



Art, Nature and the Virtual Environment: Three strands of a narrative inquiry written around a schoolyard garden as a collection of “events”

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by

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Abstract

Working with an organization outside the public school system that was creating schoolyard gardens, I began to think about culture and cultivation inside and outside of schooling practices. The liveliness of schoolyard gardens presented possibilities for enlivening educational discourses. With two participants I planted a container box “schoolyard” garden outside Lamoureux Hall, which houses the Faculty of Education. Utilizing aspects of place-based pedagogy, ecoliteracy, ecopedagogy and a métissage of a/r/tography, eco-art and writing as a method of inquiry, we tended the garden and dwelled upon ideas of nature, culture, and their intersection in a particular place. Our garden experiences left cyber footprints in virtual space as blog spots on a thesis blog site¹. The garden and the inquiry it generated outside are brought back inside the Education building as a Masters thesis. The garden grew in different and unpredictable ways due to intense construction on site entwining the planter boxes with unforeseen variables.

¹ <http://escapelot.wordpress.com>

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Prologue: The Schoolyard Garden as Ground for Research

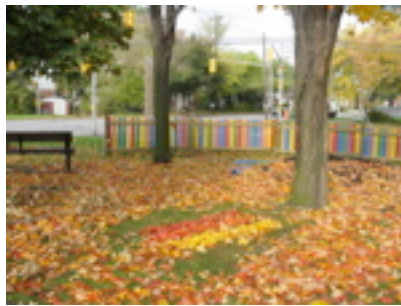
Today we had two Carleton environmental students able to help us in the school grounds that are shared between the two schools. There were three mothers digging the old beds and two new ones to be built. One of the students had been out to Alpenblik farm to get cedar logs for the raised beds and cut them about to size and get them to the schoolyard. Once the new plots were dug and marked out with string we dragged the logs over. There was only one other mother working by then, plus myself, Kate and Raymond and two great boys; Bobby, 10 and Noam who's about 12. We had to use a very old hand drill to bore holes into the cedar logs for the dowels, and a really crappy little saw for cutting them. I watched some of the little kids in the other plot shaking clods of grass to get the earth off. Kate took photos of them holding worms and one of the little girls became emotionally attached to a yucky white grub she was holding. She did not want to leave it there, "It might get killed," I heard her say to her mom. "Well... I guess we can bring it home and put it in the backyard" her mom said. I felt stricken by her sensibility for matters of life and death and remembered my own childhood feelings for living things, even yucky ones. (Personal journal notes, May 17 2008, Growing Up Organic/Canadian Organic Growers)

This inquiry has as its nexus a schoolyard garden located in downtown Ottawa.

Drawing from Irwin and de Cosson's (2004) arts-based living inquiry, a/r/t/ography (artist/researcher/teacher), with the "graphy" written through a phenomenological text, I seek to re-present the growing liveliness of the original schoolyard container garden at this downtown public school. As a practicing artist I draw from MacLeod & Holdridge's (2006) collection of artists' experiences in undertaking research, and feel with them that I "need to bring [my] writing nearer to [my] making" (p.12). My thesis work grows itself around a replication of the original garden, this time on campus, in cement container boxes outside the Faculty of Education at Lamoureux Hall. Ecopedagogy² impels me forward, circumscribing and winding its way through my research. As the events and effects of the first garden are inscribed in me as residual and residing presences, those presences and experiences intertwine themselves consciously and unconsciously in my

² David Jardine reflects on ecopedagogical theory and praxis in his "ecopedagogical essays," *Under the Tough Old Stars* (2000). "Ecopedagogy assumes that there is always and already a deep ambiguous kinship between the real, earthly life of children, the tasks of pedagogy, and the earth's 'limits of necessity and mystery'" (p.48).

work. This inquiry also seeks to make some of these “hauntings”³ tangible, bringing what is invisible towards the surface. The surface aspect of written work as artefact complements my digging down physically in an encounter with the “facts of matter” (Macleod & Holdridge, 2006, p.10). My senses are stirred up by the mixture of words and experiences and I stumble over them in a hurry to add my own, hoping with Springgay (2007) that, “Parodic mimesis exposes difference– multiple readings, interpretations and representations of social norms” (p.12). The garden as artefact is “claimed as art” *as* research (Macleod & Holdridge, 2006, p.6) by intervening with the top edges of the concrete boxes, re-making them into “frames” enclosing the garden. Writing towards the form of what Van Manen (2002) calls a “phenomenological text” helps me to link the three strands of the inquiry, addressive not only of surface meanings, but evocative of the “rhizomatic” garden liveliness and “related to the life meaning that phenomenology attempts to evoke” (p.237).



(Leaf-sorting project at Leggett Park Children’s Garden)

³ Palulis (2003), in *Uncanny demarcations: Metonymic writing as/in a doubled gesture*, in *Curriculum Intertext*, writes of “hauntology” (p.260), and being haunted by ghostly presences, spectres of other writers and other past selves, reading and re-readings, weaving and re-weaving traces in texts, placing and displacing authorship and identity.

CHAPTER 1: MY OWN BACKYARD

Three Strands and Some Groundwork

I enjoy Shepard's (2003) view of the garden as an "irrational assemblage", an assorted collection of plant life, statuary, kitsch etc. and as a "détente" between nature and culture, which in themselves are artificial categories intended to separate "human nature" from nature's "nature" (p.204).

In this first chapter I introduce the three strands of this inquiry: art, nature, and the virtual environment. I set out the terrain of this "irrational assemblage", and the ground I have had to cover in order to get where I am going. A "bricolage[d] network of reporting"⁴ on the events of the garden provides a patchwork of "texts": the garden itself can be read as a growing text; digital photos, videos, email correspondence and blog entries function as virtual texts; a/r/tography combines written texts with practices of art, research, and teaching through arts-based methods. In speaking of the artist/researcher as "bricoleur", Rolling (2008) views the relevance of artists' practices to education, in the "how" of their work:

The artist as bricoleur creates ideas from diverse and seemingly incompatible arrays of available things, and [uses] arts practices as strategies of juxtaposition, decontextualization and blending. (p. 14)

Diverse remnants of the garden were collected outside and entered inside a virtual garden blogsite, launched outwards once again as digital remains to be re-assembled by inhabitants and tourists of the worldwide web. The electronic nature of messaging, "the multimodal, intermedial, hybrid and dynamic forms of communication" (MacLeod & Holdridge, 2006, p.12) as emails, digital files and photos, and their instant replication,

⁴ See Berry, K. (2007). In K. Tobin & J. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Doing educational research: A handbook* (p.98).

seem to echo dynamic aspects of the profuse out-croppings that the original schoolyard garden generated. The blog address, which hosts entries by participants of the project as well as my own, is <http://escapelot.wordpress.com>

More locally, my participants and I collected, harvested and shared the produce and fruits of the garden research with other members of the University of Ottawa in an eco-art installation project that we called “nido” or nest. “Real time” and space artefacts have also been collected and documented: soil samples, residual seeds and seedlings, and planter garden “sculptures” such as discarded cigarette butts, drink cans and other “residues” that might otherwise be seen as garbage. Some of these vestigial traces have been “posted” as images in virtual space, becoming part of the virtual garden. Others have become part of an a/r/tographical record documenting some of the detritus that has drifted inside the domestic boundaries of my home. I embroidered them into a patchwork calendar of events in a work I call “the Apron”.

In the next section I lay out a topography of authors who helped prepare the ground, enabling me to move from theory to practice. Narrative inquiry, a/r/tography, métissage, personal journal entries, participants voices and blog posts will be used in subsequent chapters to steer away from a totalizing viewpoint and the grand narrative of modernism⁵.



(Leggett Park picket fence created by students at Lady Evelyn Alternative School)

⁵ As reiterated by Pivnick (2001), “the essential components of modern thinking are dualism, reductionism, materialism, determinism, individualism, anthropocentrism and patriarchalism” (p.vi).

Groundwork

As a way to begin to enact physically the “doubling of the gesture”⁶ of the initial schoolyard container garden, I recall the extravagance of “doubles” in which I have already been involved as a Canadian Organic Growers member. As a participant in the COG Growing Up Organic project (GUO) over the past year there was the “First Youth Farm Apprenticeship Camp” where a bunch of 11-14 year olds camped on a local organic farm. Another schoolyard garden was implemented at an alternative school. The grade six students from this school then designed and helped install a “children’s garden” with the co-operation of a community group (Sustainable Living Ottawa East). A series of workshops developed by this community group involved local artists and craftspeople. I did a leaf-sorting, eco-art workshop with local kids. Local farmers came to advise on soil and growing conditions for the GUO school gardens and they subsequently provided fruits and vegetables for two school “salad bar” snack programs on Friday afternoons. We made connections with local organic caterers and day-care centres. One of the caterers and GUO members began a garden as part of a street-youth outreach program and provided an organic lunch with supplementary cooking classes once a week. All of these events capture me and unsettle me in their liveliness. I have a growing collection of media generated from these projects.

I feel kinship with Daro Montag and Paul Ridout on the RANE⁷ website: “Research and creative practice start from the premise that the natural world is best understood as

⁶ Palulis’s lines (2003), spill over in “Uncanny demarcations: Metonymic writing as/in a doubled gesture”, in *Curriculum Intertext*, evoking the turbulence and exhilaration of something that won’t be killed off easily, that has a life of its own, a vitality that can be boosted or checked, but that won’t go away, and that haunts re-generations: “Metonymic writing as a doubled gesture evokes on-going re-writings –something happens as the reader who is already there re-reads the writing” (p.270).

⁷ Research in Art, Nature and Environment, <http://rane.falmouth.ac.uk/>

being constituted of events rather than consisting of objects”. I see my own research as an elaboration of interrelationships at work in a garden of events, and of collections of “events” in three categories or “themes”: a/r/tography and eco-art, nature, and the virtual environment as they relate to the schoolyard garden. My research foregrounds “the significance of process and its residue” (see D. Montag & P. Ridout on RANE website). This is a reciprocal process, as I too am captured by “events” and leave my own “residues” with them. The blog acts as another possible receptacle for reciprocal residue. The garden was signposted as a Faculty “children’s schoolyard garden”, including a web address. In this way participants and passers-by could be invited to “virtually” contribute to and co-inhabit the site. Working within the “blogosphere”⁸ provided another space for community. Phenomenology’s philosophical insistence on process as primary, and with it our ever- shifting relationships with the world, help me to understand the traces I leave, and the traces that events have inscribed in me, with all the particularities of the local.



[Leaf Sorting, Leggett Park Children’s Garden, 2008]

⁸ See Hookway, N. (2008). ‘Entering the blogosphere’: Some strategies for using blogs in social research. *Qualitative Research*, 8(1), 91-113.

Drawing again from Macleod & Holdridge (2006), I situate this research “within a minority tradition” outside of the normative academy. I hope, along with others, that it might have an interior longing to engage and move towards “a radical academy”⁹ which could include “making us experience experience itself on all levels of the intellectual, the aesthetic, the mind and the body” (p.10). This study strives to contribute to and celebrate “the participatory nature of knowing” (Sterling, 2003, p.309), and embodied knowledge, while testing the boundaries of the academy, using what Guba & Lincoln (2005) refer to as “messy” texts:

They are texts that seek to break the binary between science and literature, to portray the contradiction and truth of human experience, to break the rules in the service of showing, even partially, how real human beings cope with both the eternal verities of human existence and the daily irritations and tragedies of living that existence. (p. 211)

The empty container boxes outside the Faculty of Education are gaps and spaces opened for growing inquiry, and for collecting electronic ephemera that gathered around me in pursuit of this project. A layering of media, and of themes constructs another conversation in-between and within the broader art, nature, culture/permaculture¹⁰ dialogue. Via this project, I relate my experiences working with schoolyard gardens as sites for different kinds of learning events and as locatable places occupying “real” points in space and time, to the cultivation of new planter box gardens outside the department of education. The research engages with ontologies and epistemologies (the “nature” of reality, and claims to knowledge) in a dynamic movement crossing inside and outside the

⁹ Professor Sir Christopher Frayling, Rector, Royal College of Art writes in his foreword to Macleod & Holdridge’s (2006), *Thinking through art: Reflections on art as research*, “It is timely in my view, to redefine and re-evaluate the academy. . . . Towards a radical academy. Towards a distinctive research culture within it, a culture which examines and understands its own assumptions, which produces new knowledge, and which is no longer ashamed to be located within the academy”(p.xiv).

¹⁰ Permaculture is a term that incorporates ideas of permanent agriculture (as in year round) and as well, permanent culture. Social aspects are considered to be integral to sustainable systems and this social permaculture needs to mimic the structure and interrelationships found in natural ecologies.

department, on and off the page. Maxine Greene (1995) elucidates upon conditions for, and the effects of aesthetic experiences in education, and everywhere in her writing reminds us of the “inter” of these interactions:

We need to recognize that the events that make up aesthetic experiences are events that occur within and by means of the transactions with our environment that situate us in time and space. (p.130)

Playing with both real and virtual spaces, I recognize that everything “real” has some spatial position. Using a more improvisational a/r/tography, eco-art and virtual component, I attempt to disrupt the instrumental aspects of the garden as either a site only for the sciences, or as a form of return to a bucolic past. “... A rupturing from experience to writing” (MacLeod & Holdridge, 2006, p.16) I misread as, “a *rapturing* from experience to writing”. I re-read this now as a way to approach the writing, as Van Manen (2002) urges writers of interpretive inquiry to write “addressively”:

Phenomenological text makes us “think” and it makes the world address us and call upon us to think our feeling in the broadest and deepest sense of the term... More strongly put, the reader must become possessed by the allusive power of text – taken, touched, overcome by the addressive effect of its reflective engagement with lived experience. (p. 238)

Towards Contexts (A/r/tography and My Own Backyard)

There was a distinct sensation of feeling pinned down in place like an insect to an exhibit board, and a withdrawal of my subjective self inside and into the carapace of my outside body. On display as subject, I was re-moved from active life, hidden from myself behind my own eyes —the only part of me able to move. Detached, I was observed as subject, but detached from myself, I observed them observing me. Frozen, I could not respond. (Personal journal notes)

While reading Stephanie Springgay (2007) “Each discipline whether education, science, technology, sociology, sport, or visual culture, has de-constructed and re-presented the body as subject” (p.196), I recall sinkingly, vividly, *above*, how I felt as a nude model sitting for art classes. I recall how I felt as an artist sketching from a posed

model in “lifedrawing” classes. I recall in a squeamish intersection of both experiences, that “this is *not drawing from life!*” Having inhabited the doubled world of artist/model, observer and observed, and then coming upon John K. Grande (2006, p.4) I recognised in his words my own experiences¹¹ as, “Denaturalised, we perceive nature as distant from us” (p.4).

As autobiographical subject and subject-to my own research, I want to discard the shell of the distancing “auto” of autobiography, and stick closer to an interplay of doing and undoing self-in-environment with the help of phenomenology and the kind of attention it demands.

In the words of Springgay (2008), a/r/tography as a “methodology of embodiment, never isolated in its activity but always engaged with the world” (p.899) can take into account the discordant processes of art as research which privileges process; and more particularly, with Grande (2004), the digestive processes of eco-art:

The installation that ingests, places itself in an environment with a sense of the place... the drama is in the sense of place, of participating in a living history. Unseen variables play a role in outdoor nature-based art works: climate, vegetation, other living species, the quality of light, and the seasons. (p. xx)

I see a/r/tography as a living systems approach to engaged research.

As I ingest the nature of Lamoureux Hall by invading/inhabiting (dwelling within?) its public forecourt with a vegetative intervention— a garden trespass, a drama unfolds itself from out of the everyday quotidian. On meeting with a campus physical resources person, he suggested to me that the concrete planter cubes be moved away from the parking lot entrance and parking lot-as-future-construction site; the old Psychology building adjacent to the parking lot is being renovated and possibly added on to and thus the parking lot across the road from Lamoureux will be a mess of construction gear and trucks by the time spring planting comes around. There is very little of “nature”, vegetation or green

¹¹ I abandoned “representation” after art school in the 1980’s, and focused on large scale installation and site specific work, see <http://www.barbaracuerden.com> “Regeneration”. After meeting Grande and Gablick at a symposium (at Ottawa U., 1994), about ecology and art, I moved towards the largely invisible “eco-centric” art that was starting back then.

space occupying the between spaces of Faculty, road, parking lot, and renovation site, but that does not mean nature is absent. (Personal journal notes)

Eco-artist Stacy Levy (2006), comments on her own work:

Just because we create asphalt, concrete and glass canyons, dig up all the soil and replace it with pipes, tunnels and crushed building parts and desertify the city by chasing all the rainwater away does not mean that nature has been cleared out. Nature is still at work in the city, and in the suburbs. Here you find all the little bits, the tough and un-chewable leftovers, the parts we could not exploit as resources, the very gristle of nature. This is the part of nature I am trying to locate. (p. 46)

This gristle-y part of nature that borders the parking lot and roadside of Lamoureux Hall is what I worked with. My garden was a fringe element on the edges of planning directives. Unplanned-for construction intruded into the site with all the noisy equipment that goes with it. The Master Plan for the university includes nature only as a peripheral decorative element. It does not include ideas of indigenous growth and inhabitation. If I plant unplanned vegetables might I disrupt the space and alter ideas of citified nature? Is denatured nature thus re-natured? Could “re-natured” become a new dwelling space? Or am I dis-placed, and transplanting myself from art department to education department, in each case inhabiting the edges of hybrid discipline(s)? I find another kind of lodging in textual affinities, and love the ideas of Palulis’s (2003) text, that “I, too can become a lodging for a host of spectres” (p. 266).

Spectral discourses on art-as-inquiry and art-as-research inhabit this proposal; new questions emerge when established forms are challenged. Piantanida et al. (2003)¹² unravel some of the current problems of arts-based research:

Unquestionably, artists often engage in research to inform their art making.
Unquestionably good art has educative power. But in the field of education, is the

¹² Piantanida, M., McMahan, P. & Garman, N. (2003). See also Sclater, S. (2003); Bochner, A. & Ellis, C. (2003); in a special issue of *Qualitative Inquiry* 9(4) devoted to this subject.

ultimate aim of arts-based research to generate good/great art or to provide insight into significant educational phenomena? (Piantanida, p.186)



Towards texts, intertexts, in-dwelling and interpretation: “Since we are a conversation/And can hear one another” (Gadamer, p. 39, 2001)

As subject to my research, I look to the intertwinings of subjectivity and interpretation, to doing and undoing, and being undone by “the autonomous pretensions of reason” (Van Wyck, 1997):

For what we discover is that at the very moment when the culture/nature distinction is radically destabilized, so too are its distinctive cohorts –self/other, sex/gender, man/woman. The key word however, is “destabilized”; not destroyed, but rendered radically suspect. (p. 134)

The placement of aesthetics, art and eco-art are possible keys to this destabilisation and their capacities for effecting personal and social transformation(s). The “pure” modernist aesthetic of “art for art’s sake” has been bound up with the “disembodied eye” (Gablick, 2006, p.60) of radical autonomy and objectivity. Gablick’s (1992) deconstruction of conventional notions of art altered the premises of art and art-making during the late 80’s and early 1990’s. Among other things, she brings into question whether art and science can continue to inhabit a space beyond an ethics of responsibility:

We have been conditioned for a long time to accept the idea of art’s self-sufficiency and to see the aesthetic as a special sphere removed from social use. We could call this the hyperindividualized and depoliticized view of art, whose

“freedom”, we now know, is essentially bound up with the premises of commodity economy. (p. 148)

She then calls for a participatory approach that can cultivate relationship:

...a new aesthetics of participation that is less specialized, and that deals more adequately with issues of context; and whether a new definition of art’s cultural purpose [will] open it (and ourselves) up to more creative interactions with others and the world. (p. 150)

Eco-art and eco-artists were foregrounded in Gablick’s work as examples of this new participatory awareness. Much of this work is still estranged from the gallery and museum cultural aesthetic of display and ownership and will no doubt remain so, largely under the radar of patterns of art-as-commodity¹³. But I hear echoes of Gablick’s words in the “participatory paradigm” of Sterling’s (2003) “sustainable education ...[and] designing towards emergence” (p.335).

At the same time as Gablick was writing about art, the “god-word” of “creativity” was being similarly dismantled by ecologist and educator, C.A Bowers (1994):

While educators and other advocates of creativity treat it as a universal characteristic of the fully realized individual, it is in fact, a culturally specific metaphor that became part of our taken-for-granted vocabulary less than two hundred years ago. For most of human history, art has been used to communicate about relationships in a way that heightened their sense of importance.¹⁴ (p. 161)

Sterling (2003) believes that a new paradigm for “sustainable” education and a sustainable earth must move towards “teaching for emergence” (p.311). Educational

¹³ Outside of art journals, eco-art is rarely mentioned. In the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* (2008) OISE researcher Hilary Inwood takes it on as inspired practice: “as a way for art and environmental educators to create powerful and memorable experiences for students by bringing self and community into dialogue with place”(p.29). This is the only education research journal I have encountered that links eco-art to ecoliteracy and place-based pedagogy.

