

**A SCHOOL SHOOTING:
BULLYING, VIOLENCE AND AN INSTITUTION'S RESPONSE**

©MICHELLE BERTIE-HOLTHE

B.Ed., University of Lethbridge, 1993
R.N. Dip., Holy Cross School of Nursing, 1974

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of the University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

February 2003

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to

Jenna, Evan, and Nate

Each of whom will remain in my memory forever.

And my four sons

Brett, Mark, Ty and Chase

Each of whom I love beyond any words that I might write.

Abstract

This thesis is an inquiry that examines how those who are marked different in school are also marked “wrong” and marginalized and how that marking often leads to bullying. It examines the significance that those markings have on those who are marked, on those who mark and on those who are witnesses. This is an analysis of bullying and a critique of an institution’s response to bullying and its deleterious effects. The writing offers a connection between the particular and the universal. It tells of my personal experience while I was a teacher at a small town high school before, during and immediately after a violent incident that resulted in a death, against a backdrop of feminist, critical, poststructural and postmodern theory, an academic dialogue that has helped me come to some understanding of the dominant discourses at play within this story. The writing is not merely the mode of telling, the writing is the way to understanding, which must always precede the telling. Finally, this thesis is a search for a healing home, in which home-ness means a place open to being, rather than a place that defines the “right” way of being.

Acknowledgements

Thank You

To Brian Holthe, my husband; Monalie Nessman, my sister; Olive Bertie, my mother

Your steadfast belief in me was the foundation to the bridge that led me home.

To Charles Hart, Ph.D.

Your unwavering belief in the importance of telling this story is integral to this story

being told.

To Cynthia Chambers, Ph.D., my supervisor.

Your wisdom and patient guidance can be found on every page of this work.

To Erika Hasebe-Ludt, Ph.D.

You, and the Writing Teachers' Lives writing group under your leadership, provided a

safe place where complicated conversations were begun and continue still.

To Chase Holthe

Your thoughtful attention to names was invaluable and the two roses you brought me on

a particularly difficult day will always be remembered.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
Preface: Broken Home.....	viii
Intersections.....	1
Chapter 1: The Right Angle.....	2
Intersections.....	7
Chapter 2: Righting the Story.....	8
Intersections.....	13
Chapter 3: Landscaping Roots.....	14
Intersections.....	20
Chapter 4: Writing in the Margin.....	21
Intersections.....	35
Chapter 5: Fitting Lessons.....	36
Fitting Adjustment.....	36
Fitting Persona(ality).....	39
Fitting Treatment.....	41
Intersections.....	45
Chapter 6: Rooting Out the Difference.....	46
Intersections.....	62

Chapter 7: The Hole in the Telling.....63

 Intersections.....77

Chapter 8: A Home Locked Down.....78

 Intersections.....85

Chapter 9: Getting Home Back to Normal (Status quo/Status quo ante).....86

 Intersections.....114

Chapter 10: A Memory Expelled from Home/A Home for a Memory.....115

 Intersections..... 125

References.....126

The incidents of bullying and the results that are described in this thesis retain the key elements of the original event. Names, places, dates, and certain elements of the violence described in the text have been disguised to provide anonymity to those involved. The incident upon which this thesis is based resulted in a death. I have chosen a shooting to be the cause of that death. According to the United States Secret Service *Safe School Initiative* (2002), there have been 37 school shootings from 1974 to 2000. While the Secret Service found that there is no one “profile” of a school shooter, a survey of 2,017 students found that “students at the biggest risk of opening fire at school are likely to be friendless boys...who are seeking revenge for bullying” (Pleming, 2001).

Preface: Broken Home

In October of 1998, Andy, a grade nine student and another boy were suspended for three days because of fighting on school grounds. As Andy’s English teacher, I was astounded at this seemingly uncharacteristic act. I would describe him as bright, hardworking, popular with both his fellow students and his teachers, exhibiting a particular sensitivity towards those students others found “different.” During the course of his absence, I had the opportunity to discuss the circumstances surrounding the suspension with the principal. Apparently Andy had been the victim of ongoing verbal harassment and intimidating threats from the other boy. Andy’s response, which led to the suspension, was to fight the boy. While the principal felt the punishment met official policy requirements, “We have zero tolerance for fighting,” he also expressed with a smile, that it was his belief that sometimes “these types of things need to happen.” My inference of his comment was that he, at least privately, sanctioned and perhaps approved of Andy’s actions. While this statement bothered me because of its implications, I remained silent. Some weeks later I spoke to Andy’s mother. She expressed bewilderment at her son’s actions and genuinely felt it out of character for the child that

she knew. I agreed with her assessment of her son, but again remained silent on the causal issue.

The next year Andy's younger brother, Nate, was enrolled in my Grade 9 English class. He did not attend the first three weeks of class and there was some question as to whether he ever would. In the fourth week of classes he began to attend sporadically, but even when present he would refuse to do almost any kind of class activity. Eventually, because of his inability to settle in, to fit in, and adjust to school expectations, administration felt (and as one of his teachers, I agreed) it was in the best interests of the school and of course the child to ask him to leave. He was to continue his education through home schooling. Few, if anyone in that school, gave the boy much thought after that day.

Until one spring day in 2000. The school day began like any other. The morning was grey and cloudy, very unspring-like weather. Sometime during the day it began to snow; it was to be the last snowfall that spring. An observer looking in would not see anything unusual that morning; kids rushing to their desks just as the bell rang out, retrieving books from lockers, and gathering outside the doors between classes; teachers taking attendance, handing back assignments, and introducing new lessons. And then, just as the final bell ended the lunch recess, the path of fourteen-year-old Nate, carrying a gun, was timed in such a way as to intersect with the path of two seventeen-year-old students, carrying schoolbooks. The intersecting steps left one student dead, another seriously wounded and the third—forever marked as a murderer. The school was D. H. Lawrence High School in Duncan, a small town in the mid-west United States.

The student who died in the attack, Jenna Terry, grew up five houses from my home, and was my son's classmate ever since kindergarten. The boy who was seriously wounded that day was enroute to my classroom for his English class. And Nate had once been my student for a brief period.

Nate was arrested, charged and eventually convicted of the crime. As part of this child's defense, his lawyers provided evidence to show that he suffered from constant and unrelenting abuse at school. This intimidation began during his earliest elementary grades in Illinois and continued even after the family's move to Duncan when he was in Grade 6. And according to his lawyer, this child, unlike his brother, could not or would not fight back. For years this child had apparently been marked "different" for a variety of obscure reasons, a mark which pushed him further and further in the margin.

During the same April, but in what I had believed to be a completely unrelated incident, the renewal of my contract with the school was unexpectedly in jeopardy. The principal and his administrative associates felt that while they had "complete confidence" in my ability in the classroom, there was suddenly "some" concern that my personality did not fit with the school's. My reaction to this was one of surprise and concern. I spoke to a colleague who was my mentor and the State's Teachers' Association representative about the situation, and in a series of meetings that spring, my mentor and I met with the administration in an attempt to identify their particular concerns. While we were unsuccessful in discovering exactly what the areas of concerns were, the administration felt that my insistent questioning was "a red flag," a mark of danger which was proof that their concern was warranted. It was decided that because of this red flag, they would investigate my suitability to remain as a teacher for the West Evans School Division over

the next six weeks. In the end their conclusion was that, while in their view I was “a gifted teacher in the classroom,” indeed my different personality made a difference; it did not “fit” and it would be in the best interest of the school to let my contract lapse. The principal summed it up in our last meeting when he commented that he did not feel that the renewal of my contract was in keeping with the goals of a safe and caring school.

In retrospect, it was probably that moment in time that the two incidents, the shooting and my contractual dispute became emotionally linked and intertwined for me. I could not grieve the loss of my “home” without grieving the loss of both Jenna and Nate. I think my greatest fear for a long time was that somehow my difference had made a difference and was integral to the shooting, was a contributing factor to the crime. This horrific secret fear kept me silent, feeling safe only behind the closed door of my home. Being strong enough to open that door took time. When I walked through it, it was to enter the University’s door leading to the Master of Education program. I came there not to enhance or advance a career. I came because it was the only place I could still technically be a teacher. Although I did not consciously know it, I came searching for home, a healing home.

It was there that I began to ask questions, insistent questions. In what way have the dominant discourses and discursive practices, in which I have participated, informed the naming of my personality as “different”? And did they also inform the experience of Nate? Are we victims or perpetrators? Or is one of us more of a victim and the other, part of a perpetration, giving silent consent (*Qui tacet, consentit*) to the practice of marking those outside the dominant norm as different? And finally, the question that began this work: What is the significance of being marked different in schools?

These are important questions. Certainly important for me personally, but also I think important to teachers who wish to make their classrooms “home” for their students. It is my hope that the writing of this thesis will offer others and myself some insight into those questions. And I hope it will point to the importance of teachers becoming as Emmanuel Levinas (1981) believes “Otherwise” or wise of the other, to look beyond our own essence and see the other in ourselves and ourselves in the other and to understand, as Aoki (1999) does that “it takes two to make a person. A person is divided into both self and other” (p. 181). To make a home for ourselves, we must make a home for the other.

Finding a healing home cannot be accomplished by oneself. Certainly for me, I have found aid and guidance along the way from many sources. That guidance has come from both expected and unexpected places, at expected and unexpected times. This aid has often come at eerily serendipitous times. I call this assistance my “voices in the margin,” significant spirits whose paths I have intersected with during the course of this work. Hopefully, these intersections will also help guide the reader throughout this search.

Intersections

Journeys cross divides. Once on the other side, the traveler remains the same person, carrying the same baggage. But on the other side of certain divides the traveler senses a new identity; the same baggage now seems useful for new purposes. Fundamental assumptions that give life its particular meaning have changed.
(Frank, 1995, p. 4)

Chapter 1 The Right Angle

She is in her third semester of the Master of Education program. Tonight the class is discussing *critical perspectives on schooling*.

Critical: [critic-L. < Gr., able to discern, see CRISIS] tending to find fault; characterized by careful judgment and analysis; of or forming a crisis or turning point; designating or of a point at which a change in character, property or condition is effected.¹

Perspectives: [ME. < LL. to look through + to look] of perspective; the art of picturing objects or a scene in such a way, e.g. by converging lines, as to show them as they appear to the eye with reference to relative distance or depth; the relationship or proportion of the parts of a whole, regarded from a particular standpoint or point in time; a specific point of view in understanding or judging things or event, esp. one that shows them in their true relations to one another.

Schooling: training or education; cost of instruction and living at school; [Archaic] disciplinary correction.

There are eight students, five women and three men in this course. The room is small and the students' seating arrangement has taken the form of a right angle, like the letter "L". Each class she takes whichever seat is closest to the door. Tonight she sits one seat away from it, the second furthest vertical point from the vertex of the seating angle. She and three other women form this vertical line. The fifth woman takes the furthest horizontal

¹ The definitions are taken from *Webster's New World Dictionary*, (1984), (2nd ed.), New York: Simon and Schuster.

point from the vertex. The oldest male student, a principal, sits at the point and beside him, along the horizontal line of the “L” sit the two younger male students. The male instructor sits alone, midline to the angle.

At the beginning of the semester, she makes the decision to speak up more than she has in previous courses. She tries to speak at least once each class and to express her opinion, even if she thinks it is contrary to the majority held by the other students or the instructor. Even in this small class, it is difficult.

There is not much more time left in tonight’s class. The discussion has turned to the increasing corporate presence in schools. The instructor suggests that the market mindset present in schools can also be seen in administration’s attitude toward student teachers’ internships. He explains that student teachers have begun to view the internship as a prolonged job interview, which he believes leads to practices in the classroom that exhibit compliance, a wish to please and *brown-nosing*, instead of the internship being a journey in search of themselves as “teacher” and as a time to practice teaching strategies that may be risky or challenging.

Brown-nose: [from the image of currying favour with someone by kissing his rear-end] [Slang] to seek favour or approval from by obsequious behavior; fawn on.

He comments that studies show that principals tend to hire people that are like themselves.

She chooses her words carefully. She does not want to risk revealing too much. She tells the instructor that she knows that some principals and superintendents believe that “good teachers are a dime a dozen” and hire for personality rather than for what happens

in the classroom. She remarks that she finds this practice frightening. She chooses this word carefully. The word “horrifying” more accurately describes what she feels about the practice. The instructor agrees that such practice exists. She does not know if he thinks it is “frightening,” too. The oldest male student, the principal, remarks, “I don’t think I agree with that.”

She turns her head to the right and looks directly at him. She thinks he means that he does not believe the practice exists. She says, “I don’t agree with the practice, but I *know* the practice exists.” She repeats that she finds the practice “frightening.” Again, she does not use the right word. Again, the instructor agrees the practice exists.

“Well,” the principal remarks looking at her, the expression on his face suggesting that she does not understand administrative duties and responsibilities, “You have to do a little of that. You wouldn’t want to hire a *bitch*.”

Bitch: [ME. < OE. < ON.] the female of the dog, wolf, etc.; a woman, especially a bad-tempered, malicious or promiscuous woman, a coarse term of contempt or hostility.

The explosion of noise around her, laughter, expressions of surprise and mock “oohhs” suggesting impending trouble, blankets her. The word appalls her, the interpretive leaps he has taken to make this statement leaves her stunned. For a moment, her breath seems to stop at the point of exhale. She turns to the instructor and holds her hand up, palm forward and tries to speak. The sounds continue but she cannot identify any particular words being said. There is a sense of amusement to the sounds. She speaks over the noise, directing “I have to say something” to the instructor. She repeats, “I have to say something,” as the room begins to quiet. He smiles; he seems amused as he tells

her to go ahead. She is not sure what amuses him, the principal's statement, the class's general reaction, or her obvious horror.

She turns to her right and looks up the length of the wood-grain table, directly at the principal. She is speaking now only to him, her attention is directed only towards him. "There is a problem here. It depends on what your definition of 'bitch' is. If you define 'bitch' to be someone who is good in the classroom, but is assertive, has an opinion of her own, asks questions and will go nose-to-nose with you if she thinks you are wrong, if that is a 'bitch' to you, then that's a problem." She pauses...the principal does not verbally respond...she tries to read his face...it is impassive. The words rush out, "Men define what 'bitch' is. In Alberta, 95% of superintendents are men. 80% of principals are men. 80% of elementary teachers are women, yet 80% of elementary principals are men. Men define what the 'right personality' is; men define what 'bitch' is. That's a problem." The principal's expression is almost placid, perhaps indicating tolerance for her emotional outburst, or perhaps satisfaction that she has just proved his point. She wants to say more, there is so much more, months and months worth of words that she would like to say. She stops, a voice inside her head tells her to stop speaking.

She becomes aware of her surroundings. The two younger men are pretending to be frightened of her, leaning into each other in a protective stance, as part of a joking mime. One of the men advises the principal to stay quiet, advises him "Better not say anything more Fred, you're never going to be able to dig your way out of this one." The mingling of female and male laughter surrounds her again. It seems she is alone in her outrage.

And then it is over, as if it never happened. The instructor moves the discussion back to corporate presence. She reaches for her coffee but pulls her hand back, hiding it underneath the table when she sees the tremble. She does not speak again that night. The class continues as if the encounter never happened. No mention of it is made again, during or after class. Her instructor's and her fellow students' silence, at least to her, is deafening. But what does it mean? Does their silence allow the issue to disappear for them? Or does their silence mean that it is not a *critical perspective on schooling* for them, because after all, none of them are bitches?

For days she thinks of this encounter. It settles into her. In her memory, the incident seems to be lit in sharp relief. In an odd way, this incident is a blessing, a gift. It offers her the courage to step out of the shadows and to speak.

Intersections

Then came the day
When the risk to remain
Tight in a bud
Was more painful
Than the risk it took
To blossom
(Anais Nin, as quoted in Davies, 1992, p. 67)

None find peace in silence, even when it is their choice to remain silent.
(Laub, 1995, p. 66)

The only way through pain...is to absorb, probe, understand exactly what it is and what it means. To close the door on pain is to miss the chance for growth...Nothing that happens to us, even the most terrible shock, is unusable, and everything has somehow to be built into the fabric of the personality.
(May Sarton as quoted in DeSalvo, 1999, p. 47)

Chapter 2

Righting the Story

To speak. To tell. To witness. I need to write this story, the story of the shooting and the events before and after that marked me. I need to write it because I need to heal. I need to write it because I am a teacher. If I don't write it the part of me that is teacher will die. I want this story to be more than an act of reporting. I want this act of writing to be an act of testimony. Arthur Frank (1995), in his book *The Wounded Storyteller*, explains that testimony does not simply affect those who receive it; testimony also implicates those who receive it. Too, I want this writing to be an act of listening, a listening for the other. Again Frank (1995) shares that when we listen "for others, we listen for ourselves" (p. 25). This act of witnessing, this act of listening, this act of implication is testimony. According to Shoshana Felman (1995), testimony is a "*speech act*...[which] addresses what in history is *action*...and what in happening is *impact*" (italics in original, p. 17).

Frank (1995) explains that writing testimony is not an act of restitution, since there is no desire to return to what was. In fact, writing testimony implies an understanding that "returning to what was" is no longer morally acceptable. Writing testimony often begins in the dark, in a place of wordless chaos and moves towards a place of clearer understanding, a place in which reflection brings light, brings not what was, but what can be now, it brings transformation. For Dori Laub (1995), testimony

is a dialogical process of explorations and reconciliation of two worlds—the one that was brutally destroyed and the one that is—that are different and will always remain so. The testimony is inherently a process of facing loss—of going through the pain of the act of witnessing...It is the realization that the lost ones are not coming back; the

realization that what life is all about is precisely living with an unfulfilled hope. (p. 74)

Frank (1995) calls the stories that emerge from testimony “quest narratives.” So by its very nature, testimony is journey.

According to *Webster’s New World Dictionary* (1982) the word “journey” is defined as “the act or an instance of traveling from one place to another” or “any course or passage from one state or experience to another” (p. 762). According to this lexicon of English language, I have been and still am on a journey. I did not want this particular passage; I wanted no part of it and I certainly did not volunteer for it. In fact, I performed mental gymnastics in order to “clearly see” through clenched eyes, that there was no need for any type of trip. What began as mere scratchings somewhere deep in my consciousness, turned into a bold-faced, insistent and adamant demand for attention, invading even my sleeping moments. And my answer to that demand was a resounding NO! For a time I hid with my students in the safe cocoon of my classroom and when that was no longer possible, I hid behind whatever real or metaphorical screen or fence, that I could find. Even as I made tentative steps around those barriers, I tried to remain in the shadows, along the fringes, as quiet and as invisible as I could make myself, remaining close to the door in order to make a quick retreat through the exit.

And then Dr. Cynthia Chambers invited her students in the course *Curriculum Studies and Classroom Practices* to “write about what is important to you.” The question I struggled with in those weeks was “How do I write about what is important to me when what is important is the very thing that I am trying to leave behind, buried in an unmarked grave?” “Cryptic” was her description of my initial attempt, when she returned

“Written submission #1” to me. There was no sudden breakthrough, in which I decided to shout from the top of the coulees this story that was so insistent and adamant. Reaching the place that would see me accept the journey has been an arduous climb; one that I was often tempted to abandon, where I looked for the soft soil to dig in my heels, for a gopher’s hole that might hide me or a firm root that my fingers might grasp to halt my moving forward. Looking back, the path does not seem suddenly any easier or less overwhelming.

Adrienne Rich (1979) believes everyone faces, sooner or later, a time in their life that opens a path for such a journey.

In every life there are experiences, painful and at first disorienting, which by their very intensity throw a sudden floodlight on the ways we have been living, the forces that control our lives, the hypocrisies that have allowed us to collaborate with those forces, the harsh but liberating facts we have been enjoined from recognizing. Some people allow such illuminations only the brevity of a flash of sheet-lightning, that throws a whole landscape into sharp relief, after which the darkness of denial closes in again. For others, these clarifications provide a motive and impulse toward a more enduring lucidity, a search for greater honesty, and for the recognition of larger issues of which our personal suffering is a symptom, a specific example. (p. 213)

This sudden floodlight or lightening flash for me, the one that refused, and refused and refused again to allow my vision to readjust to the dark, occurred on my 46th birthday, in the spring of 2000. Every person in that school, or connected to that school was wounded in some way that day, in that sudden blinding flash of violence. I tried my hardest to find

that dark comfortable place of denial again. That place where I could comfort myself with the knowledge that Nate's act was only a random, freak incident that could find no reflection in the safe enclave that I, and many others, considered "home." And perhaps I would have been successful under other circumstances. But the sparks of light would not go away. At times, I think of those sparks as antibodies reacting to the inflamed festering sore that would not heal, no matter how many "bandages" I used to cover it from view.

In retrospect, those sparks may have been what Freire (1970a) defines as "praise de conscience...[the] first level of apprehension of reality...a consciousness of reality, but, as yet, not a critical attitude" (p. 224). If so, then I believe this journey is a search for concientization. Concientization, as Freire (1970a) describes it, is "the critical stage in which reality becomes a cogniscible object...it implies that [humans] take the role of agents, makers and remake their world" (p. 224). This writing is, in many ways, an attempt at "righting." DeSalvo (1999) tells us that "writing can be a 'righting' process...righting what profoundly disturbs us" (p. 53). It is an attempt to understand the everyday, seemingly mundane, isolated, particular occurrences that made up the preceding and succeeding days to the shooting; it is an attempt to look closely at "the assumptions in which we are drenched" (Rich, 1979, p. 35), and how those particular occurrences and assumptions form a pattern of relationships that may be significant to an understanding of "home," of "belonging," of "difference," and of "homelessness."

And hopefully this writing/righting, through its attempt to understand, is an act of caring. Noddings (1984) describes the essential part of caring as

[a]pprehending the other's reality, feeling what he[/she] feels as nearly as possible...[I]f I take on the other's reality as possibility and begin to feel its

reality, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly; that is, I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but in behalf of the other. (p.16)

Writing my thesis in this way resists the pull to fit in and into the “best model for an appropriate and acceptable thesis.” It is a personal decision, a conscious act, an act of caring for myself. It is an attempt to write my authentic voice, to break the silence in a way that is pleasing to me. It is also a political gesture. Writing in this form is a defiant act of refusal, refusal of both the name “inferior” and its appropriate place, “marginal.” It is a defiant act of insistence, which states adamantly that I will not hide my voice in a pleasing disguise, so it will conform. To choose this form of author-ity comes, as Anne-Louise Brookes (1992) felt, “from a desire to write in ways *less defining and confining* [italics added] than the more usual and obvious ones” (p. 8). And finally, writing to speak, to listen, to implicate implies dialogue, conversation, and reciprocity. It is an invitation to the reader to participate actively in this explorative journey, rather than as a passive onlooker or as a receptacle of another’s report.

