpretation of traditional alchemical symbolism. With the help provided by Warlick, I am able to become an alchemist, illuminate my career path, and find a way to professional transformation.

I begin with background information about the ancient art of alchemy. Next, I describe my current professional situation. Following that, I illustrate how I used Warlick's work as a heuristic tool for professional goal setting.

Alchemy

Alchemy is ordinarily viewed as a pseudo-science concerned with the transformation of base metals (e.g. lead) into silver and especially gold. Traced back to ancient Egypt and classical Greece, alchemy has since evolved in both Eastern and Western cultures. Alchemy is also held to be an ancient art with another goal: that is, the attainment of self-discovery and inner enlightenment.

Alchemists refer to themselves as philosopher-chemists whose strictly controlled chemical operations could bring nature to perfection. A crucial stage in the alchemical process is the unifying of the male and female principles of matter into an androgynous state known as the Elixir or Tincture, or the Philosopher's Stone. The alchemist's transparent glass vessel (Alembic) was a microcosm in which this transformation took place. Alchemical materials and operations are described in medieval texts using such vivid symbolism and obscure terms that understanding is nearly incomprehensible. It is thought that this vagueness was necessary for two related reasons: to protect secrets that could fall into wrong hands; and to test the resolve of the seeker.

In *The Philosopher's Stones*, Warlick emphasizes that alchemy is more than a metaphor of inner transformation. It also provides a means by which this can be achieved. Alchemists refer to this journey to enlightenment as the Great Work. They recognize interdependent physical and spiritual dimensions. Notable individuals such as Thomas Aquinas and Isaac Newton considered alchemy to be a complement to established philosophy and religion. Carl Jung noted the occurrence of alchemical symbols in the fantasies and dreams of his patients. This led him to believe that these symbols were powerful expressions of archetypal energies. Jung used alchemy as a model for human psychological growth.

My Newest Initiation

I am a teacher by profession; a holistic educator and an astute contemplative practitioner. I am also an arts-based phenomenologist interested in experience and its essences. In the fall of 2001 I began a new professional quest, working in a hospital-based mental health unit for children and adolescents. I faced many challenges during those initial months. I felt myself to be a holistic educator transposed into a psychiatric model where each professional is expected to contribute only a small fragmented part to the "patient's" "treatment." The expectation of many of my hospital colleagues was for me to be a teacher-technician responsible for educational assessments and transmissive teaching.
As the initiate in a new world on the mental health unit, I was also the alchemist at the beginning of a quest; much like the new Moon at the beginning of its cycle. I felt that I was standing at the beginning of a new alchemical cycle in which my intuition could be used (in some yet unknown way) to transform the material world comprising my then current professional state. I was a seeker, a wanderer along a new path. I had faith that the directions would be revealed as I walked along. Alchemy is always a process of becoming, of searching, and of new beginnings. I know from past experiences that each step along the way contains valuable lessons. I learn from my experiences in the everyday world around me.

After four months of being in that new job in the mental health unit, I was at a place where I was able to reflect back on recent experiences. I hoped that reflecting back would enable me to move ahead. But, I felt lost and stuck. I found myself in a situation that I did not understand and could not control. I felt discouraged as this new career path seemed to be so dark and arduous. I had hope, though. I know from past quests that the way will be illuminated if I can remain focused.

To get started on this new quest, I used alchemy as a heuristic tool. I hoped that it would help answer personal questions and guide decisions related to future directions and goals for professional growth. I began the process by asking myself, "What is my professional goal at this time?" I needed some help in identifying that goal, so I turned to M. E. Warlick's *The Philosopher's Stones*. 

### The Philosopher's Stones as a Heuristic Tool for Professional Development

The *Philosopher's Stones* book is part of a package that also contains 28 philosopher's stones etched in gold with a traditional alchemical symbol. The rounded shape of the stones duplicates the interior shape of the alchemist's flask. A black velvet drawstring bag is also provided to contain the stones. The book is brilliantly illustrated with seventeenth-century engravings and woodcuts. The color scheme for the book is black and gold.

M. E. Warlick begins the book with an introduction providing background information on alchemy and how it can be used for personal transformation. She discusses how, as an art historian, she first began to investigate alchemical images and their influence on visual artists starting with the surrealists in the early twentieth century. She emphasizes that "[a]lchemy is a process that requires thought, reflection and proper action" (p. 9).

In Part One -- *Your Philosopher's Stones*, Warlick discusses the significance of the philosopher's stones and describes each of the six groups into which the twenty-eight stones have been divided: (1) Alchemists (Puffer, Initiate, Adept); (2) Elements (Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Quintessence); (3) Ingredients and Tools (Primal Matter, Philosophic Sulphur, Philosophic Mercury, Salt, Alembic, Athanor); (4) Planets and Metals (Mercury/Quicksilver, Saturn/Lead, Juniper/Lead, Moon/Silver, Venus/Copper, Mars/Iron, Sun/Gold); (5) Stages of Completion (Negredo, Peacock's Tail, Albedo, Rubedo; and (6) Culmination (Androgynie, Philosopher's Stone, Ouroboros). Interpretations are provided for each of the twenty-eight stones.