¹⁴ Anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake (1992, 1998) has written extensively on this topic in order to question and derail some of the presumptions of Western art. See *What is art for?* and *Homo Aestheticus: Where art comes from and why*.

orientations of teaching as transmission (behaviourist), or transaction (constructivist) or as transformation (reconstructivist) must adapt to a participatory paradigm (Sterling, 2003, p.311). The missing links in this evolution of pedagogy towards ecopedagogy made me wonder what I could draw from as a pointer towards “emergence”? Trusting where the byways will take you often means waiting, heeding subtle signs, and/or stumbling around in the dark. From reading with Michel Serres (1985) for many years, I long for the new knowledge to come:

The passage of the squadron can ransack the body of water, the pugnacious in their revels can trample the harvest, the bomb can annihilate the world, public dialectics can put new shoes on old mules and weaken the collective until it becomes anaemic, scientific polemics can mask with its clanking new ideas and have them abort, the vulgarity of the scuffle can kill beauty, each however, continues to go on saying that debate is the father of things and war its mother. The loss of the world will not awaken us from our sleep of war, from the drug of representation. Pity the world! ...Let the new knowledge come. (p. 31)

Many writers have nodded to art and aesthetics, linking their practice to other approaches that can raise ecological awareness.¹⁵ However, they also seem to miss some implications of the processes of art practices. If as Michel Serres (1995) claims, “science is not a content, but a means of getting about” (p.104), then equally the processes of art are another way of getting about from topic to topos. Understanding and practicing embodied processes of art-making, eco-art and a/r/tography might facilitate teaching towards “emergence” and emergent knowledge. Perhaps by throwing seemingly diverse disciplines together the “new knowledge” can come, as a hybrid crossover that emerges in-between, to cross at intervals the shifting embankments of disciplines:

*and I am sitting on the couch amidst papers and books, thinking these thoughts,
facing outwards to the front window in a kind of paralysis of muddled waiting,
and it's garbage day tomorrow and I hear the jingle of a ragpicker's bottle-*

¹⁵ In particular, C.A. Bowers (1994), Wendell Berry (2008), D. Jardine (2008), B. Jickling (2005), J. Pivnick (2001), D. Orr (2004), A. Rushmere (2007), S. Sterling (2003).

collecting cart coming past, checking out the recycling bins and so I look up, glance out, and in a stab of recognition, in the moment the scavenger turns his head, I recognize Gordie. This is for me a grievous unsettling. I recognize Gordie-going-past, as one of the First Nations street people artists I had worked with in a street people's art co-op. He is a deeply sensitive person who simply gave me more than I can ever feel I did for him. And again I am haunted. The woundedness of the artist/street-people/teachers wounded me, joins me with them, and divides me from them as simultaneously I recognize them and sit behind a double-glazed window...(Personal journal notes)

Why this experience here, now, when I rummage round thoughts of art, emergence and transformation, waiting for the next thing? It comes to me – *after* the disruption of feelings, and seems obvious. I felt the same turbulent energy in the street people's art co-op¹⁶ as I do in the schoolyard gardens/Growing Up Organic project. It is the energy of transformation that draws me in and makes me certain that something's going on that cannot be reduced to an "isolated incident". This incident or "event" points me further towards and into the research. It serves as another indicator towards a kind of research that seeks relationships in events which emerge tentatively, at intervals that can often only be hinted at. Description is awkward, perhaps potentially damaging to emerging relationships. I recently ran into Gordie on the street, as I have done for years now. The last time, he did not recognize me, or did not want to. He failed to meet my smile with his own. I was just another middle-aged, middle-class woman walking to work. He was just another bum, picking garbage on garbage day. I took it personally, and still feel bereaved. I'd like to know how he feels but hesitate to intrude. I do know viscerally that he taught me about vulnerability, my own and his.

Peters (2003) talks about the often-veiled nature of research in the humanities:

Research eternally points to the point of re-turning that is its movement. It searches for the turning point, the "reference point" that both allows research to measure its undiminishing distance from the centre while

¹⁶ Cuerden, 2006; unpublished paper about a street-people's art co-op I worked with.

also referring and deferring it, turning it back to retrace its path, thereby endlessly postponing its arrival. Research, then, is always at the point of beginning, at the point where the search must begin again in the face of, and from within, the unknown... The unknown will not be revealed, but indicated. (p. 5)

The turning and re-turning, “that is its movement”, is the energy of transformation created in a living system, and not necessarily the displaced energy of an entropic and closed mechanical one, always running down. The energy I sense residing in schoolyard garden work, its movement and abundance, in turn energizes me. It is “the doubling of gesture”¹⁷ where variations are tried over and over but we never return to exactly the same starting point. This symbiotic evolution and transformative energy is what I seek to replicate and re-invigorate in my own version of the schoolyard garden; “the ecopedagogical response thus involves not just the possibility, but the necessity of returning, renewal and regenerativity” (Jardine, 2000, p.30).



[“Dirtbank”, dirt collected by the author’s travelling friends, with stories of dirt, 1989-2000]

¹⁷ See again, Palulis (2003). Uncanny demarcations: Metonymic writing as/in a doubled gesture.

Educating Towards Emergence

Reading with Sterling (2003, p.336), how do you “educate towards emergence” ? Is the garden a site for social and personal transformation? Evaluative research carried out by Dymont (2005), and Blair (2009), seems to bear this out¹⁸. Their research also points to difficulties within institutionally supported school gardens. Policy guidelines and funding that give schoolyard gardens validity as sites for different kinds of learning within traditional mainstream education legitimize them as “educational”. But with this legitimization comes a counter movement; by becoming integrated into existing programming that may be greedy for results-based orientations, school gardens can have their transformative affects diluted by programs impervious to “emergence” or the “non-destination oriented” reconstructionism that Sterling (2003) dwells on.

Eco-art’s attention to process as well as its participatory aesthetic may disrupt a purely instrumental purposefulness, while still performing “intent”. These ideas have been hinted at by environmental writers, sustainability educationalists and ecopedagogical authors. Jardine (2000) distinguishes between “environmental education” and the neologism “ecopedagogy” in *Under the Tough Old Stars*:

Paradoxically, the earth as the topic of “environmental education”, becomes one topic among others... one more damn thing that needs the weary and already scattered and overburdened attention of teachers and children... To the extent that this occurs, something is terribly wrong, not because this topic should be pre-eminent.. but because *there must be some sense in which there is no other topic*, some sense in which *all* the living disciplines in our care are earthly inheritances in need of precisely the same mindfulness and imagination and tough work. (p. 3)

¹⁸ Dymont (2005), found that school gardens she studied in Canada and Australia were conducive to inclusion of minority, marginalized and/or bullied populations, effecting social transformations both at school and in the communities linked to them. See also “*Findings from the evaluation study of The Edible Schoolyard*”, <http://www.ecoliteracy.org/publications/index.html>
See also, Blair, D. (2009). The Child in the Garden: An evaluative review of the benefits of school gardening. *Journal of Environmental Education* 40 (2), 15-38.

One of the most recent CJEE (Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, 2008) publications “presents a diverse array of contributions that advocate and represent creative forms of expression and critical consideration of discourses and counter-narratives emerging from science and environmental education” (Ed., p.5). Two of the articles present and suggest innovations in eco-pedagogy that make use of “community-arts” and eco-art as a basis for new models of environmental education practices. Both articles espouse these practices in reference to place-based pedagogy:

I was frustrated with the nature interpretation monologues that I often found myself performing in classrooms, parks and public sites... the people with whom I carried out environmental education were audience members instead of participants and my role as educator was more to recite than to engage... the most inviting solution was to alter the forms themselves by sliding them into the world of collaborative art-making for social change. (Reinsborough, pp. 47- 48)

I agree with the potential that eco-artists bring to environmental education, but sadly, these place-based works and their creators are a rich resource that have too often been neglected in both art and environmental circles. (Inwood, p. 33)

Eco-Art, Nature and the Virtual Environment

Van Wyck (1997) would call eco-art’s participatory aesthetic a “weak ecology”, or a strategy of “weakness”, as opposed to the triumphalist depth of “deep” ecology: “A weak ecology provides a kind of theory that requires bodies and locations. It positions theory within the ethics of responsibility, of care” (p.134).

This invites me to respond that a garden is a location for a body to be in, to be with, and to care for. A schoolyard garden embodies environmental/ecological theory, and ontological and epistemological questions that children and adults can get a handle on and dig with. Shepard (2003) suggests, “that as either cosmic structure condensed or

internal terrain writ large, gardens are a spatial and organic metaphor that deals with being rather than doing” (p. 212).

If, as Forrest (2007) contends, art plays “the antagonist’s role that scientific questioning used to occupy” (p.12), then the processes of a/r/tography and eco-art in the schoolyard or backyard can perhaps provoke questions and experiences that instrumental gardening activities are not able to confer, experiences of “being” rather than “doing”, of attention rather than productivity. Our symbiosis with “environment” and “nature” registers as unlisted events where the exchange rate between the “givens” of Nature and our being-in-it feels good, and we are at ease. However, when it doesn’t feel good, when there are uneasy leftovers of garbage or deadly neglect, anxiety and illness, or the extermination of entire species, we are called to question whether knowledge drawn from nature can still be called a “given”.¹⁹

The “shades” and shadows of our knowledge (extraction): where the “givens” of nature are no longer freely given. The corpus of corpses pile up and come back as shades to haunt us and to shadow our future extractions, “tax” our gains and make us wonder about the “returns” of input and output. But perhaps a wandering re-turn under these shades will cool us down towards a not-so-hot renaissance, “cooler” and cooled by, the shades and shadows of our past heat and (thermo) dynamism. A cooling off period is required as compensation for the warming up of global warming.
(Personal journal notes)

Perhaps because it is untied from commerce and productivity, and works with materials found in place, eco-art as inquiry can be freer to register aspects of some of the costs of these relationships and exchanges. Wilson (1996) outlines the cross-disciplinary investigations and useful unemployment of art as research: “The arts can function as an

¹⁹ Michel Serres looks at our exchanges and shifting relationships with Nature in *The Natural Contract*, (1999). See also *Revisiting The Natural Contract* (2006), from <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=515>

independent zone of research ... artistic traditions of iconoclasm mean that artists are likely to take up lines of inquiry devalued by others.”²⁰

However, where art or eco-art is added on to an already overloaded curriculum as panacea, it is unlikely to have much to do with “being” unless the “madness of art” is included, “...its affirmative irresponsibility, its mute inscrutability, its obsessive exactitude, its productive ignorance and its rhetorical power” (Peters, 2003, p.9). Art practices combined with schoolyard gardening could provoke events that balance merely instrumental programming oriented only towards predictable results.

Philosopher Hans Gumbrecht (2004) implicates how time becomes a partner to “epiphanic” events that he describes as “oscillations” between “presence effects and meaning effects [which] endow the object of aesthetic experience with a component of provocative instability and unrest” (p.108). He continues, “Epiphany within aesthetic experiences is an event because it undoes itself while it emerges” (p.113).

A Common Ground

This undoing, the unfolding and folding back into the quotidian, is a characteristic both of things that grow, and the interventions of eco-art and a/r/tographical research. Art is emergent order. Something gels or grows after the ground is prepared for it. The transitory nature of being struck by something epiphanic is implicated in the time of a garden’s growing and depletion. Things appear and disappear, leaving traces. The gardens’ fragilities in the face of uncontrollable elements mimic our own frailties, flexibilities and response-abilities. In bringing us back to earth and into real time, a

²⁰ S. Wilson (1996). <http://www.sfu.edu/~swilson/papers/artist.researcher.html>. First retrieval Oct. 2008.

garden can fulfil the “longing for presence” that seems to gnaw at Gumbrecht and the abstractions of his post-structuralist philosophy.

Finally, growing a garden can raise awareness of our implicit evolutionary connections to other non-anthropocentric epistemologies. As Shepard (2003) evokes so eloquently, we grew out of the earth alongside, and contingently with, a million pairs of other eyes:

by attending to species who have no words and no text other than context and yet among whom there is no spoken consensus about the contingency of life and real substructures. ... A million species constantly make “assumptions” in their body language, indicating a common ground and the validity of their responses. A thousand million pairs of eyes, antennae, and other sensing organs are fixed on something beyond themselves that sustains their being, in a relationship that works. (p. 224)

Arts-based Research as a “means of getting about”

Artists are skilled in attending to phenomena that go unnoticed by others. They work within the ecosystem of the limits of their materials, and towards a deeper understanding of them in an ongoing dialogue. The consumerist ideal of limitless growth and consumption is anathema to issuing forth anything original. Wendell Berry (2008), one of the grandfathers of the ecology movement suggests that the abundance of artistic creativity can be generated by limitation:

It is artists, not the scientists, who have dealt unremittingly with the problem of limits ... I suggest that we may have to remove some of the emphasis we have lately placed on science and technology and have a new look at the arts. For an art does not propose to enlarge itself by limitless extension but rather to enrich itself within bounds that are accepted prior to the work ... No limitless sequence of works is ever implied or looked for. ... Given the methodologies of science, the law of gravity and the genome were bound to be discovered by somebody; the identity of the discoverer is incidental to the fact. But it appears that in the arts there are no second chances ... If Dante and Shakespeare had died before they'd written [their work], nobody else would have written them. (p. 42)

Replication is a game for artists, not an end in itself. What is made entwined in

process is more important than a fixed product. Artist Bruce Mau²¹ captures the messy essence of research in discussing what studio work feels like, “You don’t have to know how to do it at the outset: you have to know how to do it when you’ve done it. This will produce really interesting work” (p.8). This seems to me to be very important as I dwell on aspects of “human resources”, “production”, and “what are people for?”²² If there is a connection between how well we handle human resources and how well we have handled “natural resources” through resource management, then a purely instrumental usage of gardens can be legitimately questioned.

The documentation of transitory effects of eco-art via film, video and digital media, forms a symbiotic alliance between eco-art, nature, the virtual world and ourselves.²³ Without some kind of media documentation eco-art falls back into the elements it was drawn from, becoming largely imperceptible. Reaching a wider audience through electronic media, it can re-invite participation and interaction that, reading again with Suzie Gablick (1992), “moves art beyond the aesthetic mode: letting the audience intersect with, and even form part of, the process, recognizing that when observer and observed merge, the vision of static autonomy is undermined” (p.151).

The Other-ness of electronic media is diminished by its seamlessness. It folds and unfolds itself when we need it to. Like double-jointedness or an extra eyelid, we’ve adapted it to our uses. Might this tolerance for othered-ness(es) be transferable to other Others and even be extended to include other species of creatures in the more-than-human world? Is tolerance and permeability towards electronic media transferable to

²¹ Mau, B. (2005). “Reviewing Impulse”. Chapter in *Archeology/Impulse*, a collection of excerpts from art magazine, *Impulse*. University of Toronto Press.

²² See Prakash, M. B. (1994). What are people for?: Wendell Berry on education, ecology, and culture. *Educational Theory* (44) 2, 135-157.

²³ For example, see artist Andy Goldsworthy, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TWBSMc47bw>

tolerances of difference, to a diversity of experiences, and openness towards others? Or does it lead to bodily and sensual anaesthetization, what researcher Heather Menzies (2005) calls “trashing ourselves” where “everything [becomes] a function of glances, as opposed to the gaze, which lingers” (p.189). Consciously holding oneself back and heeding, or lingering in a space, can provide gestation for the birth of new events. Van Wyck (1997) suggests that the recognition and positive acceptance of our “weakness”, vulnerability, and permeability could begin an engagement with “boundary making as an affirmative project” (p.127) rather than an exclusionary one, whereby we might consciously “co-create our environments for living, in a dialogue of mutual accommodation” (Menzies, 2005, p.175).

I attempt to address the disembodied affects of virtual space and its somewhat displacing effects of anaesthetization, by place-ing²⁴ a garden in local real time and space. The layering of real and virtual includes the space between contingent “environments for living”. The felt affinities and differences between “virtual” and “real” may enact the “necessarily contingent” aspects of Van Wyck’s weak ecology and “situated knowledge”: “Situated knowledge is always necessarily contingent (or contingently necessary) and determined along lines of affinity. Within a zone of affinity all manner of affirmative and creative practices may take place” (p.125).

My re-presented garden provides the potential for a permeable “zone of affinity” on the edges of the Faculty of Education.

²⁴ See Rushmere, A. (2007). ‘Placing’ caring relationships in education: Addressing abstraction and domination. *Paideusis* 16 (2), 81-88.



[cube planter and site for thesis garden, Spring, 2009]

How to Proceed: “ Because no one lives in the world in general” (Gruenewald, 2007)

In this section I discuss place-based education as an important locus, or habitat, for the schoolyard garden within extant educational discourses in educational theory and practice. Key questions are outlined. Relationships between “events” of data (henceforth referred to as “events” or “vestigia”)²⁵ as extensions of conversations between the three themes of art, nature and the virtual environment, are approached.

Van Wyck’s (1997) “situated knowledge” and weak ecology requiring “bodies and locations” and “theory within the ethics of responsibility, of care,” in turn requires a re-orientation of education towards re-natured possibilities. This turning-towards, could mean educational praxis within what is called “place-based education”. I introduced this section by culling from Gruenewald (2007), “No one lives in the world in general” (p.246); we all live some place:

Places are far from strictly geographical locations: they are not pre-cultural or pre-social; places are at least partly social constructions or cultural products. ... *Place can be described as the nexus of culture and environment* [italics added]; places are where we constantly experience their interconnection. (pp. 143-145)

²⁵ Webster’s New World Dictionary, College Edition (1957), defines vestige: **n.** [Fr.; L. *vestigium*, a footprint], **1.** a trace, mark, or sign of something which has once existed but has passed away or disappeared. **2.** a trace; bit: as, there was no *vestige* of woodland. **3.** in *biology*, a degenerate, atrophied, or rudimentary organ or part, more fully developed or functional in an earlier stage of development of the individual or species.

Implicit in place-based education is a call for the recognition of the peculiarities of ourselves in relationship to *this* place, at *this* time; remembering with Shepard (2003), “We read from culture to nature rather than the other way round” (p.206).

Oftentimes little children know more about dinosaurs than they do about the plants and trees native to their own school district and community. Rarely do they learn about the earth beneath their feet, the soil conditions and what grows here and why. This is a dis-placed, dis-connected, disembodiment endemic to what Bai (2001) calls a North American “intellectualist bias” (p. 86). It can subtly and not-so-subtly neuter experiential, sensual and embodied events such as me and you walking to school, to *this* school, in *this* town, in *this* bioregion, and dwelling *here* for eight hours a day. Bowers (2003), claims that:

This silence on the part of leading critical pedagogy theorists contributes to the widely held view that humans can impose their will on the environment and that when the environment breaks down experts using instrumentally based critical reflection will engineer a synthetic replacement. (p. 15)

The “re-placement” necessary may be a human placement nested and rooted within a particular community and biological ecosystem. The anthropocentrism of critical pedagogy and constructivist notions of educational theory, according to Bowers, Jardine, and others, contains an inherent denial of relationship in the world, ironically resulting in the contradictory reinforcement of an individually autonomous *reliance and dependency* upon markets and commodified relationships.²⁶ The acceleration of the destruction of planetary ecosystems in the past thirty years parallels the mass exportation of Western education styles and is given as evidence of its materialist, colonialist mindset, and one

²⁶ In a 62-page article, George Sessions (2002), criticizes academia from all sides for its exclusion of ecology, which he sees as an integral part of all discourse. In, *Wilderness, cyborgs and our ecological future: Reassessing the deep ecology movement*, *The Trumpeter* 22 (2), 121-183.

that has become necessary for people to resist. These resistances are at work now²⁷, and have already been made by local, indigenous and “traditional communities”.²⁸ Arne Naess (2000), one of the grandfathers of eco-philosophy, talks about notions of further expanding knowledge: “As to ecology, we have had for a long time more than enough ecological knowledge about how to mend our ways. So, in some senses it is a blind alley to ask for more knowledge; wisdom is what we need” (p. 55).

The distancing effects of abstraction value “the supremacy of knowledge and ways of knowing that are decontextualized, ahistorical, objective, rational, and as such divorced from students contexts and actions” (Rushmere, 2007, p. 86). The collective bottom-line response in the so-called West has been a silent shrug to numerous evidence-based reports over the past ten years that document the decline of the earth’s ecosystems and subsequent climate change. We look sideways, or down at our shoes, away from calls from various collectives of biologists, climatologists and ecologists for us to curb “development” and the exploitation of resources. This numbed out, “so what?” response, marks a question of [or, lack of] response-ability.

The “I don’t care”-ness of being in school for too long, takes over larger aspects of living our lives. “What am I supposed to do about it?”, “Think I care?”, and– “Ask me how little I care!” I remember these “cool” responses after awhile to anything I was told at school. “Who cares?” has become the collective bottom-line reaction to the “disembodied eye” and the “scientific method” we were trained to give credence to at school, where maturity meant disengagement from emotional responsiveness. Not-caring as essential to the scientific method of understanding is a “natural” outcome of Western education. So, why should we care when we’ve been taught not to? (Personal journal notes)

²⁷ In “Can critical pedagogy be greened?”(2003), Bowers makes connections between economic globalization and the ecological crisis and resistances by local “face-to-face” communities: “And it is in these face-to-face, intergenerationally connected cultures that we find the strongest resistance to the new biotechnologies (such as the terminator seed program that Monsanto was forced to abandon), the patenting of local knowledge of medicinal plants, and the pressure to adopt the industrial model of production and consumption” (p.17).

²⁸ See also Bowers, (2000, 1994); Beeman, (2008); Gabbard, (1994).

