

Seeing Red: A Pedagogy of Parallax

The following paper is made up of excerpts and artwork from the dissertation published as a novel by Cambria Press, 2007, under the same title.
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Our strategy should be not only to confront empire but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen. To shame it. To mock it. With our art, our music, our literature, our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness—and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we're being brainwashed to believe. The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling—their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability.

Arundhati Roy, 2003, p. 103



Seeing Red: A Pedagogy of Parallax is a scholarly work written in the form of an epistolary novel – a book of fictional letters, poetry, and art sent and unsent from a graduate student to the professor she is in love with. The book shares the possibilities of how artful research informs processes of scholarly inquiry and honours the reader's multi-perspective as integral to the research project's transformative potential. *Parallax* is the apparent change of

location of an object against a background due to a change in observer position or perspective shift. The concept of parallax encourages researchers and teachers to acknowledge and value the power of their own and their readers' and students' shifting subjectivities and situatedness which directly influence the constructs of perception, interpretation, and learning. This dissertation makes three claims:

- that the sharing of stories encourages reflexive inquiries in ethical self-consciousness, enlarges paradigms of the "normative," and develops pedagogical practices of liberation and acceptance of diversity;
- that form determines possibilities for content and function thus the use of an alternate format can significantly open new spaces for inquiry; and,
- that transformational learning may be significantly deepened in pedagogical practice through the intentional development of *embodied aesthetic wholeness* and of eros in the dynamic space between teacher and learner.

Embodied aesthetic wholeness attends to teaching and learning holistically through the body with consideration to: increasing receptivity and openness to learning; fostering skills of relationality; modeling wholeness-in-process in explicit reflexive texts; layering multiple strategies of inquiry, research experiences, and presentation; and acknowledging ecological and intuitive resonances.

Maxine Greene (2006) writes in a prologue titled “From Jagged Landscapes to Possibility”:

the crucial demand of our time is to attend, to pay heed. . . . To speak of dialogue is to suggest multiple relationships, multiple perspectives. There must be a connectedness among persons, each with a sense of agency, each with a project. And there must be a capacity to imagine, to think of things as if they could be otherwise. . . . Thoughtfulness, imagination, encounters with the arts and sciences from the grounds of lived life: this is the beginning and the opening to what might be.



Licorice Dreams, 2006, granite, marble and tile. 51” x 35”

This is my curriculum. This is my hope, that my work can render points along an unseen path; to chart the roads of the unsaid; to begin to map a rhizomatic research; to speak the iterations for those without words; to broaden the margins; to search for alternate forms which open spaces; and to share an agency that slowly iterates what is, pervading, in a

stable diffusion with strength in integrity, a hope that holds love and sees joy in all the truths we live.

I am disrupted by language
invaded by dreams
punctured by love
bleeding for the silenced
scribbling down
the moment
all to construct
now



Wounded Salix Discolor, 2006
mixed tile. 35" x 51"

l
East
Wind
Blows

Love, she had determined, was the necessary catalyst to reach the creative edges of the self.
Rosemary Sullivan on Elizabeth Smart, 1992, p. 2

May 31

Red, you were in my dreams last night. You were in a hot tub and I was in a bath nearby. I was relaxing in the bubbles, not watching you, but knowing where you

were. When I called, you didn't answer and I worried. I got out of the tub not caring about exposing myself which is unusual because there was an unfamiliar woman in the hot tub with you. She didn't notice what was happening. I got into the water with you and when I called you again, you still did not respond. I pulled you up to me from your reclining position and held you in my arms. Your heart was beating strong and fast and I could hear your breath. Your eyes were closed and you wouldn't answer me. I held you close to me, felt my lips on your forehead, your breath on my heart and when I pulled away to look at you again, you were the same, still, but your eyes were smiling at me, the way you melt me. I think I looked at you for a long time and tried to remember you all and you kissed me. Not deep, but lightly and outside, but for a long time, until I felt the foreverness, and I closed my eyes and forgot about my body.

You feel responsibility for me because you are older. I feel responsibility for you because you're older. Is that love?

.....

April 1

I like the suggestions you've sent regarding my proposal. I'll try to answer your questions below:

1. What is my rationale? *To interrupt discourse, demonstrate connections.*

2. Why it is important? *To build better communication practices, raise accessibility issues.*

3. What potential insights might be gained? *That teacher identity is critical to successful teaching; connectedness spills over life into the classroom, into teaching and learning.*

4. How might I influence theory and practice? *My work can be used in teacher education programs; telling stories will enlarge the notion of “normative.”*

Is that too simplistic—to think I can actually make a difference?

My very large extended family had a get-together last night. There were about 130 people at the restaurant. It was good to see all my cousins. There was too much to eat as usual. Since the PhD program started I know I’m different. I feel like an island, untouchable, a bit alone, can’t explain. At the end of the evening, I was standing on the sidewalk waiting for Luke and the girls who went back into the restaurant. It was dark and there were still people milling about. I distinctly felt out of place as if I was standing *on* the sidewalk. Yes, I was on the sidewalk but I felt unnatural as if my heels were really high and I wasn’t touching very much of the concrete. I think our disconnections are always related to groundings to the earth in some way.

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June 26

Here's some more writing you can reformat and rearrange and send to Chris:

Ardra Cole and J. Gary Knowles define arts-informed life history inquiry as “research that seeks to understand the complex relationships between individuals’ lives and the contexts within which their lives are shaped and expressed. Research is guided by principles that place self, relationship, and artfulness central in the research process” (2001b, pp. 214-215). When we write to each other, we are using autobiography and life history as the *text* for reflection and analysis. In this way, relationality becomes both a private and public endeavour. We must foster our skills of relationality in ourselves (our living with our teaching), between our lives and our students, and within our students as well.