Intersections

Teachers need to be in touch with their own landscape.
(Greene in Gregorio, 2002)

We are a religious town. It's a nice place to raise your family and have kids go to school.
We're good people.
(Clerk in Duncan drugstore as quoted in Dudman, 2000, p. A6)²

My childhood backyard has been unveiling itself to many other spaces—spaces that are not necessarily other yards. Spaces where this man [/woman] of today sees the child of yesterday in him [/her] self and learns to see better what [s]he had seen before... [I have been] prepared by the *lived relationship* I had with my backyard.
(Freire, 1997, p. 38)

There's absolutely no civic reason for Duncan to be the latest community stricken by this plague of school mayhem.
(Brase, 2000 p. 4)

² Newspaper articles quoted all refer to this particular violent incident or the events following this incident. Authors' and newspapers' names, some article titles, and dates have been changed to maintain the anonymity of those involved.

Chapter 3 Landscaping Roots

She was hired to teach at D. H. Lawrence High School in 1998, and was there for two years. On her way to the school each day, she walked out of her home and into a town that has shaped her life, Duncan. She was formed by this town, rooted it seems to its soil and apparently to the block where the house that she calls home is. After fourteen years of living in other places, in other houses on other blocks, she came back to live on this block, in this house again. Just as she has grown up at this address, 5108-44 Avenue, so too have her four sons.

This avenue's appearance has changed, yet remained the same, over the years. The trees are taller, the houses sport new siding or additions to accommodate growing families and, of course, many of the faces have changed. Most residents on this block probably do not know that the triplex apartment building which sits directly across from her home used to be Humphrey's Funeral Home. But, just as it was when she was a little girl, this avenue has remained an avenue of children. However now it is, more specifically, an avenue of boys. Across the road, at 5109 live the Ingalls with their four boys. Two houses east, at 5116 live the Stevens, with their five sons. And just up the avenue and across the street at 5209, live the Terrys, who have four sons and one daughter. The first structure built on this block in 1907, First Baptist Church, remains almost unchanged and continues to serve the town's Baptist congregation under the guidance of Reverend Jeffrey Brown.

44th Avenue, located north of the railroad tracks is part of the "north-side" of Duncan. When asked, "Where do you live in Duncan?" the first part of the response used to be

either “On the South-side,” or “On the North-side.” Now the response is “On the South-side,” or “On the North-side” or “In Legacy Estates.” The Legacy Estates are located north of the highway and railroad tracks. Geographically, the Legacy Estates’ main avenue, just west of 50th Street is located on the same avenue that she lives on. But this avenue is not named “44th Avenue;” it is named “Legacy Drive.” Geographically, the Legacy Estates are on the north-side of Duncan, but it is not the North-side of Duncan. The North-side of Duncan is one of the oldest sections of the town. If an outsider were to drive these streets and avenues they might come away describing it as the working-class section. To the residents of Duncan, it is simply the North-side.

D. H. Lawrence High School is nine blocks south of the highway and the railroad tracks. Each day she crossed over to the South-side. If she were to continue straight south, two blocks past the railroad tracks she would find herself in front of St. Catherine’s Roman Catholic Church. This church has marked many of the rituals, traditions, and milestones of her life. She was baptized, made her first communion, was confirmed, and married in this church. She brought her children here to be baptized. As a child she played at being Joan of Arc and practiced being burned at the stake in her backyard. Her fantasy, however, always ended with her being rescued at the last moment by a handsome saviour (male) on a horse, swooning to the point of unconsciousness from the smoke, but miraculously unmarred.

However, instead of continuing south from the tracks, she turned east, and travelled parallel to the tracks on 47th Avenue before turning south again on 54th Street. Every school day, she passed the third landmark of her life. The Regency Hotel sits across the avenue from the railroad tracks, from the soon to be demolished grain elevators, and from

the railroad station, long since demolished. The Regency Hotel has been in her family since 1929 when her grandfather bought it. He came to the United States alone, as a seventeen-year-old boy from Italy in 1908. Grandpa Tom worked first as a mule-skinner, then as a coal miner and then as delivery man for the Hannibal Furniture Factory. Prohibition in the United States proved lucrative for her grandfather. Bootlegging liquor across politically drawn lines provided the cash for him to buy his first hotel in Evergreen. Within a few years he sold that and bought the Regency Hotel in Duncan. Her father's first job, when he was eleven-years-old was cleaning the spittoons. Her first job was as a desk clerk in the lobby and as a chambermaid upstairs. Her husband supplemented their farm income with a second job as a bartender in the hotel's tavern. And each of her four sons' first job was also as desk clerk.

Turning south on 54th Street took her the rest of the way to school. At 54th and 54th there is a four-way stop. On the southwest corner is the Eternal Life Evangelical Church, built in 1929 to house the growing church population. On the southeast corner is the new Eternal Life Evangelical Seminary building. During their high school career, each weekday, for one school period, evangelic students cross the road to learn the lessons of their faith. On the northwest corner is Main Elementary School, the new version of the oldest school in Duncan, first built in 1911. And on the northeast corner of 54th and 54th is the newly renovated D. H. Lawrence High School.

Every day, she turned east on 54th Avenue and traveled to the end of the school building. A gravel car path leads to a small dirt-packed parking area behind the school and adjacent to the football field. Two back doors facing east provide entrance to two different wings of the school. It was the more northern door that she entered and exited

each school day. She used to joke with David, her mentor that she had gotten this teaching position by squeezing in through the crack at the bottom of the closed back door when everyone was out of town.

She had gone back to school to get her Bachelor of Education degree when her fourth son was three years old, in 1989. After graduating with a 3.9 GPA four and a half years later she slowly came to the realization that, while she was in demand as a substitute teacher in the division, she could “not get short-listed to save a life.” Principals told her to be patient, to keep substitute teaching, to “pay your dues” and keep applying. And so she did, for four and a half years, gathering reference letters along the way and storing them in her bedside table. And then quite unexpectedly a temporary part-time English position for the 1998-1999 school year, which had been filled twice since the previous May, became available yet again in August. The first two candidates chosen to fill the position had each found full-time employment elsewhere. This third time, David had been asked to assist the vice-principal in short-listing potential candidates because the principal and deputy superintendent were out of town. This time, she was short-listed. When the vice-principal offered her the position she was ecstatic. She knew she had gotten in by the back-door, but David just smiled and said, “It doesn’t matter how you got in; you’re here now.” She wanted to believe him. And it seemed that he was right.

The following spring, a full-time permanent position, to begin in September 1999, became available. She wanted that position very badly. She spoke to the principal, who assured her that “I will do whatever I can to keep you in this school, Michelle; however my power is limited here.” He cautioned her that he felt “99 per cent certain” that the position would probably go to an internal transfer, someone with a continuing contract.

He assured her she would be given a chance to interview for the position. When the six-member interviewing committee offered her the position she was overjoyed. The principal was surprised but seemed pleased for her. He had come up to her room the morning after the interview and handed her a folded piece of scrap paper as she was opening the door to her classroom. He had drawn a smiley face in red ink on it. It felt like she was home.

It would be almost 24 months after her last day at school and close to four years after being offered the first position before she learned quite by accident that the superintendent, who had sat in during the interviews to monitor the process for that first temporary position, had suggested after the committee had decided to offer her the position, that they should “reconsider” their decision and look at another important factor. That factor was “the way Mrs. Holthe raised her family.” While he apparently did not want to get into details he had gone on to explain that he had had some experiences with “one of her sons” while serving as principal of the school. The four committee members, perhaps because each of them, at different times, had taught her eldest son,³ or perhaps because they thought this “important factor” to be inappropriate, chose not to take his advice. She did not realize how small the crack had truly been under that back door.

It was this back door that led to the stairwell closest to her classroom on the second floor. Each day, as she walked across the threshold of her classroom, she took note of her name above the door. She had not yet taken for granted that it was there, nor had she gotten tired of seeing it there. She loved the fact that her name marked her classroom. Beside the door to her room there was a large picture window that provided anyone in the

³ My oldest son was the only one of my children who was old enough to be a student at D. H. Lawrence High School during the superintendent's tenure as principal. He had never had my son as a student.

classroom or in the hallway an unusual vantage point. Whether the door was open or closed, anyone standing in the hallway could see almost the entire classroom, and anyone in the classroom could see those passing by in the hallway.

Intersections

We are all Pandora, motivated by a need to know our inner and outer worlds when we sit down to write. For when we open the lid, pain does fly out, and anger, fear, and grief—but also joy, and an end to silence.
(Annas, 1987, p.16)

Autobiography becomes a medium for both teaching and research because each entry expresses the particular peace its author has made between the individuality of his or her subjectivity and the intersubjective and public character of meaning.
(Grumet, 1990, p. 324)

Education is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories.
(Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2)

Chapter 4

Writing in the Margin

Writing allows me to stand and to show myself in the light, with the intention of being heard; it has given me “voice.” Writing draws my attention to and gives me a clearer understanding of how shame has constructed an illusion that safety is found in the darkness of shadows and that the silence which comes with invisibility is an appropriate “home” for me. Chambers (1998) teaches that “[w]riting is a way...to open up the word and the world, and our lives within that world for attention, discussion, understanding, re-imagining and re-creating, as well as for a profound acceptance of what is” (p. 26). My writing has allowed me to re-imagine a different “home” for myself. Writing too, has given me the courage and sense of agency which Lorrie Neilsen (2000) knows is necessary to be able to write out-loud, to question mine and other’s assumptions of where my “place, [my home] in life and learning” (p. 149) should be; it has given me “authority” (p. 149) to examine, to question, to challenge and perhaps to “effect change in personal and professional contexts” (p. 149).

As I began to read the academic literature that would eventually inform this writing, the only writing that I seemed capable of was in the margins of those scholarly texts. It was an inner dialogue with them; my way of incorporating my previous knowing with this new knowledge. And so, as I was writing in the margin of another’s text, I suddenly could “see” the layers of what the term “writing in the margin” might really mean. Bonnie Friedman’s (1993) reminder that “[h]ow we learn is what we learn” (p. 56) was indeed true for me. To be marked different *is* to be on the edge, *is* to be on the border, *is* to be away from the centre. If you think about the actual margin of the centred text, there seems little to contemplate. While it is part of the whole, its place, silence and

invisibility appear natural and right. The margin's only purpose is to frame, sometimes flatter, and to create a boundary to protect the centered text, to emphasize the centre's values, focuses, and concerns. If there has to be writing in the margin at all, then the "right" writing should act as an echo, a confirmation, a reverent recognition of the superiority and the authority of the centre. And the inferiority of the margin.

But writing in the margin can be more than just the confirmation and validation of the centred authority. Writing in the margin can be a transgressive act, an act that challenges the boundaries and the authority of the centre. Frigga Haug (1987), in her astonishing work *Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory*, asserts that "writing is a transgression of boundaries, an exploration of new territory...an alternative to accepting everyday events mindlessly" (p. 36). When the voice in the margin is different than that expected respectful echo and is "insistent" and "adamant" at the same time, it is often dismissed as inappropriate, disgruntled, subjective, and/or too idiosyncratic to be taken seriously. In fact, its insistent difference becomes the "red flag" that warns of deviance and danger. And perhaps the centre's cautionary reflex is understandable. Haug (1987) continues that writing can be

destructive of culture. The dominant [centred] culture deprives us of power in two ways. Meaning generated within it, as well as its way of life, are doubly alien to us...In setting out to write, we must in this sense become involved in the 'destruction of culture.' (p. 38)

The story that I write is insistent and adamant in its desire to be heard. It is a story that may bring tight, closed, displeased looks to the faces at the centre; it is a story that does

not *belong*. Writing *in* the margin, or writing the margin *in* is writing across the boundaries, out of the border, and right smack into the centre of the text.

Writing the margin *in* by “writing (while) in the margin” offers an experiential perspective unlike one that would be lived at the centre. The act of writing from this perspective is a rejection of the silence “normally” and “naturally” imposed and a demand that attention, respect, and value be accorded those experiences. Such writing, Haug (1987) suggests, “require[s] more than a little disrespect for all norms and values...a disrespect amongst other things for traditional uses of language, for divisions of labor and theme, for certain modes of thought and behavior” (p. 38). This type of writing is a subversive act in that it rejects the name “other” given to one who inhabits the margin and takes as her or his right, the right to name self, the right to “no longer see ourselves through the eyes of others” (Haug, 1987, p. 39). The story that I write is a story of not *belonging*, of being named “other,” of believing the myth of other-as-deviant and the grief, despair, and shame that accompanies the internalization of that myth. And it is a story that frames or borders another story from the margin, one of tremendous grief and despair. Sometimes, as Griffin (1999) notes, “when one story meets another, the consequences can be surprisingly intense” (p. 9).

Writing in the margin is an act but it is also a way. Writing in the margin(al) form is a way of giving voice to the stories in the margin. Autobiography, by a woman about a woman’s experience whether in the form of formal autobiography or in the form of letter, diary or journal has been “given a devalued position at the margins of the canon” (Smith, 1993, p. 16) by those at literary and academic centres. Sidonie Smith (1987) tells us that when a woman enters the “autobiographical contract...she approaches her storytelling as

one who speaks from the margins of autobiographical discourse...as one who is both of the prevailing culture and on the outskirts of it" (p. 49). The story that I tell is best told in this "margin." Smith (1987) finds that "while the margins have their limitations, they also have their advantages of vision. They are polyvocal, more distant from the centers of power and conventions of selfhood. They are heretical" (p. 176). Writing in this form is a conscious act of resistance, resistance to the notion that women's words should not be public. Resistance to the notion that women's subjective experience should be, if at all, expressed through silent writing and should not be written out loud.

The journey that has brought me to this public place began as a very private search. So private in fact that in the beginning I could neither consciously name it as a search nor articulate the answers I hoped to find at the end of that search if asked. Slowly, ever so slowly, it became apparent that what I hoped to find at the end of this journey was evidence of my "wrong-ness." If I could discover this, then I could fix it (or, if it was unfixable then hide it more cunningly under a "master's" gown) and be restored to the centre (home) where those "normal," "good" (and flawless) people reside—you know—that place where I really belong. The travel has been at times frightening for I feared not only what that "flaw" might be but of having that flaw (the truth of "me") discovered and exposed. Yet the travel has also taken unexpected turns, raising more questions and offering seemingly fewer answers. Could it be that there would be no final answer?

Autobiography, as a private method of inquiry, can be personally transformative. Smith (1993) explains that

autobiographical practice becomes one means to change. Writing [the] experiential history of the body, the autobiographical subject engages in a process

of critical self-consciousness through which she comes to an awareness of the relationship of her specific body to the cultural “body” and to the body politic.

The change in consciousness prompts cultural critique. (p. 131).

Writing autobiography as a private search—in the form of letters, journals, and diaries—has always been an “acceptable” form of expression for women. It is, as bell hooks (1989) describes, “‘the right speech of womanhood’...the soliloquy, the talking into thin air, the talking to ears that do not hear you—the talk that is simply not listened to” (p. 6). But, as Judith Dueck (1996) advises, this private soliloquy, this silent talk is also the place where those marked different might first “break out of the mold...[and] risk disobeying the given decrees, those dictated from outside as well as those written within...[by the] past” (as quoted in Schiwy, p. 108). In addition, it was a place where I confronted my “internalized patriarchs” where I broke “out of the role of good girl, good woman” and came to understand the paralyzing “dread that breaking the old commandments will bring” (Dueck cited in Schiwy, 1996, p. 108). It was a place where I came to know that silent talk needs to be spoken out loud, for the silence is the mortar that keeps the boundaries intact. In this marginalized place I unexpectedly found a site in which I could resist, what Smith (1987) describes as “participation in the fictions of the center of culture, including the fictions of man...of woman” (p. 57), of “other” and of difference, a site where I might discover “some new truth” (p. 58).

To suggest that autobiography should be included with other “public-intellectual voices,” to offer it as part of the “public dialogue” (Munro, 1998, p. 93) in educational discourse is contrary to the centred norms and is seen as inferior and possibly dangerous. Dangerous and inferior because it has always been “taken for granted...that experience

could never be used as a source of knowledge, that experience [is] too subjective, that individuals [do] not give objective accounts of themselves" (Haug, 1987, p. 39).

Dangerous and inferior because the centre marks the personal voice, the intimate subjective voice as inappropriate in an academic context. Yet, Haug (1987) argues that "if research limits itself to the general and ignores the particular, it will be impossible ever to discover the conditions of production of universal phenomena" (p. 44) and that, in fact, "if...a given experience is possible, it is also subject to universalization"(p. 44).

Dangerous and inferior because it transgresses the center's definitions of the subjective voice as "particular" and the disembodied impersonal voice that the centre has privileged as "general." The Personal Narrative Group's (1989) editors find

[p]ersonal narratives of non-dominant social groups (women in general, racially or ethnically oppressed people, lower-class people, lesbians, gays, [the physically different in ability or presentation or those marked by age]) are often particularly effective sources of counterhegemonic insight because they expose the viewpoint embedded in dominant ideology as particularist rather than universal, and because they reveal the reality of a life that defies or contradicts the rules. (p. 7)

Excluding all voices that do not fit the "sameness" mold gives a false reading of wholeness, an illusion of completeness. Demarcating which experiential voice has scholarly value, which particular voice is worthy of public consideration based on its familiarity, will only teach the familiar, will only understand the familiar. In a closed and isolated centre conformity is misread as commonality and connection. It seems unlikely that transformation and rejuvenation could or would flourish there. The personal story, then, offers an opportunity to grow.

As a teacher, stories are the tools of my trade. According to Elbaz (1991), “story is the very stuff of teaching” (p. 3); it is the centrepiece of teaching. Story is the connection between theory and experience, the bridge between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the link between the particular and the universal; story opens doors, it “constitutes an ‘invitation’ to participate” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). Stories erase borders, join present to past, past to present and voice our hope for the future; they discover the centre in the margin and the margin in the centre. Stories invite reflection and reflexion; they create an opening where questions can be asked; “at its most powerful, [story] has the potential to move one from silence to speech” (Bailey, 1997, p. 139). Stories are the way that humans make sense of the world. According to Michael Novak (1971), “if we listen for one another’s stories, there is more of a chance that we will understand our differences than if we listen for one another’s principles” (p. 69).

Autobiography is story. I wish to tell a story. This story began as one lone fragment, written in the third person and re/created through memory, part of a journal entry for my interpretive inquiry course during the second semester of my graduate program. From there, other fragments emerged, always told in the third person, each fragment re/created through re/membering.

Much of the autobiographical writing here is written in the third person. Mitchell and Weber (1999) explain that “writing in the third person encourages description and discourages interpretation” (p. 62). Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, and Benton (1992) find that “warranting and justification” can be characteristic of personal narratives (p. 47). Because of this, Crawford et al. (1992) suggest that “writing in the third person enables the subject to have a ‘bird’s eye view’ of the scene, to picture the detail. The

subject reflects on herself/himself from the outside—from the point of view of the observer...” (p. 47). As Haug (1987) recognizes, writing in third person is a clear reminder to both the reader and the writer that “the gaze we cast today on our selves of yesterday becomes the gaze cast by one stranger on another” (p. 46). As well, for me, the process of writing in the third person allows an emotional distance that is necessary to overcome the fear and dread of taking these experiences out of the dark and forward into the light. De Salvo (1999) suggests that when writing about wounds to the psyche “the most basic and important survival tactics often involve blunting the emotions, carefully watching, splitting the consciousness (watching the event as if it’s happening to someone else)...” (p. 163). Stumbling across the idea to write “she” instead of “I” allowed me to find the “words, [the] literary forms to convey” what up to that point seemed impossible (De Salvo, 1999, p. 163). The writing in third person, in a sense, allowed me to separate myself from each incident being described, and at the same time brought me closer than I have ever allowed myself to get, in a reflective way, to each.

The story is told in fragmented form. Each fragment is an anecdote. In a foundation course on the nature of educational research, the instructor advised the class, of which I was one, that the use of anecdote should be restricted to sidebars. These sidebars should be used to emphasize and compliment the “real” scholarly work, at their best they are an attractive arm-piece or accessory to the important centre. It was clear that the anecdote’s place was marginal at best in this professor’s view. Max van Manen (1990) writes that “the point that the critics of anecdotes miss is that the anecdote is to be valued for other than factual-empirical or factual-historical reasons” (pp. 118-119). Anecdotes are: the concrete ways we live our lives, the way we come to understand our place in the world

we are born into, the impetus that moves us to reflect and then to act and possibly to transform, the mirror that reflects who we are, what we believe is important, the path which allows us to step outside the self for a moment and into the other, forever changing our understanding of both self and other. Further, van Manen (1990) finds that anecdotes form a concrete counterweight to abstract theoretical thought...[are] one of the implements for laying bare the covered-over meanings...express a certain disdain for the alienated and alienating discourse of scholars...act as a leveling device [that] humanizes [and] democratizes...may provide an account of certain teaching or doctrines which were never written down...are round-about or indirect reflections about fundamental human experiences...may be encountered as concrete demonstrations of wisdom, sensitive insight, and proverbial truth...let the recipient...sense or perceive a certain truth that is otherwise difficult to put into clear language...[and] tells something *particular* while really addressing the *general* or the *universal*. (pp. 118-120)

Too, the fragmented form more accurately represents the experience as it is remembered. Each incident exists in the memory, seemingly in isolation, scattered around the brain in different corners, crevices, crannies, and fissures. Annette Kuhn (1995) finds that “memory...has its own modes of expression...characterized by the fragmentary, non-linear quality of moments recalled out of them. Visual flashes, vignettes, a certain anecdotal quality” (p. 5) mark the memory text.

The fragments in this thesis were not written in a linear, chronological order, they did not emerge from a pre-planned coherence, nor do they offer a seamless, uncontradictory whole. The fragments attempt to “speak beyond its means, to testify...to the ill-

understood effects and to the impact of [the trauma]...[and] whose repercussions, in [its] uncontrollable and unanticipated nature, still continue to evolve even in the very process of the testimony” (Felman, 1995, p. 30). Writing the fragments is an act of weaving the pieces together in an attempt to produce an understanding of the whole of the experience, to discover the pattern only after the weaving is complete. If the fragment was remembered it was written because as Haug (1987) asserts, “anything and everything remembered constitutes a relevant trace—precisely because it is remembered” (p. 50). At the same time, she recognizes that “one of the difficulties is that the past feelings and thoughts may be distorted by present-day value-judgments” (Haug, 1987, p. 71). Recalling as much detail during the writing of the re-membered fragment, without censoring or questioning its relevance, collecting not just what fits but the incongruities and the contradictions as well and discarding nothing addresses those difficulties (Crawford et al, 1992; Haug, 1987). Coming to an understanding of the whole can only come by examining the details of the pieces. One fragment alone may seem insignificant; it is the intertwining or weaving of the pieces, each with its contradictions, incongruities, and visible seams, that hopefully will take on meaning and value.

