

University of Alberta

**Exploring Sentient Imagination with a
Secondary School English Language Arts
Creative Writing Group**

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

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Abstract

This research study describes and interprets the exploring of sentient imagination with a creative writing group of five volunteer students in Secondary School English Language Arts 20-1. The volunteer participants did writing assignments in open journal writing, biography, narratives, and poetry and I provided written feedback for each of their pieces of writing. I was a participant and an observer with the group and in this study which focuses on the following question: How do Secondary School English Language Arts 20-1 students explore sentient imagination through writing in a group?

From this research study, I learned that an emphasis on sentient imagination can be a strong component of creative writing, that it can enable writers to awaken a post-Cartesian expression of their senses in embodied writing, that it can assist writers to explore and become more aware of their own identity and the environmental contexts around and in them. The participants emphasized that in order to draw out their sentient imagination, they needed freedom in choosing topics, modes and genres for writing. They wanted to be given the right and the respect to open their voices for matters and issues that were of concern to them. Participants demonstrated in our writing research sessions that open writing could provide a helpful mode for releasing urgent and/or spontaneous issues in order to make room for new creations to form. This writing group taught me that while some of them liked it quiet to write at times, others were quite comfortable or even preferred a situation with music or other sound activities in the background. Participants of this writing research felt that it was important that I wrote when they did rather than simply watching them as they wrote. They found that forming

writing groups to work both individually and together could help them as writers to receive feedback, encouragement, criticism and inspiration. The participants appeared to value the creating worlds through sentient activity and as we dared to touch the earth in our writing research, an apparent reciprocal growth in sentient ecological intercommunications was shown, embodying a melding of the beauty of both environment and art in our work.

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My deep thanks to the five grade eleven Alberta students who volunteered to work with me in writing research sessions. It was a creative and educational delight to work with the students who are identified here by their pseudonyms: Cera, Ebony, Rosie, Greta Lee, and Tori. My thanks also to the staff of the school, particularly the supportive and kind English teacher of this group of volunteers, and the generous school division administrators who helped to make these creative writing research sessions possible.

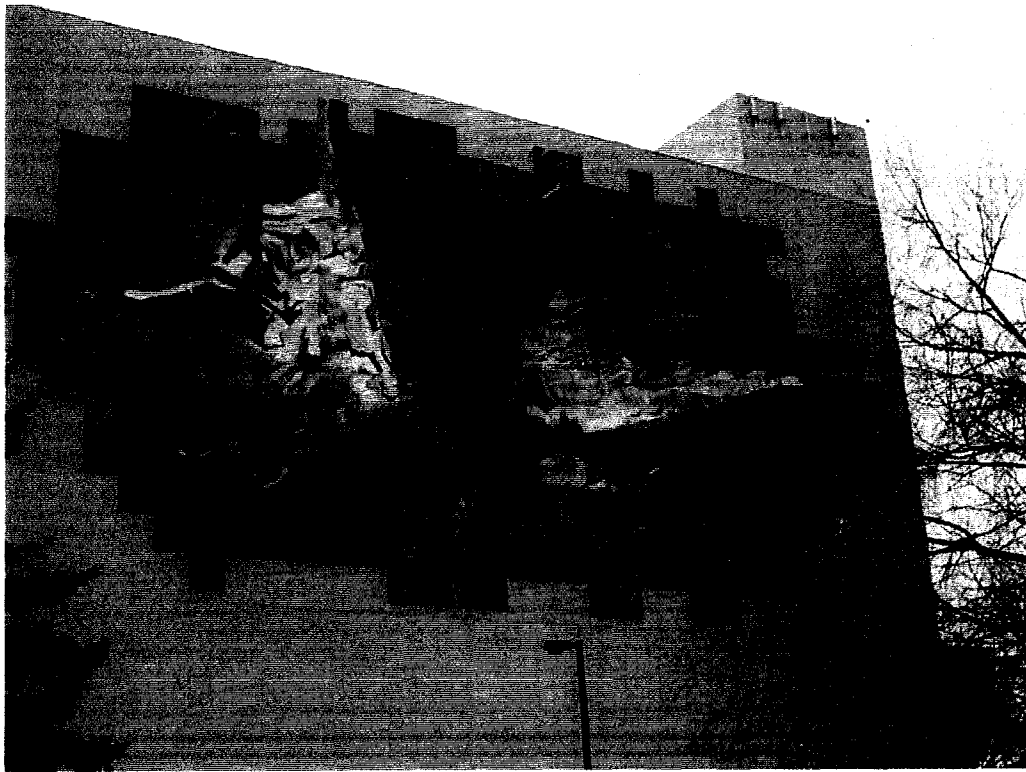
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Prelude: A Melding of Life and Art



“West and North”, a mural by Norman Edward Yates (completed 1987), Faculty of Education Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB. Photo by Martha E. Zacharias, January, 2006.

Stunning intense beauty in a work of art can interrupt and transform the heavy lives of any human being. The melding of life with art and science, passion and reason, can hardly be more strikingly apparent, I think, than in the mural entitled “West and North” on the outdoor north side of the Faculty of Education building, University of Alberta campus. The “West and North” is constructed with an amazing number of four by eight feet plywood planks of Douglas fir. Two hundred and two planks are positioned on the north side concrete wall of the Education building. According to a compilation of University of Alberta facts and figures (Rooke and Pilger, 1998), a new plank is added every five years. Mark Golden (2003), in a document for The Getty Institute of Los Angeles, California, entitled “Mural Paints: Current and Future Formulations” indicates that the artwork of “West and North” was created with alkyd primers, edged with aluminum coatings, and a clear coat of acrylic and varnish that have been scientifically

shown to be durable in challenging climates. In the process of construction, this mural is said to have withstood a tornado. Thus the construction materials and the artistic modes and elements of the mural needed to be researched and developed to endure confrontations with its unavoidable natural Canadian “audience” of storms with summer heat and winter ice.

The winter photograph of “West and North” shows a dry deciduous tree on the viewer’s right hand side and a winter green spruce, sister to the fir trees of the mural planks, on the left hand side. The work as a whole looks invitingly incomplete, with light, water, earth, fire, and green unending in their manner of presentation. The art of the mural burns, splashes, pierces, flows, takes, runs, walks, grows, soars, lights, sings, shouts, cheers, loves. To have it appear as complete in a traditional sense would seem inappropriate to me. As a viewer/thinker taking in the mural in any season of the year or time of day, I am lured to creating and recreating, revitalizing my life processes in all human senses. I want permit my creations to illuminate and flourish each day as I breathe with diverse and sometimes unexpected elements in my human and natural environment. The substance of life in “West and North” ignites my human energy with ecoartistic embodiments to work with the grass, the earth, the water, the global community, and my writing research here and now as I write.

Exploring Sentient Imagination with a Secondary School English Language Arts Creative Writing Group

By Martha E. Zacharias

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Introduction: streams

i see feel hear the swirl of our river
breathe in grand light streams
of aurora borealis
take out my pen
siberian husky beside me
begins his lunar howl
a willow bends with us
down to the river tongues tasting
the mythical mist of the night
as i write
with the earth i love

A meandering prairie creek, tall grasses, endless fields of grains, vegetables, sugar beets, and lush, expansive meadows greeted me daily for the first twelve years of my life along with the green, caring and artistic hands of my grandparents and culture of my origins. The sky of stars in open country seemed so much larger to me there than it did after urban scenes became my residences. A sentient love of the natural elements began for me in those early childhood years. The arms of the tall elms reached out to hug me, I felt. As a child, I saw that the elms stood up straight and proud, and I wanted to do what they did, even if my life sometimes brought distress. For me, loving interrelationships with the natural elements as a whole provided a strong emotional and encouraging foundation for daily living. The first story I wrote was done at home, outdoors when I was eight years old, sitting in high prairie grass with tall elms around me.

The childhood sentient relationship with the natural world evolved further when I reached my teenage years. My embrace of the elms became something I expressed in poetry, poetry that began with writing about the natural world. I found that poetry writing to me seemed to *be* the natural world. And because the natural world began for me as love from and love to mother earth, poetry became an expression of this love.

Chapter I: The Spell Begins

When I entered university and teaching, my love of poetry, writing and the natural world became the continuous core of my work as student and educator. In university writing classes that I taught over the years, I found that when we held our classes outdoors, for example, on the beautiful banks of the city river, the written work of the students seemed more unusual, creative, imaginative, moving and expressive than work that was done in the traditional university classrooms.

Experiencing, encouraging and teaching embodied sentient writing opens a wealth of complex senses and frees the writers, both the students and the teachers as writers, to create with the imagination. The teaching of writing is all too often restricted by rigid adherence to educational labels and conventions. Many writing teachers see creative writing as something that must be done in a classroom without what may be regarded as distractions from décor or sound. This tends to support the Cartesian system of the mind/ up there/ high -- developed in an environment as close as possible to being free of that other world of the body/down here/low. However, creative writing can be our breathing, our tasting, our aching, our crying, our loving. If we permit the birth and nurture of this living in our writing.

Rather than retreat into the traditional mode of leaving the world in order to write about it, we can experience writing with the world, with the earth, with our culture, with our history, with our dreams. We can touch earth as we write about it, smell a tiger lily as we describe it, listen to music that brings a character to us. We can write with our tastes, smells, touches, sounds, ears, eyes, and we can dare to enter and to permit learnings with our unusual synaesthetic senses. A pen that reaches into the senses can help our sentient world to emerge, to evolve within us and around us. This embodied pen can be encouraged through writing ventures that emphasize and focus on the senses (Zacharias, 2005).

My love of writing and imagination, my sentient relationship with the natural world, and my fascination with the content of doctoral coursework including that of writer / writing professor Robert Olen Butler (2005, 2007) and cultural ecologist / philosopher David Abram (1996), both of whose work initiated and assisted the focus and

development of this research study. Butler is passionate in his declaration that we “encounter the world out there primarily in [our] your bodies, moment to moment through [our] your senses. Everything else derives from that” (2005, p. 11). He says further that our self-conscious metavoice (p. 20) is continuously communicating with us, analyzing and interpreting for us, what comes to us through our senses. We need to learn to stop that metavoice, to permit and attend to the “sensual flow of experience from the unconscious” (p. 20). Butler further suggests that we can enter a trance-like state in stopping that analytical reflex within us, in daring to enter the dream-state, so to speak, that can become a “superconcentration” (p. 20). His book, *From Where You Dream: The Process of Writing Fiction* (2005), focuses on the beauty and the art of creating with our senses, creating with our deepest sensual states.

In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram (1996) develops a passionate work about the interrelationships of our bodies and our cognitive selves with the natural world. Abram suggests that with written language, we have lost our sensual interconnection with the earth, that we have regressed in understanding our planet and that we abandoned our reciprocal communication with the natural world. He writes that “any visible, tangible form that meets my gaze may also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to the beings around it, and to me” (p. 67). Abram shows how we need to enter into reciprocal communication with our surroundings (1996, p. 67) to feel, to hear, to see the earth, the vegetation, the wind, and all of our environment, in order to understand and appreciate the interconnectedness of our world. His work shows how the complexity of these components can bring much to us through the entire complex system of our senses. Abram touches bodies and environments and invites reciprocal sentient communication. His finger on the leaf slides into the creation of neural music. He can sing the birds into being and hear them singing for him. Reciprocal embodied narration can sing the land into being for him. And for all of us as human beings (Zacharias, 2003, 2004).

Contextual Interplay

Is there any academic research already undertaken that deals with an interplay of the exploration of sentience, imagination, writing, nature and the teaching of writing in

secondary school education? I have located research for studies in each of my areas of interest, but I have not as yet found research that integrates each of components of this study.

Louise Rosenblatt, already in 1938, published work about her theory on the transactional response to literature and her work is relevant to our conceptions of writing as both a product and as a process. Rosenblatt's work revolutionized response to literature, permitting the whole of the human being to become a part of the artistic transaction between reader and text, and although Rosenblatt does not emphasize this, it can include a transaction with the reader's own writings. She begins to articulate the concept of embodiment through understanding and interpretation of text. She perceives a literary experience to be one of an individual transaction between reader and text, involving the reader's experiences, feelings, prior knowledge, and personality. Literary works are considered as art only in the experience of the reader. Instead of the traditional text-centred approach in which the teacher is expected to transmit the correct meaning of a text to students, a new outlook based on a personal growth model that espouses the value of a reader-centred approach is emphasized in Rosenblatt's work. Her approach entails an integration of the reader's whole person, a complex embodied web for engagement, interpretation, learnings and changes with and through the arts.

The functions of our writing, the audiences for whom we write, consciously and unconsciously, are examined in the work of James Britton (1970, 1975). The research of Britton and his colleagues (1970) brought a function model that identifies three modes of writing including the expressive, the transactional and the poetic. The expressive function refers to writing in which writers themselves are considered to be of interest to the reader and this work can be speculative, exploratory, anecdotal, emotive and conversational. The transactional mode is regarded as writing in which it is taken for granted that writers mean what they say and that they can be challenged for this. This writing is explicit, and is usually the language of reports, plans, theories, technological writing. The third mode of writing, labeled as poetic, is writing in which true and false are irrelevant, and in which writing is used, not as a tool, but as an end in itself. This mode includes creative writing of all genres. To summarize the functions of writing, Britton (1982) says: "Their

[children's] explorations of the outer world demand the transactional; their explorations of the inner world demand the poetic; the roots of it all remain in the expressive" (p. 110).

Britton also writes about the stances that writers take and these are identified as writing in the participant role, in an emotional involvement in the substance of the writing, and in a "language to get things done" (1970, p. 124). The other stance noted by Britton is that of writing in the spectator role with an apparent "psychic distance" (p. 113) from the what the writing address. The participant role is regarded by Britton as being used as a means whereas the spectator role is seen as being used as an end (p. 81).

David Abram's work (1996), *The Spell of the Sensuous*, is a poetic presentation and discussion of his doctoral research in empathetic living with the natural world, in a complex sentient lifeworld with a multiplicity of cultures, and an examination of the interrelationships among plants, animals and human beings of indigenous cultures. Abram shows how particular senses are emphasized in various Asian cultures and how this influences and evokes language, knowledge, and a sense of being with the natural world.

Cultures tend to vary in terms of the meaning and the value they place on various senses and this is foundational to the research studies of Constance Classen. In *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender and the Aesthetic Imagination* (1998), she explores these issues with an historical analysis of senses and gender. A 1993 publication of hers addresses the Inca cosmological sense of the human body. In *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures*, Classen writes that sensory values are cultural values (1993, p.136), the way a society senses is the way it understands (p. 136). In *Learning, Knowledge and Cultural Context* (1999), Classen discusses the wisdom through learning through the senses in various cultures.

Robert Olen Butler (2005) writes passionately about his theories for the creation of arts and for the teaching of writing. He declares that arts do not originate in the mind, but, as he says, in the place where we dream. Thinking does not create fiction, an intense attention to senses does. He says further that the most productive, imaginative state for creating any form of art is an intense trance or a deep daydream that ignores literary analysis and art criticism to enable a sensual free flow to emerge. Although Butler's

work primarily deals with the writing of fiction, it has strong applicability to creative writing as a whole.

My research explores the complex web of embodied connections and responses among readers, writers, environment and text. The study engages secondary school students in writing to explore learnings and insights through imagination, sentience and complex webs of contexts. Senses and creative writing are interwoven with natural environment, culture, images, discussion, and a free flow of open writing.

Description and Interpretation of Sentient Imagination

The purpose of this research is to describe and interpret the exploring of sentient imagination with a writing group of secondary school English students. The research of this dissertation focuses on the following question: *How do Secondary School English Language Arts 20-1 students explore sentient imagination through writing in a group?*

This research describes and interprets the process of exploring sentient imagination in a writing group of Alberta Secondary School English Language Arts 20-1 students. Alberta Education provides several streams of programs in Secondary School English Language Arts and the grade ten 10-1, grade eleven 20-1, and grade twelve 30-1 aim to prepare students to enter university programs.

Significance of Research in Sentient Imagination

What can be the significance of this research? What is currently happening or not happening in education that shows the need for a study of this kind? Do we acknowledge the place of the senses in the development of our imagination, in the process of writing, and particularly, in the process of writing in secondary school? I believe that too little is being done in our educational system to encourage our students to explore and acknowledge the complex place of sentient imagination in the web of educational and artistic creating. How we permit ourselves to experience the senses of the world around and in us determines how we are able to encourage and present and experience it with our students. Experiencing and working with the senses becomes foundational to the writing education processual emphases.

Inviting and accepting a sentient imagination, one which emphasizes all the senses, the embodiment of the imagination with integration with our physical and spiritual environment, can, I believe, bring a stronger and a deeper awareness of life within us and around us. The need for current and future generations to live in a caring relationship with the natural world and with that of our co-related intercultural identity can become a stronger reality with an acceptance and acknowledgement of sentient imagination.

This research has potential value as a contribution to the teaching of writing in schools and in universities. It may expand findings about the process of learning and exploring with writing in various programs. It has potential to develop and present further understandings about the interrelationships of our senses and how these can influence the process of writing and the teaching of writing in education.

(Working) Definitions of Terms

Working definitions for a series of terms that are core to the interpretation of this research proposal are given below. Sources for these definitions are provided.

Creativity: This concept is defined by On-line Dictionary.com as “having the ability or power to create..” In addition, it is regarded as having originality and expressiveness as characteristics. At times, it may be synonymous with imagination.

Imagination: The same source of On-line Dictionary.com provides a detailed definition from various dictionaries that indicate similar meanings including these:

1. The formation of a mental image of something that is neither perceived as read nor present to the senses
2. The mental image so formed
3. The ability or tendency to form such images
4. The ability to confront and deal with reality by using the creative power of mind; resourcefulness: *handled the problems with great imagination.*

Creativity, for this research, will be regarded as a component of imagination, as an ability to create and form the new and/or the unusual. To create can thus be seen as one of the operational processes for the complex concept of imagination that is defined in further detail in the next section of this document.

Sentient: The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary definition is as follows:

Pronunciation: 1. 'sen(t) -sh(E-) &nt,

or 2. 'sen-tE- &nt

Function: adjective

1: responsive to or conscious of sense impressions

2: aware

3: finely sensitive in perception or feeling

Sentience: The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary definition is as follows:

Pronunciation: 1. 'sen (t)sh (E-) &n(t)s,

or 2. 'sen-tE- &n(t)s

Function: noun

1: a sentient quality or state

2: feeling or sensation as distinguished from perception and thought

Synthetic Sentience: Sentience is in our contemporary technical world also becoming a commodity, a process that is considered possible to create synthetically on demand.

Charles Ostman (2003) writes in *Synthetic Sentience on Demand*:

Sentience on demand, as a "purchasable" online resource, has more to offer than merely finding information, and providing synthetically driven decision rendering as a process. It also has the potential for providing immersive environment "experiences", populated with synthetic personalities, possessing the defacto equivalent of "emotional sentience", as a rentable "event" for the user. (p. 5)

Synaesthesia: Synaesthesia is a concept that with its traditional meaning most

commonly taken from Biology shows a person with a problematic neurological condition which has in former times been regarded as mentally “abnormal”: Synaesthesia is a neurological condition in which a stimulus to one sense triggers another; for instance, a person may taste chocolate when she sees the colour red, or a person may see colours when he feels pain (Hyperdictionary, 2003). Patrick Martin’s study about synaesthesia and right-brain functioning suggests that “there are similarities between metaphorical expression and synaesthetic perception” (2003. p.1). He states that synaesthesia comes from symbolic and linguistic language acquisition (p. 8) and that “the emotive, unconscious and pre-linguistic knowledge plays a more ordered part in the conscious operations of the mind” (p. 12).

David Abram (1996) provides a definition of synaesthesia as quite simply a natural “fusion of the senses” (p. 61). “My senses connect up with each other in the things I perceive, or rather each perceived thing gathers my senses together in a coherent way, and it is this that enables me to experience the thing itself as a centre of forces...” (p.62). Thus, rather than fear strange senses entering in response to a situation or object, we can enjoy close observations for a wealth of experiential information.

Sentient Imagination: This expression has been used occasionally in times past by philosophers such as Hegel and as well by a few contemporary creative writers, for example, in an editorial page for a literary magazine (Eiben, 2002) and in a poem (Anil, 2004). I have not located any specific definition of this term by users. Thus, for the context of this research in creative writing and education, I present an attempt at a working definition for this expression, sentient imagination: the embodied capacity and receptiveness to experience, construct and create with what emerges when the senses are evoked, explored, and acknowledged.

Summary of the Research Focus

The focus of this research is to explore sentience, imagination, culture and their interrelatedness through writing. Rosenblatt shows us that art is a transaction between the reader and the text including the in-process writing text. Emig’s work notes that writing

involves all our senses. Britton develops the pragmatics of recognizing multiple functions in writing. Bleich tells us that there is a strong relationship between feelings and text and Elbow demonstrates the connections among the senses and the process of writing. Abram lives his work in a sentient lifeworld and shows us the interrelationships among cultures, human beings, the earth and all life forms. Classen's work explores the cultural values of sensing and representation. Linds demonstrates with his research how sensing and sentient experience can facilitate the art of drama in education. Writing can be an exploratory and developmental interrelationship of the foregoing influences in action. This research invites an embodied mode of writing with the whole of our human being. To study the interconnected theories, concepts and factors more closely, a review of the literature follows.

Chapter II: Opening and Evolving with the Literature

This research study which explores sentient imagination with a teacher education writing group of five students takes in complex issues for review. The areas that are regarded as integral for this proposed research and so necessarily form the literature review are:

1. A history of imagination, its relationship with creativity and postmodern imagination
2. Theories of sentience
3. Theories of consciousness
4. Theories of writing
5. The teaching of writing

The Demise or Re/birth of Imagination

The concept of imagination has been interpreted, reinterpreted, buried, resurrected, deconstructed and reconstructed by numerous thinkers and creators throughout history. Each of us has our own perception of it from the interrelationships we have experienced with our various environments throughout life, from education to personal. These interrelationships, and our response to and with them, build the life or the demise of imagination within us. How we come to understand and work with imagination, then, is central to how we come to feel and think, to breathe and live.

Etymology of Imagination

The term “imagination” has a long etymological history. The Old French term “imager”, first recorded approximately 1340, and the Latin word, “imaginari”, meaning “to form a mental picture to oneself...” -- were the terms which began the English “imagine” (etymonline, 2003). A current definition for “imagination” in the *Dictionary of the Philosophy of Mind* (2003) is as follows:

Traditionally, the mental capacity for experiencing, constructing, or manipulating ‘mental imagery’ (quasi-perceptual experience). Imagination is also regarded as responsible for fantasy, inventiveness, idiosyncrasy, and creative, original, and

insightful thought in general, and sometimes, for a much wider range of mental activities dealing with the non-actual, such as supposing, pretending, 'seeing as', thinking of possibilities, and even being mistaken...

(<http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~MindDict/imagination.html>)

The complexity of the concept of imagination is acknowledged in noting the mental capacity for constructing image as well as for creative thought and dream as a whole. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary Tenth Edition* (2000) defines imagination as essentially image creating, problem-solving, poetic idealizing, and emptiness:

1: the act or power of forming a mental image of something not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality. 2a: creative ability b: ability to confront and deal with a problem: resourcefulness c: the thinking or active mind : interest (stories that fired the) 3a: a creation of the mind especially: an idealized or poetic creation b: fanciful or empty assumption.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1980) is in fact more concise in accordance with its dictionary title than with the foregoing Oxford definitions and these definitions appear to acknowledge imagination primarily as the ability to form and work with images: "Imagining; mental faculty forming images or concepts of external objects not present to the senses; fancy; creative faculty of the mind" Out of further curiosity about interdisciplinary reaches towards imagination, I checked my 1965 *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary* and found that it defined imagination in a manner similar to Oxford but with somewhat more emphasis about moving out of previous experience: "The power of forming mental images of things, persons, or situations which are wholly or partially different from those previously known or experienced" This medical dictionary acknowledges, as does the *2003 Dictionary of the Philosophy of Mind*, that imagination is a specific power, capacity or ability of mind.

Eva T.H. Brann (1991) defines imagination as a "...a faculty or a power; specifically it is a faculty for internal representations; these representations are image-like; therefore they share a certain character with external images; in particular, like material images, they represent absent objects as present; they do so by means of resemblance" (p. 5). Brann says that imagination is a contested, perplexing faculty, that it is "...ultimately a mystery, indeed one of the great mysteries" (p. 5).

Traditional Theories of Imagination

Nigel J.T. Thomas introduces his historical writing about theories of imagination as follows: "Despite being a familiar word of everyday language, imagination is a very complex, contested, and evaluatively loaded concept...radically different senses and connotations when used in different contexts...although it plays only a small overt role in most contemporary theories of the mind, it has played a much more prominent part in the past" (*Dictionary of Philosophy of Mind*, 2003). The concept of imagination has an imbedded and interconnected intense complexity that has both invited and kept away scholarly exploration over time.

Thomas notes that this concept appears to have been introduced in philosophy first by the Greek Aristotle who said that "'(*phantasia*) imagination -- the process by which we say an (*phantasma*) image is presented to us'" (quoted in Thomas, 2003, p.1). Aristotle believed that the soul never thinks without an image and that imagination has no special relationship with creativity. Aristotle also believed that imagination and desire and knowledge were intensely connected: "All men by nature desire to know. An indication for this is the delight we take in our senses" (Aristotle, 1958, 1965, p. 108). For him, imagination was morally neutral but the Judeo-Christian theologians came to distrust imagination as they felt it was likely to cause sin, unless of course it were disciplined by reason or their own religious creed.

"*Sensus communis*", or common sense through Aristotle, was considered to be the part of our psyche which was responsible for binding together what our senses and sense organs bring to us into a "coherent and intelligible" representation (Thomas, 2003).

Phantasia and *sensus communis*, or imagination and common sense, were regarded as

different aspects or modes of one faculty. *Phantasmata* (percepts) were seen as deliverances to our minds through these modes of imagination and common sense. Thus, percepts for that which was immediate, and perception for that which came from memory of the past, through Aristotelian philosophy, were brought to us through our imagination and common sense.

The beliefs from Early Christian and Medieval anatomy declared that *sensus communis*, or common sense, came from the front of the brain which was seen as the reception area of sense impressions, while imagination came from the rear of the brain which was seen as the location where the images received from the senses were put together and stored in memory. Imagination was also responsible for recombining all of these into new forms for new thought. This perception of imagination appears to be close to the contemporary conception of sentience.

Rene Descartes insisted that *sensus communis* and imagination were made possible by a part of the pineal gland, that the imagination or *sensus communis* was mediated between the bodily senses and the rational mind (Thomas, 2003, p. 2-3). Cartesian philosophy about the dichotomies of mind/body, mental/physical and knower/knowledge, have long dominated Western higher learning. It is interesting then, that for Descartes, the imagination and the senses had similar sources through both body and mind, even though his work came to be associated with the separation of the mind and the body and the higher emphasis of the mind. Quite possibly Descartes had a sense of discords within his own theories of the source(s) of our imagination.

With the 18th century, the Romantic Movement of the West turned imagination away from knowledge and cognition to a central place with creative thinking in the arts. Imagination brought a re-evaluation of associative concepts such as originality, non-rational thought, and the mysterious, and a new respect for these concepts emerged. Imagination came to be associated primarily with aesthetics and beauty and passion in art and literature. The works of Romantic writers and poets such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Blake, Keats, Shelley continue to be loved by many. Blake's (1757-1827) *Songs of Innocence and Experience* has long been a classic for required study in introductory English classes in university:

The Blossom

Merry Merry Sparrow
Under leaves so green,
A happy Blossom
Sees you swift as arrow
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom.

Pretty Pretty Robin
Under leaves so green,
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing sobbing
Pretty Pretty Robin
Near my Bosom.

(Blake, from *Songs of Innocence*, 1995, p. 15)

The Garden of Love

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And *Thou shalt not* writ over the door;
So I turned to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore,

And I saw it was filled with graves,

And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

(Blake, from *Songs of Experience*, 1995, pp.47-48)

Blake's poetic juxtaposition of good and evil through innocent childhood natural world with repressive adult lives is crafted in a deceptively simple form. The poetry is structured in a complex manner and rooted in the religious traditional institutions and the Cartesian philosophical foundations of Blake's time. Although it provides a strong contrast to most of today's poetry in both form and content, the literary imagination of the Romantic era continues to be treasured by many. Kieran Egan feels that "Much of our intellectual activity... is stimulated by a subconscious attempt to recapture the "lost vision", the purity and power of the perception, experience and emotion of childhood" (2003, p.9). Poetic expression of imagination in the strong, structured modes with moral religious roots such as that of the Romantic era shows a striking difference from the inviting openness, the fluidity of twenty-first century contemporary poetry. A contemporary open approach to inviting creative expression provides scope for sentient imagination to emerge and express itself more freely than in the Romantic era, yet our creations may well be reaching for a new form and concept of innocence, of beauty, of a natural world such as Blake attempts to present with his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1995).

Dewey Naturalism, Behaviourist Training and Early Postmodernism

Dewey naturalism, Dadaism and early postmodernism enter societal and academic discourses in the century following the Romantic period. These influences are complex and varied, structured and unstructured, deconstructing and reconstructing the concepts of imagination, literary structure, society and their interrelationships.

John Dewey in *The School and Society* (1900) takes us into a concept of imagination which reaches into the interrelationships among humanity, community, democracy and nature with reflection and experience in the school classroom. The

growth of the imagination in a natural microcosm of the classroom, created by the teacher, can be beautiful and beneficial to the community as a whole. Dewey asserts that ...culture...it surely is this -- the growth of the imagination in flexibility, in scope, and in sympathy, till the life which the individual lives is informed with the life of nature and of society. When nature and society can live in the schoolroom, when the forms and tools of learning are subordinated to the substance of experience, then shall there be an opportunity for this identification, and culture shall be the democratic password. (1899, 1913, p.73)

In the early 20th century, a European movement known as Dadaism, based on irrationality and negating traditional laws of beauty, brings a turbulent time of early postmodern diversity and experimentation. The Dada movement defies conventions and attempts to shock through the arts as a whole. It can be seen as an artistic form of free thought, or a formless, nihilistic, absurd way of acknowledging and dealing with confusion, anger and fears (mcnicholas, 2003). Dadaism is evident particularly in the development of abstract art, expressionism and surrealism. Wikipedia states that "According to its proponents, Dada was not art—it was "anti-art" in the sense that Dadists protested against the contemporary academic and cultured values of art" (2008, p. 2).

The most well known of the early Dadaist writers is Hugo Ball. Ball wrote extensively in prose, newspaper articles and sound poetry. Excerpts from his diary of Dadaist times have been published and these are entitled "Die Flucht aus der Zeit" or "The Flight out of Time" (Kuenzli, 2003). Ball also wrote a Dada Manifesto in 1916 and this work explains Dadaism as a new direction in art of regarding the saying of "dada" as eternal bliss, as the way to become famous, as the freedom to create poetry for example, by permitting sounds to fall wherever they wish. Although most early Dadaist writers and artists were European, the movement had some advocates in North America too. The University of Iowa Libraries have constructed an International Dada Archive for scholarly research in Dadaism.

Contemporary postmodernism, for some people, particularly in the arts

communities, often takes a renewed interest in Dadaism. Contemporary computer artists and writers and musicians seem to take in Dadaist imagination as natural for technological technique. For Simon Mills (2003, p. 1) “the computer is the perfect home for Dadaism”. In art and music, it appears that “the essentially Dadaist/Surrealist notion of cut and paste has moved into its heyday. Not only are people creating art by scanning existent art and mixing it up online or taking texts and feeding them through computer applications but they are even appropriating other websites and playing with their contents” (p. 1). An example of a poem from a postmodern Dadaist website is as follows:

XII

DADA is a virgin microbe

DADA is against the high cost of living

DADA

Limited company for exploitation of ideas

DADA has 391 different attitudes and colours according to the sex of the president

It changes -- affirms -- says the opposite at the same time -- no importance--shouts B goes fishing.

Dada is the chameleon of rapid and self-interested change.

Dada is against the future. Dada is dead. Dada is absurd. Long live Dada.

Dada is not a literary school, howl...

(excerpt from Dadaism in Today's Society, 2003)

It might not be surprising that in the time of Dewey naturalism and Dadaism, another movement emerges which virtually discouraged imagination. Anyone/thing peculiar may well be mentally maladjusted, or so John J. B. Morgan insists in his 1928 publication, *The Psychology of Abnormal People: With Educational Applications*. His book shows concern with mental maladjustment of the “different” student: ...our study must first of all be concerned with locating the traits in which he is outstandingly different. Such peculiarities we call symptoms” (1928, p. 21). John J. B. Morgan was a professor at Northwestern University in the USA, and a Family Institute named after him

at that university is still functioning in psychological research. John Morgan, Ivan Pavlov and Jean Piaget work with a psychological approach that is essentially behaviouristic, attempting to construct and develop certain reactions, attitudes and patterns of psychological growth. Morgan, the earliest of the three, shows a need for mental hygiene in the schools. "Our mental life involves a stream or sequence of perceptions... Abnormal perceptions can be understood only when we know the way in which normal perceptions operate" (p. 70). Morgan defines the objective of a teacher as follows: "One measure of success of the teacher today is not only how well her pupils pass academic examinations, but what sort of personalities she turns out from her school" (Morgan, 1928, p. 604) "A safe rule", he says, "to follow in the search for trouble indicators is: When any child is habitually markedly different in any respect from the rest of his group he needs further study" (p. 613). These complex and often contradictory influences about naturalism, defiance of conventions, emphasis for conventional norm and behaviouristic education, continue to affect the lives and limit the imagination of many students in their education today.

Only eleven years after the publication of John J.B. Morgan's work, another book was published with quite a different emphasis about education and thought. Brand Blanchard writes how a relationship exists between the subconscious, the conscious and the creative. Blanchard's *The Nature of Thought* summarizes that "...conscious design is a guide and control for subconscious process...as Goethe has...said...the melody of his coming poem floats as a self-created and impalpable entity within him, before words have shaped themselves..." (Blanchard, 1939, p. 189).

It is also during this time that two philosophical theorists develop extensive works about imagination and consciousness. Both Rudolf Steiner who founds the anthroposophy movement with worship of imagination and sentience, and Owen Barfield who writes fantasy fiction, contribute greatly to the philosophy of imagination. Their work influences the thinking of certain scholarly areas of their respective communities. Steiner's anthroposophy movement is still functioning today in Europe as well as North America.

That the creative imaginative process is not well understood and often not

accepted, is the case with the creative people examined in *The Creative Process* (1952). This book is an anthology of writings about creativity, edited by Brewster Ghiselin. Ghiselin brings out the complex conceptions of and responses to creativity through voices of well-known artists over a considerable historical period of time.

Vincent Van Gogh, a post-impressionist painter who expressed dissatisfaction with feeling incarcerated in his own self, shows a feeling of uncertainty about his own identity (Ghiselin, 1952, p. 13). He also writes to a friend how art becomes the desired natural work for him. "...I am so used to work with the natural form now and can keep my personal feeling out of it...and just because I am sitting opposite the model, sometimes I feel more like myself..." (p. 54).

Sir Stephen Spender, a poet and critic, writes about focus and the sensation of creating in the making of a poem:

The problem of creative writing is essentially one of concentration, and the supposed eccentricities of poets are usually due to mechanical habits or rituals developed in order to concentrate. Concentration, of course, for the purpose of writing poetry, is different from the kind of concentration required for working out a sum. It is a focusing of the attention in a special way, so that the poet is aware of all the implications and possible developments of his idea, just as one might say that a plant was not concentrating on developing mechanically in one direction, but in many directions, towards the warmth and light with its leaves, and towards the water with its roots, all at the same time. (Ghiselin, 1952, p. 113)

Spender shows the reader that imaginative concentration and focus are "special". But he is not able to provide a clear interpretation that will assist readers in "defining" the creative process.

Friedrich Nietzsche, a philosopher best known for his book entitled *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1997), writes about his own creative process (p. 202). He notes that the idea for the book came to him in 1881 when he noticed a decisive change in his taste for music:

Perhaps the whole of *Zarathustra* may be classified as music. I am sure that one

of the conditions of its production was a renaissance in me of the art of hearing. ...I, together with my friend and maestro, Peter Gast...discovered that the phoenix bird of music hovered over us, decked in more beautiful and brilliant plumage than it had ever before exhibited...it's last part [of Zarathustra] was finished exactly during the hallowed hour of Richard Wagner's death in Venice... (Nietzsche, 1997, p. 201).

Nietzsche continues to describe his sense of creative revelation on the following page:

The notion of revelation describes the condition quite simply by which I mean that something profoundly convulsive and disturbing suddenly becomes visible and audible with indescribable definiteness and exactness. One hears -- one does not seek; one takes -- one does not ask who gives: a thought flashes out like lightning, inevitably without hesitation. I have never had any choice about it. There is an ecstasy whose terrific tension is sometimes released by a flood of tears, during which one's progress varies from involuntary impetuosity to involuntary slowness. (Nietzsche, 1997, p.202)

While his philosophy proclaimed that traditional Christian values had lost their power over individuals, that God, in fact, was dead, Nietzsche writes about a joyful, ecstatic sense of the creative process of thought and image transmission. For Nietzsche, the creative process of imagination came close to his apparent sense of the divine.

The work of Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung, like Blanchard above, is given in Ghiselin's collection (1952) through observations about creative process in conjunction with Goethe's works.

If we consider Goethe's *Faust*, and leave aside the possibility that it is compensatory to his own conscious attitude, the question that we must answer is this: In what relation does it stand to the conscious outlook of his time? Great poetry draws its strength from the life of mankind, and we completely miss its meaning if we try to derive it from personal factors. Whenever the collective unconscious becomes a living experience and is brought to bear upon the

conscious outlook of an age, this event is a creative act which is of importance to everyone living in that age....So *Faust* touches something in the soul of every German...(1952, p. 218)

Imagination and creative process and thought emerge, with Jung, through the collective unconscious, not only as an interaction between an individual and his/her manipulating of images.

