

Explorations in Intuition:
Breaking Boundaries and Reclaiming Voice
through A/r/tographic Process

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Abstract

For me, the path is now clear—release the deep intuitive feeling first and then reflect and respond through intelligence and internal aesthetics.

This thesis of creative scholarship is about process, permission, and original voice. I have used intuitive music, poetry, and narrative to create a multi-faceted tapestry that exposes my life roles, my feelings, my values, and the gray, in-between areas of knowing, teaching, and learning. This process of rediscovery and reclamation of voice has been one of artistically giving myself permission to break through my personal masks and roles as well as transcend cultural paradigms to locate myself.

The methodology of A/r/tography (Springgay, S., Irwin, R.L., Wilson Kind, S. 2005) was chosen as a path to make sense of multi-storied archetypes and multi-layered avenues of artistic expression. This process is rendered through concepts of excess, metaphor, openings, contiguity, metonymy, living inquiry, and reverberations. Renderings enable artists, teachers and researchers to interrogate the interstitial spaces between things, for example image and work, text and audience, researching, pedagogy and artmaking (Springgay, S., Irwin, R.L., Wilson Kind, S. 2005).

The artistic explorations and consequent renderings of revelation and reflection of this ontological exploration can be loosely grouped into seven major themes:

- Personal Context and Context formation
- Heroes
- Regrets
- Issues with the prevailing culture
- New beginnings

(The importance of) Artistic/Transcendent/Arational spaces
Reflections and intimate looks into the form and function of educational landscape.

The writing and music were then analyzed in light of who I am and what I know. Results consisted of a number of conceptual strides forward in both my artistic vision and my teaching. Overall, a/r/tography enabled me to gain deeper autobiographical understandings about issues that have shaped my view of the world. From music, poetic and narrative renderings, I learned valuable insights about the real me. I discovered a multilayered individual inside who became re-energized and revitalized about finding my inner voice. From a/r/tographic renderings, I analyzed and reflected on what I learned and unlearned. Though there were resolutions, there were also new directions as I explored intuition, broke boundaries and reclaimed voice. I sculpted and embraced stories behind stories about myself. The notion of hero surfaced while regrets brought new narratives. Who am I? I am artist, teacher, guitar player, and a/r/tographer.

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Demo CD of Poetry, Narratives, and Soundscapes

Track 1
How Old?

Track 2
Driving With No Hands

Track 3
The Unnatural Act

Track 4
The Fable of Regret

Track 5
I am Starting (to Lose)

Track 6
Big People

Track 7
On Music Class After a Sleepless Night

Track 8
The Goddess of Innovation

Track 9
How Do You Determine?

Track 10
The Master Frame

Track 11
The Hustler

Track 12
I've Em(braced)

Track 13
Thunderstorm at the Pond (Instrumental Narrative)
An electric guitar is used to create the rumble of the approaching storm, various birds calling in the trees and bushes; frogs croaking quietly; insects buzzing around; the sizzle of the rain descending, and finally the melody of lightning bolts and thunder.

Collaborative Work: Soundscapes for the Poetry of Carl Leggo

Track 14
The Same Nose

Track 15
No Locks

Track 16
Picnics

Track 17
My Mother's House

Track 18
The Diver

Track 19
O

Track 20
Lynch's Lane

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I would like to thank Dr. Peter Gouzouasis and Dr. Carl Leggo for their invaluable support and encouragement through this wonderful process. Peter was instrumental in convincing me to embark on this journey and Carl was a beacon of light, learning, and calm throughout. I have grown so much through my work with both of you. Thank you.

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Finally I would like to thank my mother, Irene for her lifetime of unconditional love and support, both of myself and my brother, Les. I have been able to take the risks needed to realize myself through your nurturing love.

I've (Em)braced

I've (Em)braced
Prankster, Con Man, Liar, Lover,
Husband, Father, T(h)inker(er),
Imposter,
Preposterous
Lying in judgment!

Yet
Sometimes Not of this World
As my eyes roll backward and the jaw drops...
Mystic systemic, pathetic and regretful
Keeper of cartoon consciousness,
My feet blister on the hyper-heated asphalt
Of Western reality,
I never learn
Still

Mystified by the rarified
Miracle of hope(lessness)
Frightened child and old man I am
Penis crossed with penance
Son of Zorro and Nosferatu,
(Anti)... Christ, I wish I knew!
Saint or sinner,
Certainly

Fool on the hill of the Academy of
Power, politics and lost souls,
Liminal Transgressor in the aporia of
Found and lost (again)
I see
The oasis
Or just another mirage?...

Meanwhile the Buddha of Compassion pours
Rivers of tears through me as I look at pictures of
My daughter
Because
Sometimes I know
To look above myself

Section I

Beginnings

The Fable of the Sculptor

An autobiometaphoric overview of the type and nature of the struggles and successes of my creative life.

I have a sculpture downstairs. It is a work in progress. I try to visit it every night for a few minutes. This sleeping giant is, for the most part, unfinished, with its character partially concealed to the causal observer. Entombed within a sea of marble, it is a prisoner of circumstance, waiting to be born. I can feel the energy from deep within the rock and often I imagine its muffled, plaintive call for freedom, even upstairs, when I am engaged and intoxicated by domestic vignettes with Rose and Emily.

Like Michelangelo, and in the great tradition of sculptors before and after him, I, in service and servitude, slowly chip away at the sacred rock to release the poor soul. My hands ache from fatigue and productivity is hampered by a brain filled with distracting life-noise- my daily existence, seemly, a never-ending turnstile of more uncompleted tasks and obligations. Yet, the urgency to breathe life into the sculpture is ever heightening with each day.

I carve best through intuition. This process emerges in the morning when the chatter of the monkey is low. The trick is to start my carving before I have a chance to really acknowledge that I am working. It is in this middle space, between sleep and wakefulness, that my hands move automatically, without willful intention. And so, the spirit shows itself when ready.

As I wake, my thoughts and aesthetic judgment come into play. They can hinder the process, but I have learned to use them to refine and redirect the power of the initial lines. For me, the path is now clear — *release the deep intuitive feeling first and then reflect and respond through intelligence and observer aesthetics.* This process, which I have discovered after many years of searching, yields my best lines.

I should have finished the sculpture many years ago, but I failed in listening to my own voice. I failed to trust myself. I put intelligence and the paradigm of culture before my soul. I believed in heroes for far too long. And now the snake of regret has bitten me.

Last winter, Rose and Emily left for a short holiday in the city. Every term, Rose arranges this so that I may deal with the demands of graduate work as well as a full-time teaching assignment in a secondary school. These weekends of isolation have been a blessing as it has allowed me to complete projects without distraction. This particular weekend, however, my focus was scattered and rife with distraction. I meditated and drank more coffee, employing all of my homegrown tactics to force concentration. None of these remedies seemed to improve the situation. My consciousness remained filmy and unfocussed. There was mounting stress and an acidic feeling in my stomach. The weekend hours were vanishing quickly and my inspiration and productivity were so low

At some point, I realized what was troubling me. The rock was crying out. In quiet desperation, I ran downstairs, thinking that maybe an hour's work on the sculpture would muffle its sounds to a point below the threshold of distraction. My chisel and hammer flew on their own accord as my panicked head reviewed the graduate work

I'd left upstairs. When my mind returned to the task at hand, I had to drop the tools and run my fingers over the forehead and brow of the emerging face in the rock. The familiarity was at once soothing and deeply frightening. In the wink of an eye, before the words could form, I realized that the prisoner of the rock was a reflection of myself.

Stories behind the Stories

Moving from metaphor to defining my artistic goals, expression, and personal needs.

I must confess that I am not a sculptor in a traditional sense. The lines I cut are not cut from stone, but from a higher set of vibrations. I am a sonic sculptor. I carve and shape lines of sonority as a means to represent what narratives sometimes fail to reveal. Yet, I prefer to initiate this discourse with the metaphor of sculpting as a means to inform readers of my process. The creation of music differs from the tactile sensuality and the visual imagery of the art of sculpting. Music primarily functions at a non-physicalistic level of abstraction, yet, in many ways, the processes are almost parallel and the final products can be equally as moving.

I have two areas of conscious musical interest at this time. The first area lies in the sculpting of soundscapes. The second involves the sculpting of original musical ideas/motifs for spontaneous improvisation.

Soundscapes are various musical compositions that support the autoethnographic narratives and poetic renderings that I, and others, have written. By composing these original sonic backdrops, I hope to seduce listeners into a deeper intimacy as their hearts and minds dance with the narratives.

The second area of interest, the conceptualization of ideas for improvisation and the ability to render these lines, has been a life long challenge that I have embraced. As I listen to myself play the guitar, I hear a sonic autoethnographic weaving of all of my past interests, values and new areas of interest. And, as in the fable of the sculptor, a part of me has been crying out for years to musically render a representation of the real me. But *who is the real me?*

The Master's Experience as Liminal Phenomenon

Creating the hook—connecting my artistic expression with my academic experience.

Through a series of unanticipated events, my graduate work in Curriculum Studies at UBC has become the vehicle through which I move forward on this question of *who is the real me?* Indeed, the Master's program has become a lens that has focused my personal, professional, and artistic unfolding. Paradoxically, this "lens" of the Master's program functioned in liminal rhythms to unfocus my present notions of self and what I know, thus allowing for a more expanded, stronger, and more authentic notion of self. The online encyclopedia, *Wikipedia* notes, "the liminal state is characterized by ambiguity, openness, and indeterminacy. One's sense of identity dissolves to some extent, bringing about disorientation. Liminality is a period of transition, during which your normal limits to thought, self-understanding, and behavior are relaxed, opening the way to something new" (Wikipedia, 2005). For me, "opening to something new" has allowed a repatriation of my core essence as well as a renewed trust in the creative process. This process of rediscovery and reclamation of voice has been one of

artistically breaking through my personal masks and roles. I have used intuitive music, poetry and narrative to create a multi-faceted tapestry that exposes my life roles, my feelings, my values, and the gray, in-between areas of knowing, teaching, and learning that push my risk taking to the real parameters of who I am and what I teach.

The term intuitive is used to convey the notion that these pieces were not rendered initially as part of conscious conceptualizing. They flowed from me in a natural and unselfconscious manner. Thus, they are more like artifacts of a life which can inform through a/r/tographic methodology.

Artist-pedagogue Barbara Bickel (2004) has directly addressed the issues surrounding artistic/intuitive knowing. Referencing the research of, among others, Michelle Lebaron, Henry Gioux, Jean Gebser, and Ken Beittel, Bickel supports the notion of arational knowledge (Bickel, 2004). Arational knowledge is a third and separate position from the conventional dialecticism of rational and irrational thought. Bickel describes arational positioning as “a form of knowing that includes the body, the emotions, the senses, intuition, imagination, creation making, the mystical, spiritual and the relational” (Bickel, 2005, p. 5). This conceptual site of learning “can be found in the practices of art, meditation, psychoanalysis, the body, (and) the senses” (Bickel, 2005, p. 5).

Indeed, Bickel’s discourse on this third way of knowledge acquisition reverberates in complete harmony with the processes that I have stumbled upon and nurtured over the years. Bickel maintains that through arational or intuitive artistic process, one may find the space needed to allow artistic expression, self-actualization and self-realization to manifest.

As a researcher, I concur with this finding and add that artistic expression and self-actualization are inseparable partners in the process of arts-based research. The process of arts-based research inevitably starts and ends with the path of self-realization and self-actualization. Art is both the product and process of understanding of oneself and the world at large. That being said, discourses surrounding artistic expression and specifically self-actualization, were probably the last concepts that I would have anticipated engaging in when I enrolled for graduate studies.

The Story of the Naïve A/r/tographer

Through storying, I explore the process of finding and interfacing a research methodology with my unfolding vision of research.

Originally, I entered the Master's program at UBC to train my mind to think more elegantly in scientific ways. I had spent my life cherishing artistic avenues of expression—although I had not been altogether happy with the results—and now I felt that I needed to balance myself with the challenges of logical, sequential thinking. My first graduate course embodied a survey of research methodologies. The prospect of using quantitative methodologies appealed to my yearning for a verifiable and rigorous modus operandi with which to approach some of my research interests.

As my time at UBC passed, however, I slowly started to recognize the strength of qualitative methods of inquiry for social science research. The courses that I took consistently reinforced the notion that human beings and their resulting

learning and teaching activities are fraught with complexity and inconsistency. We all have so many different dreams and needs and fears and view the world from completely unique vantage points, based on our experiences, culture, spirituality, and genetics. This personal heritage of unique, complex contexts manifests itself in our understandings and interactions with the world. As I began to reflect on my own personal contextual positioning as a researcher, I began to consider how this would play upon and could be integrated in my research. I yearned to examine both my experiences as a teacher of 20 years and the nature and interplay of my own frame of viewing.

My first opportunity to reflect on my experiences arose in Dr. Carl Leggo's class on Narrative Inquiry. Dr. Leggo, through years of teaching, writing, and reflection, has created a classroom environment that purposefully addresses and rectifies the sometimes cold, competitive and sometimes non-reflective nature of the graduate course experience. In short, he creates a welcoming, stress-reduced environment that promotes comfort, health, and risk-taking from his students. Within this context, Dr. Leggo "invites" students to write in and through a variety of literary genres. In this unique and safe situation, student writings blossom like spring flowers. And, as Dr. Leggo generally allows us to write on any subjects close to our hearts, most students dig into themselves and address their own pressing issues.

Within this context, I allowed myself to write poetry and short stories. As I entered the process, I found that the same themes emerged: educational topics, music and music-related topics, research issues, and autobiographic material.

As I grew in the inherent safety of this experience, I continued to grow in the intimacy of my work and the level of risk-taking. In a Jungian-like maneuver, I opted to carve a series of clay figurines as a three-dimensional answer to Dr. Leggo's class request for posters that displayed some of our writing/learning. I entitled the clay figure presentation: "Life archetypes and the understanding that you teach whom you are." A deeper part of me was clearly rising to the conscious surface.

The three dimensional poster erupted from my unconscious to demonstrate core archetypal roles or facets of my personality that contributed to the framing of my teaching experience. An upper level of figures represents my masks as musician, meditator, reflective family man, and teacher. This top level was mounted on a platter that could spin around a lower, outer circle of life situations/contexts, thereby symbolizing the multiplicity and "spilling over" of experience. That said, I was hoping to process and visually represent, albeit primitively, the notion that my professional life as a teacher is not separate from the rest of my life—that, in varying degrees, I teach who I am. Indeed, "teaching is performative knowing in meaningful relationships with listeners" (Irwin, 2004, p. 31). And, if I teach who I am, it behooves me, as a dedicated educator, to know myself. My subconscious, intuitive agenda in this course seemed to be an inquiry aimed at this goal.

At the end of term, we were required to submit portfolios. As I organized and prepared my portfolio, I decided to support my poetic offerings with music. Indeed, I sensed that coupling narrative with music could create a powerful psychological tool for self-reflection and discovery. As a musician, it seemed a

natural extension to support and intensify the moods and spaces that the poetry created with what I called soundscapes—musical vistas that were specifically written to inform the listener of subtleties that I struggled to convey through poetry.

Through this interactive symbiosis of sound and written word, I had a powerful composite art form in which each form enhanced and informed the other. Moving into writing poetry and prose allowed me access to an art form that is potentially less abstract than instrumental music. This coupling of words and music freed me to process, focus, and articulate specific issues through narrative, while simultaneously enabling me to musically portray the essential moods and feelings that imbued the issues.

Unlike writing lyrics, which often get into areas of compromise with the music, the narrative forms enabled me to say what needed to be said. And, unlike the beat poets of the 1950's, who rapped their poetry while jazz musicians generated cool, intellectual sonic backgrounds, this music with its compositional approach, seemed more effective and specific at supporting the ideas tabled by the writing.

Dr. Peter Gouzouasis, Chair of Music Education in Curriculum Studies had occasionally visited Dr. Leggo's course on Narrative Inquiry. After seeing my archetype project and hearing some of my soundscapes, he recognized that I was unwittingly developing a homespun methodology that paralleled the theorizing of a new arts-based methodology named a/r/tography. His unqualified support of my risk-taking adventures into this composite artistic form, combined with his friendly

nudging to have me further investigate the questions that were generated through the project of the archetypes, convinced me to continue this line of inquiry.

Indeed, as Dr. Gouzouasis described and detailed a/r/tography at our weekly meetings after class, I felt as if I was a naïve a/r/tographer who had stumbled upon a process that paralleled the formal work and theorizing that had been going on in a/r/tography. A/r/tography, as it was being theorized (by Rita Irwin, Kit Grauer, Carl Leggo and Peter Gouzouasis), seemed like a natural methodological fit for my research as it addressed the gap in my analysis in light of who I am and what I know. . It began to unfold who I was.

A/r/tography embraces numerous narrative techniques, including autoethnography, autobiography, poetry, and creative non-fiction which it combines with other artistic genres. Initially, I looked at the methodology of autoethnography as a means to express burgeoning narrative aspects of my research.

Autoethnography

A Partial Solution

The autoethnographic movement embraces a number of values that resonate with my concern of the retrieval, reassessment, and formalizing of knowledge. This modern methodology, like many social sciences that have been theorized through the tenets of post-modernism, openly admits that pure objectivity (i.e., knowledge without contextual framing) is not truly possible. Further, autoethnography embraces the notion that researchers can participate and turn the process of ethnographic inquiry inward on themselves.

Autoethnography is a natural, post-modernist extension of its ethnographic roots. Initially, ethnographers, as framed within quantitative research methodologies, represented themselves as “invisible” observers who diligently and systematically observed and recorded social life and interaction. Through a series of multi-layered events, not the least of which being the rise of post-modernist thinking and qualitative research, ethnographers began to question the modernist assumptions of objectivity.

This wave of theorizing sparked the development of a host of alternative methodologies that attempted to address the problems associated with objectivity. As a result, attempts at objectivity in the social sciences became tempered by the notions of reflexivity and social constructions of reality (Gaitán, 2000). Ever-burgeoning numbers of the academic community argued that the observer’s special vantage point within research offered a unique access point to previously untapped knowledge that was informed by the observer’s participation and experiences with and within the area/people that were being researched. The proximity and the interactions of the observer with the observed became valued and necessary avenues for the researcher to explore. As Gaitán, (2000) states, “Not only does closeness not have to result in ‘bias’ (an expression derived from the belief that subject and object need to be kept separate), but it may foster a privileged point of view (an ‘insider’s’ perspective) that can be offered to the reader so that deeper understanding is conveyed.” (2000, p. 1.)

The work of Ellis (1998) has taken the level of intimacy and reflexivity to a new level as she seeks to develop an ethnography that includes researchers’ vulnerable selves, emotions, bodies, and spirits; produces evocative stories that create the effect of reality; celebrates concrete experience and intimate detail;

examines how human experience is endowed with meaning; is concerned with moral, ethical, and political consequences; encourages compassion and empathy; helps us know how to live and cope;....in short, to extend ethnography to include the heart, the autobiographical, and the artistic text (1998, p. 669.)

Although the conceptual tenets of autoethnography appealed to me, I needed a methodology that could incorporate and value an interdisciplinary artistic venture as I wanted to use an autoethnographic narrative style with music. Thus, I concluded that autoethnography was a partial solution as it offered the intimacy and candor that I needed, but with a continued search for a methodology that would use multi-tiered artistic expression to inform.

A/r/tography

A path to make sense of multi-storied archetypes and multi-layered avenues of artistic expression

The broader methodology of a/r/tography seemed a wiser choice to frame and focus my research, as it is living inquiry that celebrates many forms and collages of artistic expression as a means of epistemological process (Irwin 2005). Furthermore, a/r/tography is a process/methodology that addresses the unique needs of artists who are also researchers, as well as being teachers— (hence the stylized a/r/t in the name a/r/tography). Although a/r/tography was originally intended to assist visual artists in authenticating their art as part of their research, its methodological process is being used for an ever-expanding list of diverse art forms, including literary, musical, and performative arts.

A/r/tographers refer to six essential concepts through which the a/r/tographic methodology is framed and expressed or rendered. These six essential renderings or “active methodological agents” (Irwin 2005) include the concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations and excess” which can be “enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry approach is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher. (Springgay, S., Irwin, R.L., Wilson Kind, S. 2005.)

Thus, the a/r/tographic inquiry is defined by its positioning of the text in the research. For a/r/tographers, the supporting text is not separate from the art. Irwin defined the concept of contiguity as the act of doubling art and graphy.

“Visual/performative and textual processes and products are not separate and distinct but are in contiguous interaction which disrupt taken for granted categorizations of knowledge production” (Irwin, 2005). Artistic renderings work with and through text in a dynamic, integrated, processional dance of revelation and reflection. A/r/tographers are fascinated with interstitial spaces that include areas that exist at the boundaries of their various roles as artists, researchers, and teachers, their pedagogies and their audiences (Springgay, S., Irwin, R.L., Wilson Kind, S. 2005). The notion of boundaries, the blurring of boundaries and the shifting of boundaries is an area of intense scrutiny. Springgay’s (2004) research has led her to define these various bounded roles/identities as “fragments, (that are) leaky, abject, shifting, and unstable” (Springgay in Irwin, de Cosson, 2004, p. 60). For Springgay, “it is not a blurring of boundaries that I bring to my art-making, research, and teaching, but rather a boundary shift, one that is situated in

the *seam*, where multiple images, identities, and ways of knowing collide and are in tension with each other” (2004, p.60).

The focus on the roles and the interplay between these roles weighs heavily on the direction(s) of the endeavor. Springgay (2004) believes that this focus “. . . becomes an ontological complexity where the questions asked are ones of being: Who do you think you are? How do you know? How do we perform in relation to these shifting boundaries?” (p. 61).

The Inevitability of the Ontological Dance

The first step in any original, mature, artistic endeavor is to know yourself

Springgay’s fundamental ontologically born questions rest at the core of any endeavor into the arts or through a/r/tographic process. Simply put, as artists and humans, we must know ourselves in order to know. Vexing questions surround the issue of how we inform ourselves of ourselves. Often, this process of self-realization manifests through a complex unraveling of realizations, epiphanies and regrets. Our own immaturities and self-deceptions as well as external forces, act as governors to the rate at which we unfold. De Cosson(2003) reminds of the the Pinar and Grumet quotation: “We must lay in waiting for ourselves. Throughout our lives. Abandoning the pretense that we know” (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. viii).

There can be, however, nuances to the prerequisites and conditions that must be examined before we, as a/r/tographers proceed in a conscious effort at answering or unfolding these ontological mysteries.

For one, we must see or intuitively sense the importance of introspection. If no value or sense of gain is perceived, it is unlikely there will be any genuine progress.

And even if we sense the relevance of these sorts of questions/riddles, we must have the courage to know. What will happen if we are uncomfortable or disgraced with what we find? What if the truthfulness of our unfolding rips at the very fabric of who we thought we were? It is hard to turn back. Carolyn Ellis (1999) writes that revelatory exploration

generates a lot of fears and self-doubts and emotional pain. Just when you think you can't stand the pain anymore, well that's when the real work has only begun. Then there's the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written or having any control over how readers interpret it. It's hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating (p. 671).

With all of these potential pitfalls, we, as a/r/tographers, must believe that the unfolding of our true selves is indeed the correct path or at least the process will eventually move toward some balance or new knowledge.

Also, we must believe we are worthy enough to risk learning the truth. As well as sensing value and having the courage to honestly proceed, we must value ourselves. That is, we must believe, for whatever reasons, that our stories, beliefs, accumulated experiences, and acts of artistic expression, warrant the public act of unraveling and exposure.

As well as these hurdles, the enormity of the task can be daunting. There are many aspects of "self" to know. There are the deep chasms that can only be mined through artistic process but there are, of course, other "selves" within our

multidimensional personalities. In fact, my clay figurine archetypes were an unconscious outpouring of the very issue of our many sides/ways/values of being.

My categorizing of these ways of being is, from one perspective, very artificial. But what intrigued me was the ways in which the archetypes overlapped and informed the actions of the others. Gouzouasis (2007) addresses the following question:

Thus, one may consider that the synthetic, split binaries of teacher-artist, teacher-researcher, researcher-artist dissolve into a relational, inclusive perspective of an understanding of the artist/researcher/teacher, metaphorically defined by the Escher ink sketch, "Drawing Hands." Thus, each aspect of artist/researcher/teacher simultaneously nurtures the other—creating and being created in an ongoing process of living inquiry (p. 226).

Thus, the shifting and blurring of boundaries and the continuous circular loop of personal reflection, realization, and revision in a public forum are critical elements to this artistic methodological process. But as I alluded to earlier, the nuances of this process generate for me another connotation of the notion of boundaries. When I am looking at boundaries, I am not only looking at boundaries that lie with-in my own multi-layered persona, but I have had to look at my own conceptual framing. The limits or boundaries of my personality needed to be broken in order to generate an original artistic mindset—one in which the tenacious grip of cultural norms and values could be reviewed, and, potentially abandoned.