One fall evening, during a “Curriculum Studies and Classroom Practices” class, Dr. Cynthia Chambers invited her students to venture outside the walls of the university for a short time, to sit, to observe, to contemplate the surrounding environment, and to come to some understanding about what place “I” have in that environment. It was a beautiful gold and green evening. The coulees border the concrete walls and sidewalks of the university. One step takes you into the quiet gold and green and brown of the undulating hills. One step farther and you begin to lose the sounds and the voices of the institution

and if you listen carefully you hear the voices of the coulees, each speaking its native tongue: the meadow lark's sweet brief song, the magpie's bold staccato chatter, the grasshopper's frictional frenetic whirl, the wind's whisper along the folds of the land, and the gopher's small high whistle from below the surface.

That evening, I left the cemented walk, staying close to the shadows of the concrete walls. I turned a corner and came across a recessed grassy patch, shaded by a lone tree leaning out toward the coulee. It felt like a secret place except for the dusty chair that waited, seemingly, for me. I sat, feeling slightly foolish at first, wondering what it was I was supposed to see or understand or realize. And, in that moment, just in front of me not ten steps from where I sat, I saw a flicker of brown on brown. The barest movement belied an almost perfect camouflage. A tiny gopher sat cautiously by the entrance to her hole. She ventured just a few steps from the opening, then stopped, still barely visible—silent. She stayed with me, immobile almost the entire time, returning to her underground home only as I stood to leave approximately 15 minutes later. I wondered what it was about her that I needed to understand, what was her message that I needed to take with me. That evening, I understood her to be a creature fearful of the light, safe in the dark quietness of her nest. I understood her to be a subversive in the eyes of most humans, a pest, even a pestilence. I understood her caution on her journey to the surface, and I understood her fear. And because I understood her in a particular way that particular evening, I understood myself on that particular evening, too.

I have not gone back to that secret secluded place, so near the institution's walls. But on occasion, as I am walking from the parking lot, I will catch a glimpse of *a* gopher, (I like to pretend it is *the* gopher) running along the boundaries of the walk, slipping quickly

away, seeing and experiencing the world from an entirely different perspective than any other creature on campus. I understand her in other ways now. For one, I understand the strength that is hers because of her ability to examine her environment, not just from the outside, but from the underside as well. Each new glimpse of her, each time from a slightly different context, brings a slightly different, deepening understanding, not just of her but of me as well. I do not know her completely, will never know her completely. But in some odd way, I feel a sense of familiarity and what David Jardine (1998) calls “kinship” with her because of these particular Gopher/Me conversations/intersections.

It is this kinship, this familiarity that I hope the reader will sense in reading the autobiographical text of this thesis. It is an interpretive piece of writing. The fragments chosen, the words, metaphors, adjectives, and the structure itself used to translate the remembered incidents to text are meant to create meaning, in the same way that good conversation does. And as with good conversation, “the essential thing is the opening it creates, not the resolution” (Caputo, 1987, p. 5). The text strives to reach across “boundaries to enable dialogue between people and traditions superficially at odds” (Smith, 1994, p. 114). The text strives to unearth silent voices, silent messages, the unsaid as well as the said, to unearth the uncertain, the underside, the inside-out. It strives to follow the intricate intertwining root systems that lie hidden but which are vital to the reality of the field’s rows and allow that reality to present themselves as uniform and symmetrical.

As part of the unearthing process, the interpretive work offers up a “living connection” in order to bring the topic of difference and of being marked different to the center of the dialogue (Jardine, 1998, p. 44). Jardine (1998) holds that a living connection

is a way of “open[ing] up and reveal[ing] something to us about our lives. In this sense, our unanticipated, unmethodical being in the world can, quite literally in certain instances, make a claim to truth” (p. 40). He makes no apology for the embeddedness that a living connection expresses, but finds that the value of the expression stems from that embeddedness:

Its manner of speaking is...not ‘informative’ standing outside of the ambiguity of life as a voyeur demanding a good show, demanding presentability. It is, rather...a voice crying out from within the midst of things. It is, therefore, not disinterested, but profoundly interested. (Jardine, 2000, p. 120)

I make no apologies for my profound interest in this topic or for my living connection to it. While some might claim that this text is not “‘research’ but rather [a] personal story,” Clandinin and Connelly (1992) maintain “that teachers’ autobiographies are a critical part of the research literature of the teacher as curriculum maker” (p. 386). The living connection that I, as a teacher, bring to the topic is not meant to “pass on objective information to readers, but to evoke in readers a new way of understanding themselves and the lives they are living” (Jardine, 1998, p. 50) as this process of interpretation has done for me. It challenges me and hopefully others to “pay attention to how meaning gets constructed and used, by whom, and for what purpose in schools and curriculums” (Ellsworth, 1994, p. 106). This interpretive inquiry is a pedagogical act of teaching. It is a statement that says, “*I am a teacher.*”

This new way of understanding my life and the life I was and am now leading came about because of this interpretive process. This process of transformation that I make, this journey which Smith (1994) calls “dialogical” (p. 129), will hopefully become apparent

to the reader as she/he journey through this text. Ellsworth (1994) believes that as part of the interpretive inquiry, we, you and I, must “become response-able (that is, able-to-respond) to our active participation in interpreting the world—not only as individuals, but also as members of groups and communities and as people who develop and teach curriculums” (p. 107). This responsibility that Ellsworth speaks of is not an easy mantle to take up. It is difficult, often painful, and at times it reveals a reflection that is uncomfortable to examine.

Intersections

Everywhere there seems to be a need for a language of “understanding” that could take up “difference” not as a problem to be solved but as an invitation to consider the boundaries and limits of one’s own understanding.
(Smith, 1994, p. 129)

A longing for others to be just like oneself, is to step, narcissistically, in the direction of the false totality of totalitarianism.
(Aboulafia, 1983, p. 182)

[L]iterature devoted to education and difference points to the need to challenge and transform dominant inflections of identity and meaning that constitute differences as inferior, hateful, exotic, and therefore, dismissible.
(Kelly, 1997, p. 117)

Chapter 5 Fitting Lessons

Fitting Adjustment

She knows his name, Nate, long before she knows him. His name is on her attendance list, but he is not coming to her class. She reports his absence to the office. She is told that the situation is under consideration, she should just continue to mark him absent for the time being. She mentions his name to the kids in his class period; does anyone know him or his situation? “Oh, he never comes to school” is the immediate response. “He’s just like that.” She knows they would say more, perhaps they are even waiting to say more, but she closes the door to it, finishes attendance for that day and goes on to other matters.

He appears one day with no warning, quiet. His thinness gives the impression of fragility. His complexion is pale, made more so by the dark rims of his glasses and his dark hair, cut short. The coat, navy or black, is fastened to his chin, and stays *closed* throughout the period.

Close: [ME. < OFr. < L. to close, block up < IE. Base, close with a hook or bar, whence L., key; Oir., nail; G., to lock] to move to a position that covers an opening; to bar entrance to or exit from; to bring to an end, finish; to stop or suspend the operation; the final part or conclusion; [Archaic] hand to hand encounter.

She suggests he take his coat off—he does not refuse—he gives her a tiny smile, amused rather than friendly—and the coat remains on.

The kids begin to break into the groups they have been working in for the last few days, dragging their desks together, chattering, moving to the different parts of the

classroom they have claimed as their own, a flurry of active bodies. He remains seated at his desk at the front of the classroom. His back is to the commotion of students rearranging themselves; he does not turn to watch. Both his hands, child's hands still, with the slightly dirty fingernails you would expect of a boy, rest motionless, palms down and slightly cupped on the creamy pale surface of his desk. She explains to him what the class is working on. She asks him if there is a particular group that he would like to join. He briefly glances over his shoulder, shrugs and shakes his head, no. She gives him a choice; he could join this group, or that one. He shrugs again and chooses.

She asks the group to *include* him.

Include: [ME. < L. to shut, CLOSE] to shut up or in, enclose; to have as part of a whole; put in a total category.

The boys hesitate, there are quick glances at each other and then they agree. They make room for him to pull his desk over. She watches him. He seems comfortable, except for his coat; he seems to enjoy being with the boys. Someone in the group gives him a corner of their poster to work on, but he takes no responsibility for it and they seem not to expect it of him. During presentations, he holds one corner of the poster but does not speak. There is a small, slightly embarrassed smile on his face. Over the next three weeks, he attends irregularly.

The special education teacher tells her that he is very bright, but has trouble “*adjusting*,” perhaps because he is bored.

Adjust: [ME. < Ofr., to join] to change so as to fit, conform, make suitable, etc., to make accurate by regulating; to come into conformity, as with one's surroundings.

Apparently there have been discussions with the parents about the possibility of home schooling for him. The woman advises her that Nate prefers to work by himself, away from regular classes, on the computer, and that she should consider the possibility of giving him an independent project that will allow him to work on his own. No reference is made to past or present episodes of intimidation. She does not see nor does she hear any of that herself. Does she?

Fitting Person(ality)

She should be happy. She is standing in the hallway with her close friend Petra from across the hall and her mentor, David. She looks through the picture window into her empty classroom as her friend teases her that she is looking for things to worry about. David tells her that her concerns are groundless. They tell her she should be satisfied. After all, the deputy superintendent's evaluation of her is glowing. Yet, it feels as though she is under an ominous, foreboding cloud.

She thinks back to the lunch break. The deputy superintendent asks her if she minds whether he eats as they talk. She assures him that she does not. He tells her that she should eat as well. She lies to him and tells him that she will eat during her prep. She cannot bring herself to eat in front of this man. She watches him unwrap his sandwich. She wonders if he makes his own lunch or if his wife does it for him. The bread is brown and thick; it looks fresh. She thinks she sees bean sprouts. He carefully goes over his observation notes with her. He speaks of her teaching in glowing terms, chewing between phrases. He does not smile, even when he tells her there is humor in her teaching. How odd the words sound coming from the uninflected tone of his voice. He looks at his food; he looks at his notes; he looks at the evaluation policy. He glances at her briefly, but she cannot capture his eyes and hold them for more than a few seconds. The meeting is almost over. He begins to put his lunch things back in the brown paper bag. On the surface things have gone well. She has been concerned about his influence and power; she knows that she was never, and would never, be his choice, although she is not sure why. She wonders if he can overcome his aversion to her. She wonders what it is about her that he seems to dislike so much. She wonders if she reminds him of someone else.

Should she explain about her one blind eye? Some people think her eyes are weird; sometimes people can't tell where she is looking. She hopes he has integrity.

He looks at her as if she is a puzzle or a problem that he finds particularly perplexing. It seems he wants to say something further. There is carefulness embedded in the sentence he chooses. "You have quite a *different* personality."

Different- [ME. < Ofr. < L.] not alike; dissimilar; not the same; distinct; separate; other; unlike most others, unusual.

He pauses for a split second, shrugs and finishes with "But it seems to work for you." She wonders if it really is only her imagination that hears the hidden message of criticism. Should she agree or disagree with him? What exactly would she be agreeing or disagreeing to? She would like to challenge him with "Different from what...? She knows better. Instead, she gives him a small smile and says, "Yes, I know you think so."

When she tells her husband about the evaluation, she only tells him the good parts, she does not mention that last comment. She reassures herself the comment doesn't really matter anyway.

Fitting Treatment

She looks up as Patrick enters her classroom. He is usually pale but is paler still today. His long limp blond hair hangs around his small face. His whole body is small compared to the rest of his classmates, a combination of genetics and poor nutrition she thinks. His face is usually closed but is more closed still today. He rarely speaks or participates, yet she is glad to see him every time he walks in for class. His marks are dismal but his attendance is almost perfect. She is more concerned with keeping him than with assignments that are only partially complete or not done at all. She knows things are not good for him at home. He has been all but abandoned by the only parent that seems to care for him. He is involved with drugs; she doesn't know what kind. He is not one of the *regular* kids, nor one of the troubled kids who agree to follow the prescribed treatment administration believes is appropriate.

Regular: [ME. < MFr. < L. of a bar, see RULE] conforming in form, build or arrangement to a rule, principle, standard; characterized by conformity to a fixed principle or procedure; usual, customary; consistent or habitual; conforming to a standard or to a generally accepted rule or mode of conduct, proper.

He has made it clear that he does not want to be fixed. Yet, he keeps coming. She believes that is a good sign. Maybe that is all the effort he can manage right now.

He missed her class today. Now he stands at the back of the room, his coat on, his shoulders up around his ears. He speaks abruptly, and without looking directly at her; "I need you to sign that I handed my textbook in."

"Oh, Patrick, what happened?" she asks.

“They want to get rid of me because I’ve been getting into trouble,” his voice quivers, and she knows he is fighting tears. She sees that he does not want to cry, he wants not to care. She tells him how sorry she is to see him go, how smart she thinks he is. He shrugs, he nods. She wants to hug him, but she does not. She wants to throw something, but she does not.

She is angry when she finds out the reason for his expulsion. It is small. It seems minor compared to other actions more malicious and hurtful that have been regularly excused or ignored. He blew smoke in the face of the vice-principal when she caught him smoking on school grounds. She knows they would never have expelled him if he were a regular kid with regular parents, or a troubled kid with someone, anyone to speak for him.

Discarded.

Discard: [OFr.] to throw away, abandon or get rid of as no longer valuable or useful.

The term silently echoes in her brain. She expresses her sorrow and anger at his expulsion to Petra. As she speaks, she is unaware of someone walking up behind her. The principal has overheard her. She repeats her sorrow at losing the boy. He tells her that “I really didn’t have a choice.” It feels like she has been caught doing something bad.

She is called into the principal’s office. She is unsure of the reason, but the tone of the request creates anxiety in her. She is confused at first as he begins to speak. The principal wants to ensure that she understands he had no recourse but to *expel* the boy.

Expel; [ME. < L. out + to thrust] to drive out by force, force out, eject; to dismiss or sent away by authority; deprive of rights, membership.

She thinks, "How odd, why do you care what I think?" He had not sought her opinion of Patrick prior to the expulsion. She repeats her sorrow at losing him. She tries to squeeze in information about his home situation. He frowns and shakes his head. He does not seem to want this information. He reminds her that she is unaware of all the facts that are available to him. She watches him as he speaks. She listens to his words with a careful ear. His tone suggests concern for her upset. His facial expression conveys a professional's care. But she is attuned to the veiled nuances of displeasure. She is attuned to danger.

His masked displeasure demands a performance. She is very good at this. She speaks of her faith in his objectivity, his rational assessment of all the information, even in this difficult situation, assuring him that she is in no way questioning the appropriateness of his actions. He smiles his professional smile and describes for her how well he has handled the boy. He is proud. "When he left my office he agreed with me that I had no other option. You need to know that if a student leaves school, I try to do it in such a way that they say thank-you when they leave. That is how most leave. Some are frustrated of course, but most say thank-you." She knows that administrators prefer to have a student withdraw voluntarily; it leaves the student no avenue of appeal. The boy has agreed to his own exclusion. She thinks of Patrick, his hunched shoulders, his struggle with tears and caring, his words, "they want to get rid of me." She thinks of the shame of those words. Yet, she does not speak for Patrick. Her anger and sorrow remain hidden. She senses danger and retreats behind a placating smile.

She begins to rise from the chair, eager to leave but he stops her with a smile. "There's just one other thing." She lowers herself back down. "I just wanted to let you

know that some students have a negative perception of you.” She feels a shift in the air. His face holds the smile. “I just wanted you to be aware but there is nothing for you to worry about; I certainly have not seen any sign that there is a concern. Keep doing what you’re doing; I just wanted you to be aware.” She asks for details, can he be more specific, she wonders. “I really can’t be more specific, just some reports that have come my way.” She pushes for more information. Reluctantly, it seems, “Well, for instance, as some of my math students were coming into class, I overheard them say that ‘Mrs. Holthe is a *bag*.’”

Bag- [ME. < ON. >] a non-rigid container; a container; the amount of game caught or killed; [slang] an unattractive woman, [Colloq.] “holding the bag”-to be left to suffer the bad consequences or the blame.

“I can’t even tell you who,” he offers.

She is appalled and very afraid. Appalled at...afraid of...she can’t quite put her finger on it, but appalled and afraid. When he says he himself has not seen any signs, does he mean that he has seen no signs that she is a “bag”? What does he think constitutes a “bag”? Later she will wonder at the principal’s choice of juxtaposing what seem to be two separate conversations. The jagged edges of the two slice inside of her, the break between the two sometimes seeming wide and sometimes seeming small. She will wonder what the dark edges hide, if what is hidden is as, or more, important than what is not hidden. Now, she walks down the dimly lit, empty hallways back to her classroom. Her ears are ringing and feel oddly numb, almost as if they had just been boxed. She sits and stares at the empty desks that fill her room. She is very angry; yet, her face is stilled of any expression. She does not consider speaking on behalf of the boy again.

Intersections

[T]he work of schooling, curriculum, and pedagogy is implicated in the making of social differences that make an unjust difference.

(Kelly, 1997, p. 117)

[S]chool was so cruel...he was the type who would just take it—people would bug him and he would just walk away...other kids thought... [he] was weird or a geek or whatever...he was a pretty normal kid, which is sad, because other people didn't know that... he didn't like the same things they did, [he] didn't fit in.

(Grade 9 Duncan student, quoted in Ingel, 2000, A3)

Ooh...you're so ugly...Don't touch me I don't want to get your disease...Everyone's been angry to him for nothing his whole life...everyone called him a nothing—a nobody...he isn't a cold-hearted killer.

(Grade 9 Duncan student, quoted in Lothar, 2000, A3)

Chapter 6

Rooting Out the Difference

I suppose that everyone has been told at some time in their life that they are different. And for the most part, the person remarking on the difference doesn't necessarily intend to convey that "different" means bad or wrong; "different" just means—well—different. There is something different about her eyes, his voice, their appearance. And of course, being marked "different" in one area of your life, does not mark you as different in all areas. Valerie Walkerdine (1981) explains that "individuals are not produced as unitary subjects but as a nexus of contradictory subjectivities" (p. 19). I, for instance, am not just a middle-aged, heterosexual, white, able-bodied, blind in one eye, Canadian woman from a working-class Italian background; I am also a mother, sister, daughter, wife, professional, teacher, and student. The discursive practices of each to the other "have different and often contradictory histories" (Walkerdine, 1981, p. 20). According to Foucault (1981)

[d]iscursive practices are characterized by a delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories. Their effect is to make virtually impossible to think outside. To think outside them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason. (p. 48)

Because "particular individuals are produced as subjects *differently* within a variety of discursive practices...[and have] the potential to be 'read' within a variety of discourses" (Walkerdine, 1981, p. 15) and because the norm of one discursive practice may be defined as abnormal in another, it is often tempting to impose a unified text on the individual to make the "read" less burdensome, confusing, and complex.

This unified text is described by Young (1990) as

[t]he logic of identity [which] expresses one construction of the meaning and operations of reason: an urge to think things together, to reduce them to unity...the logic of identity tends to conceptualize entities in terms of substance rather than process or relation; substance... that can be identified, counted, measured...it constructs totalizing systems in which the unifying categories are themselves unified under principles, where the ideal is to reduce everything to one principle. The logic of identity denies or represses difference. (p. 98)

It is perhaps at this point that being marked different becomes ominous. If the norms of one identity, such as “woman,” contradict the norms of another, such as “professional,” within the multiple contradicting subjectivities that I call “me,” then it seems easy and natural for those around me and even for myself to define “me” within the discursive practices that mark my body in the most physically identifiable and easily definable way. What you see is what you expect becomes the anticipated experience. If the anticipated experience does not match what is expected, then the resulting dissonance must be assuaged in some way. If, one understands, as Davies (1992) does, the multiplicity of self then

[t]hrough locating the source of a contradiction in the available discourses, it is possible to examine the contradictory elements of one’s [or another’s] subjectivity without guilt or anxiety. Dealing with contradiction within this model can enable one to make a simple decision to act within the terms of one discourse rather than another at any one point in time, depending on its relevance, the values of its products, and so on. Or it can facilitate a decision to refuse a discourse, or to

refuse the positioning made available within that discourse. It can also facilitate an understanding of the collective and discursive nature of such refusals and of the ways in which one might begin to generate alternative practices. (pp. 57-58)

However, if the seemingly more rational (and comfortable) logic of identity that Young (1990) details prevails then

[r]educing differences to unity means bringing them under a universal category, which requires expelling those aspects of the different things that do not fit into the category. Difference thus becomes a hierarchical opposition between what lies inside and what lies outside the category, valuing more what lies inside than what lies outside. (p. 102)

At this point, if I resist being positioned within a particular discursive practice I may be marked different. If I accept the positioning, that position may be in opposition to another and I therefore accept the mark of difference in that other practice. The impact of that marking, in that particular practice, to my life will be minimal if the marking is value-free and is simply a descriptive term. However, “the mainstream equate[s] difference with deviance. It is deviance from the mythical norm, which is usually defined as a white, middle-class, heterosexual, adult male” (Norquay, 1993, p. 243). If to be marked different translates into a mark of deviance, then, as Norquay (1993) notes, it is important to understand that difference “always signifies a social relation of domination/subordination...[that] all constructions of difference are integral to power relationships...[that] [d]ifference as deviance sets up simplistic opposites: good/bad, superior/inferior, insider/outsider” within dominant discourses such as schooling (p. 243).

Marshall (1992) defines discourse as

a regulated system of statements which can be analyzed not solely in terms of its internal rules of formation, but also as a set of practices within a social milieu.