Warlick encouraged me to practice alchemy in everyday life. She showed me the way in Part Two -- *Your Laboratory Procedures*. Here, the author explains that five different "readings" are possible, using either one, two, three, four, or seven philosopher's stones. Each type of philosopher stone reading has a different focus. Warlick suggests beginning with a single-stone reading, then progressing to more complex multi-stone readings as you become more comfortable with the process. With a single-stone reading you can "...illuminate any question you want to ask. Pose your query in a simple, straightforward manner, keeping the issues focused on a single point" (p. 81). The author provides "Sample Readings" for each of the five layouts to illustrate how the stones can be interpreted different personal situations.

I practiced first with two or three single-stone readings. When ready I moved on to formulate my actual question relating directly to short-term professional goal setting. Specifically I asked myself, "What is my present professional goal?"

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1 (1) Alchemists; (2) Elements; (3) Ingredients and Tools; (4) Planets and Metals; (5) Stages of Completion; and (6) Culmination.

2 "Twenty-eight is a powerful number, being the sum of the seven sacred numbers, one to seven. This magic number is in harmony with the Moon's cycle, thus closely linked to our daily experience of the cosmos" (p. 17)
A four-stone reading is most appropriate for setting new goals and for finding stability. One by one I drew four stones from the black velvet bag. I placed them in a horizontal row from left to right. I followed Warlick's directions:
Balance the meaning of your four stones with their positions within the layout. The first stone will speak of practical matters.... The second stone's message will affect you in the areas of love and emotions in your life.... The third stone relates to your thoughts and anxieties....The fourth stone concerns any new projects that you may wish to begin. (p. 89)

My Four-Stone Reading
The first stone that I drew was the element "Earth." Using the Interpretation of this alchemical symbol presented on page forty, I considered advice to "Look for practical solutions. Identify exactly what I need. Build on my experience. Weigh the situation as if I am holding a real object. Stand firm in my resolve...even if in conflict."

The second stone that I drew was the planet "Venus" and the metal "copper." My advice found on page fifty-eight was to "Surround myself with beauty. Explore my creativity. Remember that copper is a malleable metal with excellent conductivity. Remember that alchemical Venus can be volatile, also tender and gentle. A new openness emerges and begins process of healing. Passionately engage in activities that best encourage growth. Conductivity of copper leads to flow of Venus' compassion."

The third stone was the planet "Moon" and the metal "silver." On page fifty-six, I am advised to "Listen to my intuition for unconscious resources. Listen to my dreams. Imagine possibilities. Be receptive to change. Let go of disappointments. Maintain my receptivity. Keep in touch with my body (combine physical activity and rest). Trust deepest intuitive impulses. Follow my inspiration. Body and soul as one!"

The fourth and final stone was the ingredient "Primal Matter." Accordingly, I am advised to "go deep within to discover what I want. Remember that the resources I need are all around me. Search for primal matter in the world and within myself. Keep asking myself 'What am I seeking?' and 'How can I resolve problems/blocks?' Trust my inner strength. Go deep. Strive for simplicity. Recognize my own potential not magical solutions offered by others. Observe.

A Summary of My Philosopher Stone Reading
"What were my professional goals?" In summary, at the time of this inquiry, I had begun a new teaching position in a hospital-based mental health unit for children and adolescents. Here, disciplinary roles and responsibilities were rigidly set. I was expected to be a teacher technician administering educational assessments and teaching using a transmissive model. The whole approach was diametrically opposed to the precepts of constructivist education. Arts-based approaches to teaching and self were not valued or even understood. I was told by one colleague that meditation, guided imagery and yoga would surely bring on wild hallucinations in the children and adolescents being hospitalized in the mental health unit. I was also told not to use Pablo Picasso's cubist work because the human images look too "hallucinogenic and schizophrenic." Dream-work would definitely be out of the question. By this time, I had given up fighting for what I believe in as a teacher.

In alchemy, the element "Earth" highlights standing firm and building the foundations to realize my plans. It is the universal archetype of inexhaustible creativity and sustenance. "Venus" appears as the morning or evening star, marking the transitions between day and night. "Copper" is a malleable and conductive metal symbolic with connection. The "Moon" rapidly transforms within its monthly cycle. It is connected with the night, dreams, fertility and the life span. "Silver" is connected with the Moon, brightness, virginity, and eloquence. It also symbolized the corruptible side of human nature because it tarnishes. (I refused to be tarnished.) In alchemy, silver is the virginal state of the Primal Matter, the feminine aspect with gold as the masculine. My final stone, Primal Matter thrusts me forward. It indicates action, energy, enterprise and initiative. It points to journey, descent and discovery.