Reflections in the Infinite Now

Increasing the Frequency of Arational Transcendence Through Ritual

The notion of living inquiry is a critical premise in the methodology of a/r/tography. A/r/tography is, by its very nature, a holistic endeavor that synthesizes not only the multidimensional lives of artists who are researchers and teachers but it creates a marriage between artistic praxis and theorizing. This process of living inquiry is often catalyzed by the notion of ritualized practice. A/r/tographer Barbara Bickel has linked the concept of arationalism with a/r/tographic ritual. She argues that the context of arationalism can be manifested through the use of ritual. "*Ritual* essentially includes an arational sacred practice of trans-egoic respect/awareness/openness to the creative interaction of physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual realities, within nature, culture and self, for the purpose of transformation" (Bickel, 2005, p 7). Like Bickel, I value ritualized visitations to the site of the arational to allow the unknown to surface through me and through my art making.

Playing guitar has always been a transcendent process for me—an entrance point to the site of the arational. But when I started the practice of meditation in 1979, I was surprised and delighted to find that it took me to the same arational space as my guitar. Prior to this, I had been quite dependent on the guitar to enter this zone of creativity that is both invigorating and grounding. My meditative practice, which is connected to the Vedic traditions of India, is steeped in history and tradition and is, by definition, ritualistic. Soon after learning to meditate, I tied

it into my music. I developed a ritual of always meditating before practicing and especially before a musical performance.

It is extremely difficult to identify what this ritual gives me and my artistic endeavors, but at the least, it produces a clear space in my mind so that it becomes unencumbered by the noisy internal conversations that rage through all of us. I question whether the arational process needs to be, or even can be, explained. It may not be possible to satisfactorily theorize the arational process through the dualistic lens of western academic thought. Pryer (2002), Bai (2001) and Synott (1993) have argued that the cultivation of Western thought and logos has generated a skewed, disembodied, and fractal sense of knowledge and knowledge acquisition. Bai (2001) refers to a loss of grounding of ideas to our senses to a point of “semi-consciousness or even unconsciousness” (p. 89).

In my experience, artistic endeavor is so satisfying because it mends this tyranny of artificial contexts of coping. Artistic endeavor is healing and self-revelatory. My own recent explorations and renderings of revelation and reflection can be loosely grouped by the following questions:

- Where do I come from?
- What do I encounter?
- What do I create (in the classroom, the academy, and for myself?)

These questions became apparent after I had spent many hours returning to intuitive, arational spaces, in an attempt to reclaim my own, authentic voice through ritualized artistic endeavor and a/r/tographic processes.

Section II of this paper chronicles the reclamation of voice through artistic renderings.

The Poet and the Piper

The process of reclaiming my voice was aided by a formal collaborative a/r/tographic project with Dr. Carl Leggo. Upon hearing some of my a/r/tographic renderings of amalgams of poetry and music, Carl inquired if I would be interested in composing some music for his poetry. Immediately, I jumped at the opportunity to work with this internationally renowned poet and scholar of language and literacy.

Having agreed to the project, I was initially overwhelmed with conflicting emotions of happiness and anxiety. Clearly, it was a great honour to have a chance to write music for this poet. I had thoroughly enjoyed and had been moved by all of Carl's poetic performances throughout his classes. I admired both the poetry and Carl's wonderful delivery of his works. In these episodes of performance poetry, Carl could lift the words off the page and breathe a new dynamic of energy and meaning into the works. Carl made the poetry vibrate with life and poignancy.

And so, I was excited at the possibility of adding another dimension to the presentation of his poems. I was, however, anxious about how Carl would react to my artistic response to his poetry. What if I didn't understand what he was saying? What if my music emphasized or took the poetry on an inappropriate tangent? And so in entering into this collaboration, I established an understanding with Carl that he was under no obligation to embrace any of my musical offerings.

As it turned out, Carl had absolute faith in my ability. He never tried to explain the point(s) of his poetry. He did not really hint at any direction that I

should take with the music. He did, however, answer some questions that I had about them, but he essentially let the poems and his delivery explain themselves to me.

And so, our process was extremely straightforward. Carl made a few visits to my home studio and simply performed the poems. I recorded a couple takes until Carl felt happy with his performance. From the process, I realized Carl had certain rhythms implied in some of his various poems. To assist in my part, Carl agreed to have a metronome clicking softly in his headphones. It was my hope that the clicking would support his own internal rhythms and thereby help with the flow of the music.

We ended up recording seven poems. After numerous listenings to Carl's performances, I followed my intuitive process to generate sounds appropriate to my understanding. The initial ideas went quickly but recording these ideas was more labor-intensive as I tracked myself again and again to create some of the musical montages. It took about 150 odd hours over a three-week period in August 2005.

To my joy and relief, Carl seemed delighted with the results. Both Carl and his wife, Lana, felt that I had successfully captured the spirit of his poetry. These renderings are included on the CD with the working title *The Poet and the Piper*.

Section II

A/r/tographic Renderings

1. Where do I come from/to?

Driving with No Hands

Preamble:

Driving with no hands is about the time When You Are Young and on the Path. It is a time when you don't know a lot about life, but you know when it feels right. Recently I had a marvelous experience that once again reminded me of the feelings that I had so long ago. This unconscious and unsolicited reflection turned out to be a gift, as the return to the "past I" in all its sensory glory helped me reclaim an important part of my personal story that I had dismissed as a sort of mistake/regret.

Driving with No Hands

You could never tell
From these old mismatched clothes,
Worn out sneakers, tired Dockers that
There had ever been the presence of cool

You would probably never think that
The meandering rivers of my facial lines
Formed not from stress but rather from
Years of grinning from ear to ear
And my large temple vein grew forth
To support the hyper-blood flow that
Accompanies only the purest of pleasures,
The pleasure that tells you, "You are on the path"

I tell you of this because of
A change in the wind that (somehow)
Catalyzed a breath-taking flash
Where my past pushed forward to dance
With the eternal now

For as I drove home today,
Deep in the grid and lock of 9 to 5
Eating the fumes and cursing buffoons
In a panic to get off the tar
For domestic abyss in my little house in the sub

With its 70's big engine time warp and
Neighbors who are white-right of Arnold,
I was amazed to see the sun burst through
The heavens and bless all the prisoners
Of the commute

And for some reason on this special day
The sun connected with me so strongly
That I longed to pull out a chain saw
And cut off the entire roof of my old hound dog car
And, like Brother Jake, when he saw the Light,
I too wanted to jump cartwheels
And drive again with no hands
For it gave me a feeling that I had forgotten-
A feeling so special, so sacred, so life affirming
That I wanted to weep at how
Empty

I
Had
Become...

You see...

There was a time,
So long ago now
When I took a stand,
Carved out a place,
And freeze dried
The grinding merciless pedanticism
Of the ordinary
For a chance to follow my heart
And feel
So alive,
So real

In this drama of "past I"
As a young, naive and uneducated man,
With no locus of support,
Started a hero's journey
Whittling out a strategy
And pushing my willpower into overdrive
To solve the riddles
And become the player I dreamed of
When, as a little boy, I would pretend
Hour upon hour that I could guitar
And music make with the best of them

Working ever so hard
I eventually cracked the codes
And built up my hands
Shaping and molding the sound
Of the guitar so that it would
Sing out sustaining stories of my deepest secrets
With the tones and richness
Of a fine old violin
So I could join a band
And catch the road, playing
Endless streams of rock and roll

And the lads I played with
Formed special bonds
That were forged together
From endless adventures
On this road
And like rebel gangs
We had our colors and our
Attitude and words that meant
Only something to us
For it was a tight team circle
Of trust and survival
And pride in our strength
And we were a force
To be reckoned with

Like Blackbeard and Captain Kidd
And all their scurvy mates
We would storm into prairie towns
And pull up to the docks
With all guns firing
And we'd rock and rock
'Til we raised the roof
Just to prove we could
And after six days and nights
We'd pull up anchor
For the next port of lights...

This carried on for years
And for me the thrill never ended
And though there may have been
Better players than I
Certainly there was no one
Who could surpass my passion
For the sport as night after night
I totally let go

And every single show was
At once a complete revelation
And catharsis of my soul

Ten years later
When the adventure
Came to its end
And I became "normal" again,
It took me years to come off
The adrenaline-it was like heroin
And for lifetimes after
I walked the streets
Like a prisoner
Of the setting sun
Craving the rush and the release
And the recognition
And never seeming to score
Enough to appease my mind...

And it never reconciled
It just faded in time
With the avalanche of responsibility
That follows fitting into society
Until this moment when
In the blink of an eye
I was taken right back
To the time when I could fly
And drive with no hands.

The Fable of Regret

It came in through the open window
At that time of early morning renewal
When the air feathering your nostrils
And whispering warmly calls
For more engagement.
Yet you ignore it and roll back
To *Neverland* although
It will not be the same
Even though the sun
Still sleeps under silent watch
Of the round, observing moon.

And lunar beams twinkle the sheen
On the reptile's undulating back
As
It
Silently
Slips
Down

From the open frame
And pulses across the cool tiles
In search of the posts to your bed,
Its unblinking eyes and split tongue
Radar the destination with clear intention

And some part of you knew
This was coming.
Subtle alarms were sounding
By you own primal/animal being
As an inexplicable feeling
Of concern.
Yet with absolute authority,
The "I" in "You"
Has been trying to suppress
The knowledge of it there,
Although you are painfully aware
That you will be called
To pay the piper
For this conscious self-delusion
That eventually will collapse
Into a labyrinth of dis/ease
And despair

The cold scales brush
Against the soft hair
On the back of your neck
As the creature readies to bind
Stirring your adrenaline just in time
For a twist and panic dodge
That you've spent a lifetime rehearsing
And sitting straight up, fully engaged,
Your jolted wakefulness has a split second
To realize the size of the snake
Before it speaks:
"I've come to collect
And take from you
All that is due
For it is my duty

To wrap around
And suffocate you
With your own toxins
From misunderstandings.

Yes, I have grown large and fat
Feasting on plentiful numbers of
Profound regrets that, like rats,
Have been entering the holes
In your soul that open
As, in your mind's eye,
You reflect
On your life and how
Very critical choices
At critical times
Has paved a road
That is not lined
With gold

Yes, I have observed that
As you have grown older
And deeper in the seat
Of your true self
You have also cognized
That your demise is
Racing to catch you
And your own story
Is being etched in stone
For time eternal
And you are fast losing
Control of your destiny
And especially any resolution
Of your messy stories
Of unrealized glory

Yes, I am the Snake of Regret
Who lives and thrives
On your frustration
With the finite aspect
Of your short visitation
Into this earthly vessel
And with your misunderstandings
Of the very nature
Of human learning's.

For you I have
A little compassion
(As that is the fashion) as
Your "I" could
Have scarcely known
That, like a worker
In the field,
You've sown
A deadly yearning
For a past reversing
In outcome.
And the deeper the regret,
The larger I grow
And before you know
I will tighten my grip
Until you are unconscious
And consumed by it."

And the snake's words
Rang true like the deafening bells
From hell's hottest corners
Ringing disorientation
Across the universe
Of my experience.
How could I turn this around?
Was there something so profound
That my thinking had missed
That would turn all of this
Around in my favour?

"I am afraid, 'dear' snake
That there has been
A clear mistake
In identifying
For it is not 'I'
Whom you seek
For the 'I' in me
Has long abandoned
Regrets role having
Boarded up the holes
When I came to see
That regret, instead of
Harming me,
Is the way
To measure how much
I have grown over this
Tangled and thorny path

That we all are enslaved
To endure through our tenure
On this earth.

And so with all this regret
Certainly you can see that
That 'I' in my
Own special way,
Has moved forward
And encountered infinitely
New days of understanding
And that what, as a boy,
I had originally sought to pursue
Has little to do with whom
I am now.

Regret then, for me,
Is an affirmation
And a measure
That indeed,
I have succeeded
In moving myself forward
And truly grown
Through the years.
And so, rather than fear,
I choose to feast on regret
As the only true test
Of my growth as a human."

The Snake did hesitate
And in that second of reflection
And his break in intention
I drew this new blade
That through sheer will
My "I" had fabricated and
Swinging my sword
In my enemy's direction
I severed the head
And from my bed
I dragged the body
And lit a fire
To cook the snake
And did music make
Feeling higher
Than I had in years.

The Unnatural Act

Preamble:

A poem about T.V. immersion in the 60's

The Unnatural Act

No one knew:
It seemed like a Bonanza if
You loved Lucy like Jeanie like Samantha
With Emma and 86 (just the flip of a switch)
At the Junction of Green Acres ***I could never resist.***

I loved their perfection, their ultra mythic feminine
Looks with doe eyes and cheek bones
Chiseled out of granite and smiles
That would take you miles to a distant planet of siren-
What possible chance did I have, but, again,

To be a man, a Paladin,
Real Rifleman wanted Dead or Alive,
A Chuck or a Steve, Clint or Gary
Tallness and silence brimming with violence and fury
Too much too soon to define the American Male
On the black and white pages of high noon.

Or out of the West and into a jungle
Or Lost in Space or the courts or the fumble
Of family life, just Leave It To Beaver
Captains Kirk and Kangaroo, Crunch, Hook and Cleaver.
With rabbits and mice and woodpeckers too that
Had grown up in the Bronx, right next to the zoo...

How much did I laugh? How much do I hate
How deep these myths did sink and formulate
My brain and assist in the construction of black and white reductionism
That drove me and a young nation of over stimulated romantics to
Rebel at the antics of a world that we really didn't know,
Tune out and on with the show!

I Am Guitar

Guitar is not a passing phase or phrase
Or an art/instrument that I dabble with
It is so beyond that, it transcends anything
That I can adequately describe except to say,

I am guitar
It will not go away

It really doesn't matter if I am good or bad,
Or if you like it or not
Although both notions
Haunted me for far too long.

The guitar has soothed me, challenged me,
Delighted me and grounded me
Throughout all the many challenges
That I have endured in this sometimes
Lumpy, sad clown
Plane of existence.

It has supported me through various jobs,
Boring routines, mind-deadening situations,
Over-work, and negative people.

It has listened to me talk through
The acceleration of
Ever-changing experiences,
Relentless challenges,
The coming and going of relationships,
And of balance within myself

Somehow it has always helped keep me in check,
The magnitude of its experience,
Its potential and intellectual and emotional palette having now
Underpinned my whole point of view,
My entire value system.

And so the lines between "guitar" and "I" have blurred

I am guitar
It will not go away,
It will not go away...

If I had enough riches to stop work,
I'd play guitar, meditate, and be with my family/friends

That is my bottom line,
But rich or poor, I will play
(Now just) a little each day
And if the archetype of tragedy
Rolls over me and
Decimates all that I have worked
So hard for and
Destroys my family,
My core,
And brings me to my knees, blind and crippled
In a pathetic heap of crushed humanity
I will crawl on hands and knees
To find my guitar to cry through
And though it will not offer solution,
It will give some solace and self-reflection because

I am guitar
It will not go away

It will not go away
Until I do

I Am Starting (to Lose)

Preamble:

I tend to go through experiences much later than most people that I know. For example, I didn't start teaching until I was 36 years old. I had my first child at the age of 45. I took my first Master's course at the age of 50. And now at the age of 52, well past mid-life, I seem to be having a bit of a mid-life crisis. Actually, it's more like a mid-life ripple, but the waters are agitated, nonetheless. This poem addresses the fact that something deep is changing for me.

I Am Starting (to Lose)

*I am starting (to lose)
My life now
Just as the pieces
Were starting to connect.
Just as the moan of primordial realization of being is
Running all the way up through my veins,
Through my head, heart, and mind.*

*I am starting to lose
Just why I did all those things;*

Why in youth I railed and clamored so passionately
For freedoms that were already said to be and
Why I coveted and conspired, adorned and displayed and
Danced to a music that sometimes only existed in my head.

I am starting to lose
All my heroes
As a tide of democratization rolls in
And levels the playing field
Into a liquid flowing mass
Washing me clean and
Freeing me from the victimization of
Needs to prove and
Needs to be accepted...

As I experience this natural wilt
I stand naked and not caring
Disinterested and disconnected, yet
Passionately involved...
How can this be?
Change is in the air...

I am becoming
The fool on the hill
The invisible one, the crazy man,
Talking to himself
Reveling in his own jokes
Yet, at the same time, I am hearing
New symphonies of living
And concertos in the once cacophonous tumble
Of confusion
And I am preparing
To be myself...

And I will savour
Each moment like a sumptuous meal served
To a starving man
And I will bite life to the bone,
The juice running down my face
And all the time acknowledging
That I am as bad as I am good
As I am good at being bad
And I will shed this skin of illusion
And punch through this cocoon
Only to find my true self
Staring back at me.

I've (Em)braced

Preamble:

This poem, written after my courses, and at a moment of honesty/epiphany, is a comprehensive reflection on all the I am/have been and as such represents a poetic equivalent of an abstract of this Thesis

I've (Em)braced

I've (Em)braced
Prankster, Con Man, Liar, Lover,
Husband, Father, T(h)inker(er),
Imposter,
Preposterous
Lying in judgment!
Yet
Sometimes Not of this World
As my eyes roll backward and the jaw drops...
Mystic systemic, pathetic and regretful
Keeper of cartoon consciousness,
My feet blister on the hyper-heated asphalt
Of Western reality,
I never learn
Still
Mystified by the rarified
Miracle of hope(lessness)
Frightened child and old man I am
Penis crossed with penance
Son of Zorro and Nosferatu,
(Anti)... Charliet, I wish I knew!
Saint or sinner,
Certainly
Fool on the hill of the Academy of
Power, politics and lost souls,
Liminal Transgressor in the aporia of
Found and lost (again)
I see
The oasis or just another mirage?...

Meanwhile the Buddha of Compassion pours
Rivers of tears through me as I look at pictures of
My daughter
because
Sometimes I know
To look above myself

2. What do I encounter:

The Master Frame

Preamble:

I find it fascinating that our childhood learning, expectations and value structures can either intensify or invalidate our life experience in later years. This notion is examined in a poem that, on the literal level, talks about me building a playhouse with my daughter, Emily.

The Master Frame

Emily,
Who is six,
Is hard at work
Helping me build
The frame of her playhouse
And being very keen, yet all the same
Lacking real experience, we follow the plans
Very slowly and carefully, checking the lay of the land

She passes me the wood and the siding
And with the greatest pains, holds the beams steady for
The Master Frame as I measure and pencil and
Pound the nails into the wallboards as well as
Into the story board of her myth for we talk
Incessantly and work co-operatively to raise a structure and
A cohesive environment not only out of
Wood and paper and nails but of dreams and schemes and
Values that often prevail in my own Master Frame

For the original Master Frame that I built so long ago
Has served me well as a room with a view where
I've witnessed both nirvana and hellish times,
Although its design has been modified to re-align for
Situations that come along and block the sun and
Bar me from gleaning the most out of each and every day

You see,
My own
Master Frame
Is still a work in progress
An exquisite game of strategy for
Keeping dry through all types of inclement weather
And now the time is right to take the strongest beams,
Those that have proven themselves again and again, and show them
To Emily for consideration in the construction of her own Master Frame

And so
This new rising structure looks right for Emily
With great strength and design so that she cannot outgrow it
But can decorate and expose it to the scrutiny of her friends
And in time she too will review and reflect and modify
This structural system in order to keep dry...

I heard about a woman who grew up in a house of riches framed with beliefs
Of superiority only to find that a turn of events pushed her into a life of
Constant struggle inside a new dream with a man of modest means
And there she raised a family but was never able to return
To her original Home Frame with its Affluence and
Connections and as a result she divorced herself
From her very own life for she saw her life
As a failure as she could not re-conceive
Her Master Frame to accommodate
A different context and
So she invalidated
Everything...

And now as I look with wonder and awe
At the miracle of our six-year-old daughter
I shutter at the thought that we may be building
A sanctuary that could sometime in the future
Turn into a cell if we fail to construct a tale
That is wide enough to allow her to grow
Yet strong enough to protect her from the elements
As she seeks to find her place and peace in this world.

Big People

Preamble:

I love the layers of meaning that are found within language. As a kid I used to love to listen to Mae West or later, John Lennon, as they playfully set up word traps constructed out the foibles of the audience's own pre-conceptions and experience.

Big People

The big people I know
Come in all shape and size
From ecto to mezzo with
Tiny waists or massive thighs
Red, white and blue,
Black, yellow and mellow
Full of fire and wire
And often times higher than you or I
With both feet on the ground
As they jump out of bounds...

Big people eat pizza, guacamole and rice
Or strict protein diets from morning till night
Pre-fab nutrients from trans-fat diners
Or natural fresh slices of organic types

Big people drink scotch, beer, water and Pepsi
Earl Grey, with milk or glasses of sherry
And all manner of liquid cold and hot
But sometimes not

Big people live in spacious refinement
Or apartment lofts or cluttered homes
Sometimes all alone in
Bars and abandoned cars while
Others live in their heads
With no bed of significance
And no way to get home

Big people often run
Through the cracks for the borders and
Stay up all night to seize the day because
Big people have great vision
Even if they leave their glasses at home
For they peer through a lens
That has been ground and polished

By years of episodic narratives
And reflective calls and responses
That turns outward in
And in so out

Big people know you and me
Better than most, having climbed
The mountains to reply to the host
Of unending questions that fill them up
They push for answers and
Having answered the push
They live in 3-D opportunity
To the point of filling this poem
With the present, future and past atoned

Big people cannot be bottled or
Labeled, categorized or denied
Dismissed, re-miffed or qualified
Except by those who miss the boat
As it leaves for adventure islands remote

Oh how I love big people!

How Old?

Here's a little notion
To reflect on over your
Afternoon tea, on that rainy day
When the roar of the fireplace and
The dance of the flames pulls you in.

For as I walked my dog on such a day
Crazy with rain, I came across
A most senior gentleman who,
When seeing me, broke into a fit of
Deep resounding laughter and said,
As we both shared a drowned moment in this pathetic state,
"This is ridiculous weather!"
To which
He laughed even harder, eyes sparkling,
And as he passed, I wondered to myself
How old are you when you laugh?

But really,
How old are you when

You laugh so deeply that your
Whole body lets go
And your eyes diamond shine
And the lines of your face turn upward

And how old are you
When you nibble that chocolate and sip the wine
And you finally grok what
The music has been saying all along
As it washes you clean
With tidal force waves of
Emotions and epiphany.

How old are you
When you lose all time at
The sunset on the beach
With the bursting silence being
Spilled by the lap of the waters
On the logs?

How old are you when you finally come
And tell your lover the truth
Whatever it is to you
Or when you run until
You're undone and you
Break through your barriers to ecstasy?

We unlock the fountain of youth
Through our choice of frames to view
All manner of living, both past and new.

The Goddess of Innovation

Preamble:

Oh, if only I could make my muse visit more often. What fun I could have!

The Goddess of Innovation

I am making an invitation to
The goddess of innovation to
Stop by for tea
A little more often

Of course she is very busy
With her own various activities
And I know some how by saying
I'm needy, I'm being a little greedy
For the miraculous inspiration
She is offering

And if she does arrive
It's usually a surprise and
I don't always sense her presence
Just that colors seem bright
And the flow is totally right
And new ideas pop forth from my essence

And as we drink our tea
All manner of artistry
Is in turn affected.
Why we muse about art,
Writing, music and dance
And life itself as a canvas
Waiting to be perfected

And as I relax, I know she is right
I just get in my own way
For the trick is to open the door
And allow her to explore without
Blocking or controlling her stay

And that's easier said than done
For the mind's rascal monkey for one
Is always talking and taking control
But the goddess needs plenty of room
To create such a tune
That's original and full of soul

And the monkey will pretend to
Be asleep in order to sneak a peek
At the awe-inspiring beauty of the goddess
But she can sense him through his process
And she will fade away glowing
For trying to contain her in logic's bounds
Is as hopeless as pulling vegetables out of the ground
To see how well they're growing

But I am always thankful for
Any visitation, no matter how short

And every day I do rain dances
As an invocation to abort
Any drought that may occur
From being far too busy
To realize all the energy
And boundless fertile creativity that
Comes from a quiet tea
With the goddess

The Hustler (a.k.a.), And What Would You Do?

Preamble:

This light-hearted narrative deals with the serious issues of teaching ethics and power structures within an educational organization

“Come in, Michael.”

As I entered, I was surprised to find Bill standing up-away from his desk. My heartbeat doubled. I always found it harder to talk to my principal when he was standing, for his enormously tall frame and sheer physicality always informed the outcome of our conversations. Indeed, I often felt patronized in the silence before the words, like a little boy asking his daddy for a favor. But here was a man who willfully played his physical currency to the extent that I would buy in. So I braced myself and looked into the high noon eyes of this surly John Wayne.

And as I looked, I reflected on the fact that Bill, although he was well into his fifty's, was still a keen rugby player, barfly, chauvinist, and stickman whose would-be role as a cowboy of the new frontier spilled over like a glass of home-brewed whiskey into his professional life. And of that life, Bill had moved quickly from being a P.E. teacher to an administrator and, ultimately to an assistant superintendent. But due to the recent and severe cutbacks in the district, he was bumped as his job was collapsed. And so, like a sleeping grizzly that had been

disturbed, Bill grumpily accepted the demotion of a principalship at our school. It was either that or face the cold winter of a job search.