Discourse is the combination of practice and a mode or structure of speaking. (p. 99)

Today, the social and legal rules, “the discursive consciousness” (Young, 1990, p. 131) of the dominant discourses of Canadian society for the most part espouse a respect for all individuals, regardless of difference, and that equality of opportunity in the school or workplace is meritocratic in character. Yet in this society that claims difference does not make a difference, unconscious reaction to difference is submerged to the “practical consciousness” (Young, 1990, p. 131). Young (1990) describes this practical consciousness as

aspects of action and situation which involve often complex reflexive monitoring of the relation of the subject’s body to those of other subjects and the surrounding environment, but which are on the fringe of consciousness, rather than the focus of discursive attention. Practical consciousness is the habitual, routinized background awareness that enables a person to accomplish focused, immediate purposive action.... (p. 131)

It is at this level of practical consciousness working in concert with the mechanisms of the logic of identity that difference, indeed, makes a difference. It is at this level that marking another as different becomes an act of oppression. While not part of official laws and policy within dominant discourses (such as schooling) “group oppressions are enacted...in informal, often unnoticed and unreflective speech, bodily reactions to others, conventional practices of everyday interaction and evaluation, aesthetic judgments, and

the jokes, images, and stereotypes...” (Young, 1990, p. 148). Oppression arises as a consequence of “unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions...structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies...in short, the normal processes of everyday life” (Young, 1990, p. 41).

It is easy to pretend that oppression happens to “other” people. Certainly “oppression” does not seem to be a word that has any relevance to our society or to our institutions. It is a word that suggests injustices in far off places that have little in common with our very privileged and protected way of life and seems to fit more aptly with descriptions of authoritarian, totalitarian dictatorships. Apartheid, the Taliban, and the ethnic cleansing policies of Milosevic come to mind when asked to cite examples of “oppression.” It certainly does not seem to fit with my discursive consciousness of schooling in Canada. Schools surely are safe havens for children, a place to nurture and care for them as they are educated to take their place in the world, a world that is free, just, and based on equality and the celebration of the individual. School is the place where all decisions are based on what is best for the “child.”

But, I wonder, who is this “child?” Valerie Walkerdine (1989) cautions us that within educational discursive practices the signifier “‘child’ is not co-terminous with actual children” (p. 271) but is constituted through a series of normalization signs which enable those reading the signs to understand the relation between signifier and signified. The meaning of difference and similarity becomes pivotal to our reading the signified child as normal or deviant (p. 272). Iris Marion Young (1990) turns to Foucault to explain that

[n]ormalising reason refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It

differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or an optimum toward which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal. (p. 126)

If school is both the place that this normalized child is nurtured and cared for, and the place "dominant ideology" is nurtured and cared for (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 175), what becomes of the child marked deviant or pathological? How might we identify this child and what place does this child have in school?

According to Lewis (1993)

[i]f we are not men, if we are not white, if we are not economically advantaged, if we survive by the labor of our hands, if we are not heterosexual, and if we do not embody and display the valued assets of the privilege of Euro-American culture, the school curriculum and classroom practices fling us to the margins. (p. 185)

Norquay (1993) adds to this list when she asserts that pathologized differences are constituted in a number of much more subtle ways, among them physical appearance and/or presentation, physical ability, age, or even just an unusual name and that these differences too are "constructed into forms of domination" (p. 244).

Are individuals who are marked as different from the dominant norm oppressed? They are if that marking creates a situation "in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or

hinders his [or her] pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person,” (Freire, 1970b, p. 37), if that marking defines what one deserves or is capable of and if that marking is defined as deviant or inferior. However, Young (1990) finds that “[o]ppression refers to structural phenomena that immobilize or diminish a group” (p. 42), that one must first be a member of a social group to claim that they are oppressed. Do those being marked different from the dominant norm in school constitute a social group, especially if those markings stem from the variety of disparate reasons that Norquay (1993) and Lewis (1993) describe? Young (1990) claims that groups are not in and of themselves homogenous (p. 48) and that

[a] group may be identified by outsiders without those identified having any specific consciousness of themselves as a group. Sometimes a group comes to exist only because one group excludes and labels a category of person, and those labeled come to understand themselves as group members only slowly... (p. 46) or perhaps never at all, believing their exclusion to be the result of a personal failing or flaw.

The school, as a site of oppression for those who find themselves outside the boundaries of the normalized view, can be seen as a metaphorical site of centre and margin. If you or I were to visit a school today, we would not be able to find an actual place marked “center” or “margin;” we would not be able to measure the square footage of each place and look out the windows to examine the view from both vantage points. However, for those who “reside” there, the margin is a very real place; a place of oppression manifested by silence, exclusion, shame, and invisibility. Of its various faces, Young (1990) finds marginalization to be “the most dangerous form of oppression. A

whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life” (p. 53). Any act of oppression is an act of violence, according to Freire (1970b), “even when sweetened by false generosity, because it interferes with the individual’s ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human” (p. 37). While the naming of difference as deviance is an act of oppression, an act of violation, and one which causes, as bell hooks (1989) understands so well, “the pain of degradation and dehumanization, the pain of loneliness, the pain of loss, the pain of isolation, the pain of exile—spiritually and physically” (p. 4), perhaps the most wounding and scarring pain of being shoved to the margins is the damage inflicted by psychological oppression.

To be psychologically oppressed, as Sandra Lee Bartky (1990) explains, is “to be weighted down in your mind; it is to have a harsh domination exercised over your self-esteem. The psychologically oppressed become their own oppressors; they come to exercise harsh dominion over their own self-esteem” (p. 22). The margin takes up residence in the souls of those deemed inferior and they come to believe that their silence, exclusion, and invisibility are fitting and appropriate. And shame is a suitable response.

When I first began my graduate studies, I wrote a great deal about silence, about silencing, about what it felt like to be silenced, and about the terror of breaking the silence that seemed to feel so “right.” I tried to perform metaphorical somersaults in order to write but to still remain silent. Those who have read some of that writing have been extraordinarily patient with me. It seems to have taken me a very long time to come to the realization that being silenced is not the disease but just a symptom. And that addressing only the symptom is not the same as addressing the disease. Sometimes silencing is a symptom of oppression. When it is, and the oppressed accepts the silencing, then the

oppressor and the oppressed become collaborators in the act of oppression. That act of collaboration will certainly lead to the silencing of others. I believe that my silence has been complicit in the silencing of others.

Inside the silence, inside the need to keep secret and concealed, inside the fear of exposing oneself to demeaning or even violent treatment, inside the fear of being in the light, of one's own voice, of being present, visible and heard, inside all of that bleeds the wound of shame. Shame is a way of being in the world. It is reflective and reflexive of understanding oneself as inferior or deviant from the normal and healthy Other. Bartky (1990) defines shame as the

distressed apprehension of the self as inadequate or diminished: it requires if not an actual audience before whom my deficiencies are paraded, then an internalized audience with the capacity to judge me, hence internalized standards of judgment. Further, shame requires the recognition that I am, in some important sense, *as I am seen to be* [italics added]. (p. 86)

The wounding is indeed massive and the consequences deeply profound. Fanon (1963) writes that the wounding from the "systematic negation of the other person" creates a decay of the spirit (p. 203). Shame is deeply corrosive, allowing one's inner trust of self, one's sense of empowerment to leach away, and in its place a "stagnant self-obsession or...a rage whose expression is unconstructive, even self-destructive" (Bartky, 1990, p. 97) or other-destructive takes root.

Few would argue that the psychological damage from oppression is immense. But what has that got to do with bullying? The words "bully/bullying" seem to be such

innocuous words. The different definitions of *bully* in the dictionary suggest a dichotomy of connotation, one meaning seeming to cancel out the other.

Bully: [orig. sweetheart < MDu., lover, brother < MHG. lover] a person who hurts, frightens, or tyrannizes over those who are smaller or weaker; a companion or comrade, [Archaic] a hired cutthroat or thug; [Archaic] a fine fellow; dashing, hearty or jolly; fine, very good; well done.

Bersianik (1985) reminds us that

[l]anguage is not the product of spontaneous generation. We cannot separate what we are from how we speak, ourselves from our language, tongue from speech. Language reflects the mentality of the individuals who speak it, and who are spoken of by it. (p. 157)

The etymology of words, the history of our language, gives us clues as to how we are oriented to society and how society wishes us to orientate ourselves to it. A vital part of the way our cultural community normalizes and regulates all those born into it is through language. Warland (1985) tells us that

[i]n etymological terms, words are referred to as sharing the same 'root system' or 'stemming' from the same 'root.' It is interesting to note that the word 'tree' shares the same root system as the word 'truth': *the truth is in the roots* [italics added]. (p. 177)

Just as the dictionary seems to struggle with what it is we should understand from the word, *bully*, so too is there a struggle in the consciousness of our community as to what we should understand about bullies and the bullied. In a study of 201 middle and high

school students in small town American Midwestern schools, Oliver, Hoover, and Hazler (1994) found that

45% of boys and 30% of girls attributed educative content to bullying...and can be used to teach about behaviors unacceptable to the group...61% believed that bullying made victims tougher...Both boys and girls tended to agree that bullies enjoyed higher social status than did victims...[a significant minority of students felt that] bullying may not be justified, but interfering on the behalf of scapegoats may be seen as risky to one's own reputation...[and] a clear majority believed that victims brought on bullying themselves...some perceived bullying may be teasing that is playful in intent, but is perceived as bullying by victims. (p. 419)

Hazler, Carney, Green, Powell and Jolly (1997), examined "[a]reas of expert agreement on identification of school bullies and victims" to draw a portrait of "potential" bullies. Their completed picture revealed bullies to be aggressive "revenge-seeking" (p. 10) thugs, coming from homes where they "are likely to suffer physical and emotional abuse" (p. 10), with parents who are "poor role models as problem solvers or as people who can get along with others. The experts clearly saw the home environment as providing strong indicators of negative factors in the environment of bullies" (p. 10).

The portrait drawn of those "most susceptible to victimization" (p. 6) revealed

inadequacy, self-blame, poor self-concept and incapable, reflect[ing] the emphasis on the victim's over-acceptance of their own weaknesses...victims would appear to punish themselves for their self-perceived weakness...the home environment of victims is felt to emphasize too much family involvement in the victim's life.

Such an over-involved family could create a situation where children have less

experience with self-assertiveness and consequently they would have less confidence in their abilities to handle situations on their own when necessary. (p. 13)

With these portraits expertly drawn and hung on the walls of schools under the heading “Be on the lookout for...” it is little wonder that “nearly three-quarters of the teachers reported that they usually intervene if they see bullying going on, [but] only one-quarter of the students reported that teachers typically intervene....” (Charach, Pepler, & Ziegler, 1995, p. 16) Perhaps the reason teachers do not identify acts of physical or psychological violence against students in their charge is because they are looking only to those *others*, the thugs and pathologized victims, for that “type of behavior” and not closer to home, into the *normal* faces as both bully and bullied. Perhaps, like the experts, they believe that a good portion of the problem could be solved by teaching the victim “the skills and abilities to take a stronger role in producing positive relationships” (Hazler et al., 1997, p. 13).

Trauma literature offers some interesting insights that might be used to look at the underlying reason for the dichotomous view of bullying. As late as 1987, “the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual defined a trauma that may give rise to post-traumatic stress...as an event outside the range of human experience” (Brown, 1995, p. 100). If we accept this definition, Brown (1995) argues, then incest, rape, domestic and child abuse, and other forms of interpersonal violence would not constitute trauma, since “those events occur at a high enough base rates in the lives of certain groups that such events are in fact normative, ‘normal’ in a statistical sense” (p. 103). Violence suffered in school under the label of “bullying” seems to fit in this other category. The only “real” trauma then is “that

form of trauma in which the dominant group can participate as a victim rather than as the perpetrator or etiologist of the trauma” (Brown, 1995, p. 102). If psychic pain is experienced by those suffering from those other events, there is a tendency to look to the victims’ psychopathology, to their inadequacy, to their lack, to their difference to explain that pain and further, to explain the victims’ inability to protect themselves from such events (Brown, 1995; Herman, 1992/1997). Herman (1997) finds that “the tendency to blame the victim has strongly influenced the direction of psychological inquiry” (p. 116). She contends that searching for the characteristics of victims is futile, and is surprised at the “enormous effort” (p. 116) taken to explain a perpetrator’s behavior by examining the characteristics of the victims. Of course, understanding Nate’s violent action will not be explained by looking to the preexisting personality traits of the two students who were shot. Neither can the violence that Nate experienced be understood by looking to his preexisting personality traits.

The dichotomized view of the bully and the bullied obscures the real root of bullying. Dan Olweus, a pioneer in the research into bullying, connects bullying to an abuse of power and control. One is

bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons...the negative action is a purposeful act to intentionally inflict, or attempt to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another...[a] asymmetric power relationship exists. (quoted in Roberts & Coursol, 1996, p. 205)

Roberts and Coursol (1996) define this asymmetric power relationship as “extensions of interpersonal violence” (p. 205), explaining further that those victimized “may exhibit

many of the same cognitive, behavioral, and affective responses as those individuals who have been subjected to a criminal act” (p. 206). Yet, still there continues to be a focus on the “how to” to change (or cure) the victim-ness that led to the target’s victimization so as to make her or him “stronger” or more “positive.”

Herman starkly explains that trauma suffered “between rape survivors and combat veterans, between battered women and political prisoners, between survivors of vast concentration camps...and small, hidden concentration camps created by tyrants who rule their homes” (Herman, 1997, p. 3) and I am suggesting the school-home too show commonalities. Trauma can occur following the easily identifiable acts that “involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death” (Herman, 1997, p. 32), such as the D. H. Lawrence shooting, or it can occur, as Maria Root, a psychotherapist, explains, following the “traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit” (Brown, 1995, p. 107), such as the interpersonal violence called bullying.

Herman (1992, 1997) tells us that as psychological trauma demolishes a victim’s belief in a safe world, autonomy at the most basic level is violated: initiative, a sense of control and competence are overwhelmed, replaced by feelings of disempowerment, helplessness, isolation, and abandonment and leaving him/her highly vulnerable to feelings of shame, doubt in him/herself and others, guilt and inferiority, the result of which pushes the victim further away from the community that was once *home*, further into the margins and into isolation, leaving him/her, in essence, shattered.

This shattering is intensified when it involves betrayal, when those who are responsible for protecting the individual are indifferent or when witnesses actively or passively give consent to the perpetrator (Herman, 1997). According to Frank (1995), the narrative of those suffering from trauma—whose reality has been denied, whose pain is neither accepted nor seen as possibility for the listener, whose experience is viewed as a portrait of abnormal weakness and inadequacy—are narratives of chaos. Those in such chaos can not imagine life getting better. Those who are in a position to help but who deny the chaos because they cannot imagine it will never be able to offer a caring bridge out for those in chaos. The denials only drive those in chaos deeper into the void. Frank (1995) tells us that such stories “are hard to hear because they are too threatening” (pp. 97-98). Too, the listening requires what is unhearable to be heard, because “[u]ltimately, chaos is told in the silences that speech cannot penetrate or illuminate...it is the hole in the telling” (pp. 101-102).

There seems to be reluctance in the bullying literature to call bullying what it is, an oppressive act by the perpetrator and a traumatic event for both the target of that violation and the witnesses of that event. Too, there seems to be a special reluctance to see the self in the faces of the bullied, perhaps because to see that, would be to see how easily it can be to become “other” and perhaps because to “admit that we can all be on the receiving end, we rest much less easily with those institutions of the society which might eventually make us their target” (Brown, 1995, p. 108) and because to look with seeing eyes and to listen with hearing ears requires those who study bullying to question the everyday practices of some of the culture’s most revered institutions.

As long as the victims of this interpersonal violence are defined and labeled as *other*, as *different* and until this “asymmetric power relationship” is defined for what it is, acts of physical and/or psychological oppression causing serious trauma to its victims, then it seems likely that not just the answers but also the kinds of questions that need to be asked are still beyond reach. It seems particularly significant that “almost nothing is known about the long-term development of children who have been victimized” (Olweus, 1993, p. 310). Is this absence, this hole in the current knowledge, the portrait of a flawed view of those who are marked different in school and are punished for that mark under the label of bullying? If it is, then this absence is also a portrait of consent to marking difference as wrong, an act of “detached complicity” (Fanon, 1963, p. 52) by those who have the power to intervene. Too, this absence gives a kind of justification-by-proxy, covert justification, to the perpetrators and their violence.

Intersections

And the madness continues...
Only this time it's much much closer to home
Much too close to home...
God help us.
(Too close to home, 2000, p. 14)

[M]embers of the suspect's boy scout troop ignored his calls for help after he became
stranded while rock-climbing...
(Wilson, Nigel, Abrahm, & Treece, 2000, pp. A1, A6)

In Illinois, at the age of 6 or 7, other children doused him with lighter fluid and
threatened to set him ablaze...[T]hrough the years he'd been picked on...Some girl even
took pictures of him being beaten up. It was her form of entertainment...He never fought
back. He never lashed out...
(Case as quoted in Husband, p. A14, 2001)

[I]t is important to us to look again at what pushed the confused teenage gunman to walk
into one of our schools with 380 rounds of ammunition and the will to shoot complete
strangers.
(Beyond the sentence, 2001, p. A4)

The revenge fantasy is often a mirror image of the traumatic memory...[it is a] wish for
catharsis. The victim imagines that she[/he] can get rid of the terror, shame and pain of
the trauma by retaliating...she[/he] may imagine that it is the only way to force the
perpetrator to acknowledge the harm...[done to] her[/him].
(Herman, 1997, p. 189)

Chapter 7
“The Hole in the Telling”⁵

Fall 1999

It was the last time she saw Nate. He was not in class that day, had not been present for quite some time. There were perhaps ten minutes left in English 9, the third period of the day. She noticed Kevin walk back into the classroom, heading directly for her. He was returning from the bathroom. “Mrs. Holthe, there’s something strange in the boys’ bathroom.” A touch of anxiety blended with the uncertainty of whether he should be anxious played across his face; the expression seeming to say, “It’s probably no big deal.”

“What do you mean ‘strange’?”

“There’s like this weird kind of candle burning on top of one of the toilets.”

“Show me,” she says. As they leave her classroom together, David, exits the computer room next door, where he has been working during his prep. Except for her, David and Kevin, the hall is empty. Both landings to the stairwells, which are on opposite ends of the hallway to each other, appear to be deserted as well. The stairwell closest to the boys’ washroom takes students and staff toward the center of the school. The opposite stairwell provides easy access to a back door exit. She feels pulled in two directions. She asks David to go with Kevin into the boys’ bathroom to check what is there. Moving in the opposite direction of the boys’ bathroom, she walks toward the stairwell nearest her room. As she opens the fire door she smells it immediately. It is not so much a burning smell, but rather the pungent *sulfurous* odor that is left over after matches have been lit and extinguished.

⁵ This chapter’s title is taken from Arthur Frank’s explanation of the chaotic narrative, which I refer to in more detail on page 60 of this text.

Sulfurous: [L.] of or containing sulfur; of or suggesting the fires of hell; violently emotional, heated, fiery.

The stairwell is an open design. The solid wood banister, perhaps a little higher than 80 centimeters, is not flush to the floor. Standing just inside the landing, but facing the stairs, she can look down and see through the gap between the floor and the railing to the stairs that join the hallway immediately below hers. There, through the gap, perhaps halfway down the stairs she sees one runner-clad foot, frozen it seems, in descending mid-step. It is a foot that does not want (and perhaps does not expect) its steps to be heard, that does not realize (and perhaps does not expect) it can be seen. It is attached to a body that is hiding in plain sight. The stance seems to freeze her too, for a moment. Then she walks toward the railing and looks down. There is Nate, frozen in his *downward* flight.

Downward: [ME. < OE.] toward a lower position, place, state; from an earlier to a later time.

As she speaks he raises his head to her voice. "Hey, Nate whatcha doin'?"

He shrugs and mumbles, "Nothin."

"You're supposed to be in class now, aren't you?" Again he shrugs. She does not remind him that it is her class he should be in even though she would guess that he does not remember his class-schedule. Nor does she mention the odor that still hangs in the air or the strange candle in the bathroom, although it seems certain to her that he is responsible for both. "You know I have to report you for being truant, right?" He shrugs. It seems obvious he does not care. He moves down the rest of the stairs and leaves the stairwell. She does not try to stop him. As she walks back toward the boys' bathroom, she

turns into David's classroom instead and walks across the room to look out his window. She can see the boy running fast across the school grounds toward the street north of the school, his dark coat tight around his body.

David and the principal are just leaving the bathroom as she finally approaches that end of the hallway. The homemade candle—constructed using a tin can, cardboard, wax and wick, and placed in such a way—has unsettled David enough that he has called the principal upstairs to see. On seeing, the principal kicked the candle from the toilet tank and stomped out its light with his foot, dismissing the incident as a meaningless prank while the hot candle wax hardened on the institutional linoleum floor. Like David, she, too, is unsettled. She mentions her stairwell encounter with Nate and his flight away from the school to the principal. He takes note of what she says but does not seem particularly interested. Later, she repeats her experience to the vice-principal in charge of dealing with unexcused absences. On hearing, the vice-principal does not ask for more details of the encounter, or a description of what was found in the washroom, but rather replies that the absence will be dealt with, suggesting that this latest truancy will probably be the last straw, adding that it is doubtful that the boy will be back.

She does not see Nate again.

Only many months later does she learn that Nate was taught to construct this type of homemade candle in his Boy Scout troop, as part of survival training.

Scout: [ME. < OFr., to hear < L., to listen] a soldier, ship, etc. sent to spy out the strength, movements, etc. of the enemy; a person sent out to observe the tactics of an opponent; a member of the Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts; the act of reconnoitering; to go in search of something, hunt.

One spring day, 2000

She wonders briefly where Evan is as she takes attendance. He is always one of the first to arrive. He is so rarely absent that she waits before marking the attendance sheet. She asks if anyone has seen him. The kids, laughing, moving desks and settling in assure her he is on his way, someone adding that they just saw him on his way into the school. The lights are dimmed and the movie begins where the bell ended the scene from last period. They know the story well and are enjoying this performance.

The door opens and her aide, Diane, motions for her to come into the hallway. Diane, shaken, her face white, manages to breathe the words, "Something awful, something really bad." She knows that she does not want to hear this. "Is it yours or mine?" she asks, waiting for the blow.

"No, someone just walked into the school and shot two kids downstairs." She seems to hear and react to the sentence in slow motion.

She hears all three messages, "No," "Someone," and "Two kids shot downstairs."

She does not doubt the "No," although later she will return to it in her memory again and again to wonder at her quick acceptance that "no" meant her son was safe.

"Someone" she interprets to mean a *stranger*.

Stranger: [ME. < MFr. < OFr. see STRANGE]: an outsider, newcomer or foreigner; a guest or visitor; a person not known or familiar to one

So many assumptions.

“Two kids shot downstairs.” The phrase sounds so *foreign* to her at that moment; it is as if the act happened to unknown people in a far off unfamiliar place.