We need to practise developing awareness of feelings, thoughts and physical responses in order to deepen levels of personal growth. (Chödrön, 1991; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Kozik-Rosabal, 2001; Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005). We must “live a life of awareness, a life that permits openness around us, a life that permits openness to the complexity around us, a life that intentionally sets out to perceive things differently” (Irwin, 2004, p. 33). Rita Irwin and the work of others describe this way of being immersed in knowledge creation and understanding through processes of committed living inquiry as *a/r/t/ography*. Carson and Sumara describe their notions of living practice as action research:

The knowledge that is produced through action research is always knowledge about one's self and one's relations to particular communities. In this sense, action research practices are deeply hermeneutic and postmodern practices, for not only do they acknowledge the importance of self and collective interpretation, but they deeply understand that these interpretations are always in a state of becoming and can never be fixed into predetermined and static categories. (1997, p. 33)

If we believe that learning takes place when students are able to connect the perceived with something they know and hence process the new information to new constructions of understanding, then it is very important that we cultivate the aspect of bridging the unrelated.

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February 7

BETRAYAL OF BODY
I cannot hide
my naked self
always laid open, feeling
breathing beauty
and swallowing glass

One of the reasons why I named this work *Seeing Red* was in connection to working on the edge. Imagine the image of a sound equalizer. When making music recordings, the perfect setting is to have the majority of the music in the "green" and the level extending just over into "red." Being slightly in the red zone provides the optimum recording level. The novel title also has many other connotations.

When I look at this mosaic, “Windy Words,” I am reminded of the description of “Reverberations,” a descriptive rendering of a/r/tography (Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005, p. 10):



It is the desire to respond to the disappearance and appearance of signs, the impulse between what is known and what cannot be expressed, that gives new tension and vibration to the signifier. Research thus becomes an act of unsettling, an evocation that calls out, asking for a response, a living inquiry, transforming static moments into momentum, multiplying and metamorphosing.

Windy Words, 2005, mixed and tile.35” x 51”

Teaching on the edge can also be paralleled to Pollock’s notion of “nervous” performative writing. We are restless, maybe even a bit fearful in our teaching, afraid of the level of exposure, “unable to settle into a clear, linear course, neither willing nor able to stop moving, restless, transient and transitive . . . drawing one charged moment into another, constituting knowledge in an ongoing process of transmission and transferal” (1998, pp. 90-91). A/r/tography suggests that it is in this movement, this shaking and quaking of measure and rhythm, that knowing is sifted and shifted to understanding (Aoki, 1996; Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005).

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March 2
UNSENT

When I come to the surface
When I feel the real
I cannot bear
I cannot live
my way
I am a mask
with no places to see
or breathe out
mouth smooth plastic
so I cannot cry
cry out
I have no sound
no words

.....
**A CONVERSATION
AFTERWORD**

I understand that curriculum is “the site on which the generations struggle to define themselves and the world, [that] curriculum is an extraordinarily complicated conversation” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 848), and that curriculum [refers] to educational courses of action that facilitate human ‘growth’ [that are] so complex that [they] cannot be studied through any particular theoretical perspective” (Henderson & Slattery, 2004, p. 3). Schwab (1969) believes that the curriculum field is both theoretical and practical and must be approached eclectically. So I purposefully (re)search in multi-layered and seemingly unrelated ways, seeking connections off charted courses. In order to constitute current understandings I take my uncertainties and the relational aspects of my living and research to express theoretical notions and ruminations through the body—through artful expressive means which are enriched with

the participation of arms, legs, eyes, ears, and heart in the forms of writing and artmaking. I take Anne Phelan (2005, p 355) seriously; I am always playing with thought:

Learning to be practically wise begins with desire, a yearning to be something other than who one is (Garrison, 1997). Pursuing that desire may involve letting go, losing one's balance, and losing certainty. . . . Accepting the fragility of knowledge. Feeling overwhelmed. Engaging in a play of thought.

In “playing” out uncertainties through multi-genre narrative texts and visual art, or music, performance, or movement, a complicated and complex conversation is created; and through this shifting and sifting (Aoki, 1996) and agitation of reciprocity, reversibility, resonance, reverberation, and echo within and between forms and mediums, the unarticulated becomes articulated, seen, marked, and visible (see Springgay, Irwin, & Wilson Kind, 2005; Jones, 1998; Pollock, 1998; Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1993). Artful research is the act of focusing the camera lens to still a moment in time for others to “see” an iteration, to make



Georgia's Diaspora, 2006, mixed tile. 35" x 51"

the consciousness visible for others to interrogate, judge, and edit. It is the act of iteration which begins to locate points along the journey of currere on the boundless map of a dynamic and rhizomatic curriculum (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Alverman, 2000; Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Gu & Bickel, 2006). Concurrently I am reminded that

fine scholarship is not only iteration of the central notions of the personal, relational and artful, but includes in combination: focus, intensity, authority, relevance, and substance (Cole & Knowles, 2000; 2001a; Knowles, 2005).

In the creation of this work, I have adapted and selected my own criteria for research quality (see Cole & Knowles, 2001a, 2001b; Kilbourn, 1999; Duke & Beck, 1999; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). I ask myself if the work demonstrates:

- an understanding of the art of research?
- a disciplined in-depth study which transparently merges researcher, process, and product?
- a deep concern for pedagogical representation?
- an invitation to think, write, make, react, create?
- with humility, a contribution to knowledge or a contestation of the accepted?
- consideration of accessibility and communicability?



I am hopeful that sharing stories of process offers some of the constitutive aspects of research in order to encourage subjectivity, open windows into alternate spaces, disrupt conceptions of form, hearten lived experiences as theory and knowledge, decolonize writing, and broaden the richness of living the research of currere.

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