It is remarkable when many ecopedagogical writers single out caring as the antidote to future environmental miseries. It's startling in that caring is so absent from schooling as to be remarked upon. Yet as Rushmere (2007) notes, "relation is ontologically basic to humans and simply acknowledging this in education would be a great step in the right direction" (p.86). Since caring can alter the hypotheses and outcome of controlled conditions and the scientific method, it could be as Shepard (2003) says that, "The problem may be more difficult to understand than to solve. ... An ecologically harmonious sense of self and world is not the outcome of rational choices. It is the inherent possession of everyone; it is latent in the organism, in the interaction of the genome and early experience" (p. 10).

The problem is not an absence of ecopedagogical caring but that caring often takes place *outside* of school. Caring can be institutionalized out, along with the diversity of the rest of our co-habiting world, its species, and our relationships with them. From Gruenewald (2007):

This fundamental lack of diversity, the isolated, regulated and narrow nature of schooling, its disconnection from and disregard for community life- [make it] therefore necessary to look outside of schools and classrooms ... for diverse experiences ... that do not and probably cannot happen in the institution of school. (pp. 142-143)

As an artist/researcher/teacher/gardener, I occupy an "outsider" position with regard to schoolyard gardens, and caring as "outside[r]" knowledge (Paulson, 2000, p.218).

Events currently happening outside of school are necessarily "outside" in both senses of the word: outside in-the-world, and outside the normative school and academy. I remind myself that diversity is the norm in nature, and that our constructions of knowledge into narrow disciplines is but "a nostalgic unity recoverable only in myth" (Serres, in Zembylas, 2002, p.12).

A Question poses itself: Key Questions as Outgrowths

A question poses itself– but not before I am stopped or stalled by something. I'm heading to the post office, say, going along and doing what I'm doing. And all of a sudden I'm stopped. I've seen something, or some little peripheral event has happened and I am stopped in my tracks (vetigium/"footprints"). Post office is forgotten. Maybe something fell out of the tree, a leaf or something, or I've caught a glimpse of something in the grass by that fence but something has stopped me here– where I've passed every other day for twenty years. Something has stopped me today, now. So I have to pay attention. Give my attention, not pay it. (or spend it, as Pat would say). I may then walk backwards and re-approach in order to notice with intent this time, what I noticed subconsciously before. I re-approach the "event" to find maybe an inconsequential seedpod or bit of string or piece of paper, or whatever, and I have to pick it up and trust it will mean something later. Sometimes I can make the connection straight away. Sometimes it takes years, so I have a collection of bits and pieces that go somewhere, I just don't have the puzzle that fits around them yet. These are the events that provoke questions. But the stopping place is a place of NOT knowing. And time is necessary for answers to a question that poses itself. (Personal journal notes)

- 1.** What might happen when a schoolyard garden is planted and tended/attended to on campus at a Faculty of Education? What stories emerge within the being and doing events of the garden as border, boundary or bridge or fringe?
- 2.** What kinds of events might be reflective of the costs of knowledge extraction/transactions or exchange relationships, turns and returns within garden and gardening sites, conditions and events? What is "given", and/or given up?
- 3.** How might a garden inhabit a site for new knowledge in education; different sorts of learning processes, possibilities and "ecopedagogical" awareness(es): are there possibilities for less aggressive, more receptive, humbler listening ways of teaching and learning?



CHAPTER 2: PROCEDO

Writing the subject/Finding a place

Another overcast day, threatening showers in the afternoon. I checked the weather forecast last night. Rain today then clearing but still cool tomorrow. Sunny most of the rest of the week with rain again towards weekend which is perfect for planting because that'll give me time to figure out watering sources when it gets hot and dry. I've kept some backup seeds (squash and pumpkins) growing on the windowsill.

Took my trundle cart, which is a basket on wheels, up the hill to the U. with the garden sign in it. It's a stick (tree branch) poked through a piece of cardboard I cut out of a pizza box with "children's garden" written in black marker on it, as well as the http address of the thesis garden blogsite. While I was planting the second box with corn, beans and squash, the guy who is the subcontractor for Physical Resources at the U. pulled up in his truck and we had a conversation about what I was planting... he seems quite affable and was interested in the companion planting. It's a cold wind as I write this on the front porch, having returned home.

(Personal journal notes June 1, 2009)

I move to make a copy of words I wrote months ago; of other words I read years ago, of thoughts re-moved from texts decades ago which still occupy me. As an occupied territory who and what have I gathered to myself? And how to think the local.²⁹

²⁹ The body of your text stands on footnotes, balanced by groundwork imprinted with the traces of passages by others. You split yourself from the surface text to recall a pre-occupation with the “**procedural**” of Michel Serres [In, N. Thrift, & M. Crang (Eds.). 2000], a philosopher you read years ago who has come to “occupy” you again. It is a subterranean invasion that influences all your surface work. You realized you have been captured by the reading: lassoed, tied, and bound to look at him again, (and again): **Procedural:** this term has its origins in *procedo*, the act of walking, or rather moving forward step by step. This also means to advance among the particularity of sites and conditions. Can one define a way of thinking based on such a model? Is it not precisely what proper philosophy denounces as empiricism? Not even that, for at the end of the journey, empiricism intends to rejoin the universal it did not posit at the beginning. We are dealing here with something quite different — that is, taking seriously the particularities of the sites, the unpredictability of circumstances, the uneven patterns of the landscape and the hazardous nature of becoming. In short, again: How to think the local. Which means, is there a science of the particular? (p. 288)

The process of *procedural* walks among the particularity of sites and conditions and processes in a relational way. As Puleo articulates (2007)³⁰ Serres' work is prepositional, "in, of, through, in front of, into, out of, onto, about," etc. (p.14). I am connected in relational, pre-positional ways and through diverse methods of representation, to the particular site work of my thesis garden. I circle around it making networks of connections from different spatial points of view and different points in time, in an effort to get to know the subject as it presents itself to me. I welcome its emergence, remarking the traces we leave and have left on each other as residues of events.



(Garden Cube seedlings and dismantling of Psychology building in the background, summer 2009)

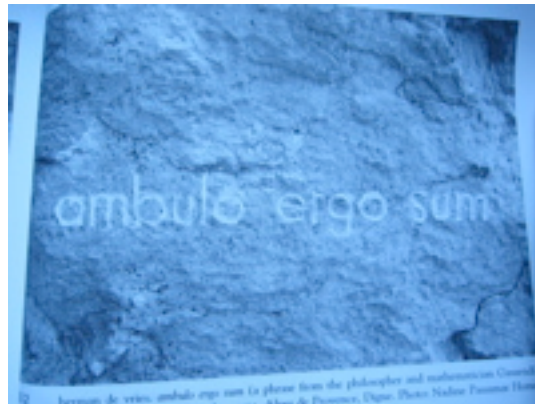
Pierre Gassendi, a contemporary of Rene Descartes, contested the "*cogito*" of Descartes with his "*ambulo*": "I walk therefore I am". Lucy Lippard (1997) writes that, "Motion allows a certain mental freedom that translates a place to a person kinaesthetically" and that "walking is the only way to measure the rhythm of the body

³⁰ The cords that anchor you to the work of Michel Serres, you draw outward, pulling yourself around "**the procedural**" as a center, describing a circumference around a point. You are tethered, but you find that you can relax the cord by not pulling so hard, and then you can venture within the circle or circus of events. You find that Puleo (2007) "*An integrating model for geography: Michel Serres as the clinamen?*", Zembylas (2002) "*Of troubadours, angels, and parasites: Reevaluating the educational territory in the arts and sciences through the work of Michel Serres*", and Paulson (2000) "*Michel Serres Utopia of language*" have drawn overlapping circles and inhabit some of the same spaces that occupy you.

against the rhythm of the land” (p.17). I prefer to walk with Heesoon Bai (in Hocking et al., 2007) not necessarily “against [its] rhythm” but with it as “we feel our body act intricately moment by moment, with the ground, the air, the trees, the sky, and all that embraces the body” (p. 93). I can come to know something of the landscape as I walk and process through it and with-in it. My feet as they are in contact with stones, earth, moss and tangled roots keep my eyes cast down feeling out the foot path, unlike walking the monotone of unbroken asphalt and its straight forward vision. A reader can also mobilize the work of the thesis. In the act of reading it, he or she walks through it anew, treading the distance between the clumsy written words and the events behind them.

But who is the “I” that walks? And where is the place(s) she is walking to?

Ambulo Ergo Sum/ Getting There



...again and today, Pat has provoked me and I wonder why I am drawn, feel drawn in as if something draws me to it. The liveliness of the garden project as we spoke of it, draws me to it, a murmuring behind the wall, a disturbance. And I am provoked to think “What are the movements and gestures of the disturbance”? There’s a forming and re-forming of the initial schoolyard garden into other projects. From the Mutchmor/Corpus Christi shared schoolyard it crossed the street over to the community center and became the First Youth Farm Apprenticeship Camp, and went from Lady Evelyn schoolyard to Leggett park children’s instructional community garden, and a parallel movement took it to the outer reaches- the Operation Go Home outreach street youth garden, and that’s not all...But Pat’s “Doubled Gesture”/ the haunted text/ my

garden haunts, and the scouting around this week for a space to plant in –finally after coming out of the academic writing unit and a seminar on the “Lit Review”, crossing over to LMX and I see two square empty concrete containers/planter boxes, and yeah– two! a doubling/ and then the two COG container/planter gardens in the doubled school yard sharing. And really, it seems so obvious to plant a school teacher container garden outside the faculty as a doubling gesture, an echo of the disturbance and haunting the outdoors of the faculty of education. (Personal journal notes Oct. 17, 2008)

The “I” of this journaling part of the “auto” of autobiography displaces me again as I look over my own shoulder transcribing old notes. I am brought back to Serres (1995), and this time to the disembodiment inherent to what he calls “philosophies of suspicion”:

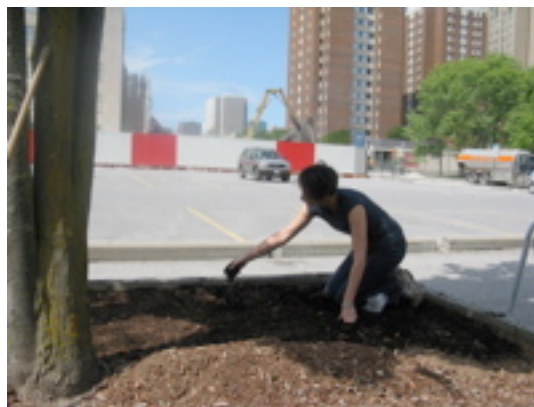
The critic’s ultimate goal is to escape all possible criticism. He looks over everyone else’s shoulder and persuades everyone that he has no shoulder. That he has no heart. He asks all the questions so that none can be asked of him... When a policing body is looking over a person’s shoulder, assessing his heart and innermost workings, are we to suppose that this policing body has neither a shoulder of its own, nor heart, nor innermost workings? (p. 133)

My disembodied self lurks as a haunting abstraction. Writing myself into this paper is unsettling as I re-inhabit old settlements and walk through the institutions and bureaucracies formed and built around printed text as a site for the privileges that go with it.³¹ Official knowledge hardens into bronze plaques making institutions more

³¹ Looking over your own shoulder, your policing body writes a passable literature review in deference to a colonizing institution. You cautiously refer to Paulson (2000) in “*Michel Serres Utopia of language*”. Paulson writes about: “the successive rise of new media” standing in relief from “The persistent eighteenth and nineteenth-century institutions of the modern world, [which] from representative democracy to the press to schools and universities, now seem to have been more closely connected to the forms and practices of print culture than anyone realized during the long years of print’s hegemony” (p.222). Your disembodied and abstracted self floats like an island territory, or a satellite. Serres (1995) brings you back to your senses: “All around us language replaces experience ... The sound of the coin is not worth the coin; the smell of cooking does not fill the hungry stomach; the tongue that talks annuls the tongue that tastes or the one that receives and gives a kiss ... The sign, so soft, substitutes itself for the thing, which is hard. I cannot think of this substitution as an equivalence. It is more of an abuse and a violence” (p. 132).

institutional. I am also a virtual itinerant of Paulson's (2000) "mediasphere", of blogs, emails etc., and as well in a way, of the "the entire terraqueous globe" (p.217). My garden engages with practices of place-based pedagogy³² in a decolonization of the forecourt of the Faculty of Education. I plant a version of an Iroquois or Six Nations or Hodenosaunee "three sisters" garden: corn, beans and squash. This season the garden occupied a construction site at the faculty, enduring the worst weather in terms of rainfall and lack of sunshine recorded of any summer since the early 1970's.

Moving towards claiming an indigenous self includes claiming multiple orientations for myself as artist/researcher/teacher. A/r/tography grows as a methodology for unravelling my preoccupation with the thesis garden site. I grew myself alongside the garden. The garden project seems to function as a reflection of what is cultivated and un-cultivated in myself. Whilst writing myself into this paper I bring with me a variegated assemblage of reading and writing histories, literacies and "eco-literacies", which orient me away from some of the more traditional aspects of research.



³² You now have to move outside of the hegemony of so-called "Western" Enlightenment, and consider, especially in North America, who has been left out? Who and what have been displaced? and with David Gruenewald (2007), you must be moved to consider and reconsider one of his criteria for the re-inhabitation and de-colonization of a specific site. Gruenewald poses the question "What is the role of indigenous knowledge?" (p.149). See also Appendix 'B'.



(planting wheat, May, 2009)

Métissage³³

Back from Pat's office and having the revised REB forms re-signed, and then catching up with her. It's been a frenetic couple of days—planted two of the other boxes on Monday with spirals of wheat, only to discover two days later, today —that my mini-monocultures have been colonized with petunias! (Personal journal notes, June 3, 2009)

This thesis is structured as a form of métissage; a mixture of writing genres and gestures and split territories on and off the page and into the margins of art, eco-art,

³³ You wander through many passages and texts and get lost in the tangled undergrowth. You wonder what the “métis” of métissage stands for. Wikipedia says a Métis is a person born to parents who belong to different groups defined by visible physical differences, regarded as racial, or the descendant of such persons. And that “in Canada, the term usually designates a constitutionally recognized individual born of an Aboriginal group, descended primarily from the marriages of Scottish and French men to Cree, Saulteaux, and Ojibwa women in southern Rupert's Land starting in the late 17th century, and the marriages of French women to Ojibway men starting in Quebec in the middle 17th century.”

Canadian educational researchers Erika Hasebe-Ludt, Cynthia M. Chambers, and Carl Leggo (2009), in *Lifewriting and Métissage*, trace Metis back to Greek mythology: “Metis was the first love and wife of Zeus, and the mother of Athena, the goddess of arts and wisdom ... she was also known as intelligent, a figure of skill and craft, a shape shifter who took many forms to outwit Zeus. ... The word métissage is derived from the Latin *mixiticius*, meaning the weaving of a cloth from different fibres. Thus métissage through its genealogy of magical cunning, and mixing, weaves disparate elements into multivalenced, metonymic and multi-textured forms, unraveling the logic of linearity, hierarchy and uniformity” (p. 36).

a/r/tography, and bricolage. I seek to disrupt “the normative academy” which at its heart must desire its own disruption (Macleod & Holdridge, 2006, p. xiv). New forms of research bring with them reversals, hybridities, the leaking of old borders, and as Hendry (2007) writes, “consequently, from a systems perspective, knowledge is not an object but a network” (p. 492).

It may be *only* by throwing diverse systems together that new knowledge and resiliencies can emerge. In order to reflect a shifting of the center to the periphery, or towards a “multi-centered society”³⁴ research may have to look and feel awkwardly different. Awkwardness marks learning something new. This qualitative inquiry and its written expression does not follow a standardized format. I read Laurel Richardson (2003) and I realize that step by step, I am walking away from a known form; and that “unlike quantitative work, which can be interpreted through its tables and summaries, qualitative work carries its meaning in its entire text” (p. 924).

My garden invasion of the periphery of Lamoureux Hall was representative of two worlds: a “First Nations” world with the companion planting of corn, beans and squash, and a “first world” monoculture of wheat. The wheat was invaded by what became an ubiquitous spread of petunia boxes across campus. Subsequently, wheat seeds left behind in the planter dirt and unseen by contractors, sprouted in another infestation amongst the

³⁴ As you move around in the footnotes, texts and the contexts for the thesis you become a literary nomad, even of this one small locale. You are introduced to Lucy Lippard’s *The Lure of the Local* (1997) and “the notion of multicenteredness as an extension of the often-abused notion of multiculturalism. Most of us move around a lot, but when we move we often come into contact with those who haven’t moved around, or have come from different places ... Each time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity, which is really what all “local places” consist of. By entering that hybrid, we change it” (p. 6). And reciprocally, it changes us. Perhaps, as John Rauslton Saul (2008) claims in *A Fair Country*, we are all part of the Métis nation.

invading petunias. Finally, my “wheatfield” was re-planted and relocated across the street in a larger tree planter container, and grew up beneath a small canopied maple tree.



(invading petunias, growing wheat, closeup of wheat, Spring 2009)

Heeding (Questions)

I had the great good fortune of meeting ecopedagogical author, David Jardine, at the “Provoking Curriculum “ conference (Spring, 2009) at Ottawa U. He subsequently replied to an email I sent him where I included a reference to Serres “procedural”:

“science of the particular”--there is certainly the old sense of knowledge to be had of the particular, because each particular, as a "small part" (Latin: *particulum*), always shows itself as part OF something, does it not? and it therefore shows itself as a "gathering spot" about which we might gather something of the whole of which it is a part...

i'm reminded of what Gadamer says about words: “every word breaks forth as if from a center and is related to a whole, through which alone it is a word. Every word causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate” [Gadamer 1989, p. 458]. there can be science here, but not a science that takes methodology as its initiating gesture. the first gesture in *scientia*/wisdom must be heeding...

it was great to meet you and have a brief chance to talk. let me know how things go as your work proceeds. (Personal email correspondence June 14, 2009)

Jardine’s “heeding,” describes what is felt as a hesitating preliminary for relationship.

Heeding and listening foreground process. It keeps me moving, hesitantly, prodded by events. In this way of procession/walking and processing through, my method was simple. I planted a garden because I was drawn into the liveliness of the original Growing Up Organic school garden. Could the liveliness I found there be transplanted onto another site? Could anyone else be lured by it? Could I draw attention to its potential for

enlivening curricula, or those that will come to teach it, or maybe draw them to gardening as place-based pedagogy. Perhaps the garden could draw attention to the lack of attention given over to biotic diversity, to nature studies, and as Jardine (2000) reminds us, to the earth “that is the only topic” (p. 3).

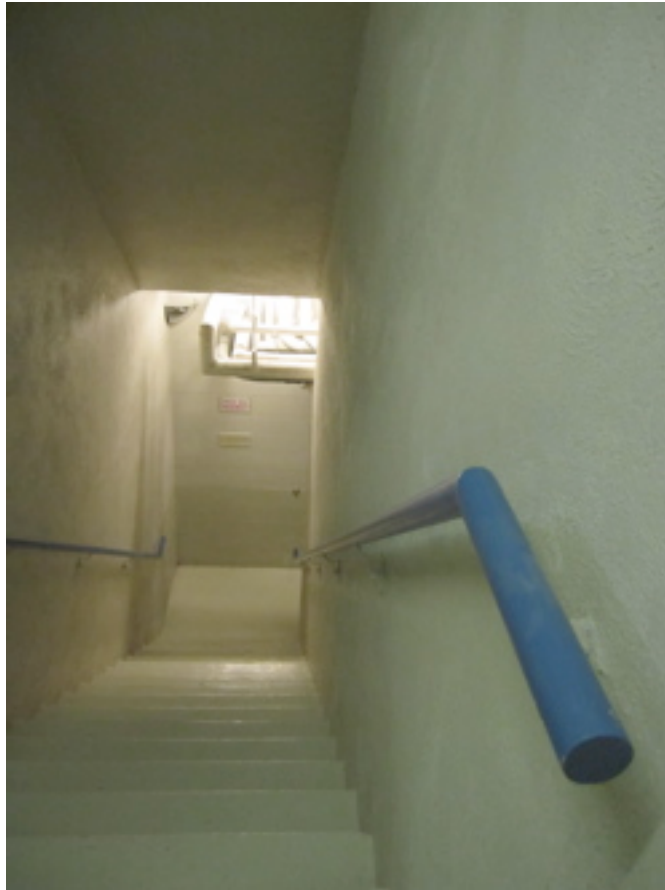
As a “sustainable” researcher in the humanities, which includes practice as an eco-artist, I ask with environmental art writer, John Grande (1995) whether art could have a “more pervasive, subtle role” in heeding the world:

Is it possible that significant art of the future will present an entirely new basis for aesthetic judgment where near invisibility is considered “high art?” ... This kind of aesthetic neutrality would be judged not by how it stands apart from, but by how it silently integrates into a given environment. (p. 94)

Jardine often recalls the work of Gadamer³⁵ in his usage of the phrase “always and already a part of” where he reminds educators of the inseparability of themselves here and now, with the subject(s) and histories of their practices. As a part of our research practices, the subtle integration and near invisibility that Grande writes about might reflect what living and sustainable research practices come to look like. We disappear into practice that waits for us to take it up.

