University of Alberta

The Search for Creativity: A Visual Narrative Inquiry

by

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Dedication

To my mom and dad, my first teachers. I feel deeply blessed to have you as my parents.

To Mr. Gordon Cross, who in his death helped give life to this dissertation. Thank you Gordie, for showing me the meaning of a completely selfless action.

To Sri Swami Viswamatha, a firm spiritual mother with a soft heart.

and,

To one Silent Sufi, who took my hand at just the right moment.
There really are not words to express my gratitude to you, *Shiva*.

ABSTRACT

The Search for Creativity: A Visual Narrative Inquiry

The present dissertation is a visual narrative account of academically-trained women's experiences of creativity. These narratives are intended to provide "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Heilbrun, 1988) for women encountering challenges with creativity. It includes both the author's own search for creativity in academia, as well as the stories of three women co-participants: Jude, Maya, and Isabella.

At the time of the study, Jude had just completed a doctoral degree, Maya was working on a doctoral degree, and Isabella was considering returning to begin a doctoral degree. Creativity was not defined a priori for the co-participants, in order to explore the stories women tell when they think of creativity in an unrestricted way. Three to six research conversations were conducted with each co-participant over a period of approximately one year. To retain the uniqueness of each of the research relationships, the results of the conversations have been crafted into individual notebooks using narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000), collage (Finley, 2001), found poetry (Butler-Kisber, 2001, Richardson, 1992), and dreams as dynamic and evocative ways of relating the research results. The narrative threads arising from the author's and the co-participants' stories of creativity include: *being who I am*; *being silenced*; *being good*; *attuning to feminine creators and integrating masculine qualities*; and *being*.

An account is provided of the author's gradual realization of her own underlying, autobiographical research questions, her desire to integrate art, poetry and spirituality into her doctoral work, and the relevance of the myth of Psyche and Eros to her own academic journey.

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And to Mark, my Shiva, for being with me heart and soul during the final leg of the journey.

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Introduction

The universities do not teach all things so a doctor must seek out old wives, gypsies, sorcerers, wandering tribes, old robbers, and such outlaws and take lessons from them. A doctor must be a traveler. Knowledge is experience.
(Paracelsus[1])

Graduate school can be a path, a journey... a *search* for something a student may only be vaguely aware of, something ineffable and far greater than the stated research topic. It can be part of a transformational process where old ways of knowing and being break down in order for newer, personally authentic ways of knowing and being to arise. It can be part of a journey to the Self, the very source of creativity and life, itself. As ambiguous, arduous and seemingly contrary to our conscious plans as it may be, once this process of dissolution and return has begun, it is thwarted at the peril of one's own personal transformation and wellbeing.

There are not many "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Heilbrun, 1988), however, for women who are embarking on the path of self-transformation, and the myths and "mystery texts of transformation" (Hillman, 1972) that may be particularly helpful to women are not commonly known, although women scholars are attempting to remedy this situation (Labouvie-Vief, 1994; Weir-Huber, 1999; Woodman & Dickson, 1996). Discovering the myth of *Psyche and Eros* through the work of these scholars, and contemplating the initiatory tasks Psyche must complete in order to be reunited with Eros has been one of the things that has been the most helpful to me in my own search for creativity and wholeness during my time in graduate school. A few women have written

[1] This quote was recorded in my personal diary prior to beginning graduate school but the exact source is unknown.

their personal stories or made reference to their quest to be more creative while in graduate school and academia, and to them I am also eternally grateful (Allen, 1995; Finley, 2001; Heilbrun, 1988; Politsky, 1995; Raffe, 1992; Rendon, 2000; Silko, 1997). It would have been a much lonelier, perhaps even impossible journey without their commitment and courage in sharing their experiences, and in undergoing the incredible tensions and obstacles they had to face in doing so. They are the lineage of my heart. I read and re-read their stories whenever I wondered why I couldn't just do things the usual way, why the tensions seemed almost unbearable at times, and why I was taking so long. Their words sustained me, giving form to the amorphous and confusing feelings and experiences not recognized, acknowledged or honored elsewhere. Their stories gave me temporary shelter along the way, particularly at times when I existed only in liminal spaces, filled with the feeling of belonging nowhere, in the no-woman's land familiar to all of those who have heard the call of the *Self* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

To all of those who have heard the call away from safety, towards the mystery, and did not turn back—*Namastè.* I honor the divinity within you. To all of those who are embarking on, or are lost somewhere in the midst of their journey, and are looking for sustenance, the stories contained within this work are for you, and the thought of you, also has kept me going. Your own work, particularly your personal transformation, will help the lives of all those you touch. Your strongest teaching will be the knowledge you have realized from within, the presence that emanates from you. Your strongest teaching will be who you are.

The Search: A Personal Story

My own personal story of how I ended up back at graduate school at age 34,

researching creativity, is a long and winding story punctuated by jobs as diverse as prison guard, educational research consultant, and yoga teacher. Feeling there must be more to life, and at times out of a sheer inner necessity, I have taken long breaks and many side roads away from academia, wanting to know about other things—creative and perhaps mystical things. There was something I always loved about university though, so eventually I returned to do a doctorate degree, having acquired some unscholarly research ideas along the way.

When I first came to Edmonton at age 18, I was excited about the freedom and adventures I perceived to be in front of me in university. I had no specific academic plan, but I enjoyed art, English literature and psychology, so I included courses in all three in my program. Right across the board, my first year marks were unremarkable, including in art and English, the classes I had excelled at in high school. It might have been the heightened critical approach to the topics, or it may have been that I was having too much fun, but in my second year, when it came time to get more serious and begin thinking about what I would major in, my marks in psychology seemed to suggest the direction I should go in. I took classes in abnormal psychology, neuropsychology, and criminal psychology, but it was the psychology of Memory and Attention class that came to my aid throughout the rest of my undergraduate years, enabling me to train myself to memorize vast quantities of material. This is how I was able to get the grades to apply to graduate school in psychology.

After taking a year off to work as a prison guard, I was more than ready to escape the dismal cellblocks of the jail and return to the academic environment to begin a Master's degree. The graduate coordinator in the psychology department jokingly

introduced me to the rest of the students as having just "gotten out of prison." Most of the other students had a strong science background and seemed to have an idea of what they wanted to research. I was more uncertain, but because of my experience working in the jail and my courses in criminal psychology, I ended up working in the lab of a professor who was researching the electroenceaphalographic (EEG) predictors of people prone to becoming psychopaths. I was almost finished collecting my thesis data when he abruptly decided to leave the university, taking all of the laboratory equipment with him. It seemed an unfortunate experience at the time, but looking back, there's something I discovered in that lab all those years ago, that is directly related to what I'm doing now. When I analyzed the EEG responses of my research participants as they observed different patterns of letters on computer screens, even when those patterns changed, their brain cells continued to fire as if the pattern had not been changed. Sometimes referring to the area of the brain responsible as "the interpreter," I recently read that neuroscientists are now commenting that:

> ... the left cerebral hemisphere is prone to fabricating verbal narratives that do not necessarily correspond with the truth [and that it does so] in order to convince itself and you that it is in full control .... (Damasio, 1999, p. 187)

The interpreter is really trying to keep our "personal story together" (Gazzaniga, 1998, p. 26).

At the time of my own personal discovery of this tendency, it was curiously like looking at a different sort of a prison cell—this time a mental one—and it seemed like it could be important to the study of psychology for many reasons. After all, how could you study the psyche using the psyche, if the psyche over-looked information that didn't fit with its theories? And how could we disrupt this seemingly automatic storying process,

in order to have fresh creative insights and breakthroughs?

Disillusioned with my experience in the psychology department, I decided to switch to the Master's program in educational psychology, to complete what I initially thought would be a thesis of convenience in the area of vocational psychology with Transport Canada. Jumping at the chance to have 600 research participants made readily available to me, I undertook a quantitative study of air traffic controller personality traits and aptitudes that would fulfill the requirements for my program. The plan was to collect the data and just "write it up," but ultimately, the study took much longer than planned and yielded information of little predictive value. When I was finished, I felt completely disoriented and had no discernible direction I wanted to go in. "I" was not in any of my work and, over time, I had lost my inner compass altogether. I took temporary research consulting jobs with Alberta Education, but felt anxious and out of my element. Exhausted, miserable and completely lost, I knew something had to change. Inspired by a friend who practiced yoga and meditation, I began making inquiries into yoga classes.

In the Himalayan tradition of yoga, there's a very systematic approach to the yoking together of the mind and body. In class, we would begin by laying down on the floor and practicing diaphragmatic breathing, then we would begin some gentle stretches and body movements while the instructor reminded us to sense and feel what was happening in our bodies. After so many years of university, this was challenging, not because the movements were difficult, but it was challenging to stay with the body without my mind wandering off. At the end of the class we would further re-acquaint ourselves with our bodies using a relaxation exercise, slowly tensing and relaxing one muscle group at a time. I was never one of the students who would completely fall asleep,

but at the end of one of the first classes, I recall one thought floating through my mind: "What is this?" It had been so long I did not remember what it was like to let go and relax anymore.

Not long after my first yoga classes, another door began to open, and another form of education appeared, or rather re-appeared in my life—by accident—when I broke my hand. While I was trying to decide whether my hand was really broken, and whether I really needed to go to emergency at eleven o'clock at night, the thought went through my mind, "I can't break my right hand! That's my drawing hand!" It was an odd thought since I hadn't done much drawing since my first year of university ten years prior to this. Feeling sorry for myself, fresh cast on my right hand, I dove into my storage closet the next day in search of my art portfolio. Wistfully leafing through my old drawings and paintings, I remembered the long hours I spent in the studio in the old Arts Building, completely absorbed in making them. Nervous, fragile, and unemployed, when the cast came off my hand, I began taking afternoon drawing classes at the university extension center, and continued with my yoga classes. I was tentatively crafting my own educational program now, one that included my body and artwork.

Eventually I began teaching yoga classes for people experiencing anxiety and depression, and running a community self-help group as well, but I also continued with drawing classes, moving into pastel painting when I had the courage for color. Although I was nervous about not having a plan, and not knowing where I was going, a small voice inside, an almost inaudible whisper kept urging me to "try a little more art." Delighted with these explorations, I was still reluctant to share any of it with anyone, so much of it remained unframed and in a closet, behind the old accordion I used to play as a child.

In 1997, when the opportunity arose to go to an ashram in India for five weeks with my yoga teacher, I jumped at the chance even though I had never really been interested in going. As she was discussing the classes she thought I might like to teach for her while she was away, to my own surprise I suddenly blurted out, "I'd rather go to India." She smiled and replied, "Well then come!" Three weeks later, expedited passport in my hand, I was on a plane and headed to India. After a 27-hour flight to Delhi followed by three hours of sleep, then a nine hour bus ride to Rishikish, I was frightened by how ill I felt when we arrived. At the end of the first week, sitting on the banks of the Ganges River, in the foothills of the Himalayas, and looking down on all of the tourists scurrying around in the ashram garden, I began to wonder why I had exhausted myself and my bank account to come all the way to India. It was not turning out to be the peaceful, spiritual experience I had been expecting. The ashram was co-sponsoring International Yoga Week with the Indian government, and there were flashy ceremonies with government officials, and members of the press photographing how the tourists were enjoying all of the festivities—including the yoga and meditation classes. Avoiding many of the scheduled activities, I began spending much of my time wandering up the Ganges and having coffee at the *Ganga Kinare*, the one hotel that had a cappuccino machine, then wandering down the river in the opposite direction, towards the mysterious temple atop the hill.

Most mornings there was a fine pinkish mist hovering over the waters of the Ganges as I made my way toward what was considered the wealthier end of town, where the temple was located. Groups of children in their school uniforms would cluster around me as I walked, chanting, "Hullo, hullo, hullo ..." with the occasional, "Goooood

morning," from one who really wanted to impress. Passing through the small, hut-like houses, cows and goats wandering across my path, I would make my way toward the stone stairs leading up to the temple and begin my ascent. Slipping my shoes off at the top and entering, I watched the local people to see how I was supposed to behave while inside. Ringing the bell over the statue of the bull, to let the gods know I was there, I never quite felt comfortable pouring milk over the bull so I would immediately walk around to the back of the temple, where the deity was located. Seated on a mountain peak of stones, clouds painted overhead, the massive blue-skinned deity had a crescent moon atop the coils of his black hair, three horizontal lines of white ash across his forehead, and a cobra coiled about his throat. The palm of one of his hands was raised up in a gesture I didn't understand and in the other hand he was holding a trident. Unaware that I was visiting *Shiva*, the male god who destroys old worlds in order to prepare for the new, I marveled at how colorful and extravagant the image seemed compared to the more somber images of Christianity I had been brought up with. Around the corner from the Shiva statue, seated in an alcove on a marble floor, was another representation of Shiva in the form of an oval black stone, seated in a base representing its female counterpart or *Shakti.* In passing one day, one of the photographers for Yoga Week mentioned to me that Hindu temples always have representations of both female and male deities or the people would be insulted and not worship there. He spoke of some extremely powerful Shakti temples—temples more devoted to the female creative energy—that exist high, high up in the mountains, and are considered to be a great blessing to reach. India is perhaps the only place on the planet that has an unbroken tradition of worshipping and revering the power of female creative energy (Johnsen, 1999). Unfortunately, while I

was there I did not visit a Shakti temple, or a temple devoted to any of the Hindu goddesses. I went to India mainly with the intention of practicing yoga and meditation in a monastic setting, but like many journeys, it turned out to be not quite what I expected. Instead, I ended up spending much of my time with Shiva, the destroyer of old worlds.

The Structure of the Dissertation

In keeping with a narrative inquiry, the entire dissertation has been written as a narrative account of my experience of returning to academia and my search for creativity there. In Chapter Two, entitled *Searching Through The Literature*, I recount the various tensions I experienced in navigating through the scholarly literature and coursework, and how I was eventually introduced to a method of researching creativity—arts-based research—that seemed to both suit the topic and to explicitly acknowledge that research, itself, is a creative process. Chapter Three, *Searching for a Methodology*, provides a narrative of my experiences in both the arts-based research course and the narrative inquiry course to convey why I personally wanted to use these methods in my research. The specific experience I became interested in researching—academically-trained women's experiences of creativity—evolved from my experience in the narrative inquiry course so is addressed in Chapter Three to reflect the personal process that transpired. The results of my research conversations with each of my co-participants have been crafted into individual notebooks in Chapters Four, *Jude's Story: Unrelated,* Chapter 5, *Maya's Sonata,* and Chapter 6, *Isabella and the River of Life*, respectively. Following the notebooks in Chapter Seven, *Being Creative*, is a discussion of the dominant narrative threads arising from the research conversations with my co-participants and from my own autobiographical journey. The relevance of the myth of Psyche and Eros to my journey

and to the results of the research conversations is noted in various places but not used exclusively to interpret the results. Instead, in the discussion, I have often chosen to respond to the stories of my co-participants with the stories of other women, in the spirit of story-telling. The dissertation concludes in Chapter Eight, *A Taste of Ambrosia,* with a reflective turn regarding the overall inquiry process, what has been gained in the creation of the notebooks from the research conversations, and whether the underlying autobiographical research questions that were realized during the inquiry process have been answered.

CHAPTER 2

Searching the Literature

After returning from India, I continued to teach yoga for the next year, then, on my 34th birthday, decided to apply to go back to graduate school and begin the journey of a doctoral student. The research I initially proposed involved validating a yoga therapy program for anxiety and depression, but when I arrived that fall, the professor who was to supervise my research had passed away in a tragic accident. Once more, I found myself without a supervisor, and without a research topic, since there was no one else in the department with research interests similar to my own. Being on scholarship, I decided to stay for at least a year, to see what would unfold.

Mental Effort versus Wu Wei

At the end of my first year of coursework, I began to consider conducting my research on the topic of creativity, thinking it would be a good match between my subjective interests, and the objective requirements of a doctoral student in an educational psychology department. In order to approach the topic of creativity more creatively, however, quite a struggle has taken place on both my inner and outer landscapes—a struggle filled with a series of intellectual, emotional, and physical tensions. For several years I kept separate diaries for my subjective reactions to what I was reading and experiencing, as I have done for many years outside of academia, as well. At the beginning of my second year, I made the following entry in my journal regarding an article we were asked to read for a Psychology of Learning class (Prawatt, 1999):

> *I was surprised that the article on 'the learning paradox' was more philosophical instead of one of those dry articles with table after table of data! The main point the author was trying to make was that learning theorists still don't really know how we make that mysterious leap when we make creative discoveries. When we*

> *discussed the article in class, most of the students were annoyed with the philosophical writing style and felt that there was no 'paradox' at all. Our instructor thought it was an example of poor scholarly work, and that the author had gone too far in dismissing all of the previous learning theories. He's going to show us how cognitive scientists model the learning process on computers. While we were discussing it, I felt a wave of embarrassment wash over me because I agreed with the article but I knew I couldn't articulate my ideas in the appropriate scholarly jargon. I've been away from university for seven years now. Could the cognitive scientists really have figured out all of the mysteries in learning and creativity?* (Journal Entry)

Commenting on the earliest computer models of learning, Newell, Shaw and Simon (1962) confidently stated that although these models were not able to match human ingenuity and creativity, "there was every reason to suppose that they are qualitatively of the same genus as the more complex human problem-solving processes" (p. 116). Later, when connectionist models were developed, the gap between human and computer performance began to narrow due to their capacity to rapidly process information in parallel. These models have become so sophisticated that some feel connectionism is psychology's latest paradigm shift (Schneider, 1987). According to connectionism, creativity, or what is referred to as "creative problem-solving," is simply the result of immersion in a topic such that thousands of problems, solutions and strategies are encountered, creating extensive neural networking that will be available for future problem-solving attempts.

The traditional model of creativity, based on the stories of famous discoveries made by scientists and mathematicians, holds that there are five stages involved in creativity: problem formulation, saturation, incubation, illumination (or eureka!), and verification (Wallas, 1926). Connectionists believe, however, that it's time to delete the mysterious *incubation* phase because the more advanced connectionist models are now able to account for what happens prior to the "sudden moments of insight that challenged

the old stimulus-response theories of learning" (Bates & Elman, 1993, p. 14). In How the Mind Works, Pinker (1997) commented that, "[u]nfortunately, creative people are at their most creative when writing their autobiographies," and their time away from their research puzzles is helpful, "not because it ferments in the unconscious, but because they are exhausted and need the rest" (p. 361). According to the cognitive science perspective, creativity is simply the result of practice, hard work and conscious mental effort. Schneider and Graham (1992) note the strong impact the connectionist model is having on education in terms of the role of practice, learning and instruction it implies. A survey of 400 creativity experts seems to agree with the connectionist perspective (Runco, Nemiro & Walberg, 1998). Asked to rank the factor most important to creativity, researchers found that in terms of their own personal theories, creativity experts believe that "motivation," defined as the capacity for sustained effort, hard work and perseverance, was the most important factor in creativity.

The cognitive science perspective on creativity was quite troubling to me. I found myself continually scribbling argumentative, "yah but..." notes in the margins of the articles we were assigned to read. I was particularly troubled by the assumption that if creative problem-solving could be modeled this way on a computer, then that's the way it occurs in humans, an assumption that made it dangerously logical to dismiss the stories of the experiential experts that relate how impressed they were that the solutions to the problems they were working on arrived when they were not actively working on them. Kekule (cited in Simon, 1977) described how it was actually dream imagery that led him to the discovery of the ring structure of the benzene molecule:

> I turned my chair to the fireplace and sank into a half-sleep. Again the atoms flitted before my eyes ... long rows, some more closely united, all in movement,

> wriggling and turning into snakes. And see, what was that? One of the snakes seized its own tail and the image whirled scornfully before my eyes. As though from a flash of lightening I awoke. (p. 4)

Similarly, in recounting his solution to a mathematical problem, Poincare (1952) recalled that:

> As I was crossing the street, the solution to the difficulty which had brought me to a vexing standstill came to me all at once ... nothing in my former thoughts seemed to prepare me for it. (p. 25)

Experiences such as these were so common that the physicists jokingly coined "The 3 B's"—bed, breakfast, and bath—as the places where the solutions to the problems they were working on often presented themselves, when they had let go of all mental effort (Nachmanovitch, 1990).

The cognitive science literature was also troubling because it was at odds with my own personal experiences of creativity. In the drawing classes I began after finishing my Master's degree, I discovered that I could make surprising leaps, without any additional practice, whenever the instructor turned the pictures we were to draw from upside down. To my delight, my drawings became more dramatic and what seemed to me more creative. The instructor would stop at my drawing table, smile and ask, "Much stronger drawing, hmm?" He appeared to be enjoying my discovery, but wisely did not explain what was behind the technique, allowing me to just enjoy the process. It was years later I learned that when Betty Edwards (1979) was trying to understand why some students had difficulty learning to draw, she had developed strategies such as this to prevent them from being able to label what they were perceiving and from relying on what they thought the object should look like. Instead, they would have to rely on the pure visual perceptual mode of what Edwards (1979) believed to be the right brain at work (R-

mode), learning to see without the usual interference and interpretations of the left-brain (L-mode). Edwards (1979) emphasizes that we can intentionally evoke these shifts in perception in order to:

> ... access at a conscious level ...inventive, intuitive, imaginative powers that have been largely untapped by our verbal, technological culture and educational system. (p. 5)

The feeling of creating in what Edwards (1979) calls *R-mode* was also markedly different than more analytical, technical drawing. Right from the start, I felt freer because the picture was upside down, so I didn't feel as much pressure to make the end product look like anything in particular. Instead, focusing on the nonsensical shadows and highlights, I became so absorbed in what I was doing that I didn't notice the instructor coming around, and I worked right through the breaks. The class seemed to go by very quickly and I noticed that even if I had arrived feeling exhausted, I left in a lighter mood, feeling rejuvenated. Maslow (1967) refers to a state similar to R-mode as "Being-Cognition," and described it as a blissful state where one is totally lost in the present moment, self-forgetful, other-forgetful, and fused with the reality being observed. He emphasized that creativity was the opposite of dissociation, where one is fragmented into an observing ego and experiencing ego. Instead,

> ... when you are totally absorbed you are less apt to be observing yourself like a spectator or a critic, [which means], ... less criticizing and editing, less evaluating, less selecting and rejecting, less judging and weighing, less splitting and analyzing of the experience. (Maslow, 1967, p. 50)

In his work on creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) refers to this type of experience as "flow," and believes that the key to an optimal life is to cultivate flow states and make them a regular feature of one's life. Whatever the label, this was the fluid, life-enhancing

creativity I wanted to know more about, not the mentally exhausting version Pinker (1997) had been speaking of.

Resistant to the one-sidedness of the cognitive science perspective, when it came time to prepare a presentation and paper for class, I felt unmotivated and distracted. Having done some reading in Eastern philosophy, it occurred to me that these philosophies spoke more to my personal experience of creativity and might form the theoretical background for a paper that would be more personally enjoyable to write. In psychology, Maslow (1967) had used Taoism to inform much of his thinking on creativity and self-actualization so I felt encouraged to explore this connection myself. Rather than emphasizing mental effort, Taoism purports that:

> As long as the conscious intellect is frantically trying to clutch the world in its net of abstractions and to insist that life be bound and fitted to its rigid categories, the wisdom of the Tao will remain incomprehensible .... The Tao is accessible only to the mind which can practice the simple and subtle art of "wu wei," which, after the Tao is the second important principle of Taoism .... "Wu" means "not" or "non," and "wei" means "striving," "straining" or "busyness." (Watts, 1957, p. 31)

Wu wei involves knowing how to leave one's mind alone, not pushing it to figure things out, trusting an intelligence that is beyond the intellect. "Taoist cognition" is characterized by a "let-be" and "will-free" attitude, allowing things to reveal themselves as they are, unobscured by labels, biases and preconceptions (Kuo, 1996). Chung-yuan (1963) comments that, "to reach the state of no-thought, according to the Taoist means to reach the realm of creativity" (p. 207). This seemed a key point, contrasting sharply with the cognitive "intellectual effort" approach to creativity.

Excited about incorporating wu wei into my paper on creativity, I set out to find the scientific evidence I would need to support it for my paper. In the EEG literature

there was evidence that creatively gifted people used less mental effort when they solved problems, but from the connectionist perspective it could still be argued that they don't need to work as hard because they've developed more efficient neural networks due to previous practice and effort (Jausovec, 1996, 1998). The novice-expert research, on the other hand, had demonstrated that in some cases the accumulation of expert knowledge can lead to a "mental set" or a fixation on known strategies such that novices and intermediates were often able to out-perform the experts (Wiley, 1998). Commenting on the paradoxical relationship between the accumulation of knowledge and creativity, Henle (1962) noted that:

> We cannot become steeped in a field without also becoming steeped in the ideas current in that field. And existing ideas tend to blind us to new ones. (p. 43)

Almost 40 years later, Weisberg (1999) noted that the tension between the accumulation of knowledge and creativity is still a serious challenge confronting all theories of creativity.

In my own effort to address the creativity paradox, I gathered 60 references to try to construct an argument for the importance of relaxing mental effort (reducing beta wave activity) and entering alpha states of consciousness in order to be more creative. I alternated between being completely blocked on the paper, and completely driven to get it done. Although I had small glimpses of feeling creative, for the most part it was exhausting and anxiety-provoking. I felt an enormous pressure to prove my point, and ironically did a lot of thinking about the importance of not thinking. When it came time to present the paper in class, I began with the Zen quote: "Stop thinking and talking about it, and there is nothing you will not be able to know" and then proceeded to talk about all of the available evidence for shifts in states of consciousness prior to creative discoveries.

In 20 minutes, I presented as much evidence for the value of non-striving and effortlessness as I could, wanting to inspire the class to not work so hard on their papers and dissertations, and instead to practice wu wei. As Bateson (2000) comments though:

> There are ways of transmitting knowledge that feel like intellectual rape: so much logic and powerful statistics, so many footnotes that resistance is beaten down. But oddly, overwhelming logic and data often fail to convince. (p. 235)

In my case, resistance to the logic of my presentation gathered strength. The following week one of my classmates began her presentation with Descartes' famous statement: "I think therefore I am," and provided 20 minutes worth of evidence for the value of mental effort. I felt like I had managed to provoke an intellectual war of viewpoints, no different than the way any war begins. By the end of the term, I felt depleted, disconnected, and anything but creative.

Originality versus Essence

> *Saying I'm researching creativity sounds a lot more creative than it feels. Whenever someone asks me about my area of research I feel like I'm feigning an enthusiasm, certainty and direction I don't have. I'm still exhausted from writing the last paper and now I have to write another one. I feel like reading anything but academic literature. Yesterday I bought a book called <u>When Elephants Paint</u> (Komar & Melamid, 2000) so I could read about how two artists rescued elephants in Thailand from a life of logging and started elephant art schools where tourists can pay to watch elephants paint. As I was falling asleep last night an image flashed through my mind and I jumped up and dug to the bottom of the storage closet to find one of the first books I ever bought: <u>Pencil, Pen and Brush.</u> (Weiss, 1961) The cover has a pencil drawing of an elephant on it, like the elephant on the cover of the other book. Making art was one of my first loves but I never thought about going to art school or doing it for a living. I wonder why. The phrase "an elephant never forgets" keeps going through my mind today. Maybe I should try drawing the elephant again, thirty years later, and see what it conjures up.*. (Journal Entry)

I didn't draw the elephant that day, though, because I felt I had to get to work on my next paper. This time, I decided to focus on the difference between the Western and

the Eastern definitions of creativity, since a review of the creativity literature over the past 50 years emphasized that an important challenge for future researchers would be to clarify the definition of creativity in order for a new, more fruitful research agenda to emerge (Mayer, 1999). In the West, there appears to be a general consensus among creativity researchers that creativity occurs when someone creates an "observable product" that is "original" and "useful" (Hughes & Drew, 1984; Lubart, 1999; Mayer, 1999). Emphasizing the importance of originality, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) states that "big C" creativity is about changing symbolic domains in a culture resulting in "new songs, new ideas, and new machines" (pp. 7-8). Mayer (1999) points out that the Western focus on the nature of the end product tends to automatically lead to the assumption that "creative people are those who create new and useful products, and creative cognitive processes occur whenever a new and useful product is created" (p. 45).

When I went in search of an Eastern definition of creativity, I found that little scholarly research had been undertaken in this area, and the research studies of creativity in Eastern cultures that have been conducted have often employed Western definitions and measures of creativity with the result that some cultures have been evaluated as lacking in creativity (Lubart, 1990, 1999). In the East, however, researchers and writers have noted that the creation of original products is not the *sin qua non* of creativity (Chung-yuan, 1963, Kuo, 1996, Maduro, 1976) and the arts are used more often than problem solving as the paradigm of creativity (Kuo, 1996). In an 18-month field study of 155 traditional painters in Nathdwara, India, anthropologist and artist Maduro (1976) found that artistic innovations and improvisations within the traditional framework will be socially rewarded but artists are not goaded into trying to create original artwork.

Instead, art tends to be evaluated according to whether the artist is able to bring out from a realm deep within forms that are energized with *rasa*:

> Rasa is the spirit, sentiment, essential affect, "juice," or "taste" of a work of art .... Something that is rasavat possesses rasa, the quintessence or flavor of some innate aesthetic or emotional experience that gets projected into the outside world in living symbols from the unconscious .... (Maduro, 1976, p. 143)

Maduro (1976) goes on to state that the creativity the Nathdawara painters described was "more a matter of a new and original experience for the painter than the creation of some new theme, product, or subject" (p. 144). What matters is if an artist is able to go deep within and bring back forms that are energized with "Maya," the creative power of the universe that exists within the individual. The work of art produced then allows the audience to taste the rasa that results from this inward journey.

Chung-yuan (1963) similarly emphasizes that for the Taoist, art and poetry are evaluated according to whether they meet an inner criterion. If an artist achieves oneness with Tao, a state that is indescribable in words, his paintings will issue forth from the "spiritual court," or the depths of the unconscious, and reverberate with "li" or spiritual rhythm. Whether the artist has achieved Tao needs to be *sensed* by the viewer. Chung-yuan (1963) relates an example of how one Taoist painter responded to the work of another:

> When I sense the vigor of Chang Tsao's painting, I see no longer a painting, I see Tao. When Painting, he leaves behind mere skills and measurements and his thoughts vanish into the creative night. The things brought forth are not of the consciousness of eye and ear, but from the Spiritual Court. What he achieves in his heart is made known by his hand. (p. 207)

Reading the Hindu and Taoist artists' conceptions of creativity made my heart sing. I felt a resounding "yes!" in me, and a renewal of my enthusiasm for writing my second paper on creativity. At this point, I didn't know how to include paintings in my

paper, but it would be possible to include poetry, and Chung-yuan (1963) had specifically noted that it was the same spiritual rhythm that imparts life to both Taoist poems and paintings. Rather than proving the superiority of the Eastern views of creativity, I would allow the subtleties of the Eastern poetry to move the reader in a feeling-sense, to evoke the inner knowing that we also experience in the West, but have not made as explicit or emphasized in our definitions of creativity. With this in mind, I made a tentative start, weaving the poetry of Taoist, Indian and Sufi poets into a discussion of the Eastern philosophy of creativity. The work became play and the ideas flowed. All of this stopped abruptly, though, when I received feedback on my first assignment for the class stating that creativity and passion were not appropriate in academic writing, and warning that they were generally grounds for being rejected from academic publications. If I wanted to write a paper on creativity, I would need to base my writing mainly on quantitative evidence. Discouraged, I immediately began removing the poetry from the paper I was working on.

Measurement versus Mysticism

Reviewing the scholarly literature in an attempt to do a more traditional research paper, I found evidence that there had been a curious aversion to the subject of creativity in the West. Of the 121,000 titles listed in the Psychological Abstracts from the late 1920's to 1950, Guilford (1950) found that only 186 articles dealt with creativity—fewer than 0.002%. Surprisingly, things haven't improved that much. Sternberg and Lubart (1999) found that from 1975 to 1994 only 0.5% of the articles indexed in the Psychological Abstracts concerned creativity, compared to the topic of reading, which accounted for 1.5%. They also note that psychology texts usually devote little space to

the topic, there are only two journals in creativity and neither is at the top of the most-cited journals list, and major psychology departments seldom offer courses in creativity or have a division devoted to the study of creativity.

Sternberg and Lubart (1999) speculate that one of the major roadblocks making creativity one of psychology's "orphans" is its origins in a tradition of muses, mysticism and spirituality, which seemed "indifferent or even possibly counter to the scientific spirit" (p. 4). In her writing on mysticism, Lerner (1993) notes that mysticism as "an alternate mode of perceiving and knowing" (p. 69) does contrast sharply with patriarchal thinking:

> Mysticism, in its various forms, asserted that transcendent knowledge came not as a product of rational thought, but as a result of a way of life, of individual inspiration and sudden revelatory insight. Mystics saw human beings, the world and the universe in state of relatedness, open to understanding by intuitive and immediate perception. (p. 66)

It was only when Guilford (1950) challenged researchers in psychology to move creativity from the realm of mysticism to scientific measurement that it began to receive any scholarly attention in an attempt to quantify its nature. Critics of the psychometric approach to creativity argue, however, that even after decades of investigation, and the development of many measures of creativity, "the criterion problem ... is still the major stumbling block for the advancement of psychometric creativity research" (Plucker & Renzulli, 1999, p. 48). Evidence for the discriminant, predictive and criterion validity are still lacking for the original-and-useful-products definition of creativity, and it is unclear whether the psychometric approach has had any impact on the enhancement of creativity.