Today, as I entered his office/den, I was in crisis. Roger, the head of the P.E. department was emboldened by Bill's appointment to our school and thrust a new offensive against me in our long war about evening gym privileges. Earlier that morning, in a small committee meeting that was dealing with the timetable, he hissed that basketball games and practices had been booked for all of December and that there would be no room on any evening for a Christmas concert. I was too shocked to say "But it's only September-can't you alter the schedule and give me one night?" In reality, the power and finality of Roger's tone and trump collapsed any chance of negotiation. I turned to John, our Vice Principal and whispered, "This is crazy. We have to have a Christmas concert!" Ron acquiesced silently with his "I'm not getting involved" look and shrugged his shoulders.

Now, with my visit to Bill, I was escalating the issue. As I walked up to his door, I mentally reviewed the points I wanted to make to Bill. I started with a story about the long tradition of Christmas concerts at our school. But before I had completed the first sentence, Bill waved a big paw to cut me off and another to shoo me out, angrily barking that he was going to have to make a decision and that was that!

That was that? Obviously, John had mentioned the issue to him-which was fine as far as I was concerned. But I wanted a chance to be heard. I wanted to pitch the importance of the concert. Did he, as principal, not have to at least give me a little say in this matter?

I was on pins and needles for two days. Then, the decision came down. I would get my concert on its annual date. Oddly, I was told of this not by the administration team, but by a nutrasweet Roger, who closed by quipping, "No hard feelings, eh?" Even though I had "won" this battle, I felt drained and angry. What could I do to remedy this situation?

And then it dawned on me. It was brilliant in its simplicity and it gave me a new energy. Dawning my virtual boots and spurs, I "rode" into Bill's office with an Achilles' hunch and a double-barreled attitude Eastwood for I knew that Bill was a big fan of country and western music.

"Bill, I know this may seem wild, but I noticed how rich your voice is. What do think about you and me performing a song together? I think it would be so great to have you sing a song in the Christmas concert. We could do a country song. In fact, I could probably put a whole band together to back you up. Think about how positively the kids would react at seeing their principal singing with a band?"

"Well, Michael, I've always loved Johnny Cash," he explained. I had him. "Bill, that's a great idea! William, in the science department is a good drummer and John wants to play bass. I'll pull in my brother so that we can have blazing telecasters, and, oh yes, Charlie in drama can play some great honky-tonk piano.

Feverishly, I worked to assemble the members of the band. We had a rehearsal or two to lock in to "Folsom Prison Blues" and then invited Bill to attend. Fortunately, Bill sang in tune (sort of) and, more importantly sang in time. I had foolishly assumed that he could cut the gig. I made a mental note to trick future administrator-singers into an informal assessment before committing to a project and I thanked the gods for this current round of grace.

On the night of the Christmas concert, Bill was extremely nervous. I sensed that he would back out.

“Bill, why don’t you come out first as Santa, and throw out some candy while the back-up band plays something fun. Then, after a few “Ho-Ho’s” you can come up to the mic and sing your song. The kids will love it. After the concert I can leak out that Santa was played by you!”

(Desperately, I was trying to figure out a way to increase Bill’s comfort as I knew that the Santa suit and beard would pull down the intensity of the performance). Bill felt better.

Bill’s moment came at the half way mark of the second set. The teacher band fired up an instrumental version of “Folsom,” complete with scorching solos. Santa Bill burst in through a curtain like a Brahma bull at a rodeo. He ran into the bleachers and tossed his candy canes to the screaming kids and came crashing back to sing his song.

Then, it happened somewhere in the second verse. Bill lost himself to the fun of performance. He started digging in-blossoming right before our eyes. The crowd, who had pretty well figured out who Santa was, went wild with approval. Bill, reveling in this newfound power, began to improvise and told me to take another solo. We rocked the house down and then he “rode” out of town.

Bill had an epiphany that night. Indeed, through a crazy turn of events, this old dog had learned a new trick - the power and joy of performing. The band was also happy with the success of the show. Consequently, we kept the band together and made cameos at many other concerts. We even wrote Bill a cameo in our musical. The kids at school loved it, but more importantly, Bill absolutely loved

performing and quickly realized great value in the arts. I think that it ultimately overtook his long-time love of sports.

My friend, Michelle, was a district level administrator at the time. Michelle is a wonderful singer and keyboardist and has a soft spot for the plight of music teachers and fragile music programs. But she was appalled at my actions.

“It was ethically wrong to manipulate Bill and the school like that,” she complained. I felt uneasy at the suggestion of compromised integrity. I explained to her that the school district’s (government induced) financial hardships politicized all actions. Continuing threats to my program had forced me to consider these manipulative actions.

But I felt uneasy at the suggestion of compromised integrity. I didn’t like doing them but felt that I had little choice. Indeed, I did them to preserve my program, for I believed then and now that the study of music is of great value to so many children and one night’s use of the gym was reasonable request.

Was I wrong in my actions? I know that Bill continued to sing, after he retired, and he also took lessons to learn the harmonica. Perhaps, in the end, Bill was just another student of mine who grew, along with my students, through the power of performing. Certainly, he learned what I want all my students to learn, which is a lifelong love and appreciation of music.

In the end, I’m not sure if the pressure of survival justified my response. I used the same tactic for other principals after Bill, though I am not presently doing this. This issue makes me reflect on the words of the American “philosopher,” Theodor Geisel, who also examined the issues of authority and integrity:

Then our mother came in
And she said to us two,
“Did you have any fun?
Tell me. What did you do?”

And Sally and I did not know
What to say.
Should we tell her
The things that went on there that day?
Should we tell her about it?
Now, what SHOULD we do?
Well...
What would YOU do
If your mother asked you?

(Seuss, 1957, p. 60)

The Hi-fi

My first exposure to music happened when I was four years old. My family had just moved to Montreal after many years on the prairies. My Dad worked for the Firestone Rubber & Tire Company. In those days, Firestone tire stores had a retail annex that dabbled with many various household products - a concept that has been expanded and successfully utilized in Canada by the Canadian Tire Corporation. One could find big items, like freezers, washers and dryers as well as small house ware items like toasters and entertainment products like radios and record players. There was even a small toy section.

My Dad, as manager of this store, was able to buy items at a special employee discount rate. One day, he arrived home with some help to load in an enormous crate. What could it be? We already had a TV. As it turns out, he had purchased what I recall as the most advanced record player money could buy.

It was a huge, commanding piece of furniture and a thing of enormous beauty. The massive rectangular cabinet was made of a stunning light exotic wood that had been sanded, varnished and polished to accentuate the multi-colored grain. My four-year-old brain would sink deep into the three-dimensional hills and valleys of this wood.

The entire front of the cabinet was strewn with a wondrous multi-colored speaker grill cloth that had golden threads that tied together with the grain patterns. In the late afternoon, when the sun was just beginning to pour into our living room window, I would be able to “look through” this grill cloth at a circle and a rectangle that were normally hidden by the colours in the cloth. The circle was where the enormous speaker was attached. The rectangle beside it was a large port to allow bass frequencies to emit—clearly a revolutionary idea for 1957.

The top of the record player opened up to reveal its secrets. I had to stand on my tiptoes to look inside. To the left was the actual turntable. Being such an advanced model, it had four speed settings. Along with the popular 33 -rpm for long-playing records and 45-rpm for singles, it would also play at 78-rpm for older discs. And, it even had a 16-rpm setting. I never saw a record for that speed. I often wondered if it was just there for the future when discs might double their long-play ability.

My father explained that the hooked device that hovered above the platter was a feature that allowed the listener to stack many records so that the turntable could automatically “drop” and play a new disc when the former disc finished. Miracle of miracles, our new record player entertained us for hours at a time.

On the right hand side was the control panel for the amplifier. A decal on the inside read "Hi-fi" which my father explained meant "high fidelity sound. I would put my hands on this area to feel the warmth from the vacuum tubes that amplified and shaped the tone.

Now, as an aside, I must tell you that my mother comes from the village of Moorside, just outside of Oldham, which is, in turn, just a few miles from Manchester England. Her tastes and her life continue to be one of polite conservatism and caring with her motto being "everything in moderation."

My father, however, is Hungarian. His family immigrated to the Canadian prairies in the late 1920's after his father decided that the politics of their homeland was changing. Regina provided a scruffy, tough existence in the 1930's, what with the ghettoized living of scores of eastern European families struggling to survive the crash of the economy as well as the blistering hot, drought ridden summers and deep-freeze winters.

Uncle Frank taught my dad the rudiments and repertoire of violin playing. The young boy was also enrolled in a mandolin orchestra, where, for 50 cents a month, you were loaned a mandolin and received a weekly lesson along with rehearsals of the large ensemble. All through high school, my Dad and his band played many styles of popular and ethnic music for all types of community celebrations, weddings, and dances. Canada's entry into World War II, however, took him far away from his violin. At the war's end he returned a changed man who had married and brought his English bride back to Canada. After his return, he did not pick up the violin for forty years.

Now, with the purchase of the Hi-fi, my Dad had an opportunity to re-visit to music of his youth. On many an evening, when he arrived home from work, my Dad would load up our magnificent new record player with wonderful recordings of the music of Eastern Europe. As well as playing the wild gypsy music of Hungary, he would play Russian gypsy, Romanian gypsy and Jewish folk music.

I will never forget the huge, incredible sound that our new Hi-fi could generate. It was simply overwhelming. Nothing had ever sounded so good, so loud and so thunderous. Its tonal possibilities seemed endless. Dad would simply crank up the bass and it was as if the bass player himself had just entered the room!

It was this huge sound, combined with Dad's choice of playing gypsy music, that made me lose total control. The passionate violin playing flooded the room with heavy emotion. It seemed that every song started with a slow, heart-wrenching opening. This was followed by a gentle accompaniment of moderate tempo. Then, the band would suddenly start to accelerate, playing faster and faster until the melody and the band would peak at the climax and crash to a most stirring and exuberant ending. Sorrow, revolution, and triumphant resolution—the heroic European way!

My emotions and body were kidnapped and forced to ride this sonic roller coaster. It was as if the music could somehow charge up my whole system. Perhaps we could blame it on my genetics, but, for whatever reason, this music found its way to the very core of my being. It just about drove me crazy. I would slowly sway to the mournful opening theme, (there is always sorrow in any gypsy piece of merit), and then, uncontrollably, I would have to dance as the tempo accelerated. I was transformed into a marionette and the music was the master puppeteer. As the

band would rocket to a “Presto” tempo I would be forced to run, non-stop, in circles through the rooms of the house. This crazy puppet dance would continue until the triumphant finish had me collapsing into a chair, breathless and sweating profusely.

This explosive release of kinetic passion was consistently drawn from me by the Hi-fi with its gypsy music. Other types of music never took a hold of me in the same way, until the Beatles broke, many years later.

The Hi-fi stayed with the family for 30 years, faithfully spinning its musical spells until my aging parents downsized to an apartment. Although it had long become obsolete with the introduction and refinement of stereo sound, neither my brother, nor myself wanted to let go of the magic machine. When it was time to junk the machine, I removed the top from its hinges and used it to build a baffle for my amplifier. In this way I like to think that I have a little bit of the magic with me.

Curiously, my parents never, ever breathed a word to me about this exorcism of feelings and adrenal, which continued, unabated for years. I, in turn, never told them of how involuntary the process was. I often wonder if my becoming a professional musician and a music teacher may be in part due to the strong sonic voodoo that the Hi-fi cast with every nuance of the gypsy’s bow.

Lessons from the Piano

It has been six weeks now, since Emily started Grade 1 and group piano lessons. Rosemary, my wife, usually meets Emily after school. What with full time teaching and my course at UBC, I can only pick-up my daughter on Wednesdays. On these nights, her mom usually stays late at work and then attends a workout or

dance class, so it has come to pass that Wednesdays provide a special time together for Emily and I.

Emily has spelling and piano homework almost every night. In order to provide a break in the routine and to have more fun in the learning, I ask Emily teach me what she has learned on the piano. This twist provides Emily an opportunity to verbalize her learning and critically observe my reaction and understanding of it. It also allows her a chance to experience the power of telling someone what to do, thereby breaking the monotony of following rules—something that my 6 year old has to do most of the day.

So far, I've been able to keep up with the curriculum provided through the lessons. Emily has proved to be a good teacher, with a keen eye for technique.

“Keep all your fingers on the keys—even your thumb!” She catches me when I slack. She teaches me about Fireman Fred and the Dinosaur Den. We take turns playing F and D on the piano. At the end of the lesson we close up our books. Our next activity will be a spelling review of the words on the Friday dictation.

“What does this spell?” Emily has noticed the piano maker's name on the instrument. “It says Baldwin. Baldwin is the name of the company that made this piano. You could think of this name as a compound word made of two smaller words—bald and win,” I answer. Emily beats me upstairs to the kitchen table where we practice our French spelling. I linger behind, cleaning up.

Emily has just started to compose and write short sentences. She will do this for fun and to get a verbal stroke from her proud father. Tonight she neatly prints out a three-word sentence for my praise and delight. It even included a new word. “Here, Dad.” I took the paper from her hand to read the words “Dad is Bald.”

“Thank you so much,” I said, trying to keep my face in a neutral state of reaction.

“We certainly had interesting lesson from the piano tonight.”

Emily smiled.

Sunday at the Art Gallery

It's Sunday and our little house is filled with the sounds of young voices.

Emily has had her friend, Tamara, stay for a “sleep-over.” Tamara is tall for her seven years. Her fair skin and freckles compliment her long, soft, corn silk hair. A placid demeanor belies the energetic rascal underneath. Tamara never spoke for the first two years of her life-she just observed. But now there is no stopping her, in either English or French. Emily would love it if Tamara were her sister.

The girls had stayed up late last night in giddy revelry. Rose and I had hoped that they would sleep in. Not a chance! By 6:40, they were already deeply at work in their play. I admire how children can get to close to each other in such a short time. My mom would describe them as being “thick as thieves” for it is as if their lives depend on their mutual trust to pull off their fantasy constructs and conspiracies of little girl anarchy.

I think about how long it takes me to form friendships now. Middle-aged people are, in general, so cautious and set. It takes an investment of time to peel off the layers of protection to get to their hearts, whereas the girls immediately connect. And the extended time of this visit has allowed their game playing to spread from the downstairs playroom to Emily's bedroom and now to the upstairs living room. In fact, indoor tents have been foisted next to my favorite chair.

Lucy, our little dog, searches for a bit of sofa to curl up on. It has been converted to a trendy apartment loft for a group of stuffed teddy bears that are wearing sunglasses. The temptation for Lucy is unbearable. Small toys, like the Polly pocket collection are within reach. Lucy loves to gnaw the feet off these little dolls—to the abject horror of Emily, whose imagination has breathed life into these stylized polymers.

The smell of French toast and coffee pull all of us into the kitchen. It is mango season in lands far away and Rose has bought a case for six dollars. We feast on mango and strawberries before the newly found recipe for French toast. Rose is trying to emulate a recipe that Tamara's mom makes for her. Tamara asks for more.

After breakfast, we announce our intentions to visit the art gallery with the two girls. The girls counter with their disappointment that their game will have to stop. (At this point, the girls are ready to play the game forever and for Tamara to permanently move in to facilitate this.) They plead for the game to continue. We counter by explaining the special features of what the Art Gallery marketers describe as "Family Sunday," a once a month event where the gallery becomes a "hands-on" experience for its younger visitors. And besides, we explain, the Art Gallery is on the way back to Tamara's home and her parents are hoping to see her again.

Once the girls grok the reality that the visit has an ending, we all work at the tedious process of cleaning up and getting into the car. The car ride is non-descript as we travel to the musical musings of Charlotte Diamond.

We find the parkade located under the old Eaton's building. The bright sunshine fails to overcome the cold chill of a February day in Vancouver. Fortunately, the old law courts building, which now houses the art gallery is only a few short steps away.

The art gallery is warm and inviting and totally prepared for us. The first floor has a special show on photography. The old photos have been framed and hung like pictures.

Some photos are so old and fragile that they are covered with a light-blocking fabric that you lift for viewing. It is a window to the past-CSA approved time-travel. One part of the exhibit showed a series of 19th century photos of a moose hunt. As we looked closer, we realized that all the pictures in this series were staged. Like a movie set, these early photographers had created phony backdrops to create the illusion of being out in the wilds of Canada. These controlled situations allowed the photographers to use their bulky and slow cameras without the worrying about changes in lighting or weather. Apparently, this series and others like it were used in British magazines to inform British readers of life in the colonies.

An art gallery volunteer quietly walks up. She asks, "Would the girls like to make one?" The gallery has created a little area where each child can construct a small model of a photo shoot. The child picks a miniature backdrop and figurines for the tiny scene. Each scene is decorated with tiny trees and tools. It reminds me of the scenes that I used to construct as a boy with Grant Emms' miniature railway. The girls work furiously at their compositions. It has to be just right, for once it is constructed, one Polaroid snapshot will be taken as a souvenir.

This learning/play allows the girls to experience what went into these pictures while Rose and I take turns viewing hundreds of magnificent pictures. I love the stories that the pictures tell. There are some wonderful portraits of various characters from the Canadian past. Great portrait photos seem to spill over with the attitude and values of the participants. The revelatory nature of these photos reminds me of when, as a young man I went to take a picture of a farm laborer in Morocco. He stopped me before I could snap and told me that he did not wish to lose his soul to the camera. Now, many years later, I concur with him. If a photographer has the talent to wait until the right moment, it does seem possible to capture more than the reflection of light of an individual. I love the "truth" that I find looking into the eyes of "unmasked" subjects.

In another room of photos, I am intrigued and delighted to travel back to America in the 1940's and India in the late 19th century. The pictures of west coast First Nations peoples from the turn of the 20th century make me run back to Rose to tell her about some portraits of native women. But there is no time to show her. Emily and Tamara have both completed their miniature photo sets and an art gallery volunteer is taking a Polaroid of each creation. Each girl watches the magic of the instant photo as it changes from a reddish haze to a crystal clear picture in a few minutes. Will someone look at these pictures with curiosity sometime in the future?

Looking for more adventure, the four of us end up on the top floor of the gallery. This floor is devoted to the work of Emily Carr. I am so pleased because I really have never taken a good look at her work. So often, we miss some of the finest work available, just because it is local. In a world of intense marketing, some

of us have developed blinders and filters to works that are not promoted in certain ways.

As we arrive by escalator at the top floor, we are greeted with an oversized picture of the artist in her later years. Emily Carr projects the essence of a shaman or a Buddhist priest. Her eyes are deep and independent and shining with energy from both the present and the infinite. As we enter the presentation area, these words are written on the wall: "...enter into the life of trees, know your relationship and understand their language, unspoken, unwritten talk" (Carr, 1966, p. 30).

Seeing her work, you know that Emily Carr did indeed become profoundly at one with the forest. I was pulled into the trees and the canopies of green. It makes me reflect on Peter Elbow's "theory of voice" in literary writing (Elbow 1998). Elbow believes that a writer must be totally "in" and "of" any experience in order to write powerfully and convincingly about it. I find more writing on the wall. "People said, "Explain the pictures." But how can one explain spirit?" (Carr, 1966, p.179). While these words throw me into yet a deeper level, I see that Rose has our Emily and Tamara working hard in the hands-on area. Their challenge is first to find, within the Emily Carr works, a landscape with swirling skies; then a scene where trees that create a path and finally to discover close up and far away views. Then they are asked to sketch a favorite Carr landscape. This sketch is morphed into a pastel drawing that the gallery laminates. Emily and Tamara now have their own dinner place mats, a la Carr.

We are now running out of time. Through the pedagogical wisdom of the art gallery, Tamara and Emily have been introduced to the world of photographic art and the sublime artistry of Emily Carr. Rose and I are both energized and inspired.

In the car again, the little girls munch quietly on goodies for the picnic that we ran out of time for. We drop Tamara off and say goodbye. Both girls cry a bit. It is hard to break the bond—two voices as one. We attempt to make Emily feel better by reminding her that she will be seeing Tamara in two weeks for a trip to the ballet. There is no consoling her with logic. I reflect that Emily always wrestles with transitions from one activity to another. It seems that we are always interrupting her. I feel compassion for her. It is such a tough lesson. I think about our friends in Abbotsford and their new banner that is mounted on a door in their house. It simply and profoundly reads: "Learn to live; learn to love; learn to let go."

3. What do I create?

High Wire Guitar

Putting your foot out you feel the wire
Before you walk on water
And though you are very high
In the stratosphere, there is no
Net and certainly no turning back,
Only turning inward as you
Completely relax, Ohm Mani Padme Hum,
And unconsciously align and poise
Your mind, body and soul
In absolute concentration
To let out your voice from
The deepest pit of your spirit
As only the way you can
While the rest of the universe
Looks over your shoulders
And floats you up in a
Sea of teardrops from
The Buddha of compassion

And in the blistering whirling of the spheres
You tune into its tautness,

Its frequency and thickness
Until there is no separation
Through storm and still
 You are...
Your extension and
If all manner of things have
Locked themselves into
The most sacred pattern
When the sun makes love to the moon
And the tides roll backward to reveal
Ancient shipwrecks and cities
Of so long ago, yet you know
And the howl of the wolf
Becomes an aria of unspeakable beauty...
Then you are ready

On Music Class after a Sleepless Night

Preamble:

Teaching beginners' band is a daunting task, even at the best of times. I find that it requires enormous amounts of patience and fast thinking to make it a success.

In 1998, after a decade of successful teaching, I now encountered a new set of challenges to my career with the arrival of a baby girl. Emily provided us with immeasurable happiness and fulfillment. Emily was not able, however, to sleep through the night. She would call out loudly to us for food or attention. Friends told us to be happy about this, knowing that the frequent calls probably meant that Emily had a very active brain. Now I know that many Dads can sleep through this kind of sound, but I found that every time Emily called out, my adrenal glands would fire and my heart would race, leaving me totally awake.

After 10 months of this, both Rose and I were wrecks. It started to affect my work. My patience dwindled, as did my energy levels. In this state of exhaustion, I found that the first five minutes of class, when the children are warming up, to be the most challenging. Here is a light-hearted poem on the subject of losing your mind before the class has even started.

On Music Class after a Sleepless Night

Lazy sounds, crazy sounds,
Deep from a bed of morning silence
 They bloom
In all shapes and sizes,
Sounds of brass, sounds electric, sounds pathetic
From old reeds and moldy reeds and

Mis-reads of music with
Cases banging and music stands clanging
And young voices laughing and all of this
Speaking to me through all manner of tongue until...

The growling, howling, crashing, and clashing
Of these fragments of frequency and emotion
In this lumpy sonic mass hits
Its critical point of no return and morphs
Into one hideous multi-tendrilled entity
That continues to expand and
Feed off black hole recesses until
It suddenly lashes out at me,
Knocking me senseless with
Unbearable dissonance and decibels
That moves to destabilize my very frame
Of calm and detached professionalism (?)

I scramble to pad my ears and
Grab my baton while I
Call for the Force and the Gods of Reason.
Walking out of my office
I tap twice on the music stand, raising my hand while
Praying that the alien in my room
Will hear my call and sense my intention and
Will fail to detect my bluff
And that my sheer magnitude of conviction
Will dissipate this entity back to
A bed of silence so that the seeds of
Focus, cohesion, grace, and beauty
May take root and once again
Return us to a garden of symphony.

How Do You Determine?

Preamble:

This poem stems from a meeting with a UBC music professor with whom I was having lunch. I recall asking him about a Master's program. All his responses indicated that I had asked an "illegitimate" question—one that I should already know the answer to. As I reflect on this incident, I know that I learned a lot. I learned that I would never want to speak like this to a student. On the back of my door in my office is written "Act Neutral on the Obvious!" This is to remind me that, regardless of what I think of any question posed to me, I will endeavor to respond in a caring, supportive, and professional manner. After all, it took me 15 years to return to UBC.

How Do You Determine?

How do you determine
In your position of power
If the question put to you
Is worthy of an answer?

That is to say,
Assuming that the questioner is
Coming from a space of clean intention,
How do you differentiate between the insightful and
The plodding
How do you (dare) do...it?

Is there some special hierarchy,
A Maslow's list towards a peak experience question
That allows a value to be attached as an immediate precursor to the answer?

How often do you hear the phrase "Great Question"?
How is that so?
Are questions great that have no answer?
Or are they simply great as segues in a performance?

Let me now ask:
Have you been bereted after asking something
That seemed totally reasonable to ask?

I have.

"Well, *obviously*, you would do this,"
He bellowed, his tone and body English
Dripping with dismissive scorn.

$A=B; B=C; \text{therefore, } A=C$

Isn't it intriguing how the word
"Obviously" cues the questioner
That the question is dumb and therefore,
The questioner must **"obviously"** be dumb.

And of course, this poorly constructed question
And its crushing response leads me to
Many more silly questions about the responder, like:
Where in his experience did he adapt this response?

Learned or invented, I ask?
Did his mother or father treat him like this?
Or is it a way for him
To fend off his concerns about
His own insecurities in general,
Or perhaps to vent his own specific anger
That was generated
From allowing himself to be in a position
Where he had to dance with fools such as me?