In an interview with Preston, Gertrude Stein invites us to think of the creative process as discovery: "...creation must take place between the pen and the paper, not before in a thought or afterwards in recasting...It will come if it is there and if you will let it come, and if you have anything, you will get a sudden creative recognition" (Ghiselin, 1952, p. 159). Stein's sense of creative process, of imagination, appears to be a gentle version of a portion of Nietzsche's observations. But she emphasizes that the writer needs to permit imagination to emerge, not to force it, or attempt to relive it, but simply to trust her own discovery process.

In "The Biological Basis of Imagination", *The Scientific Monthly* June, 1946, (in Ghiselin, 1952), R.W.Gerard provides his observations about imagination: Imagination, creative imagination, is an action of the mind that produces a new idea or insight (p. 226).

Imagination depends on sensory information (p. 241). Gerard also notes the complexity that exists in the teaching of imagination in education: "Formal education is directed to our conscious reason, which can at least be supplied with content and practice; if the more intuitive and unconscious imagination can be cultivated we have yet to learn the secret to teach rigor while preserving the imagination is an unsolved challenge to education" (p. 249). Imagination demands intellectual as well as emotional factors. Gerard regards imagination as the "constructive power of the unconscious" (p. 250) and this power can come to assist humanity in guiding its inward learning and growth.

Northrop Frye, the Canadian literary critic, became known for his strong stance about learning much through quality literature. His theoretical stance includes the learning of imagination. Imagination is learned from literature; it assists us in constructing our identity, and it is needed to envision a reconstructed society. In *The*

Educated Imagination (1963), he writes that imagination is the constructive power of the mind set free to work on pure construction, construction for its own sake (Frye, p. 50). Imagination is emotion and intellect working together (p.57). With the teaching of literature, says Frye, imaginative energy is transferred from the literature to the student (p. 55) but that the limit of the imagination is a totally human world. Frye further discusses the role of imagination in making observations about the world around us in order that we may help to change what is needed. "The motive for metaphor, according to Wallace Stevens, is a *desire to associate, and finally to identify*, the human mind with what goes on outside it, because the only genuine joy you can have is when you feel, that although we may know in part.." (p. 11). Frye provides guidelines about what he feels should comprise the literature studies for schools and these include the following (p. 46-53): The Bible should be taught early in education for its association with literary studies; classical mythologies and the structures of great literary forms should be taught; both discursive writing (argument, reason) and imaginative (suspension of belief and judgment) need to be taught; two contexts should be used in English literary studies and these are with a language other than English and with a choice of arts other than literature; literature teaching should begin with its centre, poetry, as "Poetry is the most direct and simple means of expressing oneself in words..." (p. 51). In addition, Frye suggests that Canadians should study Canadian literature even if other literature seems superior (p. 53).

Frye believes that imagination has a place in society and social life as well. What the responsible citizen really uses is his imagination, not believing anybody literally, but voting for the man or party that corresponds most closely, or least remotely, to his vision of the society he wants to live in. The fundamental job of the imagination in ordinary life then is to produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in (1963, p. 60).

Frye's emphasis of the role of our imagination in creating a better society than the one we live in reminds me of the work of Paulo Freire. Freire writes that visions of better worlds can come to us when we learn to develop *conscientizacao*, a critical consciousness in the understanding of social, political and economic problems, and then to take action for change. We need to learn to recognize and interpret emerging perceptions about how

to take actions to transform our world, how to liberate humanity. Freire shows that change and liberation cannot come about unless we learn to imagine, to vividly see reconstructed situations and societies. Thus for Freire, imagination is the foundation of human liberation.

Postmodern to Postpostmodern Imagination

With postmodern philosophy and theory, imagination becomes a parody of itself. In *The Wake of the Imagination: Ideas of Creativity in Western Culture*, a book which is also entitled *The Wake of the Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture*, Richard Kearney (1988) provides a history of the development and death of imagination. He discusses imagination in relation to history, sociology, politics, theology, and art. According to him, creative imagination is a passing illusion of western capitalist culture. Kearney shows the postmodern demise of the creative imagination and its replacement by “a depersonalized consumer system of pseudo-images” (1988, p. 252). Contrived realities reign and postmodern art continuously mocks itself: “...art derides itself by playing on the idea of the image as an artificial imitation of another equally artificial image” (p. 254). Postmodernism returns to the *mimesis* model (imitation, mimicry) and self-parody (p. 255).

Allen Ginsberg is one of the most well known and controversial but loved postmodern beat poets. An excerpt from his classic “Howl” exemplifies Kearney’s observations:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by
madness, starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through negro streets at
dawn looking for an angry fix,

angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient
heavenly connection to the starry
dynamo in the machinery of night...

(Ginsberg, 1956, *City Light Books*)

Kearney brings in a history of the postmodern theorists whose work has affected development of imagination's alleged end. The work of Jean-Paul Sartre from France shows that no unconscious exists, that a belief in the unconsciousness would be a denial of human freedom and responsibility. The unconscious is incompatible with self-projecting action of the imagination. Jacques Lacan writes that "Consciousness must open itself to the unconscious" (Kearney, p. 256). Lacan's work is a return to Freudian anti-humanism. Humanist ideals for self-identity are contrived (imaginary), according to Lacan. The "...imaginary self must die in order for the symbolic other to live" (p. 257). Louis Althusser kicks humanist ideology: the imaginary is equal to a false consciousness of the bourgeoisie. Kearney writes: "Althusser declares that the very concept of human subjectivity, understood as an original condition of creative freedom, is nothing less than an ideological strategy of subjection to the status quo" (p. 262).

Kearney then takes the history of imagination to the postmodernist work of Foucault, Warhol and Barthes. Foucault writes extensively of the death of man, the death of the author, and thus no creative imagination is celebrated. His epistemological foci deal with the observation that the subjects are rejected due to influences and underlying discourses with which they are helpless. Historicity, historical genuineness or accuracy, through Foucault, leads to transcendental consciousness, or the original core of knowledge, the purpose of which is to question the source and origin of all representations. He interprets humanist imagination as utopia and consolation. Postmodern imagination is heterotopia. In other words, imagination is an entity that is misplaced in postmodernism. Postmodernism exposes the limits of our imagination and impossibilities often through self-parodies. Resemblance, writes Kearney, presupposes a 'primary reference' of image to reality and imitation (1988, p. 269). Kearney says that similitude refers to lateral repetitions in parodying form with no privileged hierarchy of imitation, repetition of the similar, to the similar or loss of identity, for example, Andy Warhol's reproductions of consumer images such as Campbell's soup cans (p. 270). Roland Barthes writes about the death of authorial imagination (Kearney, p. 271): "...images are no more than surface signs of unconscious language" (p. 272). The imaginary, images, imagination are all a myth. Sarcasm is appropriate for

demythologizing in postmodernism, for dismantling of the imagination, and no reality can be counted on to go to either. A work of literature, according to Barthes, assumes the death of the author, the destruction of the writing voice and the points of origin.

Jacques Derrida writes of “deconstruction *par excellence*” (Kearney, p. 281), or a dismantling of humanism, the end of man and a complete deconstruction of modes of representation. He notes that mimesis is without origin; that there is nothing to imitate therefore...nothing...Apocalypse is without end, the breakup of western culture is here, the postmodern apocalypse and the apocalypse of human consciousness (Kearney, 1988, p. 293). Imagination comes to be non-existent altogether with Derridian deconstruction.

After showing the demise of the imagination, Kearney’s interpretation of a new “imagination” shows new hope. He presents an important response to postmodern despair: what he refers to as the *poetics of the possible*. He introduces it in this manner:

A more fitting response to the postmodern dilemma is to radically reinterpret the role of the imagination as a relationship between self and other. We may thus take stock of what deconstruction has to offer: a dual dismantling of imagination as i) a humanist cult of the transcendental self and ii) an onto-theological imitation of the imperialist other. Having thus demystified the excesses of premodern and modern paradigms of imagination, we may be in a position to discover another kind of relation between self and other, one more human than humanism and more faithful to otherness than onto-theology. (1988, p. 363)

Imagination is interpreted by Kearney as a relationship between self and other, as relationship between knowledge and culture, between historical meaning and narrative, among the open-minded and the empathetic and the diversive. In his conclusions for the 1988 book, he reminds us that “The narrative relation of self to other -- which imagination recollects from the historical past and projects into the historical future -- is a story that cannot be brought to an end... We must go on telling it if we are to make the postmodern imagination *human* again” (p. 396). “Even when it can’t go on”, says Kearney, “the postmodern imagination goes on” (p. 397). In his later edition of this book (1998), Kearney passionately declares that the imagination has “the power to unrealize

repressive realities in favour of emancipatory possibilities” (1998, p. 228).

“So, imagination is the capacity to think of things as possibly being so...,” concludes Kieran Egan (2003) in his article on history of the imagination. His conclusion seems to be the most common element among all perceptions about imagination throughout history but Egan takes it further to conclude that it is an intentional act of mind and that it provides great enrichment for rational thinking.

Imagination interconnects with environment in ecological literacy or as it is also called, ecoliteracy. The current ecoliteracy movement attempts to emphasize the process of becoming literate, of understanding ecology. It further brings out strong ecological concerns through literature. This movement motivates imaginations to join with the natural world’s music, to listen and to respect its components. Among the Canadian writers in this area are award-winning writer and artist, Jeannette Armstrong, Dave Glaze (Saskatchewan) with his children’s novels about pelican friends, John Weier (Manitoba) with his birding and naturalist memoirs, and Barbara Nickel (B.C.) with her prairie children’s poetry. These writers enjoy the reach into their ecoliteracy loves to share with readers. Farley Mowat’s works for children and adults bring continuous love and delight for nature and the animal world. The work of American poet and writer, Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) in *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* mentioned in the literature review section on sentience, invites and encourages intense imagination in a strong connection with earth and oral culture.

International organizations such as the *Association for Study of Literature and the Environment* (ASLE, 2007) and the *Center for Ecoliteracy* (Center for Ecoliteracy, 2007) are attempting to bring educators and writers together who want to work with their love and concern for the environment. Such organizations assist the encouragement of imaginative interconnection with the environment and ecological concerns.

Crepuscular Dawn for Imagination?

Can a crepuscular dawn be predicted for imagination as Paul Virilio (2002) says?

“Crepuscular”, according to Dictionary.com (2007) is: “1. Of or like twilight; dim

2. Zoology. Becoming active at twilight or before sunrise, as do bats and certain insects” Virilio, in a published interview with Sylvere Lotringer, entitled *Crepuscular Dawn* (2002), talks vividly about upcoming global crises in which our atmosphere may be one that prevents full sunlight from coming our way, so that the earth’s creatures, even we, may well be living in a perpetual twilight. Virilio is considered an important current technological thinker, one who “hates technology with a passion” (Lotringer, 2002, p. 8). He writes how it is affecting the ways in which our perceptions are built or changed by telescopes and computers, and how our sense of distance and communication are being altered by it; how this is creating a race not only to control lands, but also ideals, ideas and research. Lotringer notes that despite Virilio’s passionate hatred for technology, “this absolute rejection of technology could also be experienced as a form of love, or devotion. ...a powerful bond...” (p. 8). This paradoxical bond that Virilio has with the technology he hates may well suggest some human hope in what has become in so many senses, a post-human world. Can our postmodern imagination become human again? Or is it suffering with crepuscular fading? Can a writing workshop group of secondary school students, in an attempt to explore creative writing through sentient imagination, unchain itself of repressive realities such as a crepuscular dawn?

Sentience as Sensual Interconnectedness

In the work previously addressed, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram declares that we need to enter into reciprocal communication with our surroundings (1996, p. 67), and that we need permit ourselves to experience our environment in order to understand and appreciate the interconnectedness of our world. His work shows how the complexity of these components can emerge through an awareness and an acknowledgment of sentience, and of these interconnections among all components of our senses.

Etymology of Sentience

What then, is sentience? An online etymology dictionary indicates that sentience was first recorded in 1598 as “sentient” and in 1632 from Latin as “sentientem” and that

it may have been originally derived from southern Italian dialect (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2003). Although this term has been in existence for a long time, a history about its development is difficult to obtain. The definition of "sentient" is given by Oxford Dictionary as "having the power of sense-perception" (1980). The current internet Hyperdictionary provides a contemporary definition of three meanings for sentience with the pronunciation given as "senshuns": "1. The readiness to perceive sensations... 2. The faculty through which the external world is apprehended... 3. State of elementary or undifferentiated consciousness" (Hyperdictionary, 2003). This same source gives a Webster's definition from 1913: "The quality or state of being sentient; esp., the quality of having sensation" These definitions do not limit "sentience" to human beings but to all beings which have various degrees and forms of sentient abilities and this can include many animals.

Educators at times associate emotion with sentience. However, the concept of emotion will not be directly addressed and studied in conjunction with this research as it presents work of a large scope reaching into additional psychological segments beyond the given intentions of my research focus in imagination and sentience.

A website forum page about "Sentience and you" (2003) records several individual conceptions of this term:

Sentience, to me, means awareness of consequences. I'm not talking about 'if I touch that, it'll hurt me'. I'm talking 'If I make him angry now, if I need something from him later I may not be able to get it. (Hisae Ichikawa, The Brunching Shuttlecocks, 2003)

...having a conscious awareness of itself and its own existence in relation to other things that exist, and not just the ability to sense things... (Bombadi, 2003)

Tricky stuff. If self-awareness is the key, the babies most certainly aren't sentient. So perhaps the "sanctity" we assign to sentience also includes those who are capable of becoming sentient... (Fast Learner, 2003)

Theories of Sentience

Various philosophical and psychological researchers attempt to ground their studies and theories in a working definition of their own about sentience. However, the work, theoretical or pragmatic, in the area of sentience and sensing, is somewhat sparse. In terms of a relationship between education and sentience, I have not located academic publications.

Philosophy professor David Cole (2007) builds a definition in his work with senses by differentiating between sensing and sentience. He describes sensing as “something which animals, some plants, and some machines do. Sensing involves a sensing organ or device which enables the system of which it is a part, organic or inorganic, to actively respond to environmental circumstances” (2007, p. 3). Cole distinguishes sentience from sensing by stating that the former refers to “having a sensation or a feeling...a phenomenon which goes beyond more than mere sensing...it involves an internal state in which information (typically) about the environment is treated by the system so that it comes to have a subjective character” (p. 3). Cold, lights, music and pain are regarded as sensations that we feel, thus making us sentient. Cole indicates that sensing is not a necessary condition for sentience, that “artificial systems may sense without being sentient” (p. 3) such as certain machines or devices that automatically control components of our cars. These devices make sensory discriminations but are not experiencing sensations, according to Cole. In addition, a human being may be sentient without sensing, such as in the case of hallucinations that are internally generated but seemingly without the sense organs (Cole, 2007, p. 3).

The studies of Constance Classen show her theory of the relationships among cultures, values and senses. Classen does not include the term “sentience” in her work, but as Cole above shows, sensing relates to components of this concept. In *The Color of Angels: Cosmology, Gender and the Aesthetic Imagination* (1998), she explores the history of Western symbolism with an analysis of senses and gender. Her 1993 publication addresses the Inca cosmological sense of the human body. *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* is a comprehensive research presentation about a study of the senses. Classen writes that sensory values are cultural

values (1993, p.136), “the way a society senses is the way it understands” (p. 136). She notes that sensory relations are moral relations, and that sensory expression can also indicate structures of power within various cultures (p. 137). In a book entitled *Learning, Knowledge and Cultural Context* (1999), Classen addresses the concept of wisdom through learning through the senses in various cultures. She says that most of us

...in the Western world are accustomed to learning about the world primarily through our senses of sight and hearing. Despite a few interesting experiments in the education of the “lower” senses, smell, taste and touch have not been accorded a place in mainstream Western education. These senses tend to be associated either with “savagery” or sensualism. When we look across the cultures, however, a different sensory picture emerges, in which each of the senses has a vital role to play in the acquisition of knowledge of the world... (p. 269)

Austin Clark, professor of philosophy, in his work, *A Theory of Sentience* (2000) writes that “...sentience is...an important part, but still only a part of consciousness” (2000, p.i). He says further that “There is more to sentience than sensory qualities. Even if there comes a day when all the conceptual tangles wrapped around the qualities of sensory experience have been resolved, the job of understanding sentience would still be only half done” (2000, p. 1). Clark’s theory of sentience attempts to “...show that some presentations of sensory qualities can be explained...”(p. 196) by building a complex scientific thesis with this intention. A sentient being, he indicates, to be able to sense, needs to use several capacities: one to represent *places-at-times (spatial representation)*, the other to represent *features* (p. 60-70). Clark sees these two capacities as distinct but both components of sentience. Sense is a specific component of the overall concept of consciousness. Sentience can have qualities and states including sensory, subjective, phenomenal and phenomenological properties. Sensory states are those in which the subject has a sense of the appearance or presence of certain objects while sensory qualities “are those qualities of sensory states that account for this appearance” (1993, p. 2). The qualitative mental states or *qualia* refer to “...how the world appears” (p. 2), and

these “are defined by what it seems one is perceiving, not by what caused the episode” (p. 2).

Clark’s earlier work, *Sensory Qualities* (1993), after extensive technological analysis as in his later book, concludes that “The philosophical problem posed by sensory qualities is that no objective understanding or explanation of them seems possible: it seems that they can only be understood in their own subjective terms, and that none of the current sciences provide any help in attempting to understand them” (1993, p. 209). His 2000 document closes with a passionate challenge:

...If one lifts one’s gaze to the full panoply of vertebrate sentience, and imagines all the features and sensory identifiers of all the modalities therein, the work that awaits to fill out feature -- placing accounts...is daunting--and exciting. The philosophical goal is to give some sense of how all those parts will hang together...half the fun is that we do not know what is out there...(2000, p. 254)

Susanne Langer (Donahue, 2003) regards art as being comprised of the object more so than the experience with/of the object by the artist or the viewer. She develops her theory from the notion that human senses, human feelings, or human expressions, have the function of gathering information to build and analyze meaning from art. Her work in *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (1953) builds theory that interrelates ideas, emotion, music, shapes, literature and film as areas from which to construct meaning. My research focuses on evoking all senses, inviting a complexity of processes with these evocations, and acknowledging, exploring and interpreting components of these experiences. Art for this research is regarded as a web of interwoven unlimited exploration.

Synthetic Sentience

Sentience is in our contemporary technical world also becoming a commodity, a process that is considered possible to create synthetically on demand. Charles Ostman (2003) writes in “Synthetic Sentience on Demand”:

...We are rapidly entering into a realm where decision rendering, as a

mission critical process, will simply exceed human capacity. At the threshold of crossing that event horizon, the ability to have access to the virtual terraform, populated with potentially infinite number of intelligent agents, and sentient entities will no longer be an interesting luxury. It will become an absolute requirement (Ostman, p. 1-2)

...Sentience, as definable in part by the awareness of one's self, can in some cases be measured by the defensive posturing and maneuvering that a synthetic entity will employ on its own behalf...learn to adapt...improve its response... (p. 4)

...Sentience on demand, as a purchasable online resource, has more to offer than merely finding information, and providing synthetically driven decision rendering as a process. It also has the potential for providing immersive environment "experiences", populated with synthetic personalities, possessing the defacto equivalent of "emotional sentience", as a rentable "event" for the user (p. 5)

The issues in Ostman's work may well become commonplace in technology and education with time. In observing students at work on computers from kindergarten to university, I can well imagine sentience as synthetically generated to a degree much greater than many seem to realize. Although this research focus does not examine the issue or experience of synthetic sentience, this form of sentience may well be subtly generated at times in our writing.

Richard Barry (2001) states that with regard to inventions such as the interactive technologies above, or as he puts it, "a new race of intelligent sentient beings powered by artificial means" (p. 1) suggests that sentience will be the next moral dilemma for us. Barry wonders if these artificial beings will enjoy the same rights as their human creators, and if these would be labeled *persons*, and could these be considered immortal? He wonders further if, since they would be considered sentient beings, they would also be honoured and respected as all other sentient beings in the Buddhist faith (Barry, 2001, p. 2). I cannot help but wonder what effect such a synthetic conception will have on the biological, ecological, artistic sense of sentience.

Sixth and Seventh Senses

It is common to think primarily of the first five when the issue of the senses arises in discussion: hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, and smelling or the auditory, visual, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory senses. The sixth and seventh senses are usually ignored in education altogether and these may well be the strongest unmentioned parts of ourselves. Research publications about these senses are rare and so writings about these senses come most often from website sources that focus primarily on the supernatural.

Most often, the sixth sense is defined as intuition or ability to sense situations or happenings quickly without direct open communication for receiving it. Sometimes others feel what we feel so that there is no need to discuss the issue and thus, the intuition is mutual at times. The seventh sense is usually regarded as intelligence, new thought, or the discovery of new ideas through a connection with infinite intelligence (Sixthsense.org, 2003, p.1). Chakras are considered sensing points for the sixth and seventh senses and studies of Eastern spirituality can provide detailed information about these concepts.

Synaesthesia

Synaesthesia is a concept that with its traditional meaning most commonly taken from biology, shows a person with a problematic neurological condition. This condition has in former times been regarded as mental “abnormality”: Synaesthesia is a neurological condition in which a stimulus to one sense triggers another; for instance, a person tastes chocolate when she sees the colour red, or if a person...sees colours when he feels pain (Hyperdictionary, 2003). Patrick Martin’s study of synaesthesia and right-brain functioning suggests that “there are similarities between metaphorical expression and synaesthetic perception...” (2003. p. 1). He states that synaesthesia comes from symbolic and linguistic language acquisition (p. 8) and that “the emotive, unconscious and pre-linguistic knowledge plays a more ordered part in the conscious operations of the mind” (p. 12).

David Abram (1996) provides a definition of synaesthesia as quite simply a natural “fusion of the senses” (p. 61). “My senses connect up with each other in the

things I perceive, or rather each perceived thing gathers my senses together in a coherent way, and it is this that enables me to experience the thing itself as a centre of forces...” (p.62). Abram defines his sense of perception as “...the concerted activities of all the body’s senses as they function and flourish together” (p. 59). Thus, rather than fear strange perceptions of unusual senses entering in response to a situation or object, we can enjoy close observations for a wealth of experiential information and interpretation. Synaesthesia, as a melding of our senses, can become for us a mode of opening ourselves to our contexts, daring to acknowledge what emerges in our perceptions, and seeking learning with and from these experiences.

The fundamental emphasis in our traditional Western education of the Cartesian dichotomies of mind/body, mental/physical, and knower/knowledge have long tended to consider scholarly knowing as that which emerges from a mind regarded as being above the body, from a mind which has conquered the lowly influence of the body, from a mind which reaches far above the earth on which we walk. Our education has considered higher learning as that which is outside of the concrete levels with which we start as infants, above that which comes from the senses of our hands, our feet, our eyes or any of our physical components. The Western goals in education have primarily been to work toward the abstract, to encourage the use of our higher knowledge for superior management and control of that which is or those who are beneath us and around us. Education has not taught us to consider the influence of our body as a reality in the construction of our knowledge. We have not usually learned in our education, even if we have had an awareness of it, that our minds and our bodies are continuously interdependent in their creation of thought and insight.

Huston Smith, in a 1972 publication entitled *Earth Might Be Fair: Reflections on Ethics, Religion and Ecology*, edited by Ian G. Barbour, writes about the need for a new consciousness in our world, one which will change the presumption that “nature has no claims, only uses” (p.63). He says we need to reassess our Western disengagement from nature. Smith notes further that even our intelligence needs to be deconditioned (p. 72), that Chinese Taoism with its regard for all manifestations of our environment as holy in essence (p. 78) is needed in the West to reinterpret our relationships with each other and

the natural world.

A few years later, in 1977, Fritjof Capra's work *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*, was published. With this work, Capra reaches into a new interpretation of the sciences through Taoism, and celebrates an intensely-engaging relationship with the natural world.

Capra returns with several more works including a major publication in 2002, *The Hidden Connections: Integrating the Biological, Cognitive and Social Dimensions of Life into a Science of Sustainability*. With this work, Capra builds a web of hopeful life for our environment with revelations of intricate connections among all the components of the world around us and within us and his work will be addressed later in this document.

In her 1992 publication entitled *Women Who Run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes reveals her perceptions of how a woman can attempt to reconnect with her long lost wild earth nature, instinct and intuition, and magic. Estes tells a collection of stories and myths about woman which have been recovered from any cultures and eras, and writes her interpretations of these for the contemporary reader. Through her presentation and interpretation of historic myths and tales about wild woman, she "elucidate[s] the instinctual nature of women..." (p. 13), bringing together natural earth and oral culture.

The complexity of sentience as a direct source of embodied writing and living has been ignored by too many educators for too long. If we learn to permit the emergence of complex sentience and if we acknowledge perceptions that it evokes, our learnings can burgeon. These learnings may at times connect with those that have frequently been denounced by education, or accepted by traditional Western religions only when the results fall in line with the ruling religious creeds. For example, the traditional interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus is accepted, but the magic of old world cultures and new age interests in extra-sensory perceptions and auras are usually rejected. An open acknowledgement of the natural, physical domains as interconnected with the intuitive, non-physical domains, assists the potential creation and affirmation of embodied written communication.

Consciousness as Awareness

Consciousness, like sentience, is understood differently by many theorists and many acknowledge how little they know about this complex concept. The theories vary among disciplines so only a brief look at a few can be done.

Etymology of Consciousness

The word “conscious” was first recorded in 1601 and it appears to have come from the Latin word *consciūs*, meaning “knowing, aware” and from *conscire* which is said to be a likely loan or translation from the Greek word *syneidos*. In 1837, it was recorded as “active and awake” in definition (Etymology Online, 2003). Four main topics are usually addressed by philosophers with the term “consciousness”: knowledge, intentionality, introspection and phenomenal experience (Lormand, 2003, p.1). David Rosenthal (2003) sees consciousness as being a term that deals with different aspects of mental functioning. He says further that this term most commonly describes people and other sentient creatures, as being awake and receptive to sensory input..” (p.1).

Theories of Consciousness

Rosenthal (2003) in “Consciousness and Sensation” identifies types of consciousness to assist understanding of the concept. The first type which is considered the most basic form, is referred to as *creature consciousness* and it describes sentient creatures as being awake and receptive. The second type relates to a person or animal being aware that something is the case or that something is. This notion, which describes consciousness in relation to an object of which the person or animal is aware, is known as *transitive consciousness*. The third type of consciousness relates to the mental states of people such as perceiving, sensing, thinking, desiring and feeling labeled as *state consciousness* (2003, p. 1). Here one is conscious of one’s conscious mental states.

Rosenthal states further that

Both creature consciousness and transitive consciousness can be understood only if we first understand what it is to perceive and think about things. A person or other creature is conscious only if it is mentally responsive to its environment, and

one is transitively conscious of something only if one is in a suitable kind of mental state. To understand state consciousness, by contrast, requires [that]...One must understand what it is to think about or perceive something, and also understand the difference between thinking and perceiving consciously and doing so in a way that is not conscious. (p. 2)

In "Curriculum and Consciousness" (1997) Maxine Greene takes the reader back to primordial consciousness in early childhood, when awareness begins to develop, and consciousness becomes an automatic response as a result of basic authoritarian or environmental influences. Precognitive realities develop early too, as "...the world is constituted prior to the 'construction of cognitive structures' " (1997, p.140). Consciousness is "always consciousness of something" (p. 140), something in relation to the world, a reflecting of past, present and hopefully future experiences. It consists of a manner of awareness in which the world seems to show itself to a person and to remind her of the need for continuous rediscover of herself. The learner "...may realize that he is projecting beyond his present horizons each time he shifts his attention and takes another perspective on his world" (p. 147). Greene presents visions of the learner developing with concentrated observation, intense reflection, and a willingness to break from traditional subjectivities in order to *move beyond what she has been* (p. 139).

The process of learning, of moving beyond, calls for an inherent focus for the learner: "ordering the materials of his own life-world when dislocations occur, what was once familiar abruptly appears strange" (Greene, 1997, p. 142). The contemporary person deals continuously with the transience of her life-world, of the manner in which she relates to people, to ideas, to art and to values. Greene's postmodern observations acknowledge that a human being may feel "strange", disengaged, frustrated, and helpless in the face of ever-changing realities; that this willingness to acknowledge the strangeness, the uncertainty is part of learning. An individual may be aware that her sense of reality will depend on and vary with perspectives taken (p. 143), and this may bring increased fragility to attempts at creating order and harmony in the life-world.

The concept of consciousness in education is addressed by Paulo Freire in

Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1971). Freire asserts that the major goal in education is to develop *conscientizacao*, a critical consciousness in the understanding of social, political and economic problems, and then to take action for change (Freire, 1971, pp. 19-20). A development of this critical consciousness makes it possible, says Freire, for people to become responsible, beginning their own search for self-affirmation, and their fight of injustices. Freire, who is committed to human liberation, states that the radical enters fully into reality, so that with knowing it better, he can transform it into a world in which it will be easier to love. Greene, without overt political assertions in her work, emphasizes that the necessary intense focus in consciousness of the learner creates the need to make a new order and so to bring harmony in the life-world. Freire urges a mode of critical consciousness that necessitates a critical focus on the reality of our world, on what we face and hear and feel each day. He declares that the radical must act on emerging perceptions, thereby helping to create necessary and desirable changes for human beings, and with Greene then, to go beyond what has already been. Freire's passionate commitment to *conscientizacao* strengthens the curriculum and consciousness philosophy of Maxine Greene.

Writing as Embodied Post-Cartesian Discoveries

Writing is a complex concept and practice that is core to learning in our educational systems. I believe that the basic primary action of developing an understanding of written symbols and of learning to create these written symbols with our eyes and hands, is too often rigidly tunneled throughout the school years. I think that so much of that trust and confidence to create, to dare to enjoy and delight in creations, is channeled, stunted and/or destroyed by regulations and traditions which attempt to formulate guarded, restricted minds and bodies as graduands of the educational system. The more we attempt to encourage and accept openness in thoughts and ideas and dreams and creations in any mode or form, the more we will be able to dare to release of what is in our minds and bodies, and the more readily we will be able to identify and understand, think about and analyze, our own emergings and those of others. Structured modes of writing can be learned with a confident basis in open embodied writing. Writing in

various genres can be developed from an enjoyable basis in imaginative sentient intergenre writing (Zacharias, 2002).

A look at educational research in writing brings literature that explores what writing is considered to be, how writing can be done individually and in groups and how writing can be taught. Educators can benefit from working through their own experiences with writing before studying the pedagogical issues of it for their teaching. As some of the literature begins to show, writing can become an embodied experience with the encouraging of the emergence and recognition of the senses.

Theories of Writing Process

Writing as a concept can be regarded in multiple forms by writers and instructors in writing. Emphasis has varied from it being seen as a product, a process, and a mode of communication. As a product, writing has long been a work of art, such as a painting or a musical composition. As a process, it can be private discourse that the writer has with herself, social discourse that is shared with a select group, academic discourse that has limited sharing with instructors and education communities, and public discourse that is openly shared, possibly via various forms of publication such as print and/or digital modes.

David Abram (1996) believes that written language has destroyed the human relationship with the earth environment, with our fellow animal creatures, with our own awareness of and work with our senses. As he interprets the effects of written language, human sentience has in effect, weakened, possibly died, with writing. The abstract emphasis of written symbols in terms of the Western alphabet and writing process has removed human attention from what our ears, our eyes, our tongues, our noses, our hands, the synaesthetic fusion of these, and our mysterious additional sixth and seventh senses can show us and teach us of our inner and outer worlds. Abram declares that "Our task... is that of taking up the written word, with all of its potency, and patiently, carefully, writing language back into the land... Finding phrases that place us in contact with the trembling neck-muscles of a deer holding its antlers high as it swims toward the

mainland...Planting words, like seeds, under rocks and fallen logs—letting language take root, once again, in the earthen silence of shadow and bone and leaf” (pp. 273-274).

Peter Elbow’s chapter, “Three mysteries at the heart of writing”, in *Composition Studies in the New Millennium* (2003) introduces the concept of interrelationships among writing and the senses. The first mystery, according to Elbow, is the step from no words to words and this is discussed with suggestions for a productive manner of progressing. He suggests that we talk with others, that we push ourselves to write through freewriting, and to build further what has been begun in freewriting. Elbow advocates an academic method of writing labelled as inkshedding, a “focussed and public freewriting” (2003, p.3) in which the participants write informally an academic response which is immediately shared with other participants, discussed, responded to, tossed out, or kept by the participants for further consideration on their own.

Elbow identifies the second mystery as that of learning to write what we really mean. He emphasizes the concept of learning to understand and express our inner intentions, our “felt sense” from the words of Eugene Gendlin. According to Gendlin, says Elbow, our inner intentions are non-verbal bodily senses and these formulate or influence most of our communications. Elbow states that it is “natural...to consult felt sense” (p. 5) but that we tend to do it more when we speak than when we write. “One of the principal strengths of most good writers and talkers...is the ability to...consult and stay in touch with their felt sense”, according to Elbow (p. 7).

Elbow notes a third mystery of writing as that of learning to find words that “give” (p.8) the readers the experience of their meaning, to find words that seem to pour out and enliven the meaning in an astonishing manner. He discusses at length the role that the sounds of words can take, how the intonation of these words can invite and bring meanings.

Rebecca Luce-Kapler (2004), in her book, *Writing with, through, and beyond the text: An ecology of language*, begins with an introduction of her focus for the work: “Understanding the potential of writing to orient us in the world, to help us think and understand, even perhaps to heal us (DeSalvo, 1999) has been the impetus behind my work as a teacher, writer, and researcher and is the focus for this book” (p. xi). She raises

questions that continue to come to her as a teacher of writing and these questions include: How can we teach the nature of writing without committing to one process? How do we teach the skills of writing? What are the benefits of writing for students? In addition, Luce-Kapler raises questions about writing assessment and about the potential of involving professional writers in the schools (p. xi). She indicates that her book suggests writing practices "that help us interpret experience and realize new understandings" (p. xii). Her work builds with an expression from Elizabeth Grosz's presentation at Queen's University, 2000: *writing otherwise* (p. xii, p. 60). According to Luce-Kapler, Grosz stated that it was "time to move beyond discussions of 'writing like a woman' to think about how we could 'write otherwise' " (in Luce-Kapler, p. xii). Luce-Kapler writes that writing otherwise tries to "create the otherwise" (p. xii) for women to enter into the social and cultural institutions through language and symbolic order shown through language in our society. She says that her book "considers writing as an ecology, a network of connected and nested systems within which a writer resides and works. Understanding its processes through such a lens may offer new insights into how we think about its potentials and how we might begin 'writing otherwise' " (p. xiv). Luce-Kapler states that writing practices are based on three notions of language. She says that intertextuality and creativity interact, that it offers limitless opportunities of interpretation and reinterpretation, and with Derrida, agrees that this interpretation and reinterpretation emerges at various levels including the *pre-text, con-text, sub-text, re-text, research re-textured* and more (Luce-Kapler, 2004, pp.63-66). Writers can enter and emerge most fully when they reach into various levels.

In March of 2007, I attended a conference of the Association of Writers and Writing Pedagogy. One the major presenters for this conference was Pulitzer Prize award winner, Robert Olen Butler (Butler, 2007, 2005), whose work was new to me. Butler received the Pulitzer Prize in 1992 for this book of short stories, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (Butler, 1992). Butler's presentation at the AWP conference focused on his beliefs about the process and the teaching/learning of writing. Butler passionately declared that "works of art do not come from the mind, that art comes from the place where you dream! Students are taught too much to think up their stories!" (Conference

notes, Zacharias, 2007). Furthermore, he said, "Works of art exist in the body, artists are sensualists! Art is of the senses...comes from a trance-state...from yearning, the deepest level of desire.." (Zacharias, 2007). Butler feels that the pedagogy of creative writing as a whole and the nature of this form of art are at odds (Butler, 2005, p. 9), and so changes are needed. Butler's book, *From Where You Dream* (2005) is a narrative conversational informal written exploration and presentation of his own beliefs about the concepts of art and writing as a whole. Butler has a background in acting and oral interpretation and Burroway introduces Butler as follows:

...he [Butler] owes much to the director Konstantin Stanislavsky of the Moscow Art Theatre, who revolutionized dramatic practice for the twentieth century...The so-called Stanislavsky Method rests on two principles: that the actor's body is an instrument that must be supple, strong, and prepared; and that craft is always secondary to the truth of emotional connection. Both of these principles have their counterpart in Butler's teaching of the fictional process. In place of the body, it is the imagination that must be a strong and supple instrument, ready to lead the reader through a moment-by-moment sensual experience. And it is in the realm of the unconscious rather than that of technique or intellect that the writer seeks fictional truth (Burroway, in Butler, 2005, p. 2)

Burroway notes further that Butler's writing is a "place of meditation on the sense experience of the characters, requiring both patience and depth of concentration that must be surrendered to and cannot be willed" (p. 3). Butler says that artists like other people, experience the world primarily through their bodies, that we are all creatures of our senses, even though living through our senses may bring initial impressions of a world of chaos (Butler, p. 11). He then says that artists realize that behind this chaos is meaning for them to explore and communicate.

Butler relates his theory of the role of emotion and its relationship with writing and reading. "Emotions reside in the senses" (p.14), he says, and thus these are experiences for expression in writing fiction. He describes five ways (p. 15) in which emotions are expressed in fiction. We have a sensual body reaction to the work as we

read -- pulse, temperature etc. We have a sensual response shown by our posture, facial expression, voice tone. We experience "flashes of the past" (p. 15). We have "flashes of the future" (p. 15) and these may come in images. Most important, according to Butler, is the fifth reaction and that is what he refers to as sensual selectivity. We receive sensual cues about ourselves and the characters, and these come from and are selected by our emotional responses.

The problem, says Butler, with transferring sensual experience to writing, is that "language is not innately sensual" (p. 17). Also in the process of writing, we suffer with a self-conscious metavoice which criticizes our thoughts, writing efforts continuously (p. 19-20). Butler says that is a "voice about the voice...like talking about my own unconsciousness" (p. 20). He notes that in order to access the unconscious, we must stop the operations of our metavoice. In other words, we need to permit ourselves to get into a sensual trance that we dare to trust in order to transform our senses to writing. This trance is one of "superconcentration" (Butler, p. 20) and he reminds us that psychologists refer to this as a "flow state" and that athletes refer to it as being "in the zone" (p. 21). Furthermore, what athletes say is their "muscle memory" with being in the zone, is for writers the dream space, the sense memory, says Butler (p. 21). He emphasizes that this state is not a literal memory, but a trance, an unconscious visitation by the writer.

