

The Pedagogy of Hinges

THE CURRICULUM COLLECTIVE*

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Abstract

This paper describes the experiences of a doctoral curriculum class where we, four doctoral students and one professor, read about theories of enactivism, complexity, and consciousness, finishing with Elizabeth Ellsworth's book, *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy* (2005). This final reading served to bring into focus the emergent collaborative nature of our learning and stitched the learning of the course into an integrated experience. In particular, our practice of writing weekly keywords, experimentation with learning space and structure, and culminating writing based on Ellsworth's book served as pedagogical hinges for our learning. In recognition of this collaborative learning experience, we chose to write a final paper together reflecting on this curriculum pedagogy.

* We (four students and one professor) chose to use The Curriculum Collective as "author" to interrupt the typical academic structures of privileging first authors and to acknowledge that this work was a collaborative and complex process of coming to know in a collective. We are (in alphabetic order): Theodore Christou, Jennifer Davis, Christopher DeLuca, Rebecca Luce-Kapler, and Laura McEwen.

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The Pedagogy of Hinges

Elizabeth Ellsworth brought us to the house on the lake. Normally, we four doctoral students in Curriculum Studies congregated weekly at our university's West Campus. There were no other faculty buildings nearby. Our classroom resembled a cinder block cell, without windows, painted stale yellow. The space had corridors on either side that separated it from offices. We perceived this place of learning as enclosed and isolated.

Near the end of term, we began reading Elizabeth Ellsworth's *Places of Learning: Media, Architecture, Pedagogy* (2005). This reading followed the course's themes of contemporary curriculum theory, teaching, and learning. In previous discussions we focused on enactivism and ethics (Varela, 1999), complexity thinking (Davis & Sumara, 2006), and consciousness (Donald, 2001) as they related to education. Ellsworth's text created an opportunity for us to conceptualize curriculum as the intersection of these areas of study.

What enabled this broad understanding of curriculum was Ellsworth's notion of hinges. According to Ellsworth (2005), hinges are pedagogical pivot points. As she says, "pedagogy, like painting, sculpture, or music, can be magical in its artful manipulation of inner ways of knowing into a mutually transforming relation with outer events, selves, objects, and ideas" (p. 7). This type of experience embodies the idea of learning-in-the-making in which relationships are made between the past and present, the inner and outer, and the self and others. Hinges prompt learning.

Ellsworth (2005) characterizes learning as an active state of transition that connects body, mind, space, and time. She argues that effective pedagogical hinges engage transitional objects, sounds, and environments that push an individual from being a learner of compliance to becoming a learning self. Compliant learners assume that knowledge is pre-made where the goal of learning is the acquisition of such knowledge. In contrast, a learning self experiences knowledge-in-the-making and exists "in transition and in motion toward previously unknown ways of thinking and being in the world" (Ellsworth, p. 16). Thus for Ellsworth, the learning self sits within a transitional space responding both physically (through sensations) and cognitively (in thought) to pedagogical hinges. The aim of our course was to create

learning structures that promoted the emergence of the learning self and to participate in knowledge making.

Throughout our course we regularly engaged in keyword writing, a process of focused inquiry into a vocabulary. Based on Raymond Williams' (1976) notion of keywords, the purpose of keyword writing is to arrive at new points of resonance and deepen understanding of words and their meanings in relation to self, group, and society. The keyword assignments were hinges upon which hung and from which we swung our class discussions. These discussions and the digressions that related to them can be represented as our movements through the frame of transitional space. This space, made incarnate by the debates and discussions that followed a reading, was the dissolving, albeit brief, of the borders between self and other. While we carried with us our prior knowledge, beliefs, and intentions as we moved through this transitional space, we emerged with alternative understandings and a broader range of perspectives.

Each week our written keywords became the basis of class activities and discussions. However, we decided that for our final class, our keywords were not going to be text-based. Rather, we were to use objects, spaces, and activities to share our thinking on words and concepts from Ellsworth's text. Further, given the stark contradiction between our enclosed and isolated learning environment on West Campus and Ellsworth's (2005) thesis—namely, that the emergence of a learning self is intertwined with the time and space of our environment—we decided to hold our final meeting at our professor's home, a house overlooking a lake, away from the space we typically inhabited. We anticipated that this would be a "catalyst for departure to somewhere else in our understandings of experience—somewhere that offers a fresh perspective on experience" (Ellsworth, p. 3). By changing our learning space—our class setting and structure—we hoped to push knowledge made into knowledge-in-the-making and relinquish our inner learners of compliance for our learning selves.

This essay is structured around the keywords we presented at our alternative learning setting, outside the faculty building. By drawing upon each of our experiences, this essay documents knowledge-in-the-making and provides an example of how pedagogy can precipitate the emergence of self. The following section written by Rebecca (the

professor) details how we arrived at the house and its significance as a place of learning. Each student then describes her or his oral keyword—sound, stone sculpture, theatrical space, and play—identifying how these pedagogical hinges permitted our passage into the transitional space of shared discussion and, beyond that, to the creation of our learning selves. Finally, we reflect on our learning while at the house, drawing connections between our experience and our understanding of pedagogical practices.