Foreign: [ME. < OFr. < L. foreign originally external; < L. out-of-doors, Originally L. DOOR] situated outside one's country, province or locality; not natural to the person or thing specified, not belonging, not characteristic; not pertinent, irrelevant; not organically belonging, introduced from outside.

Later, she will think it is this denial that allows her to act.

“Is he gone?” and then on top of that: “Do you know who the kids are?” The aide shakes her head, “I’m not sure; I don’t know. I couldn’t see who but I saw blood.”

It is only then that she notices two of her students, Anna and Crystal, staggering down the hallway towards her, holding each other and crying, trembling so badly she does not know how they managed to get themselves up the stairs. One of the girls adds fragments to the aide’s story. A boy, she doesn’t know who, a gun, the gun pointed at her head, the boy asking her “Do you want to die?” and then running into the stairwell, hearing the shots behind her.

David enters the hallway. She motions for him to join them and tells him what she knows. He moves to lock the doors that the girls have just come through. She moves to the east fire doors, the doors closest to her classroom. To lock them, she must enter the stairwell. She glances to her left as she walks through the doors, down the stairs to the landing, but there is no one there. Her hands shake as the key enters and turns the lock. She reenters the hallway and closes the door behind her. Only then does she remember the rarely used door from the stairwell that leads directly into the computer room. She enters the computer room. David’s kids are laughing, visiting, looking at each other’s

monitors. They ignore her. She walks the length of the room, opens the door that leads directly into the stairwell and checks that it is locked. She returns to her classroom, locks the door but does not enter. She takes the aide and her two girls into an empty classroom across the hall. "Stay here. All the doors are locked, you're safe." They want to go *home*.

Home: [ME. < OE. akin to G. < IE. base to lie, homestead, Gr., to lie down, rest, L. townsmen, HIDE, ON. home: basic sense "place where one lies, dwelling"] the place where a person or family lives, the place where one was born or reared; a place thought of as home; the place where something is or has been originated, developed.

"Soon," she promises, "We just have to wait a little while." She leaves them sitting on the floor, their backs against a bookcase.

She looks for her son. He should be in David's fifth period English 20 class. He is not in the computer room, nor is he in his classroom. "Have you seen him today?" she asks David. Unlike Evan, she knows that he is almost always late. Punctuality to him is walking through the fire doors just as the second bell's ringing echoes into silence. David looks worried as he shakes his head back and forth. She knows he must be safe. Of course, he is safe. It is impossible to think anything else. She tells herself she is not really worried about him, she would just like to have him behind the locked doors with her. She just wants to know where he is.

Standing in the hallway, looking through the picture window of her classroom, she knows that she has to tell the kids now. She has delayed it as long as possible. She wants them to remain in the dimly lit bubble that is her classroom today.

She does not want to turn on the lights. But the sirens' insistent cries have finally turned her student's attention away from the story on the TV screen. An announcement over the intercom has asked everyone to stay in their classrooms, to ignore the bell signaling the end of fifth period. She walks back into the classroom and turns on the light. As she makes her way to the front of the room a voice with eerie prescience jokingly asks, "What? Did someone shoot up the school?"

And so she tells them. There is stunned disbelief. She assures them that they are safe. She is called back into the hallway.

The two students shot are Jenna and Evan. "Evan is conscious, but Jenna looks really bad...Nate is the shooter, they have him in the office...We'll be evacuated a floor at a time...We just have to wait...They'll come and get us."

She returns to her kids. The students are clustered in small groups around the room. Jamie is sitting on the stool at the front of the class, crying. "Can I just call my mom? My mom needs to know. Do you think someone will tell her? She's in Violet Creek."

Saundra and Jaymee stand on either side, trying to be a comfort but looking lost. Brynn has left his desk and is sitting on the floor, his back to the wall, his knees drawn up, his arms holding them tight against his chest. Den hovers near by. She crouches beside Brynn on the floor. She asks him how he is doing. "He's scared," Den answers for him. She tells Brynn that he is safe, that she knows he is scared, that she is sure everyone feels that way. She asks Den to stay close to him. Ray asks her if she knows who has been shot, who is the shooter. She considers lying, yet can't quite bring herself to do that to them. She does not want to be the one to tell them this. She knows if she tells them, they will lose the shocked calm that they are experiencing. She tells them that she has heard

involved, but that she can't be completely sure that what she has heard is right. To repeat something she is not sure of would not be fair. They accept this evasion, surprisingly easily. Perhaps they are not ready to be told yet either. She waits for someone to ask about Evan or Crystal or Anna. No one does. Ray looks at her carefully and then asks: "Can you tell me that it is not someone, like someone related to me?" He is asking about his sister.

She smiles. "She's OK." He nods.

She is called into the hallway again. Evacuation plans are explained. She returns to her kids and explains what will be happening next. Someone asks, "Why can't we just go home?" She explains how important it is for everyone to gather at the adjoining middle school's gym. "Your parents will be coming to find you; they are going to be scared and worried, they need to see your faces as soon as possible. This is the quickest way for that to happen. You need to be there for them." They nod, understanding immediately. She is very proud of them.

As she leaves the classroom with her kids, she looks back once. The room looks—*interrupted*.

*Interrupt: [ME. < L. to break apart, break off, between + to break; see RUPTURE]
to break into or in upon; stop, hinder. To make a break in the continuity of; cut
off, obstruct—vi. To make an interruption, esp. in another's speech, action.*

The hallway and stairwell are dim as her students and she make their way to the exit. The shrouded sun is bright by comparison. The cold air slaps her as she exits the school. Snow is falling; the flakes rest lightly on the startled blades of young April grass. Fire-

fighters stand sentry at each door, barricading entry. Their faces are chiseled stone, impassive, and yet incongruously young. They do not make eye contact.

The red flashers on the fire trucks, police cars, and service trucks create a visual twirling cacophony of red and red and red. The vehicles circle the school, forming a barricade, keeping the world from view and the view from the world.

She barely attends to the first young voice, sees his mouth move, flippant irreverent words coming from a pale face. The second young voice, mutters angry threats at the first, his face just as pale. She murmurs to him, soothes him with meaningless words. He quiets; they all quiet.

At first she does not notice the classrooms' windows full of faces as they round the first corner that takes them along the south end of the school. Not until a teacher's voice reaches out to her from behind the screen and glass, calling her name urgently. Does she have any information that he does not? She tells him what she can, that they are being evacuated floor by floor.

They round the corner to the front of the school. She thinks to herself, "This is my birthday." Her eyes catch the flash of her moving shoe. She looks down at herself, surprised. She is wearing pale blue. She had decided to dress for spring that morning, denying the weather reports.

She thinks how odd it is to take notice of what she is wearing. Her thoughts *clash* with the day.

Clash- [echoic] to collide or strike together with a loud, harsh metallic noise; conflict, disagree sharply; fail to harmonize; sharp disagreement, lack of harmony.

She feels *ashamed* of her odd inconsequential thoughts as she enters into the front doors of the adjoining middle school.

Ashamed: [to shame < ME. To make ashamed < OE. see SHAME] feeling shame because something, bad, wrong or foolish was done.

The air in the gym is warm and close, the room filled with faces. Her kids disperse into the mix. She feels lost. She cannot stand still. She begins to thread her way around and through the clusters of students. Weeping, silent, whispering, stunned clusters. Expanding, merging, dissolving clusters. She is calm and removed. People around her are crying. She is not. She knows that there is something *wrong* with what is inside of her.

Wrong: [ME., crooked, twisted, wrong < OE. < ON. wrong, twisted] not in accordance with justice, law, morality; unlawful, immoral, improper; not in accordance with an established standard, previous arrangement, given intention; not suitable or appropriate; unsatisfactory; not functioning properly.

Parents begin to arrive. This is something that she can do. She matches parent to child, a two-piece jigsaw puzzle. Once one match is made, she looks for another parent and child to match. Puzzle after puzzle after puzzle. It makes her feel useful.

Parents are beginning to pour in now. Bankers, waitresses, accountants, stay-at-home parents, teachers, farmers, grocery clerks, secretaries, factory workers, and dentists leave offices, homes, schools, stores, fields, and assembly lines to come now. Maria, her younger sister comes, looking for her son; she has been crying. "He's here, he's okay," she says, referring to Maria's oldest child, and one of her fifth-period students.

"I was so scared."

“He’s fine, he was with me.” It sounds like a lie to her ear. She watches as her nephew is hugged. Hugged in the way a mother would hug a lost child, found after hours of desperate searching.

“I’m okay Mom.” He bends into the hug and holds on.

She stops friends of her son’s. Have they seen him? If they see him tell him to go home. Tell him “I need to see him.” Two of her students, friends of her son’s, promise to find him for her and send him home.

A friend from long past, an emergency-room nurse, in pink uniform, comes for her daughter. The nurse stops short in front of her, breathless. In a whisper, the words are hurled at her: “I was there when they brought the kids in. It is really bad. Jenna didn’t make it. Jenna died.” The last word seems to stretch past her; she tries to catch it, to understand it.

She doesn’t know what to do with this information. She does not want it. She should not know this yet. She has no right to it yet. She does not feel like crying.

The teachers are told they must meet before they can go home. She walks down the dim hallway toward the assigned room. The late afternoon light refuses to enter, lingering reluctantly by the boot racks. She is one of the last to arrive. The room is bright by comparison, artificially lit. All windows are covered. Poster paper, screaming with bright vibrant artistry, masks today’s reality.

Her eyes scan the room. She wants to be close to the door. Every desk is filled, mostly with familiar faces. The bookshelf counter tops running beneath the covered windows and furthest from the door are the last spaces to be taken. She takes a place there. She does not feel like crying.

The announcement that most will hear for the first time is made. Jenna is dead. Counsellors are here to talk to them. Someone, their team-leader, introduces them and their different agencies. Each speaks for a minute, describing where they were when they first heard the news, detailing their thoughts and emotions. She wants to scream at them “Who the fuck cares.” She wants to go home. She wants to see her kids. She does not feel like crying.

Most of the teachers are silent. Someone speaks the words, “We just want to go home, that’s the only thing we need right now.” The counsellors talk of the importance of debriefing. The importance of understanding the different emotions some might experience. She feels separate from that. She has no emotions.

Someone asks what will happen to Andy. And she wonders, “Who’s Andy?” She stops listening and concentrates on answering that question. Her memory cannot find an Andy anywhere in the school hallways or classrooms. She whispers her question to someone next to her. “Who’s Andy?”

“You know,” comes the answer, “Nate’s brother, he’s in Grade 10.”

She knows all the Grade 10 students, most have been her students, and many still are. He still hides from her. She closes her eyes and says the name over and over in her mind. Andy, Andy, Andy. There is no *memory* of an Andy; she is convinced that there is no Andy in the school.

Memory: [ME. < OFr. < L. mindful, remembering < IE. to remember, recall,

MOURN] the power, act or process of recalling to mind facts previously learned or past experiences.

Mourn: [ME. < OE; akin to Goth. To be anxious < IE., to remember, think of, remembers, mindful of] to feel or express sorrow; lament, grieve.

Why doesn't she think to link Nate's family name to Andy? Such a simple thing to do. Someone does it for her and she feels the punch in her stomach. She thinks, "Oh God, no," the veil of detachment and numbness parting with the memory of Andy. She closes her eyes and remembers his face. She remembers him making a place for a special needs student next to him during a group project. She remembers how bright he is, his spirited participation in discussions. She remembers him telling her he was suspended from school for fighting. She remembers the uncharacteristically closed defiant look on his face that day. It was so unlike him. She remembers speaking to the principal about the suspension and the reason for it. He had explained that Andy had been the victim of ongoing verbal harassment and intimidation, that this fight was his response. The principal had smiled at her, explaining that while he was required to impose a three-day suspension because of the zero-tolerance policy on fighting, he believed that "These things sometimes *need* to happen."

Need: [ME. < OE. akin to G., Goth, < IE. base to collapse with weariness] necessity or obligation created by some situation; something useful, required or desired that is lacking; want; requirement.

She had not agreed with him, had thought there was a dangerous message hidden in that statement, yet she had remained silent, not wanting to challenge his authority. Her silence had given consent to that authority. She remembers Andy's mother, caring, concerned yet confused, too. His mom had not been able to understand her son's uncharacteristic behavior. She had kept the conversation with the principal to herself. How could she not

remember Andy? She wonders why she doesn't feel like crying. What the hell is wrong with her? She feels guilty.

She hates this room; she hates these counsellors. She looks past them to the dim hallway and wishes herself away from here. She wants to go back to her classroom. She wants to go home. She wants to see her sons.

Intersections

[A] simple formula can be applied to any system as a qualitative means of assessing potential response to trauma: it is that a leader's pre-trauma functioning will influence the response and recovery of a system in similar proportion to the degree of power (formal or informal) they have in the system.

(Cameron, 2001, p. 19)

All the evidence supports the view that *intervention efforts*...should not be primarily focused on changing the reactions and characteristics of the victim but rather on changing *the behavior and attitudes of the social environment*.

(Olweus, 1993, p. 337)

Asked what he can do to make the students feel more secure upon their return, [the superintendent replied] "I don't anticipate there would be much more than what we've been doing up until now."

(Superintendent of West Evans School Division, quoted in Albert, 2000, p. A5)

Chapter 8

A Home Locked Down

That spring day in 2000, students just wanted to go home. Staff just wanted to go home. The statement “I just want to go home” was repeated over and over again that day by almost everyone. On a conscious level we all wanted to go to that place where our families waited for us. For me I wanted to go home to the northth-side of Duncan, to the block and the house that had been my home for most of my life. But I think at a very deep level, each of us began a process of longing, a yearning for a “home,” that we believed existed before 1:05 p.m. that day, where our safety did not depend on the randomness of intersecting stops and did not depend on our seeing the outside from behind screens and locked doors. Certainly, I yearned to get as close to home as possible, to get back to normal. I believe we all did.

But not all homes are the same, are they? What I might consider appropriate safety measures to keep my home safe, another might consider inadequate. What I refer to as “home,” Kevin Cameron (2001), an expert in trauma response and threat assessment, who has provided training and consultation to several schools and communities throughout Canada, the United States and Ireland, refers to as a human system and explains that, like homes, human systems are either open or closed. He explains that “when a system is naturally open there is little resistance to the flow of information between members...outsiders are not generally viewed as potential threats to the equilibrium of the system unless real data indicates otherwise” (p. 13). Conversely, a naturally closed system views outsiders and differences as threatening and potentially dangerous. Cameron (2001) continues:

A naturally closed system tends to be moderately resistant to the flow of new information between members...Beliefs and standards are common within the system and frequently stated. Opposing opinions are not permitted and if members of the system do not conform they are usually expelled from the system (i.e. kicked out or fired) or ostracized within the system. Scapegoats who are not expelled or refuse to leave the system inadvertently stand as an example to the rest of the system as to why conformity is more advantageous than rebellion. In this way the minority non-conformist may serve a function in helping to keep the system closed, as most members are not prepared to endure the negative projections of the system witnessed against the scapegoat. When conflict occurs within the system it is not resolved through dialogue, but is generally concluded with sanctions to the least powerful member of the conflict...confidence is usually high concerning the 'correctness' of the systems codes.... (p. 14)

Following a trauma, it is likely that a naturally closed system will respond by closing even tighter. If a closed system closes even tighter then "once the cultural rituals are performed (funerals, memorial serves, etc.)...the roles, beliefs and standards are often intensified using the pre-trauma functioning as the springboard" (Cameron, 2001, p. 16). Frank (1995) would recognize that such human systems would see restoration to the status quo ante, getting back to normal, as imperative to the care and safety of the system/home, and by inference of those humans who reside there. Those seen as suspect before, those *others*, would now be identified as further threats to that care and safety. Little thought would be given to the root of the trauma. "The question of origin is subsumed in the puzzle of how to get the set working again" (Frank, 1995, p. 88). Frank

(1995) explains that the longing to get back to normal, or a drive for restitution, suggests that there is neither interest in the genesis of the trauma nor a desire to change the conditions that gave rise to the trauma, conditions which those within the system/home would be returning to. This striving for restitution and lack of concern for genesis is in keeping with the denial of facts, awareness, responsibility, and/or impact that Cameron (2001) identifies as a further characteristic of a traumatically closed system.

It seems likely, then, that if a system uses coercion and intimidation as a way of exercising administrative power, if difference is seen as an “adjustment problem which requires fixing,” if those who do not seem to fit are often invited to leave or are expelled, if there is a dichotomous attitude and response to those who suffer from interpersonal violence within that system because of real or manufactured differences, then the definition of what is safe and who should be cared for will be very different in this type of *home*. On November 4, 2002 Jay Ecker reported in *The Hannibal Herald* that the parents of a twelve-year-old bullied child, a student at St. Ambrose School in Duncan, had hired a lawyer to look into the possibility of bringing a negligence suit against the school. The parents of the boy had become frustrated with the “school’s response to 18 months of bullying” (p. A1) and the resolution that school officials had finally suggested, that their child should move to a new school. The article quoted the lawyer and the boy’s parents, who spoke for their son. On December 13, 2002, the principal⁵ of D. H. Lawrence High School wrote a letter to *The Hannibal Herald*’s editor, chastising the newspaper for publishing that story and a number of follow-up stories, questioning *The Hannibal Herald*’s “journalistic virtues of conducting interviews [with those] bent on

⁵The present principal of D. H. Lawrence High School was appointed to the position in September, 2002.

conducting interviews [with those] bent on destroying the image of a school and maligning the people who work there” (Frontman, p.. A7). He signed the letter with his name, followed with “Principal, on behalf of the administrative team of D. H. Lawrence High School,” saying he wrote the letter because “we *value* [italics added] them [St. Ambrose] as a sister school, as colleagues, and as friends” (p. A7). It is ironic that he, in his official role as Principal, chose to publicly attack the motives of the parents of this child, and other parents who had come forward with similar stories that their children had experienced, each of whom expected, but apparently did not find, a safe and caring school environment that *valued* their children.

Those who cannot imagine themselves as other cannot create a safe and caring atmosphere for anyone whom they define as other. The safe and caring incentive then is unmasked, only to reveal another locked door, one that is meant to protect the center from the other. Safe and caring in this instance is shallow, selfish, and futile: shallow because there is no honest desire to change that which makes it unsafe for those outside the center, selfish because its true intent is to protect and care for only those already in the center and futile because there is blindness to the truth that “I am only truly free when the other is also free and is recognized by me as free. This freedom of one in the other unites...” (Hegel, 1971, p. 171). This freedom is the key to unlocking a home locked-down.

While the statement, “We just want to go home” was repeated over and over again the day of the shooting, the statement, “We are fine, we are strong,” became the statement repeated over and over by administrators to the staff and then by the staff to each other over the next eight weeks of school. I was one of those who answered, “I am fine,” when

most members of my family. For me, and I suspect for a number of other staff members, “I am fine,” became synonymous with, “I am back to normal,” which became synonymous with, “I belong.” And if I moved my tongue in just the right way, along the roof of my mouth, or bit the inside of my cheek, I could keep from crying, further proof that I was fine, that I was normal. And if I was careful to keep very busy with the mundane duties of school-life and not to look too carefully, not to listen too intently, I did not need to question the enormous paradoxes that existed at the school during those weeks.

Anyone approaching the main entry-way of the school would have to walk past the American flag flying at half mast. The front entry-way windows were covered with e-mail and telegraph messages from all over the world offering condolences and sympathy. Near the staff room entrance, a picture of Jenna hung on the wall; notes and flowers sent by her fellow students were displayed on a small table in front of her picture.⁶ The first floor hallway walls were covered with “Thinking of You” and “We Care” posters, signed by students from schools across Canada and the United States. Someone donated *Chicken Soup for the Soul* to every student and staff member; the State’s Teacher’s Association president came to speak to the staff to offer the association’s support; parents, local merchants, and staff from neighbouring schools sent cards, food, and messages of concern to the staff.

Regardless of each act of kindness from the outside, each message of care on the walls acknowledging the tragedy, and despite the public announcement made by administrators that D. H. Lawrence High School was and would continue to be a safe and caring school,

⁶ The memorial table to Jenna was removed very soon after her memorial service on the Monday following her death, and the flag was raised to full mast sometime the following week.

was “a good school where a bad thing happened,” a blanket of silence about the shooting seemed to be descending on the school and those within. Staff met frequently during the first week to discuss how best to get the students back to a feeling of normalcy. The way to healing, the way back home, was defined as getting back to the way it was before the shooting, getting back to normal as quickly as possible. Within the first two weeks following the shooting, the school’s memory of the shooting that was beginning to emerge was as a remembered incident “outside of memory, insofar as memory involves placing experiences into patterns” (Frank, 1995, p. 90). The shooting was viewed as “an aberration, a blip in the otherwise normal passage of time. The normal trajectory remain[ed] intact.” (Frank, 1995, p. 90). Reminders of the murder, the flag at half-mast, the posters, the counsellors, those teachers or students who wanted or needed to talk began to be resented by many on staff. When, three weeks following Jenna’s murder, a student walked into a High School in another state and shot and wounded a number of fellow students, there was no recognition of that incident and how it might emotionally affect D. H. Lawrence High School students and staff, there was no discussion of that event at all except in the hallways among individuals. The attitude that began then and that I believe persists today is that the violence that D. H. Lawrence High School experienced is somehow *different* than the violence that has happened to other schools elsewhere, that *we* are different than those *other* places and schools. Open dialogue—about any shooting, about the emotions that had taken up residence in our bodies that spring day, about the grief over the loss of Jenna, about the guilt and anger associated with Nate, about how other schools and teachers had dealt with similar tragedies, about the rumors that live ammunition had been placed around the school by someone, and that

there were more threats being made against the school that were not being shared with staff, about the free-floating fear—was discouraged; it did not *fit* into what Frank (1995) describes as a restitution narrative that the administration had adopted, the purpose of which was to “return to just before the beginning: ‘good as new’ or status quo ante” (p. 90).

Intersections

“We’ll try to retain as much a state of normalcy as we can.”
(Superintendent of West Evans School Division, as quoted in Albert, 2000, p. A1)

Bullying Awareness Higher Today

“[B]ullying is now taken more seriously, especially here in Duncan”....[The] principal of Dr. Westmount School and the Safe and Caring Schools co-ordinator for West Evans School Division, has noticed a shift in attitude.

“There’s a bigger recognition amongst kids that bullying is not accepted, that it’s not tolerated...”

The biggest change that I have seen is there is much more awareness about what bullying is and what steps can be taken if you are being bullied...