Butler also states that there are three fundamentals to fiction and that two of these should not be ignored by aspiring writers: "first, that fiction is about human beings; second, that it's about human emotion" (p. 39). He says that the third element is missing from almost every student writing he has seen and this is the phenomenon of desire or as he prefers to call it, yearning (p. 40). Butler suggests that there are superficial yearnings and deep yearnings, and that we yearn for something every second of our lives (p. 40). He states further that yearning in "*always* part of fictional character" (p. 40). Yearning, he says, is absent from most manuscripts, especially in early stages of writing.

James Britton's research of the 1970s as previously mentioned, resulted in a function model that indicates different ways in which writing can be a tool for learning. This function model (Britton, 1970) has been adopted by many educators and it notes the three modes of writing as *expressive*, *transactional*, and *poetic*. The expressive function

refers to writing that assumes that the writers themselves are of interest to the reader in an exploration of the writer's thoughts and feelings. This mode of writing is speculative, anecdotal, emotive and conversational. Writing in which it is taken for granted that writers mean what they say and can be challenged for it is known in the function model as writing in the transactional mode. This writing is organized and explicit, and is the language of reporting, planning, theorizing, trade and technology. The third mode of writing known as the poetic mode, identified by Britton and the research team of 1970 as one in which issues of true and false are irrelevant. In this mode, writing is not used instrumentally but as an end in itself. This writing is most often the language of plays, narratives and poetry. This mode has also become integrated, melded with the other two modes in many contemporary written works, particularly those with postmodern weavings.

Donald Murray, in *Crafting a Life in Essay, Story, Poem* (1996), opens his book by informing the reader why he writes and what writing is to him. Murray is an educator, writer and journalist who shows a deep love for writing as a craft and as a process. "When I write, I create myself, and that created self, through writing, may affect the world" (p. 2). Murray elaborates: "I write to discover who I am...in the act of exposure [via writing], writers discover themselves. I meet myself on the page... I keep needing to rediscover" (p. 3). "Write to create your life", he says (p. 3). Murray emphasizes that students can be encouraged to discover themselves and to learn to understand themselves and their lives (p. 3-5). "Beginning writers", says Murray, "make the mistake of looking for ideas before beginning to write" (p. 28) and writers need to "tune in the blankness" (p. 29), to simply begin writing about any image or word that appears. In the teaching of writing classes in education over the years, I have invited students to give attention to sounds, smells, and feelings as they begin to write, and to explore what these senses suggest to them.

Writing is also a mode of learning to understand other people, or as Murray puts it, "Becoming myself, I become others... When writing, we do not leave ourselves but extend ourselves... I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means..." (p. 3-4). He suggests that he is "happiest when rubbing

two words together to produce an unexpected insight..." (p. 5). Murray emphasizes too that the sharing of our own writing and the listening to that of others can assist these learning processes continuously. He concludes his 1996 book with "My greatest satisfaction is to be lost in the writing" (p. 157).

When writers desire an exploration of their immediate home, their earlier homes, their metaphorical home, a sensitive poetic approach such as that of Georgia Heard in *Writing Toward Home: Tales and Lessons to Find Your Way* (1995) can assist. The suggestions and invitations in this book to travel anywhere, to travel home, to a home in any sense, can help educators with ideas and thoughts too. I like the mode in which this writer opens her book's acknowledgements: "I've seen your faces. They are like mine: hungry for telling, for truth, for courage, for the energy and the time to re-create our worlds... Writing is made of voices. Our single voices may seem lost in the bitter wind. But if we listen hard enough we can hear hundreds of other voices trying to sing like us..." (p. xi). Along with the narrations from her own voice and of those she has heard in her travels, she pauses periodically in her book to offer specific suggestions for awakening the senses, the awareness to what is around us, and what is in us, in our memories and in our hopes.

Richard Rhodes, another Pulitzer Prize winner, reveals his sense of writing in a gentle, thoughtful, yet pragmatic flow with his 1995 book entitled simply *How to Write: Advice and Reflections*. The first sentence of his book is "If you want to write, you can" (p. 1). He says that it is fear, not lack of talent that prevents most people from writing. He states that the "...challenge is to get from where you are to where you want to be" (p. 1). Rhodes emphasizes that the writer needs a sense of safety in writing, that the writer needs to be willing to release his/her history as this is unavoidable in becoming public with any of it, and that regardless of what is written, writing is communication. Throughout his book, he takes the reader as a prospective writer into many sites, inner and outer, to explore wording. Rhodes says that

...words derive ultimately from the body, the ground and only vessel of experience. The body extends itself into the world by imitation and analogy. The hand grasping an object, the ear and eye and nose and tongue grasping an object,

make a negative of the object, an imitation, a mold. The molds are stored in memory and accumulate. Eventually, they assemble an image even in the object's absence. The image replaces the object and constructs continuity. Thus the body modifies the world and captures it, making it available for thought, for language, and for alteration (p. 77).

The last sentence in this book by Rhodes is as his first one. He concludes: "If you want to write, you can" (p. 211).

A look at the works above by writing theorists can assist my proposed research with information, concepts and ideas to consider. It also becomes important to analyze the theories above in relation to my own experiential learnings, philosophies, and potential and actual findings with the proposed research. Abram's despair with what he sees as the distancing effect of written language from the land, and yet his hope that we can bring writing back to the land – provides an inspirational basis to awaken our sentience and to trust the creations from our senses. Elbow's identification of the second mystery of writing as being to say what we really mean may in fact be a natural journey in much writing rather than a mystery to solve. As important as this second "mystery" may be for many writers, writing can be an integrated part of us and of our search for meanings and understandings. We need not only try to write what we mean, but try to explore, discover and develop new interpretations, insights, and understandings as we write. That is, we need not attempt to draw out what we seem to mean, but to work together with our minds and our bodies through all our senses to permit multiple meanings to evolve. For my research, bodily senses and their interrelationships with writing form a complex web for study.

Britton's work provides information for the potential functions and modes of writing that may emerge with this proposed research proposal. I do feel however, that such theory when adhered to or emphasized too much, may become boxed and compartmentalized, resulting in a stunting of creativity and imagination. The senses may then become too tightly, narrowly channeled into function/mode rather than opened for new work and thought. Butler's declarations of art coming from the senses, from the

body, from learning to create in a trance, provide a new freedom for and recognition of what so many educators have ignored or controlled.

The Teaching of Writing

How writing is permitted or encouraged or taught varies with styles or modes of teaching and learning, and classroom atmospheres or settings. Educators develop modes of teaching, and create environments that may or may not invite and stimulate sentient imagination. Experiencing, encouraging and teaching embodied sentient writing can open a wealth of complex senses and free the writers, both students and teachers as writers -- to create with the imagination. The teaching of writing in the schools is all too often restricted by rigid adherence to educational labels and conventions. Many writing teachers see creative writing as something that must come from a classroom without what may be regarded as distractions in décor or sound etc. This tends to support the old Cartesian system of mind/ up there/ high -- as coming from an environment as close as possible to being free of that other world of body/down here/low. I feel that writing, creative writing can be our breathing, our touching, our hearing, our tasting, our aching, our crying, our loving...if we permit the birth and nurture of this living in our writing.

Writing teachers often consider it necessary to identify their own precise purposes for each writing task to control the content and the sequential process of each piece of writing, to attach a label about what has been written and how, and finally to quantify the value of writing with expected grades. To create freely and openly and imaginatively becomes almost impossible with so much control and regulation of writing. Students develop a sense of writing that has little to do with creative sentient emergence, or with an enjoyment of spontaneity, or with the evolution of themselves and their lifeworlds in writing.

In the teaching of writing in education, the transmission of mind to paper or as educators often say it -- of learning to write what we think -- is generally regarded as the central technique in writing. Jeffrey and Prentice (1997) provide valuable professional ideas, many of which can be adapted for a variety of uses in the teaching of writing as a process of prewriting, drafting, revising, and presenting -- and they provide suggestions

for how these can be evaluated. Their book, *Writing in the Middle and Secondary Classrooms*, concludes with several pieces of advice that they hope teachers will give to their students and the first one is: "...students should be encouraged to keep writing until what they have on paper approaches what they have in their minds" (p. 124). It is interesting that the book's conclusion has the dualistic Cartesian tone that most documents about the teaching of writing still have. The conclusion does not mention encouraging students to write what they are, what they sense, what they feel with/in their bodies, what they experience in their physical environments.

Xiao-ming Li, an assistant professor of English at Long Island University, provides important factors to consider with the teaching of writing. In "*Good Writing*" in *Cross-Cultural Context* (1996) Li reports the findings from studies with differences in the teaching of composition in the United States colleges and universities by American and Chinese instructors. Li says that to expose "...the collective subjectivity for 'good writing', the study looks at the actual commentary teachers of different cultures deliver, both orally and in writing, when reading and responding to a common set of student papers" (1996, p. 3). Allen Purves, in the forward to this study notes that "The question that arose in these studies was whether differences in compositions mean differences in the way people thought or simply in the way it was considered proper to express oneself" (Li, 1996, p. vii). In relation to Li's work, Purves also identifies what I think is a major problem in much of the teaching of writing -- and to which I have alluded above: "In a postmodern world we see these differences; but within each of the cultures, there is a strong modernist and universalist approach to writing. ...Some of those students may rebel, but probably few will. Although the teachers may call for individuality of expression, pressure is strong for such individuality to be confined" (p. vii). Li's work articulates comparisons between Chinese and American teaching of writing, finding that cultural values and academic as well as political rhetoric continue to be major factors in what students write and how they write it. Overall, it is the teachers' subtle or overtly -- expressed expectations that appear to formulate the student writings and this appears to create problems especially for students of cultures that are at variance with the dominant American ones.

Gary William Rasberry details his research about writing in *Writing Research/ Researching Writing: Through a Poet's I* (2001). Rasberry introduces his work:

I believe that many teachers, with whom I have had the pleasure and privilege of writing, were willing participants in a shared obsession: writing, writing lives. Writing became a real way of imagining a life that included teaching and learning, a way of following words to find out that words lead to other words, a way for teacher candidates to negotiate their identities as teachers. In other words, writing became a way of wording with the world, a world of labyrinthian possibility as well as unexpected ends (p. xxi).

Rasberry notes in the preface that “a powerful sense of loss” occurs during such a project as what he attributes to Kent Nussey’s words “the thing the writer does to himself by withdrawing from the world to write about it” (p. xxi). He states that writing about pedagogy or writing pedagogy is to cut oneself off from it. Teachers in these projects are creating these components, pedagogy, lives, in the act of writing. Rasberry’s work travels into poetic creations frequently. He considers the riches of the world and the word as they bump into each other, as he puts it (p. 80). He says further that the teacher candidates in his research workshop “...were pulled by this passion, pulled by this open invitation to consider the profound nature of wordmaking, of writing practice, of *writing* practice. While the students were written, in part, by us, we were in turn, written by the students, by their passion for learning, for writing” (p. 84). He talks about the writing process as part of the postmodern tangle, a tangle which he describes as “both generous and generative” (p. 118), and he believes that this can create flourishing conditions for reading and writing curricula.

In thinking about various processes and activities that can be encouraged and practiced by individual writers and by teachers and students in the classroom, Butler suggests that brainstorming is better regarded as *dreamstorming*, “inviting the images of moment-to-moment experience through your unconscious...very much like an intensive daydream...” (p. 31). Writing well, says Butler, absolutely needs entry and practice of this zone of the unconscious. As difficult as it can be to transmit dreamstorming to

language, "Voice is the embodiment in language of the contents of your unconscious", writes Butler (2005, p. 32). When educators can permit their own metavoices and those of their students to turn off, the voice of the unconscious, the language of art, can emerge as they travel in the zone.

Butler writes that in dreamstorming, instead of sitting down to write immediately and freely, we should "free-float, free-associate with your character, watch your character move around in the potential world" of your/our writing (p. 87). He suggests that we do this every day with regards to our fiction writing, that we will then bring in yearnings for our characters and ourselves. Butler's dreamstorming can apply to all genres of writing, to the evocation of free imagination for artistic creations. Butler's method of dreamstorming relates to aspects of writing techniques that participants and I worked with in our writing research for this dissertation.

Writing in Groups

English language arts books of the nature used as textbooks for teacher education, frequently address group learning strategies and some of these take this issue into the area of writing groups. Carol Booth Olson (2003) in *The Reading/Writing Connection: Strategies for Teaching and Learning in the Secondary Classroom*, provides pragmatic suggestions for "turning reading groups into writing groups" (p. 270). She states that groups which discuss and analyze the work of the professional writers can then extend these strategies into analysis of their own writings. Olson indicates that she explains to her students that "the reason we are participating in writing groups is to get feedback on how our words communicate to other readers..." (p. 270) and to assist other group members in learning to share their responses as well. It is difficult to locate scholarly research regarding creative writing groups in the secondary schools, so I include several articles that I found relevant and interesting. In addition, I choose to show how my own experiences in writing and in the teaching of writing influence this research and the strong desire to learn more.

Andrea Herrmann (1989, 2006) reports that writing groups can bring peer response that assists the development of writing but that peer reaction can also bring

mixed effects for students (Herrmann, 1989, 2006, ERIC). Her work found that sharing writing in groups did bring an awareness of audience in addition to the teacher who would be grading the writings, some encouragement for revisions, varying responses to suggestions for revisions. She observed a tendency for students with lower writing abilities to absorb and depend on revision suggestions from others, and for students identified with higher writing abilities to learn to become their own audience (Herrmann, 1989, 2006).

In her book about writing workshops, entitled *Just Write!* Sylvia Gunnery (1998) writes about classes being divided into writing groups for the workshops. She emphasizes that the role of the teacher for writing workshops is that of advisor, guide, listener, and watcher. She encourages writing classes to begin with freefall writing which she identifies as brief free writing time, about five minutes, to start the class. Students are informed that there is no concern for punctuation, and encouraged to count the number of words they have written. With several classes of practice, they are asked to try to make it thirty, forty or more words. Gunnery suggests that several consecutive efforts with free writing can be done. Students are asked to underline any interesting phrases or ideas. Gunnery does not read the freefall writing from the students. Fiction, poetry and composition as a whole are taught in a formal, structured manner by Gunnery. In terms of group work, Gunnery asks students to share some of their writings with class members for feedback. She asks students to have at least two members of their classes and these can be group members, write a reader response to the compositions shared. Specific guidelines for reader response are not given but the feedback appears to be based largely on what the students have learned in writing class.

In my university writing classes, I have generally developed guidelines with whole class discussions to encourage and assist participation in writing groups. The guidelines tend to be developed with reference to various genres of writing as well. My students have often mentioned that these group discussions have been *very* helpful in their own writing development. I have also encouraged students to state their own preferences for those aspects of their own writing where they would like feedback in addition to following the guidelines for discussion or in place of the guidelines. My writing students

have often been asked to bring photocopies of their week's compositions for the members of their own small group as often as possible. Their group partners have then made written comments or verbal comments in response.

The conferencing by teachers with an individual student or two about their writing is addressed by many educational theorists. Donald Graves, in *A Fresh Look at Writing*, warns the teachers not to try too hard to teach in the process of conferencing as this can leave the student more confused than when the conference started (1994). He encourages teachers to "practice listening to children" (p. 377), to learn about and from the children (p. 378) and to make efforts to do things such as writing, with the children (p. 379). Graves suggests that some of this participation be in the form of joining individual writing groups for occasional classes (p. 379).

Janet E. Grant in her book, *The Writing Coach: Strategies for Helping Students Develop Their Own Writing Voice* (1992), writes about teachers developing a "coaching relationship" with students and their writing. She emphasizes the importance of getting to know student interests and skills and to assist their development of self-esteem in creating a publishing market in the classroom. Grant encourages discussion about writing skills and techniques and mini-exercises for individuals and whole classes to push the development of various areas such as for example, bringing real dandelions for each student in descriptive writing exercises (p. 54).

Another teacher who addresses the notion of "coaching writing" is Mary L. Warner in her work as editor of *Winning Ways of Coaching Writing: A Practical Guide for Teaching Writing Grades 6-12* (2001). Warner organizes her document along purposes and reasons for writing including writing for personal growth, for learning, for ESL and dialect issues, for audience respect, technology, assessment, and for the development of collegial journals (p. iii-vi). In an introduction to the book, Leila Christenbury says "The image of coaching acknowledges that the major actor in the business of writing is the writer and that this person's activity is the focus. Certainly, writing is a lonely act that is never really performed alone; but it lends itself more to encouragement and aid than to direct instruction" (p. xvii). The book's articles provide

looks at the integration of many education areas with writing processes and assignments in junior and senior high.

Writing and Journal Writing

Toby Fulwiler, a long-time advocate for working with journal writing in education, discusses the practice of journals in writing classes in a chapter of his in the book *A Community of Voices: Reading and Writing in the Disciplines* (Fulwiler & Biddle, 1992). He reports that one of his students said that journals in writing classes were “a type of cleansing almost a washing of the mind...” (p. 27). For Fulwiler’s students, journals became “collections of thoughts, impressions, musings meditations, notes, doubts, plans and intentions caught chronologically on paper” (p. 28).

In *Conversations about Writing: Eavesdropping, Inkshedding, and Joining In* (Sargent and Paraskevas, 2005), a chapter by Fulwiler reminds readers that journal writing is based on certain assumptions about language and learning and these include: the articulation of new information and related prior knowledge assists learning and understanding; thinking is done in many modes such as the symbolic of language; learning takes place with all language modes-reading, writing, listening, speaking; writing about new information and ideas assists learning and understanding; caring about what we write and seeing connections to our lives helps us to learn and write better (p. 146-147). Fulwiler further suggests guidelines for educators who assign journals and these include ideas for introducing them as neither “diaries” or “class notebooks” but to create a blend of preferred features from each type of writing. He suggests that these journals become part of the active work in class, that student volunteers read portions aloud to a partner or for the whole class, that journals not be graded but credited/counted, that teachers not respond to every entry, that students at the end of the year/term organize these journals with a table of contents and a conclusion of their own (p. 148).

In their writing handbook, *The College Writer’s Reference* (2005), Fulwiler and Hayakawa define journals as “personal notebooks in which writers can explore their personal thoughts and feelings” (p. 17). They state further that journals are generally assigned to “help students focus narrowly on the subject matter of a single discipline but

also to speculate broadly on the whole range of their academic experience” (p. 17). Four characteristics of journals are noted: Sequence: daily thoughts; Audience: “Journals are written for writers rather than for readers” (p. 17); Language: informal, comfortable; Freedom: books for discovery and practice, nothing “wrong” in journal writing (Fulwiler & Hayakawa, 2005, p. 17). Fulwiler and Hayakawa suggest that journals can take on a metacognitive function for the development of the process of writing, that is, to have writers write about their own observations and thoughts about their own writing developments.

Gary Cobine (1995), in an article that reviews effective journal writing in schools, refers to dialogue journals, as “conversation in print” (p. 2) between teacher and student. In the use of journal writing in education, many educators do write feedback in the form of comments or questions to students in their journals. Cobine suggests however, that in this process of written dialogue, the impressionable students “automatically apprentice themselves to the teacher...not only do students write about topics of personal concern, but they also observe a mature writer’s response to the same topics and sometimes imitate this mature writer’s methods (Staton, 1987)” (p. 2).

Butler commends one type of journaling for writing development and that is a frequent, daily if preferred, return to an event of that day or another, which evoked an emotion in the writer (2005, p. 28). He suggests that these events be recorded in a moment to moment state through the senses, not naming emotions, but writing down signals from the body, from the contexts, flashes from the past and future, sensual selectivity -- or through his five aspects of emotions in reading and writing. This form of a journal entry, Butler indicates, will read like a portion from a novel. After a few weeks of this form of journal writing, he says that the process should then have two parts to it: writing a new entry, and then revising the previous entries by cutting out any abstractions, generalizations, summaries, analyses, and interpretations (p. 29). These journals are sense-based and entries gradually become parts of fiction or other creative writing. He states that most journaling is counter-productive as too much is “great swatches of abstraction and generalization and self-analysis and interpretation and all that bad stuff” (p. 28).

Post-Process Writing Theory

Soon after the completion of my research data collection, I located a work about post-process writing theory by Thomas Kent (1999) entitled *Post-Process Theory: Beyond the Writing-Process Paradigm*. Kent edits an anthology of complex essays which challenge writing process theory and present post-process composition approaches. A rather mixed review of the book by Porter (2000) suggests that the Kent anthology challenges us to abandon pedagogy altogether and that the book expects the readers to align themselves with the post-process theory. However, in the spirit of accepting and enjoying potential change in theory by my own research, I would like to note that Kent concludes his introduction, and begins the book by declaring that change in writing process theory is needed and is coming. He asks us to "reimagine the act of writing" (p. 7).

Kent introduces his book and post-process theory of the anthology as a whole with the following:

Breaking with the still-dominant process tradition in compositions studies, post-process theory -- or at least the different incarnations of post-process theory discussed by the contributors represented in this collection of original essays -- endorses the fundamental idea that no codifiable or generalizable writing process exists or could exist. Post-process theorists hold that the practice of writing cannot be captured by a generalized process or a "big" theory (Kent, p. 1)

To clarify and ground the theory of the post-process articles, Kent then summarizes the basics of the assumptions held by these theorists:

Most post-process theorists hold three assumptions about the act of writing: "(1) writing is public; (2) writing is interpretive; and (3) writing is situated" ... We are never alone; we write always in a relationship with others... By "interpretive act," post-process theorists generally mean something as broad as "making sense of" and not exclusively the ability to move from one code to another. To interpret means more than only to "translate" or to "paraphrase"; to interpret means to enter into both the reception and the production of discourse... For most post-process theorists, interpretation or this act of making sense of the

world never ceases...Because writing is a public act that requires interpretive interaction with others, writers always write from some position or some place; writers are never nowhere....writers are "situated" (Kent, 1999, p. 1-3).

One of the contributors to Kent's anthology, Sidney I. Dobrin in the essay "Paralogic Hermeneutic Theories, Power, and the Possibility for Liberating Pedagogies" addresses major issues from Thomas Kent's philosophical approach to paralogic hermeneutics and interrelates this with communication, communicative interaction and pedagogy. Dobrin defines "post-process" in composition studies as "the shift in scholarly attention from the process by which the individual writer produces text to the larger forces that affect the writer and of which that writer is a part" (1999, p. 132). Dobrin writes that Thomas Kent in his work drawn from poststructuralists such as Donald Davidson proposes that "every moment of communicative interaction is singularly unique" (Dobrin, 1999, p. 132) and therefore, "the systems by which we interpret are not codifiable in any logical manner.." (p. 132). Because there are no codifiable processes for interpretation of communicative interaction, discourse interpretation cannot be taught and so "Individuals, then, communicate through paralogic hermeneutic strategies..." (p. 133). Dobrin suggests that process pedagogy makes it easy to define and write texts and thus educators often have difficulty going beyond process theory (p. 139). Dobrin then reaches further into the work of Kent to explain how interpretation can come about, such as in some aspects of paralogic hermeneutics including "hermeneutic guessing". This process is considered dependent on triangulation, needing at least two people and "knowledge of our own minds, knowledge of other minds, and knowledge of the shared world" (p. 141, quoted from Thomas Kent). Dobrin notes that our understanding of the world is brought about when our interpretations are like those of at least some other people. In addition, Dobrin writes that Kent's notion of triangulation through Donald Davidson, depends on passing theory and prior theory: "Prior theories are the interpretive strategies one brings to a particular communicative scenario—the hermeneutic guessing skills one has developed prior to a particular situation. Passing theories are the strategies one employs during the particular instance of communication" (p. 141). Dobrin

concludes his essay by writing about the possibility and the value of encouraging educators to assist their students in reaching beyond power structures of classroom composition theory, in learning paralogic hermeneutics, and in achieving their own agency in communicative interaction (p. 147).

"Paralogic hermeneutics" is explained in various forms by different theoreticians and it helps us to remember that "paralogism" refers to reasoning that does not demand traditionally valid reasoning. The emphasis tends to suggest that attempts at mutual understandings and interpretations are not subject to preconceived boundaries for reasoning. Brenda Daisy (2005), in a discussion of the pedagogical possibilities of paralogic hermeneutics, writes that the key focus is not the "construction of meaning, but the interpretation of meaning" (p. 9) and that students need to make use of the whole of their knowledge and cultural backgrounds, and learn as much as possible about their communication partners, to engage in interpretation together. She explains paralogic hermeneutics:

Paralogic hermeneutics addresses interpretation that occurs between participants, not as binaries, but as complex actors in ambiguous spaces which are informed by the participants' multiple identities and dynamic backgrounds, by what they bring socially, culturally, and epistemologically to a dialogue... (Daisy, 2005, p. 7).

Daisy suggests that writing instructors should consider paralogic hermeneutics in their work because of the pedagogical implications that she identifies as the following four issues. Paralogic hermeneutics --

- *Suits understanding of discourse as a social phenomenon
 - *Recognizes the centrality of the language function
 - *Acknowledges the ambiguous nature of language, and
 - *Accommodates the multiplicity and fluidity in meaning and interpretation
- (Daisy, 2005, p. 8).

Post-process theory relates to my philosophical and pedagogical orientation for this writing research study. My research methods for this study attempt to abandon traditional writing process strategies for creative writing and to emphasize the evocation of sentient imagination rather than to follow or learn specific writing processes. Kent,

Dobrin and Daisy provide theoretical voices which assist in understanding and interpreting some of the methods and data of my research.

Summary of Literature Review

The theory presentations above regarding the teaching of writing can assist my research in numerous ways. Interesting pragmatic ideas for the writing classroom emerge and my hope is to move beyond Cartesian undertones in this writing research. Abbs (1992) believes, as I do, that both students and teachers in education can learn so much about writing and about themselves from participation in writing courses. The findings of Li's research may be more dramatic in the United States than we hope they would be in Canada, but they do have applicability to intercultural considerations and to the teaching of all students. How much do we in fact consider the backgrounds, the values, the academic upbringing of students specific to their own culture and nation? How much do we as teachers of writing demand only a certain form and content and value in what our students are asked to do? How much does a dominant or stereotypical or traditional form, content and value emerge in our students' writing even when we as writing teachers attempt to reach and encourage past those constraints and definitions? Rasberry invites us in on a postmodern bump and play journey with the word, warning us that with writing, we necessarily leave the world to explore it.

With this research, I hope to experience writing with the world, with the earth, with our culture, our history, our dreams. I hope we can touch earth as we write about it, smell a tiger lily as we describe it, touch a photograph that brings a loved one back. I hope we can write with our tastes, smells, touch, sounds, ears, eyes, and with our unusual synaesthetic senses. I believe that writing does not separate us from our world; I believe that writing helps our world to evolve within us and around us.

The teaching of writing remains one of the most traditionally channeled areas in education that I believe begs for change. My hope in my work is to experience with a group of secondary education students complex embodied writing through the encouragement of all senses and to have us explore meanings of representations from what emerges. With this research, I work to invite sentience through writing, to bracket

traditional literary expectations of form, content and process without denying their appearance, and to search the resultant data.

My findings from the literature review can be summarized as follows:

1. Imagination is the ability to form images that have the power to emancipate us from creative repression and this can provide new awarenesses for thought and life.
2. Sentience is an awareness of sense impressions, a sensitivity of perceptions and feelings that evoke subjective insights and creations that can be shown through writing.
3. Modes and levels of consciousness and awareness including the complexity of factors that influence consciousness, in turn affect the sentience of all living beings. Written language can evoke this web of new and interrelated awarenesses.
4. Writing wants theoretical and pragmatic room to explore the evolution of an emancipated imagination, the creations of a subjective sentience, the complex evocations of consciousness, and life.
5. Journal writing can be integrated in the teaching of writing as repositories for thoughts and ideas, as a manner of focusing on specific skills, and as a meta-cognitive writing process.
6. Post-process theory for writing asks us to look beyond traditional writing process theory; it invites us as writers to learn more about ourselves as human beings in a complex environment, to learn more about how and where we situate ourselves with our writings, to learn to interpret our own writing and that of our fellow writers -- with our fellow writers.
7. Art is considered by Butler to emerge, not from the mind, but from the place where we dream. This theorist further declares that art comes when we yearn and when we enter a trance-like state that opens our senses to us in vivid, sensual manner.
8. The teaching of writing needs to explore, interpret, acknowledge, and encourage the above.

The next chapter will review a series of research studies that are qualitative in nature, and show how my research relates to these studies. These studies are drawn from a variety of sources and include relevant studies from the University of Alberta.

Chapter III: Planning the Research Explorations

Living Research: Related Qualitative Research Studies

The research study works through a qualitative method of research, integrating several areas of this mode. Merriam (2002) indicates that “the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (p. 3). The complexity of realities is in a continuously changing state and therefore interpretative work in qualitative research attempts to construct meanings within particular situated contexts. This work with exploring sentient imagination utilizes exploration and interpretation with continuous search and acknowledgement of changes in complex realities of writing contexts.

Merriam provides a list of key characteristics for interpretive qualitative research. She says that researchers try to “understand the meaning people have constructed about their world and their experiences” (p. 4-5). For Merriam, the second given characteristic of qualitative research is that “the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis” (p. 5). Merriam reminds the reader that with the human being as the instrument, it becomes essential to provide a transparent picture of the biases and experiences of this human instrument to contextualize the research. Qualitative research, says Merriam, is inductive. It is not research by which hypotheses or theories are tested or analysed in the positivist paradigm, but rather an assembling of data from which concepts and hypotheses may emerge. That the product of qualitative research is “richly descriptive” (p. 5) is a major characteristic and style for this form of inquiry. The participants, the contexts, and the communications come together to create a descriptive web for learnings here.

Qualitative research, according to Merriam, comes in a multitude of types among which are autobiography, biography, case studies, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and postmodern research brings in almost an innumerable list of types and overlaps. This section will look into and provide examples of forms including ethnography, postmodern and poststructural research, complexity science research, interpretive biography, discourse analysis, and arts based research.

Ethnography

Merriam (2002) informs us that ethnography has a history in anthropology, that it was first created to study society and culture or beliefs, values and attitudes of human beings (p.8). She indicates that the inaccurate use of this term in using it interchangeably for fieldwork, participant observation or case study can bring confusion. In order for a qualitative study to be considered an ethnography, says, Merriam, "it must present a sociocultural interpretation of the data" (p. 9). Sociocultural interpretation thus forms the lens, as she refers to it, for ethnography. A variety of sub-categories exist for ethnography such as autoethnography, defined by Reed-Danahay (1997) through the work of Denzin (1989) as "...the incorporation of one's own life experience when writing about others through biography or ethnography" (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 6). Reed-Danahay notes also that literary critic Mary Louise Pratt (1992; 1994) suggests "autoethnography is a form of ethnography of one's own culture, rather than a piece of autobiography" (p. 7).

Johnny Saldaña (2003) defines educational ethnography as "naturalistic observation of participants' daily culture in a school setting over a period of time" (p. 2). He reminds researchers that for emergent studies such as those of ethnographic design, it is essential that they keep their minds on the possibilities of participant change during fieldwork, data analysis and reporting. I would think that it is just as important that researchers keep attuned to the potential of changes possibly resulting from new perceptions in themselves as well as new insights emerge from their studies.

In a 2004 dissertation from the University of Alberta's Department of Secondary Education, Diane Conrad creates an outstanding, innovative, insightful award-winning qualitative experiment in representing experience. Her work researches drama with at-risk youth and presents the findings in complex and creative forms and modes. Conrad clearly becomes a participant in her research and she shows her teenage history of empathy with the risky youth. With my research group, I showed some of the cultural influences that have affected and still affect my own writing.

Jean Anyon (1980) in an article entitled "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" describes her research in what are identified as elementary schools in five

contrasting social class communities. Jean Anyon's work suggests that the hidden school curriculum and the work and interaction in school as a whole tends to reproduce the social class system in the United States. Interviews and observations with teachers, principals, and students of the fifth grade are used to collect data for this research. Data consisted of components about social class information, usually about parents of students including their capital, relationships between authority and work (degree of autonomy including managerial), and relations between people and their work (type of work including mechanical, clerical etc). The sources of data are identified as working-class schools, middle class schools, affluent professional schools, and executive elite schools. Anyon finds that in the working class schools, the procedures in the classroom tended to be rote, mechanical, and with very little decision-making or choices or creative encouragement for the students. Teachers tended not to show webs of inter-connections among schoolwork and other components such as the community or even with other disciplines. In the middle class school, the tendency was to work towards the right answer, following directions precisely, simple grammar in language arts, and having some choice and decision-making. Creative work and individual thinking was found to be encouraged in the affluent professional schools. Here the students were continuously asked to express and apply concepts learned. In the exclusive elite school, students were expected to develop their own analytical and intellectual powers, to reason, to think logically, and to create work of sound academic quality. School work were regarded as helping one to "achieve, to excel, and to prepare for life" (p. 83). Anyon's research indicates that in the United States schools of her sampling, the social class system is strictly continued by the methods of teaching or the lack of it, by the content chosen for each socio-economic layer so that upward or downward movement or further development by each layer is discouraged in the schools.

Celia Haig-Brown (1995), in an article in the *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, "Two Worlds Together: Contradiction and Curriculum in First Nations Adult Science Education" examines the development of post-secondary science curriculum for adult First Nations learners by a study of the process of education and minorities from current anthropological literature. She argues that accepting dialectical contradiction in

both the curriculum plans and the lived experiences of students assists analysis beyond “unidirectional cultural change” (p. 193). Haig-Brown notes that most anthropological literature about cultural discontinuity describes acculturation and assimilation of children into a mainstream culture and that this mainstream culture is regarded by many to be mythical. Haig-Brown borrows Wolcott’s definition of acculturation as “modification of one culture through continuous contact with another” (p. 194) with one often dominating the other. She informs us that in some programs, blending the cultures of origin with the goals of the school leads to the creation of a culture of opposition to the status quo, especially in programs that have not integrated the values and views of First Nations. This type of opposition therefore becomes productive in its counter-productive response to standard goals. Haig-Brown suggests that these contradictions make it necessary for teachers to acknowledge, encourage and discuss opposition and cultural struggles in the classroom to further the transformation of life and understanding.

Studies about the acceptance of struggle and opposition and contradiction in the classroom reveal a strong component of learning, of transforming our understandings of students from all backgrounds and cultures. Too many students unfortunately learn from early on that they are not supposed to disagree with the teacher and that they should never fight, even verbally, in the classroom. Too many students come to university with little skill and/or confidence in the ability and the interest in listening, speaking and creating in a critical and thoughtful manner. They seem to be caught up in what-should-I-do-how-should-I-do-it and the unspoken what-should-I-think frameworks. These frameworks leave little room for contradictions and oppositions.

Postmodern and Poststructural Research

Postmodern research steps out of the modernist notions of grand theories and predictable realities. As Merriam (2002) puts it, “the postmodern world is one of uncertainty, fragmentation, diversity, and plurality. There are many truths, and all generalizations, hierarchies, typologies, and binaries (good/bad, right/wrong, male/female etc) are...challenged” (p. 10). Postmodern research reports develop their own form and rhythm, according to Merriam, and their own creations for lived experiences as valid

representation, their own criteria about the evaluation and analysis of data, and the potential need or demand for social action from the results of these studies. Although Merriam puts postmodernism and poststructuralism together in her chapter, differences between these two will be shown in the course of this paper.

Dennis Sumara and Brent Davis (1999) research and examine the ways in which educators can break into the heteronormative foundation of the concept of curriculum in "Interrupting Heteronormativity: Toward a Queer Curriculum Theory". Sumara and Davis discuss the manner in which educators can hopefully begin to reconstruct curriculum with an understanding of the knowledge and identity limitations which exclusive heteronormativity creates. They attempt to show the parallel components of curriculum theory and queer theory; they define queer theory as one which asks for the analysis and interpretation of the ways in which pedagogy is heteronormatively sexualized. The research for this paper comes from two literature-response projects: the Queer Teachers Study Group which involved gay, lesbian, and transgendered teachers, and the other with a group of teachers, parents and a class of grade 5-6 students. The Queer Teachers Study Group responded to literature about childhood, activities of identification, notions of sexuality, and racial/ethnic backgrounds including Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* and the story, "The Surprise Party" by Pat Califia. The children's literature study came out of Lois Lowry's *The Giver* in which the relationships between identity and knowledge and sexual "stirrings" emerge.

From this research, four major *placeholders* (p. 203) are developed by Sumara and Davis in the hope that these "will help to collect a deeper understanding of what it might mean to interrupt the heteronormative relations of curriculum" The placeholders are:

1. Curriculum theory might continue to work toward a deeper understanding of the forms that curriculum can take so that sexuality is understood as a necessary companion to all knowing.
2. Rather than focusing on the elaboration and interpretation of queer identities, curriculum theory might begin to wonder about the unruly heterosexual closet and seek to render problematic the always known but usually invisible desires and pleasures that circulate throughout it.
3. Curriculum theory ought to be more interested in understanding and interpreting differences among persons rather than noting differences

among categories of persons. 4. Curriculum theory should continue to be curious about experiences of desire, of pleasure and of sexuality. Sumara and Davis conclude that educators can begin working with the above placeholders by creating curriculum events influenced by Foucaultian interpretation as being “heterotopic”, or in settings and circumstances that are not usually associated with each other, thus inviting language to stretch and to articulate new interpretations and thus to develop new insights. All four placeholders from Sumara and Davis's work relate to the research of this study as well. This study examines sentient imagination for a deeper understanding about writing, imagination and sentience and their interrelationships for education. This research is more interested in understanding and interpreting differences in the students and their writing than trying to establish differences among different categories of people or actions. This work addresses experiences of desire and pleasure with and in writing and invites written expression to explore these areas.