Recognizing that the beliefs of the scientific orthodoxy may be biasing the nature of the creativity research being conducted, Runco, Nemiro, and Walberg (1998)

specifically investigated the personal theories of creativity experts. They found that the majority believed that the most important area for future investigation was creative behavior. Topics such as the creative experience, states of consciousness, and cross-cultural differences were not part of the popular research agenda. The lack of enthusiasm regarding cross-cultural differences was particularly curious since the researchers had ranked "openness to other cultures" quite highly in terms of its significance to the development of creativity. It seemed odd that it was not seen as important to creativity research, unless creativity research and creativity, itself, were assumed to be mutually exclusive endeavors.

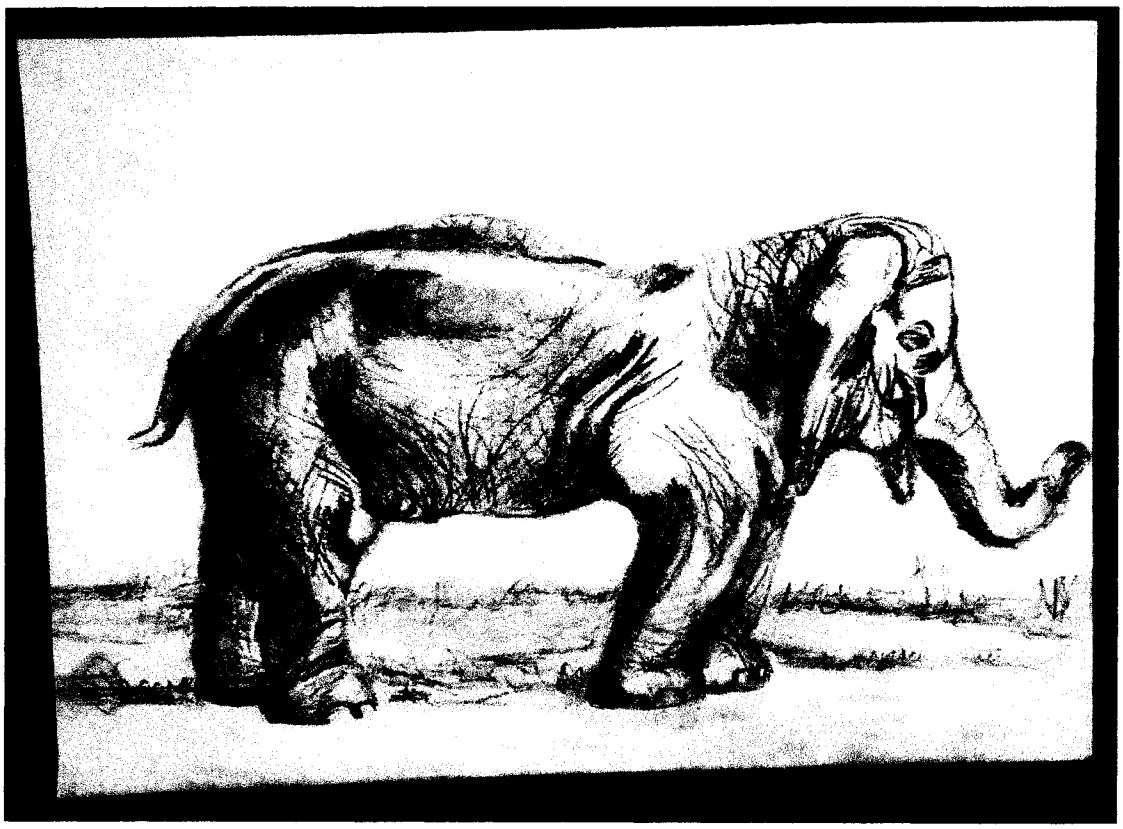
Logos versus Mythos

> *I finally decided to draw the elephant* (Image 1, p. 24) *today, after a particularly draining day at school. I was still wound up when I got home and was thinking how I've got to get some work done on the next paper, but my hands were reaching for the pencils and I started setting up the paper on the drawing board and I began. It took a few minutes to settle down but once I got started the time flew. When I looked up for the first time, an hour had already gone. I felt so much better afterward I was almost ecstatic. It was my own mini-eureka, or maybe a "déjà vu." I always seem to forget how good this is! I just feel more like myself when I'm making art. I guess an elephant never forgets!* (Journal Entry)

In contrast to this experience, using words and logic to write a paper criticizing the Western creativity researchers' bias became a struggle. Again, I alternated between being driven to write the paper, then being completely unmotivated, this time becoming ill with a strep throat that lasted for two months and two rounds of antibiotics. Looking through my old artwork while I was at home, I decided to finally put together a portfolio to see if I could meet the upcoming deadline for having work from past classes juried into a fine arts certificate program. Standing with my artwork in a circle around me and having the instructors thoughtfully considering it was like an old dream come true. When

I got home after the jurying-in, still feverish and sick, I fell asleep and dreamt that I was holding a baby boy and was blissfully happy. Something had been born.

Image 1: The Elephant



Labouvie-Vief (1994) notes that in mythology, and in the inner life of an individual, the birth of a child "indicates a sense of renewal of a self-aspect that has not yet found appropriate expression" (p. 260). After my own experience, I began to wonder how the taken-for-granted story of stress and illness in academia might relate to aspects of the self that are not being freely expressed. In her Presidential Address to the Association for the Study of Higher Learning, an address she calls "the most difficult and most important of her career," Rendon (2000) discusses the stress in academia in the context of the disconnection between the "scientific mind" and the "artistry of the spirit." Of this disconnection she says:

> We consider that objective, quantitative research, separating the knower from what is to be known, and employing complex mathematical models to explain causal relationships, are superior over less pure, subjectively tainted qualitative research that seeks to discern truth, not from numbers, but from fieldwork, interviews, and personal reflections .... Few of us feel comfortable revealing both our academic knowledge and our humanity in our work. We have tended to disregard and/ or disdain ancient wisdom and diverse ways of knowing as advanced by feminists and people of color among others. (p. 4)

The disjointedness between objective and subjective ways of knowing does not appear to be a passing curiosity. Describing what she refers to as the tension between logos and mythos, Labouvie-Vief (1994) defines logos as "the realm of logic and objectivity," (p. 1) or "the part of knowledge that is arguable and can be demonstrated" (p. 39), and mythos as "the realm of all that is felt and organic, of that which is private and imaginative, of all that appeals to the inner world of emotions" (pp. 1-2). Where logos is found in precise laws, rules and abstract concepts, mythos is sensed and felt in narrative, images, poetry, symbols, dreams and playful dialogues, but may remain entirely "opaque to our attempts to justify it or define it" (p. 39). Referring to the magnitude of the logos-mythos polarity, Levine (2000) says, "order and chaos, mind and body, reason and passion, art and science—all the great antitheses of life are embodied in this imaginative dimension" (p. 14).

Because the traditional model of education and knowledge has been based on the elevation and idealization of logos, and a deflation of mythos, some writers speculate that the process of re-balancing involves a "compensatory counter-movement," where mythos is elevated and logos is de-throned (Labouvie-Vief, 1994; Maslow, 1967; Raffe, 1992; Woodman & Dickson, 1996). On an individual basis, this de-throning and subsequent initiation into the feminine is prompted by either an "exterior or interior crisis" where:

> ...the need for safety and security that came from conforming to the masculine,

> logical outer world is replaced by a stronger urge to retrieve the parts of the self that were lost during a time of conformity. (Raffe, 1992, p. 144)

In Women's Ways of Knowing, Belenky, Clinchy, Godlberger & Tarule (1986) similarly describe how individual women who reconnect with their subjective knowing often do so on the heels of disappointment with patriarchal authority and its sanctioned ways of knowing. In subjective knowing, feeling is privileged over thought, and truth is viewed as an individual matter dependent on personal experience and gut instinct. Subjective knowers are often thought to lack an integrated self-concept, but their frequent use of birth imagery suggests that a nascent self may be in the process of development.

Woodman (1992) has noted that the initiation into the realm of the subjective and the feminine, where the nascent self can be nurtured, nourished and eventually given birth to:

> ... is long and arduous. The process is as difficult inside as it is outside. Observing it abstractly is one thing: experiencing it personally is quite another. (p. 2)

Belenky et al. (1986) emphasize that, "when and if it occurs, it is a revolutionary step ...an important adaptive move in the service of self-protection, self-assertion, and self-definition" (p. 54).

Recording dreams, journaling, poetry writing, creating art, connecting with nature, gravitating toward maternal mentors, reading women writers, and paying attention to the body are frequently mentioned ways women describe connecting with and cultivating trust in their inner world (Long, 1999; Raffe, 1992; Rendon, 2000). In giving birth to his work, even Descartes, the father of reason, based the direction of his writing on his dreams. Rendon (2000) asks: "If the path to reason can indeed be sparked from

dreams, what does this say about our work as educational researchers?" (p.3) What else might evolve by paying attention to our dreams, creating art, writing poetry, and connecting with nature and others?

Meeting Mythos: A River Initiation

In order to finish my second paper on creativity, whenever I felt blocked and could not write, I shifted to working on an etching for a visual design class I was taking in the evenings. Selecting an image of an accordion player from the magazines in the class, I continued to work on the etching at home for hours, completely absorbed. Something about the image of the accordion, the instrument I played as a child, was particularly attractive to me right now (Image 2, p. 28). Concentrating on the negative spaces in the picture in order to etch it onto a black surface shifted me into R-mode, releasing me from the tensions of academia and trying to write a paper in the traditional research paper format (Edwards, 1979). When I got this paper back, the feedback stated that my heart was not in it, and I received a lower mark than my first, more passionately written paper. Having removed the poetry from the paper, and kept my artwork separate, it was definitely true that my heart was not in it. I was not familiar with a way of keeping my heart in the usual academic writing. I still had two more years left on my scholarship, but didn't know whether to continue. The tension between my artist-self and researcher-self was extreme and it felt like I had to pick one, or the other, and focus on it. At the end of my second year I mentally "quit" graduate school.

Returning to Lethbridge to visit my family that summer, I found myself going down into the coulees to walk along the river. Feeling the ground beneath my feet, and the heat of the Southern Alberta sun, I walked for hours along the length of the river,

Image 2: The Accordion Player

slipping my sandals off occasionally to dip my toes into the water. Spending time down at the river, I remembered my long walks along the banks of the Ganges in India and how I discovered that I didn't really need to go all the way to India to find spirituality. But I needed to go there to find that out. Now, while walking along the river in my birthplace, poetry singing effortlessly through my mind, I began to feel that I didn't need to wait until I had finished my Ph.D. to be creative. Looking up at the tallest bridge in the world, the bridge I played below as a child, I knew I needed to take a complete break from

all thoughts of the doctoral program and do something different.

Letting the river carry me, when I left Lethbridge, I went on to Red Deer College to stay in the residence there and take a week-long course in Asian painting. Drifting from the small dormitory room to the art studio, free of any plans beyond that week, I began to learn some of the secrets of the brush and ink, and the joy of letting art and life flow. Painting scenes of mountains and water, I learned the significance of water in Asian painting:

> Water, in all of its many forms is the feminine element of a landscape, soft and yielding amidst the massive masculinity of the rocks and mountains. The strength of the water is in its ability to flow steadily on its course, overcoming all obstacles on its path, and wearing down all resistance to its fluid movement, until eventually the water itself shapes its surroundings. (Kan, 1974, p. 128)

The path of the water must be established first, and water, although considered feminine, is considered in Asian art to be powerful, strong and as having an intelligence of its own. Showing us pictures of the paintings of the Asian masters, our instructor casually mentioned that they often referred to themselves as "scholar-artists," and sometimes "scholar-artist-poets" and that they were responsible for the great majority of the historical and theoretical studies of their fields. Participating in the group art show at the end of the Asian painting class, I was just happy to be making art again and never thought of how it related to research, per se. It felt like I was in my element, and that the river had brought me home, to the world of the artists.

Returning to Edmonton, I continued to practice Asian painting and began frequenting local bookstores to look through books of paintings, particularly women's paintings. Crossing over to the biography section, I also began a serious search for the stories of women artists, realizing that I had never read a book about a woman artist's

life, I hadn't seen any movies about women artists, and I had never personally known a woman who had become an artist. Their paths were shrouded in mystery and almost seemed taboo in some way. But as Long (1999) writes, a female reader searches for female models in biography and autobiography, and " a world that revolves around her, and that makes being the way she is make sense" (p. 42). In my search, I found, however, that there were very few narratives of the lives of women artists available. There were books about Emily Carr, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Frida Kahlo, but I was left with the painful impression that only three women had ever managed to become successful artists.

The next problem I contended with was the lack of diversity in the biographies I read. Biographies of female artists seemed to focus on strikingly similar themes: emotional instability, dependency, failed romantic relationships, childlessness, chronic illness, eccentricity, isolation, and sublimation. Confidently diagnosing the source of Georgia O'Keeffe's "psychoneurosis," biographer Hogrefe (1992) stated that:

> As with most cases of nervous exhaustion, the exact causes of Georgia's illness no doubt date back to early childhood and to unresolved conflicts with her shadowy father and cold mother. (p. 165)

O'Keeffe herself said she had no complaints about her childhood. Turning to Blanchard's (1987) biography of Emily Carr, I found an entire chapter entitled "Breakdown" devoted to Carr's "hysterical conversion disorder" and the speculations about it's connection to her sexual conflicts, as opposed to her challenges in establishing herself as a viable artist. Reading books such as these made it seem like creativity and craziness were almost synonymous, and that the quest for creativity was a dangerous path that would more than likely lead to some sort of a nervous breakdown.

Trailing over into the biographies of women writers and poets, I encountered

the same negative framing and an even stronger aura of disturbance and tragedy, with stories such as that of Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and Anne Sexton, moving inexorably and single-mindedly towards their eventual suicides. Commenting on two biographies of Virginia Woolf, Heilbrun (1988) notes that they omit much of Woolf's inner life "apart from her madness, leaving us with the impression of a sick woman who depended extravagantly on a supportive husband" (p. 30). In his review of Plath's poetry, Rosenblat (1979) similarly comments that Plath's attempts to write "a poetry of self-transformation" have been massively overshadowed by the discussion of her madness and "buried under a mass of psychoanalytic interpretations" (p. x). Similarly, the psychological literature I had encountered as I was researching my paper on creativity focused almost exclusively on the litany of "pathology" in the lives of women writers. Ludwig (1994) found that women writers were more likely than non-writers to suffer from mood disorders, drug abuse, panic attacks, general anxiety, eating disorders and multiple mental disorders, and that their overall levels of creativity were predicted by their cumulative pathology. One researcher (Serlin, 1993) coined the term the "Anne Sexton Complex" to describe what he saw as women writers' pattern of romanticizing death and identifying creativity with death and darkness. There have been seemingly few transformational narratives available, however, to help women understand these womb-like, liminal spaces, to free them from disabling scripts and beliefs (Heilbrun, 1988) and to help initiate them into the re-birth process (Rosenblat, 1979).

During graduate school, however, a particular myth I repeatedly encountered came to my aid. Overwhelmed by the articles we were reading on the computer models of learning and creativity in the Psychology of Learning course, I bought a

book by Woodman and Dickson (1996) from a bookstore bargain table and found myself reading instead about the myth of Psyche and Eros, a myth Hillman (1972) says provides an archetypal pattern of creativity, and a "mystery text of transformation" (p. 56). Regarding the value of reading myths, in general, Woodman and Dickson (1996) write that:

> Reading ancient myths and fairy tales can be very helpful because these stories came spontaneously from people who had not studied psychology. The stories came straight out of their unconscious and, therefore, show us how the unconscious works unimpeded by conscious intervention. .... For those of us who are interested in why we do what we do when we want to do the opposite, the stories are gold mines of information. (p. 126)

Finding the personal myth we are living, gaining an understanding of it, and living it consciously is what Jung (1976) called "the task of tasks" (p. xxv). Likening myths to the unseen beams in a house, May (1991) writes that "they are the structure which holds the house together so that people can live in it" (p. 15), helping them to make sense of life, and giving them direction and purpose. As Politsky (1995) has written, however, "we live in an age that has lost its guiding myths and symbols," and a "greater responsibility falls upon individuals to find their own life-sustaining myths" (p. 9). Fortunately, my own life sustaining myth seemed to find me. In a visit to a second-hand bookstore, I encountered the myth of Psyche and Eros for a second time, this time in a psychology section (Labouvie-Vief, 1994). Using the myth of Psyche and Eros to bring to life the two modes of knowing and being (logos and mythos) that have been polarized, Labouvie-Vief (1994) comments that:

> ... before Psyche and Eros can become reunited, they need to experience a series of transformations. These transformations are described in the four tasks Aphrodite poses to Psyche. (p. 209)

As the goddess of creativity and fertility, and the most solar of the goddesses,

(Weir-Huber, 1999) the four tasks Aphrodite assigns to Psyche in order to reclaim her passion and creativity, are all:

> ... seemingly impossible and each carrying a death sentence. If Pysche fails to accomplish them, she dies either physically or psychically. (Woodman & Dickson, 1996, pp. 129-130)

If Psyche succeeds in accomplishing the tasks, however, she will be reunited with Eros, transformed, and give birth to a daughter named Joy. In Transforming Psyche, Weir-Huber (1999) emphasizes the butterfly-like, transformational possibilities for women that are encoded within the severe initiatory tasks assigned by Aphrodite. Begun as a doctoral dissertation, Weir-Huber (1999) integrates the categories of Women's Ways of Knowing (Belenky et al., 1986) with the four tasks Psyche must accomplish believing that incorporating ancient myth in this way can "illuminate the experiences of present-day women and ultimately provide positive and affirmative ways for understanding women's 'examined' lives" (p. 9).

Following a Feeling

With a lack of positive autobiographical stories available to me, I read and re-read the accounts of Psyche's various initiatory tasks, trying to understand where I was at, and where things might be going next. Even though I had only read about her in the myth, having been separated from Eros when I was asked to remove passion and creativity from my writing, I sensed that I was now under the invisible tutelage of Aphrodite if I wanted to find a way to recover my creativity in an academic setting. In the myth, the first task Aphrodite assigns Psyche is to sort through bushels of assorted seeds, putting each type of seed in its proper pile. It is an impossible task in the time frame Psyche is given.

Discriminating among the seeds has been interpreted as "the need to separate

one's own values from those of other people" (Woodman & Dickson, 1996, p. 130), or as "the ability to categorize different grains of knowledge." (Weir-Huber, 1999, p. 91) In order to accomplish the task successfully, though, Psyche's helpers are ants, tiny symbols of instinctual energies. (Weir-Huber, 1999; Woodman & Dickson, 1996) Labouvie-Vief (1994) comments that, "what is interesting is that it is these feminine powers that begin to classify the seeds, to separate them and put them into orderly categories ..." (p. 213). Psyche's first lesson from Aphrodite can be viewed, then, as "a lesson in surrender to her own deepest instincts." (Woodman & Dicksion, 1996, p. 130).

By the end of my summer of Asian painting and walking along the river, I had not registered in any courses for the fall, knowing instinctively that I could not go back to doing the same sort of quantitative research I had done during my Master's degree if I did not want to become ill again. Like the subjective knowers in Women's Ways of Knowing (Belenky et al., 1986), the thought of returning to analytical or received forms of knowing felt oppressive and completely unattractive, but I was uncertain what to do next. Wandering down the hallway of the Education Building in late August, to see how it would feel to be back in the university environment, I checked my student mailbox, and found a syllabus for an "arts-based research" course. Staring at the title, it looked like there might be a way of being both an artist *and* a researcher, and perhaps reuniting Psyche and Eros. The description for the course said that it was designed to be "playful and exploratory," as well as "personal" in that you could connect the classroom exercises to your own research. When I got home I immediately called the instructor for the course and we talked about how arts-based methods would connect with my interest in researching creativity. He suggested that I read Zen and the Art of Motorcycle

Maintenance (Pirsig, 1981). Surprised that he was open to Eastern philosophy, I hung up the phone, feeling I could begin the doctoral program again, now that I had the opportunity to research creativity in a different way, using what appeared to be more creative methods. The river had brought a new possibility, a new direction.

CHAPTER 3

Searching for a Methodology

> *In the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story.* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71)

In the previous chapter I wrote, reflected upon, revised and relived the story of how my search for creativity in academia gradually led me to an arts-based research course. In the present chapter, I moved through the same reflexive process as I wrote the narrative of how my experiences in the arts-based research course, and then a narrative inquiry course moved me closer toward my goal of:

> ...writing about creativity while at the same time engaged in the very same process—the search and the object of the search becoming one and the same. (Edwards, 1986, p. xii)

The literature pertaining to each course has been integrated with my personal experience, and the relevance of Psyche's second initiatory task to my personal transition to using narrative inquiry is discussed in this chapter. Accompanying this is an account of the transformation of my original research intentions through my encounters with both methods, as well as an account of my realization of the underlying autobiographical questions driving the research.

Throughout the chapter, there are references to various ways of knowing but for my purposes in this dissertation, I consider all of these distinctions to fall along the *Logos-Mythos* dimension, with *Logos* being related to what authors variously call the objective, intellectual, empirical, masculine, rational, scientific and externally observable ways of knowing, and *Mythos* being related to what are referred to as inner, subjective, tacit, emotive, feminine, feeling, introspective, bodily, poetic and artistic ways of

knowing (Levine, 2000). In terms of the creation of the text, the evolution of Found Poetry (Richardson, 1992) into the document, the changing role of the use of collage, and the use of the notebook format for my co-participants' stories are described. Lastly, possible criteria for the evaluation of research texts incorporating narratives, poetry and art are presented.

Artist-as-Researcher, Researcher-as-Artist

> *...this self-reflective research has allowed me to say, "Yes, I am an artist." And I can say, "Yes, I am a researcher." But I also discovered that my research self and artist self are not separate. I am simultaneously artist-as-researcher and researcher-as-artist whatever specific task I am engaging.* (Finley, in Finley & Knowles, 1995, p. 131)

Although arts-based research is one of the most powerful classes I've taken in university, it is challenging to articulate what it is because the knowing is so inextricably bound up with the process. In contrast to knowledge acquired by observing or through outside sources, arts-based research involves "poeisis" which is knowing by making (Levine, 200). Creating art forms (e.g., collages, poetry, plays, paintings, narratives, photographs) is used as the means for both collecting and representing research results (Norris, 2000). The power of the arts-based approach as a way of knowing became clearer as I began experiencing the method in the classroom:

> *Our first class was in a drama studio so it was exciting, but scary, because it wasn't the usual classroom environment. The studio was black, and there were spotlights, heavy curtains, and cords for equipment running along the floor. Even the chairs were different – sort of like the vinyl seats out of cars, except you could stretch your legs out in front of you on them. Sitting in a circle, the instructor told us a bit about the class but instead of going around the circle and introducing ourselves according to what department we were in and what our area of research was, he turned on yellow, blue, green and red colored lights in the corners of the room, then read out the words 'chemistry,' 'recess,' and 'home.' With each word, he asked us to move to the color of light we felt fit with our experience of that word, then introduce ourselves to the others there and tell them why that color fit. When he read out 'chemistry,' I immediately went toward the*

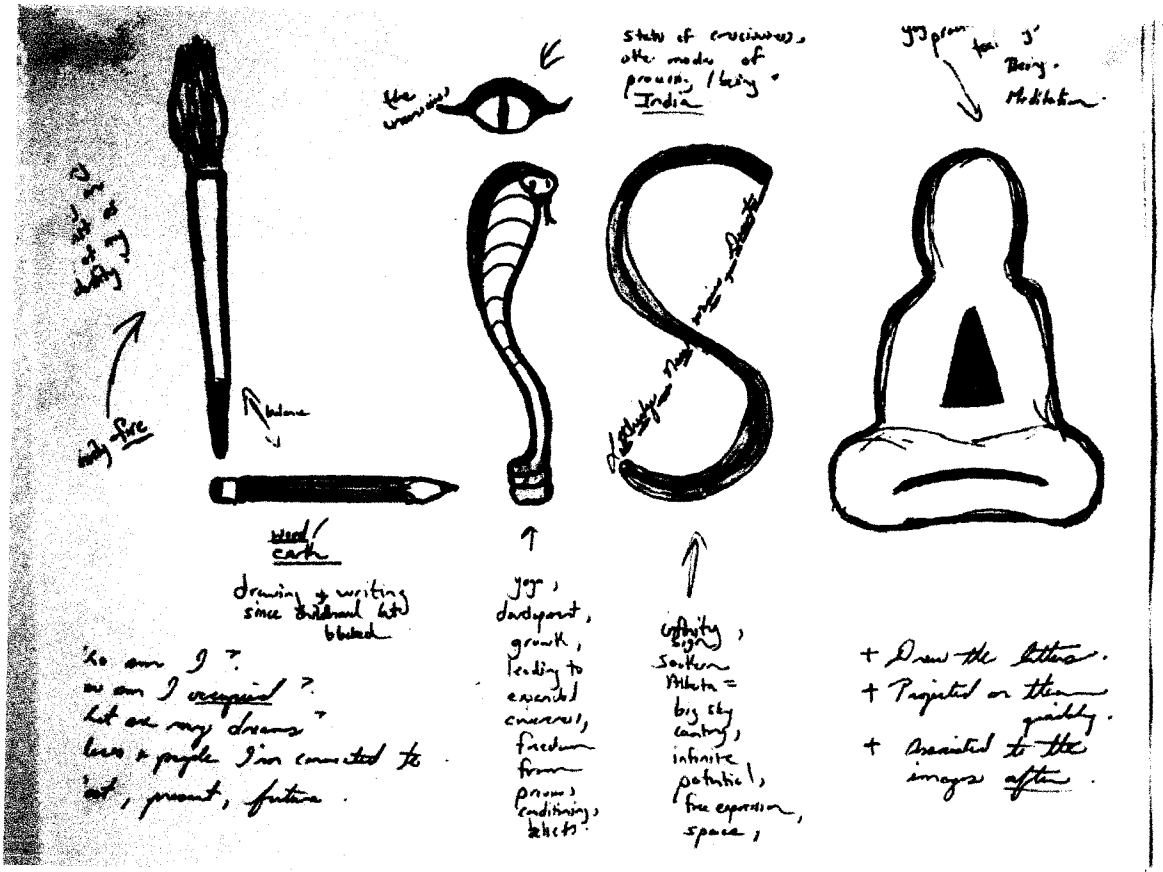
> *yellow color. I never felt totally at ease in a chemistry class. Instead I felt exposed, on the spot, tense. It wasn't my subject. Only one person in our group picked yellow because chemistry class was a positive experience that she related to "happy golden light."* (Journal Entry)

This was my introduction to arts-based research and I was excited. Through a simple exercise, like the one I recall from my journal, I already knew more about my classmates than if I had spent an entire term with them in another class. The exercise evoked inner reflection, or a re-searching as to "why yellow?" and conversations based on our personal experiences of school. *Evocative* is a word that's often used to describe arts-based research (Eisner, 1997).

For the following class, the instructor asked us to build on these introductions by drawing name cards to visually represent ourselves (Figure 3, p. 39). We were to consider questions such as: *Who am I? What am I preoccupied with? What are some of the places, and who are some of the people I'm connected to?* At home, I sketched the letters of my name, then quickly started turning them into images of a paintbrush and pencil, the serpent energy that runs up the spine, the eye of intuitive knowledge, an infinity sign for the big sky country of Southern Alberta, and a figure seated in meditation. Given the opportunity, these images came immediately and effortlessly. It was still surprisingly difficult to use them to introduce myself to the others in the class, but after my previous experiences I wanted to take the opportunity that was being provided.

In general, arts-based methods provide the opportunity for researchers and their co-participants to tell their stories in a different way. In their attempts to find a scientific language for conveying their insights, Levine (2000) warns that researchers in psychology may miss entirely the living substance of their work. Dissatisfied with "dustbowl empiricism," arts-based researchers are exploring the use of various

Image 3: Lisa's Name Card



aesthetic forms to represent the findings of their research (Gregg, 1991). Eisner (1997) notes that these explorations "are rooted in an expanding conception of the nature of knowledge and the relationship between what one knows and how it is represented" (p. 4). Using art forms as a way of conveying knowledge is not "new," although it is relatively new in the context of educational research.

In another classroom exercise designed to help us to gain an experiential understanding of arts-based research, we interviewed a classmate regarding what drew her to an art-based research class, and how arts-based research connected to who she was, and then used an art form to convey what had been learned from the conversation:

> *After reading over what K and I talked about, I thumbed through a few magazines, thinking I might try making a collage based on our conversation. I*

was surprised at the sureness of my hand as it began plucking out and arranging certain images. The figures of a little girl, and an older adolescent girl behind her immediately formed the center of the collage. K. had talked a lot about how her older sister's choice to become a teacher had influenced her to become a teacher too, but that she had enjoyed English literature and drama and would like to write plays when she retires. Arranging the images of books, women reading, typewriters and school children, I felt so connected with K. that I wondered at times if it was her or myself I was representing. At one point I took a book of Thornton Wilder plays off my own bookshelf and took the title page from inside to add to her collage. When I shared it with her the following week she scanned the images very carefully and looked surprised when she saw that I had included the title of her favorite play to teach. She hadn't mentioned it in our conversation. Looking at the collage, she began talking about how the tensions she was experiencing as a teacher were reflected in the images and the way they were arranged. When we rejoined the rest of the class I was surprised when she said she felt she had been known in a way that friends who have known her for 20 years didn't know her. (Journal Entry)

Concerned that her narrations of her research participants' lives were "unfeeling" and "told as if from a distance," Finley (2001) describes how she suddenly picked up scissors and began creating collage portraits for each of them, and how the process felt "freeing, liberating even" and "fired energy" into her work as an educational researcher (p. 14). This was my experience of the collage-making process as well. Selecting images for K's collage was engaging and absorbing, similar to the R-mode I had experienced while drawing and etching (Edwards, 1979). Selecting and arranging images in a way that conveyed my "felt-sense" of what had transpired in our conversation, I felt connected to K, and able to relate more than what she had conveyed to me verbally during our conversation (Gendlin, 1982). I could relate something of what she communicated through her mannerisms, facial expressions, body language, pauses in speaking, and changes in tones. As Polanyi (1966) comments in his work on the tacit dimension of experience: "we can know more than we can tell" (p. 4). Collage making seemed to help me relate more of that implicit, inner knowing that exists in a form not yet articulated

in words, and that is closer to the experience.

Artists, art therapists and arts-based researchers have all noted that the process of making art has a powerful capacity to reveal new insights to us and break through our habitual stories and perception because it is one step ahead of the verbal mind (Allen, 1995; Barber, Chandler, & Collins, 2001; Cassou, 1995; Levine, 2000; McNiff, 1998). Collage artists, in particular, have stressed the inner transformations that are possible when we have the opportunity to combine an array of displaced and seemingly incongruous images, referring to it as a process of "visual alchemy" (Spencer, 1980). In their study of leadership, Barber et al. (2001) used a group collage-like, arts-based activity to challenge their participants to go beyond relying on and recapitulating explicit scientific knowledge, "to exploring and generating their own intuitive artistic knowledge of the experience of leadership" (p. 27). The researchers observed what they called "synthetic moments" where the participants reconstructed their understandings of leadership, and experienced "transformations of the self" (p. 35). They note that in reconnecting with their inner subjective knowing, "many who were silent the first week became leaders in class discussion the second week" (p. 36).