Certainly, I felt stupid for asking because
I had foolishly assumed...
That he was wiser than that.

This Day in the Life

Preamble:

One of my continuing goals in this course is to learn how to address educational issues through a relaxed, yet informative narrative style that honors the importance of context in understanding of human issues. "This Day in the Life" reveals of a lot of my own values and philosophy on the art and science of teaching. The reflections and ruminations are strung together through the "scaffolding" of a typical day. The introduction gives the reader a general feeling of the start of a typical day. The middle of the narrative can be thought of as a reflection of past challenges of the profession. The final portion of the narrative moves into a reflection on the process of mentoring.

It's the green-labeled key that opens this door. I had to resort to colour coding as every area has its own key. As I enter the pitch-black room, I tune into its character. It feels airy, ambient and a little cool this morning in particular. I am always struck by its eerie magnitude.

In the intense blackness, I edge toward the first step. There are 21 steps downwards into this chasm. Once I find the first step, I confidently descend into the pitch, listening to the room echo back my soft steps as if it were gently complaining about being stirred so early in the morning.

Most of these mornings in the winter, I sleepwalk down the stairs and through this cavernous black hole as I always have for the last 19 years. It is just another routine that my subconscious leads me through. I even once took Emily through this route. She was not impressed.

But on the odd morning, when I am with myself, I marvel at my own fearlessness/foolishness at shuffling blindly down these bannisterless, open stairs, whose painted concrete is equally as unforgiving to a fall as the invisible hard wood bleachers that neighbor the stairs.

I still have to count the steps though, as the drop from the 21st step to the floor is almost twice the size- something that we would naturally adjust to when we have sight references.

Once on the floor, I leave the enormous unlit gym to return to its early morning sleep. Soon it will be teeming with an army of basketball Jones and its air will be displaced with volleys of rubber balls that are aimed at its baskets. I exist by a side door, and am once again outside.

After a few steps, I enter another smaller, dark edifice. This room, my classroom, has a few northern facing windows that allow in the pre-dawn sky so navigating it is much easier. Without turning on the lights I unlock my office, take off my coat and shoes and prop up my posture on the small sofa by my desk. Om Mani Padme Hum.

This office is a tiny windowed room on the southeast corner of the music portable. The pre-dawn light is so poor, that I can hardly discern the contents of the many framed photos that festoon the four walls. Pictures of my Rose and Emily hang next to pictures of my guitar collection and pictures of former students, band

trips and musical productions. They all feed the room energy and attitude. Each one tells a story in my life. Of course, there is the obligatory computer on my large oak desk. Next to it are piles of miscellaneous papers to be read and tended to. It is messy. In my nineteen years as a music teacher, I have never had even one day where I left the building feeling that I had answered all the various mail and was fully prepped for the next day. After so many hours, I just leave. I hate this level of mediocrity, but I am more fearful of losing my life to this job.

I know that teaching is one of the greatest and most important jobs one could do. But through the lens of a more cynical context, I've watched career teachers pour their soul into this learning community, only to find themselves as strangers to the building and its inhabitants within a very few years of retirement. The system gobbles them up, squeezing out the juices of their inspiration and compassion and then spits them out and turns away. Having given too much to their jobs, these people have not structured a life outside these halls of learning. They usually leave under strained circumstances and they function like the undead of the system. Their time had come but they resist the call. They seem condemned to a twilight zone of memories of teaching past and uncomfortable visits back to the school.

Of course, there are many teachers who have completely rewarding careers and move on to the next adventure with grace and ease and humour. But it is the odd few that leave kicking and screaming that haunt my psyche.

On a good day, the 50-kilometer drive to work takes about 50 minutes. It's a hard drive and often I am witness to a lot of impatience and frustration as

thousands of cars on my route squeeze through a bridge and a tiny corridor to move to work.

I purposefully arrive at work before 7:30 am. This gives me time to unwind from the commute prior to opening the room at 8:00 am. In the darkness, I sit on my office couch and meditate. Transcendental Meditation, or TM, is the style that I practise. For almost 20 years, I faithfully meditated twice a day. When Emily was born in 1998, I had to put my meditating on hold. In 2003, I was able to squeeze in one meditation a day and I've been pretty well stuck at that amount.

I have always received tremendous benefit from this Eastern discipline. In fact, I was shocked at how much TM had increased my well-being, my creativity and my ability to concentrate. In fact, soon after I started meditating, I became evangelistic and told all my friends that they had to try it. To my chagrin, none of my friends found much value in the practice and all stopped.

I don't know why I get so much out of TM but after the failure of my friends, I hardly ever tell people about it. I just do. After 20 minutes of the practise, I've left the drive totally behind.

Between 8:00 and 8:30, I turn on the lights, unlock the doors and brew some strong coffee. Students are invited to come in for extra help at this time. Extra help sessions are special for the "professional" me as they are a time when I can really dig in and work one on one without the pressure of the class dynamics. It is a time where I can really support and make a difference. It is also a time when I can increase my rapport and understanding of a student.

Today, Mark, a grade 7 beginner from a nearby feeder school, has booked in for the help session. It is not the first session. We have been meeting quite

regularly as Mark is really struggling. I have learned through the years that children of the same age can wildly vary in their development. Mark is 12 years old, but really he's just a little boy, who is trying hard to stay a little boy. In his regular class he is almost always off-task socializing, making funny faces and pretending to play his bass guitar. Now he is seriously behind the rest of the class.

He has reluctantly agreed to accept some help. His mother brought him to the first session. He was not happy. I watched the dynamic between the mother and the child. I sensed that the child is very powerful within that dynamic.

Today is his fourth visit. When I do get him focused, I find that he can learn the material as well as any one. We make some progress and he leaves happy. I worry about next year. How will he handle the rigors of high school life?

When I help these students, I abandon any expectations on how the learning should progress. For example, I will continue to slow down my rate of teaching, even to painfully slow levels and small steps if it is required. I will endlessly repeat processes and re-frame them until the concept or technique is absorbed. The student's own ability and needs determine the rate of learning and the amount of learning. No judgment is passed on the student. I try to be calm, easy and upbeat. Any "one on one" work with a student always changes the dynamics of our relationship. It invariably improves it. On many levels, my early morning help session is the most fruitful time of the day.

At 8:25, the warning bell sounds. I quickly run to the washroom, as the coffee won't let me carry on until 9:47. We have one hour and seventeen minute classes. To me, this length of class is too much for grade 8 and 9 students. My

frustration with this issue gives me cause to reflect on some of the internal processes of the teaching profession.

The intersection of politics with the education of children was something that I was not prepared for as a novice teacher. The educational slogan of our provincial government: "Students come first," evokes mixed responses within me. One of the educational truisms that I have developed is that scarcity evokes political activity. When I entered the profession in the late 1980's, I found that the various departments in the school were broken into separate camps and each aggressively sought favor with the administration in order to garner monies to run their under-funded programs. With this increased politicism, I noticed a proportionate decrease in ethical action.

The timetable issue was driven primarily by through the needs of the science department. We had been running 5/55-minute blocks a day. The school at this time was number 1 in the province as determined by the conservative think-tank—the "Fraser Institute report." One would have to determine that, by the measure of the Fraser Institute, we were doing well as a school. The Lab teachers wanted more time to clean up after labs. Their department head had the ear of a lot of people and successfully spearheaded the committee for change. I am sure it has been good for the lab sessions, but I feel that the result has been devastating for the 13 and 14 year olds at our school. My sense is that it is just too long for the grade 8's and 9's to sit and focus. Children need to move. At least, in the old system, the kids rose up and moved to their next class every 55 minutes. Furthermore, these long classes have moved lunch times to 12.53! This makes third block classes unfocussed and unruly, as people are much too hungry to be productive.

Besides peer politics, I have encountered and worked through administrative politics and school board politics. In my first years of teaching, I actively engaged in rapport building activities with my administrators. I soon learned that many administrators had come from PE backgrounds. I feared that in a financial squeeze, administrators might cut programs that they were unfamiliar with. In order to increase their understanding of the value of the arts, I would form after-school rock bands with the administration. The principal and vice-principals would sing or play with me. Inevitably, we would perform for laughs at school district functions. I found this strategy to be very effective in raising the perceived value of the arts.

Rick Myers, one of my sponsor teachers when I was a student teacher, always said that if you want to get access to power (money), befriend the PAC. Rick clearly understood the relationship between the parents and the principals. I have not asked for much from our PAC, but when I did, I learned the wisdom in Rick's statement.

In fact, a woman on the PAC noticed that I had not been asking for any money. Myra told me that it was time for my department to get some financial support. She asked what I had dreamt about having in my band room. I told her that I would love to get a small recording studio, as I believed that making a recording of the students would generate much learning for my classes. Within two months, I had a fully equipped 16 Digital recording system, complete with microphones, cables and processing equipment. The PAC had put a major portion of their fund-raising money into the project.

This was an incredible win for the music department, but I found the next part of the story much more curious. I needed a small sound booth to house the new recording system. My PAC friend told me that Superintendent would have Facilities construct the booth. I warned her that it might be difficult for me to get the board to finance this. Myra, however, did not see this as a problem. She simply went to the board office and told the Superintendent to built it, as the PAC had already invested so much money in the purchase of the equipment.

Periodically, Myra would phone me to ask how the construction was going. If it were not up to her satisfaction, she would march down to the board office and give the Superintendent a hard time. As the process was nearing an end, I got another call from Myra. "Is it finished yet?" she inquired. "They tell me it will be complete by Thursday," I replied. "I'll be down to see it then," she quipped.

When Thursday arrived, the room was not quite finished but, to my thinking, close enough. "Well," said Myra, after receiving the royal tour, "I must be going now to take the Superintendent this apple pie that I cooked for her." "What if the project had not been finished?" I shyly asked. "In that case, I was going to "North Shore News" to have it printed that the Sea View PAC had spent \$10,000 on equipment that was not being used on account of the Superintendent." I knew that Myra was telling the truth. The Superintendent could be difficult at times, but Myra understood her aversion for bad press.. In some ways, the superintendent didn't stand a chance.

Neither did the teachers when they when they tried to defend their interests with the Superintendent. In a budget saving move, the Superintendent cancelled the position of department head. This position was not protected in our

contract at the time. So, the Superintendent pulled back the money for the position, although she fully expected the department heads to continue their duties, albeit for free.

This position was not a highly paid one. Teachers, who were in service as department heads, received a few thousand dollars a year in exchange for a lot of meetings and work. My staff, however, was very offended by this swift and unexpected action. As a reaction, the staff voted to not attend the summer pro-day morning in late August-the one where they had to listen to the Superintendent's annual report. The result of this action was that Sea View went through many years of no monies for school renovation or updating.

Instead, it seemed to the staff at Sea View that the Superintendent took all the monies for upgrading and repair and poured it into neighbouring Clover Bluffs High. This school had accepted the Superintendent's cut in department head pay. There had been no overt action. Was Clover Bluffs deemed the good employees and the good school, as the Sea View teachers suspected?

I was reminded of this real or imagined disparity one day, when I saw my friend, John, arriving with a clock for the school. "Are you bringing us a new clock?" I asked, not really caring for an answer, but rather wanting to connect with John. "Oh, this isn't a new clock, it's from Clover Bluffs High." Doesn't Clover Bluffs need it?" I inquired. "Oh no, these analog clocks have been junked by Clover Bluffs. They only use digital clocks." We were getting Clover Bluffs' throw-aways.

On a much larger scale, our school has no theatre. This is despite a strong performing arts tradition. About 5 years ago, a wonderful woman named Fay Billings wanted to build, as a legacy, a dual-use community/school theatre. That is,

both the community and the school would share the facility. The school would provide the land at a school site and Fay Billings would donate \$5.5 million dollars to construct the facility.

Our school naturally lobbied for the theatre. Now I will not pretend to know what happened in the backroom negotiations, but I know that Clover Bluffs High was chosen by the Superintendent as the site for the theatre, even though it had a fully functioning and great sounding theatre already. I'll never forget the feeling I had as I watched them demolish this theatre in order to build a new one when Sea View had no performance venue to display the talents of their kids. We could have had two theatres instead of one. In a final ironic twist, Sea View was given the old seats from the theatre that was been demolished in order to convert the drama room into a small theatre.

Clearing my mind of the past, I focus on the tasks at hand. My first class of the day, which starts at 8:30am is one of my favorite classes. It is my R&B (Rhythm and Blues) Band Class. I love this class for a number of reasons, but mainly for the fact that it teaches the students how to play by ear. Each student receives a CD of R&B material at the beginning of the year. The goal is for the band to figure out what to play off the CD and then to go out and perform the material. Besides providing ear training, this course offers other benefits: it introduces them to Afro-American soul music of the 1960's and 1970's; it develops team mentality; it teaches the group independence and responsibility, collective decision making, higher performance standards, and it develops leadership qualities in students. This course was developed by myself to foster learning that was not being addressed to my satisfaction through traditional concert band programs. One of

the things that I have learned is that *children are “able.”* By that I mean that if you open the doors of expectation to greater learning, children will often rise to meet the challenge.

One of the gratifying by-products of this course is the collective maturity of the band. If, by chance, the office needs to speak with me and I arrive late to class, the class will have started without me. What a fulfilling moment this is.

This band, along with my after-school jazz ensembles, is clearly one of the highlights of my teaching experience. It is a long journey of technical and aesthetic growth from the Grade 7 beginners' band to these ensembles. The community has thoroughly embraced the R&B band. Consequently, the band is frequently asked to play for assorted functions and celebrations outside of school.

Kerry Stalling, my student teacher, is teaching the second block of the day. He is 26 years old and just starting on his journey. Kerry is the 8th student teacher that I've sponsored. He is a “natural” at this game, with superior knowledge of wind instruments and an irrepressible energy and positive personality.

When they show promise, student teachers can be wonderful aides in getting me a little more in order. Student teachers always provide an excellent mirror for myself. They make me uncomfortably aware of the areas that I need to work on. Student teachers also eventually provide me with valuable catch-up time with my work. And it is really a joy to discuss pedagogy and strategy with them.

Kerry has chosen to teach stage band during his first week. His confidence and love of the material is obvious to the class. They listen and co-operate. The class is, in general, a success. Afterwards, I talk with Kerry about pacing and momentum to keep up the fun and get through all the learning objectives. He

listens carefully. Finally, I explain that all the classes, regardless of how nice they are at the beginning, will test him to determine his boundaries. I tell him to avoid taking it personally and that it is just a natural need for students to discover limits.

Two weeks later, Kerry tells me that he realizes that classroom teaching is much more a psychological "game" than he thought and that his musical knowledge is not that important. I tell him that both psychological and musical knowledge are both important and that he brings a lot to offer the kids. Secretly, I am very heartened by his epiphany so that we can move and discuss psychological issues and strategies.

Getting into the Water

Week One

I can feel you thinking
That I'm just another old fool
And that I cannot match
Your knowledge base
And your youthful age
And your passion for your art
And your humour and your earring

This gig will be easy, you assume
Music has been your life; your calling
So it should be nothing at all
To get the kids to fall in
And to whisper their whim
That you, like him, would be
Their teacher of choice

But though you bristle with confidence
And though I whistle at your technique
You do not yet understand that
Still waters run deep
And teaching is much more
Complex than first appears
And just as a virtuoso musician

Can seduce you into believing
That something incredibly hard
Is actually easy,
Don't be fooled by that apparition
For you are like a swan that has
Never seen water
And never flown south
For the winter
And though
You maybe genetically pre-disposed
Nothing will replace getting wet
And into the water

Week Two

What happened?
Didn't I explain?
Watch carefully
Now who is to blame?
That the timing is off
And you're not following
Your very own plan
And the children are
Re-directing your objectives
And you are played into their hand
And get your head up!
Don't you see?
What has transpired in the class
As you waxed poetic about your past?

You must lead, but not too slowly
Or the class will totally
Pull you down, nothing personal,
They'll do it at any rehearsal
To any conductor
That fails to keep moving
For these kinetic beings
Can hardly keep still so
You better be on top of your game
And use your smarts and will
And guide the train before it derails

Week Three

What is this that you've found?
We may have common ground
 After all
 As you notice how easily
 I step in and steer you away
 From a disastrous fall
And now you are starting to see
Teaching requires subject knowledge
But just as much it needs strategy
 And intuition and subtlety
 To fly and inspire respectfully

 And now I sense
 A change in the game
You're watching and talking
 And gleaning my ideas
 And I too
 Am open to you
 For you have much
 To teach me as well
 So let us work as one
 The old and the young
 And tap out this time
 For all its worth
 To play in one of
The greatest shows on earth

The third block of the day is my band class of 43 grade 8's. I have scheduled a test for this block. I'm initially interrupted by a visit from a person from facilities. The children set up their instruments and furiously practise the test piece while I say hello to Craig. I've known Craig for a number of years. Craig is a smiling, middle-aged tradesman who is often assigned repair and restoration jobs at our school. Due to cutbacks, he usually delivers mail and parcels for the school district, but today he is busy measuring our windows in the music portable. He will bring to closure a subject of stress for me. Two years ago, one of the narrow music portable

windows was broken by thieves who proceeded to steal a number of instruments. Although facilities installed a motion sensor to capture and deter future break-ins, I asked for some subtle white bars to be placed across the windows in such a way as to block entry. This measure is being implemented just at the right time as I have heard that music rooms in Surrey and Burnaby have been robbed.

After answering Craig's design questions, I move quickly to start the class. I am thwarted again as half a dozen Grade 8 students run up to me. They are all filled with reasons why they shouldn't be tested today. Some seem legitimate and have brought notes from home. Others are lacking the documentation and are begging for special treatment. This is really hard for me. To reduce this kind of negotiation, I perennially review a hand-out entitled "Tests and Test Protocol." This is to make a flawed process as fair as possible.

Tests and Test Protocol

1. FIVE TO SEVEN DAYS NOTICE OF A TEST WILL BE GIVEN.
2. TESTS WILL ONLY BE ON MATERIAL STUDIED IN CLASS.
3. TESTS ARE OUT OF 25 MARKS AND ARE BASED ON THE PLAYING OF CORRECT:
NOTES,
RHYTHM,
ARTICULATION,
DYNAMICS,
AND TONE, TUNING, POSTURE, AND A PROJECTION OF THE UNDERLYING EMOTIONAL MESSAGE IN THE PIECE, (IE- THE "SPIRIT" OF THE PIECE).
4. IF YOU WANT HELP OR AN OPINION ON HOW YOU WOULD BE GRADED, PLEASE ARRANGE A MEETING WITH MR. T. NO LATER THAN 48 HOURS PRIOR TO THE TEST. MR. T. WOULD BE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU!
5. YOU MAY HAVE TWO "TRYS" IN A ROW AT THE MATERIAL.

6. IF YOU ARE SICK, YOU MUST PRESENT A HAND WRITTEN NOTE FROM YOUR PARENT/GUARDIAN. THIS NOTE MUST INCLUDE A SIGNATURE AND A PHONE NUMBER. MR. T WILL PHONE HOME!
7. IF, FOR SOME REASON, YOU ARE PRESENT, BUT ARE UNPREPARED TO PLAY THE TEST, (EG- FORGOT INSTRUMENT, FORGOT MUSIC, FORGOT REEDS, CORDS, ETC. OR ARE SUDDENLY FEELING POORLY), YOU WILL LOSE 5 MARKS FOR EACH CONSECUTIVE DAY THAT YOU DO NOT PLAY THE TEST.
8. THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO "SKIP" THE CLASS ON THE DAY OF THE TEST, WILL, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCHOOL POLICY, RECEIVE AN AUTOMATIC "o" ON THE QUIZ.

BE READY TO PLAY ON THE ASSIGNED TEST DAY. PLEASE DO NOT ASK FOR A TIME EXTENSION, OR A RETEST. IT'S NOT FAIR TO THE OTHERS.

REMEMBER-ANYONE WHO PRACTISES 30 MINUTES A NIGHT, 5 DAYS A WEEK WILL HAVE LITTLE TROUBLE MAINTAINING A FIRST CLASS MARK IN THIS COURSE.

GOOD LUCK!

MR. T.

As I review this list, I am struck at the number of issues addressed as well as the general complexity of this form. It is really the antithesis of my teaching style. In my handouts, I strive for clarity and simplicity. Here, I have failed. In fact, I am reminded of an episode encapsulated by Gary Larson in the "Far Side" cartoons. In this particular cartoon, an old, experienced elementary school teacher has written on the board a list of do's and don'ts-much like this one. In the cartoon, the list is endless and absolutely ridiculous in detail. It is an extremely funny and absurd cartoon whose potency is derived from some connection to the truth. Over the years of teaching, the old teacher has heard just about every excuse and witnessed just about every possible slip in behavior. The ridiculous list is her attempt at class control.

My handout has the sense of a legal document. Unfortunately, I have found that at every test, the Grade 8's have a rash of sickness (although they are well enough to attend school) and an epidemic of forgetfulness. What is even more frustrating is that the students will aggressively argue for their "right" to not be tested. So, in order to protect myself from being accused of being unfair, I have constructed this protocol. This clarifies the "rules" around testing. I never spring tests on them. I encourage students to see me to prep for the tests. I talk about what I am marking on in great detail with volunteers playing a mock test. Children can be excused from tests, but a note must accompany it. Finally, I use an audiotape to record the test days so that I can explain in detail to upset students and parents the areas of competence and the areas that need more work.

Having said all this, most of the students receive first class marks in my band classes. By grade 9, most students can guess within half a mark, what any student performance will be worth.

I use this system for every class, with the exception of the R&B class. In this senior class, I allow the children to contribute to the final grade through peer-evaluation. Peers determine two marks-an effort mark and a skills or result-based mark for every student in the class. I do the same for each student. The peer-assessed marks are averaged out so I end up with a class perspective of each student's effort and a results mark. These two marks are added together with my assessment of each student's effort and results mark. The average of these four marks gives me a final mark for their report cards. In using this system, I acknowledge that it weighs heavily on effort. But I want the students to take the risks needed to meet the challenges of the course and consequently grow as

musicians. Learning to play by ear is a very unnerving prospect for many students. I believe as a music educator that children must move from being "paper" dependent to becoming explorers of sound who are open to other systems of learning music. This is how music originally and organically came to be and still is the modus operandi for a lot of the world.

The class ends and it is lunchtime. I collect my lunch from my office and start to make my way to the staff room. As I open my door to leave my office, my eye catches some of my own graffiti. The children can't see it, but I can't miss it whenever I leave my office. At the top of the door, scrawled in black marker is "Learning should be fun!" This simple phrase eloquently describes the pivotal concept of my teaching philosophy. I believe that children learn faster and retain more when there is joy and passion attached to the lesson-regardless of the content. Implicit in that statement is that there is an underlying rhythm and momentum to any good teaching. I believe that even some of the driest topics can be re-formatted to be delivered in more meaningful ways to children.

As my eyes scan downward on the door, the next scrawl comes into view. It reads: "Act neutral on the obvious." This cryptic message is written to help me keep professional at points when I could lose it. One of the ways I can lose my professional edge is by assuming expectations of behaviors that I have not addressed in class. Sometimes in the past I would find myself surprised at acts of totally inappropriate behavior or the lack of the most fundamental social skills of certain students. I would find myself wanting to respond to these obviously inappropriate actions by saying, "You should know better...." Now, in the 21st Century, with a diverse multi-cultural clientele that often come from compromised

family situations, I tend to act in a very neutral manner to even the most outlandish acts of inappropriateness and calmly explain our school's expectations—hence, “Act neutral on the obvious.”

As I am leaving my office, two students enter to ask a question. As they leave, they spot old promo photos of the bands that I played with in my professional days. They laugh crazily when they find me with long hair and rock attire. The experience of professional playing has been an invaluable tool in my arsenal of teaching strategies.

My entire musical career has been a hybrid affair. Although I heard a lot of music at our house when I was growing up, I was not motivated to learn music until the Beatles hit the airwaves. This led to a 20-year journey into rock, blues, R&B and pop music. When I came out of professional playing to attend UBC's school of music, I ended up with a degree in classical music. As I was unfamiliar with this genre, I majored in musicology so that I could gain a wide historical perspective. Now I am very taken with jazz music and I am studying it at home. I have taken these various genres and molded a three-way system for my teaching. I teach classical music, jazz and R&B. And so, after the junior years of generic skill building, grade 10 students audition for the orchestra class, the various jazz ensembles or the R&B class.

My student teacher and I head up to the cafeteria. We have about 25 minutes to eat before we must drive to our first feeder school. I tremendously enjoy my precious time with the staff upstairs. It is “adult” time in a day saturated with youngsters. There is a wonderful array of characters at the table. Kristy is the librarian and Robert teaches English. Harry used to be an editor and book

publisher in another life. Doug is working part-time as a chemistry teacher so that he can complete his masters' degree at Royal Rhodes. Right now, I like to sit next to Brian, our drama teacher. He and I are going through a teaching rite of passage—the “high school musical” and we need to be close for our own preservation.