Complexity Science Research

Elaine Simmt and Brent Davis (2003) explore “Understanding learning systems: Mathematics education and complexity science”, in an article dealing with the relationship between complexity science and the teaching of mathematics. They attempt to redefine mathematics communities with the vocabulary of complexity science and to apply the principles of complexity science to the teaching of mathematics. Mathematics classes, they say, are “adaptive and self-organizing complex systems” (p. 2). Key principles of complexity which are incorporated into mathematics education are radical constructivism, situated learning, enactivism and some forms of social constructivism. These authors draw on Weaver (1948) for the presentation of three categories of phenomena in modern science about complexity and these are 1) *simple systems* which are determinate, have only a few interacting variables, have clear inputs and outputs, and can be predicted. 2) *Disorganized complex systems* have a huge number of variables and are mechanical but in terms of current semantics, are not complex. 3) *Organized complexity*, from Weaver' terms, refers to the current complex systems in which potential emergence or evolution is another important component. 4) Another phenomena of

complexity is *self-organization*, with reference to the spontaneous collectives which can develop as entities come together in a manner different from that of the individual agents. The categories of phenomena in modern science about complexity are part of the various aspects of the research activities in exploring sentient imagination through writing in this study. Development of writing and interpretation draw on each of the phenomena to varying degrees for different processes and contexts.

Complexity science in this research attempts to increase understanding of self-organization by observing complex systems and through computer modeling. The authors note that complex systems have rules that set the “boundaries of activity but not the limits of possibility” (p. 18). The term “liberating constraints” from Davis and Sumara is used to note the importance of differences between tasks that are proscriptive and those that are prescriptive. The authors conclude that the key to creating or permitting the emergence of teachable moments is to be willing to understand a classroom community “as an adaptive, self-organizing---complex----unity” (p. 28).

In the above research article, Davis and Simmt say, “...organized randomness...is...a structural condition that helps to determine the balance between redundancy and diversity among agents. Complex systems are rule-bound, but those rules determine only the boundaries of activity, not the limits of possibility” (p. 18). This quotation brings to me a sense of creativity that I feel emerges the most effectively and innovatively with some basic structure/rules for a task at hand and then an invitation to work with and redevelop projects.

Interpretive Biography

Interpretive biography in qualitative research has drawn the attention of a number of current educational researchers such as Norman Denzin and John Creswell. In addition, social researchers Hollway and Jefferson (2000), writing about a person’s fear of crime and the capacity to talk about it, in *Doing Qualitative Research Differently: free association, narrative and interview method*, note that biography “is not a direct reflection of real events...past experiences are continuously reconstructed in the light of later meanings” (p.2000). In an article about teacher education and autobiographical

studies, "Guidelines for Quality in Autobiographical Forms of Self-Study Research", Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) offer several suggestions in relation to autobiographical and biographical studies. They remind the reader that autobiography is a form of biography (p. 16) and although the emphasis in this paper is autobiography, the article does apply to the genre as a whole. Among the Bullough and Pinnegar guidelines are the following:

Guideline 2: Self-studies should promote insight and interpretation. (p. 16).

Guideline 4: Biographical and autobiographical self-studies in teacher education are about the problems and issues that make someone an educator. (p. 17).

Guideline 5: Authentic voice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the scholarly standing of a biographical self-study. (p. 17).

Guideline 8: Quality autobiographical self-studies attend carefully to persons in context or setting. (p. 18).

Biographical research may consist of an intensive exploring of a character's life through document collection, interviews, archival searches, and the written research product may assist the intended audience with unexpected findings such as new insights and perceptions for the academy. In a research study such as this one, interpretive biographical writing is important especially in relation to cultural exploration and memories of writing influences.

Arts-based Research

Arts-based research appears to be a highly complex area that rejects standard traditional expectations about research and that attempts to integrate arts in one or various forms as the substance of the study. Arts-based research begs close studies of reports about particular attempts. Such individual studies can assist in providing an overview and an intense experience. Two studies are examined, one by Patrick Slattery (2001) who enters the art of Jackson Pollock in his work, and another from a book written by Margaret Macintyre Latta who writes about arts-based research completed in a Calgary school that emphasizes creativity as its major focus.

The research report by Patrick Slattery (2001) entitled "The Educational

Researcher as Artist Working Within” candidly enters autoethnographic presentation in conjunction with arts-based educational research. Slattery writes about the complexity of such an experience by describing “an installation tableau which investigates the regulation of the human body and human sexuality” (p. 1) in a Roman Catholic school junior high school in the 1960s. He shows how Jackson Pollock, an expressionist painter, uses the unconscious to create his work, to let it emerge. In his examination of Foucaultian discussions and Pollock’s fascination about surrealism, Slattery takes the reader into an intense and personal look at the inner workings of an artist, or with the “artist working within” as his article title indicates. The concept and process of permitting the release of our imaginations has been studied by so many researchers and Slattery reminds the reader of a series of them including Maxine Greene, Gilles Deleuze, and William Pinar. He writes a biographical introduction to Jackson Pollock, with particular attention to Pollock’s life traumas and subsequent psychoanalytical revelations about his apparent unconscious and the release of it into surrealist paintings. Slattery reveals much about his own personal life with various parallels to Pollock.

Slattery addresses the issues of poststructuralist notions of autobiographies and the self. “Postmodernism”, he says, “views the self in terms of a multiplicity of ironic and conflicting interdependent voices that can only be understood contextually, ironically, relationally, and politically” (p. 7). Slattery takes poststructuralism further and “rejects the notion of the self because the search for the true and lasting self is a metaphysical dead end” (p.7). Slattery insists that the educational researcher as artist must engage postmodernism and poststructuralism to provide contextualization for the research and to permit the imagination to be released. He says that Pollock modeled this process in his fascination and subsequent aesthetic vision about surrealism. Slattery enters this research in a deeply personal manner with descriptions of his own psychoanalytic journeys similar to Pollock’s, reveals his father’s suicide attempt, and writes about insights gleaned through therapy from his unconscious.

The legitimacy of arts-based educational research, autoethnography and various alternative forms of research are addressed in a discussion that takes in various educational researchers, including a supporter of these forms, Carolyn Ellis, as well as

Elliot Eisner, who warns about the difficulties in creating a document that can be understood. Slattery describes some of his arts-based autoethnographical educational research projects as he presented them in various situations. His installations need to show warnings in advance about religious, violent, and sexual images in a juxtaposition with educational material and classroom furniture. He indicates that he turns to his unconscious for “direction and inspiration” (p. 25) about his tableaux, and that these do evoke many different reactions with the presentation about regulation and control of bodies, of sexuality, of attempts to build the “normal” forms in his Catholic education.

Much as many would like to ignore such revelations, Slattery says that “the hidden curriculum of the body has a powerful impact on the lived experience of students” (p. 36). Early experiences such as these can emerge from our unconscious and affect relationships and education and life for us. Slattery concludes that, for him, the only way to “remember wholistically” is “to live with my whole body, and to take the power of my body back from those who regulated it...” (p. 36), that teaching and learning are to be with the whole body, that autoethnography can bring memories and insights that can help us to understand our students and education more (p. 37).

Slattery’s work and his report of it are powerful perceptive journeys. But I did find that some sections of the art works seemed too raw in sexuality for education and that this could quite possibly prevent open presentation to large audiences. I think that a wider consideration of the receptiveness of viewers and listeners and readers is needed in this work. But the concepts Slattery raises have strong applicability for education and lived experience of human beings.

The beauty of inviting and acknowledging the processes and/or the products of learning in myriad forms to emerge, of believing in a philosophical artistic eurhythmy which can be born from both the harmonious and the discordant elements in our environment, of celebrating the aesthetics of and in education: these comprise a foundation for another arts-based research study in *The Possibilities of Play in the Classroom: On the Power of Aesthetic Experience in Teaching, Learning, and Researching* (2001) by Margaret Macintyre Latta.

Latta indicates that her purpose with this book is to explore the possibilities and

concrete implications of aesthetic play in school. The manner in which this is done reaches into fine arts in an overall sense, bringing a large-scale applicability and potential interest for this work in education. Latta examines the creating process over a two-year period with 3 teachers and 26 middle age students in the Creative Arts Centre, Milton Williams School, Calgary Board of Education. She presents a review of relevant theory in educational research, aesthetic and ontological philosophy, followed by a description of her participation with and interviewing of students/ parents/ teachers, and a reflection in this work of the simultaneous relations of aesthetic play's theory and practice.

Through the metaphoric image of collage, Latta creates her publication. In her study, she includes illustrative collages of her own in which she develops thematic *textual* art work as a part of each one. Examples of student collages have been chosen and included as well. The collages are an informative component of the demonstration in this book of aesthetic play. They form stations of beauty for the reader to visit, experience and integrate with the research. Continuous interaction on Latta's part with both teachers and students brings insights and findings. One of the teachers involved, Laurie, notes emphatically that in teaching/learning situations with aesthetic play, "dissonance is part of the process..." (p.22), that it is necessary for educators to accept clashes, struggles among all learners, including the teacher, so that it can bring what may not come without it. Alex, a student, informs Latta that teachers in this school listen to his "yearning, wonder, fear and confusion..." (p. 45) and that he "felt safe to expose pain, to share joy, to convey his unique perspectives" (p 45).

Latta agrees with Kant's assertion that "aesthetic encounters are not mediated through existing rules but result in the creation of rules on which the work can be subsequently talked about" (p. 42). Students need to develop confidence in a "felt freedom" (p. 44) in their learning assignments and the aesthetic becomes, as Latta says, "a medium in which a form emerges through habitual relationships between self and other" (p. 45). Through encouragement and permission "to observe...to dwell with and in learning situations...to be receptive to sensory qualities of self and other on an ongoing basis" (p. 23), students come to develop a sense of their own ability, confidence in

working with their ideas, and they become a clear, strong part of their own learning processes.

The creating process described by Latta as coming from students and necessarily involving answerability referring to the taking of a stand through one's values (p. 60) "derived from a fundamental reciprocity between self, content, material and form" (p. 65), outsidership as the interpretation of the interdependently-constituted self and other which makes answerability possible (p.65). She further suggests unfinalizability, meaning "an openness to unasked for and unpredictable learnings" (p. 70) for teachers, to show an open-endedness, a tentative wholeness, for students in their work. In her research observations and participation, Latta concludes that "A curious exchange unfolds between self and other as creators and re-creators of meanings..." (p. 72).

Dewey's conditions for teaching and learning including attentiveness, personal involvement, emotional commitment, felt freedom, dialogues, inquiring as guided, projection and self-consciousness (p. 85) are utilized to emphasize and describe how these are related to experience in the work of one of the middle schools teachers. Latta says that teachers need to "embrace tensions and uncertainties as inherent to teaching and learning, searching for attunement within the development of experience itself" (p. 90).

The above journey through the content and methods of examples from a selected group of qualitative research projects and papers in ethnography, postmodern and poststructural research, complexity science research, interpretive biography, discourse analysis, and arts based research – presents perceptions and awareness about the potential components of such work. It becomes valuable and appropriate to blend several methods into one dissertation project at times as various researchers have done. Another point that this study as a whole evokes for me is the excitement and the passion that can drive a blended qualitative research study. My study is an attempt to learn to understand more of who we are and who we can be as human beings in a sometimes enigmatic lifeworld with each other.

The following section reports on the methods of my research study.

The Writing Research Study Method

The nature of this research can be described as one of participatory research through writing and discourse. The focus for this research integrates a complex and large body of research and theory. I was actively involved in the research as participant-observer, and as a facilitator and consultant. As researcher, I participated in all assignments and events and shared my thoughts and my writings as a member of the group. The descriptive interpretations and observations drawn from this research are largely context-dependent, thus the atmosphere and the interactions emerging during and from this research are important considerations. Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 229-231) assert that to the extent that the foregoing issues are true of particular research, the naturalistic paradigm is the one of choice.

With the naturalistic paradigm, research takes places through flexible guidelines rather than fixed structure for the data collection. The design is of an emergent nature, inviting changes to occur in the unfolding of the research conceptions as the data collection and analysis took place. The research design is thus to be considered as a starting point, a framework to begin the work in the highly interwoven complex areas of qualitative research, naturalistic inquiry, ethnography, and arts-based research.

Design

For this doctoral research study, I worked with a group of five volunteer grade-eleven Alberta students who were then part of an English Language Arts 20-1 class. The Alberta Curriculum has developed two course sequences for high school English Language Arts and these are labeled as -1 or -2 programs including the 20-1 for this research study. The -2 programs (e.g. 20-2) are developed for students who do not have plans or interest in English Language Arts or related areas for post-secondary studies. The -1 program emphasizes higher curriculum expectations than the -2 program in literacy, literature criticism and personal response to literature. (Alberta Government, 2003). My research needed students with an interest in writing and in exploring new thoughts and methods with creativity and because of this I felt that students from the -1 program would be able to enjoy this writing and to contribute their help for it. I chose the level of 20-1, the year before high school graduation, so that participants would be integrated into a

high school level without continuously experiencing the pressures of the final 30-1 year of graduation.

These volunteer participants and I wrote together at a round table in a classroom that was available for us during the times of our sessions. The students wrote by hand as the school's computer lab was tied up during the preferred times for students.

When I met with the five volunteers for an introductory session in fall of 2005, I talked about the hopes for my writing research with them, about the administrative matters of being a participant in my research such as the signing of permission forms for my audiotaping, about agreement forms for participating, and about beginnings in relation to what we might do with the first session.

Research Situation and Context

The arrangement that was made to work with a group of five secondary English Language Arts 20-1 students was in a rural Alberta secondary school. I was fortunate to have the assistance of an English teacher who, after I sent the information to her, talked with her classes about my research and asked for volunteers. Five students with interests in writing volunteered to participate. Students did all writing assignments in the context of the sessions in a school classroom which we were given for this research project.

Writing Group

I decided to do my research in the exploration of sentient imagination through writing with a secondary school creative writing group. Five female students, after being informed by their English teacher about my writing research study, volunteered to participate. These participants and I met, discussed the issues and responsibilities in relation to participation, and decided days and times best suited for sessions, and school administration provided us with a classroom.

Participants

The locating of volunteer participants was begun by contacting a rural Alberta school division director for initial permission to explore the possibility of my research. An English teacher in English Language Arts 20-1 assisted with informing of volunteers for

possible participation in my research. For this research, the terms “participant”, “voluntary participant”, and “student volunteer” all refer to the English Language Arts 20-1 students who volunteered for this writing research and became participants in the fall 2005 research sessions. The following factors were identified as prerequisites for voluntary participants:

1. Potential volunteer participant is an Alberta English Language Arts 20-1 student.
2. Potential volunteer participant is willing to participate in writing with/in a writing group project of eight 60-90 minute sessions for 8 weeks in the winter term, 2005.
3. Potential volunteer participant has interest in exploring interrelationships among culture of origin and sensory experience through writing.
4. Potential volunteer participant understands and accepts the fact that the writings of these research sessions will not be part of any graded assignments for any class.
5. Potential volunteer participant will receive a photocopy of his or her own writings from the research sessions if desired, and the original will be given to the researcher.
6. Potential volunteer participant is willing to accept audiotaping of research sessions.
7. Potential volunteer participants are willing to sign a document from the researcher in order to begin the sessions.

Establishing Trust with the Volunteer Participants

The establishment and maintenance of a trusting relationship with the writing group participants was an issue I regarded as being of utmost importance. Among the premises upon which this research rests are the following: all participants' writings, discourse and responses are encouraged and valued; no single form, mode, or style is preferred in the communication as whole; all philosophical, cultural, religious and political ideas are respected; all student work is completely confidential, except as agreed upon between researcher and participant in writing. These premises were discussed with the writing group members at the first meeting. An effort was made to ease into the research gradually, taking time to encourage rapport and mutual confidence in the relationships and with the methods of this research. Volunteer participants were

reminded that should they wish to withdraw at any point in the research, this would be accepted.

Procedures

Five English Language Arts 20-1 students volunteered to be participants in my research program of writing to explore sentient imagination. All five student volunteers happened to be female. In the writing sessions, an effort was made to evoke sentient imagination through exploration of all the senses, the common five senses plus the sixth and seventh. An attempt was made to develop the work with subjective articulation in both oral and written modes. The research consisted of eight 60-90 minute sessions which took place once or twice a week, in a schedule that we decided as a group, and the sessions were completed within eight weeks. I regarded my research role as that of a participant, observer, writer, instructor, group member, and intermediary among all participants, exploring sentient imagination through writing, encouraging group and individual engagement and acting as consultant for questions and feedback. I wrote during each session in response to the same guidelines or suggestions assigned to them by me, and I attempted to initiate dialogical collective explorations in each session in relation to writing and sentient imagination. Unless the voluntary student participants wanted to take the writing notebooks home with them between sessions, I asked participants to hand in their writings to me after every session, and I responded in writing to their written pieces after each session.

I kept a field journal for the purpose of recording and discussing my perceptions of the research sessions. I made occasional observational notes, unobtrusively, regarding my perceptions of interactions, comfort level with components of assigned writing, contextual factors or any other data that might prove helpful. Each session was audio-taped with the written permission of the participants. Each tape was transcribed for data analysis, and transcriptions were returned to the participants for validation. Participants were invited to note corrections or omissions where needed in the transcriptions and to offer clarifications as needed or preferred. Participants enjoyed reading the transcriptions, found them amusing at times, and took the time and effort to note some minor points for corrections.

The traditional terms of prewriting, drafting, and revising did not receive major

emphasis in our work in order to encourage a non-linear natural process to emerge for creation, yet inherent processes within those terms were used by students in various forms and modes. An attempt was made to begin sessions in different ways: with music, with the reading of literature or the voluntary participants' writings, with oral communication openers, with writing, and with the experience of touching the earth in leaves and soil, or cultural creations of objects. That is, the attempts were made to reach into all senses and to meld these with other forms of expression. A guide was planned for each session, yet flexibility and spontaneity was emphasized in the emergence and development of these plans.

The information provided below shows the content and experience of the data collection for this research. For most sessions, the volunteer participants received a handout, describing the writing venture invitations. Brief feedback was requested in writing at the end of several sessions, but participants had a choice as to whether or not they would give feedback. The following questions were given to the volunteer participants for possible feedback:

How did you feel about today's session?

Did you like it? Which aspects did you like most? Least?

Did you dislike any of it? Which aspects?

Was anything particularly evocative or boring?

Was any of it helpful to you in any way?

How did you feel about the researcher/me doing the same writing assignments as you?

Which aspects seemed difficult? Easy?

Any learnings you would like to note?

To assist readers' understanding of the data presentation and discussion in this study, I have integrated use of codes which may have volunteer participant pseudonyms included when relevant. Page numbers are given for the Research Session Transcript; other data have fewer pages, so these are not listed with page references. The codes follow:

Research Session Transcript = (RST/date/month/year, p.)

Field Notes = (FN/date/month/year)

Biographical Information = (Bio/date/month/year)

Research Session Feedback = (RSF/date/month/year)

Individual Chat Feedback = (ICF/date/month/year)

Participant Writing Samples = (PWS//title/date/month/year)

In addition, the letter "S" is used as the identifier for the speaker in a few areas of conversation from transcript quotes. When this letter is used, it indicates that the speaker wanted anonymity for that statement, or the audiotaping was somewhat vague, or none of the group including me, remembered which member made that statement during the sessions. In most conversation quotes, the participants are identified by their pseudonym.

A brief overview of what comprised the research writing sessions which will be described in detail in the next chapter, is as follows:

20th October, 2005. Introductory Session

Introduction of the research project,

Presentation of permission forms (see Appendixes 2-4, pp. 189-192)

Explanation of the ethical issues that need addressing.

Discussion and question time given for writing research project issues.

25th October, 2005. Session 1

Introduction to the research and the sessions

Biographical questionnaire (See Appendix 5, p. 194).

3rd November, 2005. Session 2: Visual /auditory

Writing Venture #2: Biography continued, music, photos, oral reading

Journal

Feedback for Research Session

8th November, 2005. Session 3 -- Visual/tactile

Journal

Bolga Basket Paint the Object
Sentient Imagination and the Object
Peer Partner Feedback for Writing

15th November, 2005. Session 4: Auditory/tactile/olfactory

Journal
Bolga Basket Object and a Short Story
Peer Partner Feedback for Writing
Journal

22nd November, 2005. Session 5: All senses

Writing the Earth that I Feel

29th November, 2006. Session 6: All senses

Pizza
Optional Journal
Revise/ edit own choice of one piece of writing
The Dracaena Marginata

6th December, 2005. Session 7: Individual chats with each volunteer participant

20th December, 2005. Session 8: Browsing through transcriptions with writing group members to check for accuracy

Trustworthiness of the Research Study

Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are the factors identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as necessary to address in naturalistic qualitative research in order to reach trustworthiness (pp. 218-219, pp. 247-248). Credibility was worked towards in engagement with the study and data, persistent observation and triangulation. Thick description was attempted to make transferability possible.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines as set out by the Faculty of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (as per revisions of July 15, 2004) were followed in this research and all its components. The group of five writers from grade eleven English Language Arts 20-1 program in a rural Alberta secondary school, referred to as participants or volunteer participants, provided raw data with their discourse and writing, and were professionally and adequately informed of the nature, purpose and effects, if any, of this research. The participation was voluntary and written permission of parents and of each participant was obtained. Written permission was also obtained for the physical setting of this research in a rural small town high school. Participants were assured and reminded that they could withdraw from the research at any time if they preferred to do so.

The volunteer participants were informed of the time commitment that the research involves. They were assured that the results of this research was confidential, that no one would have access to the raw data, except in situations where written permission was already or would be received from them. Participants were notified that a reporting summary of the research data would become available with the dissertation. Anonymity of the participants was protected by the use of fictitious names that each one chose. Participants were assured that an effort would be made to disseminate the data in a manner that prevents disclosure of the participant identities and that the privacy of the participants would be respected in the types of data chosen for research report publication. I, as the researcher, was and am sensitive to the fact that this research did engage informants younger than I, and that a power differential could be regarded as a disadvantage to the participants. The selection from the volunteers for participants came about only with written consent. The information/consent letter sample is included in Appendix 4 of this document.

Methods for Data Analysis and Interpretation

An attempt is made with this research study to report on data collected, to discuss and interpret in chapter form as needed. The data analysis addresses components of the central research question including how informants used each method/ guideline/ suggestion for sentient imagination with writing, how they created their own, what

perceptions, meanings, thoughts emerged with each mode. An exploration of issues that emerged from the writing, listening, reading, sharing, and discourse are integrated in data analysis and interpretation. The data analysis and interpretation of this research proposal has been and is open-ended and continuous from the first session.

Saldaña (2003) develops a series of questions to assist the qualitative researcher to work with framing the data for an initial discussion and then continues the questions for each of the Wolcott categorizations of description, analysis, and interpretation. These questions can be adapted for research that need not be longitudinal in scope and I found them helpful in working with thinking of and working with interpretation of writings from each session and each participant. Saldaña's questions will not form the basis for a structured analysis and interpretation of my writing research data, but his questions do inform my observations throughout the data reporting and discussing. The question list provided by Saldaña is as follows:

Framing questions (p. 63, p. 67, pp. 159-163)

What is different from one pond or pool of data through the next? (see page 63) for same question

When do changes occur through time?

What contextual and intervening conditions appear to influence and affect participant changes through time?

What are the dynamics of participant changes through time?

What preliminary assertions (propositions, findings, results, conclusions, interpretations, and theories) about participant changes can be made as data analysis progresses?

Descriptive questions (p. 64, p.99, pp.163-167). These questions are intended to answer the first set of framing questions.

1. What increases or emerges through time?

What is cumulative through time?

What kinds of surges or epiphanies occur through time?

What decreases or ceases through time?

What remains constant or consistent through time?

What is idiosyncratic through time?

What is missing through time?

Analytic and Interpretive questions (p. 64, p. 27, pp.167-170)

1. Which changes interrelate through time?
2. Which changes through time oppose or harmonize with natural human development or constructed social processes?
3. What are participant or conceptual rhythms (phases, stages, cycles, and so on) through time?
4. What is the through-line of the study?

In addition, discourse analysis theory provides observations for interpretation of data. Discourse analysis attempts to develop further understandings and interpretation of mode of discursive data. In a doctoral course at University of Alberta in discourse analysis, I developed a method for discourse analysis which drew from the course as a whole, from the work of Rowland (1995) on uncertainty hedges in mathematics classes, and from a previous literature response method of mine (Zacharias, 1997). Rowland refers to hedges as “linguistics pointers to ...uncertainty...” (1995, p. 328). He goes further to provide a taxonomy of hedges appearing in his Mathematics talk research which include the following: a Shield which is defined as a “fuzzy prelude such as *I think that*” (p. 334). Rowland identifies two types of shields: a Plausability Shield. Examples given by Rowland are “I think, maybe, probably” (p. 334), an Attribution Shield which “implicates some degree, or quality, of knowledge to a third party” (p. 335) and examples given for this form are “according to”, “*says Runa*” (p. 335). Another major form of hedges is labeled by Rowland as Approximators such as “*about and a little bit*” and “*sort of*” (p. 335).

Subcategories for hedges, according to Rowland consist of Rounders such as “about, around, approximately” and Adaptors such as “*a little bit, somewhat, fairly*”. Among other observations about uncertainty as part of hedging, Rowland does suggest that prediction and generalization “may be evidence of undesirable anxiety” (1995, p. 333). He concludes his research with the proposition of a Zone of Conjectural Neutrality, which he defines as “the space between what we believe and what we are willing to assert” (p. 350). This zone has the effect of “distancing the speaker from the assertion he

or she makes...a person may articulate a proposition without necessarily being committed to its truth" (p. 350).

Salager-Meyer (2007) explains hedging is "a process whereby authors tone down ... risk of opposition and minimize the threat-to-face ..." (2007, p. 2-3). He indicates that these are used largely for protection, evasiveness or politeness. Modal auxiliary verbs such as may, might, can, could, would, and should are common forms, as are modal lexical verbs including, to believe, to tend, to propose, to speculate, to assume, and many more. Other forms include "if clauses" and compound hedges which include several hedges in one sentence (Salager-Meyer, 2007, p.7).

Hedging is examined and discussed by Raija Markkanen and Hartmut Schroeder (2007) by providing a short history and concept of the term of hedging, and a description of different types of hedges. These authors also note the grammatical approaches to defining and identifying hedges. The work of House/Kasper is shown too as it gives additional types of hedgings such as modality markers including understaters such as "a little bit", and downtoners such as "possibly" or "perhaps". (Markkanen & Schroeder, 2007, p. 5).

I chose to develop the discourse analysis method to assist literary interpretation. This literary interpretation could be done with an integration of the process of the discourse analysis theory, for example, in hedging, as noted below. This method can function with the interpretation of literature and writing as a whole, as well as talk. I think that a major factor often absent in discourse analysis is an exploration of the overall context of words and phrases of a document of any type such as a story, a poem, a conversation, a play, or an article. This method of discourse analysis, attempts to take discourse analysis theory particularly in hedging, personal experience and an integration of interrelationships among these, to interpret discourse in any form. I labeled the Discourse Analysis Contextual Spirals (2003, 2007) and it is one of the modes that assists analysis and interpretation of data for this writing research. The diagram is presented in Figure 1 (p. 84).

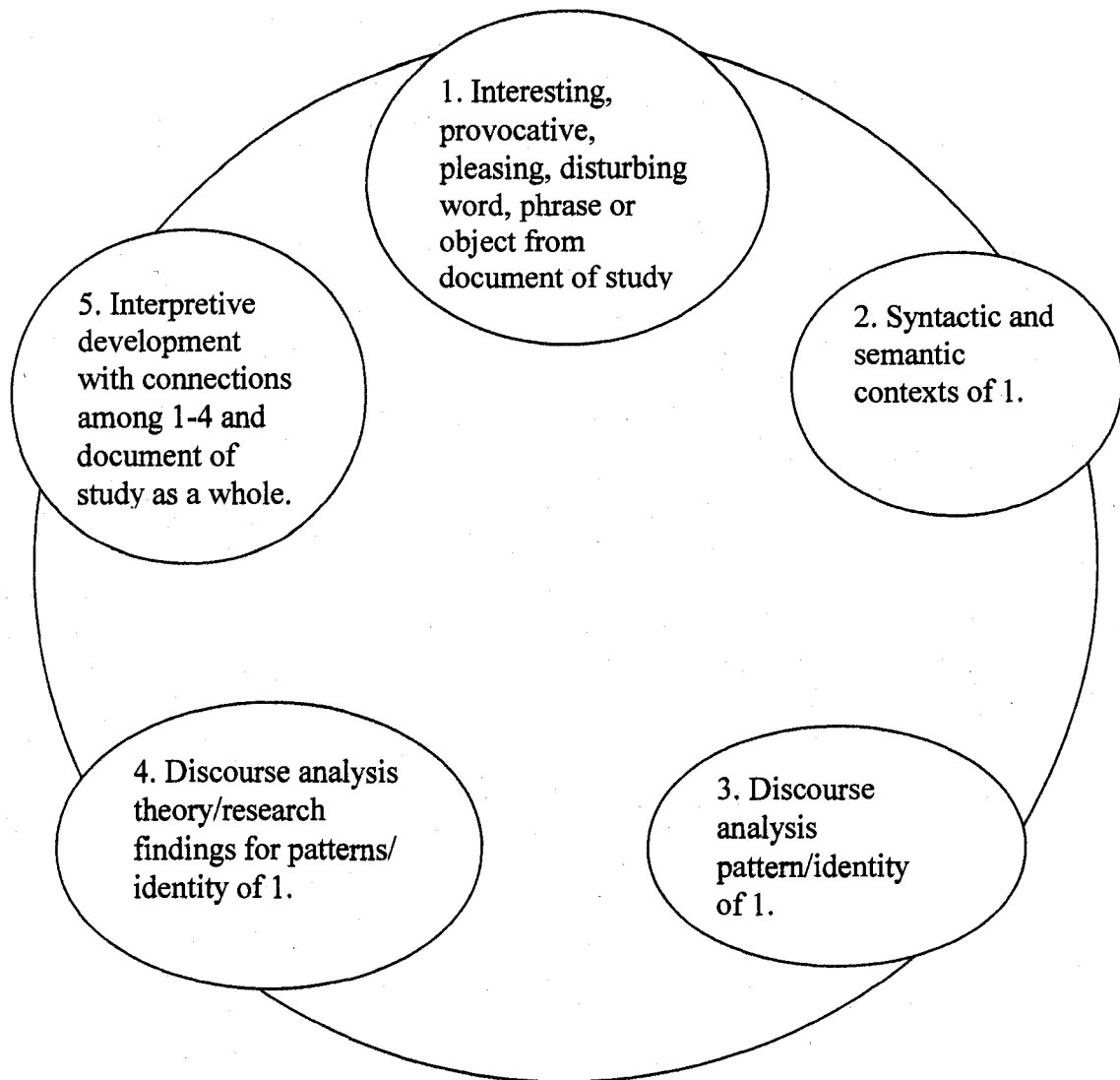


Figure 1: Discourse Analysis Contextual Spirals (Zacharias, 2003, 2007)

Summary of the Research Method

This research studies the exploration of sentience, imagination, and writing with a group of five secondary school creative writers. The research has potential value as a contribution to understandings of sentience and imagination, and their interrelationships for the teaching of writing in schools, for the process of exploring writing and the teaching of writing in teacher education, and for writing as a process and as a concept . This research invites an embodied mode of writing with the whole of our human being, physical, intellectual, spiritual, creative -- and multiple complex elements of our contexts.

The literature review of this study indicates that imagination is an ability to form images that may become emancipators for creative writing and for subsequent new awarenesses in life. Sentience is a subjective awareness of what emerges through the senses, a sensitivity of perceptions that evoke insights and creations. Consciousness can include many forms and levels of awareness including mysticism, rituals, cultural and neurobiological factors, all of which influence the sentience of living beings. Writing needs theoretical and pragmatic room to explore the evolution of an emancipated imagination, the creations of subjective sentience, and the complex evocations of consciousness and life. The teaching of writing needs to facilitate and encourage the foregoing. Interrelated webs of awarenesses such as the above can be evoked with a writing group in secondary schools.

This research consists of a naturalistic inquiry form in which several methods are blended to present the data and observations. Components of postmodern research, complexity science, ethnography, interpretive biographies, discourse analysis and arts-based research inform the observations, analysis and interpretation from the data of this research. Volunteer participants were encouraged to express themselves with originality and creativity in writing without preconceived expectations of results or products.

Participatory research with oral and written discourse forms this study. I, as the researcher, was the participant-observer and facilitator-consultant. Flexible guidelines were developed for data collection but no fixed structure. The design was of an emergent nature, developing with the writing group. Data collection took place with five Alberta English Language Arts 20-1 volunteer participants in eight sessions of about 80 minutes each in a two month period during the fall of 2005. The sessions were audiotaped with the written permission of the participants and the location of the writing sessions was a high school classroom. Audiotapes were transcribed by me, the researcher, and were reviewed by writing group members for validation or change. Writing group members received a return of their original copies of writing and I made photocopies for my researcher records. In addition, I made observational notes before, during and after each session as situations made it possible.

Data analysis and interpretation were open-ended and continuous from the first session and followed the Saldaña (2003) list of qualitative research analysis questions and discourse analysis contextual spirals (Zacharias, 2003, 2007). Thick and clear description was attempted to bring transferability for the study, and auditing by the research supervisor and committee members as well as peer personnel was completed to assist in developing academic dependability and confirmability for the study. Guidelines established by the Faculty of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board (2003) were followed by this research study.

Chapter IV: Writing with the Writers

Introduction: School, students, earth, and pen

When I began this doctoral research with a secondary school creative writing group, I had, for the most part, been out of the school community for about a dozen years as I had been teaching Language Arts, English Education and Creative Writing in teacher education classes. Although I had experience in visiting schools for teacher education internships with a few classes, my work had primarily been with teaching in the university settings. With this writing research study, I was excited about entering the school system again, but I felt somewhat awkward at first. Yet my arrival in the town was interesting.

My impressions in new places are generally drawn first from the natural setting and the geographical features. What took me in most of all when I first drove into the town of my research in September were the lush large green full-leafed trees in the residential area near the high school in which I would be doing my writing research. The trees seemed to insist on celebrating summer and delaying autumn longer than most trees in the nearby city. This small town is a colourful active one with strong Ukrainian beginnings and with a current population of various ethnic and cultural residents. Quite a number of the people have moved in from other provinces including Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia to experience and enjoy the multitudinous Alberta opportunities. The experience of researching writing with a rural secondary school group proved to be enlightening and transformative.

In order to locate the specific school and volunteer participants for this research in writing, I contacted a director of a school division and several outstanding secondary school English teachers at the recommendation of my doctoral studies advisor. I met with several grade eleven English Language Arts 20-1 teachers, chatted about my research, about our mutual interests in writing, and about the potential of the English classrooms for locating volunteers for my work. I decided to focus on a rural class and an English teacher with seemingly the strongest interest and potential as a source of volunteers for my research in writing. I asked this teacher to inform her class of my research and I gave her a copy of the Information Document (see Appendix 1). She talked with her class

about my work and we communicated further through email about my research and about her work and her students. My reason for preferring voluntary research participants from English Language Arts 20-1 level was that these students are in the second year of high school university entrance studies but they are not yet in their final graduating school year with accordant pressures. I informed the teacher that volunteers from her class needed to have interest in writing, to be willing and able to meet once or twice a week to write, and to be students from the English Language Arts 20-1 classes. After the teacher received notice from some of her students that they had interest in voluntary participation, we learned that each of these five students had a spare period at the same time once a week and that these students were willing to give these spares for the writing research participation.

Excerpts from or full writing products, as well as segments from conversations or readings by participant volunteers during writing sessions are included in the data collected and presented in this document. Group members often read portions of their writings aloud during our work sessions as well. Selections of writings completed during sessions and handed in to me for feedback are presented as well. Volunteer participant talk is presented unedited and is indicated by quotation marks, or in the case of long conversation quotes, they are indented. Because I consider it irrelevant and unnecessary for the focus of this research study to give special attention to volunteer participant language errors such as grammar, spelling and syntax, the use of "sic" in quoting such language is avoided. Three dashes (---) in the quotes from the transcribed data indicate a brief pause in the conversations of the participants. Three periods (...) in transcription of talk indicate that although a participant may not have finished expressing a thought, she seems to show that she has finished speaking for the moment. Three dashes are also used in the traditional manner for written data to show gaps in the choices of quotation portions. Interruptions are shown with a single dash at the end of one person's speech and the beginning of another's.

After arranging an initial introductory meeting, discussing the prerequisites and the potential writing research work with the volunteers, the details of which are addressed later in this document, the volunteer participants

and I agreed on dates and times that worked for all. Each of the volunteers was sixteen years old during the fall 2005 sessions.

The Writers

In our introductory session, I talked with the volunteer participants about my writing research interests in sentience, imagination, creative writing, and my hope that our work together would contribute to theory and learning for the teaching of creative writing and for writing as a whole. I shared the Consent and Confidentiality Form (Appendix 4), the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Information Letter (Appendix 2), and the Research Consent Form for Parent(s)/Guardian(s) (Appendix 3) with the group and informed them of the requirement of a signature from their parent(s)/guardian(s) to enable their voluntary student participation. Group members were amazingly chatty even during this first meeting time. They seemed both excited at getting involved in something new and puzzled at the notion of participating in doctoral research with creative writing.

During the first session, I handed out a biographical form (see Appendix 5) and asked each of them to fill it out, to answer whatever they could, and to skip whatever they did not wish to answer. I told them that I wanted to get to know them better as students and as persons, and that this information about their backgrounds and interests could help us plan the sessions meaningfully. Each volunteer participant co-operated and filled out the biographical form. From the information provided on these forms, I provide an introduction to each volunteer participant in my writing research. I did some of the biographical form too as the participants did theirs, but I found it awkward to reach into writing about myself in this manner. The participants seemed comfortable with completing it quickly.