At the end of the philosopher stone reading I began to experience a shift in perspective and along with that a sense of relief. I realized that I was only in a liminal place of transition. Two days after my stone reading, I saw these words in my head and scribbled them into my sketchbook. The words screamed off the page, "They want a person to do the job not change it."
I read my words and took a deep breath! Warlick advised me "dissolve and coagulate," to let go and move on:

As you weigh these messages, remember to apply one of the central axioms of the alchemical process, Solve et Coagula, 'dissolve and coagulate.' Decide what you should discard and what you should join with and use as guidance in your life. (p. 80)

With the help M. E. Warlick's *The Philosopher's Stones* I was able to assess my professional situation and identify practical short-term goals. I am considering educational administration, and have recently completed the first part of the Principal Qualification Program. I wonder how art-informed ways of knowing and being will mesh with educational leadership.

I live with my disappointment that this teaching assignment was not what I had hoped it would be. However, I remain resolved to learn what I can from my new colleagues and the children during the time that I am there. Ultimately, I know that I cannot stay long in a place where the status quo is guarded and creativity and risk taking are smothered.

I resolve that I will not be tarnished.

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**Meditations on Borderlands**

*Sara Promislow*

PhD. Candidate, OISE/UT

an etched olive tree,
its gnarled arteries
conduits of life
not here.

conversations in relation
stir subconscious
dislocations,
my participant’s
or mine.

---

I need to feel safe.

I need people who make time to listen.

I need to be in my body without shame or fear.

I need approval for something other than compliance.

I need to give a voice to my feelings instead of eating them.

I need a father who is not drunk or angry or violent or gone.

I need to let go of the addictions that answer my emptiness.

I need men who are brave enough to be tender and gentle.

I need to dance and sing and take up space in this world.

I need to stop equating my worth with male desire.

I need to be seen and heard.

I need to see my own beauty.

I need to feel like I belong.

I need the courage to leave.

I need the courage to say no.

I need to know I am not alone.

I need to stop accepting abuse.

I need peace and healing silences.

I need to believe that God loves me.

I need risks that take me to my edges.

I need to be recognized and acknowledged.

I need to know in my heart that I am not disposable.

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1 *Voices in a Silent Forest* represents the shared voices of Beth’s co-researchers (adolescent girls and teachers of adolescents), and is a part of her doctoral research titled: *Teaching Adolescent Girls “At-risk”: Stories of Voice and Silence*, completed at (OISE/UT, 2001).
Data Poetry in Qualitative Research: An Annotated Bibliography

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Introduction

Data poetry, also known as poetic transcription (Glesne, 1997) and poetic representation (Richardson, 1994, 1997), is an area of growing interest to arts-based qualitative researchers. Examples of data poetry can be found in many areas of the social sciences, including: Psychology, sociology, anthropology and education. The potential power of data poetry is to synthesize and present experience through language. Although a certain amount of contextualizing may be necessary for the fullest appreciation of poetry in a research setting, it is my contention that the best examples of data poems are good poems in and of themselves. Herein, I offer readers the beginnings of a multidisciplinary bibliographic resource on data poetry. The bibliography describes and offers examples of three main types of data poetry: Researcher-voiced, participant-voiced and researcher/participant-voiced.

Researcher-voiced poems are written from field notes, journal entries, or reflective/creative/autobiographical writing as the data source. This category is problematic in that it could conceivably encompass all poetry, if positioned as an essentially autobiographical art form, taking its data from the poet’s (researcher’s) life experience. Of course, poems must be framed in a research context in order to qualify here, but all poetry could be argued to be a form of research, a re-searching of experience and its expression and communication through language.

Participant-voiced poems are written from interview transcripts or solicited directly from participants. In an action research model, poems are co-created with the researcher. The voices in the poems may be singular or multiple.

Researcher/participant-voiced poems blend both the researcher’s and the participants’ voices.

The bibliography below is divided into these three types of data poetry. Under each category readers will find two annotated examples of the form, as described above, along with some brief contextual information about the field/topic of the research.

A list of additional references for further reading follows.

Annotated Bibliography

Researcher-Voiced Data Poetry


This study and its data poems are based on "phenomenological interviews on the experience of being a parent with children in school" (p. 646). The data poems employ a blend of the researcher's and the participants' voices. The example below, however, is solely researcher-voiced, pp. 651-652:

Learning to Listen

Understanding is not an act of subjectivity but a mode of being. (Gadamer, 1976)

I listen

The stories of people
Open to me
Unfold
Rippling outward
Experiences I know nothing of
And have never had

I think that I listen

Absorbed and well-meaning
I travel these landscapes
Extracting scraps and segments
Reshaping their form
Seeking out words
Not even spoken

I have not learned to listen

A fusion of horizons
Is not the engulfment
Of a valley
Or the taking of a soul
When we hear
Entirely with our mind
We hear only a
Fragment
Of the possible

Nowak's work is pure autobiographical/autoethnographical poetry, void of context. This excerpt closes a poem that reflects on the researcher's relationship with his or her participants and topic within an ethnographic framework, p. 131:

Some place
in here
I think there was
a clipping
"It tells a story
"through interruptions,
that you were
* that ethnography always begins with
an "e"--
"amassed densities
"of description,
"evocations of voices and absent frames
* going to make a record.
This time, of
"the conditions
* When I used to
Cut things out
"of their possibility,
I didn’t always put
The dates on them.
"and lyrical, ruminative aporias
"that give pause.