Attempting to mount a professional Broadway musical that was not designed in any way for high school or amateur actors, musicians, or technicians is potentially an extremely stressful situation. It is financially stressful and pedagogically stressful. In fact, one could launch an argument that it is a very unsound activity for any music student to attempt.

Some schools, however, have long-standing traditions of high school musicals. My school has been producing them since it opened in the early 1960's. When I started in 1988, we produced four musicals in four years. After that, I successfully argued to have a musical every other year and a band trip on the off years. Although the musicals are a great experience for those on stage, it is a lot of unrewarding work for the pit musicians. Students spend untold hours struggling with parts that require exacting and expert reading skills. Often, the brass parts require players with exceedingly high range. And an irritating feature for amateurs is the constant transpositions of songs into very difficult key signatures. The music is leased to us on a month-to-month basis. It is expensive to lease and so we will have had access to the music for about 3 months, prior to show time.

At least in the original shows, the musicians were well paid for their efforts. Many New York pros spent their careers in the cavernous holes of the Broadway theatres. In lieu of money, Brian and I have created other “wins” for the music students. We put them up on stage. With this approach, friends and parents can

see the band students. The musicians are also featured with individual pictures and write-ups in the programme. Through these means, the student musicians feel much more included in the production.

This year, we are producing "South Pacific" One of my strategies for improving the band's performance and helping the dancers and singers is to record the instrumental parts of the music as soon as the band can get through it. I just finished recording the band. Now the singers will have "bed" tracks to sing and practise with and the dancers will be able to adjust to the band tempos and interpretation of the music. The musicians and I will critically review the recording and work to fix problems. If time permits, we will do a second run of recording. Prior to that, on Spring Break, I will record the singers so that they may have a good mirror of their performance to analyze

I rehearse the musical orchestra until it has actually transcends what we thought we could achieve. On the last week of rehearsals, I make sure that everyone has the speaking cues for starting each musical part written in their music. Then I ask a band member (usually the drummer), to count in the cues. With the drummer starting each number, I have literally handed over the musical to the students. Now there is no need for a conductor. I find that this final step has some risks, but by pulling the teacher out of the equation, the maturity of the band members blooms like tulips on a spring day.

Senior students crave a chance to lead by themselves. And successful risk taking in leadership at this age, I believe, can be a life-altering experience. I just stack the deck a bit, as I train the orchestra so thoroughly, that they automatically play everything with my exact interpretation of the music. Still, the risks and

responsibilities to come in correctly and on time are still real. And although I am in the theatre, I am not within easy for any crisis as I am usually mixing the band on the soundboard at the front of the hall.

Our last production step will be knitting the musicians, actors, dancers, singers and technicians into one presentable product. This is called "running the musical." When you run a musical, certain energy and rhythm emanates from the amalgam of the various parts. This flow and focus will make or destroy a musical. Drops in pacing and emotion just create another "bad" school musical that everybody politely suffers through. Great flow and energy can take the musical beyond the expectations of any high school production.

And so Brian and I end up talking about details of the musical before Kerry and I hurry to the car to get to our feeder school. Today, we teach the afternoon block at Ecole Paul Jones. This is one of three feeder schools that I service in the afternoon block. When I initially started working this job, Sea View, I was a grade 7-12 school. Unlike many other districts, there was no will to support band programs at an elementary level. So, beginning band was taught at Grade 7 in Sea View. Approximately 6 years ago, the district removed the grade 7's from the high school and put them back into the elementary schools. I was very concerned about the future of the music program at Sea View. I believe that students need to start learning a musical instrument before puberty. Consequently, I have been driving to the feeder schools ever since this change. It is tiring being itinerant after all these years, but I have learned, in my district, that if I don't look after and lobby for my program, it will quickly disappear.

The beginner band classes are the most challenging part of the day. They demand energy, organization and infinite patience. I must control the class, but at the same time optimize the fun so that the children will sense value in learning an instrument and choose to carry on to study it at high school. My classes are very high paced. In January, I start teaching them rock and roll classics from the '50's. The kids love songs like "La Bamba," "Tequila" and "The Locomotion." If I can get the kids to "rock" I usually can expect a good number to continue in Grade 8 at Sea View.

At 3:00 o'clock I have about 15 minutes down time before I start my after-school jazz improvisation ensembles. I have a junior and a senior ensemble. I run these after school bands as enriched programs for gifted learners. My approach to maximizing the learning success of my program is as follows:

1. The bulk of the students learn in the classroom setting. I pace my yearly outcomes on the learning rhythms of each class so that the bulk of the students succeed to achieve my defined outcomes.
2. Children who cannot meet the rhythm of the class learning are invited for continued before-school private help from me.
3. Students who clearly need challenge beyond the classroom are invited to meet the challenge of learning jazz improvisation in an extra-curricular setting with other gifted students.

And so, through these before and after school sessions, I feel that I've made some improvement on the bulk learning formula of public education. Although I don't get paid for these services, I sleep better at night knowing that there is opportunity for my students to either catch up or be challenged through music program.

The junior and senior after-school jazz ensembles are tremendously rewarding for me. I love teaching at an “advanced” level. These students receive college level theory. It is really nice to be teaching and playing without the issues of discipline. The senior jazz ensemble with its hard bop and “Kind of Blue” repertoire has become a favorite in our district for receptions and gatherings that require music that creates a pleasant ambience.

These ensembles take up my after-school time for two days a week. On other days, after school, I attend Master’s classes, rehearse for this year’s musical, or work on our yearly band trip.

This ends the day. My head swims from multi-tasking. The sun is setting and I’m off for the final leg of my workday, the 50-kilometer battle home.

Soon I’ll be:

Deep in the grid and lock of 9 to 5
Eating the fumes and cursing buffoons
In a panic to get off the tar
For domestic abyss in my little house in the sub
With its 70’s big engine time warp and
Neighbors who are white-right of Arnold...

...and I will start the next part of my day—the one with my family. I leave my work at work until I return once again in the pre-dawn hours to descend the long gym bleacher stairs and start another day.

A Trilogy of Developmental Stories

The Story of “The Blues Brothers—a Musical”

Charlie Phillips and I had played together in a lot of bands when we were much younger. Now, as professional educators, we were once again working as a team. This time it was in the roles of music teacher and drama teacher.

I had already been teaching music at Sea View for five years prior to Charlie becoming the drama teacher. During this tenure, I had established myself in my role and my personal priorities, interests and passions were starting to surface in the program.

One tradition that I had to deal with was a community expectation for a musical. I was not very keen on musicals, but as a new teacher, I was quite concerned with local politics and policies. Consequently, I had, in partnership with the previous drama teachers, produced "Fiddler on the Roof," "The Sound of Music," "Grease" and "Bye-bye Birdie."

With Charlie taking on the position of drama teacher, I knew that I would have to become inventive in my approach to the musical. Charlie was a modern visionary who possessed Olympian energy and dedication to his job. I knew that he had no time for "old" Broadway musicals that tended to represent values and sentiments of the past. I also knew that Charlie was crazy about Rhythm and Blues-urban Afro-American soul music from the 1960's- so much so, that I had connected him with a "Blues Brothers" tribute band. Charlie loved to perform on his Hammond B3 organ with a band that parodied the comedic story of the movie that starred John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd.

"How about creating "The Blues Brothers—a Musical," I suggested, putting into my voice a positive spin. "We could write our own script over a background of famous R&B songs. Why, you could even play the B3 in the musical!" The creative potential of this situation was way too great for a champion educator like Charlie to pass on.

“I want to add John Peppard to the team,” he said. John was a young Social Studies teacher at the school. John loved Charlie’s energy and vision and tried to model his style after Charlie. “John has been taking courses on how to write screen plays for Television,” Charlie continued. “I will work with him on the script. I will also be the producer and set designer. Michael, you, of course, will be the music director.”

Creating the musical would be challenging. Usually the songwriters and lyricists compose songs that are generated from a libretto or text. The purposes of the songs are many. For example, the songs can describe what has passed in the action or what emotions the singer or the group is experiencing. Songs can also move the plot forward by detailing what will happen next. We had a unique situation in that the songs and their lyric stories were already composed. Furthermore, there was no intentional thematic linkage between these R&B hits.

Our first step was to compile a number of outstanding R&B hits. I dug through my CD’s and constructed an anthology that included artists like Wilson Pickett, Sam and Dave, Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Smokey Robinson, The Four Tops, to name a few. John took this collection and notated the themes of the lyrics for each song. Then, by luck and creativity, he was able to see a potential “coherence” in a number of the songs. To his credit, John, with Charlie’s support, constructed a fine libretto. The story ended up being strong in itself, with no connection, except in name to the original “Blues Brothers” movie script.

Once John had narrowed down the list to those songs that would be in the musical, it was my job to transcribe all the parts of all the songs and then teach them to my stage band. This represented a lot of work. Fortunately, I had a student

teacher. I recall countless hours in my school office transcribing. I used headphones as I fought to block out the sounds of the classes while the student teacher taught. The parts were all handwritten.

As I finished each song, I would then proceed to teach them to my senior stage band class. The class seemed very interested in the material and it was an easy fit for the instrumentation as most R&B records use horns as well as guitar, drums, bass and keyboards.

We had some real "finds" in our casting. Although we thought we knew all the actor/singers in the school, we were delighted to discover a young leading man, James Olen. James was a football player, who had not worked with the fine arts department. There were three components to the casting calls. The first component was a dramatic reading. The second component was a dance number. Finally, the student had to sing a song. We were shocked to discover that James sounded exactly like the young male singer who starred in the R&B movie "The Commitments." We paired up James with another strong singer, Luke Goodall. The two made a magical team. Other characters quickly fell into place. The drama was starting to take shape.

Another hurdle to jump was that of securing a theatre. Unfortunately, our school did not have a proper theatre. We had a large gym that had a stage at one end. Charlie was not happy with this venue. Ever since he started teaching, Charlie has always tried to envision bigger and more exciting learning experiences for children. So it did not come as a surprise to learn that he had talked the owner of the Park Royal cinemas into loaning us one of his three cinemas to rehearse and foist the production.

Now we had a script, music, cast of actors, and a performance venue. We set up an intensive practice schedule to knit together the individual work of the actors, dancers, and band. Putting a show together so that it has an energy and a pulse of its own is a challenging proposition. It is hard enough to develop the students to a quality level either in singing, dancing, acting, or playing, but it is a daunting task to put the individual parts together in such a way that the overall sum of energy surpasses the total of the individual parts.

With this show, our level of success shocked all of us. The musical did launch and develop an energy of its own. But there was another factor for success that we underestimated. We hadn't really calculated the universal appeal of R&B music. We discovered both the parents and the students loved this music. Not only did we have a sold-out run at the Park Royal cinema, but, also, we ended up taking the production downtown and having a successful run at the Vogue Theatre.

The tremendous success of this experience spurred the teaching team to begin a run of original musicals wherein the music as well as the librettos was conceived by the team. My work moved to include composition as well as band directing. But greatest impact on my program and my career came from a vision of creating a class devoted to a curriculum of R&B music.

The Story of the Creation of the Rhythm and Blues Class

After a summer of reflection on the success of "The Blues Brothers-A Musical," I decided that I wanted to switch the focus of my senior stage band class. I had been quite frustrated with the standard fare of high school band music. I felt

that it was staid and tired and hopelessly out of date. I decided that I wanted to teach a class about R&B music.

To understand the reasoning behind this undertaking beyond the obvious success of the musical, I must reveal some more of my values and reflections as a musician, educator and human. The following is an excerpt from an essay of mine that was written as part of an assignment for a course on Action Research.

The making of music has always held a very special place in my life. It has provided continuous challenge and rewards. Moreover, it has been a place of sanctuary and self-expression. From an early age, music making has consistently grounded and revitalized my spirit. In fact, it has been a world unto itself—a world of never ending joy, adventure, and learning. It has given me a platform to launch my priorities, my values and my point of view. It has allowed me a level of self-determination that would be hard to obtain in the real world. It is because of this rich, fulfilling, and multi-faceted experience that I determined I would spread this joy to others—I would become a teacher.

Teaching my beloved subject in the public high school system was, initially, a far cry from my previous experience with music. In my naivety, I had not considered the non-musical issues, such as class control, dealing with parents, principals and school-based politics in general. Fortunately, over the years, I have developed strategies and learned skills that have helped me overcome these impediments. In fact, my program has become quite successful. One area, however, where I have only experienced limited success is in adjusting to the limitations of the curriculum—a curriculum that for the most part, tends to support the music from a past colonial culture.

The band music curriculum in North American public schools has been dominated by the concert band genre and its associated repertoire. This is an old genre with roots in the British military tradition. The genre includes marches, anthems and a generous borrowing of repertoire from the classical and jazz idioms. Today's band teachers have virtually all grown up under the auspices of this system. Their values and formative notions of pedagogy have been influenced by this system. Consequently, band programs in North America have been structured to deliver and maintain this style of music. So pervasive is this genre, one finds that high school jazz bands, who actually play a more modern and indigenous style and repertoire, are reduced in importance and viewed in schools as an add-on or adjunct to the concert band experience. Junior and senior concert bands are considered the pre-eminent bands in many schools. The concert band approach, though it is thorough, sequential and grounded in a good technical pedagogy, might benefit from a revitalization of the curriculum by some of the advances, both musically and technologically, of today's world.

The main area of contention seems to be the repertoire itself. In my experience, concert band repertoire does not connect with young performers. It does not move them emotionally and, in general, the students do not connect with the underlying messages or the pulse of this music. This detachment seems quite

reasonable if one accepts the notion that music is one of the great purveyors and representatives of culture.

Concert band music, for the most part does not reflect the culture of today. Few people, if any, in today's society listen to concert band music. One cannot find a "concert band" section in most CD stores. Students never enter my classroom listening to concert band music. I suggest that, for the most part, music teachers are teaching a historical form that is detached from the world, as we know it now. It comes as no surprise then that students are not reaping the wonderful rewards of playing music-the rewards that have consistently nourished and sustained my interest and drove me to teaching in the first place.

The creation of an R&B course initially seemed to be a solution to my issues with the curriculum as it was being taught in most high schools in British Columbia. I had learned through the musical that the children loved R&B music. Although it is still not completely a current genre, it is much closer to today's music than any concert or stage band repertoire could hope to be and it uses brass, so that it can be open to lots of my students.

When I decided to implement this idea, I knew that it was critical that I enlist some of the great singers from the musical. Without their level of talent, I did not think that I could launch any kind of program that could publicly perform. As fate would have it, James Olen, one of the two stars of our show, had a spare block that coincided with the fledgling R&B class. Furthermore, two more female singers from the musical were also able to alter their timetables to allow them to join. The class could fly!

I wanted this class to parrot a lot of the experiences and memories that I had as a professional musician. When I played with bands in Vancouver nightclubs, for example, we could not wait for the music of the current rock and pop hits to be printed. Instead, we learned all the material by ear. If we had trouble, we would help each other. Also, the show had to be tight and professional, as there was much

competition for the gigs. As is often the case, there were many more bands in the area than there was work. Of course, we had to look good as well as sound good. Although nothing was really choreographed, we still moved on stage and rocked hard. We had to connect with the audience and take them on a musical adventure every night. Song lists were carefully constructed and there were no delays between songs, or we would lose the dancers and the atmosphere that we were trying to create. Finally, there was a special bond that formed between the band members. All of us wanted to survive and succeed in the business.

I run the class with much of the attitude and techniques that were employed during my professional tenure. The course is accessed through auditions. It is dominated by Grade 11 and Grade 12 music students, most of who have worked with me since Grade 7 beginner band and have grown through the hierarchy of learning in the Sea View music program.

At the first class of each school year, each student receives a CD of approximately 22 songs. One of the outcomes of the course is for each student to learn their part for each of the songs. We generally try to tackle a new song every class or two. Students initially work on the assigned song at home, and produce a short set of notes describing what they were able to transcribe. I collect these notes. They represent the effort made by each student to develop their ears. The effort is acknowledged-not whether the notes are right or wrong. We then look at the song collectively, in class. People break up in teams to discuss their results and come to a consensus on how the song will be played. The song is then rehearsed. Vocals are added; harmonies and dance moves are constructed. When the song jells, it is added to a rotating play list of songs that the students play each class.

The correct attitude is emphasized. Students must be punctual and ready to work in a mature and serious manner. Often there will be "down time" where one section of the band has to fix a problem. The rest of the band must act maturely and not jam or disrupt the few who need help.

The toughest part of the music is to play it with enough concentration and feeling. Due to the deceptively simple form and structure of the music, students initially get lulled into believing that the music is very easy. This results in a break in concentration and a drop of the "groove" and feeling of the song. Beginning R&B players do not always recognize that the feeling of the song is not right. I work hard to support them to realize when they have lost the "groove."

Band members are actively encouraged to get to know and, perhaps, befriend other band members. The amount of internal cohesion seems to directly improve the level of performance. To support this notion, the band often has dinners together after gigs and generally takes a band trip each year. Students must be ready to participate in these extra-curricular activities.

My role is one of facilitator. I have no desire to police the band's behavior, as doing so would throw the class into a traditional frame and the objectives of developing leadership, maturity, and creative problem solving could be placed in jeopardy. To support the notion of teacher as facilitator and technical aid, each student along with their parents sign a contract of understanding and commitment. This contract is as follows:

R & B EXPECTATIONS

THE R&B BAND IS A VERY SPECIAL CLASS AT SEA VIEW. THE REWARDS DERIVED FROM THIS CLASS ARE NOT OFTEN AVAILABLE IN A REGULAR HIGH

SCHOOL COURSE. STUDENTS WILL NEED TO DEMONSTRATE MATURITY, ENTHUSIASM, AND A STRONG COMMITMENT TO THE BAND AND IT'S GOALS AND REPERTOIRE IN ORDER FOR THE CLASS TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

THIS WILL BE DISPLAYED IN THE FOLLOWING MANNER:

1. STUDENTS WILL WORK HARD AT THEIR SONG PARTS AT HOME.
2. STUDENTS WILL HAVE A SONG PREPARED (IN WRITING) FOR EACH CLASS.
3. STUDENTS WILL PLAY THE SONGS BY MEMORY.
4. STUDENTS WILL MAKE THEMSELVES AVAILABLE FOR THE VARIOUS EXTRACURRICULAR PERFORMANCES.
5. STUDENTS WILL TAKE EACH CLASS SERIOUSLY
6. STUDENTS WILL BE PUNCTUAL AND SET UP QUICKLY.
7. ONCE CLASS HAS STARTED, STUDENTS WILL ONLY PLAY AND FOCUS ON THIS YEAR'S REPETOIRE OF MUSIC.
8. STUDENTS WILL ALWAYS PLAY THE MUSIC WITH AS MUCH ENERGY, SPIRIT, AND "SOUL" AS POSSIBLE.
9. STUDENTS WILL BEFRIEND AND RESPECT OTHER BAND MEMBERS TO CREATE A COHESIVE "TEAM" ENVIRONMENT.
10. STUDENTS WILL ASSIST EACH OTHER IN THE LEARNING OF NEW SONGS.

I,,HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE 10 EXPECTATIONS FOR THE R & B CLASS, AND AM PREPARED TO DO MY BEST TO FOLLOW THESE RULES. I KNOW THAT THIS COURSE REQUIRES CONSISTENT MATURITY AND FOCUS ON MY PART. I REALIZE THAT FORCING MR. T. TO CONSTANTLY POLICE MY BEHAVIOURS IS COUNTER- PRODUCTIVE TO THE CLASS AND THAT FAILURE TO MEET THESE EXPECTATIONS MAY RESULT IN A LOSS OF THE RIGHT TO ATTEND AND BE IN THE CLASS.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT.....

SIGNATURE OF PARENT AFTER READING THE EXPECTATIONS.....

.....

A second educational challenge for the R&B class is the musical that we produce every second year. On these years, we push hard to get through our basic repertoire in

order to make room for in-class rehearsals of the music for the production.

This "hard" reading provides a balance to all the "ear" work of the fall term.

Performing for two weeks in the musical is a very rewarding experience, both musically and socially for the students.

This educational project is a local success. We seem to provide the ultimate “crossover” music for many events. Parents are especially welcoming to this genre. I know that the R&B band has been picked over other school bands for events simply because the music is energetic, danceable and fun. As a result, we usually play for large crowds at both North and West Vancouver Canada Day celebrations. Private businesses, when they are having a celebration, will often pay us to perform. The music festival at Keremeos, A.K.A. “Music under the K.” has asked us to be part of the entertainment package for the festival—a festival that we use to attend as in the role of students.

Besides the appreciation for R&B music and the legacy of good R&B players and singers that the program has turned out, there as well exists an alumni band, known as the R&B Conspiracy. This band performs at various professional R&B clubs in Vancouver.

The only area of skepticism seems to emanate from some traditional concert band teachers who, for a myriad of reasons, question the validity of this program.

The Story of the R&B Conspiracy

It had been a year since my first group of R&B class singers had graduated from Sea View. Most of the students were attending various local post-secondary institutions. Two students, Sheila Irving and Cynthia Swansburgh each independently visited the following year. Both girls bemoaned the fact that, upon graduation from Sea View Secondary, they had lost their avenue of musical expression. The Sea View R&B Band Class had been an important and valued

experience, but neither had been able to form or connect with a band since they had graduated.

I started reflecting about this issue and the fact that I wasn't playing either. In fact, it had been a difficult transition from playing six nights a week to a full-time teaching job wherein your hard work was not often noticed. I had been use to a lot of recognition and status. Now, as a teacher, I made more money and had more security, but I had to generally pat myself on the back for my effort and results.

My old friend and mentor, Charlie Phillips, was really missing playing too. So to meet these various needs, I pulled seven people together. Three former Sea View singers would front the band: Sheila Irving, Cynthia Swansburgh and Donna Lee. The drummer's chair eventually fell another Sea View alumni—Casey White. Charlie played Hammond B3 organ and I played guitar. The group added only one non-Sea View person—Peter Boychuk on bass guitar.

It was an odd matching of twenty-year olds with forty year olds, but it worked. The “kids” brought in energy and image and the “old guys” brought in stability and depth of musical experience. Usually an age gap of twenty years precludes the success of a group, but because we had been their teachers, we had already established a good rapport.

The band started out slowly, playing free gigs and events for the West Vancouver community and school district. As our professionalism started to emerge, we able to start playing the local professional R&B and blues rooms in Vancouver.

Presently, the band plays once or twice a month at the Backstage Lounge (Arts Club Theatre), the Fairview pub, or on occasion at the Yale. It is hard to believe that we have been together for almost nine years. We have clearly grown into a quality local act that has a following.

As a teacher, I feel very proud of this professional unit. I see the young people in my band completing my educational vision—that music could be a rewarding hobby that it could be successfully integrated into the framework of their busy professional lives.

Heroes

Preamble:

Heroes is a collection of narratives, poems, and reflections on the pervasive issue of heroes and hero journeys.

Furthermore, we have not even to risk the adventure alone, for the heroes of all time have gone before us. The labyrinth is thoroughly known. We have only to follow the thread of the hero path, and where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god. And where we thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves. Where we had thought to travel outward, we will come to the center of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we will be with all the world (Campbell, 1988, p.123.)

Heroes: who are they? In the first decade of the 21st Century, the word “hero” is becoming an overused word. It is on the edge of joining a host of other words that, in our world of incessant spin and hyperbole, are losing their original meaning and force. Constant media use of words such as “awesome,” “legendary,” “visionary,” “mythic,” or “tradition,” to name a few, have had their value in cultural currency made almost meaningless. In part, they have been drained of their potency by their use to describe things that they are not.

Despite this, the phenomenon of “hero” is still real and powerful. To some extent, the notion of hero has and will always have an important role in the human drama. Who qualifies as a hero? In the above quotation, Joseph Campbell was intrigued with the hero within each person. He was also intrigued with exterior heroes that have acted as models for generations of cultures throughout the world. His exterior work focused on myths and legends.

Often, in my formative years, I looked outside of myself for heroic inspiration. I sought out and modeled myself after others, who manifested a deep resonance with my own core values and dreams. Therefore, my approach to this piece is framed by the following definition: Heroes are people who inspire me to reach deeper, to fly higher, move to a more visionary state and, subsequently, live a richer life. In short, my heroes are people who have catalyzed a shift of my thoughts and values. They are people who have ultimately changed my path. Within this context, I am interested in the following questions for reflection:

- Who are or have been the heroes in my life?
- Why do I see them as heroes?
- How did they resonate with me
- How do they live through me?
- How do they impact on my teaching?
- Am I my yet my own hero?
- What is the role of present day heroes for me?

As a human who has been obsessed with the beauty and potential of music and guitar playing, I have had many heroes. One may argue that through the

culture of hero and myth, the tradition of guitar is kept alive and passed on through successive generations of youngsters. One need only peruse the magazine racks to find magazines devoted to icons of both music and guitar playing. The notion that musicians who play guitar could be somehow bigger than life—that they could know things and have insights and wisdom that we have yet to find—is just accepted as part of the guitar/music culture.

I sense that this illusion stems from the inherent spiritual potency of the music itself, for the power of music on some of us is immense. Music can inspire, ground and balance us. It can support healing and reflection. It can lead to new avenues of direction. Therefore it seems natural to draw spiritual assumptions about it. I attempt to express some of these notions in the following poem, entitled *Magician/Musician*.