Some arts-based researchers speculate that arts-based methods are more than just subjective ways of knowing, though, and that art making actually integrates the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of our being (Allen, 1995, p. xvii). McNiff (1998) believes, in fact, that what is most intriguing about art-based research methods is that they:

> ... require the integration of the two elements that have been polarized through the past four centuries of debate over what constitutes appropriate scientific methodology. Art-based research comprises both introspective and empirical inquiry. The artist-researcher initiates a series of artistic expressions as a means of

> personal introspection and the process of inquiry generates empirical data, which are systematically reviewed. (p. 57)

Finley (2001) similarly comments, but goes somewhat further believing that the integration of the two ways of knowing occurs within the art-making activity itself, and not sequentially. She believes that collage-making, "integrates physical with mental activity, forming an interlock of mind and body," and connects it to:

> working knowledge ... where there is a kinesthetic correctness ... an interplay of the theoretical and the empirical, the marriage of hand and mind in solving practical problems. (p. 19)

In my own experience, a dream I had in the middle of the course suggests that the ability to integrate, and to travel easily back and forth on a bridge between the two ways of knowing, was yet to come:

> *I'm climbing a mountain with a friend from the class. The wind is picking up; the sky is getting darker and filling with black storm clouds. I hear a sound like thunder and look up to see the summit beginning to crumble down, like an avalanche. Looking down, the base of the mountain seems to be shifting too. Looking back up again, I notice a huge train bridge, like the one across the river in Lethbridge, looming in the background, unreachable.* (Journal Entry)

In my final presentation for the arts-based course the two ways of knowing were not yet married, instead running parallel to each with no bridge between them. I inadvertently used some of my existing artwork to illustrate and express my previous painful experiences of feeling creatively oppressed and victimized in academia as opposed to creating new art that may have helped me to have fresh insights and transform this story. Expressing concern about researchers using art to illustrate pre-exiting themes, Fox and Geichman (2001) have emphasized the need to use the transformative potential of art to "break down the momentum of current themes ..." (p. 33). Arts-based research methods may be of particular value for breaking through research cover stories.

By the end of the term, I knew I wanted to continue my explorations with arts-based methods, and to use them in my research, but I hadn't had enough transformative experience with them yet to confidently defend my use of them in a mock candidacy examination in the doctoral research seminar the following term. Most of the students who would make up my mock committee were doing quantitative research, and as McNiff (1998) notes, it is easy to "negate a new form of inquiry by judging it according to the standards of the existing paradigm." (p. 39). Unlike the masculine hero myths engrained into us where the hero knows exactly where he is going, and there is a linear, step-by-step ascent toward a pre-determined destination, at this point I experienced much tension and uncertainty, worried that my proposal to use arts-based methods would not survive if I moved forward too quickly (Long, 1999; Raffe, 1992). I needed a story with another plotline for guidance.

Psyche's Second Task: Transitioning to Narrative Inquiry

Returning to the myth of Psyche and Eros as I am writing this, Psyche's second task is relevant to the situation I was encountering at that time, and the manner in which my situation was resolved. According to the myth, to appease Aphrodite, Psyche must proceed to gather wool from sheep that have golden fleece. Representing the male solar spirit, or masculine courage, Psyche knows that attempting to collect this golden fleece will be almost impossible because the sheep are too wild, and can become aggressive in the heat of the midday sun. Heeding the advice from a green reed near the river where she had been considering drowning herself, Psyche waits until the sheep are resting in the evening and in this way successfully completes the task. Woodman and Dickson (1996) note that through Aphrodite's second task, Psyche is taught to further strengthen her

ability to listen to her instincts, and "to cultivate patience, which can prevent her from acting too quickly, thereby bringing about her own destruction" (p. 130). Weir-Huber (1999) similarly notes:

> ....that Psyche must postpone until evening the gathering of the strands of golden fleece indicates the importance of judging context and the significance of foresight, forbearance, and the ability to wait. (p. 94)

In my own situation, aware of the context, and my own limitations, I decided to wait until the Christmas holiday was over, before deciding about the doctoral research seminar.

Over the holiday, I attended a Christmas party where one of the guests mentioned a narrative inquiry class that had helped her immensely in her work. A second methodology class sounded like it would be an acceptable alternative to the doctoral seminar, but it was likely that there would not be any room left at this late date. A dream I had on New Year's Eve prompted me to try to enroll in the class anyway:

> *I'm driving in my car, heading east down Whyte Avenue. My mom and my older sister are with me and we're on our way to a restaurant. The road ends abruptly and there is no path to continue on, just a large expanse of thick, muddy earth. I turn the car around and head back in the opposite direction, toward an apartment I'm living in with another student who's doing some sort of experimental research. Her entire family is at the apartment and they're all speaking a foreign language. I don't speak their language and feel very uncomfortable, like I don't really belong there. Looking around I notice that I've somehow managed to lose my mother and sister on the way back to the apartment.* (Journal Entry)

Feeling that I would not integrate the ways of knowing my artistic mom and scientific sister symbolized if I continued to participate in the doctoral research seminar, I decided to listen to what my dream seemed to be suggesting; drop the doctoral seminar, and put myself on the waiting list for the Narrative Inquiry class. Taking the counsel of dreams may seem like an unusual way to make academic program decisions, but Rendon (2000) describes how even Descartes, the "father of reason," used his dreams to guide

him on his quest to find a reliable method of generating knowledge. Opening a book of poems in one of his dreams, he encountered the question: "What road in life should I follow?" Analyzing the symbols in his dreams to mean that the intellect should be separated from intuition, he ultimately chose the path of reason, but as Rendon (2000) notes, it is "... noteworthy, if not highly ironic, that rational science... could evolve from the cathartic, passionate, mysterious experience of having a dream" (p. 3). Interpreting the symbols from my own dream to mean that I should not take the path of reason I had already taken, and should not continue participating in a quantitative research seminar where I wouldn't be speaking the same language as the others, I decided to delve into another mode of inquiry I was not yet familiar with. A few days later a second dream seemed to confirm the decision to follow this path:

> *I'm riding my bicycle west down Whyte Avenue and manage to keep my balance as I make my way over the railroad tracks. Sitting at the intersection of Calgary Trail and Whyte Avenue I see a celebratory parade coming up Calgary Trail and turning onto Whyte Avenue. It's headed toward the university and I decide to squeeze into the procession at the very last minute.* (Journal Entry)

Heading back towards the university, this time, I'm using a form of transportation that requires the body's energy and balance, and my dream source seems to be celebrating this decision. When I arrived in the narrative inquiry class, the text for the course further confirmed the decision and my dream:

> If we shift our position in the parade, our knowing shifts ... [and] as the parade changes, our relative positions change. What we knew at one point in time shifts as the parade moves temporally forward to another point in time. (from the course text, Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17)

This is definitely true of the present inquiry. Had I begun conducting my research prior to taking the arts-based research class, it would have arisen from a story of how patriarchal educational systems oppress creativity and do not appreciate subjective, feminine ways of

knowing. In the narrative inquiry class, however, when we were encouraged to write "narrative beginnings" and explore our personal, autobiographical connections to our research, I began to burst through my research cover story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000):

> In grade four, when we began receiving the order forms for the Scholastic book club, a photograph of a green book cover with a drawing of an elephant on it caught my eye. This wasn't like the drawings we did in school. You could see the inside drawing of the elephant—everywhere the artist's pencil had touched down was still visible. There was no erasing, which seemed to make it look more alive somehow. I wanted to learn how to draw like that, and the description promised that, Pencil, Pen and Brush (Weiss, 1961) was filled with the secrets of "real" artists. It wasn't one of the most expensive books that month, only sixty cents, so I had a good chance of getting it. As a manager of a grocery store, my father knew what a "good deal" was. After church on Sundays we would go with him to the store to help put prices on the cans of food while he built displays of what was on sale that week. At home, I'd sit at the kitchen table, hypnotized, whenever he took one of his pens out of his shirt pocket and began sketching floor plans for a house on the corner of a sale flyer. It was a trace of a life I didn't know much about. He had built the house we were living in when I was only four and two houses prior to that. Once in a while I would hear him say how he wished he would have kept building houses. (Field Text excerpt from Narrative Inquiry course)

I was surprised that my narrative beginnings spontaneously led to my father after all of my intense focus on feminine, subjective ways of knowing, but this is where they led—to one of his unfulfilled creative desires, and to my wanting him to buy the drawing book for me, and to support and value my creativity. Was this desire part of what led me all the way back to try and prove the value of creativity in a patriarchal institution? The writing of the story gave me my first tentative insights into this connection, and the re-writing of it now for the dissertation brings even more clarity into the depths of the desire for my father's blessing for being an artist. Part of the power of this narrative inquiry, of the writing and revising of the story, has been how it has allowed me to get below my research cover story, changing the tone of my writing in the process.

While I was taking the narrative class, though, I still strongly resonated with the personal narratives of women who felt that their creativity would not be appreciated in patriarchal institutions and they needed to leave academia. Writer Leslie Marmon Silko (1997) recounts how even after switching from law into an English department she was still happy to leave the university altogether because she wanted to create texts, not analyze them. Experiencing similar tensions with the scholarly world, Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) says she wrote her detective novels under a pseudonym because she has no doubt that:

> ... had those responsible for my promotion to tenure in an English department known of the novels, they would have counted them heavily against me; I would probably have been rejected. (p. 110)

After completing her doctoral degree in education, Jean Raffe (1992) comments that she felt she had to let herself fail at the hero plotline of becoming a full-time tenured professor in order to claim her childhood dream of becoming a full-time writer able to write about the things that truly interested her. After delving into the power of image making, art therapist Pat Allen (1995) similarly describes how her goal of becoming a tenured professor grew less attractive and ultimately disintegrated as she became "more and more uncomfortable with the marriage of art to psychotherapy" (p. 149).

Stories such as those above were validating at the time, mirroring the tensions I was experiencing and helping me to not feel so alone. A story we read by Marianna Demarco-Torgovnick (1994) recounting how her journey through academia had largely been a rebellion against the confining and unimaginative life in her family and in her hometown of Bensonhurst, also struck a chord, though. When I journaled about the story for class, I initially discussed how her insights regarding how her mother had had to

smother her own dreams and ambitions, reflected back to me what I had been recently realizing about my own mother and her suppressed artistic creativity. There was another part of Marianna DeMarco-Torgovnick's (1994) story that also struck a chord, though, a part where she spoke of how, after her father died, she had to go through the drawer where his "important papers" were:

> In the drawer, much to my surprise, I found offprints of the first two essays I had ever published. They made me pause ... the off-prints suggested that my father took more pleasure in my authorship than he had ever expressed or shown—more than I had guessed at over the years. (p. 184)

Reading this section of her memoir resonated with my own experience. I had similarly seen photographs I had given to my father of my own artwork on top of his chests of drawers at home, and felt an odd pang of emotion I hadn't thought much about until I read this story.

Death of a Research Cover Story

The bottom began to fall out of my research cover story of how patriarchy does not appreciate or support creativity when we were asked to familiarize ourselves with narrative inquiry methodology by selecting and presenting a previous student's doctoral dissertation in class. Attracted to Bach's (1998) visual narrative inquiry because of its potential for helping me use visual art in my own work, Bach chose narrative and arts-based methods because she felt that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984 cited in Bach 1998, p. 40). Extracting excerpts of the dialogues between Bach and the girls who participated in her study, I was to play the part of Bach, and my presentation partner would play the roles of the various girls. As I was reading the dissertation, while I did not completely disagree with Bach, I became very resistant to Bach's forceful presentation of the "evaded curriculum" and "how schools

short change girls," and wanted to switch to another dissertation, but there was not enough time. To my surprise, creating an art-based presentation with poetry, dialogue, quotes and photographs became the most enjoyable project I had undertaken in graduate school. When it came time to present it in class, however, I was still extremely uneasy about playing the role of critic of the patriarchal educational system. Something was shifting inside. Unlike Allen, Silko, Heilbrun, and Raffe, I was now having opportunities to be creative within the academic environment and, ironically, creating a presentation of how schools short change girls was the most creative experience I had had yet. I began to struggle with the fact that my own research cover story of creative oppression was completely inconsistent with my recent experiences. What would I research without this story?

In the beginning of my search for creativity, I wrote of how neuroscientists had found that the left hemisphere of the brain likes to maintain its story, despite contrary evidence, to feel that it is in full control. Writers in the area of narrative have similarly commented on the "intense need there can be to reduce cognitive dissonance when telling one's story" (Bruner, 1994, p. 47) and "the immense psychic importance of having a coherent story" and "the acute unease a person can feel without one" (Crites, 1986, p. 162). Carr (1986) comments that it seems to be a "need imposed on us whether we seek it or not" (italics added, p. 97). Our drive for coherence is so strong, in fact, that some writers speculate that without it the chaos we would experience would be a threat to our sanity (Carr, 1986; Le Guin, 1989; May, 1991).

Rather than being a threat of impending sanity, however, the loss of a coherent story may be a sign that there is impending growth or a creative breakthrough about

to take place in an unknown direction. Heilbrun (1988) describes how many women writers either deliberately or unconsciously manufacture some sort of event, or "fall" to transform their lives:

> ... from a conventional to an eccentric story ... something that will allow them to place their lives outside the bounds of society's restraints and ready-made narratives. (pp. 48-50)

Belenky et al. (1986) note that women moving towards "constructed knowledge" move outside the "given by removing themselves psychologically, and at times even geographically, from all that they had known" (italics added, p. 135). Rather than reflecting an unsuccessful life, "narratives of discontinuity" may reflect a spiral path of development where there is linear progression with repetition, denouements and incubation periods prior to growth (Bateson, 2000, p. 82). This is consistent with my own personal experience. Throughout graduate school I have needed to surrender my familiar narratives, and to not know where I am going, in order to grow and move forward.

Realizing the Real Research Questions

I want to beg you, as much as I can,
dear sir, to be patient toward all that is
unsolved in your heart and try to
love the questions themselves
like locked rooms and like
books that are written
in a very foreign
tongue (...)

live the questions now. Perhaps you will
then gradually, without noticing it, live
along some distant day into the
answer
(Letter excerpt taken from Rilke, 1903, in Mitchell, 1989, p. 9)

With the death of my research cover story, "the question" I needed to be patient with was: "*What is my research question*?" My feelings of ambiguity and liminality were

further intensified by the loss of another potential supervisor, since my arts-based research professor had decided to take a job in the United States. Without the driving emotional force of the cover story and no external guide, there was a curious void.

In their text on narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note that narrative inquiry:

> ... carries more of a sense of a search, a re-search, a searching again. Narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem definition and solution. (p. 124)

Moustakas (1990) similarly believes that inside every researcher, "... exists a topic, theme, problem, or question that represents a critical interest and area of search," and that the initial engagement with one's research "... invites self-dialogue, an inner search to discover the topic" (p. 27). With the death of my research cover story, I began journaling more, practicing yoga daily and continuing with collage making to see where the imagery would lead.

Creating my first collages outside of class, my initial experiment began by simply painting swirls of various colors, a ribbon of bright orange flowing diagonally across the entire page. Next, the alphabet started to appear over the entire surface. Taking images from magazines, I placed a bursting sunflower to the right and a series of butterflies, above the orange ribbon. Lastly, I placed a seemingly incongruous image of a body on a funeral pyre and skulls along the bottom, giving the appearance that butterflies and an explosion of letters from the alphabet were being released from the body on the pyre (Image 4, p. 52).

It appeared that something was dying, and something was being released, although at the time I did not realize that it was my cover story. A short time after

Image 4: Death of a Research Cover Story

completing the collage, I had the following dream:

> *It's nighttime and I'm standing on a bridge over a large body of water. A construction worker is fixing a support on one side of the bridge and I wonder if I should be standing on it while he's doing this. He seems to know what he's doing. I watch as he removes a large bolt and the entire bridge begins to sway from side to side. He just keeps working unconcerned, and I stay on the bridge and watch as he works.* (Journal Entry)

Spiraling back around and repeating the bridge metaphor from my dream during the arts-based research class, my dream suggests that the process of repairing the bridge was now underway, indicating a possible marriage of Psyche and Eros some time in the future. Using the symbol of a bridge in her own personal story of uniting Logos and Eros, Raffe (1992) commented that the symbol of a bridge:

> ... helps us visualize this inner synthesis of the opposites. A bridge is an

> edifice that overcomes obstacles or gaps that connect things on opposite sides. In the human brain, there is a bridge called the *corpus callosum* that connects the verbal, highly conscious left hemisphere with the image-oriented, largely unconscious right (...). I imagine another bridge, an invisible one in each individual that overcomes the artificial barriers humans have erected to separate Eros and Logos .... (p. 18)

My dream seemed to hint that something in my unconscious mind was doing the work, and I should just stay on the bridge and continue to write my proposal, and perhaps the inner connection would be established. In reacting to the cognitive perspective on creativity, and cultivating more subjective, arts-based ways of knowing, I had developed quite a one-sided, anti-intellectual, non-verbal and subjective theory of creativity, though. The task of writing the proposal was not going to be easy. Belenky et al. (1986) note that women who reconnect with their subjective way of knowing often become "word-phobic," feeling as though they've been oppressed by words, reason and logic. Levine (2000) similarly notes that:

> ... in their rediscovery of nonverbal knowing, art therapy students often developed the fear that to use words will reduce the rich, creative field of sensible experience to an arid, logical plain, to turn the living into the dead. (p. 2)

Concerned that thought may destroy feeling; they begin to prefer to express themselves non-verbally. This is the way I felt.

To eventually arrive at the position of "constructed knowledge," where Psyche and Eros enjoy a playful relationship, Belenky et al. (1986) note that women must somehow jump outside of the frames provided and create their own paths. When women do so, they describe a dialogue or a dance of logos and mythos (Labouvie-Vief, 1994); a pendulum that swings between instinct and spirit (Woodman & Dickson, 1996); the reconnection of the scientific mind with the artistry of the spirit (Rendon, 2000); a weaving together of rational and emotive thought (Belenky et al., 1986); the marriage of

Psyche and Eros (Gilligan, 2002, Weir-Huber, 1999, Labouvie-Vief, 1994, Woodman & Dickson, 1996) and the bridge between Logos and Eros (Raffe, 1992).

Once my external research cover story was uncovered, however, the internal tensions between these two ways of knowing intensified and collage making became my path for releasing it. I found that if I created a collage first, it was much easier to continue writing afterwards, often bringing together ideas that were difficult to reconcile or give a structure too. Whenever there was a build-up of tension with the writing, I would shift to working with paints and images, often juxtaposing elements that don't usually go together. Mermaids would appear in trees, flowers would bloom inside of a woman's head; constellations of stars would float in the ocean. Something about putting together elements belonging to different perceptual categories—the more incongruous the better—allowed me to weave together a tentative research proposal that combined dream imagery and journal entries with scholarly references.

My initial research idea in the proposal was to begin my research by looking at academically trained women's experiences of creativity, with the rationale that there still are not enough "stories to live by" for women in academia (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Heilbrun, 1988). I would ask my participants what stories came to mind when they think of creativity, and to tell me about their lives in terms of creativity. I would also use collage as another way for them to tell their stories in order to facilitate the sharing of feeling-sensing, intuitive and tacit knowing, since researchers have noted that certain dimensions of the creative experience may not be uncovered without the use of more creative methods (McNiff, 1998; Tavalin, 1996). Using arts-based methods of data collection, I envisioned the research becoming somewhat of a *visual* Women's Ways of

Knowing (Belenky et al., 1986). Sharing and creating collages would also likely facilitate rapport and story telling in a context where participants may automatically defer to expert knowledge or relate only cover stories.

After completing the research proposal, like many narrative inquirers, I continued to feel uncertain about what I was actually researching. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) note:

> ...being able to say what phenomenon a narrative inquiry is about is not an easily answered question. It is not one that is answered with finality at the beginning of an inquiry or in the research proposal. (p. 125)

Formulating the actual query the text is a response to, may not be possible until the inquiry is complete (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It was only after conducting the research conversations, writing and reflecting on the stories, and beginning to pull out the narrative threads for the discussion that I clearly realized the autobiographical questions underlying the research, the questions I had been living all along throughout the doctoral program: *Can I be creative here in academia, or do I have to leave? Can I bring art, poetry and spirituality into the dissertation? Can I bring back together all of the letters of my name* (Figure 3, p. 39)*? Can I be who I am here? Can I reunite Psyche and Eros in my work?* While these questions seem obvious now, they were not always so; I felt I was supposed to look outside of myself for a legitimate, scholarly research question to ask. Most research is actually autobiographical in some way, though, hence our connection to and fascination with our topics (Murray, 1991).

While the creation of the proposal for the visual inquiry was a personal step forward in becoming more creative, it was not yet the marriage of Psyche and Eros of which other women had experienced and spoken. Prior to completing the proposal, I

began working on a collage that suggested there was still more growth to come before this could happen (Image 5, below).

Image 5: Psyche and Eros Collage

In the collage, Psyche is trying to soften up Eros by giving him a playful pinch, and while the two figures have their arms around each other, they are not yet fully embracing. Made of stone, they appear to still be waiting for something before the golden drop of water suspended above their heads descends and brings them into the dance of life.

Contemplating the collage prior to my candidacy examination, a poetic response to the image began to formulate in my mind:

Nectar of the Gods

How do I steal it?
Steal the Soma,
Nectar of the gods!

Left here
Barren and broken-hearted
Dry as the devil's own desert
And wailing for water
No sacred dance
No ritual romance
To make heaven rain

So I sit at Love's door
Parched
Spirit-poor
Longing for one lingering taste
Of the divine golden drop
Opens the throat
Of the priest
And the poet
To sing back to being

The mystical union
Of myriad things

Without realizing it at the time, the imagery of the poem and the collage contained my real, autobiographical research questions, and conveyed the intensity of my desire to re-unite art, poetry and spirituality in my research. And without realizing, I had already begun to try to answer my questions by responding to an image with a poem, briefly marrying together the right brain and the left brain, and presenting both the collage and the poem during my candidacy examination.

My Co-Participants: Jude, Maya and Isabella

In preparation for my candidacy examination, I presented my research proposal and collages in one of the classes I was attending in order to practice presenting alternative forms of research and receive feedback from others students about my research ideas. During this presentation two women spontaneously volunteered to be co-participants in my research study. My third co-participant was someone I had met in a prior course who was also familiar with my work and interested in taking part in the study. One of the women (*Jude*) had completed a doctorate within the last year, one who was currently working on a doctorate (*Maya*), and one had completed a master's degree but was considering returning to do a doctorate (*Isabella*). Each chose her own pseudonym, which became a significant part of her story or part of the discussion of her story, although this was originally unintended. Each reviewed the final texts and was comfortable with the degree of anonymity provided, knowing that if all descriptive information was removed and the texts were made completely generic, they would no longer be "in" their own stories. All three women were ultimately comfortable with sharing a fair amount of detail about themselves in their notebooks, but strongly identifying or particularly sensitive information was removed or altered.

The Inquiry Process

Creating Conversations

Our research conversations were held in cafés, in my co-participants' work places, and in their homes—wherever they felt most comfortable meeting that day. All of the conversations were taped, and extensive field notes were kept afterward regarding both my outer observations and my inner reactions. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000)

notion of the "three dimensional inquiry space" was used to help me attend to what I may not otherwise notice in terms of the temporal nature of the research, the personal and social aspect, and the place or situation. My initial question to my co-participants was formulated to allow the inquiry space to live and breathe. At some point, in the beginning of our conversations, I generally asked my co-participants what stories came to mind when they thought about creativity, but creativity was not defined a priori for them, and the study was not restricted to "big C" creativity (Czikszentmihalyi, 1996) In this way, I could explore what stories women tell when they think of creativity in an unrestricted way and how these stories may diverge from the "original and useful products" definition of creativity which Mayer (1999) notes is in need of expansion. The unstructured nature of the conversations created intense ambiguity at times when as "researcher" I didn't know if I was getting anything related to "creativity" and when my co-participants wondered whether they were talking about the "right" things. In one case, one of my co-participants, Jude, made the comment, "... it depends on what you mean by creativity," but went on to tell me tell a story related to what she thought of as creativity, which illustrates how having an unstructured approach can, however, work very well.

With each participant I had between three to six conversations every one to three weeks, of approximately two hours in length. One of the conversations was a follow-up conversation between six months to a year later, prior to beginning the writing phase. All of the conversations were personally transcribed so I could get a good feel for each participant's story, tones and rhythms. Some interim texts were shared with the co-participants, but the project was not as collaborative as originally designed, partly because of busy schedules and changes in life circumstances, but partly because the

research was being driven by autobiographical questions and intentions to be as personally creative as possible in the creation of the dissertation. In the end, each of my co-participants' stories is still my story of them, my own creation or portrait, and only a strand of their own larger life. Each story is also like a strand of my own story, although each participant has read her notebook and said she felt that she was in it. Jude cried upon hearing a found poem created from her words, Isabella felt surprised that her story was so interesting and that she, herself, was creatively inspired by it, and Maya commented that she read her story several times, feeling as though she was "really on those pages." All of the stories are of a temporal nature and each of the women had had major changes in her life and has moved on since the telling of these stories so, at times, re-reading parts of them may have felt somewhat disorienting. Each seemed to recognize, however, that that's where they were at that point in time.

Creating Collages

In order to bring the stories to life visually and to facilitate the sharing of more inner, subjective knowing, the original intention of the study was to also have my co-participants create collages related to their feeling-sense of a previous experience of creativity (Gendlin, 1982). As my conversations with my first co-participant unfolded, however, it became apparent that she was tentatively selecting imagery related to her feeling-sense of her creativity in her life right now, as opposed to the feeling-sense of a previous experience of creativity. It occurred to me that it was natural that the collages would arise more easily from current feelings and moods than by asking my co-participants to try and set those feeling aside to connect with feelings from a previous experience. In her creativity workshops, Cassou (2001) found that the creation of imagery

flows more easily with present-moment feelings, and trying to obstruct this process can lead to a creative block.

Following the lead of my first co-participant, then, I suggested to my other two co-participants that they create collages that felt right, right now, with whatever images and colors they were currently attracted to. In this way, the collages became part of the flow of the story of what each participant was currently experiencing in terms of her creativity, the present feeling-sense influencing both the images that were selected and the manner in which they were arranged on the page. The imagery of the collages could also then be explored in terms of their possible connection to events that transpired at later points during the research process and, in two of the stories, in terms of their connection to the imagery in subsequent collages they spontaneously created several months later.

Interestingly, each of my co- participants gathered the array of images they were thinking about using for their first collage and showed them to me before they proceeded to glue them down. In the case of one of my co-participants, Isabella, the process of making the first collage extended over a period of several weeks and became a significant part of her story, mirroring the other stories she was telling me about her challenges with regard to creative expression. Each of my co-participants made two collages during the period of our research conversations.

Creating the Texts, Finding the Poetry

In making meaning from the field texts there was no pre-determined path I could follow (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; McNiff, 1998). After transcribing the tapes of the conversations for all three women and photographing the collages, I sat down with the

transcripts from each, reading through them slowly, taking notes, and keeping their collages nearby for easy reference. Often no story presented itself in whole form, but snippets of stories emerged repeatedly across the transcripts, with the stories that were more obviously "alive" and important to each co-participant becoming apparent this way. At other times, re-visiting my journal notes, it was the research process itself that became the story, as we tried to create conversations related to creativity in the context of a research project. While writing the texts, I tended to begin with the details of *how* we met and *where* we were meeting in order to situate our conversations and create a ground for the writing to come.

With the notes from the transcripts fresh in my mind, I would often then begin writing around one particular story or part of our conversation, and see where it would lead. At times I would include lengthy sections of transcripts and work from there, gradually transforming them into the story of the research, then including the stories that were shared within that conversation in a sort of "folding-in" process. Once one section was written, a thread from that section would often arise and be pulled through as the heading for the next section. Then I would continue writing from, and expanding on that thread, watching for the next thread to arise.

One of the things I found most helpful, particularly when I felt disconnected or emotionally distant from the stories my co-participants had been sharing, was to focus on the sections of the transcripts that seemed to have the most energy and form my participants' words into "data poems" or "found poetry" (Richardson, 1992). After describing the physical atmosphere of the conversations, found poetry tended to be what I wrote next in order to "get into" the rest of the writing. As with beginning a section with

a quote which I resonated with, I discovered that writing the text flowed more readily when it was sparked by the rhythm and emotion of a found poem. For this reason, many sections in the co-participants' notebooks begin with a found poem and the reader must begin with the emotional experience first, then read on to find out the context. While this can create some tension and ambiguity for the reader the idea behind this is to feel first without knowing what it's about. Because of their capacity to directly mirror the co-participants' sentiments, the found poems were also the interim texts I generally shared first with my co-participants. If they did not resonate with them, I knew something must be wrong. Interestingly, there was never an adverse reaction from any of my co-participants to a found poem from their own words. Instead, they tended to spark emotional responses and more conversation.

Found poetry has the important advantage of keeping the co-participants' words, voices and sentiments central in the research text, ensuring that "the actual words of the participants are retained" (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 1999, p. 5). In the present inquiry, using found poetry to capture the liveliness of our conversations about the "found imagery" participants were considering for their collages was almost an ideal match, with the chaos of our fragmented conversation finding an understanding partner in the freedom of the found poem. Often, the co-participants' collages had words or phrases in them, becoming almost "picture-poems." Likewise, I also shaped and sculpted the found poetry visually into "poem-pictures" whose shape would visually convey something of the essence of what was being said. In one case, I took words and phrases from one of the women's collages and interspersed them with sections of our dialogue as we were talking about the collage in a way that encouraged a communion of the verbal and visual field

texts. In the true spirit of found poetry, I tended to make my own rules while creating the poetry, but similar to other found-poets (for example, Dillard, 1995) there was one rule I followed: I never added words. Instead, I stuck to my co-participants' choice in words, sculpting and shaping them, spacing them according to pauses in speaking or emphasis, repeating them in refrain-like fashion, dropping extraneous words like "the" to bring out the essence of the experience, and playing with fonts and word sizes to enhance the meaning visually. Whatever means seemed to help convey the meaning and voice of the co-participant were used.

While attention to the visual architecture of the poems was used to enhance their emotional impact, nothing replaces hearing poetry read aloud. Treated as the "Spoken Word," there can be "moments where the play of language dazzles the ear as the fireworks delight the eye on the Fourth of July" (Moyers, 1995, p. xi) and, conversely, moments where the barely audible whispers of a shy five-year old girl are brought to life (Butler-Kisber, 2001). Hearing Lynn Butler-Kisber read a found poem from her research entitled *Whispering Angels,* (Butler-Kisber, 2001) in the arts-based research class I attended was one of the experiences that initiated my desire to use found poetry to relate my own research results. When a poem is read aloud, a communion between poet and audience, and in the case of educational research, between the audience and the research participant, is forged. Even while reading a poem alone, it is good, as Housden (2003) points out:

> ... to read it out loud to yourself, and slowly, so the meanings and the layers and the lines seep into you and reach a place below your critical faculties. (p. 12)

As Maya Angelou has said, "poetry is music written for the human voice" (quoted in Moyers, 1995, p. xi). Much of a poem's power is lost if it is read only silently.

Creating the Notebooks

Influenced by the structure of Bach's (1998) visual narrative inquiry, the transcripts, collages and various other field texts (e-mails, written stories, dreams, poetry) for each of my co-participants were crafted into individual "notebooks" to relate the individuality of each woman, and to reflect the unique research relationship formed with each. The structure of the notebooks for each arose out of the nature of the stories, imagery and field texts they brought to the conversations and the figures of speech, metaphors or phrases they tended to repeatedly employ. Journal entries are not dated so that the identity of my research participants may not be ascertained with relationship to what classes they might have shared with me, and the like. Scholarly references were not incorporated into the notebooks unless they arose organically from the conversations and the flow of the research process, leaving the notebooks to be discussed in the context of other references in the Discussion chapter. Instead, the goal was to relate individual visual-narrative portraits of each participant, and the research process that transpired with each. Each notebook took between four to six weeks to create due to the writing, sharing and revising of the texts. While the general process involved in writing each was similar, each posed its own unique challenges. Chapter 5, *Jude's Story: Unrelated,* was the first notebook to be shaped and thus was the most "experimental." It reflects the unique challenges encountered in trying to write my first visual narrative notebook without a formula and, seemingly, without a story about "creativity" to work with. In Chapter 6, *Maya's Sonata,* the second notebook composed, the form for the text appeared early on, but there were still surprises along the way despite having the outline come first. In Chapter 7, *Isabella and The River of Life,* an initial dream set the stage for the flow of the

notebook, and the disappearance of one of the collages near the end of the research process became a part of the story intimately related to what she had shared about creativity in her life. Each notebook reflects a unique research journey and, as a series, they reflect a gradual evolution in the process of creating the notebooks.

Creating Criteria

In order to evaluate how well the poetry, narratives and art in a text have conveyed the experience of the research participants and the research journey, criteria other than generalization, reliability and validity are required (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Eisner, 1997). McNiff (1998) suggests that it may be helpful for the audience of an alternative research text to consider the following questions:

> Does the project connect to your experience? Does it evoke something for you? Does the project stand out from others and does it initiate a new dimension to practice? Does the project convey a feeling of psychological depth? Is it memorable? Is the project appealing to others? Is it helpful to someone? Does it provoke, inspire, arouse interest? (p. 172)

The ability to generate empathy or to "strike a chord" is often among the alternative evaluations mentioned (Eisner, 1997; McNiff, 1998; Politsky, 1995). When I read one of the found poems aloud in the research group I attend, the woman seated beside me commented that she would like to meet the research participant whose words the poem was created from because she didn't know someone else "felt like that." It took a moment to realize that this was exactly the response I was looking for. Moyers (1995) comments that when a poem is effective:

> ... even those of us who are not poets know when we hear it that the language is true: We nod yes, and say, That is just how I felt when my father died, or when I spied the first crocus parting the snow, or when, ... or when .... (p. xiv)

A research text may, in fact, have applied value simply by affirming and

articulating a reader's experience. Often, this is indicated when there is "consensual validation," or the reader feels "moved to complete the cycle of communication by communicating with the author" (McNiff, 1998, p. 59). Research texts can also awaken their audience to new meanings, insights and understandings that prompt them to act differently, or to imagine new possibilities for their professional practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). There may be moments of, "I never saw it that way before," or, "Oh, I hadn't thought of doing that!" A creative text and inquiry process can "stimulate and inspire others to create and perform with increased conviction and creativity" (Levine, cited in McNiff, 1998, p. 35). Unlike other forms of research, perhaps, one of the reasons to read narrative and arts-based research texts is simply to be inspired by them and see if they evoke more creativity in what we are currently doing.

