

MY BARK CANOE

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**In part fulfilment of the requirements
for the
Masters in Integrative & Transformative Studies**

PREAMBLE – *before the wandering...*

The following recounting of my learnings over the last six *oases* years tells the story of a journey – a journey weaving its way under and through my life – appearing, disappearing, reappearing – surprising, delighting, unnerving. A journey that has stretched me and stretched those with whom I co-inhabit this beautiful planet. A journey to explore the nature of being, one which has found me in the place of becoming.

I am living (thankfully) in *a new age where messy, uncertain, multivoiced texts, cultural criticism and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis and intertextual representation*¹. Therefore you will find that my journeying has dipped in and out of Goethe, Bronte and the liquid Bauman, seeking integration, sensing transformation. I have placed Shakespeare comfortably next to Foucault; referenced conversations and my own and others' speaking notes and presented photos, old airline boarding passes, Qantas magazines and Lonely Planet Guides in travelling trunks on the Augustine hall floor. All are expressions of my journey, the deep situational, epiphanic learning that has occurred for me over the last six years. Each offering is an expression of interpreted experience within a certain embodied form. There is value and meaning in each choice, each *reveals* a story. A deep story of my wanderings *on windy hillsides* and in *ferny glens*.²

In these six years, I have travelled for work countless times up and down the eastern seaboard of Australia and to its northern, western and southern reaches. I travelled to Canada, USA, Japan, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, Indonesia, Timor Leste, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Solomon Islands, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Fiji, England, Ireland, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Italy and New Zealand and to some of these many times. At no time, was my travelling separate from my *oases* journey, my being-with my learning and meeting many pilgrims along the way.

In this time I spent countless precious moments and days at the Augustine Centre in Hawthorn, home of the *oases* program and home to a unique learning experience and environment – a magical library, a welcoming hall, a warm kitchen, many lifelong friends, a delight of a garden and, through a gate, a manse in the back garden, where I lived with my amazing children and a large white fluffy golden retriever named Angel.

For these times and for all time I give thanks to every one, every leaf, every tree, every ray of sunshine and drop of rain that has blessed me. I thank everyone for their wisdom in the following ten learnings of my *oases* journey – the ten yearnings of my soul - revealing that:

- ❖ The journeying is the thing
- ❖ Ontology calls into being the creative act
- ❖ To be transformed something will/must break
- ❖ We are all pilgrims searching for our deeper connection
- ❖ Travelling into the nature of truth and the false dualism of art and science
- ❖ Words allow my 'self' to flow
- ❖ Knowledge can often get in the way
- ❖ To enter emergence I/we must leave the path
- ❖ I am a moment in time, a circle on the lake, a delight in the breeze
- ❖ The present is where I am

¹ Liamputtong, P. & Rumbold, J., 2008

² Bronte in Greer, G., 2001:93

LEARNING ONE

That the journeying is the thing

Along with Emily Bronte, my *oases* quest has been to go where the ‘*walking of my own nature be leading, where the wild wind blows on the mountain side*’.

*Often rebuked, yet always back returning
To those first feelings that were born with me.
And leaving busy chase of wealth and learning
For idle dreams of things which cannot be.*

*Today I will seek not the shadowy region.
Its unsustaining vastness waxes drear
And visions rising, legion after legion.
Bring the unreal world too strangely near.*

*I'll walk, but not in old heroic traces,
And not in paths of high morality,
And not among the half-distinguished faces,
The clouded forms of long past history.*

*I'll walk where my own nature would be leading-
It vexes me to choose another guide-
Where the gray flocks in ferny glen are feeding,
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain side.*

*What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell.
The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling.
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.*

*Emily Bronte*³ (before 1848)

Enrolling in a Masters of Integrative and Transformation Studies, six years ago, has seen me dancing along the *busy chase of learning*, attempting to capture the many, many questions that bubble up as *visions rising, bringing the unreal world too strangely near*. I have been asking: is the learning process seeking integrative and transformative outcomes a series of lights, a progression of events, a phenomenological experience or a waiting for fresh insight? Is integration and transformation a means or an end? Will I ever be the same again?

Early into the *oases* course, we explored terms new to me, terms like ontology (ways of being) and epistemology (ways of knowing). I loved playing with them, still do, getting confused, mixing them up, turning them around in my mind, wanting to dive deeply into their meaning. As well, I had a growing desire to have a direct experience with all that was integrative and transformative – whatever that would prove itself to be.

³ Greer, G., 2001:93

For much of the first two *oases* years, I meandered delightfully in the ways of being and knowing whilst nervously keeping an eye out for my *oases* final ‘project’ to emerge and take form. I was concerned that I might fail to recognise the all important ‘project’ or make the wrong decision about its form or content. Like a mirage, the elusive ‘project’ was teasing me on the horizon.

Slowly I settled. Then, dramatically, in 2010, I lost the one ‘project’ that I had been developing, the design of a new ontological ‘model’,⁴ when my computer - completely un-backed-up - was stolen. It seemed that *the wind (had) got up in the night and took (my) plans away.*⁵

And I was left to *ponder this mystery.*

We take delight in things;

we take delight in being loosed from things.

*Between these two delights, we must dance our lives.*⁶

Wonderfully, the dancing had been going on. Whilst I had been waiting for the said *project* to emerge, I had been writing - journals, poetry, assignments for course electives, discursive thoughts scribbled along the way. Slowly my readings, meanderings, led me to the same place - an understanding that my ‘project’ was being experienced in its emergence before my eyes, in the things that I read, the places I visited and the art exhibitions I attended. I was listening in to the active heart.

I had thought that my journeying into the worlds of ontology and epistemology were merely means, the foundations, the background to the real work. However, I found that my project was not an end to wait for, a mechanistic device or the constriction of a great deal of effort towards a final product. My journeying was my project. The project was embedded in my desire to know deeply the lived meaning of integration and transformation as a living ontological experience, an appreciation of the depth and the edges of my own ways of knowing and, indeed, unknowing. In effect, I was becoming my project. A journey of integrating and transforming. A journey of being. This journeying has now become story.

⁴ Fifer, D., 2009

⁵ Berger, J., 2007:91

⁶ Harnden, P., 2003:4

LEARNING TWO

That ontology calls into being the creative act

Normally, a (story) has a beginning, middle and an end, but this (story) is different because of the circular nature of conversations. Ideas and themes emerge, disappear and return. Through these conversations, I am attempting to present a pilgrim's worldview of ethics, aesthetics, spirituality and politics ... I see the world as a sacred place and I pass through it with reverence and gratitude...⁷

Like Satish Kumar, I have learned that *a pilgrim is someone who sees life as a sacred journey, who sees the Earth as a sacred home, who sees the universe as a process ... we make the outer journey to make the inner journey. Our inner landscape is shaped by the outer landscape and vice versa.*⁸

In these six years my journeying has taken me a number of times around the physical globe and, more often, to the inner sanctum of my being. Deep into Africa, deep into Oceania, deep into my psyche. In my learnings, I have revisited places – internal and external - again and again. And, from the moment of coming to know my new love, ontology, I committed to write my experience of the nature of being from the ‘inside out’.

While often alone, more often I have had the company of fellow travellers; some in the here and now, others in times past. A number have graciously pointed to the seam of knowing running beneath me,⁹ alongside me and through me, as I have come to understand that my Masters project is not a place to be sought but a journey to wander. It has taken me awhile to understand the intimate links between my being, my emergent becoming and my growing sense of an underlying collective consciousness. Some fellow travellers have held me as I lowered into the spaces between the lightness and the deep. Through such journeying, I have found truth in that beautiful phrase of Ralph Waldo Emerson: “*under every deep, another deep opens*”¹⁰. Suffice it to say, I now have affirmation that I am not alone in my walking and, indeed, have never been.

What tools and instruments have been at my disposal? I have kept my keyboard, a ladder, scissors, paper, pen, my camera and an artist's brush of fine horsehair at my side. I am reminded of *Journeys of Simplicity*, a charming book noting the lists of different travellers on their journeys.¹¹ John Muir, a Civil war activist, on his thousand mile walk to the Gulf in the late 1800s, packed lightly.

*In a rubberized bag
comb
brush
towel
soap
change of underclothing*

⁷ Kumar, S., 2009:13

⁸ Kumar, S., 2009:11

⁹ Hicks, S., 2007

¹⁰ Emerson, R.W., 2011:1

¹¹ Harnden, P., 2003

*copy of Burns's poems
Milton's Paradise Lost
Wood's Botany
small New Testament
journal
map*

A plant press

*Only by going alone in silence, without baggage, can one truly get into the heart of the wilderness,*¹² John believes. Stillness and letting were resonating for me also.

Some of the guiding stars lighting my paths into the vast oceans of my unknown are relatively well known - philosophy, psychology, sociology, ecology and biology. Others, like epistemology, phenomenology and ontology less so. And it is ontology, the newest star, hitherto unknown to me, that has become the dearest - ontology, the philosophy of being. Here, I have found a soft, warm lightness that now accompanies my adventures.

As a mode of understanding, ontology conveys to me shady verandahs and French doors, open to breezy winds of new insights in any place, at any time. I have chosen ontology - or it has chosen me - as the motif of my journey. Mind you, ontology, the philosophy of being, does not appear as the staple of everyday discussion in the twenty-first century. Philosophy sits far lighter in our culture today and even philosophers of today, like Raymond Gaita¹³ and Alain de Botton,¹⁴ have had to find new forms to bring philosophy into our imagining. How sad. Accessible psychology, science and spirituality fill too many books, shelves, magazines, talk show guest spots. Eons before the current onslaught of psychology, anthropology and sociology, it was philosophy and spirituality providing the meaning, the questioning, the answers for daily life. And it was always so within art. Art, the precious place of knowing and seeing ourselves, our community.

*Makers shape things into being, granting them their intrinsic identity... in a corner of their workshops, drifting with the currents of the rest of humanity, makers reflect back their world in its constant ruptures and changes, and mirror in themselves the unstable shapes of our societies, becoming what the Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario called "celestial lightning rods" by asking over and over again, 'Who are we?' and 'Why are we together?'*¹⁵.

As I have said, I decided early to take an active role, to offer my 'self' up for transformation through the lived experience of the present participle of this philosophy of 'being'. I have just as actively wanted to avoid any epistemological approach that would have me trawling through tomes of textual correctness, seeking just the right place to locate and settle on a given view. Perhaps I was born under a wandering star.

My perspective, my own created living philosophy on the nature of being, views ontology as a spider's web. The web acts as a prism throwing colour and light onto the world, a light touch, a fragile framework on to the meaning and practice of 'being'ness. The web has strength, resilience and movement. I also know that the web is merely the frame, the interpreter, not the reality, just as a map can never claim to be

¹² Harnden, P., 2003:8,9

¹³ Gaita, R., 2005

¹⁴ de Botton, A., 2009

¹⁵ Manguel, A., 2008:13

the territory. The web, open in its lightness, is a membrane, shaking in the invisible air, glistening with the import of the in-between space that it holds.¹⁶

I see through my web - my emerging vulnerable early dabbings of a philosophy of being - its strands providing a frame of understanding, a lens, a way to connect with what is beyond. Indeed, the boundaries of my 'self' vibrate and quiver. Pulses, revelations, insights, emergence!