Magician/Musician

Preamble:

Sometimes, but not often, I have witnessed a musical performance that is so breath-taking and deep and transcendental in nature, that I start wondering where the line lies that separates musicians from magicians and shamans. It is at times like these, the artist/hero says exactly what needs to be said at a level that profoundly resonates my core. These events, although they are very infrequent, are so overwhelming that, like an opiate, I immediately crave more. The other issue that enters my mind is the possibility that in fact there is no magic at all and that I've been duped by slight of hand into believing that there is more than meets the eye. Certainly in my life story(s), I always seem to be craving a deeper understanding than seems possible. The following poem follows a vivid memory of one of the first Vancouver concert performances of the jazz/fusion guitarist/magician Mike Stern. Stern was a member of the Michael Brecker band at the time. The performance was at the Commodore Ballroom in the late 1980's.

Magician/Musician

It was in the air
As soon as they counted out

And freed the first sounds
You knew, but couldn't explain
The feeling
That wrapped around you like
A warm blanket and convinced you
That the conversation between the instruments
Would spin a marvelous story
Filled with passion, intrigue,
Caring and humour with
Each soloist bringing
His special twist to the epic
By taking his own poetry
And weaving it into the sonic fabric
Of the whole
Which through tonal alchemy
Would convert simple sounds
Into a narrative so intense
And bursting with resonance
That the story would
Actually grind to a place
So deep, yet cleansing
That the audience would
Be left in silence at the end and
Forced again to wrestle with
Enormous questions of purpose

One of the players
Had special gifts,
An original and stunning
Combination of years of technique
With serious reading and critique
Of authors of music past
And this melded with frames
Of heroic vision and tenacity that
Ripped forth from his being as
A torrential outpouring
That started slowly,
Creeping in the back porch
And edging ever so closely

And he captured the smell
Of the rain just before the break
And he made me shiver
In anticipation of the first
Tenuous drops and
I was sure that I could
See the thunder gray and

Black clouds circling above
His head as the intensity
Of his playing heralded an
Explosion of torrent and current

And the audience screamed
From the resonance of this tale
Of epic romanticism
And just when we thought
That the journey was complete
The soloist took us
To a new level of fresh terrain and
To new worlds of understanding
And the audience exploded
And rose to their feet as they
As they strained to see him
Push his head above the thunderclouds
To the deafening silence above the white noise
Where he washed us clean
And graced us with a chance
To try again.

Growing up under the Glow

My first encounter with “heroes” was not through music. Instead they came through two sources, the T.V. and comic books. I was looking for a male mentor through whom I could mold myself. My father, alas, was not this person, although I would have loved for him to be. When I was growing up, my father was consumed with discovering his own potential and realizing his own myth. I was just viewed as something he created to please and occupy my mom. As my father had little interest in me, he rarely inter-acted with me for any kind of play or learning.

What I do remember is that every night, when I was growing up, my father watched T.V. From the moment Dad arrived at home until bedtime, the tube shone forth, delivering its messages to both him and the household. I would sit by him in

silence and watch and absorb a world-view and set of ethics generated by the entertainment industry.

I witnessed an unending parade of heroes and goddesses from all periods of history. I summate this experience in "The Unnatural Act," a poem that I wrote in August, 2004. I think that no one in the early 1960's really understood the impact that such an immersive T.V. experience would have on children. It seemed to be accepted as another technological miracle. (I personally am still saddened by our culture's acceptance of the programming of our children. In the video, *Super-Size Me*, the author states that children are exposed to approximately 10,000 messages of consumerism per year. These messages tell children what is good, bad, and cool and what they need to buy.)

The Unnatural Act
(A poem about T.V. in the 60's)

No one knew:
It seemed like a Bonanza if
You loved Lucy like Jeanie like Samantha
With Emma and 86 (just the flip of a switch)
At the Junction of Green Acres ***I could never resist.***

I loved their perfection, their ultra mythic feminine
Looks with doe eyes and cheek bones
Chiseled out of granite and smiles
That would take you miles to a distant planet of siren-
What possible chance did I have, but, again,

To be a man, a Paladin,
Real Rifleman wanted Dead or Alive,
A Chuck or a Steve, Clint or Gary
Tallness and silence brimming with violence and fury
Much too soon to define the American Male
On the black and white pages of high noon.

Or out of the West and into a jungle

Or Lost in Space or the courts or the fumble
Of family life, just Leave It To Beaver
Captains Kirk and Kangaroo, Crunch, Hook and Cleaver.
With rabbits and mice and woodpeckers too that
Had grown up in the Bronx, right next to the zoo.

How much did I laugh? How much did I hate
How deep these myths did sink and formulate
My brain and assist in the construction of black and white reduction
That drove me and a young nation of over stimulated romantics to
Rebel at the antics of a world that we really didn't know,
Tune out and on with the show!

I loved these T.V. shows as a boy. The cowboy/westerns and Disney revisionist historical dramas such as *Davy Crockett* spurred all the boys to become young cowboys. I had an arsenal of various toy guns and rifles to fight the bad guys. They were the ones who were scurrily dressed, unshaved, and mean. Their sidekicks were often cast as overweight, balding, dim-wits with funny voices. I also had a toy box filled with hats of every style. I had to have the right hat in order to launch into these imaginary roles.

Of course, I had to be the hero in the black and white morality plays of my imagination. The bad guys always went down and I, as symbol of the good, strong, clean, and handsome, always won. The bottom line plot of good over evil was played out with slight variations for years.

But what happens if, after all this indoctrination and practice, you don't measure up as a hero? What if you're not handsome and you have no cleft in your Mountie jaw. What if you are shorter than six feet? What if you have bright red hair? What if (perish the thought) you are not a tough fighter but rather a sensitive dreamer?

Another source of angst for me was the indoctrination of American standards of female beauty. The objectification of women and valuing women for what they looked like as opposed to who they were as people was a terrible lesson to be taught. For years I dated women with high cheekbones and thin waistlines. I felt trapped by these standards of beauty that were planted so deeply into my psyche. The power of the T.V. heroes faded, however, when the "British Invasion" hit the radio airwaves in early 1964.

The Heroes of the Sound Waves

I had a long distance bonding with many of the music icons of the 1960's. This new source for external heroes and mentors commenced with the North American break through of the Beatles in the early months of 1964. The Beatles introduced a new vitality to the entire world of pop. And with this vitality came a new relevance for young people. We all grew up with the Beatles as they themselves grew and moved from the simplicity of "I Want to Hold Your Hand" to the sophistication of "A Day in The Life." I recall eagerly anticipating each of the later Beatles' albums so my friends and I could listen to the lyrics. These cryptic messages constantly exposed me to concepts that were experientially way beyond my reach.

The Lyric Heroes-Bob Dylan and John Lennon

Post-modernism meets the sonic landscape. Other artists as well as the Beatles became intensely personal and reflective and relevant. It appealed to the young who were wrestling with narrow stereotypical life opportunities and values

that had been generated from the needs for security and stability by the previous generation—one who had survived the great depression and World War II. Pop music went from Pat Boone to Bob Dylan in the blink of an eye. Many lyricists joined the new wave, moving away from clichés and naivety to profound essays on values, change, the need for reflection, a sense of place and personal growth.

Dylan's lyrics in *Like a Rolling Stone* (Wissolik, R.D., McGrath, S., Colaianne, A.J., 1994) touched some of these subjects. My sense is that this song is about a woman who was raised in wealth and enjoyed this distinction. Her wealth provided her with great enjoyment, but seemed to shield her from growing up and into the world. When she tumbles into a new context, she is forced to re-evaluate and work with the very people that she looked down upon. It represents an incredible change from the "boy meets girl" simplicity of only a few years earlier. After detailing the young woman's fall from both grace and innocence, Dylan essentially asks what will happen next and how will one deal with it. This level of "reality" in song lyrics—one that captured the grayness and complexity of life—captured the imaginations of all who heard it.

Other artists reflected on spirituality and alternate philosophies. John Lennon, of the Beatles, was one of the best examples of pop artists who wrote on such issues.

John wrote about the Tibetan Book of the Dead in the song, *Tomorrow Never Knows*. His lyrics center on the acceptance of the natural end of our life journey.

John works hard to re-frame our thinking to complement the process as "love is all and love is everyone" (Womack, K., Davis, T.F. [Eds.], 2006.) These lyrics, unlike

the street wisdom of Bob Dylan, took younger people to esoteric adventures in Eastern metaphysical philosophy.

In the stream-of consciousness flow of "I Am the Walrus," Lennon blended Eastern spiritual learning and drug-based hallucinations/realizations with a Dylanesque critique on English society and sexual norms. Lyrical lines like "I am he as you are her as you are me and we are all together" are juxtaposed with "Corporation tee shirt, stupid bloody Tuesday man" and references to "Lucy in the sky," or LSD (Womack, K., Davis, T.F. [Eds.], 2006.) The lyrics are as bold as the stream of consciousness style. By the late '60's, Lennon had arrived at a special artistic place, wherein he could voice any of his thoughts in any literary style, and the whole world would listen and try to make meaning from it.

Jimi Hendrix and the Guitar Heroes

Along with lyrics, the music also reflected the huge changes and growth that accompanies any major societal paradigm break through. In this context there was nothing instrumentally that better demonstrated the change of values than the guitar playing. Using a new amalgam that channeled the passion and vocabulary of the blues through the filter of pop aesthetic, the guitar players became the high "priests" of rock.

The blues has always been an anti-religion in the Southern States. It was generally viewed as the "devil's music," probably because it took as many converts as the traditional Christian religions. Jimi Hendrix, from Seattle (via New York and London) and a number of English guitarists such as Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and

Jimmy Page, absorbed American blues and fused it into a high-powered avant-garde style that enthralled millions of teenagers.

I was one of those teenagers. Although I was not there when all the young Torontonians wore the infamous "Clapton is God" buttons, I did fully understand the message, as there is a unique phenomenon that occurs when blues infused solos are played with excessive passion. It seems that there is a breaking point where the passion pushes through the doors of normalcy to a land of the lotus. That is to say, through the intensity, a spiritual edge arises and the music starts to sound like a hymn.

All paths eventually lead to God? I have often wondered if the music of the '60's offered a path to fill the void that was being generated by the failure of the church at the time. Clearly, I was one of the new converts.

In the winter of 67-68, my heroes, Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix, played in my hometown. This was the first time that I had actually seen heroes of mine in flesh and blood. The experience changed my direction of guitar playing and my life forever. I started the long journey of trying to play improvised guitar lines that would generate the transcendental moods of my heroes. The work of honing this skill continues today and has inspired the following poem.

High Wire Guitar

Preamble:

Taking improvised solos is one of the scariest and most thrilling things that I know. From my context, it is an act of vulnerability, truthfulness and, ultimately, heroism. And it is very similar to walking a tightrope. How does one prepare? The obvious answer is to practice, but there is much more to it. With one slip you can crash and the whole edifice of emotion, intellect, soul, and aesthetic tumbles down. But when you make it....

High Wire Guitar

Putting your foot out you feel the wire
Before you walk on water
And though you are very high
In the stratosphere, there is no
Net and certainly no turning back,
Only turning inward as you
Completely relax, Ohm Mani Padme Hum,
And unconsciously align and poise
Your mind, body and soul
In absolute concentration
To let out your voice from
The deepest pit of your spirit
As only the way you can
While the rest of the universe
Looks over your shoulders
And floats you up in a
Sea of teardrops from
The Buddha of compassion

And in the blistering whirling of the spheres
You tune into its tautness,
Its frequency and thickness
Until there is no separation
Through storm and still
You are
Your extension and
If all manner of things have
Locked themselves into
The most sacred pattern
When the sun makes love to the moon
And the tides roll backward to reveal
Ancient shipwrecks and cities
Of so long ago, yet you know
And the howl of the wolf
Becomes an aria of unspeakable beauty...
Then you are ready

Working with Heroes in Real Time

A reflexive narrative on Charlie Phillips, a man in motion, and a true archetype of energy, commitment and vision

My first attempts to publicly live and tell my story came through the performance of music. I played in full time bands from 1973 until 1984. It was simple and natural music, with the biggest thrill being the improvisation of solos in the spirit of my idols. I had never been happier.

It was through my music that I met and worked with a man who profoundly inspired and changed me. Charlie Phillips was the son of an English family that lived and worked in Owen Sound, Ontario. The family owned and operated movie theatres around the Owen Sound region. Charlie's father was the projectionist. Charlie saw every movie that came through town and even had the luxury of private screenings of the cartoons. Charlie grew up in a context that hard work was the norm.

I remember Charlie telling me that his whole family, including his grandparents would gather regularly at his Dad's movie house. As soon as the patrons from Friday's final show left the theatre, the entire family would rush in and unscrew and remove all the seats in the theatre. While family members carried out the last seats, other family members would wash and then repaint the entire floor. This is not an easy or fun job. The pop and popcorn and old gum stick tenaciously to the floor. But as paint will not adhere to a dirty surface it was a necessary task. In the early morning, as the paint dried, the seats were brought back in and remounted in the theatre. The theatre would be completely clean and ready to function in time for the Saturday matinee. No family member slept at all.

They simply worked into the next day and kept going. Furthermore, no one complained. This is but one example to demonstrate boyhood experience that helped Charlie to develop a heroic frame of living.

I met Charlie when I was an immature 19 year-old who was trying to put together a rock band. My friend and bass player, Will Bronson, suggested that we audition a Hammond B-3 organ player who managed the bicycle shop where Will worked. When I met Charlie, who was 25 years old, the mythic proportions of the man's skills, life experiences, energy and work ethic overwhelmed me. Here was a man who was living a life-not just dreaming about it, as I was.

Charlie was a university student at this time. He had left Owen Sound to attend Simon Fraser University. Prior to that, he had been on the Canadian National Ski Team. As well as this achievement, Charlie had developed a passion for aircraft and flying, and had earned his private flying license. But now the focus was on academics.

In true "Phillips" style, his approach to higher education was completely over the top. The year I met Charlie, he was studying at two schools at the same time. He was enrolled at UBC for a teaching certificate and he was finishing his Masters degree in community development at the University of Western Washington. He also taught a remedial reading class at SFU. He worked on the weekends as manager of the "Peddler" shops. When he decided to join us, he was maintaining a primary relationship. As a student, he did not have a lot of money and so he rode his bike everywhere (including up the SFU hill once a week).

One of his secrets to his ability to work so much was that his hard driving psyche was connected with a fantastic metabolism that allowed him to run at full

energy with only four hours of sleep a night. He claimed that this ability was linked to his working class British heritage. I had never met anyone, British or otherwise, like him.

Besides his impressive physical gifts, Charlie's character values were clearly defined and operational. When Charlie made a promise to you, it was always kept. He was always on time and always cheerful and focused. Commitment was an important notion for Charlie. All Phillips projects were seen to their completion. Charlie despised the thought of quitting.

Charlie's style with people was highly charismatic. Everyone wanted to work with Phillips. Charlie had thoroughly studied the works of Dale Carnegie. This program gave him the interpersonal skills to make everyone feel both comfortable and special. Moreover, it provided the tools for Charlie to position himself as an incredible motivator-something that would serve him well as a teacher.

One of the most inspiring aspects of Charlie was his creative side. He constantly thought out of the box. As a senior Geography teacher, Charlie took his class up glaciers. He used his own small plane and personally flew each student over the North Shore Mountains while pointing out the features. He connected with every single student. He made the children believe in themselves by helping them realize that they were able and creative beings. Through example, Charlie led them to try harder, dig deeper and pull more out of themselves. Consequently, students outcomes soared upwards as did their appreciation for Phillips..

Being around a titan like this forced me to re-think a lot of my behaviors and values. I couldn't help but reflect on my own issues of indecisiveness, procrastination, and ineffective communication skills. And I couldn't help but

notice how small my world was compared to Charlie's world. Although I knew that I could never keep up with Charlie, I determined to incorporate as much of his style as possible.

Brian Fuller, an archetype of intellectual inquiry

Brian Fuller was the next real-time hero to inspire me in profound and enduring ways. By my late 20's, I had succeeded in integrating into the "A" room rock music community. The "A" rooms in Vancouver were the best places to play. They were popular hang outs that paid the best money for rock cover acts. Although I had not been with a recording act, I still felt good about being a working professional. I was surviving quite well and the music industry is a very tough industry to be in. It is very competitive and has a low ethical threshold. I had reached this level of pro-level commercial rock through a lot of hard work. I knew that I had to keep learning if I wished to play for the rest of my life. I decided to study some new styles to increase my versatility and technique.

I cannot recall how I got Brian's telephone number. Brian is what is known in the trade as a "legit-player." His work consisted of free-lance union jobs, private teaching and working at the new Vancouver Community College music department. Brian's greatest strengths appeared to be his strong sight-reading ability, his stylistic versatility, his innate musical talent, and a first rate intellect. He was recognized as a serious and gifted classical player, although a lot of his commercial work required him to play various electric styles.

When Brian agreed to give me lessons, I requested a length of 2 hours. The first hour would be devoted to classical studies and the other hour to jazz. I was not versed in either style, but I felt that I should be.

My earliest recollection of Brian is that of a smiling ectomorphic man with large glasses—a quiet, balanced and reflective man whom I guessed to be about ten years older than myself. Brian, his wife, Barb, and his two young children, lived in a beautiful section of Vancouver that was positioned just South of City Hall. In the late 1970's there were a number of artists who lived in this mature residential area that was noted for its quiet streets and large deciduous trees that would rain storms of colored leaves in the fall.

Brian was the third son in a large family of boys who grew in the academic setting of Berkeley California. His father, Dr. John A. Fuller, was a well-known sociologist in the faculty at the University of California, Berkeley

Brian attended Berkeley and received a BA in comparative literature. His areas of specialty were Greek and English literature. At the same time, he had a love of music and had developed a high level of skill on classical and then later on jazz guitar.

Meeting Brian was an opportunity to exchange ideas with someone who grew in a very different context. To grow up under the shadow of Berkeley at a time when all types of new intellectual paradigms were being constructed is a rare opportunity. And, of course, the summer of love was 1967 and the center of the new universe was neighboring San Francisco. Brian participated in the new music scene of that time.

Unlike Brian's background, my blue-collar upbringing had absolutely no ties to Academe or a great city like San Francisco. My father was a smart, creative and ruthless survivor in the world of business. My mother was housewife. Neither had ever gone to university. I had about a year's worth of undergrad arts courses that I had collected. But my initial dreams of higher education ended when the UBC music department informed me that they could not accept me for guitar studies as they did not consider classical guitar a serious instrument—a perplexing notion, as Andres Segovia, the international star of classical guitar, was already an old man by this time. Consequently, when I met Brian, I was extremely uneducated, naïve fellow who was leading a very narrow life.

I loved my lessons with Brian. Although, he focused on music, I learned equally as much about life from watching him and asking him questions. That is to say, the music lessons acted as an entry point to see a bigger world—one that knew little of. What I did not realize at the time was that the learning of other styles of music necessitated the learning of new cultures and their values, as music is, in general terms, one of the main voices of culture. (I learned later that one usually needed to embrace certain values of a culture if one wishes to credibly dialogue its music.)

Brian, through his connection and heritage to the great history of Western thought and values, taught me the importance and role of the intellect in music that led to, among other things, an approach of intellectual sensitivity and subtlety that I had previously been unaware of. In fact, through my “gypsy meets rock and blues” context, I had never really reflected on the intellectual approach to music. To this point, my music valued and accented the voice of emotion/heart and spirit.

To use a visual art analogy, I was painting sonic landscapes with all the primary colors-magnificent reds, yellows and blues. Through Brian, I learned about grays, purples and shades between the obvious.

In our conversations, I learned that the world was a lot more complex than I was acknowledging. For example, as our conversations evolved, I became aware of my tendency to generalize. Brian, however, was incredibly reticent about making sweeping statements about any subject. I learned that issues have many sides and one must carefully consider this before drawing any conclusions. Brian also made me comfortable with the notion that not everything can be or needs to be explained.

I owe my post-secondary education to Brian's prodding. I know that I was inundating Brian with all manner of musical questions. He felt that I should consider attending Vancouver Community College music school as he explained that he did not feel it was possible to answer all my questions in the short time afforded by private lessons. Brian was the guitar teacher at the school and, as such, my lessons would continue, but I could attend courses in theory, history, and ear training. I followed his recommendation and walked into the world of higher learning and eventually into teaching.

The Impact of my Heroes on my Teaching

As I have learned so much about teaching from so many people, I find it hard to limit the discussion to just the influence of Charlie and Brian. Without having met Brian, however, I realize that I probably would not have become a teacher, as I would not have the educational credentials that I now possess. Brian

inspired me and supported my endeavors to gain a degree through a dual track school. I ended up emerging as a band instructor that felt equally comfortable teaching classical, jazz, or pop music. This strength of diversity has formed the building blocks of my program at Sea View wherein students have the choice to follow a classical, jazz or R&B path.

Brian also nurtured the development of my own abilities on my guitar. I studied classical guitar and flourished in the jazz idiom. This has allowed me to inspire my students through my own playing. I sense that the children know that I am a “real player” as well as a teacher and this gives me a lot of credibility. Credibility translates into respect and respect that is earned is a key ingredient to successful teaching.

I am sure that it is in part through Brian’s example that I have moving into graduate work. A number of years ago, Brian returned to school and earned his PhD. He now teaches at UBC in the classics department. It seemed to be a natural evolution. I phoned him when I enrolled. He was very happy for me.

Charlie was a high school teacher for 27 years. He was an outstanding example for me. He even convinced the West Vancouver school board to take a chance on me as a music teacher at Sea View secondary where he was teaching. When he moved out of geography and started teaching drama, we co-wrote and produced four original musicals for the school. (See “The Blues Brothers-a Musical.”) I tried and still continue to try to incorporate his level of commitment, vision, and energy to my pedagogy. And like him, I work hard to make the children feel special and empowered.

On Becoming (My Own Hero?)

Charlie and Brian represented two of my biggest mentors. But, like every other human, I am constantly being exposed to new ideas and ways of being and I still absorb and incorporate ideas and behaviors that could potentially work for me. Coming back to school is assisting this process. I have met and been challenged by a wonderful complement of professors and students. I thrive on this. But as an adult male with a family, education, and seventeen years of teaching experience, I respond differently than I did as a young man.

I know that these real time heroes provided me with learning that I was not able to glean from my father or my home. I sometimes view these real time heroes as surrogate fathers. There reached a point, however, when I realized that I had to become my own man. I had been very open to these men, but it was time for me to become my own hero. It would require two important psychological steps: first, I would have to learn to listen and trust my own heart and senses. Secondly, I needed to participate more actively in the real world.

And so I consciously decided to start standing on my own and developing my own sense of self. To an extent, I have integrated and grown-up. Although I don't see myself as a "Hero," per se, I listen to my own voice and constantly work on being true to whoever I am at any given time.

I perceive my Master's program as an important transformational act. I have a life goal and commitment to unfold my potential physically, emotionally, mentally, artistically, and spiritually. By developing myself through the challenges of a graduate degree, I am striking out on one of the last neglected frontiers. I love

it. I will savour it. I will bite the experience to the bone. In doing so, I will release the hero in me.

People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think this is what we're really seeking. I think that what we're seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive (Campbell, 1988, p.5.)

Section III

An Analysis of the Renderings

Reflections on the A/r/tographic Process

Although it evolved organically, the process in writing my thesis surprised me in its consistent, ritualized approach. The poetry and narratives always came out first. In part, this was a conscious decision to free the poetry from the artistic shackles that are imposed on song lyrics. Having written numerous songs over the years, I was concerned that poetry would be subjugated to the limits of the musical phrases. I also feared that I might worry more about issues of rhyme and such, rather than dig in and write my best poetry. In short, I wanted poetic content to triumph over issues of form.

Although colleagues in the language arts may disagree, I find the creation of music to be more supple and adaptable than poetry. From my perspective, the poetry did not inhibit the music as much as it acted as a catalyst for sonic expression. Musical expression—unlike poetry, a highly concentrated and, therefore, fragile art form—seems to be able to effortlessly wrap around a variety of poetic forms and intensify the poetic content in sublime ways.

In terms of ritualized process, I wrote all the poetry in our home study space. Prior to writing the poetry, I would attempt to reach the site of the arational through meditation. At best, the meditative process would throw me into a state of profound clarity or, at worse, calm down some of the noisy chatter in my brain. One may refer to the poem, *The Goddess of Innovation*, for metaphoric insights into that process. This place of profound silence/intuitive knowing would usually

predicate the emergence of a topic or a line or a hook into a poem. At that point, I would try/not try to unwrite/write a poem by allowing as many ideas as possible to surface before my analytical brain became activated. My rational intelligence would be very important for the fine-tuning after the soul of the poem was released. To quote myself from the *Fable of the Sculptor*, "... the path is now clear-release the deep intuitive feeling first and then reflect and respond through intelligence and observer aesthetics."