Brearley employs an action research model and co-constructs data poems with a number of her participants who are "managers from an educational institution (who) are being tracked through an externally-driven amalgamation process in which their jobs have been spilled and their previous organization absorbed into a larger entity." This participant-voiced example from the study was written from interview transcripts.

Watching the Fall

I am with another colleague
We are watching someone walking out along a crane
Suspended high over the city streets

The person is smoking a cigarette
Seemingly unconcerned
About the precariousness of their situation

To my horror
The person keeps walking along to the end of the crane
Falling off it to certain death

I feel a terrible sense of responsibility for the person
I feel guilty that I had not prevented the fall
I think that the person was probably me


Glesne is probably the first researcher to use the term "poetic transcription" of interview data, inspired by sociologist Laurel Richardson (see below). In this paper Glesne describes her research process through "six poetic transcriptions of Dona Juana, an elderly Puerto Rican researcher and educator" (p. 202).

That Rare Feeling

I am a flying bird
moving fast
seeing quickly
looking with the eyes of God
from the tops of trees.

How hard for country people
picking green worms
from fields of tobacco,
sending their children to school,
not wanting them to suffer
as they suffer.
In the urban zone,
students worked at night
and so they slept in school.
Teaching was the real university.

Participant-Voiced Data Poetry

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and so they slept in school.
Teaching was the real university.

Continued....
So I came to study
to find out how I could help.
I am busy here at the university,
there is so much to do.
But the university
is not the Island.

I am a flying bird
moving fast, seeing quickly
so I can give strength,
so I can have that rare feeling
of being useful.

Researcher/Participant-Voiced Data Poetry
Baff, S. J. (1997). Realism and naturalism and
dead dudes: Talking about literature in 11th-
grade English, Qualitative Inquiry, 3(4), 468-490
Baff observed a grade 11 English class and her
resulting data poems are a combination of researcher
and participant-voiced. This excerpt combines
student participant voices with the researcher's
reflections on what the students are telling her in
relation to the literature on literacy and reading,
p. 484:

From the Back of the Room: The Observer Observes

Connections?

I'm not a reader.
I have no time.
I just hate to read.

When they are not good readers,
they don't respond well
to free, peer-led discussion.
Teacher-dominated discussion
is what they construct.
Their non-response
backs the teacher
into a corner
and they get what they need
to feel comfortable (Wolman-Bonill, 1994).

If I'm really into it,
I learn.
If I use the guide questions,
it helps me to understand.
If I hate it,
I stop reading.

Richardson, L. (1997). Fields of play:
Constructing an academic life. New Brunswick,
NJ: Rutgers University Press
Sociologist Laurel Richardson has inspired qualitative
researchers interested in alternative and creative
forms of data representation (see also Richardson,
1994). According to Richardson:
Lyric poems have the capability of reducing the
"distance" between the "I" and
the "other" and between the "writing-I" and
"experiencing-I" of the writer, and
thus move us to rethink the boundaries between
ourselves and our "work," help
us to feel how ethnography might be situated
within the self…(p. 182)

Here is an example of her work, based on a
combination of participant interviews with single
women and her own autobiographical reflections,
p. 178:

Being Single Is
drying a wishbone
by the kitchen window
till the bone is chipped
to bits by trinkets
placed beside it,
or it rots, because
there is no one
to take one end
you the other
pulling, wishing
each against each
until the bone
breaks.

Conclusion
Data poetry, in any or all of the three forms outlined
above, offers qualitative researchers a way to sift
through data that is creative, intuitive and artful in
nature. Representing research findings in a poetic
voice is challenging and can be risky, but also offers
many rewards. The challenges lie in creating poems
that accurately represent the data sources of the study.
The risks lie in writing data poems that fail as poems or fail to convince their audience of their validity as research. The rewards of data poetry writing, however, greatly outweigh the challenges and risks.

I employed both researcher and participant-voiced data poems in my thesis study (Prendergast, 2001) and my positive experience of this process has led me to consider how data poetry might become more broadly employed, understood and appreciated in research. The study was conducted on audience education in professional theatre within which I wrote as a reflective practitioner and surveyed my audience education students at Victoria's Belfry Theatre. My researcher-voiced poems, called "soliloquies", allowed me to uncover and express the autobiographical underpinnings of my interest in theatre and audience education. My participant-voiced poems, called "choral soliloquies", synthesized the voices of my student participants in a theatre audience education program. Both forms of poetry successfully captured the essential experiences of both researcher and participants as the poems interwove with more traditional forms of research writing. The data poetry strengthened the study as a whole and has been very well received by academics and non-academics alike. I was also able to pull out the poems themselves as distilled, sifted, crystallized representations of the study.