The House on the Lake

It's time for a different kind of house. A house that is more than square footage . . .

—Sarah Susanka (2001)

The day that we discussed Ellsworth's *Places of Learning* (2005), I sensed the ennui in the air even before I invited the doctoral students to read their keyword responses to the first section of the book. Nothing had changed in the institutional room we were meeting, but the atmosphere seemed heavier and the end of term was pressing near us. As individuals began to discuss their perceptions, I realized that there were few learning opportunities emerging from this discussion and that Ellsworth's ideas were being given short shrift in that context. I missed the lively exchange of ideas and the interesting discussions that we had shared as a group and, along with it, some fine opportunities for learning. On an impulse, I suggested that our next class should be held somewhere else. I added that, since Ellsworth noted the importance of attending to the pedagogy of spaces, we should consider not only the texts, ideas, and practices we had established as a class, but where we were meeting.

There was a visible sense of relief as the students pitched ideas for different locations. Then it occurred to me that, if they were willing to travel a bit further, we could hold the next class at my house on the edge of Loughborough Lake. My house—at least to me—was the antithesis of this university classroom. The students agreed immediately. I said that I would make lunch, and then we would talk about the rest of Ellsworth's book.

For our keywords, one of the group suggested that we prepare oral versions—a kind of show and tell instead of reading prepared text. Why

not? I agreed. Impulsively I added that this time, I would prepare one as well.

The context was set and I spent the week rereading Ellsworth and thinking about my keyword. As our Tuesday class neared, I had the menu planned, but still no keyword. Then it occurred to me that I should go back to what had led to this decision in the first place—my house—and talk about it as a pedagogical space.

The house I live in is one my husband and I designed, so I could discuss the influences that shaped our decision making, the importance of certain possibilities for pedagogy that I wanted to create, and the learning that had evolved from this process. There are two of us living in this house, and we are devotees of Frank Lloyd Wright's notion of a house being organic to its location. We also appreciate Sarah Susanka's (2001) philosophy of the "not so big house"; that is building no more than is needed but with an eye to creating aesthetically pleasing structures and beautiful rooms. With that influence, we designed our house to suit living on a cliff overlooking a lake in the midst of Southern Ontario woods. Light is important to us, so there are lots of big windows, but ones which also capture the sun in winter and heat the house. Most of our living happens in a central room, which is easy to clean and heat. And the house is wider than long, so that from most places one can look over the water. In building this house, I learned how to make decisions that created a space where we feel renewed and where we are encouraged to explore our art forms and our appreciation for nature. This house has been a generative space for me, my family, and colleagues.

What seemed powerful for me the day I told my class this story was the contrast in our demeanor from an exhausted collective in the institutional room the previous week to a collaborative and engaged group. The interest and learning were palpable and were an explicit demonstration of what Ellsworth was speaking about in her book.

I developed the keyword from Raymond Williams' understanding. He explains that keywords are "not a dictionary or glossary of a particular academic subject. It is not a series of footnotes in dictionary histories or definitions of a number of words. It is, rather, the record of an inquiry into a vocabulary: a shared body of words and meanings in our most general discussions, in English, of the practices and institutions

which we group as culture and society” (1976, p. 15). Whenever I have used this assignment in the past, I have asked students to carefully read the assigned text and then choose a word or phrase that they can develop, linking the meaning of the text to their own experience. At some point during the next class, each student reads her or his piece aloud. I invite some kind of response from the others such as writing for a minute or two or speaking about their own connection to the ideas. What happens through this process is that students make stronger connections to the texts we are reading and they begin to develop and work through ideas that they find intriguing. Because of keyword writing, I see marked improvement in their academic thinking and writing skills. Furthermore, by the end of a term, students have created a shared vocabulary (Rorty, 1989) that deepens their conversation, influences their thinking, and creates a community of scholars.

When the students decided to bring objects and tell oral stories revealing their connections to Ellsworth’s text, the discourse changed in unexpected ways. I noticed that the sense of collaborative meaning making deepened and that the connections among their respective ideas seemed easier to highlight. That activity became first an individual hinge where they brought their pasts to the present and realized a self in the making (Ellsworth, 2005) and then became a hinge for the group as our past work coalesced during that class and we realized our identity as a learning collective. The result is this paper. Such recognition is not to discredit the original form of our keywords, which is critical to this process; rather, it is to suggest that there also needs to be more opportunities for embodied “hinges” for learning within an academic setting at the doctoral level. As we slip among texts, weaving our stories throughout, we need to be on the lookout for those pedagogical hinges that reveal the self-in-the-making.



View of Loughborough Lake

Pedagogical Soundscapes (Christopher DeLuca)

Music, scented sound, is all around us, between our ears and at our fingertips; moving us from head to toe.