For me, there was a need for arational and rational creativity to emerge from this process. My efforts were directed at tapping into the intuitive/arational space first, in order to release deeper issues and all of their requisite passion and feelings. My rational mind then reviewed, focused, and clarified these directed feelings.

The rational review and editing process would carry on for a period of time. Coming back to a poem at a later date often allowed me to see the poem from a new perspective. There would reach a point, however, where the poem was fairly finished. That said, I don't think it ever ends, but I would then start to compose the music.

Composing music is a process that I love. Finding the "right" notes to express my feelings has consistently been a fulfilling process. I had a makeshift studio in a downstairs room of our house where I had access to my guitars, keyboards, and a G5/Pro Tools system to facilitate the composition and recording of the music.

The compositional process parallels the writing process in that I would usually meditate, read the poem, and then allow the music to rise up through the arational. One of the first determinants or unconscious decisions I would make was

to address the mood and pick an appropriate tempo. Often, I would not be aware of this step, having already made it at some intuitive level. Instead, music would come out of my fingers and heart. When the process is going well, it feels like the fingers are playing themselves—indeed, I feel more like an observer than a willful creator.

As with the writing process, my rational mind would be used to reflect upon, clarify, and focus the music ideas, once the initial intuitive impulse had been expressed. The change from arational/intuitive process to rational/contextual centered thinking process is best thought of through the analogous model of a continuum, with these two processes at either end. It is certainly not an “either/or” proposition. At any given time, I sense that I am located in a drift between these two extremes.

My musical expression was also subject to numerous reviews and edits. As I was the only player involved, I had to layer on instrumental and vocal tracks one at a time. Again, each track required both inspiration and reflection.

In general, my recording of spoken performances of poetry and stories was a difficult process. Professor Leggo’s public readings of his poetry have been a constant source of inspiration. Poets embrace the notion of performance poetry as a means to further release meaning from poetry. I found, to my dismay, that I have neither the requisite skill set, nor the timbre of voice to deliver my poetry to the level of satisfaction that I realize from my musical performances. I was tempted to ask someone else to perform a reading of my poetry, but I know that it is my poetry and that I must learn to present it.

The Opening of the Golden Flower— the Mirage of Epiphany

Eastern metaphysics refers to the notion of opening the golden flower. This concept is a metaphor for yet another metaphor about the awakening of the third eye or the awakening of enlightenment in oneself. The adventure of awakening through the journey of my master's degree has been invigorating yet discouraging, expansive yet embarrassing, fulfilling yet empty with unanswered questions. Perhaps, questions never really change. Perhaps, it is just the shift in perceptual and intellectual context that creates a mirage of epiphany. In a house of perceptual mirrors, I have moved forward, backward, or stayed in the same place. Arguments can be made for any of these positions.

A number of recurring themes have surfaced in my arational writings. These themes were chosen for their frequency within various writings and were due to the emotional weight they carry for me. The content of the themes range widely as artificial lines blur between my roles as artist, teacher, researcher. I have selected seven major themes to reflect upon.

Personal context and context formation

- Heroes (creation, demise, and problems with) and aspirations
- Regrets
- Anger with the prevailing culture
- New beginnings
- The importance of Artistic/Transcendent/Arational spaces
- Reflections and intimate looks into the form and function of educational landscape

Personal context and contextual formation

A seemingly disproportionate amount of my writing seems linked to an awareness of personal context, its creation, and ramifications (i.e., *The Master Frame*, *The Unnatural Act*, *The Hi-fi*, *I am Guitar*, *I am Starting (to Lose)*, *I've (Em)braced*, and *The Story of Finding My Path*). By personal context, I refer to a notion of who I think I am and the values, beliefs, ethics, and priorities—conscious or otherwise—that I hold within me that direct how I interpret phenomena in my life.

The topic of personal context and creation of a frame or lens of reference is directly addressed in *The Master Frame*. The arrival of our daughter, Emily, gave me great cause to reflect upon my impact on the formation of her values and beliefs. And like many first time fathers, I want to do a good job, but it is something new to me.

And being very keen, yet all the same
Lacking real experience, we follow the plans
Very slowly and carefully, checking the lay of the land

I am very conscious that her collection and re-collection of our activities will shape her. And I am also aware of the textual sub-plot I can run during these activities where I can discuss issues of importance.

She passes me the wood and the siding
And with the greatest pains, holds the beams steady for
The Master Frame as I measure and pencil and
Pound the nails into the wallboards as well as
Into the story board of her myth for we talk
Incessantly and work co-operatively to raise a structure and
A cohesive environment not only out of
Wood and paper and nails but of dreams and schemes and

Values that often prevail in my own Master Frame

My preoccupation with how one looks and agendizes or colours phenomena becomes stirred when I am with Emily because it makes me think about how little my father was involved in my life. Indeed, this a/r/tographic process has made me realize that I still carry frustration due to the lack of participation from my father with my development.

In many ways, the TV was my first surrogate father and purveyor of myth, ritual, tradition, and values. I find it stunningly ironic that I was being shaped by the values and agenda of corporate United States of America while my real Dad sat and watched beside me in a near-comatose state of non-reaction. Later, as an adult I would have to deal with all this commercial programming of my taste and priorities. It seemed harmless at the time, but ultimately the act of daily TV viewing rooted within me a core set of beliefs and approach to life that I have had to spend years wrestling out of my consciousness.

How much did I laugh? How much do I hate
How deep these myths did sink and formulate
My brain and assist in the construction of black and white reductionism
That drove me and a young nation of over stimulated romantics to
Rebel at the antics of a world that we really didn't know,
Tune out and on with the show!
(from *The Unnatural Act*)

Unknowingly, my father allowed television to develop a significant part of my nascent contextual frame. He also purchased, for his entertainment, a wonderful hi-fidelity record player. But his music of choice, the wild Eastern

European gypsy and other ethnic music forms, hooked me on the tremendous magical effect that music can have on me.

My emotions and body were kidnapped and forced to ride this sonic roller coaster. It was as if the music could somehow charge up my whole system. Perhaps we could blame it on my genetics, but, for whatever reason, this music found its way to the very core of my being. It just about drove me crazy. I would slowly sway to the mournful opening theme, (there is always sorrow in any gypsy piece of merit), and then, uncontrollably, I would have to dance as the tempo accelerated. I was transformed into a marionette and the music was the master puppeteer. As the band would rocket to a "Presto" tempo I would be forced to run, non-stop, in circles through the rooms of the house. This crazy puppet dance would continue until the triumphant finish had me collapsing into a chair, breathless and sweating profusely.

(from *The Hi-Fi*)

I am Guitar is a poem concerned with the importance of musical self-expression at the other end of my life continuum. It comes out of a defensive posture about my need/want to have some daily practice time, hence, the mantra-like refrain that keeps building:

I am guitar
It will not go away

And . . .

I am guitar
It will not go away,
It will not go away...

And finally . . .

I am guitar
It will not go away

It will not go away
Until I do

The personal benefits are huge.

The guitar has soothed me, challenged me,
Delighted me and grounded me
Throughout all the many challenges
That I have endured in this sometimes
Lumpy, sad clown
Plane of existence.

It has supported me through various jobs,
Boring routines, mind-deadening situations,
Over-work, and negative people.

It has listened to me talk through
The acceleration of
Ever-changing experiences,
Relentless challenges,
The coming and going of relationships,
And of balance within myself

Somehow it has always helped keep me in check,
The magnitude of its experience,
Its potential and intellectual and emotional palette having now
Underpinned my whole point of view,
My entire value system.
And so the lines between "guitar" and "I" have blurred

The poem closes with the notion of re-commitment.

And if the archetype of tragedy
Rolls over me and
Decimates all that I have worked
So hard for and
Destroys my family,
My core,
And brings me to my knees, blind and crippled
In a pathetic heap of crushed humanity
I will crawl on hands and knees
To find my guitar to cry through
And though it will not offer solution,
It will give some solace and self-reflection because

I am guitar
It will not go away

It will not go away

Until I do

Thus this poem enables me to reveal and evaluate the impact of guitar in my life with the hopes of conferring that all boundaries between myself and the instrument have vaporized—we have entangled to the point of oneness.

I am Starting (to Lose) was written around the mid-point of my Master's journey. Within the poem are the seeds of change and potential transformation and the conscious realization that these changes were imminent. It is intended that the title be read twice, as in *I am Starting*, and *I am Starting to Lose* in order to convey closure as well as new beginnings.

I start by questioning why I did things in the past and in this sense, can be considered a precursor to the poems of regret (i.e., *The Fable of Regret* and *Driving with no Hands*).

I am starting to lose
Just why I did all those things;
Why in youth I railed and clamored so passionately
For freedoms that were already said to be and
Why I coveted and conspired, adorned and displayed and
Danced to a music that sometimes only existed in my head.

I also examine the need to move away from my heroes and move into a state of accepting myself.

I am starting to lose
All my heroes
As a tide of democratization rolls in
And levels the playing field
Into a liquid flowing mass
Washing me clean and
Freeing me from the victimization of
Needs to prove and

Needs to be accepted...

And as a result of this natural letting-go, I find myself moving into a new state of becoming.

I stand naked and not caring
Disinterested and disconnected, yet
Passionately involved...
How can this be?
Change is in the air...

I am becoming
The fool on the hill
The invisible one, the crazy man,
Talking to himself
Reveling in his own jokes
Yet, at the same time, I am hearing
New symphonies of living
And concertos in the once cacophonous tumble
Of confusion
And I am preparing
To be myself...

I've (Em)braced is both my opening and closing piece, and is, essentially, an artistic abstract of the research in this thesis. It can be viewed as a tightly compressed personal inventory set of contextual shifts—a paradoxical and difficult assessment of all the roles and attitudes and thematic obsessions that I have assumed and consumed. It is both confessional and cathartic in its nature. It is one of the latest poems that I have written and its significance lays in its honesty and comprehensive nature. For so many years, I have wrapped myself in the belief that I essentially a “good” man, and perhaps I am, but through this poem I am attempting to embrace, or at least acknowledge all of myself, both good and bad.

The first verse lists a series of psychological masks that I’ve worn. The term *(Em)braced* implies that I loved some of these roles and how, in retrospect, I’ve had to brace myself in order to admit to other roles. The masks twist themselves

into self-criticizing and judging my sometimes annoying propensity to judge others as well as myself.

I've (Em)braced
Prankster, Con Man, Liar, Lover,
Husband, Father, T(h)inker(er),
Imposter,
Preposterous
Lying in judgment!

The poem also contains a thematic overview of all the work that has surfaced in the last couple years, during my return to university. In the second verse, I touch on three recurring themes: the importance of the arational, my personal struggles with Western culture, colonialism, and the notion of regret.

Yet
Sometimes Not of this World
As my eyes roll backward and the jaw drops...
Mystic systemic, pathetic and regretful
Keeper of cartoon consciousness,
My feet blister on the hyper-heated asphalt
Of Western reality,
I never learn
Still
Mystified by the rarified
Miracle of hope(lessness)

The third part of the poem sets up a series of dialectical binaries to demonstrate the width, breadth, depth and paradoxical multi-dimensionality of my character.

Frightened child and old man I am
Penis crossed with penance
Son of Zorro and Nosferatu,

(Anti)... Christ, I wish I knew!

The fourth part of the poem critically reviews the theme of my role as a researcher and educator and the mirage of knowledge/epiphany.

Saint or sinner,
Certainly
Fool on the hill of the Academy of
Power, politics and lost souls,
Liminal Transgressor in the aporia of
Found and lost (again)
I see
The oasis or just another mirage?...

The poem closes on an upbeat note that sometimes I can transcend my own muddle and work in service for others.

Meanwhile the Buddha of Compassion pours
Rivers of tears through me as I look at pictures of
My daughter
Because
Sometimes I know
To look above myself

Heroes

Another prevalent theme in my writing has been the concept of heroes—their creation, their demise, and the problems associated with the cult of personality. The creation and eulogizing of both genders of heroes can be found in the poem, *The Unnatural Act*.

As a child, immersed in a milieu of black and white reductionism, all screen starlets became goddesses or archetypes of beauty and charisma.

I loved their perfection, their ultra mythic feminine
Looks with doe eyes and cheek bones
Chiseled out of granite and smiles
That would take you miles to a distant planet of siren-
What possible chance did I have...

I saw the male images as direct examples of perfection—indeed, what I
needed to grow to become.

To be a man, a Paladin,
Real Rifleman wanted Dead or Alive,
A Chuck or a Steve, Clint or Gary
Tallness and silence brimming with violence and fury
Much too soon to define the American Male
On the black and white pages of high noon.

Most of my life I have tended to embrace various heroic figures. Even when I
returned to school for my graduate work, I embraced a new type of hero—the
academic hero. The poem *Big People* was written after I had been invited to attend
a meeting with the a/r/tography group. I was very impressed with the power and
intensity of the intellectual energy that surfaced at this meeting. This poem directly
talks about these new mentors, albeit in a playful setting, that makes use of the
layers of meaning and double entendres that poetically exist within language.

Big people often run
Through the cracks for the borders and
Stay up all night to seize the day because
Big people have great vision
Even if they leave their glasses at home
For they peer through a lens
That has been ground and polished
By years of episodic narratives
And reflective calls and responses

That turns outward in
And in so out

As to the diversity of the professors at the a/r/tography meaning, I write:

Big people cannot be bottled or
Labeled, categorized or denied
Dismissed, re-miffed or qualified
Except by those who miss the boat
As it leaves for adventure islands remote

Oh how I love big people!

Although my first heroes were TV screen actors and my present heroes are more likely to be found within the academy, by far, my musical hero-guitarists have made the most significant impression to date.

A part of me has always wanted to believe in magic and I have always savoured the in-dwelling of the spirit. In the realm of music, I have never been able to clearly differentiate between a few breath-taking, transcendental musical performances that I have witnessed and the notion of magic. And, as I have trouble separating magic from spirit, these highly infrequent artistic performances resonate at such a sublime level, that its effect on me is the production of an altered experience.

All paths lead to God but some paths are a little quicker. In the sixties, a lot of music came out of the blues. It was morphed into a new hybrid form when its basic form and vocabulary was musically melded with high-powered rock and roll and over-the-top emotions. When Jimi Hendrix poured his heart out through this context, the result was music/magic that touched sacred places and took audiences to transcendental heights.

To some extent, this psychedelic sacrament has been lost as popular culture has moved onto other topics like power, material acquisition, and so on. And, with aging, my own context has changed. I'm not as easily impressed as I was when I was younger as I am much better at discerning between a slight of hand and profound experience.

In *Magician/Musician*, I talk about the real thing. I mention that even the mood and feeling was different. Sometimes, one can sense a special evening.

It was in the air
As soon as they counted out
And freed the first sounds
You knew, but couldn't explain
The feeling
That wrapped around you like
A warm blanket and convinced you
That the conversation between the instruments
Would spin a marvelous story
Filled with passion, intrigue,
Caring and humour

Each player would contribute to the construction of this aural edifice of the gods:

with
Each soloist bringing
His special twist to the epic
By taking his own poetry
And weaving it into the sonic fabric
Of the whole
Which through tonal alchemy
Would convert simple sounds
Into a narrative so intense
And bursting with resonance
That the story would
Actually grind to a place
So deep, yet cleansing
That the audience would
Be left in silence at the end and
Forced again to wrestle with
Enormous questions of purpose

But one player rose above the others to take the audience over the edge.

One of the players
Had special gifts,
An original and stunning
Combination of years of technique
With serious reading and critique
Of authors of music past
And this melded with frames
Of heroic vision and tenacity that
Ripped forth from his being as
A torrential outpouring
That started slowly,
Creeping in the back porch
And edging ever so closely

And he captured the smell
Of the rain just before the break
And he made me shiver
In anticipation of the first
Tenuous drops and
I was sure that I could
See the thunder gray and
Black clouds circling above
His head as the intensity
Of his playing heralded an
Explosion of torrent and current

And I was not alone in recognizing this moment.

And the audience screamed
From the resonance of this tale
Of epic romanticism
And just when we thought
That the journey was complete
The soloist took us
To a new level of fresh terrain and
To new worlds of understanding
And the audience exploded
And rose to their feet as they

As they strained to see him
Push his head above the thunderclouds
To the deafening silence above the white noise
Where he washed us clean
And graced us with a chance
To try again.

Naturally, as a musician, I am a would-be-magician as I aspire to play at a level that supports an audience to transcend our seemingly physical reality. While *Magician/Musician* is a poem from the audience's view point, *High Wire Guitar* is a view from the other side—the feelings and process that a musician might take to move to the next level.

It starts with a musician taking an improvised solo. The difficulty, poise, and attitude needed to improvise draws an analogy to walking a tightrope.

Putting your foot out you feel the wire
Before you walk on water
And though you are very high
In the stratosphere, there is no
Net and certainly no turning back,
Only turning inward as you
Completely relax, Ohm Mani Padme Hum,
And unconsciously align and poise
Your mind, body and soul
In absolute concentration
To let out your voice from
The deepest pit of your spirit
As only the way you can
While the rest of the universe
Looks over your shoulders
And floats you up in a
Sea of teardrops from
The Buddha of compassion

In a great solo there is always a loss of self into the total concentration of the now.

And in the blistering whirling of the spheres

You tune into its tautness,
Its frequency and thickness
Until there is no separation
Through storm and still
 You are
Your extension

O course, there can be external or unconscious factors that can limit or allow the successful crossing into the infinite now.

If all manner of things have
 Locked themselves into
 The most sacred pattern
When the sun makes love to the moon
And the tides roll backward to reveal
Ancient shipwrecks and cities
Of so long ago, yet you know
 And the howl of the wolf
Becomes an aria of unspeakable beauty...
 Then you are ready

Regrets

A rising theme in my later years has been the regularly occurring issue of regret. As is the nature with regrets, these regrets frequently center on choices that I made years ago that are now impacting or restricting my present set of options. They certainly seem to fall out of a mind set that for years embraced overt heroism and romanticism. The passing of my father in August of 2005 intensified this type of thinking. His death clearly delineated the passage of time and reminded me of my limited time in this material reality. In the poem *The Fable of Regret*, I try to subvert that type of thinking to enable me to move on and live in the present. The metaphor of a snake, a cold-blooded reptile with a forked-tongue, addresses me in this fable.

Yes, I have observed that
As you have grown older
And deeper in the seat
Of your true self
You have also cognized
That your demise is
Racing to catch you
And your own story
Is being etched in stone
For time eternal
And you are fast losing
Control of your destiny
And especially any resolution
Of your messy stories
Of unrealized glory

I am the Snake of Regret
Who lives and thrives
On your frustration
With the finite aspect
Of your short visitation
Into this earthly vessel
And with your misunderstandings
Of the very nature
Of human learning's.

I battle the snake through embracing regret as a measurement of my progress
in this adventurous life. I explain it thus:

Regret then, for me,
Is an affirmation
And a measure
That indeed,
I have succeeded
In moving myself forward
And truly grown
Through the years.
And so, rather than fear,
I choose to feast on regret
As the only true test
Of my growth as a human.

Driving with No Hands was written after a real and vividly intense experience—a flashback of feelings from my youth that I encountered one day as I drove the long commute from work to home.

*And for some reason on this special day
The sun connected with me so strongly
That I longed to pull out a chain saw
And cut off the entire roof of my old hound dog car
And, like Brother Jake, when he saw the Light,
I too wanted to jump cartwheels
And drive again with no hands
For it gave me a feeling that I had forgotten—
A feeling so special, so sacred, so life affirming
That I wanted to weep at how*

Empty
I
Had
Become...

Driving with No Hands is a celebration of life, youth, and naïve honesty. It is a commentary on how, to some extent we all get derailed and dance with regret as we age within the paradigm of society.

Ten years later
When the adventure
Came to its end
And I became “normal” again,
It took me years to come off
The adrenaline—it was like heroin
And for lifetimes after
I walked the streets
Like a prisoner
Of the setting sun
Craving the rush and the release
And the recognition
And never seeming to score
Enough to appease my mind...

And it never reconciled
It just faded in time
With the avalanche of responsibility
That follows fitting into society
Until this moment when
In the blink of an eye
I was taken right back
To the time when I could fly
And drive with no hands.

Anger/alienation with the prevailing culture

Driving with No Hands touches on my anger and alienation with the prevailing culture. In this poem, I refer to the mind-numbing experience of the evening commute home. Ironically, our home is situated in a suburban neighborhood that is composed of people with whose values I have no commonality. It is a pseudo-sanctuary, as my family lives there, but we struggle with any sense of integrating with the community.

For as I drove home today,
Deep in the grid and lock of 9 to 5
Eating the fumes and cursing buffoons
In a panic to get off the tar
For domestic abyss in my little house in the sub
With its 70's big engine time warp and
Neighbors who are white-right of Arnold,
I was amazed to see the sun burst through
The heavens and bless all the prisoners
Of the commute

Although there is a clear disdain for my present life in this poem, my own sense of alienation and personal rejection certainly haunted me during the first half of my life. It seems directly tied to a search for purpose and meaning and ultimately to the revelation of dreams and values through artistic self-expression. I have often wondered why I believed that life should offer more. Reciprocally, I

wondered why I should offer something special back to life through some heroic accomplishment. And so, a lack of acceptance of life, as it is in this time and place, and a lack of accepting my own normality has been an ongoing issue. I remind myself of the woman I depicted in the *Master Frame*.

I heard about a woman who grew up in a house of riches framed with beliefs
Of superiority only to find that a turn of events pushed her into a life of
Constant struggle inside a new dream with a man of modest means
And there she raised a family but was never able to return
To her original Home Frame with its Affluence and
Connections and as a result she divorced herself
From her very own life for she saw her life
As a failure as she could not re-conceive
Her Master Frame to accommodate
A different context and
So she invalidated
Everything...

Perhaps my "house of riches framed with beliefs of superiority," was the metaphoric context of television which replaced the vacuum of late '50's suburban life with stories of adventure and heroic accomplishment. Perhaps my need for a special life is a symptom of the damage incurred by watching too much television at a very impressionable age. All those cowboy shows of the late 50's cut deeply into my psyche.

To be a man, a Paladin,
Real Rifleman wanted Dead or Alive,
A Chuck or a Steve, Clint or Gary
Tallness and silence brimming with violence and fury
Much too soon to define the American Male
On the black and white pages of high noon.

Am I, as a guitarist, a metaphoric gunslinger? Do I seek adventures and performance challenges on the musical frontier?

In the last ten years, I have worked hard at integrating myself with the various communities through which I come in contact. I have enjoyed some success in connecting with my peers, the teaching staff at work. Twenty-odd years ago, as a new teacher, I had trouble relating to other teachers. I had become a teacher at such a late age (36), and I carried such a unique personal agenda from years of non-teaching adventures. Consequently, I felt different and indeed, I was very different from most of my colleagues at that time. One clear turning point that assisted in my integrating into the teaching community and the world at large has been the arrival of our daughter, Emily, in May of 1998.

New Beginnings

The notion of new beginnings is only touched upon in this series of poems. These poems symbolize the actual process of moving to a position of acceptance and courage to reclaim my own, authentic voice. As I wrote through these poems and as I wrote music to enhance them, my voice started to re-manifest itself. But this work and this document are more clearly about the process as opposed to the results. I hint at the future and what I am to become in the poem, *I am Starting (To Lose)*.

I am becoming
The fool on the hill
The invisible one, the crazy man,
Talking to himself
Reveling in his own jokes
Yet, at the same time, I am hearing
New symphonies of living
And concertos in the once cacophonous tumble
Of confusion
And I am preparing
To be myself...

(The Importance of) Artistic/Transcendent/Arational spaces

My conduit to myself and to new beginnings has always been through Artistic/Transcendent/Arational spaces. One of my first poems, *How Old?* alludes to the timeless quality of this site of knowledge. Sudden, unexpected transcendence can be very dramatic. By unexpected, I do not mean the type of actions or rituals, like meditation, that are specifically practiced for this experience. I am talking about times when we are all just living our lives and we momentarily step out of ourselves. For example, I have sat on a beach at sunset and the sheer beauty of the experience has catapulted me into a rapture that made me feel that time had completely stopped, or that I was in a context beyond time. This poem is propelled by a series of questions that lead to ever-increasingly obvious connections to the site of arationality—moments in everyday life that may go as unrecognized as times when we dip our toes in the infinite waters of the transcendent.

Commencing with the innocuous, yet strange question of how old are you when you laugh, the poem asks the same question about other common experiences like the consumption of food and drink, as well as music and nature, and the intimacy of love and integrity. The goal is to make people sensitive to these special moments in their own way as transcendence is always just a step away.

We unlock the fountain of youth
Through our choice of frames to view
All manner of living, both past and new.

In *The Goddess of Innovation*, I personify and deify and then hope to evoke the transcendent state of arationality.

And if she does arrive
It's usually a surprise and
I don't always sense her presence
Just that colors seem bright
And the flow is totally right
And new ideas pop forth from my essence

From years of working within the site of the arational, I know that the personal contextual frame needed to enter the site can be challenging to sustain.