To conclude, data poetry is an arts-based method that has great potential value, but questions such as the following require further consideration within the community of qualitative research practice: How can we compare the validation of data poetry with the criticism, interpretation and judgment of poetry in literature? What are the actual and possible methods for constructing data poems, and how do they relate to poetry writing techniques? What are the advantages and disadvantages of presenting data in poetic forms?

References for Further Reading

**Researcher-Voiced Data Poetry**


**Participant-Voiced Data Poetry**


**Researcher/Participant-Voiced Data Poetry**


**ENDNOTE**

I hope to shamelessly elicit readers' assistance in developing this resource by requesting additional references be sent directly to me at mprender@uvic.ca. I will certainly fully acknowledge any contributions should this resource be published in any expanded form in the future.
Member Update

Margie Buttignol, Ph.D., is an independent scholar and teacher with the Toronto Catholic District School Board. She is Chair of the Arts-based Educational Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association. Margie's scholarly work is widely published and cited. Forthcoming (with C. A. Mullen and C. T. P. Diamond) is Flyboy: Using arts-based case study and theatre-based techniques as wings to assist caregivers of mentally ill adolescents. In S. Finley, J. Konzal, & K. Kerry Moran (Eds.), Performance pedagogy: Adding theatre to constructivist education. New York: Peter Lang.

Kathryn Church, Ph.D., is currently involved in writing a manuscript on her wedding dress exhibit project. Title is "What Does Your Mother Know: Uncovering the Secret Lives of Wedding Dresses." The website for the exhibit itself is still up at http://womenspace.ca/Fabrications. She is working on a study called Doing Disability at the Bank as part of David Livingstone's SSHRC Work and Learning Network at OISE; their dissemination strategy will be from transcript story/ anecdote to dramatic vignette to video. Kathryn is also developing a research proposal on discovering disability through clothing.

Ariella Damelin, Ph.D., recently completed her doctorate at OISE/UT and is performing sections (scenes and stories) from her thesis at shows at the Vanier College Theatre at York University. She is also working on the publication of her thesis as a book and will be presenting her thesis at the Centre’s seminar series this winter.

Lisa deFreitas, PhD Candidate, OISE/UT, has completed her doctoral thesis and has her oral examination in February. She presented her research at the Centre's seminar series this fall and an excerpt from her work appears in this issue of arts-informed. Liz recently took an assistant professor position at the university of Prince Edward Island, Charlottown.

Nancy Davis Halifax, Ph.D., Post-doctoral Fellow, The Centre for Global eHealth Innovation, University Health Network and the Psychosocial and Behavioural Research Unit, Toronto Sunnybrook Regional Cancer Centre. Nancy is also a CIHR Strategic Training Fellow in Health Care, Technology, and Place. Through the initiative Innovations in Cancer Education: Using Drama, Storytelling and the Arts for Information Dissemination on the Internet she is creating, translating, evaluating, and disseminating knowledges of cancer via aesthetic forms such as narrative, drama, and story, and technology and the Internet.

Jacqueline Karsemeyer, Ph.D. is a teacher-consultant with the KELI (Kindergarten Early Language Intervention) program. This is a research-based initiative for 5 year olds who demonstrate language-processing problems. She co-leads the program with a speech-language pathologist. In addition, she is writing online for film and television, where arts-informed research has a pragmatic application.

Carl Leggo, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Dept. of Language and Literacy Education, UBC, is currently working on a collection of poems about tangles and knots. His intention is to combine the poems with photographs of tangles and knots, and with ruminations from other poets and philosophers, as a way to research experiences of relationship with others, with the earth and with light.

Lisa Lipsett, Ph.D., is currently balancing her new role as a mother to baby Ruby with writing and painting. In addition to working on book chapters on transformative learning and environmental education, her latest art show entitled "Being With Child" opens May 31st at the Chapel Gallery in Bracebridge Ontario. www.artemeter.com

Maura McIntyre, Ph.D., is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the centre for arts informed research. Her research is in the psychosocial dimensions of dementia, specifically in institutional life.

Student Work-in-progress:

Vanessa Compton, Ph.D. Candidate, OISE/UT, is working on her thesis proposal for a study of the aesthetic dimensions of transformative learning in the community setting of the eleven-circuit labyrinth.

Dianne E. Hiebert, PhD Candidate, OISE/UT, is currently completing her doctoral thesis while working in the private practice of a Registered Psychologist as a group and individual therapist; and is on retainer to FGI as a trauma counselor conducting Critical Incident Stress Debriefings and Defusings to groups and on-site 1:1.

Melanie Nesbitt, is a doctoral student with the European Graduate School in Expressive Arts Therapy, as well as a practicing dance/movement therapist and supervisor. She is involved in research in Language Development using Movement, Non-verbal Expression of Pain Behaviour within a Multi-cultural Rehab Facility.
**Eimear O’Neill**, presented her installation *Holding Flames* at the Art Exhibition and Memorial Benefit in Remembrance of the December 6 Montreal Massacres sponsored by the Transformative Learning Centre/OISE/UT on December 4, 2002. She also presented her installation at the Centre’s works-in-progress series.