—John D. Barrow (2005)

In her book, Ellsworth (2005) describes anomalous places of learning. These pedagogical places speak to learners through sensory processes that “arise out of the imbrication of material elements of the mind/brain and body” (Ellsworth, p. 27). These pedagogies are concerned with reconfiguring time and space to enable sensation construction, the linking of the pedagogical environment with the bodies and minds of learners. “The resulting paths, juxtapositions, sounds, interruptions, durations, and rhythms actually impinge on the body/mind/brain in a multiplicity of ways and attempt to provide sensations that create the conditions for potential learning experiences” (Ellsworth, p. 27). In light of Ellsworth’s desire to better understand new pedagogies of sensation, I was compelled to consider the impact of pedagogies that were acoustically embodied in the process of knowledge in the making.

Since childhood, music has been part of my life. Through participation in various art forms, I have developed an appreciation for

the complexity of music. When I listen to a piece of music, I pay little attention to the lyrics of the song or the physicality of performers; instead, I listen for the blending of various musical elements. For me, it is this synthesis of sound and technique which gives rise to sensation construction. Each listening experience is unique in the sensations it produces. Ellsworth comments that “sensations are conditions of possible experiences, pedagogy as sensation construction is a condition of possible experiences of thinking. It becomes a force for thinking as experimentation” (2005, p. 27). In this way, music allows for playful discovery and pushes the mindful listener into a transitional space of learning.

The soundscapes of pedagogical spaces fulfill the experience for our learning self, offering a dimensionality that is often overlooked. Sound has texture, body, and shape. Messages and meanings are carried through its tone, rhythm, harmony, and timber. At times sound is purposeful, like bird songs in Vivaldi’s *La primavera* (Spring) or in symphonic poems such as Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faun* (Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun) or Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture*. Composers and musicians play on tonal and melodic motifs to cue our attention towards particular thoughts and actions and to give rise to unified meanings among listeners. But pedagogical soundscapes, not limited by the distinct intent of strict program music, push beyond these semiotic interpretations.

Sound resonates within individuals to create a unique experience of sensation construction. Listening is knowledge in the making. Through the qualia of the sensations produced, sound has the power to invoke images, thoughts and emotions. While sound can create convergence of experience it can also serve to open up new possibilities and bring about unexpected learning. Sound as a pedagogical hinge spurs our creativity and imagination. When we begin to listen to the soundscapes of our pedagogies, our learning self begins to play musician and composer with the score of our cognition.

In order to express this claim to my classmates, I decided that my keyword while at the house would be experiential rather than anecdotal. I wanted to engage in a group meditation that deeply focused on how sound effects thought and emotion. I had selected a piece of music that crossed genres and which incorporated unique blends of tone and

timber. The piece had a transformational sense, playing on changing rhythms and dynamics. I gave a brief introduction prior to starting the meditation. Comfortably positioned, the music began. All eyes were closed as a long unified base tone split into a wavering sound that clashed up against itself.

Synthesized sounds were pulled through streams of octaves briefly interrupted by a short programmed speech. The base line returned, a sense of calmness temporarily restored. The sound pushed forward, increasing in volume, finally modulating into a steady progressive percussion. Instruments reminiscent of aboriginal music were juxtaposed with overarching melodic voices. I used deep breaths to ground myself and focus on the sound. My awareness now entering an unknown place, my thoughts and emotions danced to the beat of tribal drums as they played in this nebulous space. I could feel the energy in the room beginning to shift as we transitioned towards new learning.

But this transition was interrupted. The track started to skip. I resisted my urge to fast forward to the next song, thinking it might play through. With each break in sound I became increasingly aware of the faulty technology, my awareness being brought back to the physical reality of three-dimensional space as I moved further away from my learning self. At this moment, I knew we were all thinking the same thing. As the interruptions grew more frequent, we finally decided to restart with the next song. Given our initial experience with the music, I found it much easier to engage this time and return to the transitional space. Midway through the selection, the wall clock offered its contribution to the soundscape, reminding us once again of our physical reality. Ten minutes passed and the music came to an end leaving us with a moment of silence.

Blank paper and coloured pencils provided a means to write and draw our personal interactions with the soundscape. The heat radiated from the snow-covered lake, warming us as we sketched our learning. We then shared our interpretations, realizing that the music had enticed similar experiences. Images paralleled one another with vivid similarity. Figures 1, 2, and 3 below each depict an individual, the first representing the enormity of space, time, and existence outside oneself, the second in relation to bodies of others and societal subjugations, and the third a man performing his self-narrative with a sense of space and time, past

and future, depicted through his position on stage. Figures 4, 5, and 6 represent elements of nature: wind, water, and earth. There is a consistent theme across these images of movement and fluidity with figures 3 and 5 positioning the self in tandem with the flow of nature.