Tyler Volk would suggest that my spider's web is a metapattern. For Tyler, *a metapattern is a pattern so wide-flung that it appears throughout the spectrum of reality: in clouds, rivers, and planets; in cells, organisms and ecosystems; in art, architecture and politics... Images and insights that pull at my own thoughts are sure to have influenced those of others.*¹⁷

In *The Art of Fiction*, Henry James also believes in the metaphor of the spider's web, though he ascribes to it different functions:

What kind of experience is intended, and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited and it is never complete: it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider's web of the finest silken threads suspended in the chamber of consciousness, and catching every airborne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind.

*When the mind is imaginative — it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, and converts the very pulses of the air into revelations.*¹⁸

For James, experience is the capacity to respond to what the world presents us with – to absorb, to register - as we give ourselves up to entranced, excited listening as in the earliest days of story-telling, round the campfire¹⁹ or in the marketplace or in halls where the great epics and sagas were recited.²⁰ Our spines shiver in an understanding of our 'being'ness.

'Being'ness, I have found, arises from a multi-dimensional place; its sentience is alive in the depth and breadth of a spatial world view. I began to understand this in my assignment, called *Poetree*, for Tricia Hiley's *oases* elective offering. We spent many hours under trees, in the open air, dangling poems from overhanging branches and, in conversation, stretching our understanding of our individual and collective self. There is motion, energy in such 'being' and, as such, the line is blurred between when 'being' ends and 'becoming' starts.

My understanding of the philosophy of being is not of an object to explore but of a subject that is both emergent and experiential in nature; a subject in whom I am located and within which I explore and co-create simultaneously. Thomas Berry famously said: *the world is not a collection of objects but a communion of subjects.*²¹ The world is innately relational, interrelating in the very nature of 'being'ness.

Lisa Mueller has expressed this in another way, in her poem, *Monet Refuses the Operation*.

¹⁶ Capra, F., 2003

¹⁷ Volk, T., 1995:viii-ix

¹⁸ Malouf, D., 2008:9

¹⁹ Maathai, W., 2006

²⁰ Malouf, D., 2008:16

²¹ Berry, T. & Swinne, B., 1992

*Doctor, you say there are no haloes
around the streetlights in Paris
and what I see is an aberration
caused by old age, an affliction.
I tell you it has taken me all my life
to arrive at the vision of gas lamps as angels,
to soften and blur and finally banish
the edges you regret I don't see,
to learn that the line I called the horizon
does not exist and sky and water,
so long apart, are the same state of being.
Fifty-four years before I could see
Rouen cathedral is built
of parallel shafts of sun,
and now you want to restore
my youthful errors: fixed
notions of top and bottom,
the illusion of three-dimensional space,
wisteria separate
from the bridge it covers.
What can I say to convince you
the Houses of Parliament dissolve
night after night to become
the fluid dream of the Thames?
I will not return to a universe
of objects that don't know each other,
as if islands were not the lost children
of one great continent. The world
is flux, and light becomes what it touches,
becomes water, lilies on water,
above and below water,
becomes lilac and mauve and yellow
and white and cerulean lamps,
small fists passing sunlight
so quickly to one another
that it would take long, streaming hair
inside my brush to catch it.
To paint the speed of light!
Our weighted shapes, these verticals,
burn to mix with air
and change our bones, skin, clothes
to gases. Doctor,
if only you could see
how heaven pulls earth into its arms
and how infinitely the heart expands
to claim this world, blue vapor without end.²²*

²² Mueller, L., 1976

The term subject and that of object would re-emerge over time, collapsing and reappearing into new understandings. Yes, I say to the empiricist and the positivist, in this transformative experiment everything changes through involvement, for *the earth does not belong to man. Man belongs to the earth ... Man does not weave the web of life ... he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web he does to himself.*²³

If 'be'ing is seen as movement, as interaction, then one will necessarily be caught up in the flow and thus, I contend, ontology is not for the faint hearted. Transforming awaits where movement and reflection collide. This search, this re-search-ing is a constant renegotiating, re-acquainting, recreating of one's being or sense of being. Experiencing and observing are interwoven processes and are intimate fellows in this emergent form of participatory researching. Goethe says that "*in so far as we make use of our healthy sense, the human being is the most powerful and exact scientific instrument possible*";²⁴ and, in the words of Vandana Shiva, "*the world is the text I write on my skin.*"²⁵

And – already a few centuries earlier - Shakespeare notes in *Love's Labour Lost*,

*Armado: How hast thou purchased this experience?
Moth, his boy: By my penny of observation.*²⁶

And in my labour of love, I have found that which was lost to me. The journey has been mine. I have been experiencing - not merely researching - theory, filtering it through all of my senses, discovering for my 'self' the meaning of words like research, ontology, epistemology, transformation and integration. I have had the privilege of six years of *oases* courses and recourses that have allowed me to 'submit' photos and poems, basket weavings and tree mobiles, co-create conversations in the round and spread labyrinths on the floor.

I have embraced story, poetry, photography, art and science, finding meaning and relevance in the valuing of all forms of emergent and expressed knowing. In each of these, there is knowable and relational truth underpinning my emergent understandings of a philosophy of being. Over six years, *flowers from an unknown tree (have) filled me with their fragrance.*²⁷

I have found that one cannot stand on the edges of integration and transformation, for *oases* is about '*whole' person transpersonal education, an 'emergent paradigm' has the capacity to raise our overall awareness, stimulate every aspect of our being and promote a sense of individual purpose and global connectedness. Unlike most education reform in the past, it is embedded in sound science: systems theory, an understanding of the integration of mind and body, knowledge of the two major modes of consciousness. It emphasises the continuum of knowledge rather than 'subjects' and the common ground of human experience, transcending ethnic or national differences. It aids the learners' search for meaning.*²⁸

Where visual, spatial, felt and spoken art could be woven into my working, I have done so. Worlds have been found underneath a lifted rock before today. And one memorable Saturday, underneath a spreading oak in the Augustine garden, where much of our *oases* learning took place, I discovered much delight as our *oases* group co-created what would later become the basis for my *Poetree* assignment. My assignment combined woven dangling mobiles, photography and exercises in affirmation for the group as we were

²³ Greenway, H., 2007

²⁴ W. Goethe in Whitelegg, M., 2003

²⁵ Shiva. V., 2008

²⁶ Shakespeare, W., 1598

²⁷ Clements, J., (2006):44

²⁸ Greenway, H., 2007

introduced to epistemology, Myers Briggs and our educational journeys thus far. Together, we became like *the poet (who) is credited with a power to open unexpected and unedited communications between our nature and the nature of the reality we inhabit.*²⁹

Later that evening, when everyone had left for the day, I dragged out my ladder and revisited the tree with our dangling poems of expressed learning and discovery and, in tiny letters, I wrote on and hung up two hanging mobiles of strips of paper 1/2cm in width, all pasted equidistant down a length of string. They looked like long Chinese firecrackers. I hung them and watched them twirl and spin in the deepening twilight.

*let the wind have its way with my caution
let the wind have its way
let the wind
let*

*let the breeze have its way with my heart
let the breeze have its way
let the breeze
let*

With this experience in mind, I smiled at Jennifer Madden's reflection on poetry, *you touch it and it jingles in the dark.*³⁰

My ontological trajectory has thus been experienced through creative work. It is rich and deep and artistic. It is wild, it is tame. It is both, and simultaneously, unfathomable and knowable.

*We work in the dark – we do what we can – we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion our task. The rest is the madness of art.*³¹

Creative work is not achieved by reading textbooks and following instructions. This work, this journeying story, is not about creating definitions but about experiencing 'defining moments'. It is of necessity an expression of a collision of cognitive and emotional impulses.

And such principles are the springboard for true creativity.³² For me, the bottom line in creation, in art is honesty, authenticity. For some, it depends on 'how much' you have inside yourself, as to 'how much' you can put into a work of art. I am now wondering if it is more about the freedom to move, to access, to let go.

Rosalie Gascoigne says that *everybody's given somewhere to expand in, and we expand according to our own continent.*³³ Let the expansion begin.

²⁹ Deane, J., 2006:14

³⁰ Maiden, J., 2005:97,98

³¹ Gelatly, K., 2008:8/9

³² Gelatly, K., 2008:11

³³ Gelatly, K., 2008:11

LEARNING THREE

To be transformed something will/must break

In giving up, I gave myself permission to experience a ‘newness’, an experiential emergence, as my ways of being and knowing danced and played, taking me to places I wasn’t expecting. As James Woods encourages, I gave myself *up to entranced, excited listening*³⁴ and listening brought many questions. What is emergent living? And what is its relationship to transformation? Does insight lead to transformation?

*... I can say, equally well, that I am and that I am not all this; the cogito does not lead to an affirmation of being, but it does lead to a whole series of questions concerned with being.*³⁵

*... how can man (sic) be that life whose web, pulsations, and buried energy constantly exceed the experience that is immediately given to them?*³⁶

After being introduced to ‘emergence’ in the first *oases* year and during subsequent electives, I began to see its relationship to transformation as an outflow of unique combinations of time, space, knowledge and insight. This became particularly prescient during travel with work, while reflecting on an *oases* elective, *Time, Consciousness and Media*, in many airport lounges across Europe and the Middle East. I was travelling through many time zones and cultures, meeting deadlines, being bombarded with media in many languages and having my consciousness raised in every encounter with international volunteers and their counterparts in Palestinian refugee camps. I was both passing through and deeply experiencing unique combinations of time, space, knowledge and insight.

I began creating formulas for the transformative experience. Time and space suggested movement, the potential for journeying. Stillness, often experienced as mindfulness or meditation, is needed to acknowledge, to reflect upon the movement. Insight, I saw as a momentary ‘lifting’ out of time and space into the transcendent, into a place of becoming anew.

So, I then assembled the parts; could it be that when time, space and knowledge are all in motion and they intersect with stillness, this intersecting and resultant ‘lifting out’ process could be called *insight* and could it be that, as an outcome, transformation through *dissociation* then takes place? This ‘*flash of insight*’ process, started to resemble an alchemical reaction.

I thus thought of this ‘lifting out’ as a moment, a point of dissociation, a breaking from or out of what is present. This process could be either self-or-other-generated and, in the ensuing act of dissociation, displaces that which has gone before. The resultant thought, new paradigm or new behaviour is a break from previous norms and distinct from other links to space, time and knowledge. It is a living process. I was later to read that dissociation is viewed by some as an essential element of transformation.³⁷ Further, this transformation, newness, this essential and deep change, is a sudden manifestation or perception of

³⁴ In Malouf, D., 2008:17

³⁵ Foucault, M., 1970/2002:352

³⁶ Malouf, D., 2008:

³⁷ Bergson, H., 1907 in Eliasson, O., 2002:114

the essential nature or meaning of something (with) *this epiphany - its soul, its whatness leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance (and) the object achieves its epiphany.*³⁸

More thoughts led to more questioning; is there a tipping point that leads to the transforming of the nature of one's thinking and being and knowing? Is it the muse gently or naggingly tapping on the shoulder or the hard slog slowly building its case? Could it be about adding to the growing mound of time, space and knowledge in our lives till it all slips at some point and an avalanche of change occurs, like straw off a camel's back? In current evolutionary dialogue, this is called 'punctuated equilibrium'.³⁹ Further, can this moment of transformation be done on one's own or only in dialogue? And is dialoguing with an 'other' or even between our many selves? Is this the heart of co-creation and our relational self?