Cera: Cera was the one participant whose favourite subject in school was English, and her favourite extra-curricular interests were choir, doing scrap books, reading, and talking on the phone. She indicated that her preferential form of writing and reading was realistic fiction because it “makes the most sense, can happen, believable....you can picture yourself there...I read what I like to write” (Cera, Bio/25/10/2005). Her favourite book,

however, is a fantasy children's book, *Green Eggs and Ham*, and her favourite author is Steven King because she likes to be "surprised, scared" (2005). Cera indicated that the best place for her to write was her father's office because it was quiet and free of distractions and interruptions. She wrote that for her, the best thing about creative writing was "No limits, no right or wrong answers. You write what you feel and want, how you want to" (2005). The worst thing about creative writing was "Marks, marks on how you think and see the world. Who's imagination is in line with curriculum" (Cera/ Bio/25/10/2005). She indicated that her preference was to write by hand, without taking time to think about punctuation or spelling to "just write from your head to paper without pauses" (2005) and she said that since she tends to think aloud, she likes to write alone. For Cera, the most important part of her methods with creative writing was her way of hand writing it first, waiting a few days, and then revising it as she types it out. She felt that for her, the most important sense was hearing because "you hear a sound, you turn around to see. Hearing for me holds the most suspense and the firmest grip on the reader" (2005). Cera did not indicate a strong interest in environmental issues and she noted that although she does not "intentionally destroy habitats", she also does not "bend over backwards to recycle" (2005) either. The non-human communities, for example, the natural world and animals do not influence her writings in any manner, "not that I can think of" (2005), she wrote.

Ebony: Ebony's favourite school subject was Psychology and her hobbies were piano, writing and music as a whole. Her preferred type of literature for both reading and writing was fantasy fiction because this genre to her has "no limits" (Ebony/Bio/25/10/2005). Her best-loved poem was "The road not taken" by Robert Frost because she likes to compare it to her own life. J. R. R Tolkien was her favourite author because she considered *Lord of the Rings* the best book series she had read. Ebony preferred to write at home, downstairs when she was alone or at night. For her, the best thing about creative writing was that "you can create your own world and escape from it anytime you wish" (2005). The worst thing about creative writing for her, was the fact "that people read it and don't understand the full world" (2005). Ebony noted that she likes to do her writing

by computer because of being able to rewrite easily. Her preference was to write at home alone rather than in a school classroom, sharing writing and ideas. For Ebony, the best part of her method of creative writing was to “write a huge description of the world, characters and events and a multy layer timeline that shows all the characters’ lives in the years of it” (2005). She indicated that sight was her strongest sense because she tended to use it a lot in her writing. Ebony indicated in the questionnaire that she often prefers animals to people and that she would often rather be around them too. She said further that although she likes to write inside, she does enjoy animal company when she writes.

Rosie: Rosie’s favourite subjects in school were Science and Mathematics. Her extra-curricular interests were piano, horseback riding, reading and puzzle-building. In the biographical questionnaire, Rosie indicated that her favourite types of books were fantasy fiction. She noted that her favourite form of writing was essays because she considered that to be the most interesting. She had no favourite books or poems or stories but she wrote that to her the author she liked most was Juliette Marillier because “she mixes history, fantasy, romance, and legend” (Rosie/Bio/25/10/2005). Rosie wrote several times that she preferred to write at home where she could be “comfortable and free of distractions” (2005). For her, the best thing about creative writing was “once you get started and the ideas start flowing onto the page” (2005). She also indicated that the worst thing about creative writing was “actually starting to write because it is difficult to get going” (2005). In terms of computer work or handwriting, Rosie’s preference for creative writing was the latter because she found hand writing faster and “more personal” (2005). With regards to methods of creative writing, Rosie felt that the most important aspect next to actually getting the story down, as she put it, was “revising because it has to make sense when people read it” (2005). Rosie indicated that for her, the strongest sense to utilize in writing was seeing because she felt that it was most important for descriptions that needed to be done. She noted too that she loved animals, plants, waters, sky etc. (2005) and that she likes to pet her sugar glider, a miniature marsupial, named Rosie when she writes.

Greta Lee: Greta Lee's favourite school subject was Mathematics. Like Rosie, her preferred form of writing was essays because she considered essays easier to write than other forms of writing. The type of book she enjoyed most was a mystery because it "catches her attention" and makes her "want to continue reading" (Greta Lee/Bio/25/10/2005). A book she likes is called "Tex". Her favourite author was S. E. Hinton because "her writing is more geared towards teenagers and it is still very interesting" (2005). Her preferred writing was at home on computer because she felt she could concentrate best in this way while still enjoying what she was doing plus she could change things whenever she wanted. For Greta Lee, the best thing about creative writing was "when I can relate to personal experiences" (2005). She also found that the most unpleasant aspect of creative writing was when it had to be done in a classroom as she found that too distracting. Greta Lee indicated that she likes to plan her writing at school and to do the writing assignment at home because of better concentration at home. For her, the most important aspect of her method of creative writing, and she emphasized this point several times in her questionnaire responses, was: "I like to talk everything over with my friends or other classmates to generate ideas and get different perspectives. This way I have more than just one prospective and am not limited to my ideas only" (2005). Greta Lee said that she felt seeing to be the most important sense to her and she sometimes forgets to include the other senses in writing creatively. She wrote that she feels a "close connection to all the animals we have on our farm...I talk to them like I would to a human" (2005).

Tori: For Tori, the best school subjects were Geography and History and her extra-curricular activities were running, snowboarding and playing piano but she indicated that she does not like the latter. She noted that she enjoyed writing fantasy fiction most "because it does not need to make much sense☺" (Tori, Bio/25/10/2005) and that her preferred types of books for reading were non-fiction because they are realistic. Her favourite piece of literature was "The Cremation of Sam McGee" by Robert Service because it sounded funny when it was being read aloud. She had no particular favourite with authors. Tori best liked to write when traveling. For her, the worst aspect of

creative writing was “trying to think of an idea to write about” (2005). Her first preference for creative writing was to do it by hand but she did not mind using computer sometimes too. Tori preferred writing in class to writing at home, unless she had difficulty with her writing topic. For her, the most important part of her method of creative writing was that she usually takes time to “draft and revise, and add a lot of things to my draft to make the story more interesting” (2005). For Tori, hearing was the strongest of the senses in her writing. She had written stories about trees, rocks or water and what these would do if they were alive, so she felt these did influence her writing a little.

Martha: I recorded my response to the biographical sketch questions primarily for my own records, for my own contemplation about patterns, learnings, insights in progress. I shared very little of it with the participants as mine was and is too long. My favourite subjects in my current school scene, that of doctoral studies, are writing, sentience studies in cognition classes, independent studies in imagination and more. The writing I enjoy most is the poetic genre and this is meant in a large sense as I enjoy experimenting with all types of poetic writing including poetic prose. I also enjoy writing essays, non-fiction, personal journals, and some short stories. For me, it feels as though poetry has a freedom of expression that other genres do not have. I can attempt to create metaphors and images to explore and/or show feeling, thought, concept. For me, the story, the creation of fiction in any form, feels more confining than poetry. In terms of my own reading, oddly enough, I enjoy reading fiction more than poetry, and the fiction can come from any sub-genre including fantasy, realistic, biography etc. What I enjoy reading most is a book that a meld of the poetic, philosophical, theoretical, historical, and the potential transformations for me. This can at times be a work of any literary and/or academic genre. During my middle school years, I treasured *Anne Frank: Diary of a Young Girl* (1958) because it provided many new insights for me in dealing with my life and with my writing. Wordsworth and his nature poetry took me in most of all in high school. In my early university years in the seventies, my favourite book was a trendy one of poetic philosophy, *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran (1923, 1973). Shakespeare had a way of

implanting some of his sonnets, especially Sonnet 29, in my memory permanently without my attempt to memorize. Then came Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* (1974) which I related to and enjoyed much more than any of her other novels. Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1965) as well as *War and Peace 1 and 2* (1869, 1957, 1978) became the next highly valued books, as I began to study and think with increasing earnestness about human and life issues. One of my recent favourite books has been *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, by Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) which felt to me as though I was writing it myself as I read it and traveled into primal earth womanhood as well as my own contemporary interrelationships in life components. Several doctoral coursework books have had strong impact on me, bringing a strong craving to learn more and to develop a research focus integrating components of these works: *The Spell of the Sensuous* by David Abram (1996), and Robert Olen Butler's *From Where You Dream* (2005). I cannot say I now have one favourite poem, story, book, or author. Maybe in time again.

As a child, I liked to write outside, sitting in the prairie grass, or at night, admiring the sky. As a teenager, I continued to write outside especially at night, or in my own room by the open window, taking in the lunar haunts. Today, I like to write first on my laptop computer or on my pda with keyboard and that can be at home, in a university office, anywhere. Secondly, I like to write with pda or with pen when I am in an outdoor spot I love such as a riverbank, or even in winter in my car parked by the riverside. I have become awkward with handwriting so I do almost all my writing, including journal and creative writing through laptop or pda. On the whole, I have found it uncomfortable to write in the creative writing classes I have taken, as I tend to want to locate a context that is private for me, one that invites me to look at the outdoors, the natural world. For me, writing tends to begin as primarily solitary communication with my immediate context; for me, it can also become shared communication through reading aloud or through publication. Because of these preferences, I have continuously provided the option in my university writing classes for students to find their own comfortable spot to do an in-class writing assignment, and this can be in class, anywhere in the building, outdoors if the weather is inviting or wherever they are comfortable. I have found that I appreciated most the creative writing classes or workshops that permitted me to locate my own spot to

write -- and then to rejoin the class and share my writing. And yet, I have enjoyed several writing groups over the years in which each one of us shared our week's writings and provided feedback for each other's work. But in these groups, we did not write during the group sessions. Our writings were created on our own.

The best aspect of creative writing for me is the sense of living and learning from my own work as I write, from entering and exploring images, feelings, thoughts, and expressing this living process. For me personally, the worst part of creative writing is having to sit so long to write. I think that as a writing student, the worst things for me have been tight regulations for the required processes of writing, for the meeting of product expectations, and for harsh, rigid, discouraging criticism that can come from a harsh, rigid, discouraging writing instructor. I think it is important to be informed about common writing theory with regards to process such as prewriting, drafting, revising, sharing etc but not to be tied to these procedures to create a work. Students are very different in how much they dream and think before committing their creativity to written text through computer or paper. Writings can be unconsciously churning within many of us over time and these can emerge quickly when the opportunity comes to write, or they can develop further within us as we interact with the communities around and in us.

My strongest immediate sense in writing is likely the visual, but I find that I continuously reach into all my senses for the unexplained, the sixth and seventh (and other) senses to contextualize what emerges for me with the other five senses. I feel close to the natural world and I find it a strong preference for all my writing in any form and genre, to have some visual connection with it through a window, a door, a car window, and being outside when possible. For me, photographs or posters or videos about the natural world do not work well as actual contexts for beginning or continuing writing. If the visual is not available, then certain forms of music, sounds of the wind, animals and birds can assist my own process of writing.

The Writing Research Sessions

The five volunteer writing participants and I worked together in assignments for all sessions and I completed writing tasks that I asked the volunteers to do. We shared

thoughts, ideas, and responses continuously so that collective generation of imaginative works did emerge. The narrative presentation of the data for this research study is an attempt to describe the sessions in the developmental intercommunicative contexts that wove various writings for each volunteer participant and for us as a group.

The writing group and I worked together for eight sessions. The first session referred to as the introductory session in which, as mentioned above, I informed the volunteer participants that the hopes of this research were for me to learn more about writing, imagination, sentience and their interrelationships. I emphasized that their participation could contribute to the teaching and learning with writing in the schools of the future. In the introductory session, permission forms were discussed and handed to them for their own and their parents' signing. The following session, in which our writing began, was referred to as Session 1. One of the work activities of the 8th session consisted of browsing through the transcriptions to look for possible errors of any type, including identification of the speaker, the actual data recorded, or any components seemingly omitted, and the volunteer participants made notes on a copy of the transcriptions data provided for each one of them. Results from each person's notes were recorded in my files and corrected as necessary. The details of each of the writing research sessions are presented below.

Introductory Session

The introductory session was not audiotaped and it was comprised primarily of a basic presentation of the research hopes, explanations and discussions about the ethical issues that needed addressing including the Parent(s) /Guardian(s) Information Letter (Appendix 2), the Research Consent Form for Parent(s)/ Guardian(s) (Appendix 3), and the Consent and Confidentiality Form (Appendix 4) to obtain permission for the research data collection and audiotaping. I talked with the group about my hope and interest in learning more about writing, imagination, sentience, and how these might show themselves in the work of a high school writing group. I told them that I considered it an honour to be in this school and to have their assistance as volunteers. I mentioned that I thought as a group we might just discover some new components for writing and

imagination. I reminded the group that there would be no grading and no reports to teachers or parents for this, and that I would be doing the same writing as would be requested of them for the research study. The volunteer participant group members were invited to bring laptops for their writing in the sessions if they had these and if they preferred to use them. The volunteer participants did not have laptops and they were comfortable to do the writing assignments by hand.

I showed the group a photo of my paternal grandparents and talked about how they had influenced my earliest concepts of writing, especially for poetry and for the sharing of that writing, how my grandfather's works sometimes conflicted with what I learned in my high school classes about writing, and yet, how I did enjoy school writing as well. I mentioned too how my involvement with writers' guilds had already provided much for my writing appreciation and how it in fact brought me back to early influences, both cultural and creative in writing. I told the group too that fortunately doctoral studies permits individual preferences and hopes in research studies and that my interests were to interconnect writing and sentience and imagination. I suggested that we not think of writing what's on /in our mind -- but what's in the whole of our persons... in all aspects of our lives / our worlds/ our bodies/ our experiences/ our feelings, and how these can influence what emerges... and that what we allow to emerge in writing may at times amaze us....

I then asked the group members to think of the earliest influence they could recall in writing? Was it a teacher? Grandparent? Friend? Parent? Author of a book you loved? Other? The group members began to look at each other and chat and some common names came to their minds. Several of the group members had attended the same elementary and secondary schools throughout their education thus far. I asked them to concentrate on this early writing influence. Could they go through each of the senses and bring this person to their memories clearly?

For the visual: what do you see with this character -- face features, clothes, context -- where is she/he and what does he/she have in hand? Sitting, standing, talking, running? Where? Think of visual detail -- nibbling? Smoking? Rubbing hands?

For the auditory: I remember hearing my grandpa's papers rustling, and his reading

glasses coming out -- and the living room chair moving forward....can you hear something that this character is doing with his/her pen? Computer? Walk? Reading aloud? Comments? Praise? Criticism? Help?

For the olfactory: Do you smell an old or new book? Certain type of clothes? Food? Coffee addict? Snacks? A new house? An old one? A library book smell?

For the tactile: I remember my grandpa holding his writing paper with poetry a bit shakily at times. His touch affected the presentation of this work, it seemed. Do you remember your writing influence person slap the desks for emphasis of points made? Or touch every tree in sight? Or be forever drinking coffee? (touch and taste)

For the taste: Is there any association of taste with your early influence? Did the certain teacher bring treats to class for everyone periodically? Were you at a dinner, a cultural event when you met this writing influence? Coffee shop? Other?

I informed the group of volunteer participants that we would be exploring the senses in the first writing session and I was hoping to encourage beginnings in sentient emphases. The volunteer participants were invited to bring photographs, music or any item that reminded them of the person who influenced their writing interests. As a group, we decided on which days and times would work out best for the writing sessions. I was hoping that we would be able to do two sessions a week, but this was not possible with the students' heavy schedules and they preferred once a week for most weeks. We were fortunate to find days and times that were fine for each group member and for me. I reminded the volunteer participants to return their permission forms signed by themselves and their parent(s) or guardian(s) for next time, which would be Session 1 of the writing research.

In the introductory session, I found the volunteer participants conversational, cooperative and curious about what our sessions would and could bring. They seemed to have some interest in the notion that this activity would take them out of the regularly-scheduled school activities. They showed themselves to be an active group with a delightful sense of humour and strong potential for communicating and creating.

Session 1: Biographical Writing

To begin the first session, I requested that the volunteer participants hand in the signed permission documents for the writing research that they had received in the introductory session. Since all but one had (who promised to bring it next time) returned these forms signed, I informed them that they were now official participants and so we could begin audiotaping. To broaden my contexts of understanding for each participant, I handed out the biographical information form mentioned above to obtain some basic information about each person and her interests. Several participants noted with grins that their favourite books were actually children's books such as *Green Eggs and Ham*.

I asked if there was any objection to my using a laptop to do writing during our sessions and no one objected. Since no one owned a laptop, I felt somewhat uncomfortable being the only computer writer, so this first session was the only one in which I used my laptop during the session. From the second session onwards, I did all my writing during the session by hand, and then after the sessions by laptop for field notes and any points I wanted to record or explore before leaving the school for the day.

We talked about pseudonyms in the early part of this first session as each participant had been asked to choose one for my recording of the work in this research study. The idea of being asked to choose a pseudonyms brought considerable humour in the names they tossed around and each found it amusing to select a name. I told the group briefly about an interesting pseudonym, Laura Amadeus Wolfgang, which was chosen by a music-loving grade eleven student (the same grade as the participants in this group) with whom I worked on a writing study for my Master's thesis some years ago.

I asked if anyone had brought a photograph that somehow connected with the person who had had a strong influence on their interest in writing. No one brought a photograph but one participant, Greta Lee, had sketched a portrait. I was delighted and Greta Lee then talked with enthusiasm about how they had had creative writing with her grade 6-7 Language Arts teacher, Mrs. Newfelt, "every single week!" (RST/25/10/2005, p. 2). A few of the participants had had several of the same teachers during their schooling in this town and that brought conversation among the group members, including some simultaneous talk.

I again showed the group a photograph from the early 1900s of my paternal grandparents, about whom I had chatted briefly in the introductory session. I mentioned a few specifics such as how I can still see Grandpa sitting in that old big chair of his, reading his poetry so passionately and I can still imagine myself beside Grandma in the living room gently watering her myrtle trees. Greta Lee looked at her portrait drawing several times during this chatting and I then asked the group participants to consider bringing even some music or any object next session if they could locate some that reminded them in some way or other about this person, that they could certainly bring mp3 players, or cd players and earphones, and that I would be bringing my cd player as well. I talked some about the Russian music as well as German hymns that tend to bring vivid specifics to memories of travels to my ancestral Russian villages -- as well as my about my Dutch/German Mennonite background. I asked them to begin writing a biography of this chosen person of influence in their writing.

Before getting into the writing, I informed the participants that the work of this research writing group was not intended to compete in any manner with the English Language Arts work of their classes. I did mention that we might however, find some of our activities to be a blend of their classroom methods, as well as both their experiences and mine, for this writing research study. The group still seemed restless and reluctant or uncertain in beginning the biography, so we conversed about a few more issues. I found out that this group, although all were in grade eleven, had not worked together as a group before this. I realized too how I felt somewhat strange and awkward myself with these students who were at least five or so years younger than the university students I'd been working with for a number of years.

I chose to tell the group about a situation in one university class in which one of the younger students to my horror, wrote an interesting note to me at the end of an in-class exploratory writing assignment: "Prof. Zacharias -- THIS CLASS KICKS ASS!" (Martha/RST/25/10/2005, p. 4) Well, I thought then that I'd heard this expression somewhere but I could not help feel apprehensive, even if amused as well, wondering what this student who did seem to enjoy writing, meant by such a loud, upper comment. I approached my sons who were then in their teens, showed the comment to them, and they

burst out laughing, explaining that the expression was simply a “positive” comment about liking the class. I decided to join the trendy young language club and in response to that particular comment wrote: “SO DO YOU!” (Martha/RST/25/10/2005, p. 4). Upon receiving the return of his assignment, the student burst out laughing and gave me a thumbs up sign in response. This student had already shown (and continued to do so throughout the term) intelligence, intuition, and humour in his class writing that was enjoyed by all in the course of this class. My awkwardness in beginning the doctoral research study in writing with a group of sixteen year-old volunteer students reminded me of what I had felt in receiving the written response comment from the former university student in what seemed like strange, foreign communication as in the preceding anecdote.

I chose not to discuss theory of biographical writing elements as I wanted to see what would emerge from these grade eleven volunteer participants without extending in formal teaching what they had already learned in their eleven years of schooling. I hoped to observe the results of our emphasis on senses with this writing, as with all writings for our sessions. We took a small amount of quiet time to begin the biography and then continued the task with informal conversing as needed or wanted by the participants. Because it appeared that most participants were not finished with their biographical stories by the end of the session, I have not included the writings with this first session’s description. I reminded the group member participants that they could certainly bring some music for next class if they so wished, especially music that reminded them of the person of their biographical writing begun today. The response to this was mixed and several said they had no mp3 players, one said she had no cds, another said she had 63 cds, and another said she was not really into music.

Session 2: Biographical Writing, Open /Journal Writing & Poetry

The second session began with the participants talking first about an upcoming school dance, then with some tension regarding assignments coming due in English, and a few other projects coming due shortly. The group seemed restless. I put on a compact disc with the music of Tchaikovsky’s “Piano Concerto No.1”, listened for few minutes,

then told the group about the music I brought and its significance for me. During an ethnic heritage cruise in the Ukraine some years back, a powerful ship stereo created an unforgettable resonance across the very river that was often talked about by my people, the Dniepr. The waves of that river seemed to respond to this concerto in a manner that came to bring an association, an echo of own ancestry for me, whenever I listened to the music after that cruise.

As I listened to this concerto in the writing research session, I wanted the music to fill all of us in that room but I saw the restlessness of the group members continuing. So I decided spontaneously to suggest that we begin our sessions as of today with informal writing such as that of open journal writing. I had the sense that this might possibly assist in focusing and channeling the thoughts and feelings of the participants into a writing mode. I suggested that they "just start with a few minutes of journal writing of any type -- something that starts you off... about something that happened today, or anything that you happen to want to -- write to start -- something you look forward to -- the upcoming dance or whatever -- kind of a bridge of writing into the other stuff...it can be your writer's notebook, your journal, whatever you want to call it -- just start by writing anything that comes to you..." (Martha/RST/3/11/2005, p. 5). The volunteer participants were informed that there was no specified length for the journal writing. I told the group this session that I enjoyed leaving the city to come to this quiet and interesting town and I mentioned the beautiful thickly leaved trees which took me in... We wrote in our open journals quietly then. Ebony was not present for this session. Excerpts from participant journals of this session and some of my written feedback follow:

Cera's journal

Dear Journal,

Yesterday I had drama. I've always loved drama, acting as someone else, letting go of any problems I have and take on the problems of another. Anyway, this year has been different..... [writings about some related frustrations followed] (Cera/PWS/3/11/2005)

Cera's writing from the beginning revealed an earnestness, a love for and

dependence on the act of writing. She appeared to release conflicts, and to develop and create integrative understandings and meanings with and from the process.

Rosie's journal

Dear Journal,

Hmmmm....what to say? Well, today was actually quite a fun day -- not because we did anything that would be considered especially "fun" but because the overall mood was good. In Bio this morning we had a pop quiz on the parts of an animal cell and I completely spaced out on a few of the answers so I started making up things like "nucleoid" and putting it in the blanks even though I knew it was wrong. But as it luckily turned out, it was not for marks and we are getting the exact same quiz next weeks so I know have a chance to correct my mistakes. The entire day has been quite like that...just goes to show the importance of optimism. (Rosie/PWS/3/11/2005)

Rosie's writings and participation showed a need and a gift for solving problems, for reaching conclusions or principles, for finding the good to celebrate in herself and her worlds. I wondered at times if this was in part because of an integration of her scientific and mathematical interests with writing as a whole.

Greta Lee's journal

Today was a rather interesting day. The morning was a bit of blue because I was tired. I am very overwhelmed right now because of all our English projects that are due in the next few days. I was up later last night trying to finish my homework + to find songs not only for this class but for my English projects as well. I am still suffering from being tired. We worked rather hard today. Bio class was filled w. notes and what we thought was a pop quiz but was actually just a work sheet. Then in English class we were given a bit of a break from our hard work near the end as our whole class was sharing jokes ☺ with one another. Lunchtime and after lunch was probably the funniest parts of the day because we

were preparing for our video in computers. We made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for one of the characters to eat during the movie and smeared all over their face. But it didn't end up being just peanut butter and jelly as we added some crunchy sprinkles to make it a little bit more interesting and the all over his face. (Greta Lee/PWS/3/11/2005)

Greta Lee's work as a whole revealed a strong determined spirit which opened itself in generous and co-operative contributions, as well as a sharing of her comedic observations in both her writing and her activities.

Tori's journal

What comes to me....?.....I could think better if it was all quiet....I had an interesting weekend. On Saturday I did a collecting thing with my4-H club and I spend all day walking around at a landfill in [] for another load of this to show up so that we could unload them. While the 5 of us were waiting (oh great, now there's music that she's put on, any noise distracts me because I am listening to the sound of it, instead of the sound of what's in my head), so as we were waiting we went for a walk, around the landfill.

Then on Sunday, I went to some place near [] that starts with a "V" but I don't remember the name with some people [] because we were going gliding. I love to fly, to just be up in the air, above and away from everything else. The pilot even let me fly the glider, from when we let go of the [?] -- plane until we'd lost enough altitude so that it was time to land. I loved it. I think I am going to stop now, everyone's begun to talk (Tori/ PWS/3/11/2005)

Tori showed herself to be a highly active person who also dared to think deeply and independently about the unusual in our lives with her writing and her comments.

Ebony was not present for the journal writing in this session. She participated with this mode of writing to open the next session.

I did find that this opening activity of informal open writing proved to be an

amazing strategy for assisting the participants in focusing, for getting into writing gear, so to speak. I have used various forms of open writing activities to begin creative writing classes that I have taught for some time and these have been helpful for the students and me. I began a journal for this research study as well. After we had all written for a few minutes, and seemed to be winding down, I could not help but comment: "You know what I loved seeing is -- how all of us just got into something with this writing.... I find that with all my writing, in fact, even university essays and all, I tend to open my writing with whatever first comes to me -- then I delete or develop....just to get my writing going.....I'll read you my journal entry today" (RST/3/11/2005, p. 6)

Martha's journal

Today I wanted to get here early and I was on my way -- when a traffic delay on one major street in the city tied me down -- may have been an accident or something ahead that I could not see.....I was frustrated....But I put on Tchaikovsky's 'Piano Concerto No. 1' which I had brought with me for today's session and I began to sail away from the frustration.....and memory of my grandparents emerged....closeness to them came again esp for my grandfather and his poetry writing.....An admiration for my mother's lineage came too...I'd heard a story sometime about a child who was adopted -- and my mother's family was one that always helped and helped anyone and everyone, it seemed...like my maternal great great grandmother...I can see her emerging now....I see a child...as I imagined on the Dniepr River in the Ukraine...Katerina... and my mother now comes to view..." (Martha/PWS/3/11/2005).

The participants listened quietly. I realized that I had talked again about a major writing influence for me, that of my grandfather and his poetry. To ease us as a group then into the biographical writing, I took out a story of mine, "the myrtle ship", which I wrote about ten years ago and I read a few paragraphs from it. I have since these research sessions revised portions of this story, but the following is what I read to the participants:

Grandpa's papers crackled as he unfolded them. Then he swept around the

family with his eyes. We all became very quiet and Grandpa began. He announced first that this was for his youngest daughter Katherina, who would be married in spring. My aunt Katherina was a teacher in Ontario. She would be returning here for her wedding but had not been able to come out for Christmas this year. Grandpa told us he would be reading this poem at her wedding too.

Life, read Grandpa, is a sea. His tears started early in his reading this time but he read with strength and clarity. Marriage is a ship. A husband is the captain. His wife is the first mate, and Grandpa continued to develop the sea/ship metaphor for the journey of life. This poem and its images stayed with me and when I reached my late teens, began to disturb me. My early readings in women's liberation showed me that Grandpa's label of a wife as a first-mate was regressive and subordinate for a woman. It was not until many years later that I began to develop a new appreciation and understanding of my grandpa. I began to realize his strong marriage to writing; not only that, this first-mate image of a wife too, despite its inequality, could be considered well ahead of many other conservative Mennonite people in my community of those years, even in terms of basic respect for a woman. When Grandpa read this poem for the first time at that Christmas gathering, I now remember Grandma looking at him with strong emotion, wiping her eyes and fingering the myrtle a few times as he read.

Our family was fortunate to live next door to our grandparents, so I did not have to follow my family out immediately. I had one last request for my grandparents this year. My parents had given me an autograph book for this Christmas and I had decided that the first autograph I wanted was one from each of my grandparents. I went to Grandma and asked her to sign my book and she wrote me a short affectionate letter in German. She read it to me, then hugged me. Grandpa began his entry with "Liebe Marta, du liebes Grosskind!", addressing me as his beloved grandchild. Then he wrote a short poem that simply stated he knew I could and would sail far in life. As I read that at the age of 10, I was very moved. It seems to now as though I realized then for the first time that not only did my Grandma love me, but so did my Grandpa. I began to understand

then that Grandpa could hug with his pen. That Grandpa could love with his pen.
That Grandpa lived with his pen.

Today, the pen from my grandfather assists new explorations and
creations of ship and sea and sky for me. Grandma's love thrives in the myrtle.



Photo:
North
Saskatchewan
River, Edmonton,
Alberta. Photo
taken 15th. June,
2007 by Martha
E. Zacharias

In retrospect, I am somewhat surprised that I chose to read both my own journal entry and a portion of a biographical narrative to the group as it might well provide an informal framework of expectations for them in their writings. However, I did find that the group appeared to be wanting a bit more direction, and my own preference was to model both sharing my own work and writing with the group, rather than to make direct statements for preferences or expectations. For these reasons, reading my writings in several areas may have been helpful. After I finished reading the segment, one of the participants commented, "Wish I could write like that" (RST/3/11/2005, p. 7). I answered that I felt my story was still rather messy, that one writer had already suggested to me that I rewrite this as two stories, one about each of my grandparents.

Greta Lee then showed her music. She had brought an mp3 player with "Beethoven's Fifth" and began playing it. When we had listened to her music for a while, I asked her to tell us what the music brought to her, especially in terms of the person who influenced her writing interest. "Well-uhm, our grade 6-7 teacher, she made us -- like --

do creative writing -- and all that. And she'd like -- always -- like talk about her life and all that -- during our English class -- and her favourite composer was Beethoven" (Greta Lee /RST/3/11/2005, p. 7). Greta went on to tell us about how this teacher had been in many places, had taught Inuit students in the Yukon, and that it was so interesting to hear the stories about her life. Another student then mentioned that she had had the same teacher. Greta, as the music played, came up with several appearance details, noting how this teacher had such big "beady" eyes, and then she forwarded the music to another section of the symphony and said, "...like this happy part brings the easy-going....it's not like we'd tons of homework.....we had no homework....we actually -- like -- got stuff done in class" (RST/3/11/2005, p. 8). Greta then reminded us to listen to a bit more of the music -- as some participants had begun to chat. It seemed to me as I listened to Greta Lee talk about the teacher who influenced her writing favourably, that her responses and ideas emerged more fluidly with the music's assistance. The music seemed to bring an engagement with synaesthetic creative evocations which could/might be transferred and/or developed in writing. I could well imagine Abram's notion of synaesthesia as a fusion of senses (1996, p. 61) apparent here.

After a few minutes, Greta's portions of "Beethoven's Fifth" were done and I informed participants that they could certainly add more to their journals at any time if they wished but that I would like us all to complete our biographies now if at all possible. I put on some James Taylor music quietly then. Several participants needed the remaining session time to write, and several were finished their biographies. I suggested that the ones who were finished their biographies could consider writing a poem as well about this very person of whom they had written the biographical story. I changed the music back to Tchaikovsky's "Piano Concerto No. 1" and we all began to write again. After awhile, I turned off the music. To my delight, Greta Lee spontaneously switched on some music by Johann Strauss, mostly for herself, she said, but since she did not have earphones with her, we all took it in. After a few minutes, several students seemed to have poems written and I asked if they would be willing to read these aloud. Since there seemed some reluctance, I explained that I'd scribbled something which did not even seem like a poem, just a few lines to attempt to visualize my grandfather's influence on

my poetry and I read a few lines. I then asked Rosie if she would read hers and she agreed:

Encouraging
Caring
Ever-imaginative
Convincing
Cajoling
Demanding not excellence
But effort
Alert
Watchful
Teacher (Rosie/PWS/3/11/2005)

My handwritten journal response comments for Rosie which were given to her the following class were as follows: I like your poem! You show the teacher – one with a colourful character -- and your affectionate memory comes through, Rosie. Will a title come yet? You do not have to write a title -- I'm just curious. Martha (Rosie/PWS/3/11/2005).

Several more participants agreed to read their poems. Greta read:

Writing
Wacky ideas place on paper
Ready to be
Insightful.
Today
I write
Never able to
Grasp the concept. (Greta Lee/PWS/3/11/2005, p. 10)

My written response to the above: Greta -- You've created a short poem here that reveals a common human feeling with poetry, I think. I like it a lot....

(GretaLee/PWS/3/11/2005)

Cera then read hers:

Untitled

Believe in me

Give me the tools, show me the way

Have faith in me, trust in my ability

Do not doubt the person I am.

Thanks for being the first

To inspire my pen, open my eyes

To a world of creativity,

No rules, no limit to my imagination. (Cera/PWS/3/11/2005)

Our time for the session had then ended and I praised their efforts, asked them to hand in their notebooks so that I could write individual feedback for them for the biographies and all work completed thus far. I informed them that I would be asking them to hand in their writing notebooks at the end of each session, and that these would be returned to them at the beginning of each session with written feedback from me for each piece of writing. The biographical writings from each participant regarding a person who had influenced their writing in some form or other, and the feedback from me follow.

Cera's biographical writing

How can I put into words exactly how this person influenced the writer I am today? When I was in grade 2, I had a teacher named Mrs. Newfeldt. She was the first person who told me that writing was 1 career option, a possibility for me

to work at and use outside of school. She told me I had a talent, a natural flair for writing and of course being an impatient 2nd grader with no sense of responsibility or planning past recesses I ignored and shrugged off her praise with a thanks. She pushed and challenged me, I never know why but I always tried to do as I was asked. It never quite clicked for me until she asked me, write about your experience while living on a deserted island. I thought this sound[?] for so I wrote a diary of how I survive, found food, built shelter and how I longed to be back home with the ones that I loved. I drew a cover for my story and she took the time to laminate each page and keep it together with a spine. She invested so much of her time in me, now that I can appreciate it I find that she was the one who started me writing for myself (Cera/PWS/3/11/2005)

Encouragement and acknowledgement of effort and of skill are shown as needs by all students in creative writing. Cera had received these from a favourite teacher in elementary school and this teacher left a mark that was still impacting this participant in grade eleven. Many of the authors who have read to my university teacher education classes have begun their presentations with stories of various forms of influence that teachers in K-12 have had on their writing.

Ebony's biographical writing (an excerpt)

My parents have a lot of friends, and I met a lot of them over the years. Even now I'm still actually meeting ones I've never met before. Usually they are all alike in the basic ways. They watch hockey, talk about their kids and most, oddly enough, work in construction. When I met Darcey, I was sort of set by how different he is. He's married with two sons and is still very close to his father. Darcey met my dad in Ontario, like all his other friends and bumped into him again in Toronto. The first time I went to his house, it was interesting to see how my father acted around him. Not a lot changes, but he seems calmer and his wit more tasteful. I liked going there at first if only for that. Don't get me wrong, I adore all our family friends, but this family always interests me.

So the months went by and I found myself in their company more and more. I found out that Darcy was in a band and was very musical. Actually, [unfinished] (Martha: Interesting beginning-----sounds like it could be a major story.) (Ebony/PWS/3/11/2005)

Rosie's biographical writing

In grade six and seven, my English teacher would always give us a small creative writing assignment. This was always a very fun time [m's note in handwriting "great!"] and people were allowed to come up to the front of the class and read theirs aloud. [m-great]. There were so many different ways in which different people thought up things to write because we all had the same prompts to start off of. There were also a large variety of different assignments ranging from short stories to poems to improvised paragraphs. The one thing I really remember was these paragraphs because Ms. Thesberg would give everyone a different topic chosen from a hat [m-☺] and we would have about two minutes to write as much as we could about that subject. The subject I had to do that I remember most was on bruises which ended up being quite a funny monologue [m-☺] about bruises. I started out writing about the many different colours bruises could be and ended up discussing how one gets bruises which in my case was from either my big sister or from my own clumsiness [m-grin]. No matter how silly anyone's writing would be, Ms. Thesberg would still give praise to the writer and encourage everyone to continue writing and thinking imaginatively.

(Martha: Hi Rosie -- I enjoyed reading this piece about how Mrs. Thesberg influenced your interest & enjoyment of writing. She sounds like a "fun" person & you were fortunate to have such a teacher. [some photocopying unclear...]- -- "see" your teacher & you in this experience is the specific detail you provide with several examples from that class. I enjoy the warm tone of your writing here too. Looking forward to reading more --other days -- Martha) (Rosie/PWS/3/11/2005)

For Rosie, it appears that both the variety of writing assignments and the warm, humorous enthusiasm shown by her teacher, Ms. Thesberg, had strong impact.

Greta Lee's biographical writing (an excerpt)

In grade one when I first came to the [] school, the new grade six and seven entered our classroom on the first day to welcome us. We went all through the school with Ms. Thesberg by our side guiding us. When we went into the grade six and seven she became our English and math teacher. Every Friday in both grade six and seven we would write some sort of piece of literature to add to our creative writing portfolio. We would have two forty-five minute blocks to write what we wanted for the assignment and at the end of the class we would have to read them in front of the class. (Greta Lee/PWS/3/11/2005)

Greta Lee shows here that Ms. Thesberg had a long-time influence, seemingly in the sense quite simply of requesting/providing opportunities for her students to write regularly, every Friday, and to learn to share their writings by reading these to the class. Many teachers from all levels do not make a practice of teaching and learning with writing in the regular mode done by Greta Lee's teacher. Providing time for students not only to read regularly but also to write frequently, can be a major factor in assisting students to develop both comfort and skill in writing, and for some, a delight with creating through writing.

Tori's biographical writing

Someone who has influenced my writing is my friend [] She was my closest friend in Alaska for 9th grade, and last year, she flew to visit me for a week, and a homework assignment that I had for Drama was to write a short play that had 'runaways' as the theme. [] is a very random person and the short play ended up being about this kid who ran away to North America and made friends with this Talking Hamster, who was the ruler of an entire alien colony, and the kid got abducted by the colony then they blew up the world and ejected the kid out into space. It was really funny, but fairly hard to describe.