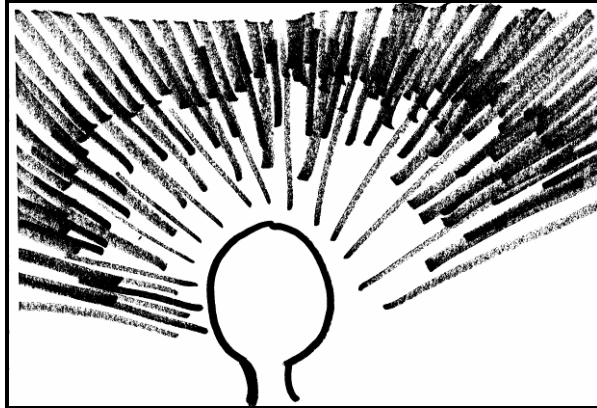


Figure 1

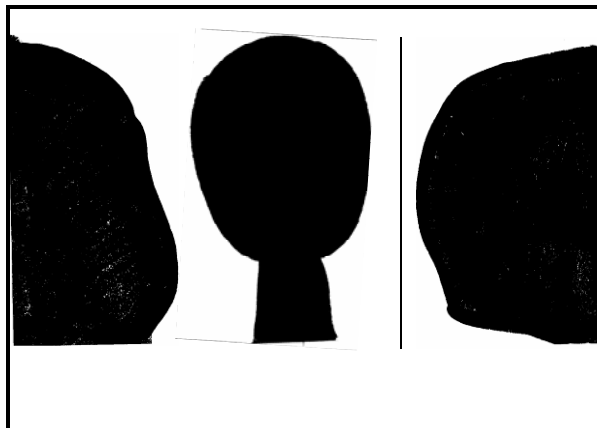


Figure 2

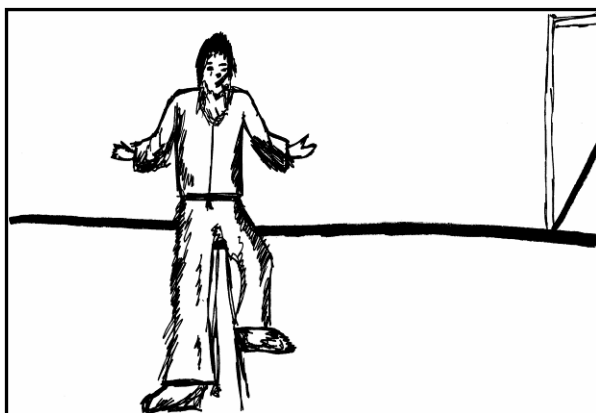


Figure 3

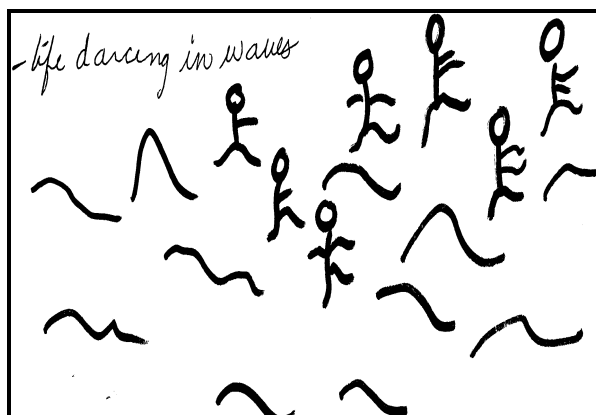


Figure 4

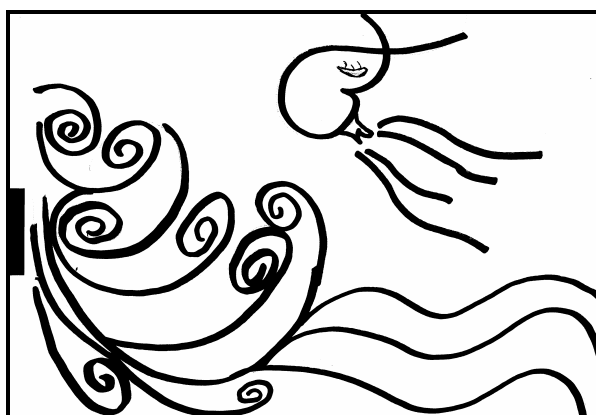


Figure 5

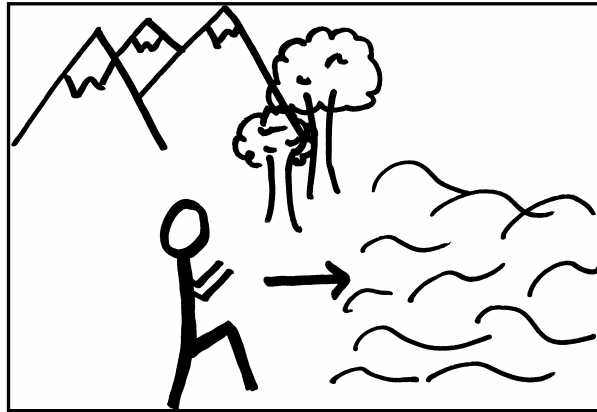


Figure 6

As each described their meditation, I could see connections with my own thoughts and sensations. While sensation construction from this experience was unique for each of us, our learning through this hinge did overlap. This learning experience, though unconventional, enabled us to arrive at cohesion in meaning and engaged us in knowledge in the making. The soundscape played teacher and we learners as we meditated in the house on the lake.