And then I pondered, could a process of practiced reflection become part of the equation and turn transformation into intentional practice? These, I discovered, were not so much questions as road signs – 'markings' - leading me as I sped along these ways.⁴⁰ My road to Damascus, both literal and metaphoric, held much in the way of epiphanies. I needed to pause and catch my breath.

I have always loved quotes; I feel a solidarity with those who have gone before, leaving, like breadcrumbs, precious insights for others. One of my favourites has become a leitmotif on my journey, a call to action; it is the reminder of André Gide, that *sometimes to find new oceans, one must lose sight of the shore*⁴¹ and it speaks to me of courage and my desire to lose sight of the land I know - to let go of my bearings. It acknowledges, indeed heralds, my newly deemed dissociative or epiphanic state of transformation. However, I am no sailor and on first reading his words, I felt an ominous knowingness that this was a journey I needed to embark upon. I felt the fear of loss of control. I was afraid of losing sight of my shore.

As Emily Bronte knows, this is all about heeding the call of *the gray flocks in the ferny glen and the wild wind on the mountainside*. It is to wonder: *what have those lonely mountains worth revealing?* And it is to hope and to fear that there will be

*More glory and more grief than I can tell.
The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.*⁴²

Much later I found encouragement in Brenda Walker's *Reading by Moonlight*, with her call to *... set sail in starlight ... leave the harbor for the ocean ... pass into the night ... the rhythm of the waves, the weightless pleasure of flotation ... if we're lucky, engulfment and death.*⁴³

Brenda believes that "*... reading is a temporary loosening of the ego. When we read we move away from ourselves. We listen without the vulnerable physiology of the human ear. We dissolve, just a little; we're pleurably lost.*"⁴⁴ What is this metaphoric death and is it another dissociative moment? *Is it possible to lose yourself safely, retrievably? To step outside yourself and ... when you have had enough step back in?*

To be transformed something will/must break.

³⁸ Joyce, J., 1959

³⁹ Eldredge, N. & Gould, S.J., 1972

⁴⁰ Hammarckjöld, D., 1965

⁴¹ Gide, A., 1925 *Les faux-monnayeurs* [The Counterfeiters] lit. translation 'One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight, for a very long time, of the shore'; frequently misattributed to Christopher Columbus and formulated as above.

⁴² Greer, G., 2001:93

⁴³ Walker, B., 2010:17

⁴⁴ Walker, B., 2010:82

LEARNING FOUR

That we are all pilgrims searching for our deeper connection

My working and travelling life in international development over the past ten years, six of which have coincided with my *oases* journey, has provided me with a generosity of time, space and knowledge in which to explore. There has been an amazing array of experiences - times on my own in far-flung countries, where I had 'no' language, times of deep connection with others, times of jetlag where everything was all awry. Thus, times to reflect, to allow movement, stillness and that flash of the alchemist's insight and - what I believe is - resultant transformation.

As I travelled within Australia and beyond, I remained open to the widest range of inputs, open to a breadth of impressions. Consequently, a profound experience was connecting with Olafur Eliasson in late 2009 at his exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in Sydney. Olafur is an artist and philosopher who delights in works of art with strong kinetic and perceptive characteristics, which aim to actively involve the spectator in a dynamic multi-sensual experience.⁴⁵

His artwork is a living construction of the phenomenological experience, playing with philosophy and phenomenology is his strength. His art invites one physically into the spaces whilst simultaneously evoking the alchemical reaction I have called transformation. The accompanying notes to his *Take your Time* exhibition, from which I quote below, were like a blinding light, an epiphany, as I laughed out loud when finding ontology, dissociation, philosophy imbued through his guiding principles.

*Olafur describes his works as 'devices for the experience of reality', an experience so physically intense, so indivisibly present, as to hold out the promise of an actuality of existence ... creat(ing) for the subject a 'space of trans-action from which one can begin again ... the collaborative work of aesthetic invention, play and transformation.' This 'in-between' space is the crucial space of process, creativity and agency that Eliasson wishes both his work and his viewers to inhabit.*⁴⁶

He was naming, creating that which I was journeying amongst. I had unexpectedly found a soul mate in an art gallery. Why was I surprised? Once again, I found that I was not alone in my *oases* journey.

Birnbaum speaks of the philosophical underpinnings of Olafur's work.

Phenomenology isn't really about finding out something you don't know. It's more about finding out what you already know. The first philosopher who understood himself as a phenomenologist was Edmund Husserl, who tended to describe the most ordinary of things, like his own hand, or what a physical object looks like from different angles. But he wanted to reach to the most fundamental level of experience and found that you have a life not only in space, but more fundamentally in time. Many people think that phenomenology is a very theoretical way of approaching the world because it goes back to the thinking subject. But if one goes into oneself, what one finds is that one doesn't really exist on one's own.

⁴⁵ Eliasson, O., 2009

⁴⁶ Grynstejn, M., 2002:39

*Deep down, at the most fundamental (level) of what it is to be as subject, there's always a relationship to the other... One thing that phenomenology emphasizes is that you only become who you are in relation to other people, other places, other times. In the end, what we find out is that all possibilities of being a human being can only be spelled out as a kind of inter-subjective sphere of communication, and that communication isn't just about sending out and receiving signs; it's actually a very bodily activity.*⁴⁷

How does one find out about what one already knows? And where are we to go if we let go of our desire for certainty and contextual completeness? I was finding out about the blurry edges of the 'dexterous relationship'⁴⁸ between ontology and epistemology.

Delving into the boundaries of knowing and unknowing, we find that we are confronted with a vast ocean filled with every memory of teaching, learning and experimenting. There is for everyone an accumulation of messages - *don't argue the point, must, should, it is thus, don't leave until you have answered all the questions* - and so forth. If we wish to question our heritage, to delve beyond our schooled thoughts, we do not know what we will find. Along the path of beyond our knowing, more moral guardians appear reminding us that *nice girls don't, we must play safe, keep off the grass, don't go into the woods today or alone* – for along with teddy bears, we are assured of a surprise.

I was learning in other readings⁴⁹ that as you grow the known, you grow the boundary of the unknown and you experience (if you let it) that unknowing more and more. Here, at my now growing edges, I have needed to give myself permission to let go of questions and answers and to just 'let go', to 'lose sight of the shore'. I have needed to make peace with patience and embrace a gentler set of eyes that understands the learning of the 'in-betweens'. I have found that edges are permeable boundaries and a desire to learn the skills of living with such borders.

While I was wandering through the McGill University Bookstore in Montreal on another of my overseas sojourns, I bought a T-shirt that read *Learning from the inside out*. I smiled and wondered if oases needed to create a T-shirt claiming oases – *Beware transformation may occur!* Olafur rejoins the conversation:

*Everything is situated within a process – everything is in motion, with a faster or slower speed, and everything is colored by intentionality ... relationships are evolving; all are in motion – not situated in the midst of their own time, rather of their time ... Space has its times. To open up space to this kind of imagination means weaving space and time together. You can't hold places (things, anything) still. What you can do is meet up with them, catch up where another's history has got to 'now' and acknowledge that 'now' is itself constituted by that meeting up. "Here" in that sense, is not a place or a map. It is that intersection of trajectories, the meeting - up of stories; an encounter. Every 'here' is a here-and-now.*⁵⁰

Olafur, it seemed, knew about my alchemic formulae. Time, space, knowledge, movement, reflection, insight, transformative experience! *Olafur Eliasson: a text collage* is a poignant essay that turned my mind inside out and set my heart on fire.

He spoke of trajectories and my project had by now become the story of my trajectory; one that has encountered so many others in this my intentional journey. I no longer think of serendipity as anything

⁴⁷ Birnbaum, D., 1998

⁴⁸ Skolimowski, H., 1994

⁴⁹ Newman, F. & Holzman, L., 1997

⁵⁰ Eliasson, O., 2009:82

other than a lifting of the veil to our collective consciousness, our ‘being-with’ each other in the moment and across time.

Bernie Neville has spoken about the mind having a wider boundary/periphery than the brain and that it picks up our thoughts as they swirl between us.⁵¹ My learning group at *oases* also experienced this ‘picking up’; together we sensed a safety and peace in our collective ‘being in this space’, our experience of collective consciousness. We knew that we were *creating the road as we walked it*.⁵² In my first year of *oases* I wrote a sonnet -

*Here, is a space where life stage, age and gender,
Are noticed not implored
Where new borders are created
And old boundaries explored*

*Where cutting/humbling honesty disarms us
And given gentleness delights
As we struggle with excitement
Late and long into the night.*

*Hear, this oases of our yearning,
As our answers become questions
And our questions quiver in our light.*

*Here now, we will not tip-toe lightly
Nor hide from horror or delight.*

Journeys, roads, companions and a further thought from Olafur:

*Social cohesion is a dynamic force – it is never simply evident. Never simply a fixed ‘we’ nor an exclusive kind of identity based on nationality, religion etc. The philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy sees individuality and community as being equally important; being in the world is always a being-with. Being singular plural.*⁵³

Early in my time with *oases* and as a reflection on my working life, I wrote a piece called *Globalised Wanderings* for the *oases* elective, *Social Change is Dead, Long Live Globalisation*. This piece is filled with much that has resulted in significant shifts in my thinking about my place, role and responsibility as a westerner in a globalised world.

Three years later, in 2010, I wrote *Developing Context* as a contribution to a proposed edited text for Deakin University, consolidating my responses to the didactic theorising so often found in international aid dialogue with my continued openness to questioning the mores of the development ‘set’.

Reconceptualising development occurs in the relational space of conversation, a conversation between peoples unencumbered by concepts and labels. I seek a place, a space, a connection between peoples where answers are never taken as seriously as questions.

⁵¹ Neville, B., 2006

⁵² Horton, M. & Freire, P., 1990 after Machado, A., 1972

⁵³ Eliasson, O., 2009:88

My journey at Australian Volunteers International over the last nine years has always been more than one of living out a role. Quite early, I realised that I could not avoid bringing my whole person to the job, to this discourse, to every encounter I experience. Why? Because to do less than this would be to succumb to creating a bureaucratic protection for myself and the organisation, against the very daily struggle of so many in those communities who have offered their hospitality and openness to our work – indeed, more than our work, because to be involved in international volunteering is to live, work and learn daily about one's practice, about one's place and impact within the world.

This is not, and I contend should not be a conceptual or managerial relationship within the developing context and whilst attempting to develop context. As volunteers throw themselves 'wholly' into the developing context, so must I and indeed all of us in the management space. I thus cannot write this paper without deliberately taking ownership and responsibility for developing a new way. Hiding behind third person statements that objectify the discussion is not developing context, but reaffirming the current state.

What is the context within which all this so-called development and developing is taking place? Surely it is the day-to-day lived, embodied experience of people in relationship, in community, in different climes and times across the globe. It is not in the differentiated sectoral views of much development debate and practice.

Lived experience is integrated. Development thinking that does not model, reflect, agonise over this reality is permanently flawed. Deciding that development responses must then be 'joined up' or 'place managed' is more of the same, and not the answer. A more transformative approach lies waiting in the wings. And there are voices calling out if one is willing to set aside the urgency in 'our' need for action.