One of the most powerful ways that a research text may be helpful to others, however, is through the transformation of the researcher who, in turn, influences the people he or she comes into contact with as mentor, practitioner and fellow human being. In this respect, McNiff (1998) suggests that the psychological depth of the project can be used as a possible criterion for evaluation. Politsky's (1995) intensive arts-based self-explorations convey the immense amount of self-development researcher-practitioners may need to undergo before being capable of valid action in their practice. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000) it is the lucidity or wakefulness of the researcher throughout the inquiry process that is what most characterizes a "good narrative inquiry" (p. 184). Research texts can be considered, then, as to whether they convey the sense of reflexivity, vitality, evolution and authenticity that originates from a researcher having fully and thoughtfully engaged in the inquiry process.

If the foregoing process has occurred internally, it is likely that the text itself will more likely reflect aesthetic criteria such as wholeness, unity, integration and balance and be less likely to appear as a "medley of selected cuts" used to demonstrate pre-existing theories and themes (Gregg, 1991). The text will have the sense of "aesthetic completeness" or wholeness, which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) feel is important to a narrative inquiry. If narrative threads have arisen from the researcher's careful contemplations of the field texts and been skillfully woven throughout, the research text will also reflect a sense of integration and unity. In terms of balance, Levine (2000) points out that a common problem in most research texts is an anxious attention to order and structure that results in dry, disembodied texts that fail to move the audience and no one wants to read—least of all, the researcher. If the process has engaged the researcher emotionally, intellectually and spiritually it is more likely that the text will have more balance, and stimulate the intellect, emotions and spirit of the reader. It may be the capacity of a text for "evocative multidimensionality," that is, in fact, the indicator of a successful inquiry process. Texts that have reached this level may be able to evoke the aesthetic pauses that a moving piece of art is capable of producing, taking us out of our usual modes of thinking and perceiving. Although the notion of an aesthetic pause seems to be straying quite far from generalisability, reliability and validity, ultimately, as Eisner (1997) comments, the criteria we select to evaluate texts in the future, and the type of research we feel expands out awareness and knowledge, ultimately "is a community decision" (pp. 5-6).

CHAPTER 4

Jude's Story: Unrelated

Colliding Plotlines

After the presentation, Jude stayed to talk and to look at the collages. She particularly liked the collage that had a pathway leading up to a mountain, with an eagle's head looming over it in the background (Image 6, p. 69). *I remember how hard that collage was to finish because it seemed to be hinting that I was still trying to live out the masculine hero myth and climb to the top of some impossible mountain. Jude was surprised that the collage of a woman's body as a tree in bloom—the one I call 'Eve'—was one of my favorites* (Image 7, p. 70). *It's one of the collages I most associate with creativity, but Jude said the eyes in the sky over top of the tree gave her an uncomfortable feeling. During the presentation she volunteered to be a research participant, and I'm drawn by her energy and enthusiasm but her research interests and background as a teacher seem so different than my own. I don't know whether we'll connect when it comes to creativity.* (Journal Entry)

Image 6: The Mountain

Image 7: Eve

When I presented my research proposal and collages in one of my classes, I was surprised when people volunteered to be research co-participants. I liked the idea of having co-participants who were already familiar with the personal story behind the research, and who had seen the collages, but without realizing it; I had been envisioning having my research conversations mainly with women who were interested in creativity in the arts. During class, Jude had not spoken about anything like music, poetry or art,

and instead spoke mainly of issues related to literacy, second language acquisition, critical pedagogy, and the politics of the educational system—all topics foreign to me, as I am not a teacher. I wondered where research conversations on creativity would lead. We appear to have colliding plotlines. Could we find a way to be co-participants in a project on creativity or would there be different agendas continually bumping up against each other: literacy versus creativity?

The 'Wrong' Story

For our first meeting, Jude and I are meeting in an Italian café because she mentioned that we could get a good cappuccino there. Arriving early, I pick out a table and begin setting up the tape recorder. The atmosphere is a mixture of modern and old-fashioned cafés, with a black and white checkered floor, lime green table tops and, near the back, couches where you can sit and watch a soccer match on television if you don't want to play chess. This is a place she likes to come, so it seems like a good place to begin to get to know her.

When Jude arrives, the owner of the café greets her with a smile and comes out from around the counter to talk with her. Listening to them talk about her search for a house, I enjoy how dramatic and playful their Italian accents become as they banter back and forth. I lived on an all-Italian block until I was five, and have Italian godparents. It's a language I love the sound of.

Seating herself at the table we chat lightly about our weekends. She spent hers working at the Italian booth at Heritage Days and had some tensions with some of the older Italian women who were trying to find out if she was a *signora* or a *signorina.* She's married, but tells them they can call her by her first name. As she's talking, I check

to make sure that the tape recorder is recording and there's an awkward moment where the purpose of our get-together is drawn to our attention. I tell her the tape recorder has all the bells and whistles, that it's the "Cadillac model" lent to me by a court reporter friend, and she laughs. She likes that expression. She's a "languages" person. Having spent the weekend transcribing the tapes from my first research conversations, I tell her how amazed I am that each of the women has such a unique rhythm to the way she speaks. With her own dissertation, Jude said it was more the tone of her research participants that became important:

> In my line of work it was more the tone—the tone of frustration, the tone of tension, the tone of struggle—throughout my whole dissertation. When I listened to the tapes and read the transcripts I found myself writing, almost every two or three sentences, "tension, tension, frustration…" I mean I even ended up having to code for that. I knew it was going to be there, but not to the extent that I found it. I wasn't expecting it to be there consistently at certain points. At first, the conversations started out very nice, and then bam! Out of the blue, the story comes out. The first phrase would start with, "I really feel," and then they'd just go. And they wouldn't be particularly correct in terms of their politics. With the masters degrees they had you'd think they'd be more 'enlightened' or more socio-culturally aware, but their educations didn't inform their practice. It was scary because more than likely they got their degrees with some of the professors I was doing my dissertation with. So here I am telling them their program with a cultural emphasis isn't enough. It has to be a more soulful thing, not a cerebral thing. The students didn't go through any real transformation. One of my committee members took what I was saying personally. She was the one who put the program together 20 years ago. So that was my struggle. (emphasis added, Conversation #1)

Like her conversations with her research participants, our conversation started out "nice," but suddenly a story of tension with a committee member came out. Concerned that we were headed in the wrong direction, I asked Jude what writing the dissertation was like as a creative venture, thinking that the tone and the story might change. Jude responded that it depended on who she was interacting with. Coming back to the committee member who designed the program, she says that:

> She seemed to have put up a block to what I was saying. She was critical at every juncture of every page of every chapter. Every draft I gave her was not punctuated, not proofread, or didn't have the appropriate language. (Conversation #1)

Trying to keep our conversation connected to the creative process I ask how all of this criticism affected the writing of her dissertation:

> Well, basically, um....I had an autobiography. [Pause] I had a piece that was autobiographical because I asked each of my participants to write their literacy autobiography, to get an idea of who they were and how they became literate... what they enjoyed, what are the good memories, what are the bad. So that's what I did with myself, to explain why I bothered doing this particular work. And I had that at the beginning of my first chapter, as the introduction, and she didn't like it. She couldn't understand how it connected to the rest of it. And believe it or not, I was already a third of the way through the process with her when out of frustration, I just chopped it out and got rid of it. Later I said, "If anybody asks me to put this thing back in, I'm not going to do it. I don't care who it is." (Conversation #1)

Looking at the transcripts from our first conversation, I recall how for much of it, I was listening for a different story of creativity than the story Jude was telling. While I waited for a story of artistic joy and effortlessness, a story of "creative flow", the story Jude was actually sharing was a story of struggling to write a dissertation, a story of feeling censored and corrected, a story of the pain of removing her own story from her work (Csziksentmihalyi, 1996). When I tried to re-direct the conversation to the creativity *I* was thinking of, Jude came back to *her* story—a story of a creative experience that was not so pleasant. Later in our conversation, after I've made a few attempts to re-direct the conversation, Jude seems to be tactfully suggesting to me to just let her story unfold:

> Like in your interview with me...depending on where I go, you kind of follow me and then bring me back which is basically what I found myself doing with my participants. But at some point, I would find myself getting involved in their stories because they would be so passionate and so...I don't even know the word. They would be so full of feeling when they talked that I didn't even want to ask them the next question because I thought, "Okay, if I ask this question, it's going to cut them off. And their brain is way over here, where it needs to be for them,

> and if I ask them this question its going to shoot them way back over there, and they're not going to be able to finish feeling this, so that it can come to its own natural...so they can feel like, 'Okay, I got it out'." (Conversation #1)

Like her own research participants, Jude seemed to need to tell a story that was not the correct one or the right one, but I was reluctant to "go there," concerned that we would get stuck in an angry story of being thwarted by an outside oppressor, a story of blame. Having explored, in detail, my own story of being creatively thwarted in my research proposal, I was reluctant to travel there again, now believing that much of the tension is internal. I wanted her to see this so we could move on to other stories about creativity.

I also thought of my audience—firstly my dissertation committee—and how a story of being creatively blocked by a committee member might seem didactic. It wasn't my intention to protest the injuries and injustices done by the educational system. But this is where Jude and I begin: with the frustrations of her research participants, with her struggles with a committee member, and with my resistance to the story she is telling me. In fact, my first experiences with narrative inquiry are showing me the surprising difficulty of just letting stories flow, without my own story or agenda getting in the way. Even during the writing phase, thoughts of somehow omitting this particular story, of selecting and emphasizing other stories, were very strong, but the writing never flowed when I attempted to edit in this way. After a few failed attempts, I decided to trust what had transpired in our conversations, trust Jude's advice and trust my audience enough to leave the story in.

What Helped: Fatherly Conversations I & II

Looking through the transcript of our conversations, I wasn't sure where to start,

or where the story was. Feeling disconnected from Jude's story, what seemed to help the most was if I pulled out pieces of the conversation that had the most emotional charge to them and create found poetry from them. The first pieces of conversation that jumped out were the segments where Jude spoke of how she felt about teaching, and then related a conversation she had with her father about possibly going to graduate school, instead. I decided to experiment with her words:

---

teaching...
wasn't what I thought
politics and
late nights
in the almost inner city

No resources
No research

graduate school?
would be nice
to become The One
who makes The Decisions

a *Mover & a Shaker*

plus,
i like school
i've always liked school

Papa, we don't have to pay!

What do you mean?

I'm a graduate student. They want graduate students.

But what will you do after?

Don't worry. I'll figure that out when I get there.

After creating the found poem, I feel inspired to call Jude and share it with her. When I do, she cries and we talk a bit. When we hang up, I feel closer to her and inspired to continue on. Looking at the other topics we covered in our first conversation, Jude mentioned that what helped her the most when she was writing her dissertation were the conversations she had with her co-chairs:

---

took his class
after my father died
maybe his demeanor was the type of thing I needed
to just kind of help

he knew how to tell me
when things weren't right
knew how to critique me knew how I'd take it

first of all, it was
Conversations
that helped give me the language
helped me shape things
Explain it to me like we're at a cocktail party!

and if I couldn't
Step away from the academic table for awhile.

that is my c l e a r e s t memory of professor D.., that and
how he presented himself:
I'm not **THIS,**
I'm not this
I'm not THIS
no labels
and he'd bring things tangible things
to show how
we all know
different things from experience

and with professor O.
we'd have these conversations
amazing!
he'd draw charts Dia G ra Ms
just listening to me talk

straight lines architectural almost
and <arrows>
and I'm thinking

How do you learn to do that?

that he can go from here
to here
to here
process words
put them in a [picture]
and he can just do it!
interacting with what he hears
in a visceral way

i don't know
i don't know

it's S imultaneou S for him:
the person he is/ community he's from/ cultures he's worked with/ work he's done

How do you learn how to do that?

Even though much of our first conversation focused on the experience of removing her literacy autobiography from her work, Jude stressed that the conversations with her co-chairs helped to give her the language and to shape what she wanted to say in her dissertation. Conversations with Professor D. helped her words flow more naturally, particularly, she said, when she was becoming too critical of her participants. Having taught sections on the creative process in his classes, he was knowledgeable about the tensions involved and would say, "This doesn't sound like what you want to say. Step away from the academic table for awhile. This is where you take your walk in the woods." While professor D. helped free her thoughts from too much critical thinking, Professor O. helped build the structure those ideas could thrive in. Fascinated with his drawings, several times she said, "How do you learn how to do that?" Listening intently to Jude, he would find and draw the structure implicit in what she was saying, and then

give the diagram to her, reassuring her that it was okay to use it because it was what she had already been saying.

When I asked Jude if she selected these particular professors for her committee because of their knowledge about the creative process, or their knowledge of her research topic, she quickly replied, "No. I chose them for the emotional part, not the academic piece." Asking if she had a metaphor for the nature of the relationship, she said, "Papa Bear protecting his young." At first this surprised me, given many women's feelings about patriarchal institutions, but as our conversation unfolded, Jude told me that her father had passed away just prior to writing her dissertation:

> They don't know what happened to him. They found him as though he was napping under a tree. He had a family plot of land and he went up there to tidy up because it was summer and come fall and winter.... And nobody else went because he was the one that bought out all his brothers and sisters. So he went and I guess he was tidying up some chaparral, or checking—because where my family lives, it's basically on a mountainside. So the water really comes out of the mountain. Like you stick something in the mountain, and the water comes out. And he was...he was there because he had to do that, and he was waiting for somebody to come bring something. And I don't know if that person ever got there. It was really hot that summer and he probably hadn't brought any water, you know so...they found him as though...I mean they found the car turned around as though he was ready to come home. But he was underneath a tree. He was underneath a shady tree. (Conversation #1)

Poignant references to her father figure prominently in our first conversation, but initially they seemed unrelated—like part of another story that isn't connected to the research we're doing together. I decided to hold off on including them, focusing instead on her conversations with her co-chairs.

Repeating the Story

For our second research conversation Jude and I met back at the Italian café. When she arrived she had papers in her hands and excitedly started to tell me that

since our last conversation she had managed to find bits and pieces of her literacy autobiography. It was in the same envelope as the e-mails from the committee member she had difficulties with. Catching a glimpse of some of the e-mails, they look like short, cryptic exchanges volleyed back and forth, some completely capitalized, as if raising their voices to each other. She says one particular exchange became so heated a friend had to calm her down before she responded again.

Leafing through the pages of the autobiography, I notice black pen strokes across some of them and Jude explains that when her committee member instructed her to remove it from her dissertation, she stroked through the text so that if she re-used the paper she wouldn't get confused as to which side was the good side and which side was the *bad* side. Parts of the story are still missing completely though, at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end. We discuss the parts I can keep—the parts she's sure she has on the hard drive—but there are parts she's concerned about getting back because she has no other copies. We agree that I will photocopy those parts and give her the originals back.

Shifting tones, she says she just thought that it was "pathetically funny," a sort of "tragic human comedy" to be searching all over her hard drive, and all through the papers from her dissertation trying to find the autobiography she was asked to remove from her dissertation. Shifting tones about it again, she says:

> When I wrote this I was in a place where I could do it. I had the pictures in my head. The fact that I somehow managed to save this chunk is actually a big deal because I didn't think I'd find almost a whole text.

She seems to have two tones, or two voices about the fact that her autobiography is not in her dissertation. Sometimes it matters, and her voice is strong and strident:

"if I knew then what I know now, I'd have left it in" Other times, she's seemingly indifferent and her voice is light and dismissive of the situation: "That's alright, it's okay." A found poem seemed like a good way to capture the tension of these differing voices:

If I Knew Then

wanted to see
if i could find
pieces of my story
        my life
but it won't be the same
took just one person to say,
"Get Rid Of It,"
 one day

        but that's alright
        .....it's okay.

just thought it was funny
searching my hard drive
searching my mind
chunk of my life
i can't find
took just one person
to say,
"It's Unrelated.
Leave It Behind."

        but that's alright
        .....it's okay.

only thing i'd trade
        if I could go back
only thing i'd change
        if I knew then is

I'd Have Left It In.

Now a copy of the story is in my hands and I'm puzzled. I don't know why she has brought it. I'm uncertain how her autobiography from a dissertation on literacy is related to our conversations on creativity. In this respect, my first reaction to the autobiography is not so different than her committee member's. She's excited about finding it, and is taking a risk in sharing it again, but it seems completely un-related. Without thinking to ask how she feels it's connected to what we're doing, I slip it into my bag and we move on to discussing the pieces she's thinking about using in her collage:

Everything and Anything

i had probably 12 kids ages of how old was Brenda?
between the ages of kindergarten and fifth grade
and i look at this picture and think
why on earth do i carry this?
but then i know why i carry it
this is Brenda

she could speak English
surrounded by it but still having trouble
reading and writing it
cause they weren't doing that at home

so what i did was i just
created this thing
off the top of my head
we went to museums we went to the park
what they *liked* to do
i bought them little notebooks you know those little ones?
and they were um, *'Researchers'*
and it was everything and anything
~swings~
rocks
trees
they wrote down or drew
whatever they wanted
and we brought it back and we talked about it
they saw stuff drew stuff wrote stuff
and wrote it again

and **we talked** about it
so it would stay with them

i carry her picture because it makes me it helps me
helps me remember because i miss that
Oh, i miss that kind of work!

i keep her in a place i've got other stuff other stuff I keep

Stuff that means *something*
Stuff that means *nothing*

Stuff That Means Something

We begin talking about the potential pieces for Jude's collage by looking at a picture of Brenda, a little girl from an after school program she created. Crying as she shows me the picture, she says, "Oh, look what you're doing to me!" But she wants to show me the picture. It means something. It helps her remember something. It might remind her of Brenda or of the type of work she was doing, but looking back, I wonder if maybe it was Jude we were looking at, and part of Jude's reason for wanting to do the research she did in graduate school.

Looking through the other pieces she's considering for her collage she seems to have brought anything and everything! There's a letter from her mother, a cheque she took from her father's pocket when he died, an e-card from her husband, postage stamps, a prayer card of a Madonna and Child given to her by a monk, post cards from trips and from the stands in restaurants, pictures of flowers, thank you cards and bows, a picture of her ideal back yard. Asking what guided her selection, she immediately replies, "Things that were pleasing to my eye," emphasizing the word *pleasing*. She began to arrange the images on her coffee table at home, but then gathered them all up to bring to show me

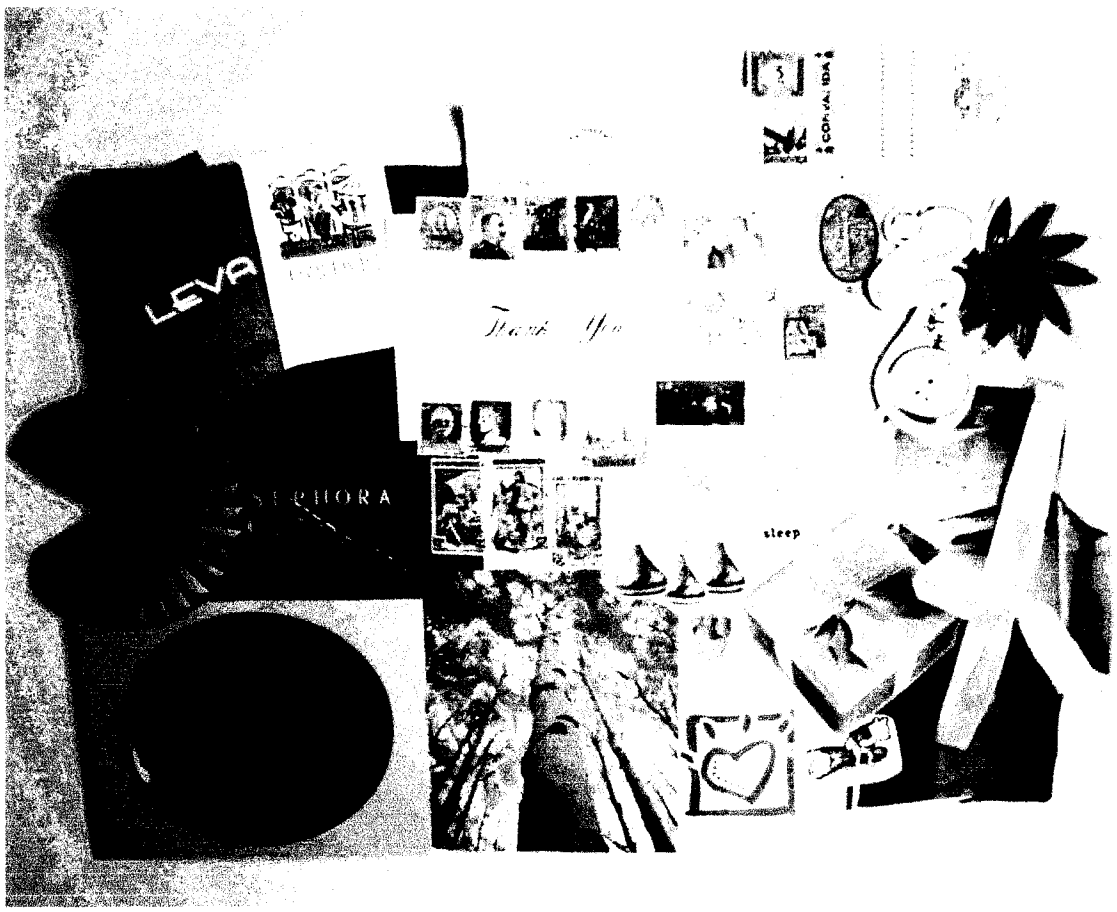
before gluing them down. We talk a bit about the type of paper she can use for the foundation, and I remind her that it's best to not think about it too much. Looking back, I was concerned that the collage would not be related to creativity and was trying to remind myself to trust the process.

Stepping Away from the Academic Table

> *Jude has her collage ready and I'm going up to her apartment to see it today. Before we have our third research conversation, I thought I'd read her literacy autobiography, as 'background information' to see if it sparks any questions regarding creativity. Most of it seems to be about her father's challenges coming to another country and being unable to read, including an experience of having the tailor shop he was working in held up at gunpoint, then seeing a picture in the paper the next day but not being able to read 'the story'. Her father packed up the family and moved them immediately to another city. It doesn't seem connected to our creativity research, but the way she weaves the various stories of her father's experiences is clearly related to her literacy research. I don't understand why it had to be excluded from her dissertation. Knowing that he passed away prior to her writing her dissertation I can understand why it was so painful to leave it out! In it, she says that it was her father's ability to 'read the world' rather than 'read the word' that made him her 'literacy model'. She was trying to honor him and his experiential knowledge with her words, and keep him connected to her life in a tangible way. I wonder if her committee member knew he had passed away.* (Journal Entry)

When I got to Jude's apartment she toured me through all of the rooms, but we ended up back at the dining room table. We talked about her ongoing search for a house and how gardening on an apartment patio just isn't the same. "I'm a chaotic gardener," she says, "I'll plant stuff wherever I find a space, and it could seem like a mess, but somehow it just works." While she's telling me this, she's bringing out espresso, cream, fresh strawberries and a chocolate mousse she has made. It's a research protocol that could become the envy of every graduate student, but it's hard to know when to start the tape recorder and where "the research" begins. As she finished setting the table I began to look at her collage (Image 8, p. 84). It's playful, child-like quality surprised me. It didn't

Image 8: Jude's First Collage



seem like something a "critical pedagogue" would make. Instead of discussing the collage, though, we ended up looking at some mermaid drawings her friend's little girl had given to her. Taken with how natural and free the drawings were, Jude used one to make a second collage (Image 9, p. 86), placing water below the mermaids and her favorite flowers (daisies) above them. Leaving that day, she gives me the collage to take home but mentions that she wants it back because she's been thinking of framing it. Spending time contemplating Jude's collage at home, I wonder how I can capture it's vibrancy in words. Initially, it did not seem she was guided by anything in particular when she made it, but she has done something, that, when I realized it, takes my breath away. She has included everything she likes, everything she wanted to include,

everything she could not bring to the academic table. She has kept her subjective self in it. Her favorite chocolates are in it, her favorite colors, stamps from her childhood stamp collection, bus tickets from a memorable trip to Italy with her husband, a pretty bag from a store in Italy, the business card from the Italian café. There is a bursting heart at the bottom of the collage, and on the right, a whirling brooch of rubies bursts right off the page, spilling outside of the box.

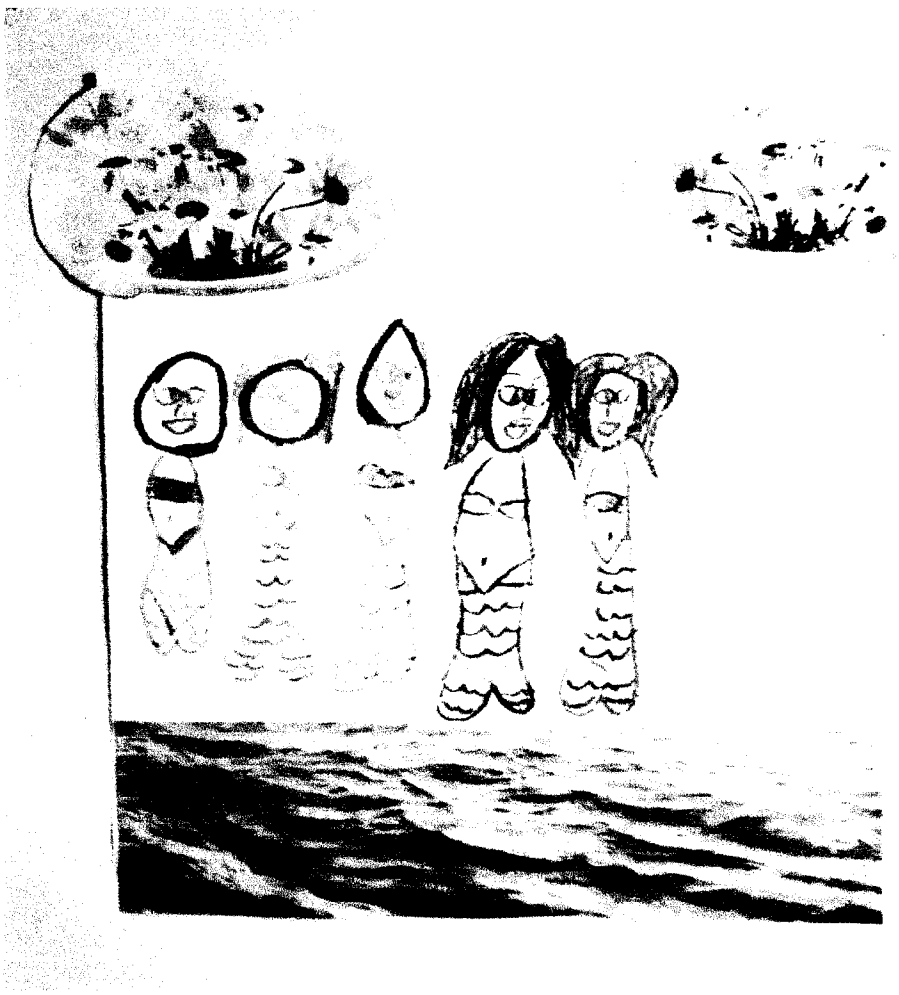
Like her comments about how she gardens, at first it seems chaotic, but it works because there is a guiding muse organizing these things: her *Self*. This is what connects the pieces. And her father's stationary from his tailor shop forms the foundation for it all, peaking through at the very top, almost like a title. When we discussed the types of paper she could use as a foundation, she says she knew immediately what she would use. Her father's life is her foundation, and he is inextricably connected to who she is. In making her collage, she has found a new way to honor him and his role in her life.

Interestingly, Jude's collage does not include titles or references from any of her scholarly publications, her thesis, her dissertation, or any of the scholarly books she may have enjoyed along the way. There is only a list of things she would enjoy doing for her ideal Saturday, and only reading the newspaper is mentioned here. References to academia are, in fact, noticeable only in their complete absence. In our first conversation, when I asked her about the possibilities for creativity in academia she expressed her disheartenment saying that the university was seen as embodying creativity, and that is what attracted students there, but that it was only there in theory, as a construct. She wistfully recalled one of her first days of graduate school where one professor invited the students to discover their passion, to not rush through the coursework, to nurture their

interests through conversation and reading. But she says:

> ... then, as you get to the end, where there's supposed to be the culmination of all of this discovering of your passion and putting it into this book you realize that they don't want you to do that, really, in the sense that they taught you. They teach you to think outside the box, but they've got their own little invisible box around you. We all think we're thinking outside the box but we're really still thinking within theirs. And when we do get to that place where we really want to show them, 'Look, I've thought outside the box, I've got this new framework, or this new way of presenting this work', they don't want it. (Conversation #2)

Image 9: Jude's Second Collage



The intensity of Jude's comments on the subject makes me wonder about how being unable to keep her origins, her originality, or her narrative beginnings in her work affected her experience of the creative process in academia (Clandinin & Connelly,

2000). Does removing our subjective selves from our work prevent it from feeling creative, and instead turn it into only a struggle? Does the lack of opportunity to write our stories, reflect on them, and revise them according to the insights along the way prevent the process from being personally transformative? In our first conversation, the potential for personal transformation is something Jude felt was lacking in her program. Even though it does not appear in her dissertation, Jude does say that writing her story, and crying through the writing of it, grounded her in some way. But what are the consequences of having it refused admission as if it was not the true origin of your work? How do experiences like these make us feel about ourselves, our work, and whether we want to be in the academic environment? When I asked Jude what she would do if she could do anything at all, and her previous resumé did not have to determine it, she replied, "Work part-time 'somewhere,' and be a mom." Thoughts of children are stronger than academia, but the picture of the little girl, Brenda, and the prayer card with the Madonna and Child, are not in her collage just yet.

Literacy as Creativity: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle

The second time I read Jude's autobiography was almost a year after our final research conversation, when I had begun writing interim texts based on our conversations. Having some difficulty bringing Jude's story into focus, I contacted her to check whether I had all of the pieces of her autobiography. It seemed like I was still missing something, some piece of the puzzle that might pull things together. We decided to meet for tea.

When we met, we had a casual conversation off the record, to just catch up. A pendant Jude was wearing caught my eye and I commented on it. Smiling at my interest,

she touched it and told me that it was a gift from her mother to congratulate her on her Ph.D. It looks like a small crossword puzzle with tiny emeralds in the spaces where words would be. When we parted, Jude took my pages of the autobiography home to check against the pages she had. Meeting again a few weeks later, she had a page that I had never had—something from the beginning of her autobiography. It begins in the middle of a story related to making the transition from the first half of grade one in Italy, to beginning the second half of grade one in the United States:

> I was managing, able to use pieces of English, trying to write, speak and read "Sally, Dick and Jane." And even though I could spell "si," it wasn't "sea." From that day, I remember taking spelling tests every few months in the lunchroom until the end of the school year. The last spelling test I remember taking consisted of spelling the words blue jeans, yellow, onion, green, picnic. It wasn't until my middle and high school years that I found out that those 'spelling tests' were assessments done to determine whether or not I would need to be pulled out during class time and have classroom lessons in the Learning Resource Center—a center where students with 'special learning needs would get one-to-one teaching/learning time. By the time I got to middle school, thanks to some particularly sensitive and attentive elementary school teachers, I felt secure with my skills in writing though it was always still a struggle for me to have it "just right." I carried this feeling wit me through my middle and high school years. It subsided, though only temporarily, by Mrs. B., my middle school music teacher, who told me that if I kept working hard I could write a "great American novel." It was then in high school that I found myself feeling like I had somehow "fallen through the cracks." Paper after paper, composition theme, book report, none seemed to be enough in order to get the grade I had hoped for. In fact, at one point I wondered if someone had made a mistake by letting me take the "regular" English composition classes all this time. Mostly though, I felt as though I was lied to, told I could "write" to only find myself told I wasn't able. (Field Text excerpt from Jude's dissertation)

I'm stunned by this missing piece of the story. While I think of the ability to express oneself in writing as creativity, it occurs to me that as a teacher, Jude places this ability in the context of literacy. With a start, I reach for the dictionary and re-discover that, yes, to be literate is to be able to read *and* write. I knew this, but whenever literacy came up in our conversations I did not think of it in terms of writing, particularly not

written *expression*. Instead, my mind automatically categorized it as relating to the technical aspects, or the rules, of learning to read and write, and something "other" than creativity. Based on a narrow definition of literacy I had unwittingly turned Jude into "the other," seeing her as having interests distinctly different than mine.