³⁵ Jardine’s ecopedagogy involves the “topography” of a topic. We go somewhere when we follow a subject and “take it up”. He has taught Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (1960) in one of his Education classes every year for a dozen years. You come across references to Gadamer numerous times from different sources as you take up your subject. You go to *Truth and Method* holding your breath in concentrated reading, for at times it seems impenetrable. You find a more approachable text in “*Gadamer in Conversation*” (2001), which feels vital. The liveliness of his transcribed conversations, the exchange of breath there, lures you into understanding a bit more the phenomenology of phenomenological hermeneutics. Gadamerian “*Verweilen*” or “tarrying”, is what Jardine (2008) calls “whiling.” Whiling and tarrying are conditions for Jardine’s “heeding,” and as you take the time to settle into a place, you are sensible – in a moment of waiting and listening.

Who's "Here"?/ Who is it that Writes?/ The Subject Hides Itself/



I was in the basement of a building; not a nice building, an office block. I was at a table in the basement of an office block. The walls are cement, painted white-grey; the stairs down are cement, the handrail is a tube of blue steel; the lights are fluorescent striplights. the only dot of colour going down to the bottom of the interior flight of basement steps, is a red fire extinguisher pinned to the wall. A fire would be lively, but there's nothing to burn, maybe even no oxygen here in the basement corridor. I was in the basement archives under the medical clinic at Ottawa U. and going through boxes of material that might have anything to do with the "place" that is Lamoureux Hall and the Faculty of Education. I was walking through the map of Gruenewald's steps for decolonization/reinhabitation of a place. Who was here before? What are the histories and stories of this place? ...The land on the top of the hill of Sandyhill where the U is, had people in houses on it. the land was expropriated by the University in the 1970's and the houses pulled down to build the brooks residence in the later 1980's. There are photographs of the exterior fronts of each of the houses, but no photos of the backyards nor the people that lived in them. Perhaps only the architecture is important when there's a building site to be cleared. It also says that there

was trees, "some of them very large". They are not there now. (Personal journal notes, Sept., 2009)

With Logsdon (2006) I ask, "who is it that writes?" (p.160). With artist Massimo Guerrera (2008) I ask "whether I can say at all [that] there is a truly circumscribed, limited and almost tangible space that I call me?" (p.204), knowing already that when I am doing my best work the "I" that is "me", disappears.

Where do I go to when I disappear, and who is it that writes when I unmake myself during the processes of making? My mothering self? My researcher self? My artist self? And how do I "bring my writing closer to my making?" (McLeod and Holdridge, 2006, p.12) when the I that is me disappears? I lose my self-conscious subjectivity when I am making art, in what Csikszentmihalyi calls "flow".³⁶ What kind of writing flows and does not feel like its voice has been forced? How might it indicate itself to me?

An instance erupts into a question that struck me while I was following through on aspects of research into Gruenewald's "place-based pedagogy"³⁷ and I found myself sitting in the windowless basement archives of the University of Ottawa, underneath the university medical centre at the corner of King Edward and Somerset St. East. As I was poring over architectural site and building plans archived for Lamoureux Hall and the future Faculty of Education in 1978, suddenly the question popped into my head, perhaps

³⁶ Another step further from the last footnote, Jardine recommends in another email that you read S. Ross (2004), who takes up "*Gadamer's Late Thinking on Verweilen*" as she takes you into "hermeneutical absorption": "Gadamer ... not only emphasizes how the time-structure of tarrying makes this kind of human experience unique, but suggests that this human experience constitutes the "highest" human reality. ... He even speculates that experiencing the artwork is analogous to the Greek way of being with the gods: hermeneutical absorption is "a highest form of activity of a highest reality" (p. 145). You realize that this absorption sounds an awful lot like Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. NY: Harper & Row, or, how you feel when you are working, and things are working *with* you.

³⁷ Gruenewald's "decolonization and reinhabitation", (see Appendix 'B').

in one of the “ruptures” Stephanie Springgay (2008) writes about in *Body Knowledge and Curriculum*, “how [in the world] did I get here!?” It was not a place I had been able to map out.

Procession: How did I get “Here”?

When I say to myself in an exclamatory, “How did I get HERE?” there’s an implicit wonder at how I must have arrived some place, perhaps some place strange. The feeling of being “here”, is where I wasn’t, before. I’ve got somewhere, even if I am not sure where that is— and how did that happen when I didn’t know where I was heading? I pace off the area of my research, heeding Gruenewald (2007), and step into something else, somewhere else, other. Is it the Othered-ness that stops me? The “how” part of the question I put to myself, reflects a need to trace backwards my arrival at this condition in this place now. To belabour this point via a phenomenological text, it must mean something for me to find myself “here”. It feels like somewhere engrossing, a place I got to paradoxically, only by losing myself. I am amazed about feeling lost and “placed” at the same time; a-mazed, as in a labyrinthine passage. Gadamer would say that the extent of our engrossment is a measure of the value of the experience and that to lose oneself is the highest form of human experience (Ross, 2004, p. 145). Eco-art writer John Grande (1995) in his inquiry into a new art that does not “stand apart from” (p. 94) may also reflect this immersion with the subject/object of our inquiries. On the other hand, Serres’s (1995) “philosophies of suspicion” (p. 133) privilege the placeless language of abstraction and disembodied disentanglement.

The subject hides itself engrossed in its labours: unfixed and in flux like the caterpillar weaving its cocoon of traces, to be read by someone else, and becoming ready to be

someone else. Although knowledge is partial, we can know something *of* the subject by the kinds of traces it leaves behind, and the kinds of language we use to describe it. David Jardine (2008) in *Translating Water* speaks of the limits and betrayals of language as a device of abstraction. We may be betraying something when describing a phenomena that can only ever be *other* than what words can describe. Yet words can “move” us too, and also betray something *of* the kind of thing it is. Writing as a method of inquiry helps me to pick apart what happens in an instant, and see that it is related to a larger theme.

The “how” of “How did I get here?” foregrounds often “rhizomatic” processes that move me in relation to places and place-ing. Van Manen’s (2002) “phenomenological writing” (p. 238) helps me to manoeuvre the particularities of sites and to write “the hazardous nature of becoming” (Serres “*procedural*” footnote, p.28) while writing around the schoolyard garden “as a collection of events.”

Phenomenological text makes us “think” and it makes the world address us and call upon us to think our feeling in the broadest and deepest sense of the term... More strongly put, the reader must become possessed by the allusive power of text— taken, touched, overcome by the addressive effect of its reflective engagement with lived experience. (Van Manen, 2002, p.238)

Phenomenology’s philosophical insistence on process as primary, and with it our ever-shifting relationships with the world, help me to understand the traces I leave, and the traces that events inscribe in me, with all the peculiarities and particularities of the local.



(Late wheat, garden project, Lamoureux Hall, 2009, and late wheat with birds)

CHAPTER 3: THE GARDEN PLOT

On the Verges

Things that move, flow or grow, like clouds and verdant undergrowth and overgrowths have shifting boundaries, or are boundless and on-the-move. Liveliness makes them edgy. Like children growing [in] their skins, peripheries shift seamlessly through time³⁸. We draw fixed lines around things that have no fixity; unfixed we fixate

³⁸ You consider the implications of shifting borders and seasons underwritten by footnoted flows of time. Your memory is imprinted over time and in lingering, in rare texts that include time as “*Verweilen*” (Gadamer, 2001, pp. 76-77) tarrying and whiling with Jardine (2008), and you linger once again in the laminar flows of Michel Serres’s (1982) writing: “And experience shows that there is no flux without eddy, no laminar flow which does not become turbulent. Now, and here is the crux of the matter, all times converge in this temporary knot: the drift of entropy or the irreversible thermal flow, wear and aging, the exhaustion of initial redundancy, time which turns back on feedback rings or the quasi-stability of eddies, the conservative invariance of genetic nuclei, the permanence of a form, the erratic blinking of aleatory mutations, the implacable filtering out of all non-viable elements, the local flow upstream of negentropic islands— refuse, recycling, memory, increase in complexities. The living organism, ontogenesis and phylogenesis combined, is of all times. This does not mean that it is eternal, but rather that it is an original complex, woven out of all the different times that our intellect subjects to analysis or that our habits distinguish or that our spatial environment tolerates. Homeorrhetic means at least that: the rthesis flows, but similarity pushes upstream and resists. All temporal vectors possessing a directional arrow are here, in this place, arranged in the shape of a star. What is an organism? A sheaf of times. What is a living system? A bouquet of times” (p. 75).

on keeping them still. “Don’t go there”. Anxieties can be one of the residues of edginess and living in or inhabiting the fringes of peripheral spaces. We feel instability in our feet as shifting ground. The ground shifts and we quake. Anxiety is one of the vestiges of the garden project.

Play draws on the boundaries of rules, of what is deemed possible by the group, as in “you’re out of bounds”. When you’re out of bounds “the axe comes down”, the whistle is blown on your behaviour. Disordered play is read as chaos because we don’t know the internal rules, or they haven’t manifested themselves yet. We might feel that we don’t know where we are anymore or what the point is. Anxiety makes us fix it before it falls apart or becomes something else, and then we might feel safer in the knowledge of boundaries. The campus garden itself shifted, was bounded, unbounded, swallowed by construction fences and finally released to future replenishment in new seeds.

The Canadian Organic Growers’ “Growing Up Organic” schoolyard garden projects inhabit peripheral in-between spaces outside the doors of official school, and are neither of the schoolyard proper, nor part of normal schooling activities. It’s interesting that some studies of children’s behaviour in schoolyards note that children are drawn to the wilder edges (Upitis, 2007, p. 4). They are drawn towards uncultivated fringes, climbing trees, hiding in bushes and long grass (if they can get it), playing with sticks and throwing stones. As wiser adults who may reflect inherited ideas of children as uncivilized, wild and willful, we seek to contain these dangerous behaviours. “For their own good” we draw boundaries against what they are drawn to. But outsiders and the out-sized or the ones that don’t fit, can draw their own strange boundaries and flourish in different places to play by their own rules. Sometimes the boundary is the circle of the circus, or the

rectangular playing area of a stage. Sometimes it's a gang. Whatever shape this takes, we do want to go to different places.

During most of the time of the garden project I was anxious, walking the borders of what was possible, or probable, likely to happen or impossible and improbable. Subcontractors of the Physical Resources Department at Ottawa U. carry out officially proscribed landscaping duties in accordance with the Master Plan for the university. Winter takes up most of the regular university semester season, as well as the normal school season in Canada, and vegetative growth vegetates mostly unseen under cover of fallen leaves, snow, ice and dirty snow and ice seeded with salt. Outside is cold, harsh, pale, and avoided, for the most part of the time that students spend at school.

Timing is everything when you live in Northern Hemisphere Zone 5, with a very short growing season. Getting permission from the right bureaucracies to grow a vegetable garden and wheatfield in places earmarked for petunias and other box plants was an exercise in walking the line between what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable campus activities. For what was once a routine activity, planting seeds in springtime, and for what was such a very small intervention, entire administrations seemed to need to rotate and groan.

My timing was good within a larger sense, as the idea of imminent environmental collapse has permeated official consciousness resulting at least in word combinations such as "green campus initiatives" and "sustainable education". Hence within the larger framework of ideas, what I proposed to do by planting a garden on the fringes, was considered a possibility. However, planting, growing and farming is knowledge that has

been lost to landscaping and agricultural experts.³⁹ A short growing season is largely meaningless to people who don't grow anything and who can pick up broccoli year round at the local 24-hour supermarket for less than two bucks a head.

Knowing how remotely most people consider soil and food cultivation caused me anxiety. Beyond kindergarten, many people have never planted a seed nor tended a garden patch. Only 1% of the Canadian population are now engaged in farming. These "occupations" are largely conceived of as recreational activities or as something kids might be interested in. Administrators may know well that there's a definite and finite growing season, but as it's not a life or death issue, who cares? And again, where no one cares, anxieties flourish untended.

The Physical Resources person was open and amenable to my borderland garden. He understands the season, but he also has responsibilities for the entire campus Master Plan. We take a walk to the concrete boxes on the edge of the parking lot. It's late fall 2008 and

³⁹ Digging under the surface of schooling practices, you get a sick feeling in your guts. Fadeggon's (2005) analysis of the New York State program "Kids Growing Food" school gardening program reveals particular insights into a troubling lack of teacher knowledge especially in the preliminary grades, about plant sciences, horticulture and even basic gardening practices such as planting seeds and watering them. A number of times she repeats from her findings that "pre-service elementary teachers do not currently receive adequate instruction in basic science, biology or botany in their post secondary education. ... Elementary teachers are uncomfortable with their knowledge of the plant science concepts needed to garden. ... Their understanding of photosynthesis and seed germination is obviously lacking when as one teacher stated, "The vegetables that were planted beneath the sunflowers did not prosper. Squash and pumpkins must need sunlight!" (p.47, 48); "Elementary teachers and students appeared to have a limited knowledge of the requirements of plants with the exception of water. They did not appear to understand the natural resources required to grow agricultural products. When plants were kept indoors even the use of water became questionable. Many teachers mentioned having a problem with over watering. This may have been due to the fact that teachers and students did not understand the need for oxygen availability in the soil. Not all teachers understood plant light requirements" (pp. 73-74). What is taken-for-granted disappears, first into the background as what endures; second as what was lost.

the boxes are barren; the parking lot is a blight. There's not a patch of green to be seen anywhere amidst the asphalt and concrete landscape except "the gristle-y bits" of grass and stunted weeds poking through the edges where asphalt meets the concrete of the curb. Sure, I can have the boxes and do I want to have them moved across the road directly in front of Lamoureux Hall? I'd have to get permission – he'd have to get permission he says – from the faculty, which he is quite willing to do. All the concrete boxes, and there is a lineup of more than eight of them residual beneath the overpass, are able to grow nothing where they get no light (we both laugh). All these boxes have to be moved because of anticipated construction and landscaping, so it's not that big a deal. However, it is one or two more items to be ticked off of the list of things I'll have to do before I will be able to plant next spring – a few more emails and worries about timing, which I have to remember to follow through on.

Time and Anxiety

Awareness of time is another residue of the garden project. Once the boxes are moved, the soil has to be changed, and when will the contractor be able to do this? A few more emails in the spring, some phone calls, and the anxious attending to replies that may or may not come easily, run parallel to approval from the Research Ethics Board. The processes of paper work and deadlines coincide with the end of term. By the end of April, beginning of May, most students have gone home or to summer jobs. I have two participants who have come to me by the end of May. But planting weekend in Ottawa comes after the last frost, which is typically the third weekend in May. I am already late.



(Planter boxes “on the verges”, Spring, 2009. These two were originally planted with wheat.)

Borderland Invasions on the Verge

Lack of prediction and control causes anxiety; tension rises with time and no crop. Is this how farmers feel? The worldwide poverty of farmers is featured in this month's Harper's (June, 2009), the "Bill Gates/ Let Them Eat Cash" article...There were squirrel tracks in my newly planted boxes. I am sure they got a number of squash seeds. So now what do I do? Buy pre-grown squash seedlings and plant them? Is that fudging the results? (Personal Journal entry June 7, 2009)

...stopped on the way back from the market to find one of my gardens violated, my stick tepee pulled out. I found it discarded nearby and the old sticks I'd replaced thrown on top of the box. One bean plant had been ripped out still tied to its stick. I was saddened by this as it is the box that is not doing as well as the other. In fact when I was watering them the other night I found myself perversely wanting to reward the box that was growing so well, and give it more water than the other one, a favouritism which doesn't seem ethically right, but may be an evolutionary deep-seated inclination to favour what thrives or what looks healthy, especially when resources are scarce, which in this case, they are. There are no external water faucets nearby. (Personal Journal entry June 25, 2009)

“Verge” is an interesting word in the context of my project, meaning edge or rim:

From “etymonline”

<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=verge&searchmode=term>
M.Fr. verge "rod or wand of office," hence "scope, territory dominated," from L. virga "shoot, rod stick," of unknown origin. Earliest attested sense in Eng. is now-obsolete meaning "male member, penis" (c.1400).. Sense shifted to "the outermost edge of an expanse or area", or "point at which something happens" (as in on the verge of).



(Planter cube amidst construction, August, 2009, with corn, beans and squash)

My second visit this month was a drive by to show my sister (visiting from LA) the interesting project I have been talking about all summer. Everything looked green and growing but unfortunately there was a layer of dust from the construction site right behind the planter boxes that lent an air of ‘road side’ to the garden. The wheat was booming and looked beautiful in this urban setting. I am sorry this project has been interfered with by the construction. I remain hopeful and curious to the returning student reaction. [Blog entry Aug. 23, 2009, Able Gardener 2]



“To verge for” is the originating phrase for to vouch for something, or to swear fealty to. Living at the outer edges or lying in-between territories, one might eventually have to swear allegiance to a larger governing body. Living on the border may mean otherwise getting caught in dodgy enterprises beyond the realm of acceptable activities;

unsanctioned couplings and trading, black-market deals, secret passages that cross the line with backwards and forwards movements of illicit or untaxed goods and materials. What is kept hidden seeps through the porous membranes of borders. Being nimble or able to side-step expectations might become a matter of survival.

The vegetable patches, which grew on the verges of the Education building, inhabited a porous border of invasion and counter-invasion. The conditions amidst which they grew I came to read with a measure of irony. The mini-gardens became overwhelmed by renovations at Lamoureux Hall that included construction of a cafeteria immediately behind them, which would no doubt serve non-local food by future suppliers of pre-packaged produce. The entire psychology building on the opposite site of the parking lot was demolished.

Initially I had planted wheat in two of the boxes at the corner of the parking lot. These were invaded by a non-local species of cultivated petunias. The subcontracted grounds-keeping crew had not yet been informed about my garden plot. The mini wheatfields had to be transplanted to another location across the road from the construction. A larger tree planter containing a small maple tree without much of a canopy of branches was where the wheatfield ended up. The petunias which had invaded the boxes I had planted with wheat, experienced a counter invasion; missed wheat seeds grew up between the potted plants, later to be weeded out by unknowing subcontractor predators. I had constant anxieties over who would win these “land wars”.

Construction machinery and materials, and the crews that worked with them eventually subsumed the planter boxes. This included a large generator bigger than the box it stood against: bobcat diggers and backhoes, circular concrete saws, panels of steel,

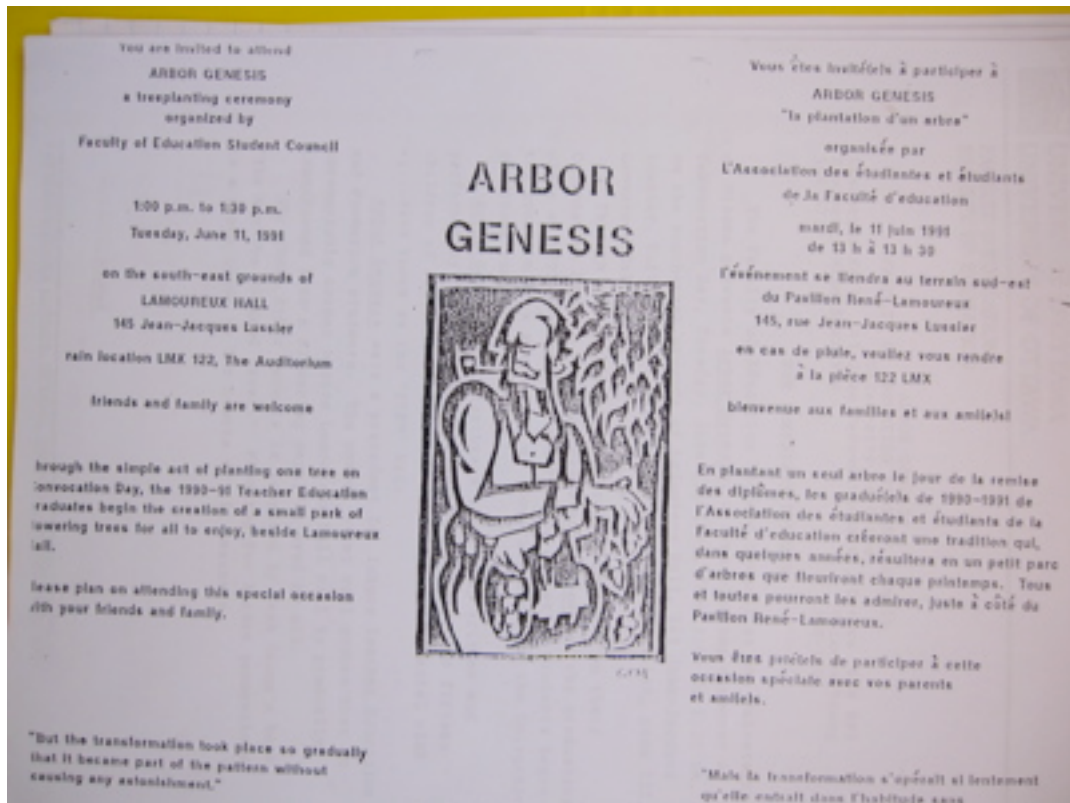
and wooden pallets. Plate glass, and bales of fibreglass were leaned up against them, sometimes cutting off the tendrils of plants that trailed over the edges. Several times, the twining tendrils and vines of squash overgrew the edges of the boxes, sliding down and into the asphalt roadway. They were regularly smashed and shifted and swept away by road sweepers keeping the dust down.