I will offer that international volunteering can, when true to its spirit, dissolve the dividing line. It offers a place for sitting alongside, for people to connect and share in the commonality of struggle, in the joys and pains of daily life in vulnerable environments, in lived community. It provides a space for working that involves deep listening and shared exploration. It is an approach of coming together to 'be' as well as to 'do'. Action takes place within emergent relationship. Acting from soul and spirit is a given. The word development need never be spoken.

Impact becomes a shared journey. Change – of the systemic, structural, personal and community kind – is imagined, multi-faceted, created and celebrated. Change is as real and as variable as the seasons and can be spoken, written, drawn, sung and danced. International volunteering, thus known as people-to-people links, understands, as Goethe contends, "knowledge that is utterly in tune with the nature of things" (Myers, 1997).

And even more powerfully within the experience of international volunteering, receiving enters the fray, which, for a westerner used to being seen as the representative sent to help from a developed country, is quite a shock. International volunteers often return 'home' saying they have received far more than they have given. They cry in overflowing supermarket aisles, they have reduced patience for quick fix solutions, they see with a different set of eyes.

David Abram (1996) says that our spontaneous experience of the world, charged with subjective, emotional, intuitive content, remains the vital and dark ground of all our objectivity (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008:33). Too many development debates, texts, policies and project plans have too little time and space for including the reality of the shared lived experience – that which is occurring right here, right now.

However, we are in a new age where messy, uncertain, multi-voiced texts, cultural criticism, and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis and inter-textual representation (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008:1). The development industry, I contend, needs to be fully awake to its own psyche. Development specialists projecting their desired future are either brave or unbelievably stupid and they should know and be able to name the difference.

International volunteering, lived as an expression of our oneness as a global family, attempts to break through the prevailing paradigm – indeed log jam – of measurement, effectiveness, trajectories, capacity, answers, priorities and monitoring, into a relational and transformative space. Emergence, solidarity, questioning, tolerance and reciprocity are very real forms of human connection, expression and action based on honestly acknowledging the mystery of our local and global future.

The shift from ‘development’ to using ‘developing’ as a present participle would help drop the assumption that we know where the path is and where it should lead. It invites others into a long conversation and sustained action that transcends our unnecessary pre-occupation with 24 hour media cycles, annual budgets and election terms.

Partnership is about ‘holding part in and of’ and assumes a very basic equality of being-together; it assumes that all those involved really understand and know and agree with what they hold part in and of; and that the whole they hold part in belongs to all partners and that all decisions which are to be made should be made in full equality by all involved. If all that sounds like taking a lot of time and energy, it does.⁵⁴

Development is the practice of doing and having. Sadly, there is little reflection on the nature of being.

Being-with has been the story of my journey into the heart of integration and transformation. And now, with you, dear reader, we tell the story together⁵⁵ for *the storyteller doesn’t have a monopoly on the exercise of the imagination; the reader is a storyteller in waiting.*⁵⁶ This, I believe, is our conversation. We are pilgrims together searching for our deeper connection.

⁵⁴ Fifer, D., 2010

⁵⁵ Boulet, J. & Fifer, D., 2007

⁵⁶ Walker, B., 2010:191

LEARNING FIVE

Travelling into the nature of truth and the false dualism of science and art

My *oases* meanderings have created flashes of insight, taking me deeper into the heart of the matter. There has been a collapsing of time, space and place, expanding what I used to know as unitary awareness - that which I know for and by my 'self' - into a personal and collective knowing. And this sense, that all knowledge is derived through 'being-with', I am tempted to call a principle, an '*expression of truth*'. A principle expressing an ontological and epistemological convergence, the 'dexterous' nature of their 'relationship.'⁵⁷ Not that I believe that there is one truth. I prefer the Hindu appreciation that truth is one - an all encompassing place/space/locus for connection of view, experience, belief.⁵⁸

And in my emergent understanding of ontology, I wonder about truth. If truth is relational, rather than absolute or relative, is such seeking, giving and receiving to be found in conversation with oneself and with others? Does truth dissolve or strengthen when this conversation unfolds and moves through seasons and cycles, the highways and the byways? Is truth a baton that is handed between us or a dissolving forming and reforming set of perspectives? Is truth a place? Is truth a co-created act or a bumping into things in the night?

Bernie Neville believes *that our truths are half truths and the tension between them is another truth.*⁵⁹

Inclusive truth embraces all and finds in diversity its true expression. Truth, I believe is a unifying state. Across time, space and knowledge. Goethe believed that *it is not always needful for truth to take a definite shape; it is enough if it hovers about us like a spirit and produces harmony.*⁶⁰ The search for such meaning has a place and to have integrity, I believe this place needs to be located outside of theoretical closure or copyright laws.

In my personal and working life, I have always preferred principles to rules. I am thus tempted to say that I am searching for 'eternal' ontological 'truths' as I experience my journey. However, if *eternity is indeed now*,⁶¹ what I am really searching for is foundational elements, the 'isness', or more particularly, the 'am'ness of being-with and with 'in' the nature of things. Thus, a better frame would be to think of the existential nature of nature's rhythms, cycles, seasons, shapes, regeneration, restorative powers, spirit. I am exploring what I believe to be interesting and beautiful.⁶² Goethe speaks of *knowledge reflecting the true nature of things.*⁶³

And, if we understand the ontological quest as one that goes to the edges of our being, we are thrown to the edges of our known thought and what will then take us beyond thought?

⁵⁷ Skolimowski, H., 1994

⁵⁸ "Truth is One; the sages call it by different names" (Rig Veda 1:164:46)

⁵⁹ Neville, B., 2006

⁶⁰ Goethe, W., 1998

⁶¹ Manfred Max-Neef, the Chilean 'barefoot economist' and author of 'Human Scale Development' (1990) in his New Year message to his global friends in 1996 and as mentioned in Boulet, J. (1997)

⁶² Gelatly, K., 2008:9

⁶³ Myers, N., 1997

*What is the link between being and thought? The phenomenological project continually resolves itself, before our eyes into a description – empirical despite itself -of actual experience, and into an ontology of the unthought that automatically short circuits the primacy of the ‘I think.’*⁶⁴

Man is a mode of being which accommodates that dimension – always open, never fully delimited yet constantly traversed – which extends from a part of himself not reflected in a cogito to the act of thought by which he apprehends that part; and which, in the inverse direction, extends from that pure apprehension to the empirical clutter, the chaotic accumulation of contents, the weight of experiences constantly eluding themselves, the whole silent horizon of what is posited in the sandy stretches of non thought ... man ... the locus of misunderstanding – that constantly exposes his thought to the risk of being swamped by his own being, and also enables him to recover his integrity on the basis of what eludes him ...

*What must I be, I who think and who am my thought, in order to be what I do not think, in order for my thought to be what I am not?*⁶⁵

Art and science both lay claim as tools in the search for truth. Unfortunately, this process operates too often as a dual track process. Such dualism, I believe, does not serve the best interests of ontological enquiry. I prefer to remember that *the artist draws upon that part of the mind that functions beneath consciousness, while the scientist, by and large but not exclusively, uses that part of the mind that functions in consciousness, while wisdom arises from both parts of the mind.*⁶⁶

As I said, whole worlds can be found under rocks, beneath trees, in oceans far from shores. Whole worlds cover canvases. Picasso’s Guernica embraces politics, history, sociology, philosophy, economics, art.⁶⁷

Throughout history, there has been a certain pull, too dualistic in its nature,⁶⁸ between science and art fighting for acceptance in their role to provide value and insight – whereas, both I believe, are expressive and interpretive.⁶⁹ Science and art struggled together all through the industrial age, with dials and mechanistics clamouring against frescoes and those grand oils which have always spoken of more than a painted edifice of substance and style. Goethe went far in interweaving the two, but then while he was valued in his time, his approach and sensibilities went underground and only recently re-emerged, as it must with Gaian urgency, in chaos and quantum theories. I live and love the art and science of Goethe.⁷⁰

Francis Bacon was an artist, a philosopher, his canvases conveying vividly, dramatically his ontological perspective. His vision from the late 1930s to his death in 1992 was of a pitiless world. He repeatedly painted the human body or parts of the body in discomfort or want or agony – with no witnesses and no grief.⁷¹ He obsessively uses the pictorial language and thematic references of earlier painters. Francis’s post war portraits of anxiety and alienation were seen as a metaphor for the corruption of the human spirit. He painted deeply on a plethora of canvasses that which many historical and scientific texts could only hope to impart. It can happen that the personal drama of an artist reflects the crisis of an entire civilisation.⁷²

⁶⁴ Foucault, M., 1970/2002

⁶⁵ Foucault, M., 1970/2002

⁶⁶ Greenway, H. 2007

⁶⁷ Guernica, Picasso’s famous painting in the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid

⁶⁸ Aristotle thrived on it; see his *Metaphysics*

⁶⁹ Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M., 1980/2003

⁷⁰ Goodwin, B., 2007; Harding, S., 2006

⁷¹ See also some of the work of Munch’s (his 1893 *Scream* now in Oslo); the work of the between-war Weimar artists (Kathe Kollwitz, Georg Grosz, even Brecht; and the 15th and 16th century works of Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Breughel the Elder (see Bonn, R., 2006)

⁷² Berger, J., 2007:86

My appreciation of the release of intuitive knowing through explorations in art, poetry, photography and science makes me seek a knowingness, a reality of understanding, that I wish to share with others along with a desire to add to the body of knowledge of ontological musings and uses.

*Our spontaneous experience of the world, charged with subjective, emotional, intuitive content, remains the vital ground of all our objectivity.*⁷³

How? Mysteriously.

I retreat from the edges of whatever I see as false dualism, I retreat as there is no value in that conceptual frame. Indeed, Rumi invites us to a different place:

*Beyond right doing and wrong doing
There is a field
I will meet you there ...*⁷⁴

Knowing, unknowing, right and wrong join together in that field in which I continue to find myself dancing the ontological journey.

⁷³ Liamputang, P. & Rumbold, J., 2008

⁷⁴ Barks, C., 2004

LEARNING SIX

That words allow my 'self' to flow

After 8,000-plus words it is perhaps time to reflect on the nature of words as they weave through my journey of being. Words are known as representational. They are an act of creation. I do not subscribe to Plato's view that makers who construct not 'the real thing' but rather phantoms, must be banished from the perfectly run state.⁷⁵ Our states, I contend, need makers.

We imagine stories that allow us to act out and record processes of learning of which we may not be entirely aware, in a constant interweaving between what happens in the world and what we make-believe happens. In this sense, the story materially lived out and the story lived out in the imagination hold equal ranks. Except that, in Western societies, we grant the material stage a symbolic status of concrete, solid value, and therefore claim it for proprietary rights, while we relegate the imaginary constructs to unreality ...⁷⁶

Manguel takes up the theme of writing in emergent thinking and discourse:

Writing is always ... situational and our Self is always present, no matter how much we try to suppress it ... writing from that premise frees us to write material in a variety of ways: to tell and retell.⁷⁷

The nature of emergence in craft-making understands that *language has a life of its own (and) while we have the feeling, much of the time, of choosing our words, at times they are chosen for us.*⁷⁸

Thus, I have found that words can be an expression of, a vehicle for emergence and remain a natural fit for my approach, because ... *language "lives" and "breathes," independently of any human subject. Speaking beings, far from simply using language as a tool, are also used by language; they are the playthings of language.*⁷⁹

Emily Dickenson reminds us, *The word is dead when it is said, some say
But I say, it just begins to live that day.*⁸⁰

And I believe the fullness of our 'selves' joins in this living, this sacred becomingness - at each and every articulated moment. There is an integral relationship between reality in the now and the becoming, mediated by emergence.