Pedagogy of Stone (Jennifer Davis)

I was a sculptor before I was born. I was driven and lashed onward by powerful forces outside myself. There was no other path, and no matter how hard I might have tried to find one, I would have been forced back again.

—Gustav Vigeland (as cited in Hale, 1969)

For my keyword I brought photographs of this remarkable sculptor's works taken during a visit to Vigelandsparken, the outdoor museum in Oslo, Norway. Each of the 192 larger-than-life size pieces depicts a stage of human life and I chose five of my favourites to share and to illustrate the power of his work. In black and white, mounted on plain construction paper, each picture showed clearly the depth of emotion captured in stone. As I passed them around the group, I told the story of how my experience in this park had come about.

For ten days, we had been jumping on and off our hired coach, travelling around Europe: four chaperones, 36 Ontario secondary school

students and one official tour guide. We had seen all the regular tourist attractions and some out-of-the-way nooks and crannies; we had tasted gourmet pizza and slinked into a McDonalds near the Vatican; we had shopped at Harrods and bartered at open air markets; and now it was almost time to fly home. The last leg of our March Break tour of seven countries was an overnight ferry ride across the North Sea to Scandinavia. As I leaned on the rail, watching the sunrise over waves lapping against the ship's hull I reflected on the whole experience. It had been good, but I was very tired and very ready to let these energetic teenagers bound back into their parents' care. I longed to sit quietly with a book and a cup of coffee in my own kitchen, staring out at wide Canadian fields without feeling any need to remember historic details or to supervise anyone's nocturnal activities. I longed to give up all responsibility for directions and arrangements to someone else. I was tired and in great need of an energy surge to carry me through the last 48 hours, back to the airport in Copenhagen and home.

On this trip I had felt older than usual. Was it the extra walking? The exceptionally fast pace of seeing seven countries in twelve days? That this trip had included four rambunctious grade nines? All those circumstances undoubtedly factored into my fatigue, but as I watched dawn cross the emerging cityscape and harbour, I realised that what was really wrong was that I missed home. I missed my family, and, most especially, I missed the friend who has been my husband for more than thirty years. Why more this trip than any of the dozen plus taken during previous school breaks? The difference, I knew, was the behaviour of the incessantly flirtatious tour guide.

Since we had arrived at Charles DeGaulle International Airport, our flamboyant Fabio look-alike tour guide had made it his undisguised intent to captivate every female on the tour with practised seductive glances, provocative stances and murmured asides—including me. Keeping adolescent estrogen from lustful overdrive was hard enough, without doing battle with my own senses. Ten days before this ferry ride my middle-aged ego had been flattered by his campaign, now any pleasant visceral response had devolved into controlled irritation and an urge to shudder in his presence. I wanted nothing more than to hug the body I have known intimately since my own high school days and accept that reciprocal response of love on which I have come to depend. I let

myself imagine leaning into that shoulder and slumping against that chest. For a moment I could smell wood smoke on a barn jacket as a cold wind blew hair into my tired tears.

“We’re getting off soon!” broke my reverie.

Still feeling uncommonly frumpy, grumpy and weary, I gathered up my bag and books, took a quick head count and followed the queue past uniformed customs officers on to Norwegian soil. Time, I thought, to stop this depressing introspection and become my professional ‘teacher self’ again. On automatic pilot, in my modulated instructional voice, I read the pamphlet about the sculptor, Gustav Vigeland, son of Norway, to my sleepy students as the chartered bus wound its way through early morning traffic. 192 sculptures. 600 different human figures. Bronze castings into granite. All statistics I had known for years and all the reasons why six months earlier I had insisted on taking this side trip to Oslo. Rocks have always held a mystical fascination for me. I love the feel of ancient boulders pushed to the earth’s surface by frost heavings. I love their warmth and I love speculating on their past history. Vigeland’s work in this medium, as shown in slides and documentaries, had drawn me like a stone magnet, but now the whole trip seemed mechanical and arduous. I wished I was back in the hotel and able to rest. I continued to wish until the bus stopped at broad wrought iron gates.

Stepping down from the coach and on to the first few steps leading up to the plateau was an act of will for my tired legs. It was not until I stood in front of the first sculpture that I began to feel a creeping sensation of awe. By the time a few more minutes had passed, or it could have been hours, I felt that constriction of the chest that precedes a storm of emotion. A tsunami gathered strength at the base of my throat and I swallowed repeatedly to hold back the cries of recognition that threatened to unravel my dignity. The stone was alive! In front of me were children and young girls; couples and families; old men and dying women, hearts beating through carved rock, and I recognized them all. Vigeland’s passionate depiction of the stages of life became my life. The infants were my infants. The growing children were my children. The harried young mother was me. The work hardened hands of the middle-aged man gently holding a grandchild were the hands of the man I love. And the aging couple facing an unknown future together was us: rock solid relationships, created by, from and into eternity. The fleeting

eclipsed by the enduring. Created, creator, creation and recreation in one continuous flow. I allowed myself to laugh aloud as the metaphors played out in my regenerated mind.