This new discovery makes me pause and reflect on how words are a primary form of communication, yet have such a powerful capacity to disconnect us from one another. Looking at this newly found fragment of Jude's autobiography it seems that in many ways our research topics overlap, but we have been speaking two different languages, using different terminology, so our similarities have been concealed. A full year later it feels like a missing piece of the research puzzle is finally clicking into place, that a tiny very precious emerald has been found allowing for a connection to be made both in our research and between us. There was a reason "we two" began this process together. We are not as different as I originally thought. We are both interested in enhancing creativity. When I phone her to tell her of my discovery, and my new understanding of literacy-as-creativity, she laughs. Language quandaries are something she knows very well. In her own dissertation she asked her participants about other literacies like poetry, painting, drawing and singing. If I had known this our conversations might have gone very differently, and we might have shared very different stories. But for now, the story of missing this connection *is* the story. As we continue to talk—as we have this conversation—the cage of concepts begins to open and the tensions between literacy and creativity, and between research and friendship release.

As our research conversations ended, Jude was in the midst of helping another doctoral student with her dissertation, and having conversations to help her

make the both the structural and emotional renovations necessary to complete the work:

Emotional Renovations

when they saw what she had done
very free form they were worried
concerned she wouldn't get it **Shaped up** *packaged*
worried she wouldn't Finish

i worried something would be lost formatting it
she didn't have the brain power so i was in charge
took two full ten hour days kept sending it back to her

'if my headings don't communicate
what you need to communicate.....'

had to come up with *'creative packaging'* not APA
to communicate what *she* needed to communicate
found myself feeling like I did writing my own
and helping G. organize her house
going
through
each
room
making it more aesthetically pleasing

part of it was *emotional renovations*
she was attached to stuff
so I'd ask Questions (cause maybe it's my background
that I'm not getting it) *can you explain it to me?*
and if she said: *I don't remember why!*
i'd create the '**Out-takes of Chapter X' file**
and just put it there

not thrown away **NO**
that's the thing the whole process with my own....
i created out-take documents for my Self

Looking at Jude's description of how she helped the other student, I smile.

Something interesting has happened. The experience of having to remove her own story

from her dissertation has made her particularly sensitive to her friend's attachment to certain pieces of her writing. Asking questions to clarify the connections between various segments, and to clarify what her friend wants to communicate, Jude helps with the emotional renovations. When pieces don't appear to fit just yet, she creates a separate space for them. Nothing is thrown out prematurely. Pieces are carefully placed in the out-take file. They might be something, they might be nothing. It's not clear yet, so for now they are safe-guarded. Protected. Just as her co-chairs had their ways of helping her, she has found a creative way to help her friend. This is the diamond formed from the experience of writing her own dissertation: without realizing it she has learned how to "do that"—to do what her two co-chairs do. And

Just as Jude has learned from her experience, I also am learning from my experience of writing Jude's story that "if I knew then," I would have done things differently. I would have asked different questions, pursued her father's connection to her creativity more, asked her how she connected her autobiographical stories to our research, and how she connected literacy to creativity. But it is in the process that I have come to realize these omissions, in the writing and re-writing of our research story, and in exploring the tensions that I found out that my initial story of Jude, the story I filtered our conversations through, was only a story based on labels such as teacher, critical pedagogue, literacy researcher. Just as Jude's professor avoided labels, Jude's autobiographical collage can't be contained within these boxes.

> *Talking last night on the phone with my friend, S, helped me begin to uncover what's been bothering me about Jude's notebook. I've written the first draft, given it to Jude, but something still feels off. I went ahead and finished writing the other participants' notebooks, but find myself coming back to this one, knowing there's something missing. Talking to S helped because I'm able to step away from the academic table, feeling freer to tell her the story in a different way. As we talked I*

found myself saying that I felt different about Jude's story now, like there had been some emotional renovations and we had 'come full circle.' As soon as I said that, S and I both paused, knowing I had just been talking about another circle. Visiting Jude at her new home that day to get her comments on her notebook, she gave me a tour of her house. Stopping in her office for a while, I was elated to see that her collage was beautifully framed and hanging in the space where she works and that she is in the process of making a new collage now.

Continuing down into the basement, we stopped in front of a piece of art she found at a garage sale and had framed. A lively drawing of elephants moving in a circle, the image takes me back to the elephant on the cover of my very first drawing book as a child and the story of wanting my father to buy the book for me. Talking with S I realize that this is something Jude and I share: the inclusion of our fathers in the narrative beginnings of our research. Feeling this connection, now I feel pulled to revise her notebook again, pulled to include her story of how her father was found when he passed away. It was a powerful moment in our conversations but it was not in the original draft, because it seemed to be unrelated.

Now, as I begin to type the story into her notebook—the story of how her father went to the mountainside, and how he lay down beneath a shady tree to rest, his spirit seems to be gently whispering to me: "Don't you notice something about this story? Read it again, Lisa." There's a mountain... and there's a tree. The two images from the two separate collages that seemed to point to the differences between Jude and I are united in this story. United in both word and image, now I feel I can give this story to Jude whole-heartedly. (Journal Entry)

CHAPTER 5

Maya's Sonata

The Exposition: Playing with Thomas

It's raining when Maya arrives at the café holding an umbrella and an armful of papers. It's been only four days since her candidacy examination and she still seems fragile and tired, but we've agreed to meet before she goes out of town for a week. There's something about "now" that seems important to our research. In preparation for our meeting, she's written down the first story that comes to mind when she thinks of creativity, but I ask if she'll read it into the tape recorder so I'll hear it in her voice when I'm transcribing the tape. As she's reading, her voice is much softer than usual so I nudge the microphone closer, then a bit closer, not wanting to interrupt her to ask her to "speak up." The story she's sharing centers around a piece of music that has played a special role in her life, a sonata entitled, *Saint-Saëns*:

> When I was vacuuming one day, when I arrived in the dining room I noticed the music stand and the music I have displayed on it to impress anyone visiting. It is impressive looking. It has 16th notes—why wouldn't that impress someone? But I started to think about my connection to this piece, what was really important about it. I played the sonata for my 3rd or 4th year recitals, and I also learned it to an impressive speed while in my master's program, but none of those memories are very clear to me now. There is one memory of it that is, though…
>
> When I was in my last year of my master's program, Thomas started his undergraduate degree in music. He was gregarious, about 5'8, bleach blonde and a swimmer. He seemed overly concerned about his looks and others' perceptions of him, and ended up joining a fraternity in order to become 'someone.' Many people in our studio speculated that he could be gay, and he was the fascination of all those people. At one of the studio parties he allegedly went skinny dipping with two women, but that's not my memory of him. My most vivid memory of Thomas relates to the sonata. One day while I was in the practice room he came and asked for advice on the first or second movement of the sonata and we ended up spending almost two hours together playing this piece. He didn't think very highly of himself so I felt I needed to encourage him. Neither of us were great players, but I felt a connection to him. We just played, and played and played. We

never had another opportunity like that again. We played in orchestra together, but never beside each other.

Time passed, I graduated, and only kept in touch with a few people. One of the women I kept in touch with sent me a Christmas card in '92 or '93 telling me that Thomas had died from AIDS. He's the only person I've ever known who died from AIDS. Thomas, I am so sorry you had to...I am so sorry he had to hide, but I'm so glad for that one moment of connection. I wish I knew him better. We shared a creative moment, and for a moment we were ourselves. (emphasis added, Conversation #1/ Field Text)

As she reads the last few sentences her eyes fill with tears and she shifts from speaking directly to Thomas, to speaking about him, trying to distance herself and regain composure. It's a revealing story though, mirroring something of her feelings in the present moment:

Lisa: And that's the first story that comes to mind when I ask you about creativity?

Maya: It did that day. Those snippets came to mind.

Lisa: Do you remember...was this written just before you went to candidacy?

Maya: [Immediately] Yah.Yah, it was. [Pause] It was interesting because he was hiding all along who he was. He was always trying to be somebody else. And that piece for me now, that movement has been special. And I never realized it, but I go back to it...when I need to play something and feel connected.

Having transcribed all of our conversations now, I'm also surprised to see that most of the narrative threads that recur throughout our conversations are there in Maya's very first story: the pressure we can feel to impress others, the longing to just be ourselves, and the desire to truly connect. But there's something else, something about Saint-Saëns, the man whose personality the sonata is supposed to capture, that my mind keeps wandering back to. What is it about a musical portrait of him that attracts Maya and Thomas? Searching through various on-line biographies, (e.g.,

www.classicalarchives.com/bios/saint-seans.html; www.bookrags.com/biography-charles-camille-saintseans) I find that Saint-Saëns was a child prodigy at age three, played before audiences at age ten, and wrote his first symphony at age eleven. Although widely acknowledged as brilliant and technically accomplished, Saint-Saëns' music was also consistently described as lacking in emotional depth, controlled, or emotionally undemonstrative. In his own words, Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) described himself as pursuing "the chimera of purity of style and perfection of form," (Lesson Tutor, 2005, p. 1) but there was speculation in many of the biographies about a "secret second life," one filled with wild, scandalous adventures. This sounds like part of Maya's story of Thomas.

Sitting down to write her notebook, I also notice that Maya mentions sonatas several times in our research conversations. In fact, they are the only type of musical composition she mentions, so I decide to continue with my background research and find out a little more about them. Typically divided into three movements, sonatas have one or more movement in *Sonata Form* (Classical Music Archives, 1994). In a sonata form movement there is an *exposition,* where the composer exposes all of the musical ideas or themes to be explored; a *development,* where those ideas are manipulated in a sort of free fantasia; and a *recapitulation,* where there is a return to the original themes, sometimes with modifications. Because composers like Beethoven often had modifications in the recapitulations of their sonatas, their work has been referred to as "the cycle of human experience" (Classical Music Archives, 1994).

Delighted with this discovery, the sonata form seems to be a form I can use to write Maya's notebook, arising from the very heart of the stories she has shared with me. The story of Thomas is like the exposition, exposing the strands of the story to be

explored. In fact, Maya brought a photograph of Thomas to our first meeting to show me what he was like. She also brought a photograph of herself at three, showing me what she was like as little girl. Something about the two photographs together strikes me, but I'm not sure why. Inside a folded piece of paper she has also brought many more images she's been thinking of including in her collage: small pictures of delicate-looking flowers, an abstract pastel she made in blue and purple, postage stamps, pictures from the thank you card she gave to her committee, and a picture of a woman with a dunce cap on that says 'brilliant" underneath. Studying the array of images in front of her she says, "I don't know how I'll put them together for the collage." I don't know how all of the ideas and tensions she's shared with me will come together in the writing either. For now they are the raw materials for the fantasia of poems, images, metaphors and stories that will make up the development of Maya's sonata.

A Not So Free Fantasia

> *After a few days of writing, and the excitement of finding the sonata form for the chapter, suddenly a day passes, then two, without writing. Writing the fantasia section, where the composer's imagination can run free should be a dream to me, the one who revels in the chaos of collage making, but I am stuck! I try to write a bit, then try again, but the writing is flat. Monotone. A linear, written report of events surrounding Maya's candidacy. What's wrong? Why am I writing like this? She boldly revealed so much of herself, sharing pages and pages of her innermost feelings from her private writing but...ah! That's it! Many times in our conversations she expressed the desire to conceal a story, saying, "This is off the record," or "Maybe you shouldn't include that," for fear of what others will think, for fear of the repercussions, and for fear of what might be read into it. She wants to share her ideas and stories, but she doesn't want to be criticized, penalized, or analyzed. Having spent thirty hours transcribing our taped conversations, whenever I try to write, I hear this "second voice" censoring me and wonder if she'll want to edit even more of what she shared when she reads this. I can't drive with the brakes on like that, though! I need to write freely first, then Maya and I can see what needs to be edited.*
> *The next place to go seems to be her candidacy experience, an experience she calls "The Game of Brilliance." That's where the emotional charge is.* (Journal Entry)

The Game of Brilliance

[Depleted] [Disconnected] [Isolated]

like i've just broken up with someone i love
a day has passed since the Game of Brilliance
of "what I know" and "what you know"
and, "you don't know enough"

What is all this Half/ Hearted reception!?

uncertain what I'm suppose to *do* now
been Told what to Do
another library search more anxious
than when I began
need to Do MORE
expected to feel happy relieved
feel empty small ant-size smaller

just want to quit

You Win.

Half Way to the Heart

After her candidacy exam, Maya was very quiet. I could barely hear her voice over our celebratory lunch. She passed, but something went wrong. Halfway through the exam, she lost her spark. Her research design is half quantitative and half qualitative, but someone on her committee questioned why she wanted to include qualitative interviews. Someone else suggested adding more quantitative measures. Having difficulty confidently defending the combination she has planned, she gets quieter and quieter, until she can barely speak. Anxiety-stricken, the next day she begins doing more library searches, and in the middle of the night pours out her feelings on paper, agonizing over what she is trying to prove and to whom, and why she feels this way but still cannot stop. She feels pressure to be *brilliant*—a word she uses many times in our conversations.

Halfway through her coursework, Maya took the qualitative research course that sparked her interest in including interviews with her research participants in her work. The course was the beginning of a journey she was curious to take, but skeptical about at the same time. She initially felt that qualitative research was the "easy way out" for people who were afraid of numbers, but in her paper for the course, she reviewed reference after reference supporting autobiographical reflection as an important part of research. One of the references advocating a three part *heart-centered* model of research made such an impression on her that she shared it with me at the time and I used it in my own research proposal as well (Rendon, 2000). In it, Rendon (2000) strongly encourages researchers to engage in contemplative practices, self-reflection and introspection with regard to their work.

Carefully crafting the first half of her paper in the third person, Maya uses articles like Rendon's (2000) to gather the courage to write the second half of her paper in the first person. She briefly relates three personal stories that come to mind when she thinks about her research topic, but it is the first story that catches my eye. Describing an episode from childhood, where a teenage boy shouted a racist remark at her while she was playing on her front lawn with her friends, she recalls how her dad later tried to calmly explain the source of these kinds of comments. A successful accountant, he told her that some people were upset that people from other countries were taking away all the good jobs, so people who were minorities, like themselves, had to "work twice as hard to prove themselves." In her words, she took what her father said that day "very seriously." It's an abrupt end to innocently playing with the group as just another one of the group. Now she feels different. Now she has to prove herself and work twice as hard.

Taking a personal risk in writing about this experience, Maya feels proud when she hands in the paper, saying she never felt that way before about an assignment. Written in connection with a potential research project on identity, I'm struck by how the intense feelings of pressure she expressed in her private writing the day after her candidacy examination reflect her father's comments to her as a child. While she found the story painful to write, unlike her more recent personal writing, the story did not yet reveal much about her inner feelings about the experience. Writing the story was a tentative narrative beginning, but her autobiographical journey is cut short and she makes it only halfway to the heart of her research. There is no follow-up course where she can write more, reflect on her stories, and illuminate where her research interests are arising from. Instead, Maya continues on to a mandatory doctoral level course in data analysis, and eventually changes her research topic. Still, her new topic is not so different than the previous one, and not so different than the music-related topic she originally began with. Each time she changes topic, there is only a slight variation. There is something she keeps coming back to, even if it takes on various disguises. When I ask what she thought would have happened if she could have done a follow-up course to the qualitative research course, she said she felt she would have been able to continue developing a research proposal related to identity.

A Genuine Response

During our first research conversation, Maya brought the feedback from her paper in the qualitative research course to show me. Discouraged from her candidacy experience, it was something she was literally hanging onto. I can still see her holding it in her hand and saying that she didn't ever expect to get this kind of feedback. When I

ask what made Judy's response leave such a lasting impression on her she replied that it was:

> So....nurturing...so...positive...so...inspired. To have feedback like that, I mean....I'm reading stuff on how praise doesn't help. [Pause] Yah, gooey, "You're the best writer in the world! If I could write like you..." Stuff like that is not that helpful necessarily. Praise used in a positive way is different than false praise...praise used to gloss over things or say things just for the sake of saying it.

Maya searches for a word to describe Judy's response to her writing—a word that fits. She tries on *nurturing, positive*, and *inspired,* and she also says what it was not: *false.* Months later, when I'm re-reading these sections of the transcripts, I phone her to ask her about it again and immediately, without hesitation she says, "it was a genuine response to me as an individual." She took a risk in sharing her personal stories and the risk paid off in terms of a genuine response. Afterwards, she says she felt connected to Judy in a way she never felt connected to any other professor. Looking back on the class, she's surprised that she wishes the students could have shared more of their autobiographical papers with each other.

After telling me about Judy's response to her paper, Maya immediately begins to tell another story—this time, one in which she was in the role of the teacher, giving feedback to one of her own students:

> I had a student several years ago, and I remember this student because he was sort of trying to decide what he wanted to be when he grew up. [Laughing] Not that he ever planned on growing up. But he wrote this paper on how he really wanted to go to this particular event, and this event was so unlike how I would see him in class. It was almost like he had two lives. He wrote it so beautifully! It was funny, and creative, and when I read it I said, "Have you ever thought about going into writing because this is beautiful!" He came up to me afterwards and said, "Actually I have been thinking about that."
> The story of her student is a memory that comes up spontaneously, as she's

contemplating something from a different vantage point. As the teacher now, she is

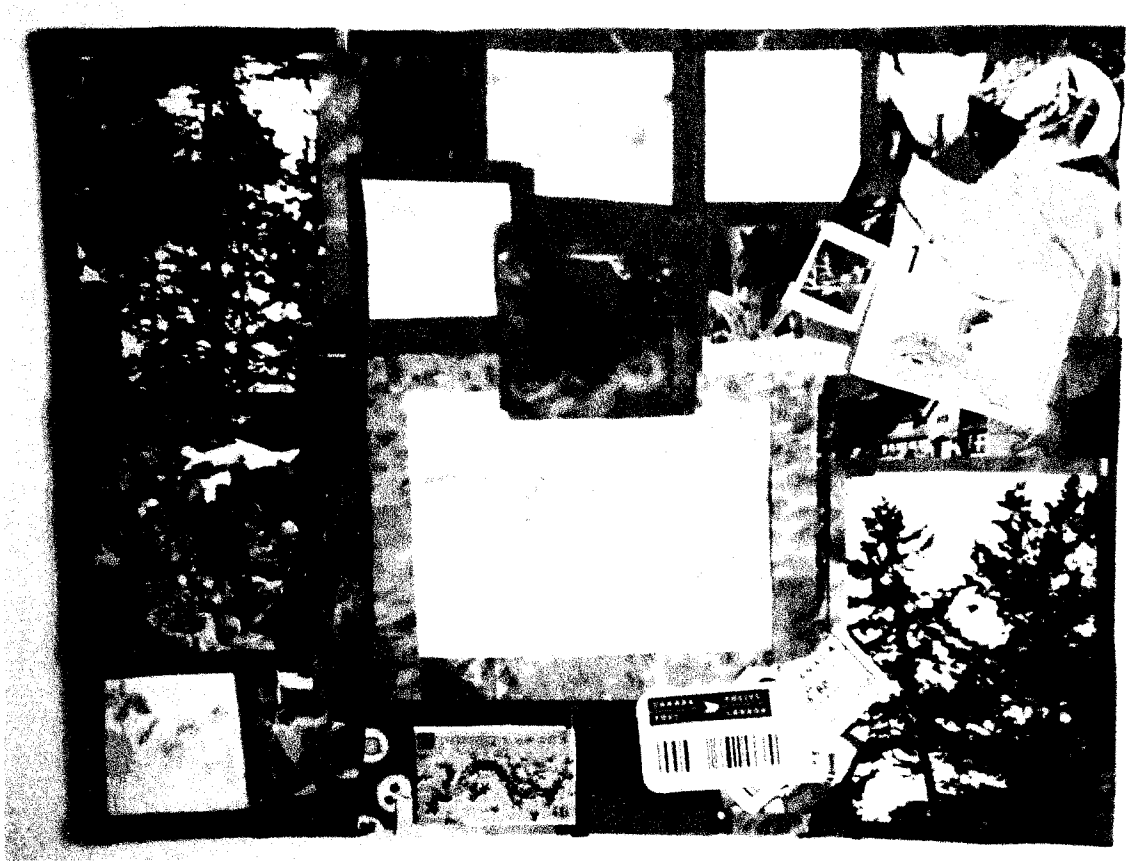
amazed by her student's "other life" and how beautifully he can write. Her own response, like her professor's, comes easily and is natural when her student's writing is authentic and natural. Of all of her experiences giving feedback to students, this is the one she remembers when she talks about feedback. There is something about the experience that made a lasting impression on her. Her student surprised her; he was not the story she had of him.

Two Lives

> *I walked around Maya's apartment when I arrived, looking at the pictures she has hanging on the wall. Two are photographs she's taken herself and framed—a photo of a stairway at a retreat center she stayed at, and a photo of a river near a friend's cabin. Both are quite ethereal and have the sense of being mysterious pathways leading somewhere unknown. In the center of the wall she has a large print of a Kandinsky painting—the artist known for trying to paint music—and over her desk she has an image of a Buddha sitting on a rock, hands gracefully folded, with a lotus below him. When she saw it, she immediately thought of her father, so she bought it for him. He had it hanging in his study but when her parents moved, she brought it to hang over her own desk. She says something strong about "learning" comes through in the image. On the opposite side of the apartment, in the dining room, the Saint-Saëns Sonata, and her collage are displayed on her music stand.* (Journal Entry)

When we sit down for our second conversation, Maya says she didn't have many magazines to use when she made the collage (Image 10, p. 102), but she did have travel magazines. Recently returning from a trip to the mountains, she feels attracted to that landscape in particular right now, feeling it's an environment she could live and grow in. When she says the word, *grow*, she stops and suddenly says, "Growth. That's it!" That's the impulse that is welling up from within her but is trapped within the frames of her collage. Selecting images of fir trees with mountains in the background, rocks with

Image 10: Maya's First Collage



a little snow on them, pictures of delicate-looking flowers—she has framed all of the images and placed them in separate compartments. The predominant color is blue, but there are surprising sparks of fiery color in the dragon stamp, and in the little red flower buds that have not yet opened fully. Below one of the buds, she's placed the only words she uses in her collage: *from deep within*, suggesting that this is where the growth may be coming from. In the center, she's created a frame around a pastel picture she's drawn of a dove in flight. Nature, growth, travel, freedom and flight are all impulses that are being contained somehow in the various compartments of her collage. She has chosen not to include the *brilliant* woman with the dunce cap in her collage, saying that if she focuses on her candidacy experience too much, she blocks out too much of life. The imagery of her collage suggests, however, that the experience has already had this type of effect.

Glancing around her apartment at all of the references to music in her personal space, I find myself asking more about her background in music. Pointing to the Saint-Saëns Sonata on her music stand she tries to recall the various occasions she played it:

> It was one of the pieces that I used on my audition tape for graduate school. Then when I was in graduate school, I, um…I had only intended on staying a year and a half, until I was done my coursework. I was going to do the written and orals and be home in January but I ended up getting sick so I canceled. Then I thought, 'I don't want to go home! I want to take some more classes—classes I want to take for fun. That's why I'm really here.' So I took all these really—and I mean they were really interesting courses. And in one of them I played the sonata again. Then, when I finished my master's degree, I went to a convention and the person I enjoyed listening to the most played the sonata!

Listening to the tapes, I hit the stop button and play and re-play this part of our conversation. Her voice sounds so different as she tells this story. Brighter. More alive. Her words are flowing without any pausing or censoring. In fact, our entire conversation begins to flow more effortlessly and I find myself asking who her favorite composer is. She responds, "Mozart or Bach. Bach I like for Baroque, Mozart for classical. There's just something familiar about their music." Wondering if there could be any biographical connection that makes their music sound so familiar, I ask and she laughs and says not really. The only thing she can recall about Bach is a story she once read where Bach supposedly left 22 shirts at the laundry when he moved to Leipzig. She's not sure if it's true, but she's delighted with the eccentricity and his lack of concern over such things. She describes Mozart as *brilliant*, performing before audiences at age five, but as being nutty, funny and unconcerned about what people think. It's the only time in this part of our conversation that her voice slows down, as if she's putting two things together for the first time: being brilliant and not caring too much about what people think.

In our first conversation, when she spoke of being asked to play with the seniors when she was only a junior in high school, and of winning a music competition in high school, the tone of her voice also changes, and there's a hint of satisfaction. But her voice changes again, and she makes halting references during our conversations to how she was told she was not good enough for the performance program in graduate school, and had to pursue another route. Now, she prefers to play duets rather than solos because she feels more connected when she plays with someone else. Knowing how hard it can be to re-claim an identity of being an artist, when I ask Maya if there is any secret lingering feeling that she really *is* a musician, she immediately says, "None," but then pauses for a moment:

> I know it's part of me. I think what it is for me is that I'm at a stage where that stuff is...it's there and it's waiting to come out, and if I start thinking about it...if I start thinking about it I get upset, and...and you know like, 'Why do I even bother with this Ph.D.?' Why don't I just give it all up and do that [laughing and pointing to the music stand]. Well, that's not realistic. When I'm done, I intend to do both.

Right now, Maya doesn't practice her viola in her apartment because she feels it would disturb her neighbors. For awhile, she spoke of possibly using soundproof rooms at the university to practice in, but I don't want to ask why she hasn't. It's enough to be asking all of these questions about creativity, questions that might evoke more ambivalence than I know. As I'm about to leave, she finds a CD she likes and wants me to hear: Ry Cooder and the Buena Vista Social Club (1997). Listening to it at home, I'm surprised! Sultry Cuban music is filling my apartment, nothing at all like the classical music we've been talking about. This is a side of her I haven't seen. Similar to her experience with her student, this is not part of my story of her.

Commenting on the essence of Cuban music in the liner notes of the CD,

Ry Cooder says:

> This music is alive in Cuba, not some remnant in a museum that we stumbled into. I felt that I had trained all my life for this and yet making this record was not what I expected in the 1990's. Music is a treasure hunt. You dig and dig and sometimes you find something. In Cuba the music flows like a river. It takes care of you and it rebuilds you from the inside out. (Cooder, 1997, p. 3)

I wonder if this is what music is trying to do for Maya, even if it has to flow underground for awhile. I wonder what would have happened if Maya and I had more purposefully used music as one of her ways of telling her story. What music would she play to convey her experience of creativity, and her sense of her identity? Would it sound like the Saint-Saëns Sonata, or would it be something more embodied and sensual like the Cuban music playing in the background right now? Or would it be somehow a combination of the two? Maybe it would be something altogether different, and she would surprise me again, with another part of her identity, another "hidden life." Even though it was not an intentional part of the research design, her music is rising to the surface again, and guiding our research together.

Moving Down to the Ground

> *It's been almost eight months now since Maya's candidacy and she's just finished gathering her data and is preparing to move back to her hometown. She's moving into a house this time—a place where she can finally play her music. Her apartment is bare, in that in between stage when you're not quite "here" anymore, but you're not quite "there" yet. She still has her couch and table, but her photos have been taken down, and boxes are lined up in the living room.*
>
> *Looking at Maya tonight, I remember meeting her three years ago and feel amazed that we're sitting here now, doing what we're doing. I didn't realize the intensity of the journey we would share, or the sacredness of it. I never thought of graduate school in that way, but it has been years of our lives we have shared. During the long pause since our last research conversation, she's gone on to create a second collage, begun writing her own poetry, and she's in the process of re-rooting to a place where she feels she can grow again. Sitting at my desk at home now, I can still see the plant she calls "the plant that never dies" in my mind's eye, and the shadow it was casting on the bare wall of the apartment.*

She'll be leaving soon and she says she wants to give me the little plant before she goes. It's a precious gift. (Journal Entry)

Re-Rooting

sometimes its gone un-watered
for weeks maybe a month
it came it was one of those
two for five dollar plants
a friend of mine bought
it had flowers i think
hers died mine never did
well mine just never flowered again
was never leafy the way it came
it would get longer leafier
then it would stop drop
and almost die

but then I'd root the stems
this is the best its ever done
it's a cutting of a cutting of a cutting
there are nicer plants beside it
but its my favorite

and I want to give it to you
if you want it

Ready to Burst

Just before I began writing her notebook, I wrote Maya an e-mail, letting her know that the plant that never dies is miraculously still alive and well. It has two stems which have grown almost a foot long, and one is wrapping itself around the tree next to it for support. She writes back that it must feel cared for, and I smile. I'm not usually good with plants but knowing this one's story, I do feel particular care and attentiveness toward her, and am glad she has found sources of support.

In our last research conversation before she moved, we sat again at her kitchen table and placed her two collages side by side so we could look at them

together. "Brighter," she says, pointing to the new collage (Image 11, p. 107), and "Darker," pointing to the one she made just after candidacy (Image 10, p. 102).

Image 11: Maya's Second Collage

Her imagery is largely from nature again, but the colors and the arrangement are dramatically different—more vibrant and less organized. The tiny flower bud "from deep within" the first collage has burst open in a red explosion, and now the only patches of blue that appear are where she has placed two images of the planet Earth. Aside from the earth and flower images, she has added only one small butterfly and a tiny bursting heart. There are no framed compartments this time, but words and phrases create a loose structure. She laughs when she tells me that she found some of the phrases on her morning oatmeal packages, but they were phrases that caught her eye as she was in the

thick of gathering the data for her research. Puzzling over how to convey how the collage relates to our creativity research, and to the tensions she's experiencing with her own research, I experiment with interspersing the phrases from the collage with what she said to me while we talked about it:

From Deep Within

Nature heals hearts

this is what I'm attracted to.....trees and flowers

BALANCE

and butterflies.....you don't see them much anymore

Slow down, just let it happen

i'd like to believe i could just do that

Dream
Hope
Love

The beauties of life where we live

it's been 20 years since i've lived in a house

A step in the right direction

reached the point where some nights are sleepless

Don't judge yourself by what you do

if i do my best.....if i do what I'm comfortable with.....

Do what you can, try not to worry

my problem is.....what if i'm not comfortable with it.....

Real

it's probably from not letting myself say what i'd really like to say.

Authenticity

Saying what I genuinely have to say.

Maya's collage-making is like a dialogue between two parts of herself. A voice from deep within speaks through the collage, trying to remind her researcher-self to slow down, to let go and to trust the process. When we sit down to look at the collage, she confesses that she doubts this voice, though, and finds it difficult to believe that things will work out if she lets go and relaxes. When I ask what her personal definition of creativity is, again, it is as if part of her is trying to guide her despite her doubts and fears:

> Just let it go. Just let it go. Be who you are. Tell me something...the story about yourself. Show me that there's something beyond point number one, point number two, point number three. Really tell me something. It doesn't have to be new, but instead of just stating the facts, show me you've taken the time...that you've learned to enjoy something. To me that's creativity: something that's coming from the person. It doesn't have to be new.

Right now, there are sleepless nights, worrying about whether she'll have enough data, whether she'll get significant results, and whether she'll be able to somehow include her own voice in her work. The tension she feels between what she's *supposed* to do, and what she *wants* to do is extreme. Pointing to the explosions of color in her collage, she says, "I feel like I'm going to burst sometime!" She doesn't usually keep a diary, but as with her candidacy experience, she begins pouring her feelings out on paper in the middle of the night—feelings of fear, of pressure, of feeling false. Page after page, the feelings tumble out and she asks herself why she keeps them inside, why she has shared her real self –her hidden self with so few. This time, there's a burst of poetry at the end, poetry that echoes the image contained in the compartment in the center of her first

collage:

The Dove

The dove flies high in the sky
Pure, white and simple
She flies free and with ease
This bird of love and peace
She circles the blue sky and enters past the clouds
Nothing really stops her as she is strong
She is beautiful and great
This dove is simple, not ornate
As this bird flies with out-stretched wings
She leaves for far way
Happy, she lets go and sings
"I am doing it my way."

After she reads the poem, we're both been silent for a moment, then she says, "I'm not a poet, it's not great quality." But she has done what poets do, using an image to convey feelings that words alone can't capture—feelings of wanting to fly away, to escape from something, to sing freely, to feel peace. Similar to Maya Angelou's (1970) caged bird in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Maya writes to try and free herself from the prison of pressures and fears she feels inside, writing a second poem the same night at 3:00 a.m. This one was harder to write because she kept wondering if it sounded silly, but she ignored the critical voice inside and just kept writing. In the end, she found it refreshing to write and asks if I want to hear that one too. I say yes, not wanting to silence her now, when she has just begun to find her voice.