**Ann Patteson**, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, Queen’s University is currently studying teacher development, both personal and professional, through art-making experiences. She is using Transformative Learning Theory as a theoretical framework to help both understand and describe the teachers' learning processes.

**Alex Perlman**, PhD. Candidate, OISE/UT, is currently working on his research proposal exploring the intersection of the three elements of conscious, intimate community, utilizing a narrative approach within experiential and performance contexts.

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**Recent Events Fall 2002**

**The Centre for Arts-informed Research Seminar Series:**
In a series of informal lunch hour presentations, ‘scholartists’ share completed works of ‘scholartistry’, providing a glimpse of the triumphs and tribulations of engaging in research without precedents, and inspiration to novice and experienced ‘scholartists’ alike.

November 7, 2002. **Dr. Lois Kunkel, Spiders Spin Silk: Reflections of Missionary Kids at Midlife.**
Lois shared the magical and “awe-full” creative conception of her doctoral thesis completed in September 2000. She traced the process of discovering and working with her “spider” metaphor, how it informed her analysis, shaped her knowledge and took on a life of its own. Lois revealed the challenges she experienced as a participant-researcher, her search for voice and her sincere efforts to honour her story and that of her co-participants. She shared excerpts from her dissertation including autobiographical narratives, spider myths, as well as scholarly reflections, spinning her audience in the web of her experience and deep insight.

November 21, 2002. **Liz deFreitas, The Ethics of Signature: Fiction as a Passionate Form of Inquiry.**
Liz’s presentation focused on the theoretical premises that underpin the process of writing a fictional thesis. She touched upon issues of voice, the ethics of signature, and language in fiction as both conveying and shaping experience. Liz shared excerpts from her novel, while deconstructing her role as researcher and artist. She provided the audience with a window into the challenges she experienced in face of the need to legitimize the place of fiction within academic discourse, and insight into the differences between literary and scholarly novels. An excerpt from her novel/thesis titled: *Bad Intention*, appears in this issue of *arts-informed*, and provides readers with a taste of her powerful signature.

**The Centre for Arts-informed Research Works-in-progress Series:**
In a series of informal afternoons artful inquirers share the process and progress of research, providing a forum for informal, supportive, and informative exchanges to sustain inquirers at various stages of the arts-informed research process.

November 28, 2002. **Tracy Luciani, Telling Stories, Performing Li(v)es in the Academy.**
Integrating scholarly discourse; personal reflection; storytelling, as well as cooking and eating tomato sauce with traditional Italian bread, Tracy’s performance struggled with how to blend the many ingredients that make up her two worlds—the academy and home. In her research, Tracy attempts to remain true to her “selves” in both form and content. Her fictional-autobiographical stories, from which she shared, are both moving and insightful. Her scholarly discourse, as presented, is mixed with personal as well as intellectual deliberations. The savory tomato sauce Tracy cooked during the performance and later shared, embodied a metaphorical integration of her experience, enabling the audience to be a part of her worlds.
Events 2003

Please note the change of venue, and make sure to pick up notices on future events, the Centre’s publications, and various calls for contributions available at all programs in the series.

The Centre for Arts-informed Research Seminar Series:

Time and Place for all Seminars: Thursdays, 12:00-1:30; Room 7-162 OISE/UT.

January 16 -- Beth Veal, Into the Forest of Voice and Silence
Dr. Beth Veale presents excerpts from her doctoral thesis work completed in April, 2001. She leads us into the Forest of Voice and Silence, where we meet adolescent girls "at-risk". Through her reading in-role as some of her co-researchers, Beth invites us to join her in the adventure of arts-informed inquiry. An excerpt from Beth’s research appears in this issue of arts-informed.

February 5 -- Deborah Barndt, Engaging Contradictions: A Framework for Rethinking Participatory Research and Community Arts
Dr. Deborah Barndt explores the intersections of participatory research and community arts through the lenses of critical questions related to context, agency, praxis, holistic learning, and leadership. Two case studies ground the discussion: a community arts project on Toronto’s garbage that involved participatory research and a participatory research project on natural resource issues on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua that involved community radio as a tool.

February 13 – Ariella Damelin, Walking barefoot: A storyteller's arts-informed inquiry
Ariella describes her process of combining collage, variation in voice, font, and written genres, as I construct and represent narrative reflections in her thesis. She focuses on how she makes space for the words and stories of other participants who people her inquiry. She also discusses how, for her, the boundaries between professional and family life are blurred, and that knowledge is simultaneously both public and private.

March 6 – Lisa Herman
April 1 – Adrienne Chambon, Professor, Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

The Centre for Arts-informed Research Works-in-progress Series:

Time and place of all Works-in-progress: Thursdays, 4:00-5:30; South Lounge 7th floor, OISE/UT.

January 30 -- Eimear O’Neill, Holding Flames: Illuminating women’ knowledge of self transformation
Women, self-defined as having undertaken personal transformation, were invited to take a wooden lantern box to capture some immediate sense of their journeys of profound change. Eimear presents her installation of thirty-six lanterns that collectively give a sense of embodied presence, creative diversity, and many places from which each and all of us, as a community of knowers understand the personal transformation needed for human change. Eimear’s installation is currently exhibited in the south lounge on the 7th floor at OISE/UT.