And as I relax, I know she is right
I just get in my own way
For the trick is to open the door
And allow *her* to explore without
Blocking or controlling her stay

And that's easier said than done
For the mind's rascal monkey for one
Is always talking and taking control
But the goddess needs plenty of room
To create such a tune
That's original and full of soul

And the monkey will pretend to
Be asleep in order to sneak a peek
At the awe-inspiring beauty of the goddess
But she can sense him through his process
And she will fade away glowing

Another poem that deals with this zone of innovation is the poem entitled *High Wire Guitar*. The circus metaphor draws in all types of secondary associations with danger and daring and high drama. But this poem is also filled with mixed imagery of spiritualism. Initially, I refer to guitar playing as walking on water. I refer to the mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* to evoke the notion of complete

concentration, the Buddha of Compassion, and the whirling of the spheres. The pinnacle, or golden mean, arrives with the two words, "You are."

You are
Your extension and
If all manner of things have
Locked themselves into
The most sacred pattern
When the sun makes love to the moon
And the tides roll backward to reveal
Ancient shipwrecks and cities
Of so long ago, yet you know
And the howl of the wolf
Becomes an aria of unspeakable beauty...
Then you are ready

From these words I construct a triumvirate of associations that links guitar soloing with the circus as well as with deep spiritualism. In so doing, I hope to simulate some of my psychological experiences of creating music on stage for the reader. With the decline of the influence of the church in the 1960's, many young people turned to an informal spirituality and idolatry through the pop icons. People would carefully listen to lyrics as if there were modern scriptures. Guitar wizards like Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix became the high priests of the movement. Therein, extended blues based solos guided us to new levels of transcendence. And so, this poem stems from that attitude, where the actions of the improviser model a sacred ritual wherein the passion and the life force of the player turn the solo into a hymn of transcendence.

Reflections and Intimate Looks into the Form and Function of the Educational Landscape

There are a number of poems and narratives that were composed during my graduate work that address educational issues. These include the following poems: *On Music Class after a Sleepless Night*, and *How Do You Determine*, as well as the narratives, *The Hustler*, and *This Day in a Life*.

On Music Class after a Sleepless Night invites the reader to imagine some of the feeling and atmosphere of a modern junior high music class with the additional bonus of seeing it from the teacher's perspective. Many people have taken band classes when they were in school, but few know what the experience is like on the other side of the baton. I incorporated real sounds from one of my junior concert bands to intensify and validate the mood of the opening lines.

Lazy sounds, crazy sounds,
Deep from a bed of morning silence
They bloom
In all shapes and sizes
Sounds of brass, sounds electric, sounds pathetic
From old reeds and moldy reeds and
Misreads of music with
Cases banging and music stands clanging

I talk about how the music grows in intensity until there is a point where the overlapping of sound is so frequent that the sounds congeal one enormous storm that seems to have gained a life of its own.

The growling, howling, crashing, and clashing
Of these fragments of frequency and emotion
In this lumpy sonic mass hits
Its critical point of no return and morphs
Into one hideous multi-tendrilled entity
That continues to expand and

Feed off black hole recesses
And suddenly lashes out at me,
Knocking me senseless with
Unbearable dissonance and decibels
That moves to destabilize my very frame
Of calm and detached professionalism (?)

Trying to start a class requires pulling the children out of their own explorations and back to silence. This is can be a challenge. Some band teachers resort to a military-like atmosphere where children fear their teacher enough to quickly shut down when asked. I aspire to have, however, a calmer style, wherein I foster a more relaxed environment—one that can sometimes lead to exploration or too much socializing. So in my classroom, bringing the children back to my music agenda can be challenging.

I scramble to pad my ears and
Grab my baton while I
Call for the Force and the Gods of Reason.
Walking out of my office
I tap twice on the music stand, raising my hand while
Praying that the alien in my room
Will hear my call and sense my intention and
Will fail to detect my bluff
And that my sheer magnitude of conviction
Will dissipate this entity back to
A bed of silence so that the seeds of
Focus, cohesion, grace, and beauty
May take root and once again
Return us to a garden of symphony.

The narratives *The Hustler* and *This Day In a Life* dig much deeper into the politics and issues that I have dealt with in my tenure as a music teacher. The light tone permeating the musical soundscape of *The Hustler* softens the harsher realities of politics and power in the public system. The dominant question that is posed is whether I acted with integrity when I manipulated my principal into

valuing the music program. In reflection, I probably would do the same thing if the situation called for it but after writing this piece, I believe that I would approach the issue more carefully and slowly.

This Day in a Life chronicles a fictitious day in my professional life. A day at school serves as a scaffold to foist a plethora of issues and points of view I have about my job and profession. It is a/r/tographic by default as it interweaves my roles as artist, teacher and researcher. In reviewing this narrative I think that it serves the purpose of priming readers to the typical agenda and demands placed on music teachers. It raises questions about ethics, and the purpose of teaching as well as inviting thought on how music classes should be structured and how student needs could be met. It also acts as a springboard for many other topics.

The Intuitive Process and Empathy without Experience

Reflections on the collaborative process of the Poet and the Piper.

How is it that one is able to successfully construct music to either a poem, narrative, or libretto that contains subjects and feelings that are foreign to the composer? Or, to rephrase, what mechanisms are operating when a writer/poet feels that collaboration with a composer strongly conveys the experiential essence of the text even though the composer has never been through any of the poet's experiences other than reading or hearing the text? Certainly, it is an acknowledgement of the strength of the narrative to convey the intention and affective atmosphere of the subject at hand. Having said that, when I reflect on the life of Carl Leggo, I must certainly acknowledge that I come from another world of experience. Regrettably, I have never been east of Quebec City. I have never

breathed the salt air of the east coast—never met its wonderful, colourful inhabitants. Yet, there was some inexplicable linking between Carl and myself. Carl, and his wife Lana, were both very pleased with our a/r/tographic collaboration. Lana felt that I really understood the moods, ideas and feelings Carl tried to convey. The following discourse is a reflection on the event, in hopes of gleaning some insight into the question of intuitive empathetic connections and renderings albeit without real time experience.

The seven poems that Carl shared with me were treated individually. No conscious linking through motif or style was used. Having said that, a number of poems were from a period when Carl was reflecting on his east coast childhood experiences in Newfoundland, Canada. Many of these artistic reflections, with the exception of Lynch's Lane, seemed to call for a casual style of writing. The Same Nose called to me for a folk-like accompaniment in a two-part structure. Carl told me that his dad liked country music. I think of Scottish jigs and reels as being part of the east coast subconscious musical/cultural mosaic. So, I decided to spin an east coast reel with a twist of country. I started with a hook for acoustic guitar. From there, it is continuously repeated with various instruments joining in to expand, countrify, and variate the spirit of the hook. The Skipper (A.K.A., Carl's father) has clearly defined views on any number of topics, but one view that stands out is his distain for snobs. When Carl refers to other topics of rant, the music moves into a minor setting. After eight bars, it returns to the happy, danceable first theme in an A/B/A structure. The whole piece, being in part, a mirror of Carl's father, assumes a straightforward quality—one that is decorated with the musical equivalents of blue-collar culture and values.

In retrospect, it would have helped to have met Skipper before writing this piece. Writing music for poems that address inner feelings or abstract ideas allows for more freedom than writing music for a person that is still alive. I believe that the latter demands accuracy—much like the accuracy sought by a historian.

Perhaps, in part due to this, I feel the least satisfied with this piece

No Locks vividly takes one back to the house where Carl grew up. Usually, Carl reads this poem with a lot of frenetic energy. This house was a very busy place. I tried to capture some of the energy and drama. My first step was to create a moving, tumbling drum pattern that locks in with a furiously frantic bass part. If you listen, you will hear the sound of Carl's mother sweeping with a broom which became a metaphorical clearing of the house for the next activity in their three-ring circus of domesticity.

A traditional jazz guitar is used to further highlight the swirling energy. I purposefully created a very abrupt ending to contrast with the silence following the track. I wanted the listener to feel a bit of relief when it was over.

Overall, I felt fairly pleased with this soundscape as it seemed to support Carl's feverish reading of the poem. This piece further convinced me of the value of hearing poets read their own writings. Indeed, the act of performance poetry seems in itself a multi-layered and essentially a/r/tographic process. Text is combined with oratory. So strong is this alchemy that I found myself seldom referring to a hardcopy of Carl's poems. When I wanted to experience his poetry, my recordings of Carl were far more satiating than the one-dimensional form on paper. Carl's readings move in real time. His subconscious use of meter, phrasing, dynamics, tenuto, accelerando, ritardando and articulation unfold like a symphonic drama.

Listening to these musical elements of Carl's performance in turn shaped the musical "nest" that I constructed for the poem. Knowing the way that Carl writes, I would argue that his poetry in particular should be heard (through performance), rather than being read. If I had initially experienced this poem through my own reading of it, I doubt that I would have automatically interpreted the poem with such vigor.

Picnics called for a broader, introspective, and more melancholy approach. Our awareness of limited time on earth is arguably a most difficult topic. With this poem, I felt that Carl's unique framing was poignant and compelling. I wanted this piece to have an instrumental opening that prepared the listener for the melancholy and complex mood the poem generated. I used a jazz-like genre instead of a pure classical piece because Carl lightens up the poem toward the end. I placed an instrumental solo in the center of the poem for reasons that were two fold. First, to reinforce the mood and movement of the poem. Second, to allow the listener to reflect on the words spoken thus far. Like the poem, the music has an inevitable swing to it and eventually winds down like a clock.

Carl and I are both close to the same age and though he was clearly cognizant and concerned about the finality of the earthly human experience at an early age, I, as a 52-year-old man, empathized on a level that previously would not be possible for me.

My Mother's House demonstrates a pernicious theme in Carl's poetry: the colliding of contextual frames and past recollections with new contextual awareness of the present. The understanding and feelings of childhood experiences can change so dramatically as we go through our lives, gaining new experiences,

new understandings, and, perhaps, new levels of empathy and compassion for others as well as ourselves. With this process, I see Carl Leggo, the poet, as metaphorically sitting in the middle of a room of mirrors that reflect back differing angles of understanding. Physicists theorize that, if one could accelerate fast enough, one could bend back through time and return to the past. In this poem, Carl returns to his mother's home and discovers that it is veritably unchanged since Carl grew up in it. Carl examines it as a time-traveler might, wherein his past archetypal memories of his home paradoxically confirm and collide with his current adult experiences of the house. The past looks the same, yet different, as it is mirrored through the new lens of a mature man, poet, academic, father, husband and world traveler. In this room of mirrors, the past looks new, the past looks old, the past informs the present, and the present informs the past.

To accompany this mix of feelings, I wrote a soundscape that is very circular, one that just keeps going, not unlike the reflections in a room of mirrors. It also reminds me of the long car rides that I took as a boy each summer to the same place. Musical events happen in this piece just like the coming and going of scenery along the way. We would never stop—Carrie's (Carl's mother's) place never changes—and so there is a benign, observational feeling to the whole event. What changes is really internal. And so the soundscape slowing vanishes, its folksy style emphasizing the contents of the house and its owner.

The Diver is a powerful piece of poetry. Every time I hear it, Carl's writing forces me to experience a complete vision of the story in my mind's eye. In the beginning, I wanted to create a calm, watery feeling -the feeling that one has when you are swimming under the water and rising up to the surface for air. Then

intuitively, I decided that this poem with its dramatic story, stops, starts, and truncation of present with past, required a looser, and more flexible musical support. Using drums or strict time just did not seem appropriate. A single guitar seemed the best choice. As I listened to the poem, I simply improvised musical moods and tempos. Out of the seven poems, this piece seemed to rely the most on immediate intuitive responses. There was little revision-only the overdub of wind chimes at a few chosen spots. Indeed, due to spontaneous creation, I don't recognize my playing at certain points. I don't know what I played and I couldn't duplicate it accurately without transcribing parts of it. I continue to enjoy the poem and the soundscape and often think about youth, daring and foolishness, and their need for acts of fundamentalist reductionism in heroism.

The poem entitled O was a joy to work with. Although Carl spoke very little about what he heard musically for these soundscapes, I do recall him mentioning the idea of surf music. But when I started working on the piece, his alluding to a broncobuster pushed me into morphing the surf music into a homogeneous blend of surf and country music which was a sort of Lone Star Surf. Then, I pulled out my telecaster guitar and my slide and tried to musically emulate the ride with its slope and bumps and eventual crash. This soundscape is very light-hearted and works well for me in the context of the six other poems. I do not know how comfortable I would be if it were played out of the context of the CD.

The reading of *Lynch's Lane* was a particularly powerful experience for me. Carl has an extraordinary gift of recalling the past and putting the reader into the centre of the experience. This is achieved in part through his ability to tune into small details which for most of us, are long forgotten. The taste of the first popsicle

in summer, the pink flesh of fried trout draws our attention to the things that stood out when we were young and the world was new. The poem is once both ordinary and sublimely extra-ordinary.

During the August (2005) that I wrote the music for Carl's poems, I was lost in my own world of recollection. My father was very sick with lung cancer. Indeed, he would die just a week after the completion of my collaboration with Carl. As I wrote the music for *Lynch's Lane*, Carl's opening and closing lines that signify both the permanence and importance of childhood memories reverberated with the intensifying prospect that my relationship with my father would soon collapse into a series of special memories. As such, I was unable to work on Carl's poem without thinking of my Dad and his immanent passing into this field of memories. The sanctity of these thoughts and Carl's memories forced me to write music from the piano. I am not a pianist, and so I was forced to loop together small phrases. The theme that enters at the end of the poem is a motific representation of the spirit of my father as well as the spirit of all the important memories of growing up. I would like to have orchestrated this section as I envisioned a cello playing or at least doubling this theme. Just before the piece ends, the theme dissolves into a peaceful consonance-metaphorically echoing the end of my father's troubles with the final passage.

Section IV

What have I learned/unlearned?

To Believe in Myself and Value of My Unique Artistic Voice

Through this journey of grad studies, I have been led myself to resurrect my own voice. That is, however, precipitated on a number of other factors, the least of which being that I believe in myself and in my own intrinsic value as a human.

As I was growing up, heroes and heroic artists seemed to be very self-assured and generally right about many issues. Television heroes were always black and white right. Later, my musical heroes seemed to be very confident. Even as a young, unknown musician arriving in New York, Bob Dylan (2004) was very confident about himself:

“...I had a heightened sense of awareness, was set in my ways, impractical and a visionary to boot. My mind was strong like a trap and I didn’t need any guarantee of validity.” (p. 9).

Somehow, along the way, as a small boy, I mixed up the notion of hero with being an adult. In fact, I felt that in order to be grown up, you had to be a hero on some level.

When I reflected on myself, and compared myself against these heroes, I always felt I had a long way to go. The world was a mysterious and complex place. My TV heroes and even my Dad seemed very clear and controlled, decisive and resolute. TV heroes understood the world and always made the right choices. As I thought about myself, I could see how undeveloped I was; I could see that I didn’t know a lot about the world, much less lead in any way. As I always felt unsure, I tended to move cautiously through life. I failed as a boy to acknowledge that when I looked at myself, I judged my identity and behaviors from a position of privilege, in the sense that I could clearly see all my failings and all my experiential inadequacies. Without the critical ability to see

that my heroes suffered from their own set of failings, I felt generally inferior. Through this process, I unknowingly constructed psychological blocks against my own success. I had failed to realize that heroes, as I perceived them, do not exist- *humans exist*, and some humans act in heroic ways. The human condition is one of fallibility and learning and knowledge acquisition often occurs through and in spite of mistakes. Yet somehow, I convinced myself that burdened with my own fallibility, I had less of value to contribute than others.

This may, in part, have also been a result of my adolescent inability to connect with my culture. So many aspects of my culture did not appeal to me. The blue-collar culture of the '50's seemed narrow and judgmental and trying to fit in seemed to kill my life force. As I moved into adolescence, the suburban lifestyle that was embraced by so many Canadians, seemed like an impossibly small repository for my restless nature. But my Mom and Dad did seem to fit in, as did so many others, to the point that I felt obliged to assume that the problem lay within me. This catapulted me into a decades long journey to change myself in order to fit in.

To Work on Releasing Comparisons and Cultural Norms and Measurements of Value

Why I could not believe that I could be right—that the culture could be problematic, if not lethal for some of its members—still eludes me. In fact, as I grew up, it was obvious that some of my new musical heroes suffered badly and went generally unrecognized for their contributions. Saxophonist Charlie Parker and guitarist Lenny Breau both led artistic lives of amazing originality and artistic achievement yet both struggled to survive and both received little recognition

relative to the magnitude of their artistic genius. I do not know how much this lack of recognition bothered Parker or Breau, but I am sure that, at least financially, it must have been a very frustrating experience. These great artists uncovered new artistic frontiers through their dedication and obsession with their art form and not through an attempt to become famous or for financial gain. It seems that a personal context of artistic achievement based on the results of the recognition of the culture, represents a dangerous mind-set. One must follow one's voice for its own intrinsic and spiritual rewards. If one is recognized publicly, so be it, but that cannot be the driving force of any artistic endeavors. Leonard Cohen dismisses the relevance of the culture's failure to recognize Lenny Breau's genius. In the Emily Hughes' film, *The Genius of Lenny Breau*, (1999), Cohen states that Breau was "burning in the furnace of creation," and that alone was nourishing. He continued by saying that for some people this nourishment is enough and that for others, "it doesn't mean a thing" (Hughes, 1999).

Contextual Shifting and Re-building: Letting go of heroes: To be my own hero/no one is a hero/everyone is a hero

As I witnessed this personal psychodrama unfold, and I became more informed as to my own intrinsic worth, I found myself moving away from the concept of heroes. In everyday activities, I noted that I was not reading about them as much or giving them as much thought. Living in this newly "renovated" conceptual space, I seemed to have little energy for the process of mythologizing others. I felt ready to move onward to new, original adventures in order unfold as I should.

But the concept of hero kept haunting my psyche. And so, as I informed myself of myself through writing, performing music, teaching, and a/r/tographic process, I decided that perhaps the answer for me lay in me becoming my own hero.

This notion was very helpful at shifting my context away from zealous admiration of the lives of others to a position of original thinking. Indeed, the idea that I would become my own hero worked like a commercial slogan-something fast and easy that I could glean onto in order to prevent the new ways of thinking from slipping away. And this catch-phrase did indeed initially help me hold on to the new ways of seeing myself.

Upon deeper reflection, I think that the whole notion of heroism is so linked with recognition that it becomes inappropriate as a conceptual aid for artists. After all, is the notion of heroism not really part of the scaffolding of our culture? One could enter arguments that a hero may not even exist until the society at large recognizes one. Thus, I find that the concept of heroism is mired in the notion of recognition. And I have learned that this hook of recognition is a very dangerous one for me to entertain. When embracing the notion of heroism, I internally validate the notion of recognition, I find that I take my self worth and hand it over to the culture. Thus, my original thinking becomes subverted with an agenda, however subtle, that I create and express myself, based on what my culture approves. And so, the avoidance of seeking recognition is an important idea to maintain if I wish to keep on my artistic path. However, this idea of keeping the desire for recognition at a distance is very difficult to implement because I am bombarded with the culture constantly and to a great degree I am a product of this

culture. I need to function with a Zen-like detachment, wherein I observe and evaluate incoming stimuli, but keep the locus of control within myself.

I have clarified and developed new ways of thinking and feeling, I find myself move toward abandoning the heroic notion. Yet, I struggle with this idea as well. Heroism, though it is hooked with recognition, is also connected with other positive notions, such as notions of hope and altruism, and the notion of reaching past normal behaviors and cultural patterns to create new paradigms of behavior.

Consequently, at this juncture of my thinking/writing, I am conceptualizing that “everyone is a hero.” Again, I am using an arguably false generalization, but it seems to feel more comfortable than the notion that there are no heroes. Perhaps this is intermediary step that will eventually lead me to the notion that there are no heroes. But for now, artography has transformed me into the notion that “everyone is a hero.” This context certainly allows me to tap into heroic energy and passion for future artistic expression. It also supports my teaching as this conceptual frame shines a positive light and potential on all humans.

I will cautiously continue my meditation on the role of hero which is a role fraught with pitfalls and equally abundant with enormous transformative powers. Campbell (1988) states, “The images of myth are reflections of the spiritual potentialities of every one of us. Through contemplating these, we evoke their powers in our own lives” (p. 207).

To re-claim my voice also means that I need to validate my own process and rituals. This for me is less of a problem than really accepting what I find within myself. Certainly through my course work on narrative inquiry, I have once again walked the path of arational knowledge. A/r/tographic methodology has shown me

that intuition and inspiration, followed by review through logic and reflection, is truly my modus operandi. What I need to do is attend to the muse more often and avoid cognitive traps that sabotage my unfolding

The Snake of Regret Keeps Attacking

Re-claiming my original voice has involved much personal and professional growth. It is my intent to continue to use a/r/tographic forms to reclaim my voice in order to avoid the pitfalls of experiencing regret. As an a/r/tographer, I have learned that my own authentic voice can highlight and inform my future.

It seems so easy to write a declaration of intention like the last paragraph, but it is harder to enact. When I am having a bad day, it is very easy, even after all this work, to fall into an oft-repeated cycle of regret that has been with me since I turned 50. I feel, however, that I have moved far enough forward through this process to stymie future cycles.

Reflections on the Effect of the A/r/tographic Experience on my Classroom Teaching

Whenever a person adds an experience of learning that encompasses the magnitude of a master's degree, there must surely be ramifications throughout many levels of their lives. Changes and growth become further enhanced when the purpose of the research takes on an introspective and autobiographic element. Personally, I have always felt that I have moved forward following an academic experience. But this academic experience feels like the biggest step yet in my own personal development. I sense that my thinking is more lucid and functions at deeper levels of sophistication.

From my courses, I have gained more clarity on the complexity of life and how people do see things differently. This is forcing me to be more accepting of others as well as myself.

The ramifications of the experience have affected my daily classroom assignment. There is an overall feeling of invigoration that I bring to the classroom. My deepening empathy with the variance of human condition increases my ability to keep calm and work through issues with students. As I become more connected and clear through the a/r/tographic process, I bring more passion about music and art to my job. And I have always found that passion, to some extent, rubs off on students. Indeed, students often will open up and widen their own experience, if an instructor is motivated about the subject matter. Indeed, I sense that classroom environment and student interest and achievement can be somewhat viewed as a mirror of the passion, subject skills, interpersonal skills, and the overall experience of the teacher. Ultimately, as I learn and grow, my success as a teacher will move to deeper levels of growth.

In light of my growth as a/r/tographer, I plan to create a new school course that will inspire songwriters, composers, and improvisers. The purpose of this course will be to encourage and document student creativity. The working course title will be "song-writing and technology." Using Carl Leggo's Narrative Inquiry class as a model, I wish to create a safe and inspiring environment for students to write/compose and share their creations with the others in class. As well, the students would learn about the recording process and develop the requisite skills to make their own recordings. Classroom topics may include discourse on the artistic process, the nature and function of poetry, as well as talks on composition and more technical lecture on the operation of the recording equipment. When we reach a degree of safety and comfort, we will share and celebrate our individual artistic creations. I envision a CD/DVD of student submissions at the end of the year to

celebrate their learning. In a sense, I see this course as an extension of my research as students become engaged in the a/r/tographic process.

Where to Now?

I am reveling in anticipation of finishing this phase of reflection so that I may return with renewed vitality to new musical, poetic, and a/r/tographic outpourings. As to my on-going development as a jazz guitarist, I am flush with original ideas to the point that I backlogged in my absorbing these motifs into my inventory of improvisational motifs. I am wishing to compose a CD of original jazz inspired music. It will be the first sampler of my work in many years.

I hope to continue writing poetry as this is one of the greatest personal benefits that I derived from the Master's experience. I never wrote poetry prior to my return to school. Now, I am taken by a brand new art form that is rich in potential for learning.

I must continue to be vigilant of my psychological cycles if I wish to keep this artistic thrust going. Falling into a vortex of regret creates inertia. I must carefully monitor my thinking patterns and compile a more comprehensive list of psycho-triggers and cognitive errors that promote my descent into inactivity or unoriginality.

Finally, I must continue to deflate and resolve my issues with my Dad, who passed away in the middle of this project. When I find myself mired in frustration about our relationship, I must remind myself of what I know to be true: that my Dad loved me and was very proud of all my accomplishments. Perhaps, writing some music, poetry, and narrative might help resolve this tension.

I am starting anew. Ideas surface that are totally original as I have reclaimed my own voice. I must continue to learn about myself and strive to engage in the a/r/tographic process in order embrace my own uniqueness as a human for it is clear that a/r/tography enables me to gain deeper understandings about issues that have shaped my view of the world. Indeed, from my research, I have gained invaluable insights about the real me. From all my music, poetic and narrative renderings in a/r/tographic forms, I have discovered a deeper multilayered individual inside who became reenergized and revitalized about finding and releasing an authentic inner voice. I resolved issues and found new questions about myself. I explored intuition, and broke boundaries. I have sculpted and embraced stories behind the stories about myself. Heroes surface while regrets bring new narratives. Who am I? I am artist, teacher, guitar player, and a/r/tographer. Thus, through a/r/tographic process, I am truly starting anew.

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