Large flatbed trucks that carried the equipment and materials, tractors, caches of tiles, construction fencing, cladding, siding and new doors, pulled up alongside or parked in front of the planters. All the bells and warning whistles shouted about while cranes came and swung materials off the truck beds. There was no peace on site except for weekends, when I would return to find increasing amounts of construction fencing placed behind and then completely enclosing, the planter boxes. I had to break in to the fencing surreptitiously in order to water and otherwise tend to the crop of corn, beans and squash. Migrant refuse from the construction crews was also gathered from the spot as vestigial remains: 2 Pepsi cans, 2 large green plastic No Name 2 litre size ginger ale bottles, 2 plastic 500 ml Evian bottled water, 2 Tim Horton medium paper coffee cups, 1 Tim Horton take-out tray, 13 cigarette butts and 2 green foil gum wrappers. I became an itinerant worker avoiding the site during the day, arriving and disappearing on weekends or at sunset. The wheatfield was disturbed by High-Pressure Sodium light emitted by security lights in the parking lot; at one end of the planter box, there was no night, and the wheat was stunted and never bloomed. It produced neither wheatbud flowers nor seed, at the end of the box that could not escape the HPS light.

I spoke with one construction foreman at the beginning of the project asking for a truce or *détente*, requesting of him to kindly take precautionary measures to protect my

vegetating population. He was sympathetic to what I was trying to do, and initially so were the crews who worked for him. But as time went on, I conclude that there was a strain on all the systems, as my post-colonial garden was swallowed by construction materials and fencing. Construction activity did not end on the site into the new year, even as it was estimated to be completed by October. The boxes are now removed somewhere not on site. They are gone. The construction site is covered over and wrapped in a veiling of tarpaulins, as I write this, hiding what might never have existed. Strangely, I miss concrete boxes that other people never saw nor that can be seen now at all.

Another of the leavings of this project was archival residue. Gruenewald's (2007) steps towards "de-colonization and re-inhabitation of place" (p.149-150) require a researcher or teacher to dig into layers of the history of the site. At the University of Ottawa archives I was sifting through materials in the only box designated with the word "environment". I encountered the first item with shock. It is a 20 page brief on "SICK BUILDING SYNDROME" in large lettering, which invites me to remember connections between the first wave of energy saving construction practices and policies in the 1970's. Conservation architecture meant designing buildings where the windows could not be opened, where insulation was put behind vapour barriers, and where air circulation systems had little to do with fresh air. Human inhabitants of the new buildings were effectively sealed off inside plastic bags. Then, I came across an invitation by Faculty of Education pre-service teachers to an event that took place in 1991. They called this event "Arbor Genesis".



(Excerpt, bottom left: “But the transformation took place so gradually that it became part of the pattern without causing any astonishment”)

Nido/Nest

Arbor Genesis was a treeplanting ceremony “organized by the Faculty of Education Student Council” to celebrate Convocation Day. The invitation cover page is above. The planting of a “flowering tree” took place behind the Faculty of Education, Lamoureux Hall, and on the edges of what was then the new Brooks student residence (finished in 1987). Student teachers wanted to inaugurate a future “small park of flowering trees”, by planting one in the spirit of Jean Giono’s “The Man Who Planted Trees”. This was a popular National Film Board animated film by Frédéric Back, released around that time (1987).

I tried to find which tree it must be, by following directions provided in the lovely wood block illustrated invitational leaflet. I believe it to be a small flowering crab apple tree. In lieu of a harvest event, and because of the encroachments of construction, and the presence of non-edible residues that might possibly have been absorbed by the vegetables, my participants and I harvested the residual plant matter from our boxes and wove it into a large nest in this tree. I noticed that branches of the apple tree spiral outward around the trunk, swirling upwards in spines, like the framework for a woven basket. We configured the nest out of remnants of corn stems and leaves, and squash and bean vines, interlaced with a supporting structure of a native Canadian grape vine that grows in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately, as far as I can determine, no other flowering trees⁴⁰ have been planted since. Young maple trees planted en masse, all about the same age populate the area.

Eco-artist Nils Udo built a staggeringly large and beautiful nest as one of his projects. A friend, remarking on his name and the nest idea, converged the information into “nido” which is the Italian word for nest and as well, nursery school. The construction of a nest

⁴⁰ Another notation lurks underfoot as you stop again at the words “flowering trees”. Now that you’ve linked “arbor genesis” to an apple tree, you recall Serres’s (1990) admonition “not to eat of that fruit”, “the product of arborescent knowledge” (p.58). Serres warns of the shadow sides of research:

“In the garden between two shores, among the proffered fruits and the peaceable beasts of the field, the *libido sentiendi*, a dream of love and feasts, happy, modest, silent, and scorned, serves as a backdrop, a source, and surely also as an excuse for the transhistorical confrontation of two other libidos: the *libido sciendi* and the *libido dominandi*. The *libido sciendi* is a craving for knowledge so much more powerful than the *libido sentiendi* that the whole human race doesn’t hesitate to set aside, in favour of its curiosity, and for all time to come, the entire Edenic satisfaction of the senses, though that gratification was within reach of the body. The *libido dominandi* is a never ending will to dominate, the most devastating of the three... . The senses are thrown to the winds so that brains and dominance can fight it out at their leisure” (p.58).

seemed a fitting and poetical end to the schoolyard project, and place-based pedagogy, because a nest is one of the first places out of which new beings are brought forth.



(Beyond the recycling bins is a small crab apple tree, in the right location, the right age for “arbor genesis”)



(“Nido”/nest, Fall , 2009)

Gathering Participants and Writing Around

Events of construction fencing around the garden boxes prompted physically stepping around the barriers to reach and tend to the planter boxes. These different sorts of movements around the periphery changed with the location of the fences, and make an awkward congruence between my original proposal references to “a narrative inquiry written *around* a schoolyard garden as a collection of events”.

Gathering participants was fraught with uncertainty for reasons of timing outlined previously in this text, but for other reasons also. Gardening is a recognizable activity for most people. However, even within marginal cultural activities of which art-making flakes at the edges largely unabsorbed by the wider social body, one arrives at eco-art as an unremarkable, unmarketable detour off the beaten path. So I can only say that my participants found me, and not the other way around.

I was invited to speak about my research work to a couple of end-of-term classes at the faculty, and I had hopes of recruiting interested volunteer/participants. An initial enthusiast drawn from this pool disappeared by the onset of planting season, but then two others approached me seemingly out of the blue. One, who came to be identified as “Able Gardener 2”, talked about being at the University 35 years ago and how she’d done her teacher training before Lamoureux Hall became the location for teacher-training. She had been caught by my part of a panel presentation at an education conference, her own interest in gardening, some spare time, and a desire to potentially get involved with children and Canadian Organic Growers projects.

Sitting with Able Gardener 2, who was tying bundles of wheat and oats together with a knot at the end, very adeptly– she made sure to put some green strands in with the drier stalks so that there was enough flexibility to tie them. I used cotton

thread to keep my bundles from collapsing. Most of the wheat was dried out husks, the seeds already fallen out or eaten by birds. I'd seen pigeons and sparrows feeding from the boxes, and I could find very few seeds on top of the soil. ... We talked about being able to roam as children, in fields of green, a shared experience of sitting alone on a hill⁴¹ surrounded by wild flowers, making daisy chains, and then how confined children are now. She grew up here in Ottawa- "a real local!" and "not many of us around" she said. (Personal journal notes Sept.9, 2009)



⁴¹ Canadian environmental education researcher Janet Pivnick (2001), documents the motivating experiences of environmental and ecological educators, researchers and activists, and their sympathizers, and concludes that most have had childhood experiences similar to the ones shared by AG2 and myself. Pyle, in Gruenewald (2007) claims these experiences are rare in profiles of a new generation of educators.



It's the first week of fall semester and there's thousands of students on campus, a week of warmth and sunshine which enlivens the campus with movement outside and a reluctance to go inside into classes... We sit on the edge of the raised bed container along with other students who've stopped to use cell phones, eat lunch or rendezvous. It's one of the few places to sit other than the Unicentre steps, which have reached a lunchtime capacity crowd. There are no benches I realize, and this seems quite un hospitable to all those young bodies that need lunch, air and sunshine as well as communal grazing grounds for sociability but that's not what university is about. Stoicism and control of the body⁴² through hard outlines of off-gassing high-density particle board desks, moulded plastic chairs in walled up classrooms impermeable to shifting air, light, weather and sound. That's what it's about. The uni-center is a sideshow of Rogers' hawking phones and cable, of credit card companies offering \$1,000 start up loans for students, of lineups into the bookstore for textbooks costing a fortune with no re-sale value. It's about the University as Big Box Store, and that's how it's being built. There is no handmade or homemade or home grown. No longer children, these young adults know where they are headed— to the mall. "After the ecstasy, the laundry"... After University, the mall. (Personal journal notes Sept.9, 2009)

We conclude that we are an oasis of the handmade and the home-grown, where the lovingly handmade intrudes unasked for, into official public spaces. The planter boxes

⁴² Mark Fettes, (2005), a Vancouver researcher at IERG (Imagination in Education Research Group), concludes from his research with young teachers, that they have great difficulty in literally moving beyond the beaten track of education programs. I wonder about the tensions that might lie behind feelings of constraint in places of education.

are green in a brown out zone of construction dust, concrete, and machinery. Able Gardener 2 has helped me sew our strips of knitted “tree cosies” to the tree trunks; one made by her sister in L.A because AG2 (Able Gardener 2) has suddenly been swamped with work. In her own words, she posted on the blog:

Though more fall than summer the weather is summer-like. I meet with Barb to put my knitting (my sister’s handiwork) project on the trunk of the 3-trunk tree, which is surrounded by the wheat crop – ready for harvesting and not a bad crop. I am reminded of lazy summer days long ago when I had time to lie in un-mowed fields near my home observing the end of summer – the smell of tall grasses, the fading wild flowers, the sound of bees and cloud formations. It sounds idyllic and sentimental but that is what the end of summer feels like to me; the harvest of summer’s growth and the chill of fall.

We made wheat corsages amid the rush of returning students, a young woman (a knitter) took pictures of the tree cozies and we took turns bemoaning the siege of the vegetable beds (plots, planters??). The reconstruction of the education building has overtaken the vegetable beds and covered them with dust and surrounded them with a protective fence. Hopefully the garden will shine again when the construction is finished but the fruit will be spoiled. The J.P. Getty clay swirls are still visible but they are covered by the white construction dust. I also hope once the fence is down people will have a chance to touch and lean against the veggie patch– we will see. [Blog entry Sept. 12, 2009, Able Gardener 2]

What was also interesting was AG2’s claims that she knew nothing of eco-art and that she had no artistic powers of expression, yet her description of summer idyll evokes all its delights, sensually and aesthetically. Must feelings of warmth and beauty be alluded to derisively as “sentimental”? After several meetings, and sharing the garden space in different ways, I found out about “Wabi Sabi”, an eclectic storefront venue for knitters and crafters on Wellington Street, and a group of knitters that Able Gardener 2 is acquainted with. Able Gardener 1 on the other hand, is well acquainted with eco-art, and has sent me images of an installation in New Mexico that is driven by her artist friend,

Nina Dubois⁴³. A posting online at the campus OPIRG (Ontario Public Interest Research Group) regarding this thesis project and work undertaken by the campus garden group, drew Able Gardener 1 to contact me. Her PhD work concerns issues of education, children, and violence, and she had been interested in “horticultural therapy”, also known as “ecotherapy”.

When it came to one of our eco-art activities, AG2 immediately got stuck into it with gusto, while AG1 was more reticent. I don’t think this had anything to do with either of their self-proclaimed capacities or incapacities or creativity quotients and deficits. Denying their creativity, they were both creative. However unlike AG1, AG2 is older, less self-conscious and happily not enrolled in the sometime disabling confines of a PhD program.

Though it feels like summer is almost over, this year’s harvest is decidedly late. Early this month, my first visit was to meet with Barb and Able Gardener1 to apply some artistry to the project. Though I have never worked in clay it was enjoyable to surround and decorate the vegetable garden in a beautiful way. One planter box was full of flowers and no fruit and the other had fruit growing– corn, zucchini, beans. All very healthy. The wheat was coming along but again the rain, lack of sun and heat had

⁴³ Nina’s installation on the grounds of the University of New Mexico involves the “digestion” of cultural artefacts generated by academia into useable compost. I emailed her and requested permission to use images and text about her work. From her signage at the site: “*Culture digest(e)* is a site-specific art laboratory that explores the waste stream of the University of New Mexico Campus and its potential to be creatively diverted and re-imagined. Designed as an on-site passive solar greenhouse, the project functions as a repository where cultural artefacts such as office memos, newspapers, food waste, and landscape debris are collected and photographed. These documents are then transformed into digital still life images that investigate the cultural meaning of waste and decay. The accumulated material is then composted within the greenhouse and made into a readily available form of soil nutrient, or organic compost. This, in turn, is used by the laboratory for planting and building, as well as landscaping and community projects”. http://www.etrememediastudies.org/extreme_media/13_LANDART/index.php

significantly delayed its growth. [Blog entry Aug. 23, Able Gardener 2]



(Clay spiral by Able Gardener 1)

I began by rolling out some red clay into long worms and pressing them into the tree trunk bark in a spiral shape. AG2 quickly mirrored what I was doing in an upside down spiral below the one I'd made. It was a nice inversion. Then she quickly rolled out more worms, long ones, and proceeded to frame the 2 container boxes of corn, beans and squash with spiralling tendrils and a waving outline of looping clay.



It was only after I had taken photos that we noticed the curling and spiralling tendrils reaching out from the bean and squash vines, mimicking the movement of the clay. It was a lively and lovely hour that we spent together. AG1 produced another beautiful spiral of clay moving towards its centre in red clay, and inset with white clay moving outwards.

I pressed clay into the pavement shadow of a squash leaf, leaving a physical trace of the shifting shadow. A day later it had been swept away by street sweepers.

The clay spirals on the tree trunks dried up and dropped off. Like bits of seashell pottery their remains scattered at the base of the tree trunks. A lovely coincidence happened a week or so later. While tending the boxes, now enclosed completely within the construction fencing, and after some rain, the remains of washed away clay spirals could still be seen along the edges of one of the boxes, but perched on the corner rim of the other box, was a thick coil of reddish brown copper wire, left there by a workman. As a physical parallel to the coilings of red brown clay, it was almost as if the unknown workman had shared our proclivities.



Photo Documentation

Instantly uploadable digital photos and videos are an important part of this project, as a record of garden growth over time, as a record of art and construction activity on the site, and as a site for memories for all that we could not see at the time, but that could be re-membered through photographs. For their intrusions as remnants, tracing real world and singular real time activity they can be injected as evidence, processing and projecting the realness of real time into a virtual website weblog that can be accessed anytime, anywhere: Serres' s "bouquets of time" (1995, p.75) and sheaves of real events. The thesis presents some of these photos as a beautiful intrusion of collected remains into the text. As sidekicks to the text, they are illustrative of its stories, but as stand-alone photographs they have their own integrity. By using them in this thesis in these ways I acknowledge their informative and aesthetic possibilities.

August: Barb, Able Gardener 2, and I worked with clay, placing spirals around the garden. This visceral experience was fascinating... holding the clay facilitated a sense of wonder and appreciation for the growth of this garden... in spite of such adverse conditions, the garden continues to flourish... I am really moved by the resilience of these relatively small gardens surrounded by clattering and sputtering machines. I think it would make a wonderful metaphor for a children's book... B's project also reminds me of a children's book I have been writing for some time. It is called The Spaghetti Garden and it is inspired by my friend who immigrated to Canada from Italy after the Second World War. She is an avid gardener and recounts stories describing the significance of her garden in her first years in Montreal. After 9/11, she saw many parallels between how she was treated as an immigrant from a fascist society, and the emerging Islamaphobia at the time [of 9/11]. After watching the news, she would say to me: You have to remember that this was a time when most people in Montreal had never heard of spaghetti. Hearing her experiences as a young person in a new country made me think of her garden as a

metaphor for resilience⁴⁴... and the resilience of the garden at Ottawa U reminds me of her stories. [Blog entry Able Gardener1, August, 2009]]



(Able Gardener 1, with knitting)

⁴⁴ An article by ecojournalist, weather watcher and author Chris Turner (2009), “The age of breathing under water” quotes Brian Walker of the Resilience Alliance: “With resilience... we kind of embrace uncertainty. And we try to say that the minute you know what the answer is, you’re likely to come unstuck. You need slack in the system. You need to have the messiness that enables self-organization in the system in ways that are not predictable. The best goal is to try to build a general resilience. Things like having strong connectivity, but also some modularity in the system so it’s not all highly connected everywhere. And lots of diversity” (p. 37).



September

The past few weeks, I am thinking about food security and the labour of those who cultivate the food we eat. I have been working as a TA for a course on Global Education and Social Justice for pre-service teachers and we have been discussing migrant justice issues... we have just finished reading about migrant farm workers. In particular I am thinking about [Deborah Barndt](#)'s work on the [Tomasita Project](#), which is described in her book [Tangled Routes](#). Barndt traces the path of the tomato from cultivation to packaging and marketing in North American supermarkets. Again, I think the Children's garden could draw links to these readings. I think many educators underestimate young children's understanding of social, political and economic issues, and the kind of analysis they are capable of.

[Blog entry Sept., 2009, Able Gardener 1]

Above is an excerpt from Able Gardner 1's web postings. She did not have the time to figure out the template for posting blog entries, so she sent her compositions to me all together and I did it for her. Neither of my Able Gardeners knew how to add tags to their blogs so that webcrawlers could take the keywords out into cyberspace, leave their cyber footprints, and attract visitors to the blog. Also, I used their links pointing to other people and their work, such as [Deborah Barndt](#) in this case, to "create" hyper links within the blog so that if someone clicks on Barndt, they are taken to her website. If they click on the [Tomasita Project](#), then this is immediately accessible; [Tangled Routes](#) becomes

another link. Like a spider I join holes in the web, patiently and impatiently spinning and re-weaving lines of thought in order to catch flitting passersby. I write about garden vestigia trapped into digital information packages unpacked or unwound online I think of the line of “online” as pushing a point through cyberspace towards some unknown destination. These lines of thought can also be conceived of as cords that bind me to Illich’s (Gabbard, 1994) thousand “alterities” (p. 178). Straining at the outer edges, the cord pulls tight and with enough sensitivity I can register the point at the other end. When things are slack I can freely wander around a topography. Short video clips could also be uploaded online. The noise and movement of construction recorded in these clips can encroach upon Brock’s (2008) “narratives of silencing” (p. 50). A wall of static silence surrounds typical landscape images and photographs, removing them from bodies in places, doing things.

Able Gardener 1’s blog entry comments about the “educational imaginary” that underestimates the capabilities of children. It reminds me of experiences I had with a group of 10-14 year olds who attended the First Youth Farm Apprenticeship Camp sponsored by Canadian Organic Growers and the Glebe Community Centre. I remember one thirteen-year-old’s extensive knowledge about soil composition; another’s stubborn refusal to eat pre-packaged food, her stories about her Brazilian grandmother’s home grown recipes, and her insistent attempts to cultivate tomatoes on the family’s high rise apartment balcony. These two young women were subsequently interviewed by CBC at the camp, and had a front page feature dedicated to their recipes for “Feast of Fields” on the Citizen food page that year. I am also reminded of the co-operative building of the camp outhouse by two other groups of children; one group dug the hole, the other group

sawed the boards and nailed them into a usable bathroom. Another child in the camp could tell us all about the frogs in the swamp and how to identify poison ivy. Admittedly, these were a self-selected bunch of interested young people, but it is impossible to have predicted their tenacity, their willingness to learn and participate amidst very rough camping conditions, nor their bubbling energy, and abiding fun-quotient, even when it rained and we had to milk the goats.

Able Gardener 1:

June. The children's garden is in the very early stages of growth and has an important presence near the education building. It is exciting to think about what will be cultivated and also the concept of it being a "post-colonial" garden. I really appreciate Barbara's commitment to this project and her attention to the agricultural practices of first peoples. I am hopeful that a new generation of teachers will be attentive to issues of food security, and especially culturally-appropriate food. The post-colonial garden reminds me of an initiative in Toronto, the Afri-Can Food Basket, which was an important food security movement: <http://www.africanfoodbasket.com/>

One of the co-founders was a fellow student at the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University and he inspired so many people with his commitment to the cultivation of, and access to, healthy and culturally-appropriate food. As I left Ottawa U. I walked past an elementary school near the campus and saw kids playing beside oak trees and small bushes. It was exciting to envision them in the process of cultivating food in the schoolyard. Undoubtedly they would bring important skills to such initiatives, in addition to learning new ones. I think that kids also bring an important element of wonder. Holding a seed, placing it deep in the earth and knowing that food will be cultivated is a realization that must elicit wonder! [Blog entry Able Gardener 1, June, 2009]

Vestigia can also be thought of as cast-offs, perhaps even a sort of waste, as well as a "given", or something gifted and freely given. Cast off and away from home a new perspective along farther lines of thought, it might be possible to see more clearly as

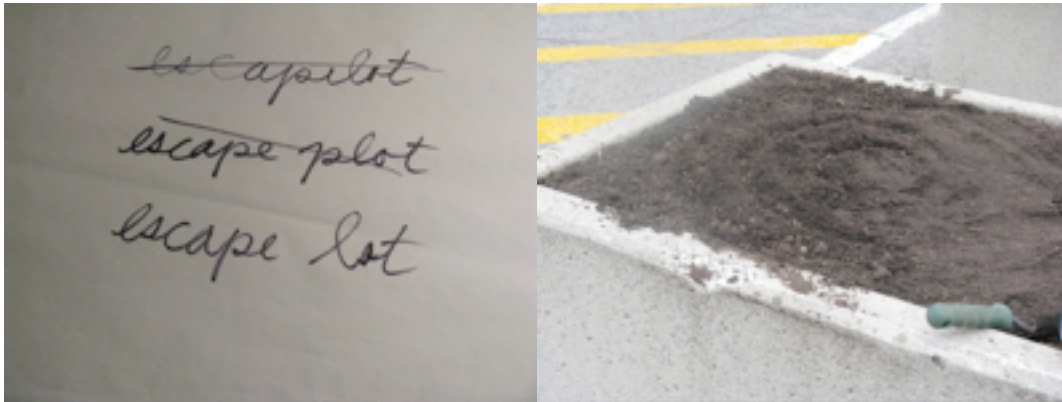
whole what's been left behind. Serres (1990) claims that as we have cast off from the earth and from working the soil, and cast off astronomically far enough from our Earth, we may finally be able to see her whole. What we give up in this cast off, outer-limits recognition, could be the sense of belonging. Reading with Serres (1990), "We have all become astronauts, completely deterritorialized" (p. 120).