The key is to work with the victims so they realize they don’t have to be victims. I think where we have to keep working is with the victims so that they understand they do not have to become violent in order to get away from a bullying situation.”

(Hutman, 2003, p. A1)

[Letter to the editor]

Re: No tolerance for bullying.

I’m responding to the article in the Duncan Times of January 24 (Bullying awareness higher today, Page A1.)

We may be more aware of bullying than we were three years ago, but what is really being done about it, especially in the schools?

Having a [police officer] in the schools is obviously not enough.

My child has been bullied for about three years and this school year he went into a new school and I thought maybe things would be different.

It was almost worse than it ever has been.

The first time I went to the school I was told they have no tolerance for bullying.

Well I was down there quite a few times and not a whole bunch was done about it.

If [the police officer] is to be in the school for that purpose, then why wasn’t he made aware of the problem that was ongoing.

I finally had to remove my child from that school and place him in another school.

It was so bad that my child did not want to go to school anymore.

I really think that some schools should pull up their socks on the bullying issue before we have another situation like we had three years ago.

A CONCERNED PARENT

Editor’s note: The writer of the above letter is not identified by the Times because of concerns about potential bullying of the writer’s child...

(Anonymous, 2003, p. A4)

Chapter 9

Getting Home Back to Normal (Status quo/Status quo ante)

Spring, 2000

It is the last period of the school day, her prep. The principal has phoned up to her classroom, requesting a meeting in his office. There is nothing in his tone or phrasing that is ominous, yet she feels uneasy as she walks toward the stairwell that takes her down and away from her room and towards the administrative offices. The halls are dimly lit and empty. Most of the doors to the classrooms along the way are closed, teachers and students hidden from view. She feels separate and alone. She has become wary of this man, his easy smile and charming quips, his encouraging praise and casual flattery.

As she enters his office, he turns in his chair towards her with a smile. His office is long and narrow. His chair is office-issue, set to complement his height and the height of his workspace. The pale-grey upholstered chair, placed at the end of his work area and next to the door, is meant for visitors. It matches the couch that sits opposite his desk. The upholstered furniture suggests a hospitable informality, yet as she lowers herself onto the edge of the plush pillow-seat she feels at a disadvantage. The seating arrangement makes her feel small, not just physically smaller, but somehow—less than. She wonders if the seating arrangement is deliberate, if they teach hierarchical decorating in “principal-school.”

He smiles as he begins to speak. He tells her that he and his administrative team have met recently to discuss the awarding of contracts for the coming school term. He continues, “During the course of the meeting some sudden concerns were raised about you. Because of those concerns we have decided that it would be best to offer you another probationary contract.” He does not identify who “we” are. He pauses and then “I

can't tell you how badly I feel about this, Michelle; I know you must feel *blindsided* by this."

Blindside: the side of a person opposite to the direction in which [s]he is looking.

He tells her that he believes she is an excellent teacher, that "these concerns are outside the classroom." Her heart is pounding so hard that she wants to place the ball of her palm on her sternum to control the thumping. Instead she leans forward with her elbows on her knees. Her fingers are laced together, her chin resting on the overlapping thumbs, the index fingers covering her mouth. She asks him what these concerns are. He lists them for her: there seems to be a negative perception about her among some of her students, there is a feeling that she should be more involved in extracurricular activities and that she should be spending more time in the staff room. He explains that they wish to investigate these concerns further because "Michelle, no matter how wonderful a teacher you might be, if you do not *fit* with the rest of the staff you will not be given a continuing contract."

Fit: [ME. akin to ON to knit] to be suitable or adapted to; to be the proper size, shape, etc.; to make suitable or qualified; to be suitably adapted, be in accord or harmony.

She asks him if he can be more specific about the "negative perception." He tells her that he would prefer not to get into specifics, that there is an issue of confidentiality that he must respect. "Will you agree to this and *trust* that I will be on top of things next year?"

Trust: [ME < ON lit. firmness for IE base see TRUE] a firm belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, justice, etc., of another person or thing, keeping care.

It sounds like he is asking her to agree that there is cause for concern. Is that what he is asking her? And then he adds, “We *are* giving you another probationary contract, so you know that you will be teaching here at least for another year.”

“Trust me...teaching...at least...another year” enters and settles like a clenched fist in the pit of her stomach.

She has waited so long and worked so hard for the opportunity to teach. She knows he wants her to smile, affirm and accept; he wants her to believe him, she knows he is relying on her to do that. She will not smile pleasingly for him. She will not give consent to this by remaining silent. She asks again for specific complaints about her that he has found troubling. Again, he refuses with “I’m not even aware of all the details. That’s why we want more time. It may turn out that there really is nothing to be concerned about.” She tells him that she is unsure how to respond to this negative perception without specific details. He reminds her “If you remember, I mentioned negative perception to you a while back. It may just be some facial expression or body language that creates this negative impression.” She reminds him of the student survey that he conducted with her students, a survey conducted without her knowledge. His own survey did not bear out these negative perceptions. She reminds him that he approved of her extracurricular choices, as had the Vice Principal that had reviewed her formative evaluation plan. She reminds him that this is the first time in two years that concerns of staff room visits have been mentioned. She tells him that she wished he had brought these concerns to her

attention earlier; she would have acted upon them immediately. Again he tells her, “I feel really bad about how this was all handled.”

She thinks but does not say, “If you feel so badly about this, then do something about it. You’re the boss.” She offers to make a commitment in writing to join more committees and go the staff room regularly.

He shakes his head, “You don’t need to do that.”

This time she smiles, “You’re asking me to trust you, but you’re not willing to trust me.” She looks him straight in the eye, “If you are asking me to agree with your decision, I won’t do that. I won’t agree just to make this easier for you.” And then, very clearly, she adds, “I have *earned* a continuing contract.”

Earn: [ME < OE. to gain, labour for, lit. to harvest < IE. base, harvest time] to receive (salary, wages etc.) for one’s labour; to get or deserve as a result of something one has done.

His face tightens for the briefest of seconds, a wince of displeasure, she thinks. His eyes shift to look over her left shoulder. “Well, no firm decision has been made yet. I’ll talk to my team again and we can re-evaluate. Give me a couple of days and I’ll have an answer for you, no later than Wednesday. I won’t leave you on pins and needles any longer than that.” He does not smile again. Nor does she.

She walks down the hallway away from the administrative offices, up the stairwell and through the fire doors. She sees down the length of the hallway that she’s left the door to her room open. She always does that, forgetting to close and lock up when she leaves the room. She was in the middle of marking when she was called downstairs. The paper she is working on is only half marked. The computer screen by her desk has

coloured windows flying through space at her. She sits and waits. Waiting for the bell to end the day, so she can talk to David. It feels like she is waiting to confess. The bell rings, but she still waits. She listens to the locker doors that line the walls just outside her door banging open and shut, kids yelling down the hall at each other. After a time, the hall quiets. Still she waits. She thinks he will be disappointed in her. She walks across the hall into his room. He is sitting in a student's desk marking papers. As she walks in he looks up, smiles, and as always puts his pencil down immediately, indicating that he is giving her his full attention. She sits sideways in a student's desk across from him. Just for a moment she doesn't speak and then she begins. It spills out of her, her voice becoming shaky.

His reaction takes her by surprise. He is out of the desk and across the classroom. She's not quite sure how he got there. "This is bullshit; this is just pure bullshit!" She has never heard him swear before. "This is exactly what we have worked so hard for, so this fucking bullshit doesn't happen." She knows he has spent years chairing the Teacher Evaluation committee and writing the resulting policy for this school division. Somehow she is reassured by his anger.

One month later

He has entitled it "Addendum." The *principal* leaves the addendum on her desk as she is teaching fifth period.

Principal: [ME. < OFr. < L. see PRINCE] first in rank, authority, importance.

His friendly smile accompanied the whisper that she should come and see him at the end of the day. Her students were working quietly; she began to read his words. A wash of horror rippled over her, leaving a crawling sensation on her skin. A student approached

her with a question. She heard him as if from a great distance. Her answer seemed to satisfy him because he had returned to his desk. She understands that his two-page addendum will become part of her summative evaluation reports. Yet, it does not mention their concerns with her teaching. Rather it is a description of, and his reaction to the meetings held on the Friday and the Tuesday before the shooting, in which she and David had attempted to discover what the concerns with her teaching were and why the concerns were never communicated to her so that she might address them and take actions to remediate if necessary. She had felt that she was fighting for her life in those meetings. She had believed it important that she speak, that she had a *profess/ional* responsibility to speak, to question.

Profess: [< L. to avow publicly < before + to avow akin to, to speak] to make an open declaration of; to claim to have some feeling, an interest, knowledge etc.; to practice as one's profession; to declare one's belief in.

She had asked her questions quietly but she had asked them persistently and insistently: If these negative perceptions were not classroom related, what were they related to and in what context had they been formed? How was she to address these concerns, or prevent them from happening again if administrators wished to protect the confidentiality of those involved? How would administrators be able to determine the validity of the negative perception if she was not allowed to address the particular sources of complaint? Since they had withdrawn their concerns about staff room attendance and extracurricular activities would it be possible to investigate the negative perception concerns before the end of the year, and reconsider the continuing contract offer? Shouldn't the summative evaluation process that she had been involved in for the last 21 months be given a heavier

weight than concern arising from anonymous perceptions when it came to making decisions centering on her teaching future? David and she had been unsuccessful in finding answers during those meetings; the team did not feel that they were required to answer such questions.

And now it seems her insistent questioning has been deemed a “red flag,” a danger that threatened the administrators’ ability to be “open and honest” and to act in a spirit of “cooperation and collegiality,” a threat making them feel “as if we need a lawyer,” and a signal that her “posture” suggested a problem with her “*approachability*.”

Approach: [ME. < OFr. < LL. < L. to + comparative of near] to come closer, draw nearer; vt. to come near or nearer; to be like or similar to; approximate; n. an approximation or similarity.

The written words seem to palpitate with outrage. She thinks again of his friendly smile just moments before. She is appalled with his perception of her, and is deeply frightened by the implication of that. The paper should be entitled “Indictment.”

She thinks of her conversation with David as she takes the central staircase down to the first floor and towards the principal’s office. She had taken the addendum to David across the hall. Her hands shook as she handed the papers to him. He read the words on the page with what seemed to be sad resignation. He told her that the Deputy Superintendent is extremely angry with him. He told her that after speaking with the Deputy Superintendent, he received the distinct impression that to remain as her mentor would be to jeopardize her chances of having her probationary contract extended. He shook his head and commented, “Whatever this is about, it’s not about teaching.” He told her that the Deputy Superintendent stated that neither he nor the principal needed to do or

would do any further summative observations of her teaching now or during the next school term nor did he intend to monitor any remediation. David repeated the advice the Deputy Superintendent had given him to give to her, "Tell her to smile and do what she is told to do."

She sits in the principal's office now. He asks her if she would like to make any comments at the end of the addendum. She knows the blank white space that follows the heading "Teacher's Comments" gives mute consent to his assessment of her. She tells him that she will not be adding anything. She hopes that her silent compliance will be read as cooperative, collegial, open and honest. He suggests she take the weekend to think it over. And then, he asks if he can give her "a piece of friendly advice." She nods. "Be careful of who you allow to speak for you. Their words and actions may impact negatively on how you are viewed." She does not tell him that she no longer has a mentor. As she is leaving his office he tells her to have a good weekend and then, almost as an after-thought it seems, he adds the message that she should call the Deputy Superintendent, "The Deputy Superintendent wants to speak to you."

She does as she is told; she calls the Deputy Superintendent as soon as she returns to her classroom. His secretary takes a message for him and tells her, "He'll get back to you later today, or Monday morning." She tells the secretary that she will either be in her classroom or at home. She gives the secretary her home phone number.

She sits in the chair just inside the living room, with her coat on; the phone is beside her on the armrest. No one else is home. She does not turn on the TV, but rather stares out the window. It is close to 5:00 p.m. when he calls. He tells her he was on his way home, but that he will wait for her if she wants to come to the office today, "You

probably want to get this over with before Monday.” He tells her that everyone else has gone home, but that he will leave the door open for her.

When she arrives, he motions her towards the boardroom. “We can talk in here.” The last time she was in this room was her orientation day, 21 months ago. The blue sky and August sun pushed their way through the windows that day, teasing those in the cool thermostatically controlled room. Then the room had been packed with new teachers to the district. She had felt so proud to be there, filled with hope for her future as a teacher. There had not been enough room for everyone to sit at the table then. She had been one of the ones that sat in chairs lining the walls of the room. Both he and the superintendent, had spoken at the meeting that day. He had shaken her hand during the break, moving his lips into a smile while saying, “I’m glad that you finally got your chance.” She had smiled politely then, pretending to believe in his gladness, and thanked him. David had spoken that day too, welcoming the new teachers to the division and briefly explaining the formative and summative evaluation policy and its history. He had spoken of the intent behind the policy’s inception: to provide teachers with an opportunity to be successful and to give new teachers the confidence that they will be evaluated in a fair, just and unbiased manner, that this policy protects them against arbitrary decisions. He had spoken of the importance of mentoring within the policy. He had explained that administrators of this division are seriously committed to dealing with the assessment of teachers honestly, openly, and in an atmosphere of trust and good faith.

She looks over her shoulder briefly to reacquaint herself with the room. It is empty now, except for her and him. She sits at the conference table now; her chair turned parallel along side it. She keeps her coat on; she does not move the zipper away from her

throat. She has not seen him since the crisis intervention debriefing the day of the shooting, sixteen days before, when his eyes merely flickered over her. She watches his impassive face and listens to the even uninflected tone that gives his words sound. She listens as he speaks of his outrage at her not asking the “right sort of questions,” of “your completely *inappropriate* questions.”

Inappropriate: not appropriate, not suitable, fitting or proper.

He tells her that she should be ashamed that she has compromised a good man, David, by involving him in something that had nothing to do with him. (She remains silent on what the policy states is the role of mentor.) He tells her that he is keeping the superintendent completely up-to-date and that the superintendent is in complete agreement with him. “If it was up to the Superintendent and me, you would be gone today.” He tells her that the only reason she is not gone is because the team at the school is willing to give her time to prove herself cooperative and that she should consider herself lucky. He reminds her that, regardless of what the Division’s evaluation policy states, probationary contracts can be allowed to expire with no reason given. *The School Act* is very specific about that. He cautions her that they will not allow her to sign the probationary contract for next year until the end of the school term and then only “if the *team* is pleased with you.”

Team: [ME. < OE. offspring, brood, team of draft animals, akin to G. a bridle, rein < base of, to draw] [Obs.] progeny, race or lineage; two or more draft animals harnessed to the same vehicle; a group of people constituting one side in a contest or competition; a group of people working together in a coordinated effort; to harness or yoke together in a team.

He warns her that if she fails to be completely cooperative, “Your career in this division is over.” (She knows her career as a teacher, anywhere, is threatened.)

In the manner of a teacher instructing a particularly recalcitrant student, he looks at her and explains: “You know, Michelle, teachers” and he pauses, “even good teachers, are *a dime a dozen*. Anyone, everyone actually, is easily replaced.”

A dime a dozen: [Colloq] abundant and easily obtained; cheap

She speaks with great care, looking him in the eyes. “I want to be the best teacher that I can be. I will do whatever I have to do to make sure that happens.” He nods, unmoved. Or is it disappointment? She thinks that perhaps he wants her to get angry and quit.

She takes note of her hand; it is slightly cupped, palm down, her fingers resting on the smooth cool richness of the table, the wood *grain* polished to glow and reflect the scene, a silent visual echo.

Grain- [ME. < OFr., a seed, grain (< L., a seed, kernel) and seed or grain collectively] the arrangement, direction of fibers; the markings or texture due to a particular arrangement; against the grain—contrary to one’s feelings, nature, wishes; irritating or displeasing.

And then, the words fly across the grain to hit her. “You know we never wanted you in the first place.” She sees the deep satisfaction that saying those words gives him. And she feels shame. Her silence shames her. Her need to prove she fits in shames her. Her refusal to show anger shames her. The fact that she might not fit in shames her. Their desire to be rid of her shames her.

Three days later, 2000

She sits in the principal's office on Monday morning, the addendum signed, the comment page blank. He asks how her weekend was. She looks past his shoulder, past the performance and out the window. She is enormously tired. Students are beginning to arrive, she sees some of her own as they chat and playfully jostle with each other. She turns her attention back to him. He watches her as she answers him with one word, "Quiet."

Quiet: [ME. < OFr. > L., to keep quiet, < IE. base, to rest] still, calm, motionless; not making noise, not speaking, silent; not agitated, not in motion, gentle; not forward, unobtrusive.

He seems somehow dissatisfied with her response. As he watches her, she watches him.

She has spent the weekend on the couch, her knees held tightly to her chest in order to make her body as small as she can. Her entire being aches, but especially her throat. She wishes she could get that ache out of her throat. She wants to hide in the dark, to escape their disapproving frowns, to make mute their words that she hears over and over again. Her husband has asked her if everything is all right. She knows he has been worried about her. He knows she is not telling him something. Before this, she has brought all her summative reports home for him to read. She was *proud* then.

Proud: [ME. < OE. < OFr. < LL. < L., to be useful < L. to be] having or showing a proper pride in oneself, one's position, one's family, etc.; having or showing an overweening opinion of oneself; feeling or showing great pride or joy, as from being honoured.

She does not know how to tell him that none of that matters now. She cannot bring herself to open her home to these new words, to tell him that they want to get rid of her. He'll ask her why and she won't know what to say. And so she lied. She assured him that it is "just *normal* stuff," that she is just tired.

Normal: [L. a rule] conforming with or constituting an accepted standard, model, or pattern corresponding to the median or average, appearance, achievement, function, usual; free from disease, disorder; the usual state, amount degree.

She has dreaded this Monday. He places the signed addendum in a file with her name on it. He smiles reassuringly and offers the soothing, "I'm sure we're on the right track here. Honest and open communication is the key." She tells him that David has withdrawn as her mentor. He is immediately solicitous. Would she like him to speak to David and convince him to change his mind? He is a firm believer in the mentoring relationship; it can be such a valuable tool for new teachers. Her face does not change expression. She will not let him read her thoughts, refusing to let the words escape past her tongue, which is firmly in place on her hard palate. She politely declines his offer. As she walks away from his office, past the posters on the hallway walls, up the stairs and towards her room, the bell to begin *teaching* rings out.

Teach: [ME. < OE> a sign, symbol (see TOKEN) basic sense, "to show, demonstrate"] to show or help to learn how to do something; give instructions to, give lessons to; to provide with knowledge, insight; cause to know, understand.

One month later, 2000

She is alone in her classroom, sitting at her desk, beginning to mark her students' final exams. Her door is closed. It is Wednesday. Yesterday was the last day of regularly scheduled classes. Yesterday, the Vice Principal stopped her in the hall to tell her an amusing story. It had been the first friendly gesture from the woman in weeks. Surely the woman would not have done that if they were going to get rid of her. She is wearing bright yellow today. She has heard that yellow is a hopeful color. She clings to the hope that she has reason to hope. The wait has been unbearable. It is likely that she will hear today or tomorrow.

She thinks back to the previous Friday.

He had come to the classroom to show her, he says, her teaching schedule for next year. It is the first time in weeks that it had not hurt to breathe. She had asked him, "Does that mean you have made a decision?" Looking at the promise of next year felt like she had been given a reprieve, been told she is in *remission*.

Remission: [ME. < OFr. < L. a sending back in LL. forgiveness of sin] the act or instance of remitting; specifically, forgiveness or pardon as of sins or crimes; cancellation or release from a debt, tax or penalty; a lessening or abating; a relatively prolonged lessening or disappearance of the symptoms of a disease.

He had hesitated, glancing quickly at her, "Well, I think the Deputy Superintendent told you that that decision did not have to be made until the end of the regular school year."

He had told her that "I will decide next week sometime, at the very latest, in order to allow you to make plans if that should become necessary." That had sounded ominous, yet surely showing her the schedule for next year and discussing with her the merits and

drawbacks of having her son in her English 9 class next year meant he had decided to extend her contract. She had known she would spend the weekend analyzing and evaluating this act. Surely he would not have gone through so cruel a performance just for appearances. Surely he would know she would take hope in that act. Surely he would not give her hope only to smash it now.

As he had prepared to leave, he said, "I don't want you to think that this has been a *witch hunt*, Michelle. I have made absolutely sure that that is not what this is about."

Witch: [ME. < OE., sorcerer akin to ODu., to use magic] a woman supposedly having supernatural power by a compact with the devil or evil spirits; an ugly and ill-tempered old woman; hag; crone.

Witch hunt: [so named in allusion to persecutions of person's alleged to be witches] an investigation usually conducted with much publicity, supposedly to uncover subversive political activity, disloyalty but really to harass and weaken political opposition.

She had been taken surprise by the reference. She had wondered if it was a trap. She had assured him of her faith in his integrity. She is desperate to believe in it. He had continued, telling her that whatever decision he made would be made based on what he believed was in the best interests of the students. As she had sat listening to him she had wondered how he would decide what was best for the students. Neither he, nor any other administrator had been in her classroom to observe her interaction with her students for months. The last administrator to observe her teaching was the Deputy Superintendent as part of her summative evaluation, long before they said that they were "concerned.". He had called her "accomplished" then. Shouldn't they want to see if something has

changed? Shouldn't that be of paramount importance? What about the kids? Shouldn't someone be protecting them against her and her "personality?" She had wanted to challenge him; she had wanted to tell him he was full of shit. She wants to believe he is full of shit. But she had said nothing. She must not show anger. She must not show confusion. She must be very careful of asking the wrong sort of questions. He had continued, "I was talking to the Superintendent recently and he told me that this division hires for *personality*.

Personality: [ME. < LL. personal] the quality or fact of being a person; the quality or fact of being a particular person; personal identity, individuality; habitual patterns and qualities of behavior of any individual expressed by physical and mental activities and attitudes.

I didn't know that myself." She had tried to decipher his tone; she thought he said it with a sense of pride. Obviously he has the right personality. She knows she does not have the "right" personality—he and the Vice Principal had told her so the previous Monday when she had been in his office. He had explained to her that he was no longer concerned with "whatever negative perception there might have been" with particular students or parents. "On the face of it" he felt that she had handled each situation appropriately. However, there was a new concern now; "I'm nervous now that you have a *personality problem*."

Problem: [ME. < MFr. < L. < G. to throw forward; forward + to throw, drive] a question proposed for solution or consideration; a question, matter, situation or person that is perplexing or difficult; very difficult to deal with, especially to train or discipline.