Goethe shows us that there are mysteries that we can 'enter into' and begin to find our 'way around' inside of... there is a 'poetic' way of talking and writing here - what we might call 'witness'-writing - within which we can express what we find in our criss-cross journeying over these often befogged landscapes. Ways of talking and writing that, like signposts erected at

⁷⁵ Manguel, A., 2007:17

⁷⁶ Manguel, A., 2007:80

⁷⁷ Liamputtong, P. in Liamputtong, P. & Rumbold, J., 2008:166

⁷⁸ Fink, B., 1995:7

⁷⁹ Fink, B., 1995

⁸⁰ Dickenson, E., 2012

*recognisable landmarks, can 'point to' what next to expect in the world of our everyday, practical affairs.*⁸¹

Words, stories pass between us and in that in-between space I have found a quivering and a trembling; strength and vulnerability where words are messengers conveying gifts and burdens. I wrote the following piece in October 2008 after another experience of our *oases* Integrative Conversation group co-creating circular conversations.

Yesterday we went round in circles – deliberately, deeply, intentionally, meaningfully, beautifully.

Yesterday we all gathered close and together we wandered in thick and thin places.

We spoke of many things and in the speaking we found the willingness to go to the edges of conversation, a confidence to dive into places hitherto unknown. We did the things we spoke of, lived the learning we longed for. Our words dissolved in their inadequacies and then returned as breath. Willingness the thin became willingness the thick, the brave, the air that held us together as our viscous, sticky words lingered and dribbled between souls open enough to listen, wait and share in turn. Yesterday we teetered on diving pool edges and then went over.

Ad so we talked being and doing and heart and head; we used and raged against such dichotomies; found hope in dragons and acceptance; discovered faith in energy and struggle and a skepticism for power, security and balance. There was space for our background and our foreground and the providence of accidents and truth. We honored the barefootedness of our learning and named ourselves as conscious and unconscious gardeners, mulching and harvesting words, thoughts, experience. Then as soulful archeologists we dug into emerging, blurring layers, giving names, smiles and sighs to the wonders within.

Like making love we were delightfully unsure of boundaries as we lay in our net and played with our uncertainties. It no longer mattered whose thoughts, bodies, words were whose as we found meaning making meaning and thus gave birth to that which was spawned from the humus of our communing.

The poet Eric Ormsby knew such times when he wrote:

*I have the feeling that words lead a private existence of their own, apart from us, and that when we speak or write, especially in moments of strong emotion, we do little more than hitch a ride on some obliging syllable or accommodating phrase.*⁸²

Michael Bond, the author of *Paddington Bear*, knew the role of writing when he said that the greatest compliment that he has ever received was from a little girl who wrote, “...when I read your books, pictures come into my mind.”⁸³

Over the past six years, I have in the main been using words to craft, to explore, to bring out my lived reality of experience and insight. James Woods calls stream of consciousness *the soul's stutter, when we read it we sit with another person.*⁸⁴ I love playing with the stream of consciousness that arises from my

⁸¹ Shoter, J., 2005:146

⁸² In Manguel, A., 2007:11

⁸³ Bond, M., 1998:Covernote

⁸⁴ Walker, B., 2010:73

fingertips on the keyboard as I type my wandering thoughts, as I weave in a bibliography of readings having conversations with my soul. Do you as reader, as co-creator, need to fully understand every word of mine or just appreciate the flow, connecting with the vibrations behind the words which are wrapped around them? Do you go to the same or to different places?

However, I add a note of caution in over-subscribing the purpose and consequence of the written word:

Language, precisely because of its erratic ambiguity, attempts to convince us, its users, of its accuracy and weight by declaring itself an absolutist affirmation, a system of freezing the world into a state of fixed being. This is the law of the Baker in Lewis Carroll's 'The Hunting of the Snark': "What I tell you three times is true."

*(But) in spite of this populist assumption ... language seizes reality not by turning it into stone but by reconstructing it imaginatively, by means of allusion, inference and suggestion.*⁸⁵

It remains a structural linguistic metaphor, not the thing itself as the novelist Doblin reminds us:

*... that literary observation and critical judgement, however clearly expressed and imaginatively wrought, can never promise a revelation ... only ... convince by showing.*⁸⁶

Metaphor is also a reminder that all words sit lightly on the surface of knowing as words themselves are the greatest metaphorical device of the literate age.⁸⁷ I have been happy to use metaphor at times as a tool for my exploring. Metaphor as a device has helped me to avoid the temptation to carve my ideas relentlessly into grooves of immovable reasoning.

This is a wonderful time and place to dispel another dualism, that of fiction and non-fiction. Both have played significant roles in my journeying. Both play with space, time and knowledge. While I recognise the terms non-fiction or fiction, I believe they operate as myth. Fiction and non-fiction are metaphoric devices in the sense that all words are phantoms created to distil a reality perceived.

I have purposefully let the delineation fall away and have delighted in moving easily between them in my readings and referencing. Indeed, I would prefer the word *reverencing* – offering reverence - and hate the concept of foot- and end-notes relegating my 'friends in arms' to places at the edges. I loathe what the messages of educational guidelines do to my learning. Critiques carve deep into my wanton/edness. Footnotes and knowledge, weary souls, be damned! How can I package up squeals and gasps of delight when I hand in this, my journey of the soul?

The power of emergence through words is intimately related to reflection and tapping into the stories, the observations of others.

David Malouf is aware of the historical context when he asks, *so what of this self-dramatising and self-regarding consciousness that is so much part now of what we take for granted, both in ourselves and in our friends? In the poems of Horace, Catullus, Ovid and (later) Augustine (and) then Petrarch's recovery of 'solitude' (we have) the beginning of modern notions of self-reflection and the exploration of consciousness; though it would be another three centuries before journals, memories, diaries of travel ...*

⁸⁵ Manguel, A., 2007:25

⁸⁶ Manguel, A., 2007:19

⁸⁷ Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M., 1980/2003

*and then the novel emerged in the early eighteenth century as the chief vehicle for imagined experienced ... a new set of terms for examining lived life.*⁸⁸

I have been able to allow collective knowing to be a force of circumspection. This is a fine line to tread, as I am aware of the dangers of using others to validate or justify a view; however, I believe that if the viewing is expansive and open to emergence, the effect is one of surprise and delight at collective understanding such that one says to each other “*you too?*” rather than “*of course*” or “*it must be so*”.

This craft ... of building reality out of words ... concerns two different methods or theories of defining a society and its identity, and consequently that of each of its citizens.

One theory assumes that created language and created reality are in fact separate epistemological entities, and that, while the former (poetry or storytelling) elaborates its system of knowledge through intuition and imaginative analogy, the latter (politics and its various branches, including economy and law) does so in an empirical fashion, and is therefore of greater practical and material value.

*The second theory holds that both entities (literature and politics) are inextricably intertwined, and that the invention of stories and the building of states depends mutually upon each other.*⁸⁹

I am of the latter view; take that Plato: this, I believe, is the art of ontology and the ontology of art.

*And this is (thus) the role of the articulate observer in what we might call ‘the theatre of the self’ ... it belongs to that part of a writer’s nature that produces ‘writing’ and ... it is the act of writing itself that makes articulation possible.*⁹⁰

Poetry has played a special role in my writing history. Poetry has allowed me to break through an incessant pull away from the integration of my whole self which often occurs in my narrative. My narrative at times skims quickly across the surface, my poetry dives deep into my whole experience. Poetry pulls me up. Poetry takes me away from the shore. Poetry brought me to ontology before I knew it had a name.

Poetry has thus been the way into my being, bringing me to places I had never known, places I couldn’t access. In time and space, poetry has allowed me to interpret, integrate, reflect and gain insight through the emerging words on the page. I have notebooks full of poems, mostly haiku of sorts, often written in a frenzy after a day or days experiencing heartaches in Cambodia, Africa, Papua New Guinea and many other far flung places and in my own backyard.

*I travelled far
And went backwards
I met many
And remember few
I cried for my self, my soul, and my planet
I longed to wrap the world and its people
Into a different era
But I’m not sure where to find it
My tears are for the me in everyone and the everyone in me*

⁸⁸ Malouf, D., 2008:79

⁸⁹ Walker, B., 2010:73

⁹⁰ Malouf, D., 2008:79

There have been many times in my ‘work’ life in international development that writing poems has been the only way I could debrief and consolidate the experiences of the day. I concur with the *implicit yet unacknowledged belief that reality exists autonomously in an area of experience that only poetry can penetrate.*⁹¹

Poetry has a distilling function that embraces emotion, mind, spirit, physicality and distils essences. What emerges is the point of synergy, intersection, interconnectivity. Daily we need to make sense of the multitude of experiences and story. The force of poetry is a mystery; while allowing words to dance lightly, it also acts as a poultice drawing out the depth and the collision of our lives. Poetry breaks up and puts our lives back together again. Poetry, says Wordsworth, is ‘*emotion recollected in tranquillity*’ ...⁹² I have been writing poems for years, under-estimating their power and healing quality. Poems come from the deep and surprise us, writer and reader, always.

What the poem translates, wrote Philippe Lacou-Labarthe, *I propose we call experience, on condition that this word be taken literally – from Latin, experiri: the risky crossing ... and this is why one can refer, strictly speaking, to a poetic existence.*⁹³ Poetry: my oars, my bark canoe as I lose sight of the shore.

I continue to read poems from many cultures, gathering books of Indigenous poets when I travel. I have experienced some of the deepest connections of common humanity while reading them, as well as the greatest sense of respect, appreciation and awe about the different perspectives our cultural upbringings afford us. As the Korean poet Ko Un writes, *everything outside my door/ is my teacher.*⁹⁴

As an epistemological expression of my ontology, my philosophy of being, I am eternally grateful that I enrolled in a program that allows me to write poems, thread them through essays, dangle them from trees, sprinkle them amongst photos and value them where hitherto I had underestimated their place in my ongoing transforming journey. More than a tool of integration and transformation, poems are the journey, the launching place, the diving board, the steps, the boat, the river, the bank.