Looking around for my students I found a group of them silent before the great stone carved monolith that rises at the centre of this amazing natural museum. Their demeanour was reminiscent of the visits we had made to cathedrals and other sacred places. In an impromptu gesture we circled the column and held hands as we moved slowly around it until someone tripped and giggles relieved the intensity of the moment.



After returning to the classroom routine and familiar Canadian farmland, I often looked at pictures and tried to explain the impact of this place. Many listened, a few understood, but life and distance blurred my memories and surprisingly, I have not thought of that trip or the time spent at Vigelandsparken for months, if not years. Even the postcard I keep pinned to a corkboard above my desk had become commonplace until I read Elizabeth Ellsworth's *Places of Learning* (2005). Her description of moving through the Holocaust Museum was a powerful reminder to me of Oslo. Through her explanations of space and pedagogy she has given me words to better understand what happened in the park that day.

Massumi's (2002) understanding of interaction in the making relies

on our minds and bodies passing through time, space and events without planning the outcome. As tired as I was before entering the park, I had no energy to predetermine what I would find or experience there. It was indeed an “uncertain passage” which changed my self and yet that same self emerged stronger and more real than ever before. Boundaries of self and other, subject and object, even time and space, disappeared as the rock sculptures fused to me and I to them. The path between the columns was both literal and figurative transitional space and in an unexplainable irony the solid rock surfaces became me in the making rather than me already made. They were Ellsworth’s hinges to a new and profound understanding of the enduring cycle of life. An understanding which not only affected me, but my students.

But what of my self as teacher? The dark places of my soul, it turns out, were not hidden from my students, who had been struggling with their own tiredness and longings for the known after days of traveling through the unknown. Believing that I would interpret their sadness as disappointment in the trip, they had worked to “keep up appearances” for my sake. What an ironic twist to the child being father to the man! Our circle around the intricately carved monolith broke down those strange construed barriers. The power of art experienced as reality bound us to each other in a new way. At a picnic table we shared openly what we each missed the most about home, what we were looking forward to doing and how glad we were to be Canadians. We learned about each other.

Being alone in our group, we were even able to share our frustrations over “Fabio’s” advances, nodding supportively when the youngest female participant confessed that infatuation had long since turned to annoyance and the boys expressed their corporate jealousy over his flirtations. What emerged as a shared source of frustration became fodder for hilarious “in” jokes and cleverly constructed puns. It also became a moment of knowledge in the making as we considered the value of lasting relationships in all our lives. Inner conflicts resolved as teachers and students became simply people together discovering our connected selves. In photographs, the smiling faces of the teachers are markedly indiscernible, except by age, from the faces of the students. Laughing, sharing sandwiches and Kleenex, we realized in one revealing moment that we eerily resembled the figures surrounding us. The

boundaries of reality can be very vague. The artificial boundaries imposed through learning institutions can become even vaguer given half a chance.

Some Echoes from an Ancient Space: Theatre, Performance, and Learning

(Theodore Christou)

The poet being an imitator just like a painter or other maker of likenesses, he must necessarily in all instances represent things in one or another of three aspects, either as they are, or as they are said to be or as they ought to be.

— Aristotle (2006)

Childhood has a peculiar way of echoing in the present. It does not evaporate and disappear, it dissolves like sugar into a glass; while invisible, each sip of the present has the flavour of the past. The echo that I speak of literally reverberated in my ears when I was seventeen and visiting Athens for the first time.

This was the summer before my senior year of high school. Two weeks before my trip to Greece, I had performed in a stage production at my school's June concert and the show was mired in technical troubles. The wireless microphones malfunctioned and the audience suffered through the speakers' feedback and rumbling. On the stage, between the drawn curtains, framed by the proscenium arch, I acted and sang amateurishly. Still, I blame the technology for the sound problems.

In Athens, my father and I discussed the too-soon end to my acting career and laughed as we walked through the streets that trespassed both ancient monuments and modern office space. The Parthenon loomed above us, watching our movement, like the eyes of the Christ Pantocrator above the altar in Byzantine churches. We took pictures but my dad did not lecture me on the significance of each marble structure we encountered. We reached the Epidauros theatre and he asked me to climb the steps alone and sit as near the top as possible.



It was not easy climbing. The seats, turning like a horseshoe around the semi-circular orchestra, are steep and shallow. At least the stones here are better preserved than at most ancient sites, where time and the elements have been unkind. I reach the top, sit, and pant; my arms outstretched to show my father that I have fulfilled his request. He removed from his pocket a brochure for bus rides that we picked up at the hotel hours before. He suddenly tore the paper and I, perched above, heard the echo clearly. I laughed; the lesson was clear to me: two millennia after this theatre was constructed, our architectural spaces are not more wisely constructed.