When I write about the multimodal media generated by the garden in forms of video, photographs, emailed journal entries, web postings, and links to other virtual sites, I think of all this stuff as astronomical "tetherings" to and from the non-virtual garden earth, similar to the way that Serres (1990) describes our astronauts floating "...outside their capsule, but tethered to it by every available network, by the sum of our know-how and of everyone's money, work and capacities" (p.120). The digital packets of information are an umbilical conduit connecting the blogsite with the originating garden plot.

I return to one of my questions about the costs of knowledge, what is given or given up. Human beings tend not to see what is taken for granted, what is given: "it's easy to forget what endures" (Serres, 1990, p. 60). In the same way, through our knowledge and complex information systems we can cast ourselves off on too fragile strings, forgetting the earth(s). I write the 's' in parentheses because we may now occupy a twinned earth, somewhere between this local one that we stand on to look at pictures of another global one far and away in space, in a reflexive ping pong gesture of away and return and away again, but never quite "here". Pyle (2007) laments the doubled awayness of Serres *libido sciendi* and *libido dominandi*⁴⁵ that remove the value of local and sensual knowledge,

⁴⁵ (see footnote, p. 52, "not to eat of that fruit")

“local knowledge of non-human lives has been sidelined [in education] for the past 50 years”, and asks “how can a culture confront imperilled ecosystems when the large majority of the members have no functional knowledge of the system’s working parts” (p. 156). What we forget, or do not give a part of ourselves over to, or neglect, can be the death of us. Pyle and others remind us that at its heart, anthropocentrism is misanthropic.



The feedback loop closes quicker when algorithmic clouds of information regulate relationships and equations. “We all live downstream” – a car’s bumper sticker elucidates the Siamese twin reality of human nature and nature’s nature, as subject to one another. There are reciprocal bonds and restraints, permeable membranes that separate, enclose and allow for penetration. We forget what endures. This is one of the “givens” that is given up when analysis severs the cords of original participation and interdisciplinarity. Interestingly, these ruptures that seem to cast us so far away, may at last highlight interdependencies⁴⁶. It remains to be seen, perhaps in the post-Copenhagen climate talks,

⁴⁶ Serres (1990) “Tiers Instruit”, can settle for “ceaseless” wandering in-between spaces: “humanist and scientist, fast and slow, green and seasoned, audacious and prudent; ... ceaselessly wandering across the span that separates hunger from surfeit, misery from wealth, shadow from light, mastery from servitude, home from abroad. ... This mixture demands a paradoxical rootedness in the global; not in a plot of earth, but on Earth, not in the group, but everywhere; the plant image hardly makes sense anymore. Since we left the ground, casting off powerfully for more remote places, we have relied more on immaterial bonds than on roots” (p. 95).

whether we can re-tether ourselves to the earth, our more-than-human neighbours, and each other. Rootedness in one spot may not be fundamental to this re-tethering, if it is possible to keep in mind that a contract means to be bound knowingly in reciprocal obligation and nourishment, to tracts.



I struggle to reconcile belonging with casting off, in the attempt to see a wider perspective from a distancing angle. At the same time, I consider that new knowledge comes from transgressions of old boundaries and laws. To play at the edges of what was once common knowledge disrupts what was stable ground. Cut off, there is a sort of suffering. The wanderer suffers, and what is left behind may be neglected. Hence, does belonging mean to relinquish a wider perspective? Is it possible to be rooted in the global and not neglect the local?

Escapelot Plot

A gloomy drizzly wet day walk down to the park. My online virtual garden has attracted almost 300 blog “hits”, and I realize as I walk that that’s what I am thinking about. Those hits are how the blog registers impact, and is more real than my “real” garden which lies fallow, empty and un-real-ized, waiting for better weather, some good soil, REB approval, and seeding. Even so, it does exist in me. The virtual garden is the “avante-garden”, and “virtual” space becomes more valuable and enchanted, as more people visit it. Outside those online references, words and images however, the “real” garden is not real. I stumble over some feathers because they’ve emerged out of the brown wet quotidian. They are very definitely vertically striped and unlike the usual flotsam of leaves and

ratty feathers that gather along the low cement wall that skirts the rivers edge. But I am elated because I've found them right at the place where there's a nest built every year in the reeds by some red-winged blackbirds. It's really a bit early for them but I heard one a week ago. I check my bird book at home and see that the female red-winged blackbird is neither red-winged, nor black, but a brown stripey-breasted chirper. I'm sure I've seen one in the undergrowth as I get closer to home. One summer I watched her in the reeds making her little hanging nest, and later I admired her ferocity anytime anything came close. (Personal journal notes April 5, 2009)

The escapelot thesis weblog is a cache of vestigial residue that can provide resources for anyone likeminded who might be scurrying along at the edges of things, engaged in eco-art, gardening, research or ecoliteracies. It is an internet home address that can be added on to as more room is needed. Visitors can build or weave extensions onto or into it, through comments and uploads. There is always a little bit of activity registered there even if only as one or two accidental hits a day. And although the garden no longer exists now, it is still alive on the net as a cast-off trace reflecting something of what we participated in this summer.

Comments on the blog site record some activity from other lines of perspective:

From nincgerry on able gardener 1 September Post # [Pending]: *"True words, some truthful words dude. You made my day"*.

From charlotte, Submitted on 2009/11/05 at 8:09am: *"Seen from the buildings above, those boxes would be little oases between the roads and parking lots to break the monotony of the concrete view"*.

Forty-four comments have been registered on a total of 69 blog entries. As of writing this sentence 2,600 blog "hits" or visits have been made and recorded on the site.

The blog was a vehicle for me to connect to other internet sites as well, and a place for me to construct a personal map of traces to related sites, which could then direct tourists to another supporting network of interlinked places; places I've been to that I

like. Some places I felt I belonged to, and returned to again and again. I remind the reader of RANE (<http://rane.falmouth.ac.uk/>) an extensive research site which I stumbled on haphazardly.

I've come to realize that this thesis may represent wild parts unknown to the larger population with the blog serving as a reef perhaps for smaller fragile berths. At the same time as inhabiting a small and seemingly strange corner of research, via the blog and the Internet, I find that I am not so small and not so strange. There are other others that enliven what sometimes feels like a lonely and desolate spot. RANE downloads of research in video, photo and print format link me to a widening body of research. Social Environmental Aesthetic⁴⁷ in New York, and greenmuseum.org, create a pool of artists and eco-artists as researchers and activists. In my own small way I am connected to the extraordinary Cape Farewell project which involves co-operation between scientists, artists and researchers in a cultural response to climate change. Bruce Janz's internet collective *Research on Place and Space*⁴⁸ disseminates information by many authors and directs and connects them inwardly and outwardly. The Centre for Ecoliteracy⁴⁹ website out of Berkeley, that was started by physicist Fritjof Capra, provides a multitude of resources for ecologically aware curriculum practices. Blog commentators and visitors were also able to link up with each other and share mutual interests through their own blogsites and emails.

“We have much in common as I see from a brief look at your blog. I look forward to connecting with you. Perhaps you would like to visit at the Perley to see what the old folks are doing or come to my home studio.” [Blog comment April 24, 2009]

⁴⁷ http://www.exitart.org/site/pub/exhibition_programs/SEA/index.html

⁴⁸ <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/place/>

⁴⁹ <http://www.ecoliteracy.org/>

I received this comment from a local artist I hadn't seen for ages. Not only were we able to re-engage, but another commentator who was interested in this person's work was able to "trackback" to the artist's website and connect her own work in nursing with the artist's therapeutic work using labyrinths. My partner in the COG children's gardens had this to say when I posted a blog about my visit to Paul Finkelstein and his successful high school garden and cooking/catering operation "The Screaming Avocado":

"You lucky lucky girl! Just hearing about the Screaming Avocado sends me into spirals of possibilities. Thanks for making the trek, blogging, and providing this great site".

Her use of the word "spirals" references an eco-art work her daughter and a number of other participants created through my facilitation as artist-in-residence at the COG First Youth Farm Apprenticeship Camp. And spiralling back, she was the one who precipitated my "trek" to visit Paul Finkelstein when she mentioned him at the outset of one of our first meetings of the Growing Up Organic Project. I took her up on it. Lastly, the spiral became the image "header" for the thesis blog, Escapelot.



My final blog entry as of this writing, documents something new, and comes around joining arcs in a circle back to Michel Serres 1990 work *The Natural Contract* where he suggests abandoning Rousseau's social contract for a new one which could give legal rights to nature:

Excerpted From the Globe & Mail July 23, 2009: **The Earth Can Sue**

“Last February, the town of Shapleigh, Maine, population 2,326, passed an unusual ordinance,” The Boston Globe reports. “Shapleigh sought to protect its aquifers from Nestle Corp., which draws heavily on the region for its Poland Spring bottled water...[The town] tried something new – a move at once humble in its method and audacious in its ambition. At a town meeting, residents voted, 114-66, to endow all the town’s natural assets with legal rights: ‘Natural communities and ecosystems possess inalienable rights to exist, flourish and naturally evolve within the Town of Shapleigh.’ It further decreed that any town resident had ‘standing’ to seek relief for damages caused to nature – permitting, for example, a lawsuit on behalf of a stream.”

Dump Site 41 in Tiny Township on Georgian Bay might consider this too.

See also, Michel Serres: *The Natural Contract*

The blog can do what academic research cannot – reach a wider audience, disseminate research in popular media, photographic and video streams, provide access to a public for comments and inputs, create instant links to layers of reference material, while simultaneously acting as a repository for participants posts and entries⁵⁰. Wordpress, as blog host, also provides daily, weekly, monthly and incremental statistical details and feedback about visitors and “tourists” who hit on the site. It can track what they clicked on that day, how many clicks a month a certain blog entry tallies, who linked up to what and showed interest in where. The garden blog, through these statistics and so-called “hard” data, sometimes felt “real-er” than the less-regulated physical garden.

I was getting close to 40 hits a day for a few days when I posted “The Obama’s Garden”, with details of contents of the White House garden which I’d gleaned from visiting other wordpress

⁵⁰ “The where of the who of the subject that comes to education, cannot be fully anticipated” writes McKenzie (2009) in support of blogs, twitters and wiki-sites as in-between places for mustering new identities that could further youth in activism. “We are unable to contain or control when and where the pedagogical address arrives or how it is taken up” (p. 369).

garden blogs. So I felt compelled to check in with the blog to see what my numbers were. The blog statistics make you feel like something is happening, even when it isn't "really". It's only virtually happening, and I realize I love the use of "virtual" in virtual space, and I wonder who first coined the term⁵¹. Because coinage is currency and virtual space has even more currency than real time and space. Whatever is current is happening there, simultaneously with a million other currents and currencies, and currency means a kind of value. The more hits I get, the more valuable my virtual space feels. I suppose it could be like book sales or something—but better! because you don't have to have a physical product and it never has to be "finished". A sideways peripheral collateral that adds to personal "capital", or feels like it. Because you can trade on it. (Personal journal notes Apr. 5, 2009)

“Currency” as it relates to this thesis, blogs and their links, and other current media such as twitters, wikis, social networking sites, webpages etc. can be interpreted to mean up-to-date, of-the-moment, contemporaneous. But what makes this format current now, can be the same set of conditions that might render it old and uncomfortably out of date, within a couple of years. Logarithmic shifts, bouquets and sheafs of time, can mean current knowledge is no longer fixed. It is prepositional, and no longer anchored in noun-verb-object. Reading with Puleo (2007) and Serres (1995), it is pre-positional, fluctuating and relational, shifting in-relation-to. The flow of “current” knowledge can suggest rapports between, and map out traces of these relations:

It is a complex and supple network, never in equilibrium – in other words, never “existing”– striking and fluctuating swiftly in time, and having ill-defined edges. (Serres, 1995, p. 105)

Relations of exchange and of trading back and forth across borders implicates the significance of territorial distance, differences, and exclusivity. It's difficult in the age of

⁵¹ The answer arrives in a Saturday Globe&Mail, March 13, 2010, p. F3. Ian Brown reviews J. Lanier's new book, *You Are Not A Gadget*, (2010). Lanier was the originator of the phrase “virtual reality”.

the autonomous individual, not to speak in terms of separation, capital and trading (up).⁵² In educational, as well as other forms of research, the loneliness of the method of the scientific method and of the objective observer, confirms oppositional relations where difference is privileged over common ground, stakes are claimed, heels are dug into a certain patch and a flag is planted. These habits are so in-grained that I forget to ask whether they must be true.

Jardine (2002) examines the influence of the “onrush of internet possibilities” on classroom “exchanges” noting the potential for transcending old borders through what could be seen as a gift economy. People post things, comments, research, and links on the net “for nothing. ... We have begun to read the movement from commodified relations towards the economy of the gift as a way of understanding the transcendence of boundaries characteristic of the phenomenon of globalization” (p. 212).

The movement of the gift, given without a price or the cost of exchange counted, is a free movement and as such un-contained. Liveliness and abundance and the mutual recognition of the free movement of the gift are the taken-for-granted parts of this relation or transaction. A gift is the material embodiment of no-borders thinking. A sharing in abundance is tacit, no strings attached. Other kinds of gifts mark the non-tacit agreements of contractual arrangements: wedding gifts, anniversary gifts, gifts between leaders of state, or corporate donations. These gifts require conscious recognition of the

⁵² Jardine (2002) talks about the language of “marketspeak”: “The language of the market, the language of commodity, has become the only warranted form of publically speaking. And, as educators, we have all experienced how knowledge has become a commodity, students and parents have become “stakeholders” and customers, and teachers have become “accountable” in ways that no longer have any hint other than of ‘are we getting our money’s worth?’ ... All else seems merely naïve, unable to understand ‘the realities’ of things” (p. 216).

strings attached one side to another. The true gift thus relies on a level of unconscious acceptance, a relinquishing of ego in favour of eco, a stepping back from returns.



(Gifts from the garden planters, taken up and rewound into a nest)

Do I try to unpick the knots of exchange relationships in order to negotiate a new kind of contract? Or is it the liveliness of abundance of the gifts and the givens that draw me back to them? Or is it a bit of both and more? Can there be a kind of participation in abundance without making claims or greedily anticipating the harvest of results? Without being greedy for results, perhaps one can be here, now, a little more fully, recognizing bundled relationships and multi-storied realities. The multi-centred society of Lucy Lippard (1997) admits, emits and transmits signals to and from all corners and quarters, connecting different horizons, differently, at unpredictable times.

If I can drop what Jardine refers to as “the constraints of an atomistic and autonomous individualism” (p. 214), if I can implicate myself in networks of knowledge and relations, in prepositional and immaterial bonds, might I be able to find another kind of sharing without the restraining emphasis on status, money and power? With free exchanges across the globe via the Internet, millions of times a second in mutating numbers of operations, time and space are compressed. Physical territory loses significance. When exchanges are freely given indefinitely, un-countably and unaccountably, does this mean I might already be awash in a gift economy? If we can’t see it, is it perhaps because it is a

new “given” that we take for granted. That is, until someone puts a price on it, or limits the range of movement like Rupert Murdoch and Microsoft’s “Google-blocking” plan⁵³.

The reality principle says, if *here*, then not *there*; if inside, then not outside. The alternative to dualism is dialectics, that is to say, love—

Two distincts, division none:

Number there in love was slain.

Whitehead says the reality is unification: reality is events (not things), which are prehensive unifications; gathering diversities together in a unity; not simply here, or there, but a gathering of *here* and *there* (subject and object) into a unity. (Brown, 1966, p. 156)

⁵³ To google is now a verb, another form of action and movement. Or is it prepositional? An article by Jeff Jarvis re-iterates notions of knowledge as a network. It is not for much longer a controllable or containable commodity: “This silliness is emblematic of the end of the Gutenberg age, the industrial age, the age of control, the age of centralization, Murdoch’s age. The problem here is that Google-virgin Murdoch simply does not understand the dynamics of the link economy. He roars against them. Google et al do not take his content, they send it audience and value. It is up to him to exploit that. The business failure here is Murdoch’s, not Google’s”.

From Jeff Jarvis article (Nov. 24, 2009) at Seeking Alpha: Stock Market News, Opinion & Analysis <http://seekingalpha.com/article/175090-why-microsoft-s-google-blocking-plan-won-t-work>

CHAPTER 4

Multiple Readings/ a living pedagogy

“to understand colonization is taking me years” (poet, Adrienne Rich,)



(Garden and site “waste”, closeup of photos p.92)

It's not what he said, or how he said it, or even who he is, or even the events they occupied that finally is what troubled her. He's a good guy who cares and is trying to do his job the best he can. He's the kind of guy who cares that his daylilies got trampled by construction workers and he has no recourse within his job's parameters to tell them off, or to prevent it happening again, because he's pretty sure he's the only guy on campus who cared about those rows of daylilies in the first place. So it's not him, or his job, or his person, or his personal ambitions that troubled her.

She'd walked up the hill on purpose to meet him and to give him an update on the last of the garden, and to have a walk around the site and to ask him about some ideas and questions that had come up. They were standing at the little apple tree she had decided must be the one that the Faculty of Ed. students had planted in 1990-91 convocation day, the initiating gesture of what they called “arbor genesis”. She'd come across a file in the Ottawa U archives in an attempt to uncover a deeper strata of knowledge about the site she had chosen for the garden, to peel

back the layer she'd imposed on it and maybe get a glimpse of the "hidden histories" of the site & what constitutes "official knowledge"? She felt a kind of revulsion, nausea, perhaps that's too strong a word, and yet it was a visceral "sinking feeling" in the pit of her stomach. She was telling him about the "arbor genesis" project and what she'd found in the archives. They were at the little apple tree and she was saying that she thought that it was probably the tree that students had planted. He was interested, keen to see a copy of the invitation to the ceremony because "maybe we can put up a commemorative plaque". It was then that her "heart sank" as they say, or maybe it's more that "she got her back up"- She could feel her own resistance to that idea, like, "no, that's not what this is about". It's about local knowledge and being able to find out for yourself; it's about having curiosity about what's right in front of you, what's taken for granted, and not seeing it in an official way which seems to negate making your own relationship to it or with it. Putting up plaques is like the idea of having pre-digested food administered to you. You can't taste it, or chew it or experience it for yourself. It's "pre-experienced." You are told that this is what it is- and all the nuance is lost. the tree is now no longer a tree but a representative of something else; it stamps out the gesture of "arbor genesis" as something that is over. Over and done with and no longer a living idea to be "taken up" once again. Been there, done that, read the plaque.... Next!. (Personal journal notes Sept. 2009)

Narrative inquiry, phenomenological writing, a/r/tography, métissage and bricolage, the use of participants voices, a weblog site, blog comments, site work and eco-art are all used to break up the tradition of "single vision and Newton's sleep" (William Blake), the grand narrative of modernism, and to place myself "always and already" as part of and intertwined with, the research work of the thesis. Like the child holding the yucky grub in the opening narrative, I research for a living pedagogy that can include messy and living conditions. Jardine's lived pedagogy urges me on to keep things in circulation, to consider school as a workshop where kids are capable of so much more (Able Gardener 1, blog comment about educators underestimations of children, p. 64), and to "take up" generously, the questions provoked by events.

In this case, that would mean accepting the small event of the child in the garden for maybe more than “what it’s worth”. “Abiding in inquiry” can I make more out of it than what is “really” there? Is it my business to expand upon it, open it out and allow the question to flourish and become a lived-in space through a deep listening to the “inheritances, bloodlines and ancestries” of Jardine & Ross (2009, p. 16) that this presents? The event of the little child holding the grub is full of resonances, and as a lesson learned at home I don’t want to get very far away from it. I remember her saying, “If we leave it here, it might get killed!” So much in what this child says evokes Jardine’s “interpretive understanding”. The life that comes out of or into his lived pedagogy circulates and opens outward to meet expansive questions, and also moves sideways and backwards to and from bloodlines and beginnings. Re-reading and re-interpreting my journal notes at this point, I linger with the anecdote of the child and the grub in the garden. I realize this place is abundant with questions I am only now ready to take up. The child understands something vital, that I did not see before. I recognize today with Jardine (2002), that “Interpretation breaks open the seemingly isolated fragment into its field(s), its place(s), its histories, its imaginal and linguistic and intellectual possibilities” (xxi).