February 20 – Christina Grant
March 20 – Kathy Mantas

Things to watch for in 2003

"Fiddle & Zephyr" an arts-informed research ceilidh and retreat: In conjunction with Social Sciences and Humanities Congress, Halifax, Nova Scotia. May 28, 29 evenings at the Shore Club, Hubbards, Nova Scotia, and June 1 all day on Big Tancook Island.

Summer Workshops (non-credit) at The Centre for Arts-informed Research (OISE/UT):
Poetry workshop with Lorri Neilsen; Fiction writing workshop; Photography as inquiry workshop.

Watch for details coming soon on our website: http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~aresearch
Arts-informed Doctoral Theses at the OISE/UT library


Margie Buttignol (1998). *Colouring outside the lines: Transformative experiences of creativity and teacher self(ves).*


Nancy Davis Halifax (2002). *Of rose petals and sutures, marks on a woman’s body: An aesthetic and oblique inquiry into dys-body, solace and vulnerability.*

Jacqueline Karsemeyer (2000). *Moved by the spirit, a narrative inquiry.*


**Coming soon:**


Christina Grant (April, 2003). *Relational learning in jazz.*

Suzanne Thomas (April, 2003). *Of earth and flesh and bones and breath: landscapes of embodiment and moments of re-enactment.*

Please check our website for additional titles: [http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~aresearch](http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~aresearch)

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**CAIR Links**

**Educational Insights. Website:** [http://www.csci.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/](http://www.csci.educ.ubc.ca/publication/insights/)

An electronic journal from the University of British Columbia, inviting “educators, curriculum theorists and pedagogical adventurers” to participate in “intertextual conversations within reimagined spaces of pedagogy, inquiry, writing and practices of transdisciplinarity”.


A project initiated by Sandra Weber from the Department of Education at Concordia University (Montreal), and Claudia Mitchell from the Faculty of Education at McGill University (Montreal). “The collaborators of IIRC share an interest in developing interdisciplinary, image-based research methodologies and artistic forms of representation for the Humanities and Social Sciences”.

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**arts-informed: Call for Contributions**

The Center for Arts-informed Research is inviting contributions for its Newsletter arts-informed which is likely to evolve into an on-line journal. This publication is a space for 'scholartists', who are exploring and articulating ways of bringing together art and social science research, to write about their experiences; share their creative work; and participate in an ongoing dialogue among researchers who are committed to expanding the boundaries of academic discourse. We welcome submissions of 'scholartistry', essays, reflections, poetry, book reviews, artwork, etc. Please direct all submissions to the arts-informed editor by email: spromislow@oise.utoronto.ca. A variety of visual and written genres are encouraged. Written contributions may vary in form and size, but should not exceed 2,000 words. All contributions must be submitted as attachments. Written contributions should be sent in RTF (Rich Text Format) and images should be sent in PDF files. If you are at OISE, please copy your image(s) onto a CD and arrange to submit to me personally. Please write “arts-informed” as subject.

**Deadline for Submissions: Monday, March 31, 2003**

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**The Art of Visual Inquiry: Call for Contributions**

You are invited to contribute to the third in a series of edited volumes produced and published by Backalong Books and the Centre for Arts-informed Research at the Department of Adult Education and Counseling Psychology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. The third volume, *The Art of Visual Inquiry*, with a projected publication date of Spring 2004, will focus on examples of arts-informed research which employ visual images as part of the inquiry process and/or in forms of representation. Contributors to this volume will demonstrate and elaborate on research that infuses the processes and representational forms of the visual arts with qualitative inquiry so that research products reflect a range of two- and three-dimensional visual art forms, including photography, painting, installation art, collage, film or video and sculpture.

**Overview:** As qualitative researchers in the 21st Century employing the arts in our work, we have inherited research practices that re/produce individualism, the 'Expert' and separation from the public. In the arts, late modernist aesthetics developed the image of 'the Artist' as detached, isolated and rebellious and 'Art' as aesthetic self-expression without social responsibility or utility (Gablik, 1991). According to Gablik, the "psychic and social structures in which we live have become too profoundly antieccological, unhealthy and destructive" (1991, p. 5). She challenges us to explore and to develop new forms that speak to our interconnectedness and not to our separateness, that resonate with feelings of belonging to a larger whole instead of the isolated and alienated self (ibid., pp. 5-6). Within this vein, and in using visual images in the service of social science research to understand and communicate elements of the human condition, we want to move research and aesthetics away from mere individual achievement and accomplishment and move towards participation with communities, towards social/ecological accountability, responsibility and accessibility. In conventional qualitative research, visual images often play the role of observing, collecting and archiving communities and culture, particularly in the disciplines of Anthropology and Sociology. Photography and film/video (of or about people, cultural practices, objects/art) are repeatedly positioned as peripheral data, as information that documents, illustrates and 'adds to' the understanding of the human condition. By infusing art into inquiry and inquiry into art, arts-informed research bridges the gap between art as archival material/art for art's sake and research, between artist and researcher, and between art-making and theorizing. By arts-informed research we mean research that brings together the systematic and rigorous qualities of social science inquiry with the creative and imaginative qualities of the arts. Such inquiry processes are organic and fluid and research representations move beyond uni-dimensional, text-based discourse.
In so doing the process of researching becomes creative and responsive and the representational forms for communication reflect the multidimensional qualities of lives through multimedia forms (Cole & Knowles, 2001, pp. 10-11).