The Plant That Never Dies

I'm like the plant that never dies

This plant has had broken branches and dead leaves
But these branches establish new roots
It is the way with lows and highs
My plant is beautiful and green
It is scraggly and simply grows tall
This plant is a sight to be seen
There's no such sight anywhere else at all
She has her own character
She is her own
And grows despite the full and bushy plants around her
To me she is more beautiful because she's unique
I love this plant!
She has brought me joy
That I never otherwise would have had
She's beautiful, she's green
She's gentle, and by most unseen
I, like the plant, have been most unknown
Only a few have seen how I have really grown
Like most everyone, I have had my share of broken branches
But quietly I have re-grown
Without much of a notice
I long to flower, I long to bloom
My time will come
And it will come soon

Maya has distilled her tension into the form of two separate poems. In the first, she is a dove flying high in the sky—pure, white, strong and free—almost the same chimera of purity and perfection Saint Saëns was reaching for in his music. In the second, she's a plant rooted in the earth—gentle, green, scraggly and broken. Juxtaposed, the two poems are an interesting contrast between sky and earth, between perfect, pristine purity, and imperfect, broken earthiness. It's the resilient little plant she says she wants to give to me, though, and that is a "sight to be seen." Moving from a high rise apartment down to the ground and into a house, where she feels she can bloom again, the return to the earth is what her collages seem to be hinting is needed before there will be further growth. "The scary part," Maya says quietly, "Is that I know I need to leave here in order

for that to happen." Sensing her fear of losing something in letting go and leaving, I ask her what would happen if it all fell apart after she moved, and she wasn't able to complete her dissertation:

> Maya: Some days, I could care less. I'll be the same person.
>
> Lisa: Who would you be without a Ph.D.?
>
> Maya: Me. [Pause] But at the same time, why did I start it to begin with? [Pause] Part of me says it would kill me if I didn't do this. So it's a double-edged sword
>
> Lisa: If you get significant results, will *that* be fulfilling?
>
> Maya: Do you know why it would be fulfilling? Because other people would accept it more readily. They wouldn't attack me. [Pause] But if I find nothing they can say, "Go back and do it again." No thank you! Good bye! [Pause] I'd like to say that, but I'd never do that. I'd go back and kill myself all over again getting that data. [Long pause] You know what I'd do? I'd fight to do it the way I want, to do it my way, because I'd be so exhausted and agitated that if I couldn't do it the way I want. Good bye. I'd give up. It'd be like a death, but I'd like...it's kind of like...I would like a part of me to come out in this.

Recapitulation: Playing Again

> *It was what I already knew when I first sat down to write Maya's notebook: events have transpired in Maya's life that paralleled the story of Thomas from our first conversation. It was what made the cyclical form of the sonata seem so right, even though I usually don't believe in the outline coming first. But true to life, there are twists in the recapitulation of this sonata, new discoveries arising as it was being written. In particular, I didn't realize that for a moment I would stand in for Thomas and we would have a playful moment together in the liminal space we share: graduate school.* (Journal Entry)

After our first two conversations there is a long pause filled with experiences outside of the academic environment. When we sit down for our third research conversation, Maya shares that she recently sang in a choral performance of a North American premier of a mass, and I am stunned. I didn't even know she sang! She's never mentioned it in any of our conversations. When she was visiting friends out of town, she was so exhausted from her trip that she just said yes to an invitation from a friend to sing.

I hear that note of satisfaction in her voice again as she tells me she never looked at the music in advance, that she was sight-reading, and that she was singing in another language! Her voice brightens even more when she tells me about playing music on another occasion:

> I went to see an ensemble with Brian, a friend of mine. He had seen them in the seventies and he said, "Maya, you've got to go see them," so we both got tickets and went. It was FABULOUS! [Emphasis added] I was on the edge of my seat. Normally if I'm not interested, I can fall asleep at concerts, but this one...mmmmmm! I couldn't. And we ended up going out with the group after, and they were all speaking Dutch, and we were laughing at translations of different words, having fun. But the next day when we went to the workshop, Brian said, 'Aah, I'm not going to play', and I said, "We both paid for this thing and everybody else is playing. Fake it, if you don't really want to play." Well, we began sitting side by side, but I decided I was going to play alto and he decided he'd rather play soprano. So he sat with the sopranos and I sat with the altos, and yah, he was faking it an awful lot. [Smiling] But I decided I wasn't going to fake it. I was going to do what I could do, and he said, "You know, when I was faking it, I was really listening to you. You've got a natural talent. You should keep it up." So now that I've grown up, and I've gone through being a viola player, I've realized that my true love is the flute. (Conversation #3)

The river of music is flowing above the ground now and she has been dipping her toes into it. Inspired by the ensemble, and exhausted from her efforts with her research, she feels like participating in the workshop. She doesn't want to fake it anymore. She is a musician, but playing an instrument she's less familiar with enables her to just *play*. As we're talking, she jumps up to show me a flute lent to her by a friend and enthusiastically states:

> If I decide to play, Gail knows where I can get the same type that my favorite female flautist plays. Now <u>there's</u> a CD you should hear! Too bad I packed it up. She's one of my heroes. (emphasis added)

Hearing her speak with such admiration for the solo woman flautist, and seeing how natural she looks with the flute in her hands, I ask if she'll play me a few notes, so I can hear what her musical voice sounds like. She plays a few notes, pauses, then

slowly begins playing the theme music from a familiar children's program of our childhood, *The Friendly Giant*[2]. We burst out laughing, and then continue to giggle like little girls as we talk about Rusty and Jerome, the puppet characters from the show we both loved as children. For a moment, the veil of Maya lifts and I catch a glimpse of the little girl from the photo, sitting on her new tricycle, and of the little girl playing with her friends on her front lawn, before she learned that she had to prove herself. In the midst of our research conversations, it was a moment of real connection forged by music, humor and child-like playfulness.

Looking back at moments like this, and all the surprises along the way, I find myself wondering how these bursts of singing and playing music might influence her work in the future, what new spirals might develop. Even though she hasn't designed her present research as a musician-as-researcher, I still wonder if maybe she'll play more music, listen to more music, sing along to music, dance to music....and how that might help free her writing. When I ask about her ideal career, she says that it's writing, but she's not sure what kind. She'd like to continue playing music too, but she speaks of it as though it's still in a separate compartment in her collage—separate from her work-life. Asking if she'd like her writing to be integrated with her music somehow, she says that that was her original intention, to research music, but an analytical approach to it was not satisfying. "What scares me," she says quietly, "is that I do keep coming back to that original research topic." Having burst to the surface again, perhaps the river of music will help Maya find a new way to re-search it, one that is closer to her own heart.

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[2] The Canadian Broadcasting Channel (CBC) program, "The Friendly Giant", featuring Robert Homme as the "Giant" was an educational children's program during the year's of 1958-1985.

CHAPTER 6

Isabella & The River of Life

Evoking a Dream

> *From the moment she walked into the classroom Isabella began studying the collages on the wall, quietly seating herself across from them while the other students came in chatting and laughing. In class she's spoken about her photography so I was curious as to how she was going to respond to the collage imagery. I began my presentation by reading a dream that I had included in my proposal, then read various sections related to the tensions I experienced in trying to be more creative, mentioning how recording my dreams, writing in my diary and making collages enabled me to write a research proposal for a visual narrative. Other students asked me a few questions, but I don't recall Isabella asking any. She just offered to be a research participant at some point in the middle of the discussion. After the presentation, a few students stayed to talk, but Isabella stayed silently in the background, looking at the collages. Looking over at her, we made eye contact and smiled at each other, but she waved and motioned that she had to go. We never had a chance to speak.* (Journal Entry)

A few days later I e-mailed Isabella about her offer to be a participant and she immediately replied, saying that after the presentation, for the first time in a long time she had had a dream. Waking up in the middle of the night, she sat up in bed and thought, "I have to tell Lisa!" This is how our research story together begins—in dreamtime, the realm of the feminine way knowing.

Dream #1: Immobilized in the River

> In the dream there was a river. I've never had a dream with <u>flowing</u> water before and I was in the absolute middle of this river. I was not cold or drowning, but I wasn't swimming. The water was just flowing by me at a rapid pace and I could hear the voices of people I knew—some were in cars and they were hanging out, and waving at me, but they couldn't get my attention. I wasn't connecting with them. Everything and everybody that was important to me was flowing down the river and going past me—and they were screaming and yelling, "Help! I'm here. Don't forget me!" I was supposed to save them. I was concerned, but I wasn't concerned. I wasn't panicked. In fact, I don't even remember trying to reach out. All I could do was stand in one spot, in the middle of the river, like I was somehow immobilized. When I woke up I thought, "Okay, that's the river of life." (Conversation #1)

Is she supposed to save these people and these things? Are they important talents and relationships that are passing her by, or does she need to let go of some of the "important" people and things that make claims on her time so she can become mobile again? After having several research conversations with her, when I look back on this dream it is not clear, as interpretations of dreams usually aren't. What *is* apparent is that Isabella, herself, connects having the dream to the collage and dream imagery in the presentation.

In Art as a Way of Knowing (1995), Pat Allen writes that:

> Images ... are a universal phenomenon that each of us experiences continuously in dreams, in our mind's eye, when we hear music, read a poem or encounter a scent that evokes a memory. We all have many internal images ... art-making is the process of giving these images form. (p. x)

Isabella's dream image-maker seems to have responded to my image-maker and a dialogue between us began somewhere in a place beyond words. Something was evoked. I began seriously reading Art is a Way of Knowing at the time I began having conversations with Isabella. It's a book I've had for awhile, but wanted to give a good read just when the time was right. Re-reading the preface, I pause when I reach Allen's (1995) comment that image-making is for anyone who wants to:

> ...contact her feeling, intuition, and sensing inner being, and to forge a path to the river of soul that runs below everyday life, becoming more alive in the process. (pp. x-xi)

Flowing from the previous chapter into Isabella's dream, and now surfacing in Allen's book, the river seems to know what it is doing. I am just following its lead.

A Felt-Sense: Disjointed

Before our first meeting, Isabella and I exchange a few e-mails and she says she's excited about the work-play we have in front of us, but that she has been feeling off

lately, that something seems amiss. When we meet, I ask about what I call her out-of-sortedness and she says that when she's been writing in her journal, the word that repeatedly comes up is *disjointed.* This is the word that seems to best fit the felt-sense she's experiencing inside:

> A felt-sense is the body's sense of a particular problem or situation. A felt-sense is not an emotion. We recognize emotions .... A felt-sense is something you do not at first recognize—it is vague and murky. It feels meaningful, but not known. It is a body-sense of meaning. (Gendlin, 1982, p.10)

Often used to describe an awkward conversation or a poorly written text, the term, disjointed, also refers to a disturbed connection between things that are meant to function together, like the parts of the joints in our bodies. Exploring how I can create a poetic form for her words that conveys the inner feeling-sense of what Isabella had to say about what she's been feeling lately, two disconnected columns begin to take shape.

DIS-

JOINTED

feeling that — again

it's a recurring story — tired of feeling that

Again

finished my Big Goal — which was to get my Master's

and i'm Doing — what i Love

can't put my finger on it — kept saying to myself it's because

'i'm not in the right job" Or *" i'm not finished my master's"*

but there's something a dis-jointedness I feel

i go to bed at night with that

[ONE QUESTION]

there's just something

?

and i'm trying to Do the

"relax, it will come to you."

but every once in a while i get tired and

i want to Know

Although she cannot yet articulate what her one question is, there is something she wants to know, something she feels impatient to know. Achieving her external goals has not satisfied her, and has not resolved this inner feeling of dis-jointedness. This is where we begin our first re-search conversations.

Afraid of the Water

During our first conversation Isabella mentioned that she had already collected a few images for her collage but had forgotten them at home, laughing wryly as she says the word "forgotten." Curious, I ask if she can remember what any of the images were and in a lower, more serious voice she says, "Oh yah. Women, with really 'set' mouths. Like this ..." She clenches her jaw to show me what she means. She calls it a "determined mouth," and a "get- me- out- of- here expression," mentioning that she has

TMJ (Temporomandibular Jaw Disorder). When I ask if she feels like she could begin creating a collage from these images, she says she *could*, but that she picked them out that night thinking she *might* do something with them. She's not sure yet. She's seen the brightly painted backgrounds of my collages but she's been thinking of putting her own images on plain white paper first, before deciding how to fill in the background. Right now the images of the women with clenched jaws seem to need some space. She's very hesitant to continue any further, uncertain where the process will lead:

> When you were showing your collages I was mesmerized, thinking, wow! But I was...this whole idea that I'd actually be thinking that I would even cut the things out...like that's as far as I would go. That's where my line is. Then I'd put it away and I'd never look at it again, because there's that line of crossing...crossing over that line...and then you know you have to make decisions and go where it leads. (Conversation #2)

Feeling sympathetic to Isabella's fear, and not wanting to pressure her regarding the collage, after our conversation I dream that I have to go to the dentist because of a problem with my own jaw. I, too, have experienced TMJ, and one of my very first collages had a picture of a woman's face with a "set mouth," hovering behind a table set for a party for others.

When we have our second conversation a week later, Isabella brings a folder with images she has pulled out of magazines first thing in the morning, before talking to anyone or reading anything. She knows it's important to not be in left-brain, "thinking-mode" so she just flips through magazines as quickly as she can, pulling out the images she's attracted to. Now, the first image she pulls out is of multiple, powerful waterfalls cascading down. Beginning with this image, one by one she describes to me the images she was attracted to for her collage:

Explaining My Self

Interesting how the images came out in this order…
First **Water**
Those waterfalls are just so
Um,….

And I don't know what this is this
Ostrich with a feather skirt
People see me as _____ and I want to go out there and say
"This is who I am!"
Need to get a bathing cap with rubber flowers
Then maybe I'd just Be
Who I am

Don't know who this is this **Talk Show Host**
Just loved the colors purple and green
With a blue face

This one just sort of **grabbed** me
The little girl being pulled along by the hand
"Let's go, let's go. Let's hurry."
How I felt as a kid
The instrument in her hand doesn't mean anything
Actually it might

Remember seeing this one a long time ago **The Woman With a Violin**
These magazines are so darn old!
There's just something about, um *Music*

Hate to say it but
This lone **Super-Woman** up on the roof top
Is a part of me
Looking out for danger authoritative
Probably how I am a lot
But if I was up there I'd be like
Pretending I was 'okay' but teeterIng

Pulled these out as fast as I could without thinking
A single [solitary] *long-stemmed rose*
A Curve- in- the -Road sign something about the blurriness of it
And **Eyes**
In a lot of my dreams I can't open my eyes
I can't see

Lots of sadness in this one can feel it in my body

They're holding hands but there's a sense of leaving
Seems like *a little girl* **and** her mother?
Someone she trusts might not be her mother
Mother just seemed like the right answer

Loved this one the two sides
The Academic & The Clown
That's the way I feel like I'm striving for this one
Not because other people want me to but I like being
An academic kind- of –person

Don't know what this is never read the article
Think she's **paddling the boat with a big pencil!**
I didn't realize she was on water!
Seems to be balance with a computer AND a book

And then of course there's *The Violin*
I thought, *"Oh my God, there's the violin!"*
Just make an appointment and start!

There was something about this one from an old **Toast Master's** magazine
Something about the person's head being open
Looks like stuff is coming out but I think
Stuff is actually being poured in and he's expounding it
Been thinking about going back
Still have trouble explaining my **Self**

Still reluctant to put the images together, Isabella tells me, "I'm not doing anything with the collage yet, just collecting the images so they'll be here when I need them." Then, she pauses with a thoughtful look on her face. "I forgot the very first ones I picked out again. I'm not sure why". She has not included the images of the women's faces with the clenched jaws in her folder. Later, she tells me that maybe they were just related to a mood she was in after having a conversation with "a family member."

Looking back at the notes from our first conversation, I decide to take a risk and ask her about her fear of making the collage, using her river metaphor to perhaps make it easier to talk about:

> Lisa: You mentioned something to me... [looking through the pages of my research journal]. Oh! I wanted to ask you about something that came up in our previous conversation, something that peaked my interest and made me think. [Speaking carefully and very slowly] What are you afraid of if you dip your toes into The River of Life?
>
> Isabella: [Low, wicked laugh] I might get carried away and never come back.

I'm surprised by her response, and the sudden change in her demeanor! An entirely different personality flashes forth for an instant. I'm not quite sure what she means so I ask if she can tell me more. She tells me she'd be living a very different life than she's living now. When she was younger she often thought of how wonderful it would be to live on a commune, in a community atmosphere. Now she has visions of living in a more isolated setting, in little adobe cottage somewhere, away from everyone. A story begins to unfurl naturally from that image:

> I had a boyfriend who said to me that he worried that I would get really taken up by something and that one day I would just be gone. He came the closest to understanding that part of me, but that there's something that holds me back from doing that. I'm actually moving there more slowly, and dipping my toe in just a little at a time, so people get used to that [in a lower, quieter voice]...and they don't see me as, um...[she doesn't finish the thought]. I don't know who I'm protecting when I do that. I remember when I lived up in Fort McMurray for a year—I took a leave from teaching after three years because I wanted to be a child psychologist so I went and I actually worked at a youth assessment center in two different places, but I got a full-time job in Fort McMurray. I knew I was only going to be there a year. I spent a considerable amount of time alone up there. It was a good place for me to go, and it was probably the first time that I had ever left everybody behind and started completely fresh. That's as far as I could go. I could never see myself living across on the other side of the world, which is too bad. Before that I had also taken myself on a trip to B.C. Now I think of that and I think, "Oh my God, I couldn't even go somewhere overnight alone." (Conversation #2)

If she completes the collage, if she jumps into the "River of Life" and lets it carry her, she's afraid a line will be forever crossed and that she'll leave people behind but she's not sure *who*, or perhaps is not ready to say "who" aloud. In many of her dreams lately, she has a sense of being cut off from people, but somehow it feels "right" and when she wakes up she doesn't feel troubled by them.

Dream #2: Them & Me

> I was with my family and it was funny, because we had gone to Kyle's house [a gay co-worker] for some reason. He was getting things ready for this great party and he had everything set up beautifully. My family walked in and sat down and started to eat and I had to say to them, "This party isn't for you." I don't know if it was for me, but it wasn't for them and they had to stop eating. They weren't angry or anything. They just left, and I was left to put it back in order. I had this feeling...there was this sense of "them" and "me." That sense of disjointedness. (emphasis added, Conversation #2)

Spencer (1980) comments that:

> The need to create a counter-world in opposition to the conventional patriarchal model ignites sympathy between rebellious children, defiant women and gay young men, drawing them into friendships. (p. 78)

In their work as Jungian analysts, Woodman and Dickson (1996) similarly found that homosexual figures often appear in dreams in a "bridging role" with a "natural sympathy toward the feminine while at the same time, being very effective against tyrannical male and female figures locked in either matriarchy or patriarchy." (p. 93). These are only things I have read, though, so I ask Isabella what qualities *she* thinks of when she thinks of Kyle. She responds:

> He's out there doing things, moving forward, even in redneck Alberta. He's out there talking to people and he's not afraid of what they're going to say and do. (emphasis added)

Her perceptions of Kyle's ability to speak freely and be out there celebrating

who he is, regardless of what people think, make me think of the tension among some of the original images she chose for her collage. There are women with clenched jaws, ,a talking head from a Toastmaster's[3] ad, and a woman talk show host The first is an image of repressed silence, the second is an image of a masculine voice being filled with outside knowledge, and the third is an image of a feminine voice. I wonder which of these images, if any, will ultimately be in her collage.

Dream #3: Two of Me

> I haven't been remembering my dreams much this week, maybe because I'm so busy in the day. I don't know. But last night I dreamt....um...well you know how dreams are. There were two of me. I was split in two. One part had been shot and killed and the other part was going to be shot. I was really frightened. Then I realized that someone shot me...no, it was actually me, I think. Part of me was over here realizing that another part of me had been...had been killed. (Conversation #3)

When we next meet there's a noticeable difference in Isabella, a drawnness or agitation that is hard to describe. She's more guarded as she's speaking, at times covering her throat with one hand, or circling one of her hands with the other as if she's anxiously twisting a bracelet. Over the weekend there was a family get together at her parents' cabin. This year, some family members made a special trip out, even though she suspects they probably didn't want to be there, and others cancelled at the last minute. She's trying to slowly detach herself from some of the family rituals and traditions, but doesn't want her mother to be disappointed, and feels she should be there to visit with the family who made the special trip. Before leaving for the cabin, she tells her husband she really doesn't want to go, almost telling him she doesn't want to go with *him*, but she's quick to

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[3] Toastmasters International is an organization that is devoted to effective oral communication. With "clubs" around the world, it provides a supportive environment in which individuals learn to do public speaking (see http://www.toastmasters.org/ for more information).

explain to me that that's because she just wanted some time alone. As she's telling me this, she suddenly remembers that it was her husband, though, who was the gunman in her dream. Shocked by this sudden realization, she says she can't grasp why it would be him because he's not "like that" at all. "Maybe it's just a part of me," she says, and I nod my head in agreement. I often conceive of the various characters in my dreams as parts of myself. "If you had to describe him really quickly what would you say?" I ask. She rattles off words like compulsive, linear and meticulous, then says he's a very "right and wrong, there's only one way to do it, worried about what other people will think, kind-of-guy." This is the nature of whatever or whoever is shooting part of her in her dream.

Later, in our conversation, when I ask how she's feeling about making her collage, she says she feels "more ready," but then begins to tell me that over the weekend she had a conversation about artists with her mom, who she says is very much like her husband:

> My mom's very "right and wrong" too, so I knew I couldn't talk about creativity with her. But I wanted to know something about my own creativity and I could only come at it through the door of artistry, because she's very into being an "artist" right now. She takes lessons, and is learning how to draw flowers. She does a wonderful job, but those people that haven't had the proper instruction are not worth looking at in her mind. So I asked her...what did I ask her? Well, I think the significant thing that came out of the conversation was that I have an uncle on her side who does oil painting and, um, I remember him showing his artwork at her 70th birthday which was last October. We were all over at my sister's house and my mom's whole family was there. He had brought his artwork and he was the youngest son who took over the farm, that everybody kind of loves but kind of has other feelings for him too because he was sort of—he was the mother's boy, that sort of thing. He remained a bachelor for much of his life but eventually married. Anyways, he had done some art things, and um, he wanted to show his work. And I remember being—I remember having to go over to the table when he was showing it because I felt there wasn't the recog [she pauses]...you know people were...it's not that they were saying it was "bad" work. They just weren't as excited as he was. And, um, I thought they were nice. You know. They were nice pictures. We have one that my husband's uncle has done in our living room that's a still life of scenery and I think it's actually kind

> of cool but he won't put it up because it's not done by a professional. It's in our living room, but it's not on the wall. I was thinking about hanging some of my photos in the entranceway but it was the same sort of thing, He says, "buy some." (Conversation #3)

When I ask about making her collage, she shares stories about her family's and her husband's responses to artwork, perhaps worried about what mine will be. In a later research conversation, she returns to the story about her uncle and his artwork again, adding that her mother had commented, "He could use some lessons." She's quick to say her mom's paintings are beautiful, but that she never seems to get decent frames for them. "She doesn't think her artwork is good enough to be framed properly. I don't know where she finds the frames she uses!" She laughs, but shakes her head sadly.

Dipping Her Toes

Driving back from the cabin Isabella is quiet. When she gets home she suddenly feels like going downstairs to begin working on her collage. Quickly finding everything she needs, she's ready to start when a voice inside says, "You should be outside helping B. with the yard work." Another voice quietly responds, "No," though, and she cuts out a woman with a "do not disturb sign," and a woman seated with her hands wrapped around her legs, head on her knees, in a protective posture. Setting these aside for a moment, she begins making various sponge paintings she might use as the foundation for a collage.

> When I found myself painting, it was interesting because at first I thought I was just going to make a collage from the pieces. I started playing with colors - purple and green—there was something about those two colors that was really important. I wanted to experiment with purple and green on white paper, so I played for a while. Then I thought, "Okay, now I'll just leave them overnight and maybe tomorrow morning I'll cut out some shapes." But I didn't because I had a doctor's appointment. So I brought them with me to work, for whenever I'm ready, but then I got busy.... (Conversation #3)

When she goes upstairs to go to bed, Isabella's husband asks why the light was

on downstairs and she tells him simply that she's been painting. When he asks what she's been painting she replies, "I'm not sure yet. It's something, but I'm not sure what it's going to be. It's just something I'm working on." Grateful he doesn't question her any further, she goes to sleep. She has cut out some images, and she has painted some foundations she might use, but she hasn't made a collage just yet. She just wanted to see what it would feel like to dip her toes into the river.

Naming Her Self

Hello Lisa,

When I opened your e-mail this morning I told myself to wait and see how much work I get done before replying.

I went to see an Aunt on Sunday. She is an artist extraordinaire!!!! She showed me her work. She lives to paint and garden! It was very inspiring so I went home and created a wonderful meal. (The only way I know how to be creative.) Anyway, I went over because she is doing genealogy on my dad's family and I agreed to help. I loved seeing all the beautiful names of ancestors I have never heard of. It reminded me that I have to come up with a name for myself for this project.

Don't laugh, but I have decided on "Isabella" because I do not know an Isabella. It's like starting a whole new me...

If it's okay with you I'd like to take a bit of a break so I have something tangible to share with you next time. I want to use your time effectively and to do that I need to take the next step – start the collage. Maybe we can meet in a few weeks.

Take care,

Isabella (Electronic mail correspondence)

When I reply a few hours later I reassure her that there's no pressure to finish a collage, and call her by her new name, *Isabella*. From now on, whenever we e-mail, I call her by this name. I can see she is excited about the opportunity to be an Isabella, and wonder what qualities it conjures up for her, and whether it's perhaps inspired by a

character from a movie or book. Asking her about her new name, it's clear that she's given it quite a bit of thought. It was much harder than when she needed to find a pseudonym in the past, but she says "Isabella" was attractive to her for some reason, that there was something exotic and adventurous about the name, as opposed to "plain Jane." "Isabella" seems like the name of someone who "lives on the edge, just a little bit." She thought of using "Isadora" because she had read Isadora Duncan's biography and identified with her "to a tee," except, she says:

> Isadora Duncan was very...creative. So I picked Isabella instead. I don't know any Isabella's. It's a name that just sort of rings of something. I guess it's the unknown.

Jumping In

Hello Lisa!

What a difference a name makes!

I wanted to quickly tell you that I created a collage last night!!!! I realized I needed my inspirational music. My "muse" was the same CD I used to write the difficult parts of my thesis. B. had gone out to work in the garage, and I had just watched an interview with the star from The Pianist, and thought I might play the piano – but then I decided to go downstairs instead. I took a bit of time to clear some space but once I started, it just happened. My hands knew which piece to pick up first, where to put it down, and what to pick up next. "It" knew what to do. I didn't have to think about it, and it was perfect.

I put it up on the mirror this morning as I got ready for the day – WOW!! Even sitting in a presentation this morning, I kept seeing it in my mind. It's very powerful for me for some reason.

One thing that did come to me last night when I was done, was how nice it was to not have a deadline.

Next Monday would be great for our next meeting.

Isabella (Electronic mail correspondence)

With a new name, and the pressure removed, within a day of saying she wants

to take a break, she has finished her first collage (Image 12, p. 130) and wants to set the date for our next meeting. When we meet again, she has the collage on her desk in her office, ready for us to look at. Comparing it to mine, she says her collage is "elementary," but that it's *her* start. As I begin to look at it, she jumps up and starts rearranging the other things on her desk so they won't be distracting, then she suddenly takes some tape and sticks the collage onto the wall, so we can look at it that way. "I didn't put it up before you came because I thought: what if someone walks in? [whispering] They'll think I'm losing my mind." After she first finished the collage she put it on her bathroom mirror at home then panicked when she got half-way to work realizing that she had left it there, where her husband might see it. She wanted some quiet, reflective time with it, to give it a chance to speak to her, before having to explain it to anyone else. The first place she puts her collage is on a mirror indicating that the conversation she wants to have is with her Self.

In her collage, the central figure is that of a super-woman on a rooftop, with a powerful waterfall surging down from the sky, baptizing her with its waters. There are heart shapes, a solitary rose, and a bright orange flower. The red towel swirling around in the center is the piece she reached for first and is the piece she initially thought would cover most of her collage. The words, "soften up" appear almost message-like in the center, below the superwoman. The last piece she adds is a blue eye in the lower corner, looking back at her. When she's finished gluing down the pieces, she takes crayons and lightly colors in the white spaces so that this time she can go upstairs feeling she has finished the piece. As we look at it, she begins to criticize a few things about it, finding imperfections. The centre seems imbalanced to her somehow, and she wishes she had

made the red piece in the middle a little rounder, but when she was making it, it felt "perfect" and like something knew what "it" was doing. The red and the blue colors she

Image 12: Isabella's First Collage

has chosen make it a bold and dramatic image, one with a sense of adventure to it, as though it had been made by someone who lives "a little on the edge"—as though it was made by someone named, *Isabella.*

A few days after making the collage, Isabella does something she says is "not

like her," something she wouldn't usually do. On a weekend camping trip, she jumps into a river and lets it carry her downstream:

> I found out that what people often do - my sister-in-law was telling me – is they jump in at the point where the river starts. There's a lake and the river flows down from this lake so it gets its original source from the water up there somewhere. People jump in where the river starts, and they just float down, and they get so far and have to get out because there's a weir, and if you don't get out you'll get caught under it and drown. So there's this element of having to think about when to get out, but I mean it's easy to get out. Well, I say that. I was wearing a life jacket because it was the first time and I didn't know how strong the river would be. There was just something about being near the river, and then getting right into it. Afterwards, I thought, "Oh my God! I have to do that again."
> But afterwards I was completely exhausted. Not just physically. It was more emotional. (Conversation #4)

To show me how she felt at the end of that day, she slumps back in her chair and exhales deeply. Something was released but she doesn't know what exactly. "I feel like I've been moved forward," she says, "But I don't know how. I've been noticing changes in myself daily." A recurring dream she has been having about being stuck seems to have stopped and she's noticed that she doesn't feel as much pressure to spend time with her family, speaking with her mother briefly on the phone only once. She's found herself testing the waters a little more with other people over the last few days by speaking a little more freely, and sharing some of her writing with colleagues and friends. It's a step toward writing the book she's been thinking of writing—the book she really wants to write.

When she looks at the superwoman in her collage she feels different about her now. The lone figure who she first described as "authoritative" and "looking out for danger," is now a "visionary," someone who sees things others don't, is respected for her ideas and maybe even looked up to. Now she seems to be searching for something—maybe for what the book she wants to write will look like. She hesitates for a moment,

then says that maybe "looked up to" and "respected" are not quite the way to describe her. Her superwoman's ideas just don't seem so "crazy" anymore, and she doesn't seem as marginalized or isolated. She has connected with the river.

One of the things she says helped her to finally finish her collage was to stop thinking about whether it was "artistic." Pointing to it, she says, "I don't allow myself to think of this as any kind of art." When I ask her what "art" is, she lets out a low laugh:

> Something that would be hanging in a gallery. And I'm looking at this one and thinking...this is *not* art. Maybe that's the distinction. This is not to be shared. [Pointing to the piece in the center of the collage]: Nobody knows what's under there—but I do. It's a baby. The superwoman is superimposed over a baby and I know that I can lift that piece up, and there's the real me under there. She's there. It's that journey, maybe, of reclaiming some of the artist. Ah! I just said it! (emphasis added, Conversation #4)

We both laugh at this "slip of the tongue," and how it reveals the identity of the baby. As an adolescent Isabella took an art class and the teacher came by and laughed at one of her drawings. It's the first story that came to mind when I initially asked her about "creativity," and an experience she says she'll never forget, saying that it confirmed for her what she already knew: she wasn't creative and she wasn't an artist.

Hearing her speak of reclaiming her "artist," I begin telling her a story from my research proposal of how I dreamt of having a baby after having my artwork juried into a fine arts program, but the sound of voices and footsteps coming down the hallway distract us. Isabella leaps to her feet and pulls her collage off the wall just as the door of her office opens. One of her co-workers introduces us to a woman who is touring her workplace, and the woman has a baby in her arms. We talk politely for a few minutes, and then they shut the door and leave. Isabella and I are quiet for a moment:

Lisa: Did you notice what just happened?

Isabella: [tears in her eyes] Yes.

Lisa: A baby just walked in.

The river has brought a powerful burst of synchronicity. The shock of these two worlds colliding—the imaginary and the real—has left us both speechless. This seems like a good place to end our conversation for today. I wonder what will happen now that the baby has been unveiled.