The child holding the grub in the palm of her hand understands that connections are vital. Her sympathy with the ugly grub is such that she worries about its survival. Neither she nor the grub can survive on their own. By itself and left behind, the grub might die! Neglected or unseen, it might get killed! The web of life that holds the grub, in fact, includes all of us. It cannot be broken down infinitely into bits that could be re-assembled anywhere (wherever the labour is cheap). I be-labour the anecdotal, and in this way I

breathe energy into it, as it moves me and reforms my original attitudes. It was just “kinda cute” then; now it resonates with added value. It has ripened and become something instructive for me.

Physicist Fritjof Capra has devoted much of his life to systems thinking and the development of the Centre for Ecoliteracy at Berkeley. Capra and the child with the grub remind me that:

The sustainability [long-term survival] of each species in an ecosystem depends on a limited resource base. Communities of organisms have evolved over billions of years, continually using and recycling the same molecules of minerals, water and air. These cyclical exchanges are sustained by pervasive cooperation. Partnership – the tendency to associate, establish links, live inside one another and cooperate – is an essential characteristic of living organisms. (Capra in Bowers, 1994, p.163)

Without bonds, connections, partnerships and the circulation inherent to acts of generosity, cooperation and community, we are in danger of death by alienation and isolation. As a grad student, I became aware of the imperviousness of educational institutions to these matters of life and death, the seasons of growth and decay, living and eating. The processes of paperwork and administrative requirements kept me inside and away from the garden outside. High-pressure sodium lighting emitted in the parking lot stunted the growth of plants. Construction fenced the garden off from involvement in campus life, and from being able to be tended properly. The fatigue and exhaustion that comes with filling out forms and business-as-usual attitudes sucks the life out of the campus environment, students and faculty alike. Yet we still go on doing it in the name of “independent” research.

The cult of independence and individuality oversimplifies the so-called benefits of liberating people from communal practices, and encourages education for displacement.

The “I-ness” of the child in the garden as a differentiated person has not yet happened. Un-individuated and close to the ground, she relates to the grub as kin, and takes for granted that they are connected in living and inhabiting the same space of ground; and once again this reflects something I was flabbergasted not to have encountered in educational theory outside of Jardine: “...the unique *incapacity* of the child to inhabit an ‘I’ while the pedagogy presumes they can (or ought to)” (Jardine and Ross, 2009, p. 19).

Industrial education follows the industrialization of labour, where the end product is broken down into bits, in order to be re-assembled as cheaply as possible somewhere else in the name of efficiency. What was once considered whole becomes fragmented into individual pieces without the originating time-consuming relationships between the maker and the thing that is made. I might add that the idea of time running out is only relevant to a machine running down that has no engine for renewal. The old time-consuming relationships become added value, when purchased at the end of the assembly line, but as add-ons, they feel superficial and no longer constitute relationships between. The industrial process nullifies relationship, taking a hard line position around soft and squishy human beings, to keep them out of touch, interchangeable in their places.

The basics of education have become similarly reductive. Chopped up bits of information, divested of relationships, are further broken down so that children can consume them and regurgitate them onto tests that can be marked, added up, and slotted into an economy of statistical information, but without having to relate to a larger ecology. The conditions for producing educated people “liberate” them also from direct engagement with one of the “basics” of life, namely, the act of eating. Industrial education has turned food into an abstract idea. Industrial eating is another one of its

products, along with the waste that goes with it. C.A. Bowers and Wendell Berry are educators who have spent their lives rewinding the severances constituted by industrial waste, factory farming and “surplus people”. Prakash (1994) elaborates on Berry’s (1990) work at the time. The violence of Western education:

... is littered with death – of rural peoples, of farming communities, and of soil cultures ... the savage displacement of people from their own roots, traditions and places, of the transmogrification of people into community-less individualists, well-trained to be mobile, and available to be fitted anywhere, to perform whatever ‘job’ the industrial system pays them to do without seriously addressing moral and ecological questions. (p. 137)

There is a double betrayal of back-to-basics education. It betrays the notion of the privileged status given to humans by Western culture, at the expense of everything else. Worse, it betrays the children of the future, by denying them citizenship in a much larger world than the shrunken globally enfranchised village. “The child is educated to be of no use at home, where he or she lives,” and the trash generated by wasted lives “is evidence of good work *not* done, by people able to do it” (p.139). Children are capable of so much more.

The Subject Writes Herself

Even though the members of this committee understood its hermeneutic character, some of them seemed to want the *outcome* of her study to be presentable independently of the devotion, dedication and time that the candidate took whiling over such matters. It was as if the self-formation that was required in order for the topic to show itself, all that work she had to do on herself and in this field, had nothing to do with *what* she found in her study. (Jardine & Ross, 2009, p. 2)

I write myself into the thesis through first and third person narratives in journal entries, as well as from second person introjections in footnotes, and I have attempted to destabilize and decentre myself as the lone observer, providing multiple views and voices, through various media, readings and interpretations evocative of teaching for emergence, and

learning as an emergent process. Footnotes provide an undergrowth of roots, bloodlines and inheritances that I abide with, and upon which I stand and trace these footsteps, and which enable me to go off the path and follow a hunch. “It’s so much easier to follow an instruction than to follow a hunch” (Ross, in Jardine and Ross, 2009, p.2). A risky venture can mean no returns. An a/r/tographical record of traces I picked up through the duration of this project binds me to it in another way and addresses Rushmere’s (2007) frustration with the abstractions of academia and “the problem of domination, without the very thinking that created it” (p. 87).

I’ve written of arcs, spirals, circles, and the circumlocutions of writing around a subject. What are the conditions that allow for circulation? Circulation, which happens between, around, through, and moving back, to being pre-positional, prepositional as Michel Serres tells it; no longer a verb fixing noun as subject into object, never quite getting there. Of no fixed address, circulation relates between, moves around, towards or through, does not arrive at or get to a point. Circulation does not exist in the same manner of the “is-ness” of an object, yet it provides nourishing air or blood, reviving living subjects as participant co-creators. I try to incorporate this participation through immersion and absorption in a/r/tography, the apron (see p. 85), and the messiness of food, and writing about it. The garden and its produce circulate. We eat it, share it, and save seeds from it.

Circulation mixes in. The disembodied eye (Gablick, 2006) necessarily holds itself back, has no-body, no where, does not feel itself into the world, and in holding itself back refuses to be influenced. Inert, it passes through stoically, unmarked, and ungenerously refuses to mix, like a bad guest at a party. Instead I try to reflect on the

messiness of resilient networks, (*Research on Place and Space*, website; *Resilience Alliance* research website) rooted in a global mix and within diverse systems and the hybrid knowledge that might result. I highlight the participatory nature of knowing (Sterling, 2003), and messy texts (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), which “break the binary between science and literature” (p. 211).



(a/r/tography project, “ The Apron”, B.Cuerden, 2009-2010)

Vestigia and a/r/tography/ swerving on the verges

From “etymonline” online dictionary:

<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=swerve&searchmode=term>

swerve : early 13c., "to depart, make off;" early 14c., "to turn aside, deviate from a straight course," probably from O.E. *sweorfan* "to rub, scour, file" (but sense development is difficult to trace), from P.Gmc. **swerbanan* (cf O.N. *sverfa* "to scour, file," O.S. *swebran* "to wipe off"), from PIE base **swerbh-*. Cognate words in other Germanic languages (cf. O.Fris. *swerva* "to creep," M.Du. *swerven* "to rove, stray") suggests the sense of "go off, turn aside" may have existed in O.E., though unrecorded. The noun is recorded from 1741.

I swerve to follow some hunches. In swerving, the laws of inertia provoke displacement.

I offer this a/rtographical record of my thesis garden year, where the cast off data is freely taken up and sewn into place.

My use of “vestigia” also refers to Jardine’s (2002) wonderful translation of “data”:

In some of my earlier work we have already explained some of the philosophical underpinnings of the image of the gift and its pedagogical character. We suggested that the idea of data or datum is defined as that which is freely given. (p.217)

The Apron: that which is freely given

“To take up what is freely given” is one reading of the a/r/tographical record provided by the Apron as artefact. I had initially thought to make a hand bound book of relics as part of the thesis record. What happened was a moment of convergence. Immersed in reading about farming practices, food, and cooking food for a family for too many years: gardening, ecopedagogy and ecoliteracy, being bound to home, school and neighborhood, and the binding of books. I felt the ties that bind! The Apron became the cloth binding for a collection of relics of walks to and from the University, my home, and the park a few blocks away. It evolved between messy texts.

Vergeing and swerving I have sewn edges around collected vestiges of the garden project. Things I collected on the edges of the garden patch, I sew into see-through patches. By placing them together in one place, I sew a new topography, a wearable place.

July 16, 2009 and I'm sewing the April First pocket onto my apron always kind of wondering why. It's an act of faith, is what flits through my mind. Like the thesis, I trust that someday it will get done (like an impossible dream) and I realize as I'm sewing that I have to trim the corner of the plastic pocket so that it's an irregular shape, no longer square-ish. Formulaic. And now all of a sudden there's overlaps of pocket corners and date embroidery and it's getting jumbled up. It's assuming it's OWN shape, and telling ME what to do. I'm having a relationship with it! I've forgotten why I made it that size. It's quite a large space and I discover that what I collected back then was a lovely green lichen stained piece of bark. I remember exactly the place and instant that I first saw it. “Oh, it's so lovely” I say to it as I draw it out of

the envelope I'd put it in and dated. I sew it into its pocket, still glad that I picked it up, still seeing its beauty and feeling its claim on me. Its (possessive) claim on me— I remember, or it calls to my mind, how I met up with it, how I now receive it again and our shared memory. It re-calls me as I sew it into the apron.

Also, I notice how, because I have to move the apron around in order to sew around the pockets, the natural substances start to fall apart and deteriorate. The transitoriness of what I am doing- except for the plastic bits like the computer keys I picked up- they'll last forever. And, getting to the point here— I think of David Jardine (“Unable to Return to the Gods that made Them” in Under the Tough Old Stars, 2000) yet again, and how he tells it, that so-called modern materials, and particularly “disposable” modern materials and the things made out of them, are made specifically Not to be loved or to be cared about. I love my apron [today] even as it sucks my time and energy, and I have the notion to get some nice beads and other stuff and sew them all over the place and make it Unpractical. To make it beautiful and complex and “frivolous”, a frill, like what art is considered to be. And then I think we oughtn't make things to last, but to be loved. (Personal journal notes July 16, 2009)

I began the collection as a practice of a/r/tographical research in the ideas of emergent order and Sterling's teaching for emergence, and what that might look like. I had no idea what would or could emerge, believing that over time, within the initial constraints that I imposed on the action of collecting⁵⁴, that some kind of pattern could eventually be read into or hermeneutically detected within the processes and residues of “events”.



⁵⁴ It's the end of December 2008, and a new year coming up. I was looking at some lonely dried out maple keys blown down from the Manitoba maple, light brown on the snow. It is a freezing, dry cold. The maple keys are the residue of last year's summer seeds, what is left over. What if I collected them? What if I collected something everyday, would there be a pattern?

I gave David Jardine some images and a written piece about the apron I was in the process of making in May, 2009. He inquires of me in a correspondence I could never have predicted, “what do you gather to yourself?” and goes on to say, “the apron fascinates and repels”. Jardine’s writing regularly reminds us that “we are always and already a part of”, implicated in the world, its stories and histories.

Brown’s (1996) words come back to haunt me as I finish the apron, “The reality is unification: reality is events (not things), which are prehensive unifications; gathering diversities together in a unity; not simply here, or there, but a gathering of *here* and *there* (subject and object) into a unity” (p. 156).

Gruenewald (2007) seeks to make these storied elements conscious as we settle into a place. His pedagogy of place becomes a centre to tether myself to as I reach out towards my limits, learning about, standing upon, and tentatively coming to understand the topography and topics my life might inhabit. Centred, maybe I can move out to touch other circles. Unmoored, I could have found a byway through Gruenewald’s pedagogy of place, another way to find another anchorage for who I am, where I am, now.

Apron strings, and the cutting of apron strings signify leaving the mother ship. As a mother, I wear the mantle of the apron as a second skin, protecting me as I provide and dispense nourishment. Depleted by the cords that tie me up as I am tied to it, I untie the knots and divest myself. Cross-stitched into the embroidered edges is a kind of caring that demonstrates attention to details, commitment to larger communities that suck personal energy, but that feed back into systems of familiarity that hold us fast to places to grow outward from. In numerous ways, the apron can be read. It contains me, as it contains vestigial threads of this project in a calendar that binds seemingly unrelated bits

and pieces of my local topography in a geography of now. Being able to entertain ambivalent relationships through arts-based practices such as a/r/tography and eco-art, enables me to dwell within tangled contradictions, and to wear them better. Such approaches can be used outside in schoolyard gardens, and be brought back inside as well, as connective tissues.

What's the apron but another skin to shed? I swerve on the verges. The root is “wer” or “ver”, and to sever is to cut the ties that bind... To shed like the bark of a tree, a seed from a plant, a feather from a bird, this lost token or treasure bound now to the apron and binding itself in memory. I give these cast-offs a place as they offer themselves as data freely given, and I hold them to my body.



I love and hate the apron, for all it signifies. Writing the apron helps me to compose and re-compose ideas and to see it as a gathering spot for the things I “heeded” during the length of the project. As an artefact, it can address the limits of the written text and “the problem of domination without the thinking that created it” (Rushmere, 2007, p. 87). The apron as artefact, and the schoolyard garden as well, share ways consistent with a/r/tography as a method of research, and can act as counter narratives to dominant Western codes of enculturation. I am reminded by Zembylas (2002) that, “culture is ordinary”, but also that “there is no such thing as culture without a physical and biological basis: without places, matter, bodies and things (Paulson, 2000, p. 221).

Again with Jardine (2002), I share his lament for what is lost within what he calls our “deep, cultural logic of fragmentation”, that is, “the topography, the ecos, the place of any particular thing”, a “conceptual violence” he says, “that tears particulars out of their intimate, particular places”, and re-sorts them away from home under general, abstract, anonymous categories, “not sensuous, bodily, indigenous and immediate, but oddly cold, ideational, fleshless and alien” (p. 168).

But, as apron pockets hold intimate objects over my ovaries, the apron can act as crossing over place as it crosses over my body, holding outside ephemera within the feminized handwork of embroidered relics, strung as bubbles of quilted plastic samples, the plastic cut from plastic freezer bags, and unscientifically uncategorized, wrapped and sewn and held against my body. I situate myself within these traces, as an intimate crossing over place. Like a schoolyard garden, the apron becomes a third space of clumsy, fleshy interplays and encounters between outsides and insides that carry over to make my lived in spaces a little more liveable.



Waste & Compost

Jardine writes to me that in his view the apron as artefact both “attracts and repels”. Parts of the above descriptions of the making of the apron were posted on the blogsite and elicited one hostile comment, carefully structured and written in a blithe blog attack. It still unsettles me with embarrassed feelings of failure and shame. The apron can also be seen as a collection of refuse and detritus, perhaps as a waste of time and resources, according to “Ed” (below). I cut, copy, and paste directly from his blog post, unedited:

“Ed”, frag2xs@hotmail.com 77.60.46.18

2009/05/21 at 6:10am

Though it’s my first time commenting, I must say that I love what you’ve done with this site and each week look forward to the next round of posts.

Your satire of pretentious artists is truly magnificent. I love how your character’s posts evoke such incredible self-satisfaction and smugness, whilst at the same time perfectly skewering the art world’s frequent childishness: “I am myself the connecting code behind a pattern of assemblages” - such perfect comic writing.

Each post is perfect in its content: the awful puns (“lands-cape” – genius!), the obnoxiously elevated syllable-count, the pointless meandering over trivia relevant to no-one. I especially enjoyed how you carefully made your character ignorant and self-centred enough to ‘invent’ a word, vestigia, already in existence!

With such gems as “Have you noticed how often apron pockets are sewn in place over your ovaries?”, reminiscent of the best of Amanda McKittrick Ros, gracing the page, I hope you have success in finding a publisher. I’m sure a 21st-century female Adrian Mole will find a broad and receptive audience. Good luck!

I feel the sting of snide criticism and the attempt to shut me up for good. Certainly “Ed” is repelled by the apron and has difficulty putting it in the context of a garden that barely exists at the time he wrote. He neglects to move around the site to perhaps see it from a number of perspectives. Taking the time to do a proper squelching, he seems to feel entitled to his delicious contempt. In an urbane “self-satisfied” style with an “obnoxiously elevated syllable-count” of his own, he writes to me in order to “perfectly skewer” the “artworld’s frequent childishness”. Art and its so-called frivolous activities

are open to derision, and as an artist functioning outside common currencies, I have to take this kind of heat. My fiddling with metonymy and etymology seems pretentious and childishly simple to “Ed”. The blog could read as an unfinished cartoon sketch, but why does this perceived “childishness” need to be “skewered”? What is he afraid of so that he needs to beat it back, target it and cut it down to size?

I beg these questions with my research and reconsider who decides what is relevant and what is not? What is essential and what should be discarded? In a culture where “no frills” is a positive selling point, reductionism prevails and is privileged over ideas of holism: “frills” being a femininized word that denotes an excess of material. I have come to question whether it is possible that large amounts of waste are built in by-products of these systems of reduction and production. If I look towards finding the kernel of truth as if it can be unwrapped like an object, what are the unwrappings but frills, discarded and considered to be in-excess-of, or in other words, non-essential waste? However, if the waste of the unwrapping is considered as essential to the whole story, then unwrapping towards a desired object or “point,” wastes a lot of information. Can thinking in terms of “essentials” and of “waste” inadvertently produce an outcropping of “surplus people”?⁵⁵ “Ed” wants to reduce my activities and the free-exchanges that can take place on the Internet. They bug him with their wasteful childishness and he wants to make sure that no one might profit by them. The flow of abundance is wasteful of his generous time and energy and I have provoked him into negatively contributing to it. I am accountable to

⁵⁵ You remember as you write, horrified echoes of Serres (1995): “Worn out with dreary overeating, we entertain ourselves in the evening, on the screens of televisions spread out over our mountain of abundance and money, by watching millions of skeletal people die. More than our brothers, are they our children, or, rather, our products? Even more, are they the necessary conditions of our future life? And thus our parents?” (p. 180).

people like “Ed”. The web is not as free as I perhaps thought. And “Ed” would surely like to make of me a surplus person. The tensions cause heat.



(garbage collected from the site)



(garden and site waste)

In terms of what can be seen to be uncovered through research, or what might emerge of its own volition, the limits of the use of language proscribe ever knowing or seeing the entire truth. It can only reveal something *of* the kind of story the event is or was. However, if we can include looking more closely at the wrappings and unwrappings of movement, events, and language, as if inclusive of bits of seed husks, stem, roots and leaves of the plant that perhaps hold and shape the kernel, the wrappings themselves point towards what is contained and hidden, but the unwrapper or unpicker does not assume that this seemingly central something is *all*. If I can draw some of my attention to

the usefulness of the wrappings as part of the picture, a picture that does not feel like it has to be reduced, to get to a point, then perhaps nothing is wasted⁵⁶. I am trying to point to a difference in attitude that artful activities can generate. And is this not what composting is? Taking the heat of leavings, or what is freely given, even by people like “Ed”, and making them potentially and potently worth the while. Attempts to close down art and artfulness are regularly reflected in cuts to arts programming, arts funding, or arts-based learning, and disincentives to include these activities in education and schooling. Artists are used to composting the leavings.

Further, if you consciously declare that you are unpicking, exposing, uncovering or reducing, are you also including the notion that what is revealed by this picking away, can only ever be a partial truth, as in unpicking a cocoon from which place the metamorphosing butterfly can no longer emerge. Are you including in the research the notion that you stop the action by describing it or picking it apart? Perhaps the kernel sought after and found is no longer a generative seed once it is uncovered. An attitude of heeding attends and gives space over to whatever might emerge and come to meet us. Settling into a space, I make it worth my while and perhaps nothing is wasted.

⁵⁶ The generosity of the recipient in taking something up, and thinking about the datum that is freely given up, in order to understand our relationships to it, is where Jardine (2002) again recalls Gadamer:

“He suggests that rather than combating what has been offered up [in conversation], in an argumentative way in order to weaken it in favour of something else, one might rather attempt to strengthen it by taking it up, by taking seriously its claim on us, taking seriously its claim to be, in some sense, true of something. It should, that is, be taken up as a gift and read back perhaps more generously than the giver intended or knew, or desired” (p. 217).

EPILOGUE: An Epistemology of Heeding

Returning to my third “key question”, I loop “escapelot” back to the proposal beginning:

- 3.** How might a garden inhabit a site for new knowledge in education; different sorts of learning processes, possibilities and “ecopedagogical” awareness(es): are there possibilities for less aggressive, more receptive, humbler listening ways of teaching and learning?

and to my first tentative query of the University of Ottawa Physical Resources personnel, whether I could have access to the cube planter boxes outside of Lamoureux Hall in which the garden plot was subsequently seeded. Escapelot escapades, stories, photos and blog entries have circulated in, around and amongst relationships developed over a year with a couple of people I have come to know in the Physical Resources department. Now another turn, another idea I have proposed lately, has been taken up seriously by the Sustainable Campus Manager and Physical Resources department. As I previously mentioned, this thesis inquiry led me to the inspiring work of RANE at Falmouth College in the United Kingdom, their biennial eco-art and environmental conference, its artist and scientists and collaborators publications; lecture series, workshops and dissemination of research. My proposed idea is to organize a similar style conference here along the lines of eco-art, art, and environmental education studies, which could take place in the summer when the campus is largely uninhabited and the weather is good.