I have discovered that, no one is creating as an individual writing self:

*In “The Distribution of the Sensible”, the French philosopher Jacques Rancière outlines an approach to politics and aesthetics that focuses on “the manner in which the arts can be perceived and thought of as forms of art and as forms that inscribe a sense of community.” Every artistic articulation involves a distribution of shared experience and is thus a figure of sociability or community.*⁹⁵

Suzi Gablick finds similar when she writes that “*the very act of writing has always been (about) following where the energy takes me ... a process involving my own transformation ... my own epistemological “break” ... my own search for alternatives to viewing the self as autonomous, like James Hillman I entertain “some serious doubts” about the individualistic ontology that is the silent faith of both psychotherapy and art.*”⁹⁶

I wonder at the nature of collective consciousness every time I open a new book, enter a gallery, hear a new or old piece of music and find a connection to what I have been exploring in another realm. Stories

⁹¹ Deane, J.F., 2006:10

⁹² Gelatly, K., 2008:13

⁹³ Chang, T., Handal, N., Shankar, R., 2008:xxviii

⁹⁴ Chang, T., Handal, N., Shankar, R., 2008:xxix

⁹⁵ Eliasson, O., 2009:88

⁹⁶ Gablick, S., 1995:16

and poems, words wrapped around our living, travel through time and *our poems like milestones ... line the road*.⁹⁷ They are expressed as emergence to, and through, those who are open to the underground river of creativity.⁹⁸

Let us remember that *consciousness, out of which poems arise*,⁹⁹ is a collective place. A collective, communal ontology and thus to explore being is to explore one's connectedness, the relational self. Words have allowed me to know self as flow.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Hikmet in Berger, J., 2007:25

⁹⁸ Hicks, S., 2007

⁹⁹ Chang, T., Handal, N., Shankar, R., 2008:xxix

¹⁰⁰ Cresswell, C., 2010

LEARNING SEVEN

That knowledge can often get in the way

In so many ways, I do not perceive the knowledge of ‘being’ as having an upward trajectory though time and that current generations ‘know’ any more than those who have gone before. I do not believe that philosophy, psychology or any body of knowledge is further on the path of evolutionary meaning in its depth, value or importance. Western notions of ‘progress’ have no place here. I do not believe that that which is known today, or the methods or ways of being and knowing, the epistemological forces, as it were, are of greater or less value than in previous ages.

The ontological ‘now’ is the same now as it was then. There has been an ongoing struggle throughout all time with the named, the spoken, the painted and the written. The ways and means of knowing are inseparable from the ways and means to interpret life amongst and between us.

Some may raise an eyebrow at my joy in finding an essay on *Becoming* written in the 1950s.¹⁰¹ Some may declare it out of date and unfit for purpose. But how can one view any concept as ‘out of date’ in a philosophy of being that recognises knowledge as emergence from the deep, the collective imaginings of souls throughout time? As Berger suggests, half a century later:

*To make sense of what I'm suggesting it is necessary to eject the notion of time that began in Europe during the eighteenth century and is closely linked with the positivism and linear accountability of modern capitalism: the notion that a single time, which is unilinear, regular, abstract and irreversible, carries everything. All other cultures have proposed a coexistence of various times surrounded in some way by the timeless.*¹⁰²

I found the essay refreshing in its openness and discussion of the early, dare I say, young adult years of academic psychology. I am glad the speaker did not “know too much”! Today there is an accumulated heaviness in the burden and writings of psychology - a burden to read, apply, relate to. Much like religion has burdened the spirit with a heaviness undeserved, so psychology, particularly the clinical branch, has us reeling with insights, therapies, guilt trips and didactic dilemmas. Layers of knowledge gained over the years have not en‘lighten’ed the soul.

I have chosen the philosophy of being as a better guide to our common expression of lived experience because of its ageless quality. Surely, an ontology and an epistemology true to their nature will age beautifully with a grace and a graciousness that comes with wisdom rather than the middle-aged seriousness of psychology.¹⁰³ Such wisdom would encompass the breadth of our being, our lives, our time, as an individual expression of that collective consciousness to which, to whom, I now so easily refer. This understanding has become a given, a peaceful settling rather than an urgent search for me.

The following passage is Foucault’s explanation of the impetus behind the writing of his *The Order of Things*. I offer it here as a reminder that categorisation, like the search for definitions, theories or explanations, should be a delightfully nuanced art.

¹⁰¹ Allport, G.W., 1955

¹⁰² Berger, J., 2007

¹⁰³ de Botton, A., 2009

“This book first arose out of a passage in Bores, out of the laughter, that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other.

This passage quotes a ‘certain Chinese encyclopaedia’ in which it is written that ‘animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like ‘flies.’

In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated in the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking that.”¹⁰⁴

Though I appreciate the rigour, I do not take the line of Linnaean categorization.¹⁰⁵ I will not box up or attempt to nail down a propensity or a tendency of thought, thus inviting dissection, enunciation and discriminatory practice. Foucault understands such quandaries but does not deliver us from this evil.

We assume taxonomies and typologies create spaces for everything once and once only. *As adults in the Western world, what we ignore, even in the study of ourselves, is the coming into being of things. We tend to think in terms of finished things, like solid objects. We are not well versed in methods of thinking about unfinished things, things still open to yet further development, fluid things.*¹⁰⁶ And yet, with emergence, with the understanding of self as flow¹⁰⁷ - that which I cannot dip into twice and find it the same, much like a river - we find we can only sit lightly and hope. Hope, that before the wind rises and the sand blows over the marks I/we make in the sand, that we have understood what we want and need and that it may have even helped. Perhaps all philosophies should not be written down but rather drawn in the sand with a stick on a windy day!

To be fair, positivism and its desire for empirical data is not unknowing, but it strips mystery. Why is it only once the flower has bloomed that one applies labels, counts the petals, names the colours? Before then, let’s appreciate the great becoming, the pre-known, the pre-literate.

My ontological interests would like to account for the pre-blooming and the fall. I am interested in the abiding life that led to the bloom, the life expressed in its showy display, its relational role in nature and its ultimate destination. This is, as Foucault suggests, the *exotic charm* of another way of thinking and the *limitation* of all that I have previously known.

*There are relations everywhere, and relations are life, said Goethe.*¹⁰⁸

Goethe sought to understand not simply already existing things nor constructed things – built piece by piece from separate, self-contained parts but created things, things that can come into existence (and,

¹⁰⁴ Foucault, M., 1970/2002

¹⁰⁵ Linnaeus, C., 1751 (Philosophia Botanica), 1753 (Species Plantarum)

¹⁰⁶ Shotton, J., 2005:136

¹⁰⁷ Cresswell, C., 2010

¹⁰⁸ Shotton, J., 2005:134

perhaps, pass out of existence again) as a result of meetings between forms of life with the other forms around them in their surroundings.

It is this, the focus – not on a world of isolated elements, their properties, and the spatial structure of their external relations at different instants in time – but on the relations between the different aspects exhibited in a dynamic world of internally inter-related, continuously changing activities, that characterizes Goethe’s concerns. The thought we apply in counting, weighing, and measuring things can only be applied to dead phenomena – for counting, weighing, and measuring things requires dividing things up into separate, fixed, and self-contained elements of reality, and no living thing can be thus fragmented like this without dying. While entirely appropriate to the inanimate world, this form of thought – operating within the realm of measurement (to give it a name) – is a form of thought quite inadequate to the understanding of life.¹⁰⁹

It is this, the focus – not on a world of isolated elements, their properties, and the spatial structure of their external relations at different instants in time – but on the relations between the different aspects exhibited

And now in true emergent fashion, eco-psychology and eco-philosophy quite rightly enter from the wings of my theatrical wanderings. Have I really been suggesting that my understanding of philosophy of being is to ascribe such being only to humans? No, and I say this with an audience of sentient beings nodding to each other, knowing that I would get there, even if a little slowly. If one allows the notion of experiential learning, then the ‘spell of the sensuous’¹¹⁰ follows close behind.

I am reminded of my time in Glendalough in 2009 when I stayed by myself in a small stone cottage on a very windy hillside - though I hesitate to write ‘by myself’ as I shared time, space and place with robins, the wind and many leaves.

*on my first morning at Glendalough I sat outside on my bench, with tea, bacon and toast
in early lukewarm light
an orange-breasted robin came to share toast and later bacon fat
I took photos
and then to the right of me leaves began cart-wheeling close to my feet,
telling me not to forget them, that the same spirit made them dance and sing
they wanted their picture taken too
what is alive? what is life?
the joining of spirit
the robin and me
the wind
the leaves and me
us

an emerging us
a connection
a service
a community of relating and meaning
I thought later
of the interfaces
between*

¹⁰⁹ Shotter, J., 2005:134

¹¹⁰ Abram, D., 1996

*that a human
negotiates
though not alone
as wind, water
and fire can
do likewise*

*but it was in passing that
I noticed my unique
place as a
steward of the
interfaces
hello daffodil
hello sheep*

*I could be with each one
For the moment
For longer
But then in moving on
I am the in-between
I link
I have responsibilities
for carrying messages
for joining dots
for taking care*

*and so I took a photo of the leaves
I was convinced they
began to dance
every time I tried to take
a photo of the robin
on the left of me
and they on the right
were not to be forgotten*

*... my photo was probably better
And my being was enlarged*

Motifs of earth, air, fire and water continue to play before me now. Motifs as artistic devices and poetic delights. My epistemological positioning, if I must, is located with light, colour, movement and owes a little and a lot to the nature of emergence, which, I believe, reflects the very nature of becoming. By allowing emergence, we enter becoming.

This, I believe, is an emergence from, but not out of, a collective consciousness as we create and co-create our existence, an expression of our beingness in this place, in this time. Becoming is not towards. Becoming is not away from. Becoming just is. I and thou, we are located within it,¹¹¹ were given birth by it - and into this I weave art, spirit trying to assuage the rising guilt, as I remind myself that the personal is not profane when one attempts thoughtfulness. It has been said before that the personal is political.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Levinas, E., 1998, 2003; Buber, M., 1970

¹¹² Hanish, K., 1969/70

Indeed, all of the human sciences emerge from such a place and yet, sadly, are kept separate in educational and professional life. I experienced this tension when I recently wrote a chapter for an edited academic text. I deliberately chose to tell stories and insert “I” as a statement of the relational nature of development working. The transformation from my earlier *Globalised Wanderings* time had taken hold.

I offer to you these words to describe my/our relational individuality and its ebbs and flows, its tendencies, cultures and styles not as a bounded self but as an expression of our whole through this one, this particular me. Becomingness is where the collective consciousness resides and as integral to my ‘nature’, indeed at its heart, it does not pursue delineation through separateness. It is a drive towards unity, an expression of the verb and the noun of life’s journeying. Becoming is being together, it is living within our natural state. The nature of the relational is thereby even more than the sum or subtotal of the ‘me-s’ taken together.

*The truth is that our experience, for all that we are the subject of it, is a mystery to us. We have no notion, amid the events and feelings and words and pictures that crowd in upon us, of the advent of our most secret understandings, the moments that will one day mean most to us, which image glimpsed, or word spoken, will occasion in us that sweet shock in which the whole ‘spider’s web of the finest silken threads’ of Henry James, will suddenly glow and tremble in the chamber of our consciousness.*¹¹³

Psychology know thy place! This then is the fragile map and the shaky territory, the web and the reality of life. Emergence has its way and I have often needed to emerge from behind a book to find emergence.

I hope I have heeded Kafka’s advice ...

*.. of aspiring without concluding, building without climbing, that is to say, knowing without demanding exclusive possession of knowledge.*¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Malouf, D., 2008: 15/16

¹¹⁴ Kafka, F., 2006

LEARNING EIGHT

That to enter emergence I/we must leave the path

Schumacher College, in the south-west of England, has provided a powerful place for me to explore what they call head, heart and hands learning. The two courses I attended in 2008 and 2009 were rich in their immersion in nature; in listening, reading and conversation; in cooking and working around the property and in freedom left to wander the English countryside. I took many photographs and the content and style of those in 2009 were very different from those of 2008. In between the two visits, I had read *Hold Everything Dear* by John Berger¹¹⁵ and I came to take courageous steps into the outer and inner forest in 2009, whereas I previously had lingered on the edges, peering into the depths. Photography like poetry, graciously, knowingly provided me with a way.