Dream #4: The House on the Right

> In my dream I lived in this house, but it was the house to the right of my house that was really intriguing to me. It was quite vivid to me that it was the house on the right that I just had to go in. There was something drawing me into it. It was built – I don't know whether it was on a cliff—but it was suspended over an ocean, or a large body of water. The water was turbulent, but it was a good turbulence, if there is such a thing. It was positive. There was someone in the house who was drawing me in, saying, "Come over here." I was being invited. It was a house you'd want to live in, where I could do…be…whatever I wanted. But I lived next door. (emphasis added, Conversation #5)

It's been seven weeks since our last conversation and I'm curious about what has been happening in her life since the unveiling of the baby. Sharing the above dream with me, I ask her who the figure calling her into the house might be and she tells me it was "a younger man. He was definitely an art…he was definitely a musician." She stops herself from saying "artist" but says he had something to do with "the arts." He reminds her of an "artist-musician" from her past who had an old van and kind of a "hippie lifestyle." They were friends during a time of her life when she was taking a break from a more structured life. Appearing in her dream, he seems almost like a male muse or siren calling her from her thinking mind over to the watery reservoir of her unconscious where her creative potentials await. As our conversation unfolds it sounds like she may have

already responded to the call as she's begun to take violin lessons, something she has wanted for a very long time:

> When I took piano lessons as a child, I never really connected to the piano. It didn't give me back what I needed—over. I've only had 2 lessons but I already know how to play "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" on the violin! There are some scratchy parts, but it feels so good. There is just something that happens when I play the violin. I absolutely love it! I get up in the morning and I play, which is a nice way to start the day. When I phoned my mom to tell her I was going to take lessons, right up until my first lesson she said, "Oh your fingers are going to really hurt." Well, my fingers are fine [said in a firm voice]. When I called her to tell her about my first lessons, she said, "Oh I always wanted to take lessons. The violin is my favorite instrument as well." (Conversation #5)

In our first conversation, Isabella mentioned how her mother did not like the children to play the piano in front of others because they might make a mistake, or it might seem like they were "showing off." Her mother never had music lessons, but when the family gets a piano, all the children get piano lessons. It's something that's a good thing to learn.

After her first few violin lessons, Isabella takes her violin and stands in front of the mirror to see how it looks. She tells me it's to check to see if she's holding it correctly but my thoughts stray back to how she placed her collage on the mirror at home. I wonder if she wants to see a part of herself that was hidden beneath the superwoman in the collage. "A fiddle that's been ignored or hasn't been played for a long time takes a while to come back to life," she tells me, adding that there's a violin in her family that hasn't been played in a long time and she may be able to have it.

As we're catching up, it becomes apparent that there is something else happening in her life right now that may also amount to a call into the "right" house. She mentions a letter she needs to write to officially "make the break" and "move into the place" where she can do what she really wants to do. It's been on her mind so much that

she thinks she has already mentioned it to me. On leave from teaching in the school system for almost four years now, she needs to decide whether to make it permanent. The contract work she currently does for the government gives her the opportunity to have a more balanced life, and to be more creative, but there are people in her life who feel like she'd be giving up a lot if she gives up the security of being a teacher. Her mother was a teacher in the school system, but Isabella is not sure if it's the "right" place for her. She remembers creative moments as a teacher, but when I ask if she thinks she'll ever go back she whispers, "I don't think so." Struck by the parallel between her dream and the impending decision, she says:

> Isn't that funny? The dream was definitely at the time when I began to feel myself getting closer to having to make that decision. It's sort of silly because I'm already saying, "When I was a teacher (...)." (Conversation #5)

In whatever spare moments she can find, she reads bell hooks' (2003) book, Teaching Community, a book she finds hard to put down:

> I've just got to finish this book because it's driving me crazy. She talks about—I I really love the way she puts it—about how she needed to energize herself. She had to give up her position at a prestigious college because she realized she was burning out and she couldn't live like that anymore. And I thought, "Wow! She did it!" Then she went to a smaller college, and eventually she resigned from the small one too. But she found she still wanted to teach. She didn't resign at first, I don't think. I think what she did was took a leave, and she just tried it. Then she said, "Okay, I'm going to be okay. I'm not going to have as much money, but I'm going to have a pretty rich life." She went on to do some small group work where she could facilitate workshops and when they were over she'd have time to rejuvenate and could be her creative self. (emphasis added, Conversation #5)

Reading the book early in the morning and late at night in bed, she wants to find out how the story ends. As our conversation winds down, we talk a bit about the power of other people's stories – "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999)- and how they can give us courage.

Dream #5: Almost Missing the Bus

> I had the strangest dream, probably about a week ago. A bus dream. It was a...not getting on the bus dream. I don't know what happened but I missed the bus. And the second time, I get a ticket and I lose it! So then I get on the bus and I say to the bus driver, "Well, I lost my ticket. Do you think...is there any way you can let me ride? And she turns to the other passengers and they say, "Yah, she can ride with us. We'll pay for her way. Divide up the fare and she can come with us." (emphasis added, Conversation #6)

Describing her dream, Isabella says that she wants to get on the bus and move forward but she sets up so many roadblocks for herself, starting a million projects, and never seeming to finish any of them. She writes and writes in her diary, and the book she wants to write is still very much on her mind, but there is no time. I confess to her that in my mind I can't keep track of all the things she's working on, so am confused about the type of work she does. There are groups she runs, articles in the process of being written, workshops she gives to community groups, events she plans. It's been six months since our last conversation but the number of things she describes having done during that time still seem like a lot.

When I ask Isabella "who" the bus driver in her dream might be, to see what bus she feels she might be missing, she says the driver was a very kind woman, slightly older than herself, someone who reminds her of a mentor she had in university who "opened up spaces" for others to speak about their writing. This is where her dream seems to want her to go—towards a space that will support her writer self. Speaking of some of the things she's been doing recently other than writing, though, the first thing she mentions is the work she was doing the previous week with seniors and with kids in group homes, and how she wanted to be there, but it was emotionally draining:

> I was looking for a word to describe the way I felt by the end of the week. Chaotic? Chaotic wasn't strong enough. It was stronger than that. Messier than

> "messy." There's this feeling that these people are so marginalized in our society, and they're crying out. And it was their hurt, or their despair was starting to come over me and I wasn't giving them something back. I was drawing it out of them, but I was pulling it inside of me. (Conversation #6)

The way she describes her experience is strikingly similar to the imagery of her opening dream where people are calling out for her to save them, but in her recent experience she *does* reach out to try to and save them, and by the end of the week she feels *messier* than *messy*.

In contrast, she also mentions a talk she recently gave to a women's group who weren't the usual group of educators or professionals. Deciding to use some of her photographs, she has a completely different "work" experience:

> I had not originally planned to use any visuals but in the end I used photographs so that every once in awhile I had something I could speak to. The part that was really cool for me was that I was able to walk away from my notes, walk away from the podium, and walk into the crowd and be with them. That was a really good feeling for me. It was probably one of the most satisfying workshops or presentations I've ever given. It was different. It wasn't so academ [pauses]...it was more of a from-my-heart talk about what worked in my life. I was there speaking as a woman to a group of women. Not coming across as some sort of...expert. (Conversation #6)

She has not gone back to Toastmaster's to be taught how to speak effectively, but she has found a powerful source from which to speak. Connected to her imagery, to the river of her soul, she's able to connect with her audience and get something back from the experience. Similarly, when she created a photo journal while working on her Master's thesis, it gave her the energy to complete her degree. These experiences seem to hint at the kind of book she really wants to write - one with a balance of word and image.

Doing & Being

Since our last conversation, Isabella has gone on to create a second collage (Image 13, p. 138) on her own, with the intention of creating a space for herself and

better boundaries with other people. Just as we are about to look at it a co-worker walks into her office without knocking, making it clear that this is something she is working on.

Image 13: Isabella's Second Collage

Returning to the collage she says, "With this one, I had a purpose. I was trying to get into a new way of being." The dominant image in the collage is a sculpture of a woman's head "in progress," hands on either side, molding the clay. It's an image she has been saving for awhile. Uncertain how to describe it, she says:

> There's an openness to whatever is going to come. A growth, or development but she's still not finished yet. She's in a process of becoming. [She pauses] Her eyes aren't even in. I don't think she can see yet. But someone can. (Conversation #6)

In contrast to the feeling of movement in her first collage, she says her second collage is more of a "moment," and more about being "silent and still." It's not important to always know, to always be looking out for danger, and to always be searching for what's on the horizon, like the superwoman. The second collage is more about "being" than "doing" which she says is, " ...something I've just started to think more about. I've been a do-er most of my life."

Looking out from behind the woman who is being, there is a also a baby, playing, hands and face smeared with paint or food. Pointing to this image she mentions a book she's been reading about the writing process:

> It's about playing with writing...writing in circles...writing in columns, then writing underneath. Stuff like that. It's fun to think of moving in that direction, and to think about doing more of that. Because if I play with my writing—the word play is coming up more and more in my journals and in my work—if I play with it, then I'll be able to do it. If it's not play, and it becomes serious, I won't do it. (Conversation #6)

Considering the image of the baby, and her comments on writing, I ask if her Master's thesis ever felt like her baby, or like a process of giving birth and she says, "No," she never thought of it that way. The book she wants to write *now* feels more like it could be her baby, and she's struggling to have a piece of her come out in it. "If I were to do a Ph,D., it would be on what I want to write this book about," she says, but she doesn't think she needs to. Quietly wondering if this is the second bus in her dream, I mention the time between my Master's degree and Ph.D., and the many times I doubted whether I'd continue. Looking at me thoughtfully she says:

> I think we need to have those gaps...that incubation...that's the word I was looking for when I was talking about the collage. Incubation! The time to get to where we need to be. I think about babies and how you have to wait those nine months to have them. You have to wait until it's time. (Conversation #6)

Comparing her two collages again, she points to the second one saying that it is the one that's going to help her make her "big changes." Something requires incubation but she can't see what it is yet. As we end our conversation she takes some photos of the new collage so she can give one to me, and keep the original with her so she can look at it.

Who is Isabella?

Looking back, one of the ways Isabella's story could have been written was as a journey through the books she has read, similar to looking at someone's bookshelf to get a sense of who they are. During our last conversation, it's as if one of the books from her bookshelf has fallen to the floor, open to a certain page, pointing to something:

> In the first chapter of this book I've been reading, they talk about the writing process and how difficult it is, and how you need to do all these things to give yourself permission to do it. Then they listed authors like Isabel Allende, and Gabriel García Marquez, and I started thinking, "Isabel...that's the name I picked!" I never made that connection!! I've had this book of hers in my closet and I've just been w-a-i-t-i-n-g to read it. I think I'm just going to keep reading her work because I remember being...when I started to do my thesis...talk about being sick! I was sick a lot, and in bed. I wasn't dying or anything but I chose to stay in bed. And I read Isabel Allende's work and that's what allowed me to go forward with my research...and I hadn't thought about that, until now. It was Paula, her book "Paula." (Conversation #6)

Going in search of a copy of Paula (1995) in the library, I'm surprised to find it in the *autobiography* section, but not so surprised when I think of Isabella's penchant for autobiographies. Writing the story of her family for her daughter, Paula, who was laying in bed in a coma, Allende begins by speaking directly to her silenced daughter: "Listen Paula. I am going to tell you a story so that when you wake up you will not feel so lost"

(Allende, 1995, p. 1). Weaving the story of her own metamorphosis into a writer, Allende tells her daughter stories, including the story of how her first novel was "born and baptized." Writing is so important to Allende that she feels it saved her life, that her life is created as she narrates it.

When she was laying in bed ill and trying to finish writing her Master's thesis maybe this is what Allende's story did for Isabella. Maybe it helped her to not feel so lost, giving her writerly company and helping her to understand something more about the process of becoming the kind of writer she wants to be. Although Isabella chose not to use the name *Isadora* because Isadora Duncan was "creative," part of her still seems to know the truth. Part of her identifies with Isabel Allende, unconsciously baptizing herself with the name *Isabella*, perhaps to initiate the type of writing process she will embark on next. Maybe the time is coming to be Isabel, and give birth to the book she really wants to write. At the end of our last conversation she mentions another story, though—a story she can't remember the name of, but wishes she could find. It's a story where a woman leaves everything behind, and doesn't take any clocks or mirrors. I think about this for awhile: no clocks, no mirrors. No time pressure, no self-consciousness. No deadlines, no concerns over appearances. The freedom to just "be." Right now, this is the story Isabella wishes she could find.

Finding Being

In the midst of writing Isabella's story I realize I don't have her second collage—the one that's more about "being." Wondering if she might have returned it to me at some point and I have forgotten, I search through all of my field texts stored in my filing

cabinet, then through my art portfolio to see if I put it there during the move from one apartment to another. It is not in either place. I e-mail Isabella to see if she can find it, thinking that I will need it very soon.

When Isabella replies, she says she'll start to look as soon as she can, but many of her projects for work are coming to fruition, and she is very busy. Reading her message, I wonder if she has moved into the "right" house, and it is, after all, her work; that is her baby, and not a book. Something seems amiss, though, I can't put my finger on it but my mind keeps wandering back to our first conversation where she said that despite doing a job she loves, something still felt disjointed.

I wait a while, and when I have not heard from her, I try sending another message about the collage. She reassures me that she knows it's important, and says she'll do a thorough search, both at home and at work. She's sure she has it, and that she photographed it, but she may have hidden it away somewhere she can't find now. She has to go out of town for work, though, so she might not be able to find it for awhile. We exchange a few more messages, and each time she says she'll try to find it, but her messages are filled with the many things she is busy doing. I don't want to pressure, so instead I send her a poem, and decide to let it go.

When I next hear from Isabella she is home ill with a sore throat, something she felt coming on. She mentions trying to find the collage, but for now she needs to rest. She feels another collage might be brewing but in a few days, when I receive another message from her, it is poetry that has burst through. Resting at home, she has written a poem one evening, and another the next morning. She's not sure she can send them out into the

world just yet but she sounds happy. Returning to the river, she has re-connected with her self.

Writing this now, I don't know if she'll find the second collage and if it will be added at the last moment. I let go of wanting the story to be a certain way. I have no control over how the river flows. She might find the collage, she might not. The pleasure has been in participating in the mystery, not knowing what will happen. Drifting to a café I sit down, order a coffee and open up Paula (1995), to see how the book Allende wrote for her daughter ends. Reading the last page, I see that the river has not disappointed me. It has brought it's own ending for Isabella's notebook—an ending from Isabella's own bookshelf, and one more powerful than anything I could have planned.

Holding her daughter's now lifeless body in her arms, Allende (1995) has a dream:

> Paula pointed to the stream; I saw fresh roses lying along its banks and a white powder of calcined bones on the bottom, and I heard the voices of a thousand voices whispering among the trees. I felt myself sinking into that cool water, and knew the voyage through the pain was ending in an absolute void. As I dissolved I had the revelation that the void was filled with everything the universe holds. Nothing and everything, at once. Sacramental light and unfathomable darkness. I am the void. I am everything that exists, I am in every leaf of the forest, in every drop of the dew, in every particle of ash carried by the stream, I am Paula and I am also Isabel, I am nothing and all other things in this life and other lives immortal. (p. 328)

I am silent for a while, in awe of how my journey with Isabella has come full circle, returning to a dream of water. In a magical confluence of river and stream, Isabel Allende's life begins to merge with Isabella's, conveying a message from self to self, an answer to the unspoken question within everyone: *Who am I?* And the river teaches her that in immersing herself in its waters, and surrendering to the void of being, she will find

everything she is searching for. In the no-thingness of pure being there is a plenitude and fullness that heals all separation and disjointedness. All rivers converge here.

Uncertain whether I can actually include such a mystical message in these pages I decide to sleep on it. Drifting off with the question in my mind, I am awoken at 3:00 a.m. by the voice of the river and she is saying:

> *Tell them. Tell them I am Isabel, I am Isabella, I am Jude, I am Maya, I am Lisa...I am in everyone...in every cell of their bodies, the answer to every question. Tell them Lisa, tell them. I am on your tongue. This invitation is for everyone. Tell them they too can come to the River. This story is for all.* (Journal Entry)

CHAPTER 7

Being Creative

Meeting the River Deity

As I'm working on my co-participants' notebooks, a friend of mine gives me a small picture of a goddess he thinks I might like. It's not Aphrodite, from the myth of Psyche and Eros, but I recognize her. It's *Sarasvati*, the Hindu deity associated with the arts and education. Known as the *Goddess of Speech*, and "*She who resides on the tongues of poets*," Sarasvati is linked with eloquence, knowledge, creativity and wisdom (Johnsen, 1999). Originally associated with a river in Northern India which now flows only underground, as her connection with the river steadily decreased, Sarasvati came instead to symbolize *the river of creative inspiration.* The first part of her name, *Saras* means "flow of nectar from above" and *vati* simply means "possessor of" (Theosophy Libray Online, 2005). This is a much different conception of creative *flow* (Cszicksentmihalyi, 1996) than the one with which I began the dissertation, one that retains the power of imagery or mythos—the feminine way of knowing (Labouvie-Vief, 1994, Levine, 2000).

Unlike Aphrodite, the goddess of fertility and creativity, and the other goddesses in the Hindu pantheon, Sarasvati gives birth to works of art rather than children, and as *Brahma*, the creator God's wife, it is she who has the power to manifest creative ideas. In fact, her power is so great it is said that Brahma himself worshipped her, then the other gods, then the sages, and finally, men. As a Hindu deity, she is not so much worshipped, however, as she is infused into creative work as a fresh living presence. After receiving her picture, I decided to use it at the center of a new collage (Image 14, p. 146),

while continuing with my writing. Having anonymously woven her way throughout the

Image 14: Sarasvati Collage

dissertation, from my walks along the rivers in India and in Lethbridge, to the source of water on the mountain where Jude's father passed away, to the underground river of music in Maya's Sonata, to the river of life in Isabella's dreams and story, I'm amazed at how the river deity has suddenly burst to the surface and shown me her face. Even though I did not meet her in the temples of India, she is here with me now, and perhaps has been with me all along, flowing underground. Was it Sarasvati's voice that awoke me in the

middle of the night and urged me to conclude the previous chapter by telling readers they too can come to her river of inspiration? As I write the last chapter of my dissertation, I bow in gratitude to her, wondering where the goddess of inspiration will flow next, and what she would like to say about creativity.

Being Who I Am

> If we see a child who is two or three, perhaps four years old, we find a free human. Why is this human free? Because this human does whatever he or she wants to do. The human is completely wild (...). And if we observe humans who are two years old, we find that most of the time these humans have a big smile on their face and they're having fun. They are exploring the world. They are not afraid to play. (Ruiz, 1997, p. 94)

Contemplating the writing of this section, I put on the soundtrack to *Amelie* (Virgin Records, 2001). I haven't seen the movie but the mischievous look of the young girl on the cover of the CD and the playful accordion music take me back to when I was eight years old and played the accordion myself. It was an instrument I pined for the very first time I heard it played, taking lessons for six years, and eventually playing before auditoriums full of people, my best friend turning the pages of my sheet music for me. My fondest memory, though, is of my Slovak grandfather laughing, clapping and dancing in the middle of the night as I played a polka for him.

Pouring through my co-participants stories and my research notes, there is something that each one of my co-participants did that evokes these memories and prompts me to put on accordion music: Each woman brought a picture of a child to our conversations on creativity. Maya showed me a picture of herself at three playing on a tricycle, before she showed me the image of the woman with the dunce cap that says "brilliant" on it. Jude cried as she showed me a picture of a little girl named Brenda that she carries "to remember," and created a second collage from the free-form, whimsical

mermaid drawings a friend's little girl gave to her. Isabella created a collage with a superwoman figure super-imposed over an image of a baby, commenting that she knows that she can "lift that piece up and there's the real me under there." Several months later, in a second collage, the baby is unveiled and looking out playfully from behind a woman's head. Accidentally referring to the baby as an artist, moments later a woman walks in with a baby, confirming her slip of the tongue.

> In his book Free Play, Nachmanovitch (1990) comments that the ability to play:
>
> > ... may be the simplest thing there is—spontaneous, childish, disarming. But as we grow and experience the complexities of life, it may also be the most difficult and hard-won achievement imaginable, and its coming to fruition is a kind of homecoming to our true selves. (p. 1)

In many ways, the topic of the dissertation could have been play, and the journey to being able to play again. In our initial communications, Isabella says she is excited about the work-play of being involved in the research with me, commenting that when she's able to *play* with her writing, she's able to do it. Beginning music lessons as an adult, she's delighted when she can play *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* on the violin, an instrument she has wanted to play since she was a little girl. Similarly, freeing herself from the instrument she studied in graduate school and shifting to the flute, Maya begins to play again—with an ensemble at a music workshop, and the first few notes of the *Theme from the Friendly Giant* during our last research conversations. Creating playful activities for the children in the after school program where they have the freedom to write or draw "anything and everything," Jude cries, saying she misses "that kind of work." Stepping away from the academic table she creates a collage with an explosion of things "pleasing to her eye," including a tiny Winnie the Pooh figure, an image that contrasts dramatically with her identity as a critical pedagogue.

In the Oxford Dictionary (1992) *play* is defined either as acting in *a half-hearted* way, suggesting a lack of serious effort, or acting in a *light-hearted manner*, suggesting more fun and joviality. It is something about which adults seem to be ambivalent. There's something about the loss of the ability to play, though, and its connection to a loss of an original self that is echoed throughout the stories my participants shared in our conversations on creativity. The first experience Maya recalls with regards to creativity is playing music with TR, where she says, "We could be ourselves." Wondering why she has shared her real self with so few others, she emblazons the word *authenticity* across her second collage (Image 11, p. 107), where flowers are bursting into bloom. One of the meanings of the pseudonym she chose for herself—Maya—is a veil that exists over reality, suggesting that at the time of our conversations, her authentic self has not been unveiled yet. When I ask what her personal definition of creativity is she replies, "Be who you are. To me that's creativity: something that's coming from the person. It doesn't have to be new." For Maya, authenticity, originality and creativity are inextricably bound together, with originality meaning "being the origin, acting out of your own center" (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 179).

When we've been away from our origins for too long, influenced by outside opinions and pressures, we can reach a pivotal point, however, where we find ourselves trying to find our way home, and asking the question: Who am I? Returning to one of Maya's favorite articles, I smile when I notice that in discussing the stressors in academia, Rendon (2000, p. 10) includes a poem entitled *Quien Soy Yo* (Who Am I?), and her first response, similar to Maya showing me the picture of herself at three, is who she was as a little girl:

No one really knows that I am
The young girl who wanted nothing
More than a pair of moccasins
For her sixth birthday
They seemed to be such
An extravagant purchase at the time

One way to answer the question, *who am I?* as Rendon (2000) does in the rest of her poem, is to reflect on all of the many identities, roles and qualities we have. Pondering "that one big question," Isabella includes a comical image of an ostrich with a feather skirt amongst her collage images suggesting that part of who she is, is someone with a quirky sense of humor. She muses that maybe if she began wearing a bathing cap with rubber flowers on it when she went swimming, "then I'd be who I am." Looking at an image split between being an academic and a clown, she knows she's striving to be the academic but has a more comical side that is still untapped. Isabella's story also highlights her difficulty in calling herself creative, even switching pseudonyms to one she thinks won't be making such a claim. At the time of our research conversations, both Isabella and Maya have difficulty fully claiming their identities as *artist* and *musician*, respectively, and saying, as Susan Finley boldly states, "Yes, I am an artist [and].... yes I am a researcher" (in Finley & Knowles, 1995, p. 131).

There is something more than the desire to claim a multiplicity of identities, however, which arises from the stories of my co-participants. There is a memory of a fundamental nature, essence or energy, that is being yearned for, something that has been immobilized in the case of Isabella (as depicted in conversations around her first collage, Image 12, p. 130), imprisoned within the frames of Maya's first collage (Image 10, p. 102), is beginning to burst outside of the box in Jude's collage (Image 8, p. 84), and was

etched into my black scratchboard image of the accordion player (Image 2, p. 28). Referring to it as her rosy-red Eros nature, and her birthright, Raffe's (1992) comments about Eros bear a striking similarity to the array of images in Jude's collage:

> Eros acknowledged, Eros revered, Eros celebrated in joyous gratitude is chocolate, champagne, a Chopin nocturne, perfume. A soft warm bed—shared. A newborn kitten. Life. (p. 51)

Often symbolized in the figure of Dionysus, Woodman and Dickson (1996) similarly comment that when Dionysus is honored, "...wine streams forth, vines with swelling grapes appear, ivy grows, honey trickles down, water or milk gushes forth" (p. 83). Connecting this energy with the ability to play, Nachmanovitch (1990) emphasizes that Dionysus' or Eros' energy:

> ...surges from our deepest evolutionary roots: the urge to create, to generate new life, to regenerate the species.....and represents the power to harness the elemental energies: the Pagan, the wild, the chthonic. (pp. 163-164)

The ability to write, paint, compose, and be creative in any task requires us to be swept away by our wild Eros energy.

In the myth of Psyche and Eros, Psyche's journey begins, however, with her separation from Eros and she must undergo a series of initiatory tasks before they can be reunited. It's a journey that can take some time. As Isabella said in one of our conversations, "A fiddle that's been ignored or hasn't been played for a long time takes a while to come back to life." Only when she wrote Coming into Eighty (1994) was writer May Sarton confidently able to state: "Now I become myself. It's taken time, many years and places. I have been dissolved and shaken. I have worn other people's faces." (in Nash, 2004, p. 99). In my own journey toward reclaiming who I am, and that of my co-participants, two issues have come up repeatedly. It's to these two related narrative

threads that I will turn next: feeling silenced and feeling pressure to be good.

Being Silenced

> What I would say is that you should watch your work mighty well and see that it is the voice that comes from within you that speaks in your work—not an expected or controlled voice, not an outside educated voice. (Henri, 1984, p. 176)

Over the last year, I have gradually stopped writing in diaries, my private voice and my public voice beginning to merge together, but ironically, this section on voice has me silenced again. It's a vast topic, and there are probably important references I should cite in order to be scholarly, but if I begin this way, somehow my voice feels *lost in an acoustic reflection*, like the disembodied, mythical figure of *Echo* (Weir-Huber, 1990, p. 31). In Liberating the Scholarly Voice (2004), Nash takes a poke at this sort of pressure to be scholarly saying that the word *scholar* originally meant "to play with ideas" (p. 43). Keeping with the ideas about "play" from the previous section, this seems like something I can do.

When I set out to begin the research, I recall thinking that the results of my conversations with my co-participants might evolve into a visual "women's ways of knowing," (Belenky et al., 1986) visually relating the images and metaphors women use to convey their stories about creativity. Unlike the metaphors of sight, light and illumination highlighted in the model of creativity based on men's stories of their scientific discoveries and creative breakthroughs, Belenkey, et al. (1986) found that in terms of their intellectual development:

> ...women commonly talked about voice and silence: "speaking up," "speaking out," "being silenced," "not being heard," ... and so on in an endless variety of connotations .... We found that women repeatedly used the metaphor of voice to depict their intellectual and ethical development; and that the development of a sense of voice, mind, and self were intricately intertwined. (p. 18)

In my own conversations with the women in my study, while there were references to sight and illumination, the more dominant metaphor for creativity, or its loss, was also that of voice. At the beginning of my first research conversations with Jude, "boom," she immediately began talking about the *tone* that was consistently there in her research participants' stories—an angry tone that surprised her because it was consistently there. Feeling pressured to remove her own story from her dissertation, she, herself, still has two voices about having done so: on the one hand she vehemently wishes she would have left it in, on the other hand, "it's alright, it's okay." In my first meeting with Maya, there is a completely different voice: one so soft I can barely hear her, having lost her voice during her candidacy examination. Censoring herself often, she makes references to "brilliance," but they are ambivalent ones, showing me a picture of a woman with a dunce cap on that says "brilliant," and referring to the painful experience of her candidacy examination as "The Game of Brilliance." In her poetry, she identifies with a dove that is singing about doing her work her own way, and her voice brightens, becoming fluid and completely unself-conscious when she says what she really wants to say on the subject. In Isabella's story, there are images of vision, as in the eye in her first collage (Image 12, p. 130), the woman without eyes in her second collage (Image 13, p. 138), and her reference to not being able to see in her dreams, but the images of women with clenched jaws that she excluded from her collage tell a silent story of thwarted creativity that she doesn't want to tell again, but is still there at times. Suppressing the imagery may be why it takes some time, however, for her to create her first collage. Having a similar tendency to not want to tell an angry story, I wonder if this is why we have both experienced TMJ. A powerful dream I had just prior to writing this

section suggests that there is a connection between these two things:

> *Someone was forcefully removing metal binding from the teeth on the right side of my mouth. Strong hands were reaching in and pulling out long strips of metal that were becoming twisted and bent from the force with which they were being removed. I was worried my teeth would be damaged in the process but the hands seemed to know what they were doing. At first they seemed like a man's hands, but when I woke up, I wondered if they were my own. It felt like something very powerful had happened.* (Journal Entry)

Sometimes we need a moment of masculine strength to free up our voices, and often this freeing initially involves the telling of a not-so-correct story, perhaps repeatedly, before we can have the insights that Coles (1989) says happen when people tell stories. Using free writing exercises (Elbow, 2000; Goldberg, 2000) to free up my own voice to write this section, I found that, once again, I was feeling creatively oppressed by having to write about stories of creative *woundings*, and that below my feelings of frustration with my co-participants' stories of being oppressed were my own feelings of pressure to be more "scholarly." Writing out what I felt helped me to continue writing, to include this sentiment, and to keep my voice in the writing.

Unfortunately, in my conversations with Jude, we only began to get below the cover stories of her tensions with her participants, and her frustration with the system, to see that some of this frustration was coming from her painful experiences in school as a child. Having read about how graduate students often go through transference of family and teacher issues onto their supervisors, and how academics can remain creatively blocked for their entire careers trying to work out their inner conflicts in their research, (Kubie, 1967; McNiff, 1998) I tried to divert Jude from her cover story so we could just "move on," but in retrospect this is what delayed the deeper stories from arising Despite my personal preference for talking about more pleasant experiences of creative flow, as

art therapist, Pat Allen (1995) noted, when people talk to her about creativity, they usually begin by sharing an "art trauma." (p. 11). In her painting workshops, Cassou (2001) has found that in order for her students to keep creating, they need to release the imagery that is naturally presenting itself, first, without judgment or censoring. Jude's insights regarding her conversations with her research participants suggest the same thing:

> Okay, if I ask this question, it's going to cut them off. And their brain is way over here, where it needs to be for them, and if I ask them this question it's going to shoot them way back over there, and they're not going to be able to finish feeling this, so that it can come to its own natural ... so they can feel like, "Okay, I got it out." (Conversation #1)

In both her own dissertation work, and in our research conversations, this process was cut short, however, with the re-silencing of her story, becoming the research story.

While remaining silent can be a passive form of resistance in some situations, and a way of just getting through, there can come a time when there is a powerful initiatory crisis, or a wounding of the personality that is intensely shocking (Belenky et al., 1986; Politsky, 1995; Raffe, 1992; Weir-Huber, 1999; Woodman & Dickson, 1996). There can be an:

> ...exterior or interior crisis where the need for safety and security that came from conforming to the outer world is replaced by a stronger urge to replace the parts of the self that were lost during a time of conformity. (Raffe, 1992, p. 144)

The first shock may be the most dramatic, but it is repeated over a lifetime as old ways of being that are no longer functional dissolve. The feedback I received on my paper indicating that creativity and passion were not welcome in academia; the reaction of Jude's committee member to her story; Isabella's dream of shooting herself after pressuring herself to go to the family cabin; and the shock of Maya's experience with her candidacy, are all suggestive of such initiatory crises.

In the myth of Psyche and Eros, after the shock of her separation from Eros, the first two tasks she is assigned—firstly, sorting the grains, then secondly, gathering the fleece—both require her to begin listening to an inner voice, the voice of her instincts. In Jude's story, the explosion of subjective imagery in Jude's collage (Image 8, p. 84) suggests that this process of re-connecting to and listening to herself has already begun. Similarly, after Maya's candidacy examination, a voice begins to arise "from deep within" her first collage (Image 10, p. 102), then more boldly in the earthy imagery of her second collage (Image 11, p. 107). Appearing to guide her, the voice cautions her to "slow down" and have patience with her research, similar to the green reed's advice to Psyche when she must gather the fleece from the sheep. In Isabella's case, her need to finally decide whether to leave behind teaching—a separation from both a seemingly secure job and her mother's approval and occupation—evokes an inner voice in the form of a dream figure calling her into the house on the right, the one she would *want* to live in. Without consciously making the connection, Isabella answers the call by beginning violin lessons, and eventually making her leave from teaching permanent. Receiving the same type of call, Politsky (1995) writes of being awakened from a deep sleep by a voice she later interpreted as "the Self asking for the realization of the Self" (p. 12). Resonating with my own story of collage-making, Politsky (1995) spontaneously began a series of pastel drawings that were to become one of her main forms of inner guidance over the years, giving her the courage to make significant life decisions she feels she otherwise could not have made. One of these decisions involved leaving the sanctity and safety of her convent home and beginning the archetypal journey toward an inner home. It is toward a common obstacle in this journey I will turn next.