Laurel Richardson's Writing A Method of Inquiry inspires me to write more creatively, to work on it, figure it out, but how to write ecologically with a holistic picture in mind? ... I read the piece while sitting on a bench by the river in Strathcona Park. One of the last fall Indian Summer days where its almost hazy & you can hear the hissing of grasshoppers and the ducks are quietly paddling in the shallows and the long bulrushes are not moving at all

Tangential to these events, and reaching into the inquiry from out of the blue, was a phone call and email from the curator at the Ottawa Art Gallery which lies a stone's throw from the Ottawa U. campus. The curator asked whether I would be interested in joining a group who will develop a community art-garden/installation for 2011. It seemed a natural extension of gardening activities to try to tie these two events together, and this co-ordination seems to be happening now. Three meetings later, I am still entangled in questions and conversations regarding art, eco-art, environmentalism, nature and the possibilities of ecopedagogy to reach beyond current and normative aspects of schooling – on campus. Artists will be invited to invade the campus over the summer, and at a later interval, to present and bring inside via digital media, their outside research and eco-art interventions in the campus environment. These can be shared and reflected upon in symposia with various faculties collaborating and attending. I consider with new input from the Fine Arts department that the project at this point could possibly grow too quickly and become etiolated, with too little support later. The Fine Arts department is often subject to the first budget cuts, and the teaching staff there grows exhausted from doing too much with too little support. From an email conversation with a faculty member in February 2009:

“Everyone I know, including me, are so overworked it's not even funny. The administration of this University is huge and extremely well-paid, but we, on the front lines, have to cut, cut, cut, and ultimately reduce quality education. We have to work harder and harder not only to keep up the quality to which we have all become accustomed, but we also have to spend a lot of time protesting and organizing and writing counter-proposals against the latest cuts or workload issues, which never seem to end.”

A kind of quiet where there's a waiting before the earth draws everything back into itself and freezes over. Can we even call that “Indian” Summer when 11,000 years of continuous habitation has been wiped out by the bulldozer of “Western” culture? Like the way a new development is called “Pine Ridge” when all the pines have been cut down to make way for houses made of ticky-tacky that now inhabit the ridge. I worked on construction for a

Even so, and still, I am happy to learn that :

“a few of us in the department are starting a research group on art/science/and nature and we have wanted to invite some leading thinkers/doers for a talk and consultation on collaboration with us. All of this is in its beginnings only, as is your project, so some kind of intersection between your proposal and our interests could be wonderful.”

I have had to heed parts of stories I missed the first time around from Physical Resources, to listen again. With these meetings I am given an opportunity a year later, to listen again to stories told; and with Hendry (2007) to listen harder and attend to my own ignorance; to not seek to quickly shape, organize and explain, but to receive and to listen, “trusting that meaning will be made” (p. 494) in its own time, and not necessarily by me right now. Can I trust that something meaningful seeps through the writing as inquiry without an explanatory, perhaps even, in spite of it?

I re-read my own narratives and wonder, what seeps through these personal journal notes, my mis-steps and mis-interpretations? As new information comes at us at every moment of every day, through emails, language and the sound of the radio, the light in the window, a phone message and tapped-out keyboard response, bending over to pick up a pencil, the mis-placed scrap of paper on the floor with a shopping list on it, a child’s cry heard outside, the books section of a newspaper picked up in a coffee shop, family irritations and concerns, as lived from out of the past and into an unknown at all times and everywhere, in all our movements and stillnesses, coming at you from all sides amidst the messy contradictory multiple messages that infiltrate and filter through us at

year putting in the thinnest of balsa-wood “baseboards” in “starter homes” on Pine Ridge which was a mud flat by the time our crew got there. We called the baseboard material “Kleenex” nails went straight through it. We had to glue it on mostly. It was ersatz everything, almost like building a set in theatre, which I have also done, working as an artist and scenic painter. The shallow flimsiness of Western urban “lifestyles” begins in

every moment – from all these events and singularities, is it possible to create a living line that is able to weave through and still hold together? Re-reading with Hendry (2007), it's not so much the stories we tell even, but the meaning we attach to them at a given time, admitting as I read, "that we are *not* characters [in stories] ... Our lives are not morals... A life may have a 'plot-line', but not everything lived – not everything of import to the person – fits neatly into a plot" (p. 490).

Reading with, to, and from, Hendry (2007), I am brought back to my own 'plot', which I called "escapelot", introducing the blog with these words (unedited):

"welcome to escape lot. as it happens in between spaces,I am between spaces with this blog as one plot/lot and thgarden plot as another lot/plot and the escape lot as a blogspot.Lots and lots of blog spots and plots. Welcome and escape-or not." (Feb. 27, 2009)

As an Information Technology (I.T.) worker, my daughter provided "intergenerational transfer of knowledge", an inversion of C.A. Bowers's (2003) depictions of traditional community learning. She urged me to "hurry up and write something" for the blogsite she had set up for me (in ten minutes) so that she could get to bed at a proper time and get enough sleep for the next working day. And again I recall Hendry, that, "not everything of import to a person fits neatly into a 'plot'. The way the plants overgrew the containers, trailed into the roadways, were swept away by street sweeper trucks, cordoned off by construction fencing and covered with dust, they overgrew and out grew my own idea of what the garden would be. The garden did not become a beacon at the doorway of the Education building. It hardly pointed to itself at

"starter homes" on Pine Ridge where people "settle" for being no place. That's what we call "development". I've meandered; I didn't mean to. Not yet. But I was "getting there" to meandering purposefully. That was my starting goal, writing about sitting on the bench reading about Writing As A Method of Inquiry. Because I was inspired by Laurel Richardson and subdued by the beauty of the hazy fall light and the quietness of the park

all. The construction site even altered pathways that students normally took. Because the front entrance was blocked off, they were forced to detour around to the back and side entrances. My educational imaginary seems thus to have had a fictional ‘plot’. The name of the blogsite returns to me, “escapelot”, and the first sentence I wrote at 10 o’clock at night, and I wonder now did I seek to escape from my own plot, or escape to it? I don’t know, even in hindsight. Is there an internal consistency one only finds when reading backwards and at a distance? Was I trying to read forwards in these attempts at research, to reassure myself of predictability and repeatability in the doubling of the original schoolyard gardens?

I confront my own ignorance. It’s a kind of ignorance that comes from the idealization of ends as primary, and the displacement of means into secondary information. I do so want something to happen. I listen again to stories told by the Physical Resources department manager. I’ve since admitted to him of my resistance to the idea of “official knowledge” as testified to by plaques and signage. During our latest meeting, he tells me a number of stories about student campus life and some students’ physical involvement and interactions with environment and landscape. One event occurred around an artwork by a fine arts student who had constructed a ladder out of entwined twigs; there were no nails used to hold it together. The ladder seemed to come out of the earth at an angle, but of course, it had been planted there to look like that. There was no signage to indicate anything; the artwork was just there appearing to come

bench by the river and when I got up after forcing myself to sit still, finish reading, not get up and rush back home to check phone & email messages—to have trust in the process, of sitting there for a while—to while away the time as if it really is worth the while, as David Jardine would have it. When I finally finished reading and paying attention- giving

out of the ground. Unfortunately, another student tried to climb it. This is kind of funny in the telling, but you can see the problem of insurance liability arising from an unfixed “ladder” on campus.

Other similar tales are recalled and told with a smile and a shudder at the folly of students and the limits of what we can call generalized knowledge, particularly when it comes to art and eco-art. Regardless, the Physical Resources person is interested in engaging students differently with the campus physical environment. He would like to see students stumble off the beaten path instead of moving from class to sidewalked class, obliviously talking on apple iphones or “blackberrying”, whilst unable to identify a real blackberry fruit, blackberry bush, apple tree, or flowering crab apple tree.

I read last week about Steve Jobs’s new Apple iPad, and how “the hardware is a hook into the wider ecosystem” (Globe & Mail, Jan.28, 2010). “Ecosystem” here, means the marketplace ecosystem; the one where you’ve entered a web of pricey software applications, telecommunications packages, plans and “bundles”. I wonder if this is THE ecosystem we are embedded in, increasingly out of the biosphere and into the mediasphere.

It worries me that another word has been co-opted, and so quickly. What has only recently in the past 25 years even become commonly recognized as a word, like the word “environmentalism”, is used to try to indicate the life systems in which we are embedded just as physically as the plants and air and soil systems are symbiotically “nested”.

attention rather, as it was more of a gift than a debit from my attention deficit account—when I finally did get up I started along the straight asphalt path, but caught myself up, and turned myself aside in a meander. Because meandering is what it’s all about doing/practicing Qualitative Research has to be an un-fearful meander towards where a

Now and suddenly, it references the technological web that sustains itself through our increased dependencies on a remote technocracy. Is “ecosystem” now only a plastic descriptor for the merger between ecology and technology? Does it still mean what I thought it meant a few weeks ago? Bowers (2010) recent article considers how our educational systems in the west, neglect the history that each word carries, unconsciously reproducing underlying cultural assumptions:

While environmentally oriented scientists are increasingly relying upon an ecological interpretative framework, most teachers and professors continue to reinforce the language framed by the root metaphors of individualism, progress, anthropocentrism, mechanism etc., that gave conceptual direction and moral legitimacy to the industrial/consumer oriented culture– and that continue to perpetuate silences regarding how to live less consumer dependent and more community-centred lives. (p. 4)

I wonder what language we can come up with that will not be co-opted.

It worries me, and I listen to the Physical Resources guy’s stories a little differently today. I am staggered by my own ignorance of student life, and the extent of their lack of awareness of the natural environment. The stories fill in some of the gaps and fault lines perhaps, between eco-art and a subtle e-colonizing eco-opting, and plausible reasons for some kind of signage.

What is beautiful about his telling stories is that he is still open. “You must have a kind of jaded view of the intelligence of campus life”, I say to him. But no. He has instead a kind of outrageous acceptance of the fecklessness of students and is willing to work with it. I ask myself again more emphatically what it is that I move towards through

side track will take you, at least for a while. And then it was that I realized the topography of a meander off the straight path had forced me into an encounter with more and varied trees, grasses, bushes and “vegetation” with curves in the path and different kinds of ground, and windings-around, and these encounters mimicked my margin notes which I

research. Do I believe there is a story out there, and do I want to capture and colonize it with my interpretations? Can I also, stay open and receptive in spite of or because of what I learn? Research can be perceived not just as a site for the production of knowledge but as a complex border condition, or as a “zone of affinity” (Van Wyck, 1997) where vulnerability is a good thing. The work may be more of a growing network of trust and of ensuing trade relationships and interchanges with people rather than Serres (1995) “philosophies of suspicion” (p. 137). Is it even possible then to extricate oneself and move away?

My back is sore from hunching over the keyboard in the deep February cold and I feel like notions of “embodied learning” are something one gravitates to only in warmth and sunshine. “Disembodied learning” and abstraction become appealing if I get to forget about the cold and sitting in one spot. Gardening seems once again, to be a long way away. I hear from the Physical Resources guy that the campus gardeners and Ottawa U. are going to start a community garden in the spring, behind the housing co-op I used to live in, and wouldn’t I like to be a part of that? He can get me hundreds of free bulbs from the National Capital Commission – I could work with them with the community gardeners to plant some kind of eco-art project, maybe with the Echinacea bulbs, which are medicinal, he suggests. Oh, and by the way, yes, he will tell the grounds-keeping contractors to keep all the cuttings and twigs culled from campus trees and bushes in case any invited artists might want the use of them over the summer. He’ll store them on site where the big shiny new composting machine is...

scrambled through to find on p. 927 while I read “Writing Format” I had scribbled at the side of the text: a wandering way touches more surfaces, encounters more variety, includes the topos and has no particular endpoints (Personal Journal Notes Sept., 2008)



(New composter at Lees Ave., Ottawa U. campus)

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APPENDIX 'A'

Appendix ‘A’

“de-colonisation and reinhabitation”

David Gruenewald outlines a path for place-based pedagogy and place-based education in his chapter, *Grounding Culturally Responsive Teaching in Geographical Diversity*. In *Place-Based Education for a Global Age*, 2007, Gruenewald & Smith (Eds.) pp. 149-150:

I have previously proposed the phrase “a critical pedagogy of place” to signify the potential confluence of cultural and ecological thinking in the emerging discourse of place-based education... A critical pedagogy of place posits two fundamental goals for education: decolonization and reinhabitation. Decolonization roughly equates with the deeper agenda of culturally responsive teaching: to undo the damage done by multiple forms of oppression. Reinhabitation roughly equates with the deeper agenda of many environmental educators: to learn how to live well together in a place without doing damage to others, human and nonhuman. Pedagogically, these two interrelated goals translate into a set of questions that can be put to any group of learners on any place on earth: What is happening here? What happened here? What should happen here? What needs to be transformed, conserved, restored, or created in this place? How might people everywhere learn to become “native” to their places? Such questions provide a local focus for socioecological inquiry and action that, because of interrelated cultural and ecological systems, is potentially global in reach. In other words, place-consciousness suggests consciousness not only of place, but of others, and the relationship between places.

The juxtaposition of culturally responsive and critical, place-based pedagogy suggests several additional focusing questions important to the development of place-based education:

- To what places should teachers and learners be responsive?
- What forms of cultural, economic, and political colonization impact multiple places?
- To what forms of grassroots resistance and reinhabitation might educators pay attention?
- What is the role of indigenous knowledge in reinhabitation and decolonization?
- How can a focus on the local also provide opportunities for intergenerational, interregional and international communication and collaboration?
- What kinds of experiences are needed for people to learn how to perceive, critically analyze, and act on their human and nonhuman environments and relationships?

One of the main goals of place-based education is to expand the landscape of learning opportunities among and between students, educators and community members. It may be that culturally responsive teaching in diverse communities is only possible when

*students and teachers encounter the cultural and ecological diversity that is threatened or extinct in schools, **but is still endemic to places.*** [my italic and bold]

In order to enact a more concrete understanding of place-based learning, which to me means starting right where you are, I had to suspend my own expectations and not-knowing, and to follow some of Gruenewald's suggested steps towards de-colonization and reinhabitation of a particular site. My not knowing is a way to foreground process and to allow a pattern to emerge through experience from which to draw "new knowledge". I believe that Gruenewald's ideas are an important "place" to start from for teaching for emergence, for engendering resiliencies and for understanding relationship and connections to the places we inhabit.

Gruenewald's template is also useful for me to consider, as an eco-artist working with wider ideas of space and place that include layered "occupations" of socio-cultural geographies. I think it is particularly relevant for North American students and educators.

APPENDIX 'B'

Dec. 31/08 This morning I looked outside and saw these maple keys on top of the snow and thought about the pale traces in the Buddhist art book, with the bees wax work, and making an album of a years walks and traces.

Jan.1/09 It's so cold the streets are white but not from snow. The asphalt and concrete are bleeding salty white. Pine cones are popping off the fir trees. I found the birth control pill packet (2nd one in a few years) lying on the sidewalk as I headed to the park. Not sure what the blue and purple figures on the packet (are they in a logo embrace?) mean. Also picked up a couple of Manitoba maple keys, like maple and flatter and wondered what they are. Maybe ash? I'll have to look them up (new knowledge). Let the new knowledge come. Will I sew these vestiges into a cloth book? I also found a nest which to me always seems extravagantly lucky. As an artist I am less competent than a little bird. I could never build a nest. Indelicate fingers.

Jan.14/09 So cold that "snot-cicles" form immediately on going out (Eamonn said). Nose hairs stick together. It's a high of -21 degrees for the next few days. Black ice on the roads and 49 accidents before 8 a.m. this morning.

Jan.16/09 Walking to the U. I walk over this elastic, walk back and pick it up as a symbol of my ongoing minor ecological feud with our postal worker who refuses to take back the envelope I've stuffed with the elastics he or she's dropped along the street as they deliver the mail. Even though I wrote on the envelope that they get washed down the sewers to the river two blocks away and the turtles and fish try to eat them. Talked to Viv and Karina last night and they suggested I mail them back, so I put the envelope full into the first mailbox I saw, which is why I picked up this elastic later.

Jan.27/09 Walking back from library and looking for my earring I ended up reading about Donna Haraway's cyborgs, the virtual transgenic beings (the Flvr Svr tomato) thinking about mythic beings and beasts and then seeing a trail of feathers on the snow, wondering if there would be a pigeon corpse at the end of it.

Jan.30/09 Passing the vines at the U. and seeing the grapes shrivelled and the vine skeletons, the ends of my Andy G. project in the fall.

Feb.7/09 Computer keys. I passed them a couple of times under the hedge, before picking them up a couple days later. Someone must've thrown a computer in the garbage. They were in my pocket for so long before I remembered them. First I thought they were a kind of dice when I saw them on the ground.

Feb.9/09 A shiny piece of plastic in a half melted salt/snow puddle on the sidewalk. I think it was the transparency and the scanning code on it that brought me back. Passing las Brisas- and seeing the blue chip of painted pargeing of the sign. The blue stopped me.

Finally some colour in this dirty grey and white and while buses resumed today, after the strike, I walked down the hill and had to go back to get the shiny piece of plastic.

Mar.12/09 At Liz's house, the backyard snow melting now, and her neighbours back porch, ugly snow melting around the base, and a door in the detritus. The leaf came later.

Mar.27 /09 A walk in the park and seagull poo on my pants. The bright green caught my eye, twice I passed the piece of bark, then picked it up for the colour of it.

April1/09 A gloomy drizzly wet day walk down to the park. My virtual online garden has attracted almost 300 blog "hits" and I realize as I walk that that's what I am thinking about. It is more real than my "real" garden which lies fallow, empty and unreal-ized, waiting for better weather, some good soil and seeding. But it exists in me. The virtual garden is the avante-garden, and as "virtual" space becomes more valuable and enchanted, as more people visit it.

Outside of words and images, however, it is not real. I stumble over some feathers because they've emerged out of the brown quotidian. They are very definitely vertically striped and, unlike the usual flotsam of leaves and feathers that gather along the edges of the low cement wall that skirts the river edge. Usually there is the brown of leftover maple leaves and some duck feathers. But I am elated because I've found them right at the place where there's a nest built in the reeds by some red-winged blackbirds. It's really a bit early for them, but I heard one a week ago. I think maybe the feathers might belong to the Canada Geese but realize later that's unlikely as I check my bird book at home and see the female re-winged blackbird is of course not red-winged or black but a brown stripey-breasted chirper. I'm sure I've seen one in the underbrush as I get closer to home. One summer I watched her in the reeds with her little hanging nest admiring her ferocity anytime anything came close.

Apr26/09 walking up to All Saints, the beetle I spotted in the stones over the agent orang-ed bamboo the neighbours on the corner can't get rid of. Up to All Saints (Anglican church) to build "square foot" garden boxes with the boys, I found the tiny plastic bag, picked it up thinking the bug would fit into it, which decided me- I'd go back for the bug later if I remembered it, and if it was still as dead as it looked. Otherwise I might squash it in my pocket.

Apr.29/09 Shopping in the Glebe I saw a vitamin bottle on the edge of the curb, thought maybe it'd been dropped unopened. It was empty, so I pulled off the scanning code sticker, as I have a collection of them.

May 19/09 Cycling up to the university for the provoking curriculum conference, like a big beetle or cricket. lying squished and silver on the sidewalk, the remains of a cell phone.

late May I find a piece of wood that matches a tiny piece I've kept for some reason for years, like a tiny tree stump.

June 1 wheat berries and barley seeds for the garden, escapelot.

June 21 solstice First I found a glossy blackbird feather, definitely not a crow; its smaller with bluish blush to it. It made me inordinately (?) happy, a relief from my own heavy thinking. Mum is visiting and it's day 6, so I got out of the house to go for a newspaper. I didn't say where I'd go to get it. A walk through the park settles me. Then there were numerous downy feathers along the low wall and I kept picking them up hoping they weren't the remnants of a baby duck. There's about 20 new ones I've seen this spring.

July 15 walking round to French class, I see a shiny round thing in the soft dust of a driveway at the edge of the sidewalk. I wonder if it's a solid round ball of metal like a marble or ball bearing so I move, nudge it with my toe(not yet committed to bending over and picking it up). It's a button, but I like it enough to pick it up. I'm wearing loose pants with inside pockets and I have a looney loose in the right hand one. I put the button in that pocket as I walk they make a jingly sound that's unexpected and very pleasant.

July 19 going up the hill, after Pat (Able Gardener 2)'s upload on the blog that "the wheatfield is gone". I am stunned, call her, find out she was looking somewhere else. I walked up to the U the next day to wire some signs onto the tree trunks, and picked up some bailer twine at the end of Nelson St. that was lying in the bushy scrub there. I figured the universe might be trying to help me out in case I ran out of wire. In fact, the twine worked better than wire.

July 30, The apron functions also as a calendar of "events". I collect a few wheat plants torn out of my wheatfield, left withered on top of the other plants.

Aug. 1, the rainiest July on record. Only three days without rain. The basement flooded a couple of weekends ago. One day of sun, today. I took a chair down to the park and read underneath a tree near the river. I looked up to see pale spots all over the maple leaves.

October Beans and seed pods collected from the clearing out harvest.

bits of wire and safety tape collected from the construction fencing. I'll incorporate them into the nest with other stuff left over from the garden. "Plow it back" into the campus environment.



A/r/tography Project "The Apron"

Barbara Cuerden 2010