In 9th grade, when I was actually going to the same school as [], we'd have

writing assignments for English and we'd have all sorts of creative elaborations even though most of the crazy ideas were hers. I just think that [] really influenced my writing styles mostly because now, I find it hard to sometimes write without a little bit of the subtle sarcasm ...(Tori/PWS/3/11/2005).

Tori's poem ☺

Tori told me that she was unable to think of a poem so her choice was simply to write the following two words as her "poem".

Unwritten poem

(Martha's comments: It's okay, Tori. With these sessions, you can choose not to complete or even start assignments that you do not wish to do.

Tori/PWS/3/11/2005)) I also told Tori verbally that, in fact, I liked her words as a complete poem!

I find it interesting that for Tori, the person who influenced her writing most was a friend of hers. She and her friend would share ideas and create together, even wildly at times! The "crazy" seemed to invite creations for Tori and her friend was one who apparently dared to be this often.



Photo of the Bolga Basket by Martha E. Zacharias, 12th June, 2007.

Session 3: Bolga Basket Paint the Object

For this session I brought some chocolates for the participants to nibble. Some humorous banter that seemed to be a continuation of an encounter prior to the

session began and I chuckled with them. Then I asked them to begin their open writing for the session, reminding them that they could begin these entries any way they wanted,

and to write about anything that came to them. For this session, I brought a large West African basket which I purchased in Ghana during my year of teaching English composition with Canadian University Service Overseas in a Ghanaian secondary school many years ago. I did tell the participants that I wished that we had more time to work together in addition to this research. Because Ebony had not been present in the previous session when we started the journals, she asked how much she was to write. I told her that although no particular length was requested, most of the participants last session wrote about half a page to a page. And then, interrupting the journals somewhat, I asked participants if they had over the years learned to follow a pattern in writing such as a certain procedure with pre-writing, writing, revising and so on. Ebony answered immediately that she wrote very differently on her own at home than at school. I asked her to expand the comment. She then talked about how in school she writes it "just straight" (Ebony/RST/8/11/2005, p. 12), like in writing an essay. At home, she develops different pages for the bios of different characters to write about them in detail, and then she develops a "setting bio" (Ebony/RST/8/11/2005, p. 12). She then talked about how she does not write in a journal, that she has never liked the idea of writing to herself because she feels she can just "keep it in my head" (Ebony/RST/ 8/11/2005, p. 12).

Rosie told us that she sometimes writes down her "thoughts and stuff" (Rosie/RST/8/11/2005, p. 12) and that she finds it interesting and weird to go back and read it. I urged her to keep these writings as she would likely find them fascinating in the years to come. We then proceeded to give a few minutes to journal writing. Journal entry excerpts follow.

Cera's journal

Dear Journal,

Today in Drama []---. I wasn't trying to be mean or pushy or busy in any way, though that may have been how I came across -- -- I was yelled at -- -- No comment to help the situation. I talk to fill the empty space, break a silence, add humour ---.

(Martha: You've experienced some harsh realities -- -- You have plenty guts and

skill -- -- You'll work it out -- --) (Cera/PWS/8/11/2005)

Cera's full journal entry in this session showed her strong need to release, record and interpret a difficult experience before opening space in her person for creative writing. As an instructor in teacher education writing classes, I found this to be the case often with my students, to varying degrees at different times of the terms, to in varying forms for different students. But the reality of some form of journal writing providing a tool to make room for new work was clear. Not only that, but learning to do this journal writing through many modes and forms also brought gems of images, feelings and insights that could be explored further in creative writing.

Ebony's journal

[]'s complaining again... I don't know what to do about that girl. I actually got into a lot of writing last night, I am getting quite a bit closer to anything that's even close to a novel. [m comment -- great!] I pretty much have all my planning and character sheets done though that's not saying much because I really enjoy doing those. Don't get me wrong, I love writing but that is something I always do. It has been a long day, and I have a whole bunch of school work so I will not be able to do any, or much writing tonight (Ebony/PWS/8/11/2005).

(Martha's comments: Hi Ebony☺- -- You are experiencing so much already of the life of a free lance writer with the novel you've begun. I'm amazed that you can work on it often despite the grade eleven homework loads. I look forward to reading your published work in time! ☺ You show a comfort with writing and ambitions with it too. Great! Martha) (Ebony/PWS/8/11/2005)

Ebony's comfort with, pride in and intense devotion to creative writing on her own was continuously apparent and she told me that a poem of hers had been published in a well-known journal a few years ago. She seemed to associate her strongest sense of creative writing with non-school contexts.

Rosie's journal

Dear Journal,

Today was a very nice day, from beginning to end as it was quite relaxing. I believe this is due in part to the fact that this morning I had tea. [m: ☺] Though this may sound odd, I think tea has a very powerful effect of goodwill and calm -- especially if it is drunk in the morning. The presence of Rosie (my sugar glider) I think really even increased the potency of the tea as well as the fact that I was not rushing to get on the bus. Rosie is so very soft it is comforting just to simply hold her in my hand while she sleeps -- knowing that she trusts me not to hurt her and can relax around her combined with tea (Rosie/PWS/8/11/2005)

Rosie's sense of humour came around many times in our sessions and her appreciation of humour in others, including the teacher, Ms. Theberg, was apparent too.

Greta Lee's journal

Today has been a very stressful day. It started off with my hair not working out and waking up late and almost missing the bus. It was also rather stressful as we are starting a new unit in English and last night we were overwhelmed with homework. I have not caught up on my sleep yet from Friday and I haven't been feeling very good. I think I might be coming down with something. All today we have been working very hard. In Bio..... Today's English.... Lunch was also filled with arguing over the theme and title for the talent show that we have to run in the coming month. Drama was also filled with arguing because we are trying to put on a play.....I just want to take a break from the day's hectic events.

(Martha's feedback: Greta Lee, you are a busy, active person! Wow! And you have had a highly stressful day. Now -- what amazes me is how you can write despite the stress.... Your unicorn story writing was a mystic, beautiful "dance" through words. Interesting, your creative writing about the unicorn feels all the more clear after reading about your stressful day) (Greta Lee/ PWS/8/11/2005)

Greta Lee seems to write in her journal in this session as a manner of entering the writing process. She meanders through her day thus far, the frustrations and stresses and then seems to invite creative writing to enter her person.

Tori's journal

I'm just thinking...I guess I'd better begin to write a bit...I'll just write whatever comes to mind....well, this weekend (Sunday actually), my family & I went to my brother's football game in [city name]. It was just the last game of his district's finals, and they won, so next week we get to go to [city] so that he can play the winners for that area, and whoever wins that gets to play [city] district, for the best Bantam team in Alberta. I'm think I'm done.

(Martha's feedback: Hi Tori, Do you enjoy football? And going to your brother's games? You mentioned running and skateboarding in a questionnaire you filled out [about your interests etc]. Do you ever dream up ideas while running or skateboarding? Martha) (Tori/PWS/8/11/2005)

Following the journal writing, I placed the Bolga Basket at the centre of our group table and told them about its history. I informed them that I purchased this basket in Bolgatanga, a village in northern Ghana, West Africa, and that I had it shipped to Canada. This village, I told them, was not far from a small city where I taught high school English Composition with Canadian University Services Overseas. The basket is colourful and woven in a highly durable manner. It was one I took with me nearly every day in Ghana to the local market to buy my food items for the day, and most of the food consisted of fresh tropical fruits and vegetables. After returning to Canada, this basket became one for holding a collection of my life representations and these consisted of a few travel gems, mostly from my own travels, a few gifts, some historical and ethnic objects, and some ordinary everyday items from the past and present. In the teaching of writing classes for a College of Education, I found that this basket became a treasure for many areas of teaching, learning, and writing. I often added a number of objects that were not from my own life experiences, such as magazine advertisements, newspaper photos,

books of potential interest, and so on, for humour and/or specific educational purposes. The Bolga Basket even made it to teacher education grammar classes occasionally.

For this writing session, the volunteer participants began to look at and take out the assortment of objects in the Bolga Basket I had brought: the empty Ghanaian school notebook, a few photographs of me in Ghana and in the Ghanaian school scenes, the piece of German music which I enjoyed during my singing lessons when I was a teenager like these volunteer participants, the sterling silver unicorn I received from my sons many years ago, the Ukrainian and Polish painted Easter eggs, the two different Matryoshka dolls, one that I bought in Red Square, Moscow, and another given to me by my brother who purchased it in Kyrgyzstan, an unusual writing pen from Krakow, shaped like an axe ... Participants were curious and asked me about a number of the items. I gave some basic information about the objects but I did not want to talk about these too much as I looked forward to what their imaginations could create with experiencing these objects.

I then gave the volunteer participants a handout with guidelines for the creative writing for session 3 and suggested that we go through it together so that they could ask questions or make comments as needed. I talked further about each point and participants showed strong interest in exploring the contents of the basket for this assignment. As we chatted, I provided some of my own examples for the points given on the handout. For example, for number 5, I told them that the one object, the wooden lion napkin holder reminded me of an experience I had in a Kenyan safari where a large pride of lions gave us quite a scare, even though we were in a jeep. Then participants came up with several suggestions as to what some of the objects reminded them. A participant mentioned that one object, and the voice is not clear on the audiotape as to which person said this, brought to her mind a bizarre embarrassing experience of spilling an entire milkshake in a restaurant a few years ago. All participants laughed and this brought some further chatting until I asked students to look at the handout once more, to partner with another person in the group, and begin experiencing and writing. The handout given to the volunteer participants was as follows:

Session 3 Writers Group Handout

Today's creative writing exercise. Please write double-spaced.

1. First, choose an object from my Bolga Basket that interests you.
2. Second, choose a peer partner with whom to share your writing.
3. Third, look very closely at the object. Touch/feel the object.
4. Now -- "paint the object, so to speak, with words" -- write a descriptive paragraph or two -- especially working with your visual and tactile/touch senses...
5. Is there anything that the object reminds you of? Does it bring an experience to mind? Does it bring a person or another image or some dreams/hopes to mind? Write a paragraph or two about this...
6. What would you like to have feedback on from your partner for your writing? What do you think will make it quality writing? What would you like your peer partner to look at in particular -- and comment on? Would you like to know if your descriptions/ ideas are clearly written? If you have effective word choice? Grammar? Spelling? Other aspects that you've written -- and you wonder if these work? You and your partner can give feedback in a written comment to each other -- or in verbal comments -- or some of both... it's up to you.
7. After you've completed your peer partner comments, can you rewrite some parts of this work? Revise? Improve? With your double-spaced writing, you can include your revisions in the original copy.

**I enjoy reading your writing! -- and I look forward to reading today's work and responding to each item! You're teaching me so much already!*

(RST/8/11/2005, p. 14)

I found it interesting that the volunteer participants had no difficulty choosing an object of their liking quickly and that they immediately began to explore the objects in fascinating ways. For example, the participants who chose Ukrainian and Polish Easter eggs began to roll them on the table, rotate them, hold them up to the light, feel them

closely, and since they were peer partners, they began to share their observations about the eggs.

Cera's description of chosen object

Smooth to the touch, a delight for the eyes. Swirls of black outline spots of red, all formed around a speck of orange, all vibrant in colour. Tears of green seem to fall away from all angles of the flower. Rain flows down either [illegible writing of two words], pooling at the bottom, incasing the image on its side of the egg.

Black, the black looks almost like ballerina's, head standing, tall and proud while graceful, hand arced over her crown, reaching for the sky. Behind her, the sun is setting.

That's what it reminds me of, my time in ballet class, resitles and other compititions.

(Martha: This is a beautiful, imaginative showing of an ache for more....lovely writing.) (Cera/PWS/8/11/2005)

Cera's writing appears to deconstruct her ballet experience, her identity, her hopes, her "reaching for the sky". Living images, which I believe can be of collective spirit sources, sometimes of a synaesthetic origin, show themselves to her here, and she begins a new creation.

Ebony's description of object

A doll is placed before me, a part of Russian history that now rests far from the land of its creation.

It's the form of a woman, an opening story that on each layer has a new chapter below it. These dolls have been made and recreated in so many forms, though this is a history, a tale of Russia that is beyond words and yet is so common, so passed over. Gone are the days of vibrant red and gold. Instead the heavy groans laced with metallic color symbolize the simple people they have been forced to become. Upone it's back a petled flower in bloom, a gentle pride

resound in a strong people. Her cantry is placed and painted on her stomach, always a reminder to where she came from. Each though dressed the same in poverty and tradition, each image on their fronts is different, each tells a much different story, a stronger history and tale.

This object reminds me a lot of a book I read a long time ago called 'The Bronze Horseman' [m comment -- yes!], a story about Russia in war time.

(Martha's comments -- "Ebony" -- Your description is imaginative from the start and your writing touches past, present and future in a thoughtful, creative manner. Martha) (Ebony/PWS/8/11/2005)

For Ebony, a sensitive narrative begins that builds across time. She sees complex contexts quickly for this Russian doll and it becomes part of her thoughts, her writings. Ebony's Matryoshka comes to life.

Rosie's description of chosen object (an excerpt)

An object lies in front of me. It is shaped like an egg except perhaps a little less wide than a plump round egg. There is a small nub on one end and at the other end it becomes almost to a point except it is blunted and smooth. The shapes of the end make it impossible for the egg to balance on either. The object has been painted very carefully in a floral pattern, which seems to "grow" [m-I like this.] from the end with the nub. Going around the egg lengthwise through the middle is a long fern which is the color of wheat and look similar. On either side of the egg are the flowers which are pink with red shading and rather long petals -- except for two small buds. The leaves are broad at the base narrowing [copy unclear for about one line] ...light almost lime green and a darker green. Their lines are smooth and unbroken -- almost as if they have been made in one stroke with a paintbrush dipped in two colors. The stems of the flowers are small and a richer jungle green colour. The background of the egg is black and there is a gloss over the entire thing which makes it feel smooth to the touch and reflects light. When you spin the egg the egg rolls over because if you look n the top it

changes from the pink flowers to the grain colored ferns and back, finally ending on the ferns. This means that the one side with the ferns is heavier than the other. (Martha's comments -- Hi Rosie, Your description of the Polish egg is clear and detailed. You show how the object/egg comes to life from you and how it brings an experience to your memory too.) (Rosie/PWS/8/11/2005).

A near-scientific tone emerges in Rosie's detailed description of the Polish Easter egg, and this is not surprising since Science and Mathematics are her favourite subjects in school. I find it interesting too that such detail can in fact, encourage the emergence of life in an object. As educators, it may well be that such detail be acknowledged and worked with too -- even with creative writing!

Greta Lee's description of chosen object

It stands not very tall, but seems to be rather bold and mystic. A creature not known to man but of great magic and beauty. Washed of colour but consisting of silver, it rears up to show the power it portrays. It is smooth and rough in numerous parts. I want to be part of the unicorn's haven; to be free from all worries as it is a horse with a horn. A unicorn is a beautiful creature unknown. This miniature unicorn statue reminds me of our miniature horses and the freedom they possess. It also reminds me of a mare that I saw when I was younger. It was where a little white pony grew a horn and became a majestic and beautiful unicorn. I always loved this mare because it was a dream when I was little to have unicorn. I can always remember wanting to fly amongst the clouds and leap among the colorful planets. Dancing around on my hobby horse I thought that I was riding a unicorn because my imagination was gone wild.

(Martha: Your imagination is a delight to travel with!) (Greta Lee/PWS/8/11/2005).

Greta Lee enters life with her chosen object. Not only does the object come to life in her writing; she interrupts common reality with her living entry into fantasy. For her, fantasy brings a beauty and a majesty that infects her style and her attitudes outside of

writing too. I find it fascinating that this small beginning is developed and transformed in the next writing assignment about this object.

Tori's description of chosen object

Standing atop a round hollow thing is a wooden lion. From the base to the top of the lion's roughly formed mane is about 3 inches approximately. When the lion's facing left, the wood that it is made out of gets lighter as you go right from the left. The lion's face looks sad, and a bit worn out, and the snout looks like a moose's nose, because it's so large and wide at the end of it... It is a skinny lion, possibly very old... The napkin holder is slightly squashed as though the lion's weight is pushing it flatter, as though it was round at one time. The object reminds me of when I was chased by a moose in Alaska...

(Martha: Wow! I'd love to hear more about this chase. Your description shows close observation and imagination...) (Tori/PWS/8/11/2005)

Tori's adventures come to her in this description of the wooden lion napkin holder. Her active nature enters her imagination creatively.

I asked participants to provide feedback about the session this time but I did not make this compulsory. Summaries of feedback given by the participants in writing follow.

Cera's session feedback for 8/11/2005: Cera felt the session was, good, productive. What she liked best of the was the description of an object of her choice from the Bolga Basket. She indicated that she did not dislike any aspects of the session but that the sessions were "always a blast" (Cera/RSF/8/11/2005). Cera felt the session activity helped her with learning about descriptive writing. She wrote that she thinks it great that the researcher is "not just making us do work, you're working with us" (Cera/RSF/8/11/2005). The work of painting with words, she noted, was challenging.

Ebony's feedback for 8/11/2005: Ebony enjoyed the session because she was able to

write about a topic she finds interesting, that she liked writing about a new object. She did not dislike any of the session but didn't like it that she was the only one to finish her writing assignment this time. She liked getting ideas for story writing. She wrote that it was interesting that the researcher found the writing activities interesting too. Ebony indicated that she learned that she writes differently from others. (Ebony/RSF/8/11/2005).

Rosie's feedback for 8/11/2005: Rosie indicated that the session was fun and that she felt she learned about the importance of description. She noted that she liked the humorous banter here and there during this session. She did find it hard to write about past experiences, she said, because her memory is not good. (Rosie/RSF/8/11/2005).

Greta Lee's feedback for 8/11/2005: Greta Lee felt that the session went very well and that participants actually accomplished a fair bit in different forms of writing. She indicated that her day had brought the need for some comic relief in this session. She enjoyed the journal writing because it helped to give her the chance to "explain" some of her anger from the school day. She felt that everything in the session went well. Greta Lee found it evocative to explore a memory with an object as it brought some different ideas to her. She felt that it is better for me as researcher to do the same assignments as the participants because, she indicated, that she felt that their English teacher would not be able to complete the hard assignments she gives to her class. She noted that she found it helpful to learn that she could look at objects around her to get ideas on what to write about. She closed with saying that it is very interesting to learn how other people write instead of just the way a teacher says to write. (Greta Lee/RSF/8/11/2005).

Session 4: Bolga Basket Short Story

We began this session together with open journal writing. For me, journal writing has been an form of open writing since age fourteen when I began my own journal. I have used many open writing forms, including different activities and guides as well as free unguided open writing for both my own journal writing and that in writing courses in

my university teaching. But for me, a major issue with journal writing is that it can encourage the exploration of thoughts and issues and experiences, the development of new insights, transformations, and creative writing connections, rather than serve only as a process to record events. After we had finished our journals during this class, I could not help but talk a little about my own sense of journals. "...for me, journals are not just a day to day writing of events -- or even a regular rigid schedule for journals...I've never agreed with journals necessarily being something you have to write in every day about the day's happenings...no, I don't object to that form and some teachers regard it as the expected form...but I think of that type of journal as a diary. To me, in what I consider a journal, or a writer's notebook, or whatever -- is an exploration of thoughts, feelings..." (Martha/RST/15/11/2005, p. 16). I did want the participants to consciously draw on open journal writing topics besides events and happenings.

Cera's journal

Dear Journal,

Christmas is in the air. I'm in one of those let it snow type moods. I love it; putting up lights, wrapping and buying gifts, I love it all. I know that by the time the snow has reach levels of annoyance and it becomes more of a hassle than a delight I will be forced to wish it away and pay for sunshine and green grasses. But until then, I can't wait. Isn't it funny, some times you can spend your whole life wishing for something, a pet, a job or even snow, and as soon as you have it, you no longer have that same drive to keep it, it wasn't the destination rather the journey the brought so much enjoyment. -- --

Cera's writing above shows interesting nostalgic dreaming, speculating, and a faint hope. Open writing can become the development of a rich field which invites the planting of whatever is evoked by our sentient imagination.

Ebony's journal

Today wasn't really all that eventful. I'm still pretty sick from the other day and not up to par or functioning like I usually would. So I pretty much just

laid back and relaxed today. Tonight I have a shit load of homework to do and I don't know how on earth I'll get it done, plus chores and the early sleep-time that was planned. At least I didn't have to go to school on Monday, I went to go get my passport. Lord, that was a long wait but I have some really good ideas now. I think if I have time I'm going to finish some character sketches. With all the stuff due tomorrow I almost doubt I'll get to any writing at all.

(Martha: Hi Ebony☺--I'm sorry that you've been ill and that you're still not feeling quite well. It was kind of you to come for the writing session despite this plus such an overload of homework! You deserve some rest!☺ Martha)
(Ebony/PWS/15/11/2005).

Ebony had a brief setback with illness and she communicates her somewhat melancholy situation. Her scenes were too pressured at this time, yet she shows confidence and interest in character ideas that are forming within her.

Greta Lee's journal

I love Christmas! I can't wait for the time off from school. Lately I have really been in the mood for some Christmas spirit. I even asked my mom if we can put up the tree this weekend... On Sunday, despite being extremely tired...our family went shopping... Today I was in a fairly energetic mood because the snow looks like it is going to stay, meaning that I can start going skidooring soon...(Greta Lee/PWS/15/11/2005).

Tori's journal

I had a pretty good weekend... On Saturday, I went to my friend's house and I met his big horses.... On Sunday, I spent most of the day on homework, so many pointless, long and boring [assignments]. I am so far behind a lot of projects, almost all of them actually.

(Martha: Yes, it's a tough time when many assignments come due. It's kind and generous of you to come to writing sessions despite these pressures.)

(Tori/PWS/15/11/2005).

Following the open journal writing and my comments about my own sense of journals, the group conversation brought fascinating explorations of objects, senses, and interrelationships with life, and the potential for creative writing. Volunteer participant speakers are identified by the initial of their first name pseudonym and I am shown as "M" in dialogue transcriptions.

M -- I've enjoyed reading all of your journals each time. They're fascinating. I'm enjoying them all.

C -- Look at the messed up kids you got here... [chuckles]

M -- Nah, interesting... [chuckles]

M -- What I did for my Master's degree -- is respond to literature -- each student and I read the same short stories and then we wrote about these stories in various ways -- and shared. Found it fascinating too -- some of it came out as personal responses -- kind of a journal form in some cases... But the thing is that -- I found it so fascinating that with each of you choosing an object -- the way in which you described it was different, what you emphasized.... What fascinated me too was that when you brought it to life, you took it further and for some of you, it became a story too. G's became an adventure with a unicorn. All of you had fascinating exploration with that object.

I had one student in a university writing class who chose a coffee cup as a central object, a metaphor for reflections, memories, hopes... and it became a beautiful piece of writing. Submitted it for publication, it got into one journal....

S- You think -- well, the person around with the coffee cup, you could see what it goes through throughout the whole day...

M -- uh-hm... neat ...yeah...

E -- or even like in a restaurant - -- have to clean it up -- what is this lipstick?
[laughter]

C -- honey! [chuckles] what is this on the cup? [chuckles]
(RST/15/11/2005, p. 16)

Despite the pressures that all participants were feeling with assignment deadlines in their classes, they could enjoy their own humour. We then launched another piece of

work with the object the volunteer participants had chosen last week from the Bolga Basket, and about which they had paragraphs drawn from the senses of seeing and touching. I gave the group members another handout:

Bolga Basket Short Story

1. Read your description of the object again from last session.
2. Read your paragraph again in which you write what the object reminds you of.
3. Imagine your object coming to life...maybe on its own -- or maybe in the hands of a character? Or maybe see it simply sitting on a shelf close to a violin player? Listen to the object -- and to the character(s) or to the aspects of the setting of what's around the object....can you hear ocean waves? Can you hear people talking at a store? In your town? Can you hear a machine on a field nearby? Listen, let your imagination bring sounds...And now ☺!
4. Write a short story double-spaced (or more if you wish☺), integrating both the object and/or what it reminds your of -- and what you began to hear with your imagination in number 3. You are the one who can decide how the writing and the ideas from numbers 1-3 components enter your story. Numbers 1-3 can form the major parts that you expand and develop further -- or they can simply be the beginnings for some story ideas. For example: In your description of the object, did an idea begin to develop for something that happened or could happen with it -- and with you -- or with another character? Or a fantasy tale? Could some or much of the piece of writing that you did to describe the object and/or the paragraph(s) that you wrote for what it reminded you of possibly form the beginning or the short story? Could what your imagination hears in relation to the object form the story's happenings/plot? The length of the story is up to you -- with the time that our session permits. If you wish, you can study again the object that you chose from the Bolga basket last session.
5. When you've finished your story, ask your peer partner to read it quietly. For what aspects of your story would you like feedback from your peer partner(s)?

What would you like your peer partner to look at and comment on? Would you like to have some feedback about your story's plot? What about the conclusion of the story? Does it resolve, at least to some degree, the problem/conflicts that you create as your plot? Is the plot interesting? Suspenseful? Would you like feedback about your character(s)? Real? Clearly created? Stereotypical? Would you like to know if your writing as a whole is clear? Effective word choice? Grammar? Spelling? Any other aspects that you've written -- and you wonder if they work?

6. You and your partner can try giving some verbal and/or written feedback this time for each other -- below the story.

After going through the handout briefly, we wrote quietly for some time. When it seemed to me that most were done, I mentioned what the experience felt like to me, and the conversation grew in what I see as a delightful, valuable one:

M -- For me, this thing almost became --like -- a feeling -- and -- I don't know -- more than an object? -- and then I [unclear words]... then the object began to be alive-

S --alive too... [speaker and words unclear]

M -- If you manage to have enough time seeing we're almost done, I'd like you do some journal writing again in closing -- about anything if you have enough time... it's okay if you don't....For me, this thing kind of came to life like the someone who was making it-

C -- That's totally what I did! I totally did -- with the person making it!

M -- Yeah? Wow! Exciting!

E -- I've done mine-- with the doll from in Russia -

G -- I wrote about how I was flying with the unicorn -- and then out of nowhere I was sitting in a field. [chuckles]

M -- Oh neat... [to T:] How did your lion come about?

T -- I was kind of writing like the lion's perspective -- kind of thing -- how the

lion feels --

M -- Neat --

[some mimics from participants for the lion's chatter☺]

M -- Mine was a bit of a struggle -- maybe because this strange sculpture came from my son -- who made it for me one Christmas-- -- he said it was me. As I wrote, I was almost telling the sculptor what to do with it... I don't know... sculptor just did something

M -- I enjoy your ideas so much -- you come up with interesting ideas so often... Anybody want a read a part of hers?

C -- I want to hear the unicorn one. (RST/15/11/2005, p. 18)

I found it interesting that when I showed my genuine uncertainty, difficulty in trying to explain what I was experiencing with bringing my object to life, the participants came to life, so to speak, in identifying with me, and several showed excitement in realizing that we were going through a similar experience together in a manner that we understood together, even if we could not yet describe it clearly in talk. It was a delight too to hear Cera request that one of the participants, Greta Lee, read her story.

Greta Lee agreed to read her story:

In the depth of a green meadow, it lies hidden behind some shrubs. Pink and purple pansies are illuminated by the sun peaking through the luscious canopy of the trees. Amongst the various animals, a unicorn stands proud and of majestic beauty. It is the centre of the meadow, and gains the attention of its surroundings. The twinkling horn catches my attention. I stand there amazed at what I see before me. I dream off into the clouds of my childhood imagination. I thought of how I wanted to fly off into the sunset, and over the rushing water falls with the unicorn. wanting to soar above the trees and fly with the eagles left my stomach feeling empty. Taking pictures in my mind, the wind rushing through my hair, drifting down my back. It's mane and tail flying everywhere as we soar high in the sky. I remain flabbergasted at what I am encountering. The sun is blinding my

eyes, and burning my skin. I am sweating in the excitement. As I look back, I see a steady field of clouds and the wings of the unicorn flapping. It is silent. Time is flying by and I am all caught up in the moment. The unicorn starts to lower and dive to the ground. I tremble in fear, scared to death that I might get injured if I plummet into the ground. Clip! Clop! Clip! Clop! My eyes slowly open on the ground...I gaze at what I thought was a unicorn but was just a galloping horse with a measly bump on its forehead. It stares at me in wonder as I stare back at him. Still shaking from the excitement, I arise from the cold of the ground. It comes time for a blanket and a warm cup of hot chocolate at some point in time, and then to sit by the raging fire, to be left in wonder and amazement. (Martha: Greta Lee, this is a delight to read! It is great fun to join the adventure in fantasy with you...) (Greta Lee/PWS/15/11/2005)

Participants enjoyed Greta Lee's story and told her so. One person excitedly said, "You fantasize about flying -- when you get back -- you like -- woooo!"

I asked if another person would be willing to read her story and Ebony volunteered.

Ebony read most of her short story, and the comments were "Wow! Great!" from several participants:

The shelves shook, and the war seemed upon them yet so far away. For all reality, the bombs and the fire from across seas couldn't cause the movement of the shelves and random junk. For all the good that it did, things shook either way.

The years had passed quite loudly, yet it was chants and calls that had deafened and not the sound of war. Upon the shelves she sat, waiting almost, but no one ever came.

After these years, I imagine that one should be forgotten Russia but she hadn't. Or that you might not even notice that you had even left. When the entire trip traveled wrapped and in a crate, but she did. Her rounded face carved and polished in browns and golds, she would gaze for days, weekend even until the dust grew so thick it covered the delicate painted eyes, watching as they could.

She was a part of history, opening up to find another piece and another. Each round, wooden woman opened a new tale, a new rare memory of something never seen. The girls who sat in this room saw her only as a doll now.

Their uncle had brought her back from Asia after his military conscription and sentence. She seemed out of place in America, but then again, so did the family. I often thought that she would say, if her small red lips one day opened, and she had the chance of speech few ornaments obtain. The chance was of course slim, but how could one be safe? (sure?) I have never taken the time to watch and listen to something as still as she. Wouldn't some people never be found to speak if others did not pause and notice the silence around them? It not hollow, I might have been watching her right now instead of write this. God knows with this drought and dust I should be cleaning too. It's just a shame, to seem something with such rare beauty be cast away and up where it won't get in the way of every day life. Though I know I'd love to be able to put away the uniform I was sewing and sit beside her on that shelf. Not talking, but just listening. For the life of me, I swear I see her nod her head, and pat the shelf beside her, asking me to just quit all this and sit beside her. One day I'll send her back to Russia, no one would care. Better yet, I'll bring her myself.

(Ebony/PWS/15/11/2005)

Ebony enters a world she creates as she travels, and her Russian doll becomes a central image for living, for loving, for preserving. Through the eyes of an apparently caring narrator, Ebony seems to become the Matryoshka and the old woman who weeps for her history, her culture -- and she takes us into her world with a new sense of our state.

The other volunteer participants' stories follow.

Cera's short story

She sat there quietly, patiently waiting for inspiration to strike. She always thought long and hard before beginning any of her projects, spinning the colourless,

wooden abstract in her long slender fingers. Then it hit, she grabbed her brush and began to work feverishly, paint flew from her as if it were exploding upon impact of the smooth surface.

I peered in to catch a glimpse of what she had painted, but I was quickly hushed away by her silence. I should know better by now not to bother her as she works, but I could not help but look from a safe distance.

She sat still, spring it with her breath. I was now a solid colour, a pail yellow as the butter we spread on our morning toast. Again inspiration struck her. When she finished painting and saw her blowing on the newly painted figure I saw it. It was a blue as pail as sea water, a teal that was both calming and treacherous. The colour flow on either side from top to bottom as tears falling from a broken heart pooling at the end. They seemed to be connected as though a group of collection of several tears from many misfortunes.

She began to work again, longer than she had ever without breaking for inspiration from her life or surrounding, this was from her heart, this was what she knew.

When she was finished, she placed it on a stand and left it to that. I crept in slow so to not make a sound. I looked at it examined it, What was so important about it?

It was a flower, a hope, a light in the world of sorrow, a beacon of hope. The grace and elegance and peace in the world, all that is good.
(Martha: Cera, your story is beautifully written. The imagery that emerges with this is touching, moving, relevant, rich. Your writing has a fine visual emphasis in images that work very well to help the reader see & feel & understand your character, her life etc. Could such a story be expanded into a micro-novel? Just curious what you think....) (Cera/PWS/15/11/2005)

Deep longing and pain and hope colour Cera's story. Her story feels like a beginning in exploring a metaphor for artistic process, like a deconstruction of her own

artistic identity. For Cera, this exploration is a powerful reality that an elementary school teacher helped to bring to her.

Tori's short story

I was a lion born with multiple birth defects. My tail is grown into my leg and my ear is a little flat. Both my legs on my right side are shorter than the left, this makes me walk with a leaning limp that's not good for my back. I went to see the elephant who in his knowing practice said that I look like the leaning tiger, who was dropped upon his head. The other lions all ignore me when I rave and rant.

Tori's comments to me following this writing: To me, this sounds a bit like I could turn it into a poem with some work. I was just having a bit of trouble figuring out what it was that I wanted the grumpy lion to say.

(Martha: Tori -- Yes, I agree, you could certainly create a poem with this -- grin too. I enjoyed your description of the lion... You show your ability to take on a persona here with writing in the first person as the lion. This piece of writing sounds like an imaginative beginning for a tale that could be amusingly wild☺ or dark and surreal? Or...lots of potential...) (Tori/PWS/15/11/2005)

I asked the volunteer participants to bring a small container, like a margarine container, with earth from somewhere on their yard, or from a favourite place, for next class. I told them that I'd like us to explore connections with our planet along with the help of an author who addresses this in a book of hers about writing. The participants gave me a puzzled look and we left it there.



Photo of prairie crocus by Martha E. Zacharias,
20th April, 2007, Cranberry Flats, Saskatchewan.

Session 5: Writing the Earth

Our session started spontaneously with all of us in open writing. Excerpts from the open journals follow.

Cera's journal:

Dear Diary,

Well I don't really know what to write about today. Nothing important happened. It was all, well, it was pretty.... Blah. One of those days that wasn't good enough for you to remember for years to come but, not bad enough to classify as a horrible experience.

Well, let's see, what did I do today? We had a sub for Bio so I ended up finishing of homework for other classes while talking with Chris. (Debating is more like it.) Why is it that when we have a sub its like a "get out of jail free" card when it comes to goofing off around and slacking off.

Sometimes I wonder, is this really the kind of behaviour that will continue throughout generations. It starts small, disobeying rules and parents one minute, anarchy the next (Cera/PWS/22/11/2005).

Ebony's journal:

Today has been a bit mixed up, but take things as they come. I suppose I actually have five different journals [m -- WOW! ☺] going for different reasons. [?] sketch included of an object -- pen??] has broken so now it is a bend in it that is making it very hard to hold. I actually haven't been writing all that much, but I have some great ideas but I'm not sure how long it will take me to get working on them. For all I know, I might get it done tonight because I don't have that much homework. Though I do hav ea new PS2 game I'm looking forward to.

(Martha: I wish you the finest with your artistic gifts as a whole!)

(Ebony/PWS/22/11/2005)

Rosie's Journal:

Dear Journal,

Things are beginning to be stressful with school and homework -- especially in English. But I guess I just need to plow ahead and get through it day by day. It is a good thing there is a long weekend this weekend even though it is rather full. Driver's training is on Friday -- which is almost like school -- and I have to drive in the city for the first time which is scary. It's a good thing the instructor has her own brakes! [m: grin]. Then on saturday I have to work at the craft sale which also isn't very relaxing and I need to get up early on Monday and I'll probably just end up doing more homework. Let me just say, it is a good thing I have such a long relaxing weekend planned!

(Martha: ;-) Great! You deserve some relaxation!) (Rosie/PWS/22/11/2005).

Greta Lee's journal:

I really can't think of anything to write about. I am thinking very hard. Oh! Well, tomorrow, (my friend) and I are going to join the junior high kids to go curling for gym class. [Martha: great!] ...I am really looking forward to it, as then we can see people fall, get some practice and have some fun....Sometimes it is

nice to just have fun and take a break from everything...that means I am going to do a lot of cramming of homework tonight so I have less to do tomorrow...

(Martha: Grin – and smile -- Yes, these are the realities of high school, eh? However, you've accomplished so much already & you're a skilled creative writer too!) (Greta Lee/PWS/22/11/2005).

Tori's journal

I'll start with my weekend again, as usual. On Saturday, my brother had another football game, his last football game of the season. They were playing for the []. My brother's team won... Then later, on Saturday, I was working on an assignment for Mrs. [] and I was having a hard time thinking of ideas, and was getting very frustrated, so I was chewing on my pen unusually hard, and it eventually broke, and I got blue ink all over my face and hands and didn't get it off until yesterday (Tori/PWS/22/11/2005)

After the open journal writing, I began this session by talking with the participants about my interest in locating and purchasing one plant for them as a symbolic gesture of working and growing together as writers. I asked them if they had any ideas for plants that might bring a collective growth sense for them. Various suggestions were made such as any tropical plants and the bonsai. I then asked who had brought a container of earth and only two participants had, one from the rabbit cage on her farm and another from her yard.

I then showed them a photograph of what I called my favourite part of my city of residence at that time, the North Saskatchewan River, which all of them saw whenever they came into the city. Students responded quickly with comments about liking that beautiful river, and several had anecdotes about canoeing down that river. We talked a bit further about the river's high banks and appealing flow. Then I introduced briefly the work of Elaine Farris Hughes, her book *Writing From the Inner Self* (1984) in which she suggests learning to write the earth that we feel. I asked them if any of them were "nature types". Four of them indicated some form of outdoors enjoyment such as horseback

riding, camping, hiking, tending the farm animals, and walking the dog but Cera showed some hesitation, saying that she was a “city girl” (RST/22/11/2005, p. 20). I then gave them the handout I had prepared for this session. One of the participants asked us if we realized that every day we eat over 10,000 pounds of dirt three times a day. We conversed about how earth can evoke many different responses for people, that it can represent various element of life, death, growth, that there are many types and colours of earth, of soil. I briefly mentioned a helpful organization, the Association for Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE), which I value as a member. We then went through the handout together. I suggested that they imagine themselves in each step of the guide, then write in response to that which felt most comfortable to them.