With a sympathetic smile he had continued, “You know Michelle, personality is one thing a person can’t change.” She understands that this is his final diagnosis. She wants to ask what the right personality is; she wishes she had a key to that puzzle.... She had thought about it all weekend. Monday and Tuesday the principal had walked through her class three times, each time lasting no more than a minute.

She tries to stop thinking about the last few days. She tries instead to concentrate on today. She returns to her marking. The door opens and he walks in. He tells her quickly with no preamble “I’ve decided to allow your contract to expire.” The weight on her chest now is unbearable. She tells him that she is deeply *confused*.

Confuse: [ME. < *perplexed*, OFr. < L. *see* CONFOUND]

Confound: [ME. < OFr. < L. *to pour together, confuse*] [Archaic] *to cause to fail, defeat or destroy; [Archaic] to make feel ashamed.*

Her confusion is just the kind of example he is talking about. She has shown an inability to change what needs to be changed, an inability to look at the root cause of their concerns about her. He frowns in final painful disapproval. He tells her that he has agonized over this decision. He tells her that he has spent countless hours discussing the matter with the Vice Principal. She thinks of the woman’s amusing story yesterday. He reminds her that these hours of consideration were not something he was required to do, he did it as a favour to her—no reason needs to be given. He turns his eyes away and looks at the bookshelves to her right. His eyes refocus on her as he explains that his decision finally came down to the fact that he does not believe he can have her on staff, based on the things that the *Safe and Care/ing* Committee has defined are important.

Safe: [ME. < OFr. < L. *akin to health, sound condition* < IE. *whole, well-preserved, whence Gr. whole, Sans. unharmed, whole*] *free from damage, danger or injury; secure, having escaped danger or injury unharmed; giving protection, trustworthy, no longer dangerous, unable to cause trouble or damage.*

Care: [ME. < OE. *sorrow* < IE. *base, to cry out, scream whence L. garrulous, Goth., care, G., Good Friday*] *a troubled or burdened state of mind, worry, concern; close attention or careful heed; a liking or regard; charge, protection, custody; something to watch or attend to, responsibility, to feel concern or interest, to take charge of, look after, provide for.*

It seems pointless to remind him that she is on the Safe and Caring Committee. He obviously does not remember. The committee was only formed last month at the regular staff meeting, as a response to the shooting. The two meetings that have been held since then have dealt more with trying to determine what the Safe and Caring Committee should consider its mandate. She knows what he has just said is a lie. It is a lie, isn't it? She thinks of Jenna, Evan and Nate.

Jenna—dead. Whenever she thinks of Jenna, she always wonders how she left her bedroom that morning. Was her bed unmade, were her pajamas and soccer uniform piled on the floor, next to the empty hamper? Were the pages of her insurance policy for the car she had just bought lying scattered on the dresser? Did her pillow smell like sleep, or did it smell of perfume?

Evan—pale and shaky the last time she saw him. He had come, with his mother close by his side, to the door of each of his classrooms to have his textbooks signed in. He would not be returning until after the summer. She has been teaching when he knocked at

her door. She hadn't been expecting him. There was that same shy, kind of goofy smile. Yet, he was so much thinner, so much paler behind his freckles, and his bright red hair seemed somehow less bright. She had hugged him so hard that she had made him wobble on his crutches. She thinks maybe the hug had kind of embarrassed him. "See you next year, Mrs. Holthe," he had said. That had been a good day.

And Nate too—lost. She has been so angry with him, so angry that it sounds like she is spitting words when she speaks of him to anyone. Yet, the anger is giving way to profound sadness. Sadness for his mother, his older brother—that makes sense to her. But her sadness for him has taken her by surprise; she does not want to feel sad for him. She thinks of him often, especially when she looks into the faces of her sons. She does not belong in a safe and caring school. She thinks of her sons.

She repeats again that she is deeply confused. He replies that he does not wish to discuss with her his decision. She tells him that she believes he has just ended her career. He frowns again in disapproval. She knows he believes she has earned this. She fears she has earned this. He tells her that that is "entirely dependent" on what she does next. He tells her that he is very busy; he has waited until the last possible moment to make this decision. Now he must inform the Deputy Superintendent of his decision; he must make arrangements to have the position advertised. Interviewing will have to begin almost immediately. The time to find a replacement is very short. He has so much to do and he is so very busy. Should she wish to discuss with him his ideas on what she would need to do for her own future, he may be able to find some time for her later next week. She stares at him. She is not a troubled defiant child. She will never agree to or thank him for her own exclusion. Perhaps it is that silent refusal that causes the tight closed look of

disapproval on his face. His distaste for her is palpable. As he leaves the room he closes the door quietly, leaving her alone in the classroom, someone else's classroom soon. Her skin crawls with realization. Her skin feels numb. Her ears and the sides of her throat throb. She opens her mouth to breathe; it is as if she is in an airless, soundless vacuum. This is what horror feels like. She thinks of her sons.

The following day

She thinks of the words "I will do whatever I have to do to be the best teacher I can be." It is a selfish goal. Every once in a while, not often but often enough, when everything seems to work and the sparks fly for her students and her, she has felt what she can only describe as bubbles of joy gurgling and fizzing around her Adam's apple. She has become addicted to those bubbles. And she had felt those bubbles even lately. But she had forgotten to be grateful for that gift. Instead she had been dissatisfied, wishing that someone who mattered had been there to see it. *Someone who matters.*

Matters: [ME. < OFr. < L. < base of MOTHER]: vi. To be of importance or consequence, have significance.

The last month had not been about becoming a better teacher. She thinks what is more true is that these last weeks have been about doing whatever she had to do to be allowed to stay: to smile pleasingly, to allow gross omissions and what she believes are deliberate inaccuracies to go unchallenged for fear of being labeled "confrontational" or "defensive," to easily forget who and what mattered. The longing to *belong* had so blinded her that she had come to a point where she could stand in the middle of her classroom, with a roomful of her students, and not be appalled by her wish that someone who mattered had been there.

Belong: [ME, < OE.] *to have a proper or suitable place; to be part of, to be related or connected; to be a member; to be owned.*

She hears the principal's footsteps as he walks down the hall. She has decided that she must speak to him. She has considered turning a *blind-eye*; pretending that she is not aware of the situation that has developed with two of her students.

Blind: [ME. < OE.] *without the power of sight; not able or willing to notice, understand or judge; disregarding evidence, sound logic; dense, impenetrable; not bearing flowers or fruit as imperfect plants. vt. to make temporarily unable to see; to deprive of the power or judgement of insight; to hide or conceal. n. anything that keeps out light; a place of concealment as for a hunter, ambush; a person or thing used to deceive or mislead, decoy; a person who in his dealings is really acting for another.*

If she ignores what she has discovered, that it is very likely that one if not two of her students have cheated on their final exams for her class, she will not have to speak to him. She can stay in her room as he passes by her door; she can listen as his steps fade into the stairwell. But to remain silent about this because it is safer, easier, would be another shameful act that would belong solely to her. She will not make true their opinion of her.

She can hear his voice as he jokes and makes end-of-the-year comments to who ever is in the room across from hers. She walks across the hallway and takes two steps into the room. She stands, waiting. She knows he is aware of her presence, but has not acknowledged it. He finally turns his head to look at her. She tells him she needs a minute with him. He smiles, tells her he will be with her in just a moment. She retreats,

but does not want him in her classroom. She waits in the dimly lit hallway. As he approaches her she notices his casually professional brown tasseled loafers. He is wearing jeans and a polo shirt. He seems so relaxed and comfortable, so at ease.

As he stops in front of her, he places his hand on her shoulder for the briefest of seconds and asks what he can do for her today. An observer might assume the gesture to be friendly, a collegial show of concern and support. She does not step back, but allows his hand to remain on her shoulder. She feels the heavy pressure of his print through her clothes. She tells him of her concerns about her students. She keeps her face as expressionless as she can manage. It feels like she is wearing a mask. He thanks her for bringing this matter to his attention. Is that all he can do for her today? he asks, performing his best collegial tone for her. She nods and turns. As she enters her classroom, she touches her shoulder, rotates it. She can still feel the pressure of his hand. She should have told him not to *touch* her.

Touch- [ME. < OFr. < VL. light blow of echoic origin] to put the hand, finger, or some other part of the body on so as to feel, perceive by the sense of feeling; to lay hand on as some kings once did, supposedly to effect a cure; to be effective on contact, have a physical effect on.

She did not.

Late day of the 1999-2000 school year.

There is so much she doesn't know on this last day. There is so much that she knows but does not understand. There are so many emotions, fear, shame, rage and incredible sadness, residing unrecognized and unarticulated in her body. She has begun to think of herself as the jigsaw lady. This day, the cracking and splitting hidden beneath her clothes

are becoming so deep that it is only a matter of hours before the separating pieces of her body will begin to fall to the floor. She does not think that she will be able to find glue strong enough to paste the pieces back together. And she knows that if the glue should hold, the fractured markings will mar her body forever.

The stairwell and hallway are empty. In the weeks, months and years to come, she will think often of stairwells and hallways, sometimes dreaming about them. In the dreams she is sometimes looking for answers to questions, she is sometimes searching for solutions to problems, and sometimes she is just looking for help. She always wakes up crying. When she thinks of Nate, she thinks of him in the stairwells and hallways of the school. She thinks of him outside the closed school doors during the times he would come to talk and visit with other fourteen-year-old boys during their lunch break. He came that spring day, for such a visit, talking of the other school shootings, suggesting that, just maybe, he should do something like that; he could do something like that. His words were dismissed and discarded, their fluidity left to harden around his feet in the playground dirt. She thinks of him watching as the boys enter the school to go to their lockers to prepare for their afternoon classes, leaving him and his words alone, outside. She wonders if the closed doors to the school puzzled him at all. She thinks of him walking home across the football field to get a gun. She thinks of him retracing those steps, and opening the side door and walking into a hallway and seeing two students who were strangers to him. And she thinks of him choosing to shoot those strangers, allowing those familiar to him to escape.

On that last day she stops at the threshold of her classroom. Her name is still on the door. She reaches up to touch the nameplate before walking into her empty classroom. The day stretches before her.

She sits at her desk, silently fingering the keys lying on her desk. The clock, propped next to her gargoyle and potpourri in the cardboard box, is ticking away her time here, ticking away the time until she will be sent away from this place she considers home for the last time. She will not leave until the clock reads 2:55. The box holds the last remnants of her from this place. She closes her eyes for a moment, in order to allow this room to settle deeper into her memory. She wants to allow this place to pass into her being. She wants the sounds, the smells, the sights and the feel of her time here to be imprinted and preserved in her memory. She was happy here. She believes her students were happy here, too. Perhaps, she is only fooling herself. She wonders what place she will have in her students' memory-ed pictures of their time with her.

Her eyes move from one set of papers to the other. She has taken both sets out of her briefcase. Her first day here as a teacher she had carried that briefcase into her classroom like a kid with the latest and coolest lunch box. Her pencils were sharpened; her pens were the kind that she had used at university (and nowhere else); each page in her plan book was dated and her daily plans were ready, should she forget what she was doing, when she was doing it, how and why she was doing it and with whom she was doing it. Now, without these folders, the case is almost entirely empty, nothing in there now except a lone tampon and a couple of pens. She thinks of these two sets of papers as the before and after story. She touches the written words in front of her, as if their printed texture will bring her closer to understanding. Her hope has always been to infect her

students with a love for words. Failing that she wanted them to understand the enormous power that resides in language, the huge responsibility that comes with utilizing that power. The written words from one folder drive into her, stealing her breath, stealing her voice, stealing her will. The other set of papers makes her grieve, to grieve for the part of her that she fears no longer exists or worse, perhaps never existed. She wants to scream in raging protest: "Can't you see the contradictions of your own words! Look, look at the words here. Can't you see? Don't you see?" But she is mute. She cannot find the key to unlock the puzzle.

This administration team is recommending that [she] be offered another probationary contract.

The combination of a high interest, high demand activity plus very creative hands-on problem solving contributed to the high on task. This was also enhanced by the ability of the teacher to relate to the students.

[She] requested a meeting...[She] was quite adamant about having a meeting.

[She] always acts in a manner befitting the "Code of Professional Conduct" as outlined by the teachers' professional organization... Concerns are openly discussed via appropriate channels and confidentiality is always observed.

During the second meeting unlike the first, [she] spoke as much as her mentor. There was definitely a feeling amongst the administrators that we were being attacked.

[She] speaks fluently and precisely albeit rather quietly...her voice is nevertheless very effective. [She] is quite a unique teacher and the students relate well to her style of communication.

Every statement [of ours] was scrutinized and questioned. If an answer did not satisfy [her] or her mentor the question was rephrased in an attempt to elicit another response.

As a technique [she] has mastered different types of questioning and utilizes them efficiently and effectively.

The perceived demeanor that existed in the above meetings raised a red flag causing another question to be formed in the minds of the administration. The posture assumed by [her] may be considered detrimental to the resolution of any potential concerns.

She is extremely giving of her time in a very professional manner. She has displayed a value for the rights, views, and suggestions of others.

There appears to be a disparity between the perceptions of administration and [her] regarding her tone and approachability.

[She] has a strong positive relationship with the students. She acknowledges their right to hold a different view. She responded positively to them, she was very patient and she was very respectful...Overall [she] demonstrated a high level of skill and a great deal of talent for teaching during this lesson. Her students are fortunate to have her as a teacher...The classroom was set up in such a manner that the environment is warm and friendly.

It is her responsibility to work cooperatively. Negligence on her part may detrimentally affect her career.

[She] works tirelessly to carry out the duties assigned to her...she works enthusiastically with her mentor teacher. She actively seeks out feedback and is continually looking for ideas that may improve her teaching.

We believe that when some teachers (albeit a few) are unwilling to meet the demands and expectations of the teaching profession, in spite of honest and thorough efforts to improve their performance, then those individuals should be counseled into alternate careers.

The structure, the questions, and the content of the lesson created a superb learning experience for students.

There is a perception that [her] approach when dealing with others hinders the development of positive relationships with some parents and students.

It is also my experience that [she] listens to the concerns of parents, students, and administrators with an empathetic and thoughtful ear.

I believe [her] teacher style, actions, and approach are not consistent with our school/team philosophy. As well they are not consistent with the West Evans School Division teaching criteria.

[She] has displayed a positive proactive attitude.

[She has not focused] on the root of the concern.

[She is] a teacher with great potential-she is already a very accomplished teacher.

I [am] nervous about what appear[s] to be a personality problem.

In her own way she communicates a high level of enthusiasm for teaching.

As a result, I am recommending that [her] temporary contract be allowed to expire without renewal.

She stands in the doorway of her classroom, holding the box; her briefcase with the two sets of papers inside is balanced precariously on top. Dangling from her wrist, in an old Safeway bag, is the gift-wrapped farewell memento that the secretary had delivered to her moments before. "Just a memento really," the woman had said, "to show our appreciation for all that you have given to the school since you've been here and to wish you success in the future."

She takes one last look in the deserted room and then closes the door behind her as she leaves. The hall is deserted too, except for David. He has come out of his room to say good-bye. Her closest friend at the school, Petra, is absent from this farewell. They had always known each other, although Petra was her senior by about ten years. Both of them had been born in Duncan and of their four parents, three had been children of Duncan, too. They had come to know each other well when Petra had been her teacher associate during her student teaching days. For the last two years, they had shared coffee and conversation almost every morning and had lunched and laughed together almost every noon. But her friend had slowly pulled away from her over the last few weeks, still offering support and assurances over the phone, but advising that "We shouldn't be seen together too much right now. We don't want the office thinking that you're discussing all this with me. It could get you into more trouble; this stuff is supposed to be confidential."

They had talked briefly this morning. Petra had advised her, "This really isn't that big of a deal." She did not know that within 24 hours, Petra's withdrawal would turn to silence. It would be close to four months before she would hear from her friend again, and then it would be by postcard. That gaping silence would mortally wound the friendship. Another loss yet to be mourned.

She leaves by the back stairwell. The door hushes shut behind her, leaving her homeless, voice-less, body-less. She is invisible. She is gone. She takes the normal route home.

She notices the envelope on the counter-top as she walks into her kitchen. She puts the box down and moves the briefcase to the floor. The Safeway bag still dangles from her wrist. She opens the letter and reads:

Dear Mrs. Bertie-Holthe:

This letter is to confirm to you that the teaching contract you presently hold expires June ___, 2000.

We very much appreciate the service you provided to students at D. H. Lawrence High School. We invite you to apply for other positions which may become available throughout the West Evans School Division.

Michelle, we wish you well in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Deputy Superintendent of Schools

She throws their memento, a pair of candles in frosted glass holders, in the trash. In her bedroom, behind closed doors, she *splinters* into a thousand pieces.

Splinter: [ME. < MDu. akin to splint] to break or split into thin sharp pieces; to break into small parts or groups with divergent views; fragment.

Intersections

At the location of the attack, the Baptist minister called for
evil to be cast out, and the school to be reclaimed.
(Brown calls for change, 2000, pp. A1, A7)

[B]y failing to look at our shadows, we feed a dangerous delusion that leaders too often
indulge: that our efforts are always well intended, our power is always benign, and the
problem is always in those difficult people whom we are trying to lead...If we do not
understand that the enemy is within, we will find a thousand ways of making someone
“out there” into the enemy, becoming leaders who oppress rather than liberate others.
(Palmer, 2000, pp. 79-80).

Fear is everywhere—in our culture, in our institutions, in our students, in ourselves—and
it cuts us off from everyone.
(Palmer, 1998, p. 56)

A teacher asks, during a staff meeting, if it is true that 20 students were suspended or
expelled in the last week. The Vice Principal answers, “We’ve had a busy week.”
(R. Webb, personal communication, March, 2001)⁷

We teach who we are.
(Palmer, 1998, p. 1)

⁷ I have had private conversations with a D. H. Lawrence staff member, who is given the pseudonym
“Rachel Webb” in order to protect her from possible retaliation for sharing this information.

Chapter 10

A Memory Expelled/A Memory Remembered

A few days before the second anniversary of the shooting, David called me and invited me to a graveside memorial service for Jenna's death. I was hesitant to attend. It was one of those doors that I was not sure that I wanted to go through. There were people that I thought would be there that I had no wish to see. Initially, the school staff had agreed to have a moment of silence on the Friday before the anniversary. But then the moment of silence was cancelled, apparently because those staff members who still remained in the school from the time of the shooting wished it gone. The newer staff members, which consisted of approximately 43% of the present staff, remained silent on the issue, agreeing that they would comply with whatever decision was made by the original staff.⁹ The student body was not consulted. I asked David if he thought there would be a large turnout at the graveside service. "I doubt it," he had replied. Administrators would not allow him to make a school-wide announcement nor would they allow him to announce it during his classes. He was allowed only to tell those students that he spoke to prior to and following classes, to speak of it only in the margins of the school day. Slowly, it seemed the silence surrounding the shooting was becoming complete.

In March, 2001 the first school assembly about the shooting was called.¹⁰ The principal had cautioned students on how to respond to questions put to them from the media. "You can say, 'We have a good school.'" He told the students that they should not seek the

⁹A *Denver Post* article, "Fleeing the Pain" states that as of August, 2002, "60% of Columbine High School's 1999 staff has departed" (Curtin & Aguilera, 2002). In the same article, Steven M. Herman, an expert in post-traumatic stress syndrome states that an unusually high "turnover is typical in the aftermath of tragedy" and this trend can be seen at other schools where shootings have occurred (Curtin & Aguilera, 2002).

¹⁰ During the 2000-2001 school year two of my sons were students at D. H. Lawrence High School.

press out, that they should come across in a way that was complimentary to the school. He reminded the assembly that if the reports weren't good, then that would reflect on the school. He instructed them to say either, "No comment, or talk in a way that does not make everyone look bad." He told the students that they might hear that guns had been brought to the school. He assured the assembly that the person who said it did not mean it, that a student had made a threat earlier in the year, but it had been dealt with. He repeated that he hoped the students would talk about the good things happening in the school. During that same assembly the principal asked the students: "How many of you think that things are worse at the school than they were before the shooting?" The principal noted that approximately two thirds of the students present thought that things were worse at the school than before the shooting. He responded with a question, "Who has the power to change harassment at school?" He reminded the assembly that there was about 29 staff but approximately 500 students.¹⁰ He instructed those who thought that things were worse, that the power to make it better was in them (C. Holthe & T. Holthe, personal communication, March, 2001). In an article that appeared in *The Duncan Times*, the following month, John Hardlane (2001) wrote that "according to the principal, it is difficult to gauge if levels of bullying have changed much over the past year, because the students have a heightened awareness that makes them more conscious of actions of harassment or bullying" (p. A7). The principal continued:

I'm hoping as the anniversary passes that our school is allowed to get back to some sort of normalcy...I think as the Grade 12 students leave we will lose a sense of identity that these kids brought to us, because Jenna would have been in Grade 12 this year. I think we're going to see hopefully a passing of the torch in

¹⁰ The actual number of staff members was probably closer to 40.

terms of carrying on with a positive attitude towards school....” (Hardlane, 2001, p. A7)

He seemed to be suggesting that those who carried the memory most closely were somehow detrimental to the school.

Certainly, it seemed that by the time of the third anniversary, the memory of the shooting and any reference to it had become what Michelle Fine (1987) refers to as “undesirable talk...[which] is subverted, appropriated, and exported” (p. 157). Fine (1987) defines this silencing as

a terror of words, a fear of talk...a process of institutionalized policies and practices which obscure the very...experiential conditions of students’ daily lives, and which expel from written, oral, and nonverbal expression substantive and critical ‘talk’ about these conditions...Silencing constitutes the process by which contradictory evidence, ideologies, and experiences find themselves buried, camouflaged, and discredited...[T]he silencing process bears not only ideological or cosmetic consequences. These very demands permeate classroom life so primitively as to make irrelevant the lived experiences, passions, concerns, communities, and biographies [of the very students we are supposedly caring for and teaching]. (pp. 157-158)

As the second anniversary drew near, a reporter for a national broadcasting corporation (R. Webb, personal communication, April 2002) contacted the school to ask if any staff member would be willing to speak about how they, and the school, in general, were doing three years later. As a group, the staff decided that no member should speak to

the press, that regardless of individual preference, all would remain silent on the issue.¹¹

The spring morning was bright and sunny. When I arrived at the cemetery David and his wife were present, as was a D. H. Lawrence student, (a student who would have been in Grade 9 in 2000) and her mother. We waited together silently, waiting together for more people to arrive. I asked David about the Terrys. He explained that Mr. and Mrs. Terry had not returned his phone calls. Both William and Wanda Terry seemed to have distanced themselves from D. H. Lawrence High School. This distance was all the more stark when I remembered how the Terrys had insisted that the school be the site for Jenna's memorial service, had prayed for the school at the spot where their child had been shot and had been present to welcome students back to school the day after the funeral. There appeared to be resentment directed at the Terrys by staff members. During a staff meeting just prior to the first anniversary of Jenna's death, a teacher asked the principal to speak to Mr. Terry to suggest that he not speak of certain topics at the memorial. The feeling was that William Terry had made comments about the school that were "not that nice." The principal replied that he would try and contact him again but that he had already spoken to Mr. Terry that his comments about bullying gave a negative view of the school (R. Webb, personal communication, March, 2001).