Being Good

In her poem, *The Journey*, Mary Oliver (cited in Housden, 2001) begins with the following realization:

One day you finally knew
what you had to do, and began,
though the voices around you
kept shouting their bad advice –
though the whole house
began to tremble
and you felt the old tug at your ankles
"Mend my life!"
each voice cried
But you didn't stop.
you knew what you had to do ...

The moment about which Oliver writes is so significant in women's journeys that it is encoded into the lessons Psyche must learn before she can be reunited with Eros: descending into Hades she must walk silently past a series of people begging for help in order to fill a jar with beauty cream for Aphrodite. To successfully complete this task, she must learn that:

> ... she does not have the energy to help everyone she meets ... that she cannot rescue people from their destiny and that trying to do so can undermine their strength. (Woodman & Dickson, 1996, p. 131)

Along with avoiding the misuses of pity, Weir-Huber (1999) adds that Psyche must also learn "... to curb distractions in order to accomplish her task ... and grant the same importance to her own journey as she would to others" (p. 79).

As I'm attempting to write the last chapters of my dissertation, Psyche's lessons once again become relevant to what I need to do. There are many calls, many demands, and many "obligations," with which I struggle intensely as old habits echo into the present. Over the years, I have done volunteer work in the community, have been on

the board of non-profit societies, taught classes in yoga and other spiritual practices, but there has always been a strong tension between this "spiritual service" mentality and my love of writing, art and poetry. Writing of a client named Sara, who sounds oddly familiar to me, Woodman and Dickson (1996) note that, "inspired by spirit, she was trying to live out an ideal, and inadvertently flooding her soul with too much light" (p. 78). Later, they note that Sara reached the point where, "she resigned from boards, gave up charitable work, even discontinued religious practices as she had understood them" (p. 84). Like Politsky (1995), Sara eventually left her convent home because it could not contain her creative, passionate nature, and was not a place where the fire of transformation was well-understood. In my own case, *St. Lisa* needed to retire in order for me to complete writing the dissertation.

Turning to the transcripts of my conversation with my co-participants, the same tensions between being good and of service to others, and being creative according to their own desires, is apparent, with the word *saint* even entering into the conversations with two of my co-participants. In Jude's story, she wants to give a voice to other teachers' sentiments, and wants to transform a graduate school system that is *not* transformative. She helps others get their dissertations done now, but in a part of our conversation that is not in her notebook, she says that when she was writing her own dissertation she could become so absorbed that she would forget that her husband was even in the house. "Could you imagine?" she said, "What if I had kids?" She's amazed by her own capacity to become so absorbed in her work, but there's a subtle sense of guilt over enjoying it so much that she could easily forget about others. When I ask why she chose the name *Jude* as her pseudonym, she wistfully says it's for *Saint Jude*, patron saint

of lost causes, the saint you come to for help when you're in the worst shape. While she enjoys assisting others with their work, and has become highly skillful in doing so, at the time, she chose the name she was feeling weary of helping friends and family members, particularly when her own career direction was feeling uncertain.

In Maya's Sonata the word *saint* comes up as well, in reference to the music she plays when she wants to feel connected. Generously lending articles and books to other students and trying to do a dissertation that will please everyone, when she wants to feel connected, she plays the Saint-Saëns Sonata. The story of playing this sonata with Thomas conjures up a curious memory of connection, though—a duet of two people who are feeling disconnected from whom they really are. In this, they feel connected. When I do further research on Saint-Saëns, although his music was known for its polish, purity and technical perfection, Saint-Saëns himself had another lesser-known side, with many speculations about his hidden homosexuality and wild private life. While this reflects Maya's comments about Thomas and his uninhibited behavior, it also reflects Maya's lesser-known delight in the exotic sounds of the Cuban music—music that is quite different than Saint-Saëns. The tensions between her musical preferences are reflected in her poems of the white dove and the scraggly green plant, and similar to the tension Raffe (1992) describes between the purity of her lily nature and her earthier rose nature.

Although the word saint did not enter into my conversations with Isabella, it was in her story that the tension between helping others and being creative was the most dramatically expressed. From the opening dream where other people are crying out for her to save them, to her difficulty in letting her husband take care of the yard work while she makes her collage, to her dream of shooting herself, there is a strong tension between

helping and teaching others and her own desire to be creative. When she ignores the latter, she begins to feel messier than messy though, and is unable to give anything back to the people she is working with. Only when she is sick in bed does she indulge in an Isabella Allende novel, or write a little poetry. When she combines her photography with her work, she experiences a natural sense of connection with her self and her audience that surprises her, but there's relapsing back into too many projects for her to write the book she *really* wants to write, one that might incorporate the river of her soul: the images from her photography.

Writing of Anaïs Nin's (1903-1977) lifelong tension between helping others with their work and writing and publishing her own stories and books, Spencer (1980) comments:

> After her maternal activities grew beyond her control, robbing her of money, energy and time, and Nin broke down, she wrote in her diary: "It seemed to me that I was broken for good, physically and spiritually." (p. 104)

Similar to Isabella's description of feeling "messier than messy," and my own near miss with my dissertation, it took Nin many years to:

> ... weaken the hold on her unconscious of the Christian ideal of the saintly, self-sacrificing woman ...[and] gradually turn away, little by little from some of her more demanding children. (Spencer, 1980, pp. 104-105)

Even while writing the book I want to write—my dissertation—the pressure to be a good woman pops up in yet another way: concerns over what would be helpful to the audience. It is a concern that is so well disguised that it seems insidiously right. Fear of being labeled self-absorbed and solipsistic often prompts women to *write it slant*, or *write it messy*, and cover up the stories they really want to tell (Long, 1999). Uncertain that it was "real research," it was a decade before Politsky (1995) could present her "deeply personal

and autobiographical work," (p. 10) and artwork, but eventually she came to believe that it might be part of the "universal archetypal material that is capable of striking a chord in anyone who reads it" (p. 9). After twenty years of practicing writing, and an intensive writing retreat, Goldberg (2000) similarly realized: "Whom do I write for? I asked again. I write for myself – and through myself for everyone." (p. 215). Eventually overcoming the good woman versus writer conflict, and commenting on the depth of her self-explorations in her diaries, Nin was able to boldly comment that: "The evolution of woman. I am living it and suffering it for all women" (Nin, cited in Spencer, 1980, p. 68).

Something about the age-old tension between the spiritual and the creative can be so extreme that when it is resolved, it prompts the need on the part of many writers, artists and poets, to make such bold claims—claims I have kept as favorite quotes to keep me company in my own journey. Initially, wondering if she chose the wrong path by putting everything into her writing as opposed to focusing on her zen spiritual practices, it is through her writing practice that Goldberg (2000) realizes that the two are actually one, and she is able to assert:

> This is what I want to make clear here: this is a declaration, a manifesto: writing is a true spiritual path, an authentic Zen way .... Here you are the doer and the done, the worldly person and the monk. (p. 215)

Writing of how courageous visual artists must be to share the life of the mind, soul and emotions with others, sociologist and artist-scholar Robin Chandler (2000) similarly comments that making art "can be more significant than healing the sick, negotiating peace or any service to humanity." (p. 1). Reconnecting with our inner worlds and saving ourselves by doing our own creative work may be our most important spiritual service. When we take this inner journey and are bold enough to re-enter the

world with what we have found along the way, we may realize, as Oliver (as cited in Housden, 2000) comments at the end of *The Journey:*

> ... and there was a new voice
> which you slowly
> recognized as your own,
> that kept you company
> as you strode deeper and deeper
> into the world
> determined to do
> the only thing you could do –
> determined to save
> the only life that you could save.

Be Me: Attuning to Feminine Creators, Integrating Masculine Qualities

> She was a woman who was a great man: that is what her admirers most wanted to say .... (Moers, cited in Heilbrun, 1988, p. 35)

After completing the writing of my co-participants' stories, the river brings a visitor—someone I met just prior to my candidacy examination: Sri Swami Viswamatha[1], from Tamilnadu, India. In keeping with the previous theme of saintliness, *Mathaji* (Mother) as she is affectionately referred to by the people in India, is considered to be a fully enlightened saint, but her way of being redefines the term for me. When she visits Edmonton, I spend time with her daily as she heals people, provides guidance and advice on a variety of practical matters, and teaches breathing practices, ancient chanting, physical exercises and South Indian cooking. Un-wavering in her energy, her knowledge seems to extend in every direction, all of which she says she owes to the goddess, Sarasvati. Telling us stories from her life, she emphasizes that her life is an open book for us, as well as telling us stories-to-live-by (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) from Hindu

[1] Readers interested in learning more about *Sri Swami Viswamatha* and her work can refer to www.ourdivinemother.org.

mythology. She surprises me completely this visit when she begins painting images of Hindu goddesses. In fact, like a good book, she is full of surprises.

Returning to my dissertation when Mathaji has gone, I wonder how this latest visit will impact my writing. At the end of her visits, she reminds me, "I am with you," and deep inside I know that she has somehow become a part of me, a silent partner in my work. My writing seems to flow more readily when I begin with her, attuning to her energy, boldness, courage, clarity, wisdom and humor. While she is compassionate, I would not describe her as a "nice woman." Instead, she characterizes herself as a "firm mother with a soft heart." When I awkwardly comment that its good to meet a *woman* swami she immediately replies, "I am married to Shiva," indicating that she has the full measure of both masculine and feminine qualities, that this inner marriage has occurred. Teasing me, she occasionally comments, "Lisa is a nice girl," knowing that this is something I am still working on.

Attunement, as it is called in Sufism, is not something that is captured well by the Western concepts of mentors or role models (Khan, 1999). More than a process of intellectual learning or an outward emulation of behavior, attunement involves a *calibration* of both one's mental and emotional vibrations to that of another being who embodies the qualities we desire—similar to the way a musician tunes to a certain pitch before beginning to play an instrument:

> The Sufis teach concentrating on an illuminated being by entering into their consciousness as deeply as possible—to the point that we imagine what it is like to be that particular sage or mystic, as well as to imagine the particular Divine Quality each one embodies ...a kind of mirroring takes place in which we are able to discover the very same potentialities latent in our being. (Khan, 1999, p. 72)

In his Ph.D. study of the male Brahmin painters in India, Maduro (1976)

emphasizes that the more creative painters identify with and spend time attuning to their male patron deity of creativity, *Vishvakarma*, prior to beginning a piece of artwork. Returning to his dissertation, I'm surprised to find that Vishvakarma is a manifestation of Brahma, Sarasvati's husband, and that the painters also spend time attuning to Sarasvati. This is not emphasized in Maduro's work. Even in the absence of the knowledge of such female divinities, though, Woodman and Dickson (1996) note that they will push through the collective unconscious, where they have been suppressed for millennia, and find their way into our dreams and our artwork:

> Although she takes many forms, this goddess—sometimes a Black Madonna or an Asian or Indian Madonna—always carries authority. She guides and advises and acts with absolute clarity, often with a startling sense of humor that delights in play. These moments in dreams or active imagination are filled with her compassion for our human situation. She is blunt, neither indulgent nor sentimental .... (pp. 1-2)

These descriptions of the Madonnas that appear in dreams and art sound like my experience of Mathaji. Turning to my conversations with my co-participants, while there are there no meetings with Madonnas in dreams or life, per se, there are, however, examples of attempts at attunement with women who are highly creative. Maya appreciates her professor's genuine feedback, and admires Bach for not caring what other people think. But it's the female flautist, LM, she calls her hero, and when she mentions her, her voice changes completely and she says it's *her* music she'd like me to hear. Inspired by the thought of LM, she jumps up to get her own flute and begins to play me a few notes. When she's finished writing her dissertation, she's thinking of getting a flute like the one LM has. While writing this section, I ask Maya how she would describe LM, to explore the qualities she may have been trying to attune to. She sends me a photo of a confident-looking woman in a red gown, jeweled necklace about her throat and a joyous

smile, her flute in one hand, and her feet lifting off the ground, as if she's skipping off to a performance she is late for. Describing LM, Maya writes that she is:

> ... beautiful, vibrant, her smile is unforgettable, she is graceful, and her music, while wickedly difficult, sounds so effortless. Her fingers fly when she plays—like a bird flies. She *is* her music.

LM's music is from the Baroque period—music Maya says is her favorite to listen to. Striving for a greater level of emotional intensity than Renaissance music, Baroque composers and musicians sought to objectively depict emotions in a way that evokes "...emotional feeling responses in its listeners," and "... stirs the passions of the soul" (Thornburgh & Logan, 2005, p. 17). In contrast to both the unemotional, technically perfect music of Saint-Saëns, and the more sensual Cuban music mentioned in Maya's story, Baroque music seems to be music with an archetypal emotional quality that we all recognize if it is "successful," each piece seeking to accurately convey one particular emotion. It is not completely objective and un-emotional, but it is not purely subjective. This the musical style of the woman soloist Maya attunes to.

In Isabella's story, attunement is present in quite a different way: the adopting of a new name. Initially unaware of why she chose the name *Isabella* as her pseudonym, Isabella only knows that it is not a "plain Jane" name, instead suggesting someone who "lives on the edge, just a little bit" and is more adventurous. Once she has baptized herself with this new name and attunes to these qualities, she is able to jump into the *river of life* both figuratively and literally. As Isabella, she takes a risk, creating a collage after weeks of hesitation, then goes on to do something that weekend that is not like her—she jumps into a river and lets it carry her away. Afterwards, her description of the woman in the center of her collage shifts from being authoritative, marginalized and isolated, to

being someone who is visionary, sees things others don't, is respected for her ideas and is maybe even looked up to. These are the qualities she has attuned to by becoming Isabella, the name of a writer she admires for her creativity.

In Jude's story there is an attunement to Saint Jude, and her capacity for helping others in difficult situations, and brief mention in the transcripts of an "angry female pedagogist professor whose very strong and out there," but there was also a bridge provided by her co-chairs towards the qualities that she has begun to embody. Supporting her emotionally, her co-chairs listen to her and dialogue with her in a way that helps her to free her voice from excess critical thinking, helping her to both *express* and *structure* what she wants to say, achieving more balance between these feminine and masculine qualities. Later, in assisting other students with their writing, she creates similar conversations, mirroring these abilities. Writing of *animus* figures, or the male guide-figures appearing in women's lives and dreams, Emma Jung (1995) notes that they "... can appear as a representative or master of any sort of ability or knowledge." (p. 21) For Jude, they appear as university professors, but the form they appear in depends on the natural gifts of the woman in question. The animus often appears in women's dreams as a sage, sorcerer, teacher, judge, artist, aviator, mechanic, scholar, philosopher, or monk, "...a man distinguished in some way by mental capacities or other masculine qualities." (p. 25) In Isabella's dreams, the animus appears in the form of the well-spoken, gay co-worker who fearlessly says what he has to say, but also in the form of the musician-artist calling her over into the house on the right. In Maya's story, her friend Thomas, who was the fascination of the students in the grad program because of his uninhibited behavior, also functions as an animus figure, since it is with Thomas she plays music and feels

freer to be herself.

Writing of Anaïs Nin's creative alliances with the homosexual writers and artists she calls "the light children," Spencer (1980) comments that, "incarnations of her animus, these men served as muses to the developing woman artist." (p. 107). Woodman and Dickson (1996) have also found that homosexual figures often appear in women's dreams in a "bridging role," with a "natural sympathy toward the feminine while at the same time being very effective against tyrannical male and female figures locked in either matriarchy or patriarchy" (p. 93). The task, when these guiding animus figures appear, is to initiate some sort of undertaking with the qualities they embody. Emma Jung (1985) writes that:

> Usually our talents, hobbies and so on, have already given us hints as to the direction in which this energy can become active. Often, too dreams point the way, and in keeping with the individual's natural bent, mention will be made in them of studies, books, and definite lines of work, or of artistic or executive activities. But the undertakings suggested will always be of an objective practical sort corresponding to the masculine entity which the animus represents. The attitude demanded here—which is, to do something for its own sake and not for the sake of another human being—runs counter to feminine nature and can be achieved only with effort. (p. 39)

Spencer (1980) notes that writer Anaïs Nin:

> ... became free to round out her identity as a specifically feminine creator only after she had succeeded in implementing the masculine qualities she once so greatly feared. (p. 109)

Once these masculine qualities have been integrated in Nin's fifth diary mention of friendships with powerful and self-possessed women artists begin to appear. There is something forbidden and almost blasphemous, however, about entering the circle of powerful, creative women who are at-one within themselves. Sent to retrieve a jar of beauty cream from the underworld for Aphrodite, Psyche is warned to:

> ... not open or look into the jar that you will be carrying, and in fact do not even think too inquisitively about the hidden treasure of divine beauty. (Weir-Huber, 1999, p. 80)

After making her sojourn through the underworld, Psyche does, however, disobey Aphrodite and open the jar to take out a drop of beauty for herself. While this decision could be interpreted as a failure, or an act of vanity, the opening of the jar could also indicate that the last of Aphrodite's tasks has been successfully accomplished by Psyche (Labouvie-Vief, 1994, Weir-Huber, 1999): "Now she dares to become like her [Aphrodite], not only in her beauty, but also in her divine wholeness." (Woodman & Dickson, 1996, p. 131)

Being

> But at the very end Psyche's long trials almost come to naught. Even though she was warned not to open the box with the ointment, she gives in to her curiosity. As she opens the box, she is overcome with a death-like sleep. (Labouvie-Vief, 1994, p. 215)

In the end, something does happen. There is a long pause, a *death-like sleep*, as I'm trying to write the last chapter of my dissertation. The writing steadily becomes more difficult and plodding. When I sit down to it, I add a few small things, revise a few things, but nothing new is written. I begin to wonder if I want to quit altogether. I'm already on an extension, and I am weary of this story. Maybe it's okay to just let go of it, even if it has been years of work and I'm on the last chapter. Maybe I can just move on and do something else without finishing it. For some reason, it doesn't seem like the usual creative block. There is a flatness or dullness whenever I even think about writing. Weeks pass by without looking at what I've written.

Deciding that I should give it at least one more serious try, I drive to a café one Sunday morning, to see if I can somehow manage to focus on the Discussion

section. Sitting down with my coffee, I take out the pages on *Being Good*, but stare vacantly out the window, then get up and leave. Walking around the block, something feels very wrong so I get back into the car and turn around and go home. Closing the door of my apartment, suddenly the memory of the experience that has been driving the dissertation surfaces—the reason I feel such a strong need to recover my creativity, the reason why it is blocked. The grief is almost unbearable. It's something I already knew, but somehow what I have been writing has brought all of the emotions up and out of my body. Decades of buried pain pour out of me. So this is what it has been about all along. I wonder how I can ever write another word, knowing. Maybe it really doesn't matter. Maybe I don't "have to" anymore. I call a close friend and tell her what is happening. Several more weeks pass before I begin to feel like maybe, just maybe, I will start to write again. Maybe there is still a way to go about this.

I have read the work of other writers where something similar has happened, but for some reason, I did not expect this to happen to me. Writing about a 21-day writing retreat she took herself on, Natalie Goldberg (2000) says:

> Long moments of that first week a strong, clear and convincing voice whispered in my ear as I wrote: "I don't want to do this." She said it over and over. I'd heard this voice for a year and a half and I knew she was not easy to divert. I think she was why I unconsciously maneuvered this retreat: to face her. Over my last twenty-five years I have encountered many strong inner opponents to my act of writing .... But this was a new voice, and I was beginning to believe her .... She was persistent beyond anything I had faced before. Maybe she was telling the truth—I'd limited my life. Enough was enough. (p. 208)

Tossing and turning at night, but continuing to write on the topic of "language'" during the day, at first Goldberg (2000) says, "I had no name for my sorrow, no understanding of it" (p. 210). As she continues to write each day, though, a painful classroom memory of being labeled as "ugly" by her classmates eventually surfaces. Reading her classmates

description of her in a notebook passed around the class, she says she was stunned "...into a terrible, deep silence" (p. 214). Writing about this moment decades later, Goldberg experiences a release of buried emotions, commenting that, "... a rose of pain bloomed in my chest" (p. 214).

In the myth of Psyche and Eros, before Psyche is ready to bring the beauty ointment (the contents of the unconscious) up from the underworld, and for the final integration of the masculine to occur, she must have gathered sufficient masculine strength from the previous tasks assigned to her by Aphrodite. The jar is supposed to contain beauty cream, but instead it contains "a *death-like sleep* which attacks Psyche instantly, enveloping her entire body in a dense cloud of slumber ..." (italics added, Weir-Huber, 1999, p. 80). It is significant that the beauty ointment belongs to *Persephone*, the goddess of the underworld, "... a knower of the dark side of life" (Labouvie-Vief, 1994, p. 215) and Aphrodite's "shadow self" (Weir-Huber, 1999, p. 80). Labouvie-Vief (1994) comments that:

> ... stealing beauty from this regal figure of deep wisdom is not enough. Psyche must explore it, experience it, falls into its spell. Sinking into the deep sleep of unconsciousness, Psyche must revisit her own woundedness and thus, become one with the goddess of suffering and victimization, Persephone. Paradoxically, that regressive act becomes the source of Psyche's transformation. Revisiting her woundedness, falling into the core of her feminine passivity and paralyzed agency, Psyche recovers the secret of her true desire. (p. 215)

Psyche must fall into a state of passive being and experience her woundedness in order to die and be reborn. For a while, she exists in the "land of the dead," experiencing a "death to the old self" (Woodman & Dickson, 1996, p. 131). From her personal experience of this process, Raffe (1992) comments that:

> The death phase of our journey is a time when we feel lifeless and

> powerless. When we relinquish the comfort and safety of our castle walls, we abandon many of the resources that gave us the courage to go on. (p. 142)

In my conversations with my co-participants, there are suggestions that a part of their journeys may also be to meet Persephone, revisit an old wound, and allow an old self to die. In *Maya's Sonata,* she begins to uncover one of the childhood sources of the pressure to work twice as hard to prove herself when she writes an autobiographical story for her qualitative research course, but the full emotional impact does not seem to have been felt just yet. The voice from her second collage (Image 11, p. 108) urges her to "slow down, just let it happen," and "letting go" is part of her personal definition of creativity, but she finds it difficult to trust this voice, feeling she might lose something important. Although she says she'd still "be me" without a Ph.D., the pressure to get a Ph.D. is strong enough that she says it would "kill her" if she didn't do it, and "it'd be like a death" to let it go. The day after her candidacy exam, she is back in the library doing more literature searches, trying to "do more." Only when she begins making a geographical transition to a new home in another city, does she begin playing a little music and experimenting with letting go of her *Ph.D. self* for longer periods of time.

In Jude's story, she spoke of crying as she wrote of her painful early experiences as a second language learner in schools, and how that grounded her, but in our conversations there seems to be something more waiting to be released. The inability to include the truth of her personal experience in her work was a re-wounding experience, one she is still ambivalent about and carrying with her at the time of our conversations. While there was rarely a pause in our conversations, at the end of our first conversation when the tape recorder was shut off, Jude casually mentions a yoga retreat a friend had gone on where there were long periods of silence. It's in spaces such as this, where we

are "detached from outer reality and surrender to the inner workings of the soul, that the death of the old self and the old stories can occur." (Woodman & Dickson, 1996, p. 131). While Jude seemed intrigued by her friend's experience, she was in the process of moving to a new home and creating a new life in a new city. A silence retreat was not something that was drawing her yet.

In Isabella's story, the tension between "doing" and "being" is perhaps the major part of the story. Initially, it is hard for her to create a space to just "be" and to begin creating her first collage (Image 12, p. 130). Fear of what might come up, of "crossing a line" and having to make important decisions, of losing people in her life, and of getting swept away by the river and never coming back are strong. She moved away alone, but now she feels she could not spend a night alone, spending a weekend at her parents' cabin even though this feels like part of her is "killing" another part of herself. When she returns, she immediately goes downstairs, though, and cuts out a woman with a "do not disturb" sign on her, and another woman in a protective posture, signaling that she wants to create a place she can just "be" without any interruptions. A few conversations later, she is becoming extremely busy again and dreaming that she is missing the bus driven by the facilitator of the writers' group. Reading bell hooks' (2003) autobiographical writing, she searches for how she made the transition to a life more balanced between doing and being. Commenting that she's been a "doer" most of her life, in her second collage (Image 13, p. 138) she begins a conscious contemplation of the state of "being," saying that *this* is the collage that would help her make her "big changes." It's a collage that is difficult to find, however. Her stories and imagery touch on the familial sources of the pressure to "do," but like Jude and Maya, there is some suggestion that there is still

hesitation to create a lengthy space for just "being" where the source of this pressure might be fully felt, and finally released. During all three stories there is a sense, though, of an increasing testing of the waters, of a gradual gathering of the masculine strength necessary to meet Persephone, and open her jar of beauty cream.

In her personal experience, Raffe (1992) notes that the first visit to "the island—the feminine realm of mystery, instinct and death" (p. 109)—is usually the most intense. But after repeated visits to the island, and gathering masculine strength through the completion of a dissertation, her unconscious Self eventually confirmed her rebirth in a dream where a wedding that is too dazzling to behold is taking place:

> I'm sitting behind rows of people who are standing in front of me. I can't actually see the bride and groom, but I catch occasional glimpses of dancers, bright lights, and beautiful flashing colors way up in the front where the couple is getting married. (Raffe, 1992, p. 157)

Already writing another book, the same dream indicates that when that book is done, Raffe will write another, this time about her newly transformed self, and it will be her creation, her child. Similarly, in the myth of Psyche and Eros, it is when Psyche has visited the underworld and supped there for a time, that she is reunited with Eros and escorted to their wedding on heaven's summit where she "drinks ambrosia and is given a rich wedding banquet where all the gods attend," including the goddess herself, Aphrodite, who is said to dance gorgeously (Weir-Huber, 1999, p. 101). In the end, under Aphrodite's firm tutelage, Psyche has developed strength, defiance and individuality, and her reunion with Eros yields a daughter she names *Pleasure*, or *Joy*. These are the fruits of Psyche's perilous journey to wholeness, but as Pratt (cited in Weir-Huber, 1999) notes:

> ...women's descent or rebirth journeys 'create transformed, androgynous, and powerful human personalities out of socially devalued beings and are therefore more likely to involve dénouements punishing the quester

for succeeding in her perilous, revolutionary journey. (p. 101)

It is still not clear how my own perilous research journey will end. Arising out of the shadowy void (Image 4, page 52) into the garden of life (Image 14, p. 146), in the latter collage, Psyche and Eros have been transformed from stone into flesh and are now reaching towards one another, or rather, are being "sung together" by Sarasvati, the river of creative inspiration. Will he receive the rose she is offering? Will they embrace and drink the ambrosia, the nectar of the gods? Will the Goddess of creativity, Aphrodite, dance gorgeously at their wedding? And in the end, will there be pleasure or joy, when Psyche's journey has been completed?

CHAPTER 8

A Taste of Ambrosia

> *The visible painting is just the echo of a much greater process. What is reflected in the forms, images and colors is the by-product of a journey that has taken place on an inner landscape. The real painting has been created on the canvas of the psyche; the true artistic product is the personal transformation that has taken place within the painting experience itself.* (Cassou, 1995, p.xxv)

My search for creativity in Chapter 1 began with a quote from Paracelsus, a quote I have been saving for many years without knowing that Paracelsus was a physician and an *alchemist*. Spending years in their laboratories, alchemists sought to transmute base metals into gold, the process being as much about the *internal* transformation of the alchemist as it was about the *external* transformation of the metals. Upon reflection, beginning my writing with a quote from Paracelsus, signaled that I, too, was attempting to initiate such an alchemical process as I embarked upon the revising and re-arranging of the field texts, and the combining and recombining of the images in the collages. In the end, the results of the processes that have transpired are reflected in the pages of this dissertation, the record of my search for creativity, or what the alchemists would call my "opus."

Excited about this insight into the connection between the opening quote and the processes involved in narrative and arts-based inquiry, when I tell my co-supervisor, Jean, she asks if I have read the book, The Alchemist , (1993) by Paulo Coelho. Responding that I have, it's not until later that evening, as I'm reflecting on the intensity of my search for creativity and considering how to write an inspired conclusion, that I recall Jean's question again, and reach for the book, thinking it may have some clues.

Turning to the last chapter to remind myself of how Santiago's search for his

treasure ends, I find the following passage:

> He remembered the night in the desert when he had sat with the alchemist, as they looked at the stars and drank wine together. He thought of the many roads he had traveled, and of the strange way God had chosen to show him his treasure. If he hadn't believed in the significance of recurrent dreams, he would not have met the Gypsy woman, the king, the thief, or.... "Well, it's a long list. But the path was written in the omens, and there was no way I could go wrong," he said to himself.
>
> He fell asleep, and when he awoke the sun was already high. He began to dig at the base of the sycamore.
>
> "You old sorcerer," the boy shouted up at the sky. "You knew the whole story. You even left a bit of gold at the monastery so I could get back to this church. The monk laughed when he saw me come back in tatters. "Couldn't you have saved me from that?"
>
> "No," he heard a voice on the wind say. "If I had told you, you wouldn't have seen the pyramids. They're beautiful aren't they?" (p. 176)

Smiling at the parallel between Santiago's reflections on the gypsy, king and thief he met during his search for his treasure and Paracelsus' comment on the need to search out gypsies, sorcerers and thieves, and take lessons from them in order to be a truly knowledgeable doctor, the passage brings me full circle, having met my own gypsies and sorcerers during my own search. Beginning with an external search through my travels, coursework and research conversations with my co-participants, similar to Santiago, my search eventually involved an internal search as I stopped to "dig at the base of the tree" where I began, engaging in the reflection necessary for writing the dissertation. In working with Jude's field texts, I revisited my story of feeling creatively oppressed by an outside force and learned the importance of the writing and sharing of narrative beginnings and research cover stories. In Maya's Sonata, I revisited the tensions I have experienced in academia between being who I am and self-censoring to please others. In Isabella's story I revisited the tension between doing and being, the importance of

"being" to the surfacing and letting go of old wounds in order to be creative becoming personally evident in the writing of the Discussion chapter. As Santiago's heart whispered to him in The Alchemist, we need to be aware of the places where "we are brought to tears because that is where our treasure is" (Coelho, 1993, p. 168).

In the reading of the three notebooks, I anticipate that reader will resonate with the notebook containing the experiences she has already had and/or have tension, with the notebook containing the tension that is currently the most alive and waiting to be resolved in order for her to become more creative and who *she* is. In this manner, I feel that once the umbilical cord is cut, the notebooks will have a life of their own, with their own work to do when they are sent out into the world. This, in fact, was the original purpose of the research: to provide texts that give form to and reflect other women's experiences, assisting them in their search for creativity in academia by providing *stories-to-live-by*—stories that make sense of the experiences and tensions we encounter here, in this particular environment (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Heilbrun, 1988).

But have I answered my autobiographical research questions, the questions that have been burning below the surface throughout my search? *Can I be creative here in academia or do I have to leave? Can I bring art, poetry, and spirituality into the dissertation? Can I bring back together all of the letters of my name? Can I be who I am here? Can I reunite Psyche and Eros in my work?* These are difficult questions to personally assess, perhaps because they depend on the "community decision" of which Eisner (1997) speaks with regard to what is acceptable research. In pondering the dilemma I have posed for myself in asking these sorts of questions, my own personal response arrives in the fashion most fitting to my dissertation—in the form of a dream:

I am visiting a store—a store that seems a lot like my dad's but is a sort of a pharmacy too. The man behind the counter is prescribing various herbs and potions for his customers and speaks the language of each person that enters. I can't tell his nationality, but he seems like he might be Arabic and I feel like I know him. A woman resembling my grandmother walks into the store with a container of something she has prepared for him, and he asks if I would like a spoonful. Dipping into the bowl, when I taste it I'm surprised and immediately say, "Ambrosia," remembering the name of the sweet dessert my grandmother, mother and aunts used to make for Christmas. Turning around, an artist I remember having met comes into the store and I point out a collage I have hanging in the back. She tells me she's been invited to do an art show with the theme of healing art, but that the gallery prefers to do a group show. She asks if I will join them. (Journal Entry)

Once again, the river of the soul has pulled together through dream imagery what I could not, answering my own research questions and hinting perhaps, of outward experiences yet to come. While there is no dazzling marriage ceremony of Psyche and Eros, the dream takes place in my father's store with the feminine, grandmotherly figure bringing the ambrosia. Presiding over the occasion, the alchemist, the catalyst for the transformational process, offers me the nectar of the gods usually enjoyed at the wedding banquet of Psyche and Eros, the nectar imagined in the golden drop in my collage and poem before candidacy, and the nectar usually enjoyed by my family at Christmas, the time of a spiritual birth. And it's in my father's store that an artist enters, inviting me into a group show of healing art suggestive of the group art show contained within the notebooks of the dissertation. The group art show perhaps also hints at the potential for conducting future arts-based research in academia, the "store of the fathers" where knowledge is sold. In collage-like fashion, the dream conveys its message of a healing of the once disparate elements—the masculine and the feminine, the researcher and the artist—the tasting of the ambrosia indicating that an inner reunion has already transpired and now awaits its birth into the world.

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