Scope: In this collection, we invite authors to draw upon their experiences as scholar/artists to imagine and theorize about the issues and impacts of visual images as inquiry and inquiry into visual images in the social sciences and humanities. What do visual images convey that conventional research processes and representations cannot? What does it mean to use visual art as process in research? What issues arise from the language of images? From the interplay between words as images and images as words? From the merging of artist-as-researcher and researcher-as-artist? How can such inquiry impact form, audience, communication and the ethical dimensions of our work? How do viewers perceive, receive and make meaning from visual images as inquiry? What issues and implications surface from the transformational potential of this kind of work in the academy and in our communities? How do aesthetics inform such inquiry? How do visual images as inquiry engage in critical discussions about justice, accessibility, and social change? This volume aims to move beyond arguing for alternative genres/approaches to inquiry by assuming alternative works already exist and need not be defended. Imbued with qualities of process and form rooted in the arts, arts-informed inquiry opens up dialogue between words and images, between the texts of imagery and the imagery of texts, creating possibilities for scholarly work, and moving beyond the walls of the academy and into public spaces.

Audience: This volume aims for a readership of qualitative researchers/writers (graduate students, university, school and community-based researchers and writers) in education and related field in the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, literary/visual arts, among others). It will appeal to a wide community: North American/Australasian/British/European writers/researchers, typically those participating in academic and writing communities including, but not limited to, AERA, NCTE, BERA, AARE, among others. We mention these organizations only to illustrate the range of research communities we hope this collection can reach.

Process and Format for Submissions: Please email an abstract proposal, no longer than 500 words and sent as an unformatted rich text format (.rtf) file in Word, to Tracy Luciani: tluciani@oise.utoronto.ca by Friday, February 28, 2003. Please do not send images with your abstract; within your abstract describe your images as a storyboard layout [the number, sizing and position of images, if they are colour or black and white, and, if possible, the content of the images]. Accepted proposals will be notified by Friday, April 25, 2003 and then have a manuscript deadline of Friday, September 26, 2003. Final manuscript length is a minimum of 800 words to a maximum 6000 words on 8 1/2”x11” paper, double spaced. Abstracts and final manuscripts should be typed in 12pt font, preferably Garamond or similar, double spaced and have a short biography at the end listing name, address, phone number, e-mail address, biography and institutional affiliation, if any [see: The art of writing inquiry (2001) for examples of personal biographies]. No simultaneous submissions or previously published materials will be considered. One submission per author only please. We welcome submissions in multiple forms and genres: fiction, poetry, playwriting, reflections, essays. We encourage people to visit our Centre's web site: http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~aresearch for examples of arts-informed research.

Initial Abstract Submissions Deadline: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2003
Notification of Abstract Acceptance: FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 2003
Final Manuscripts Deadline: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2003
Expected Publication Date: Spring 2004

We look forward to reading your work,

Sincerely,

J. Gary Knowles, Ardra L. Cole, Lorri Neilsen, and Teresa C. Luciani, Editors
**Arts Informed Inquiry Series**  
Backalong Books and The Centre for Arts-informed Research

**The Art of Writing Inquiry**  
Lorri Neilsen, Ardra L. Cole, &  
J. Gary Knowles (Eds.)  
ISBN 1-894132-06-8  List Price CDN $34.95

Upcoming Spring 2003

**Provoked by Art:**  
*Theorizing Arts-informed Inquiry*  
Edited by Ardra L. Cole, Lorri Neilsen, J. Gary Knowles, & Teresa Luciani  
Backalong Books and  
The Centre for Arts-informed Research  
ISBN: 1-894132-08-4  
List price: CDN$28.95

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Deborah Barndt, Ardra Cole, Roewen Crowe, Liz de Freitas, Rishma Dunlop, Robin Ewing, Ross Gray,  
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Teresa Luciani, Monica Mak, Maura McIntyre, Claudia Mitchell, Nicki Newton, Allan Neilsen, Lorri Neilsen  
Karen Schaller, David Smith, Stephanie Springgay, Suzanne Thomas, Sandra Weber, Shannon Walsh, Kelly Young

In this collection authors draw on illustrative examples of arts-informed research to foreground theoretical elements and issues associated with new genres of social science inquiry. Through languages and genres of fiction, poetry, drama, and visual arts the works in this volume show the potential of arts-informed research to bring together the academy and diverse knowledge communities.

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