A car pulled in and we all watched its progress, wondering, hoping that someone else would join us. The car turned in another direction, visiting another grave site. No one else came. As we gathered around Jenna's gravesite, the wind suddenly began to blow

¹¹ In October, 2002 a student in a nearby town committed suicide at home after he left school without permission, following an argument with a teacher. A request was made that two teachers from D. H. Lawrence High School speak to the school's teachers about their experience following the Duncan shooting. The two teachers agreed to go and speak. The decision to break the imposed silence was greeted with anger by many of the staff that had voted that all should remain silent (R. Webb, personal communication, November, 2002).

from the west. David began by offering a short prayer and reading a poem. He asked if anyone else wished to speak. There was a moment of silence. While I spoke I focused my eyes on Jenna's name on the headstone. I spoke briefly about the importance of remembering, remembering the terrible loss of Jenna and remembering the terrible chaos that had led a young boy to the violent act that took Jenna from us, because remembering what is painful is a responsibility, a moral obligation that we all have in making sure that when we look, we see, that when we hear, we listen, and when we know, we learn so we might be able to reach into the chaos to help those who are in that hole a way out before they are lost. The young girl placed flowers she had brought by Jenna's headstone, but chose not to speak. The young girl's mother stood silently behind her, her arms circling her daughter in a protective embrace, her daughter leaning into that embrace. Another bouquet of flowers stood by the headstone. David had brought it for a former student who had moved away from Duncan. She had called and asked him to deliver it for her.

Herman (1997) reminds me that "remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims" (p. 1). Part of caring to make schools "home" requires that my history is part of the healing, that I "right" it into my soul as part of the healing process. Acknowledging grief, acknowledging sorrow in a public way is a "way of understanding our connection to others" (DeSalvo, 1999, p. 54), which surely is a step towards caring for both myself and others. Silence cannot, must not, be used as a protective cape because speaking of the pain or the grief or the shame is too frightening or threatening.

Part of caring to create a home for students is hoping and dreaming. Freire (1970) teaches that "the dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair

but for hope” (p. 72). I hope for a place where difference is celebrated, a community where my difference is another’s strength and another’s, mine. I imagine a *community* in which unity is *not* synonymous with sameness, a place that does *not* model for our children that “bringing unity seems always to require silencing the so-called parts that do not fit the holistic vision” (Corlett, 1989, p. 6). I hope for a place to call home, whose walls, windows, doors, and ceilings rely on the beams of difference for strength and where the social institutions, such as school, model home-ness through healthy and transformative acts rather than as sentimental gestures. Ann Douglas, in Grumet’s (1988)

Bitter milk: Women and teaching defines sentimentalism as a

complex phenomenon...[which] asserts that the values a society actively denies are precisely the ones it cherishes; it attempts to deal with the phenomenon of cultural bifurcation by this manipulation of nostalgia. Sentimentalism provides a way to protest a power to which one has already in part capitulated. It is a form of dragging one’s heels. It always borders on dishonesty.... (p. 41)

As long as schools and educational practices continue to act, as Nel Noddings (1987) describes, as places that “produce people who are not good—who are inclined to violence and are unreflective about the ethical codes that support their violent inclinations” (p. 177), and as long as schools and educational practices model (covertly or overtly) the use of coercion and intimidation as appropriate means of administering power, transformative acts which will create safe and caring places will not be possible.

I envision an educational place, a home, that is significantly different in its understanding of self and other. It must be based on an ontology that, as Caroline Whitbeck (1983) dreams, “is neither oppositional nor dyadic;” (p. 64) a place where “an

understanding of differentiation...does not depend on opposition and a life and death struggle" (p. 69). This way of being in the world suggests a community in which an other is not taken to be opposite to the self, the character of the self does not uniquely define the character of the other by opposition to it: others may be similar or dissimilar in an unlimited variety of ways...relationships between people are understood as developing through identification and differentiation, through listening and speaking, with each other, rather than through struggles to dominate or annihilate the other. (Whitbeck, 1983, p. 75-6)

To dream of such a time and place is the first transformative act. Shor and Freire (1987), through their dialogue, show that imagining tomorrow by dreaming today is more than naïve idealism; it is looking for the possibilities and the way to reach them (p. 187).

Freire (1970b) offers a guide to understanding that hope prompts action and rejects silence and is necessary to begin the inquiry, to begin the search (p. 72). And so I hope for a future in which my dreams are possibilities. My hopes and dreams are the beginning action in an inquiry of what might be tomorrow by understanding what is today. Of course, hoping and dreaming are not enough.

Part of caring to create a home for my students is searching for the questions I need to ask myself. I have to ask the questions that make me uncomfortable, questions that force me to look inward and outward. The questions and concerns that the West Evans School Division administrators and the D. H. Lawrence administration and staff focused on following the shooting and that have continued to the present are: How do we get beyond this?...How can the school get back to normal?...What are the ways that those who don't fit can be gotten rid of safely?...Getting problem students to leave voluntarily is one

solution... We don't want these types of students at school... Will those expelled or are asked to leave want to come back, like Nate did?... Safe and Caring—it is a fine line—should staff be lenient or '*stick to our guns?*' Should staff show compassion or '*kick butt?*' ... Structure is what is needed... We are bleeding hearts when a kid is kicked out... Things run more smoothly when the staff is stricter... We are a different kind of community (R. Webb, personal communication, 2001). It is unlikely that a focus on such questions and concerns will reveal “new images of the situation [that] might generate new possibilities and new hope” (Aoki, 1999, p. 181). Almost three years later, on January 10, 2003 the nine Duncan principals from the public and private school divisions, the superintendent and deputy superintendent¹² from West Evans School Division, the superintendent that oversaw St. Ambrose School, the school resource officer and the chief of police all gathered to discuss their concern over the recent negative media coverage of bullying incidents in Duncan schools. The D. H. Lawrence High School principal felt that “there tended to be this general sort of slant toward indicating that nothing is done or that what is being done is wholly inadequate and really never anything written so much about what is in fact being done” (quoted in Tomkins, 2003a, p. A1). The principal continued, “When we link the murder of a boy that occurred in our building to bullying when that in fact isn't the case, that is and was damaging to us” (quoted in Tomkins, 2003b, p. A8). When asked by Calvin Tomkins (2003b) to clarify his opinion of the shooting, the principal stated “What I can say is from everything I know from the files I have and from talking to the people who are here, that (shooting) had precious little

¹² The present deputy superintendent of West Evans School Division was a Vice Principal at D. H. Lawrence High School when the shooting of Jenna Terry occurred.

to do with bullying...[w]hen you take a look at that situation from what I know of it, it wasn't about bullying" (p. A8).¹³

Children learn by imitation. As an adult, if I look with seeing eyes and listen with hearing ears into the cultural mirror and observe my words and actions, my praxis, reflected back at me, then surely if I look deeper into that mirror, past my own image, to the children behind me, I will see those children practicing and reflecting the praxis of the adult community. If I deny what I remember I cannot dig for the roots that might bring transformation. The questions that I ask myself are the questions I teach my students to ask of themselves and their world. The questions that do not "open to voices not yet heard" will not test "our capacity to hear" (Robinson, 1990, p. 5). The questions that I do not ask will reveal what answers I am most afraid of. And I will teach that fear.

In a letter to *The Hannibal Herald*, published following the Columbine shooting, fifteen-year old Terri Henry asks, "What kind of influence could devour a soul like that...What got them so close to the edge, to make them think that this was the only way?" She does not offer answers but she does explain that "All us kids need reassurance that we're safe. We need to feel safe!" (p. A6). I must search for the answers to those questions because to turn away from them is to turn away from my children and my students. I must ask myself critical questions that risk exposing my vulnerability, that risk revealing an unpredictable result, that risk letting go of rigidly held rules and procedures that offer the illusion of safety but in actuality imprison me. I must ask myself questions whose answers may demand that I change what I so comfortably refer to as "normal." If I do not demand this of myself as a teacher, if I do not remain insistent and adamant within

¹³ In response to the principal's comments, William Terry stated "I suppose they're making the statement because that's the easiest thing to say and there is no way anybody will be able to prove 100 percent one way or another" (Tomkins, 2003b, A8).

myself as a teacher, then I will fail in teaching my students how to ask the questions that will give them the keys to open the doors wide. I will fail to teach my students how to live well in the world with others; I will fail to teach my students the way to their home.

When I first began this journey in search of an unbroken, unlocked home, I looked outward, desperately ignoring the metaphorical barricades that had replaced the actual physical barriers—the locked doors, the sentries, the police crime scene tape, the barricade of service vehicles that restricted inward and outward views—that marked the school and those within it the day of the shooting, hoping that somewhere *out there* I would find the key to a healthy wholeness *within*. The search led me to the realization that I had to first acknowledge and then understand my own brokenness, understand my own locked-down/ness and the contributing factors—the trauma of the shooting, the silence that hid the shame, the grief, and the fear experienced following the murder, and the administrative intimidation and coercion, the *bullying*, that preceded the non-renewal of my contract—that led to that brokenness before I could find the healing home that I was searching for. Frank (1995) is right when he explains that “[t]he meaning of the journey emerges recursively. The journey is taken in order to find out what sort of journey one has been taking” (p. 117). I have written a way for the memory of Jenna, Evan, Nate, and D. H. Lawrence High School and the events that encompassed us all during that time to find a place of belonging in my soul. It was this writing that provided the map which has led me forward, which has led me home.

Intersections

I want to image...the concrete thrill of borderlessness—a kind of out of doors safety...a social space that is psychically and physically safe.
(Morrison, 1997, pp. 9-10)

[H]ome is not a place that we can own—but by the same token, we cannot be banned from it, and it cannot be stolen from us. No matter where we are or what condition we are in or how many obstacles are before us, we can always come back home...the home we find is not a closed and parochial place in which we can hide, from which we can neither see nor be seen. Instead this home is as open and vast as the sky itself.
(Palmer, 1998, p. 58)

I have myself...I am close to home.
(Holthe, personal communication, 2002, August)

References

- Aboulafia, M. (1983). From domination to recognition. In C. C. Gould (Ed.), *Beyond domination: New perspectives on women and philosophy* (pp. 175-185). Totowa NJ: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Albert, C. (2000, May 1). Duncan's return to normal will be slow process. *The Hannibal Herald*, pp. A1, A5.
- Anonymous, (2003, Jan, 31). Bullying still a reality in schools. [letter to the editor]. *The Duncan Times*, A4.
- Annas, P. J. (1987). Silences: Feminist language research and the teaching of writing. In C. L. Caywood & G. R. Overing (Eds.), *Teaching Writing: Pedagogy, gender, and equity* (pp. 3-17). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Aoki, T. (1999). Rethinking curriculum and pedagogy. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, Summer, 180-181.
- Bailey, C. (1997). A place from which to speak. In J. Jipson & N. Paley (Eds.), *Daredevil research: Recreating analytic practice* (pp. 137-160). New York: Peter Lang.
- Bartky, S. L. (1990). *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*. New York: Routledge.
- Bersianik, L. (1985). Women's work. In A. Dybikowski, V. Freeman, D. Marlatt, B. Pulling & B. Warland (Eds.), *In the feminine: Women and words* (pp. 155-165). Edmonton: Longspoon Press.
- Beyond the sentence (2001, November 22). *The Duncan Times*, p. A4.
- Brase, D. (2000, April 14). Duncan horribly changed forever. *The Colorado Sun*, p. 4.

- Brown calls for change. (2000, May 5). *The Duncan Times*, pp. A1, A7
- Brown, L. S. (1995). Not outside the range: One feminist perspective on psychic trauma. In C. Caruth (Ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in memory* (pp. 100-112). Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Cameron, J. K. (2001, October). *Trauma in human systems: A brief introduction*. Paper presented to Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, CA.
- Caputo, J. D. (1987). *Radical hermeneutics: Repetition, deconstruction, and the hermeneutic project*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Chambers, C. M. (1998). Composition and composure. *Alberta English*, Summer, 21-27.
- Charach, A., Pepler, D., & Ziegler, S. (1995). Bullying at school: A Canadian perspective. *Education Canada*, Spring, 12-19.
- Clandinin, D. J. & Connelly, F. M. (1992). Teacher as curriculum maker. In P. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum: A project of the American Educational Research Association* (pp. 363-401). New York: Macmillan.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*. June-July, 2-14.
- Corlett, W. (1989). *Community without unity: A politics of Derridian extravagance*. London: Duke University Press.
- Crawford, J., Kippax, S., Onyx, J., Gault, U., & Benton, P. (1992). *Emotion and gender: Constructing meaning from memory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Curtin, D., & Aguilera, E. (2002, August 18). Fleeing the pain. *Denver Post* [on-line], Available: <http://www.denverpost.com/Stories/0,1413,36%7E54%7E803355%7E,00.html>

- Davies, B. (1992). Women's subjectivity and feminist stories. In C. Ellis & M. G. Flaherty (Eds.), *Investigating subjectivity: Research on lived experience* (pp. 53-76). Newbury Park CA: Sage Publications.
- DeSalvo, L. (1999). *Writing as a way of healing: How telling our stories transforms our lives*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Dudman, W. (2000, April 16). Tranquil community begs to grieve in silence. *Springfield Herald*, pp. A1, A6.
- Ecker, J. (2002, November 4). Bullied Beyond. *The Hannibal Herald*, p. A1.
- Elbaz, F. (1991). Research on teachers' knowledge: The evolution of a discourse. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 23, 1-19.
- Ellsworth, E. (1994). Representation, self-representation, and the meanings of difference. In R. A. Martusewicz & W. M. Reynolds (Eds.), *Inside/Outside: Contemporary critical perspectives in education* (pp. 100-108). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth* (C. Farrington, Trans.). New York: Grove Press.
- Felman, S. (1995). Education and crisis, or the vicissitudes of teaching. In C. Caruth (Ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in memory* (pp. 13-60). Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Fine, M. (1987). Silencing in public schools. *Language Arts*, 64 (2), 157-174.
- Foucault, M. (1981). The order of discourse. In R. Young (Ed.), *Untying the text: A post-structuralist reader* (pp. 48-78). Boston: Routledge & Regan Paul.
- Frank, A. (1995). *The wounded storyteller: Body, illness and ethics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Freire, P. (1970a) A few notions about the word "conscientization." In R. Dale, G. Esland, & M. Macdonald (Eds.), *Schooling and capitalism* (pp. 224-227). Buckingham PA: The Open University Press.
- Freire, P. (1970b). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1997). *Pedagogy of the heart*. New York: Continuum.
- Friedman, B. (1993). *Writing past dark: Envy, fear, distraction, and other dilemmas in the writer's life*. New York: HarperPerennial.
- Frontman, M. (2002, December 13). One-sided story denies justice. [Letter to the editor]. *The Hannibal Herald*, p. A7.
- Gregorio, K. (Producer), & Hancock, M. (Director). (2002). *Exclusions and awakenings: The life of Maxine Greene*. [Film]. (Available from Hancock Productions, 505 West End Avenue, #7 AA, New York, NY 10024).
- Griffin, S. (1999). *What her body thought: A journey into shadows*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.
- Grumet, M. (1988). Pedagogy for patriarchy: The feminization of teaching. In *Bitter milk: Women and teaching* (pp. 31-58). Amherst: University of Massachusetts.
- Grumet, M. (1990). Retrospective: Autobiography and the analysis of educational experience. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 20 (3), 321-325.
- Hardlane, J. (2001, April 19). Shooting anniversary tough on Duncan, says principal. *The Duncan Times*, p. A1, A7.
- Haug, F. & Others (1987). *Female sexualization: A collective work of memory*. New York: Verso.

Haug, F. & Others (1987). *Female sexualization: A collective work of memory*. New York: Verso.

Hazler, R. J., Carney, J. V., Green, S., Powell, R., & Jolly, L. S. (1997). Areas of expert agreement on identification of school bullies and victims. *School Psychology International*, 18, 5-14.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1971). *Philosophy of mind*. (W. Wallace, Trans.). London: Oxford University Press.

Henry, T. (1999, April 29) Teenagers need reassurance in the wake of school shooting. [Letter to the editor]. *The Hannibal Herald*, p. A6.

Herman, J. L. (1992, 1997). *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books.

hooks, b. (1989). *Talking back: Thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston: South End Press.

Husband, D. (2001, November 22). Court hears shooting details. *The Duncan Times*, p. A14.

Hutman, H. (2002, January 24). Bullying awareness higher today. *The Duncan Times*, A1.

Ingel, M. (2000, April 16). Youth disarmed friend, talked him into surrendering. *The Gazette*, p. A3.

Jardine, D. W. (1998). The fecundity of the individual case: Considerations of the pedagogic heart of interpretive work. In *To Dwell with a boundless heart: Essays in curriculum theory, hermeneutics, and the ecological imagination* (pp. 33-51). New York: Peter Lang.

Jardine, D. W. (2000). Reflections on education, hermeneutics and ambiguity: Hermeneutics as a restoring of life to its original difficulty. In "Under the tough old stars:" *Ecopedagogical essays* (pp. 115-132). Brandon, VT: The Foundation for Educational Renewal.

- Kuhn, A. (1995). *Family secrets: Acts of memory and imagination*. New York: Verso.
- Laub, D. (1995). Truth and testimony: The process and the struggle. In C. Caruth (Ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in memory* (pp. 61-75). Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Levinas, E. (1981). *Otherwise than being or beyond essence*. Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Lewis, M. G. (1993). *Without a word: Teaching beyond women's silences*. New York: Routledge.
- Lothar, J. (2000, May 1). Shooting suspect was a victim, say classmates. *The Hannibal Herald*, p. A3
- Marshall, B. (1992). *Teaching the postmodern: Fiction and theory*. New York: Routledge.
- Mitchell, C., & Weber, S. (1999). *Reinventing ourselves as teachers: Beyond nostalgia*. London: Falmer Press.
- Morrison, T. (1997). Home. In T. Morrison & W. Lubiano (Eds.), *The house that race built* (pp. 3-12). New York: Panthem.
- Munro, P. (1998). *Subject to fiction: Women teachers' life history narratives and the cultural politics of resistance*. Buckingham PA: Open University Press.
- Neilsen, L. (2000). Writing out loud: Women writing learning. In K. Sandford, H. Blair & B-A Schlender (Eds.), *Engendering education* (pp. 149-154). Edmonton: Canadian Association for the Study of Women and Education, May 27-28.
- Nodding, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Noddings, N. (1987). Do we really want to produce good people? *Journal of Moral Education*, 16 (3), 177-188.

- Norquay, N. (1993). The other side of difference: Memory-work in the mainstream. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 6 (3), pp. 241-251.
- Novak, M. (1971). *Ascent of the mountain flight of the dove: An invitation to religious studies*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Oliver, R., Hoover, J. H., & Hazler, R. (1994). The perceived roles of bullying in small-town Midwestern schools. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 72, March/April, 416-420.
- Olweus, D. (1993). Victimization by peers: Antecedents and long-term outcomes. In K. H. Rubin and J. R. Asendorf (Eds.), *Social withdrawal: Inhibitions and shyness in childhood*. (pp. 315-341). Hillsdale: Erlbaum.
- Palmer, P. J. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teachers' life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Palmer, P. J. (2000). *Let your life speak: Listening for the voice of vocation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Personal Narratives Group. (1989). Origins. In Personal narratives group (Eds.), *Interpreting women's lives: Feminist theory and personal narratives* (pp. 3-15). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Pleming, S. (2001, August 28). Bullying seen as key factor in school shootings. *International action network on small arms*. [on-line], Available:
http://www.iansa.org/news/2001/aug_01/bully_seen.htm
- Rich, A. (1979). *On lies, secrets, and silence: Selected prose 1966-1978*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

- Roberts, W. B., & Coursol, D. H. (1996). Strategies for intervention with childhood and adolescent victims of bullying, teasing, and intimidation in school settings. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 30, February, 201-212.
- Robinson, J. L. (1990). *Conversations on the written word: Essays on language and literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers.
- Secret Service safe school initiative. (2002). *United States Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center* [on-line], Available" http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac_ssi.shtml
- Schiwy, M. A. (1996). *A voice of her own: Women and the journal writing journey*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Shor, I., & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education*. Westport CN: Bergin & Garvey.
- Smith, D. G. (1994). The hermeneutic imagination and the pedagogic text. In *Pedagon: Meditations on pedagogy and culture* (pp. 99-136). New York: Peter Lang.
- Smith, S. (1987). *A poetics of women's autobiography: Marginality and the fictions of self-representation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Smith, S. (1993). The bodies of contemporary autobiographical practice. In *Subjectivity, identity and the body: Women's autobiographical practices in the twentieth century*. (pp. 126-153). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Tomkins, C. (2003a, January 15). Bullying efforts defended. *The Duncan Times*, pp. A1, A8.
- Tomkins, C. (2003b, January 15). Officials say 2000 shooting at Duncan had little do to with school bullying. *The Duncan Times*, p. A8.
- Too close to home. (April 15, 2000). *The Colorado Sun*, p. 14.

- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London: The Althouse Press.
- Walkerdine, V. (1981). Sex, power and pedagogy. *Screen Education*, 30, Spring. 14-24.
- Walkerdine, V. (1989). Femininity as performance. *Oxford Review of Education*, 15 (3), pp. 267-279.
- Warland, B. (1985). Surrendering the English language. In A. Dybikowski, V. Freeman, D. Marlatt, B. Pulling & B. Warland (Eds.), *In the feminine: Women and words* (pp. 175-179). Edmonton: Longspoon Press.
- Webster's New World Dictionary*. (2nd ed.). (1982). New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Whitbeck, C. (1983). A different reality: Feminist ontology. In C. C. Gould (Ed.), *Beyond domination: New perspectives on women and philosophy* (pp. 64-88). Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Wilson, S., Nigel, R., Abraham, J., & Treece, D. (2000, April 16). Teen charged with murder. *The Gazette*, pp. A1, A6.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.