I inhabited pedagogical space. Looking down at my father, my first and best teacher, I saw him as an individual speck of light amongst an infinite glowing of stars. Athens, the constructed city, as well as distant mountains and azure heavens formed the backdrop to this realization. The dramatic and comic events that unfolded in the Greek theatre were always juxtaposed with the vastness of space. The lessons learned in dramatic retellings of myths and religious fables were never considered in isolation from the pedagogy of life.

I imagined three actors in front of the skene, a wall that allowed for costume changes, as well as entrances or exits. They wore long cloaks and tall platform boots. The characters were of lofty status and had to be seen. Their large masks demonstrated emotion; they also distinguished between all the personages a single actor would play. I am also such an actor, I thought, shuddering, swapping faces and personas according to context. Resuming my imaginative sequence, I envisioned the chorus, a group of singers and actors dressed in robes and masks like the actors

were. They moved and chanted in unison; now turning clockwise in slow exaggerated gestures, now counter-clockwise in a stuttered stagger.



The Greek theatre as pedagogical space blurred and smudged the difference between at least two wedded notions that are often deemed in our schools to be antithetical: the emotional/logical; and the personal/public. This blurring transformed the dramatic medium into the transitional space where the structures of the audience's world broke down and were rebuilt. Tragedy provoked and cleansed, rattling or jarring the emotional and intellectual state of participants. Even the viewers, seated in the stands, were participants in this religious and educational rite. Without the audience, the action echoed into no one's consciousness.

This was public education. The drama festivals began in the morning and went until the sun set. They were free to attend, and the audience was fed. Communally, the Greeks laughed and cried, empathized and hated, felt pity and exorcized fear. The human characters were lofty in status (what we might today describe as being of elevated socio-economic status) but this made their demise more pitiful to the citizen of a budding democracy. The levelling and conflating of social class permitted audiences to critique and examine the actions of gods and mortals, king and peasant, monster and tyrant. While drama built community, the impetus was on each individual to examine the underlying assumptions and character traits motivating thought and

action.



Education here, in this space, was riotous, by our standards. It spoke to the mind by evoking the ecstatic and the emotional. This, if nothing else, betrays tragedy's religious roots. In the center of the theatre's orchestra, there used to be an altar, it is said. A goat was sacrificed on that altar as it bleated, or cried. The word tragedy (τραγωδία – tragodia) is compound and it means 'the goat's song.' The plots of most dramas were rooted in religious dogma. They featured the interaction between the human and the divine. In the world of Greek mythology, the well from which tragic stories were drawn, the lives of gods and goddesses intermingled with those of ordinary citizens of the state.

The gods not only resembled humans physically, they behaved as we do. They erred as we do, aspired and dreamed as we might, and were as subject to the force of their emotions as we can be. The plots, by necessity, modified the myths as individuals knew them. By enacting dialogue and developing character, the tragedians became story-tellers and transmitters of their culture. No two storytellers will tell the story exactly the same way. As such, Greek tragedy brought to consciousness into that mythology and those beliefs that we encase in bound volumes and shelve in the dusty background of our minds. The theatre, a physical

space, enabled the uploading of cultural beliefs and stories into a public forum, recreating the ideas that distinguished Athens from all other cities and states.



Were I to have presented my keyword on the Greek theatre to my classmates in any place but the house on the lake, my performance and the following discussion would not have been the same. Despite the fact that the prompt I used to facilitate discussion—a black and white printed photograph of the theatre at Epidaurus—would have been the same at another time, the place of learning we inhabited facilitated my recollection of the anecdote involving my father. As I spoke, the sun pierced the unsheathed windows behind me, warming the back of my neck and melting the frosty memories from my youth. The words flowed easily and I remembered details of my trip to Athens that ten years of experience had frozen.

When my classmates and I left the classroom that had framed our learning over the term, we entered into a theatre of sorts. The backdrop for our learning was a lake and not the Mediterranean, or an ancient polis. We did not dance, as the chorus would have. There was music and mediation. We entered into dialogue. We performed, making a keyword

writing assignment into a public address. There was food and emotion. We began an iterative cycle of work and reflection, whereby communal interactions led to individual learning, which spawning a communal paper wrought of individual reflections and connections. The house on a lake north of Kingston transformed into an ancient place: one where learning masqueraded as fun and play.

Play Dough Pedagogy (Laura McEwen)

Play is our brain's favourite way of learning.

—Diane Ackerman (1999)

As I sat reflecting upon my daughter's early years of play, I thought about the transitional objects she regularly appropriated. In particular, I recalled her fondness for play dough. While her room was filled with heaps of expensive toys, her favourite activity was sitting at the dining room table fashioning shapes out of the colourful dough. Considered within the context of Ellsworth's (2005) discussion of play, this insight made perfect sense, play dough held no a priori agenda. Where her bag of Barbie dolls defined the enabling constraints of our creative interaction, our adventures with play dough had no such boundaries. Unconfined by limits of wardrobe and accessories, we were free to explore the endless possibilities of our collective creativity.