Writing Group Handout for Session 5: Writing the Earth that I Feel

Elaine Farris Hughes, in *Writing from the Inner Self* (1991), suggests ways in which we can attempt to get in touch with our natural world and to write about that union. Hughes suggests that we start by thinking of the earth as what we walk upon, what provides our feet with some realities. These steps are adaptations of hers (p. 97-99).

1. Sit on the earth for a few minutes or focus your concentration on the ground, the earth upon which you walk. Think about the different appearances of the earth in various places and can be the site of earthquakes, floods, rivers, mountains, gardens
2. Think about forms and types of earth eg mud, red tropical soil, sandy flatlands soil, black prairie soil, the soil bed of your living room fig tree etc.
3. Think about the functions and the importance of this earth to us
4. What is your personal relationship with the earth? How do you feel when your body is in contact with it?
5. Can you recall a memorable experience you've had with the earth? Location? When? With whom are you? Relive this memorable experience in vivid, sensory detail through writing. Try to draw on all of your senses in your writing. Why is this experience significant to you? Physical and/or emotional feelings?

I asked volunteer participants to run their fingers if they felt comfortable in doing so, through the earth brought by two of them, to connect through their senses with the earth if possible. Participants then began chatting about some experiential connections with earth in terms of walking beside a stream on a farmyard, seeing the stream become a flood some seasons, enjoying hiking, snow, skiidooing on nearby hills. I mentioned to the participants that I was curious what this method for writing the earth could do to bring our planet to us in a living way, with vivid, sensory detail, trying to draw on all our senses, physical or emotional feelings, touch of the mud, dry dirt. For me, I told them, “the earth has almost a paranormal connection...because of a dream experience I had 10 years ago...in which ...a strong image of olive green leaves helped me...” (RST/22/11/2005, p. 21). Tori asked what the dream was and I said that I did not want to take much time to talk about it, but that it was an incredible experience in which I looked into the eyes of death and that along the way were green leaves which represented hope and brought determination. I told them that in this experience, death then turned aside and told me that I could walk back to life (RST/22/11/2005, p. 21). The dream I referred to was what I consider an out-of-body experience in a health crisis I had had.

I then returned to talking about writing and how for me my earlier writing tended to be outdoors in the grass. A student mentioned that one of her teachers used to take the class outside for English. I expressed delight with this, and then suggested that earth can be so many different things for us, dream, reality, relationship with the planet, and so on. Then I asked the participants to write in response to the guidelines in the handout they now had. We wrote quietly for some time.

Selections and excerpts from Session 5 writing follow.

Cera’s “writing the earth:

She holds me, comforts me so.

Her voice is as sweet as birds singing praises
to the heavens which lull me to sleep.

Her eyes are the stars watching over,
protecting us by night.

Her arms keep me safe and warm
For she is my mother, mother earth.
Her voice has grown dim,
I no longer hear her speak or feel or her touch
her singing does not reach my ears
her touch does not bring me warmth.
Still her eyes watch and her voice cries
But in my selfishness I hear not
her warning. Of what is to become [unclear last words].

(Martha: So beautiful -- strong, sad, and asking for hope? for mother earth -- I
love this work!) (Cera/PWS/22/11/2005).

Ebony's "writing the earth":

The wind sailed past and through the heads of those that ran. A team they started, but now they are nothing but a couple dancing in the trees. For all the others near, someone might have fallen long ago, but that was the price you paid to have the chance of a dream. Steps fell hard and fast, faster now that they leapt into the open and the fields of wheat. They didn't care. A lunge and a pull they were split again, eight beings four paths. Two stopped altogether and took time to watch over the beauty of nature. The others didn't have the time. Life didn't have the time. This is who they live now, forever and for always. The dust caught in the wind and the glisten of the [unclear script] them pause and falter in their strides. Every minute is like a thousand...yet somehow every ten felt like just one. That's what it would do to you, and that was the danger of it all. Being lost forever would be little worry to those who knew to run. It was an art all in itself, and a dream not to be forgotten. That was the only way I could describe it, so much and yet so little. You rode out at dawn, and it was every person and their

horse for themselves.

So the fields

Softly seething

feel the wind,

the storm is leaving

(Martha: This works very well—with the concluding poem. Do tell me more about this one.....) (Ebony/PWS/22/11/2005).

“Life didn’t have the time” That’s a phrase that will stay with me for a long time. Ebony experiences earth’s fragile life art and her creative evocation has profound innuendoes for us all. And hopefully, “...the storm is leaving”.

Rosie’s “writing the earth”

It is a brilliant day, warm and bright, smelling of spring with the promise of summer to come – and with it the end of school. However, not everything is blissful with the world. The end of the year is nearing – and none too soon, for my group of friends are starting to get on each other’s nerves.

Seeking a brief respite from the small dramas of upper elementary school, I run outside when the bells ring for lunch and go as far as I can until I reach the edge of the grassy field. Lying down on this plush green carpeting, I feel my pulse, I close my eyes, breathe in the rich scents of freshly cut grass, and listen to the sounds of the wind in the trees. There is a chirping of birds as they socialize and make their own summer plans. Lying on the ground I am aware of the solid presence of the Earth at my back, a stability during such unstable times in my own small life. There is such a feeling of immensity which makes my own problems seem paltry and foolish in comparison. The sun is bright on my face, warming me and lighting up my eyelids with a warm, living red colour to enjoy. These are the times when I [copy unclear] the world I live in. A more soothing environment can not be found.

(Martha: I love this, Rosie! Your writing is fluent & shows strength and faith

for a beautiful earth for our future too.) (Rosie/PWS/22/11/2005)

In “writing the earth”, Rosie joins her close companion, the earth, to reflect on the better in life.

Greta Lee’s “writing the earth”

Splash! Splash! Megan and I were playing in her dugout during an extremely hot summer’s day. We walked down to the very bottom of the couple hundred foot deep hole, that’s dug out with water at the very bottom. We were doing canon balls, jumping in and just playing down there all day. We even ended up having a mud bath and we pretended to shave our legs, even though we were way too young. We had plastered sticky muddy, clay, all over our legs. It was almost an inch thick. The feeling was like no other.

The earth felt cool, but yet calming. I enjoyed doing this as we played in the mud and water for several hours. We did this a few times that summer, but couldn’t the year after because the dugout was completely full of water. That summer seemed like it flew by so fast, but the feeling of mud between my toes and all over my legs lasts forever. Everytime since that summer when I see mud, it turns into a remember-when story, and Megan and I collect our thoughts about what we have done in the past.

And every time sand, or dirt or even mud is between my toes, I recollect memories of that summer. Each of the different kinds of earth has a different texture, but they tickle my toes all in the same way. They also feel rough and cool to the touch of the skin. It is almost like a magnet to me and the earth, as I am always getting dirty in some way, no matter where I am or what I am doing.

(Martha: very interesting writing [remainder of comments illegible from photocopy]) (Greta Lee/PWS/22/11/2005).

Each of the different kinds of earth has a different texture, but they tickle my toes all in the same way”, says Greta above. In her writing, Greta Lee reaches beyond to express observations of earth, experience, and a love of all life.

Tori's "writing the earth"

The dream you just mentioned about the leaves and death made me think about an unusual experience I had with nature, and now that we have to write about an experience of our own, this is the only one I seem to be able to think about writing about.

I'm sure I've mentioned it before, but last year, I lived in England, [Martha: great!] with my Mom's sister and her family. Their house is a thatched cottage that is about 500 years old, [Martha: wow!] in a cute little village called Liddington. The house is right next to the Old Saxon church in the village. I'd lots of times when I felt like being alone or whatever, go to the gravestones to try to find the oldest one. Some were so old they were covered in moss and lichen and almost fallen out. The inscriptions on some were so worn away that you could only find them with your fingers, and even then, I'm not sure they were modern enough to even be written in English.

Anyway, my unusual experience with nature was in that graveyard one night. My cousin, Emily and I were hanging out in my room (from which you could see the back of the church, and the more recent part of the graveyard, which was from behind the church, and we were getting increasingly curious about the [copy not clear for a few words] check it out. If you've ever seen "Mickey's Christmas Carol" (It's a Disney Cartoon) then I don't need to describe the foggy moonlit scene with the two dark and gravediggers who were busy working away. Emily and I were both very scared to talk to them, because they just seemed so out of place in our quiet village graveyard, even though it was a thick and foggy midnight. We slowly walked up to the hole and looked over the edge, and because of the angle of the light, you couldn't see the bottom of the pit, which made it look bottomless, and the sight of so much cut ground, that would soon be someone's permanent home, is something I don't think I'll be able to forget. [copy unclear for next phrase]...of contrast between the old and the young, the new and the old, the ancient and the unhappened. For some reason, every time I saw the graves of that church after that, I'd see what the ground looks like beneath

them, as well as the gravestones. So, that my unusual 'Earth' story.

(Martha: Very unusual, mysterious, mystical... You've had fascinating experiences in such an interesting environment in England...)

(Tori/PWS/22/11/2005).

An unusual development in story comes for Tori with her construction of a surreal personal narrative. She reaches into perceptive observations that one might expect of people older than she is: "...contrast between the old and the young, the new and the old, the ancient and the unhappened". And the story does emerge from an experience with earth, with touching some earth from the neighbourhood.

Near the end of this session, I handed out a feedback form (Appendix 7), and asked participants for comments or suggestions that they wished to make. I reminded them that the feedback was voluntary, not compulsory. The feedback received is as follows.

Ebony's feedback for above session 22/11/05:/

Ebony liked the memory that this session's activity brought to her. She enjoyed the session as a whole but felt that the other participants enjoyed it even more. She indicated that today she found it hard to concentrate and that she found it hard to decide which place to write about. This session about "Writing the earth" is one that helped her to make up her mind to walk tonight to the old creek again, she noted.

(Ebony/RSF/22/11/2005)

Tori's feedback 22/11/2005

Tori felt good about this session, especially that she could actually get things that she felt like writing about. She disliked none of it and said that she really felt like describing that church and the village.[?] She felt that the activity would help her in the future if she was stumped for writing ideas. Tori indicated that she liked having the researcher doing the same assignments made it easier for her to write what she wanted to "when it doesn't feel like I'm being watched" (Tori/22/11/2005). Because she had spent

time thinking about this topic which was something she liked, she found this writing assignment easier to write than a lot of the other assignments. (Tori/RSF/22/11/2005).

Greta Lee's feedback 22/11/2005

Greta Lee felt the session went by fast but felt that she was not in a writing mood and so thought she could not write a good story. She said that she had had a good day generally. Greta Lee found that it was a different experience to write about the earth, to try to make a connection while still writing some type of story. The activity brought many memories to her, even ones that she could not write about. She likes it that the researcher works on the same assignments so that the researcher can share her ideas too and all can learn together. Greta Lee felt that writing about the earth was hard. She felt that she learned that "there are many repetitive aspects in life like earth" (Greta Lee/RST/22/11/2005). Closing comments from her: "See you next week! Have a good day☺" (Greta Lee/RSF/22/11/2005).

Session 6: Pizza, Revisions & *Dracaena Marginata*

This 6th session was informal and not audiotaped. I brought a plant for the writing group as a representative gift, first to thank the volunteer participants as a group for their generous gift of time and effort for creative, fascinating contributions with my research, to remind them of collective and individual growth and development, and to encourage continued sentient imagination in their caring for the tree and for their own further writing. The *Dracaena Marginata* plant, also known as the Madagascar dragon tree, is an unusual tropical plant with many long, grass-like leaves that reach up in their growth, some in various directions and styles, and some coming together at the top of the plant. The rural school of this writing research had a lovely atrium where anyone could sit down and contemplate, or wander through for observational enjoyment. I informed the group members that they could choose to have the tree in a place of their choice, and this might be in their classroom, in the school's atrium, or wherever they wished. At this time, participants felt that they would like this plant to be in their home room classroom.

Since the participants had told me a number of times about their favourite pizza shop in town, I brought pizza for us all from this restaurant and we began by eating and chatting. I informed the group that journals were optional today, that they could write in these if they wished to, but that they need not do so if they did not want to. After a while, I asked the participants to choose one written work from these sessions and to edit and revise it as they preferred. No instructions or expectations were given for the editing and revising, but I did mention that they could certainly help each other with this if they preferred. I suggested that they do this as they had already learned in their education thus far. For the most part, I have included the revised version in the records of Session Five as it becomes clumsy with computer formats to record with precision the bits of changes often included. The editing and revising by the group tended to be spelling errors, syntax concerns and occasional vocabulary changes. In terms of recording the final edited versions, I will present Cera's as she rewrote her entire poem. Her moving, edited, revised version is given.

Cera's revision of "writing the earth":

Mother Earth

She holds me, comforts me so
Her arms wrap around me keeping me safe
and warm. Shielding me from devastation and
misery, protecting me from heart ache.

Her voice calms my sorrows and lulls me to
Sleep. As sweet as angels sing from heaven, she
Tames the heart of a lion with but one word.
For she is my mother, mother earth.
Her eyes are the stars, closely watching from
a distance. Keeping me from harm and
reaching out to me when I stumble. I

see she is watching and I know
of her love and kindness.
For she is my mother, mother earth.

Sadly, with time her voice has grown dim
her song does not reach my ears and
her cries have gone on no answer.

I no longer feel her touch, her arms
around me. I do not feel the warmth of
her embrace.

Still her eyes watch and the skies weep.
She cries out for us but,
In my selfishness, I hear not her
warning of what will become of her.

To my mother, mother earth.
(Cera/PWS/29/11/2005)

Following the editing and revising, I informed the participants that we needed to have one more session in which we would have individual chats and that they could sign up for their preferred slot on my time sheet. I told the participants that I would appreciate their feedback on various aspects of these writing research sessions, that the questions I'd ask would be similar to what they'd already answered in session feedback forms, plus I'd welcome any comments and feedback that they had too. I emphasized that their feedback could help teachers and students of the future.

Session 7: Individual Chats

For this session, we began with informal chatting and participants informed me about some upcoming events in the school which excited them. Participants checked the

time sheet for their own interview, left the room except the first one, and we began. I had prepared a basic guide for my part of the chat questions and these are presented in Appendix 8, but I did not consider the guide a formal strategy and volunteer participants were encouraged to comment on any areas, to ask questions themselves too if they so preferred. Participants were not asked to write in their journal but were told that they certainly could.

Rosie was the only participant who wrote a journal entry this session:

Dear Journal,

It's December today and Christmas is coming! I am very excited. I got the Christmas tree out yesterday -- all by myself -- and will start decorating it tonight. My aunts are also coming over tonight which is nice because I hardly ever see them as they live in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. They came down to Red Deer to help my other aunt move into her new house and decided they may as well come and visit us since they were here. It is kind of awkward though when I do see them because when you haven't seen someone in a very long time -- where do you start? (Rosie/PWS/6/12/2005).

Individual Chat with Cera

Cera liked the comments that had been made in response to the writings, the work with description, the opportunity to focus on one task such as description so that there is nothing else to worry about. She felt that sight was the most important sense to her, but that she knew they could explore with different ways like sounds and textures, especially as there was no mark in this class [writing session]. She said that she thought she drew on her imagination to write by bringing things to life, and that that took a lot to do. Her eyes were opened to see a different type of writing, of actually bringing inanimate objects to life. She felt that journal writing helped her a lot to get into the mindset of writing time. It also helped, she felt, to get her out of the drama scenes just prior to some writing sessions, to "kind of get it out of your system...which is really cool...". She said that everything in the writing sessions ended up helping her, and again noted the experience of bringing an object to life. She enjoyed writing in a group, especially to see how different

each person is, and how differently each of them wrote. She said it was “cool” to have me do the same assignments as they did. (Cera/ICF/6/12/2005).

Individual Chat with Ebony

Ebony was a participant who considered herself a writer and her work delighted us all. She started by saying that the writing sessions reminded her of how much she liked to write and that because of the sessions, she was writing more on her own again too. The senses she used most of all, she felt, were sight and hearing, that she really liked doing descriptions, that she applied this in detail to the characters she writes about on her own. She indicated that she had a harder time with touch, that she thought “everyone will touch things differently”. She enjoyed the Russian dolls in my Bolga Basket because of her interest in Russia so she did not have a hard time choosing an object to work with for that session. She told me that her mother spent much of her earlier life in Montreal and her father in southern Ontario, that they moved to Alberta, first a city, and then this town when her mother was pregnant with her. She said that they wanted the opportunities in Alberta and that her mother was a fanatic about horses. Her parents, she said, write to their moms all the time. She had a harder time with journals because she felt that “if you’re thinking about something, you can usually keep it to yourself to some extent”. She also said that she was not into sharing her writing as much, that she remembers all of her stories, doesn’t keep them, deletes them. She finds it too weird to go back into what she might have written long ago, that this is too weird for her. The session writing activity that she liked best was choosing an object to write about. She also suggested that it would be neat to have everyone have the same object, to write a different view about it. She liked writing in a group and she said she found it hard to write when it’s very quiet because then any sound would begin to distract her. She indicated that she chooses different music at home for writing, and the music depends on the genre in which she is writing. She closed with “I really enjoyed this experience. I’d love to do it again” (Ebony/ICF/6/12/2005).

Individual Chat with Rosie

I began by telling Rosie that a voice teacher I had during my teenage years in southern Manitoba had the same surname as hers and I found this interesting especially as she had written in her journal one day that her aunts from Saskatchewan and Manitoba were coming over. She said that these contacts of mine might be related to her. Rosie's favourite session was the one in which we talked and wrote about the earth, possibly because she had more experience with that. She said that she likes plants and animals a great deal. For her, the visual sense seemed the most important for writing, to describe objects etc. Rosie felt that journal writing was "neat to get into writing", to get into the mood of writing. She felt that she preferred to write alone rather than in a group, that she found group writing somewhat distracting. Her favourite writing assignment, she mentioned again at the end of our chat, was "the earth one" (Rosie/ICF/6/12/2005).

Individual Chat with Greta Lee

Greta Lee and I began by talking about senses when she walked in for our chat. She told me that for her the visual tended to be the most important, the tactile seemingly not much. When I asked her what brought her imagination out the most, she mentioned that in our sessions this experience with choosing the object from the Bolga Basket brought her imagination out the most. I thanked her for bringing an earth sample to our Writing the Earth session. She said yes, she'd brought it from the area of her rabbits at home. We talked about rabbits for awhile and she told me her rabbits were dwarfs. I expressed delight as the rabbits my sons used to have were also dwarf rabbits. She said further hers were even mini-dwarfs. I asked her how she felt about writing in a journal to start the sessions and she said that it was good, that "it kind of got me going -- on the -- like -- thinking of writing and all that". I realized that earlier I had asked her if the Bolga Basket object had brought her imagination out the most, rather than asking openly what she thought, did in fact bring her imagination out the most. So I asked her again what she felt brought her imagination out the most. She responded that when you write in journals, "like the ideas just flow cause you're constantly writing. So that kind of helps" She then returned to the object exercise, and mentioned that for her, touching the unicorn she chose

did not do much for her, but trying to think of something to connect it with did, that for her looking at it and thinking brought connections and ideas. She then told me about her favourite childhood movie with a unicorn in the story. I asked her how she felt about writing with the group and she answered that it was better to write with a group than with a whole class, that writing in a whole class tended to be too noisy, that there are too many disruptions in a class. I then asked her if she found it beneficial to write in our group during the times when the whole group was very quiet and writing intensely. I told her too that one volunteer participant even suggested that that quiet intense writing gave her vibes for wanting to write more. Greta Lee said that she found the quiet group writing interesting but had no further comment on it.

Session 8: Browsing through Transcriptions

For this session, I provided each participant with a copy of the transcriptions for sessions 1 to 6 and a transcription of their individual meeting with me. I asked them to browse through the transcriptions and to make corrections in any area that appeared inaccurate, such as what was said, or who said it, or did they feel something had been missed that had been said or done? Participants found it quite an amusing experience at first to read their own words and indicated that it felt strange and embarrassing and funny all at the same time to read what you've said (FN/20/12/2005). I did not audiotape this session. The only changes participants requested were the speakers assigned for a few comments. I read all the participant notes for this and chose to use the speaker identified by most of the group for each of the comments in question.

We chatted about happenings for Christmas for their school situations, including concerts soon (which unfortunately conflicted with my university schedule), drama in the new year, and hopes to bring some of this research to publication in time. I did inform the group that an article about my Master's thesis writing research was published and that I sent my participant for that work a copy of the article. I assured them too that I would certainly try to send them through their school administration, a copy should an article of mine about this writing research be published in the near future.

At this final session, Tori gave me her handwritten responses to the interview

questions. Her responses indicated that she felt the research writing sessions were good, interesting and “something a little different” (RST/20/12/2005). She wrote that she used her visual sense most in her writing and that memories came to her quite a bit. She felt that she was not usually good at writing imaginatively “but I guess I used it sometimes” (RST/20/12/2005, p. 39). Tori liked it that I wrote with the group, that they then did not feel watched, and that my writing with them made it easier for her to write, not feel so rushed either. She felt that journal writing was helpful, that it got the “writing juices” going (RST/20/12/2005, p. 39), and that it got her senses going too. Tori noted that the group talk helped her most for imagination. She wrote that the assignment in which they were asked to write about someone who had influenced their writing was strange, because she had never really had anyone influence hers. She liked it that there was no homework in these sessions. Tori found it particularly interesting and helpful, she wrote, that I “obviously really enjoyed writing, so it was easier for me to get writing...” (RST/20/12/2005, p. 39). She indicated further that it she liked it that “the whole group was actually on task when we were supposed to be writing” (RST/20/12/2005, p. 39). For her, the best writing assignment was in writing about the chosen object, the easiest was the one about Earth, the hardest one was the poem that she “never managed to write” (RST/20/12/2005, p. 39).

Summary of the Writing Data

This research has focused a description of how Secondary School English Language Arts students explored sentient imagination through writing in a group. The data has been reported in this chapter in a full and detailed manner in order to provide a context for the writing done by these grade eleven students, known in this document as volunteer participants. The observations and findings from a study such as this can well include much more than the scope of this document permits for discussion, so I will choose to address subsequent observations and findings that appear to be most readily integrative for writing, for teaching, for the spirit of learning -- from those emerging in response to the research question for this dissertation: *How do Secondary School English Language Arts 20-1 students explore sentient imagination through writing in a group?*

Chapter V: Discussion of Observations and Findings from the Research

To discuss and interpret observations and findings from this writing research study, I will explore data through three methods from various parts of the data collected. The first will be a method of discourse analysis that I developed in a doctoral class and one piece of writing as well as one example of writing session conversation will be analyzed. Second, an interpretation of observations made by the volunteer participants during invitations for written or chat and interview feedback, will be explored. Third, an analysis and interpretation using a selection of relevant questions from the work of Saldaña, will be used to reach for additional observations.

Discourse Analysis of Hedging by Participants

Two discourse examples, one from writing session conversation and one from a piece of writing from the work of each volunteer participant of the writing group, will be now discussed and interpreted to search for observations and findings in relation to the focus for this doctoral research about sentient imagination and writing. Although this discussion will examine the discourse examples for hedging with the help of the Discourse Analysis Contextual Spirals, described on page 83 of this document, an attempt will be made not to emphasize the discourse theory, but to try to bring out what the findings show in relation to ways in which these participants explored sentient imagination in their writings in the group sessions. The discussion with regards to this DACS method will be numbered with reference to each of the five points given in this method, Figure 2, p. 83). Hedges, which were previously mentioned in this dissertation on p. 81, are defined by Rowland as “linguistic pointers to ... uncertainty” (1995, p. 328). As previously noted, Salager-Meyer suggests that hedges are an effort authors make to “tone down...risk of opposition...” (Salager-Meyer, 2007, p. 2-3).

I did find that for most of the volunteer participants, hedging tended to be more common in open journal writing and in conversation than in the writing of stories and poetry. In addition, there were differences in terms of how much each individual participant used this form of discourse. The issues addressed by the Figure 2, Discourse Analysis Contextual Spirals (p. 83), are:

- 1) Interesting, provocative, pleasing, disturbing word, phrase or object from document of study
- 2) Syntactic and/or semantic contexts of 1.)
- 3) Discourse Analysis pattern/identity of 1.)
- 4) Discourse analysis theory/research findings for patterns/identity of 1.)
- 5) Interpretive development with connections among 1-4 and document of study as a whole.

For this interpretive study of hedging examples from the work of the volunteer participants for this research, only words and phrases could be used. For other forms of discourse studies, objects of any forms could be studied as well. A look at examples of hedging from participant's conversation and writing and their relationship to this research focus follows.

Cera's Hedging

Cera's oral and written communication during our writing research sessions rarely included hedging. In session 3, we chose objects from the Bolga Basket, and worked on a description exercise, attempting to use all our senses. Cera chose a brightly painted wooden egg from Poland. 1) The example of hedging in this description is "seem". 2) The word "seem" is used in Cera's description: "Tears of green seem to fall away from the angles of the flower" (Cera/PWS/8/11/2005). 3) The choice of the verb "seem" can be connected to Rowland's general definition of Shields, a manner of showing uncertainty. 4) I suggest that a sub-category for Rowland's shields might well be creative shields, ones which, like Cera's seemingly uncertain use of it here, may well invite the reader to visualize the "tears of green" as falling from the flower, and to re-imagine those tears from other places or in other areas too. 5) Cera's examination of this object brings her sentient imagination to work. Her senses study the object, create scenes and characters and experiences with this study. In addition, her creative study of this object brings a connection of a personal experience that begins the development of an artistic web for Cera and the Polish Easter egg.

In session 5, in which we worked with “writing the earth”, opening conversation brought talk about nature, outdoors ventures, environmental concerns, animals, and city life, Cera had already emphasized that she was not an outdoorsy person, but she did like Stanley Park, she said (Cera/RST/22/11/2005/p. 18). When the concerns of city pollution were raised by one participant, Cera said “I do really like the city though – the lights and stuff – ohhh...” (Cera/RST/22/11/2005/p. 19). 1) The phrase, “do really like the city though” is the example of speech closest to a form a hedging in Cera’s work. 2) The phrase is part of an unfinished sentence and seems to drift off as she thinks further about this issue. 3) The phrase also seems to be an attempt at both gently defending but toning down her love of the city. This technique may come close to what Rowland refers to as a Shield (1995, p. 334) or what Salager-Meyer defines as hedging: “a process whereby authors tone down...risk of opposition...(2007, p. 2-3). 4) Hedging with particular, shielding, is shown in the discourse analysis literature of Rowland and Salager-Meyer to be an effort by authors to protect themselves from possible opposition, from having to prove statements made. 5) This example is a significant one for Cera’s work in the course of the writing sessions. She and her family had lived in several Canadian locations and had moved to this small town from another setting that seemed to her more urban. Her comments made it seem to me that she felt that to love the outdoors, the earth, and animals, felt somewhat unsophisticated for her. She did not bring an earth sample to this session, nor did she show particular interest in the subject. Yet the example given here of her hedging with talking about how she did like the city “though”, seems to show some hesitation, as though she is asking us to remember that she has awareness of some unpleasant urban associations, maybe because she is admitting that she does like the city but that she is aware of the degrees of pollution in the urban environment. The poem that she writes after this session’s discussion is a strong example of her sentience, with a love shown for Mother Earth, and a pain and uncertainty for this Mother’s state.

Ebony’s Hedging

In Session 4 in which we worked with choosing objects from the Bolga Basket for description and story creation, we began with open journal writing as we had since

Session 2. 1) In her journal entry for this session, she uses the hedging expression “I almost doubt” (Ebony/PWS/15/11/2005). 2) This hedging is preceded by the clause “With all the stuff due tomorrow” and the sentence finishes with “I almost doubt I’ll get to any writing at all”. She does not say that she doubts if she’ll get to writing; she says that she is almost in a state of doubting about it. 3) Ebony’s hedge appears to be used as a Shield (Rowland, 1995, p. 334), 4) in an attempt to show that she has lost her faith that she will write, but that she has almost lost it, or kind of sort of possibly could lose an edge of it....so to speak. 5) Ebony informed us early in the writing research sessions that she is writing a novel and that she works on this novel regularly. She showed passion and strong dedication to this work. I can imagine that she might well consider it poor on her part to admit that in the face of so much homework, she had doubt if she would get to any writing at all that evening. After all, the writing of a novel is something she enjoys so much more than the other tasks. For Ebony, it is safe to say that she almost doubts about getting to writing, but not really, as writing is core to her life. Yet it is quite an admission for her to say that she almost loses her passionate core with all this homework. It means that the homework load does pause her writing interests at times.

The only example of hedging that I could locate in Ebony’s recorded conversation was in Session 5 with “writing the earth” talk. 1) The hedging words I select for Ebony are “maybe about” (Ebony/RST/22/11/2005, p. 18). 2) Ebony uses this hedge in describing her house and yard: “Yeah, my house, maybe about a few acres in the horsefield, there’s this, there’s three hills, in between them there’s a small river... and you can just sit on the hills” (p. 18). Ebony is telling the group about one of her favourite spots in the place where she lives and the precise location of this river is not measured in metres or kilometers, but by approximations in walks to and along that small river. 3) Rowland refers to this form of hedging as an Approximator (1995, p. 335) used by an author to give an approximate sense of a issue or a matter such as Ebony does with distance. 4) In this case, the reason Ebony may be using an approximation hedge is quite simply because there may not be a road that clarifies the distance of that stream from her house, or across the field. She may also be using this technique of hedging here because others may know of this small river and might well feel they have a more precise

sense of the distance of it from a particular spot. 5) Ebony mentioned a number of times that she loves the outdoors and that she considers herself a nature person who loves to walk her dog and be outside. In talking about this small river which is the length of a few acres into the horsefield, she is also suggesting to the listeners that such a distance is not far to her, and we think that it has likely been a pleasant walk for her many times. Just before she makes the comment with the hedge, she tells us that her rural place, her walking the dog is key to her life. She says "It's my self, it's part of my entity... I like being outside and I like running water..." (Ebony/RST/22/11/2005, p. 18). She lives with the horsefield, her dog, her hills and her small river. Talking about exact distances between these could well distract listeners from the Romantic emphasis that seems to emerge in her writing about the natural world.

Rosie's Hedging

Rosie used more hedging than the other participants did as a whole, and her speech seemed to have more of it than her writing. In Session 2, after we had listened to music, after most of us had finished our biographies, and after I had a portion of my story about my grandparents' influence as well as a short beginning of my poem about his influence, and then chatted about the writing of poetry for a while, I asked if anyone would be willing to read her poem. There was a short pause and then I asked Rosie if she would read hers. Her response was "Okay, it's just a bunch of words...but I don't know..." (Rosie/RST/3/11/2005, p. 9). 1) Rosie's hedging in this answer to being asked to read her poem includes "it's just a bunch of words" coupled with "I don't know". 2) As shown in the full response above, these two hedges, of which the first part is like a statement by itself and the last part, "I don't know" follows the first statement, making it a clause with an unspoken conjunction "but". 3) These two expressions appear to be an Approximator (Rowland, 1995, p. 335) for the first part and a *downtoner* (House/Kasper, 1981, in Markkanen & Shroeder, 2007, p. 5). 4) The Approximator shows uncertainty for an author and brings a degree of safety in its use. Adding a downtoner to the Approximator may further reduce risk and saves face, so to speak, just in case the Approximator brings undesirable response from listeners. 5) Rosie seemed rather

uncertain when she was asked to read her poem yet she also had a grin on her face when she made her comments. Her open journal which began this session wrote about several amusing happenings that day. She wrote about making what to her was an hilarious error in a Biology quiz, then to her relief finding that the quiz marks did not count for her Biology grades (Rosie/PWS/3/11/2005). I found her to be a person who seemed uncertain and insecure at times, but who had with these characteristics, also a great sense of humour in both talking and writing. With her open journal for this session and her work throughout the remaining sessions, I interpret her hedged response to my request for her to read her poem as one that showed uncertainty in terms of how we as a group might receive her poem, and her own uncertainty in terms of its literary value, and a response that also showed ability to laugh at her own uncertainties. With the first part of her response “Okay, it’s just a bunch of words”, she amusingly denigrates her work, then with an amusing cynicism, suggests to us that well, maybe it’s not just that, that she does not really know. Her humour seemed to me to bring an edge of being pleased at having been asked to read. Her poem was in fact one that showed affection, respect, and gratitude for the teacher about whom she wrote it. She did use mostly a list of descriptors and these worked well for her apparent intent.

The short biographical story Rosie wrote in Session 2 before writing the poem which is discussed also shows a few hedges. 1) In this story Rosie refers to “quite a funny monologue” and the use of “quite” creates a hedge (Rosie/PWS/3/11/2005). 2) The sentence which contains this hedge shows an amusing irony for the subject for the monologue: “The subject I had to do that I remember most was on bruises which ended up being quite a funny monologue about bruises” 3) This hedge is related to Rowland’s Plausability Shields (1995, p. 334). 4) This Plausability Shield may well have been used in case the author was worried that someone might think that her work was not funny. 5) In this biographical narrative, Rosie describes an experience with the English teacher who had a positive influence for her interest in writing. After the above statement with the hedge regarding her funny monologue, she vividly describes writing about her colourful bruise incident and the contexts of how these came. She also indicates that this was written in a two minute paragraph writing spree which this English teacher frequently

assigned. In addition, she closes her biography with the information that “No matter how silly anyone’s writing would be, Ms. Theberg would still give praise to the writer and encourage everyone to continue writing and thinking imaginatively” (Rosie/ PWS/ 3/11/2005). This last statement for the story and the use of a hedge for her amusing monologue in Ms. Theberg’s class may be interconnected, and yet, her hedge may be a cautious attempt to show pride in her sense of humour and her ability to write with it.

Greta Lee’s Hedging

Greta Lee was a talkative person who dared to share and participate actively and frequently. In the Introductory Session, I had talked with the participants about the fact that we would be starting with some biographical writing in relation to someone who had had a helpful, valued influence for their writing. I suggested that they could even bring a photograph of this person if they had one to share. In the next session, which was Session 1, Greta Lee was the only one to bring a picture. After our opening chat, I asked if anyone had brought a photograph and Greta Lee answered, “I kinda drew one but...” (Greta Lee/RST/25/10/2005) and then showed us her sketch. 1) “kinda” is an interesting hedge for Greta Lee. 2) Her full comment is an incomplete one as well and that seems in context for her content. 3) The identity of Greta Lee’s “kinda” has an edge of Rowland’s *Approximator* (1995, p. 335) and it may be what Markkanen and Schroeder would describe as the concept of vagueness in hedging which is shown in “expressions that denote the impreciseness of quantity, quality, or identity...” (2007, p. 5). 4) As is shown by the definition of vagueness, this hedging may be an attempt by an author not to brag about a specific item, rather to cut it down some because of uncertainty with its quality or reception by audience or listener. The *Approximator* can be used as something that falls into the large area of a particular item or action, but no specifics are provided in terms of quality. 5) In this first writing research session, Greta Lee showed a slight hesitancy with taking out and showing her drawing of the teacher who influenced her as a writer, but she voluntarily told us that she had “kinda” drawn a picture. She seemed to have a shy pride in having drawn it and when I responded with “Great!” she did take it out and shared it with us. Her emphasis in her biographical writing about this teacher was how

often they did creative writing in class, and how at the end of class, they would have to read their writing to the class as well.

In the third session, Greta Lee chose to work with a small sterling silver unicorn for a descriptive exercise with her senses and for a story integrating this character. Greta Lee's sentient imagination came to life with this work. 1) A hedge she used in the first sentence of her descriptive paragraph is "seems to be rather bold" (Greta Lee/PWS/8/11/2005). 2) The hedging phrase is a subordinate clause that provides additional description for the main clause of this first sentence: "It stands not very tall, but seems to be rather bold and mystic" (Greta Lee/PWS/8/11/2005). 3) Greta Lee's hedging with this hedging phrase would be referred to as a hedge that "avoids precise propositional specification" by House/Kasper (1981, in Markkanen & Schroeder, 2007, p. 5) or an Adaptor, as a subcategory of Approximator, by Rowland (1995, p. 335). 4) Rowland's work suggests in a manner similar to that of House/Kasper's comments about hedging, that this method of hedging is used to safely and politely offer some information, but without specifics that may bring confrontation or question. 5) In Greta Lee's descriptive paragraph, her first observation is that the unicorn is "not very tall" and then shows her fascination for it by qualifying her first observation with another, acknowledging its boldness and mysticism. This acknowledgement, which begins the writing of her lure to this unicorn, is the only hedging used in her paragraph. Her description does well in bringing this object/character to life, and in connecting it with her own life and her own fantasies. It may well be that Greta Lee's beginning of this bold examination of the unicorn and her entry into her own fantasies, was made easier for her by starting with a hedge. That hedge may have provided the safety net for her to open her sentient imagination and let it emerge in her writing. Her descriptive writing in which we worked hard to draw out senses and imagination, shows more creativity than her biographical writing from the session before this.

Tori's Hedging

We worked in Session 4 on creating a short story by imaginatively bringing to life the chosen object from the Bolga Basket work of Session 3. Tori had chosen a teakwood

napkin holder from Kenya which was carved with a lion at the top of it. After we had done the open journal writing for the session, talked about and received this session's writing guide, and written our stories, volunteer participants were delightfully interested in sharing their work. Not only that, they showed excitement in hearing about imaginative ideas that each brought into the writing about the Bolga Basket object. Tori was somewhat quiet at first and I knew she had been working with the lion object so I asked her how this writing came about. Her answer contained several uses of the same hedge, 1) "kind of". 2) Tori's answer to my question was: "I was kind of writing like the lion's perspective – kind of thing – how the lion feels ..." (Tori/RST/15/11/2005/ p. 16). Her talk shows a hedging statement, then several hesitating phrases. 3) Rowland's *Approximators* (1995, p. 335) describe this pattern of hedging. 4) The hedge "kind of" seems to be a cautious attempt to talk about something, to describe an action or a character but not to make an absolute statement about it. 5) We had begun our discussion about and sharing of our sentient stories from the Bolga Basket objects and Cera had just shown excitement about the fact that a comment I made about how my object came to life was exactly the way hers did. Cera had a strong assertive personality and Tori had a strong, more quiet one in the context of the writing research sessions. When I asked Tori about hers, the excitement from Cera's comments may have provided more hesitation than usual for Tori. Tori found the examination of the lion napkin holder intriguing and she examined it in great detail. The lion came alive for her already in the sentient paragraph that she wrote with it and her work showed this beautifully. In her story which was shorter than that of the other participants, she brought the lion to life in a manner different from the others too: She became the lion in a tender, moving beginning for a story which she told me later, could become a poem. Her hedging was a gentle, uncertainty about her own mode of dealing with this writing assignment.