The observation of the photographer and philosopher are woven together beautifully by John Berger as he relates the themes of the Czech photographer, Jitka Hanzlova and the German philosopher, Heidegger. For me, the following discussion is where ecology continues to weave through this discourse, this knowing place of ontology. Not as guest or host, not as romantic hero, but as given, and as en-acted.

Many nature photographs are like fashion photos ... mountains, waterfalls, meadows, lakes, beech trees in autumn ... asked to stand there, wearing themselves and giving the camera a moody look ... nature as hostess ... In Jitka's photos there is no welcome. They have been taken from the inside. The deep inside of a forest, perceived like the inside of a glove by a hand within it.

She speaks of the between-forest... (and) the preposition 'between' belongs to forests in general... a forest is what exists between its trees ... a forest is a meeting place between those who enter it and something unnameable and attendant, waiting behind a tree or in the undergrowth. Something intangible and within touching distance. Neither silent nor audible.

It is commonplace today that photographs interrupt or arrest the flow of time. What is strange about Jitka's forest photos – is that they appear to have stopped nothing! ... It is as if they have been taken between times, where there is none.¹¹⁶

Could this forest be a place of the becoming? Other places have been seen as such entry points. Margaret Atwood once claimed, *turning to face north, we enter our own unconscious*,¹¹⁷ when she wrote of the Arctic and the metaphoric north, the places where we physically and imaginatively head to find ourselves.

Throughout history and prehistory forests have offered shelter, a hiding-place, whilst also being places in which a wanderer can be ultimately lost. They oblige us to recognise how much is hidden.

The philosopher Heidegger, (saw) the forest as a metaphor for all reality – and (said that) the task of the philosopher was to find the Weg, the woodcutters' path through it. He spoke of

¹¹⁵ Berger, J., 2007

¹¹⁶ Berger, J., 2007:135-7

¹¹⁷ Manguel, A., 2007:76

*'coming into the nearness of distance' and ... this was his way of approaching the forest phenomenon.*¹¹⁸

The photograph and the woodcutter's axe are thus more tools on the ontological path of discovery. And it was their use, rather than words, has allowed me to find the forest and its timeless-becoming-nature that is only known from within. The relational nature of this 'between' is now another way to understand the circular conversing¹¹⁹ my *oases* group explored.

*As Jitka says, the way I go is the way back to the future.*¹²⁰

For a long time, my own photography loved doors, windows and paths; windows, sometimes closed, sometimes open; doors, sometimes ajar; gates into fields with their hidden treasures beckoning me. I often snapped winding paths leading into horizons or branching into two. It is as if I have stood at the entrance to this very real and all too mythical forest of the becoming, standing before the entering. The photos, though, do not speak of fear, but they are cautious, I have paused. The photos invite, they are the captured moment of living, being on the edge, in the edges, of living in the before and wondering about the after. It is as though I am in a hesitant, a stuck place.

So, what if I heeded the call of the photo? What if I moved, entered in and experienced immersion rather than portraying an invitation, one which I never accepted? My poetry, my writing had not led me to this place so explicitly. I now see that my photography had been speaking of my personal ontological dreams, my desired journey into the forest. Metaphoric indeed!

This project was ajar and I entered in. *Sometimes to find new oceans, one must lose sight of the shore...*

Too late for fear and tears, I was moving. Yet again, I offer these photos as my early Weg wanderings.¹²¹ I embraced digital emergence and I left the path. I leaned against centuries-old cedars deep in a Totnes forest; lay amongst baby holly bushes and composted layers of being in Luxembourg; found a lone kookaburra, the soul of my father, in thick bush in Yarra Junction; walked to the end of the world in Petra, Jordan. I was in silence and it intersected with stillness as time, space and knowledge sat together and all time and no time settled in my being.

The wooded and desert forests I explored through deep photographic venturing and this ontological experience can be deeply embedded in metaphor in my writing. The very nature of our being is enlivened by bringing forth nature in my work. Again, I remember all too vividly that day at Glendalough when 'dead' leaves swirled 'live'ly at my feet, begging me to take their photo and later that day, when walking up a mountain path, leaves again swirled and twirled breathlessly in front of my every step, leading me on. This was when I had a deep sense of the nature of all sentient beings!

I believe that therapy is embedded here – there is healing in the between and its experience. My ontological position calls this place 'becoming' and it is here in the collective consciousness that the relational knows its true 'self', the collective self that is knowable, experienced and healing – the place of our knowing and to be known.

¹¹⁸ Berger, J., 2007:138

¹¹⁹ *Oases* Integrative Conversations group 2009

¹²⁰ Berger, J., 2007:138

¹²¹ Heidegger, M.,1966

How do any of us enter this forest, and explore the wonderment of its 'Weg-s'? What is my role in – both - this searching, exploring and the offering of the finding to you the reader? Can I ask you to share, to walk this Weg that I am carving? Or perhaps it found me and I turn, beckon and ask you to share the journey. Welcome to the world of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.¹²²

Who is instrumental to this healing process between society and its individuals, in a non-progressive time and a non-mapable space?

*The French philosopher Michel Serres has usefully coined the term “le tiers-instruit,” the “instructed third” or “troubadour of knowledge”; the Anglo-Saxons called him the “maker.” Serres uses this term to find a bridge between natural and human sciences, but it can be useful in finding such a bridge between the physical individual and the metaphysical society.. this is (also) the role of the elder or, sometimes, of the shaman, the “instructed third”, (who) with the help of an auxiliary spirit can make his soul leave his body and dive into a depth of darkness and light that allows him to repair the cosmic disorders produced by humans.*¹²³

Though I suspect the shaman may have his/her work cut out with climate change!

Another excursion is still needed before we leave this world of the timeless knowing with its flow of reality wrapped in art and words. An excursion into the world of the Inuit, the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Their stories are given as an expression of the wider Indigenous experience and to remember that my cultural milieu is a western one and I need to be open to other fields of view. It is also when I let go of my western upbringing that I know that I am not lost when I wander in places of becoming and in the in between, for “*you are not lost,*” say the Inuit, “*because you are here.*”¹²⁴

We enter the world of the Inuit through the film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*, directed by Inuit, Zacharias Kunuk.

(There is, in this film) something new, a different receptive method for a different voice ... and in the process the non-Inuit audience is taught another way of seeing, a viewpoint from within the other culture itself. The story is set at the beginning of the first millennium: for the non-Inuit, this is comparable to “no time” or “once upon a time.”

For the Inuit, the narrative progression from before to after is unlike the western convention. For the Inuit, time, like space, is an area through which we move but in which our traces are effaced by that very movement. Progress is a meaningless concept; we advance along a cyclical path in which events and the stage of these events appear and reappear as both cause and effect of any given happening. Space and time are not regarded as individual or even social properties, but as given areas in which we assume certain individual and social responsibilities, to ourselves and to the “social other”, to the animals with whom the world is shared. Land and sky, sea and ice, days and nights, are individual beings, and belong to no one.

Here, as the poet Yves Bonnefoy writes of Inuit mythology, “connection counts for more than explanation” ... no event, no act stands alone, nor does any individual or social element. The whole natural world is populated by a complex, dense story into which everyone and everything is woven, teller and listener included.

¹²² Lewis, C.S., 1950

¹²³ Manguel, A., 2007:81

¹²⁴ Manguel, A., 2007:81

*In Western thought, place and time change hands and value... In the Inuit imagination, it is place and time that remain constant as we travel through time: the stories on the other hand, change in order to hold the passing of memory ... the telling of legend is always both a voice from the past and contemporary of the teller. For a Westerner, it is difficult to leave aside the cumulative notion of time and accept that which is imagined and told as happening in a constant movement that is, all at once, present, past, and future. For the Inuit, it is the story, not time, that travels.*¹²⁵

It is important that I sit in time sharing this understanding. You see, the 'forest' tundra of the Inuit is the story of my ontology, that which I desire to tell is a story handed to me from others gone before ... because in becoming, I have entered eternity, and in the words of Jesus ... *before ... I am.*¹²⁶ This understanding is part of us all, not anew but made again for 2012. My trajectory, my dear project/trajectory is an inherited story and a gift I share at this time. I acknowledge my storying as collective memory, I name it of value. *We are that which previous experience has taught us, communally and individually.*¹²⁷

The nature of such collective life with all sentient beings, I believe, is that which links and binds us as beings. *The Inuit does not know 'lost.'* "*We are not lost, we are here.*" And "*here*" is identified with *community, the grouping of people ...*¹²⁸

It is like a bubbling spring that bursts forth in our individual and collective expressions. I sense that the very nature of this life is embedded in patterns and cycles. And these, as expressed by indigenous cultures, can be visualised in art; written about in poetry and in song; experienced in dance. We are, I am weaving in the now our future into our past. In my emergent journey, I am continually taking on a new form; I am a shadow of my former self.

*Caminante, son tus huellas
el camino, y nada más;
caminante, no hay camino,
se hace camino al andar.
Al andar se hace camino,
y al volver la vista atrás
se ve la senda que nunca
se ha de volver a pisar.
Caminante, no hay camino,
sino estelas en la mar.*

*Wanderer, your footsteps are
the road, and nothing more;
wanderer, there is no road,
the road is made by walking.
By walking one makes the road,
and upon glancing back
one sees the path
that never will be trod again.*

*Wanderer, there is no road--
Only waves upon the sea.*¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Manguel, A., 2007: 73-79

¹²⁶ The Bible, John 8:58

¹²⁷ Manguel, A., 2007: 81

¹²⁸ Manguel, A., 2007:77

¹²⁹ Machado, A., 1979 and Horton, M. & Freire, P. (1990)

LEARNING NINE

That I am a moment in time, a circle on the lake, a delight in the breeze.

*A few minutes ago, I stepped onto the deck
Of the house. From there I could see and hear the water,
And everything that's happened to me over the years.
It was hot and still, the tide was out.
No birds sang. As I leaned against the railing
A cobweb touched my forehead.
It caught in my hair. No one can blame me that I turned
And went inside. There was no wind. The sea was
dead calm. I hung the cobweb from the lampshade.
Where I watch it shudder now and then when my breath
Touches it. A fine thread ... Intricate.
Before long, before anyone realises,
I'll be gone from here.¹³⁰*

I have been experiencing the art of science and the science in art. I know that there is a collective unifying consciousness that is a core of our becoming and that becoming is a place of unity and thus collectivity and relational – this is its very nature. The bubbling of this has led me to lose sight of many shores – the edges of my knowing and my practice. I have been far and wide in my bark canoe. Along with Raymond Carver's poem above, *The Cobweb*, I offer the following story as a motif of courage.

In the days of the Yellow Emperor, there was a Minister of Laws who believed that there was nothing perfect in this world, until the day he had a daughter. She was beautiful and intelligent and affectionate. There was not one hair on her head that he would change.

'For my perfect daughter, I need a perfect man,' he told the people. So he passed a new law: Only a man who could draw a perfect circle could marry his daughter.

Many men tried. And every man failed.

Then came the day when there was only one man left who had not tried. He was in the dungeon, being punished for failing to show respect to the many laws of the country.

The man in the prison said: 'If you let me out, I will draw six perfect circles.'

His daughter was lonely for a husband so the Minister let him out.

'Take me to the edge of the Lake of Bottomless Calm in West Tianting,' he said.

¹³⁰ Carver, R., in Milosz, C., 1996:265

The prisoner, the Minister of Laws and his daughter gathered at that place. The man dived from the edge of the cliff into the Lake of Bottomless Calm and disappeared.