Brought together by play dough, we traveled on safari in Africa, skidded by penguins in Antarctica, planted tropical gardens and explored magical underwater worlds filled with sea creatures and hidden treasures. Play dough captured the meaning I wished to convey with my keyword. As I explained the idea to my eight-year-old daughter, she understood my intention immediately and quickly located a recipe on the Internet. She was excited, asking that she be allowed to define the color and find individual containers. The idea of play dough inspired creativity, opened the window to endless possibilities, and engaged us in collaboratively defining our learning. As she kneaded the food colouring into the dough, shapes emerged and she lamented that she so missed the feel of it in her hands. Once again, there we were together, playing at the dining room table.

As I handed each of my colleagues their portion, I felt excited to share the powerful message of play dough. They were immediately

engrossed in play. While they squeezed and pulled at the dough, I talked about the memories of my daughter's preference for this creative medium over alternatives like Barbie. I suggested that her bias might have been attributed to my outspoken opinions about the coercive nature of such toys. The covert patriarchal agenda packaged in long blonde hair, large breasts, tiny waists, mini skirts and stilettos. And while I spoke, we played, immersed in the creative process. They argued that children often rebel against such rhetoric offered by parents, and suggested the appealing quality of play dough was its open-ended potentiality.

As others in our collective have already acknowledged, Ellsworth (2005) talks about the use of play as a hinge or pathway into the transitional space occupied by the learning self. That moment of becoming, fuelled by interest and enjoyment, where self and other are fused and no determinant end anticipated. She juxtaposes these possibilities with the dangerous potential of play to mask underlying agendas that serve coercive ends. Used in this way, the latent power of play is corrupted as the participant becomes aware of the intentionality of predetermined outcomes. Robbed of this inconclusive quality, play as a transitional activity is squelched and the learner forced into compliance. It was this fundamental conceptualization of play as potential versus propaganda that served as the basis for my keyword at the house on the lake.

Framed within the context of curriculum, Barbies symbolize a narrow view of education: a pedagogy characterized by clearly defined objectives, scripted activities, and measurable outcomes. Exploration is only encouraged to the degree that learners successfully adopt accepted ways of thinking to prescribed levels of competence within appropriate age ranges. Little wonder so many students fail to engage in this stagnant path of predestination. The process has been robbed of its inconclusive and play-like properties as prescribed curriculum comes to dominate the learning landscape. As Ellsworth interprets Winnicott's (1989) ideas about transitional space, the coercive nature of this type of pedagogy stifles any capacity for learners to play with ideas, push personal limits and discover individual interests. The pathway to the learning self is obstructed by an agenda imposed from outside. What would happen if we adopted the play dough approach to pedagogy?

Unlike Barbie's agenda that objectifies women within a dominant hetero-normative society, play dough imposes no such coercion. In play dough pedagogy, the enabling constraints (Davis & Sumara, 2006) maintain a wider scope that allows learners to pursue their own agendas. Where Barbie pedagogy focuses attention on socially constructed relationships between self and other, play dough invites exploration of a more dynamic nature. This widening of pedagogy represents potential and invites the learner into a creative process bound solely by color and texture. Further, within the context of these minimal constraints there is fluidity, determined only by the readiness of the learners. For example, the mixing of colors can allow them to move beyond even these predetermined limitations.

In play dough pedagogy the hinge of play is used to swing learners of compliance into transitional spaces. Once there, learners are free and encouraged to take responsibility for the emergence of their learning selves in the way our 'playing' with class location led to adjustments in class structure which in turn gave rise to the emergence of a new form of keyword. The open-endedness of play reveals possibilities. For us, it was the means that allowed us to step inside the creative process of remaking our course experience. Freed from the textual constraints of our key word practice, we playfully shared glimpses of our learning selves. Through play dough pedagogy, we lived Ellsworth's notions of pedagogy as the experience of an idea.

Our Learning at the House

The reactions to our day at the lake varied as we reflected upon the impact this experience had on our learning. For some of us, the practical application of Ellsworth's (2005) ideas brought into focus prior aspects of our course and gave us words to describe what we inherently knew. For others, the playful nature of our shared time challenged our conceptions of learning and curriculum, prompting us to move beyond our text-based notions of pedagogy. For all of us, the change in our place of learning and our modified keyword structure created a hinge that led us to experience knowledge-in-the-making. We did not know or assume what we were to learn that day; rather, we suspended belief that knowledge was made, we relinquished our inner learners of compliance,

and we took risks. What transpired was the emergence of our learning selves, in transition, in motion, resulting in unknown ways of thinking and being.

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We (four students and one professor) chose to use The Curriculum Collective as "author" to interrupt the typical academic structures of privileging first authors and to acknowledge that this work was a collaborative and complex process of coming to know in a collective.

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