Tori's story for the "writing the earth" assignment in Session 5 took us into a personal experience of hers in England and 1) the phrase "I don't think" is a hedge that will be examined for her written work. 2) The sentence that contains the hedge for study is a long one, that is in itself, a journey in meaning: "We walked slowly up the hole and looked over the edge, and because of the angle of the light, you couldn't see the bottom of

the pit, which made it look bottomless, and the sight of so much cut ground, that would soon be someone's permanent home, is something I don't think I'll be able to forget" (Tori/PWS/22/11/2005). 3) The hedging phrase, "I don't think" is a Shield (Rowland, 1995, p. 334). 4) Shields such as this attempt to provide a cover of uncertainty about a statement or observation or declaration made. 5) Tori's story is about a mysterious night experiences with a graveyard that was within view of the windows of the place where she and her family were staying in England with cousins. Her descriptions draw from all senses and the dark mystical which haunts her from that experience. Her hedging seems to show her uncertainty not only about saying that she does not think she'll be able to forget this view of the "bottomless" grave views, but about conceptions of the "new and the old, the ancient and the unhappened" (Tori/PWS/22/11/2005), and about the mystery and the mystic of life and death for us all ... It is interesting that this hedging about an experience with graves is brought in by Tori with the conclusion of her vivid dark story.

Observations from the Writing Research Volunteer Participants

Participants were asked to provide feedback about the about the writing research sessions twice and these were done after sessions 3 and 5. Giving feedback was not compulsory and participants were told that if they did not want to give feedback, they did not have to do so, but each participant chose to give feedback. Participants generally enjoyed the third session in which they chose an object from the Bolga Basket to explore through their senses, to write a descriptive paragraph about it, then to bring it to life and create a narrative that included this object. Participants felt the session was productive and that they learned more about descriptive writing. Several participants mentioned that they liked getting ideas for story writing from this experience with an object, and that it was helpful to learn to look at everything around them for writing ideas to come to life. One participant wrote that she appreciated the opportunity for journal writing because it gave her a chance to explain some things to me from a previous school day's difficulties. The same participant also indicated that it was good that I was doing the same writing assignments in order to get a sense of how hard these might be for the students.

After the fifth session which dealt with the “writing the earth” exercise, I asked the group members for voluntary feedback again. Three participants handed in the completed feedback forms. Two of the participants liked the session as a whole, including the topics of concern with the earth. Both of these participants felt that they could connect with the sessions from memories of their own experiences that they valued. One participant indicated that this was best for getting ideas to write if she were ever stuck for ideas. She was happy that I was writing again because she did not have to feel watched. This participant found the “writing the earth” exercise easier than all the work of the other sessions. Another participant noted that she liked it that I was writing almost continuously. She wrote too that she found there was much to learn about the earth.

The individual chats scheduled for Session 7 of the research study in writing proved to be what I see as valuable for the interpretation of this work. In fact, the insights and observations from the participants during those chats form what I consider the crux of this interpretive chapter, and maybe the whole of this study. I found the comments from the volunteer participants moving, powerful, provocative, evocative, rewarding and more. I will make an attempt to bring out the observations and findings from each of the participants. The phrases in italics are quotes from the participants during the individual chat feedback sessions or phrases that paraphrase a point made by several of them.

1. Individual Creativity and Sentience: *everyone will touch things differently*

It was Ebony who expressed the given phrase “everyone will touch things differently”. Each volunteer participant utilized her senses differently, some emphasized the visual sense most of all, and others tended to touch and feel the objects and smell them. Each participant worked to reach into several senses and their manners of describing and expressing were different, as were the aspects that each person chose for focus. I found it fascinating that descriptions of the chosen object for example, from the Bolga Basket in Session 3, even with an emphasis in appealing to all our senses, were quite different. The descriptive writing of Cera and Rosie demonstrates Ebony’s words clearly. Cera’s description of the Polish egg is poetic, almost lyrical, creative in expression; Rosie’s description of the Kyrgyzstan egg is detailed, physical, almost

scientific. Cera has a major interest in writing and Rosie has a first interest in Science and Mathematics and yet an enjoyment and interest in writing as well. It is also interesting that for Ebony, the Russian matryoshka doll immediately brings historical life and narrative and Ebony, as previously mentioned, was one who did a great deal of writing on her own at home and that included a novel in progress.

2. Interconnecting Sentience and Writing: *the object thing does it*

Each of the volunteer participants found it interesting and helpful to examine and explore an object of their choice, and then to bring it to life in a narrative. Several mentioned that they need not worry anymore about not being able to think of what to write. I did tell them the story too of a situation in one of my university writing classes where students had to study the class we were in – in great detail. They were to locate an object of interest that they could first describe in detail and then bring to life in narrative, as this research writing group did. One of my university students at that time chose her coffee mug and wrote a beautiful narrative about the life, the colourful, adventurous life of that coffee mug which used to belong to her sister, and her mother. The volunteer participants found that amusing. The participants repeatedly noted in their comments on the sessions, particularly during our individual chats of Session 7 that close work with specific objects evoked their imaginations. Cera indicated that her imagination was drawn into writing by the way in which she brought the object to life. She said that she had learned a different way to write, a way to bring the inanimate around her to life through writing (ICF/6/12/2005). I found that each student in Session 3 enjoyed working with description of a new chosen object and this brought interest in sentient description.

3. Choice in Writing: *we had more freedom to write*

Several participants commented a few times that they liked it a great deal that they could write anything they wanted. I found these comments interesting because I did provide guides and handouts for the writing ventures like the choosing something from the Bolga Basket for writing and for working with the project in Writing the Earth that I

Feel. Yet they felt comfortable with being able to create narratives or poems of the type what they wanted with these objects and the earth. I felt at times that I was providing too much structure and guidance. Yet they felt that they had considerable freedom, and seemingly that was especially when they could be the ones to create content, to bring life to something that they had chosen such as the Bolga Basket objects, or that they had been able to connect with through group discussion such as the earth talk.

4. A Bridge to Creative Writing: *today's been too stressful already*

Each participant responded favourably to beginning our writing sessions with open journal writing. Although in my own experience with the teaching of writing, I have explored and taught many different forms of guided and creative journal writing, I felt that the journal writing for these research sessions needed to be open. The reason for this is because I thought that our emphasis with embodied sentient imagination in writing tasks as a whole would be diminished and possibly confused if I included some new methods with guided journal writing as well.

During the individual chat for feedback, Rosie told me how she felt about the beginning the sessions with open journal writing: "I think it was kinda neat... to get into writing...to get in the mood" (Rosie/ICF/6/12/2005). Greta Lee said she "... felt that it was good in that it kind of got me going – on the – like – of thinking of writing and all that" I found it interesting too that she felt the journals got her imagination going the most quickly" "...when you write...journals, like the ideas just flow cause you're constantly writing" (Greta Lee/ICF/6/12/2005). It was helpful to learn that this open journal writing in the beginning of the sessions did help the participants to get into a writing spirit, to let go of some frustrations as well and this seemed to open them for new foci for the rest of each writing session.

I found it interesting that to begin with unguided open journal writing was unconditionally accepted, and it seemed to work naturally with the group as a method to channel them out of casual conversation into writing mode. I also found it interesting to note how each volunteer participant worked with open journal writing. For the most part, it appeared that the content of the open journals were similar in style and content, but

with some differences. For Cera, the open journal seemed to be a release of emotion, frustration, disappointment, but also for moralizing, pondering and speculating. For Ebony, this writing seemed to be a way of releasing some minor annoyances and for informing me, the researcher/facilitator of various concerns and situations such as an illness of hers which had her absent from one session. For Rosie and Greta Lee, the open journal brought a tool for writing personal anecdotes and brief activity reports. Tori tended to utilize the open journal as a report on her weekend activities and in the later entries, also to let out some frustrations with a feeling of overload with school assignments.

5. Teacher Participants: *i feel more relaxed if teachers write too*

Participants repeatedly told me that they found it tense and uncomfortable when their writing teachers would simply sit at the front or walk around during writing classes just to look at them to check if they are writing. They told me that they were relieved that I was writing like they were, that therefore they could feel comfortable about not being stared at or monitored in writing. Cera even said that it was "...actually kind of cool when you actually do the same assignment..." (Cera/ICF/6/12/2005).

Volunteer participants did read the comments every day that I had written in response to each piece of writing they did and this included the journal entries as well as the creative works. They did mention several times that it made them feel better to have some feedback that was encouraging. In addition, they seemed to enjoy the informal-styled chat of my responses to their written thoughts and their creative writings. Positive, encouraging as well as amusing observations seemed to assist continued motivation for writing as a whole and for trying new ways of creating and developing writing.

6. Peer Influence in a Writing Group: *i kind of liked writing in a group*

Participants had a variety of responses for writing in a group but overall they seemed curious and interested to find out how others wrote. Cera mentioned that "it was really good to see how different we take everything...like me and T were writing about the egg --" With peer feedback experiences, they had the opportunity to read each other's

work as well and comment and assist each other. Tori mentioned that she liked the vibes of intense group writing for motivation with writing. It was fascinating to observe how this group of five high school writers enjoyed watching each other's responses to the writing tasks, enjoyed hearing and reading each other's pieces of writing, and enjoyed talking about the writing or related issues in the group sessions. Even Ebony, who felt she liked to write alone and not to share her writing at all (Ebony/ICF/6/12/2005), did read her last story aloud during the sessions and she enjoyed the delight of the group members with her story. Greta Lee told me that writing in a group was better than writing with the whole class because "In the whole class I don't get very much done cause there's always noises...disrupts..."

7. Writing to Music: *different music...different styles*

Ebony informed us in the writing sessions that she liked to write by music at home, but "I get different music than when I'm writing a different style" For her, the music and mood and character were linked as she listened at home. Greta Lee complained about disruptive noises in the classroom during writing yet she was the volunteer participant who brought music to our sessions when I invited it and the music seemed to assist her writing. As she played different segments of "Beethoven's Fifth", which was music enjoyed by her former writing teacher, Greta Lee informed us what memories these various parts brought to her. In her case, i-pods, mp3 players might well assist her to concentrate on her own music, her own sounds in conjunction with her writing in class as well. My bringing of music such as Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1 and sharing the significance of this work from a heritage tour to the Ukraine, and then having us as a group doing some writing with this music in the background, may have brought a degree of empathy in responses from the participants as well.

8. Sentience and the Natural World: *i liked the earth thing*

Participants responded with appreciation to the discussion about earth and environment and the writing exercise with this. They showed a keen awareness of their place in our environment and their love for our planet in the writings they created. Only

Greta Lee who brought a sample of earth from her farm, felt comfortable in touching it. The other participants watched Greta Lee and looked at the earth. Not all senses need to be actively explored with each writing exercise, and this seemed to work quite well as it was. However, I think that I will create another earth exercise with this issue in the future. Other writing classes of mine have simply done this earth writing outdoors while sitting on the grass and that seemed effective in connecting with the earth. Yet somehow in our research writing sessions, the connections with and empathy for earth causes did work quite well too and it may be that our discussions brought life to the situation.

Analysis and Interpretation with Saldaña

A few select questions or adaptations of these questions from the series that are developed by Saldaña (2003, p. 63, p. 67, pp. 159-163) will be considered for recording further observations from the data for this writing research. The first question and last questions addressed for this section are my adaptations of several questions from Saldaña's list and the second one is used as given by him. I feel that the first question adaptation from his "When do changes occur?" (2003, p. 63) is needed as changes cannot be assumed in any research and that these need to be searched for and identified in order for the second question below which is from Saldaña, to be relevant. The last question is adapted to relate directly to the focus question for this writing research study. What Saldaña's questions appear to assist with most of all for my research discussion is another look at what has already been found through participant dialogue, participant feedback, participant interviews, and discourse analysis of hedging in the writing research sessions.

What changes occur and when do these occur?

A sentient study of an object, by its intense, complex and full invitation and examination with all our senses, seems to bring both personal connection and creative writing. In the work of Session 3 with Bolga Basket object description, participant writing becomes creatively sentient as well subtly personal. Cera's writing in Session 3 about the Polish painted wooden egg (PWS/8/11/2005) takes in her sentient imagination as well as her deeply personal memories. The object then becomes more than simply

something for expository descriptive writing: sentient imagination emphasis brings it to life. Cera shows in several situations that she is “not outdoorsy” (Cera/RST/22/11/2005, p. 18) and her general attitude in sessions at first appeared to suggest to me that she was not one for the “Writing the Earth” tasks of Session 5. Some aspects of the writing sessions, possibly including group discussions of ecology, bringing and touching actual soil to the session, sharing writings among the group – seem to have evoked a degree of change as her writing became empathetic, passionate and loving in relation to Mother Earth.

Greta Lee’s work in sentient writing in a study of the sterling silver unicorn shows some development for her creative mode. An intense fascination seems to arise with her absorbing study of the unicorn. Her writing seems to flow more creatively when she permits her senses to come to know and interact with the unicorn.

Participants’ journal entries to open writing sessions became slightly shorter overall by the later sessions than the earlier ones. Possibly participants became comfortable with the research writing situations more quickly than at first; possibly participants were able to enter the writing mode more quickly as the sessions progressed.

What remains constant or consistent through time?

Hedging, as shown in the discourse analysis segment above, often seems to provide safety net for participants to try sentient writing and the sharing of it. Humour among all participants including me, often eased stress and work for the writing group and for productivity with tasks. Participants showed a continuous need for and appreciation of encouragement and feedback in both written and conversational forms. This feedback included that from fellow group members. Enjoyment of sharing from all participants resulted from work with the Bolga Basket objects and to my delight, they also became engaged quickly in bringing these objects to life for narratives.

What participant, sentience, imagination, or writing process issues become apparent through time?

It did become apparent quickly that the volunteer participants in the research writing group found it much easier to come up with ideas for creative writing when we encouraged sentient imagination in response from the senses in modes such as music, concrete objects and soil, than when they had in some previous years been asked to create without such sentient assistance. For the emphasis to begin with that which they could touch, see, smell and taste around them provided assistance in evoking the creative in a much broader and deeper sense, including the abstract, than with an absence of sentient encouragement.

One issue that came up several times throughout our sessions was that the participants genuinely appreciated the fact that I, as researcher/teacher/guide, wrote with them, and worked on the tasks as I assigned to them. I feel that they also appreciated my reading to them of both uncertain and awkward journal entries several times and portions of narratives in draft.

Another issue that seemed to assist various aspects of the research including general rapport among us all, a motivation to try various approaches to writing tasks, and the feelings of personal support and encouragement were the handwritten conversational feedback notes I provided in response to writing assignments including journal entries. Participants found it fascinating and helpful to read and hear writings from fellow students in our group. They indicated that they from the writing research sessions they learned a great deal about how other students wrote in terms of style, content, form and more.

Summary of the Observations and Findings from the Writing Research Study

With this research, I have described and interpreted the ways in which secondary school students explore sentient imagination in a writing group of five members. I did learn that an emphasis on sentient imagination could evoke creative writing in a post-Cartesian embodied mode of expression. The volunteer participants, in their intense focus on drawing out and acknowledging the sentient emergings, wrote the language into

the land, as urged by David Abram (1996). Rather than alienating them from their environments, written language lived in their worlds and they created with embodied writing modes to generate new life, understanding and appreciation for their contexts as a whole. They touched the Polish and Ukrainian eggs, they fingered the soil and smelled it as they walked upon it in story and poem, they stared at and then held the sterling silver unicorn and listened to the wind as the creature became skybound in writings. Their whole persons, body, mind, and spirit entered a melding of written language and environment to explore sentient emergings and to create from these.

Butler's assertion that "Art is of the senses...from yearning...from where you dream..." (Zacharias, 2007) and that in order to transfer sensual experience to written language, we need to tune out the self-conscious metavoices (Butler, 2005, pp. 19-20) became apparent in the writing sessions of this research. Once the volunteer participants developed degrees of comfort and confidence in the writing sessions, they seemed to lose themselves, so to speak, in an intense focus first on specific items which invited their senses such as the Bolga Basket objects from various travels of mine and the soil that were brought to the sessions. Possibly the fact that I as researcher became absorbed with these concrete objects, they developed some curiosity to explore. The fact that the participants were not assessed in their work and that their instructors were not receiving reports from me about any aspects of their work in the writing sessions, may have helped them to relax with these experiences, and possibly to reduce or close the self-conscious metavoices in their tasks.

Participants in this study experienced and expressed themselves in different styles and forms of writings such as fiction, poetry, and personal writing—and a cynical, amusing edge of Dadaism with Tori's "poem": Unwritten poem (p. 114). Various forms of writing emerged through their senses and this helped to make their individual creativity unique, yet continuously growing from collective interaction as a group. I found that when participants focussed on experiencing objects through exploration with their senses, it could assist the emergence of sentient imagination and rich observations in their creative writing. These participants emphasized that in order to draw out their sentient imagination, they preferred freedom in choosing topics, modes and genres for writing.

Participants demonstrated in our writing research sessions that open writing can provide a helpful mode for releasing these in order to make room for new creations to form, and that beginning a writing session with open writing can also serve as a bridge from prior activities to the language of written form. Open writing is a form of writing that Britton (1970) would label as expressive writing that is speculative, anecdotal, emotive and conversational—and that this can be an exploration of the writer's own thoughts and feelings. The volunteer participants showed evidence of Britton's descriptors and furthermore, that open writing could also be a tool to gently step out of previous body, mind, spirit operations to enter the written mode of thinking, experiencing, and creating.

This writing group taught me that while some of them liked it quiet to write at times, others were quite comfortable or even preferred a situation with music or other sound activities in the background. The participants of this writing research valued the fact that I did the same writing assignments that they did and occasionally shared some of my efforts in sessions. Participants of this research study found that forming writing groups to work both individually and together can help them as writers to receive feedback, encouragement, criticism and inspiration. Participants greatly enjoyed humour and banter in communication and the release of these seemed to open personal room for tasks such as new writing ventures.

Participants made it clear repeatedly that they felt much more comfortable with writing if I as the researcher and the facilitator/instructor also wrote when they did and that I also worked on the same tasks as they did. They noted several times that for an instructor to observe them in their writing made them uneasy and tense.

The participants showed that feedback and support from me was appreciated and that it was in fact a motivator for further work. To hear and read the creative writings of other students was helpful, interesting and informative for group members in this writing research as they felt that it provided a greater sense of how others write and what they write and this helped them develop their own writing further.

Murray (1996) indicates writers should not look for ideas but “tune in the blankness” (p. 29) to begin writing. To a degree, the free open writing that the volunteer

participants did to start each session supports his suggestion. However, our mode of finding ideas, so to speak, was to connect with our environmental contexts physically, bodily. The volunteer participants touched, smelled, listened and so on to specific aspects or objects within their situations. I found that drawing on our sentient imaginations to explore concrete objects and aspects of life around us such as our own soil, could evoke intense engagement in the process of creative writing.

With an emphasis on all senses, individually as well as fused, these students gave birth to new life and thought in written creations. For me, the working definition “sentient imagination” given on page 10 of this document, came alive in this research study: the embodied capacity and receptiveness to experience, construct and create with what emerges when the senses are evoked, explored, and acknowledged. The senses needed to be evoked or invited through specific foci or emphasized specifically to begin to develop understanding and skill in writing with sentient imagination. Participants needed opportunity to explore what emerged through their senses, and they needed to feel comfortable and confident to acknowledge what came to them through searching and experiencing their sentient imaginations. Inviting the emergence of responses and communications from the senses with music or with food or with concrete objects including cultural creations or functional items such as coffee mugs— and sharing and discussing these embodied experiences brought a wealth of human and earth life to our writings. The sentient engagement with animate or inanimate matter around us could expand or develop a love and concern for the beauty and care of our environment—and to assist us in remembering the beauty of the place where we dream.

Chapter VI: Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

Implications emerging from this research interrelate with various aspects of writing and teaching writing, but I choose to identify the areas as follows: Open journal writing in the writing class, touching the earth to engage in writing, being with the world to write about the world, optional silence in the writing classroom, the writing teacher as class writer, flexibility and variation in writing modes/tasks, and the engaging of the senses in writing class to invite imagination.

Open Writing can Open Writing Classes

Open writing, as an unguided form of journal writing, can open the class for any mode and genre of writing and various forms of this mode of beginning a writing class have been part of my teaching for decades. Instructors and students can begin by writing anything that comes to them upon entry into the writing class and this starting technique can become increasingly effective if it is used for each or at least, most classes. Open writing can work well as an uncensored opening of the act of written communication, as a bridge from other activity into communication and thinking focus through written symbols. It can be an interconnection of the moment before class entry with the moment of creative writing starts, and an exploration of the transition from life outside the writing class to life in the writing class.

To explore the potential value with the writing class of opening writing as repositories for creative ideas too, students can be asked to share some of their entries voluntarily by reading portions of their own choice to the class. Spontaneous transmission to written language symbolism -- of the delighted friend's voice from the previous day, of the strong vocal experience of a drama class just done, of the pizza smells from next door bringing hunger, of the eyestrain with lights too dim or bright, of the painful embarrassment in getting a disappointingly low mark in an assignment from the another class just done, of the urgent desire to get a better mark in this writing class by the end of the term -- can assist the writing student to walk out of and over the other preoccupations to enter the craft of creative writing in each session. Several points to consider with open journal writing:

1. Written feedback in student journals can initiate an encouraging, confident

dialogue between peers or teacher and student to communicate and learn through writing thoughts/ideas.

2. The writing teacher can model interest, enjoyment and the serious effort of the writing assignments that are given to students by participating in these herself and by sharing some of her writing in journals, open writing and in literary pieces such as her stories, poetry, biographies.

3. The writing assignments need to show flexibility and openness in interpretation of them in order to invite the emergence of imagination and creativity.

4. In order to engage the imagination in writing classes, reaching for as many senses as possible, and inviting an open interpretation of what these senses bring, can enrich and enliven and expand creative writing.

Touch the Earth to Engage in Writing

The worlds of caring about nature, animals, water and earth can be awakened and reawakened by our sentient imaginative writing. We can experience a caring growth in interrelationships between earth life by daring to touch the earth as we write, by encouraging experiences that bring us into an embodied melding of the beauty of both environment and art. So few students learn to associate the outdoors of their schoolyards or their university grounds with creative writing, with imagination, or with evoking their senses. We can assist students and ourselves in bringing life to our environmental awareness by exploring the natural world with our sentient imagination.

A Quiet Environment is Optional for Writing

Silence is not a necessary context for writing by many of our teenagers today. Yet respect for the feelings and preferences of fellow writers in the classrooms is necessary. With today's technology in electronic music devices, many student writers may well feel more comfortable in their tasks if they are permitted to bring these to assist their work. The reality is too that this music provides additional sensing factors that can bring further creations in the process of writing. Silence is not more academically sound than music or comfortable conversation from fellow students in the background of a writing class.

The Instructor Writes in Writing Classes

The earnest and enthusiastic writing of teachers during writing classes can help students in feeling more motivated as well as relaxed in any forms of writing. We may well find that it helps writing classes if flexibility is shown in terms of permitting and encouraging students to bring music to accompany their writing, and by accepting reasonable degrees of sound activity in the classroom such as conversing by others, yet to respect those students who need quiet. Students can learn from observing the reality of the writing struggle with the teacher as well as with fellow classmates. Students need to see the teacher willing to model struggling to create quality writing.

Engaging the Senses for Sentient Writing

I found that objects which could invite touch and visual exploration or with any senses could assist the writers to engage their own ability for sentient imagination. In beginning introductions to sentient imagination with concrete objects, writers could begin to see life around them in all places and all contexts. This beginning with concrete objects to explore can bring rich observations in creative writing with the participants. With introductory work in exploring such objects as cultural collections, earth, rocks, plants, water and so on, transference could be made to air, breath, the unknown, the mysterious, the misunderstood, the abstract – and to integrate these with the soil of creative writing growth.

Conclusions

My hopes in undertaking the writing research of this dissertation have not only been to expand my own knowledge and understanding about imagination, sentience, writing, secondary school education and the melding of all these, but to offer perceptions and learnings for pragmatic and philosophical consideration to the larger education community. The findings from this study may assist and influence some teachers and university writing instructors in Education and other faculties as well as future university students to work towards engaging the sentient imaginations of their students in creative written explorations. Instructors and university students may develop interest in

considering the post-Cartesian paradigm in writing and experimenting with various techniques in this research.

An openness to sentience can begin a process that enables us to see with, through and beyond our cultural, ethical, religious, and academic upbringing, thus enlarging and intensifying the reception and development of a body of knowledge for us. An increased interest in awareness can also open more of our ponderous, imposing universe to us, showing us interconnections among all components and beings, from the miniscule to the massive, of our planet. We may well find that even small fragments of time devoted to sentience reception and study can begin to develop for us a new clarity in consciousness, in awareness of these complex interconnections. These efforts can begin the development of a deep personal and professional love and devotion to the natural world, and thus to the saving and restoring of our planet and all its inhabitants, including our embodied spirits.

Postlude

Mother Earth

She holds me, comforts me so
Her arms wrap around me keeping me safe
and warm. Shielding me from devastation and
misery, protecting me from heart ache.

Her voice calms my sorrows and lulls me to
Sleep. As sweet as angels sing from heaven, she
Tames the heart of a lion with but one word.
For she is my mother, mother earth.
Her eyes are the stars, closely watching from
a distance. Keeping me from harm and
reaching out to me when I stumble. I
see she is watching and I know
of her love and kindness.
For she is my mother, mother earth.

Sadly, with time her voice has grown dim
her song does not reach my ears and
her cries have gone on no answer.

I no longer feel her touch, her arms
around me. I do not feel the warmth of
her embrace.

Still her eyes watch and the skies weep.
She cries out for us but,
In my selfishness, I hear not her
warning of what will become of her.

To my mother, mother earth.

(Cera/PWS/29/11/2005)

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Appendix 1: INFORMATION DOCUMENT

For Teachers/Educational Administrators of Research School Site for Secondary School ELA 20-1 Writing Participants with Doctoral Research, Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta: "Exploring Sentient Imagination with a Writing Group in Secondary School ELA 20-1 " -by Martha E. Zacharias. 26th September, 2005.

Voluntary research participants are being sought for doctoral research by Martha E. Zacharias with the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta. This research hopes to explore senses and imagination with their interrelatedness through a writing group in Secondary English secondary school ELA 20-1 . With writing regarded as an exploratory and a developmental interrelationship for us as we permit our senses to experience and emerge imaginatively for us, this research hopes to invite an embodied mode of writing with the whole of our being. Students will have the opportunity to explore and create written work in supportive and innovative non-graded group ventures.

Martha E. Zacharias is a resident of Edmonton with experience lecturing in the College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, in classes in literacy, language arts, and writing. She has been active in the arts communities of Saskatchewan and has coordinated the organization of various literary/cultural events, including some of an inter-collegial university scene in Saskatoon. She has some poetry and narrative published in literary journals as well as a selection of academic articles in refereed Education journals.

This research is requesting participation by three to five volunteers from secondary school ELA 20-1 students six writing sessions of approximately 60 minutes each. Some of these writing sessions may take place outdoors if the weather permits. The researcher will keep photocopies of the participants' writing but will return originals of each piece of writing to the voluntary participants. Each session will be audiotaped and the contents transcribed. The transcriptions will be shared with the participants so that their comments can inform and assist with the transcription accuracy.

Students may withdraw from this research project at any time if they prefer to do so. Consideration will be given for new participants to become involved as the research

progresses if withdrawals show a need for more. Data collected in any forms with the writing group will be kept confidential and will be reported in the dissertation and presentations only with anonymity. It is expected that these research sessions can be done twice a week and completed within a month in the fall term, 2005.

Appendix 2: PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) INFORMATION LETTER

for Secondary School ELA 20-1 Writing Participants in Doctoral Research, Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta: "Exploring Sentient Imagination with a Writing Group in Secondary School ELA 20-1 " -- by Martha E. Zacharias.

Martha E. Zacharias, Phd Candidate
Department of Secondary Education
341 Education North
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5

Dear parents/guardians:

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, organizing research for my Phd dissertation. I am the mother of two grown sons and an experienced teacher in the public school system of Manitoba and Saskatchewan as well as in lecturing Education classes at the university level. My major interest in education and on a personal level has long been the process of writing and I have some poetry and narrative items published as well as a series of academic articles. With my doctoral research, I hope to learn more about the integration of our senses and our imagination in exploring the processes of creative writing. I would like to meet with your son/daughter at the school for six sessions of about an hour each to explore various methods of writing creatively. The research sessions would be audiotaped for my study. Your son/daughter would not be given any homework demands and further writing about the research sessions assignments outside of the sessions would be voluntary.

My research will follow strict ethical guidelines set out by the University of Alberta Faculty of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I will not use the real names of any of the students in writing up the research and all information collected, including the audiotaping, will be held in strict confidence, being used only for the purposes of my research study itself and for reports/articles in relation to the study. Every effort will be

made to ensure that the research sessions do not interfere with regular class work, but that the sessions expand the participant's education and experience in the process of writing.

Please realize that your son/daughter may withdraw at any time from the research sessions if he or she wishes to do so, or if you wish your son/daughter to withdraw. Participation in the research must be voluntary and each participant will be asked to sign a consent form indicating a willingness to participate and acknowledgement that he/she has been informed of the situation.

When completed and approved, the results of the research study can be made available to you upon request.

I request permission to work with your son/daughter for six one-hour research sessions in creative writing at _____ school in the fall term of 2005. If this is acceptable, please sign the attached form and return it to your son/s/daughter's classroom teacher. The student consent form is also enclosed for your son's/daughter's signature and return to the teacher as well.

I look forward to an enjoyable and educative time working with your son/daughter in creative writing!

Thankyou very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Martha E. Zacharias,

B.A., M.Ed, Phd Candidate

Appendix 3: **RESEARCH CONSENT FORM FOR PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S)**

26th September, 2005.

We, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of

_____ (name of student) give
permission for the above named son/daughter to participate in six research sessions for a
Phd Dissertation entitled "Exploring Sentient Imagination with a Writing Group in
Secondary School ELA 20-1 " by Martha E. Zacharias, Department of Secondary
Education, University of Alberta. We also give permission for the researcher to
audiotape the sessions.

Signed,

(parent(s)/guardian(s))

Appendix 4: CONSENT and CONFIDENTIALITY FORM

for Secondary School ELA 20-1 Volunteer Writing Participants in Doctoral Research,
Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta: “Exploring Sentient
Imagination with a Writing Group in Secondary School ELA 20-1 ” -- by Martha E.
Zacharias.

I, _____ (printed name of student)

1. I agree to participate in six writing group sessions for the doctoral research by Martha E. Zacharias of the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, entitled “Exploring Sentient Imagination: A Writing Group in Secondary School ELA 20-1.
2. I give permission for the researcher to make and keep photocopies of writings from these sessions but I expect her to return the original copies to me.
3. I give permission for the researcher to audiotape these research sessions and to transcribe these audiotapes.
4. I give permission for the researcher to integrate data collected from these writing group sessions in her doctoral research dissertation report and in future academic presentations and articles/papers anonymously and that only pseudonyms chosen by the participants will be used.
5. I will respect the confidentiality of all work during this research in any form including writings and research session communications of/with fellow participants, and all related materials including transcripts and written work.
6. I have been informed and assured that the researcher will respect the confidentiality of all research data and that all of it will be stored in a personal lockbox in the researcher’s residence.
7. I have been informed and assured that my voluntary participation in this research project will be kept confidential from everyone and this includes the assurance that my professors and fellow students will not be informed of my participation of any aspects of my work in the research project.
8. I can withdraw from these sessions at any time if preferred. Written materials I

handed in will be returned to me if I withdraw. I will continue to respect the confidentiality of these materials and this research when I withdraw.

9. I have been informed that the data in all forms from this research by Martha E. Zacharias will be destroyed within five years of completing this study.

Signed,

_____ (signed name of student)

Date _____

Appendix 5: **WRITING GROUP PARTICIPANTS (Biographical Sketch)**

Name of Participant _____

Age _____ Grade _____

1. Favourite subjects in school _____
2. What form of writing do you enjoy most? Realistic fiction? Historical works? Poetry? Auto/biography? Fantasy fiction? Essays? Articles? Other?

_____ why? _____

3. What types of books do you enjoy reading most of all? _____

Why? _____

4. Favourite poem or story or book? _____

Why? _____

5. Favourite author(s)? _____

Why is this author one of your favourites? _____

6. Where do you like to write? In a classroom? At home in your room? At home in your kitchen? Living room? Outdoors in summer? Any other place? Why?

7. What's the best thing about creative writing for you? _____

8. What's the worst aspect of creative writing for you? _____

9. Do you prefer to do creative writing by hand? Or by computer? _____

10. Do you prefer to write at home or in class? Or with classmates to share writing and ideas? _____

11. What do you consider the most important with your method of doing creative writing? Do you use a formal prewriting, drafting, revising, sharing with peer partner(s)? _____

12. Which of the common five senses (hear, see, touch, taste, smell) do you think is your strong one for using in writing? Why? _____

13. Do you feel a close caring for some of your non-human community? Eg. The natural world? The trees in your yard? For the rivers, creeks, lakes? For the animals on your farm, or pets in your house? Other? _____

14. Do the above influence any of your writings? If so, how? (For example, one prof I know puts her cat in her lap when she writes 😊 -- (says she like the cat companionship for writing) _____

Appendix 6: SAMPLE OF WRITING GROUP DISCUSSION/FEEDBACK GUIDELINES Developed in Researcher's Teaching of University Writing Classes

1. Each member of the group is asked to decide what kinds of feedback he or she wants about the composition work that will be read.
 - *do you want feedback about a particular area of that piece of writing in which you had some difficulty? do you want others' opinions re aspects about which you feel very strongly?
 - *do you want literary critique about specific components of your piece of writing? eg. fluent writing? choppy?
 - *vocabulary pretentious? word choice changes needed?
 - *characterization strong?--cultural linguistics? physical description vivid? favourite expressions coming out for characters?
 - *writing clear? cluttered? could some details be cut? or added?
 - *dialogue real or contrived?
 - *comments about plot?--episodes/events lead to resolution logically? resolution of story?
 - *does the metaphor of poem work?
 - *"show don't tell" features?
 - *images original or cliched?
 - *content appropriate for genre/genre blend?
 - *does the point of view which emerges feel effective and appropriate for the content and for the audience targeted?
 - *basic editing, syntax with variety, grammar, spelling assistance?
 - *general open feedback?
2. Ask another group member to read your work aloud.
3. Try to provide suggestions to group members for writers whose work you've read which is related in some way to their forms/ experiments/interests in writing.
4. Have each group member provide some feedback about the two aspects indicated by the writer and some open feedback. Do any members wish to comment re how the piece of literature was read by the group member? (optional)
5. Consider the feedback provided and then make up your own mind as author with regards to changes/ editing/ revising on your own time.

Appendix 7: **WRITING RESEARCH SESSION FEEDBACK HANDOUTS**

FOLLOWING SESSIONS 3 AND 5. (Completion was voluntary)

“Pseudo” /Name of student: _____

Date: _____

Please provide some feedback for the doctoral student researcher (me☺) with as many of the questions below as possible. Use the bottom or the back of the page to extend your comments if you need to do so. Thankyou!

How did you feel about today’s session?

Did you like it? Which aspects did you like most? Least?

Did you dislike any of it? Which aspects?

Was anything particularly evocative or particularly boring?

Was any of it helpful to you in any way?

How did you feel about the researcher/me doing the same writing assignments as you?

Which aspects of the assignment seemed difficult? Easy?

Any learnings of yours that you would like to note?

Any further comments you'd like to share with me?

*Feel free to send me a note, a comment, a concern any time through email if you wish.
My email address: martha.zacharias@ualberta.ca and my phone number is 780-432-5738 if you need to call.

**Appendix 8: RESEARCHER'S GUIDE FOR FINAL FEEDBACK
QUESTIONS WITH INDIVIDUAL CHATS FOR SESSION 7**

Volunteer Participant: _____

Date: _____

You are welcome to provide some additional written feedback to these questions - all of them or some of them -- if you wish. Whenever possible, to give reasons or examples, showing why you are saying what you do.

How do you feel about the research writing sessions as a whole?

Any specific comments about writing session(s)?

How did you use your senses to write?

Your visual sense?

Your hearing?

Your smell?

Your taste?

Your touch?

Your 6th sense?

How did you draw on or use your imagination to create/to write?

Any aspects of the writing sessions or writing assignments/ideas that you found unusual?

Any aspects that you found interesting?

How did you feel about researcher writing with you?

How did you feel about researcher feedback?

How did you feel about writing in a journal to start some of the sessions?

Any benefits for the journal writing? Any frustrations?

Did any aspects help to get your senses working?

What helped to get your imagination working? Group talk? Objects? Basket? Discussions?

What did the assignment do for you -- the assignment which asked you to write about someone who influenced your writing?

What to you is the most important to get one's imagination going? Did we reach into this at all?

What to you is the most important to bring our senses alive to write vividly, creatively etc?

Which components/aspects of our sessions did you like most?

Which aspects did you like least?

Did you dislike any of it? Which aspects?

Was anything particularly interesting? Or helpful?

Anything particularly boring? Or unhelpful?

How was it to write weekly with a group?

What did you learn from group members/ or group work as a whole?

Which writing assignments seemed the best? Which ones the easiest? Hardest?

Any learnings of yours that you would like to note?

Any further comments you'd like to make from any aspects? .