At the point he entered the water, they saw six perfect circles radiating outwards.

Blade of Grass, we think of laws as things made by man. But who made the laws of nature? 131

I love the image of circles drawn lightly on the lake, the allusion to the bottomless nature of our collective consciousness, the eternity within and beyond. For me this is a story of integration and transformation for the man didn't merely throw a pebble in or dip in a stick which would have achieved the effect - he held nothing back. He dived in, he entered in. I offer it as a motif of courage – the courage to dive from a height into its deepness.

Goethe, who had a vast appetite for life, for adventures of the mind, and of the eye and heart, recommended that we should throw ourselves into experience as into an element like the sea.¹³² Transformation asks this of us because I believe,

*There is no other
There is no outside
(There is no me diving in)
I am the drawing of the circle and the circle*

However, before I appear to endorse the notion of a romantic perfect circle, I also add the following.

The human intellect, from its peculiar nature, easily supposes a greater order and equality in things than it actually finds; and, while there are many things in nature unique, and quite irregular, still it feigns parallels, correspondents and relations that have no existence. Hence that fiction, 'that among the heavenly bodies all motion takes place by perfect circles.'¹³³

I bring these two selections from the Days of the Yellow Emperor and Foucault to highlight the dilemmas with which I juggle, struggle and dance. I have always had a deep appreciation of wabi sabi, the Japanese philosophy which speaks to the beauty of those things which are imperfect, impermanent and incomplete,¹³⁴ However, I also will never deny those times where I gasp involuntarily 'how perfect!' at a sight or at a moment within an experience. Perhaps I am sensing a completeness, a fullness, a coming home.

In 2009, during a Schumacher College two week course on the *Principles of Eco-literacy*, I 'chose' a yew tree for an exercise in Goethean principles¹³⁵ and, through deep connecting in a day of exercises, sitting amongst its low hanging twirling branches, found healing of my fear of dying.

Goethe describes the process of gaining knowledge in the following way:

When in the exercise of his powers of observation man undertakes to confront the world of nature, he will at first experience a tremendous compulsion to bring what he finds there under his control. Before long, however, these objects will thrust themselves upon him with such force that he, in turn, must feel the obligation to acknowledge their power and pay homage to their effects. When this

¹³¹ Wong, C.F., 2008:2

¹³² Malouf, D., 2008:2

¹³³ Foucault, M., 2002:

¹³⁴ Koren, L., 1994

¹³⁵ Goodwin, B., 2007

*mutual interaction becomes evident he will make a discovery which, in a double sense, is limitless; among the objects he will find many different forms of existence and modes of change, a variety of relationships livingly interwoven; in himself, on the other hand, a potential for infinite growth through constant adaptation of his sensibilities and judgment to new ways of acquiring knowledge and responding with action.*¹³⁶

In Goethe's view, science entails "mutual interaction" with the phenomena.

... witness (dialogic) – thinking is a form of reflective interaction that involves our coming into living contact with the living or moving being of an other or otherness. In the interplay of living movements intertwining with each other, new possibilities of relation are engendered, new interconnections are made, new 'shapes' or 'forms' of experience can emerge.

*He speaks of a delicate empiricism which make itself utterly identical with the object, thereby becoming true theory. Goethe's 'delicate empiricism, far from being an arcane form of understanding, is a deliberately extended version of witness- understanding – an anticipatory form of practical understanding that gives us a direct sense of how, in Wittgenstein's terms, to 'go on' with the others and othernesses round us in our daily lives.*¹³⁷

Engaging in this process we discover the "limitless" nature of connections and relationships in the world, but at the same time our potential to continually grow and adapt ourselves to new, more adequate ways of knowing.

*Man knows himself only to the extent that he knows the world; he becomes aware of himself only within the world, and aware of the world only within himself. Every new object, well contemplated, opens up a new organ of perception in us*¹³⁸.

*In living nature nothing happens that does not stand in a relationship to the whole, and if experiences appear to us only in isolation, if we are to look upon experiences solely as isolated facts, that is not to say that they are isolated; the question is, how are we to find the relationship of these phenomena, of these givens*¹³⁹.

*Vygotsky claims we need to concentrate not on the product of development but on the very process by which higher forms are established. If we do, then we will discover that: an interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one.*¹⁴⁰

Doing Goethean science means treading a path of conscious development. The question accompanying every aspect of the work is: "How can I make myself into a better, more transparent instrument of knowing?" In traditional science, we are much more likely to ask, "How can I find ways of adapting the phenomena to my specific approach so that I can answer my question?"

I suspected that I would have to confront death and dying from the moment that Satish Kumar on the first night at Schumacher, shared his understanding of ecological principles. He believes that ecological integrity involves the acceptance of three things, one of which is our dying. There was an immediate emotional stab at my heart. I knew that there was going to be no movement in growth or transformation

¹³⁶ Miller, 1995:61

¹³⁷ Shotter, J., 2005:132, 140-141

¹³⁸ Goethe (SS, p.39, quoted in Cottrell, 1998, p.257)

¹³⁹ Goethe (in HA, 13, p.17, quoted in Sepper, 1988, p.69).

¹⁴⁰ Shotter, J., 2005: 136

for me till this was resolved and that at some time in the following fortnight, I was going to have to face and resolve this in some place, with some one. How beautiful that the some one was a yew tree hundreds of years older than me in wisdom and life experience. I was living the art and science of Goethe. Since that time, and coming to appreciate the idea of dissociation in transformation, I am intrigued by the nature and place of death in growth and change, in our selves, our relationships, our co-creation. I am humbled by our given moment in time, in place.

Emergence comes from openness, the art of walking and writing, the connecting with the collectivity of all knowledge and experience gone before. I relish Goethe, Schumacher, Satish, Stefan, Capra, my yew tree - time, space, knowledge collapsing, insight and transformation emerging. This is the art and act of co-creation and the nature of my philosophy of being. There is no separateness in the place of becoming...

*I am writing this as I wing my way to Canberra, on yet another footprint extending planetary journey, and as we approach the hills and wind-swirling currents of Canberra airport, I note the squeals of delight as the plane bumps vigorously coming into land – these are the excited little voices of children, probably around five years of age, seated behind me. They are in wonder – this is their experience, their understanding of their way of experiencing landing in a small plane... They do not need an explanation of wind shift changes or wing-tilt dynamics and thankfully their father refrained from doing so. This was not an engineering experience, this is experience, this is life.*¹⁴¹

And thus, I too, have been wary of being too engineering in my crafting work, of delivering an exegesis when I want to merely, while expansively, express the delights, the magic, the ‘am’ness of life. I want the immediateness of emergence, of transformative moments. I can’t help but be excited as I come into land with these thoughts. *When the mind is imaginative — it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, and converts the very pulses of the air into revelations.*¹⁴² Do you hear my squeals as I go into the unknown, a place that I had feared and have now not found wanting?

I have been in an ongoing conversation with all sentient beings and the spell of the sensuous has infused my crafting. My inner thoughts, I believe, need to reflect the experience of the senses, the intuition. I have never wanted my words to contradict the experience of living.

As Rumi says, *On a day when the wind is perfect the sail just needs to open and the world is full of beauty. Today is such a day.*¹⁴³

I am a moment in time, a circle on the lake, a delight in the breeze.

¹⁴¹ Fifer, D., 2009

¹⁴² Malouf, D., 2008:10

¹⁴³ Ladinsky, D., 2002:79

LEARNING TEN

The present is where I am

*Geese appear high over us,
pass, and the sky closes. Abandon,
as in love or sleep, holds
them to their way, clear
in the ancient faith: what we need
is here. And we pray, not
for new earth or heaven, but to be
quiet in heart, and in eye,
clear. What we need is here.*¹⁴⁴

The journeying of my project has embraced so many conceptual, semantic and practical dilemmas all the while being imbued with wonder. I am now of the understanding that such journeying is alive like a river running alongside us, with and within us, through our years, under our yearnings waiting for us to listen and allow its emergence. I now know in the deepest sense of the word that under *every deep another deep opens*.¹⁴⁵

And in offering these ten learnings, I (have dealt) with each aspect of this question by fragments, by unconnected pieces, because the passing from one area of knowledge to another fans the pleasure and ardour of reading. If I were to write the chapters of my (journeying) in a continuous form, each time exhausting the chosen subject, they would certainly be more complete, more comprehensive, of a nobler character. But I fear lengthy texts, and you, reader, are worthy and capable of grasping the whole by means of a few random details, and of knowing the end by learning the beginning.¹⁴⁶

My project has not been a temptress, shimmering on the horizon, beckoning me to undertake the arduous task of the long, lonely sojourn over scorching sands - albeit in the company of friends and an *oases* co-visor. The creative emergence of my journeying has been, as Philip Glass muses, about listening into the eternal underground river and its life-giving source and becoming a portal for its emergence. So, not so much a journey to, but an emergence from - a lived expression of the phenomenological view that we only *bring forth that which we already know*.

This reflects a deeper purposeful becoming which is both a driving force, not a conscious set of choices per-se, but an expression of the outpouring of our common consciousness. And further, becoming does not have as its goal (as in much literature in this area) the becoming of us as a perfect self, as an individualised progress of form i.e. becoming 'me'; rather, becomingness is both within, and towards, the relational and the collective expression of life, becoming is expressive of the co-creation of the we. I and thou can thus be relishing, acknowledging the very state and nature of becomingness – resting within it, relaxing upon it, drinking and diving within it.

One sits within both the particle and the wave – the me and the us in the drop and the ocean. There is no separateness between us. Here, in becoming, I need not do, have or act. Here, I am.

¹⁴⁴ Berry, W., 1998:90

¹⁴⁵ Emerson, R. W., 2011

¹⁴⁶ Manguel, A., 2007:Introduction

*To be a pilgrim, is to be connected. We are all connected, we are all related, there is no I and the other, I am the other, the other is me –that is what makes me a pilgrim of life and a pilgrim of the Earth. My pilgrimage is not going somewhere; my pilgrimage is to be one with the universe. I am the universe and the universe is me.*¹⁴⁷

I write these words from Satish on a computer in Addis Ababa, about to board a number of flights ‘home’ to Melbourne 17 hours away, after another experience of beauty and sadness in relationship with the land and its peoples in Kenya and Ethiopia. I always feel deeply such connections as I enter times and spaces, experiencing my globalised wanderings as expressions of I–thou encounters rather than work appointments and meetings¹⁴⁸.

I am reminded that Ellen Langer extends a thought of Diane Arbus “*my favourite thing is to go where I’ve never been*” with “*where we are is where we have never been*”. Ellen is asking us to capture the wonder, the spirit of the present, both here and now.¹⁴⁹

Brenda Walker ends her work with the reminder that *all narration holds the promise of further stories, and another dawn*.¹⁵⁰ And thus, I offer my appreciative affirmation of all that I am, of all that I have learned and have still to explore. I hold in my open palm the promise of that future giving humble thanks to my brother Shiki, of centuries before and living still, who reminds me that

*Without my journey
And without the spring
I would have missed this dawn.*¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Kumar, S., 2009:21-22

¹⁴⁸ Levinas, E., 1998, 2003; Buber, M., 1970

¹⁴⁹ Langer, E. J., 2006:12

¹⁵⁰ Walker, B., 2010:173

¹⁵¹ Clements, J., 2000:26

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